

# **The Novels of Jack London: Part 1**

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# **The Cruise of the Dazzler**

This is London's first full-length novel, which was published in 1902. Set in old San Francisco Bay, the story concerns a young man who becomes involved with "oyster pirates" making raids on commercial oyster beds.

The first edition

London, shortly after the publication of his first novel

# Foreword

Tempting boys to be what they should be — giving them in wholesome form what they want — that is the purpose and power of Scouting. To help parents and leaders of youth secure books boys like best that are also best for boys, the Boy Scouts of America organized EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY. The books included, formerly sold at prices ranging from \$1.50 to \$2.00 but, by special arrangement with the several publishers interested, are now sold in the EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY Edition at \$1.00 per volume.

The books of EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY were selected by the Library Commission of the Boy Scouts of America, consisting of George F. Bowerman, Librarian, Public Library of the District of Columbia; Harrison W. Craver, Director, Engineering Societies Library, New York City; Claude G. Leland, Superintendent, Bureau of Libraries, Board of Education, New York City; Edward F. Stevens, Librarian, Pratt Institute Free Library, Brooklyn, N.Y., and Franklin K. Mathiews, Chief Scout Librarian. Only such books were chosen by the Commission as proved to be, by a nation wide canvas, most in demand by the boys themselves. Their popularity is further attested by the fact that in the EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY Edition, more than a million and a quarter copies of these books have already been sold.

We know so well, are reminded so often of the worth of the good book and great, that too often we fail to observe or understand the influence for good of a boy's recreational reading. Such books may influence him for good or ill as profoundly as his play activities, of which they are a vital part. The needful thing is to find stories in which the heroes have the characteristics boys so much admire — unquenchable courage, immense resourcefulness, absolute fidelity, conspicuous greatness. We believe the books of EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY measurably well meet this challenge.

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA,

James E. West

Chief Scout Executive.

# Part I

## Chapter I. Brother and Sister

They ran across the shining sand, the Pacific thundering its long surge at their backs, and when they gained the roadway leaped upon bicycles and dived at faster pace into the green avenues of the park. There were three of them, three boys, in as many bright-colored sweaters, and they “scorched” along the cycle-path as dangerously near the speed-limit as is the custom of boys in bright-colored sweaters to go. They may have exceeded the speed-limit. A mounted park policeman thought so, but was not sure, and contented himself with cautioning them as they flashed by. They acknowledged the warning promptly, and on the next turn of the path as promptly forgot it, which is also a custom of boys in bright-colored sweaters.

Shooting out through the entrance to Golden Gate Park, they turned into San Francisco, and took the long sweep of the descending hills at a rate that caused pedestrians to turn and watch them anxiously. Through the city streets the bright sweaters flew, turning and twisting to escape climbing the steeper hills, and, when the steep hills were unavoidable, doing stunts to see which would first gain the top.

The boy who more often hit up the pace, led the scorching, and instituted the stunts was called Joe by his companions. It was “follow the leader,” and he led, the merriest and boldest in the bunch. But as they pedaled into the Western Addition, among the large and comfortable residences, his laughter became less loud and frequent, and he unconsciously lagged in the rear. At Laguna and Vallejo streets his companions turned off to the right.

“So long, Fred,” he called as he turned his wheel to the left. “So long, Charley.”

“See you to-night!” they called back.

“No — I can’t come,” he answered.

“Aw, come on,” they begged.

“No, I’ve got to dig. — So long!”

As he went on alone, his face grew grave and a vague worry came into his eyes. He began resolutely to whistle, but this dwindled away till it was a thin and very subdued little sound, which ceased altogether as he rode up the driveway to a large two-storied house.

“Oh, Joe!”

He hesitated before the door to the library. Bessie was there, he knew, studiously working up her lessons. She must be nearly through with them, too, for she was always

done before dinner, and dinner could not be many minutes away. As for his lessons, they were as yet untouched. The thought made him angry. It was bad enough to have one's sister — and two years younger at that — in the same grade, but to have her continually head and shoulders above him in scholarship was a most intolerable thing. Not that he was dull. No one knew better than himself that he was not dull. But somehow — he did not quite know how — his mind was on other things and he was usually unprepared.

"Joe — please come here." There was the slightest possible plaintive note in her voice this time.

"Well?" he said, thrusting aside the portière with an impetuous movement.

He said it gruffly, but he was half sorry for it the next instant when he saw a slender little girl regarding him with wistful eyes across the big reading-table heaped with books. She was curled up, with pencil and pad, in an easy-chair of such generous dimensions that it made her seem more delicate and fragile than she really was.

"What is it, Sis?" he asked more gently, crossing over to her side.

She took his hand in hers and pressed it against her cheek, and as he stood beside her came closer to him with a nestling movement.

"What is the matter, Joe dear?" she asked softly. "Won't you tell me?"

He remained silent. It struck him as ridiculous to confess his troubles to a little sister, even if her reports were higher than his. And the little sister struck him as ridiculous to demand his troubles of him. "What a soft cheek she has!" he thought as she pressed her face gently against his hand. If he could but tear himself away — it was all so foolish! Only he might hurt her feelings, and, in his experience, girls' feelings were very easily hurt.

She opened his fingers and kissed the palm of his hand. It was like a rose-leaf falling; it was also her way of asking her question over again.

"Nothing's the matter," he said decisively. And then, quite inconsistently, he blurted out, "Father!"

His worry was now in her eyes. "But father is so good and kind, Joe," she began. "Why don't you try to please him? He doesn't ask much of you, and it's all for your own good. It's not as though you were a fool, like some boys. If you would only study a little bit — "

"That's it! Lecturing!" he exploded, tearing his hand roughly away. "Even you are beginning to lecture me now. I suppose the cook and the stable-boy will be at it next."

He shoved his hands into his pockets and looked forward into a melancholy and desolate future filled with interminable lectures and lecturers innumerable.

"Was that what you wanted me for?" he demanded, turning to go.

She caught at his hand again. "No, it wasn't; only you looked so worried that I thought — I — " Her voice broke, and she began again freshly. "What I wanted to tell you was that we're planning a trip across the bay to Oakland, next Saturday, for a tramp in the hills."

"Who's going?"

"Myrtle Hayes — "

"What! That little softy?" he interrupted.

"I don't think she is a softy," Bessie answered with spirit. "She's one of the sweetest girls I know."

"Which isn't saying much, considering the girls you know. But go on. Who are the others?"

"Pearl Sayther, and her sister Alice, and Jessie Hilborn, and Sadie French, and Edna Crothers. That's all the girls."

Joe sniffed disdainfully. "Who are the fellows, then?"

"Maurice and Felix Clement, Dick Schofield, Burt Layton, and — "

"That's enough. Milk-and-water chaps, all of them."

"I — I wanted to ask you and Fred and Charley," she said in a quavering voice. "That's what I called you in for — to ask you to come."

"And what are you going to do?" he asked.

"Walk, gather wild flowers, — the poppies are all out now, — eat luncheon at some nice place, and — and — "

"Come home," he finished for her.

Bessie nodded her head. Joe put his hands in his pockets again, and walked up and down.

"A sissy outfit, that's what it is," he said abruptly; "and a sissy program. None of it in mine, please."

She tightened her trembling lips and struggled on bravely. "What would you rather do?" she asked.

"I'd sooner take Fred and Charley and go off somewhere and do something — well, anything."

He paused and looked at her. She was waiting patiently for him to proceed. He was aware of his inability to express in words what he felt and wanted, and all his trouble and general dissatisfaction rose up and gripped hold of him.

"Oh, you can't understand!" he burst out. "You can't understand. You're a girl. You like to be prim and neat, and to be good in deportment and ahead in your studies. You don't care for danger and adventure and such things, and you don't care for boys who are rough, and have life and go in them, and all that. You like good little boys in white collars, with clothes always clean and hair always combed, who like to stay in at recess and be petted by the teacher and told how they're always up in their studies; nice little boys who never get into scrapes — who are too busy walking around and picking flowers and eating lunches with girls, to get into scrapes. Oh, I know the kind — afraid of their own shadows, and no more spunk in them than in so many sheep. That's what they are — sheep. Well, I'm not a sheep, and there's no more to be said. And I don't want to go on your picnic, and, what's more, I'm not going."

The tears welled up in Bessie's brown eyes, and her lips were trembling. This angered him unreasonably. What were girls good for, anyway? — always blubbering, and interfering, and carrying on. There was no sense in them.



"A fellow can't say anything without making you cry," he began, trying to appease her. "Why, I didn't mean anything, Sis. I didn't, sure. I — "

He paused helplessly and looked down at her. She was sobbing, and at the same time shaking with the effort to control her sobs, while big tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"Oh, you — you girls!" he cried, and strode wrathfully out of the room.

## Chapter II. "The Draconian Reforms"

A few minutes later, and still wrathful, Joe went in to dinner. He ate silently, though his father and mother and Bessie kept up a genial flow of conversation. There she was, he communed savagely with his plate, crying one minute, and the next all smiles and laughter. Now that wasn't his way. If he had anything sufficiently important to cry about, rest assured he wouldn't get over it for days. Girls were hypocrites, that was all there was to it. They didn't feel one hundredth part of all that they said when they cried. It stood to reason that they didn't. It must be that they just carried on because they enjoyed it. It made them feel good to make other people miserable, especially boys. That was why they were always interfering.

Thus reflecting sagely, he kept his eyes on his plate and did justice to the fare; for one cannot scorch from the Cliff House to the Western Addition via the park without being guilty of a healthy appetite.

Now and then his father directed a glance at him in a certain mildly anxious way. Joe did not see these glances, but Bessie saw them, every one. Mr. Bronson was a middle-aged man, well developed and of heavy build, though not fat. His was a rugged face, square-jawed and stern-featured, though his eyes were kindly and there were lines about the mouth that betokened laughter rather than severity. A close examination was not required to discover the resemblance between him and Joe. The same broad forehead and strong jaw characterized them both, and the eyes, taking into consideration the difference of age, were as like as peas from one pod.

"How are you getting on, Joe?" Mr. Bronson asked finally. Dinner was over and they were about to leave the table.

"Oh, I don't know," Joe answered carelessly, and then added: "We have examinations to-morrow. I'll know then."

"Whither bound?" his mother questioned, as he turned to leave the room. She was a slender, willowy woman, whose brown eyes Bessie's were, and likewise her tender ways.

"To my room," Joe answered. "To work," he supplemented.

She rumbled his hair affectionately, and bent and kissed him. Mr. Bronson smiled approval at him as he went out, and he hurried up the stairs, resolved to dig hard and pass the examinations of the coming day.

Entering his room, he locked the door and sat down at a desk most comfortably arranged for a boy's study. He ran his eye over his text-books. The history examination came the first thing in the morning, so he would begin on that. He opened the book where a page was turned down, and began to read:

Shortly after the Draconian reforms, a war broke out between Athens and Megara respecting the island of Salamis, to which both cities laid claim.

That was easy; but what were the Draconian reforms? He must look them up. He felt quite studious as he ran over the back pages, till he chanced to raise his eyes above the top of the book and saw on a chair a baseball mask and a catcher's glove. They shouldn't have lost that game last Saturday, he thought, and they wouldn't have, either, if it hadn't been for Fred. He wished Fred wouldn't fumble so. He could hold a hundred difficult balls in succession, but when a critical point came, he'd let go of even a dewdrop. He'd have to send him out in the field and bring in Jones to first base. Only Jones was so excitable. He could hold any kind of a ball, no matter how critical the play was, but there was no telling what he would do with the ball after he got it.

Joe came to himself with a start. A pretty way of studying history! He buried his head in his book and began:

Shortly after the Draconian reforms —

He read the sentence through three times, and then recollected that he had not looked up the Draconian reforms.

A knock came at the door. He turned the pages over with a noisy flutter, but made no answer.

The knock was repeated, and Bessie's "Joe, dear" came to his ears.

"What do you want?" he demanded. But before she could answer he hurried on: "No admittance. I'm busy."

"I came to see if I could help you," she pleaded. "I'm all done, and I thought — "

"Of course you're all done!" he shouted. "You always are!"

He held his head in both his hands to keep his eyes on the book. But the baseball mask bothered him. The more he attempted to keep his mind on the history the more in his mind's eye he saw the mask resting on the chair and all the games in which it had played its part.

This would never do. He deliberately placed the book face downward on the desk and walked over to the chair. With a swift sweep he sent both mask and glove hurtling under the bed, and so violently that he heard the mask rebound from the wall.

Shortly after the Draconian reforms, a war broke out between Athens and Megara

—  
The mask had rolled back from the wall. He wondered if it had rolled back far enough for him to see it. No, he wouldn't look. What did it matter if it had rolled out? That wasn't history. He wondered —

He peered over the top of the book, and there was the mask peeping out at him from under the edge of the bed. This was not to be borne. There was no use attempting to study while that mask was around. He went over and fished it out, crossed the

room to the closet, and tossed it inside, then locked the door. That was settled, thank goodness! Now he could do some work.

He sat down again.

Shortly after the Draconian reforms, a war broke out between Athens and Megara respecting the island of Salamis, to which, both cities laid claim.

Which was all very well, if he had only found out what the Draconian reforms were. A soft glow pervaded the room, and he suddenly became aware of it. What could cause it? He looked out of the window. The setting sun was slanting its long rays against low-hanging masses of summer clouds, turning them to warm scarlet and rosy red; and it was from them that the red light, mellow and glowing, was flung earthward.

His gaze dropped from the clouds to the bay beneath. The sea-breeze was dying down with the day, and off Fort Point a fishing-boat was creeping into port before the last light breeze. A little beyond, a tug was sending up a twisted pillar of smoke as it towed a three-masted schooner to sea. His eyes wandered over toward the Marin County shore. The line where land and water met was already in darkness, and long shadows were creeping up the hills toward Mount Tamalpais, which was sharply silhouetted against the western sky.

Oh, if he, Joe Bronson, were only on that fishing-boat and sailing in with a deep-sea catch! Or if he were on that schooner, heading out into the sunset, into the world! That was life, that was living, doing something and being something in the world. And, instead, here he was, pent up in a close room, racking his brains about people dead and gone thousands of years before he was born.

He jerked himself away from the window as though held there by some physical force, and resolutely carried his chair and history into the farthest corner of the room, where he sat down with his back to the window.

An instant later, so it seemed to him, he found himself again staring out of the window and dreaming. How he had got there he did not know. His last recollection was the finding of a subheading on a page on the right-hand side of the book which read: "The Laws and Constitution of Draco." And then, evidently like walking in one's sleep, he had come to the window. How long had he been there? he wondered. The fishing-boat which he had seen off Fort Point was now crawling into Meiggs's Wharf. This denoted nearly an hour's lapse of time. The sun had long since set; a solemn grayness was brooding over the water, and the first faint stars were beginning to twinkle over the crest of Mount Tamalpais.

He turned, with a sigh, to go back into his corner, when a long whistle, shrill and piercing, came to his ears. That was Fred. He sighed again. The whistle repeated itself. Then another whistle joined it. That was Charley. They were waiting on the corner — lucky fellows!

Well, they wouldn't see him this night. Both whistles arose in duet. He writhed in his chair and groaned. No, they wouldn't see him this night, he reiterated, at the same time rising to his feet. It was certainly impossible for him to join them when he had not yet learned about the Draconian reforms. The same force which had held him to

the window now seemed drawing him across the room to the desk. It made him put the history on top of his school-books, and he had the door unlocked and was half-way into the hall before he realized it. He started to return, but the thought came to him that he could go out for a little while and then come back and do his work.

A very little while, he promised himself, as he went down-stairs. He went down faster and faster, till at the bottom he was going three steps at a time. He popped his cap on his head and went out of the side entrance in a rush; and ere he reached the corner the reforms of Draco were as far away in the past as Draco himself, while the examinations on the morrow were equally far away in the future.

### Chapter III. "Brick," "Sorrel-Top," and "Reddy"

"What's up?" Joe asked, as he joined Fred and Charley.

"Kites," Charley answered. "Come on. We're tired out waiting for you."

The three set off down the street to the brow of the hill, where they looked down upon Union Street, far below and almost under their feet. This they called the Pit, and it was well named. Themselves they called the Hill-dwellers, and a descent into the Pit by the Hill-dwellers was looked upon by them as a great adventure.

Scientific kite-flying was one of the keenest pleasures of these three particular Hill-dwellers, and six or eight kites strung out on a mile of twine and soaring into the clouds was an ordinary achievement for them. They were compelled to replenish their kite-supply often; for whenever an accident occurred, and the string broke, or a ducking kite dragged down the rest, or the wind suddenly died out, their kites fell into the Pit, from which place they were unrecoverable. The reason for this was the young people of the Pit were a piratical and robber race with peculiar ideas of ownership and property rights.

On a day following an accident to a kite of one of the Hill-dwellers, the self-same kite could be seen riding the air attached to a string which led down into the Pit to the lairs of the Pit People. So it came about that the Pit People, who were a poor folk and unable to afford scientific kite-flying, developed great proficiency in the art when their neighbors the Hill-dwellers took it up.

There was also an old sailorman who profited by this recreation of the Hill-dwellers; for he was learned in sails and air-currents, and being deft of hand and cunning, he fashioned the best-flying kites that could be obtained. He lived in a rattletrap shanty close to the water, where he could still watch with dim eyes the ebb and flow of the tide, and the ships pass out and in, and where he could revive old memories of the days when he, too, went down to the sea in ships.

To reach his shanty from the Hill one had to pass through the Pit, and thither the three boys were bound. They had often gone for kites in the daytime, but this was their first trip after dark, and they felt it to be, as it indeed was, a hazardous adventure.

In simple words, the Pit was merely the cramped and narrow quarters of the poor, where many nationalities crowded together in cosmopolitan confusion, and lived as best they could, amid much dirt and squalor. It was still early evening when the boys passed through on their way to the sailorman's shanty, and no mishap befell them, though some of the Pit boys stared at them savagely and hurled a taunting remark after them, now and then.

The sailorman made kites which were not only splendid fliers but which folded up and were very convenient to carry. Each of the boys bought a few, and, with them wrapped in compact bundles and under their arms, started back on the return journey.

"Keep a sharp lookout for the b'ys," the kite-maker cautioned them. "They're like to be cruisin' round after dark."

"We're not afraid," Charley assured him; "and we know how to take care of ourselves."

Used to the broad and quiet streets of the Hill, the boys were shocked and stunned by the life that teemed in the close-packed quarter. It seemed some thick and monstrous growth of vegetation, and that they were wading through it. They shrank closely together in the tangle of narrow streets as though for protection, conscious of the strangeness of it all, and how unrelated they were to it.

Children and babies sprawled on the sidewalk and under their feet. Bareheaded and unkempt women gossiped in the doorways or passed back and forth with scant marketings in their arms. There was a general odor of decaying fruit and fish, a smell of staleness and putridity. Big hulking men slouched by, and ragged little girls walked gingerly through the confusion with foaming buckets of beer in their hands. There was a clatter and garble of foreign tongues and brogues, shrill cries, quarrels and wrangles, and the Pit pulsed with a great and steady murmur, like the hum of the human hive that it was.

"Phew! I'll be glad when we're out of it," Fred said.

He spoke in a whisper, and Joe and Charley nodded grimly that they agreed with him. They were not inclined to speech, and they walked as rapidly as the crowd permitted, with much the same feelings as those of travelers in a dangerous and hostile jungle.

And danger and hostility stalked in the Pit. The inhabitants seemed to resent the presence of these strangers from the Hill. Dirty little urchins abused them as they passed, snarling with assumed bravery, and prepared to run away at the first sign of attack. And still other little urchins formed a noisy parade at the heels of the boys, and grew bolder with increasing numbers.

"Don't mind them," Joe cautioned. "Take no notice, but keep right on. We'll soon be out of it."

"No; we're in for it," said Fred, in an undertone. "Look there!"

On the corner they were approaching, four or five boys of about their own age were standing. The light from a street-lamp fell upon them and disclosed one with vivid red hair. It could be no other than "Brick" Simpson, the redoubtable leader of a redoubtable gang. Twice within their memory he had led his gang up the Hill and

spread panic and terror among the Hill-dwelling young folk, who fled wildly to their homes, while their fathers and mothers hurriedly telephoned for the police.

At sight of the group on the corner, the rabble at the heels of the three boys melted away on the instant with like manifestations of fear. This but increased the anxiety of the boys, though they held boldly on their way.

The red-haired boy detached himself from the group, and stepped before them, blocking their path. They essayed to go around him, but he stretched out his arm.

"Wot yer doin' here?" he snarled. "Why don't yer stay where yer b'long?"

"We're just going home," Fred said mildly.

Brick looked at Joe. "Wot yer got under yer arm?" he demanded.

Joe contained himself and took no heed of him. "Come on," he said to Fred and Charley, at the same time starting to brush past the gang-leader.

But with a quick blow Brick Simpson struck him in the face, and with equal quickness snatched the bundle of kites from under his arm.

Joe uttered an inarticulate cry of rage, and, all caution flung to the winds, sprang at his assailant.

This was evidently a surprise to the gang-leader, who expected least of all to be attacked in his own territory. He retreated backward, still clutching the kites, and divided between desire to fight and desire to retain his capture.

The latter desire dominated him, and he turned and fled swiftly down the narrow side-street into a labyrinth of streets and alleys. Joe knew that he was plunging into the wilderness of the enemy's country, but his sense of both property and pride had been offended, and he took up the pursuit hot-footed.

Fred and Charley followed after, though he outdistanced them, and behind came the three other members of the gang, emitting a whistling call while they ran which was evidently intended for the assembling of the rest of the band. As the chase proceeded, these whistles were answered from many different directions, and soon a score of dark figures were tagging at the heels of Fred and Charley, who, in turn, were straining every muscle to keep the swifter-footed Joe in sight.

Brick Simpson darted into a vacant lot, aiming for a "slip," as such things are called which are prearranged passages through fences and over sheds and houses and around dark holes and corners, where the unfamiliar pursuer must go more carefully and where the chances are many that he will soon lose the track.

But Joe caught Brick before he could attain his end, and together they rolled over and over in the dirt, locked in each other's arms. By the time Fred and Charley and the gang had come up, they were on their feet, facing each other.

"Wot d' ye want, eh?" the red-headed gang-leader was saying in a bullying tone. "Wot d' ye want? That's wot I want'er know."

"I want my kites," Joe answered.

Brick Simpson's eyes sparkled at the intelligence. Kites were something he stood in need of himself.

"Then you've got to fight fer'em," he announced.

"Why should I fight for them?" Joe demanded indignantly. "They're mine." Which went to show how ignorant he was of the ideas of ownership and property rights which obtained among the People of the Pit.

A chorus of jeers and catcalls went up from the gang, which clustered behind its leader like a pack of wolves.

"Why should I fight for them?" Joe reiterated.

"'Cos I say so," Simpson replied. "An' wot I say goes. Understand?"

But Joe did not understand. He refused to understand that Brick Simpson's word was law in San Francisco, or any part of San Francisco. His love of honesty and right dealing was offended, and all his fighting blood was up.

"You give those kites to me, right here and now," he threatened, reaching out his hand for them.

But Simpson jerked them away. "D' ye know who I am?" he demanded. "I'm Brick Simpson, an' I don't'low no one to talk to me in that tone of voice."

"Better leave him alone," Charley whispered in Joe's ear. "What are a few kites? Leave him alone and let's get out of this."

"They're my kites," Joe said slowly in a dogged manner. "They're my kites, and I'm going to have them."

"You can't fight the crowd," Fred interfered; "and if you do get the best of him they'll all pile on you."

The gang, observing this whispered colloquy, and mistaking it for hesitancy on the part of Joe, set up its wolf-like howling again.

"Afraid! afraid!" the young roughs jeered and taunted. "He's too high-toned, he is! Mebbe he'll spoil his nice clean shirt, and then what'll mama say?"

"Shut up!" their leader snapped authoritatively, and the noise obediently died away.

"Will you give me those kites?" Joe demanded, advancing determinedly.

"Will you fight for'em?" was Simpson's counter-demand.

"Yes," Joe answered.

"Fight! fight!" the gang began to howl again.

"And it's me that'll see fair play," said a man's heavy voice.

All eyes were instantly turned upon the man who had approached unseen and made this announcement. By the electric light, shining brightly on them from the corner, they made him out to be a big, muscular fellow, clad in a working-man's garments. His feet were incased in heavy brogans, a narrow strap of black leather held his overalls about his waist, and a black and greasy cap was on his head. His face was grimed with coal-dust, and a coarse blue shirt, open at the neck, revealed a wide throat and massive chest.

"An' who're you?" Simpson snarled, angry at the interruption.

"None of yer business," the newcomer retorted tartly. "But, if it'll do you any good, I'm a fireman on the China steamers, and, as I said, I'm goin' to see fair play. That's my business. Your business is to give fair play. So pitch in, and don't be all night about it."

The three boys were as pleased by the appearance of the fireman as Simpson and his followers were displeased. They conferred together for several minutes, when Simpson deposited the bundle of kites in the arms of one of his gang and stepped forward.

"Come on, then," he said, at the same time pulling off his coat.

Joe handed his to Fred, and sprang toward Brick. They put up their fists and faced each other. Almost instantly Simpson drove in a fierce blow and ducked cleverly away and out of reach of the blow which Joe returned. Joe felt a sudden respect for the abilities of his antagonist, but the only effect upon him was to arouse all the doggedness of his nature and make him utterly determined to win.

Awed by the presence of the fireman, Simpson's followers confined themselves to cheering Brick and jeering Joe. The two boys circled round and round, attacking, feinting, and guarding, and now one and then the other getting in a telling blow. Their positions were in marked contrast. Joe stood erect, planted solidly on his feet, with legs wide apart and head up. On the other hand, Simpson crouched till his head was nearly lost between his shoulders, and all the while he was in constant motion, leaping and springing and manoeuvring in the execution of a score or more of tricks quite new and strange to Joe.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, both were very tired, though Joe was much fresher. Tobacco, ill food, and unhealthy living were telling on the gang-leader, who was panting and sobbing for breath. Though at first (and because of superior skill) he had severely punished Joe, he was now weak and his blows were without force. Growing desperate, he adopted what might be called not an unfair but a mean method of attack: he would manoeuvre, leap in and strike swiftly, and then, ducking forward, fall to the ground at Joe's feet. Joe could not strike him while he was down, and so would step back until he could get on his feet again, when the thing would be repeated.

But Joe grew tired of this, and prepared for him. Timing his blow with Simpson's attack, he delivered it just as Simpson was ducking forward to fall. Simpson fell, but he fell over on one side, whither he had been driven by the impact of Joe's fist upon his head. He rolled over and got half-way to his feet, where he remained, crying and gasping. His followers called upon him to get up, and he tried once or twice, but was too exhausted and stunned.

"I give in," he said. "I'm licked."

The gang had become silent and depressed at its leader's defeat.

Joe stepped forward.

"I'll trouble you for those kites," he said to the boy who was holding them.

"Oh, I dunno," said another member of the gang, shoving in between Joe and his property. His hair was also a vivid red. "You've got to lick me before you kin have'em."

"I don't see that," Joe said bluntly. "I've fought and I've won, and there's nothing more to it."

"Oh, yes, there is," said the other. "I'm 'Sorrel-top' Simpson. Brick's my brother. See?"



And so, in this fashion, Joe learned another custom of the Pit People of which he had been ignorant.

"All right," he said, his fighting blood more fully aroused than ever by the unjustness of the proceeding. "Come on."

Sorrel-top Simpson, a year younger than his brother, proved to be a most unfair fighter, and the good-natured fireman was compelled to interfere several times before the second of the Simpson clan lay on the ground and acknowledged defeat.

This time Joe reached for his kites without the slightest doubt that he was to get them. But still another lad stepped in between him and his property. The telltale hair, vividly red, sprouted likewise on this lad's head, and Joe knew him at once for what he was, another member of the Simpson clan. He was a younger edition of his brothers, somewhat less heavily built, with a face covered with a vast quantity of freckles, which showed plainly under the electric light.

"You don't git them there kites till you git me," he challenged in a piping little voice. "I'm'Reddy' Simpson, an' you ain't licked the fambly till you've licked me."

The gang cheered admiringly, and Reddy stripped a tattered jacket preparatory for the fray.

"Git ready," he said to Joe.

Joe's knuckles were torn, his nose was bleeding, his lip was cut and swollen, while his shirt had been ripped down from throat to waist. Further, he was tired, and breathing hard.

"How many more are there of you Simpsons?" he asked. "I've got to get home, and if your family's much larger this thing is liable to keep on all night."

"I'm the last an' the best," Reddy replied. "You gits me an' you gits the kites. Sure."

"All right," Joe sighed. "Come on."

While the youngest of the clan lacked the strength and skill of his elders, he made up for it by a wildcat manner of fighting that taxed Joe severely. Time and again it seemed to him that he must give in to the little whirlwind; but each time he pulled himself together and went doggedly on. For he felt that he was fighting for principle, as his forefathers had fought for principle; also, it seemed to him that the honor of the Hill was at stake, and that he, as its representative, could do nothing less than his very best.

So he held on and managed to endure his opponent's swift and continuous rushes till that young and less experienced person at last wore himself out with his own exertions, and from the ground confessed that, for the first time in its history, the "Simpson fambly was beat."

## Chapter IV. The Biter Bitten

But life in the Pit at best was a precarious affair, as the three Hill-dwellers were quickly to learn. Before Joe could even possess himself of his kites, his astonished eyes

were greeted with the spectacle of all his enemies, the fireman included, taking to their heels in wild flight. As the little girls and urchins had melted away before the Simpson gang, so was melting away the Simpson gang before some new and correspondingly awe-inspiring group of predatory creatures.

Joe heard terrified cries of "Fish gang!" "Fish gang!" from those who fled, and he would have fled himself from this new danger, only he was breathless from his last encounter, and knew the impossibility of escaping whatever threatened. Fred and Charley felt mighty longings to run away from a danger great enough to frighten the redoubtable Simpson gang and the valorous fireman, but they could not desert their comrade.

Dark forms broke into the vacant lot, some surrounding the boys and others dashing after the fugitives. That the laggards were overtaken was evidenced by the cries of distress that went up, and when later the pursuers returned, they brought with them the luckless and snarling Brick, still clinging fast to the bundle of kites.

Joe looked curiously at this latest band of marauders. They were young men of from seventeen and eighteen to twenty-three and-four years of age, and bore the unmistakable stamp of the hoodlum class. There were vicious faces among them — faces so vicious as to make Joe's flesh creep as he looked at them. A couple grasped him tightly by the arms, and Fred and Charley were similarly held captive.

"Look here, you," said one who spoke with the authority of leader, "we've got to inquire into this. Wot's be'n goin' on here? Wot're you up to, Red-head? Wot you be'n doin'?"

"Ain't be'n doin' nothin'," Simpson whined.

"Looks like it." The leader turned up Brick's face to the electric light. "Who's been paintin' you up like that?" he demanded.

Brick pointed at Joe, who was forthwith dragged to the front.

"Wot was you scrappin' about?"

"Kites — my kites," Joe spoke up boldly. "That fellow tried to take them away from me. He's got them under his arm now."

"Oh, he has, has he? Look here, you Brick, we don't put up with stealin' in this territory. See? You never rightly owned nothin'. Come, fork over the kites. Last call."

The leader tightened his grasp threateningly, and Simpson, weeping tears of rage, surrendered the plunder.

"Wot yer got under yer arm?" the leader demanded abruptly of Fred, at the same time jerking out the bundle. "More kites, eh? Reg'lar kite-factory gone and got itself lost," he remarked finally, when he had appropriated Charley's bundle. "Now, wot I wants to know is wot we're goin' to do to you t'ree chaps?" he continued in a judicial tone.

"What for?" Joe demanded hotly. "For being robbed of our kites?"

"Not at all, not at all," the leader responded politely; "but for luggin' kites round these quarters an' causin' all this unseemly disturbance. It's disgraceful; that's wot it is — disgraceful."

At this juncture, when the Hill-dwellers were the center of attraction, Brick suddenly wormed out of his jacket, squirmed away from his captors, and dashed across the lot to the slip for which he had been originally headed when overtaken by Joe. Two or three of the gang shot over the fence after him in noisy pursuit. There was much barking and howling of back-yard dogs and clattering of shoes over sheds and boxes. Then there came a splashing of water, as though a barrel of it had been precipitated to the ground. Several minutes later the pursuers returned, very sheepish and very wet from the deluge presented them by the wily Brick, whose voice, high up in the air from some friendly housetop, could be heard defiantly jeering them.

This event apparently disconcerted the leader of the gang, and just as he turned to Joe and Fred and Charley, a long and peculiar whistle came to their ears from the street — the warning signal, evidently, of a scout posted to keep a lookout. The next moment the scout himself came flying back to the main body, which was already beginning to retreat.

“Cops!” he panted.

Joe looked, and he saw two helmeted policemen approaching, with bright stars shining on their breasts.

“Let’s get out of this,” he whispered to Fred and Charley.

The gang had already taken to flight, and they blocked the boys’ retreat in one quarter, and in another they saw the policemen advancing. So they took to their heels in the direction of Brick Simpson’s slip, the policemen hot after them and yelling bravely for them to halt.

But young feet are nimble, and young feet when frightened become something more than nimble, and the boys were first over the fence and plunging wildly through a maze of back yards. They soon found that the policemen were discreet. Evidently they had had experiences in slips, and they were satisfied to give over the chase at the first fence.

No street-lamps shed their light here, and the boys blundered along through the blackness with their hearts in their mouths. In one yard, filled with mountains of crates and fruit-boxes, they were lost for a quarter of an hour. Feel and quest about as they would, they encountered nothing but endless heaps of boxes. From this wilderness they finally emerged by way of a shed roof, only to fall into another yard, cumbered with countless empty chicken-coops.

Farther on they came upon the contrivance which had soaked Brick Simpson’s pursuers with water. It was a cunning arrangement. Where the slip led through a fence with a board missing, a long slat was so arranged that the ignorant wayfarer could not fail to strike against it. This slat was the spring of the trap. A light touch upon it was sufficient to disconnect a heavy stone from a barrel perched overhead and nicely balanced. The disconnecting of the stone permitted the barrel to turn over and spill its contents on the one beneath who touched the slat.

The boys examined the arrangement with keen appreciation. Luckily for them, the barrel was overturned, or they too would have received a ducking, for Joe, who was in advance, had blundered against the slat.

"I wonder if this is Simpson's back yard?" he queried softly.

"It must be," Fred concluded, "or else the back yard of some member of his gang."

Charley put his hands warningly on both their arms.

"Hist! What's that?" he whispered.

They crouched down on the ground. Not far away was the sound of some one moving about. Then they heard a noise of falling water, as from a faucet into a bucket. This was followed by steps boldly approaching. They crouched lower, breathless with apprehension.

A dark form passed by within arm's reach and mounted on a box to the fence. It was Brick himself, resetting the trap. They heard him arrange the slat and stone, then right the barrel and empty into it a couple of buckets of water. As he came down from the box to go after more water, Joe sprang upon him, tripped him up, and held him to the ground.

"Don't make any noise," he said. "I want you to listen to me."

"Oh, it's you, is it?" Simpson replied, with such obvious relief in his voice as to make them feel relieved also. "Wot d' ye want here?"

"We want to get out of here," Joe said, "and the shortest way's the best. There's three of us, and you're only one — "

"That's all right, that's all right," the gang-leader interrupted. "I'd just as soon show you the way out as not. I ain't got nothin' 'gainst you. Come on an' follow me, an' don't step to the side, an' I'll have you out in no time."

Several minutes later they dropped from the top of a high fence into a dark alley.

"Follow this to the street," Simpson directed; "turn to the right two blocks, turn to the right again for three, an' yer on Union. Tra-la-loo."

They said good-by, and as they started down the alley received the following advice:

"Nex' time you bring kites along, you'd best leave'em to home."

## Chapter V. Home Again

Following Brick Simpson's directions, they came into Union Street, and without further mishap gained the Hill. From the brow they looked down into the Pit, whence arose that steady, indefinable hum which comes from crowded human places.

"I'll never go down there again, not as long as I live," Fred said with a great deal of savagery in his voice. "I wonder what became of the fireman."

"We're lucky to get back with whole skins," Joe cheered them philosophically.

"I guess we left our share, and you more than yours," laughed Charley.

"Yes," Joe answered. "And I've got more trouble to face when I get home. Good night, fellows."

As he expected, the door on the side porch was locked, and he went around to the dining-room and entered like a burglar through a window. As he crossed the wide hall, walking softly toward the stairs, his father came out of the library. The surprise was mutual, and each halted aghast.

Joe felt a hysterical desire to laugh, for he thought that he knew precisely how he looked. In reality he looked far worse than he imagined. What Mr. Bronson saw was a boy with hat and coat covered with dirt, his whole face smeared with the stains of conflict, and, in particular, a badly swollen nose, a bruised eyebrow, a cut and swollen lip, a scratched cheek, knuckles still bleeding, and a shirt torn open from throat to waist.

"What does this mean, sir?" Mr. Bronson finally managed to articulate.

Joe stood speechless. How could he tell, in one brief sentence, all the whole night's happenings? — for all that must be included in the explanation of what his luckless disarray meant.

"Have you lost your tongue?" Mr. Bronson demanded with an appearance of impatience.

"I've — I've — "

"Yes, yes," his father encouraged.

"I've — well, I've been down in the Pit," Joe succeeded in blurting out.

"I must confess that you look like it — very much like it indeed." Mr. Bronson spoke severely, but if ever by great effort he conquered a smile, that was the time. "I presume," he went on, "that you do not refer to the abiding-place of sinners, but rather to some definite locality in San Francisco. Am I right?"

Joe swept his arm in a descending gesture toward Union Street, and said: "Down there, sir."

"And who gave it that name?"

"I did," Joe answered, as though confessing to a specified crime.

"It's most appropriate, I'm sure, and denotes imagination. It couldn't really be bettered. You must do well at school, sir, with your English."

This did not increase Joe's happiness, for English was the only study of which he did not have to feel ashamed.

And, while he stood thus a silent picture of misery and disgrace, Mr. Bronson looked upon him through the eyes of his own boyhood with an understanding which Joe could not have believed possible.

"However, what you need just now is not a discourse, but a bath and court-plaster and witch-hazel and cold-water bandages," Mr. Bronson said; "so to bed with you. You'll need all the sleep you can get, and you'll feel stiff and sore to-morrow morning, I promise you."

The clock struck one as Joe pulled the bedclothes around him; and the next he knew he was being worried by a soft, insistent rapping, which seemed to continue through several centuries, until at last, unable to endure it longer, he opened his eyes and sat up.

The day was streaming in through the window — bright and sunshiny day. He stretched his arms to yawn; but a shooting pain darted through all the muscles, and his arms came down more rapidly than they had gone up. He looked at them with a bewildered stare, till suddenly the events of the night rushed in upon him, and he groaned.

The rapping still persisted, and he cried: "Yes, I hear. What time is it?"

"Eight o'clock," Bessie's voice came to him through the door. "Eight o'clock, and you'll have to hurry if you don't want to be late for school."

"Goodness!" He sprang out of bed precipitately, groaned with the pain from all his stiff muscles, and collapsed slowly and carefully on a chair. "Why didn't you call me sooner?" he growled.

"Father said to let you sleep."

Joe groaned again, in another fashion. Then his history-book caught his eye, and he groaned yet again and in still another fashion.

"All right," he called. "Go on. I'll be down in a jiffy."

He did come down in fairly brief order; but if Bessie had watched him descend the stairs she would have been astounded at the remarkable caution he observed and at the twinges of pain that every now and then contorted his face. As it was, when she came upon him in the dining-room she uttered a frightened cry and ran over to him.

"What's the matter, Joe?" she asked tremulously. "What has happened?"

"Nothing," he grunted, putting sugar on his porridge.

"But surely — " she began.

"Please don't bother me," he interrupted. "I'm late, and I want to eat my breakfast."

And just then Mrs. Bronson caught Bessie's eye, and that young lady, still mystified, made haste to withdraw herself.

Joe was thankful to his mother for that, and thankful that she refrained from remarking upon his appearance. Father had told her; that was one thing sure. He could trust her not to worry him; it was never her way.

And, meditating in this way, he hurried through with his solitary breakfast, vaguely conscious in an uncomfortable way that his mother was fluttering anxiously about him. Tender as she always was, he noticed that she kissed him with unusual tenderness as he started out with his books swinging at the end of a strap; and he also noticed, as he turned the corner, that she was still looking after him through the window.

But of more vital importance than that, to him, was his stiffness and soreness. As he walked along, each step was an effort and a torment. Severely as the reflected sunlight from the cement sidewalk hurt his bruised eye, and severely as his various wounds pained him, still more severely did he suffer from his muscles and joints. He had never imagined such stiffness. Each individual muscle in his whole body protested when called upon to move. His fingers were badly swollen, and it was agony to clasp and unclasp them; while his arms were sore from wrist to elbow. This, he said to himself, was caused by the many blows which he had warded off from his face and

body. He wondered if Brick Simpson was in similar plight, and the thought of their mutual misery made him feel a certain kinship for that redoubtable young ruffian.

When he entered the school-yard he quickly became aware that he was the center of attraction for all eyes. The boys crowded around in an awe-stricken way, and even his classmates and those with whom he was well acquainted looked at him with a certain respect he had never seen before.

## Chapter VI. Examination Day

It was plain that Fred and Charley had spread the news of their descent into the Pit, and of their battle with the Simpson clan and the Fishes. He heard the nine-o'clock bell with feelings of relief, and passed into the school, a mark for admiring glances from all the boys. The girls, too, looked at him in a timid and fearful way — as they might have looked at Daniel when he came out of the lions' den, Joe thought, or at David after his battle with Goliath. It made him uncomfortable and painfully self-conscious, this hero-worshipping, and he wished heartily that they would look in some other direction for a change.

Soon they did look in another direction. While big sheets of foolscap were being distributed to every desk, Miss Wilson, the teacher (an austere-looking young woman who went through the world as though it were a refrigerator, and who, even on the warmest days in the classroom, was to be found with a shawl or cape about her shoulders), arose, and on the blackboard where all could see wrote the Roman numeral "I." Every eye, and there were fifty pairs of them, hung with expectancy upon her hand, and in the pause that followed the room was quiet as the grave.

Underneath the Roman numeral "I" she wrote: "(a) What were the laws of Draco? (b) Why did an Athenian orator say that they were written not in ink, but in blood?"

Forty-nine heads bent down and forty-nine pens scratched lustily across as many sheets of foolscap. Joe's head alone remained up, and he regarded the blackboard with so blank a stare that Miss Wilson, glancing over her shoulder after having written "II," stopped to look at him. Then she wrote:

"(a) How did the war between Athens and Megara, respecting the island of Salamis, bring about the reforms of Solon? (b) In what way did they differ from the laws of Draco?"

She turned to look at Joe again. He was staring as blankly as ever.

"What is the matter, Joe?" she asked. "Have you no paper?"

"Yes, I have, thank you," he answered, and began moodily to sharpen a lead-pencil.

He made a fine point to it. Then he made a very fine point. Then, and with infinite patience, he proceeded to make it very much finer. Several of his classmates raised their heads inquiringly at the noise. But he did not notice. He was too absorbed in his pencil-sharpening and in thinking thoughts far away from both pencil-sharpening and Greek history.

"Of course you all understand that the examination papers are to be written with ink."

Miss Wilson addressed the class in general, but her eyes rested on Joe.

Just as it was about as fine as it could possibly be the point broke, and Joe began over again.

"I am afraid, Joe, that you annoy the class," Miss Wilson said in final desperation.

He put the pencil down, closed the knife with a snap, and returned to his blank staring at the blackboard. What did he know about Draco? or Solon? or the rest of the Greeks? It was a flunk, and that was all there was to it. No need for him to look at the rest of the questions, and even if he did know the answers to two or three, there was no use in writing them down. It would not prevent the flunk. Besides, his arm hurt him too much to write. It hurt his eyes to look at the blackboard, and his eyes hurt even when they were closed; and it seemed positively to hurt him to think.

So the forty-nine pens scratched on in a race after Miss Wilson, who was covering the blackboard with question after question; and he listened to the scratching, and watched the questions growing under her chalk, and was very miserable indeed. His head seemed whirling around. It ached inside and was sore outside, and he did not seem to have any control of it at all.

He was beset with memories of the Pit, like scenes from some monstrous nightmare, and, try as he would, he could not dispel them. He would fix his mind and eyes on Miss Wilson's face, who was now sitting at her desk, and even as he looked at her the face of Brick Simpson, impudent and pugnacious, would arise before him. It was of no use. He felt sick and sore and tired and worthless. There was nothing to be done but flunk. And when, after an age of waiting, the papers were collected, his went in a blank, save for his name, the name of the examination, and the date, which were written across the top.

After a brief interval, more papers were given out, and the examination in arithmetic began. He did not trouble himself to look at the questions. Ordinarily he might have pulled through such an examination, but in his present state of mind and body he knew it was impossible. He contented himself with burying his face in his hands and hoping for the noon hour. Once, lifting his eyes to the clock, he caught Bessie looking anxiously at him across the room from the girls' side. This but added to his discomfort. Why was she bothering him? No need for her to trouble. She was bound to pass. Then why couldn't she leave him alone? So he gave her a particularly glowering look and buried his face in his hands again. Nor did he lift it till the twelve-o'clock gong rang, when he handed in a second blank paper and passed out with the boys.

Fred and Charley and he usually ate lunch in a corner of the yard which they had arrogated to themselves; but this day, by some remarkable coincidence, a score of other boys had elected to eat their lunches on the same spot. Joe surveyed them with disgust. In his present condition he did not feel inclined to receive hero-worship. His head ached too much, and he was troubled over his failure in the examinations; and there were more to come in the afternoon.



He was angry with Fred and Charley. They were chattering like magpies over the adventures of the night (in which, however, they did not fail to give him chief credit), and they conducted themselves in quite a patronizing fashion toward their awed and admiring schoolmates. But every attempt to make Joe talk was a failure. He grunted and gave short answers, and said "yes" and "no" to questions asked with the intention of drawing him out.

He was longing to get away somewhere by himself, to throw himself down some place on the green grass and forget his aches and pains and troubles. He got up to go and find such a place, and found half a dozen of his following tagging after him. He wanted to turn around and scream at them to leave him alone, but his pride restrained him. A great wave of disgust and despair swept over him, and then an idea flashed through his mind. Since he was sure to flunk in his examinations, why endure the afternoon's torture, which could not but be worse than the morning's? And on the impulse of the moment he made up his mind.

He walked straight on to the schoolyard gate and passed out. Here his worshipers halted in wonderment, but he kept on to the corner and out of sight. For some time he wandered along aimlessly, till he came to the tracks of a cable road. A down-town car happening to stop to let off passengers, he stepped aboard and ensconced himself in an outside corner seat. The next thing he was aware of, the car was swinging around on its turn-table and he was hastily scrambling off. The big ferry building stood before him. Seeing and hearing nothing, he had been carried through the heart of the business section of San Francisco.

He glanced up at the tower clock on top of the ferry building. It was ten minutes after one — time enough to catch the quarter-past-one boat. That decided him, and without the least idea in the world as to where he was going, he paid ten cents for a ticket, passed through the gate, and was soon speeding across the bay to the pretty city of Oakland.

In the same aimless and unwitting fashion, he found himself, an hour later, sitting on the string-piece of the Oakland city wharf and leaning his aching head against a friendly timber. From where he sat he could look down upon the decks of a number of small sailing-craft. Quite a crowd of curious idlers had collected to look at them, and Joe found himself growing interested.

There were four boats, and from where he sat he could make out their names. The one directly beneath him had the name Ghost painted in large green letters on its stern. The other three, which lay beyond, were called respectively La Caprice, the Oyster Queen, and the Flying Dutchman.

Each of these boats had cabins built amidships, with short stovepipes projecting through the roofs, and from the pipe of the Ghost smoke was ascending. The cabin doors were open and the roof-slide pulled back, so that Joe could look inside and observe the inmate, a young fellow of nineteen or twenty who was engaged just then in cooking. He was clad in long sea-boots which reached the hips, blue overalls, and dark woolen shirt. The sleeves, rolled back to the elbows, disclosed sturdy, sun-bronzed

arms, and when the young fellow looked up his face proved to be equally bronzed and tanned.

The aroma of coffee arose to Joe's nose, and from a light iron pot came the unmistakable smell of beans nearly done. The cook placed a frying-pan on the stove, wiped it around with a piece of suet when it had heated, and tossed in a thick chunk of beef-steak. While he worked he talked with a companion on deck, who was busily engaged in filling a bucket overside and flinging the salt water over heaps of oysters that lay on the deck. This completed, he covered the oysters with wet sacks, and went into the cabin, where a place was set for him on a tiny table, and where the cook served the dinner and joined him in eating it.

All the romance of Joe's nature stirred at the sight. That was life. They were living, and gaining their living, out in the free open, under the sun and sky, with the sea rocking beneath them, and the wind blowing on them, or the rain falling on them, as the chance might be. Each day and every day he sat in a room, pent up with fifty more of his kind, racking his brains and cramming dry husks of knowledge, while they were doing all this, living glad and careless and happy, rowing boats and sailing, and cooking their own food, and certainly meeting with adventures such as one only dreams of in the crowded school-room.

Joe sighed. He felt that he was made for this sort of life and not for the life of a scholar. As a scholar he was undeniably a failure. He had flunked in his examinations, while at that very moment, he knew, Bessie was going triumphantly home, her last examination over and done, and with credit. Oh, it was not to be borne! His father was wrong in sending him to school. That might be well enough for boys who were inclined to study, but it was manifest that he was not so inclined. There were more careers in life than that of the schools. Men had gone down to the sea in the lowest capacity, and risen in greatness, and owned great fleets, and done great deeds, and left their names on the pages of time. And why not he, Joe Bronson?

He closed his eyes and felt immensely sorry for himself; and when he opened his eyes again he found that he had been asleep, and that the sun was sinking fast.

It was after dark when he arrived home, and he went straight to his room and to bed without meeting any one. He sank down between the cool sheets with a sigh of satisfaction at the thought that, come what would, he need no longer worry about his history. Then another and unwelcome thought obtruded itself, and he knew that the next school term would come, and that six months thereafter, another examination in the same history awaited him.

## Chapter VII. Father and Son

On the following morning, after breakfast, Joe was summoned to the library by his father, and he went in almost with a feeling of gladness that the suspense of waiting was over. Mr. Bronson was standing by the window. A great chattering of sparrows

outside seemed to have attracted his attention. Joe joined him in looking out, and saw a fledgeling sparrow on the grass, tumbling ridiculously about in its efforts to stand on its feeble baby legs. It had fallen from the nest in the rose-bush that climbed over the window, and the two parent sparrows were wild with anxiety over its plight.

"It's a way young birds have," Mr. Bronson remarked, turning to Joe with a serious smile; "and I dare say you are on the verge of a somewhat similar predicament, my boy," he went on. "I am afraid things have reached a crisis, Joe. I have watched it coming on for a year now — your poor scholarship, your carelessness and inattention, your constant desire to be out of the house and away in search of adventures of one sort or another."

He paused, as though expecting a reply; but Joe remained silent.

"I have given you plenty of liberty. I believe in liberty. The finest souls grow in such soil. So I have not hedged you in with endless rules and irksome restrictions. I have asked little of you, and you have come and gone pretty much as you pleased. In a way, I have put you on your honor, made you largely your own master, trusting to your sense of right to restrain you from going wrong and at least to keep you up in your studies. And you have failed me. What do you want me to do? Set you certain bounds and time-limits? Keep a watch over you? Compel you by main strength to go through your books?"

"I have here a note," Mr. Bronson said after another pause, in which he picked up an envelop from the table and drew forth a written sheet.

Joe recognized the stiff and uncompromising scrawl of Miss Wilson, and his heart sank.

His father began to read:

"Listlessness and carelessness have characterized his term's work, so that when the examinations came he was wholly unprepared. In neither history nor arithmetic did he attempt to answer a question, passing in his papers perfectly blank. These examinations took place in the morning. In the afternoon he did not take the trouble even to appear for the remainder."

Mr. Bronson ceased reading and looked up.

"Where were you in the afternoon?" he asked.

"I went across on the ferry to Oakland," Joe answered, not caring to offer his aching head and body in extenuation.

"That is what is called 'playing hooky,' is it not?"

"Yes, sir," Joe answered.

"The night before the examinations, instead of studying, you saw fit to wander away and involve yourself in a disgraceful fight with hoodlums. I did not say anything at the time. In my heart I think I might almost have forgiven you that, if you had done well in your school-work."

Joe had nothing to say. He knew that there was his side to the story, but he felt that his father did not understand, and that there was little use of telling him.

"The trouble with you, Joe, is carelessness and lack of concentration. What you need is what I have not given you, and that is rigid discipline. I have been debating for some time upon the advisability of sending you to some military school, where your tasks will be set for you, and what you do every moment in the twenty-four hours will be determined for you — "

"Oh, father, you don't understand, you can't understand!" Joe broke forth at last. "I try to study — I honestly try to study; but somehow — I don't know how — I can't study. Perhaps I am a failure. Perhaps I am not made for study. I want to go out into the world. I want to see life — to live. I don't want any military academy; I'd sooner go to sea — anywhere where I can do something and be something."

Mr. Bronson looked at him kindly. "It is only through study that you can hope to do something and be something in the world," he said.

Joe threw up his hand with a gesture of despair.

"I know how you feel about it," Mr. Bronson went on; "but you are only a boy, very much like that young sparrow we were watching. If at home you have not sufficient control over yourself to study, then away from home, out in the world which you think is calling to you, you will likewise not have sufficient control over yourself to do the work of that world."

"But I am willing, Joe, I am willing, after you have finished high school and before you go into the university, to let you out into the world for a time."

"Let me go now?" Joe asked impulsively.

"No; it is too early. You haven't your wings yet. You are too unformed, and your ideals and standards are not yet thoroughly fixed."

"But I shall not be able to study," Joe threatened. "I know I shall not be able to study."

Mr. Bronson consulted his watch and arose to go. "I have not made up my mind yet," he said. "I do not know what I shall do — whether I shall give you another trial at the public school or send you to a military academy."

He stopped a moment at the door and looked back. "But remember this, Joe," he said. "I am not angry with you; I am more grieved and hurt. Think it over, and tell me this evening what you intend to do."

His father passed out, and Joe heard the front door close after him. He leaned back in the big easy-chair and closed his eyes. A military school! He feared such an institution as the animal fears a trap. No, he would certainly never go to such a place. And as for public school — He sighed deeply at the thought of it. He was given till evening to make up his mind as to what he intended to do. Well, he knew what he would do, and he did not have to wait till evening to find it out.

He got up with a determined look on his face, put on his hat, and went out the front door. He would show his father that he could do his share of the world's work, he thought as he walked along — he would show him.

By the time he reached the school he had his whole plan worked out definitely. Nothing remained but to put it through. It was the noon hour, and he passed in

to his room and packed up his books unnoticed. Coming out through the yard, he encountered Fred and Charley.

"What's up?" Charley asked.

"Nothing," Joe grunted.

"What are you doing there?"

"Taking my books home, of course. What did you suppose I was doing?"

"Come, come," Fred interposed. "Don't be so mysterious. I don't see why you can't tell us what has happened."

"You'll find out soon enough," Joe said significantly — more significantly than he had intended.

And, for fear that he might say more, he turned his back on his astonished chums and hurried away. He went straight home and to his room, where he busied himself at once with putting everything in order. His clothes he hung carefully away, changing the suit he had on for an older one. From his bureau he selected a couple of changes of underclothing, a couple of cotton shirts, and half a dozen pairs of socks. To these he added as many handkerchiefs, a comb, and a tooth-brush.

When he had bound the bundle in stout wrapping-paper he contemplated it with satisfaction. Then he went over to his desk and took from a small inner compartment his savings for some months, which amounted to several dollars. This sum he had been keeping for the Fourth of July, but he thrust it into his pocket with hardly a regret. Then he pulled a writing-pad over to him, sat down and wrote:

Don't look for me. I am a failure and I am going away to sea. Don't worry about me. I am all right and able to take care of myself. I shall come back some day, and then you will all be proud of me. Good-by, papa, and mama, and Bessie.

JOE.

This he left lying on his desk where it could easily be seen. He tucked the bundle under his arm, and, with a last farewell look at the room, stole out.

## Part II

### Chapter VIII — ‘Frisco Kid and the New Boy

‘Frisco Kid was discontented — discontented and disgusted. This would have seemed impossible to the boys who fished from the dock above and envied him greatly. True, they wore cleaner and better clothes, and were blessed with fathers and mothers; but his was the free floating life of the bay, the domain of moving adventure, and the companionship of men — theirs the rigid discipline and dreary sameness of home life. They did not dream that ‘Frisco Kid ever looked up at them from the cockpit of the Dazzler and in turn envied them just those things which sometimes were the most distasteful to them and from which they suffered to repletion. Just as the romance of adventure sang its siren song in their ears and whispered vague messages of strange lands and lusty deeds, so the delicious mysteries of home enticed ‘Frisco Kid’s roving fancies, and his brightest day-dreams were of the things he knew not — brothers, sisters, a father’s counsel, a mother’s kiss.

He frowned, got up from where he had been sunning himself on top of the Dazzler’s cabin, and kicked off his heavy rubber boots. Then he stretched himself on the narrow side-deck and dangled his feet in the cool salt water.

“Now that’s freedom,” thought the boys who watched him. Besides, those long sea-boots, reaching to the hips and buckled to the leather strap about the waist, held a strange and wonderful fascination for them. They did not know that ‘Frisco Kid did not possess such things as shoes — that the boots were an old pair of Pete Le Maire’s and were three sizes too large for him. Nor could they guess how uncomfortable they were to wear on a hot summer day.

The cause of ‘Frisco Kid’s discontent was those very boys who sat on the string-piece and admired him; but his disgust was the result of quite another event. The Dazzler was short one in its crew, and he had to do more work than was justly his share. He did not mind the cooking, nor the washing down of the decks and the pumping; but when it came to the paint-scrubbing and dishwashing he rebelled. He felt that he had earned the right to be exempt from such scullion work. That was all the green boys were fit for, while he could make or take in sail, lift anchor, steer, and make landings.

“Stan’ from un’er!” Pete Le Maire or “French Pete,” captain of the Dazzler and lord and master of ‘Frisco Kid, threw a bundle into the cockpit and came aboard by the starboard rigging.

"Come! Queeck!" he shouted to the boy who owned the bundle and who now hesitated on the dock. It was a good fifteen feet to the deck of the sloop, and he could not reach the steel stay by which he must descend.

"Now! One, two, three!" the Frenchman counted good-naturedly, after the manner of captains when their crews are short-handed.

The boy swung his body into space and gripped the rigging. A moment later he struck the deck, his hands tingling warmly from the friction.

"Kid, dis is ze new sailor. I make your acquaintance." French Pete smirked and bowed, and stood aside. "Mistaire Sho Bronson," he added as an afterthought.

The two boys regarded each other silently for a moment. They were evidently about the same age, though the stranger looked the heartier and stronger of the two. Frisco Kid put out his hand, and they shook.

"So you're thinking of tackling the water, eh?" he said.

Joe Bronson nodded and glanced curiously about him before answering: "Yes; I think the bay life will suit me for a while, and then, when I've got used to it, I'm going to sea in the forecastle."

"In the what?"

"In the forecastle — the place where the sailors live," he explained, flushing and feeling doubtful of his pronunciation.

"Oh, the fo'c'sle. Know anything about going to sea?"

"Yes — no; that is, except what I've read."

Frisco Kid whistled, turned on his heel in a lordly manner, and went into the cabin.

"Going to sea," he chuckled to himself as he built the fire and set about cooking supper; "in the forecastle, too; and thinks he'll like it."

In the meanwhile French Pete was showing the newcomer about the sloop as though he were a guest. Such affability and charm did he display that Frisco Kid, popping his head up through the scuttle to call them to supper, nearly choked in his effort to suppress a grin.

Joe Bronson enjoyed that supper. The food was rough but good, and the smack of the salt air and the sea-fittings around him gave zest to his appetite. The cabin was clean and snug, and, though not large, the accommodations surprised him. Every bit of space was utilized. The table swung to the centerboard-case on hinges, so that when not in use it actually occupied no room at all. On either side and partly under the deck were two bunks. The blankets were rolled back, and the boys sat on the well-scrubbed bunk boards while they ate. A swinging sea-lamp of brightly polished brass gave them light, which in the daytime could be obtained through the four deadeyes, or small round panes of heavy glass which were fitted into the walls of the cabin. On one side of the door was the stove and wood-box, on the other the cupboard. The front end of the cabin was ornamented with a couple of rifles and a shot-gun, while exposed by the rolled-back blankets of French Pete's bunk was a cartridge-lined belt carrying a brace of revolvers.

It all seemed like a dream to Joe. Countless times he had imagined scenes somewhat similar to this; but here he was right in the midst of it, and already it seemed as though he had known his two companions for years. French Pete was smiling genially at him across the board. It really was a villainous countenance, but to Joe it seemed only weather-beaten. Frisco Kid was describing to him, between mouthfuls, the last sou'easter the Dazzler had weathered, and Joe experienced an increasing awe for this boy who had lived so long upon the water and knew so much about it.

The captain, however, drank a glass of wine, and topped it off with a second and a third, and then, a vicious flush lighting his swarthy face, stretched out on top of his blankets, where he soon was snoring loudly.

"Better turn in and get a couple of hours' sleep," Frisco Kid said kindly, pointing Joe's bunk out to him. "We'll most likely be up the rest of the night."

Joe obeyed, but he could not fall asleep so readily as the others. He lay with his eyes wide open, watching the hands of the alarm-clock that hung in the cabin, and thinking how quickly event had followed event in the last twelve hours. Only that very morning he had been a school-boy, and now he was a sailor, shipped on the Dazzler and bound he knew not whither. His fifteen years increased to twenty at the thought of it, and he felt every inch a man — a sailorman at that. He wished Charley and Fred could see him now. Well, they would hear of it soon enough. He could see them talking it over, and the other boys crowding around. "Who?" "Oh, Joe Bronson; he's gone to sea. Used to chum with us."

Joe pictured the scene proudly. Then he softened at the thought of his mother worrying, but hardened again at the recollection of his father. Not that his father was not good and kind; but he did not understand boys, Joe thought. That was where the trouble lay. Only that morning he had said that the world wasn't a play-ground, and that the boys who thought it was were liable to make sore mistakes and be glad to get home again. Well, he knew that there was plenty of hard work and rough experience in the world; but he also thought boys had some rights. He'd show him he could take care of himself; and, anyway, he could write home after he got settled down to his new life.

## Chapter IX — Aboard the Dazzler

A skiff grazed the side of the Dazzler softly and interrupted Joe's reveries. He wondered why he had not heard the sound of the oars in the rowlocks. Then two men jumped over the cockpit-rail and came into the cabin.

"Bli' me, if'ere they ain't snoozin'," said the first of the newcomers, deftly rolling Frisco Kid out of his blankets with one hand and reaching for the wine-bottle with the other.

French Pete put his head up on the other side of the centerboard, his eyes heavy with sleep, and made them welcome.



“‘Oo’s this?” asked the Cockney, as he was called, smacking his lips over the wine and rolling Joe out upon the floor. “Passenger?”

“No, no,” French Pete made haste to answer. “Ze new sailorman. Vaire good boy.”

“Good boy or not, he’s got to keep his tongue atween his teeth,” growled the second newcomer, who had not yet spoken, glaring fiercely at Joe.

“I say,” queried the other man, “‘ow does’e whack up on the loot? I’ope as me and Bill’ve a square deal.”

“Ze Dazzler she take one share — what you call — one third; den we split ze rest in five shares. Five men, five shares. Vaire good.”

French Pete insisted in excited gibberish that the Dazzler had the right to have three men in its crew, and appealed to Frisco Kid to bear him out. But the latter left them to fight it over by themselves, and proceeded to make hot coffee.

It was all Greek to Joe, except he knew that he was in some way the cause of the quarrel. In the end French Pete had his way, and the newcomers gave in after much grumbling. After they had drunk their coffee, all hands went on deck.

“Just stay in the cockpit and keep out of their way,” Frisco Kid whispered to Joe. “I’ll teach you about the ropes and everything when we ain’t in a hurry.”

Joe’s heart went out to him in sudden gratitude, for the strange feeling came to him that of those on board, to Frisco Kid, and to Frisco Kid only, could he look for help in time of need. Already a dislike for French Pete was growing up within him. Why, he could not say; he just simply felt it.

A creaking of blocks for’ard, and the huge mainsail loomed above him in the night. Bill cast off the bowline, the Cockney followed suit with the stern, Frisco Kid gave her the jib as French Pete jammed up the tiller, and the Dazzler caught the breeze, heeling over for mid-channel. Joe heard talk of not putting up the side-lights, and of keeping a sharp lookout, though all he could comprehend was that some law of navigation was being violated.

The water-front lights of Oakland began to slip past. Soon the stretches of docks and the shadowy ships began to be broken by dim sweeps of marshland, and Joe knew that they were heading out for San Francisco Bay. The wind was blowing from the north in mild squalls, and the Dazzler cut noiselessly through the landlocked water.

“Where are we going?” Joe asked the Cockney, in an endeavor to be friendly and at the same time satisfy his curiosity.

“Oh, my pardner’ere, Bill, we’re goin’ to take a cargo from’is factory,” that worthy airily replied.

Joe thought he was rather a funny-looking individual to own a factory; but, conscious that even stranger things might be found in this new world he was entering, he said nothing. He had already exposed himself to Frisco Kid in the matter of his pronunciation of “fo’c’sle,” and he had no desire further to advertise his ignorance.

A little after that he was sent in to blow out the cabin lamp. The Dazzler tacked about and began to work in toward the north shore. Everybody kept silent, save for

occasional whispered questions and answers which passed between Bill and the captain. Finally the sloop was run into the wind, and the jib and mainsail lowered cautiously.

"Short hawse," French Pete whispered to 'Frisco Kid, who went for'ard and dropped the anchor, paying out the slightest quantity of slack.

The Dazzler's skiff was brought alongside, as was also the small boat in which the two strangers had come aboard.

"See that that cub don't make a fuss," Bill commanded in an undertone, as he joined his partner in his own boat.

"Can you row?" 'Frisco Kid asked as they got into the other boat.

Joe nodded his head.

"Then take these oars, and don't make a racket."

'Frisco Kid took the second pair, while French Pete steered. Joe noticed that the oars were muffled with sennit, and that even the rowlock sockets were protected with leather. It was impossible to make a noise except by a mis-stroke, and Joe had learned to row on Lake Merrit well enough to avoid that. They followed in the wake of the first boat, and, glancing aside, he saw they were running along the length of a pier which jutted out from the land. A couple of ships, with riding-lanterns burning brightly, were moored to it, but they kept just beyond the edge of the light. He stopped rowing at the whispered command of 'Frisco Kid. Then the boats grounded like ghosts on a tiny beach, and they clambered out.

Joe followed the men, who picked their way carefully up a twenty-foot bank. At the top he found himself on a narrow railway track which ran between huge piles of rusty scrap-iron. These piles, separated by tracks, extended in every direction he could not tell how far, though in the distance he could see the vague outlines of some great factory-like building. The men began to carry loads of the iron down to the beach, and French Pete, gripping him by the arm and again warning him not to make any noise, told him to do likewise. At the beach they turned their burdens over to 'Frisco Kid, who loaded them, first in the one skiff and then in the other. As the boats settled under the weight, he kept pushing them farther and farther out, in order that they should keep clear of the bottom.

Joe worked away steadily, though he could not help marveling at the queerness of the whole business. Why should there be such a mystery about it? and why such care taken to maintain silence? He had just begun to ask himself these questions, and a horrible suspicion was forming itself in his mind, when he heard the hoot of an owl from the direction of the beach. Wondering at an owl being in so unlikely a place, he stooped to gather a fresh load of iron. But suddenly a man sprang out of the gloom, flashing a dark lantern full upon him. Blinded by the light, he staggered back. Then a revolver in the man's hand went off like the roar of a cannon. All Joe realized was that he was being shot at, while his legs manifested an overwhelming desire to get away. Even if he had so wished, he could not very well have stayed to explain to the excited man with the smoking revolver. So he took to his heels for the beach, colliding with another man with a dark lantern who came running around the end of one of the piles

of iron. This second man quickly regained his feet, and peppered away at Joe as he flew down the bank.

He dashed out into the water for the boat. French Pete at the bow-oars and Frisco Kid at the stroke had the skiff's nose pointed seaward and were calmly awaiting his arrival. They had their oars ready for the start, but they held them quietly at rest, for all that both men on the bank had begun to fire at them. The other skiff lay closer inshore, partially aground. Bill was trying to shove it off, and was calling on the Cockney to lend a hand; but that gentleman had lost his head completely, and came floundering through the water hard after Joe. No sooner had Joe climbed in over the stern than he followed him. This extra weight on the stern of the heavily loaded craft nearly swamped them. As it was, a dangerous quantity of water was shipped. In the meantime the men on the bank had reloaded their pistols and opened fire again, this time with better aim. The alarm had spread. Voices and cries could be heard from the ships on the pier, along which men were running. In the distance a police whistle was being frantically blown.

"Get out!" Frisco Kid shouted. "You ain't a-going to sink us if I know it. Go and help your pardner."

But the Cockney's teeth were chattering with fright, and he was too unnerved to move or speak.

"T'row ze crazy man out!" French Pete ordered from the bow. At this moment a bullet shattered an oar in his hand, and he coolly proceeded to ship a spare one.

"Give us a hand, Joe," Frisco Kid commanded.

Joe understood, and together they seized the terror-stricken creature and flung him overboard. Two or three bullets splashed about him as he came to the surface, just in time to be picked up by Bill, who had at last succeeded in getting clear.

"Now!" French Pete called, and a few strokes into the darkness quickly took them out of the zone of fire.

So much water had been shipped that the light skiff was in danger of sinking at any moment. While the other two rowed, and by the Frenchman's orders, Joe began to throw out the iron. This saved them for the time being. But just as they swept alongside the Dazzler the skiff lurched, shoved a side under, and turned turtle, sending the remainder of the iron to bottom. Joe and Frisco Kid came up side by side, and together they clambered aboard with the skiff's painter in tow. French Pete had already arrived, and now helped them out.

By the time they had canted the water out of the swamped boat, Bill and his partner appeared on the scene. All hands worked rapidly, and, almost before Joe could realize, the mainsail and jib had been hoisted, the anchor broken out, and the Dazzler was leaping down the channel. Off a bleak piece of marshland Bill and the Cockney said good-by and cast loose in their skiff. French Pete, in the cabin, bewailed their bad luck in various languages, and sought consolation in the wine-bottle.

## Chapter X — With the Bay Pirates

The wind freshened as they got clear of the land, and soon the Dazzler was heeling it with her lee deck buried and the water churning by, half-way up the cockpit-rail. Side-lights had been hung out. Frisco Kid was steering, and by his side sat Joe, pondering over the events of the night.

He could no longer blind himself to the facts. His mind was in a whirl of apprehension. If he had done wrong, he reasoned, he had done it through ignorance; and he did not feel shame for the past so much as he did fear for the future. His companions were thieves and robbers — the bay pirates, of whose wild deeds he had heard vague tales. And here he was, right in the midst of them, already possessing information which could send them to State's prison. This very fact, he knew, would force them to keep a sharp watch upon him and so lessen his chances of escape. But escape he would, at the very first opportunity.

At this point his thoughts were interrupted by a sharp squall, which hurled the Dazzler over till the sea rushed inboard. Frisco Kid luffed quickly, at the same time slacking off the main-sheet. Then, single-handed, — for French Pete remained below, — and with Joe looking idly on, he proceeded to reef down.

The squall which had so nearly capsized the Dazzler was of short duration, but it marked the rising of the wind, and soon puff after puff was shrieking down upon them out of the north. The mainsail was spilling the wind, and slapping and thrashing about till it seemed it would tear itself to pieces. The sloop was rolling wildly in the quick sea which had come up. Everything was in confusion; but even Joe's untrained eye showed him that it was an orderly confusion. He could see that Frisco Kid knew just what to do and just how to do it. As he watched him he learned a lesson, the lack of which has made failures of the lives of many men — the value of knowledge of one's own capacities. Frisco Kid knew what he was able to do, and because of this he had confidence in himself. He was cool and self-possessed, working hurriedly but not carelessly. There was no bungling. Every reef-point was drawn down to stay. Other accidents might occur, but the next squall, or the next forty squalls, would not carry one of those reef-knots away.

He called Joe for'ard to help stretch the mainsail by means of swinging on the peak and throat-halyards. To lay out on the long bowsprit and put a single reef in the jib was a slight task compared with what had been already accomplished; so a few moments later they were again in the cockpit. Under the other lad's directions, Joe flattened down the jib-sheet, and, going into the cabin, let down a foot or so of centerboard. The excitement of the struggle had chased all unpleasant thoughts from his mind. Patterning after the other boy, he had retained his coolness. He had executed his orders without fumbling, and at the same time without undue slowness. Together they had exerted their puny strength in the face of violent nature, and together they had outwitted her.

He came back to where his companion stood at the tiller steering, and he felt proud of him and of himself; and when he read the unspoken praise in 'Frisco Kid's eyes he blushed like a girl at her first compliment. But the next instant the thought flashed across him that this boy was a thief, a common thief; and he instinctively recoiled. His whole life had been sheltered from the harsher things of the world. His reading, which had been of the best, had laid a premium upon honesty and uprightness, and he had learned to look with abhorrence upon the criminal classes. So he drew a little away from 'Frisco Kid and remained silent. But 'Frisco Kid, devoting all his energies to the handling of the sloop, had no time in which to remark this sudden change of feeling on the part of his companion.

But there was one thing Joe found in himself that surprised him. While the thought of 'Frisco Kid being a thief was repulsive to him, 'Frisco Kid himself was not. Instead of feeling an honest desire to shun him, he felt drawn toward him. He could not help liking him, though he knew not why. Had he been a little older he would have understood that it was the lad's good qualities which appealed to him — his coolness and self-reliance, his manliness and bravery, and a certain kindness and sympathy in his nature. As it was, he thought it his own natural badness which prevented him from disliking 'Frisco Kid; but, while he felt shame at his own weakness, he could not smother the warm regard which he felt growing up for this particular bay pirate.

"Take in two or three feet on the skiff's painter," commanded 'Frisco Kid, who had an eye for everything.

The skiff was towing with too long a painter, and was behaving very badly. Every once in a while it would hold back till the tow-rope tautened, then come leaping ahead and sheering and dropping slack till it threatened to shove its nose under the huge whitecaps which roared so hungrily on every hand. Joe climbed over the cockpit-rail to the slippery after-deck, and made his way to the bitt to which the skiff was fastened.

"Be careful," 'Frisco Kid warned, as a heavy puff struck the Dazzler and careened her dangerously over on her side. "Keep one turn round the bitt, and heave in on it when the painter slacks."

It was ticklish work for a greenhorn. Joe threw off all the turns save the last, which he held with one hand, while with the other he attempted to bring in on the painter. But at that instant it tightened with a tremendous jerk, the boat sheering sharply into the crest of a heavy sea. The rope slipped from his hands and began to fly out over the stern. He clutched it frantically, and was dragged after it over the sloping deck.

"Let her go! Let her go!" 'Frisco Kid shouted.

Joe let go just as he was on the verge of going overboard, and the skiff dropped rapidly astern. He glanced in a shamefaced way at his companion, expecting to be sharply reprimanded for his awkwardness. But 'Frisco Kid smiled good-naturedly.

"That's all right," he said. "No bones broke and nobody overboard. Better to lose a boat than a man any day; that's what I say. Besides, I shouldn't have sent you out there. And there's no harm done. We can pick it up all right. Go in and drop some

more centerboard, — a couple of feet, — and then come out and do what I tell you. But don't be in a hurry. Take it easy and sure."

Joe dropped the centerboard and returned, to be stationed at the jib-sheet.

"Hard a-lee!" Frisco Kid cried, throwing the tiller down, and following it with his body. "Cast off! That's right. Now lend a hand on the main-sheet!"

Together, hand over hand, they came in on the reefed mainsail. Joe began to warm up with the work. The Dazzler turned on her heel like a race-horse, and swept into the wind, her canvas snarling and her sheets slatting like hail.

"Draw down the jib-sheet!"

Joe obeyed, and, the head-sail filling, forced her off on the other tack. This manoeuvre had turned French Pete's bunk from the lee to the weather side, and rolled him out on the cabin floor, where he lay in a drunken stupor.

'Frisco Kid, with his back against the tiller and holding the sloop off that it might cover their previous course, looked at him with an expression of disgust, and muttered: "The dog! We could well go to the bottom, for all he'd care or do!"

Twice they tacked, trying to go over the same ground; and then Joe discovered the skiff bobbing to windward in the star-lit darkness.

"Plenty of time," Frisco Kid cautioned, shooting the Dazzler into the wind toward it and gradually losing headway. "Now!"

Joe leaned over the side, grasped the trailing painter, and made it fast to the bitt. Then they tacked ship again and started on their way. Joe still felt ashamed for the trouble he had caused; but Frisco Kid quickly put him at ease.

"Oh, that's nothing," he said. "Everybody does that when they're beginning. Now some men forget all about the trouble they had in learning, and get mad when a greeny makes a mistake. I never do. Why, I remember — "

And then he told Joe of many of the mishaps which fell to him when, as a little lad, he first went on the water, and of some of the severe punishments for the same which were measured out to him. He had passed the running end of a lanyard over the tiller-neck, and as they talked they sat side by side and close against each other in the shelter of the cockpit.

"What place is that?" Joe asked, as they flew by a lighthouse blinking from a rocky headland.

"Goat Island. They've got a naval training station for boys over on the other side, and a torpedo-magazine. There's jolly good fishing, too — rock-cod. We'll pass to the lee of it, and make across, and anchor in the shelter of Angel Island. There's a quarantine station there. Then when French Pete gets sober we'll know where he wants to go. You can turn in now and get some sleep. I can manage all right."

Joe shook his head. There had been too much excitement for him to feel in the least like sleeping. He could not bear to think of it with the Dazzler leaping and surging along and shattering the seas into clouds of spray on her weather bow. His clothes had half dried already, and he preferred to stay on deck and enjoy it.

The lights of Oakland had dwindled till they made only a hazy flare against the sky; but to the south the San Francisco lights, topping hills and sinking into valleys, stretched miles upon miles. Starting from the great ferry building, and passing on to Telegraph Hill, Joe was soon able to locate the principal places of the city. Somewhere over in that maze of light and shadow was the home of his father, and perhaps even now they were thinking and worrying about him; and over there Bessie was sleeping cozily, to wake up in the morning and wonder why her brother Joe did not come down to breakfast. Joe shivered. It was almost morning. Then slowly his head dropped over on 'Frisco Kid's shoulder and he was fast asleep.

## Chapter XI — Captain and Crew

"Come! Wake up! We're going into anchor."

Joe roused with a start, bewildered at the unusual scene; for sleep had banished his troubles for the time being, and he knew not where he was. Then he remembered. The wind had dropped with the night. Beyond, the heavy after-sea was still rolling; but the Dazzler was creeping up in the shelter of a rocky island. The sky was clear, and the air had the snap and vigor of early morning about it. The rippling water was laughing in the rays of the sun just shouldering above the eastern sky-line. To the south lay Alcatraz Island, and from its gun-crowned heights a flourish of trumpets saluted the day. In the west the Golden Gate yawned between the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay. A full-rigged ship, with her lightest canvas, even to the sky-sails, set, was coming slowly in on the flood-tide.

It was a pretty sight. Joe rubbed the sleep from his eyes and drank in the glory of it till 'Frisco Kid told him to go for'ard and make ready for dropping the anchor.

"Overhaul about fifty fathoms of chain," he ordered, "and then stand by." He eased the sloop gently into the wind, at the same time casting off the jib-sheet. "Let go the jib-halyards and come in on the downhaul!"

Joe had seen the manoeuver performed the previous night, and so was able to carry it out with fair success.

"Now! Over with the mud-hook! Watch out for turns! Lively, now!"

The chain flew out with startling rapidity and brought the Dazzler to rest. 'Frisco Kid went for'ard to help, and together they lowered the mainsail, furled it in shipshape manner and made all fast with the gaskets, and put the crutches under the main-boom.

"Here's a bucket," said 'Frisco Kid, as he passed him the article in question. "Wash down the decks, and don't be afraid of the water, nor of the dirt either. Here's a broom. Give it what for, and have everything shining. When you get that done bail out the skiff. She opened her seams a little last night. I'm going below to cook breakfast."

The water was soon slushing merrily over the deck, while the smoke pouring from the cabin stove carried a promise of good things to come. Time and again Joe lifted his head from his task to take in the scene. It was one to appeal to any healthy boy, and

he was no exception. The romance of it stirred him strangely, and his happiness would have been complete could he have escaped remembering who and what his companions were. The thought of this, and of French Pete in his bleary sleep below, marred the beauty of the day. He had been unused to such things and was shocked at the harsh reality of life. But instead of hurting him, as it might a lad of weaker nature, it had the opposite effect. It strengthened his desire to be clean and strong, and to not be ashamed of himself in his own eyes. He glanced about him and sighed. Why could not men be honest and true? It seemed too bad that he must go away and leave all this; but the events of the night were strong upon him, and he knew that in order to be true to himself he must escape.

At this juncture he was called to breakfast. He discovered that Frisco Kid was as good a cook as he was a sailor, and made haste to do justice to the fare. There were mush and condensed milk, beefsteak and fried potatoes, and all topped off with good French bread, butter, and coffee. French Pete did not join them, though Frisco Kid attempted a couple of times to rouse him. He mumbled and grunted, half opened his bleared eyes, then fell to snoring again.

"Can't tell when he's going to get those spells," Frisco Kid explained, when Joe, having finished washing dishes, came on deck. "Sometimes he won't get that way for a month, and others he won't be decent for a week at a stretch. Sometimes he's good-natured, and sometimes he's dangerous; so the best thing to do is to let him alone and keep out of his way; and don't cross him, for if you do there's liable to be trouble.

"Come on; let's take a swim," he added, abruptly changing the subject to one more agreeable. "Can you swim?"

Joe nodded.

"What's that place?" he asked, as he poised before diving, pointing toward a sheltered beach on the island where there were several buildings and a large number of tents.

"Quarantine station. Lots of smallpox coming in now on the China steamers, and they make them go there till the doctors say they're safe to land. I tell you, they're strict about it, too. Why — "

Splash! Had Frisco Kid finished his sentence just then, instead of diving overboard, much trouble might have been saved to Joe. But he did not finish it, and Joe dived after him.

"I'll tell you what," Frisco Kid suggested half an hour later, while they clung to the bobstay preparatory to climbing out. "Let's catch a mess of fish for dinner, and then turn in and make up for the sleep we lost last night. What d' you say?"

They made a race to clamber aboard, but Joe was shoved over the side again. When he finally did arrive, the other lad had brought to light a pair of heavily leaded, large-hooked lines and a mackerel-keg of salt sardines.

"Bait," he said. "Just shove a whole one on. They're not a bit partic'lar. Swallow the bait, hook and all, and go — that's their caper. The fellow that doesn't catch the first fish has to clean'em."



Both sinkers started on their long descent together, and seventy feet of line whizzed out before they came to rest. But at the instant his sinker touched the bottom Joe felt the struggling jerks of a hooked fish. As he began to haul in he glanced at 'Frisco Kid and saw that he too had evidently captured a finny prize. The race between them was exciting. Hand over hand the wet lines flashed inboard. But 'Frisco Kid was more expert, and his fish tumbled into the cockpit first. Joe's followed an instant later — a three-pound rock-cod. He was wild with joy. It was magnificent — the largest fish he had ever landed or ever seen landed. Over went the lines again, and up they came with two mates of the ones already captured. It was sport royal. Joe would certainly have continued till he had fished the bay empty, had not 'Frisco Kid persuaded him to stop.

"We've got enough for three meals now," he said, "so there's no use in having them spoil. Besides, the more you catch the more you clean, and you'd better start in right away. I'm going to bed."

## Chapter XII — Joe Tries to Take French Leave

Joe did not mind. In fact, he was glad he had not caught the first fish, for it helped out a little plan which had come to him while swimming. He threw the last cleaned fish into a bucket of water and glanced about him. The quarantine station was a bare half-mile away, and he could make out a soldier pacing up and down at sentry duty on the beach. Going into the cabin, he listened to the heavy breathing of the sleepers. He had to pass so close to 'Frisco Kid to get his bundle of clothes that he decided not to take it. Returning outside, he carefully pulled the skiff alongside, got aboard with a pair of oars, and cast off.

At first he rowed very gently in the direction of the station, fearing the chance of noise if he made undue haste. But gradually he increased the strength of his strokes till he had settled down to the regular stride. When he had covered half the distance he glanced about. Escape was sure now, for he knew, even if he were discovered, that it would be impossible for the Dazzler to get under way and head him off before he made the land and the protection of that man who wore the uniform of Uncle Sam's soldiers.

The report of a gun came to him from the shore, but his back was in that direction and he did not bother to turn around. A second report followed, and a bullet cut the water within a couple of feet of his oar-blade. This time he did turn around. The soldier on the beach was leveling his rifle at him for a third shot.

Joe was in a predicament, and a very tantalizing one at that. A few minutes of hard rowing would bring him to the beach and to safety; but on that beach, for some unaccountable reason, stood a United States soldier who persisted in firing at him. When Joe saw the gun aimed at him for the third time, he backed water hastily. As a

result, the skiff came to a standstill, and the soldier, lowering his rifle, regarded him intently.

"I want to come ashore! Important!" Joe shouted out to him.

The man in uniform shook his head.

"But it's important, I tell you! Won't you let me come ashore?"

He took a hurried look in the direction of the Dazzler. The shots had evidently awakened French Pete, for the mainsail had been hoisted, and as he looked he saw the anchor broken out and the jib flung to the breeze.

"Can't land here!" the soldier shouted back. "Smallpox!"

"But I must!" he cried, choking down a half-sob and preparing to row.

"Then I'll shoot you," was the cheering response, and the rifle came to shoulder again.

Joe thought rapidly. The island was large. Perhaps there were no soldiers farther on, and if he only once got ashore he did not care how quickly they captured him. He might catch the smallpox, but even that was better than going back to the bay pirates. He whirled the skiff half about to the right, and threw all his strength against the oars. The cove was quite wide, and the nearest point which he must go around a good distance away. Had he been more of a sailor, he would have gone in the other direction for the opposite point, and thus had the wind on his pursuers. As it was, the Dazzler had a beam wind in which to overtake him.

It was nip and tuck for a while. The breeze was light and not very steady, so sometimes he gained and sometimes they. Once it freshened till the sloop was within a hundred yards of him, and then it dropped suddenly flat, the Dazzler's big mainsail flapping idly from side to side.

"Ah! you steal ze skiff, eh?" French Pete howled at him, running into the cabin for his rifle. "I fix you! You come back queeck, or I kill you!" But he knew the soldier was watching them from the shore, and did not dare to fire, even over the lad's head.

Joe did not think of this, for he, who had never been shot at in all his previous life, had been under fire twice in the last twenty-four hours. Once more or less couldn't amount to much. So he pulled steadily away, while French Pete raved like a wild man, threatening him with all manner of punishments once he laid hands upon him again. To complicate matters, 'Frisco Kid waxed mutinous.

"Just you shoot him, and I'll see you hung for it — see if I don't," he threatened. "You'd better let him go. He's a good boy and all right, and not raised for the dirty life you and I are leading."

"You too, eh!" the Frenchman shrieked, beside himself with rage. "Den I fix you, you rat!"

He made a rush for the boy, but 'Frisco Kid led him a lively chase from cockpit to bowsprit and back again. A sharp capful of wind arriving just then, French Pete abandoned the one chase for the other. Springing to the tiller and slacking away on the main-sheet, — for the wind favored, — he headed the sloop down upon Joe. The latter made one tremendous spurt, then gave up in despair and hauled in his oars. French

Pete let go the main-sheet, lost steerageway as he rounded up alongside the motionless skiff, and dragged Joe out.

"Keep mum," Frisco Kid whispered to him while the irate Frenchman was busy fastening the painter. "Don't talk back. Let him say all he wants to, and keep quiet. It'll be better for you."

But Joe's Anglo-Saxon blood was up, and he did not heed.

"Look here, Mr. French Pete, or whatever your name is," he commenced; "I give you to understand that I want to quit, and that I'm going to quit. So you'd better put me ashore at once. If you don't I'll put you in prison, or my name's not Joe Bronson."

Frisco Kid waited the outcome fearfully. French Pete was aghast. He was being defied aboard his own vessel — and by a boy! Never had such a thing been heard of. He knew he was committing an unlawful act in detaining him, but at the same time he was afraid to let him go with the information he had gathered concerning the sloop and its occupation. The boy had spoken the unpleasant truth when he said he could send him to prison. The only thing for him to do was to bully him.

"You will, eh?" His shrill voice rose wrathfully. "Den you come too. You row ze boat last-a night — answer me dat! You steal ze iron — answer me dat! You run away — answer me dat! And den you say you put me in jail? Bah!"

"But I didn't know," Joe protested.

"Ha, ha! Dat is funny. You tell dat to ze judge; mebbe him laugh, eh?"

"I say I didn't," he reiterated manfully. "I didn't know I'd shipped along with a lot of thieves."

Frisco Kid winced at this epithet, and had Joe been looking at him he would have seen a red flush mount to his face.

"And now that I do know," he continued, "I wish to be put ashore. I don't know anything about the law, but I do know something of right and wrong; and I'm willing to take my chance with any judge for whatever wrong I have done — with all the judges in the United States, for that matter. And that's more than you can say, Mr. Pete."

"You say dat, eh? Vaire good. But you are one big t'ief — "

"I'm not — don't you dare call me that again!" Joe's face was pale, and he was trembling — but not with fear.

"T'ief!" the Frenchman taunted back.

"You lie!"

Joe had not been a boy among boys for nothing. He knew the penalty which attached itself to the words he had just spoken, and he expected to receive it. So he was not overmuch surprised when he picked himself up from the floor of the cockpit an instant later, his head still ringing from a stiff blow between the eyes.

"Say dat one time more," French Pete bullied, his fist raised and prepared to strike.

Tears of anger stood in Joe's eyes, but he was calm and in deadly earnest. "When you say I am a thief, Pete, you lie. You can kill me, but still I will say you lie."

"No, you don't!" Frisco Kid had darted in like a cat, preventing a second blow, and shoving the Frenchman back across the cockpit.

"You leave the boy alone!" he continued, suddenly unshipping and arming himself with the heavy iron tiller, and standing between them. "This thing's gone just about as far as it's going to go. You big fool, can't you see the stuff the boy's made of? He speaks true. He's right, and he knows it, and you could kill him and he wouldn't give in. There's my hand on it, Joe." He turned and extended his hand to Joe, who returned the grip. "You've got spunk and you're not afraid to show it."

French Pete's mouth twisted itself in a sickly smile, but the evil gleam in his eyes gave it the lie. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Ah! So? He does not dee-sire dat I call him pet names. Ha, ha! It is only ze sailorman play. Let us — what you call — forgive and forget, eh? Vaire good; forgive and forget."

He reached out his hand, but Joe refused to take it. Frisco Kid nodded approval, while French Pete, still shrugging his shoulders and smiling, passed into the cabin.

"Slack off ze main-sheet," he called out, "and run down for Hunter's Point. For one time I will cook ze dinner, and den you will say dat it is ze vaire good dinner. Ah! French Pete is ze great cook!"

"That's the way he always does — gets real good and cooks when he wants to make up," Frisco Kid hazarded, slipping the tiller into the rudder-head and obeying the order. "But even then you can't trust him."

Joe nodded his head, but did not speak. He was in no mood for conversation. He was still trembling from the excitement of the last few moments, while deep down he questioned himself on how he had behaved, and found nothing to be ashamed of.

## Chapter XIII — Befriending Each Other

The afternoon sea-breeze had sprung up and was now rioting in from the Pacific. Angel Island was fast dropping astern, and the water-front of San Francisco showing up, as the Dazzler plowed along before it. Soon they were in the midst of the shipping, passing in and out among the vessels which had come from the ends of the earth. Later they crossed the fairway, where the ferry steamers, crowded with passengers, passed to and fro between San Francisco and Oakland. One came so close that the passengers crowded to the side to see the gallant little sloop and the two boys in the cockpit. Joe gazed enviously at the row of down-turned faces. They were all going to their homes, while he — he was going he knew not whither, at the will of French Pete. He was half tempted to cry out for help; but the foolishness of such an act struck him, and he held his tongue. Turning his head, his eyes wandered along the smoky heights of the city, and he fell to musing on the strange way of men and ships on the sea.

Frisco Kid watched him from the corner of his eye, following his thoughts as accurately as though he spoke them aloud.

"Got a home over there somewheres?" he queried suddenly, waving his hand in the direction of the city.

Joe started, so correctly had his thought been guessed. "Yes," he said simply.

"Tell us about it."

Joe rapidly described his home, though forced to go into greater detail because of the curious questions of his companion. Frisco Kid was interested in everything, especially in Mrs. Bronson and Bessie. Of the latter he could not seem to tire, and poured forth question after question concerning her. So peculiar and artless were some of them that Joe could hardly forbear to smile.

"Now tell me about yours," he said when he at last had finished.

Frisco Kid seemed suddenly to harden, and his face took on a stern look which the other had never seen there before. He swung his foot idly to and fro, and lifted a dull eye aloft to the main-peak blocks, with which, by the way, there was nothing the matter.

"Go ahead," the other encouraged.

"I haven't no home."

The four words left his mouth as though they had been forcibly ejected, and his lips came together after them almost with a snap.

Joe saw he had touched a tender spot, and strove to ease the way out of it again. "Then the home you did have." He did not dream that there were lads in the world who never had known homes, or that he had only succeeded in probing deeper.

"Never had none."

"Oh!" His interest was aroused, and he now threw solicitude to the winds. "Any sisters?"

"Nope."

"Mother?"

"I was so young when she died that I don't remember her."

"Father?"

"I never saw much of him. He went to sea — anyhow, he disappeared."

"Oh!" Joe did not know what to say, and an oppressive silence, broken only by the churn of the Dazzler's forefoot, fell upon them.

Just then Pete came out to relieve at the tiller while they went in to eat. Both lads hailed his advent with feelings of relief, and the awkwardness vanished over the dinner, which was all their skipper had claimed it to be. Afterward Frisco Kid relieved Pete, and while he was eating Joe washed up the dishes and put the cabin shipshape. Then they all gathered in the stern, where the captain strove to increase the general cordiality by entertaining them with descriptions of life among the pearl-divers of the South Seas.

In this fashion the afternoon wore away. They had long since left San Francisco behind, rounded Hunter's Point, and were now skirting the San Mateo shore. Joe caught a glimpse, once, of a party of cyclists rounding a cliff on the San Bruno Road, and remembered the time when he had gone over the same ground on his own wheel.

It was only a month or two before, but it seemed an age to him now, so much had there been to come between.

By the time supper had been eaten and the things cleared away, they were well down the bay, off the marshes behind which Redwood City clustered. The wind had gone down with the sun, and the Dazzler was making but little headway, when they sighted a sloop bearing down upon them on the dying wind. 'Frisco Kid instantly named it as the Reindeer, to which French Pete, after a deep scrutiny, agreed. He seemed very much pleased at the meeting.

"Red Nelson runs her," Frisco Kid informed Joe. "And he's a terror and no mistake. I'm always afraid of him when he comes near. They've got something big down here, and they're always after French Pete to tackle it with them. He knows more about it, whatever it is."

Joe nodded, and looked at the approaching craft curiously. Though somewhat larger, it was built on about the same lines as the Dazzler which meant, above everything else, that it was built for speed. The mainsail was so large that it was more like that of a racing-yacht, and it carried the points for no less than three reefs in case of rough weather. Aloft and on deck everything was in place — nothing was untidy or useless. From running-gear to standing rigging, everything bore evidence of thorough order and smart seamanship.

The Reindeer came up slowly in the gathering twilight and went to anchor a biscuit-toss away. French Pete followed suit with the Dazzler, and then went in the skiff to pay them a visit. The two lads stretched themselves out on top the cabin and awaited his return.

"Do you like the life?" Joe broke silence.

The other turned on his elbow. "Well — I do, and then again I don't. The fresh air, and the salt water, and all that, and the freedom — that's all right; but I don't like the — the — " He paused a moment, as though his tongue had failed in its duty, and then blurted out: "the stealing."

"Then why don't you quit it?" Joe liked the lad more than he dared confess to himself, and he felt a sudden missionary zeal come upon him.

"I will just as soon as I can turn my hand to something else."

"But why not now?"

Now is the accepted time was ringing in Joe's ears, and if the other wished to leave, it seemed a pity that he did not, and at once.

"Where can I go? What can I do? There's nobody in all the world to lend me a hand, just as there never has been. I tried it once, and learned my lesson too well to do it again in a hurry."

"Well, when I get out of this I'm going home. Guess my father was right, after all. And I don't see, maybe — what's the matter with you going with me?" He said this last without thinking, impulsively, and Frisco Kid knew it.

“You don’t know what you’re talking about,” he answered. “Fancy me going off with you! What’d your father say? and — and the rest? How would he think of me? And what’d he do?”

Joe felt sick at heart. He realized that in the spirit of the moment he had given an invitation which, on sober thought, he knew would be impossible to carry out. He tried to imagine his father receiving in his own house a stranger like Frisco Kid — no, that was not to be thought of. Then, forgetting his own plight, he fell to racking his brains for some other method by which Frisco Kid could get away from his present surroundings.

“He might turn me over to the police,” the other went on, “and send me to a refuge. I’d die first, before I’d let that happen to me. And besides, Joe, I’m not of your kind, and you know it. Why, I’d be like a fish out of water, what with all the things I didn’t know. Nope; I guess I’ll have to wait a little before I strike out. But there’s only one thing for you to do, and that’s to go straight home. First chance I get I’ll land you, and then I’ll deal with French Pete — ”

“No, you don’t,” Joe interrupted hotly. “When I leave I’m not going to leave you in trouble on my account. So don’t you try anything like that. I’ll get away, never fear, and if I can figure it out I want you to come along too; come along anyway, and figure it out afterward. What d’ you say?”

Frisco Kid shook his head, and, gazing up at the starlit heavens, wandered off into dreams of the life he would like to lead but from which he seemed inexorably shut out. The seriousness of life was striking deeper than ever into Joe’s heart, and he lay silent, thinking hard. A mumble of heavy voices came to them from the Reindeer; and from the land the solemn notes of a church bell floated across the water, while the summer night wrapped them slowly in its warm darkness.

## Chapter XIV — Among the Oyster-beds

Time and the world slipped away, and both boys were aroused by the harsh voice of French Pete from the sleep into which they had fallen.

“Get under way!” he was bawling. “Here, you Sho! Cast off ze gaskets! Queeck! Lively! You Kid, ze jib!”

Joe was clumsy in the darkness, not knowing the names of things and the places where they were to be found; but he made fair progress, and when he had tossed the gaskets into the cockpit was ordered forward to help hoist the mainsail. After that the anchor was hove in and the jib set. Then they coiled down the halyards and put everything in order before they returned aft.

“Vaire good, vaire good,” the Frenchman praised, as Joe dropped in over the rail. “Splendeed! You make ze good sailorman, I know for sure.”

Frisco Kid lifted the cover of one of the cockpit lockers and glanced questioningly at French Pete.

"For sure," that mariner replied. "Put up ze side-lights."

'Frisco Kid took the red and green lanterns into the cabin to light them, and then went forward with Joe to hang them in the rigging.

"They're not goin' to tackle it," 'Frisco Kid said in an undertone.

"What?" Joe asked.

"That big thing I was tellin' you was down here somewhere. It's so big, I guess, that French Pete's most afraid to go in for it. Red Nelson'd go in quicker'n a wink, but he don't know enough about it. Can't go in, you see, till Pete gives the word."

"Where are we going now?" Joe questioned.

"Don't know; oyster-beds most likely, from the way we're heading."

It was an uneventful trip. A breeze sprang up out of the night behind them, and held steady for an hour or more. Then it dropped and became aimless and erratic, puffing gently first from one quarter and then another. French Pete remained at the tiller, while occasionally Joe or 'Frisco Kid took in or slacked off a sheet.

Joe sat and marveled that the Frenchman should know where he was going. To Joe it seemed that they were lost in the impenetrable darkness which shrouded them. A high fog had rolled in from the Pacific, and though they were beneath, it came between them and the stars, depriving them of the little light from that source.

But French Pete seemed to know instinctively the direction he should go, and once, in reply to a query from Joe, bragged of his ability to go by the "feel" of things.

"I feel ze tide, ze wind, ze speed," he explained. "Even do I feel ze land. Dat I tell you for sure. How? I do not know. Only do I know dat I feel ze land, just like my arm grow long, miles and miles long, and I put my hand upon ze land and feel it, and know dat it is there."

Joe looked incredulously at 'Frisco Kid.

"That's right," he affirmed. "After you've been on the water a good while you come to feel the land. And if your nose is any account, you can usually smell it."

An hour or so later, Joe surmised from the Frenchman's actions that they were approaching their destination. He seemed on the alert, and was constantly peering into the darkness ahead as though he expected to see something at any moment. Joe looked very hard, but saw only the darkness.

"Try ze stick, Kid," French Pete ordered. "I t'ink it is about ze time."

'Frisco Kid unlashed a long and slender pole from the top of the cabin, and, standing on the narrow deck amidships, plunged one end of it into the water and drove it straight down.

"About fifteen feet," he said.

"What ze bottom?"

"Mud," was the answer.

"Wait one while, den we try some more."

Five minutes afterward the pole was plunged overside again.

"Two fathoms," Joe answered — "shells."



French Pete rubbed his hands with satisfaction. "Vaire good, voire well," he said. "I hit ze ground every time. You can't fool-a ze old man; I tell you dat for sure."

'Frisco Kid continued operating the pole and announcing the results, to the mystification of Joe, who could not comprehend their intimate knowledge of the bottom of the bay.

"Ten feet — shells," Frisco Kid went on in a monotonous voice. "'Leven feet — shells. Fourteen feet — soft. Sixteen feet — mud. No bottom."

"Ah, ze channel," said French Pete at this.

For a few minutes it was "No bottom"; and then, suddenly, came 'Frisco Kid's cry: "Eight feet — hard!"

"Dat'll do," French Pete commanded. "Run for'ard, you Sho, an' let go ze jib. You, Kid, get all ready ze hook."

Joe found the jib-halyard and cast it off the pin, and, as the canvas fluttered down, came in hand over hand on the downhaul.

"Let'er go!" came the command, and the anchor dropped into the water, carrying but little chain after it.

'Frisco Kid threw over plenty of slack and made fast. Then they furled the sails, made things tidy, and went below and to bed.

It was six o'clock when Joe awoke and went out into the cockpit to look about. Wind and sea had sprung up, and the Dazzler was rolling and tossing and now and again fetching up on her anchor-chain with a savage jerk. He was forced to hold on to the boom overhead to steady himself. It was a gray and leaden day, with no signs of the rising sun, while the sky was obscured by great masses of flying clouds.

Joe sought for the land. A mile and a half away it lay — a long, low stretch of sandy beach with a heavy surf thundering upon it. Behind appeared desolate marshlands, while far beyond towered the Contra Costa Hills.

Changing the direction of his gaze, Joe was startled by the sight of a small sloop rolling and plunging at her anchor not a hundred yards away. She was nearly to windward, and as she swung off slightly he read her name on the stern, the Flying Dutchman, one of the boats he had seen lying at the city wharf in Oakland. A little to the left of her he discovered the Ghost, and beyond were half a dozen other sloops at anchor.

"What I tell you?"

Joe looked quickly over his shoulder. French Pete had come out of the cabin and was triumphantly regarding the spectacle.

"What I tell you? Can't fool-a ze old man, dat's what. I hit it in ze dark just so well as in ze sunshine. I know — I know."

"Is she goin' to howl?" Frisco Kid asked from the cabin, where he was starting the fire.

The Frenchman gravely studied sea and sky for a couple of minutes.

"Mebbe blow over — mebbe blow up," was his doubtful verdict. "Get breakfast queeck, and we try ze dredging."

Smoke was rising from the cabins of the different sloops, denoting that they were all bent on getting the first meal of the day. So far as the Dazzler was concerned, it was a simple matter, and soon they were putting a single reef in the mainsail and getting ready to weigh anchor.

Joe was curious. These were undoubtedly the oyster-beds; but how under the sun, in that wild sea, were they to get oysters? He was quickly to learn the way. Lifting a section of the cockpit flooring, French Pete brought out two triangular frames of steel. At the apex of one of these triangles; in a ring for the purpose, he made fast a piece of stout rope. From this the sides (inch rods) diverged at almost right angles, and extended down for a distance of four feet or more, where they were connected by the third side of the triangle, which was the bottom of the dredge. This was a flat plate of steel over a yard in length, to which was bolted a row of long, sharp teeth, likewise of steel. Attached to the toothed plate, and to the sides of the frame was a net of very coarse fishing-twine, which Joe correctly surmised was there to catch the oysters raked loose by the teeth from the bottom of the bay.

A rope being made fast to each of the dredges, they were dropped overboard from either side of the Dazzler. When they had reached the bottom, and were dragging with the proper length of line out, they checked her speed quite noticeably. Joe touched one of the lines with his hands, and could feel plainly the shock and jar and grind as it tore over the bottom.

“All in!” French Pete shouted.

The boys laid hold of the line and hove in the dredge. The net was full of mud and slime and small oysters, with here and there a large one. This mess they dumped on the deck and picked over while the dredge was dragging again. The large oysters they threw into the cockpit, and shoveled the rubbish overboard. There was no rest, for by this time the other dredge required emptying. And when this was done and the oysters sorted, both dredges had to be hauled aboard, so that French Pete could put the Dazzler about on the other tack.

The rest of the fleet was under way and dredging back in similar fashion. Sometimes the different sloops came quite close to them, and they hailed them and exchanged snatches of conversation and rough jokes. But in the main it was hard work, and at the end of an hour Joe’s back was aching from the unaccustomed strain, and his fingers were cut and bleeding from his clumsy handling of the sharp-edged oysters.

“Dat’s right,” French Pete said approvingly. “You learn queeck. Vaire soon you know how.”

Joe grinned ruefully and wished it was dinner-time. Now and then, when a light dredge was hauled, the boys managed to catch breath and say a couple of words.

“That’s Asparagus Island,” Frisco Kid said, indicating the shore. “At least, that’s what the fishermen and scow-sailors call it. The people who live there call it Bay Farm Island.” He pointed more to the right. “And over there is San Leandro. You can’t see it, but it’s there.”

“Ever been there?” Joe asked.

‘Frisco Kid nodded his head and signed to him to help heave in the starboard dredge.

“These are what they call the deserted beds,” he said again. “Nobody owns them, so the oyster pirates come down and make a bluff at working them.”

“Why a bluff?”

“‘Cause they’re pirates, that’s why, and because there’s more money in raiding the private beds.”

He made a sweeping gesture toward the east and southeast. “The private beds are over yonder, and if it don’t storm the whole fleet’ll be raidin’em to-night.”

“And if it does storm?” Joe asked.

“Why, we won’t raid them, and French Pete’ll be mad, that’s all. He always hates being put out by the weather. But it don’t look like lettin’ up, and this is the worst possible shore in a sou’wester. Pete may try to hang on, but it’s best to get out before she howls.”

At first it did seem as though the weather were growing better. The stiff southwest wind dropped perceptibly, and by noon, when they went to anchor for dinner, the sun was breaking fitfully through the clouds.

“That’s all right,” Frisco Kid said prophetically. “But I ain’t been on the bay for nothing. She’s just gettin’ ready to let us have it good an’ hard.”

“I t’ink you’re right, Kid,” French Pete agreed; “but ze Dazzler hang on all ze same. Last-a time she run away, an’ fine night come. Dis time she run not away. Eh? Vaire good.”

## Chapter XV — Good Sailors in a Wild Anchorage

All afternoon the Dazzler pitched and rolled at her anchorage, and as evening drew on the wind deceitfully eased down. This, and the example set by French Pete, encouraged the rest of the oyster-boats to attempt to ride out the night; but they looked carefully to their moorings and put out spare anchors.

French Pete ordered the two boys into the skiff, and, at the imminent risk of swamping, they carried out a second anchor, at nearly right angles to the first one, and dropped it over. French Pete then ran out a great quantity of chain and rope, so that the Dazzler dropped back a hundred feet or more, where she rode more easily.

It was a wild stretch of water which Joe looked upon from the shelter of the cockpit. The oyster-beds were out in the open bay, utterly unprotected, and the wind, sweeping the water for a clean twelve miles, kicked up so tremendous a sea that at every moment it seemed as though the wallowing sloops would roll their masts overside. Just before twilight a patch of sail sprang up to windward, and grew and grew until it resolved itself into the huge mainsail of the Reindeer.

“Ze beeg fool!” French Pete cried, running out of the cabin to see. “Sometime — ah, sometime, I tell you — he crack on like dat, an’ he go, pouf! just like dat, pouf! — an’ no more Nelson, no more Reindeer, no more nothing.”

Joe looked inquiringly at 'Frisco Kid.

"That's right," he answered. "Nelson ought to have at least one reef in. Two'd be better. But there he goes, every inch spread, as though some fiend was after'im. He drives too hard; he's too reckless, when there ain't the smallest need for it. I've sailed with him, and I know his ways."

Like some huge bird of the air, the Reindeer lifted and soared down on them on the foaming crest of a wave.

"Don't mind," 'Frisco Kid warned. "He's only tryin' to see how close he can come to us without hittin' us."

Joe nodded, and stared with wide eyes at the thrilling sight. The Reindeer leaped up in the air, pointing her nose to the sky till they could see her whole churning forefoot; then she plunged downward till her for'ard deck was flush with the foam, and with a dizzying rush she drove past them, her main-boom missing the Dazzler's rigging by scarcely a foot.

Nelson, at the wheel, waved his hand to them as he hurtled past, and laughed joyously in French Pete's face, who was angered by the dangerous trick.

When to leeward, the splendid craft rounded to the wind, rolling once till her brown bottom showed to the centerboard and they thought she was over, then righting and dashing ahead again like a thing possessed. She passed abreast of them on the starboard side. They saw the jib run down with a rush and an anchor go overboard as she shot into the wind; and as she fell off and back and off and back with a spilling mainsail, they saw a second anchor go overboard, wide apart from the first. Then the mainsail came down on the run, and was furled and fastened by the time she had tightened to her double hawsers.

"Ah, ah! Never was there such a man!"

The Frenchman's eyes were glistening with admiration for such perfect seamanship, and 'Frisco Kid's were likewise moist.

"Just like a yacht," he said as he went back into the cabin. "Just like a yacht, only better."

