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# Wildersmoor

By C. L. Antrobus

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he might choose to ignore it for his own convenience now and then.

The rug was Nina's, therefore Will could take it and yet preserve his independent attitude towards "th' parson." Though in truth the old man did not actively dislike Paton, he merely wished to enter a vigorous protest against the principle of interference which Paton represented in the matter of cleansing the cottage. So the hearthrug, a fluffy crimson one, was laid down over the stone floor in front of the fire, and Elliot's house-friend, a large grey cat, curled herself round on it, with much satisfaction.

"Hoo's a good judge," said Will, pointing to the creature, "an' so am I. What wi' this,"—looking at the rug and Nina,—"and th' meats,"—looking at the cupboard and Frances,—"I'll be snug enow."

They left the old man thus mollified. The little crowd that had gathered with so much interest round old Will's abode had broken into scattered groups, commenting upon the scene they had just witnessed. Most of them were of opinion that it was very right and proper; not because they really thought so, but because it is always pleasant to see someone else worried.

Outside the gate Aveland proposed that the Patons should walk back to Sandhayes and lunch there.

"Fleming is coming," he said. "Five is a happy number. Do not reduce it to three."

"I am afraid we must," replied the Vicar, "we have a trick of lingering at your house, and I am due in Riverton early this afternoon."

"But you, Nina," inquired Frances. "Will you not make number four?"

Mrs. Paton shook her head.

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'Braave' sweeping on with her sails shining in the sun, like yellow satin—so old they are. Or at night, with the phosphorescence creeping like glow-worms about her worn timbers."

Paton looked his surprise.

"I have not read the book. I must do so. But I should not have thought sea stories particularly attractive to ladies."

"Now, my dear Cyril," cried his wife, "how can you or any man possibly know what attracts this or that woman? I don't know why we should be supposed to delight in the twaddle and sugar-candy literature so anxiously recommended to us by you men. It is affliction enough to mend stockings at all, without reading how the lovely Lavinia not only mended the family socks, but also those of the pew-opener, the bachelor churchwarden, and the village agitator; even though the last-mentioned was at that moment advocating the nationalization of glebe land, and a free hand with respect to other people's larders. Neither do I understand why, if one scoffs at this sort of thing, one is expected to apply oneself either to mathematics or blasphemy as the sole alternative. One may have a natural affinity for something which is neither twaddle, nor mathematics, nor blasphemy. Now my particular delight is in wild adventure, not at sea, but on land. Plenty of fighting and tumbling over precipices. I had a quiet home and needed something more stirring. So I found it in a top garret and Mayne Reid, and wished myself on the banks of the Rio Grande."

"Mrs. Paton, that is not sentimental."

"It is not, Dr. Aveland. I was never sentimental.

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