

Why Tom Mix Went Back to the Circus



Priceless furnishings adorn the living room of Tom Mix's home. . . . "The only difference between our million-dollar cabin and a lot of others in Hollywood, was that ours was paid for," says Tom.

By ELEANOR EARLY

WHICH had you rather be—a multi-millionaire or a Wild West show performer? Would you rather live in a suite at the Ritz, or a tent at the circus?

Sounds silly, doesn't it? Almost anybody'd rather be a rich man on a yacht, these blistering summer days, than a poor cowboy, sweltering in a canvas tent. A rich man, with a butler at his elbow, serving tinkling drinks from frosted goblets. With a chef, and many servants. And a Rolls Royce. A country home and a town house. And a place at the seashore, besides, where breezes blow and it's cool enough to sleep nights.

As everyone knows there's no place hotter than a circus in the summer time. And all the pink lemonade on the lot won't quench a fellow's thirst. The lions roar with the heat. And everybody has to work, whether he feels like it or not. For the tickets are sold and the show must go on.

Imagine then a multi-millionaire who says he would rather live under the big top than on his own grand yacht. A man who says he'd rather be a plain cow puncher than a plutocrat any time.

Everybody knows Tom Mix. But hardly anybody knows the extraordinary choice Tom has made between grandeur and simplicity.

The cowboy idol has gone back to his beginnings. He has deserted movie kings and queens for circus folk. Turned his back on society and sought the companionship of his old pals, the cow punchers. For eight months each year, as long as he lives, Tom says he will be a circus rider.

He will ride in the circus trains with the rest of the gang. Eat at the long wooden tables. Coarse fare from heavy crockery. Coffee served in cups as solid as tombstones. Multi-millionaire Mix, who has fired his \$100-a-week chef and sent his valet packing.

THERE is talk in Hollywood that westerns aren't popular any more because of the talkies and that Tom can no longer command his big salary, but Tom says that he doesn't like Hollywood. And he says he won't go back even when the circus season is over, at any price. Maybe his wife will invite him to visit her villa in Southern France. Perhaps she'll persuade him to open the million-dollar house on Catalina Island. Possibly she'll coax him into taking a cruise on that costly yacht he hates.

When his eight gorgeous months are over, Tom may have to compromise with life. Even multi-millionaires can't do what they want all the time. But meantime the lonely cowboy is happier than he has been for years and years.

"I never did like Hollywood," he says. "And I sure do enjoy trouping."

When Tom was a boy he joined up with Sells-Floto and had his first taste of the circus. In those days he earned his keep, and that was about all. But the spell of the big tents got in his blood. The very smell of a circus gives him a bigger kick than all his millions.

Tom left Sells-Floto to get a better job and by and by he got to be a sheriff. Tom has 38 bullets plugged in various parts of his anatomy. But he always got his man. It was exciting, but the young sheriff had a hankering to get back to the circus.

Then the movies started. And soon they were featuring western pictures. Mix was the best rider in the west, and Selig hired him for \$5 a day.

"I THOUGHT I was over-paid," he admits. "That was more than I'd earn in a month sometimes."

From the beginning Tom was a hit. He had a pretty leading woman for his love scenes, and she could ride like

*Deserting Hollywood's False Glamour.
The Most Idolized Cowboy Has Returned
To His First Love—Life Under a Tent
—While His First and Second Wives,
To Whom He Has Given Everything,
Rear His Two Daughters for Social
And Stage Careers Which Their Father
Does Not Believe in Nor Appreciate*



Multi-Millionaire Tom Mix. . . . He fired his \$100 a week chef and sent his valet packing. . . . Now a g h: months out of the year he's back where he started. . . . and happy.

Vaudeville Actress Ruth Jane Mix. . . . Tom's daughter by his first marriage. . . . "I'd rather see her married than anything else on earth," says her father. "There's more happiness for mothers than there is for actresses and social queens."

after her father. And pretty soon Mrs. Mix was talking about giving the child an education in Paris. Tom thought it was a little soon to think about that. But Mrs. Mix, like practically every woman in Hollywood, had social aspirations. That, as Tom admits, was the beginning of all their trouble.

Mrs. Mix gave a lot of swell society parties that Tom didn't like. He is surprisingly old-fashioned, for a Hollywood product.

Naturally, there were cocktails at the Mix parties. And, of course, the women smoked. Tom, being a good deal of a moralist—he doesn't smoke any more—didn't like it.