As night came on the wind began to rise again, and by eleven o'clock had reached the stage which 'Frisco Kid described as "howlin'." There was little sleep on the Dazzler. He alone closed his eyes. French Pete was up and down every few minutes. Twice, when he went on deck, he paid out more chain and rope. Joe lay in his blankets and listened, the while vainly courting sleep. He was not frightened, but he was untrained in the art of sleeping in the midst of such turmoil and uproar and violent commotion. Nor had he imagined a boat could play as wild antics as did the Dazzler and still survive. Often she wallowed over on her beam till he thought she would surely capsize. At other times she leaped and plunged in the air and fell upon the seas with thunderous crashes as though her bottom were shattered to fragments. Again, she would fetch up taut on her hawsers so suddenly and so fiercely as to reel from the shock and to groan and protest through every timber.

'Frisco Kid awoke once, and smiled at him, saying:

"This is what they call hangin' on. But just you wait till daylight comes, and watch us clawin' off. If some of the sloops don't go ashore, I'm not me, that's all."

And thereat he rolled over on his side and was off to sleep. Joe envied him. About three in the morning he heard French Pete crawl up for'ard and rummage around in the eyes of the boat. Joe looked on curiously, and by the dim light of the wildly swinging sea-lamp saw him drag out two spare coils of line. These he took up on deck, and Joe knew he was bending them on to the hawsers to make them still longer.

At half-past four French Pete had the fire going, and at five he called the boys for coffee. This over, they crept into the cockpit to gaze on the terrible scene. The dawn was breaking bleak and gray over a wild waste of tumbling water. They could faintly see the beach-line of Asparagus Island, but they could distinctly hear the thunder of the surf upon it; and as the day grew stronger they made out that they had dragged fully half a mile during the night.

The rest of the fleet had likewise dragged. The Reindeer was almost abreast of them; La Caprice lay a few hundred yards away; and to leeward, straggling between them and shore, were five more of the struggling oyster-boats.

"Two missing," Frisco Kid announced, putting the glasses to his eyes and searching the beach.

"And there's one!" he cried. And after studying it carefully he added: "The Go Ask Her. She'll be in pieces in no time. I hope they got ashore."

French Pete looked through the glasses, and then Joe. He could clearly see the unfortunate sloop lifting and pounding in the surf, and on the beach he spied the men who made up her crew.

"Where's ze Ghost?" French Pete queried.

'Frisco Kid looked for her in vain along the beach; but when he turned the glass seaward he quickly discovered her riding safely in the growing light, half a mile or more to windward.

"I'll bet she didn't drag a hundred feet all night," he said. "Must've struck good holding-ground."

"Mud," was French Pete's verdict. "Just one vaire small patch of mud right there. If she get t'rough it she's a sure-enough goner, I tell you dat. Her anchors vaire light, only good for mud. I tell ze boys get more heavy anchors, but dey laugh. Some day be sorry, for sure."

One of the sloops to leeward raised a patch of sail and began the terrible struggle out of the jaws of destruction and death. They watched her for a space, rolling and plunging fearfully, and making very little headway.

French Pete put a stop to their gazing. "Come on!" he shouted. "Put two reef in ze mainsail! We get out queeck!"

While occupied with this a shout aroused them. Looking up, they saw the Ghost dead ahead and right on top of them, and dragging down upon them at a furious rate.

French Pete scrambled forward like a cat, at the same time drawing his knife, with one stroke of which he severed the rope that held them to the spare anchor. This threw

the whole weight of the Dazzler on the chain-anchor. In consequence she swung off to the left, and just in time; for the next instant, drifting stern foremost, the Ghost passed over the spot she had vacated.

"Why, she's got four anchors out!" Joe exclaimed, at sight of four taut ropes entering the water almost horizontally from her bow.

"Two of 'em's dredges," Frisco Kid grinned; "and there goes the stove."

As he spoke, two young fellows appeared on deck and dropped the cooking-stove overside with a line attached.

"Phew!" Frisco Kid cried. "Look at Nelson. He's got one reef in, and you can just bet that's a sign she's howlin'!"

The Reindeer came foaming toward them, breasting the storm like some magnificent sea-animal. Red Nelson waved to them as he passed astern, and fifteen minutes later, when they were breaking out the one anchor that remained to them, he passed well to windward on the other tack.

French Pete followed her admiringly, though he said ominously: "Some day, pouf! he go just like dat, I tell you, sure."

A moment later the Dazzler's reefed jib was flung out, and she was straining and struggling in the thick of the fight. It was slow work, and hard and dangerous, clawing off that lee shore, and Joe found himself marveling often that so small a craft could possibly endure a minute in such elemental fury. But little by little she worked off the shore and out of the ground-swell into the deeper waters of the bay, where the main-sheet was slacked away a bit, and she ran for shelter behind the rock wall of the Alameda Mole a few miles away. Here they found the Reindeer calmly at anchor; and here, during the next several hours, straggled in the remainder of the fleet, with the exception of the Ghost, which had evidently gone ashore to keep the Go Ask Her company.

By afternoon the wind had dropped away with surprising suddenness, and the weather had turned almost summer-like.

"It doesn't look right," Frisco Kid said in the evening, after French Pete had rowed over in the skiff to visit Nelson.

"What doesn't look right?" Joe asked.

"Why, the weather. It went down too sudden. It didn't have a chance to blow itself out, and it ain't going to quit till does blow itself out. It's likely to puff up and howl at any moment, if I know anything about it."

"Where will we go from here?" Joe asked. "Back to the oyster-beds?"

Frisco Kid shook his head. "I can't say what French Pete'll do. He's been fooled on the iron, and fooled on the oysters, and he's that disgusted he's liable to do'most anything desperate. I wouldn't be surprised to see him go off with Nelson towards Redwood City, where that big thing is that I was tellin' you about. It's somewhere over there."

"Well, I won't have anything to do with it," Joe announced decisively.

"Of course not," Frisco Kid answered. "And with Nelson and his two men an' French Pete, I don't think there'll be any need for you anyway."

## Chapter XVI — 'Frisco Kid's Ditty-box

After the conversation died away, the two lads lay upon the cabin for perhaps an hour. Then, without saying a word, 'Frisco Kid went below and struck a light. Joe could hear him fumbling about, and a little later heard his own name called softly. On going into the cabin, he saw 'Frisco Kid sitting on the edge of the bunk, a sailor's ditty-box on his knees, and in his hand a carefully folded page from a magazine.

"Does she look like this?" he asked, smoothing it out and turning it that the other might see.

It was a half-page illustration of two girls and a boy, grouped, evidently, in an old-fashioned roomy attic, and holding a council of some sort. The girl who was talking faced the onlooker, while the backs of the other two were turned.

"Who?" Joe queried, glancing in perplexity from the picture to 'Frisco Kid's face.

"Your — your sister — Bessie."

The word seemed reluctant in coming to his lips, and he expressed himself with a certain shy reverence, as though it were something unspeakably sacred.

Joe was nonplussed for the moment. He could see no bearing between the two in point, and, anyway, girls were rather silly creatures to waste one's time over. "He's actually blushing," he thought, regarding the soft glow on the other's cheeks. He felt an irresistible desire to laugh, and tried to smother it down.

"No, no; don't!" Frisco Kid cried, snatching the paper away and putting it back in the ditty-box with shaking fingers. Then he added more slowly: "I thought — I — I kind o' thought you would understand, and — and —"

His lips trembled and his eyes glistened with unwonted moistness as he turned hastily away.

The next instant Joe was by his side on the bunk, his arm around him. Prompted by some instinctive monitor, he had done it before he thought. A week before he could not have imagined himself in such an absurd situation — his arm around a boy; but now it seemed the most natural thing in the world. He did not comprehend, but he knew, whatever it was, that it was of deep importance to his companion.

"Go ahead and tell us," he urged. "I'll understand."

"No, you won't. You can't."

"Yes, sure. Go ahead."

'Frisco Kid choked and shook his head. "I don't think I could, anyway. It's more the things I feel, and I don't know how to put them in words." Joe's hand patted his shoulder reassuringly, and he went on: "Well, it's this way. You see, I don't know much about the land, and people, and things, and I never had any brothers or sisters or

playmates. All the time I didn't know it, but I was lonely — sort of missed them down in here somewheres." He placed a hand over his breast. "Did you ever feel downright hungry? Well, that's just the way I used to feel, only a different kind of hunger, and me not knowing what it was. But one day, oh, a long time back, I got a-hold of a magazine and saw a picture — that picture, with the two girls and the boy talking together. I thought it must be fine to be like them, and I got to thinking about the things they said and did, till it came to me all of a sudden like, and I knew it was just loneliness was the matter with me.

"But, more than anything else, I got to wondering about the girl who looks out of the picture right at you. I was thinking about her all the time, and by and by she became real to me. You see, it was making believe, and I knew it all the time, and then again I didn't. Whenever I'd think of the men, and the work, and the hard life, I'd know it was make-believe; but when I'd think of her, it wasn't. I don't know; I can't explain it."

Joe remembered all his own adventures which he had imagined on land and sea, and nodded. He at least understood that much.

"Of course it was all foolishness, but to have a girl like that for a comrade or friend seemed more like heaven to me than anything else I knew of. As I said, it was a long while back, and I was only a little kid — that was when Red Nelson gave me my name, and I've never been anything but 'Frisco Kid' ever since. But the girl in the picture: I was always getting that picture out to look at her, and before long, if I wasn't square — why, I felt ashamed to look at her. Afterwards, when I was older, I came to look at it in another way. I thought, 'Suppose, Kid, some day you were to meet a girl like that, what would she think of you? Could she like you? Could she be even the least bit of a friend to you?' And then I'd make up my mind to be better, to try and do something with myself so that she or any of her kind of people would not be ashamed to know me.

"That's why I learned to read. That's why I ran away. Nicky Perrata, a Greek boy, taught me my letters, and it wasn't till after I learned to read that I found out there was anything really wrong in bay-pirating. I'd been used to it ever since I could remember, and almost all the people I knew made their living that way. But when I did find out, I ran away, thinking to quit it for good. I'll tell you about it sometime, and how I'm back at it again.

"Of course she seemed a real girl when I was a youngster, and even now she sometimes seems that way, I've thought so much about her. But while I'm talking to you it all clears up and she comes to me in this light: she stands just for a plain idea, a better, cleaner life than this, and one I'd like to live; and if I could live it, why, I'd come to know that kind of girls, and their kind of people — your kind, that's what I mean. So I was wondering about your sister and you, and that's why — I don't know; I guess I was just wondering. But I suppose you know lots of girls like that, don't you?"

Joe nodded his head.



"Then tell me about them — something, anything," he added as he noted the fleeting expression of doubt in the other's eyes.

"Oh, that's easy," Joe began valiantly. To a certain extent he did understand the lad's hunger, and it seemed a simple enough task to at least partially satisfy him. "To begin with, they're like — hem! — why, they're like — girls, just girls." He broke off with a miserable sense of failure.

'Frisco Kid waited patiently, his face a study in expectancy.

Joe struggled valiantly to marshal his forces. To his mind, in quick succession, came the girls with whom he had gone to school — the sisters of the boys he knew, and those who were his sister's friends: slim girls and plump girls, tall girls and short girls, blue-eyed and brown-eyed, curly-haired, black-haired, golden-haired; in short, a procession of girls of all sorts and descriptions. But, to save himself, he could say nothing about them. Anyway, he'd never been a "sissy," and why should he be expected to know anything about them? "All girls are alike," he concluded desperately. "They're just the same as the ones you know, Kid — sure they are."

"But I don't know any."

Joe whistled. "And never did?"

"Yes, one. Carlotta Gispardi. But she couldn't speak English, and I couldn't speak Dago; and she died. I don't care; though I never knew any, I seem to know as much about them as you do."

"And I guess I know more about adventures all over the world than you do," Joe retorted.

Both boys laughed. But a moment later, Joe fell into deep thought. It had come upon him quite swiftly that he had not been duly grateful for the good things of life he did possess. Already home, father, and mother had assumed a greater significance to him; but he now found himself placing a higher personal value upon his sister and his chums and friends. He had never appreciated them properly, he thought, but henceforth — well, there would be a different tale to tell.

The voice of French Pete hailing them put a finish to the conversation, for they both ran on deck.

## Chapter XVII — 'Frisco Kid Tells His Story

"Get up ze mainsail and break out ze hook!" the Frenchman shouted. "And den tail on to ze Reindeer! No side-lights!"

"Come! Cast off those gaskets — lively!" 'Frisco Kid ordered. "Now lay on to the peak-halyards — there, that rope — cast it off the pin. And don't hoist ahead of me. There! Make fast! We'll stretch it afterwards. Run aft and come in on the main-sheet! Shove the helm up!"

Under the sudden driving power of the mainsail, the Dazzler strained and tugged at her anchor like an impatient horse till the muddy iron left the bottom with a rush and she was free.

"Let go the sheet! Come for'ard again and lend a hand on the chain! Stand by to give her the jib!" "Frisco Kid the boy who mooned over girls in pictorial magazines had vanished, and 'Frisco Kid the sailor, strong and dominant, was on deck. He ran aft and tacked about as the jib rattled aloft in the hands of Joe, who quickly joined him. Just then the Reindeer, like a monstrous bat, passed to leeward of them in the gloom.

"Ah, dose boys! Dey take all-a night!" they heard French Pete exclaim, and then the gruff voice of Red Nelson, who said: "Never you mind, Frenchy. I taught the Kid his sailorizing, and I ain't never been ashamed of him yet."

The Reindeer was the faster boat, but by spilling the wind from her sails they managed so that the boys could keep them in sight. The breeze came steadily in from the west, with a promise of early increase. The stars were being blotted out by masses of driving clouds, which indicated a greater velocity in the upper strata. 'Frisco Kid surveyed the sky.

"Going to have it good and stiff before morning," he said, "just as I told you."

Several hours later, both boats stood in for the San Mateo shore, and dropped anchor not more than a cable's-length away. A little wharf ran out, the bare end of which was perceptible to them, though they could discern a small yacht lying moored to a buoy a short distance away.

According to their custom, everything was put in readiness for hasty departure. The anchors could be tripped and the sails flung out on a moment's notice. Both skiffs came over noiselessly from the Reindeer. Red Nelson had given one of his two men to French Pete, so that each skiff was doubly manned. They were not a very prepossessing group of men, — at least, Joe did not think so, — for their faces bore a savage seriousness which almost made him shiver. The captain of the Dazzler buckled on his pistol-belt, and placed a rifle and a stout double-block tackle in the boat. Then he poured out wine all around, and, standing in the darkness of the little cabin, they pledged success to the expedition. Red Nelson was also armed, while his men wore at their hips the customary sailor's sheath-knife. They were very slow and careful to avoid noise in getting into the boats, French Pete pausing long enough to warn the boys to remain quietly aboard and not try any tricks.

"Now'd be your chance, Joe, if they hadn't taken the skiff," 'Frisco Kid whispered, when the boats had vanished into the loom of the land.

"What's the matter with the Dazzler?" was the unexpected answer. "We could up sail and away before you could say Jack Robinson."

'Frisco Kid hesitated. The spirit of comradeship was strong in the lad, and deserting a companion in a pinch could not but be repulsive to him.

"I don't think it'd be exactly square to leave them in the lurch ashore," he said. "Of course," he went on hurriedly, "I know the whole thing's wrong; but you remember that

first night, when you came running through the water for the skiff, and those fellows on the bank busy popping away? We didn't leave you in the lurch, did we?"

Joe assented reluctantly, and then a new thought flashed across his mind. "But they're pirates — and thieves — and criminals. They're breaking the law, and you and I are not willing to be lawbreakers. Besides, they'll not be left. There's the Reindeer. There's nothing to prevent them from getting away on her, and they'll never catch us in the dark."

"Come on, then." Though he had agreed, 'Frisco Kid did not quite like it, for it still seemed to savor of desertion.

They crawled forward and began to hoist the mainsail. The anchor they could slip, if necessary, and save the time of pulling it up. But at the first rattle of the halyards on the sheaves a warning "Hist!" came to them through the darkness, followed by a loudly whispered "Drop that!"

Glancing in the direction from which these sounds proceeded, they made out a white face peering at them from over the rail of the other sloop.

"Aw, it's only the Reindeer's boy," 'Frisco Kid said. "Come on."

Again they were interrupted at the first rattling of the blocks.

"I say, you fellers, you'd better let go them halyards pretty quick, I'm a-tellin' you, or I'll give you what for!"

This threat being dramatically capped by the click of a cocking pistol, 'Frisco Kid obeyed and went grumblingly back to the cockpit. "Oh, there's plenty more chances to come," he whispered consolingly to Joe. "French Pete was cute, wasn't he? He thought you might be trying to make a break, and put a guard on us."

Nothing came from the shore to indicate how the pirates were faring. Not a dog barked, not a light flared. Yet the air seemed quivering with an alarm about to burst forth. The night had taken on a strained feeling of intensity, as though it held in store all kinds of terrible things. The boys felt this keenly as they huddled against each other in the cockpit and waited.

"You were going to tell me about your running away," Joe ventured finally, "and why you came back again."

'Frisco Kid took up the tale at once, speaking in a muffled undertone close to the other's ear.

"You see, when I made up my mind to quit the life, there wasn't a soul to lend me a hand; but I knew that the only thing for me to do was to get ashore and find some kind of work, so I could study. Then I figured there'd be more chance in the country than in the city; so I gave Red Nelson the slip — I was on the Reindeer then. One night on the Alameda oyster-beds, I got ashore and headed back from the bay as fast as I could sprint. Nelson didn't catch me. But they were all Portuguese farmers thereabouts, and none of them had work for me. Besides, it was in the wrong time of the year — winter. That shows how much I knew about the land.

"I'd saved up a couple of dollars, and I kept traveling back, deeper and deeper into the country, looking for work, and buying bread and cheese and such things from the

storekeepers. I tell you, it was cold, nights, sleeping out without blankets, and I was always glad when morning came. But worse than that was the way everybody looked on me. They were all suspicious, and not a bit afraid to show it, and sometimes they'd set their dogs on me and tell me to get along. Seemed as though there wasn't any place for me on the land. Then my money gave out, and just about the time I was good and hungry I got captured."

"Captured! What for?"

"Nothing. Living, I suppose. I crawled into a haystack to sleep one night, because it was warmer, and along comes a village constable and arrests me for being a tramp. At first they thought I was a runaway, and telegraphed my description all over. I told them I didn't have any people, but they wouldn't believe me for a long while. And then, when nobody claimed me, the judge sent me to a boys' 'refuge' in San Francisco."

He stopped and peered intently in the direction of the shore. The darkness and the silence in which the men had been swallowed up was profound. Nothing was stirring save the rising wind.

"I thought I'd die in that 'refuge.' It was just like being in jail. We were locked up and guarded like prisoners. Even then, if I could have liked the other boys it might have been all right. But they were mostly street-boys of the worst kind — lying, and sneaking, and cowardly, without one spark of manhood or one idea of square dealing and fair play. There was only one thing I did like, and that was the books. Oh, I did lots of reading, I tell you! But that couldn't make up for the rest. I wanted the freedom and the sunlight and the salt water. And what had I done to be kept in prison and herded with such a gang? Instead of doing wrong, I had tried to do right, to make myself better, and that's what I got for it. I wasn't old enough, you see, to reason anything out.

"Sometimes I'd see the sunshine dancing on the water and showing white on the sails, and the Reindeer cutting through it just as you please, and I'd get that sick I would know hardly what I did. And then the boys would come against me with some of their meannesses, and I'd start in to lick the whole kit of them. Then the men in charge would lock me up and punish me. Well, I couldn't stand it any longer; I watched my chance and ran for it. Seemed as though there wasn't any place on the land for me, so I picked up with French Pete and went back on the bay. That's about all there is to it, though I'm going to try it again when I get a little older — old enough to get a square deal for myself."

"You're going to go back on the land with me," Joe said authoritatively, laying a hand on his shoulder. "That's what you're going to do. As for — "

Bang! a revolver-shot rang out from the shore. Bang! bang! More guns were speaking sharply and hurriedly. A man's voice rose wildly on the air and died away. Somebody began to cry for help. Both boys were on their feet on the instant, hoisting the mainsail and getting everything ready to run. The Reindeer boy was doing likewise. A man, roused from his sleep on the yacht, thrust an excited head through the skylight, but

withdrew it hastily at sight of the two stranger sloops. The intensity of waiting was broken, the time for action come.

## Chapter XVIII — A New Responsibility for Joe

Heaving in on the anchor-chain till it was up and down, Frisco Kid and Joe ceased from their exertions. Everything was in readiness to give the Dazzler the jib, and go. They strained their eyes in the direction of the shore. The clamor had died away, but here and there lights were beginning to flash. The creaking of a block and tackle came to their ears, and they heard Red Nelson's voice singing out: "Lower away!" and "Cast off!"

"French Pete forgot to oil it," Frisco Kid commented, referring to the tackle.

"Takin' their time about it, ain't they?" the boy on the Reindeer called over to them, sitting down on the cabin and mopping his face after the exertion of hoisting the mainsail single-handed.

"Guess they're all right," Frisco Kid rejoined. "All ready?"

"Yes — all right here."

"Say, you," the man on the yacht cried through the skylight, not venturing to show his head. "You'd better go away."

"And you'd better stay below and keep quiet," was the response. "We'll take care of ourselves. You do the same."

"If I was only out of this, I'd show you!" he threatened.

"Lucky for you you're not," responded the boy on the Reindeer; and thereat the man kept quiet.

"Here they come!" said Frisco Kid suddenly to Joe.

The two skiffs shot out of the darkness and came alongside. Some kind of an altercation was going on, as French Pete's voice attested.

"No, no!" he cried. "Put it on ze Dazzler. Ze Reindeer she sail too fast-a, and run away, oh, so queeck, and never more I see it. Put it on ze Dazzler. Eh? Wot you say?"

"All right then," Red Nelson agreed. "We'll whack up afterwards. But, say, hurry up. Out with you, lads, and heave her up! My arm's broke."

The men tumbled out, ropes were cast inboard, and all hands, with the exception of Joe, tailed on. The shouting of men, the sound of oars, and the rattling and slapping of blocks and sails, told that the men on shore were getting under way for the pursuit.

"Now!" Red Nelson commanded. "All together! Don't let her come back or you'll smash the skiff. There she takes it! A long pull and a strong pull! Once again! And yet again! Get a turn there, somebody, and take a spell."

Though the task was but half accomplished, they were exhausted by the strenuous effort, and hailed the rest eagerly. Joe glanced over the side to discover what the heavy object might be, and saw the vague outlines of a small office-safe.

"Now all together!" Red Nelson began again. "Take her on the run and don't let her stop! Yo, ho! heave, ho! Once again! And another! Over with her!"

Straining and gasping, with tense muscles and heaving chests, they brought the cumbersome weight over the side, rolled it on top of the rail, and lowered it into the cockpit on the run. The cabin doors were thrown apart, and it was moved along, end for end, till it lay on the cabin floor, snug against the end of the centerboard-case. Red Nelson had followed it aboard to superintend. His left arm hung helpless at his side, and from the finger-tips blood dripped with monotonous regularity. He did not seem to mind it, however, nor even the mutterings of the human storm he had raised ashore, and which, to judge by the sounds, was even then threatening to break upon them.

"Lay your course for the Golden Gate," he said to French Pete, as he turned to go. "I'll try to stand by you, but if you get lost in the dark I'll meet you outside, off the Farralones, in the morning." He sprang into the skiff after the men, and, with a wave of his uninjured arm, cried heartily: "And then it's for Mexico, my lads — Mexico and summer weather!"

Just as the Dazzler, freed from her anchor, paid off under the jib and filled away, a dark sail loomed under their stern, barely missing the skiff in tow. The cockpit of the stranger was crowded with men, who raised their voices angrily at sight of the pirates. Joe had half a mind to run forward and cut the halyards so that the Dazzler might be captured. As he had told French Pete the day before, he had done nothing to be ashamed of, and was not afraid to go before a court of justice. But the thought of 'Frisco Kid restrained him. He wanted to take him ashore with him, but in so doing he did not wish to take him to jail. So he, too, began to experience a keen interest in the escape of the Dazzler.

The pursuing sloop rounded up hurriedly to come about after them, and in the darkness fouled the yacht which lay at anchor. The man aboard of her, thinking that at last his time had come, gave one wild yell, ran on deck, and leaped overboard. In the confusion of the collision, and while they were endeavoring to save him, French Pete and the boys slipped away into the night.

The Reindeer had already disappeared, and by the time Joe and 'Frisco Kid had the running-gear coiled down and everything in shape, they were standing out in open water. The wind was freshening constantly, and the Dazzler heeled a lively clip through the comparatively smooth stretch. Before an hour had passed, the lights of Hunter's Point were well on her starboard beam. 'Frisco Kid went below to make coffee, but Joe remained on deck, watching the lights of South San Francisco grow, and speculating on their destination. Mexico! They were going to sea in such a frail craft! Impossible! At least, it seemed so to him, for his conceptions of ocean travel were limited to steamers and full-rigged ships. He was beginning to feel half sorry that he had not cut the halyards, and longed to ask French Pete a thousand questions; but just as the first was on his lips that worthy ordered him to go below and get some coffee and then to turn in. He was followed shortly afterward by 'Frisco Kid, French Pete remaining at his lonely task of beating down the bay and out to sea. Twice he heard the waves buffeted

back from some flying forefoot, and once he saw a sail to leeward on the opposite tack, which luffed sharply and came about at sight of him. But the darkness favored, and he heard no more of it — perhaps because he worked into the wind closer by a point, and held on his way with a shaking after-leech.

Shortly after dawn, the two boys were called and came sleepily on deck. The day had broken cold and gray, while the wind had attained half a gale. Joe noted with astonishment the white tents of the quarantine station on Angel Island. San Francisco lay a smoky blur on the southern horizon, while the night, still lingering on the western edge of the world, slowly withdrew before their eyes. French Pete was just finishing a long reach into the Raccoon Straits, and at the same time studiously regarding a plunging sloop-yacht half a mile astern.

“Dey t’ink to catch ze Dazzler, eh? Bah!” And he brought the craft in question about, laying a course straight for the Golden Gate.

The pursuing yacht followed suit. Joe watched her a few moments. She held an apparently parallel course to them, and forged ahead much faster.

“Why, at this rate they’ll have us in no time!” he cried.

French Pete laughed. “You t’ink so? Bah! Dey outfoot; we outpoint. Dey are scared of ze wind; we wipe ze eye of ze wind. Ah! you wait, you see.”

“They’re traveling ahead faster,” Frisco Kid explained, “but we’re sailing closer to the wind. In the end we’ll beat them, even if they have the nerve to cross the bar — which I don’t think they have. Look! See!”

Ahead could be seen the great ocean surges, flinging themselves skyward and bursting into roaring caps of smother. In the midst of it, now rolling her dripping bottom clear, now sousing her deck-load of lumber far above the guards, a coasting steam-schooner was lumbering drunkenly into port. It was magnificent — this battle between man and the elements. Whatever timidity he had entertained fled away, and Joe’s nostrils began to dilate and his eyes to flash at the nearness of the impending struggle.

French Pete called for his oilskins and sou’wester, and Joe also was equipped with a spare suit. Then he and Frisco Kid were sent below to lash and cleat the safe in place. In the midst of this task Joe glanced at the firm-name, gilt-lettered on the face of it, and read: “Bronson & Tate.” Why, that was his father and his father’s partner. That was their safe, their money! Frisco Kid, nailing the last cleat on the floor of the cabin, looked up and followed his fascinated gaze.

“That’s rough, isn’t it,” he whispered. “Your father?”

Joe nodded. He could see it all now. They had run into San Andreas, where his father worked the big quarries, and most probably the safe contained the wages of the thousand men or more whom he employed. “Don’t say anything,” he cautioned.

Frisco Kid agreed knowingly. “French Pete can’t read, anyway,” he muttered, “and the chances are that Red Nelson won’t know what your name is. But, just the same, it’s pretty rough. They’ll break it open and divide up as soon as they can, so I don’t see what you’re going to do about it.”

“Wait and see.” Joe had made up his mind that he would do his best to stand by his father’s property. At the worst, it could only be lost; and that would surely be the case were he not along, while, being along, he at least had a fighting chance to save it, or to be in position to recover it. Responsibilities were showering upon him thick and fast. But a few days back he had had but himself to consider; then, in some subtle way, he had felt a certain accountability for ‘Frisco Kid’s future welfare; and after that, and still more subtly, he had become aware of duties which he owed to his position, to his sister, to his chums and friends; and now, by a most unexpected chain of circumstances, came the pressing need of service for his father’s sake. It was a call upon his deepest strength, and he responded bravely. While the future might be doubtful, he had no doubt of himself; and this very state of mind, this self-confidence, by a generous alchemy, gave him added resolution. Nor did he fail to be vaguely aware of it, and to grasp dimly at the truth that confidence breeds confidence — strength, strength.

## Chapter XIX — The Boys Plan an Escape

“Now she takes it!” French Pete cried.

Both lads ran into the cockpit. They were on the edge of the breaking bar. A huge forty-footer reared a foam-crested head far above them, stealing their wind for the moment and threatening to crush the tiny craft like an egg-shell. Joe held his breath. It was the supreme moment. French Pete luffed straight into it, and the Dazzler mounted the steep slope with a rush, poised a moment on the giddy summit, and fell into the yawning valley beyond. Keeping off in the intervals to fill the mainsail, and luffing into the combers, they worked their way across the dangerous stretch. Once they caught the tail-end of a whitecap and were well-nigh smothered in the froth, but otherwise the sloop bobbed and ducked with the happy facility of a cork.

To Joe it seemed as though he had been lifted out of himself — out of the world. Ah, this was life! this was action! Surely it could not be the old, commonplace world he had lived in so long! The sailors, grouped on the streaming deck-load of the steamer, waved their sou’westers, and, on the bridge, even the captain was expressing his admiration for the plucky craft.

“Ah, you see! you see!” French Pete pointed astern.

The sloop-yacht had been afraid to venture it, and was skirting back and forth on the inner edge of the bar. The chase was over. A pilot-boat, running for shelter from the coming storm, flew by them like a frightened bird, passing the steamer as though the latter were standing still.

Half an hour later the Dazzler sped beyond the last smoking sea and was sliding up and down on the long Pacific swell. The wind had increased its velocity and necessitated a reefing down of jib and mainsail. Then they laid off again, full and free on the



starboard tack, for the Farralones, thirty miles away. By the time breakfast was cooked and eaten they picked up the Reindeer, which was hove to and working offshore to the south and west. The wheel was lashed down, and there was not a soul on deck.

French Pete complained bitterly against such recklessness. "Dat is ze one fault of Red Nelson. He no care. He is afraid of not'ing. Some day he will die, oh, so vaire queeck! I know he will."

Three times they circled about the Reindeer, running under her weather quarter and shouting in chorus, before they brought anybody on deck. Sail was then made at once, and together the two cockle-shells plunged away into the vastness of the Pacific. This was necessary, as Frisco Kid informed Joe, in order to have an offing before the whole fury of the storm broke upon them. Otherwise they would be driven on the lee shore of the California coast. Grub and water, he said, could be obtained by running into the land when fine weather came. He congratulated Joe upon the fact that he was not seasick, which circumstance likewise brought praise from French Pete and put him in better humor with his mutinous young sailor.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," Frisco Kid whispered, while cooking dinner. "To-night we'll drag French Pete down — "

"Drag French Pete down!"

"Yes, and tie him up good and snug, as soon as it gets dark; then put out the lights and make a run for land; get to port anyway, anywhere, just so long as we shake loose from Red Nelson."

"Yes," Joe deliberated; "that would be all right — if I could do it alone. But as for asking you to help me — why, that would be treason to French Pete."

"That's what I'm coming to. I'll help you if you promise me a few things. French Pete took me aboard when I ran away from the 'refuge,' when I was starving and had no place to go, and I just can't repay him for that by sending him to jail. 'T wouldn't be square. Your father wouldn't have you break your word, would he?"

"No; of course not." Joe knew how sacredly his father held his word of honor.

"Then you must promise, and your father must see it carried out, not to press any charge against French Pete."

"All right. And now, what about yourself? You can't very well expect to go away with him again on the Dazzler!"

"Oh, don't bother about me. There's nobody to miss me. I'm strong enough, and know enough about it, to ship to sea as ordinary seaman. I'll go away somewhere over on the other side of the world, and begin all over again."

"Then we'll have to call it off, that's all."

"Call what off?"

"Tying French Pete up and running for it."

"No, sir. That's decided upon."

"Now listen here: I'll not have a thing to do with it. I'll go on to Mexico first, if you don't make me one promise."

"And what's the promise?"

“Just this: you place yourself in my hands from the moment we get ashore, and trust to me. You don’t know anything about the land, anyway — you said so. And I’ll fix it with my father — I know I can — so that you can get to know people of the right sort, and study and get an education, and be something else than a bay pirate or a sailor. That’s what you’d like, isn’t it?”

Though he said nothing, Frisco Kid showed how well he liked it by the expression of his face.

“And it’ll be no more than your due, either,” Joe continued. “You will have stood by me, and you’ll have recovered my father’s money. He’ll owe it to you.”

“But I don’t do things that way. I don’t think much of a man who does a favor just to be paid for it.”

“Now you keep quiet. How much do you think it would cost my father for detectives and all that to recover that safe? Give me your promise, that’s all, and when I’ve got things arranged, if you don’t like them you can back out. Come on; that’s fair.”

They shook hands on the bargain, and proceeded to map out their line of action for the night.

But the storm, yelling down out of the northwest, had something entirely different in store for the Dazzler and her crew. By the time dinner was over they were forced to put double reefs in mainsail and jib, and still the gale had not reached its height. The sea, also, had been kicked up till it was a continuous succession of water-mountains, frightful and withal grand to look upon from the low deck of the sloop. It was only when the sloops were tossed upon the crests of the waves at the same time that they caught sight of each other. Occasional fragments of seas swashed into the cockpit or dashed aft over the cabin, and Joe was stationed at the small pump to keep the well dry.

At three o’clock, watching his chance, French Pete motioned to the Reindeer that he was going to heave to and get out a sea-anchor. This latter was of the nature of a large shallow canvas bag, with the mouth held open by triangularly lashed spars. To this the towing-ropes were attached, on the kite principle, so that the greatest resisting surface was presented to the water. The sloop, drifting so much faster, would thus be held bow on to both wind and sea — the safest possible position in a storm. Red Nelson waved his hand in response that he understood and to go ahead.

French Pete went forward to launch the sea-anchor himself, leaving it to Frisco Kid to put the helm down at the proper moment and run into the wind. The Frenchman poised on the slippery fore-deck, waiting an opportunity. But at that moment the Dazzler lifted into an unusually large sea, and, as she cleared the summit, caught a heavy snort of the gale at the very instant she was righting herself to an even keel. Thus there was not the slightest yield to this sudden pressure on her sails and mast-gear.

There was a quick snap, followed by a crash. The steel weather-rigging carried away at the lanyards, and mast, jib, mainsail, blocks, stays, sea-anchor, French Pete — everything — went over the side. Almost by a miracle, the captain clutched at the bobstay and managed to get one hand up and over the bowsprit. The boys ran forward

to drag him into safety, and Red Nelson, observing the disaster, put up his helm and ran down to the rescue.

## Chapter XX — Perilous Hours

French Pete was uninjured from the fall overboard with the Dazzler's mast; but the sea-anchor, which had gone with him, had not escaped so easily. The gaff of the mainsail had been driven through it, and it refused to work. The wreckage, thumping alongside, held the sloop in a quartering slant to the seas — not so dangerous a position as it might be, nor so safe, either. "Good-by, old-a Dazzler. Never no more you wipe ze eye of ze wind. Never no more you kick your heels at ze crack gentlemen-yachts."

So the captain lamented, standing in the cockpit and surveying the ruin with wet eyes. Even Joe, who bore him great dislike, felt sorry for him at this moment. A heavier blast of the wind caught the jagged crest of a wave and hurled it upon the helpless craft.

"Can't we save her?" Joe spluttered.

'Frisco Kid shook his head.

"Nor the safe?"

"Impossible," he answered. "Couldn't lay another boat alongside for a United States mint. As it is, it'll keep us guessing to save ourselves."

Another sea swept over them, and the skiff, which had long since been swamped, dashed itself to pieces against the stern. Then the Reindeer towered above them on a mountain of water. Joe caught himself half shrinking back, for it seemed she would fall down squarely on top of them; but the next instant she dropped into the gaping trough, and they were looking down upon her far below. It was a striking picture — one Joe was destined never to forget. The Reindeer was wallowing in the snow-white smother, her rails flush with the sea, the water scudding across her deck in foaming cataracts. The air was filled with flying spray, which made the scene appear hazy and unreal. One of the men was clinging to the perilous after-deck and striving to cast off the water-logged skiff. The boy, leaning far over the cockpit-rail and holding on for dear life, was passing him a knife. The second man stood at the wheel, putting it up with flying hands and forcing the sloop to pay off. Beside him, his injured arm in a sling, was Red Nelson, his sou'wester gone and his fair hair plastered in wet, wind-blown ringlets about his face. His whole attitude breathed indomitability, courage, strength. It seemed almost as though the divine were blazing forth from him. Joe looked upon him in sudden awe, and, realizing the enormous possibilities of the man, felt sorrow for the way in which they had been wasted. A thief and a robber! In that flashing moment Joe caught a glimpse of human truth, grasped at the mystery of success and failure. Life threw back its curtains that he might read it and understand. Of such stuff as Red Nelson were heroes made; but they possessed wherein he lacked — the power of

choice, the careful poise of mind, the sober control of soul: in short, the very things his father had so often "preached" to him about.

These were the thoughts which came to Joe in the flight of a second. Then the Reindeer swept skyward and hurtled across their bow to leeward on the breast of a mighty billow.

"Ze wild man! ze wild man!" French Pete shrieked, watching her in amazement. "He t'inks he can jibe! He will die! We will all die! He must come about. Oh, ze fool, ze fool!"

But time was precious, and Red Nelson ventured the chance. At the right moment he jibed the mainsail over and hauled back on the wind.

"Here she comes! Make ready to jump for it," Frisco Kid cried to Joe.

The Reindeer dashed by their stern, heeling over till the cabin windows were buried, and so close that it appeared she must run them down. But a freak of the waters lurched the two crafts apart. Red Nelson, seeing that the manoeuvre had miscarried, instantly instituted another. Throwing the helm hard up, the Reindeer whirled on her heel, thus swinging her overhanging main-boom closer to the Dazzler. French Pete was the nearest, and the opportunity could last no longer than a second. Like a cat he sprang, catching the foot-rope with both hands. Then the Reindeer forged ahead, dipping him into the sea at every plunge. But he clung on, working inboard every time he emerged, till he dropped into the cockpit as Red Nelson squared off to run down to leeward and repeat the manoeuvre.

"Your turn next," Frisco Kid said.

"No; yours," Joe replied.

"But I know more about the water," Frisco Kid insisted.

"And I can swim as well as you," the other retorted.

It would have been hard to forecast the outcome of this dispute; but, as it was, the swift rush of events made any settlement needless. The Reindeer had jibed over and was plowing back at breakneck speed, careening at such an angle that it seemed she must surely capsize. It was a gallant sight. Just then the storm burst in all its fury, the shouting wind flattening the ragged crests till they boiled. The Reindeer dipped from view behind an immense wave. The wave rolled on, but the next moment, where the sloop had been, the boys noted with startled eyes only the angry waters! Doubting, they looked a second time. There was no Reindeer. They were alone on the torn crest of the ocean!

"God have mercy on their souls!" Frisco Kid said solemnly.

Joe was too horrified at the suddenness of the catastrophe to utter a sound.

"Sailed her clean under, and, with the ballast she carried, went straight to bottom," Frisco Kid gasped. Then, turning to their own pressing need, he said: "Now we've got to look out for ourselves. The back of the storm broke in that puff, but the sea'll kick up worse yet as the wind eases down. Lend a hand and hang on with the other. We've got to get her head-on."

Together, knives in hand, they crawled forward to where the pounding wreckage hampered the boat sorely. 'Frisco Kid took the lead in the ticklish work, but Joe obeyed orders like a veteran. Every minute or two the bow was swept by the sea, and they were pounded and buffeted about like a pair of shuttlecocks. First the main portion of the wreckage was securely fastened to the forward bitts; then, breathless and gasping, more often under the water than out, they cut and hacked at the tangle of halyards, sheets, stays, and tackles. The cockpit was taking water rapidly, and it was a race between swamping and completing the task. At last, however, everything stood clear save the lee rigging. 'Frisco Kid slashed the lanyards. The storm did the rest. The Dazzler drifted swiftly to leeward of the wreckage till the strain on the line fast to the forward bitts jerked her bow into place and she ducked dead into the eye of the wind and sea.

Pausing only for a cheer at the success of their undertaking, the two lads raced aft, where the cockpit was half full and the dunnage of the cabin all afloat. With a couple of buckets procured from the stern lockers, they proceeded to fling the water overboard. It was heartbreaking work, for many a barrellful was flung back upon them again; but they persevered, and when night fell the Dazzler, bobbing merrily at her sea-anchor, could boast that her pumps sucked once more. As 'Frisco Kid had said, the backbone of the storm was broken, though the wind had veered to the west, where it still blew stiffly.

"If she holds," 'Frisco Kid said, referring to the breeze, "we'll drift to the California coast sometime to-morrow. Nothing to do now but wait."

They said little, oppressed by the loss of their comrades and overcome with exhaustion, preferring to huddle against each other for the sake of warmth and companionship. It was a miserable night, and they shivered constantly from the cold. Nothing dry was to be obtained aboard, food, blankets, everything being soaked with the salt water. Sometimes they dozed; but these intervals were short and harassing, for it seemed each took turn in waking with such sudden starts as to rouse the other.

At last day broke, and they looked about. Wind and sea had dropped considerably, and there was no question as to the safety of the Dazzler. The coast was nearer than they had expected, its cliffs showing dark and forbidding in the gray of dawn. But with the rising of the sun they could see the yellow beaches, flanked by the white surf, and beyond — it seemed too good to be true — the clustering houses and smoking chimneys of a town.

"Santa Cruz!" 'Frisco Kid cried, "and no chance of being wrecked in the surf!"

"Then the safe is safe?" Joe queried.

"Safe! I should say so. It ain't much of a sheltered harbor for large vessels, but with this breeze we'll run right up the mouth of the San Lorenzo River. Then there's a little lake like, and a boat-house. Water smooth as glass and hardly over your head. You see, I was down here once before, with Red Nelson. Come on. We'll be in in time for breakfast."

Bringing to light some spare coils of rope from the lockers, he put a clove-hitch on the standing part of the sea-anchor hawser, and carried the new running-line aft, making it fast to the stern bitts. Then he cast off from the forward bitts. The Dazzler swung off into the trough, completed the evolution, and pointed her nose toward shore. A couple of spare oars from below, and as many water-soaked blankets, sufficed to make a jury-mast and sail. When this was in place, Joe cast loose from the wreckage, which was now towing astern, while 'Frisco Kid took the tiller.

## Chapter XXI — Joe and His Father

"How's that?" cried 'Frisco Kid, as he finished making the Dazzler fast fore and aft, and sat down on the stringpiece of the tiny wharf. "What'll we do next, captain?"

Joe looked up in quick surprise. "Why — I — what's the matter?"

"Well, ain't you captain now? Haven't we reached land? I'm crew from now on, ain't I? What's your orders?"

Joe caught the spirit of it. "Pipe all hands for breakfast — that is — wait a minute."

Diving below, he possessed himself of the money he had stowed away in his bundle when he came aboard. Then he locked the cabin door, and they went uptown in search of a restaurant. Over the breakfast Joe planned the next move, and, when they had done, communicated it to 'Frisco Kid.

In response to his inquiry, the cashier told him when the morning train started for San Francisco. He glanced at the clock.

"Just time to catch it," he said to 'Frisco Kid. "Keep the cabin doors locked, and don't let anybody come aboard. Here's money. Eat at the restaurants. Dry your blankets and sleep in the cockpit. I'll be back to-morrow. And don't let anybody into that cabin. Good-by."

With a hasty hand-grip, he sped down the street to the depot. The conductor looked at him with surprise when he punched his ticket. And well he might, for it was not the custom of his passengers to travel in sea-boots and sou'westers. But Joe did not mind. He did not even notice. He had bought a paper and was absorbed in its contents. Before long his eyes caught an interesting paragraph:

### SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN LOST

The tug Sea Queen, chartered by Bronson & Tate, has returned from a fruitless cruise outside the Heads. No news of value could be obtained concerning the pirates who so daringly carried off their safe at San Andreas last Tuesday night. The lighthouse-keeper at the Farralones mentions having sighted the two sloops Wednesday morning, clawing offshore in the teeth of the gale. It is supposed by shipping men that they perished in the storm with, their ill-gotten treasure. Rumor has it that, in addition to the ten thousand dollars in gold, the safe contained papers of great importance.

When Joe had read this he felt a great relief. It was evident no one had been killed at San Andreas the night of the robbery, else there would have been some comment

on it in the paper. Nor, if they had had any clue to his own whereabouts, would they have omitted such a striking bit of information.

At the depot in San Francisco the curious onlookers were surprised to see a boy clad conspicuously in sea-boots and sou'wester hail a cab and dash away. But Joe was in a hurry. He knew his father's hours, and was fearful lest he should not catch him before he went to lunch.

The office-boy scowled at him when he pushed open the door and asked to see Mr. Bronson; nor could the head clerk, when summoned by this disreputable intruder, recognize him.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Willis?"

Mr. Willis looked a second time. "Why, it's Joe Bronson! Of all things under the sun, where did you drop from? Go right in. Your father's in there."

Mr. Bronson stopped dictating to his stenographer and looked up. "Hello! Where have you been?" he said.

"To sea," Joe answered demurely, not sure of just what kind of a reception he was to get, and fingering his sou'wester nervously.

"Short trip, eh? How did you make out?"

"Oh, so-so." He had caught the twinkle in his father's eye and knew that it was all clear sailing. "Not so bad — er — that is, considering."

"Considering?"

"Well, not exactly that; rather, it might have been worse, while it couldn't have been better."

"That's interesting. Sit down." Then, turning to the stenographer: "You may go, Mr. Brown, and — hum! — I won't need you any more to-day."

It was all Joe could do to keep from crying, so kindly and naturally had his father received him, making him feel at once as if not the slightest thing uncommon had occurred. It seemed as if he had just returned from a vacation, or, man-grown, had come back from some business trip.

"Now go ahead, Joe. You were speaking to me a moment ago in conundrums, and you have aroused my curiosity to a most uncomfortable degree."

Whereupon Joe sat down and told what had happened — all that had happened — from Monday night to that very moment. Each little incident he related, — every detail, — not forgetting his conversations with 'Frisco Kid nor his plans concerning him. His face flushed and he was carried away with the excitement of the narrative, while Mr. Bronson was almost as eager, urging him on whenever he slackened his pace, but otherwise remaining silent.

"So you see," Joe concluded, "it couldn't possibly have turned out any better."

"Ah, well," Mr. Bronson deliberated judiciously, "it may be so, and then again it may not."

"I don't see it." Joe felt sharp disappointment at his father's qualified approval. It seemed to him that the return of the safe merited something stronger.

That Mr. Bronson fully comprehended the way Joe felt about it was clearly in evidence, for he went on: "As to the matter of the safe, all hail to you, Joe! Credit, and plenty of it, is your due. Mr. Tate and myself have already spent five hundred dollars in attempting to recover it. So important was it that we have also offered five thousand dollars reward, and but this morning were considering the advisability of increasing the amount. But, my son," — Mr. Bronson stood up, resting a hand affectionately on his boy's shoulder, — "there are certain things in this world which are of still greater importance than gold, or papers which represent what gold may buy. How about yourself? That's the point. Will you sell the best possibilities of your life right now for a million dollars?"

Joe shook his head.

"As I said, that's the point. A human life the money of the world cannot buy; nor can it redeem one which is misspent; nor can it make full and complete and beautiful a life which is dwarfed and warped and ugly. How about yourself? What is to be the effect of all these strange adventures on your life — your life, Joe? Are you going to pick yourself up to-morrow and try it over again? or the next day? or the day after? Do you understand? Why, Joe, do you think for one moment that I would place against the best value of my son's life the paltry value of a safe? And can I say, until time has told me, whether this trip of yours could not possibly have been better? Such an experience is as potent for evil as for good. One dollar is exactly like another — there are many in the world: but no Joe is like my Joe, nor can there be any others in the world to take his place. Don't you see, Joe? Don't you understand?"

Mr. Bronson's voice broke slightly, and the next instant Joe was sobbing as though his heart would break. He had never understood this father of his before, and he knew now the pain he must have caused him, to say nothing of his mother and sister. But the four stirring days he had lived had given him a clearer view of the world and humanity, and he had always possessed the power of putting his thoughts into speech; so he spoke of these things and the lessons he had learned — the conclusions he had drawn from his conversations with 'Frisco Kid, from his intercourse with French Pete, from the graphic picture he retained of the Reindeer and Red Nelson as they wallowed in the trough beneath him. And Mr. Bronson listened and, in turn, understood.

"But what of 'Frisco Kid, father?" Joe asked when he had finished.

"Hum! there seems to be a great deal of promise in the boy, from what you say of him." Mr. Bronson hid the twinkle in his eye this time. "And, I must confess, he seems perfectly capable of shifting for himself."

"Sir?" Joe could not believe his ears.

"Let us see, then. He is at present entitled to the half of five thousand dollars, the other half of which belongs to you. It was you two who preserved the safe from the bottom of the Pacific, and if you only had waited a little longer, Mr. Tate and myself would have increased the reward."

"Oh!" Joe caught a glimmering of the light. "Part of that is easily arranged. I simply refuse to take my half. As to the other — that isn't exactly what 'Frisco Kid desires.



He wants friends — and — and — though you didn't say so, they are far higher than money, nor can money buy them. He wants friends and a chance for an education, not twenty-five hundred dollars."

"Don't you think it would be better for him to choose for himself?"

"Ah, no. That's all arranged."

"Arranged?"

"Yes, sir. He's captain on sea, and I'm captain on land. So he's under my charge now."

"Then you have the power of attorney for him in the present negotiations? Good. I'll make you a proposition. The twenty-five hundred dollars shall be held in trust by me, on his demand at any time. We'll settle about yours afterward. Then he shall be put on probation for, say, a year — in our office. You can either coach him in his studies, for I am confident now that you will be up in yours hereafter, or he can attend night-school. And after that, if he comes through his period of probation with flying colors, I'll give him the same opportunities for an education that you possess. It all depends on himself. And now, Mr. Attorney, what have you to say to my offer in the interests of your client?"

"That I close with it at once."

Father and son shook hands.

"And what are you going to do now, Joe?"

"Send a telegram to 'Frisco Kid first, and then hurry home."

"Then wait a minute till I call up San Andreas and tell Mr. Tate the good news, and then I'll go with you."

"Mr. Willis," Mr. Bronson said as they left the outer office, "the San Andreas safe is recovered, and we'll all take a holiday. Kindly tell the clerks that they are free for the rest of the day. And I say," he called back as they entered the elevator, "don't forget the office-boy."

# A Daughter of the Snows

Published in 1902, this novel is set in the Yukon, and tells the story of Frona Welse, “a Stanford graduate and physical Valkyrie” who takes to the trail after upsetting her wealthy father’s community by her forthright manner and befriending the town’s prostitute. She is also torn between love for two suitors: Gregory St Vincent, a local man who turns out to be cowardly and treacherous; and Vance Corliss, a Yale-trained mining engineer. The novel is noteworthy for its strong-willed and independent heroine, one of many such characters that would feature in his later works.

The first edition

# Chapter I

“All ready, Miss Welse, though I’m sorry we can’t spare one of the steamer’s boats.” Frona Welse arose with alacrity and came to the first officer’s side.

“We’re so busy,” he explained, “and gold-rushers are such perishable freight, at least — ”

“I understand,” she interrupted, “and I, too, am behaving as though I were perishable. And I am sorry for the trouble I am giving you, but — but — ” She turned quickly and pointed to the shore. “Do you see that big log-house? Between the clump of pines and the river? I was born there.”

“Guess I’d be in a hurry myself,” he muttered, sympathetically, as he piloted her along the crowded deck.

Everybody was in everybody else’s way; nor was there one who failed to proclaim it at the top of his lungs. A thousand gold-seekers were clamoring for the immediate landing of their outfits. Each hatchway gaped wide open, and from the lower depths the shrieking donkey-engines were hurrying the misassorted outfits skyward. On either side of the steamer, rows of scows received the flying cargo, and on each of these scows a sweating mob of men charged the descending slings and heaved bales and boxes about in frantic search. Men waved shipping receipts and shouted over the steamer-rails to them. Sometimes two and three identified the same article, and war arose. The “two-circle” and the “circle-and-dot” brands caused endless jangling, while every whipsaw discovered a dozen claimants.

“The purser insists that he is going mad,” the first officer said, as he helped Frona Welse down the gangway to the landing stage, “and the freight clerks have turned the cargo over to the passengers and quit work. But we’re not so unlucky as the Star of Bethlehem,” he reassured her, pointing to a steamship at anchor a quarter of a mile away. “Half of her passengers have pack-horses for Skaguay and White Pass, and the other half are bound over the Chilcoot. So they’ve mutinied and everything’s at a standstill.”

“Hey, you!” he cried, beckoning to a Whitehall which hovered discreetly on the outer rim of the floating confusion.

A tiny launch, pulling heroically at a huge tow-barge, attempted to pass between; but the boatman shot nervily across her bow, and just as he was clear, unfortunately, caught a crab. This slewed the boat around and brought it to a stop.

“Watch out!” the first officer shouted.

A pair of seventy-foot canoes, loaded with outfits, gold-rushers, and Indians, and under full sail, drove down from the counter direction. One of them veered sharply

towards the landing stage, but the other pinched the Whitehall against the barge. The boatman had unshipped his oars in time, but his small craft groaned under the pressure and threatened to collapse. Whereat he came to his feet, and in short, nervous phrases consigned all canoe-men and launch-captains to eternal perdition. A man on the barge leaned over from above and baptized him with crisp and crackling oaths, while the whites and Indians in the canoe laughed derisively.

“Aw, g’wan!” one of them shouted. “Why don’t yeh learn to row?”

The boatman’s fist landed on the point of his critic’s jaw and dropped him stunned upon the heaped merchandise. Not content with this summary act he proceeded to follow his fist into the other craft. The miner nearest him tugged vigorously at a revolver which had jammed in its shiny leather holster, while his brother argonauts, laughing, waited the outcome. But the canoe was under way again, and the Indian helmsman drove the point of his paddle into the boatman’s chest and hurled him backward into the bottom of the Whitehall.

When the flood of oaths and blasphemy was at full tide, and violent assault and quick death seemed most imminent, the first officer had stolen a glance at the girl by his side. He had expected to find a shocked and frightened maiden countenance, and was not at all prepared for the flushed and deeply interested face which met his eyes.

“I am sorry,” he began.

But she broke in, as though annoyed by the interruption, “No, no; not at all. I am enjoying it every bit. Though I am glad that man’s revolver stuck. If it had not — ”

“We might have been delayed in getting ashore.” The first officer laughed, and therein displayed his tact.

“That man is a robber,” he went on, indicating the boatman, who had now shoved his oars into the water and was pulling alongside. “He agreed to charge only twenty dollars for putting you ashore. Said he’d have made it twenty-five had it been a man. He’s a pirate, mark me, and he will surely hang some day. Twenty dollars for a half-hour’s work! Think of it!”

“Easy, sport! Easy!” cautioned the fellow in question, at the same time making an awkward landing and dropping one of his oars over-side. “You’ve no call to be flingin’ names about,” he added, defiantly, wringing out his shirt-sleeve, wet from rescue of the oar.

“You’ve got good ears, my man,” began the first officer.

“And a quick fist,” the other snapped in.

“And a ready tongue.”

“Need it in my business. No gettin’ ‘long without it among you sea-sharks. Pirate, am I? And you with a thousand passengers packed like sardines! Charge ‘em double first-class passage, feed ‘em steerage grub, and bunk ‘em worse ‘n pigs! Pirate, eh! Me?”

A red-faced man thrust his head over the rail above and began to bellow lustily.

“I want my stock landed! Come up here, Mr. Thurston! Now! Right away! Fifty cayuses of | mine eating their heads off in this dirty kennel of yours, and it’ll be a sick time you’ll have if you don’t hustle them ashore as fast as God’ll let you! I’m losing

a thousand dollars a day, and I won't stand it! Do you hear? I won't stand it! You've robbed me right and left from the time you cleared dock in Seattle, and by the hinges of hell I won't stand it any more! I'll break this company as sure as my name's Thad Ferguson! D'ye hear my spiel? I'm Thad Ferguson, and you can't come and see me any too quick for your health! D'ye hear?"

"Pirate; eh?" the boatman soliloquized. "Who? Me?"

Mr. Thurston waved his hand appeasingly at the red-faced man, and turned to the girl. "I'd like to go ashore with you, and as far as the store, but you see how busy we are. Good-by, and a lucky trip to you. I'll tell off a couple of men at once and break out your baggage. Have it up at the store to-morrow morning, sharp."

She took his hand lightly and stepped aboard. Her weight gave the leaky boat a sudden lurch, and the water hurtled across the bottom boards to her shoe-tops: but she took it coolly enough, settling herself in the stern-sheets and tucking her feet under her.

"Hold on!" the officer cried. "This will never do, Miss Welse. Come on back, and I'll get one of our boats over as soon as I can."

"I'll see you in — in heaven first," retorted the boatman, shoving off. "Let go!" he threatened.

Mr. Thurston gripped tight hold of the gunwale, and as reward for his chivalry had his knuckles rapped sharply by the oar-blade. Then he forgot himself, and Miss Welse also, and swore, and swore fervently.

"I dare say our farewell might have been more dignified," she called back to him, her laughter rippling across the water.

"Jove!" he muttered, doffing his cap gallantly. "There is a woman!" And a sudden hunger seized him, and a yearning to see himself mirrored always in the gray eyes of Frona Welse. He was not analytical; he did not know why; but he knew that with her he could travel to the end of the earth. He felt a distaste for his profession, and a temptation to throw it all over and strike out for the Klondike whither she was going; then he glanced up the beetling side of the ship, saw the red face of Thad Ferguson, and forgot the dream he had for an instant dreamed.

Splash! A handful of water from his strenuous oar struck her full in the face. "Hope you don't mind it, miss," he apologized. "I'm doin' the best I know how, which ain't much."

"So it seems," she answered, good-naturedly.

"Not that I love the sea," bitterly; "but I've got to turn a few honest dollars somehow, and this seemed the likeliest way. I oughter 'a ben in Klondike by now, if I'd had any luck at all. Tell you how it was. I lost my outfit on Windy Arm, half-way in, after packin' it clean across the Pass — "

Zip! Splash! She shook the water from her eyes, squirming the while as some of it ran down her warm back.

"You'll do," he encouraged her. "You're the right stuff for this country. Goin' all the way in?"

She nodded cheerfully.

"Then you'll do. But as I was sayin', after I lost my outfit I hit back for the coast, bein' broke, to hustle up another one. That's why I'm chargin' high-pressure rates. And I hope you don't feel sore at what I made you pay. I'm no worse than the rest, miss, sure. I had to dig up a hundred for this old tub, which ain't worth ten down in the States. Same kind of prices everywhere. Over on the Skaguay Trail horseshoe nails is just as good as a quarter any day. A man goes up to the bar and calls for a whiskey. Whiskey's half a dollar. Well, he drinks his whiskey, plunks down two horseshoe nails, and it's O.K. No kick comin' on horseshoe nails. They use 'em to make change."

"You must be a brave man to venture into the country again after such an experience. Won't you tell me your name? We may meet on the Inside."

"Who? Me? Oh, I'm Del Bishop, pocket-miner; and if ever we run across each other, remember I'd give you the last shirt — I mean, remember my last bit of grub is yours."

"Thank you," she answered with a sweet smile; for she was a woman who loved the things which rose straight from the heart.

He stopped rowing long enough to fish about in the water around his feet for an old cornbeef can.

"You'd better do some bailin'," he ordered, tossing her the can.  
"She's leakin' worse since that squeeze."

Frona smiled mentally, tucked up her skirts, and bent to the work. At every dip, like great billows heaving along the sky-line, the glacier-fretted mountains rose and fell. Sometimes she rested her back and watched the teeming beach towards which they were heading, and again, the land-locked arm of the sea in which a score or so of great steamships lay at anchor. From each of these, to the shore and back again, flowed a steady stream of scows, launches, canoes, and all sorts of smaller craft. Man, the mighty toiler, reacting upon a hostile environment, she thought, going back in memory to the masters whose wisdom she had shared in lecture-room and midnight study. She was a ripened child of the age, and fairly understood the physical world and the workings thereof. And she had a love for the world, and a deep respect.

For some time Del Bishop had only punctuated the silence with splashes from his oars; but a thought struck him.

"You haven't told me your name," he suggested, with complacent delicacy.

"My name is Welse," she answered. "Frona Welse."

A great awe manifested itself in his face, and grew to a greater and greater awe. "You — are — Frona — Welse?" he enunciated slowly. "Jacob Welse ain't your old man, is he?"

"Yes; I am Jacob Welse's daughter, at your service."

He puckered his lips in a long low whistle of understanding and stopped rowing. "Just you climb back into the stern and take your feet out of that water," he commanded. "And gimme holt that can."

"Am I not bailing satisfactorily?" she demanded, indignantly.

"Yep. You're doin' all right; but, but, you are — are — "

"Just what I was before you knew who I was. Now you go on rowing, — that's your share of the work; and I'll take care of mine."

"Oh, you'll do!" he murmured ecstatically, bending afresh to the oars.

"And Jacob Welse is your old man? I oughter 'a known it, sure!"

When they reached the sand-spit, crowded with heterogeneous piles of merchandise and buzzing with men, she stopped long enough to shake hands with her ferryman. And though such a proceeding on the part of his feminine patrons was certainly unusual, Del Bishop squared it easily with the fact that she was Jacob Welse's daughter.

"Remember, my last bit of grub is yours," he reassured her, still holding her hand.

"And your last shirt, too; don't forget."

"Well, you're a — a — a crackerjack!" he exploded with a final squeeze.

"Sure!"

Her short skirt did not block the free movement of her limbs, and she discovered with pleasurable surprise that the quick tripping step of the city pavement had departed from her, and that she was swinging off in the long easy stride which is born of the trail and which comes only after much travail and endeavor. More than one gold-rusher, shooting keen glances at her ankles and gray-gaitered calves, affirmed Del Bishop's judgment. And more than one glanced up at her face, and glanced again; for her gaze was frank, with the frankness of comradeship; and in her eyes there was always a smiling light, just trembling on the verge of dawn; and did the onlooker smile, her eyes smiled also. And the smiling light was protean-mooded, — merry, sympathetic, joyous, quizzical, — the complement of whatsoever kindled it. And sometimes the light spread over all her face, till the smile prefigured by it was realized. But it was always in frank and open comradeship.

And there was much to cause her to smile as she hurried through the crowd, across the sand-spit, and over the flat towards the log-building she had pointed out to Mr. Thurston. Time had rolled back, and locomotion and transportation were once again in the most primitive stages. Men who had never carried more than parcels in all their lives had now become bearers of burdens. They no longer walked upright under the sun, but stooped the body forward and bowed the head to the earth. Every back had become a pack-saddle, and the strap-galls were beginning to form. They staggered beneath the unwonted effort, and legs became drunken with weariness and titubated in divers directions till the sunlight darkened and bearer and burden fell by the way. Other men, exulting secretly, piled their goods on two-wheeled go-carts and pulled out blithely enough, only to stall at the first spot where the great round boulders invaded the trail. Whereat they generalized anew upon the principles of Alaskan travel, discarded the go-cart, or trundled it back to the beach and sold it at fabulous price to the last man landed. Tenderfeet, with ten pounds of Colt's revolvers, cartridges, and hunting-knives belted about them, wandered valiantly up the trail, and crept back softly, shedding revolvers, cartridges, and knives in despairing showers. And so, in gasping and bitter sweat, these sons of Adam suffered for Adam's sin.



Frona felt vaguely disturbed by this great throbbing rush of gold-mad men, and the old scene with its clustering associations seemed blotted out by these toiling aliens. Even the old landmarks appeared strangely unfamiliar. It was the same, yet not the same. Here, on the grassy flat, where she had played as a child and shrunk back at the sound of her voice echoing from glacier to glacier, ten thousand men tramped ceaselessly up and down, grinding the tender herbage into the soil and mocking the stony silence. And just up the trail were ten thousand men who had passed by, and over the Chilcoot were ten thousand more. And behind, all down the island-studded Alaskan coast, even to the Horn, were yet ten thousand more, harnessers of wind and steam, hasteners from the ends of the earth. The Dyea River as of old roared turbulently down to the sea; but its ancient banks were gored by the feet of many men, and these men labored in surging rows at the dripping tow-lines, and the deep-laden boats followed them as they fought their upward way. And the will of man strove with the will of the water, and the men laughed at the old Dyea River and gored its banks deeper for the men who were to follow.

The doorway of the store, through which she had once run out and in, and where she had looked with awe at the unusual sight of a stray trapper or fur-trader, was now packed with a clamorous throng of men. Where of old one letter waiting a claimant was a thing of wonder, she now saw, by peering through the window, the mail heaped up from floor to ceiling. And it was for this mail the men were clamoring so insistently. Before the store, by the scales, was another crowd. An Indian threw his pack upon the scales, the white owner jotted down the weight in a note-book, and another pack was thrown on. Each pack was in the straps, ready for the packer's back and the precarious journey over the Chilcoot. Frona edged in closer. She was interested in freights. She remembered in her day when the solitary prospector or trader had his outfit packed over for six cents, — one hundred and twenty dollars a ton.

The tenderfoot who was weighing up consulted his guide-book. "Eight cents," he said to the Indian. Whereupon the Indians laughed scornfully and chorused, "Forty cents!" A pained expression came into his face, and he looked about him anxiously. The sympathetic light in Frona's eyes caught him, and he regarded her with intent blankness. In reality he was busy reducing a three-ton outfit to terms of cash at forty dollars per hundred-weight. "Twenty-four hundred dollars for thirty miles!" he cried. "What can I do?"

Frona shrugged her shoulders. "You'd better pay them the forty cents," she advised, "else they will take off their straps."

The man thanked her, but instead of taking heed went on with his haggling. One of the Indians stepped up and proceeded to unfasten his pack-straps. The tenderfoot wavered, but just as he was about to give in, the packers jumped the price on him to forty-five cents. He smiled after a sickly fashion, and nodded his head in token of surrender. But another Indian joined the group and began whispering excitedly. A cheer went up, and before the man could realize it they had jerked off their straps and

departed, spreading the news as they went that freight to Lake Linderman was fifty cents.

Of a sudden, the crowd before the store was perceptibly agitated. Its members whispered excitedly one to another, and all their eyes were focussed upon three men approaching from up the trail. The trio were ordinary-looking creatures, ill-clad and even ragged. In a more stable community their apprehension by the village constable and arrest for vagrancy would have been immediate. "French Louis," the tenderfeet whispered and passed the word along. "Owns three Eldorado claims in a block," the man next to Frona confided to her. "Worth ten millions at the very least." French Louis, striding a little in advance of his companions, did not look it. He had parted company with his hat somewhere along the route, and a frayed silk kerchief was wrapped carelessly about his head. And for all his ten millions, he carried his own travelling pack on his broad shoulders. "And that one, the one with the beard, that's Swiftwater Bill, another of the Eldorado kings."

"How do you know?" Frona asked, doubtingly.

"Know!" the man exclaimed. "Know! Why his picture has been in all the papers for the last six weeks. See!" He unfolded a newspaper. "And a pretty good likeness, too. I've looked at it so much I'd know his mug among a thousand."

"Then who is the third one?" she queried, tacitly accepting him as a fount of authority.

Her informant lifted himself on his toes to see better. "I don't know," he confessed sorrowfully, then tapped the shoulder of the man next to him. "Who is the lean, smooth-faced one? The one with the blue shirt and the patch on his knee?"

Just then Frona uttered a glad little cry and darted forward. "Matt!" she cried. "Matt McCarthy!"

The man with the patch shook her hand heartily, though he did not know her and distrust was plain in his eyes.

"Oh, you don't remember me!" she chattered. "And don't you dare say you do! If there weren't so many looking, I'd hug you, you old bear!"

"And so Big Bear went home to the Little Bears," she recited, solemnly. "And the Little Bears were very hungry. And Big Bear said, 'Guess what I have got, my children.' And one Little Bear guessed berries, and one Little Bear guessed salmon, and t'other Little Bear guessed porcupine. Then Big Bear laughed 'Whoof! Whoof!' and said, 'A Nice Big Fat Man!'"

As he listened, recollection avowed itself in his face, and, when she had finished, his eyes wrinkled up and he laughed a peculiar, laughable silent laugh.

"Sure, an' it's well I know ye," he explained; "but for the life iv me I can't put me finger on ye."

She pointed into the store and watched him anxiously.

"Now I have ye!" He drew back and looked her up and down, and his expression changed to disappointment. "It cuddent be. I mistook ye. Ye cud niver a-lived in that shanty," thrusting a thumb in the direction of the store.

Frona nodded her head vigorously.

"Thin it's yer ownself afther all? The little motherless darlin', with the goold hair I combed the knots out iv many's the time? The little witch that run barefoot an' barelegged over all the place?"

"Yes, yes," she corroborated, gleefully.

"The little divil that stole the dog-team an' wint over the Pass in the dead o' winter for to see where the world come to an ind on the ither side, just because old Matt McCarthy was afther tellin' her fairy stories?"

"O Matt, dear old Matt! Remember the time I went swimming with the Siwash girls from the Indian camp?"

"An' I dragged ye out by the hair o' yer head?"

"And lost one of your new rubber boots?"

"Ah, an' sure an' I do. And a most shockin' an' immodest affair it was! An' the boots was worth tin dollars over yer father's counter."

"And then you went away, over the Pass, to the Inside, and we never heard a word of you. Everybody thought you dead."

"Well I recollect the day. An' ye cried in me arms an' wuddent kiss yer old Matt good-by. But ye did in the ind," he exclaimed, triumphantly, "whin ye saw I was goin' to lave ye for sure. What a wee thing ye were!"

"I was only eight."

"An' 'tis twelve year ago. Twelve year I've spint on the Inside, with niver a trip out. Ye must be twinty now?"

"And almost as big as you," Frona affirmed.

"A likely woman ye've grown into, tall, an' shapely, an' all that." He looked her over critically. "But ye cud 'a' stood a bit more flesh, I'm thinkin'."

"No, no," she denied. "Not at twenty, Matt, not at twenty. Feel my arm, you'll see." She doubled that member till the biceps knotted.

"Tis muscle," he admitted, passing his hand admiringly over the swelling bunch; "just as though ye'd been workin' hard for yer livin'."

"Oh, I can swing clubs, and box, and fence," she cried, successively striking the typical postures; "and swim, and make high dives, chin a bar twenty times, and — and walk on my hands. There!"

"Is that what ye've been doin'? I thought ye wint away for book-larnin'," he commented, dryly.

"But they have new ways of teaching, now, Matt, and they don't turn you out with your head crammed — "

"An' yer legs that spindly they can't carry it all! Well, an' I forgive ye yer muscle."

"But how about yourself, Matt?" Frona asked. "How has the world been to you these twelve years?"

“Behold!” He spread his legs apart, threw his head back, and his chest out. “Ye now behold Mister Matthew McCarthy, a king iv the noble Eldorado Dynasty by the strength iv his own right arm. Me possessions is limitless. I have more dust in wan minute than iver I saw in all me life before. Me intintion for makin’ this trip to the States is to look up me ancestors. I have a firm belafe that they wance existed. Ye may find nuggets in the Klondike, but niver good whiskey. ’Tis likewise me intintion to have wan drink iv the rate stuff before I die. Afther that ’tis me sworn resolve to return to the superveeshion iv me Klondike properties. Indade, and I’m an Eldorado king; an’ if ye’ll be wantin’ the lind iv a tidy bit, it’s meself that’ll loan it ye.”

“The same old, old Matt, who never grows old,” Frona laughed.

“An’ it’s yerself is the thrue Welse, for all yer prize-fighter’s muscles an’ yer philosopher’s brains. But let’s wander inside on the heels of Louis an’ Swiftwater. Andy’s still tindin’ store, I’m told, an’ we’ll see if I still linger in the pages iv his mimory.”

“And I, also.” Frona seized him by the hand. It was a bad habit she had of seizing the hands of those she loved. “It’s ten years since I went away.”

The Irishman forged his way through the crowd like a pile-driver, and Frona followed easily in the lee of his bulk. The tenderfeet watched them reverently, for to them they were as Northland divinities. The buzz of conversation rose again.

“Who’s the girl?” somebody asked. And just as Frona passed inside the door she caught the opening of the answer: “Jacob Welse’s daughter. Never heard of Jacob Welse? Where have you been keeping yourself?”

## Chapter II

She came out of the wood of glistening birch, and with the first fires of the sun blazoning her unbound hair raced lightly across the dew-dripping meadow. The earth was fat with excessive moisture and soft to her feet, while the dank vegetation slapped against her knees and cast off flashing sprays of liquid diamonds. The flush of the morning was in her cheek, and its fire in her eyes, and she was aglow with youth and love. For she had nursed at the breast of nature, — in forfeit of a mother, — and she loved the old trees and the creeping green things with a passionate love; and the dim murmur of growing life was a gladness to her ears, and the damp earth-smells were sweet to her nostrils.

Where the upper-reach of the meadow vanished in a dark and narrow forest aisle, amid clean-stemmed dandelions and color-bursting buttercups, she came upon a bunch of great Alaskan violets. Throwing herself at full length, she buried her face in the fragrant coolness, and with her hands drew the purple heads in circling splendor about her own. And she was not ashamed. She had wandered away amid the complexities and smirch and withering heats of the great world, and she had returned, simple, and clean, and wholesome. And she was glad of it, as she lay there, slipping back to the old days, when the universe began and ended at the sky-line, and when she journeyed over the Pass to behold the Abyss.

It was a primitive life, that of her childhood, with few conventions, but such as there were, stern ones. And they might be epitomized, as she had read somewhere in her later years, as “the faith of food and blanket.” This faith had her father kept, she thought, remembering that his name sounded well on the lips of men. And this was the faith she had learned, — the faith she had carried with her across the Abyss and into the world, where men had wandered away from the old truths and made themselves selfish dogmas and casuistries of the subtlest kinds; the faith she had brought back with her, still fresh, and young, and joyous. And it was all so simple, she had contended; why should not their faith be as her faith — the faith of food and blanket? The faith of trail and hunting camp? The faith with which strong clean men faced the quick danger and sudden death by field and flood? Why not? The faith of Jacob Welse? Of Matt McCarthy? Of the Indian boys she had played with? Of the Indian girls she had led to Amazonian war? Of the very wolf-dogs straining in the harnesses and running with her across the snow? It was healthy, it was real, it was good, she thought, and she was glad.

The rich notes of a robin saluted her from the birch wood, and opened her ears to the day. A partridge boomed afar in the forest, and a tree-squirrel launched unerringly

into space above her head, and went on, from limb to limb and tree to tree, scolding graciously the while. From the hidden river rose the shouts of the toiling adventurers, already parted from sleep and fighting their way towards the Pole.

Frona arose, shook back her hair, and took instinctively the old path between the trees to the camp of Chief George and the Dyea tribesmen. She came upon a boy, breech-clouted and bare, like a copper god. He was gathering wood, and looked at her keenly over his bronze shoulder. She bade him good-morning, blithely, in the Dyea tongue; but he shook his head, and laughed insultingly, and paused in his work to hurl shameful words after her. She did not understand, for this was not the old way, and when she passed a great and glowering Sitkan buck she kept her tongue between her teeth. At the fringe of the forest, the camp confronted her. And she was startled. It was not the old camp of a score or more of lodges clustering and huddling together in the open as though for company, but a mighty camp. It began at the very forest, and flowed in and out among the scattered tree-clumps on the flat, and spilled over and down to the river bank where the long canoes were lined up ten and twelve deep. It was a gathering of the tribes, like unto none in all the past, and a thousand miles of coast made up the tally. They were all strange Indians, with wives and chattels and dogs. She rubbed shoulders with Juneau and Wrangel men, and was jostled by wild-eyed Sticks from over the Passes, fierce Chilcats, and Queen Charlotte Islanders. And the looks they cast upon her were black and frowning, save — and far worse — where the merrier souls leered patronizingly into her face and chuckled unmentionable things.

She was not frightened by this insolence, but angered; for it hurt her, and embittered the pleasurable home-coming. Yet she quickly grasped the significance of it: the old patriarchal status of her father's time had passed away, and civilization, in a scorching blast, had swept down upon this people in a day. Glancing under the raised flaps of a tent, she saw haggard-faced bucks squatting in a circle on the floor. By the door a heap of broken bottles advertised the vigils of the night. A white man, low of visage and shrewd, was dealing cards about, and gold and silver coins leaped into heaping bets upon the blanket board. A few steps farther on she heard the clattering whirl of a wheel of fortune, and saw the Indians, men and women, chancing eagerly their sweat-earned wages for the gaudy prizes of the game. And from tepee and lodge rose the cracked and crazy strains of cheap music-boxes.

An old squaw, peeling a willow pole in the sunshine of an open doorway, raised her head and uttered a shrill cry.

"Hee-Hee! Tenas Hee-Hee!" she muttered as well and as excitedly as her toothless gums would permit.

Frona thrilled at the cry. Tenas Hee-Hee! Little Laughter! Her name of the long gone Indian past! She turned and went over to the old woman.

"And hast thou so soon forgotten, Tenas Hee-Hee?" she mumbled. "And thine eyes so young and sharp! Not so soon does Neepoosa forget."

"It is thou, Neepoosa?" Frona cried, her tongue halting from the disuse of years.

"Ay, it is Neepoosa," the old woman replied, drawing her inside the tent, and despatching a boy, hot-footed, on some errand. They sat down together on the floor, and she patted Frona's hand lovingly, peering, meanwhile, blear-eyed and misty, into her face. "Ay, it is Neepoosa, grown old quickly after the manner of our women. Neepoosa, who dandled thee in her arms when thou wast a child. Neepoosa, who gave thee thy name, Tenas Hee-Hee. Who fought for thee with Death when thou wast ailing; and gathered growing things from the woods and grasses of the earth and made of them tea, and gave thee to drink. But I mark little change, for I knew thee at once. It was thy very shadow on the ground that made me lift my head. A little change, mayhap. Tall thou art, and like a slender willow in thy grace, and the sun has kissed thy cheeks more lightly of the years; but there is the old hair, flying wild and of the color of the brown seaweed floating on the tide, and the mouth, quick to laugh and loth to cry. And the eyes are as clear and true as in the days when Neepoosa chid thee for wrong-doing, and thou wouldst not put false words upon thy tongue. Ai! Ai! Not as thou art the other women who come now into the land!"

"And why is a white woman without honor among you?" Frona demanded. "Your men say evil things to me in the camp, and as I came through the woods, even the boys. Not in the old days, when I played with them, was this shame so."

"Ai! Ai!" Neepoosa made answer. "It is so. But do not blame them. Pour not thine anger upon their heads. For it is true it is the fault of thy women who come into the land these days. They can point to no man and say, 'That is my man.' And it is not good that women should be thus. And they look upon all men, bold-eyed and shameless, and their tongues are unclean, and their hearts bad. Wherefore are thy women without honor among us. As for the boys, they are but boys. And the men; how should they know?"

The tent-flaps were poked aside and an old man came in. He grunted to Frona and sat down. Only a certain eager alertness showed the delight he took in her presence.

"So Tenas Hee-Hee has come back in these bad days," he vouchsafed in a shrill, quavering voice.

"And why bad days, Muskim?" Frona asked. "Do not the women wear brighter colors? Are not the bellies fuller with flour and bacon and white man's grub? Do not the young men contrive great wealth what of their pack-straps and paddles? And art thou not remembered with the ancient offerings of meat and fish and blanket? Why bad days, Muskim?"

"True," he replied in his fine, priestly way, a reminiscent flash of the old fire lighting his eyes. "It is very true. The women wear brighter colors. But they have found favor, in the eyes of thy white men, and they look no more upon the young men of their own blood. Wherefore the tribe does not increase, nor do the little children longer clutter the way of our feet. It is so. The bellies are fuller with the white man's grub; but also are they fuller with the white man's bad whiskey. Nor could it be otherwise that the young men contrive great wealth; but they sit by night over the cards, and it passes from them, and they speak harsh words one to another, and in anger blows are struck,

and there is bad blood between them. As for old Muskim, there are few offerings of meat and fish and blanket. For the young women have turned aside from the old paths, nor do the young men longer honor the old totems and the old gods. So these are bad days, Tenas Hee-Hee, and they behold old Muskim go down in sorrow to the grave."

"Ai! Ai! It is so!" wailed Neepoosa.

"Because of the madness of thy people have my people become mad," Muskim continued. "They come over the salt sea like the waves of the sea, thy people, and they go — ah! who knoweth where?"

"Ai! Who knoweth where?" Neepoosa lamented, rocking slowly back and forth.

"Ever they go towards the frost and cold; and ever do they come, more people, wave upon wave!"

"Ai! Ai! Into the frost and cold! It is a long way, and dark and cold!" She shivered, then laid a sudden hand on Frona's arm. "And thou goest?"

Frona nodded.

"And Tenas Hee-Hee goest! Ai! Ai! Ai!"

The tent-flap lifted, and Matt McCarthy peered in. "It's yerself, Frona, is it? With breakfast waitin' this half-hour on ye, an' old Andy fumin' an' frettin' like the old woman he is. Good-mornin' to ye, Neepoosa," he addressed Frona's companions, "an' to ye, Muskim, though, belike ye've little mimory iv me face."

The old couple grunted salutation and remained stolidly silent.

"But hurry with ye, girl," turning back to Frona. "Me steamer starts by mid-day, an' it's little I'll see iv ye at the best. An' likewise there's Andy an' the breakfast pipin' hot, both iv them."



## Chapter III

Frona waved her hand to Andy and swung out on the trail. Fastened tightly to her back were her camera and a small travelling satchel. In addition, she carried for alpenstock the willow pole of Neepoosa. Her dress was of the mountaineering sort, short-skirted and scant, allowing the greatest play with the least material, and withal gray of color and modest.

Her outfit, on the backs of a dozen Indians and in charge of Del Bishop, had got under way hours before. The previous day, on her return with Matt McCarthy from the Siwash camp, she had found Del Bishop at the store waiting her. His business was quickly transacted, for the proposition he made was terse and to the point. She was going into the country. He was intending to go in. She would need somebody. If she had not picked any one yet, why he was just the man. He had forgotten to tell her the day he took her ashore that he had been in the country years before and knew all about it. True, he hated the water, and it was mainly a water journey; but he was not afraid of it. He was afraid of nothing. Further, he would fight for her at the drop of the hat. As for pay, when they got to Dawson, a good word from her to Jacob Welse, and a year's outfit would be his. No, no; no grub-stake about it, no strings on him! He would pay for the outfit later on when his sack was dusted. What did she think about it, anyway? And Frona did think about it, for ere she had finished breakfast he was out hustling the packers together.

She found herself making better speed than the majority of her fellows, who were heavily laden and had to rest their packs every few hundred yards. Yet she found herself hard put to keep the pace of a bunch of Scandinavians ahead of her. They were huge strapping blond-haired giants, each striding along with a hundred pounds on his back, and all harnessed to a go-cart which carried fully six hundred more. Their faces were as laughing suns, and the joy of life was in them. The toil seemed child's play and slipped from them lightly. They joked with one another, and with the passers-by, in a meaningless tongue, and their great chests rumbled with cavern-echoing laughs. Men stood aside for them, and looked after them enviously; for they took the rises of the trail on the run, and rattled down the counter slopes, and ground the iron-rimmed wheels harshly over the rocks. Plunging through a dark stretch of woods, they came out upon the river at the ford. A drowned man lay on his back on the sand-bar, staring upward, unblinking, at the sun. A man, in irritated tones, was questioning over and over, "Where's his pardner? Ain't he got a pardner?" Two more men had thrown off their packs and were coolly taking an inventory of the dead man's possessions. One called aloud the various articles, while the other checked them off on a piece of dirty

wrapping-paper. Letters and receipts, wet and pulpy, strewed the sand. A few gold coins were heaped carelessly on a white handkerchief. Other men, crossing back and forth in canoes and skiffs, took no notice.

The Scandinavians glanced at the sight, and their faces sobered for a moment. "Where's his pardner? Ain't he got a pardner?" the irritated man demanded of them. They shook their heads. They did not understand English. They stepped into the water and splashed onward. Some one called warningly from the opposite bank, whereat they stood still and conferred together. Then they started on again. The two men taking the inventory turned to watch. The current rose nigh to their hips, but it was swift and they staggered, while now and again the cart slipped sideways with the stream. The worst was over, and Frona found herself holding her breath. The water had sunk to the knees of the two foremost men, when a strap snapped on one nearest the cart. His pack swung suddenly to the side, overbalancing him. At the same instant the man next to him slipped, and each jerked the other under. The next two were whipped off their feet, while the cart, turning over, swept from the bottom of the ford into the deep water. The two men who had almost emerged threw themselves backward on the pull-ropes. The effort was heroic, but giants though they were, the task was too great and they were dragged, inch by inch, downward and under.

Their packs held them to the bottom, save him whose strap had broken. This one struck out, not to the shore, but down the stream, striving to keep up with his comrades. A couple of hundred feet below, the rapid dashed over a toothed-reef of rocks, and here, a minute later, they appeared. The cart, still loaded, showed first, smashing a wheel and turning over and over into the next plunge. The men followed in a miserable tangle. They were beaten against the submerged rocks and swept on, all but one. Frona, in a canoe (a dozen canoes were already in pursuit), saw him grip the rock with bleeding fingers. She saw his white face and the agony of the effort; but his hold relaxed and he was jerked away, just as his free comrade, swimming mightily, was reaching for him. Hidden from sight, they took the next plunge, showing for a second, still struggling, at the shallow foot of the rapid.

A canoe picked up the swimming man, but the rest disappeared in a long stretch of swift, deep water. For a quarter of an hour the canoes plied fruitlessly about, then found the dead men gently grounded in an eddy. A tow-rope was requisitioned from an up-coming boat, and a pair of horses from a pack-train on the bank, and the ghastly jetsam hauled ashore. Frona looked at the five young giants lying in the mud, broken-boned, limp, uncaring. They were still harnessed to the cart, and the poor worthless packs still clung to their backs. The sixth sat in the midst, dry-eyed and stunned. A dozen feet away the steady flood of life flowed by and Frona melted into it and went on.

The dark spruce-shrouded mountains drew close together in the Dyea Canyon, and the feet of men churned the wet sunless earth into mire and bog-hole. And when they had done this they sought new paths, till there were many paths. And on such a path Frona came upon a man spread carelessly in the mud. He lay on his side, legs apart and

one arm buried beneath him, pinned down by a bulky pack. His cheek was pillowed restfully in the ooze, and on his face there was an expression of content. He brightened when he saw her, and his eyes twinkled cheerily.

“‘Bout time you hove along,” he greeted her. “Been waitin’ an hour on you as it is.”

“That’s it,” as Frona bent over him. “Just unbuckle that strap. The pesky thing! ’Twas just out o’ my reach all the time.”

“Are you hurt?” she asked.

He slipped out of his straps, shook himself, and felt the twisted arm. “Nope. Sound as a dollar, thank you. And no kick to register, either.” He reached over and wiped his muddy hands on a low-bowed spruce. “Just my luck; but I got a good rest, so what’s the good of makin’ a beef about it? You see, I tripped on that little root there, and slip! slump! slam! and slush! — there I was, down and out, and the buckle just out o’ reach. And there I lay for a blasted hour, everybody hitting the lower path.”

“But why didn’t you call out to them?”

“And make ’em climb up the hill to me? Them all tuckered out with their own work? Not on your life! Wasn’t serious enough. If any other man ‘d make me climb up just because he’d slipped down, I’d take him out o’ the mud all right, all right, and punch and punch him back into the mud again. Besides, I knew somebody was bound to come along my way after a while.”

“Oh, you’ll do!” she cried, appropriating Del Bishop’s phrase. “You’ll do for this country!”

“Yep,” he called back, shouldering his pack and starting off at a lively clip. “And, anyway, I got a good rest.”

The trail dipped through a precipitous morass to the river’s brink. A slender pine-tree spanned the screaming foam and bent midway to touch the water. The surge beat upon the taper trunk and gave it a rhythmical swaying motion, while the feet of the packers had worn smooth its wave-washed surface. Eighty feet it stretched in ticklish insecurity. Frona stepped upon it, felt it move beneath her, heard the bellowing of the water, saw the mad rush — and shrank back. She slipped the knot of her shoe-laces and pretended great care in the tying thereof as a bunch of Indians came out of the woods above and down through the mud. Three or four bucks led the way, followed by many squaws, all bending in the head-straps to the heavy packs. Behind came the children burdened according to their years, and in the rear half a dozen dogs, tongues lagging out and dragging forward painfully under their several loads.

The men glanced at her sideways, and one of them said something in an undertone. Frona could not hear, but the snicker which went down the line brought the flush of shame to her brow and told her more forcibly than could the words. Her face was hot, for she sat disgraced in her own sight; but she gave no sign. The leader stood aside, and one by one, and never more than one at a time, they made the perilous passage. At the bend in the middle their weight forced the tree under, and they felt for their footing, up to the ankles in the cold, driving torrent. Even the little children made it

without hesitancy, and then the dogs whining and reluctant but urged on by the man. When the last had crossed over, he turned to Frona.

“Um horse trail,” he said, pointing up the mountain side. “Much better you take um horse trail. More far; much better.”

But she shook her head and waited till he reached the farther bank; for she felt the call, not only upon her own pride, but upon the pride of her race; and it was a greater demand than her demand, just as the race was greater than she. So she put foot upon the log, and, with the eyes of the alien people upon her, walked down into the foam-white swirl.

She came upon a man weeping by the side of the trail. His pack, clumsily strapped, sprawled on the ground. He had taken off a shoe, and one naked foot showed swollen and blistered.

“What is the matter?” she asked, halting before him.

He looked up at her, then down into the depths where the Dyea River cut the gloomy darkness with its living silver. The tears still welled in his eyes, and he sniffled.

“What is the matter?” she repeated. “Can I be of any help?”

“No,” he replied. “How can you help? My feet are raw, and my back is nearly broken, and I am all tired out. Can you help any of these things?”

“Well,” judiciously, “I am sure it might be worse. Think of the men who have just landed on the beach. It will take them ten days or two weeks to back-trip their outfits as far as you have already got yours.”

“But my partners have left me and gone on,” he moaned, a sneaking appeal for pity in his voice. “And I am all alone, and I don’t feel able to move another step. And then think of my wife and babies. I left them down in the States. Oh, if they could only see me now! I can’t go back to them, and I can’t go on. It’s too much for me. I can’t stand it, this working like a horse. I was not made to work like a horse. I’ll die, I know I will, if I do. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?”

“Why did your comrades leave you?”

“Because I was not so strong as they; because I could not pack as much or as long. And they laughed at me and left me.”

“Have you ever roughed it?” Frona asked.

“No.”

“You look well put up and strong. Weigh probably one hundred and sixty-five?”

“One hundred-and seventy,” he corrected.

“You don’t look as though you had ever been troubled with sickness. Never an invalid?”

“N-no.”

“And your comrades? They are miners?”

“Never mining in their lives. They worked in the same establishment with me. That’s what makes it so hard, don’t you see! We’d known one another for years! And to go off and leave me just because I couldn’t keep up!”

"My friend," and Frona knew she was speaking for the race, "you are strong as they. You can work just as hard as they; pack as much. But you are weak of heart. This is no place for the weak of heart. You cannot work like a horse because you will not. Therefore the country has no use for you. The north wants strong men, — strong of soul, not body. The body does not count. So go back to the States. We do not want you here. If you come you will die, and what then of your wife and babies? So sell out your outfit and go back. You will be home in three weeks. Good-by."

She passed through Sheep Camp. Somewhere above, a mighty glacier, under the pent pressure of a subterranean reservoir, had burst asunder and hurled a hundred thousand tons of ice and water down the rocky gorge. The trail was yet slippery with the slime of the flood, and men were rummaging disconsolately in the rubbish of overthrown tents and caches. But here and there they worked with nervous haste, and the stark corpses by the trail-side attested dumbly to their labor. A few hundred yards beyond, the work of the rush went on uninterrupted. Men rested their packs on jutting stones, swapped escapes whilst they regained their breath, then stumbled on to their toil again.

The mid-day sun beat down upon the stone "Scales." The forest had given up the struggle, and the dizzying heat recoiled from the unclothed rock. On either hand rose the ice-marred ribs of earth, naked and strenuous in their nakedness. Above towered storm-beaten Chilcoot. Up its gaunt and ragged front crawled a slender string of men. But it was an endless string. It came out of the last fringe of dwarfed shrub below, drew a black line across a dazzling stretch of ice, and filed past Frona where she ate her lunch by the way. And it went on, up the pitch of the steep, growing fainter and smaller, till it squirmed and twisted like a column of ants and vanished over the crest of the pass.

Even as she looked, Chilcoot was wrapped in rolling mist and whirling cloud, and a storm of sleet and wind roared down upon the toiling pigmies. The light was swept out of the day, and a deep gloom prevailed; but Frona knew that somewhere up there, clinging and climbing and immortally striving, the long line of ants still twisted towards the sky. And she thrilled at the thought, strong with man's ancient love of mastery, and stepped into the line which came out of the storm behind and disappeared into the storm before.

She blew through the gap of the pass in a whirlwind of vapor, with hand and foot clambered down the volcanic ruin of Chilcoot's mighty father, and stood on the bleak edge of the lake which filled the pit of the crater. The lake was angry and white-capped, and though a hundred caches were waiting ferriage, no boats were plying back and forth. A rickety skeleton of sticks, in a shell of greased canvas, lay upon the rocks. Frona sought out the owner, a bright-faced young fellow, with sharp black eyes and a salient jaw. Yes, he was the ferryman, but he had quit work for the day. Water too rough for freighting. He charged twenty-five dollars for passengers, but he was not taking passengers to-day. Had he not said it was too rough? That was why.

"But you will take me, surely?" she asked.

He shook his head and gazed out over the lake. "At the far end it's rougher than you see it here. Even the big wooden boats won't tackle it. The last that tried, with a gang of packers aboard, was blown over on the west shore. We could see them plainly. And as there's no trail around from there, they'll have to camp it out till the blow is over."

"But they're better off than I am. My camp outfit is at Happy Camp, and I can't very well stay here," Frona smiled winsomely, but there was no appeal in the smile; no feminine helplessness throwing itself on the strength and chivalry of the male. "Do reconsider and take me across."

"No."

"I'll give you fifty."

"No, I say."

"But I'm not afraid, you know."

The young fellow's eyes flashed angrily. He turned upon her suddenly, but on second thought did not utter the words forming on his lips. She realized the unintentional slur she had cast, and was about to explain. But on second thought she, too, remained silent; for she read him, and knew that it was perhaps the only way for her to gain her point. They stood there, bodies inclined to the storm in the manner of seamen on sloped decks, unyieldingly looking into each other's eyes. His hair was plastered in wet ringlets on his forehead, while hers, in longer wisps, beat furiously about her face.

"Come on, then!" He flung the boat into the water with an angry jerk, and tossed the oars aboard. "Climb in! I'll take you, but not for your fifty dollars. You pay the regulation price, and that's all."

A gust of the gale caught the light shell and swept it broadside for a score of feet. The spray drove inboard in a continuous stinging shower, and Frona at once fell to work with the bailing-can.

"I hope we're blown ashore," he shouted, stooping forward to the oars. "It would be embarrassing — for you." He looked up savagely into her face.

"No," she modified; "but it would be very miserable for both of us, — a night without tent, blankets, or fire. Besides, we're not going to blow ashore."

She stepped out on the slippery rocks and helped him heave up the canvas craft and tilt the water out. On either side uprose bare wet walls of rock. A heavy sleet was falling steadily, through which a few streaming caches showed in the gathering darkness.

"You'd better hurry up," he advised, thanking her for the assistance and relaunching the boat. "Two miles of stiff trail from here to Happy Camp. No wood until you get there, so you'd best hustle along. Good-by."

Frona reached out and took his hand, and said, "You are a brave man."

"Oh, I don't know." He returned the grip with usury and looked his admiration.

A dozen tents held grimly to their pegs on the extreme edge of the timber line at Happy Camp. Frona, weary with the day, went from tent to tent. Her wet skirts clung

heavily to her tired limbs, while the wind buffeted her brutally about. Once, through a canvas wall, she heard a man apostrophizing gorgeously, and felt sure that it was Del Bishop. But a peep into the interior told a different tale; so she wandered fruitlessly on till she reached the last tent in the camp. She untied the flap and looked in. A spluttering candle showed the one occupant, a man, down on his knees and blowing lustily into the fire-box of a smoky Yukon stove.

## Chapter IV

She cast off the lower flap-fastenings and entered. The man still blew into the stove, unaware of his company. Frona coughed, and he raised a pair of smoke-reddened eyes to hers.

"Certainly," he said, casually enough. "Fasten the flaps and make yourself comfortable." And thereat returned to his borean task.

"Hospitable, to say the least," she commented to herself, obeying his command and coming up to the stove.

A heap of dwarfed spruce, gnarled and wet and cut to proper stove-length, lay to one side. Frona knew it well, creeping and crawling and twisting itself among the rocks of the shallow alluvial deposit, unlike its arboreal prototype, rarely lifting its head more than a foot from the earth. She looked into the oven, found it empty, and filled it with the wet wood. The man arose to his feet, coughing from the smoke which had been driven into his lungs, and nodding approval.

When he had recovered his breath, "Sit down and dry your skirts. I'll get supper."

He put a coffee-pot on the front lid of the stove, emptied the bucket into it, and went out of the tent after more water. As his back disappeared, Frona dived for her satchel, and when he returned a moment later he found her with a dry skirt on and wringing the wet one out. While he fished about in the grub-box for dishes and eating utensils, she stretched a spare bit of rope between the tent-poles and hung the skirt on it to dry. The dishes were dirty, and, as he bent over and washed them, she turned her back and deftly changed her stockings. Her childhood had taught her the value of well-cared feet for the trail. She put her wet shoes on a pile of wood at the back of the stove, substituting for them a pair of soft and dainty house-moccasins of Indian make. The fire had now grown strong, and she was content to let her under-garments dry on her body.

During all this time neither had spoken a word. Not only had the man remained silent, but he went about his work in so preoccupied a way that it seemed to Frona that he turned a deaf ear to the words of explanation she would have liked to utter. His whole bearing conveyed the impression that it was the most ordinary thing under the sun for a young woman to come in out of the storm and night and partake of his hospitality. In one way, she liked this; but in so far as she did not comprehend it, she was troubled. She had a perception of a something being taken for granted which she did not understand. Once or twice she moistened her lips to speak, but he appeared so oblivious of her presence that she withheld.



After opening a can of corned beef with the axe, he fried half a dozen thick slices of bacon, set the frying-pan back, and boiled the coffee. From the grub-box he resurrected the half of a cold heavy flapjack. He looked at it dubiously, and shot a quick glance at her. Then he threw the sodden thing out of doors and dumped the contents of a sea-biscuit bag upon a camp cloth. The sea-biscuit had been crumbled into chips and fragments and generously soaked by the rain till it had become a mushy, pulpy mass of dirty white.

"It's all I have in the way of bread," he muttered; "but sit down and we will make the best of it."

"One moment — " And before he could protest, Frona had poured the sea-biscuit into the frying-pan on top of the grease and bacon. To this she added a couple of cups of water and stirred briskly over the fire. When it had sobbed and sighed with the heat for some few minutes, she sliced up the corned beef and mixed it in with the rest. And by the time she had seasoned it heavily with salt and black pepper, a savory steam was rising from the concoction.

"Must say it's pretty good stuff," he said, balancing his plate on his knee and sampling the mess avidiously. "What do you happen to call it?"

"Slumgullion," she responded curtly, and thereafter the meal went on in silence.

Frona helped him to the coffee, studying him intently the while. And not only was it not an unpleasant face, she decided, but it was strong. Strong, she amended, potentially rather than actually. A student, she added, for she had seen many students' eyes and knew the lasting impress of the midnight oil long continued; and his eyes bore the impress. Brown eyes, she concluded, and handsome as the male's should be handsome; but she noted with surprise, when she refilled his plate with slumgullion, that they were not at all brown in the ordinary sense, but hazel-brown. In the daylight, she felt certain, and in times of best health, they would seem gray, and almost blue-gray. She knew it well; her one girl chum and dearest friend had had such an eye.

His hair was chestnut-brown, glinting in the candle-light to gold, and the hint of waviness in it explained the perceptible droop to his tawny moustache. For the rest, his face was clean-shaven and cut on a good masculine pattern. At first she found fault with the more than slight cheek-hollows under the cheek-bones, but when she measured his well-knit, slenderly muscular figure, with its deep chest and heavy shoulders, she discovered that she preferred the hollows; at least they did not imply lack of nutrition. The body gave the lie to that; while they themselves denied the vice of over-feeding. Height, five feet, nine, she summed up from out of her gymnasium experience; and age anywhere between twenty-five and thirty, though nearer the former most likely.

"Haven't many blankets," he said abruptly, pausing to drain his cup and set it over on the grub-box. "I don't expect my Indians back from Lake Linderman till morning, and the beggars have packed over everything except a few sacks of flour and the bare camp outfit. However, I've a couple of heavy ulsters which will serve just as well."

He turned his back, as though he did not expect a reply, and untied a rubber-covered roll of blankets. Then he drew the two ulsters from a clothes-bag and threw them down on the bedding.

"Vaudeville artist, I suppose?"

He asked the question seemingly without interest, as though to keep the conversation going, and, in fact, as if he knew the stereotyped answer beforehand. But to Frona the question was like a blow in the face. She remembered Neepoosa's philippic against the white women who were coming into the land, and realized the falseness of her position and the way in which he looked upon her.

But he went on before she could speak. "Last night I had two vaudeville queens, and three the night before. Only there was more bedding then. It's unfortunate, isn't it, the aptitude they display in getting lost from their outfits? Yet somehow I have failed to find any lost outfits so far. And they are all queens, it seems. No under-studies or minor turns about them, — no, no. And I presume you are a queen, too?"

The too-ready blood sprayed her cheek, and this made her angrier than did he; for whereas she was sure of the steady grip she had on herself, her flushed face betokened a confusion which did not really possess her.

"No," she answered, coolly; "I am not a vaudeville artist."

He tossed several sacks of flour to one side of the stove, without replying, and made of them the foundation of a bed; and with the remaining sacks he duplicated the operation on the opposite side of the stove.

"But you are some kind of an artist, then," he insisted when he had finished, with an open contempt on the "artist."

"Unfortunately, I am not any kind of an artist at all."

He dropped the blanket he was folding and straightened his back. Hitherto he had no more than glanced at her; but now he scrutinized her carefully, every inch of her, from head to heel and back again, the cut of her garments and the very way she did her hair. And he took his time about it.

"Oh! I beg pardon," was his verdict, followed by another stare. "Then you are a very foolish woman dreaming of fortune and shutting your eyes to the dangers of the pilgrimage. It is only meet that two kinds of women come into this country. Those who by virtue of wifehood and daughterhood are respectable, and those who are not respectable. Vaudeville stars and artists, they call themselves for the sake of decency; and out of courtesy we countenance it. Yes, yes, I know. But remember, the women who come over the trail must be one or the other. There is no middle course, and those who attempt it are bound to fail. So you are a very, very foolish girl, and you had better turn back while there is yet a chance. If you will view it in the light of a loan from a stranger, I will advance your passage back to the States, and start an Indian over the trail with you to-morrow for Dyea."

Once or twice Frona had attempted to interrupt him, but he had waved her imperatively to silence with his hand.

"I thank you," she began; but he broke in, —

“Oh, not at all, not at all.”

“I thank you,” she repeated; but it happens that — a — that you are mistaken. I have just come over the trail from Dyea and expect to meet my outfit already in camp here at Happy Camp. They started hours ahead of me, and I can’t understand how I passed them — yes I do, too! A boat was blown over to the west shore of Crater Lake this afternoon, and they must have been in it. That is where I missed them and came on. As for my turning back, I appreciate your motive for suggesting it, but my father is in Dawson, and I have not seen him for three years. Also, I have come through from Dyea this day, and am tired, and I would like to get some rest. So, if you still extend your hospitality, I’ll go to bed.”

“Impossible!” He kicked the blankets to one side, sat down on the flour sacks, and directed a blank look upon her.

“Are — are there any women in the other tents?” she asked, hesitatingly.

“I did not see any, but I may have overlooked.”

“A man and his wife were, but they pulled stakes this morning. No; there are no other women except — except two or three in a tent, which — er — which will not do for you.”

“Do you think I am afraid of their hospitality?” she demanded, hotly.

“As you said, they are women.”

“But I said it would not do,” he answered, absently, staring at the straining canvas and listening to the roar of the storm. “A man would die in the open on a night like this.

“And the other tents are crowded to the walls,” he mused. “I happen to know. They have stored all their caches inside because of the water, and they haven’t room to turn around. Besides, a dozen other strangers are storm-bound with them. Two or three asked to spread their beds in here to-night if they couldn’t pinch room elsewhere. Evidently they have; but that does not argue that there is any surplus space left. And anyway — ”

He broke off helplessly. The inevitableness of the situation was growing.

“Can I make Deep Lake to-night?” Frona asked, forgetting herself to sympathize with him, then becoming conscious of what she was doing and bursting into laughter.

“But you couldn’t ford the river in the dark.” He frowned at her levity. “And there are no camps between.”

“Are you afraid?” she asked with just the shadow of a sneer.

“Not for myself.”

“Well, then, I think I’ll go to bed.”

“I might sit up and keep the fire going,” he suggested after a pause.

“Fiddlesticks!” she cried. “As though your foolish little code were saved in the least! We are not in civilization. This is the trail to the Pole. Go to bed.”

He elevated his shoulders in token of surrender. “Agreed. What shall I do then?”

"Help me make my bed, of course. Sacks laid crosswise! Thank you, sir, but I have bones and muscles that rebel. Here — Pull them around this way."

Under her direction he laid the sacks lengthwise in a double row. This left an uncomfortable hollow with lumpy sack-corners down the middle; but she smote them flat with the side of the axe, and in the same manner lessened the slope to the walls of the hollow. Then she made a triple longitudinal fold in a blanket and spread it along the bottom of the long depression.

"Hum!" he soliloquized. "Now I see why I sleep so badly. Here goes!" And he speedily flung his own sacks into shape.

"It is plain you are unused to the trail," she informed him, spreading the topmost blanket and sitting down.

"Perhaps so," he made answer. "But what do you know about this trail life?" he growled a little later.

"Enough to conform," she rejoined equivocally, pulling out the dried wood from the oven and replacing it with wet.

"Listen to it! How it storms!" he exclaimed. "It's growing worse, if worse be possible."

The tent reeled under the blows of the wind, the canvas booming hollowly at every shock, while the sleet and rain rattled overhead like skirmish-fire grown into a battle. In the lulls they could hear the water streaming off at the side-walls with the noise of small cataracts. He reached up curiously and touched the wet roof. A burst of water followed instantly at the point of contact and coursed down upon the grub-box.

"You mustn't do that!" Frona cried, springing to her feet. She put her finger on the spot, and, pressing tightly against the canvas, ran it down to the side-wall. The leak at once stopped. "You mustn't do it, you know," she reproved.

"Jove!" was his reply. "And you came through from Dyea to-day! Aren't you stiff?"

"Quite a bit," she confessed, candidly, "and sleepy."

"Good-night," she called to him several minutes later, stretching her body luxuriously in the warm blankets. And a quarter of an hour after that, "Oh, I say! Are you awake?"

"Yes," his voice came muffled across the stove. "What is it?"

"Have you the shavings cut?"

"Shavings?" he queried, sleepily. "What shavings?"

"For the fire in the morning, of course. So get up and cut them."

He obeyed without a word; but ere he was done she had ceased to hear him.

The ubiquitous bacon was abroad on the air when she opened her eyes. Day had broken, and with it the storm. The wet sun was shining cheerily over the drenched landscape and in at the wide-spread flaps. Already work had begun, and groups of men were filing past under their packs. Frona turned over on her side. Breakfast was cooked. Her host had just put the bacon and fried potatoes in the oven, and was engaged in propping the door ajar with two sticks of firewood.

"Good-morning," she greeted.

"And good-morning to you," he responded, rising to his feet and picking up the water-bucket. "I don't hope that you slept well, for I know you did."

Frona laughed.

"I'm going out after some water," he vouchsafed. "And when I return I shall expect you ready for breakfast."

After breakfast, basking herself in the sun, Frona descried a familiar bunch of men rounding the tail of the glacier in the direction of Crater Lake. She clapped her hands.

"There comes my outfit, and Del Bishop as shame-faced as can be, I'm sure, at his failure to connect." Turning to the man, and at the same time slinging camera and satchel over her shoulder, "So I must say good-by, not forgetting to thank you for your kindness."

"Oh, not at all, not at all. Pray don't mention it. I'd do the same for any — "

"Vaudeville artist!"

He looked his reproach, but went on. "I don't know your name, nor do I wish to know it."

"Well, I shall not be so harsh, for I do know your name, MISTER VANCE CORLISS! I saw it on the shipping tags, of course," she explained.

"And I want you to come and see me when you get to Dawson. My name is Frona Welse. Good-by."

"Your father is not Jacob Welse?" he called after her as she ran lightly down towards the trail.

She turned her head and nodded.

But Del Bishop was not shamefaced, nor even worried. "Trust a Welse to land on their feet on a soft spot," he had consoled himself as he dropped off to sleep the night before. But he was angry — "madder 'n hops," in his own vernacular.

"Good-mornin'," he saluted. "And it's plain by your face you had a comfortable night of it, and no thanks to me."

"You weren't worried, were you?" she asked.

"Worried? About a Welse? Who? Me? Not on your life. I was too busy tellin' Crater Lake what I thought of it. I don't like the water. I told you so. And it's always playin' me scurvy — not that I'm afraid of it, though."

"Hey, you Pete!" turning to the Indians. "Hit 'er up! Got to make Linderman by noon!"

"Frona Welse?" Vance Corliss was repeating to himself.

The whole thing seemed a dream, and he reassured himself by turning and looking after her retreating form. Del Bishop and the Indians were already out of sight behind a wall of rock. Frona was just rounding the base. The sun was full upon her, and she stood out radiantly against the black shadow of the wall beyond. She waved her alpenstock, and as he doffed his cap, rounded the brink and disappeared.

# Chapter V

The position occupied by Jacob Welse was certainly an anomalous one. He was a giant trader in a country without commerce, a ripened product of the nineteenth century flourishing in a society as primitive as that of the Mediterranean vandals. A captain of industry and a splendid monopolist, he dominated the most independent aggregate of men ever drawn together from the ends of the earth. An economic missionary, a commercial St. Paul, he preached the doctrines of expediency and force. Believing in the natural rights of man, a child himself of democracy, he bent all men to his absolutism. Government of Jacob Welse, for Jacob Welse and the people, by Jacob Welse, was his unwritten gospel. Single-handed he had carved out his dominion till he gripped the domain of a dozen Roman provinces. At his ukase the population ebbed and flowed over a hundred thousand miles of territory, and cities sprang up or disappeared at his bidding.

Yet he was a common man. The air of the world first smote his lungs on the open prairie by the River Platte, the blue sky over head, and beneath, the green grass of the earth pressing against his tender nakedness. On the horses his eyes first opened, still saddled and gazing in mild wonder on the miracle; for his trapper father had but turned aside from the trail that the wife might have quiet and the birth be accomplished. An hour or so and the two, which were now three, were in the saddle and overhauling their trapper comrades. The party had not been delayed; no time lost. In the morning his mother cooked the breakfast over the camp-fire, and capped it with a fifty-mile ride into the next sun-down.

The trapper father had come of the sturdy Welsh stock which trickled into early Ohio out of the jostling East, and the mother was a nomadic daughter of the Irish emigrant settlers of Ontario. From both sides came the Wanderlust of the blood, the fever to be moving, to be pushing on to the edge of things. In the first year of his life, ere he had learned the way of his legs, Jacob Welse had wandered a-horse through a thousand miles of wilderness, and wintered in a hunting-lodge on the head-waters of the Red River of the North. His first foot-gear was moccasins, his first taffy the tallow from a moose. His first generalizations were that the world was composed of great wastes and white vastnesses, and populated with Indians and white hunters like his father. A town was a cluster of deer-skin lodges; a trading-post a seat of civilization; and a factor God Almighty Himself. Rivers and lakes existed chiefly for man's use in travelling. Viewed in this light, the mountains puzzled him; but he placed them away in his classification of the Inexplicable and did not worry. Men died, sometimes. But their meat was not good to eat, and their hides worthless, — perhaps because they

did not grow fur. Pelts were valuable, and with a few bales a man might purchase the earth. Animals were made for men to catch and skin. He did not know what men were made for, unless, perhaps, for the factor.

As he grew older he modified these concepts, but the process was a continual source of naive apprehension and wonderment. It was not until he became a man and had wandered through half the cities of the States that this expression of childish wonder passed out of his eyes and left them wholly keen and alert. At his boy's first contact with the cities, while he revised his synthesis of things, he also generalized afresh. People who lived in cities were effeminate. They did not carry the points of the compass in their heads, and they got lost easily. That was why they elected to stay in the cities. Because they might catch cold and because they were afraid of the dark, they slept under shelter and locked their doors at night. The women were soft and pretty, but they could not lift a snowshoe far in a day's journey. Everybody talked too much. That was why they lied and were unable to work greatly with their hands. Finally, there was a new human force called "bluff." A man who made a bluff must be dead sure of it, or else be prepared to back it up. Bluff was a very good thing — when exercised with discretion.

Later, though living his life mainly in the woods and mountains, he came to know that the cities were not all bad; that a man might live in a city and still be a man. Accustomed to do battle with natural forces, he was attracted by the commercial battle with social forces. The masters of marts and exchanges dazzled but did not blind him, and he studied them, and strove to grasp the secrets of their strength. And further, in token that some good did come out of Nazareth, in the full tide of manhood he took to himself a city-bred woman. But he still yearned for the edge of things, and the leaven in his blood worked till they went away, and above the Dyea Beach, on the rim of the forest, built the big log trading-post. And here, in the mellow of time, he got a proper focus on things and unified the phenomena of society precisely as he had already unified the phenomena of nature. There was naught in one which could not be expressed in terms of the other. The same principles underlaid both; the same truths were manifest of both. Competition was the secret of creation. Battle was the law and the way of progress. The world was made for the strong, and only the strong inherited it, and through it all there ran an eternal equity. To be honest was to be strong. To sin was to weaken. To bluff an honest man was to be dishonest. To bluff a bluffer was to smite with the steel of justice. The primitive strength was in the arm; the modern strength in the brain. Though it had shifted ground, the struggle was the same old struggle. As of old time, men still fought for the mastery of the earth and the delights thereof. But the sword had given way to the ledger; the mail-clad baron to the soft-garbed industrial lord, and the centre of imperial political power to the seat of commercial exchanges. The modern will had destroyed the ancient brute. The stubborn earth yielded only to force. Brain was greater than body. The man with the brain could best conquer things primitive.

He did not have much education as education goes. To the three R's his mother taught him by camp-fire and candle-light, he had added a somewhat miscellaneous book-knowledge; but he was not burdened with what he had gathered. Yet he read the facts of life understandingly, and the sobriety which comes of the soil was his, and the clear earth-vision.

And so it came about that Jacob Welse crossed over the Chilcoot in an early day, and disappeared into the vast unknown. A year later he emerged at the Russian missions clustered about the mouth of the Yukon on Bering Sea. He had journeyed down a river three thousand miles long, he had seen things, and dreamed a great dream. But he held his tongue and went to work, and one day the defiant whistle of a crazy stern-wheel tub saluted the midnight sun on the dank river-stretch by Fort o' Yukon. It was a magnificent adventure. How he achieved it only Jacob Welse can tell; but with the impossible to begin with, plus the impossible, he added steamer to steamer and heaped enterprise upon enterprise. Along many a thousand miles of river and tributary he built trading-posts and warehouses. He forced the white man's axe into the hands of the aborigines, and in every village and between the villages rose the cords of four-foot firewood for his boilers. On an island in Bering Sea, where the river and the ocean meet, he established a great distributing station, and on the North Pacific he put big ocean steamships; while in his offices in Seattle and San Francisco it took clerks by the score to keep the order and system of his business.

Men drifted into the land. Hitherto famine had driven them out, but Jacob Welse was there now, and his grub-stores; so they wintered in the frost and groped in the frozen muck for gold. He encouraged them, grub-staked them, carried them on the backs of the company. His steamers dragged them up the Koyukuk in the old days of Arctic City. Wherever pay was struck he built a warehouse and a store. The town followed. He explored; he speculated; he developed. Tireless, indomitable, with the steel-glitter in his dark eyes, he was everywhere at once, doing all things. In the opening up of a new river he was in the van; and at the tail-end also, hurrying forward the grub. On the Outside he fought trade-combinations; made alliances with the corporations of the earth, and forced discriminating tariffs from the great carriers. On the Inside he sold flour, and blankets, and tobacco; built saw-mills, staked townsites, and sought properties in copper, iron, and coal; and that the miners should be well-equipped, ransacked the lands of the Arctic even as far as Siberia for native-made snow-shoes, muclucs, and parkas.

He bore the country on his shoulders; saw to its needs; did its work. Every ounce of its dust passed through his hands; every post-card and letter of credit. He did its banking and exchange; carried and distributed its mails. He frowned upon competition; frightened out predatory capital; bluffed militant syndicates, and when they would not, backed his bluff and broke them. And for all, yet found time and place to remember his motherless girl, and to love her, and to fit her for the position he had made.



## Chapter VI

“So I think, captain, you will agree that we must exaggerate the seriousness of the situation.” Jacob Welse helped his visitor into his fur great-coat and went on. “Not that it is not serious, but that it may not become more serious. Both you and I have handled famines before. We must frighten them, and frighten them now, before it is too late. Take five thousand men out of Dawson and there will be grub to last. Let those five thousand carry their tale of famine to Dyea and Skaguay, and they will prevent five thousand more coming in over the ice.”

“Quite right! And you may count on the hearty co-operation of the police, Mr. Welse.” The speaker, a strong-faced, grizzled man, heavy-set and of military bearing, pulled up his collar and rested his hand on the door-knob. “I see already, thanks to you, the newcomers are beginning to sell their outfits and buy dogs. Lord! won’t there be a stampede out over the ice as soon as the river closes down! And each that sells a thousand pounds of grub and goes lessens the proposition by one empty stomach and fills another that remains. When does the Laura start?”

“This morning, with three hundred grubless men aboard. Would that they were three thousand!”

Amen to that! And by the way, when does your daughter arrive?”

“Most any day, now.” Jacob Welse’s eyes warmed. “And I want you to dinner when she does, and bring along a bunch of your young bucks from the Barracks. I don’t know all their names, but just the same extend the invitation as though from me personally. I haven’t cultivated the social side much, — no time, but see to it that the girl enjoys herself. Fresh from the States and London, and she’s liable to feel lonesome. You understand.”

Jacob Welse closed the door, tilted his chair back, and cocked his feet on the guard-rail of the stove. For one half-minute a girlish vision wavered in the shimmering air above the stove, then merged into a woman of fair Saxon type.

The door opened. “Mr. Welse, Mr. Foster sent me to find out if he is to go on filling signed warehouse orders?”

“Certainly, Mr. Smith. But tell him to scale them down by half. If a man holds an order for a thousand pounds, give him five hundred.”

He lighted a cigar and tilted back again in his chair.

“Captain McGregor wants to see you, sir.”

“Send him in.”

Captain McGregor strode in and remained standing before his employer. The rough hand of the New World had been laid upon the Scotsman from his boyhood; but sterling

honesty was written in every line of his bitter-seamed face, while a prognathous jaw proclaimed to the onlooker that honesty was the best policy, — for the onlooker at any rate, should he wish to do business with the owner of the jaw. This warning was backed up by the nose, side-twisted and broken, and by a long scar which ran up the forehead and disappeared in the gray-grizzled hair.

“We throw off the lines in an hour, sir; so I’ve come for the last word.”

“Good.” Jacob Welse whirled his chair about. “Captain McGregor.”

“Ay.”

“I had other work cut out for you this winter; but I have changed my mind and chosen you to go down with the Laura. Can you guess why?”

Captain McGregor swayed his weight from one leg to the other, and a shrewd chuckle of a smile wrinkled the corners of his eyes. “Going to be trouble,” he grunted.

“And I couldn’t have picked a better man. Mr. Bally will give you detailed instructions as you go aboard. But let me say this: If we can’t scare enough men out of the country, there’ll be need for every pound of grub at Fort Yukon. Understand?”

“Ay.”

“So no extravagance. You are taking three hundred men down with you. The chances are that twice as many more will go down as soon as the river freezes. You’ll have a thousand to feed through the winter. Put them on rations, — working rations, — and see that they work. Cordwood, six dollars per cord, and piled on the bank where steamers can make a landing. No work, no rations. Understand?”

“Ay.”

“A thousand men can get ugly, if they are idle. They can get ugly anyway. Watch out they don’t rush the caches. If they do, — do your duty.”

The other nodded grimly. His hands gripped unconsciously, while the scar on his forehead took on a livid hue.

“There are five steamers in the ice. Make them safe against the spring break-up. But first transfer all their cargoes to one big cache. You can defend it better, and make the cache impregnable. Send a messenger down to Fort Burr, asking Mr. Carter for three of his men. He doesn’t need them. Nothing much is doing at Circle City. Stop in on the way down and take half of Mr. Burdwell’s men. You’ll need them. There’ll be gun-fighters in plenty to deal with. Be stiff. Keep things in check from the start. Remember, the man who shoots first comes off with the whole hide. And keep a constant eye on the grub.”

“And on the forty-five-nineties,” Captain McGregor rumbled back as he passed out the door.

“John Melton — Mr. Melton, sir. Can he see you?”

“See here, Welse, what’s this mean?” John Melton followed wrathfully on the heels of the clerk, and he almost walked over him as he flourished a paper before the head of the company. “Read that! What’s it stand for?”

Jacob Welse glanced over it and looked up coolly. “One thousand pounds of grub.”

"That's what I say, but that fellow you've got in the warehouse says no, — five hundred's all it's good for."

"He spoke the truth."

"But — "

"It stands for one thousand pounds, but in the warehouse it is only good for five hundred."

"That your signature?" thrusting the receipt again into the other's line of vision.

"Yes."

"Then what are you going to do about it?"

"Give you five hundred. What are you going to do about it?"

"Refuse to take it."

"Very good. There is no further discussion."

"Yes there is. I propose to have no further dealings with you. I'm rich enough to freight my own stuff in over the Passes, and I will next year. Our business stops right now and for all time."

"I cannot object to that. You have three hundred thousand dollars in dust deposited with me. Go to Mr. Atsheler and draw it at once."

The man fumed impotently up and down. "Can't I get that other five hundred? Great God, man! I've paid for it! You don't intend me to starve?"

"Look here, Melton." Jacob Welse paused to knock the ash from his cigar. "At this very moment what are you working for? What are you trying to get?"

"A thousand pounds of grub."

"For your own stomach?"

The Bonanzo king nodded his head.

"Just so." The lines showed more sharply on Jacob Welse's forehead. "You are working for your own stomach. I am working for the stomachs of twenty thousand."

"But you filled Tim McReady's thousand pounds yesterday all right."

"The scale-down did not go into effect until to-day."

"But why am I the one to get it in the neck hard?"

"Why didn't you come yesterday, and Tim McReady to-day?"

Melton's face went blank, and Jacob Welse answered his own question with shrugging shoulders.

"That's the way it stands, Melton. No favoritism. If you hold me responsible for Tim McReady, I shall hold you responsible for not coming yesterday. Better we both throw it upon Providence. You went through the Forty Mile Famine. You are a white man. A Bonanzo property, or a block of Bonanzo properties, does not entitle you to a pound more than the oldest penniless 'sour-dough' or the newest baby born. Trust me. As long as I have a pound of grub you shall not starve. Stiffen up. Shake hands. Get a smile on your face and make the best of it."

Still savage of spirit, though rapidly toning down, the king shook hands and flung out of the room. Before the door could close on his heels, a loose-jointed Yankee

shambled in, thrust a moccasined foot to the side and hooked a chair under him, and sat down.

"Say," he opened up, confidentially, "people's gittin' scairt over the grub proposition, I guess some."

"Hello, Dave. That you?"

"S'pose so. But ez I was saying there'll be a lively stampede fer the Outside soon as the river freezes."

"Think so?"

"Unh huh."

"Then I'm glad to hear it. It's what the country needs. Going to join them?"

"Not in a thousand years." Dave Harney threw his head back with smug complacency. "Freighted my truck up to the mine yesterday. Wa'n't a bit too soon about it, either. But say . . . Suthin' happened to the sugar. Had it all on the last sled, an' jest where the trail turns off the Klondike into Bonanza, what does that sled do but break through the ice! I never seen the beat of it — the last sled of all, an' all the sugar! So I jest thought I'd drop in to-day an' git a hundred pounds or so. White or brown, I ain't pertickler."

Jacob Welse shook his head and smiled, but Harney hitched his chair closer.

"The clerk of yourn said he didn't know, an' ez there wa'n't no call to pester him, I said I'd jest drop round an' see you. I don't care what it's wuth. Make it a hundred even; that'll do me handy."

"Say," he went on easily, noting the decidedly negative poise of the other's head. "I've got a tolerable sweet tooth, I have. Recollect the taffy I made over on Preacher Creek that time? I declare! how time does fly! That was all of six years ago if it's a day. More'n that, surely. Seven, by the Jimcracky! But ez I was sayin', I'd ruther do without my plug of 'Star' than sugar. An' about that sugar? Got my dogs outside. Better go round to the warehouse an' git it, eh? Pretty good idea."

But he saw the "No" shaping on Jacob Welse's lips, and hurried on before it could be uttered.

"Now, I don't want to hog it. Wouldn't do that fer the world. So if yer short, I can put up with seventy-five — " (he studied the other's face), "an' I might do with fifty. I 'preciate your position, an' I ain't low-down critter enough to pester — "

"What's the good of spilling words, Dave? We haven't a pound of sugar to spare — "

"Ez I was sayin', I ain't no hog; an' seein' 's it's you, Welse, I'll make to scrimp along on twenty-five — "

"Not an ounce!"

"Not the least leetle mite? Well, well, don't git het up. We'll jest fergit I ast you fer any, an' I'll drop round some likelier time. So long. Say!" He threw his jaw to one side and seemed to stiffen the muscles of his ear as he listened intently. "That's the Laura's whistle. She's startin' soon. Goin' to see her off? Come along."

Jacob Welse pulled on his bearskin coat and mittens, and they passed through the outer offices into the main store. So large was it, that the tenscore purchasers before the counters made no apparent crowd. Many were serious-faced, and more than one looked darkly at the head of the company as he passed. The clerks were selling everything except grub, and it was grub that was in demand. "Holding it for a rise. Famine prices," a red-whiskered miner sneered. Jacob Welse heard it, but took no notice. He expected to hear it many times and more unpleasantly ere the scare was over.

On the sidewalk he stopped to glance over the public bulletins posted against the side of the building. Dogs lost, found, and for sale occupied some space, but the rest was devoted to notices of sales of outfits. The timid were already growing frightened. Outfits of five hundred pounds were offering at a dollar a pound, without flour; others, with flour, at a dollar and a half. Jacob Welse saw Melton talking with an anxious-faced newcomer, and the satisfaction displayed by the Bonanzo king told that he had succeeded in filling his winter's cache.

"Why don't you smell out the sugar, Dave?" Jacob Welse asked, pointing to the bulletins.

Dave Harney looked his reproach. "Mebbe you think I ain't ben smellin'. I've clean wore my dogs out chasin' round from Klondike City to the Hospital. Can't git yer fingers on it fer love or money."

They walked down the block-long sidewalk, past the warehouse doors and the long teams of waiting huskies curled up in wolfish comfort in the snow. It was for this snow, the first permanent one of the fall, that the miners up-creek had waited to begin their freighting.

"Curious, ain't it?" Dave hazarded suggestively, as they crossed the main street to the river bank. "Mighty curious — me ownin' two five-hundred-foot Eldorado claims an' a fraction, wuth five millions if I'm wuth a cent, an' no sweetenin' fer my coffee or mush! Why, gosh-dang-it! this country kin go to blazes! I'll sell out! I'll quit it cold! I'll — I'll — go back to the States!"

"Oh, no, you won't," Jacob Welse answered. "I've heard you talk before. You put in a year up Stuart River on straight meat, if I haven't forgotten. And you ate salmon-belly and dogs up the Tanana, to say nothing of going through two famines; and you haven't turned your back on the country yet. And you never will. And you'll die here as sure as that's the Laura's spring being hauled aboard. And I look forward confidently to the day when I shall ship you out in a lead-lined box and burden the San Francisco end with the trouble of winding up your estate. You are a fixture, and you know it."

As he talked he constantly acknowledged greetings from the passers-by. Those who knew him were mainly old-timers and he knew them all by name, though there was scarcely a newcomer to whom his face was not familiar.

"I'll jest bet I'll be in Paris in 1900," the Eldorado king protested feebly.

But Jacob Welse did not hear. There was a jangling of gongs as McGregor saluted him from the pilot-house and the Laura slipped out from the bank. The men on the shore filled the air with good-luck farewells and last advice, but the three hundred

grubless ones, turning their backs on the golden dream, were moody and dispirited, and made small response. The Laura backed out through a channel cut in the shore-ice, swung about in the current, and with a final blast put on full steam ahead.

The crowd thinned away and went about its business, leaving Jacob Welse the centre of a group of a dozen or so. The talk was of the famine, but it was the talk of men. Even Dave Harney forgot to curse the country for its sugar shortage, and waxed facetious over the newcomers, — chechaquos, he called them, having recourse to the Siwash tongue. In the midst of his remarks his quick eye lighted on a black speck floating down with the mush-ice of the river. "Jest look at that!" he cried. "A Peterborough canoe runnin' the ice!"

Twisting and turning, now paddling, now shoving clear of the floating cakes, the two men in the canoe worked in to the rim-ice, along the edge of which they drifted, waiting for an opening. Opposite the channel cut out by the steamer, they drove their paddles deep and darted into the calm dead water. The waiting group received them with open arms, helping them up the bank and carrying their shell after them.

In its bottom were two leather mail-pouches, a couple of blankets, coffee-pot and frying-pan, and a scant grub-sack. As for the men, so frosted were they, and so numb with the cold, that they could hardly stand. Dave Harney proposed whiskey, and was for haling them away at once; but one delayed long enough to shake stiff hands with Jacob Welse.

"She's coming," he announced. "Passed her boat an hour back. It ought to be round the bend any minute. I've got despatches for you, but I'll see you later. Got to get something into me first." Turning to go with Harney, he stopped suddenly and pointed up stream. "There she is now. Just coming out past the bluff."

"Run along, boys, an' git yer whiskey," Harney admonished him and his mate. "Tell 'm it's on me, double dose, an' jest excuse me not drinkin' with you, fer I'm goin' to stay."

The Klondike was throwing a thick flow of ice, partly mush and partly solid, and swept the boat out towards the middle of the Yukon. They could see the struggle plainly from the bank, — four men standing up and poling a way through the jarring cakes. A Yukon stove aboard was sending up a trailing pillar of blue smoke, and, as the boat drew closer, they could see a woman in the stern working the long steering-sweep. At sight of this there was a snap and sparkle in Jacob Welse's eyes. It was the first omen, and it was good, he thought. She was still a Welse; a struggler and a fighter. The years of her culture had not weakened her. Though tasting of the fruits of the first remove from the soil, she was not afraid of the soil; she could return to it gleefully and naturally.

So he mused till the boat drove in, ice-rimed and battered, against the edge of the rim-ice. The one white man aboard sprang: out, painter in hand, to slow it down and work into the channel. But the rim-ice was formed of the night, and the front of it shelved off with him into the current. The nose of the boat sheered out under the pressure of a heavy cake, so that he came up at the stern. The woman's arm flashed

over the side to his collar, and at the same instant, sharp and authoritative, her voice rang out to the Indian oarsmen to back water. Still holding the man's head above water, she threw her body against the sweep and guided the boat stern-foremost into the opening. A few more strokes and it grounded at the foot of the bank. She passed the collar of the chattering man to Dave Harney, who dragged him out and started him off on the trail of the mail-carriers.

Frona stood up, her cheeks glowing from the quick work. Jacob Welse hesitated. Though he stood within reach of the gunwale, a gulf of three years was between. The womanhood of twenty, added unto the girl of seventeen, made a sum more prodigious than he had imagined. He did not know whether to bear-hug the radiant young creature or to take her hand and help her ashore. But there was no apparent hitch, for she leaped beside him and was into his arms. Those above looked away to a man till the two came up the bank hand in hand.

"Gentlemen, my daughter." There was a great pride in his face.

Frona embraced them all with a comrade smile, and each man felt that for an instant her eyes had looked straight into his.

## Chapter VII

That Vance Corliss wanted to see more of the girl he had divided blankets with, goes with the saying. He had not been wise enough to lug a camera into the country, but none the less, by a yet subtler process, a sun-picture had been recorded somewhere on his cerebral tissues. In the flash of an instant it had been done. A wave message of light and color, a molecular agitation and integration, a certain minute though definite corrugation in a brain recess, — and there it was, a picture complete! The blazing sunlight on the beetling black; a slender gray form, radiant, starting forward to the vision from the marge where light and darkness met; a fresh young morning smile wreathed in a flame of burning gold.

It was a picture he looked at often, and the more he looked the greater was his desire, to see Frona Welse again. This event he anticipated with a thrill, with the exultancy over change which is common of all life. She was something new, a fresh type, a woman unrelated to all women he had met. Out of the fascinating unknown a pair of hazel eyes smiled into his, and a hand, soft of touch and strong of grip, beckoned him. And there was an allurement about it which was as the allurement of sin.

Not that Vance Corliss was anybody's fool, nor that his had been an anchorite's existence; but that his upbringing, rather, had given his life a certain puritanical bent. Awakening intelligence and broader knowledge had weakened the early influence of an austere mother, but had not wholly eradicated it. It was there, deep down, very shadowy, but still a part of him. He could not get away from it. It distorted, ever so slightly, his concepts of things. It gave a squint to his perceptions, and very often, when the sex feminine was concerned, determined his classifications. He prided himself on his largeness when he granted that there were three kinds of women. His mother had only admitted two. But he had outgrown her. It was incontestable that there were three kinds, — the good, the bad, and the partly good and partly bad. That the last usually went bad, he believed firmly. In its very nature such a condition could not be permanent. It was the intermediary stage, marking the passage from high to low, from best to worst.

All of which might have been true, even as he saw it; but with definitions for premises, conclusions cannot fail to be dogmatic. What was good and bad? There it was. That was where his mother whispered with dead lips to him. Nor alone his mother, but divers conventional generations, even back to the sturdy ancestor who first uplifted from the soil and looked down. For Vance Corliss was many times removed from the red earth, and, though he did not know it, there was a clamor within him for a return lest he perish.



Not that he pigeon-holed Frona according to his inherited definitions. He refused to classify her at all. He did not dare. He preferred to pass judgment later, when he had gathered more data. And there was the allurements, the gathering of the data; the great critical point where purity reaches dreamy hands towards pitch and refuses to call it pitch — till defiled. No; Vance Corliss was not a cad. And since purity is merely a relative term, he was not pure. That there was no pitch under his nails was not because he had manicured diligently, but because it had not been his luck to run across any pitch. He was not good because he chose to be, because evil was repellant; but because he had not had opportunity to become evil. But from this, on the other hand, it is not to be argued that he would have gone bad had he had a chance.

He was a product of the sheltered life. All his days had been lived in a sanitary dwelling; the plumbing was excellent. The air he had breathed had been mostly ozone artificially manufactured. He had been sun-bathed in balmy weather, and brought in out of the wet when it rained. And when he reached the age of choice he had been too fully occupied to deviate from the straight path, along which his mother had taught him to creep and toddle, and along which he now proceeded to walk upright, without thought of what lay on either side.

Vitality cannot be used over again. If it be expended on one thing, there is none left for the other thing. And so with Vance Corliss. Scholarly lucubrations and healthy exercises during his college days had consumed all the energy his normal digestion extracted from a wholesome omnivorous diet. When he did discover a bit of surplus energy, he worked it off in the society of his mother and of the conventional minds and prim teas she surrounded herself with. Result: A very nice young man, of whom no maid's mother need ever be in trepidation; a very strong young man, whose substance had not been wasted in riotous living; a very learned young man, with a Freiberg mining engineer's diploma and a B.A. sheepskin from Yale; and, lastly, a very self-centred, self-possessed young man.

Now his greatest virtue lay in this: he had not become hardened in the mould baked by his several forbears and into which he had been pressed by his mother's hands. Some atavism had been at work in the making of him, and he had reverted to that ancestor who sturdily uplifted. But so far this portion of his heritage had lain dormant. He had simply remained adjusted to a stable environment. There had been no call upon the adaptability which was his. But whensoever the call came, being so constituted, it was manifest that he should adapt, should adjust himself to the unwonted pressure of new conditions. The maxim of the rolling stone may be all true; but notwithstanding, in the scheme of life, the inability to become fixed is an excellence par excellence. Though he did not know it, this inability was Vance Corliss's most splendid possession.

But to return. He looked forward with great sober glee to meeting Frona Welse, and in the meanwhile consulted often the sun-picture he carried of her. Though he went over the Pass and down the lakes and river with a push of money behind him (London syndicates are never niggardly in such matters). Frona beat him into Dawson by a fortnight. While on his part money in the end overcame obstacles, on hers the name of

Welse was a talisman greater than treasure. After his arrival, a couple of weeks were consumed in buying a cabin, presenting his letters of introduction, and settling down. But all things come in the fulness of time, and so, one night after the river closed, he pointed his moccasins in the direction of Jacob Welse's house. Mrs. Schoville, the Gold Commissioner's wife, gave him the honor of her company.

Corliss wanted to rub his eyes. Steam-heating apparatus in the Klondike! But the next instant he had passed out of the hall through the heavy portieres and stood inside the drawing-room. And it was a drawing-room. His moose-hide moccasins sank luxuriantly into the deep carpet, and his eyes were caught by a Turner sunrise on the opposite wall. And there were other paintings and things in bronze. Two Dutch fireplaces were roaring full with huge back-logs of spruce. There was a piano; and somebody was singing. Frona sprang from the stool and came forward, greeting him with both hands. He had thought his sun-picture perfect, but this fire-picture, this young creature with the flush and warmth of ringing life, quite eclipsed it. It was a whirling moment, as he held her two hands in his, one of those moments when an incomprehensible orgasm quickens the blood and dizzies the brain. Though the first syllables came to him faintly, Mrs. Schoville's voice brought him back to himself.

"Oh!" she cried. "You know him!"

And Frona answered, "Yes, we met on the Dyea Trail; and those who meet on the Dyea Trail can never forget."

"How romantic!"

The Gold Commissioner's wife clapped her hands. Though fat and forty, and phlegmatic of temperament, between exclamations and hand-clappings her waking existence was mostly explosive. Her husband secretly averred that did God Himself deign to meet her face to face, she would smite together her chubby hands and cry out, "How romantic!"

"How did it happen?" she continued. "He didn't rescue you over a cliff, or that sort of thing, did he? Do say that he did! And you never said a word about it, Mr. Corliss. Do tell me. I'm just dying to know!"

"Oh, nothing like that," he hastened to answer. "Nothing much. I, that is we — "

He felt a sinking as Frona interrupted. There was no telling what this remarkable girl might say.

"He gave me of his hospitality, that was all," she said. "And I can vouch for his fried potatoes; while for his coffee, it is excellent — when one is very hungry."

"Ingrate!" he managed to articulate, and thereby to gain a smile, ere he was introduced to a cleanly built lieutenant of the Mounted Police, who stood by the fireplace discussing the grub proposition with a dapper little man very much out of place in a white shirt and stiff collar.

Thanks to the particular niche in society into which he happened to be born, Corliss drifted about easily from group to group, and was much envied therefore by Del Bishop, who sat stiffly in the first chair he had dropped into, and who was waiting patiently for the first person to take leave that he might know how to compass the manoeuvre.

In his mind's eye he had figured most of it out, knew just how many steps required to carry him to the door, was certain he would have to say good-by to Frona, but did not know whether or not he was supposed to shake hands all around. He had just dropped in to see Frona and say "Howdee," as he expressed it, and had unwittingly found himself in company.

Corliss, having terminated a buzz with a Miss Mortimer on the decadence of the French symbolists, encountered Del Bishop. But the pocket-miner remembered him at once from the one glimpse he had caught of Corliss standing by his tent-door in Happy Camp. Was almighty obliged to him for his night's hospitality to Miss Frona, seein' as he'd ben side-tracked down the line; that any kindness to her was a kindness to him; and that he'd remember it, by God, as long as he had a corner of a blanket to pull over him. Hoped it hadn't put him out. Miss Frona'd said that bedding was scarce, but it wasn't a cold night (more blowy than crisp), so he reckoned there couldn't 'a' ben much shiverin'. All of which struck Corliss as perilous, and he broke away at the first opportunity, leaving the pocket-miner yearning for the door.

But Dave Harney, who had not come by mistake, avoided gluing himself to the first chair. Being an Eldorado king, he had felt it incumbent to assume the position in society to which his numerous millions entitled him; and though unused all his days to social amenities other than the out-hanging latch-string and the general pot, he had succeeded to his own satisfaction as a knight of the carpet. Quick to take a cue, he circulated with an aplomb which his striking garments and long shambling gait only heightened, and talked choppy and disconnected fragments with whomsoever he ran up against. The Miss Mortimer, who spoke Parisian French, took him aback with her symbolists; but he evened matters up with a goodly measure of the bastard lingo of the Canadian voyageurs, and left her gasping and meditating over a proposition to sell him twenty-five pounds of sugar, white or brown. But she was not unduly favored, for with everybody he adroitly turned the conversation to grub, and then led up to the eternal proposition. "Sugar or bust," he would conclude gayly each time and wander on to the next.

But he put the capstone on his social success by asking Frona to sing the touching ditty, "I Left My Happy Home for You." This was something beyond her, though she had him hum over the opening bars so that she could furnish the accompaniment. His voice was more strenuous than sweet, and Del Bishop, discovering himself at last, joined in raucously on the choruses. This made him feel so much better that he disconnected himself from the chair, and when he finally got home he kicked up his sleepy tent-mate to tell him about the high time he'd had over at the Welse's. Mrs. Schoville tittered and thought it all so unique, and she thought it so unique several times more when the lieutenant of Mounted Police and a couple of compatriots roared "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the Queen," and the Americans responded with "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" and "John Brown." Then big Alec Beaubien, the Circle City king, demanded the "Marseillaise," and the company broke up chanting "Die Wacht am Rhein" to the frosty night.

“Don’t come on these nights,” Frona whispered to Corliss at parting.  
“We haven’t spoken three words, and I know we shall be good friends.  
Did Dave Harney succeed in getting any sugar out of you?”

They mingled their laughter, and Corliss went home under the aurora borealis, striving to reduce his impressions to some kind of order.

## Chapter VIII

“And why should I not be proud of my race?”

Frona’s cheeks were flushed and her eyes sparkling. They had both been harking back to childhood, and she had been telling Corliss of her mother, whom she faintly remembered. Fair and flaxen-haired, typically Saxon, was the likeness she had drawn, filled out largely with knowledge gained from her father and from old Andy of the Dyea Post. The discussion had then turned upon the race in general, and Frona had said things in the heat of enthusiasm which affected the more conservative mind of Corliss as dangerous and not solidly based on fact. He deemed himself too large for race egotism and insular prejudice, and had seen fit to laugh at her immature convictions.

“It’s a common characteristic of all peoples,” he proceeded, “to consider themselves superior races, — a naive, natural egoism, very healthy and very good, but none the less manifestly untrue. The Jews conceived themselves to be God’s chosen people, and they still so conceive themselves — ”

“And because of it they have left a deep mark down the page of history,” she interrupted.

“But time has not proved the stability of their conceptions. And you must also view the other side. A superior people must look upon all others as inferior peoples. This comes home to you. To be a Roman were greater than to be a king, and when the Romans rubbed against your savage ancestors in the German forests, they elevated their brows and said, ‘An inferior people, barbarians.’”

“But we are here, now. We are, and the Romans are not. The test is time. So far we have stood the test; the signs are favorable that we shall continue to stand it. We are the best fitted!”

“Egotism.”

“But wait. Put it to the test.”

As she spoke her hand flew out impulsively to his. At the touch his heart pulsed upward, there was a rush of blood and a tightening across the temples. Ridiculous, but delightful, he thought. At this rate he could argue with her the night through.

“The test,” she repeated, withdrawing her hand without embarrassment. “We are a race of doers and fighters, of globe-encirclers and zone-conquerors. We toil and struggle, and stand by the toil and struggle no matter how hopeless it may be. While we are persistent and resistant, we are so made that we fit ourselves to the most diverse conditions. Will the Indian, the Negro, or the Mongol ever conquer the Teuton? Surely not! The Indian has persistence without variability; if he does not modify he dies, if he does try to modify he dies anyway. The Negro has adaptability, but he is servile

and must be led. As for the Chinese, they are permanent. All that the other races are not, the Anglo-Saxon, or Teuton if you please, is. All that the other races have not, the Teuton has. What race is to rise up and overwhelm us?"

"Ah, you forget the Slav," Corliss suggested slyly.

"The Slav!" Her face fell. "True, the Slav! The only stripling in this world of young men and gray-beards! But he is still in the future, and in the future the decision rests. In the mean time we prepare. If may be we shall have such a start that we shall prevent him growing. You know, because he was better skilled in chemistry, knew how to manufacture gunpowder, that the Spaniard destroyed the Aztec. May not we, who are possessing ourselves of the world and its resources, and gathering to ourselves all its knowledge, may not we nip the Slav ere he grows a thatch to his lip?"

Vance Corliss shook his head non-committally, and laughed.

"Oh! I know I become absurd and grow over-warm!" she exclaimed. "But after all, one reason that we are the salt of the earth is because we have the courage to say so."

"And I am sure your warmth spreads," he responded. "See, I'm beginning to glow myself. We are not God's, but Nature's chosen people, we Angles, and Saxons, and Normans, and Vikings, and the earth is our heritage. Let us arise and go forth!"

"Now you are laughing at me, and, besides, we have already gone forth. Why have you fared into the north, if not to lay hands on the race legacy?"

She turned her head at the sound of approaching footsteps, and cried for greeting, "I appeal to you, Captain Alexander! I summon you to bear witness!"

The captain of police smiled in his sternly mirthful fashion as he shook hands with Frona and Corliss. "Bear witness?" he questioned. "Ah, yes!

"Bear witness, O my comrades, what a hard-bit gang were we, —  
The servants of the sweep-head, but the masters of the sea!"

He quoted the verse with a savage solemnity exulting through his deep voice. This, and the appositeness of it, quite carried Frona away, and she had both his hands in hers on the instant. Corliss was aware of an inward wince at the action. It was uncomfortable. He did not like to see her so promiscuous with those warm, strong hands of hers. Did she so favor all men who delighted her by word or deed? He did not mind her fingers closing round his, but somehow it seemed wanton when shared with the next comer. By the time he had thought thus far, Frona had explained the topic under discussion, and Captain Alexander was testifying.

"I don't know much about your Slav and other kin, except that they are good workers and strong; but I do know that the white man is the greatest and best breed in the world. Take the Indian, for instance. The white man comes along and beats him at all his games, outworks him, out-roughs him, out-fishes him, out-hunts him. As far back as their myths go, the Alaskan Indians have packed on their backs. But the gold-rushers, as soon as they had learned the tricks of the trade, packed greater loads and packed them farther than did the Indians. Why, last May, the Queen's birthday, we had sports on the river. In the one, two, three, four, and five men canoe races we

beat the Indians right and left. Yet they had been born to the paddle, and most of us had never seen a canoe until man-grown."

"But why is it?" Corliss queried.

"I do not know why. I only know that it is. I simply bear witness. I do know that we do what they cannot do, and what they can do, we do better."

Frona nodded her head triumphantly at Corliss. "Come, acknowledge your defeat, so that we may go in to dinner. Defeat for the time being, at least. The concrete facts of paddles and pack-straps quite overcome your dogmatics. Ah, I thought so. More time? All the time in the world. But let us go in. We'll see what my father thinks of it, — and Mr. Kellar. A symposium on Anglo-Saxon supremacy!"

Frost and enervation are mutually repellant. The Northland gives a keenness and zest to the blood which cannot be obtained in warmer climes. Naturally so, then, the friendship which sprang up between Corliss and Frona was anything but languid. They met often under her father's roof-tree, and went many places together. Each found a pleasurable attraction in the other, and a satisfaction which the things they were not in accord with could not mar. Frona liked the man because he was a man. In her wildest flights she could never imagine linking herself with any man, no matter how exalted spiritually, who was not a man physically. It was a delight to her and a joy to look upon the strong males of her kind, with bodies comely in the sight of God and muscles swelling with the promise of deeds and work. Man, to her, was preeminently a fighter. She believed in natural selection and in sexual selection, and was certain that if man had thereby become possessed of faculties and functions, they were for him to use and could but tend to his good. And likewise with instincts. If she felt drawn to any person or thing, it was good for her to be so drawn, good for herself. If she felt impelled to joy in a well-built frame and well-shaped muscle, why should she restrain? Why should she not love the body, and without shame? The history of the race, and of all races, sealed her choice with approval. Down all time, the weak and effeminate males had vanished from the world-stage. Only the strong could inherit the earth. She had been born of the strong, and she chose to cast her lot with the strong.

Yet of all creatures, she was the last to be deaf and blind to the things of the spirit. But the things of the spirit she demanded should be likewise strong. No halting, no stuttered utterance, tremulous waiting, minor wailing! The mind and the soul must be as quick and definite and certain as the body. Nor was the spirit made alone for immortal dreaming. Like the flesh, it must strive and toil. It must be workaday as well as idle day. She could understand a weakling singing sweetly and even greatly, and in so far she could love him for his sweetness and greatness; but her love would have fuller measure were he strong of body as well. She believed she was just. She gave the flesh its due and the spirit its due; but she had, over and above, her own choice, her own individual ideal. She liked to see the two go hand in hand. Prophecy and dyspepsia did not affect her as a felicitous admixture. A splendid savage and a weak-kneed poet! She could admire the one for his brawn and the other for his song; but she would prefer that they had been made one in the beginning.

As to Vance Corliss. First, and most necessary of all, there was that physiological affinity between them that made the touch of his hand a pleasure to her. Though souls may rush together, if body cannot endure body, happiness is reared on sand and the structure will be ever unstable and tottery. Next, Corliss had the physical potency of the hero without the grossness of the brute. His muscular development was more qualitative than quantitative, and it is the qualitative development which gives rise to beauty of form. A giant need not be proportioned in the mould; nor a thew be symmetrical to be massive.

And finally, — none the less necessary but still finally, — Vance Corliss was neither spiritually dead nor decadent. He affected her as fresh and wholesome and strong, as reared above the soil but not scorning the soil. Of course, none of this she reasoned out otherwise than by subconscious processes. Her conclusions were feelings, not thoughts.

Though they quarrelled and disagreed on innumerable things, deep down, underlying all, there was a permanent unity. She liked him for a certain stern soberness that was his, and for his saving grace of humor. Seriousness and banter were not incompatible. She liked him for his gallantry, made to work with and not for display. She liked the spirit of his offer at Happy Camp, when he proposed giving her an Indian guide and passage-money back to the United States. He could do as well as talk. She liked him for his outlook, for his innate liberality, which she felt to be there, somehow, no matter that often he was narrow of expression. She liked him for his mind. Though somewhat academic, somewhat tainted with latter-day scholasticism, it was still a mind which permitted him to be classed with the "Intellectuals." He was capable of divorcing sentiment and emotion from reason. Granted that he included all the factors, he could not go wrong. And here was where she found chief fault with him, — his narrowness which precluded all the factors; his narrowness which gave the lie to the breadth she knew was really his. But she was aware that it was not an irremediable defect, and that the new life he was leading was very apt to rectify it. He was filled with culture; what he needed was a few more of life's facts.

And she liked him for himself, which is quite different from liking the parts which went to compose him. For it is no miracle for two things, added together, to produce not only the sum of themselves, but a third thing which is not to be found in either of them. So with him. She liked him for himself, for that something which refused to stand out as a part, or a sum of parts; for that something which is the corner-stone of Faith and which has ever baffled Philosophy and Science. And further, to like, with Frona Welse, did not mean to love.

First, and above all, Vance Corliss was drawn to Frona Welse because of the clamor within him for a return to the soil. In him the elements were so mixed that it was impossible for women many times removed to find favor in his eyes. Such he had met constantly, but not one had ever drawn from him a superfluous heart-beat. Though there had been in him a growing instinctive knowledge of lack of unity, — the lack of unity which must precede, always, the love of man and woman, — not one of the daughters of Eve he had met had flashed irresistibly in to fill the void. Elective



affinity, sexual affinity, or whatsoever the intangible essence known as love is, had never been manifest. When he met Frona it had at once sprung, full-fledged, into existence. But he quite misunderstood it, took it for a mere attraction towards the new and unaccustomed.

Many men, possessed of birth and breeding, have yielded to this clamor for return. And giving the apparent lie to their own sanity and moral stability, many such men have married peasant girls or barmaids, And those to whom evil apportioned itself have been prone to distrust the impulse they obeyed, forgetting that nature makes or mars the individual for the sake, always, of the type. For in every such case of return, the impulse was sound, — only that time and space interfered, and propinquity determined whether the object of choice should be bar-maid or peasant girl.

Happily for Vance Corliss, time and space were propitious, and in Frona he found the culture he could not do without, and the clean sharp tang of the earth he needed. In so far as her education and culture went, she was an astonishment. He had met the scientifically smattered young woman before, but Frona had something more than smattering. Further, she gave new life to old facts, and her interpretations of common things were coherent and vigorous and new. Though his acquired conservatism was alarmed and cried danger, he could not remain cold to the charm of her philosophizing, while her scholarly attainments were fully redeemed by her enthusiasm. Though he could not agree with much that she passionately held, he yet recognized that the passion of sincerity and enthusiasm was good.

But her chief fault, in his eyes, was her unconventionality. Woman was something so inexpressibly sacred to him, that he could not bear to see any good woman venturing where the footing was precarious. Whatever good woman thus ventured, overstepping the metes and bounds of sex and status, he deemed did so of wantonness. And wantonness of such order was akin to — well, he could not say it when thinking of Frona, though she hurt him often by her unwise acts. However, he only felt such hurts when away from her. When with her, looking into her eyes which always looked back, or at greeting and parting pressing her hand which always pressed honestly, it seemed certain that there was in her nothing but goodness and truth.

And then he liked her in many different ways for many different things. For her impulses, and for her passions which were always elevated. And already, from breathing the Northland air, he had come to like her for that comradeship which at first had shocked him. There were other acquired likings, her lack of prudishness, for instance, which he awoke one day to find that he had previously confounded with lack of modesty. And it was only the day before that day that he drifted, before he thought, into a discussion with her of "Camille." She had seen Bernhardt, and dwelt lovingly on the recollection. He went home afterwards, a dull pain gnawing at his heart, striving to reconcile Frona with the ideal impressed upon him by his mother that innocence was another term for ignorance. Notwithstanding, by the following day he had worked it out and loosened another finger of the maternal grip.

He liked the flame of her hair in the sunshine, the glint of its gold by the firelight, and the waywardness of it and the glory. He liked her neat-shod feet and the gray-gaitered calves, — alas, now hidden in long-skirted Dawson. He liked her for the strength of her slenderness; and to walk with her, swinging her step and stride to his, or to merely watch her come across a room or down the street, was a delight. Life and the joy of life romped through her blood, abstemiously filling out and rounding off each shapely muscle and soft curve. And he liked it all. Especially he liked the swell of her forearm, which rose firm and strong and tantalizing and sought shelter all too quickly under the loose-flowing sleeve.

The co-ordination of physical with spiritual beauty is very strong in normal men, and so it was with Vance Corliss. That he liked the one was no reason that he failed to appreciate the other. He liked Frona for both, and for herself as well. And to like, with him, though he did not know it, was to love.

## Chapter IX

Vance Corliss proceeded at a fair rate to adapt himself to the Northland life, and he found that many adjustments came easy. While his own tongue was alien to the brimstone of the Lord, he became quite used to strong language on the part of other men, even in the most genial conversation. Carthey, a little Texan who went to work for him for a while, opened or closed every second sentence, on an average, with the mild expletive, "By damn!" It was also his invariable way of expressing surprise, disappointment, consternation, or all the rest of the tribe of sudden emotions. By pitch and stress and intonation, the protean oath was made to perform every function of ordinary speech. At first it was a constant source of irritation and disgust to Corliss, but ere long he grew not only to tolerate it, but to like it, and to wait for it eagerly. Once, Carthey's wheel-dog lost an ear in a hasty contention with a dog of the Hudson Bay, and when the young fellow bent over the animal and discovered the loss, the blended endearment and pathos of the "by damn" which fell from his lips was a relation to Corliss. All was not evil out of Nazareth, he concluded sagely, and, like Jacob Welse of old, revised his philosophy of life accordingly.

Again, there were two sides to the social life of Dawson. Up at the Barracks, at the Welse's, and a few other places, all men of standing were welcomed and made comfortable by the womenkind of like standing. There were teas, and dinners, and dances, and socials for charity, and the usual run of things; all of which, however, failed to wholly satisfy the men. Down in the town there was a totally different though equally popular other side. As the country was too young for club-life, the masculine portion of the community expressed its masculinity by herding together in the saloons, — the ministers and missionaries being the only exceptions to this mode of expression. Business appointments and deals were made and consummated in the saloons, enterprises projected, shop talked, the latest news discussed, and a general good fellowship maintained. There all life rubbed shoulders, and kings and dog-drivers, old-timers and chechaquos, met on a common level. And it so happened, probably because saw-mills and house-space were scarce, that the saloons accommodated the gambling tables and the polished dance-house floors. And here, because he needs must bend to custom, Corliss's adaptation went on rapidly. And as Carthey, who appreciated him, soliloquized, "The best of it is he likes it damn well, by damn!"

But any adjustment must have its painful periods, and while Corliss's general change went on smoothly, in the particular case of Frona it was different. She had a code of her own, quite unlike that of the community, and perhaps believed woman might do

things at which even the saloon-inhabiting males would be shocked. And because of this, she and Corliss had their first disagreeable disagreement.

Frona loved to run with the dogs through the biting frost, cheeks tingling, blood bounding, body thrust forward, and limbs rising and falling ceaselessly to the pace. And one November day, with the first cold snap on and the spirit thermometer frigidly marking sixty-five below, she got out the sled, harnessed her team of huskies, and flew down the river trail. As soon as she cleared the town she was off and running. And in such manner, running and riding by turns, she swept through the Indian village below the bluff's, made an eight-mile circle up Moosehide Creek and back, crossed the river on the ice, and several hours later came flying up the west bank of the Yukon opposite the town. She was aiming to tap and return by the trail for the wood-sleds which crossed thereabout, but a mile away from it she ran into the soft snow and brought the winded dogs to a walk.

Along the rim of the river and under the frown of the overhanging cliffs, she directed the path she was breaking. Here and there she made detours to avoid the out-jutting talus, and at other times followed the ice in against the precipitous walls and hugged them closely around the abrupt bends. And so, at the head of her huskies, she came suddenly upon a woman sitting in the snow and gazing across the river at smoke-canopied Dawson. She had been crying, and this was sufficient to prevent Frona's scrutiny from wandering farther. A tear, turned to a globule of ice, rested on her cheek, and her eyes were dim and moist; there was an-expression of hopeless, fathomless woe.

"Oh!" Frona cried, stopping the dogs and coming up to her. "You are hurt? Can I help you?" she queried, though the stranger shook her head. "But you mustn't sit there. It is nearly seventy below, and you'll freeze in a few minutes. Your cheeks are bitten already." She rubbed the afflicted parts vigorously with a mitten of snow, and then looked down on the warm returning glow.

"I beg pardon." The woman rose somewhat stiffly to her feet. "And I thank you, but I am perfectly warm, you see" (settling the fur cape more closely about her with a snuggling movement), "and I had just sat down for the moment."

Frona noted that she was very beautiful, and her woman's eye roved over and took in the splendid furs, the make of the gown, and the bead-work of the moccasins which peeped from beneath. And in view of all this, and of the fact that the face was unfamiliar, she felt an instinctive desire to shrink back.

"And I haven't hurt myself," the woman went on. "Just a mood, that was all, looking out over the dreary endless white."

"Yes," Frona replied, mastering herself; "I can understand. There must be much of sadness in such a landscape, only it never comes that way to me. The sombreness and the sternness of it appeal to me, but not the sadness."

"And that is because the lines of our lives have been laid in different places," the other ventured, reflectively. "It is not what the landscape is, but what we are. If we were not, the landscape would remain, but without human significance. That is what we invest it with."

“‘Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise  
From outward things, whate’er you may believe.”

Frona’s eyes brightened, and she went on to complete the passage:

“‘There is an inmost centre in us all,  
Where truth abides in fulness; and around.’

“And — and — how does it go? I have forgotten.”

“‘Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in — ”

The woman ceased abruptly, her voice trilling off into silvery laughter with a certain bitter reckless ring to it which made Frona inwardly shiver. She moved as though to go back to her dogs, but the woman’s hand went out in a familiar gesture, — twin to Frona’s own, — which went at once to Frona’s heart.

“Stay a moment,” she said, with an undertone of pleading in the words, “and talk with me. It is long since I have met a woman” — she paused while her tongue wandered for the word — ”who could quote ‘Paracelsus.’ You are, — I know you, you see, — you are Jacob Welse’s daughter, Frona Welse, I believe.”

Frona nodded her identity, hesitated, and looked at the woman with secret intentness. She was conscious of a great and pardonable curiosity, of a frank out-reaching for fuller knowledge. This creature, so like, so different; old as the oldest race, and young as the last rose-tinted babe; flung far as the farthestmost fires of men, and eternal as humanity itself — where were they unlike, this woman and she? Her five senses told her not; by every law of life they were no; only, only by the fast-drawn lines of social caste and social wisdom were they not the same. So she thought, even as for one searching moment she studied the other’s face. And in the situation she found an uplifting awfulness, such as comes when the veil is thrust aside and one gazes on the mysteriousness of Deity. She remembered: “Her feet take hold of hell; her house is the way to the grave, going down to the chamber of death,” and in the same instant strong upon her was the vision of the familiar gesture with which the woman’s hand had gone out in mute appeal, and she looked aside, out over the dreary endless white, and for her, too, the day became filled with sadness.

She gave an involuntary, half-nervous shiver, though she said, naturally enough, “Come, let us walk on and get the blood moving again. I had no idea it was so cold till I stood still.” She turned to the dogs: “Mush-on! King! You Sandy! Mush!” And back again to the woman, “I am quite chilled, and as for you, you must be — ”

“Quite warm, of course. You have been running and your clothes are wet against you, while I have kept up the needful circulation and no more. I saw you when you leaped off the sled below the hospital and vanished down the river like a Diana of the snows. How I envied you! You must enjoy it.”

“Oh, I do,” Frona answered, simply. “I was raised with the dogs.”

“It savors of the Greek.”

Frona did not reply, and they walked on in silence. Yet Frona wished, though she dared not dare, that she could give her tongue free rein, and from out of the other’s bitter knowledge, for her own soul’s sake and sanity, draw the pregnant human gen-

eralizations which she must possess. And over her welled a wave of pity and distress; and she felt a discomfort, for she knew not what to say or how to voice her heart. And when the other's speech broke forth, she hailed it with a great relief.

"Tell me," the woman demanded, half-eagerly, half-masterly, "tell me about yourself. You are new to the Inside. Where were you before you came in? Tell me."

So the difficulty was solved, in a way, and Frona talked on about herself, with a successfully feigned girlhood innocence, as though she did not appreciate the other or understand her ill-concealed yearning for that which she might not have, but which was Frona's.

"There is the trail you are trying to connect with." They had rounded the last of the cliffs, and Frona's companion pointed ahead to where the walls receded and wrinkled to a gorge, out of which the sleds drew the firewood across the river to town. "I shall leave you there," she concluded.

"But are you not going back to Dawson?" Frona queried. "It is growing late, and you had better not linger."

"No . . . I . . ."

Her painful hesitancy brought Frona to a realization of her own thoughtlessness. But she had made the step, and she knew she could not retrace it.

"We will go back together," she said, bravely. And in candid all-knowledge of the other, "I do not mind."

Then it was that the blood surged into the woman's cold face, and her hand went out to the girl in the old, old way.

"No, no, I beg of you," she stammered. "I beg of you . . . I . . . I prefer to continue my walk a little farther. See! Some one is coming now!"

By this time they had reached the wood-trail, and Frona's face was flaming as the other's had flamed. A light sled, dogs a-lope and swinging down out of the gorge, was just upon them. A man was running with the team, and he waved his hand to the two women.

"Vance!" Frona exclaimed, as he threw his lead-dogs in the snow and brought the sled to a halt. "What are you doing over here? Is the syndicate bent upon cornering the firewood also?"

"No. We're not so bad as that." His face was full of smiling happiness at the meeting as he shook hands with her. "But Carthey is leaving me, — going prospecting somewhere around the North Pole, I believe, — and I came across to look up Del Bishop, if he'll serve."

He turned his head to glance expectantly at her companion, and she saw the smile go out of his face and anger come in. Frona was helplessly aware that she had no grip over the situation, and, though a rebellion at the cruelty and injustice of it was smouldering somewhere deep down, she could only watch the swift culmination of the little tragedy. The woman met his gaze with a half-shrinking, as from an impending blow, and with a softness of expression which entreated pity. But he regarded her long and coldly, then deliberately turned his back. As he did this, Frona noted her face go

tired and gray, and the hardness and recklessness of her laughter were there painted in harsh tones, and a bitter devil rose up and lurked in her eyes. It was evident that the same bitter devil rushed hotly to her tongue. But it chanced just then that she glanced at Frona, and all expression was brushed from her face save the infinite tiredness. She smiled wistfully at the girl, and without a word turned and went down the trail.

And without a word Frona sprang upon her sled and was off. The way was wide, and Corliss swung in his dogs abreast of hers. The smouldering rebellion flared up, and she seemed to gather to herself some of the woman's recklessness.

"You brute!"

The words left her mouth, sharp, clear-cut, breaking the silence like the lash of a whip. The unexpectedness of it, and the savagery, took Corliss aback. He did not know what to do or say.

"Oh, you coward! You coward!"

"Frona! Listen to me — "

But she cut him off. "No. Do not speak. You can have nothing to say. You have behaved abominably. I am disappointed in you. It is horrible! horrible!"

"Yes, it was horrible, — horrible that she should walk with you, have speech with you, be seen with you."

"Not until the sun excludes you, do I exclude you," she flung back at him.

"But there is a fitness of things — "

"Fitness!" She turned upon him and loosed her wrath. "If she is unfit, are you fit? May you cast the first stone with that smugly sanctimonious air of yours?"

"You shall not talk to me in this fashion. I'll not have it."

He clutched at her sled, and even in the midst of her anger she noticed it with a little thrill of pleasure.

"Shall not? You coward!"

He reached out as though to lay hands upon her, and she raised her coiled whip to strike. But to his credit he never flinched; his white face calmly waited to receive the blow. Then she deflected the stroke, and the long lash hissed out and fell among the dogs. Swinging the whip briskly, she rose to her knees on the sled and called frantically to the animals. Hers was the better team, and she shot rapidly away from Corliss. She wished to get away, not so much from him as from herself, and she encouraged the huskies into wilder and wilder speed. She took the steep river-bank in full career and dashed like a whirlwind through the town and home. Never in her life had she been in such a condition; never had she experienced such terrible anger. And not only was she already ashamed, but she was frightened and afraid of herself.

## Chapter X

The next morning Corliss was knocked out of a late bed by Bash, one of Jacob Welse's Indians. He was the bearer of a brief little note from Frona, which contained a request for the mining engineer to come and see her at his first opportunity. That was all that was said, and he pondered over it deeply. What did she wish to say to him? She was still such an unknown quantity, — and never so much as now in the light of the day before, — that he could not guess. Did she desire to give him his dismissal on a definite, well-understood basis? To take advantage of her sex and further humiliate him? To tell him what she thought of him in coolly considered, cold-measured terms? Or was she penitently striving to make amends for the unmerited harshness she had dealt him? There was neither contrition nor anger in the note, no clew, nothing save a formally worded desire to see him.

So it was in a rather unsettled and curious frame of mind that he walked in upon her as the last hour of the morning drew to a close. He was neither on his dignity nor off, his attitude being strictly non-committal against the moment she should disclose hers. But without beating about the bush, in that way of hers which he had come already to admire, she at once showed her colors and came frankly forward to him. The first glimpse of her face told him, the first feel of her hand, before she had said a word, told him that all was well.

"I am glad you have come," she began. "I could not be at peace with myself until I had seen you and told you how sorry I am for yesterday, and how deeply ashamed I —"

"There, there. It's not so bad as all that." They were still standing, and he took a step nearer to her. "I assure you I can appreciate your side of it; and though, looking at it theoretically, it was the highest conduct, demanding the fullest meed of praise, still, in all frankness, there is much to — to —"

"Yes."

"Much to deplore in it from the social stand-point. And unhappily, we cannot leave the social stand-point out of our reckoning. But so far as I may speak for myself, you have done nothing to feel sorry for or be ashamed of."

"It is kind of you," she cried, graciously. "Only it is not true, and you know it is not true. You know that you acted for the best; you know that I hurt you, insulted you; you know that I behaved like a fish-wife, and you do know that I disgusted you —"

"No, no!" He raised his hand as though to ward from her the blows she dealt herself.

"But yes, yes. And I have all reason in the world to be ashamed. I can only say this in defence: the woman had affected me deeply — so deeply that I was close to weeping.



Then you came on the scene, — you know what you did, — and the sorrow for her bred an indignation against you, and — well, I worked myself into a nervous condition such as I had never experienced in my life. It was hysteria, I suppose. Anyway, I was not myself.”

“We were neither of us ourselves.”

“Now you are untrue. I did wrong, but you were yourself, as much so then as now. But do be seated. Here we stand as though you were ready to run away at first sign of another outbreak.”

“Surely you are not so terrible!” he laughed, adroitly pulling his chair into position so that the light fell upon her face.

“Rather, you are not such a coward. I must have been terrible yesterday. I — I almost struck you. And you were certainly brave when the whip hung over you. Why, you did not even attempt to raise a hand and shield yourself.”

“I notice the dogs your whip falls among come nevertheless to lick your hand and to be petted.”

“Ergo?” she queried, audaciously.

“Ergo, it all depends,” he equivocated.

“And, notwithstanding, I am forgiven?”

“As I hope to be forgiven.”

“Then I am glad — only, you have done nothing to be forgiven for. You acted according to your light, and I to mine, though it must be acknowledged that mine casts the broader flare. Ah! I have it,” clapping her hands in delight, “I was not angry with you yesterday; nor did I behave rudely to you, or even threaten you. It was utterly impersonal, the whole of it. You simply stood for society, for the type which aroused my indignation and anger; and, as its representative, you bore the brunt of it. Don’t you see?”

“I see, and cleverly put; only, while you escape the charge of maltreating me yesterday; you throw yourself open to it to-day. You make me out all that is narrow-minded and mean and despicable, which is very unjust. Only a few minutes past I said that your way of looking at it, theoretically considered, was irreproachable. But not so when we include society.”

“But you misunderstand me, Vance. Listen.” Her hand went out to his, and he was content to listen. “I have always upheld that what is is well. I grant the wisdom of the prevailing social judgment in this matter. Though I deplore it, I grant it; for the human is so made. But I grant it socially only. I, as an individual, choose to regard such things differently. And as between individuals so minded, why should it not be so regarded? Don’t you see? Now I find you guilty. As between you and me, yesterday, on the river, you did not so regard it. You behaved as narrow-mindedly as would have the society you represent.”

“Then you would preach two doctrines?” he retaliated. “One for the elect and one for the herd? You would be a democrat in theory and an aristocrat in practice? In fact, the whole stand you are making is nothing more or less than Jesuitical.”

"I suppose with the next breath you will be contending that all men are born free and equal, with a bundle of natural rights thrown in? You are going to have Del Bishop work for you; by what equal free-born right will he work for you, or you suffer him to work?"

"No," he denied. "I should have to modify somewhat the questions of equality and rights."

"And if you modify, you are lost!" she exulted. "For you can only modify in the direction of my position, which is neither so Jesuitical nor so harsh as you have defined it. But don't let us get lost in dialectics. I want to see what I can see, so tell me about this woman."

"Not a very tasteful topic," Corliss objected.

"But I seek knowledge."

"Nor can it be wholesome knowledge."

Frona tapped her foot impatiently, and studied him.

"She is beautiful, very beautiful," she suggested. "Do you not think so?"

"As beautiful as hell."

"But still beautiful," she insisted.

"Yes, if you will have it so. And she is as cruel, and hard, and hopeless as she is beautiful."

"Yet I came upon her, alone, by the trail, her face softened, and tears in her eyes. And I believe, with a woman's ken, that I saw a side of her to which you are blind. And so strongly did I see it, that when you appeared my mind was blank to all save the solitary wail, Oh, the pity of it! The pity of it! And she is a woman, even as I, and I doubt not that we are very much alike. Why, she even quoted Browning — "

"And last week," he cut her short, "in a single sitting, she gambled away thirty thousand of Jack Dorsey's dust, — Dorsey, with two mortgages already on his dump! They found him in the snow next morning, with one chamber empty in his revolver."

Frona made no reply, but, walking over to the candle, deliberately thrust her finger into the flame. Then she held it up to Corliss that he might see the outraged skin, red and angry.

"And so I point the parable. The fire is very good, but I misuse it, and I am punished."

"You forget," he objected. "The fire works in blind obedience to natural law. Lucile is a free agent. That which she has chosen to do, that she has done."

"Nay, it is you who forget, for just as surely Dorsey was a free agent. But you said Lucile. Is that her name? I wish I knew her better."

Corliss winced. "Don't! You hurt me when you say such things."

"And why, pray?"

"Because — because — "

"Yes?"

"Because I honor woman highly. Frona, you have always made a stand for frankness, and I can now advantage by it. It hurts me because of the honor in which I hold you,

because I cannot bear to see taint approach you. Why, when I saw you and that woman together on the trail, I — you cannot understand what I suffered.”

“Taint?” There was a tightening about her lips which he did not notice, and a just perceptible lustre of victory lighted her eyes.

“Yes, taint, — contamination,” he reiterated. “There are some things which it were not well for a good woman to understand. One cannot dabble with mud and remain spotless.”

“That opens the field wide.” She clasped and unclasped her hands gleefully. “You have said that her name was Lucile; you display a knowledge of her; you have given me facts about her; you doubtless retain many which you dare not give; in short, if one cannot dabble and remain spotless, how about you?”

“But I am — ”

“A man, of course. Very good. Because you are a man, you may court contamination. Because I am a woman, I may not. Contamination contaminates, does it not? Then you, what do you here with me? Out upon you!”

Corliss threw up his hands laughingly. “I give in. You are too much for me with your formal logic. I can only fall back on the higher logic, which you will not recognize.”

“Which is — ”

“Strength. What man wills for woman, that will he have.”

“I take you, then, on your own ground,” she rushed on. “What of Lucile? What man has willed that he has had. So you, and all men, have willed since the beginning of time. So poor Dorsey willed. You cannot answer, so let me speak something that occurs to me concerning that higher logic you call strength. I have met it before. I recognized it in you, yesterday, on the sleds.”

“In me?”

“In you, when you reached out and clutched at me. You could not down the primitive passion, and, for that matter, you did not know it was uppermost. But the expression on your face, I imagine, was very like that of a woman-stealing cave-man. Another instant, and I am sure you would have laid violent hands upon me.”

“Then I ask your pardon. I did not dream — ”

“There you go, spoiling it all! I — I quite liked you for it. Don’t you remember, I, too, was a cave-woman, brandishing the whip over your head?”

“But I am not done with you yet, Sir Doubleface, even if you have dropped out of the battle.” Her eyes were sparkling mischievously, and the wee laughter-creases were forming on her cheek. “I purpose to unmask you.”

“As clay in the hands of the potter,” he responded, meekly.

“Then you must remember several things. At first, when I was very humble and apologetic, you made it easier for me by saying that you could only condemn my conduct on the ground of being socially unwise. Remember?”

Corliss nodded.

“Then, just after you branded me as Jesuitical, I turned the conversation to Lucile, saying that I wished to see what I could see.”

Again he nodded.

"And just as I expected, I saw. For in only a few minutes you began to talk about taint, and contamination, and dabbling in mud, — and all in relation to me. There are your two propositions, sir. You may only stand on one, and I feel sure that you stand on the last one. Yes, I am right. You do. And you were insincere, confess, when you found my conduct unwise only from the social point of view. I like sincerity."

"Yes," he began, "I was unwittingly insincere. But I did not know it until further analysis, with your help, put me straight. Say what you will, Frona, my conception of woman is such that she should not court defilement."

"But cannot we be as gods, knowing good and evil?"

"But we are not gods," he shook his head, sadly.

"Only the men are?"

"That is new-womanish talk," he frowned. "Equal rights, the ballot, and all that."

"Oh! Don't!" she protested. "You won't understand me; you can't. I am no woman's rights' creature; and I stand, not for the new woman, but for the new womanhood. Because I am sincere; because I desire to be natural, and honest, and true; and because I am consistent with myself, you choose to misunderstand it all and to lay wrong strictures upon me. I do try to be consistent, and I think I fairly succeed; but you can see neither rhyme nor reason in my consistency. Perhaps it is because you are unused to consistent, natural women; because, more likely, you are only familiar with the hot-house breeds, — pretty, helpless, well-rounded, stall-fatted little things, blissfully innocent and criminally ignorant. They are not natural or strong; nor can they mother the natural and strong."

She stopped abruptly. They heard somebody enter the hall, and a heavy, soft-moccasined tread approaching.

"We are friends," she added hurriedly, and Corliss answered with his eyes.

"Ain't intrudin', am I?" Dave Harney grinned broad insinuation and looked about ponderously before coming up to shake hands.

"Not at all," Corliss answered. "We've bored each other till we were pining for some one to come along. If you hadn't, we would soon have been quarrelling, wouldn't we, Miss Welse?"

"I don't think he states the situation fairly," she smiled back. "In fact, we had already begun to quarrel."

"You do look a mite flustered," Harney criticised, dropping his loose-jointed frame all over the pillows of the lounging couch.

"How's the famine?" Corliss asked. "Any public relief started yet?"

"Won't need any public relief. Miss Frona's old man was too forehanded fer 'em. Scairt the daylights out of the critters, I do b'lieve. Three thousand went out over the ice hittin' the high places, an' half ez many again went down to the caches, and the market's loosened some considerable. Jest what Welse figgered on, everybody speculated on a rise and held all the grub they could lay hand to. That helped scare the shorts, and away they stampeded fer Salt Water, the whole caboodle, a-takin' all the

dogs with 'em. Say!" he sat up solemnly, "corner dogs! They'll rise suthin' unheard on in the spring when freightin' gits brisk. I've corralled a hundred a'ready, an' I figger to clear a hundred dollars clean on every hide of 'em."

"Think so?"

"Think so! I guess yes. Between we three, confidential, I'm startin' a couple of lads down into the Lower Country next week to buy up five hundred of the best huskies they kin spot. Think so! I've limbered my jints too long in the land to git caught nappin'."

Frona burst out laughing. "But you got pinched on the sugar, Dave."

"Oh, I dunno," he responded, complacently. "Which reminds me. I've got a noospaper, an' only four weeks' old, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer."

"Has the United States and Spain — "

"Not so fast, not so fast!" The long Yankee waved his arms for silence, cutting off Frona's question which was following fast on that of Corliss.

"But have you read it?" they both demanded.

"Unh huh, every line, advertisements an' all."

"Then do tell me," Frona began. "Has — "

"Now you keep quiet, Miss Frona, till I tell you about it reg'lar. That noospaper cost me fifty dollars — caught the man comin' in round the bend above Klondike City, an' bought it on the spot. The dummy could a-got a hundred fer it, easy, if he'd held on till he made town — "

"But what does it say? Has — "

"Ez I was sayin', that noospaper cost me fifty dollars. It's the only one that come in. Everybody's jest dyin' to hear the noos. So I invited a select number of 'em to come here to yer parlors to-night, Miss Frona, ez the only likely place, an' they kin read it out loud, by shifts, ez long ez they want or till they're tired — that is, if you'll let 'em have the use of the place."

"Why, of course, they are welcome. And you are very kind to — "

He waved her praise away. "Jest ez I kalkilated. Now it so happens, ez you said, that I was pinched on sugar. So every mother's son and daughter that gits a squint at that paper to-night got to pony up five cups of sugar. Savve? Five cups, — big cups, white, or brown, or cube, — an' I'll take their IOU's, an' send a boy round to their shacks the day followin' to collect."

Frona's face went blank at the telling, then the laughter came back into it. "Won't it be jolly? I'll do it if it raises a scandal. To-night, Dave? Sure to-night?"

"Sure. An' you git a complimentary, you know, fer the loan of yer parlor."

"But papa must pay his five cups. You must insist upon it, Dave."

Dave's eyes twinkled appreciatively. "I'll git it back on him, you bet!"

"And I'll make him come," she promised, "at the tail of Dave Harney's chariot."

"Sugar cart," Dave suggested. "An' to-morrow night I'll take the paper down to the Opery House. Won't be fresh, then, so they kin git in cheap; a cup'll be about the right thing, I reckon." He sat up and cracked his huge knuckles boastfully. "I ain't

ben a-burnin' daylight sence navigation closed; an' if they set up all night they won't be up early enough in the mornin' to git ahead of Dave Harney — even on a sugar proposition."

# Chapter XI

Over in the corner Vance Corliss leaned against the piano, deep in conversation with Colonel Trethaway. The latter, keen and sharp and wiry, for all his white hair and sixty-odd years, was as young in appearance as a man of thirty. A veteran mining engineer, with a record which put him at the head of his profession, he represented as large American interests as Corliss did British. Not only had a cordial friendship sprung up between them, but in a business way they had already been of large assistance to each other. And it was well that they should stand together, — a pair who held in grip and could direct at will the potent capital which two nations had contributed to the development of the land under the Pole.

The crowded room was thick with tobacco smoke. A hundred men or so, garbed in furs and warm-colored wools, lined the walls and looked on. But the mumble of their general conversation destroyed the spectacular feature of the scene and gave to it the geniality of common comradeship. For all its bizarre appearance, it was very like the living-room of the home when the members of the household come together after the work of the day. Kerosene lamps and tallow candles glimmered feebly in the murky atmosphere, while large stoves roared their red-hot and white-hot cheer.

On the floor a score of couples pulsed rhythmically to the swinging waltz-time music. Starched shirts and frock coats were not. The men wore their wolf-and beaver-skin caps, with the gay-tasselled ear-flaps flying free, while on their feet were the moose-skin moccasins and walrus-hide muclucs of the north. Here and there a woman was in moccasins, though the majority danced in frail ball-room slippers of silk and satin. At one end of the hall a great open doorway gave glimpse of another large room where the crowd was even denser. From this room, in the lulls in the music, came the pop of corks and the clink of glasses, and as an undertone the steady click and clatter of chips and roulette balls.

The small door at the rear opened, and a woman, befurred and muffled, came in on a wave of frost. The cold rushed in with her to the warmth, taking form in a misty cloud which hung close to the floor, hiding the feet of the dancers, and writhing and twisting until vanquished by the heat.

“A veritable frost queen, my Lucile,” Colonel Trethaway addressed her.

She tossed her head and laughed, and, as she removed her capes and street-moccasins, chatted with him gayly. But of Corliss, though he stood within a yard of her, she took no notice. Half a dozen dancing men were waiting patiently at a little distance till she should have done with the colonel. The piano and violin played

the opening bars of a schottische, and she turned to go; but a sudden impulse made Corliss step up to her. It was wholly unpremeditated; he had not dreamed of doing it.

"I am very sorry," he said.

Her eyes flashed angrily as she turned upon him.

"I mean it," he repeated, holding out his hand. "I am very sorry. I was a brute and a coward. Will you forgive me?"

She hesitated, and, with the wisdom bought of experience, searched him for the ulterior motive. Then, her face softened, and she took his hand. A warm mist dimmed her eyes.

"Thank you," she said.

But the waiting men had grown impatient, and she was whirled away in the arms of a handsome young fellow, conspicuous in a cap of yellow Siberian wolf-skin. Corliss came back to his companion, feeling unaccountably good and marvelling at what he had done.

"It's a damned shame." The colonel's eye still followed Lucile, and Vance understood. "Corliss, I've lived my threescore, and lived them well, and do you know, woman is a greater mystery than ever. Look at them, look at them all!" He embraced the whole scene with his eyes. "Butterflies, bits of light and song and laughter, dancing, dancing down the last tail-reach of hell. Not only Lucile, but the rest of them. Look at May, there, with the brow of a Madonna and the tongue of a gutter-devil. And Myrtle — for all the world one of Gainsborough's old English beauties stepped down from the canvas to riot out the century in Dawson's dance-halls. And Laura, there, wouldn't she make a mother? Can't you see the child in the curve of her arm against her breast! They're the best of the boiling, I know, — a new country always gathers the best, — but there's something wrong, Corliss, something wrong. The heats of life have passed with me, and my vision is truer, surer. It seems a new Christ must arise and preach a new salvation — economic or sociologic — in these latter days, it matters not, so long as it is preached. The world has need of it."

The room was wont to be swept by sudden tides, and notably between the dances, when the revellers ebbed through the great doorway to where corks popped and glasses tinkled. Colonel Trethaway and Corliss followed out on the next ebb to the bar, where fifty men and women were lined up. They found themselves next to Lucile and the fellow in the yellow wolf-skin cap. He was undeniably handsome, and his looks were enhanced by a warm overplus of blood in the cheeks and a certain mellow fire in the eyes. He was not technically drunk, for he had himself in perfect physical control; but his was the soul-exhilaration which comes of the juice of the grape. His voice was raised the least bit and joyous, and his tongue made quick and witty — just in the unstable condition when vices and virtues are prone to extravagant expression.

As he raised his glass, the man next to him accidentally jostled his arm. He shook the wine from his sleeve and spoke his mind. It was not a nice word, but one customarily calculated to rouse the fighting blood. And the other man's blood roused, for his fist landed under the wolf-skin cap with force sufficient to drive its owner back against



Corliss. The insulted man followed up his attack swiftly. The women slipped away, leaving a free field for the men, some of whom were for crowding in, and some for giving room and fair play.

The wolf-skin cap did not put up a fight or try to meet the wrath he had invoked, but, with his hands shielding his face, strove to retreat. The crowd called upon him to stand up and fight. He nerved himself to the attempt, but weakened as the man closed in on him, and dodged away.

"Let him alone. He deserves it," the colonel called to Vance as he showed signs of interfering. "He won't fight. If he did, I think I could almost forgive him."

"But I can't see him pummelled," Vance objected. "If he would only stand up, it wouldn't seem so brutal."

The blood was streaming from his nose and from a slight cut over one eye, when Corliss sprang between. He attempted to hold the two men apart, but pressing too hard against the truculent individual, overbalanced him and threw him to the floor. Every man has friends in a bar-room fight, and before Vance knew what was taking place he was staggered by a blow from a chum of the man he had downed. Del Bishop, who had edged in, let drive promptly at the man who had attacked his employer, and the fight became general. The crowd took sides on the moment and went at it.

Colonel Trethaway forgot that the heats of life had passed, and swinging a three-legged stool, danced nimbly into the fray. A couple of mounted police, on liberty, joined him, and with half a dozen others safeguarded the man with the wolf-skin cap.

Fierce though it was, and noisy, it was purely a local disturbance. At the far end of the bar the barkeepers still dispensed drinks, and in the next room the music was on and the dancers afoot. The gamblers continued their play, and at only the near tables did they evince any interest in the affair.

"Knock'm down an' drag'm out!" Del Bishop grinned, as he fought for a brief space shoulder to shoulder with Corliss.

Corliss grinned back, met the rush of a stalwart dog-driver with a clinch, and came down on top of him among the stamping feet. He was drawn close, and felt the fellow's teeth sinking into his ear. Like a flash, he surveyed his whole future and saw himself going one-eared through life, and in the same dash, as though inspired, his thumbs flew to the man's eyes and pressed heavily on the balls. Men fell over him and trampled upon him, but it all seemed very dim and far away. He only knew, as he pressed with his thumbs, that the man's teeth wavered reluctantly. He added a little pressure (a little more, and the man would have been eyeless), and the teeth slackened and slipped their grip.

After that, as he crawled out of the fringe of the melee and came to his feet by the side of the bar, all distaste for fighting left him. He had found that he was very much like other men after all, and the imminent loss of part of his anatomy had scraped off twenty years of culture. Gambling without stakes is an insipid amusement, and Corliss discovered, likewise, that the warm blood which rises from hygienic gymnasium work is something quite different from that which pounds hotly along when the matches

threw and flesh impacts on flesh and the stake is life and limb. As he dragged himself to his feet by means of the bar-rail, he saw a man in a squirrel-skin parka lift a beer-mug to hurl at Trethaway, a couple of paces off. And the fingers, which were more used to test-tubes and water colors, doubled into a hard fist which smote the mug-thrower cleanly on the point of the jaw. The man merely dropped the glass and himself on the floor. Vance was dazed for the moment, then he realized that he had knocked the man unconscious, — the first in his life, — and a pang of delight thrilled through him.

Colonel Trethaway thanked him with a look, and shouted, "Get on the outside! Work to the door, Corliss! Work to the door!"

Quite a struggle took place before the storm-doors could be thrown open; but the colonel, still attached to the three-legged stool, effectually dissipated the opposition, and the Opera House disgorged its turbulent contents into the street. This accomplished, hostilities ceased, after the manner of such fights, and the crowd scattered. The two policemen went back to keep order, accompanied by the rest of the allies, while Corliss and the colonel, followed by the Wolf-Skin Cap and Del Bishop, proceeded up the street.

"Blood and sweat! Blood and sweat!" Colonel Trethaway exulted. "Talk about putting the vim into one! Why, I'm twenty years younger if I'm a day! Corliss, your hand. I congratulate you, I do, I heartily do. Candidly, I didn't think it was in you. You're a surprise, sir, a surprise!"

"And a surprise to myself," Corliss answered. The reaction had set in, and he was feeling sick and faint. "And you, also, are a surprise. The way you handled that stool — "

"Yes, now! I flatter myself I did fairly well with it. Did you see — well, look at that!" He held up the weapon in question, still tightly clutched, and joined in the laugh against himself.

"Whom have I to thank, gentlemen?"

They had come to a pause at the corner, and the man they had rescued was holding out his hand.

"My name is St. Vincent," he went on, "and — "

"What name?" Del Bishop queried with sudden interest.

"St. Vincent, Gregory St. Vincent — "

Bishop's fist shot out, and Gregory St. Vincent pitched heavily into the snow. The colonel instinctively raised the stool, then helped Corliss to hold the pocket-miner back.

"Are you crazy, man?" Vance demanded.

"The skunk! I wish I'd hit 'm harder!" was the response. Then, "Oh, that's all right. Let go o' me. I won't hit 'm again. Let go o' me, I'm goin' home. Good-night."

As they helped St. Vincent to his feet, Vance could have sworn he heard the colonel giggling. And he confessed to it later, as he explained, "It was so curious and unexpected." But he made amends by taking it upon himself to see St. Vincent home.

“But why did you hit him?” Corliss asked, unavailingly, for the fourth time after he had got into his cabin.

“The mean, crawlin’ skunk!” the pocket-miner gritted in his blankets.  
“What’d you stop me for, anyway? I wish I’d hit ‘m twice as hard!”

## Chapter XII

“Mr. Harney, pleased to meet you. Dave, I believe, Dave Harney?” Dave Harney nodded, and Gregory St. Vincent turned to Frona. “You see, Miss Welse, the world is none so large. Mr. Harney and I are not strangers after all.”

The Eldorado king studied the other’s face until a glimmering intelligence came to him. “Hold on!” he cried, as St. Vincent started to speak, “I got my finger on you. You were smooth-faced then. Let’s see, — ’86, fall of ’87, summer of ’88, — yep, that’s when. Summer of ’88 I come floatin’ a raft out of Stewart River, loaded down with quarters of moose an’ strainin’ to make the Lower Country ‘fore they went bad. Yep, an’ down the Yukon you come, in a Linderman boat. An’ I was holdin’ strong, ez it was Wednesday, an’ my pardner ez it was Friday, an’ you put us straight — Sunday, I b’lieve it was. Yep, Sunday. I declare! Nine years ago! And we swapped moose-steaks fer flour an’ bakin’ soda, an’ — an’ — an’ sugar! By the Jimcracky! I’m glad to see you!”

He shoved out his hand and they shook again.

“Come an’ see me,” he invited, as he moved away. “I’ve a right tidy little shack up on the hill, and another on Eldorado. Latch-string’s always out. Come an’ see me, an’ stay ez long ez you’ve a mind to. Sorry to quit you cold, but I got to traipse down to the Opery House and collect my taxes, — sugar. Miss Frona’ll tell you.”

“You are a surprise, Mr. St. Vincent.” Frona switched back to the point of interest, after briefly relating Harney’s saccharine difficulties. “The country must indeed have been a wilderness nine years ago, and to think that you went through it at that early day! Do tell me about it.”

Gregory St. Vincent shrugged his shoulders, “There is very little to tell. It was an ugly failure, filled with many things that are not nice, and containing nothing of which to be proud.”

“But do tell me, I enjoy such things. They seem closer and truer to life than the ordinary every-day happenings. A failure, as you call it, implies something attempted. What did you attempt?”

He noted her frank interest with satisfaction. “Well, if you will, I can tell you in few words all there is to tell. I took the mad idea into my head of breaking a new path around the world, and in the interest of science and journalism, particularly journalism, I proposed going through Alaska, crossing the Bering Straits on the ice, and journeying to Europe by way of Northern Siberia. It was a splendid undertaking, most of it being

virgin ground, only I failed. I crossed the Straits in good order, but came to grief in Eastern Siberia — all because of Tamerlane is the excuse I have grown accustomed to making.”

“A Ulysses!” Mrs. Schoville clapped her hands and joined them. “A modern Ulysses! How romantic!”

“But not an Othello,” Frona replied. “His tongue is a sluggard. He leaves one at the most interesting point with an enigmatical reference to a man of a bygone age. You take an unfair advantage of us, Mr. St. Vincent, and we shall be unhappy until you show how Tamerlane brought your journey to an untimely end.”

He laughed, and with an effort put aside his reluctance to speak of his travels. “When Tamerlane swept with fire and sword over Eastern Asia, states were disrupted, cities overthrown, and tribes scattered like star-dust. In fact, a vast people was hurled broadcast over the land. Fleeing before the mad lust of the conquerors, these refugees swung far into Siberia, circling to the north and east and fringing the rim of the polar basin with a spray of Mongol tribes — am I not tiring you?”

“No, no!” Mrs. Schoville exclaimed. “It is fascinating! Your method of narration is so vivid! It reminds me of — of — ”

“Of Macaulay,” St. Vincent laughed, good-naturedly. “You know I am a journalist, and he has strongly influenced my style. But I promise you I shall tone down. However, to return, had it not been for these Mongol tribes, I should not have been halted in my travels. Instead of being forced to marry a greasy princess, and to become proficient in interclannish warfare and reindeer-stealing, I should have travelled easily and peaceably to St. Petersburg.”

“Oh, these heroes! Are they not exasperating, Frona? But what about the reindeer-stealing and the greasy princesses?”

The Gold Commissioner’s wife beamed upon him, and glancing for permission to Frona, he went on.

“The coast people were Esquimo stock, merry-natured and happy, and inoffensive. They called themselves the Oukilion, or the Sea Men. I bought dogs and food from them, and they treated me splendidly. But they were subject to the Chow Chuen, or interior people, who were known as the Deer Men. The Chow Chuen were a savage, indomitable breed, with all the fierceness of the untamed Mongol, plus double his viciousness. As soon as I left the coast they fell upon me, confiscated my goods, and made me a slave.”

“But were there no Russians?” Mrs. Schoville asked.

“Russians? Among the Chow Chuen?” He laughed his amusement. “Geographically, they are within the White Tsar’s domain; but politically, no. I doubt if they ever heard of him. Remember, the interior of North-Eastern Siberia is hidden in the polar gloom, a terra incognita, where few men have gone and none has returned.”

“But you — ”

“I chance to be the exception. Why I was spared, I do not know. It just so happened. At first I was vilely treated, beaten by the women and children, clothed in vermin-

infested mangy furs, and fed on refuse. They were utterly heartless. How I managed to survive is beyond me; but I know that often and often, at first, I meditated suicide. The only thing that saved me during that period from taking my own life was the fact that I quickly became too stupefied and bestial, what of my suffering and degradation. Half-frozen, half-starved, undergoing untold misery and hardship, beaten many and many a time into insensibility, I became the sheerest animal.

"On looking back much of it seems a dream. There are gaps which my memory cannot fill. I have vague recollections of being lashed to a sled and dragged from camp to camp and tribe to tribe. Carted about for exhibition purposes, I suppose, much as we do lions and elephants and wild men. How far I so journeyed up and down that bleak region I cannot guess, though it must have been several thousand miles. I do know that when consciousness returned to me and I really became myself again, I was fully a thousand miles to the west of the point where I was captured.

"It was springtime, and from out of a forgotten past it seemed I suddenly opened my eyes. A reindeer thong was about my waist and made fast to the tail-end of a sled. This thong I clutched with both hands, like an organ-grinder's monkey; for the flesh of my body was raw and in great sores from where the thong had cut in.

"A low cunning came to me, and I made myself agreeable and servile. That night I danced and sang, and did my best to amuse them, for I was resolved to incur no more of the maltreatment which had plunged me into darkness. Now the Deer Men traded with the Sea Men, and the Sea Men with the whites, especially the whalers. So later I discovered a deck of cards in the possession of one of the women, and I proceeded to mystify the Chow Chuen with a few commonplace tricks. Likewise, with fitting solemnity, I perpetrated upon them the little I knew of parlor legerdemain. Result: I was appreciated at once, and was better fed and better clothed.

"To make a long story short, I gradually became a man of importance. First the old people and the women came to me for advice, and later the chiefs. My slight but rough and ready knowledge of medicine and surgery stood me in good stead, and I became indispensable. From a slave, I worked myself to a seat among the head men, and in war and peace, so soon as I had learned their ways, was an unchallenged authority. Reindeer was their medium of exchange, their unit of value as it were, and we were almost constantly engaged in cattle forays among the adjacent clans, or in protecting our own herds from their inroads. I improved upon their methods, taught them better strategy and tactics, and put a snap and go into their operations which no neighbor tribe could withstand.

"But still, though I became a power, I was no nearer my freedom. It was laughable, for I had over-reached myself and made myself too valuable. They cherished me with exceeding kindness, but they were jealously careful. I could go and come and command without restraint, but when the trading parties went down to the coast I was not permitted to accompany them. That was the one restriction placed upon my movements.

"Also, it is very tottery in the high places, and when I began altering their political structures I came to grief again. In the process of binding together twenty or more of the neighboring tribes in order to settle rival claims, I was given the over-lordship of the federation. But Old Pi-Une was the greatest of the under-chiefs, — a king in a way, — and in relinquishing his claim to the supreme leadership he refused to forego all the honors. The least that could be done to appease him was for me to marry his daughter Ilswunga. Nay, he demanded it. I offered to abandon the federation, but he would not hear of it. And — "

"And?" Mrs. Schoville murmured ecstatically.

"And I married Ilswunga, which is the Chow Chuen name for Wild Deer. Poor Ilswunga! Like Swinburne's Iseult of Brittany, and I Tristram! The last I saw of her she was playing solitaire in the Mission of Irkutsky and stubbornly refusing to take a bath."

"Oh, mercy! It's ten o'clock!" Mrs. Schoville suddenly cried, her husband having at last caught her eye from across the room. "I'm so sorry I can't hear the rest, Mr. St. Vincent, how you escaped and all that. But you must come and see me. I am just dying to hear!"

"And I took you for a tenderfoot, a chechaquo," Frona said meekly, as St. Vincent tied his ear-flaps and turned up his collar preparatory to leaving.

"I dislike posing," he answered, matching her meekness. "It smacks of insincerity; it really is untrue. And it is so easy to slip into it. Look at the old-timers, — 'sour-doughs' as they proudly call themselves. Just because they have been in the country a few years, they let themselves grow wild and woolly and glorify in it. They may not know it, but it is a pose. In so far as they cultivate salient peculiarities, they cultivate falseness to themselves and live lies."

"I hardly think you are wholly just," Frona said, in defence of her chosen heroes. "I do like what you say about the matter in general, and I detest posing, but the majority of the old-timers would be peculiar in any country, under any circumstances. That peculiarity is their own; it is their mode of expression. And it is, I am sure, just what makes them go into new countries. The normal man, of course, stays at home."

"Oh, I quite agree with you, Miss Welse," he temporized easily. "I did not intend it so sweepingly. I meant to brand that sprinkling among them who are poseurs. In the main, as you say, they are honest, and sincere, and natural."

"Then we have no quarrel. But Mr. St. Vincent, before you go, would you care to come to-morrow evening? We are getting up theatricals for Christmas. I know you can help us greatly, and I think it will not be altogether unenjoyable to you. All the younger people are interested, — the officials, officers of police, mining engineers, gentlemen rovers, and so forth, to say nothing of the nice women. You are bound to like them."

"I am sure I shall," as he took her hand. "Tomorrow, did you say?"

"To-morrow evening. Good-night."

A brave man, she told herself as she went bade from the door, and a splendid type of the race.

## Chapter XIII

Gregory St. Vincent swiftly became an important factor in the social life of Dawson. As a representative of the Amalgamated Press Association, he had brought with him the best credentials a powerful influence could obtain, and over and beyond, he was well qualified socially by his letters of introduction. It developed in a quiet way that he was a wanderer and explorer of no small parts, and that he had seen life and strife pretty well all over the earth's crust. And withal, he was so mild and modest about it, that nobody, not even among the men, was irritated by his achievements. Incidentally, he ran across numerous old acquaintances. Jacob Welse he had met at St. Michael's in the fall of '88, just prior to his crossing Bering Straits on the ice. A month or so later, Father Barnum (who had come up from the Lower River to take charge of the hospital) had met him a couple of hundred miles on his way north of St. Michael's. Captain Alexander, of the Police, had rubbed shoulders with him in the British Legation at Peking. And Bettles, another old-timer of standing, had met him at Fort o' Yukon nine years before.

So Dawson, ever prone to look askance at the casual comer, received him with open arms. Especially was he a favorite with the women. As a promoter of pleasures and an organizer of amusements he took the lead, and it quickly came to pass that no function was complete without him. Not only did he come to help in the theatricals, but insensibly, and as a matter of course, he took charge. Frona, as her friends charged, was suffering from a stroke of Ibsen, so they hit upon the "Doll's House," and she was cast for Nora. Corliss, who was responsible, by the way, for the theatricals, having first suggested them, was to take Torvald's part; but his interest seemed to have died out, or at any rate he begged off on the plea of business rush. So St. Vincent, without friction, took Torvald's lines. Corliss did manage to attend one rehearsal. It might have been that he had come tired from forty miles with the dogs, and it might have been that Torvald was obliged to put his arm about Nora at divers times and to toy playfully with her ear; but, one way or the other, Corliss never attended again.

Busy he certainly was, and when not away on trail he was closeted almost continually with Jacob Welse and Colonel Trethaway. That it was a deal of magnitude was evidenced by the fact that Welse's mining interests involved alone mounted to several millions. Corliss was primarily a worker and doer, and on discovering that his thorough theoretical knowledge lacked practical experience, he felt put upon his mettle and worked the harder. He even marvelled at the silliness of the men who had burdened him with such responsibilities, simply because of his pull, and he told Trethaway as much. But the colonel, while recognizing his shortcomings, liked him for his candor,



and admired him for his effort and for the quickness with which he came to grasp things actual.

Del Bishop, who had refused to play any hand but his own, had gone to work for Corliss because by so doing he was enabled to play his own hand better. He was practically unfettered, while the opportunities to further himself were greatly increased. Equipped with the best of outfits and a magnificent dog-team, his task was mainly to run the various creeks and keep his eyes and ears open. A pocket-miner, first, last, and always, he was privately on the constant lookout for pockets, which occupation did not interfere in the least with the duty he owed his employer. And as the days went by he stored his mind with miscellaneous data concerning the nature of the various placer deposits and the lay of the land, against the summer when the thawed surface and the running water would permit him to follow a trace from creek-bed to side-slope and source.

Corliss was a good employer, paid well, and considered it his right to work men as he worked himself. Those who took service with him either strengthened their own manhood and remained, or quit and said harsh things about him. Jacob Welse noted this trait with appreciation, and he sounded the mining engineer's praises continually. Frona heard and was gratified, for she liked the things her father liked; and she was more gratified because the man was Corliss. But in his rush of business she saw less of him than formerly, while St. Vincent came to occupy a greater and growing portion of her time. His healthful, optimistic spirit pleased her, while he corresponded well to her idealized natural man and favorite racial type. Her first doubt — that if what he said was true — had passed away. All the evidence had gone counter. Men who at first questioned the truth of his wonderful adventures gave in after hearing him talk. Those to any extent conversant with the parts of the world he made mention of, could not but acknowledge that he knew what he talked about. Young Soley, representing Bannock's News Syndicate, and Holmes of the Fairweather, recollected his return to the world in '91, and the sensation created thereby. And Sid Winslow, Pacific Coast journalist, had made his acquaintance at the Wanderers' Club shortly after he landed from the United States revenue cutter which had brought him down from the north. Further, as Frona well saw, he bore the ear-marks of his experiences; they showed their handiwork in his whole outlook on life. Then the primitive was strong in him, and his was a passionate race pride which fully matched hers. In the absence of Corliss they were much together, went out frequently with the dogs, and grew to know each other thoroughly.

All of which was not pleasant to Corliss, especially when the brief intervals he could devote to her were usually intruded upon by the correspondent. Naturally, Corliss was not drawn to him, and other men, who knew or had heard of the Opera House occurrence, only accepted him after a tentative fashion. Trethaway had the indiscretion, once or twice, to speak slightly of him, but so fiercely was he defended by his admirers that the colonel developed the good taste to thenceforward keep his tongue between his teeth. Once, Corliss, listening to an extravagant panegyric bursting from

the lips of Mrs. Schoville, permitted himself the luxury of an incredulous smile; but the quick wave of color in Frona's face, and the gathering of the brows, warned him.

At another time he was unwise enough and angry enough to refer to the Opera House broil. He was carried away, and what he might have said of that night's happening would have redounded neither to St. Vincent's credit nor to his own, had not Frona innocently put a seal upon his lips ere he had properly begun.

"Yes," she said. "Mr. St. Vincent told me about it. He met you for the first time that night, I believe. You all fought royally on his side, — you and Colonel Trethaway. He spoke his admiration unreservedly and, to tell the truth, with enthusiasm."

Corliss made a gesture of depreciation.

"No! no! From what he said you must have behaved splendidly. And I was most pleased to hear. It must be great to give the brute the rein now and again, and healthy, too. Great for us who have wandered from the natural and softened to sickly ripeness. Just to shake off artificiality and rage up and down! and yet, the inmost mentor, serene and passionless, viewing all and saying: 'This is my other self. Behold! I, who am now powerless, am the power behind and ruleth still! This other self, mine ancient, violent, elder self, rages blindly as the beast, but 'tis I, sitting apart, who discern the merit of the cause and bid him rage or bid him cease!' Oh, to be a man!"

Corliss could not help a humoring smile, which put Frona upon defence at once.

"Tell me, Vance, how did it feel? Have I not described it rightly? Were the symptoms yours? Did you not hold aloof and watch yourself play the brute?"

He remembered the momentary daze which came when he stunned the man with his fist, and nodded.

"And pride?" she demanded, inexorably. "Or shame?"

"A — a little of both, and more of the first than the second," he confessed. "At the time I suppose I was madly exultant; then afterwards came the shame, and I tossed awake half the night."

"And finally?"

"Pride, I guess. I couldn't help it, couldn't down it. I awoke in the morning feeling as though I had won my spurs. In a subconscious way I was inordinately proud of myself, and time and again, mentally, I caught myself throwing chests. Then came the shame again, and I tried to reason back my self-respect. And last of all, pride. The fight was fair and open. It was none of my seeking. I was forced into it by the best of motives. I am not sorry, and I would repeat it if necessary."

"And rightly so." Frona's eyes were sparkling. "And how did Mr. St. Vincent acquit himself?"

"He? . . . Oh, I suppose all right, creditably. I was too busy watching my other self to take notice."

"But he saw you."

"Most likely so. I acknowledge my negligence. I should have done better, the chances are, had I thought it would have been of interest to you — pardon me. Just my bungling

wit. The truth is, I was too much of a greenhorn to hold my own and spare glances on my neighbors."

So Corliss went away, glad that he had not spoken, and keenly appreciating St. Vincent's craft whereby he had so adroitly forestalled adverse comment by telling the story in his own modest, self-effacing way.

Two men and a woman! The most potent trinity of factors in the creating of human pathos and tragedy! As ever in the history of man, since the first father dropped down from his arboreal home and walked upright, so at Dawson. Necessarily, there were minor factors, not least among which was Del Bishop, who, in his aggressive way, stepped in and accelerated things. This came about in a trail-camp on the way to Miller Creek, where Corliss was bent on gathering in a large number of low-grade claims which could only be worked profitably on a large scale.

"I'll not be wastin' candles when I make a strike, savvy!" the pocket-miner remarked savagely to the coffee, which he was settling with a chunk of ice. "Not on your life, I guess rather not!"

"Kerosene?" Corliss queried, running a piece of bacon-rind round the frying-pan and pouring in the batter.

"Kerosene, hell! You won't see my trail for smoke when I get a gait on for God's country, my wad in my poke and the sunshine in my eyes. Say! How'd a good juicy tenderloin strike you just now, green onions, fried potatoes, and fixin's on the side? S'help me, that's the first proposition I'll hump myself up against. Then a general whoop-la! for a week — Seattle or 'Frisco, I don't care a rap which, and then — "

"Out of money and after a job."

"Not on your family tree!" Bishop roared. "Cache my sack before I go on the tear, sure pop, and then, afterwards, Southern California. Many's the day I've had my eye on a peach of a fruit farm down there — forty thousand'll buy it. No more workin' for grub-stakes and the like. Figured it out long ago, — hired men to work the ranch, a manager to run it, and me ownin' the game and livin' off the percentage. A stable with always a couple of bronchos handy; handy to slap the packs and saddles on and be off and away whenever the fever for chasin' pockets came over me. Great pocket country down there, to the east and along the desert."

"And no house on the ranch?"

"Cert! With sweet peas growin' up the sides, and in back a patch for vegetables — string-beans and spinach and radishes, cucumbers and 'sparagrass, turnips, carrots, cabbage, and such. And a woman inside to draw me back when I get to runnin' loco after the pockets. Say, you know all about minin'. Did you ever go snoozin' round after pockets? No? Then just steer clear. They're worse than whiskey, horses, or cards. Women, when they come afterwards, ain't in it. Whenever you get a hankerin' after pockets, go right off and get married. It's the only thing'll save you; and even then, mebbe, it won't. I ought 'a' done it years ago. I might 'a' made something of myself if I had. Jerusalem! the jobs I've jumped and the good things chucked in my time, just because of pockets! Say, Corliss, you want to get married, you do, and right off. I'm

tellin' you straight. Take warnin' from me and don't stay single any longer than God'll let you, sure!"

Corliss laughed.

"Sure, I mean it. I'm older'n you, and know what I'm talkin'. Now there's a bit of a thing down in Dawson I'd like to see you get your hands on. You was made for each other, both of you."

Corliss was past the stage when he would have treated Bishop's meddling as an impertinence. The trail, which turns men into the same blankets and makes them brothers, was the great leveller of distinctions, as he had come to learn. So he flopped a flapjack and held his tongue.

"Why don't you waltz in and win?" Del demanded, insistently. "Don't you cotton to her? I know you do, or you wouldn't come back to cabin, after bein' with her, a-walkin'-like on air. Better waltz in while you got a chance. Why, there was Emmy, a tidy bit of flesh as women go, and we took to each other on the jump. But I kept a-chasin' pockets and chasin' pockets, and delayin'. And then a big black lumberman, a Kanuck, began sidlin' up to her, and I made up my mind to speak — only I went off after one more pocket, just one more, and when I got back she was Mrs. Somebody Else.

"So take warnin'. There's that writer-guy, that skunk I poked outside the Opera House. He's walkin' right in and gettin' thick; and here's you, just like me, a-racin' round all creation and lettin' matrimony slide. Mark my words, Corliss! Some fine frost you'll come slippin' into camp and find 'em housekeepin'. Sure! With nothin' left for you in life but pocketing!"

The picture was so unpleasant that Corliss turned surly and ordered him to shut up.

"Who? Me?" Del asked so aggrievedly that Corliss laughed.

"What would you do, then?" he asked.

"Me? In all kindness I'll tell you. As soon as you get back you go and see her. Make dates with her ahead till you got to put 'em on paper to remember 'em all. Get a cinch on her spare time ahead so as to shut the other fellow out. Don't get down in the dirt to her, — she's not that kind, — but don't be too high and mighty, neither. Just so-so — savve? And then, some time when you see she's feelin' good, and smilin' at you in that way of hers, why up and call her hand. Of course I can't say what the showdown'll be. That's for you to find out. But don't hold off too long about it. Better married early than never. And if that writer-guy shoves in, poke him in the breadbasket — hard! That'll settle him plenty. Better still, take him off to one side and talk to him. Tell'm you're a bad man, and that you staked that claim before he was dry behind the ears, and that if he comes nosin' around tryin' to file on it you'll beat his head off."

Bishop got up, stretched, and went outside to feed the dogs. "Don't forget to beat his head off," he called back. "And if you're squeamish about it, just call on me. I won't keep 'm waitin' long."

## Chapter XIV

“Ah, the salt water, Miss Welse, the strong salt water and the big waves and the heavy boats for smooth or rough — that I know. But the fresh water, and the little canoes, egg-shells, fairy bubbles; a big breath, a sigh, a heart-pulse too much, and pouf! over you go; not so, that I do not know.” Baron Courbertin smiled self-commiseratingly and went on. “But it is delightful, magnificent. I have watched and envied. Some day I shall learn.”

“It is not so difficult,” St. Vincent interposed. “Is it, Miss Welse? Just a sure and delicate poise of mind and body — ”

“Like the tight-rope dancer?”

“Oh, you are incorrigible,” Frona laughed. “I feel certain that you know as much about canoes as we.”

“And you know? — a woman?” Cosmopolitan as the Frenchman was, the independence and ability for doing of the Yankee women were a perpetual wonder to him. “How?”

“When I was a very little girl, at Dyea, among the Indians. But next spring, after the river breaks, we’ll give you your first lessons, Mr. St. Vincent and I. So you see, you will return to civilization with accomplishments. And you will surely love it.”

“Under such charming tutorship,” he murmured, gallantly. “But you, Mr. St. Vincent, do you think I shall be so successful that I may come to love it? Do you love it? — you, who stand always in the background, sparing of speech, inscrutable, as though able but unwilling to speak from out the eternal wisdom of a vast experience.” The baron turned quickly to Frona. “We are old friends, did I not tell you? So I may, what you Americans call, josh with him. Is it not so, Mr. St. Vincent?”

Gregory nodded, and Frona said, “I am sure you met at the ends of the earth somewhere.”

“Yokohama,” St. Vincent cut in shortly; “eleven years ago, in cherry-blossom time. But Baron Courbertin does me an injustice, which stings, unhappily, because it is not true. I am afraid, when I get started, that I talk too much about myself.”

“A martyr to your friends,” Frona conciliated. “And such a teller of good tales that your friends cannot forbear imposing upon you.”

“Then tell us a canoe story,” the baron begged. “A good one! A — what you Yankees call — a hair-raiser!”

They drew up to Mrs. Schoville’s fat wood-burning stove, and St. Vincent told of the great whirlpool in the Box Canyon, of the terrible corkscrew in the mane of the

White Horse Rapids, and of his cowardly comrade, who, walking around, had left him to go through alone — nine years before when the Yukon was virgin.

Half an hour later Mrs. Schoville bustled in, with Corliss in her wake.

“That hill! The last of my breath!” she gasped, pulling off her mittens. “Never saw such luck!” she declared none the less vehemently the next moment.

“This play will never come off! I never shall be Mrs. Linden! How can I? Krogstad’s gone on a stampede to Indian River, and no one knows when he’ll be back! Krogstad” (to Corliss) “is Mr. Maybrick, you know. And Mrs. Alexander has the neuralgia and can’t stir out. So there’s no rehearsal to-day, that’s flat!” She attitudinized dramatically: “‘Yes, in my first terror! But a day has passed, and in that day I have seen incredible things in this house! Helmer must know everything! There must be an end to this unhappy secret! O Krogstad, you need me, and I — I need you,’ and you are over on the Indian River making sour-dough bread, and I shall never see you more!”

They clapped their applause.

“My only reward for venturing out and keeping you all waiting was my meeting with this ridiculous fellow.” She shoved Corliss forward. “Oh! you have not met! Baron Courbertin, Mr. Corliss. If you strike it rich, baron, I advise you to sell to Mr. Corliss. He has the money-bags of Croesus, and will buy anything so long as the title is good. And if you don’t strike, sell anyway. He’s a professional philanthropist, you know.

“But would you believe it!” (addressing the general group) “this ridiculous fellow kindly offered to see me up the hill and gossip along the way — gossip! though he refused point-blank to come in and watch the rehearsal. But when he found there wasn’t to be any, he changed about like a weather-vane. So here he is, claiming to have been away to Miller Creek; but between ourselves there is no telling what dark deeds — ”

“Dark deeds! Look!” Frona broke in, pointing to the tip of an amber mouth-piece which projected from Vance’s outside breast-pocket. “A pipe! My congratulations.”

She held out her hand and he shook good-humoredly.

“All Del’s fault,” he laughed. “When I go before the great white throne, it is he who shall stand forth and be responsible for that particular sin.”

“An improvement, nevertheless,” she argued. “All that is wanting is a good round swear-word now and again.”

“Oh, I assure you I am not unlearned,” he retorted. “No man can drive dogs else. I can swear from hell to breakfast, by damn, and back again, if you will permit me, to the last link of perdition. By the bones of Pharaoh and the blood of Judas, for instance, are fairly efficacious with a string of huskies; but the best of my dog-driving nomenclature, more’s the pity, women cannot stand. I promise you, however, in spite of hell and high water — ”

“Oh! Oh!” Mrs. Schoville screamed, thrusting her fingers into her ears.

“Madame,” Baron Courbertin spoke up gravely, “it is a fact, a lamentable fact, that the dogs of the north are responsible for more men’s souls than all other causes put together. Is it not so? I leave it to the gentlemen.”

Both Corliss and St. Vincent solemnly agreed, and proceeded to detonate the lady by swapping heart-rending and apposite dog tales.

St. Vincent and the baron remained behind to take lunch with the Gold Commissioner's wife, leaving Frona and Corliss to go down the hill together. Silently consenting, as though to prolong the descent, they swerved to the right, cutting transversely the myriad foot-paths and sled roads which led down into the town. It was a mid-December day, clear and cold; and the hesitant high-noon sun, having laboriously dragged its pale orb up from behind the southern land-rim, balked at the great climb to the zenith, and began its shamefaced slide back beneath the earth. Its oblique rays refracted from the floating frost particles till the air was filled with glittering jewel-dust — resplendent, blazing, flashing light and fire, but cold as outer space.

They passed down through the scintillant, magical sheen, their moccasins rhythmically crunching the snow and their breaths wreathing mysteriously from their lips in sprayed opalescence. Neither spoke, nor cared to speak, so wonderful was it all. At their feet, under the great vault of heaven, a speck in the midst of the white vastness, huddled the golden city — puny and sordid, feebly protesting against immensity, man's challenge to the infinite!

Calls of men and cries of encouragement came sharply to them from close at hand, and they halted. There was an eager yelping, a scratching of feet, and a string of ice-rimmed wolf-dogs, with hot-lolling tongues and dripping jaws, pulled up the slope and turned into the path ahead of them. On the sled, a long and narrow box of rough-sawed spruce told the nature of the freight. Two dog-drivers, a woman walking blindly, and a black-robed priest, made up the funeral cortege. A few paces farther on the dogs were again put against the steep, and with whine and shout and clatter the unheeding clay was hauled on and upward to its ice-hewn hillside chamber.

"A zone-conqueror," Frona broke voice.

Corliss found his thought following hers, and answered, "These battlers of frost and fighters of hunger! I can understand how the dominant races have come down out of the north to empire. Strong to venture, strong to endure, with infinite faith and infinite patience, is it to be wondered at?"

Frona glanced at him in eloquent silence.