"**A**NYTHING my wife does is ok," he says. "But I'll be god-darned if I liked those parties. Not that I blame Victoria, because she has different ideas than me about entertaining. She's a great little girl. But the glitter and sham of Hollywood gets 'em all sooner or later."

"Oh, of course there are some great people there. But there are a lot of hypocrites, too. And more make-believe than anywhere else on earth. Everybody does things for effect."

"I used to get a big kick visiting around the mansions. There's one girl, now a celebrated movie queen, who used to work in a big department store. Say, I've seen that girl call the butler to pick up a handkerchief she'd dropped on the floor."

"That's the way most of them are. One night I heard a girl call her butler, to tell her maid to come down from upstairs, and open a pocketbook that lay about three feet from where she was sitting, to pay a messenger boy. Less than four years ago that girl was selling tickets and making change at a beach concession near New York."

"If she hadn't been showing off, do you know what she would have done? She'd have handled the money herself, and short changed the kid. Honest she would. Her own dad told me that his daughter cleaned up more walk away money than any cashier on the lot. They both thought it was real smart."

Tom hates showing-off more than he hates anything. "When you get right down to brass tacks," he admits, "I hadn't any more business than the rest of them living in a house with a valet and a butler. And hiring a chef at \$100 a week, to cook my groceries. But Victoria's the sort of a girl that likes to do things up brown, and nothing would do but we must have a mansion like the rest of them. So we got one of those million-dollar cabins. And the only difference between ours and a lot of the others, was that ours was paid for."

Tom tilted back in the wooden bench on which he sat,



Tom calls this his riskiest stunt. . . . riding Tony into a moving train.

This yacht was part of the background of Tom's former ritzy existence. . . . before he stepped off the social merry-go-round.

a cowboy. Eugene Forde was her name. Eugene had a little girl called Victoria. Tom used to buy Victoria presents. Dolls and books, and all kinds of things.

By and by Victoria grew up, as little girls will. And one day Tom asked her to marry him.

Now, Tom had been married before, but his wife had secured a divorce, and the custody of their daughter Ruth. That broke Tom up pretty much, because he is naturally a home-loving man, and he was crazy about Ruth.

But, by and by, he fell in love with little Victoria Forde. Her mother was delighted, and so was her father. As for Victoria herself—well, she had idolized Tom ever since he bought her dolls.

The marriage started off beautifully, with Tom worshipful, like a cowboy in the movies, of Victoria's frail beauty. From the beginning she could twist him round her little finger, and he'd have died to save a single hair of her pretty head.

Tom's principal idea was to buy things for Victoria. He began with the biggest, most perfect engagement ring in the world. And he followed that up with a diamond circlet of stones that are known as "pavements." A little later Mrs. Mix added a diamond collar to her collection.

Jewels were the passion of her life, until Thomasina was born. Tom and Victoria both wanted a boy. You see Tom had already had one girl. But, when the baby came, nobody could ever have wished for anything else. They named her

Mrs. Victoria Mix and Daughter Thomasina. . . . Victoria is the daughter of Tom's first leading lady. . . . They were married after Tom's first marriage failed. . . . Thomasina lives in a \$1,000,000 French chateau with her mother.

parties that Tom didn't like. He is surprisingly old-fashioned, for a Hollywood product.

Naturally, there were cocktails at the Mix parties. And, of course, the women smoked. Tom, being a good deal of a moralist—he doesn't smoke any more—didn't like it.

"**A**NYTHING my wife does is ok," he says. "But I'll be god-darned if I liked those parties. Not that I blame Victoria, because she has different ideas than me about entertaining. She's a great little girl. But the glitter and sham of Hollywood gets 'em all sooner or later."

"Oh, of course there are some great people there. But there are a lot of hypocrites, too. And more make-believe than anywhere else on earth. Everybody does things for effect."

"I used to get a big kick visiting around the mansions. There's one girl, now a celebrated movie queen, who used to work in a big department store. Say, I've seen that girl call the butler to pick up a handkerchief she'd dropped on the floor."

"That's the way most of them are. One night I heard a girl call her butler, to tell her maid to come down from upstairs, and open a pocketbook that lay about three feet from where she was sitting, to pay a messenger boy. Less than four years ago that girl was selling tickets and making change at a beach concession near New York."

"If she hadn't been showing off, do you know what she would have done? She'd have handled the money herself, and short changed the kid. Honest she would. Her own dad told me that his daughter cleaned up more walk away money than any cashier on the lot. They both thought it was real smart."