"We smote with our swords," he chanted; "to me it was a joy like having my bright bride by me on the couch.' 'I have marched with my bloody sword, and the raven has followed me. Furiously we fought; the fire passed over the dwellings of men; we slept in the blood of those who kept the gates.'"

"But do you feel it, Vance?" she cried, her hand flashing out and resting on his arm.

"I begin to feel, I think. The north has taught me, is teaching me. The old thing's come back with new significance. Yet I do not know. It seems a tremendous egotism, a magnificent dream."

"But you are not a negro or a Mongol, nor are you descended from the negro or Mongol."

"Yes," he considered, "I am my father's son, and the line goes back to the sea-kings who never slept under the smoky rafters of a roof or drained the ale-horn by inhabited hearth. There must be a reason for the dead-status of the black, a reason for the Teuton spreading over the earth as no other race has ever spread. There must be something in race heredity, else I would not leap at the summons."

"A great race, Vance. Half of the earth its heritage, and all of the sea! And in threescore generations it has achieved it all — think of it! threescore generations! — and to-day it reaches out wider-armed than ever. The smiter and the destroyer among nations! the builder and the law-giver! Oh, Vance, my love is passionate, but God will forgive, for it is good. A great race, greatly conceived; and if to perish, greatly to perish! Don't you remember:

"'Trembles Yggdrasil's ash yet standing; groans that ancient tree, and the Jotun Loki is loosed. The shadows groan on the ways of Hel, until the fire of Surt has consumed the tree. Hrym steers from the east, the waters rise, the mundane snake is coiled in jotun-rage. The worm heats the water, and the eagle screams; the pale of beak tears carcasses; the ship Naglfar is loosed. Surt from the south comes with flickering flame; shines from his sword the Val-god's sun.'"

Swaying there like a furred Valkyrie above the final carnage of men and gods, she touched his imagination, and the blood surged exultingly along unknown channels, thrilling and uplifting.

"'The stony hills are dashed together, the giantesses totter; men tread the path of Hel, and heaven is cloven. The sun darkens, earth in ocean sinks, fall from heaven the bright stars, fire's breath assails the all-nourishing tree, towering fire plays against heaven itself.'"

Outlined against the blazing air, her brows and lashes white with frost, the jewel-dust striking and washing against hair and face, and the south-sun lighting her with a great redness, the man saw her as the genius of the race. The traditions of the blood laid hold of him, and he felt strangely at one with the white-skinned, yellow-haired giants of the younger world. And as he looked upon her the mighty past rose before him, and the caverns of his being resounded with the shock and tumult of forgotten battles. With bellowing of storm-winds and crash of smoking North Sea waves, he saw the sharp-beaked fighting galleys, and the sea-flung Northmen, great-muscled, deep-chested, sprung from the elements, men of sword and sweep, marauders and scourgers of the warm south-lands! The din of twenty centuries of battle was roaring in his ear, and the clamor for return to type strong upon him. He seized her hands passionately.

"Be the bright bride by me, Fróna! Be the bright bride by me on the couch!"

She started and looked down at him, questioningly. Then the import of it reached her and she involuntarily drew back. The sun shot a last failing flicker across the earth and vanished. The fire went out of the air, and the day darkened. Far above, the hearse-dogs howled mournfully.

"No," he interrupted, as words formed on her lips. "Do not speak. I know my answer, your answer . . . now . . . I was a fool . . . Come, let us go down."



It was not until they had left the mountain behind them, crossed the flat, and come out on the river by the saw-mill, that the bustle and skurry of human life made it seem possible for them to speak. Corliss had walked with his eyes moodily bent to the ground; and Frona, with head erect and looking everywhere, stealing an occasional glance to his face. Where the road rose over the log run-way of the mill the footing was slippery, and catching at her to save her from falling, their eyes met.

"I — I am grieved," she hesitated. And then, in unconscious self-defence, "It was so . . . I had not expected it — just then."

"Else you would have prevented?" he asked, bitterly.

"Yes. I think I should have. I did not wish to give you pain — "

"Then you expected it, some time?"

"And feared it. But I had hoped . . . I . . . Vance, I did not come into the Klondike to get married. I liked you at the beginning, and I have liked you more and more, — never so much as to-day, — but — "

"But you had never looked upon me in the light of a possible husband — that is what you are trying to say."

As he spoke, he looked at her side-wise, and sharply; and when her eyes met his with the same old frankness, the thought of losing her maddened him.

"But I have," she answered at once. "I have looked upon you in that light, but somehow it was not convincing. Why, I do not know. There was so much I found to like in you, so much — "

He tried to stop her with a dissenting gesture, but she went on.

"So much to admire. There was all the warmth of friendship, and closer friendship, — a growing camaraderie, in fact; but nothing more. Though I did not wish more, I should have welcomed it had it come."

"As one welcomes the unwelcome guest."

"Why won't you help me, Vance, instead of making it harder? It is hard on you, surely, but do you imagine that I am enjoying it? I feel because of your pain, and, further, I know when I refuse a dear friend for a lover the dear friend goes from me. I do not part with friends lightly."

"I see; doubly bankrupt; friend and lover both. But they are easily replaced. I fancy I was half lost before I spoke. Had I remained silent, it would have been the same anyway. Time softens; new associations, new thoughts and faces; men with marvellous adventures — "

She stopped him abruptly.

"It is useless, Vance, no matter what you may say. I shall not quarrel with you. I can understand how you feel — "

"If I am quarrelsome, then I had better leave you." He halted suddenly, and she stood beside him. "Here comes Dave Harney. He will see you home. It's only a step."

"You are doing neither yourself nor me kindness." She spoke with final firmness. "I decline to consider this the end. We are too close to it to understand it fairly. You must come and see me when we are both calmer. I refuse to be treated in this fashion."

It is childish of you." She shot a hasty glance at the approaching Eldorado king. "I do not think I deserve it at your hands. I refuse to lose you as a friend. And I insist that you come and see me, that things remain on the old footing."

He shook his head.

"Hello!" Dave Harney touched his cap and slowed down loose-jointedly.

"Sorry you didn't take my tip? Dogs gone up a dollar a pound since yesterday, and still a-whoopin'. Good-afternoon, Miss Frona, and Mr. Corliss. Goin' my way?"

"Miss Welse is." Corliss touched the visor of his cap and half-turned on his heel.

"Where're you off to?" Dave demanded.

"Got an appointment," he lied.

"Remember," Frona called to him, "you must come and see me."

"Too busy, I'm afraid, just now. Good-by. So long, Dave."

"Jemimy!" Dave remarked, staring after him; "but he's a hustler. Always busy — with big things, too. Wonder why he didn't go in for dogs?"

## Chapter XV

But Corliss did go back to see her, and before the day was out. A little bitter self-communion had not taken long to show him his childishness. The sting of loss was hard enough, but the thought, now they could be nothing to each other, that her last impressions of him should be bad, hurt almost as much, and in a way, even more. And further, putting all to the side, he was really ashamed. He had thought that he could have taken such a disappointment more manfully, especially since in advance he had not been at all sure of his footing.

So he called upon her, walked with her up to the Barracks, and on the way, with her help, managed to soften the awkwardness which the morning had left between them. He talked reasonably and meekly, which she countenanced, and would have apologized roundly had she not prevented him.

"Not the slightest bit of blame attaches to you," she said. "Had I been in your place, I should probably have done the same and behaved much more outrageously. For you were outrageous, you know."

"But had you been in my place, and I in yours," he answered, with a weak attempt at humor, "there would have been no need."

She smiled, glad that he was feeling less strongly about it.

"But, unhappily, our social wisdom does not permit such a reversal," he added, more with a desire to be saying something.

"Ah!" she laughed. "There's where my Jesuitism comes in. I can rise above our social wisdom."

"You don't mean to say, — that — ?"

"There, shocked as usual! No, I could not be so crude as to speak outright, but I might finesse, as you whist-players say. Accomplish the same end, only with greater delicacy. After all, a distinction without a difference."

"Could you?" he asked.

"I know I could, — if the occasion demanded. I am not one to let what I might deem life-happiness slip from me without a struggle. That" (judicially) "occurs only in books and among sentimentalists. As my father always says, I belong to the strugglers and fighters. That which appeared to me great and sacred, that would I battle for, though I brought heaven tumbling about my ears."

"You have made me very happy, Vance," she said at parting by the Barracks gates. "And things shall go along in the same old way. And mind, not a bit less of you than formerly; but, rather, much more."

But Corliss, after several perfunctory visits, forgot the way which led to Jacob Welse's home, and applied himself savagely to his work. He even had the hypocrisy, at times, to felicitate himself upon his escape, and to draw bleak fireside pictures of the dismal future which would have been had he and Frona incompatibly mated. But this was only at times. As a rule, the thought of her made him hungry, in a way akin to physical hunger; and the one thing he found to overcome it was hard work and plenty of it. But even then, what of trail and creek, and camp and survey, he could only get away from her in his waking hours. In his sleep he was ignobly conquered, and Del Bishop, who was with him much, studied his restlessness and gave a ready ear to his mumbled words.

The pocket-miner put two and two together, and made a correct induction from the different little things which came under his notice. But this did not require any great astuteness. The simple fact that he no longer called on Frona was sufficient evidence of an unprospering suit. But Del went a step farther, and drew the corollary that St. Vincent was the cause of it all. Several times he had seen the correspondent with Frona, going one place and another, and was duly incensed thereat.

"I'll fix 'm yet!" he muttered in camp one evening, over on Gold Bottom.

"Whom?" Corliss queried.

"Who? That newspaper man, that's who!"

"What for?"

"Aw — general principles. Why'n't you let me paste 'm that night at the Opera House?"

Corliss laughed at the recollection. "Why did you strike him, Del?"

"General principles," Del snapped back and shut up.

But Del Bishop, for all his punitive spirit, did not neglect the main chance, and on the return trip, when they came to the forks of Eldorado and Bonanza, he called a halt.

"Say, Corliss," he began at once, "d'you know what a hunch is?" His employer nodded his comprehension. "Well, I've got one. I ain't never asked favors of you before, but this once I want you to lay over here till to-morrow. Seems to me my fruit ranch is 'most in sight. I can damn near smell the oranges a-ripenin'."

"Certainly," Corliss agreed. "But better still, I'll run on down to Dawson, and you can come in when you've finished hunching."

"Say!" Del objected. "I said it was a hunch; and I want to ring you in on it, savve? You're all right, and you've learned a hell of a lot out of books. You're a regular high-roller when it comes to the laboratory, and all that; but it takes yours truly to get down and read the face of nature without spectacles. Now I've got a theory — "

Corliss threw up his hands in affected dismay, and the pocket-miner began to grow angry.

"That's right! Laugh! But it's built right up on your own pet theory of erosion and changed riverbeds. And I didn't pocket among the Mexicans two years for nothin'. Where d'you s'pose this Eldorado gold came from? — rough, and no signs of washin'?"

Eh? There's where you need your spectacles. Books have made you short-sighted. But never mind how. 'Tisn't exactly pockets, neither, but I know what I'm spelling about. I ain't been keepin' tab on traces for my health. I can tell you mining sharps more about the lay of Eldorado Creek in one minute than you could figure out in a month of Sundays. But never mind, no offence. You lay over with me till to-morrow, and you can buy a ranch 'longside of mine, sure." "Well, all right. I can rest up and look over my notes while you're hunting your ancient river-bed."

"Didn't I tell you it was a hunch?" Del reproachfully demanded.

"And haven't I agreed to stop over? What more do you want?"

"To give you a fruit ranch, that's what! Just to go with me and nose round a bit, that's all."

"I do not want any of your impossible fruit ranches. I'm tired and worried; can't you leave me alone? I think I am more than fair when I humor you to the extent of stopping over. You may waste your time nosing around, but I shall stay in camp. Understand?"

"Burn my body, but you're grateful! By the Jumpin' Methuselah, I'll quit my job in two minutes if you don't fire me. Me a-layin' 'wake nights and workin' up my theory, and calculatin' on lettin' you in, and you a-snorin' and Frona-this and Frona-that — "

"That'll do! Stop it!"

"The hell it will! If I didn't know more about gold-mining than you do about courtin' — "

Corliss sprang at him, but Del dodged to one side and put up his fists. Then he ducked a wild right and left swing and side-stepped his way into firmer footing on the hard trail.

"Hold on a moment," he cried, as Corliss made to come at him again.

"Just a second. If I lick you, will you come up the hillside with me?"

"Yes."

"And if I don't, you can fire me. That's fair. Come on."

Vance had no show whatever, as Del well knew, who played with him, feinting, attacking, retreating, dazzling, and disappearing every now and again out of his field of vision in a most exasperating way. As Vance speedily discovered, he possessed very little correlation between mind and body, and the next thing he discovered was that he was lying in the snow and slowly coming back to his senses.

"How — how did you do it?" he stammered to the pocket-miner, who had his head on his knee and was rubbing his forehead with snow.

"Oh, you'll do!" Del laughed, helping him limply to his feet. "You're the right stuff. I'll show you some time. You've got lots to learn yet what you won't find in books. But not now. We've got to wade in and make camp, then you're comin' up the hill with me."

"Hee! hee!" he chuckled later, as they fitted the pipe of the Yukon stove. "Slow sighted and short. Couldn't follow me, eh? But I'll show you some time, oh, I'll show you all right, all right!"

"Grab an axe an' come on," he commanded when the camp was completed.

He led the way up Eldorado, borrowed a pick, shovel, and pan at a cabin, and headed up among the benches near the mouth of French Creek. Vance, though feeling somewhat sore, was laughing at himself by this time and enjoying the situation. He exaggerated the humility with which he walked at the heel of his conqueror, while the extravagant servility which marked his obedience to his hired man made that individual grin.

"You'll do. You've got the makin's in you!" Del threw down the tools and scanned the run of the snow-surface carefully. "Here, take the axe, shinny up the hill, and lug me down some skookum dry wood."

By the time Corliss returned with the last load of wood, the pocket-miner had cleared away the snow and moss in divers spots, and formed, in general design, a rude cross.

"Cuttin' her both ways," he explained. "Mebbe I'll hit her here, or over there, or up above; but if there's anything in the hunch, this is the place. Bedrock dips in above, and it's deep there and most likely richer, but too much work. This is the rim of the bench. Can't be more'n a couple of feet down. All we want is indications; afterwards we can tap in from the side."

As he talked, he started fires here and there on the uncovered spaces. "But look here, Corliss, I want you to mind this ain't pocketin'. This is just plain ordinary 'prentice work; but pocketin'" — he straightened up his back and spoke reverently — "'but pocketin' is the deepest science and the finest art. Delicate to a hair's-breadth, hand and eye true and steady as steel. When you've got to burn your pan blue-black twice a day, and out of a shovelful of gravel wash down to the one wee speck of flour gold, — why, that's washin', that's what it is. Tell you what, I'd sooner follow a pocket than eat."

"And you would sooner fight than do either." Bishop stopped to consider. He weighed himself with care equal to that of retaining the one wee speck of flour gold. "No, I wouldn't, neither. I'd take pocketin' in mine every time. It's as bad as dope; Corliss, sure. If it once gets a-hold of you, you're a goner. You'll never shake it. Look at me! And talk about pipe-dreams; they can't burn a candle 'longside of it."

He walked over and kicked one of the fires apart. Then he lifted the pick, and the steel point drove in and stopped with a metallic clang, as though brought up by solid cement.

"Ain't thawed two inches," he muttered, stooping down and groping with his fingers in the wet muck. The blades of last year's grass had been burned away, but he managed to gather up and tear away a handful of the roots.

"Hell!"

"What's the matter?" Corliss asked.

"Hell!" he repeated in a passionless way, knocking the dirt-covered roots against the pan.

Corliss went over and stooped to closer inspection. "Hold on!" he cried, picking up two or three grimy bits of dirt and rubbing them with his fingers. A bright yellow flashed forth.

"Hell!" the pocket-miner reiterated tonelessly. "First rattle out the box. Begins at the grass roots and goes all the way down."

Head turned to the side and up, eyes closed, nostrils distended and quivering, he rose suddenly to his feet and sniffed the air. Corliss looked up wonderingly.

"Huh!" the pocket-miner grunted. Then he drew a deep breath. "Can't you smell them oranges?"

## Chapter XVI

The stampede to French Hill was on by the beginning of Christmas week. Corliss and Bishop had been in no hurry to record for they looked the ground over carefully before blazing their stakes, and let a few close friends into the secret, — Harney, Welse, Trethaway, a Dutch chechaquo who had forfeited both feet to the frost, a couple of the mounted police, an old pal with whom Del had prospected through the Black Hills Country, the washerwoman at the Forks, and last, and notably, Lucile. Corliss was responsible for her getting in on the lay, and he drove and marked her stakes himself, though it fell to the colonel to deliver the invitation to her to come and be rich.

In accordance with the custom of the country, those thus benefited offered to sign over half-interests to the two discoverers. Corliss would not tolerate the proposition. Del was similarly minded, though swayed by no ethical reasons. He had enough as it stood. "Got my fruit ranch paid for, double the size I was calculatin' on," he explained; "and if I had any more, I wouldn't know what to do with it, sure."

After the strike, Corliss took it upon himself as a matter of course to look about for another man; but when he brought a keen-eyed Californian into camp, Del was duly wroth.

"Not on your life," he stormed.

"But you are rich now," Vance answered, "and have no need to work."

"Rich, hell!" the pocket-miner rejoined. "Accordin' to covenant, you can't fire me; and I'm goin' to hold the job down as long as my sweet will'll let me. Savve?"

On Friday morning, early, all interested parties appeared before the Gold Commissioner to record their claims. The news went abroad immediately. In five minutes the first stampeders were hitting the trail. At the end of half an hour the town was afoot. To prevent mistakes on their property, — jumping, moving of stakes, and mutilation of notices, — Vance and Del, after promptly recording, started to return. But with the government seal attached to their holdings, they took it leisurely, the stampeders sliding past them in a steady stream. Midway, Del chanced to look behind. St. Vincent was in sight, footing it at a lively pace, the regulation stampeding pack on his shoulders. The trail made a sharp bend at that place, and with the exception of the three of them no one was in sight.

"Don't speak to me. Don't recognize me," Del cautioned sharply, as he spoke, buttoning his nose-strap across his face, which served to quite hide his identity. "There's a water-hole over there. Get down on your belly and make a blind at gettin' a drink. Then go on by your lonely to the claims; I've business of my own to handle. And for



the love of your bother don't say a word to me or to the skunk. Don't let 'm see your face."

Corliss obeyed wonderingly, stepping aside from the beaten path, lying down in the snow, and dipping into the water-hole with an empty condensed milk-can. Bishop bent on one knee and stooped as though fastening his moccasin. Just as St. Vincent came up with him he finished tying the knot, and started forward with the feverish haste of a man trying to make up for lost time.

"I say, hold on, my man," the correspondent called out to him.

Bishop shot a hurried glance at him and pressed on. St. Vincent broke into a run till they were side by side again.

"Is this the way — "

"To the benches of French Hill?" Del snapped him short. "Betcher your life. That's the way I'm headin'. So long."

He ploughed forward at a tremendous rate, and the correspondent, half-running, swung in behind with the evident intention of taking the pace. Corliss, still in the dark, lifted his head and watched them go; but when he saw the pocket-miner swerve abruptly to the right and take the trail up Adams Creek, the light dawned upon him and he laughed softly to himself.

Late that night Del arrived in camp on Eldorado exhausted but jubilant.

"Didn't do a thing to him," he cried before he was half inside the tent-flaps. "Gimme a bite to eat" (grabbing at the teapot and running a hot flood down his throat), — "cookin'-fat, slush, old moccasins, candle-ends, anything!"

Then he collapsed upon the blankets and fell to rubbing his stiff leg-muscles while Corliss fried bacon and dished up the beans.

"What about 'm?" he exulted between mouthfuls. "Well, you can stack your chips that he didn't get in on the French Hill benches. How far is it, my man?" (in the well-mimicked, patronizing tones of St. Vincent). "How far is it?" with the patronage left out. "How far to French Hill?" weakly. "How far do you think it is?" very weakly, with a tremolo which hinted of repressed tears. "How far — "

The pocket-miner burst into roars of laughter, which were choked by a misdirected flood of tea, and which left him coughing and speechless.

"Where'd I leave 'm?" when he had recovered. "Over on the divide to Indian River, winded, plum-beaten, done for. Just about able to crawl into the nearest camp, and that's about all. I've covered fifty stiff miles myself, so here's for bed. Good-night. Don't call me in the mornin'."

He turned into the blankets all-standing, and as he dozed off Vance could hear him muttering, "How far is it, my man? I say, how far is it?"

Regarding Lucile, Corliss was disappointed. "I confess I cannot understand her," he said to Colonel Trethaway. "I thought her bench claim would make her independent of the Opera House."

"You can't get a dump out in a day," the colonel interposed.

"But you can mortgage the dirt in the ground when it prospects as hers does. Yet I took that into consideration, and offered to advance her a few thousand, non-interest bearing, and she declined. Said she didn't need it, — in fact, was really grateful; thanked me, and said that any time I was short to come and see her."

Trethaway smiled and played with his watch-chain. "What would you? Life, even here, certainly means more to you and me than a bit of grub, a piece of blanket, and a Yukon stove. She is as gregarious as the rest of us, and probably a little more so. Suppose you cut her off from the Opera House, — what then? May she go up to the Barracks and consort with the captain's lady, make social calls on Mrs. Schoville, or chum with Frona? Don't you see? Will you escort her, in daylight, down the public street?"

"Will you?" Vance demanded.

"Ay," the colonel replied, unhesitatingly, "and with pleasure."

"And so will I; but — " He paused and gazed gloomily into the fire. "But see how she is going on with St. Vincent. As thick as thieves they are, and always together."

"Puzzles me," Trethaway admitted. "I can grasp St. Vincent's side of it. Many irons in the fire, and Lucile owns a bench claim on the second tier of French Hill. Mark me, Corliss, we can tell infallibly the day that Frona consents to go to his bed and board, — if she ever does consent."

"And that will be?"

"The day St. Vincent breaks with Lucile."

Corliss pondered, and the colonel went on.

"But I can't grasp Lucile's side of it. What she can see in St. Vincent — "

"Her taste is no worse than — than that of the rest of the women," Vance broke in hotly. "I am sure that — "

"Frona could not display poor taste, eh?" Corliss turned on his heel and walked out, and left Colonel Trethaway smiling grimly.

Vance Corliss never knew how many people, directly and indirectly, had his cause at heart that Christmas week. Two men strove in particular, one for him and one for the sake of Frona. Pete Whipple, an old-timer in the land, possessed an Eldorado claim directly beneath French Hill, also a woman of the country for a wife, — a swarthy breed, not over pretty, whose Indian mother had mated with a Russian fur-trader some thirty years before at Kutlik on the Great Delta. Bishop went down one Sunday morning to yarn away an hour or so with Whipple, but found the wife alone in the cabin. She talked a bastard English gibberish which was an anguish to hear, so the pocket-miner resolved to smoke a pipe and depart without rudeness. But he got her tongue wagging, and to such an extent that he stopped and smoked many pipes, and whenever she lagged, urged her on again. He grunted and chuckled and swore in undertones while he listened, punctuating her narrative regularly with hells! which adequately expressed the many shades of interest he felt.

In the midst of it, the woman fished an ancient leather-bound volume, all scarred and marred, from the bottom of a dilapidated chest, and thereafter it lay on the table between them. Though it remained unopened, she constantly referred to it by look and gesture, and each time she did so a greedy light blazed in Bishop's eyes. At the end, when she could say no more and had repeated herself from two to half a dozen times, he pulled out his sack. Mrs. Whipple set up the gold scales and placed the weights, which he counterbalanced with a hundred dollars' worth of dust. Then he departed up the hill to the tent, hugging the purchase closely, and broke in on Corliss, who sat in the blankets mending moccasins.

"I'll fix 'm yet," Del remarked casually, at the same time patting the book and throwing it down on the bed.

Corliss looked up inquiringly and opened it. The paper was yellow with age and rotten from the weather-wear of trail, while the text was printed in Russian. "I didn't know you were a Russian scholar, Del," he quizzed. "But I can't read a line of it."

"Neither can I, more's the pity; nor does Whipple's woman savve the lingo. I got it from her. But her old man — he was full Russian, you know — he used to read it aloud to her. But she knows what she knows and what her old man knew, and so do I."

"And what do the three of you know?"

"Oh, that's tellin'," Bishop answered, coyly. "But you wait and watch my smoke, and when you see it risin', you'll know, too."

Matt McCarthy came in over the ice Christmas week, summed up the situation so far as Frona and St. Vincent were concerned, and did not like it. Dave Harney furnished him with full information, to which he added that obtained from Lucile, with whom he was on good terms. Perhaps it was because he received the full benefit of the sum of their prejudice; but no matter how, he at any rate answered roll-call with those who looked upon the correspondent with disfavor. It was impossible for them to tell why they did not approve of the man, but somehow St. Vincent was never much of a success with men. This, in turn, might have been due to the fact that he shone so resplendently with women as to cast his fellows in eclipse; for otherwise, in his intercourse with men, he was all that a man could wish. There was nothing domineering or over-riding about him, while he manifested a good fellowship at least equal to their own.

Yet, having withheld his judgment after listening to Lucile and Harney, Matt McCarthy speedily reached a verdict upon spending an hour with St. Vincent at Jacob Welse's, — and this in face of the fact that what Lucile had said had been invalidated by Matt's learning of her intimacy with the man in question. Strong of friendship, quick of heart and hand, Matt did not let the grass grow under his feet. "'Tis I'll be takin' a social fling meself, as befits a mumber iv the noble Eldorado Dynasty," he explained, and went up the hill to a whist party in Dave Harney's cabin. To himself he added, "An' belike, if Satan takes his eye off his own, I'll put it to that young cub iv his."

But more than once during the evening he discovered himself challenging his own judgment. Probe as he would with his innocent wit, Matt found himself baffled. St. Vincent certainly rang true. Simple, light-hearted, unaffected, joking and being joked in all good-nature, thoroughly democratic. Matt failed to catch the faintest echo of insincerity.

"May the dogs walk on me grave," he communed with himself while studying a hand which suffered from a plethora of trumps. "Is it the years are tellin', puttin' the frost in me veins and chillin' the blood? A likely lad, an' is it for me to misjudge because his is a-takin' way with the ladies? Just because the swate creatures smile on the lad an' flutter warm at the sight iv him? Bright eyes and brave men! 'Tis the way they have iv lovin' valor. They're shuddered an' shocked at the cruel an' bloody dades iv war, yet who so quick do they lose their hearts to as the brave butcher-bye iv a sodger? Why not? The lad's done brave things, and the girls give him the warm soft smile. Small reason, that, for me to be callin' him the devil's own cub. Out upon ye, Matt McCarthy, for a crusty old sour-dough, with vitals frozen an' summer gone from yer heart! 'Tis an ossification ye've become! But bide a wee, Matt, bide a wee," he supplemented. "Wait till ye've felt the fale iv his flesh."

The opportunity came shortly, when St. Vincent, with Frona opposite, swept in the full thirteen tricks.

"A rampse!" Matt cried. "Vincent, me lad, a rampse! Yer hand on it, me brave!"

It was a stout grip, neither warm nor clammy, but Matt shook his head dubiously. "What's the good iv botherin'?" he muttered to himself as he shuffled the cards for the next deal. "Ye old fool! Find out first how Frona darlin' stands, an' if it's pat she is, thin 'tis time for doin'."

"Oh, McCarthy's all hunky," Dave Harney assured them later on, coming to the rescue of St. Vincent, who was getting the rough side of the Irishman's wit. The evening was over and the company was putting on its wraps and mittens. "Didn't tell you 'bout his visit to the cathedral, did he, when he was on the Outside? Well, it was suthin' like this, ez he was explainin' it to me. He went to the cathedral durin' service, an' took in the priests and choir-boys in their surplices, — parkas, he called 'em, — an' watched the burnin' of the holy incense. 'An' do ye know, Dave, he sez to me, 'they got in an' made a smudge, and there wa'n't a darned mosquito in sight.'"

"True, ivery word iv it." Matt unblushingly fathered Harney's yarn. "An' did ye niver hear tell iv the time Dave an' me got drunk on condensed milk?"

"Oh! Horrors!" cried Mrs. Schoville. "But how? Do tell us."

"'Twas durin' the time iv the candle famine at Forty Mile. Cold snap on, an' Dave slides into me shack to pass the time o' day, and glues his eyes on me case iv condensed milk. 'How'd ye like a sip iv Moran's good whiskey?' he sez, eyin' the case iv milk the while. I confiss me mouth went wet at the naked thought iv it. 'But what's the use iv likin'?' sez I, with me sack bulgin' with emptiness.' 'Candles worth tin dollars the dozen,' sez he, 'a dollar apiece. Will ye give six cans iv milk for a bottle iv the old

stuff?' 'How'll ye do it?' sez I. 'Trust me,' sez he. 'Give me the cans. 'Tis cold out iv doors, an' I've a pair iv candle-moulds.'

"An' it's the sacred truth I'm tellin' ye all, an' if ye run across Bill Moran he'll back me word; for what does Dave Harney do but lug off me six cans, freeze the milk into his candle-moulds, an' trade them in to bill Moran for a bottle iv tanglefoot!"

As soon as he could be heard through the laughter, Harney raised his voice. "It's true, as McCarthy tells, but he's only told you the half. Can't you guess the rest, Matt?"

Matt shook his head.

"Bein' short on milk myself, an' not over much sugar, I doctored three of your cans with water, which went to make the candles. An' by the bye, I had milk in my coffee for a month to come."

"It's on me, Dave," McCarthy admitted. "'Tis only that yer me host, or I'd be shockin' the ladies with yer nortorious disgraces. But I'll lave ye live this time, Dave. Come, spade the partin' guests; we must be movin'."

"No ye don't, ye young laddy-buck," he interposed, as St. Vincent started to take Frona down the hill, "'Tis her foster-daddy sees her home this night."

McCarthy laughed in his silent way and offered his arm to Frona, while St. Vincent joined in the laugh against himself, dropped back, and joined Miss Mortimer and Baron Courbertin.

"What's this I'm hearin' about you an' Vincent?" Matt bluntly asked as soon as they had drawn apart from the others.

He looked at her with his keen gray eyes, but she returned the look quite as keenly.

"How should I know what you have been hearing?" she countered.

"Whin the talk goes round iv a maid an' a man, the one pretty an' the other not unhandsome, both young an' neither married, does it 'token aught but the one thing?"

"Yes?"

"An' the one thing the greatest thing in all the world."

"Well?" Frona was the least bit angry, and did not feel inclined to help him.

"Marriage, iv course," he blurted out. "'Tis said it looks that way with the pair of ye."

"But is it said that it is that way?"

"Isn't the looks iv it enough?" he demanded.

"No; and you are old enough to know better. Mr. St. Vincent and I — we enjoy each other as friends, that is all. But suppose it is as you say, what of it?"

"Well," McCarthy deliberated, "there's other talk goes round, 'Tis said Vincent is over-thick with a jade down in the town — Lucile, they speak iv her."

"All of which signifies?"

She waited, and McCarthy watched her dumbly.

"I know Lucile, and I like her," Frona continued, filling the gap of his silence, and ostentatiously manoeuvring to help him on. "Do you know her? Don't you like her?"

Matt started to speak, cleared his throat, and halted. At last, in desperation, he blurted out, "For two cents, Frona, I'd lay ye acrost me knee."

She laughed. "You don't dare. I'm not running barelegged at Dyea."

"Now don't be tasin'," he blarneyed.

"I'm not teasing. Don't you like her? — Lucile?"

"An' what iv it?" he challenged, brazenly.

"Just what I asked, — what of it?"

"Thin I'll tell ye in plain words from a man old enough to be yer father. 'Tis undacent, damnably undacent, for a man to kape company with a good young girl — "

"Thank you," she laughed, dropping a courtesy. Then she added, half in bitterness, "There have been others who — "

"Name me the man!" he cried hotly.

"There, there, go on. You were saying?"

"That it's a crying shame for a man to kape company with — with you, an' at the same time be chake by jowl with a woman iv her stamp."

"And why?"

"To come drippin' from the muck to dirty yer claneness! An' ye can ask why?"

"But wait, Matt, wait a moment. Granting your premises — "

"Little I know iv primises," he growled. "'Tis facts I'm dalin' with."

Frona bit her lip. "Never mind. Have it as you will; but let me go on and I will deal with facts, too. When did you last see Lucile?"

"An' why are ye askin'?" he demanded, suspiciously.

"Never mind why. The fact."

"Well, thin, the fore part iv last night, an' much good may it do ye."

"And danced with her?"

"A rollickin' Virginia reel, an' not sayin' a word iv a quadrille or so. 'Tis at square dances I excel meself."

Frona walked on in a simulated brown study, no sound going up from the twain save the complaint of the snow from under their moccasins.

"Well, thin?" he questioned, uneasily.

"An' what iv it?" he insisted after another silence.

"Oh, nothing," she answered. "I was just wondering which was the muckiest, Mr. St. Vincent or you — or myself, with whom you have both been cheek by jowl."

Now, McCarthy was unversed in the virtues of social wisdom, and, though he felt somehow the error of her position, he could not put it into definite thought; so he steered wisely, if weakly, out of danger.

"It's gettin' mad ye are with yer old Matt," he insinuated, "who has yer own good at heart, an' because iv it makes a fool iv himself."

"No, I'm not."

"But ye are."

"There!" leaning swiftly to him and kissing him. "How could I remember the Dyea days and be angry?"

“Ah, Frona darlin’, well may ye say it. I’m the dust iv the dirt under yer feet, an’ ye may walk on me — anything save get mad. I cud die for ye, swing for ye, to make ye happy. I cud kill the man that gave ye sorrow, were it but a thimbleful, an’ go plump into hell with a smile on me face an’ joy in me heart.”

They had halted before her door, and she pressed his arm gratefully. “I am not angry, Matt. But with the exception of my father you are the only person I would have permitted to talk to me about this — this affair in the way you have. And though I like you, Matt, love you better than ever, I shall nevertheless be very angry if you mention it again. You have no right. It is something that concerns me alone. And it is wrong of you — ”

“To prevint ye walkin’ blind into danger?”

“If you wish to put it that way, yes.”

He growled deep down in his throat.

“What is it you are saying?” she asked.

“That ye may shut me mouth, but that ye can’t bind me arm.”

“But you mustn’t, Matt, dear, you mustn’t.”

Again he answered with a subterranean murmur.

“And I want you to promise me, now, that you will not interfere in my life that way, by word or deed.”

“I’ll not promise.”

“But you must.”

“I’ll not. Further, it’s gettin’ cold on the stoop, an’ ye’ll be frostin’ yer toes, the pink little toes I fished splinters out iv at Dyea. So it’s in with ye, Frona girl, an’ good-night.”

He thrust her inside and departed. When he reached the corner he stopped suddenly and regarded his shadow on the snow. “Matt McCarthy, yer a damned fool! Who iver heard iv a Welse not knowin’ their own mind? As though ye’d niver had dalin’s with the stiff-necked breed, ye calamitous son iv misfortune!”

Then he went his way, still growling deeply, and at every growl the curious wolf-dog at his heels bristled and bared its fangs.

## Chapter XVII

“Tired?”

Jacob Welse put both hands on Frona’s shoulders, and his eyes spoke the love his stiff tongue could not compass. The tree and the excitement and the pleasure were over with, a score or so of children had gone home frostily happy across the snow, the last guest had departed, and Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were blending into one.

She returned his fondness with glad-eyed interest, and they dropped into huge comfortable chairs on either side the fireplace, in which the back-log was falling to ruddy ruin.

“And this time next year?” He put the question seemingly to the glowing log, and, as if in ominous foreshadow, it flared brightly and crumbled away in a burst of sparks.

“It is marvellous,” he went on, dismissing the future in an effort to shake himself into a wholesomer frame of mind. “It has been one long continuous miracle, the last few months, since you have been with me. We have seen very little of each other, you know, since your childhood, and when I think upon it soberly it is hard to realize that you are really mine, sprung from me, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. As the tangle-haired wild young creature of Dyea, — a healthy, little, natural animal and nothing more, — it required no imagination to accept you as one of the breed of Welse. But as Frona, the woman, as you were to-night, as you are now as I look at you, as you have been since you came down the Yukon, it is hard . . . I cannot realize . . . I . . .” He faltered and threw up his hands helplessly. “I almost wish that I had given you no education, that I had kept you with me, faring with me, adventuring with me, achieving with me, and failing with me. I would have known you, now, as we sit by the fire. As it is, I do not. To that which I did know there has been added, somehow (what shall I call it?), a subtlety; complexity, — favorite words of yours, — which is beyond me.

“No.” He waved the speech abruptly from her lips. She came over and knelt at his feet, resting her head on his knee and clasping his hand in firm sympathy. “No, that is not true. Those are not the words. I cannot find them. I fail to say what I feel. Let me try again. Underneath all you do carry the stamp of the breed. I knew I risked the loss of that when I sent you away, but I had faith in the persistence of the blood and I took the chance; doubted and feared when you were gone; waited and prayed dumbly, and hoped oftentimes hopelessly; and then the day dawned, the day of days! When they said your boat was coming, death rose and walked on the one hand of me, and on the other life everlasting. Made or marred; made or marred, — the words rang



through my brain till they maddened me. Would the Welse remain the Welse? Would the blood persist? Would the young shoot rise straight and tall and strong, green with sap and fresh and vigorous? Or would it droop limp and lifeless, withered by the heats of the world other than the little simple, natural Dyea world?

"It was the day of days, and yet it was a lingering, watching, waiting tragedy. You know I had lived the years lonely, fought the lone fight, and you, away, the only kin. If it had failed . . . But your boat shot from the bluffs into the open, and I was half-afraid to look. Men have never called me coward, but I was nearer the coward then than ever and all before. Ay, that moment I had faced death easier. And it was foolish, absurd. How could I know whether it was for good or ill when you drifted a distant speck on the river? Still, I looked, and the miracle began, for I did know. You stood at the steering-sweep. You were a Welse. It seems so little; in truth it meant so much. It was not to be expected of a mere woman, but of a Welse, yes. And when Bishop went over the side, and you gripped the situation as imperatively as the sweep, and your voice rang out, and the Siwashes bent their backs to your will, — then was it the day of days."

"I tried always, and remembered," Frona whispered. She crept up softly till her arm was about his neck and her head against his breast. He rested one arm lightly on her body, and poured her bright hair again and again from his hand in glistening waves.

"As I said, the stamp of the breed was unmarred, but there was yet a difference. There is a difference. I have watched it, studied it, tried to make it out. I have sat at table, proud by the side of you, but dwarfed. When you talked of little things I was large enough to follow; when of big things, too small. I knew you, had my hand on you, when presto! and you were away, gone — I was lost. He is a fool who knows not his own ignorance; I was wise enough to know mine. Art, poetry, music, — what do I know of them? And they were the great things, are the great things to you, mean more to you than the little things I may comprehend. And I had hoped, blindly, foolishly, that we might be one in the spirit as well as the one flesh. It has been bitter, but I have faced it, and understand. But to see my own red blood get away from me, elude me, rise above me! It stuns. God! I have heard you read from your Browning — no, no; do not speak — and watched the play of your face, the uplift and the passion of it, and all the while the words droning in upon me, meaningless, musical, maddening. And Mrs. Schoville sitting there, nursing an expression of idiotic ecstasy, and understanding no more than I. I could have strangled her.

"Why, I have stolen away, at night, with your Browning, and locked myself in like a thief in fear. The text was senseless, I have beaten my head with my fist like a wild man, to try and knock some comprehension into it. For my life had worked itself out along one set groove, deep and narrow. I was in the rut. I had done those things which came to my hand and done them well; but the time was past; I could not turn my hand anew. I, who am strong and dominant, who have played large with destiny, who could buy body and soul a thousand painters and versifiers, was baffled by a few paltry cents' worth of printed paper!"

He spilled her hair for a moment's silence.

"To come back. I had attempted the impossible, gambled against the inevitable. I had sent you from me to get that which I had not, dreaming that we would still be one. As though two could be added to two and still remain two. So, to sum up, the breed still holds, but you have learned an alien tongue. When you speak it I am deaf. And bitterest of all, I know that the new tongue is the greater. I do not know why I have said all this, made my confession of weakness — "

"Oh, father mine, greatest of men!" She raised her head and laughed into his eyes, the while brushing back the thick iron-gray hair which thatched the dome of his forehead. "You, who have wrestled more mightily, done greater things than these painters and versifiers. You who know so well the law of change. Might not the same plaint fall from your father's lips were he to sit now beside you and look upon your work and you?"

"Yes, yes. I have said that I understand. Do not let us discuss it . . . a moment's weakness. My father was a great man."

"And so mine."

"A struggler to the end of his days. He fought the great lone fight — "

"And so mine."

"And died fighting."

"And so shall mine. So shall we all, we Welses."

He shook her playfully, in token of returning spirits. "But I intend to sell out, — mines, Company, everything, — and study Browning."

"Still the fight. You can't discount the blood, father."

"Why were you not a boy?" he demanded, abruptly. "You would have been a splendid one. As it is, a woman, made to be the delight of some man, you must pass from me — to-morrow, next day, this time next year, who knows how soon? Ah? now I know the direction my thought has been trending. Just as I know you do, so do I recognize the inevitableness of it and the justness. But the man, Frona, the man?"

"Don't," she demurred. "Tell me of your father's fight, the last fight, the great lone fight at Treasure City. Ten to one it was, and well fought. Tell me."

"No, Frona. Do you realize that for the first time in our lives we talk together seriously, as father and daughter, — for the first time? You have had no mother to advise; no father, for I trusted the blood, and wisely, and let you go. But there comes a time when the mother's counsel is needed, and you, you who never knew one?"

Frona yielded, in instant recognition, and waiting, snuggled more closely to him.

"This man, St. Vincent — how is it between you?"

"I . . . I do not know. How do you mean?"

"Remember always, Frona, that you have free choice, yours is the last word. Still, I would like to understand. I could . . . perhaps . . . I might be able to suggest. But nothing more. Still, a suggestion . . ."

There was something inexpressibly sacred about it, yet she found herself tongue-tied. Instead of the one definite thing to say, a muddle of ideas fluttered in her brain. After all, could he understand? Was there not a difference which prevented him from

comprehending the motives which, for her, were impelling? For all her harking back to the primitive and stout defence of its sanity and truth, did his native philosophy give him the same code which she drew from her acquired philosophy? Then she stood aside and regarded herself and the queries she put, and drew apart from them, for they breathed of treason.

"There is nothing between us, father," she spoke up resolutely. "Mr. St. Vincent has said nothing, nothing. We are good friends, we like each other, we are very good friends. I think that is all."

"But you like each other; you like him. Is it in the way a woman must like a man before she can honestly share her life with him, lose herself in him? Do you feel with Ruth, so that when the time comes you can say, 'Thy people are my people, and thy God my God'?"

"N —o. It may be; but I cannot, dare not face it, say it or not say it, think it or not think it — now. It is the great affirmation. When it comes it must come, no one may know how or why, in a great white flash, like a revelation, hiding nothing, revealing everything in dazzling, blinding truth. At least I so imagine."

Jacob Welse nodded his head with the slow meditation of one who understands, yet stops to ponder and weigh again.

"But why have you asked, father? Why has Mr. St. Vincent been raised? I have been friends with other men."

"But I have not felt about other men as I do of St. Vincent. We may be truthful, you and I, and forgive the pain we give each other. My opinion counts for no more than another's. Fallibility is the commonest of curses. Nor can I explain why I feel as I do — I oppose much in the way you expect to when your great white flash sears your eyes. But, in a word, I do not like St. Vincent."

"A very common judgment of him among the men," Frona interposed, driven irresistibly to the defensive.

"Such consensus of opinion only makes my position stronger," he returned, but not disputatively. "Yet I must remember that I look upon him as men look. His popularity with women must proceed from the fact that women look differently than men, just as women do differ physically and spiritually from men. It is deep, too deep for me to explain. I but follow my nature and try to be just."

"But have you nothing more definite?" she asked, groping for better comprehension of his attitude. "Can you not put into some sort of coherence some one certain thing of the things you feel?"

"I hardly dare. Intuitions can rarely be expressed in terms of thought. But let me try. We Welses have never known a coward. And where cowardice is, nothing can endure. It is like building on sand, or like a vile disease which rots and rots and we know not when it may break forth."

"But it seems to me that Mr. St. Vincent is the last man in the world with whom cowardice may be associated. I cannot conceive of him in that light."

The distress in her face hurt him. "I know nothing against St. Vincent. There is no evidence to show that he is anything but what he appears. Still, I cannot help feeling it, in my fallible human way. Yet there is one thing I have heard, a sordid pot-house brawl in the Opera House. Mind you, Frona, I say nothing against the brawl or the place, — men are men, but it is said that he did not act as a man ought that night."

"But as you say, father, men are men. We would like to have them other than they are, for the world surely would be better; but we must take them as they are. Lucile — "

"No, no; you misunderstand. I did not refer to her, but to the fight. He did not . . . he was cowardly."

"But as you say, it is said. He told me about it, not long afterwards, and I do not think he would have dared had there been anything — "

"But I do not make it as a charge," Jacob Welse hastily broke in. "Merely hearsay, and the prejudice of the men would be sufficient to account for the tale. And it has no bearing, anyway. I should not have brought it up, for I have known good men funk in my time — buck fever, as it were. And now let us dismiss it all from our minds. I merely wished to suggest, and I suppose I have bungled. But understand this, Frona," turning her face up to his, "understand above all things and in spite of them, first, last, and always, that you are my daughter, and that I believe your life is sacredly yours, not mine, yours to deal with and to make or mar. Your life is yours to live, and in so far that I influence it you will not have lived your life, nor would your life have been yours. Nor would you have been a Welse, for there was never a Welse yet who suffered dictation. They died first, or went away to pioneer on the edge of things.

"Why, if you thought the dance house the proper or natural medium for self-expression, I might be sad, but to-morrow I would sanction your going down to the Opera House. It would be unwise to stop you, and, further, it is not our way. The Welses have ever stood by, in many a lost cause and forlorn hope, knee to knee and shoulder to shoulder. Conventions are worthless for such as we. They are for the swine who without them would wallow deeper. The weak must obey or be crushed; not so with the strong. The mass is nothing; the individual everything; and it is the individual, always, that rules the mass and gives the law. A fig for what the world says! If the Welse should procreate a bastard line this day, it would be the way of the Welse, and you would be a daughter of the Welse, and in the face of hell and heaven, of God himself, we would stand together, we of the one blood, Frona, you and I."

"You are larger than I," she whispered, kissing his forehead, and the caress of her lips seemed to him the soft impact of a leaf falling through the still autumn air.

And as the heat of the room ebbed away, he told of her foremother and of his, and of the sturdy Welse who fought the great lone fight, and died, fighting, at Treasure City.

## Chapter XVIII

The “Doll’s House” was a success. Mrs. Schoville ecstasized over it in terms so immeasurable, so unqualifiable, that Jacob Welse, standing near, bent a glittering gaze upon her plump white throat and unconsciously clutched and closed his hand on an invisible windpipe. Dave Harney proclaimed its excellence effusively, though he questioned the soundness of Nora’s philosophy and swore by his Puritan gods that Torvald was the longest-eared Jack in two hemispheres. Even Miss Mortimer, antagonistic as she was to the whole school, conceded that the players had redeemed it; while Matt McCarthy announced that he didn’t blame Nora darlin’ the least bit, though he told the Gold Commissioner privately that a song or so and a skirt dance wouldn’t have hurt the performance.

“Iv course the Nora girl was right,” he insisted to Harney, both of whom were walking on the heels of Frona and St. Vincent. “I’d be seein’ — ”

“Rubber — ”

“Rubber yer gran’mother!” Matt wrathfully exclaimed.

“Ez I was sayin’,” Harney continued, imperturbably, “rubber boots is goin’ to go sky-high ‘bout the time of wash-up. Three ounces the pair, an’ you kin put your chips on that for a high card. You kin gather ‘em in now for an ounce a pair and clear two on the deal. A cinch, Matt, a dead open an’ shut.”

“The devil take you an’ yer cinches! It’s Nora darlin’ I have in me mind the while.”

They bade good-by to Frona and St. Vincent and went off disputing under the stars in the direction of the Opera House.

Gregory St. Vincent heaved an audible sigh. “At last.”

“At last what?” Frona asked, incuriously.

“At last the first opportunity for me to tell you how well you did. You carried off the final scene wonderfully; so well that it seemed you were really passing out of my life forever.”

“What a misfortune!”

“It was terrible.”

“No.”

“But, yes. I took the whole condition upon myself. You were not Nora, you were Frona; nor I Torvald, but Gregory. When you made your exit, capped and jacketed and travelling-bag in hand, it seemed I could not possibly stay and finish my lines. And when the door slammed and you were gone, the only thing that saved me was the curtain. It brought me to myself, or else I would have rushed after you in the face of the audience.”

"It is strange how a simulated part may react upon one," Frona speculated.

"Or rather?" St. Vincent suggested.

Frona made no answer, and they walked on without speech. She was still under the spell of the evening, and the exaltation which had come to her as Nora had not yet departed. Besides, she read between the lines of St. Vincent's conversation, and was oppressed by the timidity which comes over woman when she faces man on the verge of the greater intimacy.

It was a clear, cold night, not over-cold, — not more than forty below, — and the land was bathed in a soft, diffused flood of light which found its source not in the stars, nor yet in the moon, which was somewhere over on the other side of the world. From the south-east to the northwest a pale-greenish glow fringed the rim of the heavens, and it was from this the dim radiance was exhaled.

Suddenly, like the ray of a search-light, a band of white light ploughed overhead. Night turned to ghostly day on the instant, then blacker night descended. But to the southeast a noiseless commotion was apparent. The glowing greenish gauze was in a ferment, bubbling, uprearing, downfalling, and tentatively thrusting huge bodiless hands into the upper ether. Once more a cyclopean rocket twisted its fiery way across the sky, from horizon to zenith, and on, and on, in tremendous flight, to horizon again. But the span could not hold, and in its wake the black night brooded. And yet again, broader, stronger, deeper, lavishly spilling streamers to right and left, it flaunted the midmost zenith with its gorgeous flare, and passed on and down to the further edge of the world. Heaven was bridged at last, and the bridge endured!

At this flaming triumph the silence of earth was broken, and ten thousand wolf-dogs, in long-drawn unisoned howls, sobbed their dismay and grief. Frona shivered, and St. Vincent passed his arm about her waist. The woman in her was aware of the touch of man, and of a slight tingling thrill of vague delight; but she made no resistance. And as the wolf-dogs mourned at her feet and the aurora wantoned overhead, she felt herself drawn against him closely.

"Need I tell my story?" he whispered.

She drooped her head in tired content on his shoulder, and together they watched the burning vault wherein the stars dimmed and vanished. Ebbing, flowing, pulsing to some tremendous rhythm, the prism colors hurled themselves in luminous deluge across the firmament. Then the canopy of heaven became a mighty loom, wherein imperial purple and deep sea-green blended, wove, and interwove, with blazing woof and flashing warp, till the most delicate of tulles, fluorescent and bewildering, was daintily and airily shaken in the face of the astonished night.

Without warning the span was sundered by an arrogant arm of black. The arch dissolved in blushing confusion. Chasms of blackness yawned, grew, and rushed together. Broken masses of strayed color and fading fire stole timidly towards the sky-line. Then the dome of night towered imponderable, immense, and the stars came back one by one, and the wolf-dogs mourned anew.

“I can offer you so little, dear,” the man said with a slightly perceptible bitterness. “The precarious fortunes of a gypsy wanderer.”

And the woman, placing his hand and pressing it against her heart, said, as a great woman had said before her, “A tent and a crust of bread with you, Richard.”

## Chapter XIX

How-ha was only an Indian woman, bred of a long line of fish-eating, meat-rending carnivores, and her ethics were as crude and simple as her blood. But long contact with the whites had given her an insight into their way of looking at things, and though she grunted contemptuously in her secret soul, she none the less understood their way perfectly. Ten years previous she had cooked for Jacob Welse, and served him in one fashion or another ever since; and when on a dreary January morning she opened the front door in response to the deep-tongued knocker, even her stolid presence was shaken as she recognized the visitor. Not that the average man or woman would have so recognized. But How-ha's faculties of observing and remembering details had been developed in a hard school where death dealt his blow to the lax and life saluted the vigilant.

How-ha looked up and down the woman who stood before her. Through the heavy veil she could barely distinguish the flash of the eyes, while the hood of the parka effectually concealed the hair, and the parka proper the particular outlines of the body. But How-ha paused and looked again. There was something familiar in the vague general outline. She quested back to the shrouded head again, and knew the unmistakable poise. Then How-ha's eyes went blar as she traversed the simple windings of her own brain, inspecting the bare shelves taciturnly stored with the impressions of a meagre life. No disorder; no confused mingling of records; no devious and interminable impress of complex emotions, tangled theories, and bewildering abstractions — nothing but simple facts, neatly classified and conveniently collated. Unerringly from the stores of the past she picked and chose and put together in the instant present, till obscurity dropped from the woman before her, and she knew her, word and deed and look and history.

"Much better you go 'way quickety-quick," How-ha informed her.

"Miss Welse. I wish to see her."

The strange woman spoke in firm, even tones which betokened the will behind, but which failed to move How-ha.

"Much better you go," she repeated, stolidly.

"Here, take this to Frona Welse, and — ah! would you!" (thrusting her knee between the door and jamb) "and leave the door open."

How-ha scowled, but took the note; for she could not shake off the grip of the ten years of servitude to the superior race.

May I see you?

LUCILE.



So the note ran. Frona glanced up expectantly at the Indian woman.

"Um kick toes outside," How-ha explained. "Me tell um go 'way quickety-quick? Eh? You t'ink yes? Um no good. Um — "

"No. Take her," — Frona was thinking quickly, — "no; bring her up here."

"Much better — "

"Go!"

How-ha grunted, and yielded up the obedience she could not withhold; though, as she went down the stairs to the door, in a tenebrous, glimmering way she wondered that the accident of white skin or swart made master or servant as the case might be.

In the one sweep of vision, Lucile took in Frona smiling with extended hand in the foreground, the dainty dressing-table, the simple finery, the thousand girlish evidences; and with the sweet wholesomeness of it pervading her nostrils, her own girlhood rose up and smote her. Then she turned a bleak eye and cold ear on outward things.

"I am glad you came," Frona was saying. "I have so wanted to see you again, and — but do get that heavy parka off, please. How thick it is, and what splendid fur and workmanship!"

"Yes, from Siberia." A present from St. Vincent, Lucile felt like adding, but said instead, "The Siberians have not yet learned to scamp their work, you know."

She sank down into the low-seated rocker with a native grace which could not escape the beauty-loving eye of the girl, and with proud-poised head and silent tongue listened to Frona as the minutes ticked away, and observed with impersonal amusement Frona's painful toil at making conversation.

"What has she come for?" Frona asked herself, as she talked on furs and weather and indifferent things.

"If you do not say something, Lucile, I shall get nervous, soon," she ventured at last in desperation. "Has anything happened?"

Lucile went over to the mirror and picked up, from among the trinkets beneath, a tiny open-work miniature of Frona. "This is you? How old were you?"

"Sixteen."

"A sylph, but a cold northern one."

"The blood warms late with us," Frona reproved; "but is — "

"None the less warm for that," Lucile laughed. "And how old are you now?"

"Twenty."

"Twenty," Lucile repeated, slowly. "Twenty," and resumed her seat.

"You are twenty. And I am twenty-four."

"So little difference as that!"

"But our blood warms early." Lucile voiced her reproach across the unfathomable gulf which four years could not plumb.

Frona could hardly hide her vexation. Lucile went over and looked at the miniature again and returned.

"What do you think of love?" she asked abruptly, her face softening unheralded into a smile.

"Love?" the girl quavered.

"Yes, love. What do you know about it? What do you think of it?"

A flood of definitions, glowing and rosy, sped to her tongue, but Frana swept them aside and answered, "Love is immolation."

"Very good — sacrifice. And, now, does it pay?"

"Yes, it pays. Of course it pays. Who can doubt it?"

Lucile's eyes twinkled amusedly.

"Why do you smile?" Frana asked.

"Look at me, Frana." Lucile stood up and her face blazed. "I am twenty-four. Not altogether a fright; not altogether a dunce. I have a heart. I have good red blood and warm. And I have loved. I do not remember the pay. I know only that I have paid."

"And in the paying were paid," Frana took up warmly. "The price was the reward. If love be fallible, yet you have loved; you have done, you have served. What more would you?"

"The whelpage love," Lucile sneered.

"Oh! You are unfair."

"I do you justice," Lucile insisted firmly. "You would tell me that you know; that you have gone unveiled and seen clear-eyed; that without placing more than lips to the brim you have divined the taste of the dregs, and that the taste is good. Bah! The whelpage love! And, oh, Frana, I know; you are full womanly and broad, and lend no ear to little things, but" — she tapped a slender finger to forehead — "it is all here. It is a heady brew, and you have smelled the fumes overmuch. But drain the dregs, turn down the glass, and say that it is good. No, God forbid!" she cried, passionately. "There are good loves. You should find no masquerade, but one fair and shining."

Frana was up to her old trick, — their common one, — and her hand slid down Lucile's arm till hand clasped in hand. "You say things which I feel are wrong, yet may not answer. I can, but how dare I? I dare not put mere thoughts against your facts. I, who have lived so little, cannot in theory give the lie to you who have lived so much —"

"For he who lives more lives than one, more lives than one must die."

From out of her pain, Lucile spoke the words of her pain, and Frana, throwing arms about her, sobbed on her breast in understanding. As for Lucile, the slight nervous ingathering of the brows above her eyes smoothed out, and she pressed the kiss of motherhood, lightly and secretly, on the other's hair. For a space, — then the brows ingathered, the lips drew firm, and she put Frana from her.

"You are going to marry Gregory St. Vincent?"

Frana was startled. It was only a fortnight old, and not a word had been breathed. "How do you know?"

"You have answered." Lucile watched Frana's open face and the bold running advertisement, and felt as the skilled fencer who fronts a tyro, weak of wrist, each opening naked to his hand. "How do I know?" She laughed harshly. "When a man leaves one's arms suddenly, lips wet with last kisses and mouth areek with last lies!"

"And — ?"

"Forgets the way back to those arms."

"So?" The blood of the Welse pounded up, and like a hot sun dried the mists from her eyes and left them flashing. "Then that is why you came. I could have guessed it had I given second thought to Dawson's gossip."

"It is not too late." Lucile's lip curled. "And it is your way."

"And I am mindful. What is it? Do you intend telling me what he has done, what he has been to you. Let me say that it is useless. He is a man, as you and I are women."

"No," Lucile lied, swallowing her astonishment.

"I had not thought that any action of his would affect you. I knew you were too great for that. But — have you considered me?"

Frona caught her breath for a moment. Then she straightened out her arms to hold the man in challenge to the arms of Lucile.

"Your father over again," Lucile exclaimed. "Oh, you impossible Welses!"

"But he is not worthy of you, Frona Welse," she continued; "of me, yes. He is not a nice man, a great man, nor a good. His love cannot match with yours. Bah! He does not possess love; passion, of one sort and another, is the best he may lay claim to. That you do not want. It is all, at the best, he can give you. And you, pray what may you give him? Yourself? A prodigious waste! But your father's yellow — "

"Don't go on, or I shall refuse to listen. It is wrong of you." So Frona made her cease, and then, with bold inconsistency, "And what may the woman Lucile give him?"

"Some few wild moments," was the prompt response; "a burning burst of happiness, and the regrets of hell — which latter he deserves, as do I. So the balance is maintained, and all is well."

"But — but — "

"For there is a devil in him," she held on, "a most alluring devil, which delights me, on my soul it does, and which, pray God, Frona, you may never know. For you have no devil; mine matches his and mates. I am free to confess that the whole thing is only an attraction. There is nothing permanent about him, nor about me. And there's the beauty, the balance is preserved."

Frona lay back in her chair and lazily regarded her visitor, Lucile waited for her to speak. It was very quiet.

"Well?" Lucile at last demanded, in a low, curious tone, at the same time rising to slip into her parka.

"Nothing. I was only waiting."

"I am done."

"Then let me say that I do not understand you," Frona summed up, coldly. "I cannot somehow just catch your motive. There is a flat ring to what you have said. However, of this I am sure: for some unaccountable reason you have been untrue to yourself to-day. Do not ask me, for, as I said before, I do not know where or how; yet I am none the less convinced. This I do know, you are not the Lucile I met by the wood trail

across the river. That was the true Lucile, little though I saw of her. The woman who is here to-day is a strange woman. I do not know her. Sometimes it has seemed she was Lucile, but rarely. This woman has lied, lied to me, and lied to me about herself. As to what she said of the man, at the worst that is merely an opinion. It may be she has lied about him likewise. The chance is large that she has. What do you think about it?"

"That you are a very clever girl, Frona. That you speak sometimes more truly than you know, and that at others you are blinder than you dream."

"There is something I could love in you, but you have hidden it away so that I cannot find it."

Lucile's lips trembled on the verge of speech. But she settled her parka about her and turned to go.

Frona saw her to the door herself, and How-ha pondered over the white who made the law and was greater than the law.

When the door had closed, Lucile spat into the street. "Faugh! St. Vincent! I have defiled my mouth with your name!" And she spat again.

"Come in."

At the summons Matt McCarthy pulled the latch-string, pushed the door open, and closed it carefully behind him.

"Oh, it is you!" St. Vincent regarded his visitor with dark abstraction, then, recollecting himself, held out his hand. "Why, hello, Matt, old man. My mind was a thousand miles away when you entered. Take a stool and make yourself comfortable. There's the tobacco by your hand. Take a try at it and give us your verdict."

"An' well may his mind be a thousand miles away," Matt assured himself; for in the dark he had passed a woman on the trail who looked suspiciously like Lucile. But aloud, "Sure, an' it's day-dramin' ye mane. An' small wondher."

"How's that?" the correspondent asked, cheerily.

"By the same token that I met Lucile down the trail a piece, an' the heels iv her moccasins pointing to yer shack. It's a bitter tongue the jade slings on occasion," Matt chuckled.

"That's the worst of it." St. Vincent met him frankly. "A man looks sidewise at them for a passing moment, and they demand that the moment be eternal."

Off with the old love's a stiff proposition, eh?"

"I should say so. And you understand. It's easy to see, Matt, you've had some experience in your time."

"In me time? I'll have ye know I'm not too old to still enjoy a bit iv a fling."

"Certainly, certainly. One can read it in your eyes. The warm heart and the roving eye, Matt!" He slapped his visitor on the shoulder with a hearty laugh.

"An' I've none the best iv ye, Vincent. 'Tis a wicked lad ye are, with a takin' way with the ladies — as plain as the nose on yer face. Manny's the idle kiss ye've given, an' manny's the heart ye've broke. But, Vincent, bye, did ye iver know the rale thing?"

"How do you mean?"

"The rale thing, the rale thing — that is — well, have ye been iver a father?"

St. Vincent shook his head.

"And niver have I. But have ye felt the love iv a father, thin?"

"I hardly know. I don't think so."

"Well, I have. An' it's the rale thing, I'll tell ye. If iver a man suckled a child, I did, or the next door to it. A girl child at that, an' she's woman grown, now, an' if the thing is possible, I love her more than her own blood-father. Bad luck, exciptin' her, there was niver but one woman I loved, an' that woman had mated beforetime. Not a soul did I brathe a word to, trust me, nor even herself. But she died. God's love be with her."

His chin went down upon his chest and he quested back to a flaxen-haired Saxon woman, strayed like a bit of sunshine into the log store by the Dyea River. He looked up suddenly, and caught St. Vincent's stare bent blankly to the floor as he mused on other things.

"A truce to foolishness, Vincent."

The correspondent returned to himself with an effort and found the Irishman's small blue eyes boring into him.

"Are ye a brave man, Vincent?"

For a second's space they searched each other's souls. And in that space Matt could have sworn he saw the faintest possible flicker or flutter in the man's eyes.

He brought his fist down on the table with a triumphant crash. "By God, yer not!"

The correspondent pulled the tobacco jug over to him and rolled a cigarette. He rolled it carefully, the delicate rice paper crisping in his hand without a tremor; but all the while a red tide mounting up from beneath the collar of his shirt, deepening in the hollows of the cheeks and thinning against the cheekbones above, creeping, spreading, till all his face was aflame.

"'Tis good. An' likely it saves me fingers a dirty job. Vincent, man, the girl child which is woman grown slapes in Dawson this night. God help us, you an' me, but we'll niver hit again the pillow as clane an' pure as she! Vincent, a word to the wise: ye'll niver lay holy hand or otherwise upon her."

The devil, which Lucile had proclaimed, began to quicken, — a fuming, fretting, irrational devil.

"I do not like ye. I kape me raysons to meself. It is sufficient. But take this to heart, an' take it well: should ye be mad enough to make her yer wife, iv that damned day ye'll niver see the inding, nor lay eye upon the bridal bed. Why, man, I cud bate ye to death with me two fists if need be. But it's to be hoped I'll do a nater job. Rest aisy. I promise ye."

"You Irish pig!"

So the devil burst forth, and all unaware, for McCarthy found himself eye-high with the muzzle of a Colt's revolver.

"Is it loaded?" he asked. "I belave ye. But why are ye lingerin'? Lift the hammer, will ye?"

The correspondent's trigger-finger moved and there was a warning click.

"Now pull it. Pull it, I say. As though ye cud, with that flutter to yer eye."

St. Vincent attempted to turn his head aside.

"Look at me, man!" McCarthy commanded. "Kape yer eyes on me when ye do it."

Unwillingly the sideward movement was arrested, and his eyes returned and met the Irishman's.

"Now!"

St. Vincent ground his teeth and pulled the trigger — at least he thought he did, as men think they do things in dreams. He willed the deed, flashed the order forth; but the flutter of his soul stopped it.

"'Tis paralyzed, is it, that shaky little finger?" Matt grinned into the face of the tortured man. "Now turn it aside, so, an' drop it, gently . . . gently . . . gently." His voice crooned away in soothing diminuendo.

When the trigger was safely down, St. Vincent let the revolver fall from his hand, and with a slight audible sigh sank nervelessly upon a stool. He tried to straighten himself, but instead dropped down upon the table and buried his face in his palsied hands. Matt drew on his mittens, looking down upon him pityingly the while, and went out, closing the door softly behind him.

## Chapter XX

Where nature shows the rough hand, the sons of men are apt to respond with kindred roughness. The amenities of life spring up only in mellow lands, where the sun is warm and the earth fat. The damp and soggy climate of Britain drives men to strong drink; the rosy Orient lures to the dream splendors of the lotus. The big-bodied, white-skinned northern dweller, rude and ferocious, bellows his anger uncouthly and drives a gross fist into the face of his foe. The supple south-sojourner, silken of smile and lazy of gesture, waits, and does his work from behind, when no man looketh, gracefully and without offence. Their ends are one; the difference lies in their ways, and therein the climate, and the cumulative effect thereof, is the determining factor. Both are sinners, as men born of women have ever been; but the one does his sin openly, in the clear sight of God; the other — as though God could not see — veils his iniquity with shimmering fancies, hiding it like it were some splendid mystery.

These be the ways of men, each as the sun shines upon him and the wind blows against him, according to his kind, and the seed of his father, and the milk of his mother. Each is the resultant of many forces which go to make a pressure mightier than he, and which moulds him in the predestined shape. But, with sound legs under him, he may run away, and meet with a new pressure. He may continue running, each new pressure prodding him as he goes, until he dies and his final form will be that predestined of the many pressures. An exchange of cradle-babes, and the base-born slave may wear the purple imperially, and the royal infant begs an alms as wheedlingly or cringe to the lash as abjectly as his meanest subject. A Chesterfield, with an empty belly, chancing upon good fare, will gorge as faithfully as the swine in the next sty. And an Epicurus, in the dirt-igloo of the Eskimos, will wax eloquent over the whale oil and walrus blubber, or die.

Thus, in the young Northland, frosty and grim and menacing, men stripped off the sloth of the south and gave battle greatly. And they stripped likewise much of the veneer of civilization — all of its follies, most of its foibles, and perhaps a few of its virtues. Maybe so; but they reserved the great traditions and at least lived frankly, laughed honestly, and looked one another in the eyes.

And so it is not well for women, born south of fifty-three and reared gently, to knock loosely about the Northland, unless they be great of heart. They may be soft and tender and sensitive, possessed of eyes which have not lost the lustre and the wonder, and of ears used only to sweet sounds; but if their philosophy is sane and stable, large enough to understand and to forgive, they will come to no harm and attain comprehension. If not, they will see things and hear things which hurt, and they will suffer greatly, and

lose faith in man — which is the greatest evil that may happen them. Such should be sedulously cherished, and it were well to depute this to their men-folk, the nearer of kin the better. In line, it were good policy to seek out a cabin on the hill overlooking Dawson, or — best of all — across the Yukon on the western bank. Let them not move abroad unheralded and unaccompanied; and the hillside back of the cabin may be recommended as a fit field for stretching muscles and breathing deeply, a place where their ears may remain undefiled by the harsh words of men who strive to the utmost.

Vance Corliss wiped the last tin dish and filed it away on the shelf, lighted his pipe, and rolled over on his back on the bunk to contemplate the moss-chinked roof of his French Hill cabin. This French Hill cabin stood on the last dip of the hill into Eldorado Creek, close to the main-travelled trail; and its one window blinked cheerily of nights at those who journeyed late.

The door was kicked open, and Del Bishop staggered in with a load of fire-wood. His breath had so settled on his face in a white rime that he could not speak. Such a condition was ever a hardship with the man, so he thrust his face forthwith into the quivering heat above the stove. In a trice the frost was started and the thawed streamlets dancing madly on the white-hot surface beneath. Then the ice began to fall from his beard in chunks, rattling on the lid-tops and simmering spitefully till spurted upward in clouds of steam.

“And so you witness an actual phenomenon, illustrative of the three forms of matter,” Vance laughed, mimicking the monotonous tones of the demonstrator; “solid, liquid, and vapor. In another moment you will have the gas.”

“Th — th — that’s all very well,” Bishop spluttered, wrestling with an obstructing piece of ice until it was wrenched from his upper lip and slammed stoveward with a bang.

“How cold do you make it, Del? Fifty?”

“Fifty?” the pocket-miner demanded with unutterable scorn, wiping his face. “Quick-silver’s been solid for hours, and it’s been gittin’ colder an’ colder ever since. Fifty? I’ll bet my new mittens against your old moccasins that it ain’t a notch below seventy.”

“Think so?”

“D’ye want to bet?”

Vance nodded laughingly.

“Centigrade or Fahrenheit?” Bishop asked, suddenly suspicious.

“Oh, well, if you want my old moccasins so badly,” Vance rejoined, feigning to be hurt by the other’s lack of faith, “why, you can have them without betting.”

Del snorted and flung himself down on the opposite bunk. “Think yer funny, don’t you?” No answer forthcoming, he deemed the retort conclusive, rolled over, and fell to studying the moss chinks.

Fifteen minutes of this diversion sufficed. “Play you a rubber of crib before bed,” he challenged across to the other bunk.



"I'll go you." Corliss got up, stretched, and moved the kerosene lamp from the shelf to the table, "Think it will hold out?" he asked, surveying the oil-level through the cheap glass.

Bishop threw down the crib-board and cards, and measured the contents of the lamp with his eye. "Forgot to fill it, didn't I? Too late now. Do it to-morrow. It'll last the rubber out, sure."

Corliss took up the cards, but paused in the shuffling. "We've a big trip before us, Del, about a month from now, the middle of March as near as I can plan it, — up the Stuart River to McQuestion; up McQuestion and back again down the Mayo; then across country to Mazy May, winding up at Henderson Creek — "

"On the Indian River?"

"No," Corliss replied, as he dealt the hands; "just below where the Stuart taps the Yukon. And then back to Dawson before the ice breaks."

The pocket-miner's eyes sparkled. "Keep us hustlin'; but, say, it's a trip, isn't it! Hunch?"

"I've received word from the Parker outfit on the Mayo, and McPherson isn't asleep on Henderson — you don't know him. They're keeping quiet, and of course one can't tell, but . . ."

Bishop nodded his head sagely, while Corliss turned the trump he had cut. A sure vision of a "twenty-four" hand was dazzling him, when there was a sound of voices without and the door shook to a heavy knock.

"Come in!" he bawled. "An' don't make such a row about it! Look at that" — to Corliss, at the same time facing his hand — "fifteen-eight, fifteen-sixteen, and eight are twenty-four. Just my luck!"

Corliss started swiftly to his feet. Bishop jerked his head about. Two women and a man had staggered clumsily in through the door, and were standing just inside, momentarily blinded by the light.

"By all the Prophets! Cornell!" The pocket-miner wrung the man's hand and led him forward. "You recollect Cornell, Corliss? Jake Cornell, Thirty-Seven and a Half Eldorado."

"How could I forget?" the engineer acknowledged warmly, shaking his hand. "That was a miserable night you put us up last fall, about as miserable as the moose-steak was good that you gave us for breakfast."

Jake Cornell, hirsute and cadaverous of aspect, nodded his head with emphasis and deposited a corpulent demijohn on the table. Again he nodded his head, and glared wildly about him. The stove caught his eye and he strode over to it, lifted a lid, and spat out a mouthful of amber-colored juice. Another stride and he was back.

"Course I recollect the night," he rumbled, the ice clattering from his hairy jaws. "And I'm danged glad to see you, that's a fact." He seemed suddenly to remember himself, and added a little sheepishly, "The fact is, we're all danged glad to see you, ain't we, girls?" He twisted his head about and nodded his companions up. "Blanche,

my dear, Mr. Corliss — hem — it gives me . . . hem . . . it gives me pleasure to make you acquainted. Cariboo Blanche, sir. Cariboo Blanche.”

“Pleased to meet you.” Cariboo Blanche put out a frank hand and looked him over keenly. She was a fair-featured, blondish woman, originally not unpleasing of appearance, but now with lines all deepened and hardened as on the faces of men who have endured much weather-beat.

Congratulating himself upon his social proficiency, Jake Cornell cleared his throat and marshalled the second woman to the front. “Mr. Corliss, the Virgin; I make you both acquainted. Hem!” in response to the query in Vance’s eyes — “Yes, the Virgin. That’s all, just the Virgin.”

She smiled and bowed, but did not shake hands. “A toff” was her secret comment upon the engineer; and from her limited experience she had been led to understand that it was not good form among “toffs” to shake hands.

Corliss fumbled his hand, then bowed, and looked at her curiously. She was a pretty, low-browed creature; darkly pretty, with a well-favored body, and for all that the type was mean, he could not escape the charm of her over-brimming vitality. She seemed bursting with it, and every quick, spontaneous movement appeared to spring from very excess of red blood and superabundant energy.

“Pretty healthy proposition, ain’t she?” Jake Cornell demanded, following his host’s gaze with approval.

“None o’ your gammon, Jake,” the Virgin snapped back, with lip curled contemptuously for Vance’s especial benefit. “I fancy it’d be more in keeping if you’d look to pore Blanche, there.”

“Fact is, we’re plum ding dong played out,” Jake said. “An’ Blanche went through the ice just down the trail, and her feet’s like to freezin’.”

Blanche smiled as Corliss piloted her to a stool by the fire, and her stern mouth gave no indication of the pain she was suffering. He turned away when the Virgin addressed herself to removing the wet footgear, while Bishop went rummaging for socks and moccasins.

“Didn’t go in more’n to the ankles,” Cornell explained confidentially; “but that’s plenty a night like this.”

Corliss agreed with a nod of the head.

“Spotted your light, and — hem — and so we come. Don’t mind, do you?”

“Why, certainly not — ”

“No intrudin’?”

Corliss reassured him by laying hand on his shoulder and cordially pressing him to a seat. Blanche sighed luxuriously. Her wet stockings were stretched up and already steaming, and her feet basking in the capacious warmth of Bishop’s Siwash socks. Vance shoved the tobacco canister across, but Cornell pulled out a handful of cigars and passed them around.

“Uncommon bad piece of trail just this side of the turn,” he remarked stentoriously, at the same time flinging an eloquent glance at the demijohn. “Ice rotten from the

springs and no sign till you're into it." Turning to the woman by the stove, "How're you feeling, Blanche?"

"Tony," she responded, stretching her body lazily and redisplaying her feet; "though my legs ain't as limber as when we pulled out."

Looking to his host for consent, Cornell tilted the demijohn over his arm and partly filled the four tin mugs and an empty jelly glass.

"Wot's the matter with a toddy?" the Virgin broke in; "or a punch?"

"Got any lime juice?" she demanded of Corliss.

"You 'ave? Jolly!" She directed her dark eyes towards Del. "'Ere, you, cookie! Trot out your mixing-pan and sling the kettle for 'ot water. Come on! All hands! Jake's treat, and I'll show you 'ow! Any sugar, Mr. Corliss? And nutmeg? Cinnamon, then? O.K. It'll do. Lively now, cookie!"

"Ain't she a peach?" Cornell confided to Vance, watching her with mellow eyes as she stirred the steaming brew.

But the Virgin directed her attentions to the engineer. "Don't mind 'im, sir," she advised. "'E's more'n arf-gorn a'ready, a-'itting the jug every blessed stop."

"Now, my dear — " Jake protested.

"Don't you my-dear me," she sniffed. "I don't like you."

"Why?"

"Cos . . ." She ladled the punch carefully into the mugs and meditated. "Cos you chew tobacco. Cos you're whiskery. Wot I take to is smooth-faced young chaps."

"Don't take any stock in her nonsense," the Fraction King warned, "She just does it a-purpose to get me mad."

"Now then!" she commanded, sharply. "Step up to your lick! 'Ere's 'ow!"

"What'll it be?" cried Blanche from the stove.

The elevated mugs wavered and halted.

"The Queen, Gawd bless 'er!" the Virgin toasted promptly.

"And Bill!" Del Bishop interrupted.

Again the mugs wavered.

"Bill 'oo?" the Virgin asked, suspiciously.

"McKinley."

She favored him with a smile. "Thank you, cookie, you're a trump. Now! 'Ere's a go, gents! Take it standing. The Queen, Gawd bless 'er, and Bill McKinley!"

"Bottoms up!" thundered Jake Cornell, and the mugs smote the table with clanging rims.

Vance Corliss discovered himself amused and interested. According to Frona, he mused ironically, — this was learning life, was adding to his sum of human generalizations. The phrase was hers, and he rolled it over a couple of times. Then, again, her engagement with St. Vincent crept into his thought, and he charmed the Virgin by asking her to sing. But she was coy, and only after Bishop had rendered the several score stanzas of "Flying Cloud" did she comply. Her voice, in a weakly way, probably registered an octave and a half; below that point it underwent strange metamorphoses,

while on the upper levels it was devious and rickety. Nevertheless she sang "Take Back Your Gold" with touching effect, which brought a fiery moisture into the eyes of the Fraction King, who listened greedily, for the time being experiencing unwonted ethical yearnings.

The applause was generous, followed immediately by Bishop, who toasted the singer as the "Enchantress of Bow Bells," to the reverberating "bottoms up!" of Jake Cornell.

Two hours later, Frona Welse rapped. It was a sharp, insistent rap, penetrating the din within and bringing Corliss to the door.

She gave a glad little cry when she saw who it was. "Oh; it is you, Vance! I didn't know you lived here."

He shook hands and blocked the doorway with his body. Behind him the Virgin was laughing and Jake Cornell roaring:

"Oh, cable this message along the track;  
The Prod's out West, but he's coming back;  
Put plenty of veal for one on the rack,  
Trolla lala, la la la, la la!"

"What is it?" Vance questioned. "Anything up?"

"I think you might ask me in." There was a hint of reproach in Frona's voice, and of haste. "I blundered through the ice, and my feet are freezing."

"O Gawd!" in the exuberant tones of the Virgin, came whirling over Vance's shoulder, and the voices of Blanche and Bishop joining in a laugh against Cornell, and that worthy's vociferous protestations. It seemed to him that all the blood of his body had rushed into his face. "But you can't come in, Frona. Don't you hear them?"

"But I must," she insisted. "My feet are freezing."

With a gesture of resignation he stepped aside and closed the door after her. Coming suddenly in from the darkness, she hesitated a moment, but in that moment recovered her sight and took in the scene. The air was thick with tobacco smoke, and the odor of it, in the close room, was sickening to one fresh from the pure outside. On the table a column of steam was ascending from the big mixing-pan. The Virgin, fleeing before Cornell, was defending herself with a long mustard spoon. Evading him and watching her chance, she continually daubed his nose and cheeks with the yellow smear. Blanche had twisted about from the stove to see the fun, and Del Bishop, with a mug at rest half-way to his lips, was applauding the successive strokes. The faces of all were flushed.

Vance leaned nervelessly against the door. The whole situation seemed so unthinkably impossible. An insane desire to laugh came over him, which resolved itself into a coughing fit. But Frona, realizing her own pressing need by the growing absence of sensation in her feet, stepped forward.

"Hello, Del!" she called.

The mirth froze on his face at the familiar sound and he slowly and unwilling turned his head to meet her. She had slipped the hood of her parka back, and her face, outlined against the dark fur, rosy with the cold and bright, was like a shaft of the sun shot into the murk of a boozing-ken. They all knew her, for who did not know Jacob Welse's

daughter? The Virgin dropped the mustard-spoon with a startled shriek, while Cornell, passing a dazed hand across his yellow markings and consummating the general smear, collapsed on the nearest stool. Cariboo Blanche alone retained her self-possession, and laughed softly.

Bishop managed to articulate "Hello!" but was unable to stave off the silence which settled down.

Frona waited a second, and then said, "Good-evening, all."

"This way." Vance had recovered himself, and seated her by the stove opposite Blanche. "Better get your things off quickly, and be careful of the heat. I'll see what I can find for you."

"Some cold water, please," she asked. "It will take the frost out. Del will get it."

"I hope it is not serious?"

"No." She shook her head and smiled up to him, at the same time working away at her ice-coated moccasins. "There hasn't been time for more than surface-freezing. At the worst the skin will peel off."

An unearthly silence brooded in the cabin, broken only by Bishop filling a basin from the water-bucket, and by Corliss seeking out his smallest and daintiest house-moccasins and his warmest socks.

Frona, rubbing her feet vigorously, paused and looked up. "Don't let me chill the festivities just because I'm cold," she laughed. "Please go on."

Jake Cornell straightened up and cleared his throat inanely, and the Virgin looked over-dignified; but Blanche came over and took the towel out of Frona's hands.

"I wet my feet in the same place," she said, kneeling down and bringing a glow to the frosted feet.

"I suppose you can manage some sort of a fit with them. Here!" Vance tossed over the house-moccasins and woollen wrappings, which the two women, with low laughs and confidential undertones, proceeded to utilize.

"But what in the world were you doing on trail, alone, at this time of night?" Vance asked. In his heart he was marvelling at the coolness and pluck with which she was carrying off the situation.

"I know beforehand that you will censure me," she replied, helping Blanche arrange the wet gear over the fire. "I was at Mrs. Stanton's; but first, you must know, Miss Mortimer and I are staying at the Pently's for a week. Now, to start fresh again. I intended to leave Mrs. Stanton's before dark; but her baby got into the kerosene, her husband had gone down to Dawson, and — well, we weren't sure of the baby up to half an hour ago. She wouldn't hear of me returning alone; but there was nothing to fear; only I had not expected soft ice in such a snap."

"How'd you fix the kid?" Del asked, intent on keeping the talk going now that it had started.

"Chewing tobacco." And when the laughter had subsided, she went on: "There wasn't any mustard, and it was the best I could think of. Besides, Matt McCarthy saved my life with it once, down at Dyea when I had the croup. But you were singing when I came in," she suggested. "Do go on."

Jake Cornell hawed prodigiously. "And I got done."

"Then you, Del. Sing 'Flying Cloud' as you used to coming down the river."

"Oh, 'e 'as!" said the Virgin.

"Then you sing. I am sure you do."

She smiled into the Virgin's eyes, and that lady delivered herself of a coster ballad with more art than she was aware. The chill of Frona's advent was quickly dissipated, and song and toast and merriment went round again. Nor was Frona above touching lips to the jelly glass in fellowship; and she contributed her quota by singing "Annie Laurie" and "Ben Bolt." Also, but privily, she watched the drink saturating the besotted souls of Cornell and the Virgin. It was an experience, and she was glad of it, though sorry in a way for Corliss, who played the host lamely.

But he had little need of pity. "Any other woman — " he said to himself a score of times, looking at Frona and trying to picture numerous women he had known by his mother's teapot, knocking at the door and coming in as Frona had done. Then, again, it was only yesterday that it would have hurt him, Blanche's rubbing her feet; but now he gloried in Frona's permitting it, and his heart went out in a more kindly way to Blanche. Perhaps it was the elevation of the liquor, but he seemed to discover new virtues in her rugged face.

Frona had put on her dried moccasins and risen to her feet, and was listening patiently to Jake Cornell, who hiccoughed a last incoherent toast.

"To the — hic — man," he rumbled, cavernously, "the man — hic — that made — that made — "

"The blessed country," volunteered the Virgin.

"True, my dear — hic. To the man that made the blessed country. To — hic — to Jacob Welse!"

"And a rider!" Blanche cried. "To Jacob Welse's daughter!"

"Ay! Standing! And bottoms up!"

"Oh! she's a jolly good fellow," Del led off, the drink ruddying his cheek.

"I'd like to shake hands with you, just once," Blanche said in a low voice, while the rest were chorusing.

Frona slipped her mitten, which she had already put on, and the pressure was firm between them.

"No," she said to Corliss, who had put on his cap and was tying the ear-flaps; "Blanche tells me the Pently's are only half a mile from here. The trail is straight. I'll not hear of any one accompanying me.

"No!" This time she spoke so authoritatively that he tossed his cap into the bunk. "Good-night, all!" she called, sweeping the roisterers with a smile.

But Corliss saw her to the door and stepped outside. She glanced up to him. Her hood was pulled only partly up, and her face shone alluringly under the starlight.

"I — Frona . . . I wish — "

"Don't be alarmed," she whispered. "I'll not tell on you, Vance."

He saw the mocking glint in her eyes, but tried to go on. "I wish to explain just how — "

"No need. I understand. But at the same time I must confess I do not particularly admire your taste — "

"Frona!" The evident pain in his voice reached her.

"Oh, you big foolish!" she laughed. "Don't I know? Didn't Blanche tell me she wet her feet?"

Corliss bowed his head. "Truly, Frona, you are the most consistent woman I ever met. Furthermore," with a straightening of his form and a dominant assertion in his voice, "this is not the last."

She tried to stop him, but he continued. "I feel, I know that things will turn out differently. To fling your own words back at you, all the factors have not been taken into consideration. As for St. Vincent . . . I'll have you yet. For that matter, now could not be too soon!"

He flashed out hungry arms to her, but she read quicker than he moved, and, laughing, eluded him and ran lightly down the trail.

"Come back, Frona! Come back!" he called, "I am sorry."

"No, you're not," came the answer. "And I'd be sorry if you were. Good-night."

He watched her merge into the shadows, then entered the cabin. He had utterly forgotten the scene within, and at the first glance it startled him. Cariboo Blanche was crying softly to herself. Her eyes were luminous and moist, and, as he looked, a lone tear stole down her cheek. Bishop's face had gone serious. The Virgin had sprawled head and shoulders on the table, amid overturned mugs and dripping lees, and Cornell was tittubating over her, hiccoughing, and repeating vacuously, "You're all right, my dear. You're all right."

But the Virgin was inconsolable. "O Gawd! Wen I think on wot is, an' was . . . an' no fault of mine. No fault of mine, I tell you!" she shrieked with quick fierceness. "'Ow was I born, I ask? Wot was my old man? A drunk, a chronic. An' my old woman? Talk of Whitechapel! 'Oo guv a cent for me, or 'ow I was dragged up? 'Oo cared a rap, I say? 'Oo cared a rap?"

A sudden revulsion came over Corliss. "Hold your tongue!" he ordered.

The Virgin raised her head, her loosened hair streaming about her like a Fury's. "Wot is she?" she sneered. "Sweet'ear?"

Corliss whirled upon her savagely, face white and voice shaking with passion.

The Virgin cowered down and instinctively threw up her hands to protect her face. "Don't 'it me, sir!" she whined. "Don't 'it me!"

He was frightened at himself, and waited till he could gather control. "Now," he said, calmly, "get into your things and go. All of you. Clear out. Vamose."

"You're no man, you ain't," the Virgin snarled, discovering that physical assault was not imminent.

But Corliss herded her particularly to the door, and gave no heed.

"A-turning ladies out!" she sniffed, with a stumble over the threshold;

"No offence," Jake Cornell muttered, pacifically; "no offence."

"Good-night. Sorry," Corliss said to Blanche, with the shadow of a forgiving smile, as she passed out.

"You're a toff! That's wot you are, a bloomin' toff!" the Virgin howled back as he shut the door.

He looked blankly at Del Bishop and surveyed the sodden confusion on the table. Then he walked over and threw himself down on his bunk. Bishop leaned an elbow on the table and pulled at his wheezy pipe. The lamp smoked, flickered, and went out; but still he remained, filling his pipe again and again and striking endless matches.

"Del! Are you awake?" Corliss called at last.

Del grunted.

"I was a cur to turn them out into the snow. I am ashamed."

"Sure," was the affirmation.

A long silence followed. Del knocked the ashes out and raised up.

"Sleep?" he called.

There was no reply, and he walked to the bunk softly and pulled the blankets over the engineer.



# Chapter XXI

“Yes; what does it all mean?” Corliss stretched lazily, and cocked up his feet on the table. He was not especially interested, but Colonel Trethaway persisted in talking seriously.

“That’s it! The very thing — the old and ever young demand which man slaps into the face of the universe.” The colonel searched among the scraps in his notebook. “See,” holding up a soiled slip of typed paper, “I copied this out years ago. Listen. ‘What a monstrous spectre is this man, this disease of the agglutinated dust, lifting alternate feet or lying drugged with slumber; killing, feeding, growing, bringing forth small copies of himself; grown up with hair like grass, fitted with eyes that glitter in his face; a thing to set children screaming. Poor soul, here for so little, cast among so many hardships, filled with desires so incommensurate and so inconsistent; savagely surrounded, savagely descended, irremediably condemned to prey upon his fellow-lives. Infinitely childish, often admirably valiant, often touchingly kind; sitting down to debate of right or wrong and the attributes of the deity; rising up to battle for an egg or die for an idea!’

“And all to what end?” he demanded, hotly, throwing down the paper, “this disease of the agglutinated dust?”

Corliss yawned in reply. He had been on trail all day and was yearning for between-blankets.

“Here am I, Colonel Trethaway, modestly along in years, fairly well preserved, a place in the community, a comfortable bank account, no need to ever exert myself again, yet enduring life bleakly and working ridiculously with a zest worthy of a man half my years. And to what end? I can only eat so much, smoke so much, sleep so much, and this tail-dump of earth men call Alaska is the worst of all possible places in the matter of grub, tobacco, and blankets.”

“But it is the living strenuously which holds you,” Corliss interjected.

“Frona’s philosophy,” the colonel sneered.

“And my philosophy, and yours.”

“And of the agglutinated dust — ”

“Which is quickened with a passion you do not take into account, — the passion of duty, of race, of God!”

“And the compensation?” Trethaway demanded.

“Each breath you draw. The Mayfly lives an hour.”

“I don’t see it.”

"Blood and sweat! Blood and sweat! You cried that after the rough and tumble in the Opera House, and every word of it was receipt in full."

"Frona's philosophy."

"And yours and mine."

The colonel threw up his shoulders, and after a pause confessed. "You see, try as I will, I can't make a pessimist out of myself. We are all compensated, and I more fully than most men. What end? I asked, and the answer forthcame: Since the ultimate end is beyond us, then the immediate. More compensation, here and now!"

"Quite hedonistic."

"And rational. I shall look to it at once. I can buy grub and blankets for a score; I can eat and sleep for only one; ergo, why not for two?"

Corliss took his feet down and sat up. "In other words?"

"I shall get married, and — give the community a shock. Communities like shocks. That's one of their compensations for being agglutinative."

"I can't think of but one woman," Corliss essayed tentatively, putting out his hand.

Trethaway shook it slowly. "It is she."

Corliss let go, and misgiving shot into his face. "But St. Vincent?"

"Is your problem, not mine."

"Then Lucile — ?"

"Certainly not. She played a quixotic little game of her own and botched it beautifully."

"I — I do not understand." Corliss brushed his brows in a dazed sort of way.

Trethaway parted his lips in a superior smile. "It is not necessary that you should. The question is, Will you stand up with me?"

"Surely. But what a confoundedly long way around you took. It is not your usual method."

"Nor was it with her," the colonel declared, twisting his moustache proudly.

A captain of the North-West Mounted Police, by virtue of his magisterial office, may perform marriages in time of stress as well as execute exemplary justice. So Captain Alexander received a call from Colonel Trethaway, and after he left jotted down an engagement for the next morning. Then the impending groom went to see Frona. Lucile did not make the request, he hastened to explain, but — well, the fact was she did not know any women, and, furthermore, he (the colonel) knew whom Lucile would like to ask, did she dare. So he did it upon his own responsibility. And coming as a surprise, he knew it would be a great joy to her.

Frona was taken aback by the suddenness of it. Only the other day, it was, that Lucile had made a plea to her for St. Vincent, and now it was Colonel Trethaway! True, there had been a false quantity somewhere, but now it seemed doubly false. Could it be, after all, that Lucile was mercenary? These thoughts crowded upon her swiftly, with the colonel anxiously watching her face the while. She knew she must answer quickly, yet was distracted by an involuntary admiration for his bravery. So she followed, perforce, the lead of her heart, and consented.

Yet the whole thing was rather strained when the four of them came together, next day, in Captain Alexander's private office. There was a gloomy chill about it. Lucile seemed ready to cry, and showed a repressed perturbation quite unexpected of her; while, try as she would, Frona could not call upon her usual sympathy to drive away the coldness which obtruded intangibly between them. This, in turn, had a consequent effect on Vance, and gave a certain distance to his manner which forced him out of touch even with the colonel.

Colonel Trethaway seemed to have thrown twenty years off his erect shoulders, and the discrepancy in the match which Frona had felt vanished as she looked at him. "He has lived the years well," she thought, and prompted mysteriously, almost with vague apprehension she turned her eyes to Corliss. But if the groom had thrown off twenty years, Vance was not a whit behind. Since their last meeting he had sacrificed his brown moustache to the frost, and his smooth face, smitten with health and vigor, looked uncommonly boyish; and yet, withal, the naked upper lip advertised a stiffness and resolution hitherto concealed. Furthermore, his features portrayed a growth, and his eyes, which had been softly firm, were now firm with the added harshness or hardness which is bred of coping with things and coping quickly, — the stamp of executiveness which is pressed upon men who do, and upon all men who do, whether they drive dogs, buck the sea, or dictate the policies of empires.

When the simple ceremony was over, Frona kissed Lucile; but Lucile felt that there was a subtle something wanting, and her eyes filled with unshed tears. Trethaway, who had felt the aloofness from the start, caught an opportunity with Frona while Captain Alexander and Corliss were being pleasant to Mrs. Trethaway.

"What's the matter, Frona?" the colonel demanded, bluntly. "I hope you did not come under protest. I am sorry, not for you, because lack of frankness deserves nothing, but for Lucile. It is not fair to her."

"There has been a lack of frankness throughout." Her voice trembled. "I tried my best, — I thought I could do better, — but I cannot feign what I do not feel. I am sorry, but I . . . I am disappointed. No, I cannot explain, and to you least of all."

"Let's be above-board, Frona. St. Vincent's concerned?"

She nodded.

"And I can put my hand right on the spot. First place," he looked to the side and saw Lucile stealing an anxious glance to him, — "first place, only the other day she gave you a song about St. Vincent. Second place, and therefore, you think her heart's not in this present proposition; that she doesn't care a rap for me; in short, that she's marrying me for reinstatement and spoils. Isn't that it?"

"And isn't it enough? Oh, I am disappointed, Colonel Trethaway, grievously, in her, in you, in myself."

"Don't be a fool! I like you too well to see you make yourself one. The play's been too quick, that is all. Your eye lost it. Listen. We've kept it quiet, but she's in with the elect on French Hill. Her claim's prospected the richest of the outfit. Present indication half a million at least. In her own name, no strings attached. Couldn't she take that

and go anywhere in the world and reinstate herself? And for that matter, you might presume that I am marrying her for spoils. Frona, she cares for me, and in your ear, she's too good for me. My hope is that the future will make up. But never mind that — haven't got the time now.

"You consider her affection sudden, eh? Let me tell you we've been growing into each other from the time I came into the country, and with our eyes open. St. Vincent? Pshaw! I knew it all the time. She got it into her head that the whole of him wasn't worth a little finger of you, and she tried to break things up. You'll never know how she worked with him. I told her she didn't know the Welse, and she said so, too, after. So there it is; take it or leave it."

"But what do you think about St. Vincent?"

"What I think is neither here nor there; but I'll tell you honestly that I back her judgment. But that's not the point. What are you going to do about it? about her? now?"

She did not answer, but went back to the waiting group. Lucile saw her coming and watched her face.

"He's been telling you — ?"

"That I am a fool," Frona answered. "And I think I am." And with a smile, "I take it on faith that I am, anyway. I — I can't reason it out just now, but. . ."

Captain Alexander discovered a prenuptial joke just about then, and led the way over to the stove to crack it upon the colonel, and Vance went along to see fair play.

"It's the first time," Lucile was saying, "and it means more to me, so much more, than to . . . most women. I am afraid. It is a terrible thing for me to do. But I do love him, I do!" And when the joke had been duly digested and they came back, she was sobbing, "Dear, dear Frona."

It was just the moment, better than he could have chosen; and capped and mittened, without knocking, Jacob Welse came in.

"The uninvited guest," was his greeting. "Is it all over? So?" And he swallowed Lucile up in his huge bearskin. "Colonel, your hand, and your pardon for my intruding, and your regrets for not giving me the word. Come, out with them! Hello, Corliss! Captain Alexander, a good day."

"What have I done?" Frona wailed, received the bear-hug, and managed to press his hand till it almost hurt.

"Had to back the game," he whispered; and this time his hand did hurt.

"Now, colonel, I don't know what your plans are, and I don't care. Call them off. I've got a little spread down to the house, and the only honest case of champagne this side of Circle. Of course, you're coming, Corliss, and — " His eye roved past Captain Alexander with hardly a pause.

"Of course," came the answer like a flash, though the Chief Magistrate of the Northwest had had time to canvass the possible results of such unofficial action. "Got a hack?"

Jacob Welse laughed and held up a moccasined foot. "Walking be — chucked!" The captain started impulsively towards the door. "I'll have the sleds up before you're ready. Three of them, and bells galore!"

So Trethaway's forecast was correct, and Dawson vindicated its agglutinateness by rubbing its eyes when three sleds, with three scarlet-tuniced policemen swinging the whips, tore down its main street; and it rubbed its eyes again when it saw the occupants thereof.

"We shall live quietly," Lucile told Frona. "The Klondike is not all the world, and the best is yet to come."

But Jacob Welse said otherwise. "We've got to make this thing go," he said to Captain Alexander, and Captain Alexander said that he was unaccustomed to backing out.

Mrs. Schoville emitted preliminary thunders, marshalled the other women, and became chronically seismic and unsafe.

Lucile went nowhere save to Frona's. But Jacob Welse, who rarely went anywhere, was often to be found by Colonel Trethaway's fireside, and not only was he to be found there, but he usually brought somebody along. "Anything on hand this evening?" he was wont to say on casual meeting. "No? Then come along with me." Sometimes he said it with lamb-like innocence, sometimes with a challenge brooding under his bushy brows, and rarely did he fail to get his man. These men had wives, and thus were the germs of dissolution sown in the ranks of the opposition.

Then, again, at Colonel Trethaway's there was something to be found besides weak tea and small talk; and the correspondents, engineers, and gentlemen rovers kept the trail well packed in that direction, though it was the Kings, to a man, who first broke the way. So the Trethaway cabin became the centre of things, and, backed commercially, financially, and officially, it could not fail to succeed socially.

The only bad effect of all this was to make the lives of Mrs. Schoville and divers others of her sex more monotonous, and to cause them to lose faith in certain hoary and inconsequent maxims. Furthermore, Captain Alexander, as highest official, was a power in the land, and Jacob Welse was the Company, and there was a superstition extant concerning the unwisdom of being on indifferent terms with the Company. And the time was not long till probably a bare half-dozen remained in outer cold, and they were considered a warped lot, anyway.

## Chapter XXII

Quite an exodus took place in Dawson in the spring. Men, because they had made stakes, and other men, because they had made none, bought up the available dogs and rushed out for Dyea over the last ice. Incidentally, it was discovered that Dave Harney possessed most of these dogs.

"Going out?" Jacob Welse asked him on a day when the meridian sun for the first time felt faintly warm to the naked skin.

"Well, I calkilate not. I'm clearin' three dollars a pair on the moccasins I cornered, to say nothing but saw wood on the boots. Say, Welse, not that my nose is out of joint, but you jest cinched me everlastin' on sugar, didn't you?"

Jacob Welse smiled.

"And by the Jimcracky I'm squared! Got any rubber boots?"

"No; went out of stock early in the winter." Dave snickered slowly.

"And I'm the pertickler party that hocus-pocused 'em."

"Not you. I gave special orders to the clerks. They weren't sold in lots."

"No more they wa'n't. One man to the pair and one pair to the man, and a couple of hundred of them; but it was my dust they chucked into the scales an nobody else's. Drink? Don't mind. Easy! Put up your sack. Call it rebate, for I kin afford it. . . Goin' out? Not this year, I guess. Wash-up's comin'."

A strike on Henderson the middle of April, which promised to be sensational, drew St. Vincent to Stewart River. And a little later, Jacob Welse, interested on Gallagher Gulch and with an eye riveted on the copper mines of White River, went up into the same district, and with him went Frona, for it was more vacation than business. In the mean time, Corliss and Bishop, who had been on trail for a month or more running over the Mayo and McQuestion Country, rounded up on the left fork of Henderson, where a block of claims waited to be surveyed.

But by May, spring was so far advanced that travel on the creeks became perilous, and on the last of the thawing ice the miners travelled down to the bunch of islands below the mouth of the Stewart, where they went into temporary quarters or crowded the hospitality of those who possessed cabins. Corliss and Bishop located on Split-up Island (so called through the habit parties from the Outside had of dividing there and going several ways), where Tommy McPherson was comfortably situated. A couple of days later, Jacob Welse and Frona arrived from a hazardous trip out of White River, and pitched tent on the high ground at the upper end of Split-up. A few chechaquos, the first of the spring rush, strung in exhausted and went into camp against the breaking of the river. Also, there were still men going out who, barred by the rotten ice, came

ashore to build poling-boats and await the break-up or to negotiate with the residents for canoes. Notably among these was the Baron Courbertin.

"Ah! Excruciating! Magnificent! Is it not?"

So Frona first ran across him on the following day. "What?" she asked, giving him her hand.

"You! You!" doffing his cap. "It is a delight!"

"I am sure — " she began.

"No! No!" He shook his curly mop warmly. "It is not you. See!" He turned to a Peterborough, for which McPherson had just mulcted him of thrice its value. "The canoe! Is it not — not — what you Yankees call — a bute?"

"Oh, the canoe," she repeated, with a falling inflection of chagrin.

"No! No! Pardon!" He stamped angrily upon the ground. "It is not so. It is not you. It is not the canoe. It is — ah! I have it now! It is your promise. One day, do you not remember, at Madame Schoville's, we talked of the canoe, and of my ignorance, which was sad, and you promised, you said — "

"I would give you your first lesson?"

"And is it not delightful? Listen! Do you not hear? The rippling — ah! the rippling! — deep down at the heart of things! Soon will the water run free. Here is the canoe! Here we meet! The first lesson! Delightful! Delightful!"

The next island below Split-up was known as Roubeau's Island, and was separated from the former by a narrow back-channel. Here, when the bottom had about dropped out of the trail, and with the dogs swimming as often as not, arrived St. Vincent — the last man to travel the winter trail. He went into the cabin of John Borg, a taciturn, gloomy individual, prone to segregate himself from his kind. It was the mischance of St. Vincent's life that of all cabins he chose Borg's for an abiding-place against the break-up.

"All right," the man said, when questioned by him. "Throw your blankets into the corner. Bella'll clear the litter out of the spare bunk."

Not till evening did he speak again, and then, "You're big enough to do your own cooking. When the woman's done with the stove you can fire away."

The woman, or Bella, was a comely Indian girl, young, and the prettiest St. Vincent had run across. Instead of the customary greased swarthiness of the race, her skin was clear and of a light-bronze tone, and her features less harsh, more felicitously curved, than those common to the blood.

After supper, Borg, both elbows on table and huge misshapen hands supporting chin and jaws, sat puffing stinking Siwash tobacco and staring straight before him. It would have seemed ruminative, the stare, had his eyes been softer or had he blinked; as it was, his face was set and trance-like.

"Have you been in the country long?" St. Vincent asked, endeavoring to make conversation.

Borg turned his sullen-black eyes upon him, and seemed to look into him and through him and beyond him, and, still regarding him, to have forgotten all about

him. It was as though he pondered some great and weighty matter — probably his sins, the correspondent mused nervously, rolling himself a cigarette. When the yellow cube had dissipated itself in curling fragrance, and he was deliberating about rolling a second, Borg suddenly spoke.

“Fifteen years,” he said, and returned to his tremendous cogitation.

Thereat, and for half an hour thereafter, St. Vincent, fascinated, studied his inscrutable countenance. To begin with, it was a massive head, abnormal and top-heavy, and its only excuse for being was the huge bull-throat which supported it. It had been cast in a mould of elemental generousness, and everything about it partook of the asymmetrical crudeness of the elemental. The hair, rank of growth, thick and unkempt, matted itself here and there into curious splotches of gray; and again, grinning at age, twisted itself into curling locks of lustreless black — locks of unusual thickness, like crooked fingers, heavy and solid. The shaggy whiskers, almost bare in places, and in others massing into bunchgrass-like clumps, were plentifully splashed with gray. They rioted monstrosly over his face and fell raggedly to his chest, but failed to hide the great hollowed cheeks or the twisted mouth. The latter was thin-lipped and cruel, but cruel only in a passionless sort of way. But the forehead was the anomaly, — the anomaly required to complete the irregularity of the face. For it was a perfect forehead, full and broad, and rising superbly strong to its high dome. It was as the seat and bulwark of some vast intelligence; omniscience might have brooded there.

Bella, washing the dishes and placing them away on the shelf behind Borg’s back, dropped a heavy tin cup. The cabin was very still, and the sharp rattle came without warning. On the instant, with a brute roar, the chair was overturned and Borg was on his feet, eyes blazing and face convulsed. Bella gave an inarticulate, animal-like cry of fear and cowered at his feet. St. Vincent felt his hair bristling, and an uncanny chill, like a jet of cold air, played up and down his spine. Then Borg righted the chair and sank back into his old position, chin on hands and brooding ponderously. Not a word was spoken, and Bella went on unconcernedly with the dishes, while St. Vincent rolled, a shaky cigarette and wondered if it had been a dream.

Jacob Welse laughed when the correspondent told him. “Just his way,” he said; “for his ways are like his looks, — unusual. He’s an unsociable beast. Been in the country more years than he can number acquaintances. Truth to say, I don’t think he has a friend in all Alaska, not even among the Indians, and he’s chummed thick with them off and on. ‘Johnny Sorehead,’ they call him, but it might as well be ‘Johnny Break-um-head,’ for he’s got a quick temper and a rough hand. Temper! Some little misunderstanding popped up between him and the agent at Arctic City. He was in the right, too, — agent’s mistake, — but he tabooed the Company on the spot and lived on straight meat for a year. Then I happened to run across him at Tanana Station, and after due explanations he consented to buy from us again.”

“Got the girl from up the head-waters of the White,” Bill Brown told St. Vincent. “Welse thinks he’s pioneering in that direction, but Borg could give him cards and



spades on it and then win out. He's been over the ground years ago. Yes, strange sort of a chap. Wouldn't hanker to be bunk-mates with him."

But St. Vincent did not mind the eccentricities of the man, for he spent most of his time on Split-up Island with Frona and the Baron. One day, however, and innocently, he ran foul of him. Two Swedes, hunting tree-squirrels from the other end of Roubeau Island, had stopped to ask for matches and to yarn a while in the warm sunshine of the clearing. St. Vincent and Borg were accommodating them, the latter for the most part in meditative monosyllables. Just to the rear, by the cabin-door, Bella was washing clothes. The tub was a cumbersome home-made affair, and half-full of water, was more than a fair match for an ordinary woman. The correspondent noticed her struggling with it, and stepped back quickly to her aid.

With the tub between them, they proceeded to carry it to one side in order to dump it where the ground drained from the cabin. St. Vincent slipped in the thawing snow and the soapy water splashed up. Then Bella slipped, and then they both slipped. Bella giggled and laughed, and St. Vincent laughed back. The spring was in the air and in their blood, and it was very good to be alive. Only a wintry heart could deny a smile on such a day. Bella slipped again, tried to recover, slipped with the other foot, and sat down abruptly. Laughing gleefully, both of them, the correspondent caught her hands to pull her to her feet. With a bound and a bellow, Borg was upon them. Their hands were torn apart and St. Vincent thrust heavily backward. He staggered for a couple of yards and almost fell. Then the scene of the cabin was repeated. Bella cowered and grovelled in the muck, and her lord towered wrathfully over her.

"Look you," he said in stifled gutturals, turning to St. Vincent. "You sleep in my cabin and you cook. That is enough. Let my woman alone."

Things went on after that as though nothing had happened; St. Vincent gave Bella a wide berth and seemed to have forgotten her existence. But the Swedes went back to their end of the island, laughing at the trivial happening which was destined to be significant.

## Chapter XXIII

Spring, smiting with soft, warm hands, had come like a miracle, and now lingered for a dreamy spell before bursting into full-blown summer. The snow had left the bottoms and valleys and nestled only on the north slopes of the ice-scarred ridges. The glacial drip was already in evidence, and every creek in roaring spate. Each day the sun rose earlier and stayed later. It was now chill day by three o'clock and mellow twilight at nine. Soon a golden circle would be drawn around the sky, and deep midnight become bright as high noon. The willows and aspens had long since budded, and were now decking themselves in liveries of fresh young green, and the sap was rising in the pines.

Mother nature had heaved her waking sigh and gone about her brief business. Crickets sang of nights in the stilly cabins, and in the sunshine mosquitoes crept from out hollow logs and snug crevices among the rocks, — big, noisy, harmless fellows, that had procreated the year gone, lain frozen through the winter, and were now rejuvenated to buzz through swift senility to second death. All sorts of creeping, crawling, fluttering life came forth from the warming earth and hastened to mature, reproduce, and cease. Just a breath of balmy air, and then the long cold frost again — ah! they knew it well and lost no time. Sand martins were driving their ancient tunnels into the soft clay banks, and robins singing on the spruce-garbed islands. Overhead the woodpecker knocked insistently, and in the forest depths the partridge boom-boomed and strutted in virile glory.

But in all this nervous haste the Yukon took no part. For many a thousand miles it lay cold, unsmiling, dead. Wild fowl, driving up from the south in wind-jamming wedges, halted, looked vainly for open water, and quested dauntlessly on into the north. From bank to bank stretched the savage ice. Here and there the water burst through and flooded over, but in the chill nights froze solidly as ever. Tradition has it that of old time the Yukon lay unbroken through three long summers, and on the face of it there be traditions less easy of belief.

So summer waited for open water, and the tardy Yukon took to stretching of days and cracking its stiff joints. Now an air-hole ate into the ice, and ate and ate; or a fissure formed, and grew, and failed to freeze again. Then the ice ripped from the shore and uprose bodily a yard. But still the river was loth to loose its grip. It was a slow travail, and man, used to nursing nature with pigmy skill, able to burst waterspouts and harness waterfalls, could avail nothing against the billions of frigid tons which refused to run down the hill to Bering Sea.

On Split-up Island all were ready for the break-up. Waterways have ever been first highways, and the Yukon was the sole highway in all the land. So those bound up-

river pitched their poling-boats and shod their poles with iron, and those bound down caulked their scows and barges and shaped spare sweeps with axe and drawing-knife. Jacob Welse loafed and joyed in the utter cessation from work, and Frona joyed with him in that it was good. But Baron Courbertin was in a fever at the delay. His hot blood grew riotous after the long hibernation, and the warm sunshine dazzled him with warmer fancies.

"Oh! Oh! It will never break! Never!" And he stood gazing at the surly ice and raining politely phrased anathema upon it. "It is a conspiracy, poor La Bijou, a conspiracy!" He caressed La Bijou like it were a horse, for so he had christened the glistening Peterborough canoe.

Frona and St. Vincent laughed and preached him the gospel of patience, which he proceeded to tuck away into the deepest abysses of perdition till interrupted by Jacob Welse.

"Look, Courbertin! Over there, south of the bluff. Do you make out anything? Moving?"

"Yes; a dog."

"It moves too slowly for a dog. Frona, get the glasses."

Courbertin and St. Vincent sprang after them, but the latter knew their abiding-place and returned triumphant. Jacob Welse put the binoculars to his eyes and gazed steadily across the river. It was a sheer mile from the island to the farther bank, and the sunglare on the ice was a sore task to the vision.

"It is a man." He passed the glasses to the Baron and strained absently with his naked eyes. "And something is up."

"He creeps!" the baron exclaimed. "The man creeps, he crawls, on hand and knee! Look! See!" He thrust the glasses tremblingly into Frona's hands.

Looking across the void of shimmering white, it was difficult to discern a dark object of such size when dimly outlined against an equally dark background of brush and earth. But Frona could make the man out with fair distinctness; and as she grew accustomed to the strain she could distinguish each movement, and especially so when he came to a wind-thrown pine. Sue watched painfully. Twice, after tortuous effort, squirming and twisting, he failed in breasting the big trunk, and on the third attempt, after infinite exertion, he cleared it only to topple helplessly forward and fall on his face in the tangled undergrowth.

"It is a man." She turned the glasses over to St. Vincent. "And he is crawling feebly. He fell just then this side of the log."

"Does he move?" Jacob Welse asked, and, on a shake of St. Vincent's head, brought his rifle from the tent.

He fired six shots skyward in rapid succession. "He moves!" The correspondent followed him closely. "He is crawling to the bank. Ah! . . . No; one moment . . . Yes! He lies on the ground and raises his hat, or something, on a stick. He is waving it." (Jacob Welse fired six more shots.) "He waves again. Now he has dropped it and lies quite still."

All three looked inquiringly to Jacob Welse.

He shrugged his shoulders. "How should I know? A white man or an Indian; starvation most likely, or else he is injured."

"But he may be dying," Frona pleaded, as though her father, who had done most things, could do all things.

"We can do nothing."

"Ah! Terrible! terrible!" The baron wrung his hands. "Before our very eyes, and we can do nothing! No!" he exclaimed, with swift resolution, "it shall not be! I will cross the ice!"

He would have started precipitately down the bank had not Jacob Welse caught his arm.

"Not such a rush, baron. Keep your head."

"But — "

"But nothing. Does the man want food, or medicine, or what? Wait a moment. We will try it together."

"Count me in," St. Vincent volunteered promptly, and Frona's eyes sparkled.

While she made up a bundle of food in the tent, the men provided and rigged themselves with sixty or seventy feet of light rope. Jacob Welse and St. Vincent made themselves fast to it at either end, and the baron in the middle. He claimed the food as his portion, and strapped it to his broad shoulders. Frona watched their progress from the bank. The first hundred yards were easy going, but she noticed at once the change when they had passed the limit of the fairly solid shore-ice. Her father led sturdily, feeling ahead and to the side with his staff and changing direction continually.

St. Vincent, at the rear of the extended line, was the first to go through, but he fell with the pole thrust deftly across the opening and resting on the ice. His head did not go under, though the current sucked powerfully, and the two men dragged him out after a sharp pull. Frona saw them consult together for a minute, with much pointing and gesticulating on the part of the baron, and then St. Vincent detach himself and turn shoreward.

"Br-r-r-r," he shivered, coming up the bank to her. "It's impossible."

"But why didn't they come in?" she asked, a slight note of displeasure manifest in her voice.

"Said they were going to make one more try, first. That Courbertin is hot-headed, you know."

"And my father just as bull-headed," she smiled. "But hadn't you better change? There are spare things in the tent."

"Oh, no." He threw himself down beside her. "It's warm in the sun."

For an hour they watched the two men, who had become mere specks of black in the distance; for they had managed to gain the middle of the river and at the same time had worked nearly a mile up-stream. Frona followed them closely with the glasses, though often they were lost to sight behind the ice-ridges.

"It was unfair of them," she heard St. Vincent complain, "to say they were only going to have one more try. Otherwise I should not have turned back. Yet they can't make it — absolutely impossible."

"Yes . . . No . . . Yes! They're turning back," she announced. "But listen! What is that?"

A hoarse rumble, like distant thunder, rose from the midst of the ice. She sprang to her feet. "Gregory, the river can't be breaking!"

"No, no; surely not. See, it is gone." The noise which had come from above had died away downstream.

"But there! There!"

Another rumble, hoarser and more ominous than before, lifted itself and hushed the robins and the squirrels. When abreast of them, it sounded like a railroad train on a distant trestle. A third rumble, which approached a roar and was of greater duration, began from above and passed by.

"Oh, why don't they hurry!"

The two specks had stopped, evidently in conversation. She ran the glasses hastily up and down the river. Though another roar had risen, she could make out no commotion. The ice lay still and motionless. The robins resumed their singing, and the squirrels were chattering with spiteful glee.

"Don't fear, Frona." St. Vincent put his arm about her protectingly. "If there is any danger, they know it better than we, and they are taking their time."

"I never saw a big river break up," she confessed, and resigned herself to the waiting.

The roars rose and fell sporadically, but there were no other signs of disruption, and gradually the two men, with frequent duckings, worked inshore. The water was streaming from them and they were shivering severely as they came up the bank.

"At last!" Frona had both her father's hands in hers. "I thought you would never come back."

"There, there. Run and get dinner," Jacob Welse laughed. "There was no danger."

"But what was it?"

"Stewart River's broken and sending its ice down under the Yukon ice. We could hear the grinding plainly out there."

"Ah! And it was terrible! terrible!" cried the baron. "And that poor, poor man, we cannot save him!"

"Yes, we can. We'll have a try with the dogs after dinner. Hurry, Frona."

But the dogs were a failure. Jacob Welse picked out the leaders as the more intelligent, and with grub-packs on them drove them out from the bank. They could not grasp what was demanded of them. Whenever they tried to return they were driven back with sticks and clods and imprecations. This only bewildered them, and they retreated out of range, whence they raised their wet, cold paws and whined pitifully to the shore.

"If they could only make it once, they would understand, and then it would go like clock-work. Ah! Would you? Go on! Chook, Miriam! Chook! The thing is to get the first one across."

Jacob Welse finally succeeded in getting Miriam, lead-dog to Frona's team, to take the trail left by him and the baron. The dog went on bravely, scrambling over, floundering through, and sometimes swimming; but when she had gained the farthest point reached by them, she sat down helplessly. Later on, she cut back to the shore at a tangent, landing on the deserted island above; and an hour afterwards trotted into camp minus the grub-pack. Then the two dogs, hovering just out of range, compromised matters by devouring each other's burdens; after which the attempt was given over and they were called in.

During the afternoon the noise increased in frequency, and by nightfall was continuous, but by morning it had ceased utterly. The river had risen eight feet, and in many places was running over its crust. Much crackling and splitting were going on, and fissures leaping into life and multiplying in all directions.

"The under-tow ice has jammed below among the islands," Jacob Welse explained. "That's what caused the rise. Then, again, it has jammed at the mouth of the Stewart and is backing up. When that breaks through, it will go down underneath and stick on the lower jam."

"And then? and then?" The baron exulted.

"La Bijou will swim again."

As the light grew stronger, they searched for the man across the river. He had not moved, but in response to their rifle-shots waved feebly.

"Nothing for it till the river breaks, baron, and then a dash with La Bijou. St. Vincent, you had better bring your blankets up and sleep here to-night. We'll need three paddles, and I think we can get McPherson."

"No need," the correspondent hastened to reply. "The back-channel is like adamant, and I'll be up by daybreak."

"But I? Why not?" Baron Courbertin demanded. Frona laughed. "Remember, we haven't given you your first lessons yet."

"And there'll hardly be time to-morrow," Jacob Welse added. "When she goes, she goes with a rush. St. Vincent, McPherson, and I will have to make the crew, I'm afraid. Sorry, baron. Stay with us another year and you'll be fit."

But Baron Courbertin was inconsolable, and sulked for a full half-hour.

## Chapter XXIV

“Awake! You dreamers, wake!”

Frona was out of her sleeping-furs at Del Bishop’s first call; but ere she had slipped a skirt on and bare feet into moccasins, her father, beyond the blanket-curtain, had thrown back the flaps of the tent and stumbled out.

The river was up. In the chill gray light she could see the ice rubbing softly against the very crest of the bank; it even topped it in places, and the huge cakes worked inshore many feet. A hundred yards out the white field merged into the dim dawn and the gray sky. Subdued splits and splutters whispered from out the obscurity, and a gentle grinding could be heard.

“When will it go?” she asked of Del.

“Not a bit too lively for us. See there!” He pointed with his toe to the water lapping out from under the ice and creeping greedily towards them. “A foot rise every ten minutes.”

“Danger?” he scoffed. “Not on your life. It’s got to go. Them islands” — waving his hand indefinitely down river — “can’t hold up under more pressure. If they don’t let go the ice, the ice’ll scour them clean out of the bed of the Yukon. Sure! But I’ve got to be chasin’ back. Lower ground down our way. Fifteen inches on the cabin floor, and McPherson and Corliss hustlin’ perishables into the bunks.”

“Tell McPherson to be ready for a call,” Jacob Welse shouted after him. And then to Frona, “Now’s the time for St. Vincent to cross the back-channel.”

The baron, shivering barefooted, pulled out his watch. “Ten minutes to three,” he chattered.

“Hadn’t you better go back and get your moccasins?” Frona asked.

“There will be time.”

“And miss the magnificence? Hark!”

From nowhere in particular a brisk crackling arose, then died away. The ice was in motion. Slowly, very slowly, it proceeded down stream. There was no commotion, no ear-splitting thunder, no splendid display of force; simply a silent flood of white, an orderly procession of tight-packed ice — packed so closely that not a drop of water was in evidence. It was there, somewhere, down underneath; but it had to be taken on faith. There was a dull hum or muffled grating, but so low in pitch that the ear strained to catch it.

“Ah! Where is the magnificence? It is a fake!”

The baron shook his fists angrily at the river, and Jacob Welse’s thick brows seemed to draw down in order to hide the grim smile in his eyes.

“Ha! ha! I laugh! I snap my fingers! See! I defy!”

As the challenge left his lips. Baron Courbertin stepped upon a cake which rubbed lightly past at his feet. So unexpected was it, that when Jacob Welse reached after him he was gone.

The ice was picking up in momentum, and the hum growing louder and more threatening. Balancing gracefully, like a circus-rider, the Frenchman whirled away along the rim of the bank. Fifty precarious feet he rode, his mount becoming more unstable every instant, and he leaped neatly to the shore. He came back laughing, and received for his pains two or three of the choicest phrases Jacob Welse could select from the essentially masculine portion of his vocabulary.

“And for why?” Courbertin demanded, stung to the quick.

“For why?” Jacob Welse mimicked wrathfully, pointing into the sleek stream sliding by.

A great cake had driven its nose into the bed of the river thirty feet below and was struggling to up-end. All the frigid flood behind crinkled and bent back like so much paper. Then the stalled cake turned completely over and thrust its muddy nose skyward. But the squeeze caught it, while cake mounted cake at its back, and its fifty feet of muck and gouge were hurled into the air. It crashed upon the moving mass beneath, and flying fragments landed at the feet of those that watched. Caught broadside in a chaos of pressures, it crumbled into scattered pieces and disappeared.

“God!” The baron spoke the word reverently and with awe.

Frona caught his hand on the one side and her father’s on the other. The ice was now leaping past in feverish haste. Somewhere below a heavy cake butted into the bank, and the ground swayed under their feet. Another followed it, nearer the surface, and as they sprang back, upreared mightily, and, with a ton or so of soil on its broad back, bowled insolently onward. And yet another, reaching inshore like a huge hand, ripped three careless pines out by the roots and bore them away.

Day had broken, and the driving white gorged the Yukon from shore to shore. What of the pressure of pent water behind, the speed of the flood had become dizzying. Down all its length the bank was being gashed and gouged, and the island was jarring and shaking to its foundations.

“Oh, great! Great!” Frona sprang up and down between the men. “Where is your fake, baron?”

“Ah!” He shook his head. “Ah! I was wrong. I am miserable. But the magnificence! Look!”

He pointed down to the bunch of islands which obstructed the bend. There the mile-wide stream divided and subdivided again, — which was well for water, but not so well for packed ice. The islands drove their wedged heads into the frozen flood and tossed the cakes high into the air. But cake pressed upon cake and shelved out of the water, out and up, sliding and grinding and climbing, and still more cakes from behind, till hillocks and mountains of ice upreared and crashed among the trees.



"A likely place for a jam," Jacob Welse said. "Get the glasses, Frona." He gazed through them long and steadily. "It's growing, spreading out. A cake at the right time and the right place . . ."

"But the river is falling!" Frona cried.

The ice had dropped six feet below the top of the bank, and the Baron Courbertin marked it with a stick.

"Our man's still there, but he doesn't move."

It was clear day, and the sun was breaking forth in the north-east. They took turn about with the glasses in gazing across the river.

"Look! Is it not marvellous?" Courbertin pointed to the mark he had made. The water had dropped another foot. "Ah! Too bad! too bad! The jam; there will be none!"

Jacob Welse regarded him gravely.

"Ah! There will be?" he asked, picking up hope.

Frona looked inquiringly at her father.

"Jams are not always nice," he said, with a short laugh. "It all depends where they take place and where you happen to be."

"But the river! Look! It falls; I can see it before my eyes."

"It is not too late." He swept the island-studded bend and saw the ice-mountains larger and reaching out one to the other. "Go into the tent, Courbertin, and put on the pair of moccasins you'll find by the stove. Go on. You won't miss anything. And you, Frona, start the fire and get the coffee under way."

Half an hour after, though the river had fallen twenty feet, they found the ice still pounding along.

"Now the fun begins. Here, take a squint, you hot-headed Gaul. The left-hand channel, man. Now she takes it!"

Courbertin saw the left-hand channel close, and then a great white barrier heave up and travel from island to island. The ice before them slowed down and came to rest. Then followed the instant rise of the river. Up it came in a swift rush, as though nothing short of the sky could stop it. As when they were first awakened, the cakes rubbed and slid inshore over the crest of the bank, the muddy water creeping in advance and marking the way.

"Mon Dieu! But this is not nice!"

"But magnificent, baron," Frona teased. "In the meanwhile you are getting your feet wet."

He retreated out of the water, and in time, for a small avalanche of cakes rattled down upon the place he had just left. The rising water had forced the ice up till it stood breast-high above the island like a wall.

"But it will go down soon when the jam breaks. See, even now it comes up not so swift. It has broken."

Frona was watching the barrier. "No, it hasn't," she denied.

"But the water no longer rises like a race-horse."

"Nor does it stop rising."

He was puzzled for the nonce. Then his face brightened. "Ah! I have it! Above, somewhere, there is another jam. Most excellent, is it not?"

She caught his excited hand in hers and detained him. "But, listen. Suppose the upper jam breaks and the lower jam holds?"

He looked at her steadily till he grasped the full import. His face flushed, and with a quick intake of the breath he straightened up and threw back his head. He made a sweeping gesture as though to include the island. "Then you, and I, the tent, the boats, cabins, trees, everything, and La Bijou! Pouf! and all are gone, to the devil!"

Frona shook her head. "It is too bad."

"Bad? Pardon. Magnificent!"

"No, no, baron; not that. But that you are not an Anglo-Saxon. The race could well be proud of you."

"And you, Frona, would you not glorify the French!"

"At it again, eh? Throwing bouquets at yourselves." Del Bishop grinned at them, and made to depart as quickly as he had come. "But twist yourselves. Some sick men in a cabin down here. Got to get 'em out. You're needed. And don't be all day about it," he shouted over his shoulder as he disappeared among the trees.

The river was still rising, though more slowly, and as soon as they left the high ground they were splashing along ankle-deep in the water. Winding in and out among the trees, they came upon a boat which had been hauled out the previous fall. And three chechaquos, who had managed to get into the country thus far over the ice, had piled themselves into it, also their tent, sleds, and dogs. But the boat was perilously near the ice-gorge, which growled and wrestled and over-topped it a bare dozen feet away.

"Come! Get out of this, you fools!" Jacob Welse shouted as he went past.

Del Bishop had told them to "get the hell out of there" when he ran by, and they could not understand. One of them turned up an unheeding, terrified face. Another lay prone and listless across the thwarts as though bereft of strength; while the third, with the face of a clerk, rocked back and forth and moaned monotonously, "My God! My God!"

The baron stopped long enough to shake him. "Damn!" he cried. "Your legs, man! — not God, but your legs! Ah! ah! — hump yourself! Yes, hump! Get a move on! Twist! Get back from the bank! The woods, the trees, anywhere!"

He tried to drag him out, but the man struck at him savagely and held back.

"How one collects the vernacular," he confided proudly to Frona as they hurried on. "Twist! It is a strong word, and suitable."

"You should travel with Del," she laughed. "He'd increase your stock in no time."

"You don't say so."

"Yes, but I do."

"Ah! Your idioms. I shall never learn." And he shook his head despairingly with both his hands.

They came out in a clearing, where a cabin stood close to the river. On its flat earth-roof two sick men, swathed in blankets, were lying, while Bishop, Corliss, and Jacob Welse were splashing about inside the cabin after the clothes-bags and general outfit. The mean depth of the flood was a couple of feet, but the floor of the cabin had been dug out for purposes of warmth, and there the water was to the waist.

"Keep the tobacco dry," one of the sick men said feebly from the roof.

"Tobacco, hell!" his companion advised. "Look out for the flour. And the sugar," he added, as an afterthought.

"That's 'cause Bill he don't smoke, miss," the first man explained.

"But keep an eye on it, won't you?" he pleaded.

"Here. Now shut up." Del tossed the canister beside him, and the man clutched it as though it were a sack of nuggets.

"Can I be of any use?" she asked, looking up at them.

"Nope. Scurvy. Nothing'll do 'em any good but God's country and raw potatoes." The pocket-miner regarded her for a moment. "What are you doing here, anyway? Go on back to high ground."

But with a groan and a crash, the ice-wall bulged in. A fifty-ton cake ended over, splashing them with muddy water, and settled down before the door. A smaller cake drove against the out-jutting corner-logs and the cabin reeled. Courbertin and Jacob Welse were inside.

"After you," Frona heard the baron, and then her father's short amused laugh; and the gallant Frenchman came out last, squeezing his way between the cake and the logs.

"Say, Bill, if that there lower jam holds, we're goners;" the man with the canister called to his partner.

"Ay, that it will," came the answer. "Below Nulato I saw Bixbie Island swept clean as my old mother's kitchen floor."

The men came hastily together about Frona.

"This won't do. We've got to carry them over to your shack, Corliss." As he spoke, Jacob Welse clambered nimbly up the cabin and gazed down at the big barrier. "Where's McPherson?" he asked.

"Petrified astride the ridge-pole this last hour."

Jacob Welse waved his arm. "It's breaking! There she goes!"

"No kitchen floor this time. Bill, with my respects to your old woman," called he of the tobacco.

"Ay," answered the imperturbable Bill.

The whole river seemed to pick itself up and start down the stream. With the increasing motion the ice-wall broke in a hundred places, and from up and down the shore came the rending and crashing of uprooted trees.

Corliss and Bishop laid hold of Bill and started off to McPherson's, and Jacob Welse and the baron were just sliding his mate over the eaves, when a huge block of ice rammed in and smote the cabin squarely. Frona saw it, and cried a warning, but the tiered logs were overthrown like a house of cards. She saw Courbertin and the sick

man hurled clear of the wreckage, and her father go down with it. She sprang to the spot, but he did not rise. She pulled at him to get his mouth above water, but at full stretch his head, barely showed. Then she let go and felt about with her hands till she found his right arm jammed between the logs. These she could not move, but she thrust between them one of the roof-poles which had underlaid the dirt and moss. It was a rude handspike and hardly equal to the work, for when she threw her weight upon the free end it bent and crackled. Heedful of the warning, she came in a couple of feet and swung upon it tentatively and carefully till something gave and Jacob Welse shoved his muddy face into the air.

He drew half a dozen great breaths, and burst out, "But that tastes good!" And then, throwing a quick glance about him, Frona, Del Bishop is a most veracious man."

"Why?" she asked, perplexedly.

"Because he said you'd do, you know."

He kissed her, and they both spat the mud from their lips, laughing. Courbertin floundered round a corner of the wreckage.

"Never was there such a man!" he cried, gleefully. "He is mad, crazy! There is no appeasement. His skull is cracked by the fall, and his tobacco is gone. It is chiefly the tobacco which is lamentable."

But his skull was not cracked, for it was merely a slit of the scalp of five inches or so.

"You'll have to wait till the others come back. I can't carry." Jacob Welse pointed to his right arm, which hung dead. "Only wrenched," he explained. "No bones broken."

The baron struck an extravagant attitude and pointed down at Frona's foot. "Ah! the water, it is gone, and there, a jewel of the flood, a pearl of price!"

Her well-worn moccasins had gone rotten from the soaking, and a little white toe peeped out at the world of slime.

"Then I am indeed wealthy, baron; for I have nine others."

"And who shall deny? who shall deny?" he cried, fervently.

"What a ridiculous, foolish, lovable fellow it is!"

"I kiss your hand." And he knelt gallantly in the muck.

She jerked her hand away, and, burying it with its mate in his curly mop, shook his head back and forth. "What shall I do with him, father?"

Jacob Welse shrugged his shoulders and laughed; and she turned Courbertin's face up and kissed him on the lips. And Jacob Welse knew that his was the larger share in that manifest joy.

The river, fallen to its winter level, was pounding its ice-glut steadily along. But in falling it had rimmed the shore with a twenty-foot wall of stranded floes. The great blocks were spilled inland among the thrown and standing trees and the slime-coated flowers and grasses like the titanic vomit of some Northland monster. The sun was not idle, and the steaming thaw washed the mud and foulness from the bergs till they blazed like heaped diamonds in the brightness, or shimmered opalescent-blue. Yet they were reared hazardously one on another, and ever and anon flashing towers and

rainbow minarets crumbled thunderously into the flood. By one of the gaps so made lay La Bijou, and about it, saving chechaquos and sick men, were grouped the denizens of Split-up.

"Na, na, lad; twa men'll be a plenty." Tommy McPherson sought about him with his eyes for corroboration. "Gin ye gat three i' the canoe 'twill be ower comfortable."

"It must be a dash or nothing," Corliss spoke up. "We need three men, Tommy, and you know it."

"Na, na; twa's a plenty, I'm tellin' ye."

"But I'm afraid we'll have to do with two."

The Scotch-Canadian evinced his satisfaction openly. "Mair'd be a bother; an' I doot not ye'll mak' it all richt, lad."

"And you'll make one of those two, Tommy," Corliss went on, inexorably.

"Na; there's ithers a plenty wi'oot coontin' me."

"No, there's not. Courbertin doesn't know the first thing. St. Vincent evidently cannot cross the slough. Mr. Welse's arm puts him out of it. So it's only you and I, Tommy."

"I'll not be inqueesitive, but yon son of Anak's a likely mon. He maun pit oop a guid stroke." While the Scot did not lose much love for the truculent pocket-miner, he was well aware of his grit, and seized the chance to save himself by shoving the other into the breach.

Del Bishop stepped into the centre of the little circle, paused, and looked every man in the eyes before he spoke.

"Is there a man here'll say I'm a coward?" he demanded without preface. Again he looked each one in the eyes. "Or is there a man who'll even hint that I ever did a curlike act?" And yet again he searched the circle. "Well and good. I hate the water, but I've never been afraid of it. I don't know how to swim, yet I've been over the side more times than it's good to remember. I can't pull an oar without batting my back on the bottom of the boat. As for steering — well, authorities say there's thirty-two points to the compass, but there's at least thirty more when I get started. And as sure as God made little apples, I don't know my elbow from my knee about a paddle. I've capsized damn near every canoe I ever set foot in. I've gone right through the bottom of two. I've turned turtle in the Canyon and been pulled out below the White Horse. I can only keep stroke with one man, and that man's yours truly. But, gentlemen, if the call comes, I'll take my place in La Bijou and take her to hell if she don't turn over on the way."

Baron Courbertin threw his arms about him, crying, "As sure as God made little apples, thou art a man!"

Tommy's face was white, and he sought refuge in speech from the silence which settled down. "I'll deny I lift a guid paddle, nor that my wind is fair; but gin ye gang a tithe the way the next jam'll be on us. For my pairt I conseeder it ay rash. Bide a wee till the river's clear, say I."

"It's no go, Tommy," Jacob Welse admonished. "You can't cash excuses here."

“But, mon! It doesna need discreemeenation — ”

“That’ll do!” from Corliss. “You’re coming.”

“I’ll naething o’ the sort. I’ll — ”

“Shut up!” Del had come into the world with lungs of leather and larynx of brass, and when he thus jerked out the stops the Scotsman quailed and shrank down.

“Oyez! Oyez!” In contrast to Del’s siren tones, Frana’s were purest silver as they rippled down-island through the trees. “Oyez! Oyez! Open water! Open water! And wait a minute. I’ll be with you.”

Three miles up-stream, where the Yukon curved grandly in from the west, a bit of water appeared. It seemed too marvellous for belief, after the granite winter; but McPherson, untouched of imagination, began a crafty retreat.

“Bide a wee, bide a wee,” he protested, when collared by the pocket-miner. “A’ve forgot my pipe.”

“Then you’ll bide with us, Tommy,” Del sneered. “And I’d let you have a draw of mine if your own wasn’t sticking out of your pocket.”

“’Twas the baccy I’d in mind.”

“Then dig into this.” He shoved his pouch into McPherson’s shaking hands. “You’d better shed your coat. Here! I’ll help you. And private, Tommy, if you don’t act the man, I won’t do a thing to you. Sure.”

Corliss had stripped his heavy flannel shirt for freedom; and it was plain, when Frana joined them, that she also had been shedding. Jacket and skirt were gone, and her underskirt of dark cloth ceased midway below the knee.

“You’ll do,” Del commended.

Jacob Welse looked at her anxiously, and went over to where she was testing the grips of the several paddles. “You’re not — ?” he began.

She nodded.

“You’re a guid girl,” McPherson broke in. “Now, a’ve a wumman to home, to say naething o’ three bairns — ”

“All ready!” Corliss lifted the bow of La Bijou and looked back.

The turbid water lashed by on the heels of the ice-run. Courbertin took the stern in the steep descent, and Del marshalled Tommy’s reluctant rear. A flat floe, dipping into the water at a slight incline, served as the embarking-stage.

“Into the bow with you, Tommy!”

The Scotsman groaned, felt Bishop breathe heavily at his back, and obeyed; Frana meeting his weight by slipping into the stern.

“I can steer,” she assured Corliss, who for the first time was aware that she was coming.

He glanced up to Jacob Welse, as though for consent, and received it.

“Hit ‘er up! Hit ‘er up!” Del urged impatiently. “You’re burnin’ daylight!”

## Chapter XXV

La Bijou was a perfect expression of all that was dainty and delicate in the boat-builder's soul. Light as an egg-shell, and as fragile, her three-eighths-inch skin offered no protection from a driving chunk of ice as small as a man's head. Nor, though the water was open, did she find a clear way, for the river was full of scattered floes which had crumbled down from the rim-ice. And here, at once, through skilful handling, Corliss took to himself confidence in Frona.

It was a great picture: the river rushing blackly between its crystalline walls; beyond, the green woods stretching upward to touch the cloud-flecked summer sky; and over all, like a furnace blast, the hot sun beating down. A great picture, but somehow Corliss's mind turned to his mother and her perennial tea, the soft carpets, the prim New England maid-servants, the canaries singing in the wide windows, and he wondered if she could understand. And when he thought of the woman behind him, and felt the dip and lift, dip and lift, of her paddle, his mother's women came back to him, one by one, and passed in long review, — pale, glimmering ghosts, he thought, caricatures of the stock which had replenished the earth, and which would continue to replenish the earth.

La Bijou skirted a pivoting floe, darted into a nipping channel, and shot out into the open with the walls grinding together behind. Tommy groaned.

"Well done!" Corliss encouraged.

"The fule wumman!" came the backward snarl. "Why couldna she bide a bit?"

Frona caught his words and flung a laugh defiantly. Vance darted a glance over his shoulder to her, and her smile was witchery. Her cap, perched precariously, was sliding off, while her flying hair, aglint in the sunshine, framed her face as he had seen it framed on the Dyea Trail.

"How I should like to sing, if it weren't for saving one's breath. Say the 'Song of the Sword,' or the 'Anchor Chanty.'"

"Or the 'First Chanty,'" Corliss answered. "'Mine was the woman, darkling I found her,'" he hummed, significantly.

She flashed her paddle into the water on the opposite side in order to go wide of a jagged cake, and seemed not to hear. "I could go on this way forever."

"And I," Corliss affirmed, warmly.

But she refused to take notice, saying, instead, "Vance, do you know I'm glad we're friends?"

"No fault of mine we're not more."

"You're losing your stroke, sir," she reprimanded; and he bent silently to the work.

La Bijou was driving against the current at an angle of forty-five degrees, and her resultant course was a line at right angles to the river. Thus, she would tap the western bank directly opposite the starting-point, where she could work up-stream in the slacker flood. But a mile of indented shore, and then a hundred yards of bluffs rising precipitously from out a stiff current would still lie between them and the man to be rescued.

"Now let us ease up," Corliss advised, as they slipped into an eddy and drifted with the back-tide under the great wall of rim-ice.

"Who would think it mid-May?" She glanced up at the carelessly poised cakes. "Does it seem real to you, Vance?"

He shook his head.

"Nor to me. I know that I, Frona, in the flesh, am here, in a Peterborough, paddling for dear life with two men; year of our Lord eighteen hundred and ninety-eight, Alaska, Yukon River; this is water, that is ice; my arms are tired, my heart up a few beats, and I am sweating, — and yet it seems all a dream. Just think! A year ago I was in Paris!" She drew a deep breath and looked out over the water to the further shore, where Jacob Welse's tent, like a snowy handkerchief, sprawled against the deep green of the forest. "I do not believe there is such a place," she added. "There is no Paris."

"And I was in London a twelvemonth past," Corliss meditated. "But I have undergone a new incarnation. London? There is no London now. It is impossible. How could there be so many people in the world? This is the world, and we know of fact that there are very few people in it, else there could not be so much ice and sea and sky. Tommy, here, I know, thinks fondly of a place he calls Toronto. He mistakes. It exists only in his mind, — a memory of a former life he knew. Of course, he does not think so. That is but natural; for he is no philosopher, nor does he bother — "

"Wheest, will ye!" Tommy fiercely whispered. "Your gabble'll bring it doon aboot oor heads."

Life is brief in the Northland, and fulfilment ever clutters the heels of prophecy. A premonitory tremor sighed down the air, and the rainbow wall swayed above them. The three paddles gripped the water with common accord. La Bijou leaped out from under. Broadside after broadside flared and crashed, and a thousand frigid tons thundered down behind them. The displaced water surged outward in a foamy, upstanding circle, and La Bijou, striving wildly to rise, ducked through the stiff overhang of the crest and wallowed, half-full, in the trough.

"Dinna I tell ye, ye gabbling fules!"

"Sit still, and bail!" Corliss checked him sharply. "Or you'll not have the comfort of telling us anything."

He shook his head at Frona, and she winked back; then they both chuckled, much like children over an escapade which looks disastrous but turns out well.

Creeping timidly under the shadow of the impending avalanches, La Bijou slipped noiselessly up the last eddy. A corner of the bluff rose savagely from the river — a monstrous mass of naked rock, scarred and battered of the centuries; hating the river



that gnawed it ever; hating the rain that graved its grim face with unsightly seams; hating the sun that refused to mate with it, whereof green life might come forth and hide its hideousness. The whole force of the river hurled in against it, waged furious war along its battlements, and caromed off into mid-stream again. Down all its length the stiff waves stood in serried rows, and its crevices and water-worn caverns were a-bellow with unseen strife.

“Now! Bend to it! Your best!”

It was the last order Corliss could give, for in the din they were about to enter a man’s voice were like a cricket’s chirp amid the growling of an earthquake. La Bijou sprang forward, cleared the eddy with a bound, and plunged into the thick. Dip and lift, dip and lift, the paddles worked with rhythmic strength. The water rippled and tore, and pulled all ways at once; and the fragile shell, unable to go all ways at once, shook and quivered with the shock of resistance. It veered nervously to the right and left, but Frona held it with a hand of steel. A yard away a fissure in the rock grinned at them. La Bijou leaped and shot ahead, and the water, slipping away underneath, kept her always in one place. Now they surged out from the fissure, now in; ahead for half a yard, then back again; and the fissure mocked their toil.

Five minutes, each of which sounded a separate eternity, and the fissure was past. Ten minutes, and it was a hundred feet astern. Dip and lift, dip and lift, till sky and earth and river were blotted out, and consciousness dwindled to a thin line, — a streak of foam, fringed on the one hand with sneering rock, on the other with snarling water. That thin line summed up all. Somewhere below was the beginning of things; somewhere above, beyond the roar and traffic, was the end of things; and for that end they strove.

And still Frona held the egg-shell with a hand of steel. What they gained they held, and fought for more, inch by inch, dip and lift; and all would have been well but for the flutter of Tommy’s soul. A cake of ice, sucked beneath by the current, rose under his paddle with a flurry of foam, turned over its toothed edge, and was dragged back into the depths. And in that sight he saw himself, hair streaming upward and drowned hands clutching emptiness, going feet first, down and down. He stared, wide-eyed, at the portent, and his poised paddle refused to strike. On the instant the fissure grinned in their faces, and the next they were below the bluffs, drifting gently in the eddy.

Frona lay, head thrown back, sobbing at the sun; amidships Corliss sprawled panting; and forward, choking and gasping and nerveless, the Scotsman drooped his head upon his knees. La Bijou rubbed softly against the rim-ice and came to rest. The rainbow-wall hung above like a fairy pile; the sun, flung backward from innumerable facets, clothed it in jewelled splendor. Silvery streams tinkled down its crystal slopes; and in its clear depths seemed to unfold, veil on veil, the secrets of life and death and mortal striving, — vistas of pale-shimmering azure opening like dream-visions, and promising, down there in the great cool heart, infinite rest, infinite cessation and rest.

The topmost tower, delicately massive, a score of feet above them, swayed to and fro, gently, like the ripple of wheat in light summer airs. But Corliss gazed at it unheeding.

Just to lie there, on the marge of the mystery, just to lie there and drink the air in great gulps, and do nothing! — he asked no more. A dervish, whirling on heel till all things blur, may grasp the essence of the universe and prove the Godhead indivisible; and so a man, plying a paddle, and plying and plying, may shake off his limitations and rise above time and space. And so Corliss.

But gradually his blood ceased its mad pounding, and the air was no longer nectar-sweet, and a sense of things real and pressing came back to him.

“We’ve got to get out of this,” he said. His voice sounded like a man’s whose throat has been scorched by many and long potations. It frightened him, but he limply lifted a shaking paddle and shoved off.

“Yes; let us start, by all means,” Frona said in a dim voice, which seemed to come to him from a far distance.

Tommy lifted his head and gazed about. “A doot we’ll juist hae to gie it oop.”

“Bend to it!”

“Ye’ll no try it anither?”

“Bend to it!” Corliss repeated.

“Till your heart bursts, Tommy,” Frona added.

Once again they fought up the thin line, and all the world vanished, save the streak of foam, and the snarling water, and the grinning fissure. But they passed it, inch by inch, and the broad bend welcomed them from above, and only a rocky buttress of implacable hate, around whose base howled the tides of an equal hate, stood between. Then La Bijou leaped and throbbed and shook again, and the current slid out from under, and they remained ever in one place. Dip and lift, dip and lift, through an infinity of time and torture and travail, till even the line dimmed and faded and the struggle lost its meaning. Their souls became merged in the rhythm of the toil. Ever lifting, ever falling, they seemed to have become great pendulums of time. And before and behind glimmered the eternities, and between the eternities, ever lifting, ever falling, they pulsed in vast rhythmical movement. They were no longer humans, but rhythms. They surged in till their paddles touched the bitter rock, but they did not know; surged out, where chance piloted them unscathed through the lashing ice, but they did not see. Nor did they feel the shock of the smitten waves, nor the driving spray that cooled their faces. . .

La Bijou veered out into the stream, and their paddles, flashing mechanically in the sunshine, held her to the return angle across the river. As time and matter came back to them, and Split-up Island dawned upon their eyes like the foreshore of a new world, they settled down to the long easy stroke wherein breath and strength may be recovered.

“A third attempt would have been useless,” Corliss said, in a dry, cracked whisper.

And Frona answered, “Yes; our hearts would have surely broken.”

Life, and the pleasant camp-fire, and the quiet rest in the noonday shade, came back to Tommy as the shore drew near, and more than all, blessed Toronto, its houses that never moved, and its jostling streets. Each time his head sank forward and he

reached out and clutched the water with his paddle, the streets enlarged, as though gazing through a telescope and adjusting to a nearer focus. And each time the paddle drove clear and his head was raised, the island bounded forward. His head sank, and the streets were of the size of life; it raised, and Jacob Welse and the two men stood on the bank three lengths away.

"Dinna I tell ye!" he shouted to them, triumphantly.

But Frona jerked the canoe parallel with the bank, and he found himself gazing at the long up-stream stretch. He arrested a stroke midway, and his paddle clattered in the bottom.

"Pick it up!" Corliss's voice was sharp and relentless.

"I'll do naething o' the kind." He turned a rebellious face on his tormentor, and ground his teeth in anger and disappointment.

The canoe was drifting down with the current, and Frona merely held it in place. Corliss crawled forward on his knees.

"I don't want to hurt you, Tommy," he said in a low, tense voice, "so . . . well, just pick it up, that's a good fellow."

"I'll no."

"Then I shall kill you," Corliss went on, in the same calm, passionless way, at the same time drawing his hunting-knife from its sheath.

"And if I dinna?" the Scotsman queried stoutly, though cowering away.

Corliss pressed gently with the knife. The point of the steel entered Tommy's back just where the heart should be, passed slowly through the shirt, and bit into the skin. Nor did it stop there; neither did it quicken, but just as slowly held on its way. He shrank back, quivering.

"There! there! man! Pit it oop!" he shrieked. "I maun gie in!"

Frona's face was quite pale, but her eyes were hard, brilliantly hard, and she nodded approval.

"We're going to try this side, and shoot across from above," she called to her father. "What? I can't hear. Tommy? Oh, his heart's weak. Nothing serious." She saluted with her paddle. "We'll be back in no time, father mine. In no time."

Stewart River was wide open, and they ascended it a quarter of a mile before they shot its mouth and continued up the Yukon. But when they were well abreast of the man on the opposite bank a new obstacle faced them. A mile above, a wreck of an island clung desperately to the river bed. Its tail dwindled to a sand-spit which bisected the river as far down as the impassable bluffs. Further, a few hundred thousand tons of ice had grounded upon the spit and upreared a glittering ridge.

"We'll have to portage," Corliss said, as Frona turned the canoe from the bank.

La Bijou darted across the narrower channel to the sand-spit and slipped up a little ice ravine, where the walls were less precipitous. They landed on an out-jutting cake, which, without support, overhung the water for sheer thirty feet. How far its other end could be buried in the mass was matter for conjecture. They climbed to the summit, dragging the canoe after them, and looked out over the dazzle. Floe was piled

on floe in titanic confusion. Huge blocks topped and overtopped one another, only to serve as pedestals for great white masses, which blazed and scintillated in the sun like monstrous jewels.

"A bonny place for a bit walk," Tommy sneered, "wi' the next jam fair to come ony time." He sat down resolutely. "No, thank ye kindly, I'll no try it."

Frona and Corliss clambered on, the canoe between them.

"The Persians lashed their slaves into battle," she remarked, looking back. "I never understood before. Hadn't you better go back after him?"

Corliss kicked him up, whimpering, and forced him to go on in advance. The canoe was an affair of little weight, but its bulk, on the steep rises and sharp turns, taxed their strength. The sun burned down upon them. Its white glare hurt their eyes, the sweat oozed out from every pore, and they panted for breath.

"Oh, Vance, do you know . . ."

"What?" He swept the perspiration from his forehead and flung it from him with a quick flirt of the hand.

"I wish I had eaten more breakfast."

He grunted sympathetically. They had reached the midmost ridge and could see the open river, and beyond, quite clearly, the man and his signal of distress. Below, pastoral in its green quiet, lay Split-up Island. They looked up to the broad bend of the Yukon, smiling lazily, as though it were not capable at any moment of spewing forth a flood of death. At their feet the ice sloped down into a miniature gorge, across which the sun cast a broad shadow.

"Go on, Tommy," Frona bade. "We're half-way over, and there's water down there."

"It's water ye'd be thinkin' on, is it?" he snarled, "and you a-leadin' a buddie to his death!"

"I fear you have done some great sin, Tommy," she said, with a reproving shake of the head, "or else you would not be so afraid of death." She sighed and picked up her end of the canoe. "Well, I suppose it is natural. You do not know how to die —"

"No more do I want to die," he broke in fiercely.

"But there come times for all men to die, — times when to die is the only thing to do. Perhaps this is such a time."

Tommy slid carefully over a glistening ledge and dropped his height to a broad foothold. "It's a' vera guid," he grinned up; "but dinna ye think a've suffeicient dis-creemeeenation to judge for mysel'? Why should I no sing my ain sang?"

"Because you do not know how. The strong have ever pitched the key for such as you. It is they that have taught your kind when and how to die, and led you to die, and lashed you to die."

"Ye pit it fair," he rejoined. "And ye do it weel. It doesna behoove me to complain, sic a mighty fine job ye're makin' on it."

"You are doing well," Corliss chuckled, as Tommy dropped out of sight and landed into the bed of the gorge. "The cantankerous brute! he'd argue on the trail to Judgment."

"Where did you learn to paddle?" she asked.

"College — exercise," he answered, shortly. "But isn't that fine? Look!"

The melting ice had formed a pool in the bottom of the gorge. Frona stretched out full length, and dipped her hot mouth in its coolness. And lying as she did, the soles of her dilapidated moccasins, or rather the soles of her feet (for moccasins and stockings had gone in shreds), were turned upward. They were very white, and from contact with the ice were bruised and cut. Here and there the blood oozed out, and from one of the toes it streamed steadily.

"So wee, and pretty, and salt-like," Tommy gibed. "One wouldna think they could lead a strong man to hell."

"By the way you grumble, they're leading you fast enough," Corliss answered angrily.

"Forty mile an hour," Tommy retorted, as he walked away, gloating over having the last word.

"One moment. You've two shirts. Lend me one."

The Scotsman's face lighted inquisitively, till he comprehended. Then he shook his head and started on again.

Frona scrambled to her feet. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Sit down."

"But what is the matter?"

Corliss put his hands on her shoulders and pressed her back. "Your feet. You can't go on in such shape. They're in ribbons. See!" He brushed the sole of one of them and held up a blood-dripping palm. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Oh, they didn't bother — much."

"Give me one of your skirts," he demanded.

"I . . ." She faltered. "I only have one."

He looked about him. Tommy had disappeared among the ice-floes.

"We must be getting on," Frona said, attempting to rise.

But he held her back. "Not another step till I fix you. Here goes, so shut your eyes."

She obeyed, and when she opened them he was naked to the waist, and his undershirt, torn in strips, was being bound about her feet.

"You were in the rear, and I did not know — "

"Don't apologize, pray," she interrupted. "I could have spoken."

"I'm not; I'm reproaching you. Now, the other one. Put it up!"

The nearness to her bred a madness, and he touched his lips lightly to the same white little toe that had won the Baron Courbertin a kiss.

Though she did not draw back, her face flushed, and she thrilled as she had thrilled once before in her life. "You take advantage of your own goodness," she rebuked him.

"Then I will doubly advantage myself."

"Please don't," she begged.

"And why not? It is a custom of the sea to broach the spirits as the ship prepares to sink. And since this is a sort of a forlorn hope, you know, why not?"

"But . . ."

"But what, Miss Prim?"

"Oh! Of all things, you know I do not deserve that! If there were nobody else to be considered, why, under the circumstances . . ."

He drew the last knot tight and dropped her foot. "Damn St. Vincent, anyway! Come on!"

"So would I, were I you," she laughed, taking up her end of the canoe. "But how you have changed, Vance. You are not the same man I met on the Dyea Trail. You hadn't learned to swear, then, among other things."

"No, I'm not the same; for which I thank God and you. Only I think I am honester than you. I always live up to my philosophy."

"Now confess that's unfair. You ask too much under the circumstances — "

"Only a little toe."

"Or else, I suppose, you just care for me in a kind, big-brotherly way.

In which case, if you really wish it, you may — "

"Do keep quiet," he broke in, roughly, "or I'll be making a gorgeous fool of myself."

"Kiss all my toes," she finished.

He grunted, but did not deign a reply. The work quickly took their breath, and they went on in silence till they descended the last steep to where McPherson waited by the open river.

"Del hates St. Vincent," she said boldly. "Why?"

"Yes, it seems that way." He glanced back at her curiously. "And wherever he goes, Del lugs an old Russian book, which he can't read but which he nevertheless regards, in some sort of way, as St. Vincent's Nemesis. And do you know, Frana, he has such faith in it that I can't help catching a little myself. I don't know whether you'll come to me, or whether I'll go to you, but — "

She dropped her end of the canoe and broke out in laughter. He was annoyed, and a hurt spread of blood ruddied his face.

"If I have — " he began.

"Stupid!" she laughed. "Don't be silly! And above all don't be dignified. It doesn't exactly become you at the present moment, — your hair all tangled, a murderous knife in your belt, and naked to the waist like a pirate stripped for battle. Be fierce, frown, swear, anything, but please don't be dignified. I do wish I had my camera. In after years I could say: 'This, my friends, is Corliss, the great Arctic explorer, just as he looked at the conclusion of his world-famous trip Through Darkest Alaska.'"

He pointed an ominous finger at her and said sternly, "Where is your skirt?"

She involuntarily looked down. But its tatterdemalion presence relieved her, and her face jerked up scarlet.

"You should be ashamed!"

"Please, please do not be dignified," he laughed. "Very true, it doesn't exactly become you at the present moment. Now, if I had my camera — "

"Do be quiet and go on," she said. "Tommy is waiting. I hope the sun takes the skin all off your back," she panted vindictively, as they slid the canoe down the last shelf and dropped it into the water.

Ten minutes later they climbed the ice-wall, and on and up the bank, which was partly a hillside, to where the signal of distress still fluttered. Beneath it, on the ground, lay stretched the man. He lay very quietly, and the fear that they were too late was upon them, when he moved his head slightly and moaned. His rough clothes were in rags, and the black, bruised flesh of his feet showed through the remnants of his moccasins. His body was thin and gaunt, without flesh-pads or muscles, while the bones seemed ready to break through the tight-stretched skin. As Corliss felt his pulse, his eyes fluttered open and stared glassily. Frona shuddered.

"Man, it's fair gruesome," McPherson muttered, running his hand up a shrunken arm.

"You go on to the canoe, Frona," Corliss said. "Tommy and I will carry him down."

But her lips set firmly. Though the descent was made easier by her aid, the man was well shaken by the time they laid him in the bottom of the canoe, — so well shaken that some last shreds of consciousness were aroused. He opened his eyes and whispered hoarsely, "Jacob Welse . . . despatches . . . from the Outside." He plucked feebly at his open shirt, and across his emaciated chest they saw the leather strap, to which, doubtless, the despatch-pouch was slung.

At either end of the canoe there was room to spare, but amidships Corliss was forced to paddle with the man between his knees. La Bijou swung out blithely from the bank. It was down-stream at last, and there was little need for exertion.

Vance's arms and shoulders and back, a bright scarlet, caught Frona's attention. "My hopes are realized," she exulted, reaching out and softly stroking a burning arm. "We shall have to put cold cream on it when we get back."

"Go ahead," he encouraged. "That feels awfully good."

She splashed his hot back with a handful of the ice-cold water from over-side. He caught his breath with a gasp, and shivered. Tommy turned about to look at them.

"It's a guid deed we'll 'a doon this day," he remarked, pleasantly.

"To gie a hand in distress is guid i' the sight of God."

"Who's afeared?" Frona laughed.

"Weel," he deliberated, "I was a bit fashed, no doot, but —"

His utterance ceased, and he seemed suddenly to petrify. His eyes fixed themselves in a terrible stare over Frona's shoulder. And then, slowly and dreamily, with the solemnity fitting an invocation of Deity, murmured, "Guid Gawd Almichty!"

They whirled their heads about. A wall of ice was sweeping round the bend, and even as they looked the right-hand flank, unable to compass the curve, struck the further shore and flung up a ridge of heaving mountains.

"Guid Gawd! Guid Gawd! Like rats i' the trap!" Tommy jabbed his paddle futilely in the water.

"Get the stroke!" Corliss hissed in his ear, and La Bijou sprang away.

Frona steered straight across the current, at almost right angles, for Split-up; but when the sandspit, over which they had portaged, crashed at the impact of a million tons, Corliss glanced at her anxiously. She smiled and shook her head, at the same time slacking off the course.

"We can't make it," she whispered, looking back at the ice a couple of hundred feet away. "Our only chance is to run before it and work in slowly."

She cherished every inward inch jealously, holding the canoe up as sharply as she dared and at the same time maintaining a constant distance ahead of the ice-rim.

"I canna stand the pace," Tommy whimpered once; but the silence of Corliss and Frona seemed ominous, and he kept his paddle going.

At the very fore of the ice was a floe five or six feet thick and a couple of acres in extent. Reaching out in advance of the pack, it clove through the water till on either side there formed a bore like that of a quick flood-tide in an inland passage. Tommy caught sight of it, and would have collapsed had not Corliss prodded him, between strokes, with the point of his paddle.

"We can keep ahead," Frona panted; "but we must get time to make the landing?"

"When the chance comes, drive her in, bow on," Corliss counselled; "and when she strikes, jump and run for it."

"Climb, rather. I'm glad my skirt is short."

Repulsed by the bluffs of the left bank, the ice was forced towards the right. The big floe, in advance, drove in upon the precise point of Split-up Island.

"If you look back, I'll brain you with the paddle," Corliss threatened.

"Ay," Tommy groaned.

But Corliss looked back, and so did Frona. The great berg struck the land with an earthquake shock. For fifty feet the soft island was demolished. A score of pines swayed frantically and went down, and where they went down rose up a mountain of ice, which rose, and fell, and rose again. Below, and but a few feet away, Del Bishop ran out to the bank, and above the roar they could hear faintly his "Hit 'er up! Hit 'er up!" Then the ice-rim wrinkled up and he sprang back to escape it.

"The first opening," Corliss gasped.

Frona's lips spread apart; she tried to speak but failed, then nodded her head that she had heard. They swung along in rapid rhythm under the rainbow-wall, looking for a place where it might be quickly cleared. And down all the length of Split-up Island they raced vainly, the shore crashing behind them as they fled.

As they darted across the mouth of the back-channel to Roubeau Island they found themselves heading directly for an opening in the rim-ice. La Bijou drove into it full tilt, and went half her length out of water on a shelving cake. The three leaped together, but while the two of them gripped the canoe to run it up, Tommy, in the lead, strove only to save himself. And he would have succeeded had he not slipped and fallen midway in the climb. He half arose, slipped, and fell again. Corliss, hauling on the bow of the canoe, trampled over him. He reached up and clutched the gunwale. They did not have the strength, and this clog brought them at once to a standstill. Corliss looked back



and yelled for him to leave go, but he only turned upward a piteous face, like that of a drowning man, and clutched more tightly. Behind them the ice was thundering. The first flurry of coming destruction was upon them. They endeavored desperately to drag up the canoe, but the added burden was too much, and they fell on their knees. The sick man sat up suddenly and laughed wildly. "Blood of my soul!" he ejaculated, and laughed again.

Roubeau Island swayed to the first shock, and the ice was rocking under their feet. Frona seized a paddle and smashed the Scotsman's knuckles; and the instant he loosed his grip, Corliss carried the canoe up in a mad rush, Frona clinging on and helping from behind. The rainbow-wall curled up like a scroll, and in the convolutions of the scroll, like a bee in the many folds of a magnificent orchid, Tommy disappeared.

They fell, breathless, on the earth. But a monstrous cake shoved up from the jam and balanced above them. Frona tried to struggle to her feet, but sank on her knees; and it remained for Corliss to snatch her and the canoe out from underneath. Again they fell, this time under the trees, the sun sifting down upon them through the green pine needles, the robins singing overhead, and a colony of crickets chirping in the warmth.

## Chapter XXVI

Frona woke, slowly, as though from a long dream. She was lying where she had fallen, across Corliss's legs, while he, on his back, faced the hot sun without concern. She crawled up to him. He was breathing regularly, with closed eyes, which opened to meet hers. He smiled, and she sank down again. Then he rolled over on his side, and they looked at each other.

"Vance."

"Yes."

She reached out her hand; his closed upon it, and their eyelids fluttered and drooped down. The river still rumbled on, somewhere in the infinite distance, but it came to them like the murmur of a world forgotten. A soft languor encompassed them. The golden sunshine dripped down upon them through the living green, and all the life of the warm earth seemed singing. And quiet was very good. Fifteen long minutes they drowsed, and woke again.

Frona sat up. "I — I was afraid," she said.

"Not you."

"Afraid that I might be afraid," she amended, fumbling with her hair.

"Leave it down. The day merits it."

She complied, with a toss of the head which circled it with a nimbus of rippling yellow.

"Tommy's gone," Corliss mused, the race with the ice coming slowly back.

"Yes," she answered. "I rapped him on the knuckles. It was terrible. But the chance is we've a better man in the canoe, and we must care for him at once. Hello! Look there!" Through the trees, not a score of feet away, she saw the wall of a large cabin. "Nobody in sight. It must be deserted, or else they're visiting, whoever they are. You look to our man, Vance, — I'm more presentable, — and I'll go and see."

She skirted the cabin, which was a large one for the Yukon country, and came around to where it fronted on the river. The door stood open, and, as she paused to knock, the whole interior flashed upon her in an astounding picture, — a cumulative picture, or series of pictures, as it were. For first she was aware of a crowd of men, and of some great common purpose upon which all were seriously bent. At her knock they instinctively divided, so that a lane opened up, flanked by their pressed bodies, to the far end of the room. And there, in the long bunks on either side, sat two grave rows of men. And midway between, against the wall, was a table. This table seemed the centre of interest. Fresh from the sun-dazzle, the light within was dim and murky, but she managed to make out a bearded American sitting by the table and hammering it

with a heavy caulking-mallet. And on the opposite side sat St. Vincent. She had time to note his worn and haggard face, before a man of Scandinavian appearance slouched up to the table.

The man with the mallet raised his right hand and said glibly, "You do most solemnly swear that what you are about to give before the court — " He abruptly stopped and glowered at the man before him. "Take off your hat!" he roared, and a snicker went up from the crowd as the man obeyed.

Then he of the mallet began again. "You do most solemnly swear that what you are about to give before the court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?"

The Scandinavian nodded and dropped his hand.

"One moment, gentlemen." Frona advanced up the lane, which closed behind her.

St. Vincent sprang to his feet and stretched out his arms to her.

"Frona," he cried, "oh, Frona, I am innocent!"

It struck her like a blow, the unexpectedness of it, and for the instant, in the sickly light, she was conscious only of the ring of white faces, each face set with eyes that burned. Innocent of what? she thought, and as she looked at St. Vincent, arms still extended, she was aware, in a vague, troubled way, of something distasteful. Innocent of what? He might have had more reserve. He might have waited till he was charged. She did not know that he was charged with anything.

"Friend of the prisoner," the man with the mallet said authoritatively.

"Bring a stool for'ard, some of you."

"One moment . . ." She staggered against the table and rested a hand on it. "I do not understand. This is all new . . ." But her eyes happened to come to rest on her feet, wrapped in dirty rags, and she knew that she was clad in a short and tattered skirt, that her arm peeped forth through a rent in her sleeve, and that her hair was down and flying. Her cheek and neck on one side seemed coated with some curious substance. She brushed it with her hand, and caked mud rattled to the floor.

"That will do," the man said, not unkindly. "Sit down. We're in the same box. We do not understand. But take my word for it, we're here to find out. So sit down."

She raised her hand. "One moment — "

"Sit down!" he thundered. "The court cannot be disturbed."

A hum went up from the crowd, words of dissent, and the man pounded the table for silence. But Frona resolutely kept her feet.

When the noise had subsided, she addressed the man in the chair. "Mr.

Chairman: I take it that this is a miners' meeting." (The man nodded.)

"Then, having an equal voice in the managing of this community's affairs, I demand to be heard. It is important that I should be heard."

"But you are out of order. Miss — er — "

"Welse!" half a dozen voices prompted.

"Miss Welse," he went on, an added respect marking his demeanor, "it grieves me to inform you that you are out of order. You had best sit down."

"I will not," she answered. "I rise to a question of privilege, and if I am not heard, I shall appeal to the meeting."

She swept the crowd with her eyes, and cries went up that she be given a fair show. The chairman yielded and motioned her to go on.

"Mr. Chairman and men: I do not know the business you have at present before you, but I do know that I have more important business to place before you. Just outside this cabin is a man probably dying from starvation. We have brought him from across the river. We should not have bothered you, but we were unable to make our own island. This man I speak of needs immediate attention."

"A couple of you nearest the door go out and look after him," the chairman ordered. "And you, Doc Holiday, go along and see what you can do."

"Ask for a recess," St. Vincent whispered.

Frona nodded her head. "And, Mr. Chairman, I make a motion for a recess until the man is cared for."

Cries of "No recess!" and "Go on with the business!" greeted the putting of it, and the motion was lost.

"Now, Gregory," with a smile and salutation as she took the stool beside him, "what is it?"

He gripped her hand tightly. "Don't believe them, Frona. They are trying to" — with a gulping swallow — "to kill me."

"Why? Do be calm. Tell me."

"Why, last night," he began hurriedly, but broke off to listen to the Scandinavian previously sworn, who was speaking with ponderous slowness.

"I wake wide open quick," he was saying. "I coom to the door. I there hear one shot more."

He was interrupted by a warm-complexioned man, clad in faded mackinaws. "What did you think?" he asked.

"Eh?" the witness queried, his face dark and troubled with perplexity.

"When you came to the door, what was your first thought?"

"A-w-w," the man sighed, his face clearing and infinite comprehension sounding in his voice. "I have no moccasins. I t'ink pretty damn cold." His satisfied expression changed to naive surprise when an outburst of laughter greeted his statement, but he went on stolidly. "One more shot I hear, and I run down the trail."

Then Corliss pressed in through the crowd to Frona, and she lost what the man was saying.

"What's up?" the engineer was asking. "Anything serious? Can I be of any use?"

"Yes, yes." She caught his hand gratefully. "Get over the back-channel somehow and tell my father to come. Tell him that Gregory St. Vincent is in trouble; that he is charged with — What are you charged with, Gregory?" she asked, turning to him.

"Murder."

"Murder?" from Corliss.

"Yes, yes. Say that he is charged with murder; that I am here; and that I need him. And tell him to bring me some clothes. And, Vance," — with a pressure of the hand and swift upward look, — "don't take any . . . any big chances, but do try to make it."

"Oh, I'll make it all right." He tossed his head confidently and proceeded to elbow his way towards the door.

"Who is helping you in your defence?" she asked St. Vincent.

He shook his head. "No. They wanted to appoint some one, — a renegade lawyer from the States, Bill Brown, — but I declined him. He's taken the other side, now. It's lynch law, you know, and their minds are made up. They're bound to get me."

"I wish there were time to hear your side."

"But, Frona, I am innocent. I — "

"S-sh!" She laid her hand on his arm to hush him, and turned her attention to the witness.

"So the noospaper feller, he fight like anything; but Pierre and me, we pull him into the shack. He cry and stand in one place — "

"Who cried?" interrupted the prosecuting lawyer.

"Him. That feller there." The Scandinavian pointed directly at St. Vincent. "And I make a light. The slush-lamp I find spilt over most everything, but I have a candle in my pocket. It is good practice to carry a candle in the pocket," he affirmed gravely. "And Borg he lay on the floor dead. And the squaw say he did it, and then she die, too."

"Said who did it?"

Again his accusing finger singled out St. Vincent. "Him. That feller there."

"Did she?" Frona whispered.

"Yes," St. Vincent whispered back, "she did. But I cannot imagine what prompted her. She must have been out of her head."

The warm-faced man in the faded mackinaws then put the witness through a searching examination, which Frona followed closely, but which elicited little new.

"You have the right to cross-examine the witness," the chairman informed St. Vincent. "Any questions you want to ask?"

The correspondent shook his head.

"Go on," Frona urged.

"What's the use?" he asked, hopelessly. "I'm fore-doomed. The verdict was reached before the trial began."

"One moment, please." Frona's sharp command arrested the retiring witness. "You do not know of your own knowledge who committed this murder?"

The Scandinavian gazed at her with a bovine expression on his leaden features, as though waiting for her question to percolate to his understanding.

"You did not see who did it?" she asked again.

"Aw, yes. That feller there," accusative finger to the fore. "She say he did."

There was a general smile at this.

"But you did not see it?"

"I hear some shooting."

"But you did not see who did the shooting?"

"Aw, no; but she said — "

"That will do, thank you," she said sweetly, and the man retired.

The prosecution consulted its notes. "Pierre La Flitche!" was called out.

A slender, swart-skinned man, lithe of figure and graceful, stepped forward to the open space before the table. He was darkly handsome, with a quick, eloquent eye which roved frankly everywhere. It rested for a moment on Frona, open and honest in its admiration, and she smiled and half-nodded, for she liked him at first glance, and it seemed as though they had met of old time. He smiled pleasantly back, the smooth upper lip curling brightly and showing beautiful teeth, immaculately white.

In answer to the stereotyped preliminaries he stated that his name was that of his father's, a descendant of the coureurs du bois. His mother — with a shrug of the shoulders and flash of teeth — was a breed. He was born somewhere in the Barrens, on a hunting trip, he did not know where. Ah, oui, men called him an old-timer. He had come into the country in the days of Jack McQuestion, across the Rockies from the Great Slave.

On being told to go ahead with what he knew of the matter in hand, he deliberated a moment, as though casting about for the best departure.

"In the spring it is good to sleep with the open door," he began, his words sounding clear and flute-like and marked by haunting memories of the accents his forbears put into the tongue. "And so I sleep last night. But I sleep like the cat. The fall of the leaf, the breath of the wind, and my ears whisper to me, whisper, whisper, all the night long. So, the first shot," with a quick snap of the fingers, "and I am awake, just like that, and I am at the door."

St. Vincent leaned forward to Frona. "It was not the first shot."

She nodded, with her eyes still bent on La Flitche, who gallantly waited.

"Then two more shot," he went on, "quick, together, boom-boom, just like that. 'Borg's shack,' I say to myself, and run down the trail. I think Borg kill Bella, which was bad. Bella very fine girl," he confided with one of his irresistible smiles. "I like Bella. So I run. And John he run from his cabin like a fat cow, with great noise. 'What the matter?' he say; and I say, 'I don't know.' And then something come, wheugh! out of the dark, just like that, and knock John down, and knock me down. We grab everywhere all at once. It is a man. He is in undress. He fight. He cry, 'Oh! Oh! Oh!' just like that. We hold him tight, and bime-by pretty quick, he stop. Then we get up, and I say, 'Come along back.'"

"Who was the man?"

La Flitche turned partly, and rested his eyes on St. Vincent.

"Go on."

"So? The man he will not go back; but John and I say yes, and he go."

"Did he say anything?"

"I ask him what the matter; but he cry, he . . . he sob, huh-tsch, huh-tsch, just like that."

"Did you see anything peculiar about him?"

La Flitche's brows drew up interrogatively.

"Anything uncommon, out of the ordinary?"

"Ah, oui; blood on the hands." Disregarding the murmur in the room, he went on, his facile play of feature and gesture giving dramatic value to the recital. "John make a light, and Bella groan, like the hair-seal when you shoot him in the body, just like that when you shoot him in the body under the flipper. And Borg lay over in the corner. I look. He no breathe 'tall.

"Then Bella open her eyes, and I look in her eyes, and I know she know me, La Flitche. 'Who did it, Bella?' I ask. And she roll her head on the floor and whisper, so low, so slow, 'Him dead?' I know she mean Borg, and I say yes. Then she lift up on one elbow, and look about quick, in big hurry, and when she see Vincent she look no more, only she look at Vincent all the time. Then she point at him, just like that." Suiting the action to the word, La Flitche turned and thrust a wavering finger at the prisoner. "And she say, 'Him, him, him.' And I say, 'Bella, who did it?' And she say, 'Him, him, him. St. Vincha, him do it.' And then" — La Flitche's head felt limply forward on his chest, and came back naturally erect, as he finished, with a flash of teeth, "Dead."

The warm-faced man, Bill Brown, put the quarter-breed through the customary direct examination, which served to strengthen his testimony and to bring out the fact that a terrible struggle must have taken place in the killing of Borg. The heavy table was smashed, the stool and the bunk-board splintered, and the stove over-thrown. "Never did I see anything like it," La Flitche concluded his description of the wreck. "No, never."

Brown turned him over to Frona with a bow, which a smile of hers paid for in full. She did not deem it unwise to cultivate cordiality with the lawyer. What she was working for was time — time for her father to come, time to be closeted with St. Vincent and learn all the details of what really had occurred. So she put questions, questions, interminable questions, to La Flitche. Twice only did anything of moment crop up.

"You spoke of the first shot, Mr. La Flitche. Now, the walls of a log cabin are quite thick. Had your door been closed, do you think you could have heard that first shot?"

He shook his head, though his dark eyes told her he divined the point she was endeavoring to establish.

"And had the door of Borg's cabin been closed, would you have heard?"

Again he shook his head.

"Then, Mr. La Flitche, when you say the first shot, you do not mean necessarily the first shot fired, but rather the first shot you heard fired?"

He nodded, and though she had scored her point she could not see that it had any material bearing after all.

Again she worked up craftily to another and stronger climax, though she felt all the time that La Flitche fathomed her.

"You say it was very dark, Mr. La Flitche?"

"Ah, oui; quite dark."

"How dark? How did you know it was John you met?"

"John make much noise when he run. I know that kind of noise."

"Could you see him so as to know that it was he?"

"Ah, no."

"Then, Mr. La Flitche," she demanded, triumphantly, "will you please state how you knew there was blood on the hands of Mr. St. Vincent?"

His lip lifted in a dazzling smile, and he paused a moment. "How? I feel it warm on his hands. And my nose — ah, the smoke of the hunter camp long way off, the hole where the rabbit hide, the track of the moose which has gone before, does not my nose tell me?" He flung his head back, and with tense face, eyes closed, nostrils quivering and dilated, he simulated the quiescence of all the senses save one and the concentration of his whole being upon that one. Then his eyes fluttered partly open and he regarded her dreamily. "I smell the blood on his hands, the warm blood, the hot blood on his hands."

"And by gad he can do it!" some man exclaimed.

And so convinced was Frona that she glanced involuntarily at St. Vincent's hands, and saw there the rusty-brown stains on the cuffs of his flannel shirt.

As La Flitche left the stand, Bill Brown came over to her and shook hands. "No more than proper I should know the lawyer for the defence," he said, good-naturedly, running over his notes for the next witness.

"But don't you think it is rather unfair to me?" she asked, brightly. "I have not had time to prepare my case. I know nothing about it except what I have gleaned from your two witnesses. Don't you think, Mr. Brown," her voice rippling along in persuasive little notes, "don't you think it would be advisable to adjourn the meeting until to-morrow?"

"Hum," he deliberated, looking at his watch.

"Wouldn't be a bad idea. It's five o'clock, anyway, and the men ought to be cooking their suppers."

She thanked him, as some women can, without speech; yet, as he looked down into her face and eyes, he experienced a subtler and greater satisfaction than if she had spoken.

He stepped to his old position and addressed the room. "On consultation of the defence and the prosecution, and upon consideration of the lateness of the hour and the impossibility of finishing the trial within a reasonable limit, I — hum — I take the liberty of moving an adjournment until eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"The ayes have it," the chairman proclaimed, coming down from his place and proceeding to build the fire, for he was a part-owner of the cabin and cook for his crowd.



## Chapter XXVII

Frona turned to St. Vincent as the last of the crowd filed out. He clutched her hands spasmodically, like a drowning man.

"Do believe me, Frona. Promise me."

Her face flushed. "You are excited," she said, "or you would not say such things. Not that I blame you," she relented. "I hardly imagine the situation can be anything else but exciting."

"Yes, and well I know it," he answered, bitterly. "I am acting like a fool, and I can't help it. The strain has been terrible. And as though the horror of Borg's end were not enough, to be considered the murderer, and haled up for mob justice! Forgive me, Frona. I am beside myself. Of course, I know that you will believe me."

"Then tell me, Gregory."

"In the first place, the woman, Bella, lied. She must have been crazed to make that dying statement when I fought as I did for her and Borg. That is the only explanation —"

"Begin at the beginning," she interrupted. "Remember, I know nothing."

He settled himself more comfortably on the stool, and rolled a cigarette as he took up the history of the previous night.

"It must have been about one in the morning when I was awakened by the lighting of the slush-lamp. I thought it was Borg; wondered what he was prowling about for, and was on the verge of dropping off to sleep, when, though I do not know what prompted me, I opened my eyes. Two strange men were in the cabin. Both wore masks and fur caps with the flaps pulled down, so that I could see nothing of their faces save the glistening of the eyes through the eye-slits.

"I had no first thought, unless it was that danger threatened. I lay quietly for a second and deliberated. Borg had borrowed my pistol, and I was actually unarmed. My rifle was by the door. I decided to make a rush for it. But no sooner had I struck the floor than one of the men turned on me, at the same time firing his revolver. That was the first shot, and the one La Flitche did not hear. It was in the struggle afterwards that the door was burst open, which enabled him to hear the last three.

"Well; I was so close to the man, and my leap out of the bunk was so unexpected, that he missed me. The next moment we grappled and rolled on the floor. Of course, Borg was aroused, and the second man turned his attention to him and Bella. It was this second man who did the killing, for my man, naturally, had his hands full. You heard the testimony. From the way the cabin was wrecked, you can picture the

struggle. We rolled and tossed about and fought till stools, table, shelves — everything was smashed.

“Oh, Frona, it was terrible! Borg fighting for life, Bella helping him, though wounded and groaning, and I unable to aid. But finally, in a very short while, I began to conquer the man with whom I was struggling. I had got him down on his back, pinioned his arms with my knees, and was slowly throttling him, when the other man finished his work and turned on me also. What could I do? Two to one, and winded! So I was thrown into the corner, and they made their escape. I confess that I must have been badly rattled by that time, for as soon as I caught my breath I took out after them, and without a weapon. Then I collided with La Flitche and John, and — and you know the rest. Only,” he knit his brows in puzzlement, “only, I cannot understand why Bella should accuse me.”

He looked at her appealingly, and, though she pressed his hand sympathetically, she remained silent, weighing pro and con what she had heard.

She shook her head slowly. “It’s a bad case, and the thing is to convince them — ”

“But, my God, Frona, I am innocent! I have not been a saint, perhaps, but my hands are clean from blood.”

“But remember, Gregory,” she said, gently, “I am not to judge you. Unhappily, it rests with the men of this miners’ meeting, and the problem is: how are they to be convinced of your innocence? The two main points are against you, — Bella’s dying words and the blood on your sleeve.”

“The place was areek with blood,” St. Vincent cried passionately, springing to his feet. “I tell you it was areek! How could I avoid floundering in it, fighting as I was for life? Can you not take my word — ”

“There, there, Gregory. Sit down. You are truly beside yourself. If your case rested with me, you know you would go free and clean. But these men, — you know what mob rule is, — how are we to persuade them to let you go? Don’t you see? You have no witnesses. A dying woman’s words are more sacred than a living man’s. Can you show cause for the woman to die with a lie on her lips? Had she any reason to hate you? Had you done her or her husband an injury?”

He shook his head.

“Certainly, to us the thing is inexplicable; but the miners need no explanation. To them it is obvious. It rests with us to disprove the obvious. Can we do it?”

The correspondent sank down despondently, with a collapsing of the chest and a drooping forward of the shoulders. “Then am I indeed lost.”

“No, it’s not so bad as that. You shall not be hanged. Trust me for that.”

“But what can you do?” he asked, despairingly. “They have usurped the law, have made themselves the law.”

“In the first place, the river has broken. That means everything. The Governor and the territorial judges may be expected in at any moment with a detachment of police at their backs. And they’re certain to stop here. And, furthermore, we may be able to

do something ourselves. The river is open, and if it comes to the worst, escape would be another way out; and escape is the last thing they would dream of."

"No, no; impossible. What are you and I against the many?"

"But there's my father and Baron Courbertin. Four determined people, acting together, may perform miracles, Gregory, dear. Trust me, it shall come out well."

She kissed him and ran her hand through his hair, but the worried look did not depart.

Jacob Welse crossed over the back-channel long before dark, and with him came Del, the baron, and Corliss. While Frona retired to change her clothes in one of the smaller cabins, which the masculine owners readily turned over to her, her father saw to the welfare of the mail-carrier. The despatches were of serious import, so serious that long after Jacob Welse had read and re-read them his face was dark and clouded; but he put the anxiety from him when he returned to Frona. St. Vincent, who was confined in an adjoining cabin, was permitted to see them.

"It looks bad," Jacob Welse said, on parting for the night. "But rest assured, St. Vincent, bad or not, you'll not be stretched up so long as I've a hand to play in the rumpus. I am certain you did not kill Borg, and there's my fist on it."

"A long day," Corliss remarked, as he walked back with Frona to her cabin.

"And a longer to-morrow," she answered, wearily. "And I'm so sleepy."

"You're a brave little woman, and I'm proud of you." It was ten o'clock, and he looked out through the dim twilight to the ghostly ice drifting steadily by. "And in this trouble," he went on, "depend upon me in any way."

"In any way?" she queried, with a catch in her voice.

"If I were a hero of the melodrama I'd say; 'To the death!' but as I'm not; I'll just repeat, in any way."

"You are good to me, Vance. I can never repay — "

"Tut! tut! I do not put myself on sale. Love is service, I believe."

She looked at him for a long time, but while her face betrayed soft wonder, at heart she was troubled, she knew not why, and the events of the day, and of all the days since she had known him, came fluttering through her mind.

"Do you believe in a white friendship?" she asked at last. "For I do hope that such a bond may hold us always. A bright, white friendship, a comradeship, as it were?" And as she asked, she was aware that the phrase did not quite express what she felt and would desire. And when he shook his head, she experienced a glad little inexplicable thrill.

"A comradeship?" he questioned. "When you know I love you?"

"Yes," she affirmed in a low voice.

"I am afraid, after all, that your knowledge of man is very limited. Believe me, we are not made of such clay. A comradeship? A coming in out of the cold to sit by your fire? Good. But a coming in when another man sits with you by your fire? No. Comradeship would demand that I delight in your delights, and yet, do you think for a moment that I could see you with another man's child in your arms, a child which

might have been mine; with that other man looking out at me through the child's eyes, laughing at me through its mouth? I say, do you think I could delight in your delights? No, no; love cannot shackle itself with white friendships."

She put her hand on his arm.

"Do you think I am wrong?" he asked, bewildered by the strange look in her face.

She was sobbing quietly.

"You are tired and overwrought. So there, good-night. You must get to bed."

"No, don't go, not yet." And she arrested him. "No, no; I am foolish.

As you say, I am tired. But listen, Vance. There is much to be done.

We must plan to-morrow's work. Come inside. Father and Baron

Courbertin are together, and if the worst comes, we four must do big things."

"Spectacular," Jacob Welse commented, when Frana had briefly outlined the course of action and assigned them their parts. "But its very unexpectedness ought to carry it through."

"A coup d'etat!" was the Baron's verdict. "Magnificent! Ah! I feel warm all over at the thought. 'Hands up!' I cry, thus, and very fierce.

"And if they do not hold up their hands?" he appealed to Jacob Welse.

"Then shoot. Never bluff when you're behind a gun, Courbertin. It's held by good authorities to be unhealthy."

"And you are to take charge of La Bijou, Vance," Frana said. "Father thinks there will be little ice to-morrow if it doesn't jam to-night. All you've to do is to have the canoe by the bank just before the door. Of course, you won't know what is happening until St. Vincent comes running. Then in with him, and away you go — Dawson! So I'll say good-night and good-by now, for I may not have the opportunity in the morning."

"And keep the left-hand channel till you're past the bend," Jacob Welse counselled him; "then take the cut-offs to the right and follow the swiftest water. Now off with you and into your blankets. It's seventy miles to Dawson, and you'll have to make it at one clip."

## Chapter XXVIII

Jacob Welse was given due respect when he arose at the convening of the miners' meeting and denounced the proceedings. While such meetings had performed a legitimate function in the past, he contended, when there was no law in the land, that time was now beyond recall; for law was now established, and it was just law. The Queen's government had shown itself fit to cope with the situation, and for them to usurp its powers was to step backward into the night out of which they had come. Further, no lighter word than "criminal" could characterize such conduct. And yet further, he promised them, in set, sober terms, if anything serious were the outcome, to take an active part in the prosecution of every one of them. At the conclusion of his speech he made a motion to hold the prisoner for the territorial court and to adjourn, but was voted down without discussion.

"Don't you see," St. Vincent said to Frona, "there is no hope?"

"But there is. Listen!" And she swiftly outlined the plot of the night before.

He followed her in a half-hearted way, too crushed to partake of her enthusiasm. "It's madness to attempt it," he objected, when she had done.

"And it looks very much like hanging not to attempt it," she answered a little spiritedly. "Surely you will make a fight?"

"Surely," he replied, hollowly.

The first witnesses were two Swedes, who told of the wash-tub incident, when Borg had given way to one of his fits of anger. Trivial as the incident was, in the light of subsequent events it at once became serious. It opened the way for the imagination into a vast familiar field. It was not so much what was said as what was left unsaid. Men born of women, the rudest of them, knew life well enough to be aware of its significance, — a vulgar common happening, capable of but one interpretation. Heads were wagged knowingly in the course of the testimony, and whispered comments went the rounds.

Half a dozen witnesses followed in rapid succession, all of whom had closely examined the scene of the crime and gone over the island carefully, and all of whom were agreed that there was not the slightest trace to be found of the two men mentioned by the prisoner in his preliminary statement.

To Frona's surprise, Del Bishop went upon the stand. She knew he disliked St. Vincent, but could not imagine any evidence he could possess which would bear upon the case.

Being sworn, and age and nationality ascertained, Bill Brown asked him his business.

"Pocket-miner," he challenged back, sweeping the assemblage with an aggressive glance.

Now, it happens that a very small class of men follow pocketing, and that a very large class of men, miners, too, disbelieve utterly in any such method or obtaining gold.

"Pocket-miner!" sneered a red-shirted, patriarchal-looking man, a man who had washed his first pan in the Californian diggings in the early fifties.

"Yep," Del affirmed.

"Now, look here, young feller," his interlocutor continued, "d'ye mean to tell me you ever struck it in such-fangled way?"

"Yep."

"Don't believe it," with a contemptuous shrug.

Del swallowed fast and raised his head with a jerk. "Mr. Chairman, I rise to make a statement. I won't interfere with the dignity of the court, but I just wish to simply and distinctly state that after the meeting's over I'm going to punch the head of every man that gets gay. Understand?"

"You're out of order," the chairman replied, rapping the table with the caulking-mallet.

"And your head, too," Del cried, turning upon him. "Damn poor order you preserve. Pocketing's got nothing to do with this here trial, and why don't you shut such fool questions out? I'll take care of you afterwards, you potwolloper!"

"You will, will you?" The chairman grew red in the face, dropped the mallet, and sprang to his feet.

Del stepped forward to meet him, but Bill Brown sprang in between and held them apart.

"Order, gentlemen, order," he begged. "This is no time for unseemly exhibitions. And remember there are ladies present."

The two men grunted and subsided, and Bill Brown asked, "Mr. Bishop, we understand that you are well acquainted with the prisoner. Will you please tell the court what you know of his general character?"

Del broadened into a smile. "Well, in the first place, he's an extremely quarrelsome disposition — "

"Hold! I won't have it!" The prisoner was on his feet, trembling with anger. "You shall not swear my life away in such fashion! To bring a madman, whom I have only met once in my life, to testify as to my character!"

The pocket-miner turned to him. "So you don't know me, eh, Gregory St. Vincent?"

"No," St. Vincent replied, coldly, "I do not know you, my man."

"Don't you man me!" Del shouted, hotly.

But St. Vincent ignored him, turning to the crowd.

"I never saw the fellow but once before, and then for a few brief moments in Dawson."

"You'll remember before I'm done," Del sneered; "so hold your hush and let me say my little say. I come into the country with him way back in '84."

St. Vincent regarded him with sudden interest.

"Yep, Mr. Gregory St. Vincent. I see you begin to recollect. I sported whiskers and my name was Brown, Joe Brown, in them days."

He grinned vindictively, and the correspondent seemed to lose all interest.

"Is it true, Gregory?" Frona whispered.

"I begin to recognize," he muttered, slowly. "I don't know . . . no, folly! The man must have died."

"You say in '84, Mr. Bishop?" Bill Brown prompted.

"Yep, in '84. He was a newspaper-man, bound round the world by way of Alaska and Siberia. I'd run away from a whaler at Sitka, — that squares it with Brown, — and I engaged with him for forty a month and found. Well, he quarrelled with me — "

A snicker, beginning from nowhere in particular, but passing on from man to man and swelling in volume, greeted this statement. Even Frona and Del himself were forced to smile, and the only sober face was the prisoner's.

"But he quarrelled with Old Andy at Dyea, and with Chief George of the Chilcoots, and the Factor at Pelly, and so on down the line. He got us into no end of trouble, and 'specially woman-trouble. He was always monkeying around — "

"Mr. Chairman, I object." Frona stood up, her face quite calm and blood under control. "There is no necessity for bringing in the amours of Mr. St. Vincent. They have no bearing whatsoever upon the case; and, further, none of the men of this meeting are clean enough to be prompted by the right motive in conducting such an inquiry. So I demand that the prosecution at least confine itself to relevant testimony."

Bill Brown came up smugly complacent and smiling. "Mr. Chairman, we willingly accede to the request made by the defence. Whatever we have brought out has been relevant and material. Whatever we intend to bring out shall be relevant and material. Mr. Bishop is our star witness, and his testimony is to the point. It must be taken into consideration that we have no direct evidence as to the murder of John Borg. We can bring no eye-witnesses into court. Whatever we have is circumstantial. It is incumbent upon us to show cause. To show cause it is necessary to go into the character of the accused. This we intend to do. We intend to show his adulterous and lustful nature, which has culminated in a dastardly deed and jeopardized his neck. We intend to show that the truth is not in him; that he is a liar beyond price; that no word he may speak upon the stand need be accepted by a jury of his peers. We intend to show all this, and to weave it together, thread by thread, till we have a rope long enough and strong enough to hang him with before the day is done. So I respectfully submit, Mr. Chairman, that the witness be allowed to proceed."

The chairman decided against Frona, and her appeal to the meeting was voted down. Bill Brown nodded to Del to resume.

"As I was saying, he got us into no end of trouble. Now, I've been mixed up with water all my life, — never can get away from it, it seems, — and the more I'm mixed the less I know about it. St. Vincent knew this, too, and him a clever hand at the paddle; yet he left me to run the Box Canyon alone while he walked around. Result: I was turned over, lost half the outfit and all the tobacco, and then he put the blame on me besides. Right after that he got tangled up with the Lake Le Barge Sticks, and both of us came near croaking."

"And why was that?" Bill Brown interjected.

"All along of a pretty squaw that looked too kindly at him. After we got clear, I lectured him on women in general and squaws in particular, and he promised to behave. Then we had a hot time with the Little Salmons. He was cuter this time, and I didn't know for keeps, but I guessed. He said it was the medicine man who got hostile; but nothing'll stir up a medicine man quicker'n women, and the facts pointed that way. When I talked it over with him in a fatherly way he got wrathful, and I had to take him out on the bank and give him a thrashing. Then he got sulky, and didn't brighten up till we ran into the mouth of the Reindeer River, where a camp of Siwash were fishing salmon. But he had it in for me all the time, only I didn't know it, — was ready any time to give me the double cross.

"Now, there's no denying he's got a taking way with women. All he has to do is to whistle 'em up like dogs. Most remarkable faculty, that. There was the wickedest, prettiest squaw among the Reindeers. Never saw her beat, excepting Bella. Well, I guess he whistled her up, for he delayed in the camp longer than was necessary. Being partial to women — "

"That will do, Mr. Bishop," interrupted the chairman, who, from profitless watching of Frona's immobile face, had turned to her hand, the nervous twitching and clinching of which revealed what her face had hidden. "That will do, Mr. Bishop. I think we have had enough of squaws."

"Pray do not temper the testimony," Frona chirruped, sweetly. "It seems very important."

"Do you know what I am going to say next?" Del demanded hotly of the chairman. "You don't, eh? Then shut up. I'm running this particular sideshow."

Bill Brown sprang in to avert hostilities, but the chairman restrained himself, and Bishop went on.

"I'd been done with the whole shooting-match, squaws and all, if you hadn't broke me off. Well, as I said, he had it in for me, and the first thing I didn't know, he'd hit me on the head with a rifle-stock, bundled the squaw into the canoe, and pulled out. You all know what the Yukon country was in '84. And there I was, without an outfit, left alone, a thousand miles from anywhere. I got out all right, though there's no need of telling how, and so did he. You've all heard of his adventures in Siberia. Well," with an impressive pause, "I happen to know a thing or two myself."

He shoved a hand into the big pocket of his mackinaw jacket and pulled out a dingy leather-bound volume of venerable appearance.



"I got this from Pete Whipple's old woman, — Whipple of Eldorado. It concerns her grand-uncle or great-grand-uncle, I don't know which; and if there's anybody here can read Russian, why, it'll go into the details of that Siberian trip. But as there's no one here that can — "

"Courbertin! He can read it!" some one called in the crowd.

A way was made for the Frenchman forthwith, and he was pushed and shoved, protestingly, to the front.

"Savve the lingo?" Del demanded.

"Yes; but so poorly, so miserable," Courbertin demurred. "It is a long time. I forget."

"Go ahead. We won't criticise."

"No, but — "

"Go ahead!" the chairman commanded.

Del thrust the book into his hands, opened at the yellow title-page. "I've been itching to get my paws on some buck like you for months and months," he assured him, gleefully. "And now I've got you, you can't shake me, Charley. So fire away."

Courbertin began hesitatingly: "'The Journal of Father Yakontsk, Comprising an Account in Brief of his Life in the Benedictine Monastery at Obidorsky, and in Full of his Marvellous Adventures in East Siberia among the Deer Men.'"

The baron looked up for instructions.

"Tell us when it was printed," Del ordered him.

"In Warsaw, 1807."

The pocket-miner turned triumphantly to the room. "Did you hear that? Just keep track of it. 1807, remember!"

The baron took up the opening paragraph. "'It was because of Tamerlane,'" he commenced, unconsciously putting his translation into a construction with which he was already familiar.

At his first words Frona turned white, and she remained white throughout the reading. Once she stole a glance at her father, and was glad that he was looking straight before him, for she did not feel able to meet his gaze just then. On the other hand, though she knew St. Vincent was eying her narrowly, she took no notice of him, and all he could see was a white face devoid of expression.

"'When Tamerlane swept with fire and sword over Eastern Asia,'" Courbertin read slowly, "'states were disrupted, cities overthrown, and tribes scattered like — like star-dust. A vast people was hurled broadcast over the land. Fleeing before the conquerors,' — no, no, — 'before the mad lust of the conquerors, these refugees swung far into Siberia, circling, circling to the north and east and fringing the rim of the polar basin with a spray of Mongol tribes.'"

"Skip a few pages," Bill Brown advised, "and read here and there. We haven't got all night."

Courbertin complied. "'The coast people are Eskimo stock, merry of nature and not offensive. They call themselves the Oukilion, or the Sea Men. From them I bought dogs and food. But they are subject to the Chow Chuen, who live in the interior and

are known as the Deer Men. The Chow Chuen are a fierce and savage race. When I left the coast they fell upon me, took from me my goods, and made me a slave.” He ran over a few pages. “I worked my way to a seat among the head men, but I was no nearer my freedom. My wisdom was of too great value to them for me to depart. . . Old Pi-One was a great chief, and it was decreed that I should marry his daughter Ilswunga. Ilswunga was a filthy creature. She would not bathe, and her ways were not good . . . I did marry Ilswunga, but she was a wife to me only in name. Then did she complain to her father, the old Pi-One, and he was very wroth. And dissension was sown among the tribes; but in the end I became mightier than ever, what of my cunning and resource; and Ilswunga made no more complaint, for I taught her games with cards which she might play by herself, and other things.”

“Is that enough?” Courbertin asked.

“Yes, that will do,” Bill Brown answered. “But one moment. Please state again the date of publication.”

“1807, in Warsaw.”

“Hold on, baron,” Del Bishop spoke up. “Now that you’re on the stand, I’ve got a question or so to slap into you.” He turned to the court-room. “Gentlemen, you’ve all heard somewhat of the prisoner’s experiences in Siberia. You’ve caught on to the remarkable sameness between them and those published by Father Yakontsk nearly a hundred years ago. And you have concluded that there’s been some wholesale cribbing somewhere. I propose to show you that it’s more than cribbing. The prisoner gave me the shake on the Reindeer River in ‘88. Fall of ‘88 he was at St. Michael’s on his way to Siberia. ‘89 and ‘90 he was, by his talk, cutting up antics in Siberia. ‘91 he come back to the world, working the conquering-hero graft in ‘Frisco. Now let’s see if the Frenchman can make us wise.

“You were in Japan?” he asked.

Courbertin, who had followed the dates, made a quick calculation, and could but illy conceal his surprise. He looked appealingly to Frona, but she did not help him. “Yes,” he said, finally.

“And you met the prisoner there?”

“Yes.”

“What year was it?”

There was a general craning forward to catch the answer.

“1889,” and it came unwillingly.

“Now, how can that be, baron?” Del asked in a wheedling tone. “The prisoner was in Siberia at that time.”

Courbertin shrugged his shoulders that it was no concern of his, and came off the stand. An impromptu recess was taken by the court-room for several minutes, wherein there was much whispering and shaking of heads.

“It is all a lie.” St. Vincent leaned close to Frona’s ear, but she did not hear.

“Appearances are against me, but I can explain it all.”

But she did not move a muscle, and he was called to the stand by the chairman. She turned to her father, and the tears rushed up into her eyes when he rested his hand on hers.

“Do you care to pull out?” he asked after a momentary hesitation.

She shook her head, and St. Vincent began to speak. It was the same story he had told her, though told now a little more fully, and in nowise did it conflict with the evidence of La Flitche and John. He acknowledged the wash-tub incident, caused, he explained, by an act of simple courtesy on his part and by John Borg’s unreasoning anger. He acknowledged that Bella had been killed by his own pistol, but stated that the pistol had been borrowed by Borg several days previously and not returned. Concerning Bella’s accusation he could say nothing. He could not see why she should die with a lie on her lips. He had never in the slightest way incurred her displeasure, so even revenge could not be advanced. It was inexplicable. As for the testimony of Bishop, he did not care to discuss it. It was a tissue of falsehood cunningly interwoven with truth. It was true the man had gone into Alaska with him in 1888, but his version of the things which happened there was maliciously untrue. Regarding the baron, there was a slight mistake in the dates, that was all.

In questioning him. Bill Brown brought out one little surprise. From the prisoner’s story, he had made a hard fight against the two mysterious men. “If,” Brown asked, “such were the case, how can you explain away the fact that you came out of the struggle unmarked? On examination of the body of John Borg, many bruises and contusions were noticeable. How is it, if you put up such a stiff fight, that you escaped being battered?”

St. Vincent did not know, though he confessed to feeling stiff and sore all over. And it did not matter, anyway. He had killed neither Borg nor his wife, that much he did know.

Frona prefaced her argument to the meeting with a pithy discourse on the sacredness of human life, the weaknesses and dangers of circumstantial evidence, and the rights of the accused wherever doubt arose. Then she plunged into the evidence, stripping off the superfluous and striving to confine herself to facts. In the first place, she denied that a motive for the deed had been shown. As it was, the introduction of such evidence was an insult to their intelligence, and she had sufficient faith in their manhood and perspicacity to know that such puerility would not sway them in the verdict they were to give.

And, on the other hand, in dealing with the particular points at issue, she denied that any intimacy had been shown to have existed between Bella and St. Vincent; and she denied, further, that it had been shown that any intimacy had been attempted on the part of St. Vincent. Viewed honestly, the wash-tub incident — the only evidence brought forward — was a laughable little affair, portraying how the simple courtesy of a gentleman might be misunderstood by a mad boor of a husband. She left it to their common sense; they were not fools.

They had striven to prove the prisoner bad-tempered. She did not need to prove anything of the sort concerning John Borg. They all knew his terrible fits of anger; they all knew that his temper was proverbial in the community; that it had prevented him having friends and had made him many enemies. Was it not very probable, therefore, that the masked men were two such enemies? As to what particular motive actuated these two men, she could not say; but it rested with them, the judges, to know whether in all Alaska there were or were not two men whom John Borg could have given cause sufficient for them to take his life.

Witness had testified that no traces had been found of these two men; but the witness had not testified that no traces had been found of St. Vincent, Pierre La Flitche, or John the Swede. And there was no need for them so to testify. Everybody knew that no foot-marks were left when St. Vincent ran up the trail, and when he came back with La Flitche and the other man. Everybody knew the condition of the trail, that it was a hard-packed groove in the ground, on which a soft moccasin could leave no impression; and that had the ice not gone down the river, no traces would have been left by the murderers in passing from and to the mainland.

At this juncture La Flitche nodded his head in approbation, and she went on.

Capital had been made out of the blood on St. Vincent's hands. If they chose to examine the moccasins at that moment on the feet of Mr. La Flitche, they would also find blood. That did not argue that Mr. La Flitche had been a party to the shedding of the blood.

Mr. Brown had drawn attention to the fact that the prisoner had not been bruised or marked in the savage encounter which had taken place. She thanked him for having done so. John Borg's body showed that it had been roughly used. He was a larger, stronger, heavier man than St. Vincent. If, as charged, St. Vincent had committed the murder, and necessarily, therefore, engaged in a struggle severe enough to bruise John Borg, how was it that he had come out unharmed? That was a point worthy of consideration.

Another one was, why did he run down the trail? It was inconceivable, if he had committed the murder, that he should, without dressing or preparation for escape, run towards the other cabins. It was, however, easily conceivable that he should take up the pursuit of the real murderers, and in the darkness — exhausted, breathless, and certainly somewhat excited — run blindly down the trail.

Her summing up was a strong piece of synthesis; and when she had done, the meeting applauded her roundly. But she was angry and hurt, for she knew the demonstration was for her sex rather than for her cause and the work she had done.

Bill Brown, somewhat of a shyster, and his ear ever cocked to the crowd, was not above taking advantage when opportunity offered, and when it did not offer, to dogmatize artfully. In this his native humor was a strong factor, and when he had finished with the mysterious masked men they were as exploded sun-myths, — which phrase he promptly applied to them.

They could not have got off the island. The condition of the ice for the three or four hours preceding the break-up would not have permitted it. The prisoner had implicated none of the residents of the island, while every one of them, with the exception of the prisoner, had been accounted for elsewhere. Possibly the prisoner was excited when he ran down the trail into the arms of La Flitche and John the Swede. One should have thought, however, that he had grown used to such things in Siberia. But that was immaterial; the facts were that he was undoubtedly in an abnormal state of excitement, that he was hysterically excited, and that a murderer under such circumstances would take little account of where he ran. Such things had happened before. Many a man had butted into his own retribution.

In the matter of the relations of Borg, Bella, and St. Vincent, he made a strong appeal to the instinctive prejudices of his listeners, and for the time being abandoned matter-of-fact reasoning for all-potent sentimental platitudes. He granted that circumstantial evidence never proved anything absolutely. It was not necessary it should. Beyond the shadow of a reasonable doubt was all that was required. That this had been done, he went on to review the testimony.

"And, finally," he said, "you can't get around Bella's last words. We know nothing of our own direct knowledge. We've been feeling around in the dark, clutching at little things, and trying to figure it all out. But, gentlemen," he paused to search the faces of his listeners, "Bella knew the truth. Hers is no circumstantial evidence. With quick, anguished breath, and life-blood ebbing from her, and eyeballs glazing, she spoke the truth. With dark night coming on, and the death-rattle in her throat, she raised herself weakly and pointed a shaking finger at the accused, thus, and she said, 'Him, him, him. St. Vincha, him do it.'"

With Bill Brown's finger still boring into him, St. Vincent struggled to his feet. His face looked old and gray, and he looked about him speechlessly. "Funk! Funk!" was whispered back and forth, and not so softly but what he heard. He moistened his lips repeatedly, and his tongue fought for articulation. "It is as I have said," he succeeded, finally. "I did not do it. Before God, I did not do it!" He stared fixedly at John the Swede, waiting the while on his laggard thought. "I . . . I did not do it . . . I did not . . . I . . . I did not."

He seemed to have become lost in some supreme meditation wherein John the Swede figured largely, and as Frona caught him by the hand and pulled him gently down, some man cried out, "Secret ballot!"

But Bill Brown was on his feet at once. "No! I say no! An open ballot! We are men, and as men are not afraid to put ourselves on record."

A chorus of approval greeted him, and the open ballot began. Man after man, called upon by name, spoke the one word, "Guilty."

Baron Courbertin came forward and whispered to Frona. She nodded her head and smiled, and he edged his way back, taking up a position by the door. He voted "Not guilty" when his turn came, as did Frona and Jacob Welse. Pierre La Flitche wavered

a moment, looking keenly at Frona and St. Vincent, then spoke up, clear and flute-like, "Guilty."

As the chairman arose, Jacob Welse casually walked over to the opposite side of the table and stood with his back to the stove. Courbertin, who had missed nothing, pulled a pickle-keg out from the wall and stepped upon it.

The chairman cleared his throat and rapped for order. "Gentlemen," he announced, "the prisoner — "

"Hands up!" Jacob Welse commanded peremptorily, and a fraction of a second after him came the shrill "Hands up, gentlemen!" of Courbertin.

Front and rear they commanded the crowd with their revolvers. Every hand was in the air, the chairman's having gone up still grasping the mallet. There was no disturbance. Each stood or sat in the same posture as when the command went forth. Their eyes, playing here and there among the central figures, always returned to Jacob Welse.

St. Vincent sat as one dumfounded. Frona thrust a revolver into his hand, but his limp fingers refused to close on it.

"Come, Gregory," she entreated. "Quick! Corliss is waiting with the canoe. Come!"

She shook him, and he managed to grip the weapon. Then she pulled and tugged, as when awakening a heavy sleeper, till he was on his feet. But his face was livid, his eyes like a somnambulist's, and he was afflicted as with a palsy. Still holding him, she took a step backward for him to come on. He ventured it with a shaking knee. There was no sound save the heavy breathing of many men. A man coughed slightly and cleared his throat. It was disquieting, and all eyes centred upon him rebukingly. The man became embarrassed, and shifted his weight uneasily to the other leg. Then the heavy breathing settled down again.

St. Vincent took another step, but his fingers relaxed and the revolver fell with a loud noise to the floor. He made no effort to recover it. Frona stooped hurriedly, but Pierre La Flitche had set his foot upon it. She looked up and saw his hands above his head and his eyes fixed absently on Jacob Welse. She pushed at his leg, and the muscles were tense and hard, giving the lie to the indifference on his face. St. Vincent looked down helplessly, as though he could not understand.

But this delay drew the attention of Jacob Welse, and, as he tried to make out the cause, the chairman found his chance. Without crooking, his right arm swept out and down, the heavy caulking-mallet leaping from his hand. It spanned the short distance and smote Jacob Welse below the ear. His revolver went off as he fell, and John the Swede grunted and clapped a hand to his thigh.

Simultaneous with this the baron was overcome. Del Bishop, with hands still above his head and eyes fixed innocently before him, had simply kicked the pickle-keg out from under the Frenchman and brought him to the floor. His bullet, however, sped harmlessly through the roof. La Flitche seized Frona in his arms. St. Vincent, suddenly awakening, sprang for the door, but was tripped up by the breed's ready foot.

The chairman pounded the table with his fist and concluded his broken sentence, "Gentlemen, the prisoner is found guilty as charged."

## Chapter XXIX

Frona had gone at once to her father's side, but he was already recovering. Courbertin was brought forward with a scratched face, sprained wrist, and an insubordinate tongue. To prevent discussion and to save time, Bill Brown claimed the floor.

"Mr. Chairman, while we condemn the attempt on the part of Jacob Welse, Frona Welse, and Baron Courbertin to rescue the prisoner and thwart justice, we cannot, under the circumstances, but sympathize with them. There is no need that I should go further into this matter. You all know, and doubtless, under a like situation, would have done the same. And so, in order that we may expeditiously finish the business, I make a motion to disarm the three prisoners and let them go."

The motion was carried, and the two men searched for weapons. Frona was saved this by giving her word that she was no longer armed. The meeting then resolved itself into a hanging committee, and began to file out of the cabin.

"Sorry I had to do it," the chairman said, half-apologetically, half-defiantly.

Jacob Welse smiled. "You took your chance," he answered, "and I can't blame you. I only wish I'd got you, though."

Excited voices arose from across the cabin. "Here, you! Leggo!" "Step on his fingers, Tim!" "Break that grip!" "Ouch! Ow!" "Pry his mouth open!"

Frona saw a knot of struggling men about St. Vincent, and ran over. He had thrown himself down on the floor and, tooth and nail, was fighting like a madman. Tim Dugan, a stalwart Celt, had come to close quarters with him, and St. Vincent's teeth were sunk in the man's arm.

"Smash 'm, Tim! Smash 'm!"

"How can I, ye fule? Get a pry on his mouth, will ye?"

"One moment, please." The men made way for her, drawing back and leaving St. Vincent and Tim.

Frona knelt down by him. "Leave go, Gregory. Do leave go."

He looked up at her, and his eyes did not seem human. He breathed stertorously, and in his throat were the queer little gasping noises of one overwrought.

"It is I, Gregory." She brushed her hand soothingly across his brow.

"Don't you understand? It is I, Frona. Do leave go."

His whole body slowly relaxed, and a peaceful expression grew upon his face. His jaw dropped, and the man's arm was withdrawn.

"Now listen, Gregory. Though you are to die — "



"But I cannot! I cannot!" he groaned. "You said that I could trust to you, that all would come well."

She thought of the chance which had been given, but said nothing.

"Oh, Frona! Frona!" He sobbed and buried his face in her lap.

"At least you can be a man. It is all that remains."

"Come on!" Tim Dugan commanded. "Sorry to bother ye, miss, but we've got to fetch 'm along. Drag 'm out, you fellys! Catch 'm by the legs, Blackey, and you, too, Johnson."

St. Vincent's body stiffened at the words, the rational gleam went out of his eyes, and his fingers closed spasmodically on Frona's. She looked entreaty at the men, and they hesitated.

"Give me a minute with him," she begged, "just a minute."

"He ain't worth it," Dugan sneered, after they had drawn apart. "Look at 'm."

"It's a damned shame," corroborated Blackey, squinting sideways at Frona whispering in St. Vincent's ear, the while her hand wandered caressingly through his hair.

What she said they did not hear, but she got him on his feet and led him forward. He walked as a dead man might walk, and when he entered the open air gazed forth wonderingly upon the muddy sweep of the Yukon. The crowd had formed by the bank, about a pine tree. A boy, engaged in running a rope over one of the branches, finished his task and slid down the trunk to the ground. He looked quickly at the palms of his hands and blew upon them, and a laugh went up. A couple of wolf-dogs, on the outskirts, bristled up to each other and bared their fangs. Men encouraged them. They closed in and rolled over, but were kicked aside to make room for St. Vincent.

Corliss came up the bank to Frona. "What's up?" he whispered. "Is it off?"

She tried to speak, but swallowed and nodded her head.

"This way, Gregory." She touched his arm and guided him to the box beneath the rope.

Corliss, keeping step with them, looked over the crowd speculatively and felt into his jacket-pocket. "Can I do anything?" he asked, gnawing his under lip impatiently. "Whatever you say goes, Frona. I can stand them off."

She looked at him, aware of pleasure in the sight. She knew he would dare it, but she knew also that it would be unfair. St. Vincent had had his chance, and it was not right that further sacrifice should be made. "No, Vance. It is too late. Nothing can be done."

"At least let me try," he persisted.

"No; it is not our fault that our plan failed, and . . . and . . ." Her eyes filled. "Please do not ask it of me."

"Then let me take you away. You cannot remain here."

"I must," she answered, simply, and turned to St. Vincent, who seemed dreaming.

Blackey was tying the hangman's knot in the rope's end, preparatory to slipping the noose over St. Vincent's head.

"Kiss me, Gregory," she said, her hand on his arm.

He started at the touch, and saw all eager eyes centred upon him, and the yellow noose, just shaped, in the hands of the hangman. He threw up his arms, as though to ward it off, and cried loudly, "No! no! Let me confess! Let me tell the truth, then you'll believe me!"

Bill Brown and the chairman shoved Blackey back, and the crowd gathered in. Cries and protestations rose from its midst. "No, you don't," a boy's shrill voice made itself heard. "I'm not going to go. I climbed the tree and made the rope fast, and I've got a right to stay." "You're only a kid," replied a man's voice, "and it ain't good for you." "I don't care, and I'm not a kid. I'm — I'm used to such things. And, anyway, I climbed the tree. Look at my hands." "Of course he can stay," other voices took up the trouble. "Leave him alone, Curley." "You ain't the whole thing." A laugh greeted this, and things quieted down.

"Silence!" the chairman called, and then to St. Vincent, "Go ahead, you, and don't take all day about it."

"Give us a chance to hear!" the crowd broke out again. "Put 'm on the box! Put 'm on the box!"

St. Vincent was helped up, and began with eager volubility.

"I didn't do it, but I saw it done. There weren't two men — only one. He did it, and Bella helped him."

A wave of laughter drowned him out.

"Not so fast," Bill Brown cautioned him. "Kindly explain how Bella helped this man kill herself. Begin at the beginning."

"That night, before he turned in, Borg set his burglar alarm — "

"Burglar alarm?"

"That's what I called it, — a tin bread-pan attached to the latch so the door couldn't open without tumbling it down. He set it every night, as though he were afraid of what might happen, — the very thing which did happen, for that matter. On the night of the murder I awoke with the feeling that some one was moving around. The slush-lamp was burning low, and I saw Bella at the door. Borg was snoring; I could hear him plainly. Bella was taking down the bread-pan, and she exercised great care about it. Then she opened the door, and an Indian came in softly. He had no mask, and I should know him if ever I see him again, for a scar ran along the forehead and down over one eye."

"I suppose you sprang out of bed and gave the alarm?"

"No, I didn't," St. Vincent answered, with a defiant toss of the head, as though he might as well get the worst over with. "I just lay there and waited."

"What did you think?"

"That Bella was in collusion with the Indian, and that Borg was to be murdered. It came to me at once."

"And you did nothing?"

"Nothing." His voice sank, and his eyes dropped to Frona, leaning against the box beneath him and steadying it. She did not seem to be affected. "Bella came over to

me, but I closed my eyes and breathed regularly. She held the slush-lamp to me, but I played sleep naturally enough to fool her. Then I heard a snort of sudden awakening and alarm, and a cry, and I looked out. The Indian was hacking at Borg with a knife, and Borg was warding off with his arms and trying to grapple him. When they did grapple, Bella crept up from behind and threw her arm in a strangle-hold about her husband's neck. She put her knee into the small of his back, and bent him backward and, with the Indian helping, threw him to the floor."

"And what did you do?"

"I watched."

"Had you a revolver?"

"Yes."

"The one you previously said John Borg had borrowed?"

"Yes; but I watched."

"Did John Borg call for help?"

"Yes."

"Can you give his words?"

"He called, 'St. Vincent! Oh, St. Vincent! Oh, my God! Oh, St. Vincent, help me!'" He shuddered at the recollection, and added, "It was terrible."

"I should say so," Brown grunted. "And you?"

"I watched," was the dogged reply, while a groan went up from the crowd. "Borg shook clear of them, however, and got on his legs. He hurled Bella across the cabin with a back-sweep of the arm and turned upon the Indian. Then they fought. The Indian had dropped the knife, and the sound of Borg's blows was sickening. I thought he would surely beat the Indian to death. That was when the furniture was smashed. They rolled and snarled and struggled like wild beasts. I wondered the Indian's chest did not cave in under some of Borg's blows. But Bella got the knife and stabbed her husband repeatedly about the body. The Indian had clinched with him, and his arms were not free; so he kicked out at her sideways. He must have broken her legs, for she cried out and fell down, and though she tried, she never stood up again. Then he went down, with the Indian under him, across the stove."

"Did he call any more for help?"

"He begged me to come to him."