Tom hates showing-off more than he hates anything. "When you get right down to brass tacks," he admits, "I hadn't any more business than the rest of them living in a house with a valet and a butler. And hiring a chef at \$100 a week, to cook my groceries. But Victoria's the sort of a girl that likes to do things up brown, and nothing would do but we must have a mansion like the rest of them. So we got one of those million-dollar cabins. And the only difference between ours and a lot of the others, was that ours was paid for."

Tom tilted back in the wooden bench on which he sat,

Tom tilted back in the wooden bench on which he sat,

and chewed a blade of grass reflectively. He surveyed the circus world through the flap of his tent.

"Never was a de luxe lay-out could touch a tent for pleasant living," he declared. "I sure do feel at home right here and now. And that's more than I could ever say with a lot of servants running around, and my house all laid out like a show-room."

Yet Tom Mix is a good deal of a splurger himself. He has more dinner clothes than al-

most any person living. Gray, and plum color, and buff and pure white. And, when he is riding, his legs are most impressive. Then he leans toward scarlet and purple, with trappings of gold. And he wears that famous belt that the Texan ranchman gave him, made of diamonds. His spurs are jeweled, and his stirrups blaze like a knight's in ancient pamply.

Besides all his personal splendor—and Tom has almost as many jewels as Victoria—he owns a Rolls Royce with a special body.

Even Tony has taken on something of the Mix grandeur. Tony, as everybody knows, is Tom's famous horse. In fact, Tony is almost as famous as Tom. Mix bought him, back in the old days, for \$18. Now he's worth his weight in gold. Rather strangely, Tom has never insured his treasure. Mrs. Mix's jewels are insured for \$500,000. But there's not a penny on Tony.

"Why not, Tom? somebody asked him recently. "Seems like that's sort of nonsensical. That horse is pretty much your stock in trade. I reckon you ought to insure him for the worth of Victoria's diamonds anyhow."

Tom contemplated his friend calmly. "You got your kids insured?" he asked.

"Why, no! What's that got to do with it?" "Well, Tony's sort of like a child to me," explained Tom. "If that pony should die, I reckon I'd feel just about as bad as a man could feel. I love Tony like I love my best friend. But I haven't got my friend insured, to recompense me, when he dies."

"But they've spoiled Tony," laments his master, "the way they've spoiled almost everyone else in the movies. He's getting just like a lot of the stars. Pampered, so that he thinks nothing's too good for him. That's what the producers do to their high-salaried stars. Kid 'em along, until they get so swell headed, there's no living with them."

"Tony's a horse, and he ought not to have too many airs. But do you think he'd ride in a truck with another horse? Not Tony! He makes a fuss, like the rest of them, if he don't get the best of everything. It's a great state of affairs, when even the horses get high-hat."

MRS. MIX and Thomasina are in France now. Tom gave his wife a million dollars to buy herself a house, and she's picked a villa in southern France. Thomasina speaks French like a native, and her father is afraid she'll turn out to be a regular little society girl.

"I hope I can have her with me in the circus next summer," he sighs wistfully. "It would be a great thing for a girl, traveling with a circus for a season. Give her a taste of real, wholesome life. Seems to me it would bring my little girl and me pretty close together. The trouble is nobody can appreciate a simple life until they've tried it."

Tom's other daughter, Ruth, is grown-up now, and in vaudeville. They have seen very little of one another, because Ruth has been always with her mother.

"Her mother is an ambitious woman too," sighs Tom. "Now, Thomasina's mother has a social career mapped out for my little daughter. And Ruth's mother has a theatrical career planned for my eldest daughter. Between them, they haven't given me a look-in."

"Ruth's an awful smart girl, and a darn nice one. She'd be happier, though, if she'd get those stage ideas out of her head, and fall in love with a regular man. Ruth would make a wonderful wife, and a beautiful mother. I'd rather see her married than anything else on earth. There's more happiness for mothers than there is for actresses, and social queens. Only girls don't seem to know it. And the funny part of it is their own mothers don't tell them so."

TOM doesn't make speeches when he talks. He uses plain, one syllable words, and speaks right out from his heart. He never went much to school, but he writes his own scenarios. And he's a pretty fair conversationalist. His philosophy of life is wholesome and direct.

"Life is like a mountain," he says. "A steep, high mountain, and we all have to climb it. It's easier for some folks than for others. There's lots of weaklings that fall along the way. And there's plenty of no-account fellows ready to climb over those that get tuckered out."

"Only God knows what's beyond the mountain. But my idea is that the prize is not to the swift, but to the loving. Not to the man whose legs and wind are longest, but to them whose hearts are biggest, and love their brothers most."