"And?"

"I watched. He managed to get clear of the Indian and staggered over to me. He was streaming blood, and I could see he was very weak. 'Give me your gun,' he said; 'quick, give me it.' He felt around blindly. Then his mind seemed to clear a bit, and he reached across me to the holster hanging on the wall and took the pistol. The Indian came at him with the knife again, but he did not try to defend himself. Instead, he went on towards Bella, with the Indian still hanging to him and hacking at him. The Indian seemed to bother and irritate him, and he shoved him away. He knelt down and turned Bella's face up to the light; but his own face was covered with blood and he could not see. So he stopped long enough to brush the blood from his eyes. He

appeared to look in order to make sure. Then he put the revolver to her breast and fired.

"The Indian went wild at this, and rushed at him with the knife, at the same time knocking the pistol out of his hand. It was then the shelf with the slush-lamp was knocked down. They continued to fight in the darkness, and there were more shots fired, though I do not know by whom. I crawled out of the bunk, but they struck against me in their struggles, and I fell over Bella. That's when the blood got on my hands. As I ran out the door, more shots were fired. Then I met La Flitche and John, and . . . and you know the rest. This is the truth I have told you, I swear it!"

He looked down at Frona. She was steadying the box, and her face was composed. He looked out over the crowd and saw unbelief. Many were laughing.

"Why did you not tell this story at first?" Bill Brown demanded.

"Because . . . because . . ."

"Well?"

"Because I might have helped."

There was more laughter at this, and Bill Brown turned away from him. "Gentlemen, you have heard this pipe dream. It is a wilder fairy story than his first. At the beginning of the trial we promised to show that the truth was not in him. That we succeeded, your verdict is ample testimony. But that he should likewise succeed, and more brilliantly, we did not expect. That he has, you cannot doubt. What do you think of him? Lie upon lie he has given us; he has been proven a chronic liar; are you to believe this last and fearfully impossible lie? Gentlemen, I can only ask that you reaffirm your judgment. And to those who may doubt his mendacity, — surely there are but few, — let me state, that if his story is true; if he broke salt with this man, John Borg, and lay in his blankets while murder was done; if he did hear, unmoved, the voice of the man calling to him for help; if he did lie there and watch that carnival of butchery without his manhood prompting him, — let me state, gentlemen, I say, let me state that he is none the less deserving of hanging. We cannot make a mistake. What shall it be?"

"Death!" "String him up!" "Stretch 'm!" were the cries.

But the crowd suddenly turned its attention to the river, and even Blackey refrained from his official task. A large raft, worked by a sweep at either end, was slipping past the tail of Split-up Island, close to the shore. When it was at their feet, its nose was slewed into the bank, and while its free end swung into the stream to make the consequent circle, a snubbing-rope was flung ashore and several turns taken about the tree under which St. Vincent stood. A cargo of moose-meat, red and raw, cut into quarters, peeped from beneath a cool covering of spruce boughs. And because of this, the two men on the raft looked up to those on the bank with pride in their eyes.

"Tryin' to make Dawson with it," one of them explained, "and the sun's all-fired hot."

"Nope," said his comrade, in reply to a query, "don't care to stop and trade. It's worth a dollar and a half a pound down below, and we're hustlin' to get there. But we've got some pieces of a man we want to leave with you." He turned and pointed

to a loose heap of blankets which slightly disclosed the form of a man beneath. "We gathered him in this mornin', 'bout thirty mile up the Stewart, I should judge."

"Stands in need of doctorin'," the other man spoke up, "and the meat's spoilin', and we ain't got time for nothin'." "Beggar don't have anythin' to say. Don't savve the burro." "Looks as he might have been mixin' things with a grizzly or somethin', — all battered and gouged. Injured internally, from the looks of it. Where'll you have him?"

Frona, standing by St. Vincent, saw the injured man borne over the crest of the bank and through the crowd. A bronzed hand drooped down and a bronzed face showed from out the blankets. The bearers halted near them while a decision could be reached as to where he should be carried. Frana felt a sudden fierce grip on her arm.

"Look! look!" St. Vincent was leaning forward and pointing wildly at the injured man. "Look! That scar!"

The Indian opened his eyes and a grin of recognition distorted his face.

"It is he! It is he!" St. Vincent, trembling with eagerness, turned upon the crowd. "I call you all to witness! That is the man who killed John Borg!"

No laughter greeted this, for there was a terrible earnestness in his manner. Bill Brown and the chairman tried to make the Indian talk, but could not. A miner from British Columbia was pressed into service, but his Chinook made no impression. Then La Flitche was called. The handsome breed bent over the man and talked in gutturals which only his mother's heredity made possible. It sounded all one, yet it was apparent that he was trying many tongues. But no response did he draw, and he paused disheartened. As though with sudden recollection, he made another attempt. At once a gleam of intelligence shot across the Indian's face, and his larynx vibrated to similar sounds.

"It is the Stick talk of the Upper White," La Flitche stopped long enough to explain.

Then, with knit brows and stumbling moments when he sought dim-remembered words, he plied the man with questions. To the rest it was like a pantomime, — the meaningless grunts and waving arms and facial expressions of puzzlement, surprise, and understanding. At times a passion wrote itself on the face of the Indian, and a sympathy on the face of La Flitche. Again, by look and gesture, St. Vincent was referred to, and once a sober, mirthless laugh shaped the mouths of them.

"So? It is good," La Flitche said, when the Indian's head dropped back. "This man make true talk. He come from White River, way up. He cannot understand. He surprised very much, so many white men. He never think so many white men in the world. He die soon. His name Gow.

"Long time ago, three year, this man John Borg go to this man Gow's country. He hunt, he bring plenty meat to the camp, wherefore White River Sticks like him. Gow have one squaw, Pisk-ku. Bime-by John Borg make preparation to go 'way. He go to Gow, and he say, 'Give me your squaw. We trade. For her I give you many things.' But Gow say no. Pisk-ku good squaw. No woman sew moccasin like she. She tan moose-skin the best, and make the softest leather. He like Pisk-ku. Then John Borg say he don't care; he want Pisk-ku. Then they have a skookum big fight, and Pisk-ku go 'way

with John Borg. She no want to go 'way, but she go anyway. Borg call her 'Bella,' and give her plenty good things, but she like Gow all the time." La Flitche pointed to the scar which ran down the forehead and past the eye of the Indian. "John Borg he do that."

"Long time Gow pretty near die. Then he get well, but his head sick. He don't know nobody. Don't know his father, his mother, or anything. Just like a little baby. Just like that. Then one day, quick, click! something snap, and his head get well all at once. He know his father and mother, he remember Pisk-ku, he remember everything. His father say John Borg go down river. Then Gow go down river. Spring-time, ice very bad. He very much afraid, so many white men, and when he come to this place he travel by night. Nobody see him 'tall, but he see everybody. He like a cat, see in the dark. Somehow, he come straight to John Borg's cabin. He do not know how this was, except that the work he had to do was good work."

St. Vincent pressed Frona's hand, but she shook her fingers clear and withdrew a step.

"He see Pisk-ku feed the dogs, and he have talk with her. That night he come and she open the door. Then you know that which was done. St. Vincent do nothing, Borg kill Bella. Gow kill Borg. Borg kill Gow, for Gow die pretty quick. Borg have strong arm. Gow sick inside, all smashed up. Gow no care; Pisk-ku dead.

"After that he go 'cross ice to the land. I tell him all you people say it cannot be; no man can cross the ice at that time. He laugh, and say that it is, and what is, must be. Anyway, he have very hard time, but he get 'cross all right. He very sick inside. Bime-by he cannot walk; he crawl. Long time he come to Stewart River. Can go no more, so he lay down to die. Two white men find him and bring him to this place. He don't care. He die anyway."

La Flitche finished abruptly, but nobody spoke. Then he added, "I think Gow damn good man."

Frona came up to Jacob Welse. "Take me away, father," she said. "I am so tired."

## Chapter XXX

Next morning, Jacob Welse, for all of the Company and his millions in mines, chopped up the day's supply of firewood, lighted a cigar, and went down the island in search of Baron Courbertin. Frona finished the breakfast dishes, hung out the robes to air, and fed the dogs. Then she took a worn Wordsworth from her clothes-bag, and, out by the bank, settled herself comfortably in a seat formed by two uprooted pines. But she did no more than open the book; for her eyes strayed out and over the Yukon to the eddy below the bluffs, and the bend above, and the tail of the spit which lay in the midst of the river. The rescue and the race were still fresh with her, though there were strange lapses, here and there, of which she remembered little. The struggle by the fissure was immeasurable; she knew not how long it lasted; and the race down Split-up to Roubeau Island was a thing of which her reason convinced her, but of which she recollected nothing.

The whim seized her, and she followed Corliss through the three days' events, but she tacitly avoided the figure of another man whom she would not name. Something terrible was connected therewith, she knew, which must be faced sooner or later; but she preferred to put that moment away from her. She was stiff and sore of mind as well as of body, and will and action were for the time being distasteful. It was more pleasant, even, to dwell on Tommy, on Tommy of the bitter tongue and craven heart; and she made a note that the wife and children in Toronto should not be forgotten when the Northland paid its dividends to the Welse.

The crackle of a foot on a dead willow-twigg roused her, and her eyes met St. Vincent's.

"You have not congratulated me upon my escape," he began, breezily. "But you must have been dead-tired last night. I know I was. And you had that hard pull on the river besides."

He watched her furtively, trying to catch some cue as to her attitude and mood.

"You're a heroine, that's what you are, Frona," he began again, with exuberance. "And not only did you save the mail-man, but by the delay you wrought in the trial you saved me. If one more witness had gone on the stand that first day, I should have been duly hanged before Gow put in an appearance. Fine chap, Gow. Too bad he's going to die."

"I am glad that I could be of help," she replied, wondering the while what she could say.

"And of course I am to be congratulated — "

"Your trial is hardly a thing for congratulation," she spoke up quickly, looking him straight in the eyes for the moment. "I am glad that it came out as it did, but surely you cannot expect me to congratulate you."

"O-o-o," with long-drawn inflection. "So that's where it pinches." He smiled good-humoredly, and moved as though to sit down, but she made no room for him, and he remained standing. "I can certainly explain. If there have been women — "

Frona had been clinching her hand nervously, but at the word burst out in laughter.

"Women?" she queried. "Women?" she repeated. "Do not be ridiculous, Gregory."

"After the way you stood by me through the trial," he began, reproachfully, "I thought — "

"Oh, you do not understand," she said, hopelessly. "You do not understand. Look at me, Gregory, and see if I can make you understand. Your presence is painful to me. Your kisses hurt me. The memory of them still burns my cheek, and my lips feel unclean. And why? Because of women, which you may explain away? How little do you understand! But shall I tell you?"

Voices of men came to her from down the river-bank, and the splashing of water. She glanced quickly and saw Del Bishop guiding a poling-boat against the current, and Corliss on the bank, bending to the tow-rope.

"Shall I tell you why, Gregory St. Vincent?" she said again. "Tell you why your kisses have cheapened me? Because you broke the faith of food and blanket. Because you broke salt with a man, and then watched that man fight unequally for life without lifting your hand. Why, I had rather you had died in defending him; the memory of you would have been good. Yes, I had rather you had killed him yourself. At least, it would have shown there was blood in your body."

"So this is what you would call love?" he began, scornfully, his fretting, fuming devil beginning to rouse. "A fair-weather love, truly. But, Lord, how we men learn!"

"I had thought you were well lessoned," she retorted; "what of the other women?"

"But what do you intend to do?" he demanded, taking no notice. "I am not an easy man to cross. You cannot throw me over with impunity. I shall not stand for it, I warn you. You have dared do things in this country which would blacken you were they known. I have ears. I have not been asleep. You will find it no child's play to explain away things which you may declare most innocent."

She looked at him with a smile which carried pity in its cold mirth, and it goaded him.

"I am down, a thing to make a jest upon, a thing to pity, but I promise you that I can drag you with me. My kisses have cheapened you, eh? Then how must you have felt at Happy Camp on the Dyea Trail?"

As though in answer, Corliss swung down upon them with the tow-rope.

Frona beckoned a greeting to him. "Vance," she said, "the mail-carrier has brought important news to father, so important that he must go outside. He starts this after-



noon with Baron Courbertin in La Bijou. Will you take me down to Dawson? I should like to go at once, to-day.

“He . . . he suggested you,” she added shyly, indicating St. Vincent.

# **The Call of the Wild**

This famous novel was first published in 1903 and is London's most-read book. It is remarkable for being told from the first person perspective of a dog. The plot concerns the previously domesticated Buck, whose primordial instincts return after tragic events lead to his serving as a sled dog in the Yukon during the 19th-century Klondike Gold Rush.

The rare first edition

London studying at his schoolwork, aged 10

# Chapter I. Into the Primitive

“Old longings nomadic leap,  
Chafing at custom’s chain;  
Again from its brumal sleep  
Wakens the ferine strain.”

Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tide-water dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego. Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, and the dogs they wanted were heavy dogs, with strong muscles by which to toil, and furry coats to protect them from the frost.

Buck lived at a big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. Judge Miller’s place, it was called. It stood back from the road, half hidden among the trees, through which glimpses could be caught of the wide cool veranda that ran around its four sides. The house was approached by gravelled driveways which wound about through wide-spreading lawns and under the interlacing boughs of tall poplars. At the rear things were on even a more spacious scale than at the front. There were great stables, where a dozen grooms and boys held forth, rows of vine-clad servants’ cottages, an endless and orderly array of outhouses, long grape arbors, green pastures, orchards, and berry patches. Then there was the pumping plant for the artesian well, and the big cement tank where Judge Miller’s boys took their morning plunge and kept cool in the hot afternoon.

And over this great demesne Buck ruled. Here he was born, and here he had lived the four years of his life. It was true, there were other dogs, There could not but be other dogs on so vast a place, but they did not count. They came and went, resided in the populous kennels, or lived obscurely in the recesses of the house after the fashion of Toots, the Japanese pug, or Ysabel, the Mexican hairless, — strange creatures that rarely put nose out of doors or set foot to ground. On the other hand, there were the fox terriers, a score of them at least, who yelped fearful promises at Toots and Ysabel looking out of the windows at them and protected by a legion of housemaids armed with brooms and mops.

But Buck was neither house-dog nor kennel-dog. The whole realm was his. He plunged into the swimming tank or went hunting with the Judge’s sons; he escorted Mollie and Alice, the Judge’s daughters, on long twilight or early morning rambles; on wintry nights he lay at the Judge’s feet before the roaring library fire; he carried

the Judge's grandsons on his back, or rolled them in the grass, and guarded their footsteps through wild adventures down to the fountain in the stable yard, and even beyond, where the paddocks were, and the berry patches. Among the terriers he stalked imperiously, and Toots and Ysabel he utterly ignored, for he was king, — king over all creeping, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller's place, humans included.

His father, Elmo, a huge St. Bernard, had been the Judge's inseparable companion, and Buck bid fair to follow in the way of his father. He was not so large, — he weighed only one hundred and forty pounds, — for his mother, Shep, had been a Scotch shepherd dog. Nevertheless, one hundred and forty pounds, to which was added the dignity that comes of good living and universal respect, enabled him to carry himself in right royal fashion. During the four years since his puppyhood he had lived the life of a sated aristocrat; he had a fine pride in himself, was even a trifle egotistical, as country gentlemen sometimes become because of their insular situation. But he had saved himself by not becoming a mere pampered house-dog. Hunting and kindred outdoor delights had kept down the fat and hardened his muscles; and to him, as to the cold-tubbing races, the love of water had been a tonic and a health preserver.

And this was the manner of dog Buck was in the fall of 1897, when the Klondike strike dragged men from all the world into the frozen North. But Buck did not read the newspapers, and he did not know that Manuel, one of the gardener's helpers, was an undesirable acquaintance. Manuel had one besetting sin. He loved to play Chinese lottery. Also, in his gambling, he had one besetting weakness — faith in a system; and this made his damnation certain. For to play a system requires money, while the wages of a gardener's helper do not lap over the needs of a wife and numerous progeny.

The Judge was at a meeting of the Raisin Growers' Association, and the boys were busy organizing an athletic club, on the memorable night of Manuel's treachery. No one saw him and Buck go off through the orchard on what Buck imagined was merely a stroll. And with the exception of a solitary man, no one saw them arrive at the little flag station known as College Park. This man talked with Manuel, and money chinked between them.

"You might wrap up the goods before you deliver 'm," the stranger said gruffly, and Manuel doubled a piece of stout rope around Buck's neck under the collar.

"Twist it, an' you'll choke 'm plentee," said Manuel, and the stranger grunted a ready affirmative.

Buck had accepted the rope with quiet dignity. To be sure, it was an unwonted performance: but he had learned to trust in men he knew, and to give them credit for a wisdom that outreached his own. But when the ends of the rope were placed in the stranger's hands, he growled menacingly. He had merely intimated his displeasure, in his pride believing that to intimate was to command. But to his surprise the rope tightened around his neck, shutting off his breath. In quick rage he sprang at the man, who met him halfway, grappled him close by the throat, and with a deft twist threw him over on his back. Then the rope tightened mercilessly, while Buck struggled in a fury, his tongue lolling out of his mouth and his great chest panting futilely. Never

in all his life had he been so vilely treated, and never in all his life had he been so angry. But his strength ebbed, his eyes glazed, and he knew nothing when the train was flagged and the two men threw him into the baggage car.

The next he knew, he was dimly aware that his tongue was hurting and that he was being jolted along in some kind of a conveyance. The hoarse shriek of a locomotive whistling a crossing told him where he was. He had travelled too often with the Judge not to know the sensation of riding in a baggage car. He opened his eyes, and into them came the unbridled anger of a kidnapped king. The man sprang for his throat, but Buck was too quick for him. His jaws closed on the hand, nor did they relax till his senses were choked out of him once more.

"Yep, has fits," the man said, hiding his mangled hand from the baggageman, who had been attracted by the sounds of struggle. "I'm takin' 'm up for the boss to 'Frisco. A crack dog-doctor there thinks that he can cure 'm."

Concerning that night's ride, the man spoke most eloquently for himself, in a little shed back of a saloon on the San Francisco water front.

"All I get is fifty for it," he grumbled; "an' I wouldn't do it over for a thousand, cold cash."

His hand was wrapped in a bloody handkerchief, and the right trouser leg was ripped from knee to ankle.

"How much did the other mug get?" the saloon-keeper demanded.

"A hundred," was the reply. "Wouldn't take a sou less, so help me."

"That makes a hundred and fifty," the saloon-keeper calculated; "and he's worth it, or I'm a squarehead."

The kidnapper undid the bloody wrappings and looked at his lacerated hand. "If I don't get the hydrophoby — "

"It'll be because you was born to hang," laughed the saloon-keeper. "Here, lend me a hand before you pull your freight," he added.

Dazed, suffering intolerable pain from throat and tongue, with the life half throttled out of him, Buck attempted to face his tormentors. But he was thrown down and choked repeatedly, till they succeeded in filing the heavy brass collar from off his neck. Then the rope was removed, and he was flung into a cagelike crate.

There he lay for the remainder of the weary night, nursing his wrath and wounded pride. He could not understand what it all meant. What did they want with him, these strange men? Why were they keeping him pent up in this narrow crate? He did not know why, but he felt oppressed by the vague sense of impending calamity. Several times during the night he sprang to his feet when the shed door rattled open, expecting to see the Judge, or the boys at least. But each time it was the bulging face of the saloon-keeper that peered in at him by the sickly light of a tallow candle. And each time the joyful bark that trembled in Buck's throat was twisted into a savage growl.

But the saloon-keeper let him alone, and in the morning four men entered and picked up the crate. More tormentors, Buck decided, for they were evil-looking creatures, ragged and unkempt; and he stormed and raged at them through the bars. They

only laughed and poked sticks at him, which he promptly assailed with his teeth till he realized that that was what they wanted. Whereupon he lay down sullenly and allowed the crate to be lifted into a wagon. Then he, and the crate in which he was imprisoned, began a passage through many hands. Clerks in the express office took charge of him; he was carted about in another wagon; a truck carried him, with an assortment of boxes and parcels, upon a ferry steamer; he was trucked off the steamer into a great railway depot, and finally he was deposited in an express car.

For two days and nights this express car was dragged along at the tail of shrieking locomotives; and for two days and nights Buck neither ate nor drank. In his anger he had met the first advances of the express messengers with growls, and they had retaliated by teasing him. When he flung himself against the bars, quivering and frothing, they laughed at him and taunted him. They growled and barked like detestable dogs, mewed, and flapped their arms and crowed. It was all very silly, he knew; but therefore the more outrage to his dignity, and his anger waxed and waxed. He did not mind the hunger so much, but the lack of water caused him severe suffering and fanned his wrath to fever-pitch. For that matter, high-strung and finely sensitive, the ill treatment had flung him into a fever, which was fed by the inflammation of his parched and swollen throat and tongue.

He was glad for one thing: the rope was off his neck. That had given them an unfair advantage; but now that it was off, he would show them. They would never get another rope around his neck. Upon that he was resolved. For two days and nights he neither ate nor drank, and during those two days and nights of torment, he accumulated a fund of wrath that boded ill for whoever first fell foul of him. His eyes turned blood-shot, and he was metamorphosed into a raging fiend. So changed was he that the Judge himself would not have recognized him; and the express messengers breathed with relief when they bundled him off the train at Seattle.

Four men gingerly carried the crate from the wagon into a small, high-walled back yard. A stout man, with a red sweater that sagged generously at the neck, came out and signed the book for the driver. That was the man, Buck divined, the next tormentor, and he hurled himself savagely against the bars. The man smiled grimly, and brought a hatchet and a club.

"You ain't going to take him out now?" the driver asked.

"Sure," the man replied, driving the hatchet into the crate for a pry.

There was an instantaneous scattering of the four men who had carried it in, and from safe perches on top the wall they prepared to watch the performance.

Buck rushed at the splintering wood, sinking his teeth into it, surging and wrestling with it. Wherever the hatchet fell on the outside, he was there on the inside, snarling and growling, as furiously anxious to get out as the man in the red sweater was calmly intent on getting him out.

"Now, you red-eyed devil," he said, when he had made an opening sufficient for the passage of Buck's body. At the same time he dropped the hatchet and shifted the club to his right hand.

And Buck was truly a red-eyed devil, as he drew himself together for the spring, hair bristling, mouth foaming, a mad glitter in his blood-shot eyes. Straight at the man he launched his one hundred and forty pounds of fury, surcharged with the pent passion of two days and nights. In mid air, just as his jaws were about to close on the man, he received a shock that checked his body and brought his teeth together with an agonizing clip. He whirled over, fetching the ground on his back and side. He had never been struck by a club in his life, and did not understand. With a snarl that was part bark and more scream he was again on his feet and launched into the air. And again the shock came and he was brought crushingly to the ground. This time he was aware that it was the club, but his madness knew no caution. A dozen times he charged, and as often the club broke the charge and smashed him down.

After a particularly fierce blow, he crawled to his feet, too dazed to rush. He staggered limply about, the blood flowing from nose and mouth and ears, his beautiful coat sprayed and flecked with bloody slaver. Then the man advanced and deliberately dealt him a frightful blow on the nose. All the pain he had endured was as nothing compared with the exquisite agony of this. With a roar that was almost lionlike in its ferocity, he again hurled himself at the man. But the man, shifting the club from right to left, coolly caught him by the under jaw, at the same time wrenching downward and backward. Buck described a complete circle in the air, and half of another, then crashed to the ground on his head and chest.

For the last time he rushed. The man struck the shrewd blow he had purposely withheld for so long, and Buck crumpled up and went down, knocked utterly senseless.

"He's no slouch at dog-breakin', that's wot I say," one of the men on the wall cried enthusiastically.

"Druther break cayuses any day, and twice on Sundays," was the reply of the driver, as he climbed on the wagon and started the horses.

Buck's senses came back to him, but not his strength. He lay where he had fallen, and from there he watched the man in the red sweater.

"Answers to the name of Buck," the man soliloquized, quoting from the saloon-keeper's letter which had announced the consignment of the crate and contents. "Well, Buck, my boy," he went on in a genial voice, "we've had our little ruction, and the best thing we can do is to let it go at that. You've learned your place, and I know mine. Be a good dog and all 'll go well and the goose hang high. Be a bad dog, and I'll whale the stuffin' outa you. Understand?"

As he spoke he fearlessly patted the head he had so mercilessly pounded, and though Buck's hair involuntarily bristled at touch of the hand, he endured it without protest. When the man brought him water he drank eagerly, and later bolted a generous meal of raw meat, chunk by chunk, from the man's hand.

He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had learned the lesson, and in all his after life he never forgot it. That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law, and he met the introduction halfway. The facts of life



took on a fiercer aspect; and while he faced that aspect uncowed, he faced it with all the latent cunning of his nature aroused. As the days went by, other dogs came, in crates and at the ends of ropes, some docilely, and some raging and roaring as he had come; and, one and all, he watched them pass under the dominion of the man in the red sweater. Again and again, as he looked at each brutal performance, the lesson was driven home to Buck: a man with a club was a lawgiver, a master to be obeyed, though not necessarily conciliated. Of this last Buck was never guilty, though he did see beaten dogs that fawned upon the man, and wagged their tails, and licked his hand. Also he saw one dog, that would neither conciliate nor obey, finally killed in the struggle for mastery.

Now and again men came, strangers, who talked excitedly, wheedlingly, and in all kinds of fashions to the man in the red sweater. And at such times that money passed between them the strangers took one or more of the dogs away with them. Buck wondered where they went, for they never came back; but the fear of the future was strong upon him, and he was glad each time when he was not selected.

Yet his time came, in the end, in the form of a little weazened man who spat broken English and many strange and uncouth exclamations which Buck could not understand.

"Sacredam!" he cried, when his eyes lit upon Buck. "Dat one dam bully dog! Eh? How moch?"

"Three hundred, and a present at that," was the prompt reply of the man in the red sweater. "And seem' it's government money, you ain't got no kick coming, eh, Perrault?"

Perrault grinned. Considering that the price of dogs had been boomed skyward by the unwonted demand, it was not an unfair sum for so fine an animal. The Canadian Government would be no loser, nor would its despatches travel the slower. Perrault knew dogs, and when he looked at Buck he knew that he was one in a thousand — "One in ten t'ousand," he commented mentally.

Buck saw money pass between them, and was not surprised when Curly, a good-natured Newfoundland, and he were led away by the little weazened man. That was the last he saw of the man in the red sweater, and as Curly and he looked at receding Seattle from the deck of the Narwhal, it was the last he saw of the warm Southland. Curly and he were taken below by Perrault and turned over to a black-faced giant called Francois. Perrault was a French-Canadian, and swarthy; but Francois was a French-Canadian half-breed, and twice as swarthy. They were a new kind of men to Buck (of which he was destined to see many more), and while he developed no affection for them, he none the less grew honestly to respect them. He speedily learned that Perrault and Francois were fair men, calm and impartial in administering justice, and too wise in the way of dogs to be fooled by dogs.

In the 'tween-decks of the Narwhal, Buck and Curly joined two other dogs. One of them was a big, snow-white fellow from Spitzbergen who had been brought away by a whaling captain, and who had later accompanied a Geological Survey into the

Barrens. He was friendly, in a treacherous sort of way, smiling into one's face the while he meditated some underhand trick, as, for instance, when he stole from Buck's food at the first meal. As Buck sprang to punish him, the lash of Francois's whip sang through the air, reaching the culprit first; and nothing remained to Buck but to recover the bone. That was fair of Francois, he decided, and the half-breed began his rise in Buck's estimation.

The other dog made no advances, nor received any; also, he did not attempt to steal from the newcomers. He was a gloomy, morose fellow, and he showed Curly plainly that all he desired was to be left alone, and further, that there would be trouble if he were not left alone. "Dave" he was called, and he ate and slept, or yawned between times, and took interest in nothing, not even when the Narwhal crossed Queen Charlotte Sound and rolled and pitched and bucked like a thing possessed. When Buck and Curly grew excited, half wild with fear, he raised his head as though annoyed, favored them with an incurious glance, yawned, and went to sleep again.

Day and night the ship throbbed to the tireless pulse of the propeller, and though one day was very like another, it was apparent to Buck that the weather was steadily growing colder. At last, one morning, the propeller was quiet, and the Narwhal was pervaded with an atmosphere of excitement. He felt it, as did the other dogs, and knew that a change was at hand. Francois leashed them and brought them on deck. At the first step upon the cold surface, Buck's feet sank into a white mushy something very like mud. He sprang back with a snort. More of this white stuff was falling through the air. He shook himself, but more of it fell upon him. He sniffed it curiously, then licked some up on his tongue. It bit like fire, and the next instant was gone. This puzzled him. He tried it again, with the same result. The onlookers laughed uproariously, and he felt ashamed, he knew not why, for it was his first snow.

## Chapter II. The Law of Club and Fang

Buck's first day on the Dyea beach was like a nightmare. Every hour was filled with shock and surprise. He had been suddenly jerked from the heart of civilization and flung into the heart of things primordial. No lazy, sun-kissed life was this, with nothing to do but loaf and be bored. Here was neither peace, nor rest, nor a moment's safety. All was confusion and action, and every moment life and limb were in peril. There was imperative need to be constantly alert; for these dogs and men were not town dogs and men. They were savages, all of them, who knew no law but the law of club and fang.

He had never seen dogs fight as these wolfish creatures fought, and his first experience taught him an unforgettable lesson. It is true, it was a vicarious experience, else he would not have lived to profit by it. Curly was the victim. They were camped near the log store, where she, in her friendly way, made advances to a husky dog the size of a full-grown wolf, though not half so large as she. There was no warning, only a leap in like a flash, a metallic clip of teeth, a leap out equally swift, and Curly's face was ripped open from eye to jaw.

It was the wolf manner of fighting, to strike and leap away; but there was more to it than this. Thirty or forty huskies ran to the spot and surrounded the combatants in an intent and silent circle. Buck did not comprehend that silent intentness, nor the eager way with which they were licking their chops. Curly rushed her antagonist, who struck again and leaped aside. He met her next rush with his chest, in a peculiar fashion that tumbled her off her feet. She never regained them, This was what the onlooking huskies had waited for. They closed in upon her, snarling and yelping, and she was buried, screaming with agony, beneath the bristling mass of bodies.

So sudden was it, and so unexpected, that Buck was taken aback. He saw Spitz run out his scarlet tongue in a way he had of laughing; and he saw Francois, swinging an axe, spring into the mess of dogs. Three men with clubs were helping him to scatter them. It did not take long. Two minutes from the time Curly went down, the last of her assailants were clubbed off. But she lay there limp and lifeless in the bloody, trampled snow, almost literally torn to pieces, the swart half-breed standing over her and cursing horribly. The scene often came back to Buck to trouble him in his sleep. So that was the way. No fair play. Once down, that was the end of you. Well, he would see to it that he never went down. Spitz ran out his tongue and laughed again, and from that moment Buck hated him with a bitter and deathless hatred.

Before he had recovered from the shock caused by the tragic passing of Curly, he received another shock. Francois fastened upon him an arrangement of straps and buckles. It was a harness, such as he had seen the grooms put on the horses at home. And as he had seen horses work, so he was set to work, hauling Francois on a sled to the forest that fringed the valley, and returning with a load of firewood. Though his dignity was sorely hurt by thus being made a draught animal, he was too wise to rebel. He buckled down with a will and did his best, though it was all new and strange. Francois was stern, demanding instant obedience, and by virtue of his whip receiving instant obedience; while Dave, who was an experienced wheeler, nipped Buck's hind quarters whenever he was in error. Spitz was the leader, likewise experienced, and while he could not always get at Buck, he growled sharp reproof now and again, or cunningly threw his weight in the traces to jerk Buck into the way he should go. Buck learned easily, and under the combined tuition of his two mates and Francois made remarkable progress. Ere they returned to camp he knew enough to stop at "ho," to go ahead at "mush," to swing wide on the bends, and to keep clear of the wheeler when the loaded sled shot downhill at their heels.

"T'ree vair' good dogs," Francois told Perrault. "Dat Buck, heem pool lak hell. I tich heem queek as anyt'ing."

By afternoon, Perrault, who was in a hurry to be on the trail with his despatches, returned with two more dogs. "Billee" and "Joe" he called them, two brothers, and true huskies both. Sons of the one mother though they were, they were as different as day and night. Billee's one fault was his excessive good nature, while Joe was the very opposite, sour and introspective, with a perpetual snarl and a malignant eye. Buck received them in comradely fashion, Dave ignored them, while Spitz proceeded to thrash first one and then the other. Billee wagged his tail appeasingly, turned to run when he saw that appeasement was of no avail, and cried (still appeasingly) when Spitz's sharp teeth scored his flank. But no matter how Spitz circled, Joe whirled around on his heels to face him, mane bristling, ears laid back, lips writhing and snarling, jaws clipping together as fast as he could snap, and eyes diabolically gleaming — the incarnation of belligerent fear. So terrible was his appearance that Spitz was forced to forego disciplining him; but to cover his own discomfiture he turned upon the inoffensive and wailing Billee and drove him to the confines of the camp.

By evening Perrault secured another dog, an old husky, long and lean and gaunt, with a battle-scarred face and a single eye which flashed a warning of prowess that commanded respect. He was called Sol-leks, which means the Angry One. Like Dave, he asked nothing, gave nothing, expected nothing; and when he marched slowly and deliberately into their midst, even Spitz left him alone. He had one peculiarity which Buck was unlucky enough to discover. He did not like to be approached on his blind side. Of this offence Buck was unwittingly guilty, and the first knowledge he had of his indiscretion was when Sol-leks whirled upon him and slashed his shoulder to the bone for three inches up and down. Forever after Buck avoided his blind side, and to the last of their comradeship had no more trouble. His only apparent ambition, like

Dave's, was to be left alone; though, as Buck was afterward to learn, each of them possessed one other and even more vital ambition.

That night Buck faced the great problem of sleeping. The tent, illumined by a candle, glowed warmly in the midst of the white plain; and when he, as a matter of course, entered it, both Perrault and Francois bombarded him with curses and cooking utensils, till he recovered from his consternation and fled ignominiously into the outer cold. A chill wind was blowing that nipped him sharply and bit with especial venom into his wounded shoulder. He lay down on the snow and attempted to sleep, but the frost soon drove him shivering to his feet. Miserable and disconsolate, he wandered about among the many tents, only to find that one place was as cold as another. Here and there savage dogs rushed upon him, but he bristled his neck-hair and snarled (for he was learning fast), and they let him go his way unmolested.

Finally an idea came to him. He would return and see how his own team-mates were making out. To his astonishment, they had disappeared. Again he wandered about through the great camp, looking for them, and again he returned. Were they in the tent? No, that could not be, else he would not have been driven out. Then where could they possibly be? With drooping tail and shivering body, very forlorn indeed, he aimlessly circled the tent. Suddenly the snow gave way beneath his fore legs and he sank down. Something wriggled under his feet. He sprang back, bristling and snarling, fearful of the unseen and unknown. But a friendly little yelp reassured him, and he went back to investigate. A whiff of warm air ascended to his nostrils, and there, curled up under the snow in a snug ball, lay Billee. He whined placatingly, squirmed and wriggled to show his good will and intentions, and even ventured, as a bribe for peace, to lick Buck's face with his warm wet tongue.

Another lesson. So that was the way they did it, eh? Buck confidently selected a spot, and with much fuss and waste effort proceeded to dig a hole for himself. In a trice the heat from his body filled the confined space and he was asleep. The day had been long and arduous, and he slept soundly and comfortably, though he growled and barked and wrestled with bad dreams.

Nor did he open his eyes till roused by the noises of the waking camp. At first he did not know where he was. It had snowed during the night and he was completely buried. The snow walls pressed him on every side, and a great surge of fear swept through him — the fear of the wild thing for the trap. It was a token that he was harking back through his own life to the lives of his forebears; for he was a civilized dog, an unduly civilized dog, and of his own experience knew no trap and so could not of himself fear it. The muscles of his whole body contracted spasmodically and instinctively, the hair on his neck and shoulders stood on end, and with a ferocious snarl he bounded straight up into the blinding day, the snow flying about him in a flashing cloud. Ere he landed on his feet, he saw the white camp spread out before him and knew where he was and remembered all that had passed from the time he went for a stroll with Manuel to the hole he had dug for himself the night before.

A shout from Francois hailed his appearance. "Wot I say?" the dog-driver cried to Perrault. "Dat Buck for sure learn queek as anyt'ing."

Perrault nodded gravely. As courier for the Canadian Government, bearing important despatches, he was anxious to secure the best dogs, and he was particularly gladdened by the possession of Buck.

Three more huskies were added to the team inside an hour, making a total of nine, and before another quarter of an hour had passed they were in harness and swinging up the trail toward the Dyea Canon. Buck was glad to be gone, and though the work was hard he found he did not particularly despise it. He was surprised at the eagerness which animated the whole team and which was communicated to him; but still more surprising was the change wrought in Dave and Sol-leks. They were new dogs, utterly transformed by the harness. All passiveness and unconcern had dropped from them. They were alert and active, anxious that the work should go well, and fiercely irritable with whatever, by delay or confusion, retarded that work. The toil of the traces seemed the supreme expression of their being, and all that they lived for and the only thing in which they took delight.

Dave was wheeler or sled dog, pulling in front of him was Buck, then came Sol-leks; the rest of the team was strung out ahead, single file, to the leader, which position was filled by Spitz.

Buck had been purposely placed between Dave and Sol-leks so that he might receive instruction. Apt scholar that he was, they were equally apt teachers, never allowing him to linger long in error, and enforcing their teaching with their sharp teeth. Dave was fair and very wise. He never nipped Buck without cause, and he never failed to nip him when he stood in need of it. As Francois's whip backed him up, Buck found it to be cheaper to mend his ways than to retaliate. Once, during a brief halt, when he got tangled in the traces and delayed the start, both Dave and Solleks flew at him and administered a sound trouncing. The resulting tangle was even worse, but Buck took good care to keep the traces clear thereafter; and ere the day was done, so well had he mastered his work, his mates about ceased nagging him. Francois's whip snapped less frequently, and Perrault even honored Buck by lifting up his feet and carefully examining them.

It was a hard day's run, up the Canon, through Sheep Camp, past the Scales and the timber line, across glaciers and snowdrifts hundreds of feet deep, and over the great Chilcoat Divide, which stands between the salt water and the fresh and guards forbiddingly the sad and lonely North. They made good time down the chain of lakes which fills the craters of extinct volcanoes, and late that night pulled into the huge camp at the head of Lake Bennett, where thousands of goldseekers were building boats against the break-up of the ice in the spring. Buck made his hole in the snow and slept the sleep of the exhausted just, but all too early was routed out in the cold darkness and harnessed with his mates to the sled.

That day they made forty miles, the trail being packed; but the next day, and for many days to follow, they broke their own trail, worked harder, and made poorer

time. As a rule, Perrault travelled ahead of the team, packing the snow with webbed shoes to make it easier for them. Francois, guiding the sled at the gee-pole, sometimes exchanged places with him, but not often. Perrault was in a hurry, and he prided himself on his knowledge of ice, which knowledge was indispensable, for the fall ice was very thin, and where there was swift water, there was no ice at all.

Day after day, for days unending, Buck toiled in the traces. Always, they broke camp in the dark, and the first gray of dawn found them hitting the trail with fresh miles reeled off behind them. And always they pitched camp after dark, eating their bit of fish, and crawling to sleep into the snow. Buck was ravenous. The pound and a half of sun-dried salmon, which was his ration for each day, seemed to go nowhere. He never had enough, and suffered from perpetual hunger pangs. Yet the other dogs, because they weighed less and were born to the life, received a pound only of the fish and managed to keep in good condition.

He swiftly lost the fastidiousness which had characterized his old life. A dainty eater, he found that his mates, finishing first, robbed him of his unfinished ration. There was no defending it. While he was fighting off two or three, it was disappearing down the throats of the others. To remedy this, he ate as fast as they; and, so greatly did hunger compel him, he was not above taking what did not belong to him. He watched and learned. When he saw Pike, one of the new dogs, a clever malingerer and thief, slyly steal a slice of bacon when Perrault's back was turned, he duplicated the performance the following day, getting away with the whole chunk. A great uproar was raised, but he was unsuspected; while Dub, an awkward blunderer who was always getting caught, was punished for Buck's misdeed.

This first theft marked Buck as fit to survive in the hostile Northland environment. It marked his adaptability, his capacity to adjust himself to changing conditions, the lack of which would have meant swift and terrible death. It marked, further, the decay or going to pieces of his moral nature, a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence. It was all well enough in the Southland, under the law of love and fellowship, to respect private property and personal feelings; but in the Northland, under the law of club and fang, whoso took such things into account was a fool, and in so far as he observed them he would fail to prosper.

Not that Buck reasoned it out. He was fit, that was all, and unconsciously he accommodated himself to the new mode of life. All his days, no matter what the odds, he had never run from a fight. But the club of the man in the red sweater had beaten into him a more fundamental and primitive code. Civilized, he could have died for a moral consideration, say the defence of Judge Miller's riding-whip; but the completeness of his decivilization was now evidenced by his ability to flee from the defence of a moral consideration and so save his hide. He did not steal for joy of it, but because of the clamor of his stomach. He did not rob openly, but stole secretly and cunningly, out of respect for club and fang. In short, the things he did were done because it was easier to do them than not to do them.

His development (or retrogression) was rapid. His muscles became hard as iron, and he grew callous to all ordinary pain. He achieved an internal as well as external economy. He could eat anything, no matter how loathsome or indigestible; and, once eaten, the juices of his stomach extracted the last least particle of nutriment; and his blood carried it to the farthest reaches of his body, building it into the toughest and stoutest of tissues. Sight and scent became remarkably keen, while his hearing developed such acuteness that in his sleep he heard the faintest sound and knew whether it heralded peace or peril. He learned to bite the ice out with his teeth when it collected between his toes; and when he was thirsty and there was a thick scum of ice over the water hole, he would break it by rearing and striking it with stiff fore legs. His most conspicuous trait was an ability to scent the wind and forecast it a night in advance. No matter how breathless the air when he dug his nest by tree or bank, the wind that later blew inevitably found him to leeward, sheltered and snug.

And not only did he learn by experience, but instincts long dead became alive again. The domesticated generations fell from him. In vague ways he remembered back to the youth of the breed, to the time the wild dogs ranged in packs through the primeval forest and killed their meat as they ran it down. It was no task for him to learn to fight with cut and slash and the quick wolf snap. In this manner had fought forgotten ancestors. They quickened the old life within him, and the old tricks which they had stamped into the heredity of the breed were his tricks. They came to him without effort or discovery, as though they had been his always. And when, on the still cold nights, he pointed his nose at a star and howled long and wolflike, it was his ancestors, dead and dust, pointing nose at star and howling down through the centuries and through him. And his cadences were their cadences, the cadences which voiced their woe and what to them was the meaning of the stiffness, and the cold, and dark.

Thus, as token of what a puppet thing life is, the ancient song surged through him and he came into his own again; and he came because men had found a yellow metal in the North, and because Manuel was a gardener's helper whose wages did not lap over the needs of his wife and divers small copies of himself.



## Chapter III. The Dominant Primordial Beast

The dominant primordial beast was strong in Buck, and under the fierce conditions of trail life it grew and grew. Yet it was a secret growth. His newborn cunning gave him poise and control. He was too busy adjusting himself to the new life to feel at ease, and not only did he not pick fights, but he avoided them whenever possible. A certain deliberateness characterized his attitude. He was not prone to rashness and precipitate action; and in the bitter hatred between him and Spitz he betrayed no impatience, shunned all offensive acts.

On the other hand, possibly because he divined in Buck a dangerous rival, Spitz never lost an opportunity of showing his teeth. He even went out of his way to bully Buck, striving constantly to start the fight which could end only in the death of one or the other. Early in the trip this might have taken place had it not been for an unwonted accident. At the end of this day they made a bleak and miserable camp on the shore of Lake Le Barge. Driving snow, a wind that cut like a white-hot knife, and darkness had forced them to grope for a camping place. They could hardly have fared worse. At their backs rose a perpendicular wall of rock, and Perrault and Francois were compelled to make their fire and spread their sleeping robes on the ice of the lake itself. The tent they had discarded at Dyea in order to travel light. A few sticks of driftwood furnished them with a fire that thawed down through the ice and left them to eat supper in the dark.

Close in under the sheltering rock Buck made his nest. So snug and warm was it, that he was loath to leave it when Francois distributed the fish which he had first thawed over the fire. But when Buck finished his ration and returned, he found his nest occupied. A warning snarl told him that the trespasser was Spitz. Till now Buck had avoided trouble with his enemy, but this was too much. The beast in him roared. He sprang upon Spitz with a fury which surprised them both, and Spitz particularly, for his whole experience with Buck had gone to teach him that his rival was an unusually timid dog, who managed to hold his own only because of his great weight and size.

Francois was surprised, too, when they shot out in a tangle from the disrupted nest and he divined the cause of the trouble. "A-a-ah!" he cried to Buck. "Gif it to heem, by Gar! Gif it to heem, the dirty t'eef!"

Spitz was equally willing. He was crying with sheer rage and eagerness as he circled back and forth for a chance to spring in. Buck was no less eager, and no less cautious, as he likewise circled back and forth for the advantage. But it was then that the

unexpected happened, the thing which projected their struggle for supremacy far into the future, past many a weary mile of trail and toil.

An oath from Perrault, the resounding impact of a club upon a bony frame, and a shrill yelp of pain, heralded the breaking forth of pandemonium. The camp was suddenly discovered to be alive with skulking furry forms, — starving huskies, four or five score of them, who had scented the camp from some Indian village. They had crept in while Buck and Spitz were fighting, and when the two men sprang among them with stout clubs they showed their teeth and fought back. They were crazed by the smell of the food. Perrault found one with head buried in the grub-box. His club landed heavily on the gaunt ribs, and the grub-box was capsized on the ground. On the instant a score of the famished brutes were scrambling for the bread and bacon. The clubs fell upon them unheeded. They yelped and howled under the rain of blows, but struggled none the less madly till the last crumb had been devoured.

In the meantime the astonished team-dogs had burst out of their nests only to be set upon by the fierce invaders. Never had Buck seen such dogs. It seemed as though their bones would burst through their skins. They were mere skeletons, draped loosely in draggled hides, with blazing eyes and slavered fangs. But the hunger-madness made them terrifying, irresistible. There was no opposing them. The team-dogs were swept back against the cliff at the first onset. Buck was beset by three huskies, and in a trice his head and shoulders were ripped and slashed. The din was frightful. Billee was crying as usual. Dave and Sol-leks, dripping blood from a score of wounds, were fighting bravely side by side. Joe was snapping like a demon. Once, his teeth closed on the fore leg of a husky, and he crunched down through the bone. Pike, the malingerer, leaped upon the crippled animal, breaking its neck with a quick flash of teeth and a jerk, Buck got a frothing adversary by the throat, and was sprayed with blood when his teeth sank through the jugular. The warm taste of it in his mouth goaded him to greater fierceness. He flung himself upon another, and at the same time felt teeth sink into his own throat. It was Spitz, treacherously attacking from the side.

Perrault and Francois, having cleaned out their part of the camp, hurried to save their sled-dogs. The wild wave of famished beasts rolled back before them, and Buck shook himself free. But it was only for a moment. The two men were compelled to run back to save the grub, upon which the huskies returned to the attack on the team. Billee, terrified into bravery, sprang through the savage circle and fled away over the ice. Pike and Dub followed on his heels, with the rest of the team behind. As Buck drew himself together to spring after them, out of the tail of his eye he saw Spitz rush upon him with the evident intention of overthrowing him. Once off his feet and under that mass of huskies, there was no hope for him. But he braced himself to the shock of Spitz's charge, then joined the flight out on the lake.

Later, the nine team-dogs gathered together and sought shelter in the forest. Though unpursued, they were in a sorry plight. There was not one who was not wounded in four or five places, while some were wounded grievously. Dub was badly injured in a hind leg; Dolly, the last husky added to the team at Dyea, had a badly torn throat;

Joe had lost an eye; while Billee, the good-natured, with an ear chewed and rent to ribbons, cried and whimpered throughout the night. At daybreak they limped warily back to camp, to find the marauders gone and the two men in bad tempers. Fully half their grub supply was gone. The huskies had chewed through the sled lashings and canvas coverings. In fact, nothing, no matter how remotely eatable, had escaped them. They had eaten a pair of Perrault's moose-hide moccasins, chunks out of the leather traces, and even two feet of lash from the end of Francois's whip. He broke from a mournful contemplation of it to look over his wounded dogs.

"Ah, my frien's," he said softly, "mebbe it mek you mad dog, dose many bites. Mebbe all mad dog, sacredam! Wot you t'ink, eh, Perrault?"

The courier shook his head dubiously. With four hundred miles of trail still between him and Dawson, he could ill afford to have madness break out among his dogs. Two hours of cursing and exertion got the harnesses into shape, and the wound-stiffened team was under way, struggling painfully over the hardest part of the trail they had yet encountered, and for that matter, the hardest between them and Dawson.

The Thirty Mile River was wide open. Its wild water defied the frost, and it was in the eddies only and in the quiet places that the ice held at all. Six days of exhausting toil were required to cover those thirty terrible miles. And terrible they were, for every foot of them was accomplished at the risk of life to dog and man. A dozen times, Perrault, nosing the way broke through the ice bridges, being saved by the long pole he carried, which he so held that it fell each time across the hole made by his body. But a cold snap was on, the thermometer registering fifty below zero, and each time he broke through he was compelled for very life to build a fire and dry his garments.

Nothing daunted him. It was because nothing daunted him that he had been chosen for government courier. He took all manner of risks, resolutely thrusting his little weazened face into the frost and struggling on from dim dawn to dark. He skirted the frowning shores on rim ice that bent and crackled under foot and upon which they dared not halt. Once, the sled broke through, with Dave and Buck, and they were half-frozen and all but drowned by the time they were dragged out. The usual fire was necessary to save them. They were coated solidly with ice, and the two men kept them on the run around the fire, sweating and thawing, so close that they were singed by the flames.

At another time Spitz went through, dragging the whole team after him up to Buck, who strained backward with all his strength, his fore paws on the slippery edge and the ice quivering and snapping all around. But behind him was Dave, likewise straining backward, and behind the sled was Francois, pulling till his tendons cracked.

Again, the rim ice broke away before and behind, and there was no escape except up the cliff. Perrault scaled it by a miracle, while Francois prayed for just that miracle; and with every thong and sled lashing and the last bit of harness rove into a long rope, the dogs were hoisted, one by one, to the cliff crest. Francois came up last, after the sled and load. Then came the search for a place to descend, which descent was

ultimately made by the aid of the rope, and night found them back on the river with a quarter of a mile to the day's credit.

By the time they made the Hootalinqua and good ice, Buck was played out. The rest of the dogs were in like condition; but Perrault, to make up lost time, pushed them late and early. The first day they covered thirty-five miles to the Big Salmon; the next day thirty-five more to the Little Salmon; the third day forty miles, which brought them well up toward the Five Fingers.

Buck's feet were not so compact and hard as the feet of the huskies. His had softened during the many generations since the day his last wild ancestor was tamed by a cave-dweller or river man. All day long he limped in agony, and camp once made, lay down like a dead dog. Hungry as he was, he would not move to receive his ration of fish, which Francois had to bring to him. Also, the dog-driver rubbed Buck's feet for half an hour each night after supper, and sacrificed the tops of his own moccasins to make four moccasins for Buck. This was a great relief, and Buck caused even the weazened face of Perrault to twist itself into a grin one morning, when Francois forgot the moccasins and Buck lay on his back, his four feet waving appealingly in the air, and refused to budge without them. Later his feet grew hard to the trail, and the worn-out foot-gear was thrown away.

At the Pelly one morning, as they were harnessing up, Dolly, who had never been conspicuous for anything, went suddenly mad. She announced her condition by a long, heartbreaking wolf howl that sent every dog bristling with fear, then sprang straight for Buck. He had never seen a dog go mad, nor did he have any reason to fear madness; yet he knew that here was horror, and fled away from it in a panic. Straight away he raced, with Dolly, panting and frothing, one leap behind; nor could she gain on him, so great was his terror, nor could he leave her, so great was her madness. He plunged through the wooded breast of the island, flew down to the lower end, crossed a back channel filled with rough ice to another island, gained a third island, curved back to the main river, and in desperation started to cross it. And all the time, though he did not look, he could hear her snarling just one leap behind. Francois called to him a quarter of a mile away and he doubled back, still one leap ahead, gasping painfully for air and putting all his faith in that Francois would save him. The dog-driver held the axe poised in his hand, and as Buck shot past him the axe crashed down upon mad Dolly's head.

Buck staggered over against the sled, exhausted, sobbing for breath, helpless. This was Spitz's opportunity. He sprang upon Buck, and twice his teeth sank into his unre-sisting foe and ripped and tore the flesh to the bone. Then Francois's lash descended, and Buck had the satisfaction of watching Spitz receive the worst whipping as yet administered to any of the teams.

"One devil, dat Spitz," remarked Perrault. "Some dam day heem keel dat Buck."

"Dat Buck two devils," was Francois's rejoinder. "All de tam I watch dat Buck I know for sure. Lissen: some dam fine day heem get mad lak hell an' den heem chew dat Spitz all up an' spit heem out on de snow. Sure. I know."

From then on it was war between them. Spitz, as lead-dog and acknowledged master of the team, felt his supremacy threatened by this strange Southland dog. And strange Buck was to him, for of the many Southland dogs he had known, not one had shown up worthily in camp and on trail. They were all too soft, dying under the toil, the frost, and starvation. Buck was the exception. He alone endured and prospered, matching the husky in strength, savagery, and cunning. Then he was a masterful dog, and what made him dangerous was the fact that the club of the man in the red sweater had knocked all blind pluck and rashness out of his desire for mastery. He was preeminently cunning, and could bide his time with a patience that was nothing less than primitive.

It was inevitable that the clash for leadership should come. Buck wanted it. He wanted it because it was his nature, because he had been gripped tight by that nameless, incomprehensible pride of the trail and trace — that pride which holds dogs in the toil to the last gasp, which lures them to die joyfully in the harness, and breaks their hearts if they are cut out of the harness. This was the pride of Dave as wheel-dog, of Sol-leks as he pulled with all his strength; the pride that laid hold of them at break of camp, transforming them from sour and sullen brutes into straining, eager, ambitious creatures; the pride that spurred them on all day and dropped them at pitch of camp at night, letting them fall back into gloomy unrest and discontent. This was the pride that bore up Spitz and made him thrash the sled-dogs who blundered and shirked in the traces or hid away at harness-up time in the morning. Likewise it was this pride that made him fear Buck as a possible lead-dog. And this was Buck's pride, too.

He openly threatened the other's leadership. He came between him and the shirks he should have punished. And he did it deliberately. One night there was a heavy snowfall, and in the morning Pike, the malingerer, did not appear. He was securely hidden in his nest under a foot of snow. Francois called him and sought him in vain. Spitz was wild with wrath. He raged through the camp, smelling and digging in every likely place, snarling so frightfully that Pike heard and shivered in his hiding-place.

But when he was at last unearthed, and Spitz flew at him to punish him, Buck flew, with equal rage, in between. So unexpected was it, and so shrewdly managed, that Spitz was hurled backward and off his feet. Pike, who had been trembling abjectly, took heart at this open mutiny, and sprang upon his overthrown leader. Buck, to whom fair play was a forgotten code, likewise sprang upon Spitz. But Francois, chuckling at the incident while unswerving in the administration of justice, brought his lash down upon Buck with all his might. This failed to drive Buck from his prostrate rival, and the butt of the whip was brought into play. Half-stunned by the blow, Buck was knocked backward and the lash laid upon him again and again, while Spitz soundly punished the many times offending Pike.

In the days that followed, as Dawson grew closer and closer, Buck still continued to interfere between Spitz and the culprits; but he did it craftily, when Francois was not around. With the covert mutiny of Buck, a general insubordination sprang up and increased. Dave and Sol-leks were unaffected, but the rest of the team went from bad to worse. Things no longer went right. There was continual bickering and jangling.

Trouble was always afoot, and at the bottom of it was Buck. He kept Francois busy, for the dog-driver was in constant apprehension of the life-and-death struggle between the two which he knew must take place sooner or later; and on more than one night the sounds of quarrelling and strife among the other dogs turned him out of his sleeping robe, fearful that Buck and Spitz were at it.

But the opportunity did not present itself, and they pulled into Dawson one dreary afternoon with the great fight still to come. Here were many men, and countless dogs, and Buck found them all at work. It seemed the ordained order of things that dogs should work. All day they swung up and down the main street in long teams, and in the night their jingling bells still went by. They hauled cabin logs and firewood, freighted up to the mines, and did all manner of work that horses did in the Santa Clara Valley. Here and there Buck met Southland dogs, but in the main they were the wild wolf husky breed. Every night, regularly, at nine, at twelve, at three, they lifted a nocturnal song, a weird and eerie chant, in which it was Buck's delight to join.

With the aurora borealis flaming coldly overhead, or the stars leaping in the frost dance, and the land numb and frozen under its pall of snow, this song of the huskies might have been the defiance of life, only it was pitched in minor key, with long-drawn wailings and half-sobs, and was more the pleading of life, the articulate travail of existence. It was an old song, old as the breed itself — one of the first songs of the younger world in a day when songs were sad. It was invested with the woe of unnumbered generations, this plaint by which Buck was so strangely stirred. When he moaned and sobbed, it was with the pain of living that was of old the pain of his wild fathers, and the fear and mystery of the cold and dark that was to them fear and mystery. And that he should be stirred by it marked the completeness with which he harked back through the ages of fire and roof to the raw beginnings of life in the howling ages.

Seven days from the time they pulled into Dawson, they dropped down the steep bank by the Barracks to the Yukon Trail, and pulled for Dyea and Salt Water. Perrault was carrying despatches if anything more urgent than those he had brought in; also, the travel pride had gripped him, and he purposed to make the record trip of the year. Several things favored him in this. The week's rest had recuperated the dogs and put them in thorough trim. The trail they had broken into the country was packed hard by later journeyers. And further, the police had arranged in two or three places deposits of grub for dog and man, and he was travelling light.

They made Sixty Mile, which is a fifty-mile run, on the first day; and the second day saw them booming up the Yukon well on their way to Pelly. But such splendid running was achieved not without great trouble and vexation on the part of Francois. The insidious revolt led by Buck had destroyed the solidarity of the team. It no longer was as one dog leaping in the traces. The encouragement Buck gave the rebels led them into all kinds of petty misdemeanors. No more was Spitz a leader greatly to be feared. The old awe departed, and they grew equal to challenging his authority. Pike robbed him of half a fish one night, and gulped it down under the protection of Buck.

Another night Dub and Joe fought Spitz and made him forego the punishment they deserved. And even Billee, the good-natured, was less good-natured, and whined not half so placatingly as in former days. Buck never came near Spitz without snarling and bristling menacingly. In fact, his conduct approached that of a bully, and he was given to swaggering up and down before Spitz's very nose.

The breaking down of discipline likewise affected the dogs in their relations with one another. They quarrelled and bickered more than ever among themselves, till at times the camp was a howling bedlam. Dave and Sol-leks alone were unaltered, though they were made irritable by the unending squabbling. Francois swore strange barbarous oaths, and stamped the snow in futile rage, and tore his hair. His lash was always singing among the dogs, but it was of small avail. Directly his back was turned they were at it again. He backed up Spitz with his whip, while Buck backed up the remainder of the team. Francois knew he was behind all the trouble, and Buck knew he knew; but Buck was too clever ever again to be caught red-handed. He worked faithfully in the harness, for the toil had become a delight to him; yet it was a greater delight slyly to precipitate a fight amongst his mates and tangle the traces.

At the mouth of the Tahkeena, one night after supper, Dub turned up a snowshoe rabbit, blundered it, and missed. In a second the whole team was in full cry. A hundred yards away was a camp of the Northwest Police, with fifty dogs, huskies all, who joined the chase. The rabbit sped down the river, turned off into a small creek, up the frozen bed of which it held steadily. It ran lightly on the surface of the snow, while the dogs ploughed through by main strength. Buck led the pack, sixty strong, around bend after bend, but he could not gain. He lay down low to the race, whining eagerly, his splendid body flashing forward, leap by leap, in the wan white moonlight. And leap by leap, like some pale frost wraith, the snowshoe rabbit flashed on ahead.

All that stirring of old instincts which at stated periods drives men out from the sounding cities to forest and plain to kill things by chemically propelled leaden pellets, the blood lust, the joy to kill — all this was Buck's, only it was infinitely more intimate. He was ranging at the head of the pack, running the wild thing down, the living meat, to kill with his own teeth and wash his muzzle to the eyes in warm blood.

There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive. This ecstasy, this forgetfulness of living, comes to the artist, caught up and out of himself in a sheet of flame; it comes to the soldier, war-mad on a stricken field and refusing quarter; and it came to Buck, leading the pack, sounding the old wolf-cry, straining after the food that was alive and that fled swiftly before him through the moonlight. He was sounding the deeps of his nature, and of the parts of his nature that were deeper than he, going back into the womb of Time. He was mastered by the sheer surging of life, the tidal wave of being, the perfect joy of each separate muscle, joint, and sinew in that it was everything that was not death, that it was aglow and rampant, expressing itself in movement, flying exultantly under the stars and over the face of dead matter that did not move.

But Spitz, cold and calculating even in his supreme moods, left the pack and cut across a narrow neck of land where the creek made a long bend around. Buck did not know of this, and as he rounded the bend, the frost wraith of a rabbit still flitting before him, he saw another and larger frost wraith leap from the overhanging bank into the immediate path of the rabbit. It was Spitz. The rabbit could not turn, and as the white teeth broke its back in mid air it shrieked as loudly as a stricken man may shriek. At sound of this, the cry of Life plunging down from Life's apex in the grip of Death, the fall pack at Buck's heels raised a hell's chorus of delight.

Buck did not cry out. He did not check himself, but drove in upon Spitz, shoulder to shoulder, so hard that he missed the throat. They rolled over and over in the powdery snow. Spitz gained his feet almost as though he had not been overthrown, slashing Buck down the shoulder and leaping clear. Twice his teeth clipped together, like the steel jaws of a trap, as he backed away for better footing, with lean and lifting lips that writhed and snarled.

In a flash Buck knew it. The time had come. It was to the death. As they circled about, snarling, ears laid back, keenly watchful for the advantage, the scene came to Buck with a sense of familiarity. He seemed to remember it all, — the white woods, and earth, and moonlight, and the thrill of battle. Over the whiteness and silence brooded a ghostly calm. There was not the faintest whisper of air — nothing moved, not a leaf quivered, the visible breaths of the dogs rising slowly and lingering in the frosty air. They had made short work of the snowshoe rabbit, these dogs that were ill-tamed wolves; and they were now drawn up in an expectant circle. They, too, were silent, their eyes only gleaming and their breaths drifting slowly upward. To Buck it was nothing new or strange, this scene of old time. It was as though it had always been, the wonted way of things.

Spitz was a practised fighter. From Spitzbergen through the Arctic, and across Canada and the Barrens, he had held his own with all manner of dogs and achieved to mastery over them. Bitter rage was his, but never blind rage. In passion to rend and destroy, he never forgot that his enemy was in like passion to rend and destroy. He never rushed till he was prepared to receive a rush; never attacked till he had first defended that attack.

In vain Buck strove to sink his teeth in the neck of the big white dog. Wherever his fangs struck for the softer flesh, they were countered by the fangs of Spitz. Fang clashed fang, and lips were cut and bleeding, but Buck could not penetrate his enemy's guard. Then he warmed up and enveloped Spitz in a whirlwind of rushes. Time and time again he tried for the snow-white throat, where life bubbled near to the surface, and each time and every time Spitz slashed him and got away. Then Buck took to rushing, as though for the throat, when, suddenly drawing back his head and curving in from the side, he would drive his shoulder at the shoulder of Spitz, as a ram by which to overthrow him. But instead, Buck's shoulder was slashed down each time as Spitz leaped lightly away.



Spitz was untouched, while Buck was streaming with blood and panting hard. The fight was growing desperate. And all the while the silent and wolfish circle waited to finish off whichever dog went down. As Buck grew winded, Spitz took to rushing, and he kept him staggering for footing. Once Buck went over, and the whole circle of sixty dogs started up; but he recovered himself, almost in mid air, and the circle sank down again and waited.

But Buck possessed a quality that made for greatness — imagination. He fought by instinct, but he could fight by head as well. He rushed, as though attempting the old shoulder trick, but at the last instant swept low to the snow and in. His teeth closed on Spitz's left fore leg. There was a crunch of breaking bone, and the white dog faced him on three legs. Thrice he tried to knock him over, then repeated the trick and broke the right fore leg. Despite the pain and helplessness, Spitz struggled madly to keep up. He saw the silent circle, with gleaming eyes, lolling tongues, and silvery breaths drifting upward, closing in upon him as he had seen similar circles close in upon beaten antagonists in the past. Only this time he was the one who was beaten.

There was no hope for him. Buck was inexorable. Mercy was a thing reserved for gentler climes. He manoeuvred for the final rush. The circle had tightened till he could feel the breaths of the huskies on his flanks. He could see them, beyond Spitz and to either side, half crouching for the spring, their eyes fixed upon him. A pause seemed to fall. Every animal was motionless as though turned to stone. Only Spitz quivered and bristled as he staggered back and forth, snarling with horrible menace, as though to frighten off impending death. Then Buck sprang in and out; but while he was in, shoulder had at last squarely met shoulder. The dark circle became a dot on the moon-flooded snow as Spitz disappeared from view. Buck stood and looked on, the successful champion, the dominant primordial beast who had made his kill and found it good.

## Chapter IV. Who Has Won to Mastership

“Eh? Wot I say? I spik true w'en I say dat Buck two devils.” This was Francois's speech next morning when he discovered Spitz missing and Buck covered with wounds. He drew him to the fire and by its light pointed them out.

“Dat Spitz fight lak hell,” said Perrault, as he surveyed the gaping rips and cuts.

“An' dat Buck fight lak two hells,” was Francois's answer. “An' now we make good time. No more Spitz, no more trouble, sure.”

While Perrault packed the camp outfit and loaded the sled, the dog-driver proceeded to harness the dogs. Buck trotted up to the place Spitz would have occupied as leader; but Francois, not noticing him, brought Sol-leks to the coveted position. In his judgment, Sol-leks was the best lead-dog left. Buck sprang upon Sol-leks in a fury, driving him back and standing in his place.

“Eh? eh?” Francois cried, slapping his thighs gleefully. “Look at dat Buck. Heem keel dat Spitz, heem t'ink to take de job.”

“Go 'way, Chook!” he cried, but Buck refused to budge.

He took Buck by the scruff of the neck, and though the dog growled threateningly, dragged him to one side and replaced Sol-leks. The old dog did not like it, and showed plainly that he was afraid of Buck. Francois was obdurate, but when he turned his back Buck again displaced Sol-leks, who was not at all unwilling to go.

Francois was angry. “Now, by Gar, I feex you!” he cried, coming back with a heavy club in his hand.

Buck remembered the man in the red sweater, and retreated slowly; nor did he attempt to charge in when Sol-leks was once more brought forward. But he circled just beyond the range of the club, snarling with bitterness and rage; and while he circled he watched the club so as to dodge it if thrown by Francois, for he was become wise in the way of clubs. The driver went about his work, and he called to Buck when he was ready to put him in his old place in front of Dave. Buck retreated two or three steps. Francois followed him up, whereupon he again retreated. After some time of this, Francois threw down the club, thinking that Buck feared a thrashing. But Buck was in open revolt. He wanted, not to escape a clubbing, but to have the leadership. It was his by right. He had earned it, and he would not be content with less.

Perrault took a hand. Between them they ran him about for the better part of an hour. They threw clubs at him. He dodged. They cursed him, and his fathers and mothers before him, and all his seed to come after him down to the remotest generation,

and every hair on his body and drop of blood in his veins; and he answered curse with snarl and kept out of their reach. He did not try to run away, but retreated around and around the camp, advertising plainly that when his desire was met, he would come in and be good.

Francois sat down and scratched his head. Perrault looked at his watch and swore. Time was flying, and they should have been on the trail an hour gone. Francois scratched his head again. He shook it and grinned sheepishly at the courier, who shrugged his shoulders in sign that they were beaten. Then Francois went up to where Sol-leks stood and called to Buck. Buck laughed, as dogs laugh, yet kept his distance. Francois unfastened Sol-leks's traces and put him back in his old place. The team stood harnessed to the sled in an unbroken line, ready for the trail. There was no place for Buck save at the front. Once more Francois called, and once more Buck laughed and kept away.

"T'row down de club," Perrault commanded.

Francois complied, whereupon Buck trotted in, laughing triumphantly, and swung around into position at the head of the team. His traces were fastened, the sled broken out, and with both men running they dashed out on to the river trail.

Highly as the dog-driver had forevalued Buck, with his two devils, he found, while the day was yet young, that he had undervalued. At a bound Buck took up the duties of leadership; and where judgment was required, and quick thinking and quick acting, he showed himself the superior even of Spitz, of whom Francois had never seen an equal.

But it was in giving the law and making his mates live up to it, that Buck excelled. Dave and Sol-leks did not mind the change in leadership. It was none of their business. Their business was to toil, and toil mightily, in the traces. So long as that were not interfered with, they did not care what happened. Billee, the good-natured, could lead for all they cared, so long as he kept order. The rest of the team, however, had grown unruly during the last days of Spitz, and their surprise was great now that Buck proceeded to lick them into shape.

Pike, who pulled at Buck's heels, and who never put an ounce more of his weight against the breast-band than he was compelled to do, was swiftly and repeatedly shaken for loafing; and ere the first day was done he was pulling more than ever before in his life. The first night in camp, Joe, the sour one, was punished roundly — a thing that Spitz had never succeeded in doing. Buck simply smothered him by virtue of superior weight, and cut him up till he ceased snapping and began to whine for mercy.

The general tone of the team picked up immediately. It recovered its old-time solidarity, and once more the dogs leaped as one dog in the traces. At the Rink Rapids two native huskies, Teek and Koonah, were added; and the celerity with which Buck broke them in took away Francois's breath.

"Nevaire such a dog as dat Buck!" he cried. "No, nevaire! Heem worth one t'ousan' dollair, by Gar! Eh? Wot you say, Perrault?"

And Perrault nodded. He was ahead of the record then, and gaining day by day. The trail was in excellent condition, well packed and hard, and there was no new-fallen snow with which to contend. It was not too cold. The temperature dropped to fifty below zero and remained there the whole trip. The men rode and ran by turn, and the dogs were kept on the jump, with but infrequent stoppages.

The Thirty Mile River was comparatively coated with ice, and they covered in one day going out what had taken them ten days coming in. In one run they made a sixty-mile dash from the foot of Lake Le Barge to the White Horse Rapids. Across Marsh, Tagish, and Bennett (seventy miles of lakes), they flew so fast that the man whose turn it was to run towed behind the sled at the end of a rope. And on the last night of the second week they topped White Pass and dropped down the sea slope with the lights of Skaguay and of the shipping at their feet.

It was a record run. Each day for fourteen days they had averaged forty miles. For three days Perrault and Francois threw chests up and down the main street of Skaguay and were deluged with invitations to drink, while the team was the constant centre of a worshipful crowd of dog-busters and mushers. Then three or four western bad men aspired to clean out the town, were riddled like pepper-boxes for their pains, and public interest turned to other idols. Next came official orders. Francois called Buck to him, threw his arms around him, wept over him. And that was the last of Francois and Perrault. Like other men, they passed out of Buck's life for good.

A Scotch half-breed took charge of him and his mates, and in company with a dozen other dog-teams he started back over the weary trail to Dawson. It was no light running now, nor record time, but heavy toil each day, with a heavy load behind; for this was the mail train, carrying word from the world to the men who sought gold under the shadow of the Pole.

Buck did not like it, but he bore up well to the work, taking pride in it after the manner of Dave and Sol-leks, and seeing that his mates, whether they prided in it or not, did their fair share. It was a monotonous life, operating with machine-like regularity. One day was very like another. At a certain time each morning the cooks turned out, fires were built, and breakfast was eaten. Then, while some broke camp, others harnessed the dogs, and they were under way an hour or so before the darkness fell which gave warning of dawn. At night, camp was made. Some pitched the flies, others cut firewood and pine boughs for the beds, and still others carried water or ice for the cooks. Also, the dogs were fed. To them, this was the one feature of the day, though it was good to loaf around, after the fish was eaten, for an hour or so with the other dogs, of which there were fivescore and odd. There were fierce fighters among them, but three battles with the fiercest brought Buck to mastery, so that when he bristled and showed his teeth they got out of his way.

Best of all, perhaps, he loved to lie near the fire, hind legs crouched under him, fore legs stretched out in front, head raised, and eyes blinking dreamily at the flames. Sometimes he thought of Judge Miller's big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley, and of the cement swimming-tank, and Ysabel, the Mexican hairless, and Toots, the

Japanese pug; but oftener he remembered the man in the red sweater, the death of Curly, the great fight with Spitz, and the good things he had eaten or would like to eat. He was not homesick. The Sunland was very dim and distant, and such memories had no power over him. Far more potent were the memories of his heredity that gave things he had never seen before a seeming familiarity; the instincts (which were but the memories of his ancestors become habits) which had lapsed in later days, and still later, in him, quickened and become alive again.

Sometimes as he crouched there, blinking dreamily at the flames, it seemed that the flames were of another fire, and that as he crouched by this other fire he saw another and different man from the half-breed cook before him. This other man was shorter of leg and longer of arm, with muscles that were stringy and knotty rather than rounded and swelling. The hair of this man was long and matted, and his head slanted back under it from the eyes. He uttered strange sounds, and seemed very much afraid of the darkness, into which he peered continually, clutching in his hand, which hung midway between knee and foot, a stick with a heavy stone made fast to the end. He was all but naked, a ragged and fire-scorched skin hanging part way down his back, but on his body there was much hair. In some places, across the chest and shoulders and down the outside of the arms and thighs, it was matted into almost a thick fur. He did not stand erect, but with trunk inclined forward from the hips, on legs that bent at the knees. About his body there was a peculiar springiness, or resiliency, almost catlike, and a quick alertness as of one who lived in perpetual fear of things seen and unseen.

At other times this hairy man squatted by the fire with head between his legs and slept. On such occasions his elbows were on his knees, his hands clasped above his head as though to shed rain by the hairy arms. And beyond that fire, in the circling darkness, Buck could see many gleaming coals, two by two, always two by two, which he knew to be the eyes of great beasts of prey. And he could hear the crashing of their bodies through the undergrowth, and the noises they made in the night. And dreaming there by the Yukon bank, with lazy eyes blinking at the fire, these sounds and sights of another world would make the hair to rise along his back and stand on end across his shoulders and up his neck, till he whimpered low and suppressedly, or growled softly, and the half-breed cook shouted at him, "Hey, you Buck, wake up!" Whereupon the other world would vanish and the real world come into his eyes, and he would get up and yawn and stretch as though he had been asleep.

It was a hard trip, with the mail behind them, and the heavy work wore them down. They were short of weight and in poor condition when they made Dawson, and should have had a ten days' or a week's rest at least. But in two days' time they dropped down the Yukon bank from the Barracks, loaded with letters for the outside. The dogs were tired, the drivers grumbling, and to make matters worse, it snowed every day. This meant a soft trail, greater friction on the runners, and heavier pulling for the dogs; yet the drivers were fair through it all, and did their best for the animals.

Each night the dogs were attended to first. They ate before the drivers ate, and no man sought his sleeping-robe till he had seen to the feet of the dogs he drove.

Still, their strength went down. Since the beginning of the winter they had travelled eighteen hundred miles, dragging sleds the whole weary distance; and eighteen hundred miles will tell upon life of the toughest. Buck stood it, keeping his mates up to their work and maintaining discipline, though he, too, was very tired. Billee cried and whimpered regularly in his sleep each night. Joe was sourer than ever, and Sol-leks was unapproachable, blind side or other side.

But it was Dave who suffered most of all. Something had gone wrong with him. He became more morose and irritable, and when camp was pitched at once made his nest, where his driver fed him. Once out of the harness and down, he did not get on his feet again till harness-up time in the morning. Sometimes, in the traces, when jerked by a sudden stoppage of the sled, or by straining to start it, he would cry out with pain. The driver examined him, but could find nothing. All the drivers became interested in his case. They talked it over at meal-time, and over their last pipes before going to bed, and one night they held a consultation. He was brought from his nest to the fire and was pressed and prodded till he cried out many times. Something was wrong inside, but they could locate no broken bones, could not make it out.

By the time Cassiar Bar was reached, he was so weak that he was falling repeatedly in the traces. The Scotch half-breed called a halt and took him out of the team, making the next dog, Sol-leks, fast to the sled. His intention was to rest Dave, letting him run free behind the sled. Sick as he was, Dave resented being taken out, grunting and growling while the traces were unfastened, and whimpering broken-heartedly when he saw Sol-leks in the position he had held and served so long. For the pride of trace and trail was his, and, sick unto death, he could not bear that another dog should do his work.

When the sled started, he floundered in the soft snow alongside the beaten trail, attacking Sol-leks with his teeth, rushing against him and trying to thrust him off into the soft snow on the other side, striving to leap inside his traces and get between him and the sled, and all the while whining and yelping and crying with grief and pain. The half-breed tried to drive him away with the whip; but he paid no heed to the stinging lash, and the man had not the heart to strike harder. Dave refused to run quietly on the trail behind the sled, where the going was easy, but continued to flounder alongside in the soft snow, where the going was most difficult, till exhausted. Then he fell, and lay where he fell, howling lugubriously as the long train of sleds churned by.

With the last remnant of his strength he managed to stagger along behind till the train made another stop, when he floundered past the sleds to his own, where he stood alongside Sol-leks. His driver lingered a moment to get a light for his pipe from the man behind. Then he returned and started his dogs. They swung out on the trail with remarkable lack of exertion, turned their heads uneasily, and stopped in surprise. The driver was surprised, too; the sled had not moved. He called his comrades to witness the sight. Dave had bitten through both of Sol-leks's traces, and was standing directly in front of the sled in his proper place.

He pleaded with his eyes to remain there. The driver was perplexed. His comrades talked of how a dog could break its heart through being denied the work that killed it, and recalled instances they had known, where dogs, too old for the toil, or injured, had died because they were cut out of the traces. Also, they held it a mercy, since Dave was to die anyway, that he should die in the traces, heart-easy and content. So he was harnessed in again, and proudly he pulled as of old, though more than once he cried out involuntarily from the bite of his inward hurt. Several times he fell down and was dragged in the traces, and once the sled ran upon him so that he limped thereafter in one of his hind legs.

But he held out till camp was reached, when his driver made a place for him by the fire. Morning found him too weak to travel. At harness-up time he tried to crawl to his driver. By convulsive efforts he got on his feet, staggered, and fell. Then he wormed his way forward slowly toward where the harnesses were being put on his mates. He would advance his fore legs and drag up his body with a sort of hitching movement, when he would advance his fore legs and hitch ahead again for a few more inches. His strength left him, and the last his mates saw of him he lay gasping in the snow and yearning toward them. But they could hear him mournfully howling till they passed out of sight behind a belt of river timber.

Here the train was halted. The Scotch half-breed slowly retraced his steps to the camp they had left. The men ceased talking. A revolver-shot rang out. The man came back hurriedly. The whips snapped, the bells tinkled merrily, the sleds churned along the trail; but Buck knew, and every dog knew, what had taken place behind the belt of river trees.

## Chapter V. The Toil of Trace and Trail

Thirty days from the time it left Dawson, the Salt Water Mail, with Buck and his mates at the fore, arrived at Skaguay. They were in a wretched state, worn out and worn down. Buck's one hundred and forty pounds had dwindled to one hundred and fifteen. The rest of his mates, though lighter dogs, had relatively lost more weight than he. Pike, the malingerer, who, in his lifetime of deceit, had often successfully feigned a hurt leg, was now limping in earnest. Sol-leks was limping, and Dub was suffering from a wrenched shoulder-blade.

They were all terribly footsore. No spring or rebound was left in them. Their feet fell heavily on the trail, jarring their bodies and doubling the fatigue of a day's travel. There was nothing the matter with them except that they were dead tired. It was not the dead-tiredness that comes through brief and excessive effort, from which recovery is a matter of hours; but it was the dead-tiredness that comes through the slow and prolonged strength drainage of months of toil. There was no power of recuperation left, no reserve strength to call upon. It had been all used, the last least bit of it. Every muscle, every fibre, every cell, was tired, dead tired. And there was reason for it. In less than five months they had travelled twenty-five hundred miles, during the last eighteen hundred of which they had had but five days' rest. When they arrived at Skaguay they were apparently on their last legs. They could barely keep the traces taut, and on the down grades just managed to keep out of the way of the sled.

"Mush on, poor sore feets," the driver encouraged them as they tottered down the main street of Skaguay. "Dis is de las'. Den we get one long res'. Eh? For sure. One bully long res'."

The drivers confidently expected a long stopover. Themselves, they had covered twelve hundred miles with two days' rest, and in the nature of reason and common justice they deserved an interval of loafing. But so many were the men who had rushed into the Klondike, and so many were the sweethearts, wives, and kin that had not rushed in, that the congested mail was taking on Alpine proportions; also, there were official orders. Fresh batches of Hudson Bay dogs were to take the places of those worthless for the trail. The worthless ones were to be got rid of, and, since dogs count for little against dollars, they were to be sold.

Three days passed, by which time Buck and his mates found how really tired and weak they were. Then, on the morning of the fourth day, two men from the States came along and bought them, harness and all, for a song. The men addressed each other



as "Hal" and "Charles." Charles was a middle-aged, lightish-colored man, with weak and watery eyes and a mustache that twisted fiercely and vigorously up, giving the lie to the limply drooping lip it concealed. Hal was a youngster of nineteen or twenty, with a big Colt's revolver and a hunting-knife strapped about him on a belt that fairly bristled with cartridges. This belt was the most salient thing about him. It advertised his callowness — a callowness sheer and unutterable. Both men were manifestly out of place, and why such as they should adventure the North is part of the mystery of things that passes understanding.

Buck heard the chaffering, saw the money pass between the man and the Government agent, and knew that the Scotch half-breed and the mail-train drivers were passing out of his life on the heels of Perrault and Francois and the others who had gone before. When driven with his mates to the new owners' camp, Buck saw a slipshod and slovenly affair, tent half stretched, dishes unwashed, everything in disorder; also, he saw a woman. "Mercedes" the men called her. She was Charles's wife and Hal's sister — a nice family party.

Buck watched them apprehensively as they proceeded to take down the tent and load the sled. There was a great deal of effort about their manner, but no businesslike method. The tent was rolled into an awkward bundle three times as large as it should have been. The tin dishes were packed away unwashed. Mercedes continually fluttered in the way of her men and kept up an unbroken chattering of remonstrance and advice. When they put a clothes-sack on the front of the sled, she suggested it should go on the back; and when they had put it on the back, and covered it over with a couple of other bundles, she discovered overlooked articles which could abide nowhere else but in that very sack, and they unloaded again.

Three men from a neighboring tent came out and looked on, grinning and winking at one another.

"You've got a right smart load as it is," said one of them; "and it's not me should tell you your business, but I wouldn't tote that tent along if I was you."

"Undreamed of!" cried Mercedes, throwing up her hands in dainty dismay. "However in the world could I manage without a tent?"

"It's springtime, and you won't get any more cold weather," the man replied.

She shook her head decidedly, and Charles and Hal put the last odds and ends on top the mountainous load.

"Think it'll ride?" one of the men asked.

"Why shouldn't it?" Charles demanded rather shortly.

"Oh, that's all right, that's all right," the man hastened meekly to say. "I was just a-wonderin', that is all. It seemed a mite top-heavy."

Charles turned his back and drew the lashings down as well as he could, which was not in the least well.

"An' of course the dogs can hike along all day with that contraption behind them," affirmed a second of the men.

"Certainly," said Hal, with freezing politeness, taking hold of the gee-pole with one hand and swinging his whip from the other. "Mush!" he shouted. "Mush on there!"

The dogs sprang against the breast-bands, strained hard for a few moments, then relaxed. They were unable to move the sled.

"The lazy brutes, I'll show them," he cried, preparing to lash out at them with the whip.

But Mercedes interfered, crying, "Oh, Hal, you mustn't," as she caught hold of the whip and wrenched it from him. "The poor dears! Now you must promise you won't be harsh with them for the rest of the trip, or I won't go a step."

"Precious lot you know about dogs," her brother sneered; "and I wish you'd leave me alone. They're lazy, I tell you, and you've got to whip them to get anything out of them. That's their way. You ask any one. Ask one of those men."

Mercedes looked at them imploringly, untold repugnance at sight of pain written in her pretty face.

"They're weak as water, if you want to know," came the reply from one of the men. "Plum tuckered out, that's what's the matter. They need a rest."

"Rest be blanked," said Hal, with his beardless lips; and Mercedes said, "Oh!" in pain and sorrow at the oath.

But she was a clannish creature, and rushed at once to the defence of her brother. "Never mind that man," she said pointedly. "You're driving our dogs, and you do what you think best with them."

Again Hal's whip fell upon the dogs. They threw themselves against the breast-bands, dug their feet into the packed snow, got down low to it, and put forth all their strength. The sled held as though it were an anchor. After two efforts, they stood still, panting. The whip was whistling savagely, when once more Mercedes interfered. She dropped on her knees before Buck, with tears in her eyes, and put her arms around his neck.

"You poor, poor dears," she cried sympathetically, "why don't you pull hard? — then you wouldn't be whipped." Buck did not like her, but he was feeling too miserable to resist her, taking it as part of the day's miserable work.

One of the onlookers, who had been clenching his teeth to suppress hot speech, now spoke up: —

"It's not that I care a whoop what becomes of you, but for the dogs' sakes I just want to tell you, you can help them a mighty lot by breaking out that sled. The runners are froze fast. Throw your weight against the gee-pole, right and left, and break it out."

A third time the attempt was made, but this time, following the advice, Hal broke out the runners which had been frozen to the snow. The overloaded and unwieldy sled forged ahead, Buck and his mates struggling frantically under the rain of blows. A hundred yards ahead the path turned and sloped steeply into the main street. It would have required an experienced man to keep the top-heavy sled upright, and Hal was not such a man. As they swung on the turn the sled went over, spilling half its load through the loose lashings. The dogs never stopped. The lightened sled bounded on

its side behind them. They were angry because of the ill treatment they had received and the unjust load. Buck was raging. He broke into a run, the team following his lead. Hal cried "Whoa! whoa!" but they gave no heed. He tripped and was pulled off his feet. The capsized sled ground over him, and the dogs dashed on up the street, adding to the gayety of Skaguay as they scattered the remainder of the outfit along its chief thoroughfare.

Kind-hearted citizens caught the dogs and gathered up the scattered belongings. Also, they gave advice. Half the load and twice the dogs, if they ever expected to reach Dawson, was what was said. Hal and his sister and brother-in-law listened unwillingly, pitched tent, and overhauled the outfit. Canned goods were turned out that made men laugh, for canned goods on the Long Trail is a thing to dream about. "Blankets for a hotel" quoth one of the men who laughed and helped. "Half as many is too much; get rid of them. Throw away that tent, and all those dishes, — who's going to wash them, anyway? Good Lord, do you think you're travelling on a Pullman?"

And so it went, the inexorable elimination of the superfluous. Mercedes cried when her clothes-bags were dumped on the ground and article after article was thrown out. She cried in general, and she cried in particular over each discarded thing. She clasped hands about knees, rocking back and forth broken-heartedly. She averred she would not go an inch, not for a dozen Charleses. She appealed to everybody and to everything, finally wiping her eyes and proceeding to cast out even articles of apparel that were imperative necessities. And in her zeal, when she had finished with her own, she attacked the belongings of her men and went through them like a tornado.

This accomplished, the outfit, though cut in half, was still a formidable bulk. Charles and Hal went out in the evening and bought six Outside dogs. These, added to the six of the original team, and Teek and Koonah, the huskies obtained at the Rink Rapids on the record trip, brought the team up to fourteen. But the Outside dogs, though practically broken in since their landing, did not amount to much. Three were short-haired pointers, one was a Newfoundland, and the other two were mongrels of indeterminate breed. They did not seem to know anything, these newcomers. Buck and his comrades looked upon them with disgust, and though he speedily taught them their places and what not to do, he could not teach them what to do. They did not take kindly to trace and trail. With the exception of the two mongrels, they were bewildered and spirit-broken by the strange savage environment in which they found themselves and by the ill treatment they had received. The two mongrels were without spirit at all; bones were the only things breakable about them.

With the newcomers hopeless and forlorn, and the old team worn out by twenty-five hundred miles of continuous trail, the outlook was anything but bright. The two men, however, were quite cheerful. And they were proud, too. They were doing the thing in style, with fourteen dogs. They had seen other sleds depart over the Pass for Dawson, or come in from Dawson, but never had they seen a sled with so many as fourteen dogs. In the nature of Arctic travel there was a reason why fourteen dogs should not drag one sled, and that was that one sled could not carry the food for fourteen dogs.

But Charles and Hal did not know this. They had worked the trip out with a pencil, so much to a dog, so many dogs, so many days, Q.E.D. Mercedes looked over their shoulders and nodded comprehensively, it was all so very simple.

Late next morning Buck led the long team up the street. There was nothing lively about it, no snap or go in him and his fellows. They were starting dead weary. Four times he had covered the distance between Salt Water and Dawson, and the knowledge that, jaded and tired, he was facing the same trail once more, made him bitter. His heart was not in the work, nor was the heart of any dog. The Outsides were timid and frightened, the Insides without confidence in their masters.

Buck felt vaguely that there was no depending upon these two men and the woman. They did not know how to do anything, and as the days went by it became apparent that they could not learn. They were slack in all things, without order or discipline. It took them half the night to pitch a slovenly camp, and half the morning to break that camp and get the sled loaded in fashion so slovenly that for the rest of the day they were occupied in stopping and rearranging the load. Some days they did not make ten miles. On other days they were unable to get started at all. And on no day did they succeed in making more than half the distance used by the men as a basis in their dog-food computation.

It was inevitable that they should go short on dog-food. But they hastened it by overfeeding, bringing the day nearer when underfeeding would commence. The Outside dogs, whose digestions had not been trained by chronic famine to make the most of little, had voracious appetites. And when, in addition to this, the worn-out huskies pulled weakly, Hal decided that the orthodox ration was too small. He doubled it. And to cap it all, when Mercedes, with tears in her pretty eyes and a quaver in her throat, could not cajole him into giving the dogs still more, she stole from the fish-sacks and fed them slyly. But it was not food that Buck and the huskies needed, but rest. And though they were making poor time, the heavy load they dragged sapped their strength severely.

Then came the underfeeding. Hal awoke one day to the fact that his dog-food was half gone and the distance only quarter covered; further, that for love or money no additional dog-food was to be obtained. So he cut down even the orthodox ration and tried to increase the day's travel. His sister and brother-in-law seconded him; but they were frustrated by their heavy outfit and their own incompetence. It was a simple matter to give the dogs less food; but it was impossible to make the dogs travel faster, while their own inability to get under way earlier in the morning prevented them from travelling longer hours. Not only did they not know how to work dogs, but they did not know how to work themselves.

The first to go was Dub. Poor blundering thief that he was, always getting caught and punished, he had none the less been a faithful worker. His wrenched shoulder-blade, untreated and unrested, went from bad to worse, till finally Hal shot him with the big Colt's revolver. It is a saying of the country that an Outside dog starves to death on the ration of the husky, so the six Outside dogs under Buck could do no less than die

on half the ration of the husky. The Newfoundland went first, followed by the three short-haired pointers, the two mongrels hanging more grittily on to life, but going in the end.

By this time all the amenities and gentlenesses of the Southland had fallen away from the three people. Shorn of its glamour and romance, Arctic travel became to them a reality too harsh for their manhood and womanhood. Mercedes ceased weeping over the dogs, being too occupied with weeping over herself and with quarrelling with her husband and brother. To quarrel was the one thing they were never too weary to do. Their irritability arose out of their misery, increased with it, doubled upon it, outdistanced it. The wonderful patience of the trail which comes to men who toil hard and suffer sore, and remain sweet of speech and kindly, did not come to these two men and the woman. They had no inkling of such a patience. They were stiff and in pain; their muscles ached, their bones ached, their very hearts ached; and because of this they became sharp of speech, and hard words were first on their lips in the morning and last at night.

Charles and Hal wrangled whenever Mercedes gave them a chance. It was the cherished belief of each that he did more than his share of the work, and neither forbore to speak this belief at every opportunity. Sometimes Mercedes sided with her husband, sometimes with her brother. The result was a beautiful and unending family quarrel. Starting from a dispute as to which should chop a few sticks for the fire (a dispute which concerned only Charles and Hal), presently would be lugged in the rest of the family, fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins, people thousands of miles away, and some of them dead. That Hal's views on art, or the sort of society plays his mother's brother wrote, should have anything to do with the chopping of a few sticks of firewood, passes comprehension; nevertheless the quarrel was as likely to tend in that direction as in the direction of Charles's political prejudices. And that Charles's sister's tale-bearing tongue should be relevant to the building of a Yukon fire, was apparent only to Mercedes, who disburdened herself of copious opinions upon that topic, and incidentally upon a few other traits unpleasantly peculiar to her husband's family. In the meantime the fire remained unbuilt, the camp half pitched, and the dogs unfed.

Mercedes nursed a special grievance — the grievance of sex. She was pretty and soft, and had been chivalrously treated all her days. But the present treatment by her husband and brother was everything save chivalrous. It was her custom to be helpless. They complained. Upon which impeachment of what to her was her most essential sex-prerogative, she made their lives unendurable. She no longer considered the dogs, and because she was sore and tired, she persisted in riding on the sled. She was pretty and soft, but she weighed one hundred and twenty pounds — a lusty last straw to the load dragged by the weak and starving animals. She rode for days, till they fell in the traces and the sled stood still. Charles and Hal begged her to get off and walk, pleaded with her, entreated, the while she wept and importuned Heaven with a recital of their brutality.

On one occasion they took her off the sled by main strength. They never did it again. She let her legs go limp like a spoiled child, and sat down on the trail. They went on their way, but she did not move. After they had travelled three miles they unloaded the sled, came back for her, and by main strength put her on the sled again.

In the excess of their own misery they were callous to the suffering of their animals. Hal's theory, which he practised on others, was that one must get hardened. He had started out preaching it to his sister and brother-in-law. Failing there, he hammered it into the dogs with a club. At the Five Fingers the dog-food gave out, and a toothless old squaw offered to trade them a few pounds of frozen horse-hide for the Colt's revolver that kept the big hunting-knife company at Hal's hip. A poor substitute for food was this hide, just as it had been stripped from the starved horses of the cattlemen six months back. In its frozen state it was more like strips of galvanized iron, and when a dog wrestled it into his stomach it thawed into thin and innutritious leathery strings and into a mass of short hair, irritating and indigestible.

And through it all Buck staggered along at the head of the team as in a nightmare. He pulled when he could; when he could no longer pull, he fell down and remained down till blows from whip or club drove him to his feet again. All the stiffness and gloss had gone out of his beautiful furry coat. The hair hung down, limp and dragged, or matted with dried blood where Hal's club had bruised him. His muscles had wasted away to knotty strings, and the flesh pads had disappeared, so that each rib and every bone in his frame were outlined cleanly through the loose hide that was wrinkled in folds of emptiness. It was heartbreaking, only Buck's heart was unbreakable. The man in the red sweater had proved that.

As it was with Buck, so was it with his mates. They were perambulating skeletons. There were seven all together, including him. In their very great misery they had become insensible to the bite of the lash or the bruise of the club. The pain of the beating was dull and distant, just as the things their eyes saw and their ears heard seemed dull and distant. They were not half living, or quarter living. They were simply so many bags of bones in which sparks of life fluttered faintly. When a halt was made, they dropped down in the traces like dead dogs, and the spark dimmed and paled and seemed to go out. And when the club or whip fell upon them, the spark fluttered feebly up, and they tottered to their feet and staggered on.

There came a day when Billee, the good-natured, fell and could not rise. Hal had traded off his revolver, so he took the axe and knocked Billee on the head as he lay in the traces, then cut the carcass out of the harness and dragged it to one side. Buck saw, and his mates saw, and they knew that this thing was very close to them. On the next day Koonah went, and but five of them remained: Joe, too far gone to be malignant; Pike, crippled and limping, only half conscious and not conscious enough longer to mangle; Sol-leks, the one-eyed, still faithful to the toil of trace and trail, and mournful in that he had so little strength with which to pull; Teek, who had not travelled so far that winter and who was now beaten more than the others because he was fresher; and Buck, still at the head of the team, but no longer enforcing discipline

or striving to enforce it, blind with weakness half the time and keeping the trail by the loom of it and by the dim feel of his feet.

It was beautiful spring weather, but neither dogs nor humans were aware of it. Each day the sun rose earlier and set later. It was dawn by three in the morning, and twilight lingered till nine at night. The whole long day was a blaze of sunshine. The ghostly winter silence had given way to the great spring murmur of awakening life. This murmur arose from all the land, fraught with the joy of living. It came from the things that lived and moved again, things which had been as dead and which had not moved during the long months of frost. The sap was rising in the pines. The willows and aspens were bursting out in young buds. Shrubs and vines were putting on fresh garbs of green. Crickets sang in the nights, and in the days all manner of creeping, crawling things rustled forth into the sun. Partridges and woodpeckers were booming and knocking in the forest. Squirrels were chattering, birds singing, and overhead honked the wild-fowl driving up from the south in cunning wedges that split the air.

From every hill slope came the trickle of running water, the music of unseen fountains. All things were thawing, bending, snapping. The Yukon was straining to break loose the ice that bound it down. It ate away from beneath; the sun ate from above. Air-holes formed, fissures sprang and spread apart, while thin sections of ice fell through bodily into the river. And amid all this bursting, rending, throbbing of awakening life, under the blazing sun and through the soft-sighing breezes, like wayfarers to death, staggered the two men, the woman, and the huskies.

With the dogs falling, Mercedes weeping and riding, Hal swearing innocuously, and Charles's eyes wistfully watering, they staggered into John Thornton's camp at the mouth of White River. When they halted, the dogs dropped down as though they had all been struck dead. Mercedes dried her eyes and looked at John Thornton. Charles sat down on a log to rest. He sat down very slowly and painstakingly what of his great stiffness. Hal did the talking. John Thornton was whittling the last touches on an axe-handle he had made from a stick of birch. He whittled and listened, gave monosyllabic replies, and, when it was asked, terse advice. He knew the breed, and he gave his advice in the certainty that it would not be followed.

"They told us up above that the bottom was dropping out of the trail and that the best thing for us to do was to lay over," Hal said in response to Thornton's warning to take no more chances on the rotten ice. "They told us we couldn't make White River, and here we are." This last with a sneering ring of triumph in it.

"And they told you true," John Thornton answered. "The bottom's likely to drop out at any moment. Only fools, with the blind luck of fools, could have made it. I tell you straight, I wouldn't risk my carcass on that ice for all the gold in Alaska."

"That's because you're not a fool, I suppose," said Hal. "All the same, we'll go on to Dawson." He uncoiled his whip. "Get up there, Buck! Hi! Get up there! Mush on!"

Thornton went on whittling. It was idle, he knew, to get between a fool and his folly; while two or three fools more or less would not alter the scheme of things.

But the team did not get up at the command. It had long since passed into the stage where blows were required to rouse it. The whip flashed out, here and there, on its merciless errands. John Thornton compressed his lips. Sol-leks was the first to crawl to his feet. Teek followed. Joe came next, yelping with pain. Pike made painful efforts. Twice he fell over, when half up, and on the third attempt managed to rise. Buck made no effort. He lay quietly where he had fallen. The lash bit into him again and again, but he neither whined nor struggled. Several times Thornton started, as though to speak, but changed his mind. A moisture came into his eyes, and, as the whipping continued, he arose and walked irresolutely up and down.

This was the first time Buck had failed, in itself a sufficient reason to drive Hal into a rage. He exchanged the whip for the customary club. Buck refused to move under the rain of heavier blows which now fell upon him. Like his mates, he was barely able to get up, but, unlike them, he had made up his mind not to get up. He had a vague feeling of impending doom. This had been strong upon him when he pulled in to the bank, and it had not departed from him. What of the thin and rotten ice he had felt under his feet all day, it seemed that he sensed disaster close at hand, out there ahead on the ice where his master was trying to drive him. He refused to stir. So greatly had he suffered, and so far gone was he, that the blows did not hurt much. And as they continued to fall upon him, the spark of life within flickered and went down. It was nearly out. He felt strangely numb. As though from a great distance, he was aware that he was being beaten. The last sensations of pain left him. He no longer felt anything, though very faintly he could hear the impact of the club upon his body. But it was no longer his body, it seemed so far away.

And then, suddenly, without warning, uttering a cry that was inarticulate and more like the cry of an animal, John Thornton sprang upon the man who wielded the club. Hal was hurled backward, as though struck by a falling tree. Mercedes screamed. Charles looked on wistfully, wiped his watery eyes, but did not get up because of his stiffness.

John Thornton stood over Buck, struggling to control himself, too convulsed with rage to speak.

"If you strike that dog again, I'll kill you," he at last managed to say in a choking voice.

"It's my dog," Hal replied, wiping the blood from his mouth as he came back. "Get out of my way, or I'll fix you. I'm going to Dawson."

Thornton stood between him and Buck, and evinced no intention of getting out of the way. Hal drew his long hunting-knife. Mercedes screamed, cried, laughed, and manifested the chaotic abandonment of hysteria. Thornton rapped Hal's knuckles with the axe-handle, knocking the knife to the ground. He rapped his knuckles again as he tried to pick it up. Then he stooped, picked it up himself, and with two strokes cut Buck's traces.

Hal had no fight left in him. Besides, his hands were full with his sister, or his arms, rather; while Buck was too near dead to be of further use in hauling the sled. A few



minutes later they pulled out from the bank and down the river. Buck heard them go and raised his head to see, Pike was leading, Sol-leks was at the wheel, and between were Joe and Teek. They were limping and staggering. Mercedes was riding the loaded sled. Hal guided at the gee-pole, and Charles stumbled along in the rear.

As Buck watched them, Thornton knelt beside him and with rough, kindly hands searched for broken bones. By the time his search had disclosed nothing more than many bruises and a state of terrible starvation, the sled was a quarter of a mile away. Dog and man watched it crawling along over the ice. Suddenly, they saw its back end drop down, as into a rut, and the gee-pole, with Hal clinging to it, jerk into the air. Mercedes's scream came to their ears. They saw Charles turn and make one step to run back, and then a whole section of ice give way and dogs and humans disappear. A yawning hole was all that was to be seen. The bottom had dropped out of the trail.

John Thornton and Buck looked at each other.

"You poor devil," said John Thornton, and Buck licked his hand.

## Chapter VI. For the Love of a Man

When John Thornton froze his feet in the previous December his partners had made him comfortable and left him to get well, going on themselves up the river to get out a raft of saw-logs for Dawson. He was still limping slightly at the time he rescued Buck, but with the continued warm weather even the slight limp left him. And here, lying by the river bank through the long spring days, watching the running water, listening lazily to the songs of birds and the hum of nature, Buck slowly won back his strength.

A rest comes very good after one has travelled three thousand miles, and it must be confessed that Buck waxed lazy as his wounds healed, his muscles swelled out, and the flesh came back to cover his bones. For that matter, they were all loafing, — Buck, John Thornton, and Skeet and Nig, — waiting for the raft to come that was to carry them down to Dawson. Skeet was a little Irish setter who early made friends with Buck, who, in a dying condition, was unable to resent her first advances. She had the doctor trait which some dogs possess; and as a mother cat washes her kittens, so she washed and cleansed Buck's wounds. Regularly, each morning after he had finished his breakfast, she performed her self-appointed task, till he came to look for her ministrations as much as he did for Thornton's. Nig, equally friendly, though less demonstrative, was a huge black dog, half bloodhound and half deerhound, with eyes that laughed and a boundless good nature.

To Buck's surprise these dogs manifested no jealousy toward him. They seemed to share the kindness and largeness of John Thornton. As Buck grew stronger they enticed him into all sorts of ridiculous games, in which Thornton himself could not forbear to join; and in this fashion Buck romped through his convalescence and into a new existence. Love, genuine passionate love, was his for the first time. This he had never experienced at Judge Miller's down in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. With the Judge's sons, hunting and tramping, it had been a working partnership; with the Judge's grandsons, a sort of pompous guardianship; and with the Judge himself, a stately and dignified friendship. But love that was feverish and burning, that was adoration, that was madness, it had taken John Thornton to arouse.

This man had saved his life, which was something; but, further, he was the ideal master. Other men saw to the welfare of their dogs from a sense of duty and business expediency; he saw to the welfare of his as if they were his own children, because he could not help it. And he saw further. He never forgot a kindly greeting or a cheering word, and to sit down for a long talk with them ("gas" he called it) was as much his delight as theirs. He had a way of taking Buck's head roughly between his hands, and resting his own head upon Buck's, of shaking him back and forth, the while calling

him ill names that to Buck were love names. Buck knew no greater joy than that rough embrace and the sound of murmured oaths, and at each jerk back and forth it seemed that his heart would be shaken out of his body so great was its ecstasy. And when, released, he sprang to his feet, his mouth laughing, his eyes eloquent, his throat vibrant with unuttered sound, and in that fashion remained without movement, John Thornton would reverently exclaim, "God! you can all but speak!"

Buck had a trick of love expression that was akin to hurt. He would often seize Thornton's hand in his mouth and close so fiercely that the flesh bore the impress of his teeth for some time afterward. And as Buck understood the oaths to be love words, so the man understood this feigned bite for a caress.

For the most part, however, Buck's love was expressed in adoration. While he went wild with happiness when Thornton touched him or spoke to him, he did not seek these tokens. Unlike Skeet, who was wont to shove her nose under Thornton's hand and nudge and nudge till petted, or Nig, who would stalk up and rest his great head on Thornton's knee, Buck was content to adore at a distance. He would lie by the hour, eager, alert, at Thornton's feet, looking up into his face, dwelling upon it, studying it, following with keenest interest each fleeting expression, every movement or change of feature. Or, as chance might have it, he would lie farther away, to the side or rear, watching the outlines of the man and the occasional movements of his body. And often, such was the communion in which they lived, the strength of Buck's gaze would draw John Thornton's head around, and he would return the gaze, without speech, his heart shining out of his eyes as Buck's heart shone out.

For a long time after his rescue, Buck did not like Thornton to get out of his sight. From the moment he left the tent to when he entered it again, Buck would follow at his heels. His transient masters since he had come into the Northland had bred in him a fear that no master could be permanent. He was afraid that Thornton would pass out of his life as Perrault and Francois and the Scotch half-breed had passed out. Even in the night, in his dreams, he was haunted by this fear. At such times he would shake off sleep and creep through the chill to the flap of the tent, where he would stand and listen to the sound of his master's breathing.

But in spite of this great love he bore John Thornton, which seemed to bespeak the soft civilizing influence, the strain of the primitive, which the Northland had aroused in him, remained alive and active. Faithfulness and devotion, things born of fire and roof, were his; yet he retained his wildness and wiliness. He was a thing of the wild, come in from the wild to sit by John Thornton's fire, rather than a dog of the soft Southland stamped with the marks of generations of civilization. Because of his very great love, he could not steal from this man, but from any other man, in any other camp, he did not hesitate an instant; while the cunning with which he stole enabled him to escape detection.

His face and body were scored by the teeth of many dogs, and he fought as fiercely as ever and more shrewdly. Skeet and Nig were too good-natured for quarrelling, — besides, they belonged to John Thornton; but the strange dog, no matter what the

breed or valor, swiftly acknowledged Buck's supremacy or found himself struggling for life with a terrible antagonist. And Buck was merciless. He had learned well the law of club and fang, and he never forewent an advantage or drew back from a foe he had started on the way to Death. He had lessoned from Spitz, and from the chief fighting dogs of the police and mail, and knew there was no middle course. He must master or be mastered; while to show mercy was a weakness. Mercy did not exist in the primordial life. It was misunderstood for fear, and such misunderstandings made for death. Kill or be killed, eat or be eaten, was the law; and this mandate, down out of the depths of Time, he obeyed.

He was older than the days he had seen and the breaths he had drawn. He linked the past with the present, and the eternity behind him throbbed through him in a mighty rhythm to which he swayed as the tides and seasons swayed. He sat by John Thornton's fire, a broad-breasted dog, white-fanged and long-furred; but behind him were the shades of all manner of dogs, half-wolves and wild wolves, urgent and prompting, tasting the savor of the meat he ate, thirsting for the water he drank, scenting the wind with him, listening with him and telling him the sounds made by the wild life in the forest, dictating his moods, directing his actions, lying down to sleep with him when he lay down, and dreaming with him and beyond him and becoming themselves the stuff of his dreams.

So peremptorily did these shades beckon him, that each day mankind and the claims of mankind slipped farther from him. Deep in the forest a call was sounding, and as often as he heard this call, mysteriously thrilling and luring, he felt compelled to turn his back upon the fire and the beaten earth around it, and to plunge into the forest, and on and on, he knew not where or why; nor did he wonder where or why, the call sounding imperiously, deep in the forest. But as often as he gained the soft unbroken earth and the green shade, the love for John Thornton drew him back to the fire again.

Thornton alone held him. The rest of mankind was as nothing. Chance travellers might praise or pet him; but he was cold under it all, and from a too demonstrative man he would get up and walk away. When Thornton's partners, Hans and Pete, arrived on the long-expected raft, Buck refused to notice them till he learned they were close to Thornton; after that he tolerated them in a passive sort of way, accepting favors from them as though he favored them by accepting. They were of the same large type as Thornton, living close to the earth, thinking simply and seeing clearly; and ere they swung the raft into the big eddy by the saw-mill at Dawson, they understood Buck and his ways, and did not insist upon an intimacy such as obtained with Skeet and Nig.

For Thornton, however, his love seemed to grow and grow. He, alone among men, could put a pack upon Buck's back in the summer travelling. Nothing was too great for Buck to do, when Thornton commanded. One day (they had grub-staked themselves from the proceeds of the raft and left Dawson for the head-waters of the Tanana) the men and dogs were sitting on the crest of a cliff which fell away, straight down, to naked bed-rock three hundred feet below. John Thornton was sitting near the edge,

Buck at his shoulder. A thoughtless whim seized Thornton, and he drew the attention of Hans and Pete to the experiment he had in mind. "Jump, Buck!" he commanded, sweeping his arm out and over the chasm. The next instant he was grappling with Buck on the extreme edge, while Hans and Pete were dragging them back into safety.

"It's uncanny," Pete said, after it was over and they had caught their speech.

Thornton shook his head. "No, it is splendid, and it is terrible, too. Do you know, it sometimes makes me afraid."

"I'm not hankering to be the man that lays hands on you while he's around," Pete announced conclusively, nodding his head toward Buck.

"Py Jingo!" was Hans's contribution. "Not mineself either."

It was at Circle City, ere the year was out, that Pete's apprehensions were realized. "Black" Burton, a man evil-tempered and malicious, had been picking a quarrel with a tenderfoot at the bar, when Thornton stepped good-naturedly between. Buck, as was his custom, was lying in a corner, head on paws, watching his master's every action. Burton struck out, without warning, straight from the shoulder. Thornton was sent spinning, and saved himself from falling only by clutching the rail of the bar.

Those who were looking on heard what was neither bark nor yelp, but a something which is best described as a roar, and they saw Buck's body rise up in the air as he left the floor for Burton's throat. The man saved his life by instinctively throwing out his arm, but was hurled backward to the floor with Buck on top of him. Buck loosed his teeth from the flesh of the arm and drove in again for the throat. This time the man succeeded only in partly blocking, and his throat was torn open. Then the crowd was upon Buck, and he was driven off; but while a surgeon checked the bleeding, he prowled up and down, growling furiously, attempting to rush in, and being forced back by an array of hostile clubs. A "miners' meeting," called on the spot, decided that the dog had sufficient provocation, and Buck was discharged. But his reputation was made, and from that day his name spread through every camp in Alaska.

Later on, in the fall of the year, he saved John Thornton's life in quite another fashion. The three partners were lining a long and narrow poling-boat down a bad stretch of rapids on the Forty-Mile Creek. Hans and Pete moved along the bank, snubbing with a thin Manila rope from tree to tree, while Thornton remained in the boat, helping its descent by means of a pole, and shouting directions to the shore. Buck, on the bank, worried and anxious, kept abreast of the boat, his eyes never off his master.

At a particularly bad spot, where a ledge of barely submerged rocks jutted out into the river, Hans cast off the rope, and, while Thornton poled the boat out into the stream, ran down the bank with the end in his hand to snub the boat when it had cleared the ledge. This it did, and was flying down-stream in a current as swift as a mill-race, when Hans checked it with the rope and checked too suddenly. The boat flirted over and snubbed in to the bank bottom up, while Thornton, flung sheer out of it, was carried down-stream toward the worst part of the rapids, a stretch of wild water in which no swimmer could live.

Buck had sprung in on the instant; and at the end of three hundred yards, amid a mad swirl of water, he overhauled Thornton. When he felt him grasp his tail, Buck headed for the bank, swimming with all his splendid strength. But the progress shoreward was slow; the progress down-stream amazingly rapid. From below came the fatal roaring where the wild current went wilder and was rent in shreds and spray by the rocks which thrust through like the teeth of an enormous comb. The suck of the water as it took the beginning of the last steep pitch was frightful, and Thornton knew that the shore was impossible. He scraped furiously over a rock, bruised across a second, and struck a third with crushing force. He clutched its slippery top with both hands, releasing Buck, and above the roar of the churning water shouted: "Go, Buck! Go!"

Buck could not hold his own, and swept on down-stream, struggling desperately, but unable to win back. When he heard Thornton's command repeated, he partly reared out of the water, throwing his head high, as though for a last look, then turned obediently toward the bank. He swam powerfully and was dragged ashore by Pete and Hans at the very point where swimming ceased to be possible and destruction began.

They knew that the time a man could cling to a slippery rock in the face of that driving current was a matter of minutes, and they ran as fast as they could up the bank to a point far above where Thornton was hanging on. They attached the line with which they had been snubbing the boat to Buck's neck and shoulders, being careful that it should neither strangle him nor impede his swimming, and launched him into the stream. He struck out boldly, but not straight enough into the stream. He discovered the mistake too late, when Thornton was abreast of him and a bare half-dozen strokes away while he was being carried helplessly past.

Hans promptly snubbed with the rope, as though Buck were a boat. The rope thus tightening on him in the sweep of the current, he was jerked under the surface, and under the surface he remained till his body struck against the bank and he was hauled out. He was half drowned, and Hans and Pete threw themselves upon him, pounding the breath into him and the water out of him. He staggered to his feet and fell down. The faint sound of Thornton's voice came to them, and though they could not make out the words of it, they knew that he was in his extremity. His master's voice acted on Buck like an electric shock, He sprang to his feet and ran up the bank ahead of the men to the point of his previous departure.

Again the rope was attached and he was launched, and again he struck out, but this time straight into the stream. He had miscalculated once, but he would not be guilty of it a second time. Hans paid out the rope, permitting no slack, while Pete kept it clear of coils. Buck held on till he was on a line straight above Thornton; then he turned, and with the speed of an express train headed down upon him. Thornton saw him coming, and, as Buck struck him like a battering ram, with the whole force of the current behind him, he reached up and closed with both arms around the shaggy neck. Hans snubbed the rope around the tree, and Buck and Thornton were jerked under the water. Strangling, suffocating, sometimes one uppermost and sometimes the other,

dragging over the jagged bottom, smashing against rocks and snags, they veered in to the bank.

Thornton came to, belly downward and being violently propelled back and forth across a drift log by Hans and Pete. His first glance was for Buck, over whose limp and apparently lifeless body Nig was setting up a howl, while Skeet was licking the wet face and closed eyes. Thornton was himself bruised and battered, and he went carefully over Buck's body, when he had been brought around, finding three broken ribs.

"That settles it," he announced. "We camp right here." And camp they did, till Buck's ribs knitted and he was able to travel.

That winter, at Dawson, Buck performed another exploit, not so heroic, perhaps, but one that put his name many notches higher on the totem-pole of Alaskan fame. This exploit was particularly gratifying to the three men; for they stood in need of the outfit which it furnished, and were enabled to make a long-desired trip into the virgin East, where miners had not yet appeared. It was brought about by a conversation in the Eldorado Saloon, in which men waxed boastful of their favorite dogs. Buck, because of his record, was the target for these men, and Thornton was driven stoutly to defend him. At the end of half an hour one man stated that his dog could start a sled with five hundred pounds and walk off with it; a second bragged six hundred for his dog; and a third, seven hundred.

"Pooh! pooh!" said John Thornton; "Buck can start a thousand pounds."

"And break it out? and walk off with it for a hundred yards?" demanded Matthewson, a Bonanza King, he of the seven hundred vaunt.

"And break it out, and walk off with it for a hundred yards," John Thornton said coolly.

"Well," Matthewson said, slowly and deliberately, so that all could hear, "I've got a thousand dollars that says he can't. And there it is." So saying, he slammed a sack of gold dust of the size of a bologna sausage down upon the bar.

Nobody spoke. Thornton's bluff, if bluff it was, had been called. He could feel a flush of warm blood creeping up his face. His tongue had tricked him. He did not know whether Buck could start a thousand pounds. Half a ton! The enormousness of it appalled him. He had great faith in Buck's strength and had often thought him capable of starting such a load; but never, as now, had he faced the possibility of it, the eyes of a dozen men fixed upon him, silent and waiting. Further, he had no thousand dollars; nor had Hans or Pete.

"I've got a sled standing outside now, with twenty fiftypound sacks of flour on it," Matthewson went on with brutal directness; "so don't let that hinder you."

Thornton did not reply. He did not know what to say. He glanced from face to face in the absent way of a man who has lost the power of thought and is seeking somewhere to find the thing that will start it going again. The face of Jim O'Brien, a Mastodon King and old-time comrade, caught his eyes. It was as a cue to him, seeming to rouse him to do what he would never have dreamed of doing.

"Can you lend me a thousand?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"Sure," answered O'Brien, thumping down a plethoric sack by the side of Matthewson's. "Though it's little faith I'm having, John, that the beast can do the trick."

The Eldorado emptied its occupants into the street to see the test. The tables were deserted, and the dealers and gamekeepers came forth to see the outcome of the wager and to lay odds. Several hundred men, furred and mittened, banked around the sled within easy distance. Matthewson's sled, loaded with a thousand pounds of flour, had been standing for a couple of hours, and in the intense cold (it was sixty below zero) the runners had frozen fast to the hard-packed snow. Men offered odds of two to one that Buck could not budge the sled. A quibble arose concerning the phrase "break out." O'Brien contended it was Thornton's privilege to knock the runners loose, leaving Buck to "break it out" from a dead standstill. Matthewson insisted that the phrase included breaking the runners from the frozen grip of the snow. A majority of the men who had witnessed the making of the bet decided in his favor, whereat the odds went up to three to one against Buck.

There were no takers. Not a man believed him capable of the feat. Thornton had been hurried into the wager, heavy with doubt; and now that he looked at the sled itself, the concrete fact, with the regular team of ten dogs curled up in the snow before it, the more impossible the task appeared. Matthewson waxed jubilant.

"Three to one!" he proclaimed. "I'll lay you another thousand at that figure, Thornton. What d'ye say?"

Thornton's doubt was strong in his face, but his fighting spirit was aroused — the fighting spirit that soars above odds, fails to recognize the impossible, and is deaf to all save the clamor for battle. He called Hans and Pete to him. Their sacks were slim, and with his own the three partners could rake together only two hundred dollars. In the ebb of their fortunes, this sum was their total capital; yet they laid it unhesitatingly against Matthewson's six hundred.

The team of ten dogs was unhitched, and Buck, with his own harness, was put into the sled. He had caught the contagion of the excitement, and he felt that in some way he must do a great thing for John Thornton. Murmurs of admiration at his splendid appearance went up. He was in perfect condition, without an ounce of superfluous flesh, and the one hundred and fifty pounds that he weighed were so many pounds of grit and virility. His furry coat shone with the sheen of silk. Down the neck and across the shoulders, his mane, in repose as it was, half bristled and seemed to lift with every movement, as though excess of vigor made each particular hair alive and active. The great breast and heavy fore legs were no more than in proportion with the rest of the body, where the muscles showed in tight rolls underneath the skin. Men felt these muscles and proclaimed them hard as iron, and the odds went down to two to one.

"Gad, sir! Gad, sir!" stuttered a member of the latest dynasty, a king of the Skookum Benches. "I offer you eight hundred for him, sir, before the test, sir; eight hundred just as he stands."

Thornton shook his head and stepped to Buck's side.



"You must stand off from him," Matthewson protested. "Free play and plenty of room."

The crowd fell silent; only could be heard the voices of the gamblers vainly offering two to one. Everybody acknowledged Buck a magnificent animal, but twenty fifty-pound sacks of flour bulked too large in their eyes for them to loosen their pouch-strings.

Thornton knelt down by Buck's side. He took his head in his two hands and rested cheek on cheek. He did not playfully shake him, as was his wont, or murmur soft love curses; but he whispered in his ear. "As you love me, Buck. As you love me," was what he whispered. Buck whined with suppressed eagerness.

The crowd was watching curiously. The affair was growing mysterious. It seemed like a conjuration. As Thornton got to his feet, Buck seized his mittened hand between his jaws, pressing in with his teeth and releasing slowly, half-reluctantly. It was the answer, in terms, not of speech, but of love. Thornton stepped well back.

"Now, Buck," he said.

Buck tightened the traces, then slacked them for a matter of several inches. It was the way he had learned.

"Gee!" Thornton's voice rang out, sharp in the tense silence.

Buck swung to the right, ending the movement in a plunge that took up the slack and with a sudden jerk arrested his one hundred and fifty pounds. The load quivered, and from under the runners arose a crisp crackling.

"Haw!" Thornton commanded.

Buck duplicated the manoeuvre, this time to the left. The crackling turned into a snapping, the sled pivoting and the runners slipping and grating several inches to the side. The sled was broken out. Men were holding their breaths, intensely unconscious of the fact.

"Now, MUSH!"

Thornton's command cracked out like a pistol-shot. Buck threw himself forward, tightening the traces with a jarring lunge. His whole body was gathered compactly together in the tremendous effort, the muscles writhing and knotting like live things under the silky fur. His great chest was low to the ground, his head forward and down, while his feet were flying like mad, the claws scarring the hard-packed snow in parallel grooves. The sled swayed and trembled, half-started forward. One of his feet slipped, and one man groaned aloud. Then the sled lurched ahead in what appeared a rapid succession of jerks, though it never really came to a dead stop again...half an inch...an inch... two inches... The jerks perceptibly diminished; as the sled gained momentum, he caught them up, till it was moving steadily along.

Men gasped and began to breathe again, unaware that for a moment they had ceased to breathe. Thornton was running behind, encouraging Buck with short, cheery words. The distance had been measured off, and as he neared the pile of firewood which marked the end of the hundred yards, a cheer began to grow and grow, which burst into a roar as he passed the firewood and halted at command. Every man was tearing

himself loose, even Matthewson. Hats and mittens were flying in the air. Men were shaking hands, it did not matter with whom, and bubbling over in a general incoherent babel.

But Thornton fell on his knees beside Buck. Head was against head, and he was shaking him back and forth. Those who hurried up heard him cursing Buck, and he cursed him long and fervently, and softly and lovingly.

“Gad, sir! Gad, sir!” spluttered the Skookum Bench king. “I’ll give you a thousand for him, sir, a thousand, sir — twelve hundred, sir.”

Thornton rose to his feet. His eyes were wet. The tears were streaming frankly down his cheeks. “Sir,” he said to the Skookum Bench king, “no, sir. You can go to hell, sir. It’s the best I can do for you, sir.”

Buck seized Thornton’s hand in his teeth. Thornton shook him back and forth. As though animated by a common impulse, the onlookers drew back to a respectful distance; nor were they again indiscreet enough to interrupt.

## Chapter VII. The Sounding of the Call

When Buck earned sixteen hundred dollars in five minutes for John Thornton, he made it possible for his master to pay off certain debts and to journey with his partners into the East after a fabled lost mine, the history of which was as old as the history of the country. Many men had sought it; few had found it; and more than a few there were who had never returned from the quest. This lost mine was steeped in tragedy and shrouded in mystery. No one knew of the first man. The oldest tradition stopped before it got back to him. From the beginning there had been an ancient and ramshackle cabin. Dying men had sworn to it, and to the mine the site of which it marked, clinching their testimony with nuggets that were unlike any known grade of gold in the Northland.

But no living man had looted this treasure house, and the dead were dead; wherefore John Thornton and Pete and Hans, with Buck and half a dozen other dogs, faced into the East on an unknown trail to achieve where men and dogs as good as themselves had failed. They sledged seventy miles up the Yukon, swung to the left into the Stewart River, passed the Mayo and the McQuestion, and held on until the Stewart itself became a streamlet, threading the upstanding peaks which marked the backbone of the continent.

John Thornton asked little of man or nature. He was unafraid of the wild. With a handful of salt and a rifle he could plunge into the wilderness and fare wherever he pleased and as long as he pleased. Being in no haste, Indian fashion, he hunted his dinner in the course of the day's travel; and if he failed to find it, like the Indian, he kept on travelling, secure in the knowledge that sooner or later he would come to it. So, on this great journey into the East, straight meat was the bill of fare, ammunition and tools principally made up the load on the sled, and the time-card was drawn upon the limitless future.

To Buck it was boundless delight, this hunting, fishing, and indefinite wandering through strange places. For weeks at a time they would hold on steadily, day after day; and for weeks upon end they would camp, here and there, the dogs loafing and the men burning holes through frozen muck and gravel and washing countless pans of dirt by the heat of the fire. Sometimes they went hungry, sometimes they feasted riotously, all according to the abundance of game and the fortune of hunting. Summer arrived, and dogs and men packed on their backs, rafted across blue mountain lakes, and descended or ascended unknown rivers in slender boats whipsawed from the standing forest.

The months came and went, and back and forth they twisted through the uncharted vastness, where no men were and yet where men had been if the Lost Cabin were true. They went across divides in summer blizzards, shivered under the midnight sun on naked mountains between the timber line and the eternal snows, dropped into summer valleys amid swarming gnats and flies, and in the shadows of glaciers picked strawberries and flowers as ripe and fair as any the Southland could boast. In the fall of the year they penetrated a weird lake country, sad and silent, where wildfowl had been, but where then there was no life nor sign of life — only the blowing of chill winds, the forming of ice in sheltered places, and the melancholy rippling of waves on lonely beaches.

And through another winter they wandered on the obliterated trails of men who had gone before. Once, they came upon a path blazed through the forest, an ancient path, and the Lost Cabin seemed very near. But the path began nowhere and ended nowhere, and it remained mystery, as the man who made it and the reason he made it remained mystery. Another time they chanced upon the time-graven wreckage of a hunting lodge, and amid the shreds of rotted blankets John Thornton found a long-barrelled flint-lock. He knew it for a Hudson Bay Company gun of the young days in the Northwest, when such a gun was worth its height in beaver skins packed flat, And that was all — no hint as to the man who in an early day had reared the lodge and left the gun among the blankets.

Spring came on once more, and at the end of all their wandering they found, not the Lost Cabin, but a shallow placer in a broad valley where the gold showed like yellow butter across the bottom of the washing-pan. They sought no farther. Each day they worked earned them thousands of dollars in clean dust and nuggets, and they worked every day. The gold was sacked in moose-hide bags, fifty pounds to the bag, and piled like so much firewood outside the spruce-bough lodge. Like giants they toiled, days flashing on the heels of days like dreams as they heaped the treasure up.

There was nothing for the dogs to do, save the hauling in of meat now and again that Thornton killed, and Buck spent long hours musing by the fire. The vision of the short-legged hairy man came to him more frequently, now that there was little work to be done; and often, blinking by the fire, Buck wandered with him in that other world which he remembered.

The salient thing of this other world seemed fear. When he watched the hairy man sleeping by the fire, head between his knees and hands clasped above, Buck saw that he slept restlessly, with many starts and awakenings, at which times he would peer fearfully into the darkness and fling more wood upon the fire. Did they walk by the beach of a sea, where the hairy man gathered shellfish and ate them as he gathered, it was with eyes that roved everywhere for hidden danger and with legs prepared to run like the wind at its first appearance. Through the forest they crept noiselessly, Buck at the hairy man's heels; and they were alert and vigilant, the pair of them, ears twitching and moving and nostrils quivering, for the man heard and smelled as keenly as Buck. The hairy man could spring up into the trees and travel ahead as fast as on

the ground, swinging by the arms from limb to limb, sometimes a dozen feet apart, letting go and catching, never falling, never missing his grip. In fact, he seemed as much at home among the trees as on the ground; and Buck had memories of nights of vigil spent beneath trees wherein the hairy man roosted, holding on tightly as he slept.

And closely akin to the visions of the hairy man was the call still sounding in the depths of the forest. It filled him with a great unrest and strange desires. It caused him to feel a vague, sweet gladness, and he was aware of wild yearnings and stirrings for he knew not what. Sometimes he pursued the call into the forest, looking for it as though it were a tangible thing, barking softly or defiantly, as the mood might dictate. He would thrust his nose into the cool wood moss, or into the black soil where long grasses grew, and snort with joy at the fat earth smells; or he would crouch for hours, as if in concealment, behind fungus-covered trunks of fallen trees, wide-eyed and wide-eared to all that moved and sounded about him. It might be, lying thus, that he hoped to surprise this call he could not understand. But he did not know why he did these various things. He was impelled to do them, and did not reason about them at all.

Irresistible impulses seized him. He would be lying in camp, dozing lazily in the heat of the day, when suddenly his head would lift and his ears cock up, intent and listening, and he would spring to his feet and dash away, and on and on, for hours, through the forest aisles and across the open spaces where the niggerheads bunched. He loved to run down dry watercourses, and to creep and spy upon the bird life in the woods. For a day at a time he would lie in the underbrush where he could watch the partridges drumming and strutting up and down. But especially he loved to run in the dim twilight of the summer midnights, listening to the subdued and sleepy murmurs of the forest, reading signs and sounds as man may read a book, and seeking for the mysterious something that called — called, waking or sleeping, at all times, for him to come.

One night he sprang from sleep with a start, eager-eyed, nostrils quivering and scenting, his mane bristling in recurrent waves. From the forest came the call (or one note of it, for the call was many noted), distinct and definite as never before, — a long-drawn howl, like, yet unlike, any noise made by husky dog. And he knew it, in the old familiar way, as a sound heard before. He sprang through the sleeping camp and in swift silence dashed through the woods. As he drew closer to the cry he went more slowly, with caution in every movement, till he came to an open place among the trees, and looking out saw, erect on haunches, with nose pointed to the sky, a long, lean, timber wolf.

He had made no noise, yet it ceased from its howling and tried to sense his presence. Buck stalked into the open, half crouching, body gathered compactly together, tail straight and stiff, feet falling with unwonted care. Every movement advertised comingling threatening and overture of friendliness. It was the menacing truce that marks the meeting of wild beasts that prey. But the wolf fled at sight of him. He followed, with wild leapings, in a frenzy to overtake. He ran him into a blind channel, in the

bed of the creek where a timber jam barred the way. The wolf whirled about, pivoting on his hind legs after the fashion of Joe and of all cornered husky dogs, snarling and bristling, clipping his teeth together in a continuous and rapid succession of snaps.

Buck did not attack, but circled him about and hedged him in with friendly advances. The wolf was suspicious and afraid; for Buck made three of him in weight, while his head barely reached Buck's shoulder. Watching his chance, he darted away, and the chase was resumed. Time and again he was cornered, and the thing repeated, though he was in poor condition, or Buck could not so easily have overtaken him. He would run till Buck's head was even with his flank, when he would whirl around at bay, only to dash away again at the first opportunity.

But in the end Buck's pertinacity was rewarded; for the wolf, finding that no harm was intended, finally sniffed noses with him. Then they became friendly, and played about in the nervous, half-coy way with which fierce beasts belie their fierceness. After some time of this the wolf started off at an easy lope in a manner that plainly showed he was going somewhere. He made it clear to Buck that he was to come, and they ran side by side through the sombre twilight, straight up the creek bed, into the gorge from which it issued, and across the bleak divide where it took its rise.

On the opposite slope of the watershed they came down into a level country where were great stretches of forest and many streams, and through these great stretches they ran steadily, hour after hour, the sun rising higher and the day growing warmer. Buck was wildly glad. He knew he was at last answering the call, running by the side of his wood brother toward the place from where the call surely came. Old memories were coming upon him fast, and he was stirring to them as of old he stirred to the realities of which they were the shadows. He had done this thing before, somewhere in that other and dimly remembered world, and he was doing it again, now, running free in the open, the unpacked earth underfoot, the wide sky overhead.

They stopped by a running stream to drink, and, stopping, Buck remembered John Thornton. He sat down. The wolf started on toward the place from where the call surely came, then returned to him, sniffing noses and making actions as though to encourage him. But Buck turned about and started slowly on the back track. For the better part of an hour the wild brother ran by his side, whining softly. Then he sat down, pointed his nose upward, and howled. It was a mournful howl, and as Buck held steadily on his way he heard it grow faint and fainter until it was lost in the distance.

John Thornton was eating dinner when Buck dashed into camp and sprang upon him in a frenzy of affection, overturning him, scrambling upon him, licking his face, biting his hand — "playing the general tom-fool," as John Thornton characterized it, the while he shook Buck back and forth and cursed him lovingly.

For two days and nights Buck never left camp, never let Thornton out of his sight. He followed him about at his work, watched him while he ate, saw him into his blankets at night and out of them in the morning. But after two days the call in the forest began to sound more imperiously than ever. Buck's restlessness came back on him, and he was haunted by recollections of the wild brother, and of the smiling land beyond the

divide and the run side by side through the wide forest stretches. Once again he took to wandering in the woods, but the wild brother came no more; and though he listened through long vigils, the mournful howl was never raised.

He began to sleep out at night, staying away from camp for days at a time; and once he crossed the divide at the head of the creek and went down into the land of timber and streams. There he wandered for a week, seeking vainly for fresh sign of the wild brother, killing his meat as he travelled and travelling with the long, easy lope that seems never to tire. He fished for salmon in a broad stream that emptied somewhere into the sea, and by this stream he killed a large black bear, blinded by the mosquitoes while likewise fishing, and raging through the forest helpless and terrible. Even so, it was a hard fight, and it aroused the last latent remnants of Buck's ferocity. And two days later, when he returned to his kill and found a dozen wolverenes quarrelling over the spoil, he scattered them like chaff; and those that fled left two behind who would quarrel no more.

The blood-longing became stronger than ever before. He was a killer, a thing that preyed, living on the things that lived, unaided, alone, by virtue of his own strength and prowess, surviving triumphantly in a hostile environment where only the strong survived. Because of all this he became possessed of a great pride in himself, which communicated itself like a contagion to his physical being. It advertised itself in all his movements, was apparent in the play of every muscle, spoke plainly as speech in the way he carried himself, and made his glorious furry coat if anything more glorious. But for the stray brown on his muzzle and above his eyes, and for the splash of white hair that ran midmost down his chest, he might well have been mistaken for a gigantic wolf, larger than the largest of the breed. From his St. Bernard father he had inherited size and weight, but it was his shepherd mother who had given shape to that size and weight. His muzzle was the long wolf muzzle, save that it was larger than the muzzle of any wolf; and his head, somewhat broader, was the wolf head on a massive scale.

His cunning was wolf cunning, and wild cunning; his intelligence, shepherd intelligence and St. Bernard intelligence; and all this, plus an experience gained in the fiercest of schools, made him as formidable a creature as any that roamed the wild. A carnivorous animal living on a straight meat diet, he was in full flower, at the high tide of his life, overspilling with vigor and virility. When Thornton passed a caressing hand along his back, a snapping and crackling followed the hand, each hair discharging its pent magnetism at the contact. Every part, brain and body, nerve tissue and fibre, was keyed to the most exquisite pitch; and between all the parts there was a perfect equilibrium or adjustment. To sights and sounds and events which required action, he responded with lightning-like rapidity. Quickly as a husky dog could leap to defend from attack or to attack, he could leap twice as quickly. He saw the movement, or heard sound, and responded in less time than another dog required to compass the mere seeing or hearing. He perceived and determined and responded in the same instant. In point of fact the three actions of perceiving, determining, and responding were sequential; but so infinitesimal were the intervals of time between them that they

appeared simultaneous. His muscles were surcharged with vitality, and snapped into play sharply, like steel springs. Life streamed through him in splendid flood, glad and rampant, until it seemed that it would burst him asunder in sheer ecstasy and pour forth generously over the world.

"Never was there such a dog," said John Thornton one day, as the partners watched Buck marching out of camp.

"When he was made, the mould was broke," said Pete.

"Py jingo! I t'ink so mineself," Hans affirmed.

They saw him marching out of camp, but they did not see the instant and terrible transformation which took place as soon as he was within the secrecy of the forest. He no longer marched. At once he became a thing of the wild, stealing along softly, cat-footed, a passing shadow that appeared and disappeared among the shadows. He knew how to take advantage of every cover, to crawl on his belly like a snake, and like a snake to leap and strike. He could take a ptarmigan from its nest, kill a rabbit as it slept, and snap in mid air the little chipmunks fleeing a second too late for the trees. Fish, in open pools, were not too quick for him; nor were beaver, mending their dams, too wary. He killed to eat, not from wantonness; but he preferred to eat what he killed himself. So a lurking humor ran through his deeds, and it was his delight to steal upon the squirrels, and, when he all but had them, to let them go, chattering in mortal fear to the treetops.

As the fall of the year came on, the moose appeared in greater abundance, moving slowly down to meet the winter in the lower and less rigorous valleys. Buck had already dragged down a stray part-grown calf; but he wished strongly for larger and more formidable quarry, and he came upon it one day on the divide at the head of the creek. A band of twenty moose had crossed over from the land of streams and timber, and chief among them was a great bull. He was in a savage temper, and, standing over six feet from the ground, was as formidable an antagonist as even Buck could desire. Back and forth the bull tossed his great palmated antlers, branching to fourteen points and embracing seven feet within the tips. His small eyes burned with a vicious and bitter light, while he roared with fury at sight of Buck.

From the bull's side, just forward of the flank, protruded a feathered arrow-end, which accounted for his savageness. Guided by that instinct which came from the old hunting days of the primordial world, Buck proceeded to cut the bull out from the herd. It was no slight task. He would bark and dance about in front of the bull, just out of reach of the great antlers and of the terrible splay hoofs which could have stamped his life out with a single blow. Unable to turn his back on the fanged danger and go on, the bull would be driven into paroxysms of rage. At such moments he charged Buck, who retreated craftily, luring him on by a simulated inability to escape. But when he was thus separated from his fellows, two or three of the younger bulls would charge back upon Buck and enable the wounded bull to rejoin the herd.

There is a patience of the wild — dogged, tireless, persistent as life itself — that holds motionless for endless hours the spider in its web, the snake in its coils, the



panther in its ambushade; this patience belongs peculiarly to life when it hunts its living food; and it belonged to Buck as he clung to the flank of the herd, retarding its march, irritating the young bulls, worrying the cows with their half-grown calves, and driving the wounded bull mad with helpless rage. For half a day this continued. Buck multiplied himself, attacking from all sides, enveloping the herd in a whirlwind of menace, cutting out his victim as fast as it could rejoin its mates, wearing out the patience of creatures preyed upon, which is a lesser patience than that of creatures preying.

As the day wore along and the sun dropped to its bed in the northwest (the darkness had come back and the fall nights were six hours long), the young bulls retraced their steps more and more reluctantly to the aid of their beset leader. The down-coming winter was harrying them on to the lower levels, and it seemed they could never shake off this tireless creature that held them back. Besides, it was not the life of the herd, or of the young bulls, that was threatened. The life of only one member was demanded, which was a remoter interest than their lives, and in the end they were content to pay the toll.

As twilight fell the old bull stood with lowered head, watching his mates — the cows he had known, the calves he had fathered, the bulls he had mastered — as they shambled on at a rapid pace through the fading light. He could not follow, for before his nose leaped the merciless fanged terror that would not let him go. Three hundredweight more than half a ton he weighed; he had lived a long, strong life, full of fight and struggle, and at the end he faced death at the teeth of a creature whose head did not reach beyond his great knuckled knees.

From then on, night and day, Buck never left his prey, never gave it a moment's rest, never permitted it to browse the leaves of trees or the shoots of young birch and willow. Nor did he give the wounded bull opportunity to slake his burning thirst in the slender trickling streams they crossed. Often, in desperation, he burst into long stretches of flight. At such times Buck did not attempt to stay him, but loped easily at his heels, satisfied with the way the game was played, lying down when the moose stood still, attacking him fiercely when he strove to eat or drink.

The great head drooped more and more under its tree of horns, and the shambling trot grew weak and weaker. He took to standing for long periods, with nose to the ground and dejected ears dropped limply; and Buck found more time in which to get water for himself and in which to rest. At such moments, panting with red lolling tongue and with eyes fixed upon the big bull, it appeared to Buck that a change was coming over the face of things. He could feel a new stir in the land. As the moose were coming into the land, other kinds of life were coming in. Forest and stream and air seemed palpitant with their presence. The news of it was borne in upon him, not by sight, or sound, or smell, but by some other and subtler sense. He heard nothing, saw nothing, yet knew that the land was somehow different; that through it strange things were afoot and ranging; and he resolved to investigate after he had finished the business in hand.

At last, at the end of the fourth day, he pulled the great moose down. For a day and a night he remained by the kill, eating and sleeping, turn and turn about. Then, rested, refreshed and strong, he turned his face toward camp and John Thornton. He broke into the long easy lope, and went on, hour after hour, never at loss for the tangled way, heading straight home through strange country with a certitude of direction that put man and his magnetic needle to shame.

As he held on he became more and more conscious of the new stir in the land. There was life abroad in it different from the life which had been there throughout the summer. No longer was this fact borne in upon him in some subtle, mysterious way. The birds talked of it, the squirrels chattered about it, the very breeze whispered of it. Several times he stopped and drew in the fresh morning air in great sniffs, reading a message which made him leap on with greater speed. He was oppressed with a sense of calamity happening, if it were not calamity already happened; and as he crossed the last watershed and dropped down into the valley toward camp, he proceeded with greater caution.

Three miles away he came upon a fresh trail that sent his neck hair rippling and bristling. It led straight toward camp and John Thornton. Buck hurried on, swiftly and stealthily, every nerve straining and tense, alert to the multitudinous details which told a story — all but the end. His nose gave him a varying description of the passage of the life on the heels of which he was travelling. He remarked the pregnant silence of the forest. The bird life had flitted. The squirrels were in hiding. One only he saw, — a sleek gray fellow, flattened against a gray dead limb so that he seemed a part of it, a woody excrescence upon the wood itself.

As Buck slid along with the obscureness of a gliding shadow, his nose was jerked suddenly to the side as though a positive force had gripped and pulled it. He followed the new scent into a thicket and found Nig. He was lying on his side, dead where he had dragged himself, an arrow protruding, head and feathers, from either side of his body.

A hundred yards farther on, Buck came upon one of the sled-dogs Thornton had bought in Dawson. This dog was thrashing about in a death-struggle, directly on the trail, and Buck passed around him without stopping. From the camp came the faint sound of many voices, rising and falling in a sing-song chant. Bellying forward to the edge of the clearing, he found Hans, lying on his face, feathered with arrows like a porcupine. At the same instant Buck peered out where the spruce-bough lodge had been and saw what made his hair leap straight up on his neck and shoulders. A gust of overpowering rage swept over him. He did not know that he growled, but he growled aloud with a terrible ferocity. For the last time in his life he allowed passion to usurp cunning and reason, and it was because of his great love for John Thornton that he lost his head.

The Yeehats were dancing about the wreckage of the spruce-bough lodge when they heard a fearful roaring and saw rushing upon them an animal the like of which they had never seen before. It was Buck, a live hurricane of fury, hurling himself upon them

in a frenzy to destroy. He sprang at the foremost man (it was the chief of the Yeehats), ripping the throat wide open till the rent jugular spouted a fountain of blood. He did not pause to worry the victim, but ripped in passing, with the next bound tearing wide the throat of a second man. There was no withstanding him. He plunged about in their very midst, tearing, rending, destroying, in constant and terrific motion which defied the arrows they discharged at him. In fact, so inconceivably rapid were his movements, and so closely were the Indians tangled together, that they shot one another with the arrows; and one young hunter, hurling a spear at Buck in mid air, drove it through the chest of another hunter with such force that the point broke through the skin of the back and stood out beyond. Then a panic seized the Yeehats, and they fled in terror to the woods, proclaiming as they fled the advent of the Evil Spirit.

And truly Buck was the Fiend incarnate, raging at their heels and dragging them down like deer as they raced through the trees. It was a fateful day for the Yeehats. They scattered far and wide over the country, and it was not till a week later that the last of the survivors gathered together in a lower valley and counted their losses. As for Buck, wearying of the pursuit, he returned to the desolated camp. He found Pete where he had been killed in his blankets in the first moment of surprise. Thornton's desperate struggle was fresh-written on the earth, and Buck scented every detail of it down to the edge of a deep pool. By the edge, head and fore feet in the water, lay Skeet, faithful to the last. The pool itself, muddy and discolored from the sluice boxes, effectually hid what it contained, and it contained John Thornton; for Buck followed his trace into the water, from which no trace led away.

All day Buck brooded by the pool or roamed restlessly about the camp. Death, as a cessation of movement, as a passing out and away from the lives of the living, he knew, and he knew John Thornton was dead. It left a great void in him, somewhat akin to hunger, but a void which ached and ached, and which food could not fill. At times, when he paused to contemplate the carcasses of the Yeehats, he forgot the pain of it; and at such times he was aware of a great pride in himself, — a pride greater than any he had yet experienced. He had killed man, the noblest game of all, and he had killed in the face of the law of club and fang. He sniffed the bodies curiously. They had died so easily. It was harder to kill a husky dog than them. They were no match at all, were it not for their arrows and spears and clubs. Thenceforward he would be unafraid of them except when they bore in their hands their arrows, spears, and clubs.

Night came on, and a full moon rose high over the trees into the sky, lighting the land till it lay bathed in ghostly day. And with the coming of the night, brooding and mourning by the pool, Buck became alive to a stirring of the new life in the forest other than that which the Yeehats had made. He stood up, listening and scenting. From far away drifted a faint, sharp yelp, followed by a chorus of similar sharp yelps. As the moments passed the yelps grew closer and louder. Again Buck knew them as things heard in that other world which persisted in his memory. He walked to the centre of the open space and listened. It was the call, the many-noted call, sounding more luringly and compellingly than ever before. And as never before, he was ready to obey. John

Thornton was dead. The last tie was broken. Man and the claims of man no longer bound him.

Hunting their living meat, as the Yeehats were hunting it, on the flanks of the migrating moose, the wolf pack had at last crossed over from the land of streams and timber and invaded Buck's valley. Into the clearing where the moonlight streamed, they poured in a silvery flood; and in the centre of the clearing stood Buck, motionless as a statue, waiting their coming. They were awed, so still and large he stood, and a moment's pause fell, till the boldest one leaped straight for him. Like a flash Buck struck, breaking the neck. Then he stood, without movement, as before, the stricken wolf rolling in agony behind him. Three others tried it in sharp succession; and one after the other they drew back, streaming blood from slashed throats or shoulders.

This was sufficient to fling the whole pack forward, pell-mell, crowded together, blocked and confused by its eagerness to pull down the prey. Buck's marvellous quickness and agility stood him in good stead. Pivoting on his hind legs, and snapping and gashing, he was everywhere at once, presenting a front which was apparently unbroken so swiftly did he whirl and guard from side to side. But to prevent them from getting behind him, he was forced back, down past the pool and into the creek bed, till he brought up against a high gravel bank. He worked along to a right angle in the bank which the men had made in the course of mining, and in this angle he came to bay, protected on three sides and with nothing to do but face the front.

And so well did he face it, that at the end of half an hour the wolves drew back discomfited. The tongues of all were out and lolling, the white fangs showing cruelly white in the moonlight. Some were lying down with heads raised and ears pricked forward; others stood on their feet, watching him; and still others were lapping water from the pool. One wolf, long and lean and gray, advanced cautiously, in a friendly manner, and Buck recognized the wild brother with whom he had run for a night and a day. He was whining softly, and, as Buck whined, they touched noses.

Then an old wolf, gaunt and battle-scarred, came forward. Buck writhed his lips into the preliminary of a snarl, but sniffed noses with him. Whereupon the old wolf sat down, pointed nose at the moon, and broke out the long wolf howl. The others sat down and howled. And now the call came to Buck in unmistakable accents. He, too, sat down and howled. This over, he came out of his angle and the pack crowded around him, sniffing in half-friendly, half-savage manner. The leaders lifted the yelp of the pack and sprang away into the woods. The wolves swung in behind, yelping in chorus. And Buck ran with them, side by side with the wild brother, yelping as he ran.

And here may well end the story of Buck. The years were not many when the Yeehats noted a change in the breed of timber wolves; for some were seen with splashes of brown on head and muzzle, and with a rift of white centring down the chest. But more remarkable than this, the Yeehats tell of a Ghost Dog that runs at the head of the pack. They are afraid of this Ghost Dog, for it has cunning greater than they, stealing from their camps in fierce winters, robbing their traps, slaying their dogs, and defying their bravest hunters.

Nay, the tale grows worse. Hunters there are who fail to return to the camp, and hunters there have been whom their tribesmen found with throats slashed cruelly open and with wolf prints about them in the snow greater than the prints of any wolf. Each fall, when the Yeehats follow the movement of the moose, there is a certain valley which they never enter. And women there are who become sad when the word goes over the fire of how the Evil Spirit came to select that valley for an abiding-place.

In the summers there is one visitor, however, to that valley, of which the Yeehats do not know. It is a great, gloriously coated wolf, like, and yet unlike, all other wolves. He crosses alone from the smiling timber land and comes down into an open space among the trees. Here a yellow stream flows from rotted moose-hide sacks and sinks into the ground, with long grasses growing through it and vegetable mould overrunning it and hiding its yellow from the sun; and here he muses for a time, howling once, long and mournfully, ere he departs.

But he is not always alone. When the long winter nights come on and the wolves follow their meat into the lower valleys, he may be seen running at the head of the pack through the pale moonlight or glimmering borealis, leaping gigantic above his fellows, his great throat a-bellow as he sings a song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack.

# **The Kempton-Wace Letters**

This 1903 epistolary novel was published anonymously by London and Anna Strunsky. It is a discussion of the philosophy of love and sex, written in the form of a series of letters between two men, "Herbert Wace," a young scientist, and "Dane Kempton," an elderly poet. Jack London wrote "Wace's" letters, Anna Strunsky wrote "Kempton's." Kempton makes the case for feeling and emotion, while Wace analyzes love in Darwinian terms.

The first edition

# I. From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

London,  
3 a Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.  
August 14, 19 — .

Yesterday I wrote formally, rising to the occasion like the conventional happy father rather than the man who believes in the miracle and lives for it. Yesterday I stinted myself. I took you in my arms, glad of what is and stately with respect for the fulness of your manhood. It is to-day that I let myself leap into yours in a passion of joy. I dwell on what has come to pass and inflate myself with pride in your fulfilment, more as a mother would, I think, and she your mother.

But why did you not write before? After all, the great event was not when you found your offer of marriage accepted, but when you found you had fallen in love. Then was your hour. Then was the time for congratulation, when the call was first sounded and the reveille of Time and About fell upon your soul and the march to another's destiny was begun. It is always more important to love than to be loved. I wish it had been vouchsafed me to be by when your spirit of a sudden grew willing to bestow itself without question or let or hope of return, when the self broke up and you grew fain to beat out your strength in praise and service for the woman who was soaring high in the blue wastes. You have known her long, and you must have been hers long, yet no word of her and of your love reached me. It was not kind to be silent.

Barbara spoke yesterday of your fastidiousness, and we told each other that you had gained a triumph of happiness in your love, for you are not of those who cheat themselves. You choose rigorously, straining for the heart of the end as do all rigorists who are also hedonists. Because we are in possession of this bit of data as to your temperamental cosmos we can congratulate you with the more abandon. Oh, Herbert, do you know that this is a rampant spring, and that on leaving Barbara I tramped out of the confines into the green, happier, it almost seems, than I have ever been? Do you know that because you love a woman and she loves you, and that because you are swept along by certain forces, that I am happy and feel myself in sight of my portion of immortality on earth, far more than because of my books, dear lad, far more?

I wish I could fly England and get to you. Should I have a shade less of you than formerly, if we were together now? From your too much green of wealth, a barrenness of friendship? It does not matter; what is her gain cannot be my loss. One power is mine, — without hindrance, in freedom and in right, to say to Ellen's son, "Godspeed!"



to place Hester Stebbins's hand in his, and bid them forth to the sunrise, into the glory of day!

Ever your devoted father,  
Dane Kempton.

## II — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
September 3, 19 — .

Here I am, back in the old quarters once more, with the old afternoon climb across the campus and up into the sky, up to the old rooms, the old books, and the old view. You poor fog-begirt Dane Kempton, could you but have lounged with me on the window couch, an hour past, and watched the light pass out of the day through the Golden Gate and the night creep over the Berkeley Hills and down out of the east! Why should you linger on there in London town! We grow away from each other, it seems — you with your wonder-singing, I with my joyful science.

Poesy and economics! Alack! alack! How did I escape you, Dane, when mind and mood you mastered me? The auguries were fair. I, too, should have been a singer, and lo, I strive for science. All my boyhood was singing, what of you; and my father was a singer, too, in his own fine way. Dear to me is your likening of him to Waring. — "What's become of Waring?" He was Waring. I can think of him only as one who went away, "chose land travel or seafaring."

Gwynne says I am sometimes almost a poet — Gwynne, you know, Arthur Gwynne, who has come to live with me at The Ridge. "If it were not for your dismal science," he is sure to add; and to fire him I lay it to the defects of early training. I know he thinks that I never half appreciated you, and that I do not appreciate you now. If you will recollect, you praised his verses once. He cherishes that praise amongst his sweetest treasures. Poor dear good old Gwynne, tender, sensitive, shrinking, with the face of a seraph and the heart of a maid. Never were two men more incongruously companioned. I love him for himself. He tolerates me, I do secretly believe, because of you. He longs to meet you, — he knew you well through my father, — and we often talk you over. Be sure at every opportunity I tear off your halo and trundle it about. Trust me, you receive scant courtesy.

How I wander on. My pen is unruly after the long vacation; my thought yet wayward, what of the fever of successful wooing. And besides, ... how shall I say?... such was the gracious warmth of your letter, of both your letters, that I am at a loss. I feel weak, inadequate. It almost seems as though you had made a demand upon something that is not in me. Ah, you poets! It would seem your delight in my marriage were greater

than mine. In my present mood, it is you who are young, you who love; I who have lived and am old.

Yes, I am going to be married. At this present moment, I doubt not, a million men and women are saying the same thing. Hewers of wood and drawers of water, princes and potentates, shy-shrinking maidens and brazen-faced hussies, all saying, "I am going to be married." And all looking forward to it as a crisis in their lives? No. After all, marriage is the way of the world. Considered biologically, it is an institution necessary for the perpetuation of the species. Why should it be a crisis? These million men and women will marry, and the work of the world go on just as it did before. Shuffle them about, and the work of the world would yet go on.

True, a month ago it did seem a crisis. I wrote you as much. It did seem a disturbing element in my life-work. One cannot view with equanimity that which appears to be totally disruptive of one's dear little system of living. But it only appeared so; I lacked perspective, that was all. As I look upon it now, everything fits well and all will run smoothly I am sure.

You know I had two years yet to work for my Doctorate. I still have them. As you see, I am back to the old quarters, settled down in the old groove, hammering away at the old grind. Nothing is changed. And besides my own studies, I have taken up an assistant instructorship in the Department of Economics. It is an ambitious course, and an important one. I don't know how they ever came to confide it to me, or how I found the temerity to attempt it, — which is neither here nor there. It is all agreed. Hester is a sensible girl.

The engagement is to be long. I shall continue my career as charted. Two years from now, when I shall have become a Doctor of Social Sciences (and candidate for numerous other things), I shall also become a benedict. My marriage and the presumably necessary honeymoon chime in with the summer vacation. There is no disturbing element even there. Oh, we are very practical, Hester and I. And we are both strong enough to lead each our own lives.

Which reminds me that you have not asked about her. First, let me shock you — she, too, is a scientist. It was in my undergraduate days that we met, and ere the half-hour struck we were quarrelling felicitously over Weismann and the neo-Darwinians. I was at Berkeley at the time, a cocksure junior; and she, far maturer as a freshman, was at Stanford, carrying more culture with her into her university than is given the average student to carry out.

Next, and here your arms open to her, she is a poet. Pre-eminently she is a poet — this must be always understood. She is the greater poet, I take it, in this dawning twentieth century, because she is a scientist; not in spite of being a scientist as some would hold. How shall I describe her? Perhaps as a George Eliot, fused with an Elizabeth Barrett, with a hint of Huxley and a trace of Keats. I may say she is something like all this, but I must say she is something other and different. There is about her a certain lightness, a glow or flash almost Latin or oriental, or perhaps Celtic. Yes, that must be it — Celtic. But the high-stomached Norman is there and the stubborn

Saxon. Her quickness and fine audacity are checked and poised, as it were, by that certain conservatism which gives stability to purpose and power to achievement. She is unafraid, and wide-looking and far-looking, but she is not over-looking. The Saxon grapples with the Celt, and the Norman forces the twain to do what the one would not dream of doing and what the other would dream beyond and never do. Do you catch me? Her most salient charm, is I think, her perfect poise, her exquisite adjustment.

Altogether she is a most wonderful woman, take my word for it. And after all she is described vicariously. Though she has published nothing and is exceeding shy, I shall send you some of her work. There will you find and know her. She is waiting for stronger voice and sings softly as yet. But hers will be no minor note, no middle flight. She is — well, she is Hester. In two years we shall be married. Two years, Dane. Surely you will be with us.

One thing more; in your letter a certain undertone which I could not fail to detect. A shade less of me than formerly? — I turn and look into your face — Waring's handiwork you remember — his painter's fancy of you in those golden days when I stood on the brink of the world, and you showed me the delights of the world and the way of my feet therein. So I turn and look, and look and wonder. A shade less of me, of you? Poesy and economics! Where lies the blame?

Herbert.

### III — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

London,  
September 30, 19 — .

It is because you know not what you do that I cannot forgive you. Could you know that your letter with its catalogue of advantages and arrangements must offend me as much as it belies (let us hope) you and the woman of your love, I would pardon the affront of it upon us all, and ascribe the unseemly want of warmth to reserve or to the sadness which grips the heart when joy is too palpitant. But something warns me that you are unaware of the chill your words breathe, and that is a lapse which it is impossible to meet with indulgence.

“He does not love her,” was Barbara’s quick decision, and she laid the open letter down with a definiteness which said that you, too, are laid out and laid low. Your sister’s very wrists can be articulate. However, I laughed at her and she soon joined me. We do not mean to be extravagant with our fears. Who shall prescribe the letters of lovers to their sisters and foster-fathers? Yet there are some things their letters should be incapable of saying, and amongst them that love is not a crisis and a rebirth, but that it is common as the commonplace, a hit or miss affair which “shuffling” could not affect.

Barbara showed me your note to her. “Had I written like this of myself and Earl —

”  
“You could not,” I objected.

“Then Herbert should have been as little able to do it,” she deduced with emphasis. Here I might have told her that men and women are races apart, but no one talks cant to Barbara. So I did not console her, and it stands against you in our minds that on this critical occasion you have baffled us with coldness.

An absence of six years, broken into twice by a brief few months, must work changes. When Barbara called your letter unnatural, she forgot how little she knows what is natural to you. She and I have been wont to predetermine you, your character, foothold, and outlook, by — say by the fact that you knew your Wordsworth and that you knew him without being able to take for yourself his austere peace. Youth which lives by hope is riven by unrest.

“I made no vows; vows were made for me,  
Bond unknown to me was given  
That I should be, else sinning gently,

A dedicated spirit.”

That pale sunrise seen from Mt. Tamalpais and your voice vibrant to fierceness on the “else sinning gently” — to me the splendour of rose on piled-up ridges of mist spoke all for you, so dear have you always been. It rested on the possible wonder of your life. It threw you into the scintillant Dawn with an abandon meet to a son of Waring.

Tell me, do you still read your Wordsworth on your knees? I am bent with regret for the time when your mind had no surprises for me, when the days were flushed halcyon with my hope in you. I resent your development if it is because of it that you speak prosaically of a prosaic marriage and of a honeymoon simultaneous with the Degree. I think you are too well pleased with the simultaneousness.

Yet the fact of the letter is fair. It cannot be that the soul of it is not. Hester Stebbins is a poet. I lean forward and think it out as I did some days ago when the news came. I conjure up the look of love. If the woman is content (how much more than content the feeling she bounds with in knowing you hers as she is yours), what better test that all is well? I conjure up the look of love. It is thus at meeting and thus at parting. Even here, to-night, when all is chill and hard to understand, I catch the flash and the warmth, and what I see restores you to me, but how deep the plummet of my mind needed to sound before it reached you. It is because you permitted yourself to speak when silence had expressed you better.

Show me the ideally real Hester Stebbins, the spark of fire which is she. The storms have not broken over her head. She will laugh and make poetry of her laughter. If before she met you she wept, that, too, will help the smiling. There is laughter which is the echo of a Miserere sobbed by the ages. Men chuckle in the irony of pain, and they smile cold, lessoned smiles in resignation; they laugh in forgetfulness and they laugh lest they die of sadness. A shrug of the shoulders, a widening of the lips, a heaving forth of sound, and the life is saved. The remedy is as drastic as are the drugs used for epilepsy, which in quelling the spasm bring idiocy to the patient. If we are made idiots by our laughter, we are paying dearly for the privilege of continuing in life.

Hester shall laugh because she is glad and must tell her joy, and she will not lose it in the telling. Greet her for me and hasten to prove yourself, for

“The Poet, gentle creature that he is,  
Hath like the Lover, his unruly times;  
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,  
Though no distress be near him but his own  
Unmanageable thoughts.”

You will judge by this letter that I am neither sick nor well, and that I reach for a distress which is not near. If I were Merchant rather than Poet, it would be otherwise with me.

Dane.

## IV — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
October 27, 19 — .

Do I still read my Wordsworth on my knees? Well, we may as well have it out. I have foreseen this day so long and shunned it that now I meet it almost with extended hands. No, I do not read my Wordsworth on my knees. My mind is filled with other things. I have not the time. I am not the Herbert Wace of six years gone. It is fair that you should know this; fair, also, that you should know the Herbert Wace of six years gone was not quite the lad you deemed him.

There is no more pathetic and terrible thing than the prejudice of love. Both you and I have suffered from it. Six years ago, ay, and before that, I felt and resented the growing difference between us. When under your spell, it seemed that I was born to lisp in numbers and devote myself to singing, that the world was good and all of it fit for singing. But away from you, even then, doubts faced me, and I knew in vague fashion that we lived in different worlds. At first in vague fashion, I say; and when with you again, your spell dominated me and I could not question. You were true, you were good, I argued, all that was wonderful and glorious; therefore, you were also right. You mastered me with your charm, as you were wont to master those who loved you.

But there came times when your sympathy failed me and I stood alone on outlooks I had achieved alone. There was no response from you. I could not hear your voice. I looked down upon a real world; you were caught up in a beautiful cloudland and shut away from me. Possibly it was because life of itself appealed to you, while to me appealed the mechanics of life. But be it as it may, yours was a world of ideas and fancies, mine a world of things and facts.

Enters here the prejudice of love. It was the lad that discovered our difference and concealed; it was the man who was blind and could not discover. There we erred, man and boy; and here, both men now, we make all well again.

Let me be explicit. Do you remember the passion with which I read the "Intellectual Development of Europe?" I understood not the tithe of it, but I was thrilled. My common sense was thrilled, I suppose; but it was all very joyous, gripping hold of the tangible world for the first time. And when I came to you, warm with the glow of adventure, you looked blankly, then smiled indulgently and did not answer. You

regarded my ardour complacently. A passing humour of adolescence, you thought; and I thought: "Dane does not read his Draper on his knees." Wordsworth was great to me; Draper was great also. You had no patience with him, and I know now, as I felt then, your consistent revolt against his materialistic philosophy.

Only the other day you complained of a letter of mine, calling it cold and analytical. That I should be cold and analytical despite all the prodding and pressing and moulding I have received at your hands, and the hands of Waring, marks only more clearly our temperamental difference; but it does not mark that one or the other of us is less a dedicated spirit. If I have wandered away from the warmth of poesy and become practical, have you not remained and become confirmed in all that is beautifully impractical? If I have adventured in a new world of common things, have you not lingered in the old world of great and impossible things? If I have shivered in the gray dawn of a new day, have you not crouched over the dying embers of the fire of yesterday? Ah, Dane, you cannot rekindle that fire. The whirl of the world scatters its ashes wide and far, like volcanic dust, to make beautiful crimson sunsets for a time and then to vanish.

None the less are you a dedicated spirit, priest that you are of a dying faith. Your prayers are futile, your altars crumbling, and the light flickers and drops down into night. Poetry is empty these days, empty and worthless and dead. All the old-world epic and lyric-singing will not put this very miserable earth of ours to rights. So long as the singers sing of the things of yesterday, glorifying the things of yesterday and lamenting their departure, so long will poetry be a vain thing and without avail. The old world is dead, dead and buried along with its heroes and Helens and knights and ladies and tournaments and pageants. You cannot sing of the truth and wonder of to-day in terms of yesterday. And no one will listen to your singing till you sing of to-day in terms of to-day.

This is the day of the common man. Do you glorify the common man? This is the day of the machine. When have you sung of the machine? The crusades are here again, not the Crusades of Christ but the Crusades of the Machine — have you found motive in them for your song? We are crusading to-day, not for the remission of sins, but for the abolition of sinning, of economic and industrial sinning. The crusade to Christ's sepulchre was paltry compared with the splendour and might of our crusade to-day toward manhood. There are millions of us afoot. In the stillness of the night have you never listened to the trampling of our feet and been caught up by the glory and the romance of it? Oh, Dane! Dane! Our captains sit in council, our heroes take the field, our fighting men are buckling on their harness, our martyrs have already died, and you are blind to it, blind to it all!

We have no poets these days, and perforce we are singing with our hands. The walking delegate is a greater singer and a finer singer than you, Dane Kempton. The cold, analytical economist, delving in the dynamics of society, is more the prophet than you. The carpenter at his bench, the blacksmith by his forge, the boiler-maker clanging and clattering, are all warbling more sweetly than you. The sledge-wielder pours out



more strength and certitude and joy in every blow than do you in your whole sheaf of songs. Why, the very socialist agitator, hustled by the police on a street corner amid the jeers of the mob, has caught the romance of to-day as you have not caught it and where you have missed it. He knows life and is living. Are you living, Dane Kempton?

Forgive me. I had begun to explain and reconcile our difference. I find I am lecturing and censuring you. In defending myself, I offend. But this I wish to say: We are so made, you and I, that your function in life is to dream, mine to work. That you failed to make a dreamer of me is no cause for heartache and chagrin. What of my practical nature and analytical mind, I have generalised in my own way upon the data of life and achieved a different code from yours. Yet I seek truth as passionately as you. I still believe myself to be a dedicated spirit.

And what boots it, all of it? When the last word is said, we are two men, by a thousand ties very dear to each other. There is room in our hearts for each other as there is room in the world for both of us. Though we have many things not in common, yet you are my dearest friend on earth, you who have been a second father to me as well.

You have long merited this explanation, and it was cowardly of me not to have made it before. My hope is that I have been sufficiently clear for you to understand.

Herbert.

## V — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

London,  
3 a Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.  
November 16, 19 — .

You sigh "Poesy and Economics," supplying the cause and thereby admitting the fact. I wish you had shown some reluctance to see my meaning, that you had preferred to waive the matter on the ground of insufficient data, that you had been less eager to ferret out the science of the thing. Do you remember how your boy's respect rose for little Barbara whenever she cried when too readily forgiven? "She dreads a double standard," you explained to me with generous heat. You sympathised with her fear lest I demand less of her than of you, honouring her insistence on an equality of duty as well as of privilege. Is the man Herbert less proud than the child Barbara, that you speak of a temperamental difference and ask for a special dispensation?

You are not in love (this you say in not gainsaying my attack on you, and so far I understand), because you are a student of Economics. At the last I stop. What is this about economics and poesy? About your emancipation from my riotously lyric sway? The hand of the forces by which you have been moulded cannot detain you from going out upon the love-quest. The fact of your preference for Draper cannot forestall your spirit's need of love. There are many codes, but there is one law, binding alike on the economist and poet. It springs out of the common and unappeasable hunger, commanding that love seek love through night to day and through day to night.

Yet it is possible to put oneself outside the pale of the law, to refuse the gift of life and snap the tie between time and space and creature. It is possible to be too emaciated for interest or feeling. The men and women of the People know neither love nor art because they are too weary. They lie in sleep prostrate from great fatigue. Their bodies are too much tried with the hungers of the body and their spirits too dimly illumined with the hope of fair chances. It is also possible to fill oneself so full with an interest that all else is crowded out. You have done this. Like the cobbler who is a cobbler typically, the teacher who is a pedagogue, the physician and the lawyer who are pathologists merely, you are a fanatic of a text. You are in the toils of an idea, the idea of selection, as I well know, and you exploit it like a drudge. When a man finds that he cannot deal in petroleum without smelling of it, it is time that he turn to something else. Every man is engaged in the cause of keeping himself whole, in watching himself lest his man turn machine, in watching lest the outside world

assail the inner. Nature spares the type, but the individual must spare himself. He is strong who is sensitive and who responds subtly to everything in his environment, but his response must be characteristic; he must sustain his personality and become more himself through the years. He alone is vital in the social scheme who lets nothing in him atrophy and who persists in being varied from all others in the scale of character to the degree of variability that was his at the beginning.

I read in your letter nothing but a decision to stop short and give over, as if you had strength for no more than your book and your theory! You have become slave to a small point of inquiry, and you call it the advance to a new time. "The crusade is on," you say. Coronation rites for the commoners and destruction to superstition. I put my hand out to you in joy. The joy is in unholy worship of a fetish, the pain that there is no joy also deference to a fetish. Your creed thunders "Thou shalt not." Love is a thing of yesterday. No room for anything that intimately concerns the self. But what are the apostles of the young thought preaching if it is not the right of men to their own, and what would it avail them to come into their own if life be stripped of romance?

I am dissatisfied because you are willing to live as others must live. You should stay aristocrat. Ferdinand Lassalle dressed with elegance for his working-men audiences, with the hope, he said, of reminding them that there was something better than their shabbiness. You are of the favoured, Herbert. It devolves upon you to endear your life to yourself. You do not agree with me. You do not believe that love is the law which controls freedom and life. Slave to your theory and rebel to the law, you lose your soul and imperil another's.

"Gently! Gently!" I say to myself. Old sorrows and wrongs oppress me and I grow harsh. My heat only helps to convince you that my position is not based on the rational rightness you hold so essential and that therefore it is unlivable. I will state calmly, then, that it is wrong to marry without love. "For the perpetuation of the species" — that is noble of you! So you strip yourself of the thousand years of civilisation that have fostered you, you abandon your prerogative as a creature high in the scale of existence to obey an instinct and fulfil a function? You say: "These men and women will marry, and the work of the world go on just as it did before. Shuffle them about and the work of the world would yet go on." And you are content. You feel no need of anything different from this condition.

Believe me, Herbert, these million men and women will not let you shuffle them about. There are forces stronger than force, shadows more real than reality. We know that the need of the unhungered for the one friend, one comrade, one mate, is good. We honour the love that persists in loving. More beautiful than starlight is the face of the lover when the Voice and the Vision enfold him. The race is consecrated to the worship of idea, and the lover who lays his all on the altar of romance (which is idea) is at one with the race. The arms of the unloved girl close about the formless air and more real than her loneliness and her sorrow is the imagined embrace, the awaited warm, close pressure of the hands, the fancied gaze. What does it mean? What secret was there for Leonardo in Mona Lisa's smile, what for him in the motion of waters? You

cannot explain the bloom, the charm, the smile of life, that which rains sunshine into our hearts, which tells us we are wise to hope and to have faith, which buckles on us an armour of activity, which lights the fires of the spirit, which gives us Godhead and renders us indomitable. Comparative anatomy cannot reason it down. It is sensibility, romance, idea. It is a fact of life toward which all other facts make. For the flush of rose-light in the heavens, the touch of a hand, the colour and shape of fruit, the tears that come for unnamed sorrows, the regrets of old men, are more significant than all the building and inventing done since the first social compact.

Forgive my tediousness. I have flaunted these truisms before you in order to exorcise that modern slang of yours which is more false than the overstrained forms of a feudal France. To shut out glory is not to be practical. You are not adjusting your life artistically; there is too much strain, too little warmth, too much self-complacence. I see that you are really younger than I thought. The world never censures the crimes of the spirit. You are safe from the world's tongue lashings, and in that safety is the danger against which my friendship warns you.

I have been reading Hester's poems, and I know that she is like them, nervous, vibrant, throbbing, sensitive. I have been reading your letters, and I think her soul will escape yours. If you have not love like hers, you have nothing with which to keep her. This I have undertaken to say to you. It is a strange role, yet conventional. I am the father whose matrimonial whims are not met by the son. The stock measure is to disinherit. But the cause of our quarrel is somewhat unusual, and I can be neither so practical nor so vulgar as to set about making codicils. Love is of no value to financiers; there is no bank for it nor may it be made over in a will. Rather is it carried on in the blood, even as Barbara carried it on into the life of her girl-babe. Your sister keeps me strong with the faith of love. May God be good to her! It was five years ago that she came to me and whispered, "Earl." When she saw I could not turn to her in joy, she leaned her little head back against the roses of the porch and wept, more than was right, I fear, for a girl just betrothed. Earl was a cripple and poor and helpless, but Barbara knew better than we, for she knew how to give herself. Poor little one, whom nobody congratulated! She sends you and Hester her love, unfolding you both in her eager tenderness.

Dane.

## VI — From the Same to the Same

London.

November 19, 19 — .

Metaphysics is contagious. I caught it from Barbara, and I cannot resist the impulse to pass it on, and to you of all others.

The mood leapt upon Barbara out of the pages of "Katia," a story by Tolstoy. To my mind, it is a painful tale of lovers who outlive their love, killing it with their own hands, but the author means it to be a happily ending novel. Tolstoy attempts to show that men and women can find happiness only when they grow content to give over seeking love from one another. They may keep the memory but must banish the hope. "Hereafter, think of me only as the father of your children," and the woman who had pined for that which had been theirs in the beginning of their union weeps softly, and agrees. Tolstoy calls this peace, but for Barbara and me this gain is loss, this end an end indeed, replete with all the tragedy of ending.

I found Barbara to-day on the last page of "Katia," and much disturbed. "Dear, I saw a spirit break," she said. I waited before asking whose, and when I did, she answered, "That of three-quarters of the world. The ghost of a Dream walked to-day — when after the spirit broke, I saw it — and myself and my Earl vanished in shadow. We and our love thinned away before the thought-shape."

"Your dreaming, Barbara, can scarce be better than your living."

We looked long at each other. She knew herself a happy woman, yet to-day the ghost had walked in the light, and her eyes were not held, and she saw. Even her life was not sufficient, even her plans were paltry, even her heart's love was cramped. Such times of seeing come to happy men and to happy women. Barbara was reading the opinions of the world and the acceptances of the world, and in disliking them she came to doubt herself. Perhaps she, too, should be less at peace, she too may be amongst Pharisees a Pharisee.

"In the midst of the breaking of spirit, how can I know?" she demanded. "Love is sure," I prompted, my hand on her forehead. "Earl and I are sure, dear," she laughed low, and a drift of sobbing swept through the music; "it is not that we are in doubt about ourselves, but sometimes, like to-day, you understand, one finds oneself bitten by the sharp tooth of the world, and a despair courses through the veins and blinds the eyes, and then, in the midst of the bitterest throe, comes a great visioning."

I heard her and understood, and my heart leapt as it had not done for long. Think of it, Herbert, fifty-three and still young! When was it that I last fluttered with joy? Ah, yes, that time the summer and the woods had a great deal to do with it, and a

few words spoken by a boy. I think Barbara's majesty of attainment through vicarious breaking of spirit a greater cause for rejoicing.

And then, in the midst of the bitterest throe, came a great visioning. When pain is good and to be thanked for, how good life is! By this alone may you know the proportion and the value of the good of being. Three-quarters of the world are broken spirited, but from out the wreckage a thought-shape, and it is well. The Vision fastens upon us, and what was full seems shrunk, what whole and of all time a passing bit, an untraceable flash. And that is well, for the dream recalls the hope, and the heart grows hardy with hoping and dreaming.

So Barbara.

And you? You do not repine because of these things. Let the Grand Mujik mutter a thousand heresies, let three-quarters of the world accept and live them, you would not think the unaspiring three-quarters broken-spirited. You would hail them right practical. And if you held a thought as firmly as your sister holds the thought of love, and you found yourself alone in your esteem of it, you would part from it and go over to the others. You would not be the fanatic your sister is, to stay so much the closer by it that of necessity she must doubt her own allegiance, fearing in her devotion that, without knowing it, she, too, is cold and but half alive. You would not see visions that would put your best to shame. The thought-shape of the more you could be, were you and the whole world finer and greater, would not walk before you. You would rest content and assured, and — I regret your assurance.

Always yours,  
Dane Kempton.

## VII — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
December 6, 19 — .

No, I am not in love. I am very thankful that I am not. I pride myself on the fact. As you say, I may not be adjusting my life artistically to its environment (there is room for discussion there), but I do know that I am adjusting it scientifically. I am arranging my life so that I may get the most out of it, while the one thing to disorder it, worse than flood and fire and the public enemy, is love.

I have told you, from time to time, of my book. I have decided to call it "The Economic Man." I am going over the proofs now, and my brain is in perfect working order. On the other hand, there is Professor Bidwell, who is likewise correcting proofs. Poor devil, he is in despair. He can do nothing with them. "I positively cannot think," he complains to me, his hair rumpled and face flushed. He did not answer my knock the other day, and I came upon him with the neglected proofs under his elbows and his absent gaze directed through window and out of doors to some rosy cloudland beyond my ken. "It will be a failure, I know it will," he growled to me. "My brain is dull. It refuses to act. I cannot imagine what has come over me." But I could imagine very easily. He is in love (madly in love with what I take to be a very ordinary sort of girl), and expects shortly to be married. "Postpone the book for a time," I suggested. He looked at me for a moment, then brought his fist down on the general disarray with a thumping "I will!" And take my word for it, Dane, a year hence, when the very ordinary girl greets him with the matronly kiss and his fever and folly have left him, he will take up the book and make a success of it.

Of course I am not in love. I have just come back from Hester — I ran down Saturday to Stanford and stopped over Sunday. Time did not pass tediously on the train. I did not look at my watch every other minute. I read the morning papers with interest and without impatience. The scenery was charming and I was unaware of the slightest hurry to reach my destination. I remember noting, when I came up the gravel walk between the rose-bushes, that my heart was not in my mouth as it should have been according to convention. In fact, the sun was uncomfortable, and I mopped my brow and decided that the roses stood in need of trimming. And really, you know, I had seen brighter days, and fairer views, and the world in more beautiful moods.

And when Hester stood on the veranda and held out her hands, my heart did not leap as though it were going to part company with me. Nor was I dizzy with — rapture, I believe. Nor did all the world vanish, and everything blot out, and leave only Hester standing there, lips curved and arms outstretched in welcome. Oh, I saw the curved lips and outstretched arms, and all the splendid young womanhood swaying there, and I was pleased and all that; but I did not think it too wonderful and impossible and miraculous and the rest of the fond rubbish I am sure poor Bidwell thinks when his eyes are gladdened by his ordinary sort of girl when he calls upon her.

What a comely young woman, is what I thought as I pressed Hester's hands; and none of the ordinary sort either. She has health and strength and beauty and youth, and she will certainly make a most charming wife and excellent mother. Thus I thought, and then we chatted, had lunch, and passed a delightful afternoon together — an afternoon such as I might pass with you, or any good comrade, or with my wife.

All of which rational rightness is, I know, distasteful to you, Dane. And I confess I depict it with brutal frankness, failing to give credit to the gentler, tenderer side of me. Believe me, I am very fond of Hester. I respect and admire her. I am proud of her, too, and proud of myself that so fine a creature should find enough in me to be willing to mate with me. It will be a happy marriage. There is nothing cramped or narrow or incompatible about it. We know each other well — a wisdom that is acquired by lovers only after marriage, and even then with the likelihood of it being a painful wisdom. We, on the other hand, are not blinded by love madness, and we see clearly and sanely and are confident of our ability to live out the years together.

Herbert.



## VIII — From the Same to the Same

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
December 11, 19 — .

I have been thinking about your romance and my rational rightness, and so this letter.

“One loves because he loves: this explanation is, as yet, the most serious and most decisive that has been found for the solution of this problem.” I do not know who has said this, but it might well have been you. And you might well say with Mlle. de Scudéri: “Love is — I know not what: which comes — I know not when: which is formed — I know not how: which enchants — I know not by what: and which ends — I know not when or why.”

You explain love by asserting that it is not to be explained. And therein lies our difference. You accept results; I search for causes. You stop at the gate of the mystery, worshipful and content. I go on and through, flinging the gate wide and formulating the law of the mystery which is a mystery no longer. It is our way. You worship the idea; I believe in the fact. If the stone fall, the wind blow, the grass and green things sprout; if the inorganic be vitalised, and take on sensibility, and perform functions, and die; if there be passions and pains, dreams and ambitions, flickerings of infinity and glimmerings of Godhead — it is for you to be smitten with the wonder of it and to memorialise it in pretty song, while for me remains to classify it as so much related phenomena, so much play and interplay of force and matter in obedience to ascertainable law.

There are two kinds of men: the wonderers and the doers; the feelers and the thinkers; the emotionals and the intellectuals. You take an emotional delight in living; I an intellectual delight. You feel a thing to be beautiful and joyful; I seek to know why it is beautiful and joyful. You are content that it is, no matter how it came to be; I, when I have learned why, strive that we may have more beautiful and joyful things. “The bloom, the charm, the smile of life” is all too wonderful for you to know; to me it is chiefly wonderful because I may know.

Oh, well, it is an ancient quarrel which neither you nor I shall outlive. I am rational, you are romantic, — that is all there is to it. You are more beautiful; I am more useful; and though you will not see it and will never be able to see it, you and your beauty rest on me. I came into the world before you, and I made the way for you. I was a hunter of beasts and a fighter of men. I discovered fire and covered my nakedness with the skins of animals. I builded cunning traps, and wove branches and long grasses and

rushes and reeds into the thatch and roof-tree. I fashioned arrows and spears of bone and flint. I drew iron from the earth, and broke the first ground, and planted the first seed. I gave law and order to the tribe and taught it to fight with craft and wisdom. I enabled the young men to grow strong and lusty, and the women to find favour with them; and I gave safety to the women when their progeny came forth, and safety to the progeny while it gathered strength and years.

I did many things. Out of my blood and sweat and toil I made it possible that all men need not all the time hunt and fish and fight. The muscle and brain of every man were no longer called to satisfy the belly need. And then, when of my blood and sweat and toil I had made room, you came, high priest of mystery and things unknowable, singer of songs and seer of visions.

And I did you honour, and gave you place by feast and fire. And of the meat I gave you the tenderest, and of the furs the softest. Need I say that of women you took the fairest? And you sang of the souls of dead men and of immortality, of the hidden things, and of the wonder; you sang of voices whispering down the wind, of the secrets of light and darkness, and the ripple of running fountains. You told of the powers that pulsed the tides, swept the sun across the firmaments, and held the stars in their courses. Ay, and you scaled the sky and created for me the hierarchy of heaven.

These things you did, Dane; but it was I who made you, and fed you, and protected you. While you dreamed and sang, I laboured sore. And when danger came, and there was a cry in the night, and women and children huddling in fear, and strong men broken, and blare of trumpets and cry of battle at the outer gate — you fled to your altars and called vainly on your phantoms of earth and sea and sky. And I? I girded my loins, and strapped my harness on, and smote in the fighting line; and died, perchance, that you and the women and children might live.

And in times of peace you throve and waxed fat. But only by our brain and blood did we men of the fighting line make possible those times of peace. And when you throve, you looked about you and saw the beauty of the world and fancied yet greater beauty. And because of me your fancy became fact, and marvels arose in stone and bronze and costly wood.

And while your brows were bright, and you visioned things of the spirit, and rose above time and space to probe eternity, I concerned myself with the work of head and hand. I employed myself with the mastery of matter. I studied the times and seasons and the crops, and made the earth fruitful. I builded roads and bridges and moles, and won the secrets of metals and virtues of the elements. Bit by bit, and with great travail, I have conquered and enslaved the blind forces. I builded ships and ventured the sea, and beyond the baths of sunset found new lands. I conquered peoples, and organised nations and knit empires, and gave periods of peace to vast territories.

And the arts of peace flourished, and you multiplied yourself in divers ways. You were priest and singer and dancer and musician. You expressed your fancies in colours and metals and marbles. You wrote epics and lyrics — ay, as you to-day write lyrics, Dane Kempton. And I multiplied myself. I kept hunger afar off, and fire and sword

from your habitation, and the bondsmen in obedience under you. I solved methods of government and invented systems of jurisprudence. Out of my toil sprang forms and institutions. You sang of them and were the slave of them, but I was the maker of them and the changer of them.

You worshipped at the shrine of the idea. I sought the fact and the law behind the fact. I was the worker and maker and liberator. You were conventional. Tradition bound you. You were full bellied and content, and you sang of the things that were. You were mastered by dogma. Did the Mediæval Church say the earth was flat, you sang of an earth that was flat, and danced and made your little shows on an earth that was flat. And you helped to bind me with chains and burn me with fire when my facts and the laws behind my facts shook your dogmas. Dante's highest audacity could not transcend a material inferno. Milton could not shake off Lucifer and hell.

You were more beautiful. But not only was I more useful, but I made the way for you that there might be greater beauty. You did not reck of that. To you the heart was the seat of the emotions. I formulated the circulation of the blood. You gave charms and indulgences to the world; I gave it medicine and surgery. To you, famine and pestilence were acts of providence and punishment of sin: I made the world a granary and drained its cities. To you the mass of the people were poor lost wretches who would be rewarded in paradise or baked in hell. You could offer them no earthly happiness of decency. Forsooth, beggars as well as kings were of divine right. But I shattered the royal prerogatives and overturned the thrones of the one and lifted the other somewhat out of the dirt.

Nor is my work done. With my inventions and discoveries and rational enterprise, I draw the world together and make it kin. The uplift is but begun. And in the great world I am making I shall be as of old to you, Dane. I, who have made you and freed you, shall give you space and greater freedom. And, as of old, we shall quarrel as when first you came to me and found me at my rude earth-work. You shall be the scorner of matter, and I the master of matter. You may laugh at me and my work, but you shall not be absent from the feast nor shall your voice be silent. For, when I have conquered the globe, and enthralled the elements, and harnessed the stars, you shall sing the epic of man, and as of old it shall be of the deeds I have done.

Herbert.

## IX — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

3a Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.

December 28, 19 — .

The curtain is rung down on an illusion, but it rises again on another, this time, as before, with the look of the absolute Good and True upon it. It is because we are at once actor and spectator that we find no fault with blinking sight and slothful thought. We are finite branded and content, except during the shrill, undermining moments when the orchestra is tuning up. "Thus we half-men struggle."

I follow your letter and wonder whether your illusions have qualities of beauty which escape me. I give you the benefit of every doubt which it is possible for me to harbour with regard to my own system of illusions. You glorify the crowd practical. You attach yourself to the ranks that carried thought into action. You inspire yourself with rugged strength by dwelling on the achievements of ruggedness, forgetting that the progress of the world is not marshalled by those who work with line and rule. It was not his crew, but Columbus, who discovered America. The crew stood between the Old and the New, as indeed the crew always does. Between the idealist and his hope were hosts of practical enemies whom he had to subdue before he reached land. But I must not fall into your mistake of dividing men into categories. Men are not either intellectual or emotional; they are both. It is a rounded not an angular development which we follow. Feeling and thinking are not mutually exclusive, and the great personality feels deeply because he thinks highly, feels keenly because he sees widely. Common sense is not incompatible with uncommon sense, evil does not of necessity attend beauty, nor weakness the strength of genius.

I shall sing of the deeds you have done if your deeds are worthy of song. I shall sing a Song of the Sword, too, should the sword "thrust through the fatuous, thrust through the fungous brood." Whatever helps the races to better life sings itself into racial lore, and I alone shall not refuse the tribute. When you come to see that the Iliad is as great a gift to the race as the doings of Achilles, that the Iliads are more significant than the doings they celebrate, you will cease to classify men into doers and singers. You will cease to dishonour yourself in the eyes of the singers with the hope that in so doing you gain somewhat elsewhere.

Professor Bidwell is in love and it interferes with his work. You have the advantage of him there, no doubt. However, you lose more than you gain. You have shattered the dream and have awakened. To what? What is this reality in which your universe is

hung? Where shine the stars of your scientific heaven? By the beauty of your dreaming alone, Herbert, shall you be judged and known. You dream that you have learned the lesson, solved the problem, pierced the mystery, and become a prophet of matter. But matter does not include spirit, so the motif of your dream grows all confused. Your race epic omits the race. You sing the branch and the leaf rather than the sunlit and tenebral wood. Bidwell thinks his ordinary sort of girl a "lyric love, half angel and half bird, and all a wonder and a wild desire." Bidwell exaggerates, perhaps, but unless he feels this for his wife, he has no wife. Barbara obeyed the voice of her heart. That sounds sentimental, but it is none the less a courageous thing to do. I was inconsistent enough to be sorry because she loved a crippled man. Bidwell and Barbara are wiser and happier than you can be, Herbert, than you from whose hand the map of Parnassus Hill has been filched.

Is there one state of consciousness better than another? I think yes. Better to have long, youthful thoughts and to thrill to vibrant emotions than to grovel sluggishly; better to hope and dream and aspire and sway to great harmonies than to be blind and deaf and dumb — better for the type, better for the immortality of the world's soul. This to me is a vital thought, therefore life or death is in the issue. For the rest I know not. By the glimmer of light lent me, I can but guess greatness and descry vagueness. You go further and would touch the phantasmagorical veil. "Right!" I say, and I pray, "Godspeed." But there must be intensity. Are you thrilled? Do you stretch out your arms and dream the beauty? It is only when you gaze into a reality empty of the voices of life that I would wake you to bid you dream better.

Well, Herbert, I have quarrelled with you and shall to the end, I promise. I wish I could take you away, hide you from your Hester's sight, and pour my poetic spleen out on you. Oh, I shall torment you into reason and passion! Whatever you may choose to be, you are my son. I must take you and keep you as you are, of course, but I choose to tell the truth to you though I do love you and hold you mine. Disagreeable of me, but how else?

Dane.

## X — From the Same to the Same

London.

Sunday, January 1, 19 — .

Behold, I have lived! I press your face to the breathing, stinging roses of my days, and bid you drink in the sweet and throb with the pain. What is my philosophy but a translation of the facts which have stamped me? Perhaps if I let you read these facts, you will the sooner come to share my consecration and my faith. I must teach you to know that you are the fact of my whole tangled web of facts, and that all that I have and am, and all that might have been I and mine, stretches itself out in the unmarked path which is before you.

I take you back with me to the road, white with dust, upon which like a Viking and like a feeble girl I have travelled. It is not long, but how many paths, what byways and what turns! What sudden glimpses of sea and sky, what inaccessibleness! Hark, from the wood on either side murmurings of hope and hard sobbing of despair, young laughter of joy and aged renunciations! See from amongst the pines the farewell gleam of a white hand. All of it dear — dearly bought and precious and miraculous, the heartache even as the gladness.

“Life is worth living  
Through every grain of it,  
From the foundations  
To the last edge  
Of the cornerstone, death.”

Ay, through every grain of it. Even that morning in the wood, thirty years ago, when your mother put her hand in mine and looked a great pity into my eyes. Indeed, she loved me well, but romance shone on the brow of John Wace. For her his face was sunlit, and she needs must take it between her hands and hold it forever. He was her Siegfried, her master. Thus the gods decreed, and we three obeyed. What else was there to do? We must be honest before all, and Ellen did not love me any more, and I must know it, and wipe out a past of deepest mutuality, and strengthen and console and restore the woman whose hand held mine while her eyes were turned elsewhere.

Before that bright, black summer morning which saw me woman-pitied, I knew I should have to renounce her. Their souls rushed together in their first meeting. John had been away, knocking about museums and colleges, and carrying on tempestuous radical work. He was splendidly picturesque. I was a youth of twenty-three, almost ten years his junior, a boy full of half-defined aims and groping powers, reaching toward what he had firm in his grasp. Ellen talked of his coming, and she planned that she

should meet this my one friend in the environment she loved best — in my rooms, whose atmosphere, she declared, belonged to an earlier time and place. (She found in me Nolly Goldsmith and all of Grub Street.) So they met at the tea-table in my study, and a great warmth stole over your father. He spoke without looking at either of us, while Ellen looked as if her destiny had just begun.

Without, it rained. I strode to the window and in a dazed way stared at the lamp-post which was sticking out its flaming little tongue to the night. Why was I mocked? There was no mocking and there should have been no bitterness. Of that there was none either, after a while.

Ellen put her hand on my hair, and a strong primal emotion rose in me. In that moment civilisation was as if it had not been. I reverted to the primitive. The blood of forgotten ancestors, cave-men and river-men, reasoned me my ethics. I turned to her, met her flushed cheeks and moved being and the glory of dawning in her eyes. I measured my strength with hers and your father's, Herbert. Easily, great strength was mine in my passion, easily I could carry her off!

You, too, have had moments of upheaval when you heard the growling of the tiger and the bear, when the brute crowded out the man. Then your soul writhed in derision, you scoffed at that which you had held to be the nobility of the soul, and you minced words satirically over the exquisiteness of the type which we have evolved. Then the experiment of life turned farce, the heavens fell about your ears and "Fool!" was upon your lips. Oh, the hurricane that sweeps over the soul when it is cheated of its joy! In the first instant of Ellen's indifference, when I felt myself pushed out of her life, I forgot everything but my desire. I could not renounce her. I was in the throes of the passion for ownership.

Gentle girl between whom and myself there had been naught but sweetness and fellowship! How often had we talked large (we were very young!) of our sublimities and potentialities, how often had we pictured tragedies of surrender and greatness in the speaking! Ah, it should come true. For her and for me there must be miracles, and there were. So was the strength of the spirit proven, so was it shown to be "pure waft of the Will." So was I confirmed in the creed which believes that to keep we must lose, and to live we must die. So was I assured that there may be but one way, and that, the way of service.

I did not grip her passionately in my arms. I withdrew; I did much to make her task of leaving me an easy one. Were it not for my efforts, it would have been harder for her to obey a mandate which made for my pain. She could not quite drown an old, Puritan voice, speaking with the authority of tradition, which bade her hold to her vows. Yes, I made it easy for her. Harrow my soul with theories of selection and survival if you dare!

In those days the spires of the temple were golden, the shrine white. The door was seen from every point in the fog-begirt world. We who worshipped knew not of doubt. Stirred by the rumbling organ tones of causes and ideas, we immolated our lives gladly. High priests of thought, we swung the censers and rose on the breast of the incense.

Ellen and John and myself glorified God and enjoyed Him forever, — God, the Type, the Final Humanity, the giant Body Soul of man. In our hearts dwelt a religion which compelled us to serve the ideal. We strove to become what organically we felt the “Human with his drippings of warm tears” may become. We were the standard-bearers of the advancing margin of the world. We were the high-water mark toward which all the tides forever make. We were soldiers and priests.

And so when Ellen loved, and lacked courage for her love, I helped her. A past of kindness and ardour riveted her to my side. She knew that we were in feeling and fact divorced from each other by virtue of her stronger love for John, yet did she do battle with the rich young love. For two years we had been close; she had been so much my friend, she could not in maiden charity seal for me a so unwelcome fate. I had awakened her slumbering soul with my first look into the sphinx wonder of her eyes. For me she had become fire and dew, flame of the sun, and flower of the hill. Without me to help her do it she could not leave me.

To the master of matter this coping with spiritual abstractions must appear like juggling with intellectual phantasmagoria. Yet I protest that life is finally for intangible triumphs. Unnamed fragrances steal upon the senses and the soul revels and greatens. Unseen hands draw us to worlds afar, and we are gathered up in the dignity of the human spirit. Unknown ideas attract and hold us, and we take our place in the universe as intellectual factors. In giving up Ellen I helped her, and, sacredly better still, I sent on into a world of vague thinking and weak acting the impulse of devotion to revealed truth.

She had a sweet way of sitting low and resting her head on my knee. She sat through one whole day with me thus, and for hours I could have thought her asleep were it not for the waves of feeling which surged in her upturned face. Toward the end she raised her head, ecstasy in her eyes and on her cheek and lip. “Dane, I love you. Dane! Dane!” The whole of me was caught up in the accents of that tremulousness. She had known John three months; but her love for him was young, it had come unexpectedly, it was still unexpressed and ineffable. Her yearning for him led to softness toward me, and though she rose out of her mood as one does from a dream, the hours when we were like the angels, all love and all speech, were mine. So much was vouchsafed me.

Memories and echoes, gusts of sweet breath from the violets on your mother’s grave — the prophet of matter will have none of them, and, I fear, will pity me that I am so much theirs. I am yours also, dear lad, and I wish to serve you.

Dane Kempton.



## XI — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
January 20, 19 — .

I do not know whether to laugh or weep. I have just finished reading your letter, and I can hardly think. Words seem to have lost their meaning, and words, used as you use them, are without significance. You appear to speak a tongue strangely familiar, yet one I cannot understand. You are unintelligible, as, I dare say, I am to you.

And small wonder that we are unintelligible. Our difference presents itself quite clearly to the scientific mind, and somewhat in this fashion: Man acquires knowledge of the outer world through his sensations and perceptions. Sensation ends in sentiment, and perception ends in reason. These are the two sides of man's nature, and the individual is determined and ruled by whichever side in him happens to be temperamentally dominant. I have already classed you as a feeler, myself as a thinker. This is, I think true. You, I am confident, feel it to be true. I reason why it is true. You accept it on faith as true, lose sight of the argument forthwith, and proceed to express it in emotional terms — which is to say that you take it to heart and feel badly because it happens to be so.

You feign to know this modern scientific slang, and you are contemptuous of it because you do not know it. The terms I use freight no ideas to you. They are sounds, rhythmic and musical, but they are not definite symbols of thought. Their facts you do not grasp. For instance, the prehensile organs of insects, the great toothed mandibles of the black stag-beetle, the amorous din of the male cicada and the muteness of his mate — these are facts which you cannot relate, one with the other, nor can you generalise upon them. Let me add to these related characters, and you cannot discern the law which is alike to all. What to you the fluttering moth, decked in gold and crimson, brilliant, iridescent, splendid? The beauty of it bids you bend to deity, otherwise it has no worth; it is a stimulus to religion, and that is all. So with the glowing incandescence of the stickleback and its polished scales of silver. What make you of the hoarse voice of the gorilla? Is not the dewlap of the ox inscrutable? the mane of the lion? the tusks of the boar? the musk-sack of the deer? In the amethyst and sapphire of the peacock's wing you find no rationality; to you it is a manifestation of the wonder which is taboo.

And so with the cock bird, displaying his feathered ruffs and furbelows, dancing strange antics and spilling out his heart in song.

I, on the other hand, dare to gather all these phenomena together, and find out the common truth, the common fact, the common law, which is generalisation, which is Science. I learn that there are two functions which all life must perform: Nutrition and Reproduction. And I learn that in all life, the performance, according to time and space and degree, is very like. The slug must take to itself food, else it will perish; and so I. The slug must procreate its kind, or its kind will perish; and so I. The need being the same, the only difference is in the expression. In all life come times and seasons when the individuals are aware of dim yearnings and blind compulsions and masterful desires. The senses are quickened and alert to the call of kind. And just as the fish and the reptile glimmeringly adumbrate man, so do these yearnings and desires adumbrate what man in himself calls "love," spelled all out in capitals. I repeat, the need is the same. From the amoeba, up the ladder of life to you and me, comes this passion of perpetuation. And in yourself, refine and sublimate as you will, it is none the less blind, unreasoning, and compelling.

And now we come to the point. In the development of life from low to high, there came a dividing of the ways. Instinct, as a factor of development, had its limitations. It culminated in that remarkable mechanism, the bee-swarm. It could go no farther. In that direction life was thwarted. But life, splendid and invincible, not to be thwarted, changed the direction of its advance, and reason became the all-potent developmental factor. Reason dawned far down in the scale of life; but it culminates in man and the end is not yet.

The lever in his arm he duplicates in wood and steel; the lenses in his eyes in glass; the visual impressions of his brain on chemically sensitised wood-pulp. He is able, reasoning from events and knowing the law, to control the blind forces and direct their operation. Having ascertained the laws of development, he is able to take hold of life and mould and knead it into more beautiful and useful forms. Domestic selection it is called. Does he wish horses which are fast, he selects the fastest. He studies the physics of velocity in relation to equine locomotion, and with an eye to withers, loins, hocks, and haunches, he segregates his brood mares and his stallions. And behold, in the course of a few years, he has a thoroughbred stock, swifter of foot than any ever in the world before.

Since he takes sexual selection into his own hands and scientifically breeds the fish and the fowl, the beast and the vegetable, why may he not scientifically breed his own kind? The fish and the fowl and the beast and the vegetable obey dim yearnings and vague desires and reproduce themselves. "Poor the reproduction," says Man to Mother Nature; "allow me." And Mother Nature is thrust aside and exceeded by this new creator, this Man-god.

These yearnings and desires of the beast and the vegetable are the best tools nature has succeeded in devising. Having devised them, she leaves their operation to the blindness of chance. Steps in man and controls and directs them. For the first time in

the history of life conscious intelligence forms and transforms life. These yearnings and desires, promptings of the "abysmal fecundity," have in man evolved into what is called "love." They arise in instinct and sensation and culminate in sentiment and emotion. They master man, and the intellect of man, as they master the beast and all the acts of the beast. And they operate in the development of man with the same blindness of chance that they operate in the development of the beast.

Now this is the law: Love, as a means for the perpetuation and development of the human type, is very crude and open to improvement. What the intellect of man has done with the beast, the intellect of man may do with man.

It is a truism to say that my intellect is wiser than my emotions. So, knowing the precise value and use of this erotic phenomenon, this sexual madness, this love, I, for one, elect to choose my mate with my intellect. Thus I choose Hester. And I do truly love her, but in the intellectual sense and not the sense you fanatically demand. I am not seized with a loutish vertigo when I look upon her and touch her hand. Nor do I feel impelled to leave her presence if I would live, as did Dante the presence of Beatrice; nor the painful confusion of Rousseau, when, in the same room with Madame Goton, he seemed impelled to leap into the flaming fireplace. But I do feel for Hester what happily mated men and women, after they have lived down the passion, feel in the afternoon of life. It is the affection of man for woman, which is sanity. It is the sanity of intercourse which replaces love madness; the sanity which comes upon sparrows after the ardour of mating, when they leave off wrangling and chattering and set soberly to work to build their nest for the coming brood.

Pre-nuptial love is the madness of non-understanding and part-understanding. Post-nuptial affection is the sanity of complete understanding; it is based upon reason and service and healthy sacrifice. The first is a blind mating of the blind; the second, a clear and open-eyed union of male and female who find enough in common to warrant that union. In a word and in the fullest sense of the word, it is sex comradeship. Pre-nuptial love cannot survive marriage any considerable time. It is doomed inexorably to flicker out, and when it has flickered out it must be replaced by affection, or else the parties to it must separate. We well know that many men and women, unable to build up affection on the ruins of love, do separate, or if they do not, continue to live together in cold tolerance or bitter hatred.

Now, Hester is my mate. We have much in common. There is intellectual, spiritual, and physical affinity. The caress of her voice and the feel of her mind are pleasurable to me; likewise the touch of her hand (and you know that in the union of man and woman the higher affinities are not possible unless there first be physiological affinity). We shall go through life as comrades go, hand in hand, Hester and I; and great happiness will be ours. And because of all this I say you have no right to challenge my happiness, and vex my days, and feel for me as one dead.

My dear, bewildered Dane, come down out of the clouds. If I am wrong, I have gone over the ground. Then do you go over that ground with me and show where I am

wrong. But do not pour out on me your romantic and poetic spleen. Confine yourself to the Fact, man, to the irrefragable Fact.

Herbert.

Ah, your later letter has just arrived. I can only say that I understand. But withal, I am pained that I am not nearer to you. These intellectual phantasmagoria rise up like huge amorphous ghosts and hold me from you. I cannot get through the mists and glooms to press your hand and tell you how dear I hold you. Do, Dane, do let us cease from this. Let us discuss no further. Let me care for Hester in my own way so long as I do no sin and harm no one; and be you father to us, and bless us who else must go unblessed. For Hester, also, is fatherless and motherless, and you must be to her as you are to me.

Herbert.

## XII — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

London,  
3a Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.  
February 10, 19 — .

So we have got into an argument! I have been poring over your last two or three letters, and they read like a set of briefs for a debate. Doubtless mine have the same forensic quality. Our letters have become rebuttals, pure and simple. This discovery gave my pen pause for a week. It occurred to me that Walt Whitman must have meant didactic letters too, when he said of the fretters of our little world, "They make me sick talking of their duty to God." Yet friend should speak to friend, should utter the word than which nothing is more sacred. "Let there be light, and there was light" — a ripple of light, and a flash, then the darkness broke and dispersed from the face of the waters. It was a trumpet-call of words bringing drama into a nebulous creation. Let the Word break up our night and let us not only grant, but avow the conviction it brings us, no matter what the consequence. Let us worship the irrefragable Fact.

You hold that marriage is an institution having for its purpose the perpetuation of the species, and that respect and affection are sufficient to bring two people into this most intimate possible relation. You also hold that the business of the world, pressing hard upon men, makes "love from their lives a thing apart," and that this is as it should be. Your letters are an exposition and a defence of what I may loosely call the practical theory. You show that the world is for work and workers, and that life is for results as seen in institutions and visible achievements. I, on the other hand, maintain that it takes a greater dowry to marry upon than affection, and that men love as intensely and with as much abandon as women. People love in proportion to the depth of their natures, and the finest man in the world has an infinite capacity for giving and receiving love store. The spell is strongest upon the finest.

This, briefly, is what we have been saying to each other. You attack my idealism, call me dreamer, and accuse me of being out of joint with the time, which itself is rigorously in joint with the laws of growth. And I class you with the Philistine because of your exaggeration of practical values. I hold that it is gross to respect the fact tangible at the expense of the feeling ineffable.

In your last letter you exploit the theory of Nutrition and Reproduction with a charm and warmth which helps me see you as I have so long known you, and which tells me again that you are worth fighting for and saving. But to trace love to its biologic

beginning is not to deny its existence. Love has a history as significant as that of life. When, eons ago, the primitive man looked at his neighbour and recognised him as a fellow to himself, consciousness of kind awoke and a cell was exploded which functioned love. When, through the ages, economic forces taught men the need of mutual aid, when everywhere in life the law of development charged men with leanings and desires and outreachings, then the sway of love began in life. What was subconscious became conscious, what, back in the past, was a mere adumbration gloried out in Aurora splendours. The love of a Juliet is the outgrowth of natural processes manifesting themselves everywhere down the scale, but it is also the gift of the last evolution, and it speaks to us from the topmost notch in the scale. The charm of morning rests on a Juliet's love because its hour is young and yet old, striking the time of the past and the future. It is thus that the hunger of the race and the passion of the race become in the individual the need for happiness. The need of the race and the need of the individual are at once the same and different.

What was the point of your letter? That sexual selection obtains? I grant it. That it is incumbent upon us as intelligent men and women to call to the aid of instinct our social wisdom? I grant and avow it. But our social wisdom insists that we obey the choices of instinct; our social wisdom is only another phase of our refinement, which, in impelling us to a love of the beautiful, does not the less impel us to love. Our social wisdom educates our taste without lessening our taste for the thing. "Love a beautiful person nobly, but be sure you love her," says our social wisdom with interesting tautology. Besides, you are a heretic to your own breed, Herbert. It is you who would forsake our present social wisdom, ruling modern men by laws which obtained in primitive life. It is you who steadily hark back to the past, and to states of consciousness which were but can never be again. The early facts of biology cannot include that which transcends them. To borrow from Ernest Seton Thompson, man is evolved with the lower orders in the same way that water is changed into steam, and the nature of the change, when it is effected, is as radical. Add a number of degrees of heat to water and it is still water. Let one degree be wanting to the necessary number, and the substance is still intact. Add the last degree, and water is no longer water. From water to steam is a radical change and a transformation.

You agree to improve upon the beasts of the fields and upon our own race in the past, and in this you go farther than you have need if marriage is for nothing else than to serve the instinct for perpetuation. You shew some respect for what is natural and instinctive, yet you say that all would be as well if individual choice had not prevailed, and men and women were "shuffled about." You draw up a cold programme for action in affairs of the spirit and formulate a code of procedure in matters of the heart.

I have a programme too. Mine does not break with nature. On the contrary, it obeys every instinct and listens to every call on the senses. My love begins in my biologic self, grows with my growth, takes its hues from visioned sunsets in corn-flower skies, its grace from swaying rivers of grain seen in dreams. It is for me what it is for fish and fowl, beast and vegetable. It is my passion for perpetuation, but it is also something

as different from this as I am different from beast and vegetable. My love is "blind, unreasoning, and compelling," and for that I trust it. I do not conceive myself Man-god, therefore I do not say to Nature, "Allow me." I cannot be sure that when I say it in the case of the horse, who obeys like me "dim yearning and vague desires," I do not sacrifice him to a lust of my own. The lust for owning and spoiling is hard to cope with. Perhaps a purer time is near, when, upborne by a sense of the dignity of romance and the sacredness of life, man will refrain from laying rough hands on his mute brothers.

The romance which is my proof of the good of being does not rest on passion. The unclean fires that consume the loutish and degenerate are not of love. You quote instances of the hyperphysical and hysterical. The feeling that I would have you obey for your soul's sake and without which you are but half alive, is not the blind passion of an oversexed sentimentalism. Rousseau was never in love in his life, though to say it were to accuse him of perjury.

One word more. Do you wish to know why I care? I care because I know you to be of those who are capable of love. Probably it was one little twist in your development that has turned you into alien ways of thinking and living. Yes, and more than for this I care because you are the fulfilment of a sacred past. You are the son of my sacrifice and your mother's love.

I care very much indeed. I do not wish you to awake some terrible night to find that you had ended your romance before you had begun it. I vex your days and call you dead? It is because I know the life that is by the grace of God yours, and because I cannot bear to let you coffin it. Herbert, there is misery when the blood pales, and the tears dry up, and the flame of the heart sinks, and all that is left is a memory of a thought — a memory of very long ago when one was young and might have chosen to live.

I am sorry we darken the days for each other.

Your friend always,

Dane Kempton.

## XIII — From the Same to the Same

London,  
3a Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.  
February 12, 19 — .

Barbara and Earl celebrated their anniversary yesterday. Invitations were sent out, the guests consisting of Melville and myself. "Anniversary of what?" we asked. For answer we received inscrutable smiles. Birthdays are accidents of fate. You may regret the accident or you may be thick enough in illusion to rejoice over it, but you cannot in decency celebrate an occurrence wholly independent of personal control and yet concerning itself with you! Leave the merrymaking for appreciative friends. So rules Barbara. Not a birthday, then, nor the date of their marriage. The occasion was in some flash struck from Being, the memory of which enriches them, — in a mood that for an hour held them in strong grasp, in the utterance of a word charged with destiny, in the avowal of their love if their love awaited avowal. Whatever the cause, they honoured it with a will.

Barbara's eyes flashed, her cheeks were sweetly suffused, and her voice was vibrant. Earl, too, was at his best. My heart loved this man who had lain all his life with death. His health is at its bad worst this winter, which fact made of the "Celebration" a rather heart-rending affair. He has been obliged to abandon the Journal, but we hope he can stay with the school. Meanwhile, his chronic invalidism of body and purse does not too much affect him. He keeps his charm of tenderness and strength. He rivets his pupils to him almost as he riveted his Barbara.

I have discovered my proof of this couple's happiness. It is that I have always taken it for granted. Simple, is it not? And absolute. Often in their presence I catch myself imagining their mutual lives and seeing vaguely the graces that each brings to each. "How she must delight him!" I say. "How his eyes speak to her!" "They can never come to the end of each other," and so on. The ordinary married couple so often brings a sense of distressed surprise: "How can these two foot it together?" "How did it happen?" "How can it go on?"

Last night counted to me. Your father and I have had such evenings, but I did not think I could do it all over again. We spoke with the fire (and conceit) of young students, exciting ourselves with expired theories, hoping old hopes, smarting under blows that perhaps had long ceased to fall. What then? What if we were ill-read in the facts? We could not have been wrong in the feeling. For the old hope that has been proven vain, a new; for the ancient hurt, a modern wrong, as great and as crying. It was good to feel that we had not grown too wise to harbour thoughts of change



and redress, or too much ironed out with doctrine to be resigned. I confess it is long since I have eaten my heart in fury, in impatience, in wildness, but last night we awoke the radical in one another. We condemned the system. We placed ourselves outside the régime, refusing aught at its hands, registering our protest, hating the inordinate scheme of things only as hotly as we loved the juster Hand of a future time.

It is curious that we, offsprings of parvenue success, should be capable of such repudiation. Barbara accepts the Management without the trouble of a question. "What do you know? What do you know?" the girl demands, a radiant little angel in white, and a conservative. "You must know yourselves in the wrong, else would you smite your way through the world."

Ah, Barbara has yet to learn that it is hard to live. It is not so hard to fight, and it is easy to rest neutral, but to be fighter and bearer both, to stand staunch, holding ever to the issue, and yet, without tameness, to take rebuff and wait, there's the true course and the heroic. It is difficult when one has been conquered to know it. It is difficult to honour an outgrown ideal, which cost us, nevertheless, comfort and prestige — prizes which youth scorns and which oncoming age, pathetically enough, holds dear. It is difficult to pull up when driving too fast and too far, when galloping towards fanaticism, and it is impossible to whip oneself into passion and martyrdom. It is difficult to live, little Barbara.

For me it is also difficult to report a social function. At this one Browning presided, for Melville took up "Caponisacchi" and read it to us. That voice of his is in itself an interpretation, but Browning needs interpreting less than any other man who wrote great poems, because he wrote the greatest. It was four in the morning when the "O great, just, good God! Miserable me!" of the soldier-saint fell upon our ears. How we had listened! Earl steadily paced the floor, Barbara leaned her cheek upon my hand. Her soul was doing battle, and so was mine. We were all fighting the gallant fight. Read "Pompilia" and you are filled with reverence, read "Caponisacchi" and you are caught up by the spirit of action. You must rise and forth to burn your way like he, though you may have been too weary in spirit before to answer to your name when opportunity called roll.

It was Earl who broke the silence caused by the inner tumult. In a dreamy voice, his eyes very eager and intent, he told us how at one time he had gone up a hill that faced the house in which he lived. A hard rain was driving, he fell at every step up the slippery steepness, but at every step the beauty of it became more and more wondrous, hardly bearable. The little village sank lower and lower, and about him were soft hills, graceful and verdant, a stretch of water lying dark under the clouded sky, and the mountain gray and watchful in the distance. It was then, in the chill of a January rain, on an oak-clad hill of a western spot, that he recognised the dear features of the Mother, knew her his as hers he was, and loved her with passion. The sea is vast and wondrous, but it is alien. It holds you apart; it is not of you. But the gentle earth with her undulating form and the growing life in her lap, soothes with wordless harmonies. It was then that he forgave the fate which deformed him. A twisted oak, that is all —

no less a tree and no less beautiful in the landscape! And it was sufficient to live. In the bosom of so much beauty sufficient also to die. As he stood, thinking it out, feeling the wonder and the glory, at times sorry for those who can see no longer the slanting sheets of rain and the grass at the feet, at times feeling that since this is good, in some impalpable way oblivion to all this may be also good, as he stood there, flushed with the climbing and sad with great joy, the thought came: With whom? It cannot be lived alone. With whom? He turned at the touch of an arm at his shoulder to meet the smile and the look and the quick breath of her who had sent herself his Eve.

In the dawn stealing over the world of London, Earl told the story, and there and then we saw it all — the hill in the heart of the hills, the reconciled boy who had climbed its brow, the rain-drenched woman hurrying to overtake him, with the gift of all of herself in her eyes. We looked neither at Barbara nor at Earl. Possessed of the secret, we spoke a few words and left. Our host had divulged what the anniversary sought to celebrate. We understood and were glad.

Good night, lad. Would you could have shared our heyday at the dawning!  
Dane.

## XIV — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
February 31, 19 — .

Love is a something that begins in sensation and ends in sentiment. Thanks to beautiful and permissible hyperbole, you have begun with sensation in your description of love, and have ended with sentiment. You have told me about love, in terms of love, which is a vain performance and unscientific. Now let me make you a definition. Love is a disorder of mind and body, and is produced by passion under the stimulus of imagination.

Love is a phase of the operation of the function of reproduction, and it occurs solely in man. Love, adhering to the common understanding of the term, is an emotional excitement which does not obtain among the lower animals. The lower animals lack the stimulus of imagination, and with them the passion for perpetuation remains a mere passion. But man has developed imagination. The pure sexual passion is glossed over and obscured by a cloud of fancies, mistaken yearnings, and distorted dreams. And so well is the real intent of the function obscured, that it is actually lost to him, especially during the period of love madness, so that there seems an apparent divorce between the parts which go to make up love, between passion and imagination.

The romantic lover of to-day (expressing sensation in terms of sentiment, and fondly imagining that he is reasoning) cannot reconcile his soul-exaltation with bodily grossness, cannot conceive that soul can turn body, and in the embrace of body tell out all the wonder of soul. To all sensitive and spiritual men and women come times of anguish and tears and self-revolt, when they are confounded and heart-broken by the physical aspect of love. Poor men and women! they suffer keenly and sincerely through lack of something more than a sentimental concept of love. To them, body and soul appear things apart, to be kept apart, lest the one contaminate the other. And in the end, loving well and truly, they prove their love by enduring, though unable ever quite to shake off the sense of sin and shame and personal degradation. They do not understand life, that is the trouble. The beast, lacking imagination, needs no rational rightness for the various acts of living, such as they need, and which they do not possess. Because of their unchecked and unbalanced imagination they mistake the half of life for the whole, and when forced to face the whole are affrighted and shocked. They

do not reason that the need for perpetuation is the cause of passion; and that human passion, working through imagination and worked upon by imagination, becomes love.

And while I am in this vein, I may as well deny that a greater spiritual dowry than affection is required for marriage. (For that matter, I fail to see anything so spiritual in erotic phenomena.) If a man may achieve affection for a woman, without undergoing pre-nuptial madness, — if a man may take the short cut, as it were, — then I see no reason why he should not marry that woman. He is certainly justified, since affection is what romantic love must evolve into after marriage. But do not mistake me, Dane. I do not intend this sweepingly. It will not do for the whole human herd; for at once enters that abhorrent thing you rightly fear, the marriage for convenience. Alas, it too often masquerades under the guise of romantic love. Certainly, every man is not capable of taking this short cut and at the same time of avoiding a violation of true sexual selection. Having little brain, the average man can only act in line with sexual selection by undergoing the romantic love malady. But for some few of us, and I dare to include myself, the short cut is permissible. This short cut I shall take, and far be it from any worldly sense of stocks and bonds and comfortable housekeeping.

Marriage means less to man than to woman? Yes, by all means, at least to the normal man or woman. As surely as reproduction is woman's peculiar function, and nutrition man's, just so surely does marriage sum up more to woman than to man. It becomes the whole life of the woman, while to the man it is rather an episode, rather a mere side to his many-sided life. Natural selection has made it so. The countless men of the past, even from before the time they swung down out of the trees, who devoted more time and energy to their love-affairs than to the winning of food and shelter, died from innutrition in various ways. Only the men, normal men, with a proper respect for the mechanism of life, survived and perpetuated their kind. The chance was large that the abnormal lover did not win a wife at all. At least it is so to-day. The abnormal lover is not a successful bidder for women, and is usually passed by.

But while we are on this topic, do not let us forget Dante Alighieri, your prince of lovers. Has a suitable explanation ever occurred to you concerning how he came to marry Gemma, daughter of Manetto Donati, who bore him seven children, and was never once mentioned in the "*Divina Commedia*?" You remember what he said of his first meeting with Beatrice, "At that moment I saw most truly that the spirit of life which hath its dwelling in the secretest chambers of the heart began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith." And he later had seven children by Gemma, daughter of Manetto Donati, and whom, as the historian has recorded, "there was no reason to suppose other than a good wife."

As for the primitive, I hark back to it because we are still very primitive. How many thousands years of culture, think you, have rubbed and polished at our raw edges? One, probably; at the best, not more than two. And that takes us back to screaming savagery, when, gross of body and deed, we drank blood from the skulls of our enemies, and hailed as highest paradise the orgies and carnage of Valhalla. And before that time, think you, how many thousands of years of savagery did we endure?

and how many myriads of thousands in the long procession of life up from the first vitalised inorganic? Two thousand years are an extremely thin veneer with which to cover the many millions.

And further, our much-vaunted two thousand years of culture is a thing of the mind, an acquired character. We are not born with it. Each must gather it for himself after he is born, from the spoken and written words of his fellow and forerunners. Isolate a babe from all of its kind and it will never learn to speak, and without speech words, it can never think save in the concretest possible way. Yet it will possess all the brute instincts and passions — the raw edges which do constantly shove through the culture varnish of the civilised man.

Our culture is the last to come, the first to go. I have seen it go from a man in an hour, nay, on the instant. Our culture is nothing more than the accumulated wisdom of the race. It is not part of us, not a thing or attribute handed down from father to son. It is a something acquired in varying degree by each individual for himself. Yes, I do well to hark back to the primitive. It tells me where I am to-day and describes to me the world I am living in. You, Dane, are hyper-refined, or refined beyond the times. You are like the idealistic and advanced zealots, who, when such action would mean destruction, advise these United States to disarm in the face of the war-harnessed world.

But no more of this jerky letter. Soon I shall proceed to make my contention good. I shall show the higher part intellect plays in conjugal love, the control, restraint, forbearance, sacrifice. And I shall show that conjugal love is higher and finer than romantic love.

Herbert.

## XV — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

London,  
3a Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.  
March 15, 19 — .

Clyde Stebbins was here an hour after your theories and definitions reached me. The fact that I had been reading treason against his sister made me pick my subjects a little too carefully for smooth conversation. Your letter, partly open, was on the table before us, and my eyes fell upon it often as I wondered what it would mean to Hester's brother — if he could read it. I no longer think only of you.

I reject your definition of love. It is not a disorder of the mind and body, nor is it solely the instrument of reproduction. I reject and resent your distinction between the pre-nuptial and post-nuptial states of feelings. Further, I hold that marriage may not be based on affection alone, and I disagree with you that population is better than principle. Children need not be brought into the world at any cost.

Love is not a disorder, but a growth. There is spiritual as well as physical growth. Some men and women never grow up strong enough to love. Their development is arrested, or they are, from the beginning, poor creatures born of starvelings, and perhaps fated to give birth to pale, sapless beings like themselves. Others there are who love, and this is no ill chance, no disease of the mind and body calling for psychiatrist and physician. It is a strength, a becoming, a fulfilment. Let us reason from the effect to the cause. How does this madness manifest itself? Not in weakness. You never saw a man or woman in love who was the worse for it. The lover carries all things before him, and not for himself alone, but for a larger world than ever had been his. He who loves one must perforce love all the world and all the unborn worlds. This is the way life goes, which is another way of saying it is a scientific fact. That which makes men capable of consecration is not a disorder of the mind and body. It is the greatest of all forces, and it turns the wrangling and grabbing human creature into an inspired poet.

And the cause? The passion for perpetuation and the imagination. We agree. But there are other and more immediate needs than the need of perpetuation that call out love, needs that are peculiarly of the present, being bound up with the steady outreaching for help, for fellowship in the jerky journey through the universe. If love were no more than an instrument of reproduction, you would be right in maintaining that the fastidiousness I insist on is unnecessary and unnatural. If love were that and that alone, there would be no love, which is a paradox indeed.

“Because of our souls’ yearning that we meet  
And mix in soul through flesh, which yours and mine  
Wear and impress, and make their visible selves, —  
All which means, for the love of you and me,  
Let us become one flesh, being one soul.”

I dare a formula: In the beginning love arose in the passion for perpetuation; to-day, the passion for perpetuation arises in love. Just as we put ourselves in the way of natural selection, pitting the microcosm against the macrocosm in a passion of ethical feeling, just so do we reverse for ourselves processes that seem indeed to have all the force of law. This reversal is civilisation.

The lover is impelled to perpetuate himself in the Here and the Now. The law of life exacts from him the tribute of love. Imagination gives the lover the key to the object of his love. He enters and he beholds only the ideal which is hers; for him her clay self and the mere facts of her do not exist. The conditions of love are inherent in civilisation. When purpose is high and feeling rich, when “the everlasting possession of the good” is desired, then is heard the I Am of love.

Now to my definition. Negatively, love is not a disorder of the mind and body, not a madness, since it arises in the eternally most valuable, since it is the culmination of high processes, and since it makes for sanity of vision and strength and happiness. Positively, love is the awakening of the personality to the beauty and worth of some one being, caused by the passion for perpetuation and by imagination. It is a desire to hold to the good everlastingly, and to merge with it.

Aristotle proved to the satisfaction of his time that women have fewer teeth than men. Aristotle was a great man, and besides being a philosopher was the foremost scientist of his day. I cannot help thinking of this prodigious blunder. Perhaps (who knows?) the same famous fate which a sexual classification of teeth enjoys awaits a definition calling love a disorder.

I will continue to-morrow. A note has just been given me calling me to Earl, who is ill, but not seriously. Barbara has prescribed for him a game of chess. The desire to see you again has got into my blood. I think I shall be in the new West and with you before long.

Your friend always,  
Dane Kempton.

## XVI — From the Same to the Same

London.

Sunday morning.

I must proceed with the three other points of my letter, so I shall stay here and write, though there is a sharp breeze this morning and a coquettishly escaping sunlight, and something tugs at me to go out upon the city streets. It is not restlessness, but the love of the open. I am fain to leave a walled house, and, better still, to get outside of the walls within and join the city in friendship and let the city join me. I never feel greater fellowship than when I walk —

Except when I write to you. Then do I grieve with the pride of life. My sympathies quicken and I grow young again. I constitute myself advocate of the world, and enthusiasm does not fail me in this high calling. It is but natural that in the face of scepticism which I cannot share I should feel greater faith, that in the face of revilement a sense of the glory of the thing belittled should settle upon me. I turn zealot and spend myself in long-drawn praising. I lay myself under a spell of harmony because I am serving and defending and approving what I hold to be good.

So when you insist that romantic love is pre-nuptial and that it dies at marriage as others suppose it to die at the approach of poverty, I grow glad with the knowledge that this is not true. I scrutinize facts which I hitherto took for granted, and become doubly sure. You dogmatise when you say that the lover and the husband are mutually exclusive. If there was love in the beginning, it will be at the end. Love doubles upon itself. Propinquity tightens bonds and there is a steady blossoming of the character in a radiant atmosphere. The marriages that fail are the unions which are based on liking. In these, weariness must set in, for marriage demands that men and women be all in all to each other, and unless it be so with them, the lives of the “contracting parties” are, by the laws of logic, and by the force of the laws of delicacy in the art of living, forever spoiled.

Yes, and people who truly love come to regret their married love, these too. But these have at least begun well. Their lives are infinitely richer for this fact. Their failure itself is made by it more bearable than the failure of those others who act the vulgarian and demand so little of life that even that little escapes them. No world-stains on these who are, at least, would-be lovers. They stand mistaken but irreproachable. It was neither their fault nor love’s, and “life more abundant” comes to them even with the mistake.

You are consistent. Just as you maintain that love is passion, so do you think that it is no more than a preliminary thrill. You note a change; the flutter and the excitement



felt in the presence of the unknown go, and you do not know that they give place to the steadier joys of the unknown, that after the promise comes the fulfilment, that the hope is not more beautiful than the realisation, that there is divinity in both, and that love does not disappoint.

Tell me, are the placid marriages of affection you are preparing to describe so very placid? Do these jog along so well? Is the control, restraint, forbearance, sacrifice, of which you speak, as readily practised for the person who is that to you which twenty others may quite as easily be, as it is for the one beyond all whom you love and deify, whom the laws of your being command that you serve, living and dying? God knows, the average marriage does not exhibit a striking picture of the practice of these virtues! Rather are such phrases ideals on stilts on which suffering marital partners attempt to hobble across their extremity. On the other hand, to some extent everybody practises restraint and sacrifice since everybody is to some extent moral. But it goes very hard with your average man and woman in your average marriage, and there is a decided setting of the mouth and narrowing of the eyes with the effort.

Whatever placidity there is is attained by means of vampirism. Diderot, the husband of a stupid seamstress, had no right to the love of a Mlle. Voland. It was vampirism and sin to take all from this woman, and to return her favour with so much less than all, as surely as cowardice and selfishness are sin. But the illicit relation will exist because custom cannot rid men and women of subtle sympathies and dear yearnings, because men and women will love though the world consider it cheap and mad. Individually, we have no difficulty in finding our happiness, but we are made advance toward it through the twisted byways of an unfrank world. "No straight road! Keep turning!" has been the scream of convention since convention began.

So for every commonplace marriage there is a canonised love, and the story is told in the old Greek civilisation by the Hetairæ. You remember how it reads in the history: "The low position generally assigned the wife in the home had a most disastrous effect upon Greek morals. She could exert no such elevating or refining influence as she casts over the modern home. The men were led to seek social and intellectual sympathy and companionship outside the family circle, among a class of women known as Hetairæ, who were esteemed chiefly for their brilliancy of intellect. As the most noted representative of this class stands Aspasia, the friend of Pericles. The influence of the Hetairæ was most harmful to social morality." And the practice persisted through many a renaissance where Lauras and Beatrices were besung, down to the brilliant encyclopædists of the eighteenth century with their avowed loves, down to our Goethe and John Stuart Mill. All of these loves rose in very different motives and environments, yet were they the same fundamentally, — strong, sweet love between man and woman, very much spoiled by the fact that custom permitted the loveless marriage at the same time, but yet love which was good since it was the best that could be had. And when the historian permits himself to say, "The influence of the Hetairæ was most harmful to social morality," it is evident that he also thinks that a marriage which compels husband or wife to seek soul's help elsewhere than in their union is bad and wrong.

To-day there is a change in attitude. Woman is new-born in strength and dignity, and the highest chivalry the world has ever known is in blossom. She is an equal, a comrade, a right regal person. She is no longer a means but an end in herself, not alone fit to mother men but fit to live in equality with men. I repeat, she is not a means but an individual, with a soul of her own to rear. Because of the greater and more general emancipation of woman the subtlety of modern love has become possible.

Now for the last point, the question of perpetuation. Just as function precedes organ, so the love of life is inherent in the living for the maintenance of life. But even the primitive man, in whom instinct is strongest, proves himself capable of death. Some men have always been able to give up their lives for some cause. (Indeed there is thought to be suicide amongst animals.) And to-day we certainly no longer say a man must live. Quite as often must he die. Men have found it wise to die at the stake or on the gallows. If this be true of our relation to the life which courses through us, how much more true is it of our instinct to perpetuate ourselves, which pertains to the love of life biologically only, which is often, in the social manifestation of that instinct, a cold intellectual concept and never a dominating thought! We are not driven to procreate. In fact, every child born into the world competes hard for its morsel. Under our unimaginable economic régime all increase in population is a menace.

I call bringing children into the world a codfish act which causes an overflow of vulgar little earthlings, if the process be not humanised and spiritualised. If the child is conceived not in lust but in love, it is rightly born. If it is the child of your ideal, the offspring of that which is your truest life, then is your progeny your immortality, and then, and then only, have you reason for pride and joy in that which you have caused to be.

My dear, dear Herbert, my love has not failed. This you must come to understand. Love never fails. The children that might have been mine are better unborn, since I could not give them a mother whom I loved. You remind me that Dante married Gemma, daughter of Manetto Donati, and she bore him seven children. Yet, Herbert, was this wife not mentioned in the "Commedia," nor in "La Vita Nuova," nor anywhere else in his writings. Dante was a Conformist. He was not in all respects above his time; witness his theology. Convention permitted the dispassionate marriage side by side with love. He was conventional, and the infinite moment of meeting in paradise with his Lady was embittered by her "cold, lessoned smiles."

"Ah, from what agonies of heart and brain,  
What exultations trampling on despair,  
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,  
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,  
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,  
This mediaeval miracle of song!"

It was for Beatrice that this man vexed his spirit with immortal effort and raised a Titan voice which yet is heard in charmed echoes. It was for Beatrice that he descended

into the dead regions and climbed the hills of purgatory and soared towards the Rose of Paradise, — "And 'She, where is She?' instantly I cried."

Dante, our prince of lovers, might have lived better, but he loved well.

This in answer to your letter. To meet your argument I have found it best to employ something of your own method, but I cannot rid myself of the feeling that I have vulgarised the subject by saying so much about it. I fear my letter would provoke a smile from those who know love and the wonder of its simplicity through all the subtlety. "We, in loving, have no cause to speak so much!" would be their unanswerable criticism. It is easier to live than to argue about life.

The thought has suddenly assailed me that what I have said may sound derogatory to Hester. Know, then, that I do not think there is a woman in the world who is not capable of inspiring true and abiding love in the heart of some man. Besides, Hester to me looms up as a heroine. Not a hair's breadth of what I know of her that is not beautiful. My regret is that she, who could be "a vision eterne," should be doomed to receive episodically your considerate affection. She does not know your programme. She is a girl who takes your love for granted in the same way as she gives hers, without niggardliness. It is the woman who cannot be content with less than all that is slowly starved to death on a bread-and-water diet and who does not find it out until the end.

Until the carnival time when you and Hester come to love each other, if that time is to be, you two must be as separate in deed as you are in fact. Forgive me and write soon.

Yours ever,  
Dane.

## XVII — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
April 2, 19 — .

So you have met Hester's brother? Well, I have had an outing with Hester. She loves me well, I know, and I cannot but confess a thrill at the thought. On the other hand, well do I know the significance of that love, the significance and the cause. Notwithstanding that wonderful soul of hers, she is in no wise constituted differently from her millions of sisters on the planet to-day. She loves — she knows not why; she knows — only that she loves. In other words, she does not reason her emotions.

But let us reason, we men, after the manner of men. And be thou patient, Dane, and follow me down and under the phenomena of love to things sexless and loveless. And from there, as the proper point of departure, let us return and chart love, its phases and occurrences, from its first beginnings to its last manifestations.

Things sexless and loveless! Yes, and as such may be classed the drops of life known as unicellular organisms. Such a creature is a tiny cell, capable of performing in itself all the functions of life. That one pulsating morsel of matter is invested with an irritability which, as Herbert Spencer says, enables it "to adjust the inner relations with outer relations," to correspond to its environment — in short, to live. That single cell contracts and recoils from the things in its environment uncongenial to its constitution, and the things congenial it draws to itself and absorbs. It has no mouth, no stomach, no alimentary canal. It is all mouth, all stomach, all alimentary canal.

But at that low plane the functions of life are few and simple. This bit of vitalised inorganic has no sex, and because of that it cannot love. Reproduction is growth. When it grows over-large it splits in half, and where was one cell there are two. Nor can the parent cell be called mother or father: and for that matter, the parent cell cannot be determined. The original cell split into two cells; one has as much claim to parenthood as the other.

It lives dimly, to be sure, this mote of life and light; but before it is a vast evolution, Dane, on the pinnacle of which are to be found men and women, Hester Stebbins, my mother, you!

A step higher we find the cell cluster, and with it begins that differentiation which has continued to this day and which still continues. Simplicity has yielded to complexity

and a new epoch of life been inaugurated. The outer cells of the cluster are more exposed to environmental forces than are the inner cells; they cohere more tenaciously and a rudimentary skin is formed. Through the pores of this skin food is absorbed, and in these food-absorbing pores is foreshadowed the mouth. Division of labour has set in, and groups of cells specialise in the performance of functions. Thus, a cell group forms the skinny covering of the cluster, another cell group the mouth. And likewise, internally, the stomach, a sac for the reception and digestion of food, takes shape; and the juices of the body begin to circulate with greater definiteness, breaking channels in their passage and keeping those channels open. And, as the generations pass, still more groups of cells segregate themselves from the mass, and the heart, the lungs, the liver, and other internal organs are formed. The jelly-like organism develops a bony structure, muscles by which to move itself, and a nervous system —

Be not bored, Dane, and be not offended. These are our ancestors, and their history is our history. Remember that as surely as we one day swung down out of the trees and walked upright, just so surely, on a far earlier day, did we crawl up out of the sea and achieve our first adventure on land.

But to be brief. In the course of specialisation of function, as I have outlined, just as other organs arose, so arose sex-differentiation. Previous to that time there was no sex. A single organism realised all potentialities, fulfilled all functions. Male and female, the creative factors, were incoherently commingled. Such an individual was both male and female. It was complete in itself, — mark this, Dane, for here individual completeness ends.

The labour of reproduction was divided, and male and female, as separate entities, came into the world. They shared the work of reproduction between them. Neither was complete alone. Each was the complement of the other. In times and seasons each felt a vital need for the other. And in the satisfying of this vital need, of this yearning for completeness, we have the first manifestation of love. Male and female loved they one another — but dimly, Dane. We would not to-day call it love, yet it foreshadowed love as the food-absorbing pore foreshadowed the mouth.

As long and tedious as has been the development of this rudimentary love to the highly evolved love of to-day, just so long and tedious would be my sketch of that development. However, the factors may be hinted. The increasing correspondence of life with its environment brought about wider and wider generalisations upon that environment and the relations of the individual to it. There is no missing link to the chain that connects the first and lowest life to the last and the highest. There is no gap between the physical and psychical. From simple reflex action, on and up through compound reflex action, instinct, and memory, the passage is made, without break, to reason. And hand in hand with these, all acting and reacting upon one another, comes the development of the imagination and of the higher passions, feelings, and emotions. But all of this is in the books, and there is no need for me to go over the ground.

So let me sum up with an analysis of that most exquisite of poets' themes, a maiden in love. In the first place, this maiden must come of an ancestry mastered by the passion

for perpetuation. It is only through those so mastered that the line comes down. The individual perishes, you know; for it is the race that lives. In this maiden is incorporated all the experience of the race. This race experience is her heritage. Her function is to pass it on to posterity. If she is disobedient, she is unfruitful; her line ceases with her; and she is without avail among the generations to come. And, be it not forgotten, there are many obedient whose lines will pass down.

But this maiden is obedient. By her acts she will link the past to the future, bind together the two eternities. But she is incomplete, this maiden, and being immature she is unaware of her incompleteness. Nevertheless she is the creature of the law of the race, and from her infancy she prepares herself for the task she is to perform. Hers is a certain definite organism, somewhat different from all other female organisms. Consequently there is one male in all the world whose organism is most nearly the complement of hers; one male for whom she will feel the greatest, intensest, and most vital need; one male who of all males is the fittest, organically, to be the father of her children. And so, in pinafores and pigtailed, she plays with little boys and likes and dislikes according to her organic need. She comes in contact with all manner of boys, from the butcher's boy to the son of her father's friend; and likewise with men, from the gardener to her father's associates. And she is more or less attracted by those who, in greater or less degree, answer to her organic demand, or, as it were, organic ideal.

And upon creatures male she early proceeds to generalise. This kind of man she likes, that she does not like; and this kind she likes more than that kind. She does not know why she does this; nor, with the highest probability, does she know she is doing it. She simply has her likes and dislikes, that is all. She is the slave of the law, unwittingly generalising upon sex-impressions against the day when she must identify the male who most nearly completes her.

She drifts across the magic borderland to womanhood, where dreams and fancies rise and intermingle and the realities of life are lost. A dissatisfaction and a restlessness come upon her. There seems no sanity in things, and life is topsy-turvy. She is filled with vague, troubled yearnings, and the woman in her quickens and cries out for unity. It is an organic cry, old as the race, and she cannot shut out the sound of it or still the clamour in her blood.

But there is one male in all the world who is most nearly her complement, and he may be over on the other side of the world where she may not find him. So propinquity determines her fate. Of the males she is in contact with, the one who can more nearly give her the completeness she craves will be the one she loves.

All of which is well and good in its way, but let us analyze further. What is all this but the symptoms of an extreme over-excitation and nervous disorder? The equilibrium of the organism has been overthrown and there is a wild scrambling for the restoration of that equilibrium. The choice made may be good or ill, as chance and time may dictate, but the impelling excitement forces a choice. What if it be ill? What if tomorrow a male who is a far better complement should appear? The time is now. Nature is not neglectful, and well she knows the disaster of delay. She is prodigal of the

individual and is satisfied with one match out of many mismatches, just as she is satisfied that of a million cod eggs one only should develop into a full-grown cod. And so this love of the human in no wise differs from that of the sparrow which forgets preservation in procreation. Thus nature tricks her creatures and the race lives on.

For the lesser creatures the trick serves the purpose well. There is need for a compelling madness, else would self-preservation overcome procreation and there be no lesser creatures. And man is content to rest coequal with the beast in the matter of mating. Notwithstanding his intelligence, which has made him the master of matter and enabled him to enslave the great blind forces, he is unable to perpetuate his species without the aid of the impelling madness. Nay, men will not have it otherwise; and when an individual urges that his reason has placed him above the beast, and that, without the impelling madness, he can mate with greater wisdom and potency, then the poets and singers rise up and fling potsherds at him. To improve upon nature by draining a malarial swamp is permitted him; to improve upon nature's methods and breed swifter carrier-pigeons and finer horses than she has ever bred is also permitted; but to improve upon nature in the breeding of the human, that is a sacrilege which cannot be condoned! Down with him! He is a brute to question our divine Love, God-given and glorious!

Ah, Dane, remember the first dim yearning of divided life, and the soils and smirches and frenzies put upon it by the spawn of multitudinous generations. There is your love, the whole history of it. There is no intrinsic shame in the thing itself, but the shame lies in that we are not greater than it.

Herbert.

## XVIII — From the Same to the Same

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
April 4, 19 — .

There were several things in your letter which I forgot to answer. Much of beauty and wonder is there in what you have said, and unrelated facts without end. Many of those facts I endorse heartily, but it seems to me you fail to embody them in a coherent argument.

I have stated, in so many words, that there are two functions common to all life — nutrition and reproduction. Of this you have missed the significance in your rejection of my definition of love, so I must explain further. Unless these two functions be carried on, life must perish from the planet. Therefore they are the most essential concerns of life. The individual must preserve its own life and the life of its kind. It is more prone to preserve its own life than the life of its kind, less prone to sacrifice itself for its species. So natural selection has developed a passion of madness which forces the individual to make the sacrifice. In all forms of life below man the struggle for existence is keen and merciless. The least weakness in an individual is the signal for its destruction. Therefore it is counter to the welfare of the individual to do aught that will tend to weaken it. On the other hand, the law is that the individual must procreate. But procreation means a weakening and a temporary state of helplessness. Problem: How may the individual be brought to procreate? to do that which is inimical to its welfare? Answer: It must be forced by something deeper than reason, and that something is unreasoning passion. Did the individual reason on the matter, it would certainly abstain. It is because the passion is not rational that life has persisted to this day. Man, coming up from the walks of lower life, brought with him this most necessary passion. Developing imagination, he commingled the two; love was the product.

Now, because of our imagination, do not let us confuse the issue. The great task demanded of man is reproduction. He is urged by passion to perform this task. Passion, working through the imagination, produces love. Passion is the impelling factor, imagination the disturbing factor; and the disturbance of passion by imagination produces love.

Stripped of all its superfluities, what function does love serve in the scheme of life? That of reproduction. Nay, now, do not object, Dane; for you state the same thing, though less clearly, in your own definition of love. You say, "Love is the awakening of the



personality to the beauty and worth of some one being” and is a desire to merge the life with that of the beloved being. In other words, your definition tells that the passion for perpetuation is the cause of love, and perpetuation the end to be accomplished. Thus nature tricks her creatures and the race lives on.

Then you say negatively, “Love is not a disorder of mind and body, not a madness, since it arises in the eternally most valuable, since it is the culmination of high processes, and since it makes for strength and sanity of vision and happiness.” I have shown the value of passion, and the processes of which love is the culmination, and I have shown that both are unreasoning and why they are unreasoning. Do you demonstrate where I am wrong.

Then again, you dare a formula: “In the beginning love arose in the passion for perpetuation; to-day the passion for perpetuation arises in love.” It is clever, but is it true? Yes, as true as this formula I dare to pattern after yours: In the beginning man ate because he was hungry; to-day he is hungry because he eats.

There are many things more I should like to answer, but I am writing this ‘twixt breakfast and lecture hour, and time presses and students will not wait.

Herbert.

## XIX — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

London,  
3a, Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.  
April 22, 19 — .

Nature tricks her creatures and the race lives on, and I, overcivilised, decadent dreamer that I am, rejoice that the past binds us, am proud of a history so old and so significant and of an heritage so marvellous. Nature tricks her creatures and the race lives on, and I am prayerfully grateful. The difference between us is that you are not. You are suffering from what has been well called, the sadness of science. You accept the thesis of a common origin only to regret it. You discover that romance has a history, and lo! romance has vanished! You are a Werther of science, sad to the heart with a melancholy all your own and dropping inert tears on the shrine of your accumulated facts.

In this you are with your generation. Just as every age has its prevailing disease of the body so has it its characteristic spiritual ailment. To-day we are in the throes of travail. In our arms is the child of our ever-delving intellect, but another deliverance is about to be and the suffering is great. After science comes the philosophy of science. Our eyes are bathed in Revelation, but upon our ears the music of the Word has not yet fallen. Until that time when the meaning of it all shall flash out upon the world, the race will be hidebound in callousness and in faint-hearted melancholy. As yet we do not know what to do with all which we know, and we are afflicted with the pessimism of inertia and the pessimism of dyspepsia. Intellectually, we have been living too high the last hundred years or so. In this is the secret of our difference. You insist upon cheapening life for yourself because it has become evident to you that the phenomenon is common, and I, on the other hand, shout its glory because it is universal. To myself I am breathless with wonder, but to you and in my work I needs must shout it.

Here let me be clear. I take it that you are under the sway of a contemporary mood, that your position is an accidental phase of to-day's materialism. Broadly, our quarrel is that of pessimism and optimism, only your pessimism is unconscious, which makes it the more dangerous to yourself. You are too sad to know that you are not happy or to care. Does my diagnosis surprise you? Analyze the argument of your last letter. You trace the growth of the emotion of love from protoplasm to man. You follow the progress of the force which is stronger than hunger and cold and swifter and more final than death, from its potential state in the unicellular stage where life goes on by

division, up through the multifarious forms of instinctive animal mating, till you reach the love of the sexes in the human world. And the exploring leads you to the belief that nothing has been reserved for the human worth his cherishing, to the conviction that the plan of life is simple and unvaried and therefore unacceptable.

You raise the wail of Ecclesiastes, "All is vanity and a striving after wind, and there is no profit under the sun." The Preacher and Omar and Swinburne are pathetically human, and we who are also human respond to their finality, to their quizzical indifference and their stinging resentment. We also say, "Vanity of vanities," and bow our heads murmuring "Ilicet," and stretch out our hands to "turn down an empty glass," but all this in twilight moods when a dimness as of dying rests upon the soul. There are a few with whom it is always morning, and others who remember something of the radiance of the young day even in the heart of midnight. These disprove the postulates of sameness and satiety, these are not smitten by the seen fact as are you of the microscopic retina, these "see life steadily and see it whole."

We need not fear the label of an idea. When I say that your position is that of the pessimist, it is not more of an accusation than if I said it was that of the optimist. The thing to concern oneself with is the question, "which of these makes the nearer approach to the truth?" You have been asking me, "What is love worth?" And you have answered your question often enough and to your satisfaction, "In itself it is worth nothing, being but the catspaw to scheming forces." With your denial of any intrinsic beauty in the emotion, with your acceptance of it as an unfortunate incident in human affairs, comes a vague hope that the race will outgrow this force. Here is your rift in the cloud. You picture a scientific Utopia where there are no lovers and no back-harkings to the primitive passion, and you appoint yourself pioneer to the promised land of the children of biology.

Ah! I speak as if I were vexed instead of simply being sure I am in the right. I wish to help you to see that there is another reading to your facts. If love is essentially the same from protoplasm to man, it does not for this reason become worthless. By virtue of being universal it is enhanced and most divinely humanly binding. You tell me that love is involuntary, compelled by external forces as old as time and as binding as instinct, and I say that because of this, life is finally for love. What! The cavemen, and the birds, too, and the fish and the plants, forsooth! What! The inorganic, perhaps, as well as the organic, swayed by this force which is wholly physical and yet wholly psychical! And does it not fire you? You are not caught up and held by this giant fact? You find that love is not sporadic, not individual, that it does not begin with you or end with you, that it does not dissociate you, and you do not warm to the world-organic kinship, you do not hear the overword of the poets and philosophers of all times, you do not see the visions that gladdened the star-forgotten nights of saints?

The same surprise sweeps over the mind in reading Ecclesiastes. Is it a sorry scheme of things that one generation goes and another comes and the world abides forever? If the same generation peopled the earth for a million years, the dignity of life would not be increased. It is not necessary to have the assurance of eternal life as the dole for

having come to be, in order to live under the aspect of eternity. It is larger to be short-lived, to be but a wave of the sea rolling for one sunful day and starry night towards a great inclusiveness. It is a higher majesty to be inalienable and a part — a ringed ripple in the Vastness — than to lie broad and smiling in meaningless endlessness.

So it is a strange thing that men who are schooled by evolution to relate themselves to all that exists, and to seek for new kinships, should lament that there is no new thing under the sun. And whose eye would be satisfied with seeing and whose ear with hearing? Who would rather have the truth than the power to seek it? There is a way of reading Ecclesiastes and Schopenhauer with a triumphant lilt in the voice. After all, it is the modulation that carries the message of the text. When you write the history of love, I find it fair reading. When you tell me love is primal and engrossing, I hold it the more a sin to crouch away from its fires.

“Love is the assertion of the will to live as a definitely determined individual.” This is Schopenhauer’s thesis and (unnecessarily enough) he apologises for it, as if it belittled love to say that it affects man in his *essentia æterna*. The genius of the race takes the lover conscript and makes him a soldier in life’s battalions.

“The genius of the race,” a metaphysical term, but meaning what you do when you speak of the function of love. Schopenhauer is a pessimist consciously, you, unconsciously; and you have both missed the living value of your facts. “Love is ruled by race welfare,” says Schopenhauer. “It (the race welfare) alone corresponds to the profoundness with which it is felt, to the seriousness with which it appears, to the importance which it attributes even to the trifling details of its sphere and occasion.” Love concerns itself with “The composition of the next generation,” therefore you find it common as the commonplace, therefore Schopenhauer regards it as a force treacherous to happiness, since to live is to be miserable. “These lovers are the traitors who seek to perpetuate the whole want and drudgery which would otherwise speedily reach an end; this they wish to frustrate as others like them have frustrated it before.”

Because love frustrates the death of the race, it is the joy of my senses and the goal of my striving.

Says Schopenhauer: “Through love man shows that the species lies closer to him than the individual, and he lives more immediately in the former than in the latter. Why does the lover hang with complete abandon on the eyes of his chosen one, and is ready to make every sacrifice for her? Because it is his immortal part that longs after her, while it is merely his mortal part that desires everything else.” Because this is so, love is the God of my faith.

You see where our subject takes us! And all the while I care nothing for the points of argument except where they prick you from your position. One must scale the skies and swim the seas in order to reach you. Well, have I approached within your hearing?

I was sitting amongst the fennel in Barbara’s garden when your letter was brought, and I read it twice to make sure I understood. When the sun lies warm on waving fennel and a city is before you, mysterious in a veil of mist, it is easier to feel love than to think about it. For a while, it was difficult to see the bearing of the data which

you marshalled so well in defence of your denial. You went far in order to answer why you are content to marry a woman you do not love. Your methods are not the methods of the practical mind. I am glad for that. You idealise your attitude, you go far back in time, you enmesh yourself in theories and generalisations, you ride your imagination proudly, in order to reconcile yourself to something which suggests itself as more ideal than that for which the unreasoning heart hungers. You are sad, but you are not practical and you are not blasé.

Of Barbara, of myself, and of London doings, this is no time to write. Tell Hester your friend thinks of her.

Yours with great memories and greater hopes,  
Dane Kempton.

## XX — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
May 18, 19 — .

I stand aloof and laugh at myself and you. Oh, believe me, I see it very clearly myself in the heyday and cocksureness of youth, flinging at you, with much energy and little skill, my immature generalisations from science; and you with an elderly beneficence and tolerance, smiling shrewdly and affectionately upon me, secure in the knowledge that sooner or later I am sure to get through with it all and join you in your broad and placid philosophy. It is the penalty age exacts from youth. Well, I accept it.

So I am suffering from the sadness of science. I had been prone to ascribe my feelings to the passion of science. But it does not matter in the least — only, somehow, I would rather you did not misunderstand me so dreadfully. I do not raise the wail of Ecclesiastes. I am not sad, but glad. I discover romance has a history, and in history I am quicker to read the romance. I accept the thesis of a common origin, not to regret it, but to make the best of it. That is the key to my life — to make the best of it, but not drearily, with the passiveness of a slave, but passionately and with desire. Invention is an artifice man employs to overcome the roundabout. It is the short cut to satisfaction. It makes man potent, so that he can do more things in a span. I am a worker and doer. The common origin is not a despair to me; it has a value, and it strengthens my arm in the work to be done.

The play and interplay of force and matter we call “evolution.” The more man understands force and matter, and the play and interplay, the more is he enabled to direct the trend of evolution, at least in human affairs. Here is a great and weltering mass of individuals which we call society. The problem is: How may it be directed so that the sum of its happiness greatens? This is my work. I would invent, overcome the roundabout, seek the short cut. And I consider all matter, all force, all factors, so that I may invent wisely and justly. And considering all factors, I consider romance, and I consider you. I weigh your value in the scheme of things, and your necessity, and I find that you are both valuable and necessary.

But the history of progress is the history of the elimination of waste. One boy, running twenty-five machines, turns out a thousand pairs of socks a day. His granny toiled a thousand days to do the same. Waste has been eliminated, the roundabout

overcome. And so with romance. I strive not to be blinded by its beauty, but to give it exact appraisal. Oftentimes it is the roundabout, the wasteful, and must needs be eliminated. Thus chivalry and its romance vanished before the chemist and the engineer, before the man who mixed gunpowder and the man who dug ditches.

I melancholy? Sir, I have not the time — so may I model my answer after the great Agassiz. I am not a Werther of science, but rather you are a John Ruskin of these latter days. He wept at the profanation of the world, at the steam-launches violating the sanctity of the Venetian canals and the electric cars running beneath the shadow of the pyramids; and you weep at the violation of like sanctities in the spiritual world. A gondola is more beautiful, but the steam-launch takes one places, and an electric car is more comfortable than the hump of a camel. It is too bad, but waste romance, as waste energy, must be eliminated.

Enough. I shall go on with the argument. I have drawn the line between pre-nuptial love and post-nuptial love. The former, which is the real sexual love, the love of which the poets sing and which “makes the world go round,” I have called romantic love. The latter, which in actuality is sex comradeship, I call conjugal affection or friendship. To be more definite, I shall call the one “love,” the other “affection” or “friendship.” Now love is not affection or friendship, yet they are oftentimes mistaken, one for the other, for it so happens that the friendship, which is akin to conjugal affection, is in many instances pre-nuptial in its development — a token, I take it, of the higher evolution of the human, an audaciousness which dares to shake off the blind passion and evade nature’s trick as man evaded when he harnessed steam and rested his feet. It is of common occurrence that a man and woman, through long and tried friendship, reach a fine appreciation of each other and marry; and the run of such marriages is the happiest. Neither blinded nor frenzied by the unreasoned passion of love, they have weighed each other, — faults, virtues, and all, — and found a compatibility strong enough to withstand the strain of years and misfortune, and wise enough to compromise the individual clashes which must inevitably arise when soul shares never ending bed and board with soul. They have achieved before marriage what the love-impelled man and woman must achieve after marriage if they would continue to live together; that is, they have sought and found compatibility before binding themselves, instead of binding themselves first and then seeking if there be compatibility or not.

Let me apparently digress for the moment and bring all clear and straight. The emotions have no basis in reason. We smile or are sad at the manifestation of jealousy in another. We smile or are sad because of the unreasonableness of it. Likewise we smile at the antics of the lover. The absurdities he is guilty of, the capers he cuts, excite our philosophic risibility. We say he is mad as a March hare. (Have you ever wondered, Dane, why a March hare is deemed mad? The saying is a pregnant one.) However, love, as you have tacitly agreed, is unreasonable. In fact, in all the walks of animal life no rational sanction can be found for the love-acts of the individual. Each love act is a hazarding of the individual’s life; this we know, and it is only impelled to

perform such acts because of the madness of the trick, which, though it strikes at the particular life, makes for the general life.

So I think there is no discussion over the fact that this emotion of love has no basis in reason. As the old French proverb runs, "The first sigh of love is the last of wisdom." On the other hand, the individual not yet afflicted by love, or recovered from it, conducts his life in a rational manner. Every act he performs has a basis in reason — so long as it is not some other of the emotional acts. The stag, locking horns with a rival over the possession of a doe, is highly irrational; but the same stag, hiding its trail from the hounds by taking to water, is performing a highly rational act. And so with the human. We model our lives on a basis of reason — of the best reason we possess. We do not put the scullery in the drawing-room, nor do we repair our bicycles in the bedchamber. We strive not to exceed our income, and we deliberate long before investing our savings. We demand good recommendations from our cook, and take letters of introduction with us when we go abroad. We overlook the petulant manner of our friend who rowed in the losing barges at the race, and we forgive on the moment the sharp answer of the man who has sat three nights by a sick-bed. And we do all this because our acts have a basis in reason.

Comes the lover, tricked by nature, blind of passion, impelled madly toward the loved one. He is as blind to her salient imperfections as he is to her petty vices. He does not interrogate her disposition and temperament, or speculate as to how they will coördinate with his for two score years and odd. He questions nothing, desires nothing, save to possess her. And this is the paradox: By nature he is driven to contract a temporary tie, which, by social observance and demand, must endure for a lifetime. Too much stress cannot be laid upon this, Dane, for herein lies the secret of the whole difficulty.

But we go on with our lover. In the throes of desire — for desire is pain, whether it be heart hunger or belly hunger — he seeks to possess the loved one. The desire is a pain which seeks easement through possession. Love cannot in its very nature be peaceful or content. It is a restlessness, an unsatisfaction. I can grant a lasting love just as I can grant a lasting satisfaction; but the lasting love cannot be coupled with possession, for love is pain and desire, and possession is easement and fulfilment. Pursuit and possession are accompanied by states of consciousness so wide apart that they can never be united. What is true of pursuit cannot be true of possession, no more than the child, grasping the bright ball, can deem it the most wonderful thing in the world — an appraisalment which it certainly made when the ball was beyond reach.

Let us suppose the loved one is as madly impelled toward the lover. In a few days, in an hour, nay, in an instant — for there is such a thing as love at first sight — this man and woman, two unrelated individuals, who may never have seen each other before, conceive a passion, greater, intenser, than all other affections, friendships, and social relations. So great, so intense is it, that the world could crumble to star-dust so long as their souls rushed together. If necessary, they would break all ties, forsake all



friends, abandon all blood kin, run away from all moral responsibilities. There can be no discussion, Dane. We see it every day, for love is the most perfectly selfish thing in the universe.

But this is easily reconcilable with the scheme of things. The true lover is the child of nature. Natural selection has determined that exogamy produces fitter progeny than endogamy. Cross fertilisation has made stronger individuals and types, and likewise it has maintained them. On the other hand, were family affection stronger than love, there would be much intermarriage of blood relations and a consequent weakening of the breed. And in such cases it would be stamped out by the stronger-breeding exogamists. Here and there, even of old time, the wise men recognised it; and we so recognise it to-day, as witness our bars against consanguineous marriage.

But be not misled into the belief that love is finer and higher than affection and friendship, that the yielding to its blandishments is higher wisdom on the part of our lovers. Not so; they are puppets and know and think nothing about it. They come of those who yielded likewise in the past. They obey forces beyond them, greater than they, their kind, and all life, great as the great forces of the physical universe. Our lovers are children of nature, natural and uninventive. Duty and moral responsibility are less to them than passion. They will obey and procreate, though the heavens roll up as a scroll and all things come to judgment. And they are right if this is what we understand to be "the bloom, the charm, the smile of life."

Yet man is man because he chanced to develop intelligence instead of instinct; otherwise he would to this day have remained among the anthropoid apes. He has turned away from nature, become unnatural, as it were, disliked the earth upon which he found himself, and changed the face of it somewhat to his liking. His trend has been, and still is, to perform more and more acts with a rational sanction. He has developed a moral nature, made laws, and by the sheer force of his will and reason curbed his lyings and his lusts.

However, our lovers are natural and uninventive. They get married. Pursuit, with all its Tantalus delights, its sighings and its songs, is gone, never to return. And in its place is possession, which is satisfaction, familiarity, knowledge. It heralds the return of rationality, the return to duty of the weighing and measuring qualities of the mind. Our lovers discover each other to be mere man and woman after all. That ethereal substance which the man took for the body of the loved one becomes flesh and blood, prone to the common weaknesses and ills of flesh and blood. He, on the other hand, betrays little petulancies of disposition, little faults and predispositions of which she never dreamed in the pre-nuptial days, and which she now finds eminently distasteful. But at first these things are not openly unpleasant. There are no scenes. One or the other gives in on the instant, without self-betrayal, and one or the other retires to have a secret cry or to ruminate about it over a cigar — the first faint hints, I may slyly suggest, of the return of rationality. They are beginning to think.

Ah, these are little things, you say. Precisely; wherefore I lay emphasis upon them. The sum of the innumerable little things becomes a mighty thing to test the human

soul. Moreover, many a home has been broken because of disagreement as to the uses or abuses of couch cushions, and more than one divorce induced by the lingering of tobacco odours in the curtains.

If the marriage of our lovers conform to the majority of marriages, the first year of their wedded life will determine whether they are able to share bed and board through the lengthening years. For this first year — often the first months of it — marks the transition from love to conjugal affection, or witnesses a rupture which nothing less than omnipotence can ever mend. In the first year a serious readjustment must take place. Unreason, as a basis for the relation, must give way to reason; blind, ignorant, selfish little love must flutter away, so that friendship, clear-eyed and wise, may step in. There will come moments when wills clash and desires do not chime; these must be moments of sober thought and compromise, when one or the other sacrifices self on the altar of their nascent friendship. Upon this ability to compromise depends their married happiness. Returning to the rationality which they forsook during mating-time, they cannot live a joint rational existence without compromising. If they be compatible, they will gradually grow to fit, each with the other, into the common life; compromise, on certain definite points, will become automatic; and for the rest they will exhibit a tacit and reasoned recognition of the imperfections and frailties of life.

All this reason will dictate. If they be incapable of rising to compromise, sacrifice, and unselfishness, reason will dictate separation. In such cases, when they will have become rational once more, they will reason the impossibility of a continued relation and give it up. In which case the true-love disciple may contend that there was no real love in the beginning. But he is wrong. It was just as real as that of any marriage, only it failed in the post-nuptial quest after compatibility. In all marriages love — passionate, romantic love — must disappear, to be replaced by conjugal affection or by nothing. The former are the happy marriages, the latter the mistaken ones.

As I close, the saying of La Bruyère comes to me, "The love which arises suddenly takes longest to cure." This generalisation upon all the love-affairs within the scope of a single lifetime cannot but be true, and it is quite in line with the general argument. I have shown that the love (so called) which grows slowly is akin to friendship, that it is friendship, in fact, conjugal friendship. On the other hand, the more sudden a love the more intense it must be; also the less rationality can it have. And because of its intensity and unreasonableness, the longer period must elapse ere its frenzy dies out and cool, calm thought comes in.

Herbert.

P.S. — My book is out — "The Economic Man." I send it to you. I cannot imagine you will care for the thing.

## XXI — From the Same to the Same

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
May 26, 19 — .

“Pretty nineteen-year-old Louisa Naveret, because her slower-minded fiancé, Charles J. Johnson, could not understand a joke, is dying with a bullet in her brain, and he, her murderer, lies dead at the morgue. They were to have been married to-day.”

From to-day’s paper I quote the above introduction to a column murder-sensation in simple life. Simple it was, and elemental — the man loving steadily and doggedly and madly, after the manner of the male before possession; the woman fluttering, and teasing, and tantalising, after the manner of the female courting possession. They had been engaged for some time. The woman loved the man and fully intended to marry him. The engagement neared its close, and on the day before that of the wedding, the man, slow minded, loving intensely, procured the marriage licence. The woman read the document, and with the last coy flutter before surrender told him that she would not marry him.

“I meant it as a jest,” she said as she lay on a cot at the receiving hospital; but four bullets were in her body, and Charles J. Johnson, clumsy and natural lover, lay dead in an adjoining room with the fifth bullet in his brain.

In this pitiful little tragedy appear two of the most salient characteristics of love; namely, madness and selfishness. Let us analyze Charles J. Johnson’s condition. He was a lineman for a telegraph company, healthy and strong, used to open-air life and hard work. He had steady employment and good wages. Can’t you see the man, content with a good digestion, unailing body, and mild pleasures, and enjoying life with bovine placidity? But pretty Louisa Naveret entered his life. The “abysmal fecundity” was stirred and life clamoured to be created. Peacefulness and content vanished. All the forces of his existence impelled him to seize upon and possess “nineteen-year-old” Louisa Naveret. He was afflicted with a disorder of mind and body, a madness so great, a delusion so powerful, a pain and unrest so pressing, that the possession of that particular “nineteen-year-old” woman became the dearest thing in the world, dearer than life itself and more potent than the “will to live.”

I do well to call love a madness. Any departure from rationality is madness, and for a man of Charles J. Johnson’s calibre, suicide is an extremely irrational act. But he also killed Louisa Naveret, wherein he was as selfish as he was mad. Convinced that he was not to possess her, he was determined that no other man should possess her.

While on this matter of love considered as a disorder of mind and body, I recall a recent magazine article of Mr. Finck's, in which he analyzes Sappho's conception of love. "In that famous poem of Sappho," he says, "that has been so often declared a compendium of all the emotions that make up love, I have not been able to find anything but a comic catalogue of such feelings as might overwhelm a woman if she met a bear in the woods — 'deadly pallor,' 'a cold sweat,' 'a fluttering heart,' 'tongue paralyzed,' 'trembling all over,' 'a fainting fit.'"

Dante suffered similarly from the disorder of love, if you will recollect. In this connection may be cited the following passage from Diderot's "Paradox of Acting": —

"Take two lovers, both of whom have their declarations to make. Who will come out of it best? Not I, I promise you. I remember that I approached the beloved object with fear and trembling; my heart beat, my ideas grew confused, my voice failed me, I mangled all I said; I cried yes for no; I made a thousand blunders; I was illimitably inept; I was absurd from top to toe, and the more I saw it the more absurd I became. Meanwhile, under my very eyes, a gay rival, light hearted and agreeable, master of himself, pleased with himself, losing no opportunity for the finest flattery, made himself entertaining and agreeable, enjoyed himself; he implored the touch of a hand which was at once given him, he sometimes caught it without asking leave, he kissed it once and again. I, the while, alone in a corner, avoided a sight which irritated me; stifling my sighs, cracking my fingers with grasping my wrists, plunged in melancholy, covered with a cold sweat, I could neither show nor conceal my vexation."

Oh, the clamour of life to be born is a masterful thing, and so far as the individual is concerned, a most irrational thing; and so far as the world of beasts and emotional men and women is concerned, it is a most necessary thing. That life may live and continue to live, a driving force is needed that is greater than the puny will of life. And in the disorder produced by the passion for perpetuation, whether or not assisted by imagination, is found this driving force. As Ernest Haeckel, that brave old hero of Jena, explains: —

"The irresistible passion that draws Edward to the sympathetic Otilia, or Paris to Helen, and leaps all bounds of reason and morality, is the same powerful, unconscious, attractive force which impels the living spermatozoon to force an entrance into the ovum in the fertilisation of the egg of the animal or plant — the same impetuous movement which unites two atoms of hydrogen to one atom of oxygen for the formation of a molecule of water."

But with the advent of intellectual man, there is no longer need for obeying blind and irresistible compulsion. Intellectual man, changing the face of life with his inventions and artifices, performing telic actions, adjusting himself and his concerns to remote ends and ultimate compensations, will grapple with the problem of perpetuation as he has grappled with that of gravitation. As he controls and directs the great natural forces so that, instead of menacing, they are made to labour for his safety and comfort, so will he control and direct the operation of the reproductive force so that life will

not only be perpetuated but developed and made higher and finer. This is not more impossible than is the steam-engine impossible or democracy impossible.

Herbert.

## XXII — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

London,  
3a, Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.  
June 12, 19 — .

Please remember that these letters are written to you alone. I do not think that there is less love in the world than ever before. I make you representative of a class, which, in turn, is characteristic of the modern scientific type, but I do not make you representative of all that to-day's world has lived up to and lived down. So I do not join my Ruskin in lamenting the past. To be sure, you are contemporary and you are parvenu. What then? You are few, nevertheless, and like the parvenu rich, you must pass into something quite unlike yourself. It is the law of growth. I ask you to account for yourself as an individual. The thing is fiercely personal. But you choose the roundabout method of answering me. For a view of what in your eyes is pertinent to this matter, you stretch a canvas wide as the world. You are resolved that your course should dramatise the whole play and interplay of force and matter. It is ideally ambitious of you and I am glad. It puts you in the ranks with the students of the ideal tendencies. It shows that you are not always impatient for short cuts, and that you begin to be of those who harness "horses of the sun to plough in earth's rough furrows."

Your letter sounds conclusive. Romance is waste, love is unreasoning; compatibility alone is worth while. You think this, and are ready to encrust yourself with what is conventional and practical. Ah, no, it is not even decently conventional! The formal world pretends, at least, to love. It also reaches for the fires that thrill and thaw, whereas you stand before a cold hearth and think the chill well and welcome, since you understand its cause. You have grasped part of a truth, and though my mind complete your arc into the perfection of a circle, I cannot place it about your head as a halo. My confusion comes from thinking of you more than of my creed. A pregnant factor in our debate is the debater. The Hafiz of the Hafiz maxims, the philosopher of your philosophy happens to interest me. You have been building yourself up before my eyes, and for watching I cannot speak.

With what does romance interfere? If it implied a waste of vital force, a giving up, a postponement of life, it were a roundabout path to development and happiness. But we live most when we are most under its sway, and it is for such self-promised sparks that we live at all. Romance quickens and controls as does nothing else, and because of this it is not only a means but an end in itself. It is stirred-up life. We live most

when we love most. The love of romance and the romance of love is the only coin for which the heart-hurt sell their death. A trick? Perhaps. The love of life is a trick to save the races from self-murder. Nature makes legitimate her tricks. Let the Genius of the Race lure us with passion and dreaming! We are not the losers by it. And if the dream fades and we grow gray despite what has been lived, then it is something to remember that soul and sense have leapt and pulsed. I am thankful that romance has an aftermath, and that old men and women can prattle about days that were robust. I am thankful that the soldiers of life are at the end given a furlough in which to fondle the arms they wielded with clumsiness and with spirit, and in which to pass themselves in review before their pension expires and their days are over. Youth has the romance of loving, and age the romance of remembering.

Lovers are not always compatible, you say, and, before all, you insist upon good partnership. How will you insure yourself against unfitness? Surely not by a registering and weighing of qualities, not by bargaining and speculating. We do not choose our wives as we do our saddle-horses; we do not plan our marriages as we plan our houses. It may sound paradoxical, but there is a higher compatibility than that of quality and degree. It is not whether people can live together, but whether they should live together. "It is an awkward thing to play with souls," — you override the fastidiousness of the soul in marrying your companion. Unless you are an automaton, you cannot rest happy in the fact that you and she do not disagree. For comfort's sake you would have a negative dimension to your cosmos, forgetting that your longings and your needs and, it may be, your dreams, are positive. If sex-comradeship and affection were not as accidental and as dependent on mood as love itself, your position would have much in its favour. You could then arrange for compatibility in marriage.

You speak of the methods in economics that conserve energy and capital, such as the employ of the machine-guiding boy, which saves the labour power of a hundred men, and you hold that in the realm of personal life like methods may obtain with value and dignity. I can see how natural it has become for you to take this viewpoint. One can be a zealot in matters frigid. The law behind the fact has you in its coil, and your passion goes to ice. You burn for that cold thing, compatibility. You, too, are in the market-place bound to a stake — it is not for such as you to escape the fire. If you look to compatibility and want it intensely, as others want love, then you suffer, and from your standpoint (not mine) you raise a vain cry; for compatibility, like everything else, is illusory. The illusions of love are a strength, and the ways of love are divine; through them we come to that feeling of completion which is compatibility and which is as ineffable as the white-lipped promise of waves heard by those who have also listened to weeping. Love is not responsible for institutionalism. There would be no fewer marriages if people married for convenience, nor would the law make such unions less binding. It is not the fault of love that the great social paradox exists. In the precipitancy of feeling, you say, the lover fastens upon an unsuitable mate, and, with possession, love dies. Here I attack your facts. If an awakening comes, it is not for either of these reasons. Love is not essentially rational, but then it is love. There

is some consistency in affairs natural, and the esoteric draught that enchanted at one time cannot poison at another.

Love is not essentially rational, and it will not of a sudden become so at the possession of the loved one. People who marry from convenience may wake to find their union most inconvenient. "There are more things in heaven and earth," and there are more intricacies of feeling and more sloughs and depths, than are dreamed of in your philosophy. A definite understanding as to sofa cushions and tobacco smoke does not always insure unwearied forbearance and devotion. With love, on the other hand, disappointment is very much less likely to spring up, for the reason that it is free from calculation. Love is a sympathy. It takes hold, it grows upon the soul and the senses, and it does not flee before argument and explanation.

Still less can I admit that possession kills love. Do we give up living because the world is based on Will and Idea? Yet to will is to want, Schopenhauer tells us, and to want is to be in pain. Do we know ourselves in pain every minute of our lives? Hardly. This applies. You hold that, with the fulfilled hope and the appeased hunger, indifference takes the place of desire. It reads so in logic, but not in life. If what is in our possession be good, we prize it more highly for its being within reach. The good in our keeping does not sate; it pains with divine hungers. We do not tire of what we have; we rise to it. We do not know the sweetness of being steadfast until we are so impelled by the love with which we have grown great. The lover may well say: "She was not my ideal; before I knew her I was not great enough to think her. She taught me."

Besides, an acquaintance with your wife's faults does not kill your love. You cannot turn from your brother or your friend if he commit even a lurid act; you cannot turn from a stranger; much less can you turn from your beloved. Herbert, when men set themselves to judge, they are invariably ridiculous and an offence to high heaven. Believe me, it is artificial. The true judge cares not for the fact of the deed, but for its motive. And the lover knows the motive. He has the key to the life. He knows his beloved, not as she is, but "as she was born to be." His lips press and his arms enfold not her so much as the ideal of her, and unless she unmake herself, he cannot unlove her. "To judge a man by the fruit of his actions," says Professor Edward Howard Griggs, "it is necessary to know all of the fruit, which is impossible. You can only know what he eternally must be if you catch the aspect of his soul and grow to understand his aspirations and his loves." To idealise, therefore, is not to be blind, but to be far-seeing.

There is another way of looking on this question of the paradox. Granted that it is caused by romantic love, romantic love is still exclusively the best thing in the world. You cannot pay too dearly for the good of life. I know that the misery of being in the intimacy of wedlock with one who is not loved is unutterable. It is to become degraded and unrecognisable, it is to wear the brand of liar before God! The man whose outer life belies the inner is an enforced suicide. There is something of majesty on "laying one's self down with a will," and there is something of strength in cloistering the body for the spirit's health's sake, but to die when all within is warm and clamorous for life



is terrible. Such a death they die who are held together, not by the bonds of the spirit, but by those of convention. They who would go from each other and dare not, die the ignominious death of fear. The suicide is contemptible, besides being pitiable, when he is hounded out of life despite himself, when he is a little embezzler of a clerk who rushes from the music hall to the Thames and thinks of the unfinished glass with his last breath. No, I do not underestimate the tragedy of the paradox. Yet I say that if love were accountable for it (which it is not), it would still be folly to forswear love. Do you ask why? Because its dangers are the dangers common to all life, and we are so made that we cannot be frightened away from our portion of experience. We are as loth to give up our nights as our days. The winters as the summers, all the seasons and all the climes, the fears as the hopes, all the travail of deepest, fullest living, we claim as our own forever. We guard jealously our heritage of feeling. Would you for all the world sleep rather than wake, forget rather than remember? Then cease the requiem of your speech about the dangers of disillusion!

Madness and selfishness were the cause of Louisa Naveret's death, and the man who was mad and selfish was her lover. The poor man had not the strength to renounce when he thought he found himself face to face with the necessity of renouncing. But all lovers are not too weak to cope with love. John Ruskin, if you remember, loved his wife, and he shot neither himself, nor her, nor Millais. Charles J. Johnson is not a Ruskin, and Ruskin's love was not a madness.

And, Herbert, to me there is nothing comic in a stress of feeling. Let the lover pale and flutter and faint; in the presence of his deity it is an acceptable form of worship. The very self-possessed lover is more preposterous!

Your book has not yet reached me. To-morrow I shall write again, providing I remember how to write a natural letter.

Yours,  
Dane Kempton.

## XXIII — From the Same to the Same

London.

June 20, 19 — .

There are impersonal hours when the things of the day drop below consciousness and the spirit grows devotional and wends a pilgrimage to larger spheres, there to sit apart. Such a respite was mine to-day. There had been a call to rouse and put forth work, and I wrought with all the puniness of my might (woe is me!), and earned my post at the window that looks out upon the large things. The best of nights and days of toil is that there comes a twilight in which fatigued eyes see clear. I said it did not matter how you do about your marriage. Time may right you in a way I cannot know. I said it did not matter if you are not righted in this, there being so much that never rights itself. Both hope and despair were followed by a calm of neutrality. The inquiry waited no solution. The stress no longer touched me, and my twilight became luminous. I saw things as from a height and forms dropped out of my range, when Barbara came tugging at me, and my pale while of abstraction was at an end.

She wanted to know what troubled me. She made her way to me, hurried but resolved, and stated her demand. "You catechised me yesterday; to-night you shall answer."

She had come to defend herself. My talk having of late taken on the sameness of that of the man of one idea, Barbara was aroused. I was gauging her because she distressed me, was her thought. (I had been trying to find whether it is possible to live differently from her and live happily and well.) "You think I am not close enough to Earl, because I mourn for my little one, perhaps. You think me not sufficiently happy to be wifely." Could I suppose aught else from such an utterance but that there was an estrangement and hidden pain? How, unless there were sorrow, could the woman see herself sorrowed for? My mind leapt to possibilities. Little Barbara on the rack was more than I could bear. I groped for her hands. It was a fault in her to be so much on her guard. She had no sorrow to confess, and spoke — only to ward off what was not directed toward her.

"The tenour of your talk led me on to believe — " she stammered with hot cheeks. It is a standing offence of hers to imagine herself accused, and she admits it is a weakness born of lack of poise. "But I took all for granted, I thought you fortunate beyond any other woman," I protested. At this the radiance broke forth. I forgave the chill that

her first words on entering the room struck to my heart, and she forgot what she had imagined.

There is nothing more important than the play and interplay of feeling. Were Barbara “unwifely,” I could not blame her, but neither could I have at hand my proof of dear miracles. My proof remained to me, for there she stood, her face lifted toward mine, her mouth tremulous, her grey eyes swimming. The mate woman was stirred. Barbara is twenty-six and has been married seven years, and she still vibrates with the old wonder to find herself loving and beloved.

I meant to tell you of what we spoke later, in the hope that I could show you a little better what I hold dear and why. But my hand grows nerveless. The twilight of abstraction has set in. A little while ago this hand was quick to rest on Barbara’s as I called her my heroine. She is that, not alone because she is pure and good and strong, but because she can accept the test of her instincts. It takes both faith and strength to obey oneself. “When shows break up, what but one’s Self remains?” asks Whitman. The shows are but shows for Barbara. Will I look into your eyes on the morrow and find them, like hers, clear? Grant that it be!

Dane.

## XXIV — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
July 1, 19 — .

Somewhere in Ward you may read, "It must constantly be borne in mind that all progress consists in the arbitrary alteration, by human efforts and devices, of the normal course of nature, so that civilisation is wholly an artificial product." Why, Dane, this is large enough to base a sociology upon. And I must ask you first, is it true? Second, do you understand, do you appreciate, the tremendous significance of it? And third, how can you bring your philosophy of love in accord with it?

Romantic love is certainly not natural. It is an artifice, blunderingly and unwittingly introduced by man into the natural order. Is this audacious? Let us see. In a state of nature the love which obtains is merely the passion for perpetuation devoid of all imagination. The male possesses the prehensile organs and the superior strength. Beyond the ardour of pursuit the female has no charms for him. But he is driven irresistibly to pursuit. And by virtue of his prehensile organs and superior strength he ravishes the females of his species and goes his way. But life creeps slowly upward, increasing in complexity and necessarily in intelligence. When some forgotten inventor of the older world smote his rival or enemy with a branch of wood and found that it was good and thereafter made a practice of smiting rivals and enemies with branches of wood, then, and on that day, artificiality may be said to have begun. Then, and on that day, was begun a revolution destined to change the history of life. Then, and on that day, was laid the cornerstone of that most tremendous of artifices, CIVILISATION!

Trace it up. Our ape-like and arboreal ancestors entered upon the first of many short cuts. To crack a marrow-bone with a rock was the act which fathered the tool, and between the cracking of a marrow-bone and the riding down town in an automobile lies only a difference of degree. The one is crudely artificial, the other consummately artificial. That is all. There have been improvements. The first inventors grasped that truthful paradox, "the longest way round is the shortest way home," and forsook the direct pursuit of happiness for the indirect pursuit of happiness. If the happiness of a savage depended upon his crossing an extensive body of water, he did not directly proceed to swim it, but turned his back upon it, selected a tree from the forest, shaped

it with his rude tools and hollowed it out with fire, then launched it in the water and paddled toward where his happiness lay.

Now concerning love. In the state of nature it is a brutal passion, nothing more. There is no romance attached. But life creeps upward, and the gregarious human forms social groups the like of which never existed before. Consider the family group, for instance. Such a group becomes in itself an entity. By means of the group man is better enabled to pursue happiness. But to maintain the group it must be regulated; so man formulates rules, codes, dim ethical laws for the conduct of the group members. Sexual ties are made less promiscuous and more orderly. A greater privacy is observed. And out of order and privacy spring respect and sacredness.

But life creeps upward, and the family group itself becomes but a unit of greater and greater groups. And rules and codes change in accordance, until the marriage tie becomes possessed of a history and takes to itself traditions. This history and these traditions form a great fund, to which changing conditions and growing imagination constantly add. And the traditions, more especially, bear heavily upon the individual, overmastering his natural expression of the love instinct and forcing him to an artificial expression of that love instinct. He loves, not as his savage forebears loved, but as his group loves. And the love method of his group is determined by its love traditions. Does the individual compare his beloved's eyes to the stars — it is a trick of old time which has come down to him. Does he serenade under her window or compose an ode to her beauty or virtue — his father did it before him. In his lover's voice throb the voices of myriads of lovers all dead and dust. The singers of a thousand songs are the ghostly chorus to the song of love he sings. His ideas, his very feelings are not his, but the ideas and feelings of countless lovers who lived and loved and whose lives and loves are remembered. Their mistaken facts and foolish precepts are his, and likewise their imaginative absurdities and sentimental philanderings. Without an erotic literature, a history of great loves and lovers, a garland of love songs and ballads, a sheaf of spoken love tales and adventures — without all this, which is the property of his group, he could not possibly love in the way he does.

To illustrate: Isolate a boy babe and a girl babe of cultured breed upon a desert isle. Let them feed and grow strong on shell-fish and fruit; but let them see none other of their species; hear no speech of mouth, nor acquire knowledge in any way of their kind and the things their kind has done. Well, and what then? They will grow to man and woman and mate as the beasts mate, without romance and without imagination. Does the woman oppose her will to that of the man — he will beat her. Does he become over-violent in the manifestation of his regard, she will flee away, if she can, to secret hiding-places. He will not compare her eyes to the stars; nor will she dream that he is Apollo; nor will the pair moon in the twilight over the love of Hero and Leander. And the many monogamic generations out of which he has descended would fail to prevent polygamy did another woman chance to strand on that particular isle.

It is the common practice of the man of the London slum to kick his wife to death when she has offended him. And the man of the London slum is a very natural beast

who expresses himself in a very natural manner. He has never heard of Hero and Leander, and the comparison of the missus' eyes to the stars would to him be arrant bosh. The gentle, tender, considerate male is an artificial product. And so is the romantic lover, who is fashioned by the love traditions which come down to him and by the erotic literature to which he has access.

And now to the point. Romantic love being an artificial product, you cannot base its retention upon the claim that it is natural. Your only claim can be that it is the best possible artifice for the perpetuation of life, or that it is the only perfect, all-sufficient, and all-satisfying artifice that man can devise. On the one hand, for the perpetuation of life, man demonstrates the inefficiency of romantic love by his achievements in the domestic selection of animals. And on the other hand, the very irrationality of romantic love will tend to its gradual elimination as the human grows wiser and wiser. Also, because it is such a crude artifice, it forces far too many to contract the permanent marriage tie without possessing compatibility. During the time romantic love runs its course in an individual, that individual is in a diseased, abnormal, irrational condition. Mental or spiritual health, which is rationality, makes for progress, and the future demands greater and greater mental or spiritual health, greater and greater rationality. The brain must dominate and direct both the individual and society in the time to come, not the belly and the heart. Granted that the function romantic love has served has been necessary; that is no reason to conclude that it must always be necessary, that it is eternally necessary. There is such a thing as rudimentary organs which served functions long since fallen in disuse and now unremembered.

The world has changed, Dane. Sense delights are no longer the sole end of existence. The brain is triumphing over the belly and the heart. The intellectual joy of living is finer and higher than the mere sexual joy of living. Darwin, at the conclusion of his "Origin of Species," experienced a nobler and more exquisite pleasure than did ever Solomon with his thousand concubines and wives. And while our sense delights themselves have become refined, their very refinement has been due to the increasing dominion over them of the intellect. Our canons of art are not founded on the heart. No emotion elaborated the laws of composition. We cannot experience a sense of delight in any art object unless it satisfies our intellectual discrimination. "He is a natural singer," we say of the poet who works unscientifically; "but he is lame, his numbers halt, and he has no knowledge of technique."

The intellect, not the heart, made man, and is continuing to make him — ah, slowly, Dane, for life creeps slowly upward. The "Advanced Margin" is a favourite shibboleth of yours. And I take it that the Advanced Margin is that portion of our race which is more dominated by intellect than the race proper. And I, as a member of that group, propose to order my affairs in a rational manner. My reason tells me that the mere passion of begetting and the paltry romance of pursuit are not the greatest and most exquisite delights of living. Intellectual delight is my bribe for living, and though the bargain be a hard one, I shall endeavour to exact the last shekel which is my due.

Wherefore I marry Hester Stebbins. I am not impelled by the archaic sex madness of the beast, nor by the obsolescent romance madness of later-day man. I contract a tie which my reason tells me is based upon health and sanity and compatibility. My intellect shall delight in that tie. My life shall be free and broad and great, and I will not be the slave to the sense delights which chained my ancient ancestry. I reject the heritage. I break the entail. And who are you to say I am unwise?

Herbert Wace.

## XXV — From the Same to the Same

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
July 5, 19 — .

I had not intended to answer your letter critically, but, on re-reading, find I am forced to speak if for no other reason than your epithet “parvenu.” The word has no reproach. It was ever thus that the old and perishing recognised the vigorous and new. Parvenu, upstart — the term is replete with significance and health. I doubt not Elijah himself was dubbed parvenu when he fluttered with his golden harp into that bright-browed throng, pride-swollen for that they had fought with Michael when Lucifer was hurled into hell.

“We do not choose our wives as we buy our saddle-horses; we do not plan our marriages as we do the building of our houses,” — so you say, and it is said excellently. No better indictment of romantic love do I ask. And oh, how many good men and women have I heard bitterly arraign society in that in the begetting of children it does not exercise the judgment which it exercises in breeding its horses and its dogs! Marriage is something more than the mere pulsating to romance, the thrilling to vague-sweet strains, the singing idly in empty days, the sating of self with pleasure — what of the children?

“Never mind the children,” says selfish little Love. “It has been our wont never to give any thought to the children; they were incidental. Always have we sought our own pleasure; let us continue to seek our own pleasure.” So Society continues to breed its horses and dogs with judgment and forethought and to trust to luck for its children.

But it won’t do, Dane. Life, in a sense, is living and surviving. And all that makes for living and surviving is good. He who follows the fact cannot go astray, while he who has no reverence for the fact wanders afar. Chivalry went mad over an idea. It idealised, if you please. It made of love a fine art, and countless knights-errant devoted themselves to the service of the little god. It sentimentalised over ladies’ gloves and forgot to make for living and surviving. And while chivalry committed suicide over its ladies’ gloves, the stout, wooden-headed burghers, with an eye to the facts of life, dickered and bickered in trade. And on the wreck and ruin of chivalry they flaunted their parvenu insolence. God, how they triumphed! The children and cobblers and shop-keepers buying with the yellow gold the “thousand years old names!” buying with their yellow gold the proud flesh and blood of their lords to breed with them and theirs!



patronising the arts, speaking a kind word to science, and patting God on the back! But they triumphed, that is the point. They revered the fact and made for living and surviving.

Love is life, you say, and you seem to hold it the achievement of existence. But I cannot say that life is love. Life? It is a toy, i' faith, given to us, we know not why, to play with as we chance to please. Some elect to dream, some to love, and some to fight. Some choose immediate happiness, and some ultimate happiness. One stakes the Here and Now upon the Hereafter; another takes the Here and Now and lets the Hereafter go. But each grasps the toy and does with it according to his fancy And while none may know the end of life, all know that life is the end of love. Love, poor little, crude little, love, is the means to life — and so we complete the circle. Life? It is a toy, i' faith, given us, we know not why, to play with as we chance to please.

But this we know, that love is the means to life, and it is subject to inevitable improvement. By our intellect will we improve upon it. Life abundant! finer life! higher life! fuller life! When we scientifically breed our race-horses and our draught-horses, we make for life abundant. And when we come scientifically to breed the human, we shall make for life abundant, for humanity abundant.

You say an acquaintance with the petty vices of one's wife does not kill one's love. Oh yes, it does, and out of the ashes of that love rises affection, comradeship, in kind somewhat similar to the affection and comradeship which I have for my brother. I do not love my brother, and it is because I do not love him, and because I do have affection and comradeship for him, that I do not turn away when he commits even a lurid act. Love, you will remember, takes its rise in the emotions, and is unstable and wanton and capricious. But affection takes its rise in the intellect, is based upon judgment of the brain. Love is unyielding tyranny; affection is compromise. Love never compromises, no more than does the mad little mating sparrow compromise.

My brother? — I played with him as a boy. His weaknesses and faults incensed and hurt me, as mine incensed and hurt him. Many were our quarrels. But he had also good qualities which pleased me, and at times performed gracious acts and even sacrifices. And I likewise. And with my brain I weighed his weaknesses and faults against his gracious acts and sacrifices, and I achieved a judgment upon him. The ethics of the family group also contributed to this judgment. The duties of kinship and the responsibilities of blood ties were impressed upon me. We grew up at our mother's knee, and she and our father became factors in determining what my conduct should be. They, too, taught me that my brother was my brother, and that in so far as he was my brother, my relations with him must be different from my relations with those who were not my brothers. And all went to crystallise an intellectual judgment, or a set of criteria, as it were, to guide all sane, unemotional acts and even to control and repress any emotional acts. These criteria, I say, became crystallised, became automatic in my thought processes.

And now, in manhood, my brother commits a lurid act, an act repulsive to me, one capable of arousing emotions of anger, of bitterness, of hatred. I experience an

emotional impulse to pour my wrath upon him, to be bitter toward him, to hate him. Then I experience an intellectual impulse. Whatever way I may act, I must first settle with my crystallised criteria. The personal bonds of my boyhood and manhood press upon me — the gracious acts and sacrifices and compromises, our father and our mother, the duties of kinship and the responsibilities of blood. Thus two counter-impulses strive with me. I desire to do two counter things. Heart and head the fight is waged, and heart or head I shall act according to which is the stronger impulse. And if my affection be stronger, I shall not turn away, but clasp my brother in my arms.

I fear I have not made myself clear. It is difficult to write hurriedly of things psychological, when the extreme demand is made upon intellect and vocabulary; but at least you may roughly catch my drift. What I have striven to say is, that I forgive my brother, not because I love him, but because of the affection I bear him; also that this affection is the product of reason, is the sum of the judgments I have achieved.

Herbert.

## XXVI — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

London,  
3a, Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.  
July 21, 19 — .

"Progress is an arbitrary alteration, by human efforts and devices, of the normal course of nature, so that civilisation is wholly an artificial product." You ask me to consider this refracted bit of sociology and by its light to cast out my exalted notion of love. As if you have proven that love is incompatible with civilisation! We make over life with each successive step, but we do not give over living. In developing new forms and in establishing more and more subtle social relations we are only building upon what we find ready to hand. The paradox of creature and creator does not exist. When your sociologist speaks of arbitrary alterations, he has reference to politics and governments and criteria, to the material and ideal forces which a progressive society may wield for itself. He cannot include under progress an alteration of those needs of existence which make up the quality of existence. Speak of a community which equally distributes the products of labour and I will grant that there has been an arbitrary alteration, the normal course of nature being that the stronger, openly, and even with the common assent, takes to the repletion of his desire from the weaker. But speak of a condition so progressive that it subverts the need, so that where in the one case hunger was equitably gratified, in the other, hunger was done away with, and I will say that you are giving an Arabian Nights' entertainment.

Love is of a piece with life, like hunger, like joy, like death. Your progress cannot leave it behind; your civilisation must become the exponent of it.

Your last letter is formal and elaborate, and — equivocal. In it you remind me, menacingly, of the possibilities of progress, you posit that love is at best artificial, and you apotheosise the brain. As an emancipated rationality, you say you cut yourself loose from the convention of feeling. Progress cannot affect the need and the power to love. This I have already stated. "How is it under our control to love or not to love?" Life is elaborate or it is simple (it depends upon the point of view), and you may call love the paraphernalia of its wedding-feast or you may call it more — the Blood and Body of all that quickens, a Transubstantiation which all accept, reverently or irreverently, as the case may be.

I can more readily conceive the existence of a central committee elected for the purpose of regulating the marriages of a community, than of a community satisfied

with such a committee. There is no logic in social events. The world persists in not taking the next step, and what to the social scout looked a dusty bypath may prove to be the highway of progress for the hoboing millions. Side issues are constantly cropping up to knock out the main issues of the stump orator; so let us be humble. For this reason I refuse to discuss possibilities in infinity. You and I cannot have become products of an environment which is not in existence. It is safe to suppose that our needs are like those of the race and that in us nothing is vestigial that is active in others. You cannot have become too rational to love. The device has not yet been formed.

You think I should take your word for it? But why? Have you never found yourself in the wrong, never disobeyed your best promptings never meant to take the good and grasped the bad? Is it not possible that you are not yet awake, or, God pity you, that you are hidebound in the dogmatism of your bit of thinking.

It is for the second point of your letter that I called you equivocal. Earlier in our discussion, I remember, you laid stress on the fact that love is an instinct common to all forms of life; now you go to great lengths in order to show that it is artificial.

How do you differentiate between the artificial and nature? Surely a development is not artificial because it is recent! Surely man is as integral to life as his progenitors! When we come to civilisation, we are face to face with the largest and subtlest thing in life, and the civilisation of human society is not artificial. It is the fulfilment of the nature of man, the promise made good, the career established, the influence sent out. A universe of mind-stuff and a civilising force constantly causing change, for change is growth, constantly compelling expression of that change — to conceive it is to conceive infinitude. And the purpose? Development, always development. To that end the individual perishes, to that end the race is conserved, to that end the peril and the sacrifice, and the agony of triumph in the overcharged heart at its last bound. And what is this refining of the type, this goal for which we all make with such tragic directness, but the gaining in the power to love? We begin with love to end with greater love, and that is progress. To write the epic of civilisation is a task for some giant artist who shall combine in himself Homer and Shakespeare, and the work will be a love story.

We do not throw away the grain and keep the chaff, nor do we transmit the “absurdities” and “philanderings” alone. If in the lover’s voice throb the voices of myriads of lovers, it is because he is stirred even as they. If a ballad wakes a response in him, it is because its motif has been singing itself of its own accord in his heart, and its rhythm was the dream nightingale to which he bade Her hearken. Behind the tradition lies the fact. The expression may be ephemeral, the song flat, the motto conventional, but the feeling which prompted it is true. Else it could not have survived. And it has more than survived. It has grown with growth. For centuries it lodged in the nature of man, lulled in acquiescence, then, when the sense of recognition awoke, back in those wondrous young days, it awakened to pale life, and now the feeling is man’s whole support, giving him courage to work and purpose to live.

But the half brute of the London slums kicks his wife when she offends him and knows nothing of love. Well for the honour of love that it is so! The half brute of the London slums had not food enough when a child, and malnutrition is deadly. Later, he stole and lied in order to eat, and he was bullied and kicked for it out of human shape. The trick was passed on to him. The unfortunate of the London slums will push us all from heaven's gate, because we do not do battle with the conditions that make him. It is not such as he that should lead you to scorn love, for he is a mistake and a crime.

In your example of the isolated boy babe and girl babe we meet with a different condition. The individual repeats the history of the race, and as these have been left out by the civilising forces, they revert to past racial states. For these it is natural to live stolidly — is it therefore natural for us? The point I make is that our refinement, crying in us with great voice, is as much a part of us as are the simple few hungers of the racial infant. We are not the less natural for being subtle. And can it not be that the face of romance reveals itself even to savage eyes? According to the need is the power, and the early man needs must hope and desire; he is curbed by waiting and taught by loss in the hunting, he is hungry, and he dreams that he is feasting. This dream is his romance — a red flicker in the dawn, then still the gray. To suppose this is not to be unscientific, for what is true of us must have had a beginning, and feeling, as well as being, cannot have been spontaneously generated.

There is an absolute gravitation to justice in nature. This was the creed preached by Huxley to Kingsley a week after his boy's death. Grief had turned the mind upon itself, and in the upheaval he formulated a philosophy of faith and joy!

Our reward is meted out according to our obedience to all of the law, spiritual and physical. Nature keeps a ledger paying glad life's arrears each minute of time. And the creed rises to my lips when I hear you cry shame upon the delight of love. It must be good, this thing which is so fraught with joy! You brand it sense delight, but all delight is of the senses, and Darwin at the conclusion of "The Descent of Man," if he was not overtaken by a feeling of incompleteness in the work and a consuming fever for the further task, was glad in a human way, with the senses and through the emotions. Darwin's supreme moment may have come at quite a different time. What can we know of the moments of repletion that fall into another's life? With Huxley we may only know that our hearts bound high when we strike a chord of harmony and prove ourselves obedient to "all of the law," and our hearts bound high when we love. It is nature's way of showing her approval. Oh, the strength of love and the miracles of its compensations! The sense of becoming that it gives, even in its defeats, the gladness that ripples in its sob-strangled throat!

The day for asceticism is gone, or shall we say the night? We are not afraid of sense delights. We are intent upon living on all sides of our natures, roundly and naturally. You have a fine gospel of work and I congratulate you upon it, but you make no mention of the purpose of it all. It must not be work for work's sake. "When I heard the learned astronomer — " says Whitman. Do you remember? He caught in one hour the whole majesty, caught to himself the wonder that was unseen by the watching astronomers.

Somehow you feel the learned ones had made a mistake in calculating so long that they had no time to see with personal eyes the glory of the stars, and that Whitman had been philosopher and had gained where they failed. The inspiration of the poet, of the painter, of the economist, and biologist, is in the revelation which they receive of what to do and why to do. For this reason philosophy, which treats of the life and works of man, is in the highest sense sociological. The generalisations of philosophy go to improve our methods so that we may have greater proneness for sense of delight and greater possibility for sense delight. Why, what else is there? You are a poet, and you give an unrestorable day, when the sun is shining and the hills lie purple in the distance, to writing a sonnet. If you do so merely to employ yourself, it must be that the wolf of despair is at your being's door. You have come to the end, and the sun and the hills do not matter. You and they have parted company. But if you write, impelled by the wish that others should read and recognise, read and remember, and grow to know and feel better, and perhaps to love the sun and hills better, then is yours a work of love, and it will be made good to you, so that for the day which you have not seen, your night shall be instinct with light. And if your labours are more especially in the service of art, then, also, with each approach toward expression, you are warmed through with the delight of achievement.

Is my meaning quite dashed away by this torrent of speech? It is simply this: Before we think we feel, and the end of thinking is feeling. The century of Voltaire and Dr. Johnson held that man is rational, the century of James, Ribot, Lange, and Wundt is thrilled to the heart with the doctrine that first, last, and always man is emotional. To speak loosely, the dimensions of the human cosmos are feeling, emotion, and sensation.

Build your fine structures. We like to see the foundations laid well and the thick walls go up. Keep to your wizard inventions. We like to live in a magic world. And ah, the indomitable machines with their austere promise of free days for weary hands, and ah, the locomotives and the ships steaming their ways toward intercourse, toward comity, toward fellowship! We like the intricacy and the vastness of the world in which we live. But "an unconsidered life is not fit to be lived by any man," says Aristotle. We must consider the phenomenon, civilisation, searching down for the nucleus of its worth. We will find that the stone structure without hope were a pitiable thing, that the making of compacts and the banking of capital, without hope, were pitiable. This hope that is the life germane, the immortal flash of mortality, the most keenly human point in all humanity, is the hope for greater and greater social happiness. Our world is an ever unfinished house which we are employed in building. If we are imbued with the spirit of the architect and not of the hod-carrier, we will hope sweetly for the work. The house beautiful will begin to mean our life, and each night we will consult our drawings, looking to it that on the house built of our days the sun shall wester, and that within shall be intimacy, and laughter, great speech and close love, looking to it that the home be such as to better to-day's tenant so that he be more loving and lovable than the one of yesterday.

We are wrong, perhaps. Long ago we were no less than now. When we reached a hand in the darkness and grasped that of our fellow, the love and the strongly frail human abandon were no less. We have not grown in heart's munificence, perhaps. It is one of the illusions only. But the hope is ours. For what do you hope?

Dane.

## XXVII — From the Same to the Same

London.

July 22, 19 — .

Your birthday, Herbert, and for greeting I state that I walk your length with you. A truce to quarrelling! It is now a year since you informed me you were going to be married, and since then the gods have thundered their laughter at the sight of two muttering men who sat themselves on the axes of earth to dangle their legs into orbit vastness. Chronic somnambulists that they are, they took their monopolist way thither in their sleep.

I cannot tell you how full of vagary the correspondence we have fallen into seems to me. I deliberately attempted to write you into passion and for months you deliberately continued to convict yourself out of your own mouth, and we did not see that it was tragic and comic and preposterous. Could we personify this our dealing, we would do well to call it a kind of Caliban. And the tentacles we threw out, clawing at everything, stealing for prop to our little theory all of man and God! It is the conceit of us that I find utterly hopeless of grace. So I drop my rôle of omniscience. I take my form off the hub, believing the system will maintain its gravity though I go my private way, and I promise to let you alone. Forgive me, and God bless you. Ah, yes, and many happy returns of the day. All my heart in the blessing and the wish.

I did some remembering to-day, dear lad. When you were born, I was five years younger than you are now, yet I felt myself old. "If we were as old as we feel, we would die of old age at twenty-one." My life seemed all behind me, long, turbulent, packed with pain, useless. I spoke of myself as if all were over. "It had been full of purpose, but what came of it? A few rhymes and a spoilt hope." To my morbid fancy your having come to be was a signal for me to go. I had no thought of dying, yet I accepted you as the proof of my failure. In the exacting eyes of the genius of the race I was insolvent. You were not mine. I looked into Time, and saw none of me there.

Yet the letter I wrote to your parents was sincere, — how else? And that night and the next and the next, I wrote "Gentleman Adventurers," which the critics called the epitome of all that is balladesque. One pitied the dead because they could go forth no more on water and under sky. This poem, written in a mood which beneficent nature sends on the too-sick spirit, has served for more than a quarter of a century as the complete and accepted catalogue of the reasons for living. Well, I must not laugh at it. It may be true that the passion of my heart incarnated itself in it beyond the rest, that



my one song sang itself out those first three days of your life. If so, it is true that love is never cheated of its fruit, and that the joy which might have been for the individual oozes out of him to the race, that the strength which would have settled upon itself in the calm of satisfied hope, filters through him outwards.

Good night, lad. My hand is on your shoulder and I am loath to take it off. For a while I would like what cannot be, to travel with you the red-brown country-roads fragrant with hay, to cross the stiles and knock upon the cabin doors, and enter where sorrow and where gladness is, big with greeting and sure of welcome. I have often pleased myself with the fancy that the outer aspects of life are patterned after the inner, so that in the map of the spirit are to be found city and country, wood, desert, and sea, so that we know these outer worlds through having travelled the worlds within. Though I stay behind, my eyes can follow you from this night's landmark along the stretch, on to the city avenues, up the highways, tracing the twists of the bypaths, clambering untrod trails of wilderness and mountain, on, on, till out upon the sea.

In one of the near turnings a woman with waiting face smiles subtly. Her hands beckon you to the tryst. Godspeed, my son.

Dane.

## XXVIII — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
August 6, 19 — .

As I have constantly insisted, our difference is temperamental. The common words we lay hold of mean one thing to you and another thing to me. I do not equivocate when I say that love is instinctive, and that the latter-day expression of love is artificial. “Art,” as I understand the term in its broadness, contradistinguishes from nature. Whatever man contrives or devises is an artifice, a thing of art not of nature, and therefore artificial.

As for ourselves, among animals we are the only real inventors and artificers. Instead of hair and hide, we have soft skins, and we weave cunning textures and wear wondrous garments. In cold weather, in place of eating much fat meat, we keep ourselves warm by grate fires and steam heat. We cut up our blood-dripping meat chunks with pieces of iron hardened by fire and sharpened by stone, and we eat fish with a fork instead of our fingers. We put a roof over our heads to keep out storm and sunshine, sleep in pent rooms, and are afraid of the good night air and the open sky. In short, we are consummately artificial.

As I recollect, I have shown that the natural expression of the love instinct is bestial and brutal and violent. I have shown how imagination entered into the development of the expression of this love instinct till it became romantic. And, in turn, I have shown how artificial was the romantic expression of this love instinct, by isolating a boy babe and a girl babe in a natural state wherein they expressed their love instinct bestially and brutally and violently. As you say, they have simply been “left out by the civilising force.” And this civilising, or socialising force is simply the sum of our many inventions. The isolated pair merely expressed their instincts in the unartificial, natural way. They had not been taught a certain particular fashion in which to express those instincts as have you and I and all artificial beings been taught.

As Mr. Finck has said, “Not till Dante’s ‘Vita Nuova’ appeared was the gospel of modern love — the romantic adoration of a maiden by a youth — revealed for the first time in definite language.”

Dante, and the men who foreshadowed and followed him, were inventors. They introduced an artifice for protracting one of our most vital pleasures. Well, they succeeded.

And what of it? There are artifices and artifices, and some are better than others. The automobile is a more cunning artifice than the ox-cart, the subway than a palanquin. Devices come and devices go. Change is the essence of progress. All is development. The end of rapes and romances is the same — perpetuation. There may be head love as well as heart love. And in the time to come, when the brain ceases to be the servant of the belly, the head the lackey of the heart, in that time stirpiculture, which is scientific perpetuation, will take the place of romantic love. And in the present there may be men ready for that time. There must be a beginning, else would we still be jolting in ox-carts. And I am ready for that time now.

You say, "Love is of a piece with life, like hunger, like joy, like death." Quite true. And civilisation is merely the expression of life — a variform utterance which includes love, and hunger, and joy, and death. Else what is this civilisation for? How did it happen to be? And I answer: It is the sum of the many inventions we have made to aid us in our pursuit of life and love and joy. It helps us to live more abundantly, to love more fruitfully, to joy more intelligently, and to get grim old Death by his knotty throat and hold him at arm's length as long as possible.

I stated that "all progress consists in the arbitrary alteration, by human efforts and devices, of the normal course of nature." This sociological concept comes inevitably into accord with my philosophy of love. It is the law of development, and all things of human life (which includes love) come inside of it. Wherefore, certainly, I am not outside our province when I demand of you to bring your philosophy of love into like accord.

Incidentally, I will state that I have fallen in love. I have grown feverish with desire, gone mad with dumb yearning. I have felt my intellect lose dominion, and learned that I was only a garmented beast, for all the many inventions very like the other beasts ungarmented. Nay, I am no cold-blooded theorist, no thick-hided dogmatist; nor am I a chastely simple young man mooning in virginal innocence. My generalisations have been tempered in the heats of passion, and what I know I know, and without hearsay.

I have seen a learned man, drunk with wine, interrogate the new states of consciousness of his unwonted condition, and so doing, gain a more comprehensive psychological insight. So I, with my loves. I was impelled toward the women I shall presently particularise. I asked why the impulsion. I reasoned to see if there were a difference between these illicit passions of mine and the illicit passions of my respectable and respected friends. And I found no difference. Separated from codes and conventions, shorn of imagination, divested of romance, stripped naked down to the core of the matter, it was old Mother Nature crying through us, every man and woman of us, for progeny. Her one unceasing and eternal cry — Progeny! Progeny! Progeny!

Just as little girls, instinctively foreshadowing motherhood, play with dolls, so children feel vague sex promptings, and in sweetly ridiculous ways love and quarrel and make up after the approved fashion of lovers. You loved little girls in pigtails and pinafores. We all did. And in our lives there is nothing fairer and more joyful to look

back upon than those same little pigtails and pinafores. But I shall pass the child loves by, and instance first my calf love.

Do you remember the incident of the torn jacket and the blackened eyes? — so inexplicable at the time. Try as you would, neither you nor Waring could get anything out of me. Oh, believe me, it was tragic! I was fifteen. Fifteen, and athrill with a strange new pulse; flushed, as the dawn, with the promise of day. And, of course, I thought it was the day, that I loved as a man loved, and that no man ever loved more. Well, well, I laugh now. I was only fifteen — a young calf who went out and butted heads with another calf in the back pasture.

She was a demure little coquette, Celia Genoine, Professor Genoine's daughter, if you will recollect. "Ah," I hear you remonstrate, "but she was a woman." Just so. Fifteen and twenty-two is usually the way of calf loves. I invested her with all the glow and colour of first youth, and in her presence became a changed being. I blushed if she looked at me; trembled at the touch of her hand or the scent of her hair. To be in her presence was to be closeted with the awfulness and splendour of God. I read immortality in her eyes. A smile from her blinded me, a gentle word or caressing look and I went faint and dizzy, and I was content to lurk in some corner and gaze upon her secretly with all my soul. And I took long, solitary walks, with book of verse beneath my arm, and learned to love as lovers had loved before me.

Sufficient romance was engendered for me to pass more than one night worshipping beneath her window. I mooned and sentimentalised and fell into a gentle melancholy, until you and Waring began to worry over an early decline, to consult specialists, and by trick and stratagem to entice me into eating more and reading less. But she married — ah, I have forgotten whom. Anyway, she married, and there was trouble about it, too, and I bade adieu to love forever.

Then came the love of my whelpage. I was twenty, and she a mad, wanton creature, wonderful and unmoral and filled with life to the brim. My blood pounds hot even now as I conjure her up. The ungarmented beast, my dear Dane, the great primordial ungarmented beast, mighty to procreate, indomitable in battle, invincible in love. Love? Do I not know it? Can I not understand how that splendid fighting animal, Antony, quartered the globe with his sword and pillowed his head between the slim breasts of Egyptian Cleopatra while that hard-won world crashed to wrack and ruin?

As I say, This was the love of my whelpage, and it was vigorous, masterful, masculine. There was no sentimentalising, no fond foolishness of youth; nor was there that cool, calm poise which comes of the calculation and discretion of age. Man and woman, we were in full tide, strong, simple, and elemental. Life rioted in our veins; we were a-bubble with the ferment; and it is out of such abundance that Mother Nature has always exacted her progeny. From the strictly emotional and naturalistic viewpoint, I must consider it, even now, the perfect love. But it was decreed that I should develop into an intellectual animal, and be something more than a mere unconscious puppet of the reproductive forces. So head mastered my heart, and I laid the grip of my will over the passion and went my way.

And then came another man's wife, a proud-breasted woman, the perfect mother, made pre-eminently to know the lip clasp of a child. You know the kind, the type. "The mothers of men," I call them. And so long as there are such women on this earth, that long may we keep faith in the breed of men. The wanton was the Mate Woman, but this was the Mother Woman, the last and highest and holiest in the hierarchy of life. In her all criteria were satisfied, and I reasoned my need of her.

And by this I take it that I was passing out of my blind puppetdom. I was becoming a conscious selective factor in the scheme of reproduction, choosing a mate, not in the lust of my eyes, but in the desire of my fatherhood. Oh, Dane, she was glorious, but she was another man's wife. Had I been living unartificially, in a state of nature, I would certainly have brained her husband (a really splendid fellow), and dragged her off with me shameless under the sky. Or had her husband not been a man, or had he been but half a man, I doubt not that I would have wrested her from him. As it was, I yearned dumbly and observed the conventions.

Nor are these experiences heart soils and smirches. They have educated me, fitted me for that which is yet to be. And I have written of them to show you that I am no closet naturalist, that I speak authoritatively out of adequate understanding. Since the end of love, when all is said and done, is progeny; and since the love of to-day is crude and wasteful; as an inventor and artificer I take it upon myself to substitute reasoned foresight and selection for the short-sighted and blundering selection of Mother Nature. What would you? The old dame would have made a mess of it had I let her have her way. She tried hard to mate me with the wanton, for it was not her method to look into the future to see if a better mother for my progeny awaited me.

And now comes Hester. I approach her, not with the milk-and-water ardours of first youth, nor with the lusty love madness of young manhood, but as an intellectual man, seeking for self and mate the ripe and rounded manhood and womanhood which comes only through the having of children — children which must be properly born and bred. In this way, and in this way only, can we fully express ourselves and the life that is in us. We shall utter ourselves in the finest speech in the world, and, our children being properly born and bred, it shall be in the finest terms of the finest speech in the world. To do this is to have lived.

Herbert.

## XXIX — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

London,  
3a, Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.  
August 26, 19 — .

You insist that the question is not on the value of love but on the significance of the artificial. Be that as it may. To me love is integral with life, and to speak of civilising it away, seems, in point of fact, as preposterous and as anomalous as a Hamletless play of Hamlet. You forget that in developing you carry yourself along; you change, yet you remain racial and natural. Else there were too many missing links in all your departments. We read Homer to-day — telling proof that the chain of sympathy stretches unbroken through epochs of inventions and discoveries and revolutions. Truism that it is, it presents itself with particular force at this stage.

With how much force? We stand in danger of exaggerating these vociferous thoughts. This question of naturalness as opposed to artificiality is not immediately pertinent to our problem, nor is the matter of optimism and pessimism, nor the biologic idea of survival. We should have looked more to the way of love in the lives of men and women and become historians of the method and conduct of the force. There would have been less confusion. So I write, "Be that as it may," and go back to more immediate considerations. And yet we were not far wrong! The little flower in the crannied wall could tell what God and man is. This is of all thoughts the most charged with truth. Let me understand one of your conclusions, root and all, and all in all, and such is the gracious plan of oneness in the branching and leafage and uptowering, that I must know and name the tree. Your winding bypath, could I but follow it to the end, must bring me to the highway of your thought, every step tell-tale of the journey's destination. But soon I shall be with you (the fifth of next month, after all; the arrangements as planned). Then we will begin to know each other, and we will no longer be tormented by the irksomeness of writing. Therefore, until easier and more fluent times, to the heart of the subject straight.

Your love-affairs — how well you have outgrown them and how ably you criticise them! They have not withstood the test of time, for you bear them no loyalty. Calldom and whelpage, vagaries of adolescence, you call them. You do not show them much respect! For this reason your examples lose what weight they might have borne. They belong so wholly to the past, they are mere wraiths of bygone stirrings, they cannot

clothe you with knowledge of love. Cold now, what boots it that you have been afire? You cannot be taught by what is utterly over.

You are catching what I aim to say, I hope, for I aim to say much. Put it that instead of a girl whom you idealised, it was a principle — some scheme of reform which you honoured with all the passion of young hope and dream, and which knit your alert being into a Laocoon of striving. Your maturer eyes see this ideal impossible and narrow. In no wise can it satisfy your bolder reach and larger sympathy. But you do not laugh at what has been. If you strove for it sincerely at any time, no matter how remote, you could never again deride it. Because once you loved it you are eternal keeper of the key to its good. What has been wholly yours you never quite desert. Nothing has remained to you of your love-affairs, therefore your recital of them is empty of meaning. If you were in love to-day, and because of your philosophy you determined to do battle with your feeling, your experience would be more authoritative.

You have known love, and having known you refuse it. Henceforth, it must be reason and not feeling. “What is your objection?” you ask. This merely, that the thing cannot be. Marriage to be marriage must come through love, through the reddest romance of love, through fire of the spirit, yes, even through the love of calfdom and whelpage. Else it is a mockery. Where is the woman of character who would sell the be-all and end-all of her existence for a neat catalogue of possible advantages? Where is the man who would frankly and without embellishment dare make such proposal? You point to yourself. But you have never explained yourself to Hester, and even to me you are embellishing the matter with all the might in your persuasive pen.

The ardours of calfdom and whelpage that you smile at I would have you throb with. You underrate the firstlings of the heart, the rose and white blossoming, the call upon the senses and the readiness to respond and to fulfil, to give and to take, to be and make happy — the great pride and utter abandon which is young love. At fifteen, fortunately for the development of mind and character, hope is placed where hope must pine. Love, then, is doomed to be tragic. The youth “attains to be denied.” But he sounds his depth. Thereafter, he knows what to expect of himself. He has a precedent. After this he will count it a sin to forget, and to accept the solace of mediocrity. In this lies the value of the tragedy.

I sometimes think that whatever is youngest is best. It is the young that, timid and bold, pay greatest reverence to knowledge, receiving without chill of prejudice and shameful cowardice of quibbling the brave new thought. Wisdom may be of age, but passion for scholarships, trail-breaking, and hardy prospecting in the treasure mines of research, is of young pioneerhood alone. It is a youth who dares be radical, who dares, in splendid largess, build mistake upon mistake, bleeding his life out in service. And it is a youth, standing tiptoe upon the earth, now waiting in unperturbed ease, now searching with unbridled zeal, who is lover and mystic. “The best is yet to be,” says Rabbi Ben Ezra, “the last of life, for which the first is made.” Yes, the last of life will be good, but only if it is like youth, beating with its pulse and instinct with its spirit.

The unhappy youth is left on the battle-field but not to die. The sword-thrusts challenge him to put forth greater strength in fiercer wars. He learns hard and well.

Indeed, I cannot leave this subject of first love. How do you know it was not good for you to love as you did? It is strange you should resolve to love no more because at one time you loved deeply enough almost to remain in love. It cannot be that you have grown old and that nature is resolving for you. You tell me of your experiences in order that I may be convinced that you know whereof you speak and I listen in wonder. Your conclusions are unwonted.

Then something was amiss, for you have outgrown and forgotten, but how is it with you in the present when your indifference waits not upon time? You approach your future wife clothed in indifference as in mail, and you do violence. How can I show you? I speak as I would to a child to whom it is necessary to explain that it is bad to abandon an education. Life is a school, and to me it seems that you are about to resign long before diploma and degree, so I interpose. I was taught by first love, and I honour that time beyond any other. I was Ellen's. I have been lonely. For the mere human need, for the sake of that which to the lonely is very dear, I have thought of marriage, but I remembered and I refused to do violence to myself remembering. Long ago my standard was established. I learned how deeply I could feel, and I refuse to acknowledge myself bankrupt, I refuse to approach an honourable human being with less than my all. Until my soul flower out again, until suns flame about my head as in that dear yoretime, I shall keep teeming with dreams and make no affront. I who have seen love, dare not live without love.

I would not give in to fate, Herbert. I would assert my manhood. I would abide in the strength of the first output, going with the flush of the first glow into the gloom. I would spurn the calm of compromise and mediocrity and register a high claim. I would keep the peace with Romance and fly her colours to the last. You have lived? It is well, and it might have been better, but do not give over and talk of stirpiculture. You are not wiser than the laws which made you.

Dane.



## XXX — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
September 18, 19 — .

How abominable I must seem to you, Dane! For certainly a creature is abominable that lays rough hands on one's dearest possessions. I doubt if even you realise how deeply you are stirred by my conduct towards love. My marriage with Hester, considering the quality and degree of the contracting parties, must appear as terrible to you as the sodomies that caused God's ancient wrath to destroy cities. You see, I take your side for the time, see with your eyes, live your thoughts, suffer what you suffer; and then I become myself again and steel myself to continue in what I think is the right.

After all, mine is the harder part. There are easier tasks than those of the illusion-shatterer. That which is established is hard to overthrow. It has the nine points of possession, and woe to him who attempts its disestablishment; for it will persist till it be drowned and washed away in the blood of the reformers and radicals.

Love is a convention. Men and women are attached to it as they are attached to material things, as a king is attached to his crown or an old family to its ancestral home. We have all been led to believe that love is splendid and wonderful, and the greatest thing in the world, and it pains us to part with it. Faith, we will not part with it. The man who would bid us put it by is a knave and a fool, a vile, degraded wretch, who will receive pardon neither in this world nor the next.

This is nothing new. It is the attitude of the established whenever its conventions are attacked. It was the attitude of the Jew toward Christ, of the Roman toward the Christian, of the Christian toward the infidel and the heretic. And it is sincere and natural. All things desire to endure, and they die hard. Love will die hard, as died the idolatries of our forefathers, the geocentric theory of the universe, and the divine right of kings.

So, I say, the rancour and warmth of the established when attacked is sincere. The world is mastered by the convention of love, and when one profanes love's Holy of Holies the world is unutterably shocked and hurt. Love is a thing for lovers only. It must not be approached by the sacrilegious scientist. Let him keep to his physics and chemistry, things definite and solid and gross. Love is for ardent speculation, not

laboratory analysis. Love is (as the reverend prior and the learned bodies told brother Lippo of man's soul): —

“ — a fire, smoke ... no, it's not ...

It's vapour done up like a new-born babe —

(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)

It's ... well, what matters talking, it's the soul!”

I thoroughly understand the popular sentimental repugnance to a scientific discussion of love. Because I dissect love, and weigh and calculate, it is denied that I am capable of experiencing love. It is too radiant and glorious a thing for a dull clod like me to know. And because I cannot experience love and be made mad by it, my fitness to describe its phenomena is likewise denied. Only the lover may describe love. And only the lunatic, I suppose, may compose a medical brochure on insanity.

Herbert.

# XXXI — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

London,  
October 7, 19 — .

It is true that you have a hard task before you, but it is not because you are fighting convention and shattering illusion; it is because you are assailing a good. Love has never acquired the prestige of the established, and the run of marriages are prompted by advantage, routine, or passion. So you are no innovator, Herbert. The idolatry of love will not be overthrown by a drawn battle between those of the Faith and those of the Reformation. Nothing so spectacular awaits us.

I have a friend who has undertaken to translate “Inferno” into English, keeping to the terza rima. “It is like climbing the Matterhorn,” he says gravely. “I get to places where I feel I can go neither forward nor back. The task is prodigious.” And it is. But whom will it concern if he succeeds in going forward? There are few who will read his book. The translation is of more importance to the translator than to anyone else. Yet the professor’s magnum opus confers a degree upon us all. Because a standard is upheld and a man is willing and able to climb a Matterhorn of thought, we can ourselves stride forward with better courage. The work will be an output of heroism, and it will ennoble even those who will not know of it.

I have another friend who ruined his life for love, so says the world that you think steeped in the idolatry of love. A priest, who by a few strokes was able to quell in America a strong and bitter movement, a gifted orator, a man of giant powers, and who was won away at the age of forty from his career by a mere girl. The girl planned nothing. She found herself a force in his life almost despite herself. The mere fact that she lived was enough to wrest this Titan from the arms of the Church. He told me that she criticised him with the directness of a simple nature, and that he came to understand her truths better than she herself. I think she must have loved him at first, but she did not go to him when all grew calm. I wish it could have been otherwise, and that she could have brought him a woman’s heart.

The priest, as the professor, is a hero. Both made great outputs.

There are few who can live like these. But because there are a few who can love and work, the game is saved. And because there are a few of these, we must ever quarrel with the many who are not like them.

“Give all to love;  
Obey thy heart;

Friends, kindred, days,  
Estate, good fame,  
Plans, credit, and the Muse, —  
Nothing refuse.”

Does this really seem such poor philosophy to you? And when, Herbert, will you marry?

Dane Kempton.

## XXXII — From the Same to the Same

Stanford University.

November 20, 19 — .

Hester met me at the station, and we walked through the Arboretum to her home on the campus. Then followed an evening together in the dormitory parlour. I have just left her. Her face was tumultuously joyous when I murmured my "At last!" Her tearful excitement was like Barbara's. You did not tell me she is so young. You must have made her feel our closeness, or she may have found a bit of my verse that all expressed her, and presto, the whole-hearted one is my friend. Her poet is now her father, brother, comrade, — what she chooses, and all she chooses.

At one time, before we were well out of the Arboretum, our eyes met, and there was something so sad and mild and strange in the burn of her gaze that I felt her frank spirit was unveiling itself in an utterness of speech. But I have become too much spoilt by mere length of living to be able to remember back and recognise what young eyes mean when they look like that. From London to Palo Alto is a short trip, if at the end of it you meet a Hester. Yet I am sad. The mood crept on me the moment we grew aware that evening had come, and we stopped a little in front of the arch to observe the night-look of the foot-hills. Lights had begun to appear in the corridors of the quadrangle, and here and there in a professor's office, while Roble and Encina looked like lit-up ferries. There was a spell of mystery and promise in the quiet which was deeper for being suggestive of the seething student-life just subsided. It was a silence that seemed to echo with bells and recitations, and babble and laughter and heartache. I fell into thought. One generation cometh and another passeth away. There is no respite. March with time and find death, mayhap, before it has found you. As years ago the flamelet of the street-lamp, so now these outposts of the colossal embryo of a world derided me and seemed to point me out and away. The evening grew chill with "a greeting in which no kindness is."

"Your coming has been announced in every class, and your lecture is on the bulletin-boards. After that, can you be depressed?"

The light words were spoken low, as if doubtful whether they could be taken in good part, and they came with something that was like music. Was it the voice or some inexplicable feeling? I turned in wonder. Her head was raised, and in the indistinctness I caught that sweet look of hers which besought me, and which I answered without knowing to what question.

I owe you a great happiness. Good-night.  
Dane Kempton.

## XXXIII — From the Same to the Same

Stanford University.  
Wednesday.

Last night I delivered my address to the student body. Behold the chapel crowded to the doors, aisles and window-seats crammed, and faces peering in from without, those of boys and girls who had perched themselves on the outer sills. A student audience is at the same time most critical and the most generous. I spoke on Literature and Democracy.

Hester approved my effort. "How does it feel to be great?" she laughed. "How does it feel to be cruel?" I retorted. "But think, Mr. Kempton, when you visited the English classes you were just so much text for us. It should count us a unit merely to have seen you."

A memory stood up and had its revenge on me. It taunted me for the half-expressed thought, for the fled insight, for the swelling note that midmost broke. Praise the artist, and he feels himself betrayer. Blear-eyed, the poet recalls the poem's sunrise, straightens himself with the old pride, is held again by the splendour which forecasts the about-to-be-steadier glory of day, and even with the recalling he shrinks together before what he knows was a false dawn. There was never a day. The song's note never sang itself at all.

Hester looked up with that wistfulness which so draws me. Her look said: "I pity you. I wish you were as happy as I." And a thought leaped out in answer to her look which would have smote her had it spoken. It was, "You, too, are awakened by a false dawning." Why is she so sure of herself and of you? Is she sure? The puny bit of writing had a vigorous rising. The ragged author was clad in it as in ermine. So the seeming love makes a strong call, for a while holding the girl intent upon a splendour of unfolding, her nature roused, her being expectant. But later, for poet and lover, the failure and the waste! Were it otherwise with your feeling for your betrothed, the comparison would not hold.

Hester does not think these things, and she is beautiful and happy.

Yours devotedly,  
Dane Kempton.

## XXXIV — From the Same to the Same

Stanford University.  
Saturday.

Her happiness wrung it from me. Before I could intervene, the question asked itself, "How will it be with you in after years?"

Straight the answer came, "There will be Herbert."

Hester is proud. To-night I saw it in the lift of her chin, in the set of her neck, in the brilliance of her cheek. She knows herself endowed. So when she prattled with abandon of all you both meant to be and do, her form erect before me, her hands eloquent with excitement, her voice pleading for the right to her very conscious self-esteem, I asked her to look still further. Further she saw you, and was content.

That was before dinner. Later we were walking. "I have a friend in Orion," she said. The witchery of starshine played in her eyes and about her mouth. Where were you, Herbert? This night will never return. Yet what has been was for you — the more, perhaps, that you seemed away. So it is with lovers. She thinks you love her.

"I am sorry for your mood," she said. "You are holding yourself to account these days in a way I know." Then she spoke, and I learned with new heaviness of spirit that she does know the way of it. You never thought Hester had much to struggle with?

"I am difficult," she said. And again, "There are times when no power can hold me." Then she quoted Browning: —

"Already how am I so far  
Out of that minute? Must I go  
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,  
Onward, whenever light winds blow,  
Fixed by no friendly star?"

"Are you unhappy, Hester?" I asked.

"Yes, but with no more reason than you for your unhappiness. Since you have come here, you have renewed your demands upon yourself. You wish to go to school with the youngest and find you cannot. You suffer because more seems behind you than before." Her voice rose as if she were fighting tears. It was different with her, I told her. Nothing was behind her.

"You test your work and I test my love. When you are sad, it is because the soul of the song spent itself to gain body — " She did not finish. Why is she sad? Because the soul of her love is narrower than she hoped?



On our return from our walk she sank on the seat under the '95 oak. "Did you think I meant I was always unhappy?" she asked. Her words seem always to say more than her meaning. She imparts something of her own elaborateness to them. I laughed.

"How could I with the 'Herbert is' in my ears?" Then her love became voluble. I forgot what I knew of your theories and grew aflame with her ardour. I anticipated as largely as she. She was again possessed by her hopes.

There, under the shadow of the quadrangle which her young strides measured, she spoke of what, with you in her life, the years must be. Beyond words you are blessed, Herbert. But if she mistakes?

D.K.

## XXXV — From the Same to the Same

Stanford University.

November 27, 19 — .

Be outspoken! What will happen I can only surmise, but you must tell her what she is to you. Set her right.

This is the fourth letter in seven days about Hester. I am endeavouring to make you acquainted with her. I had no need if you loved her. How she loves you! Yet she thinks that your calm is depth, your silence prayer. Her pride protects her, but she strains for the word which does not come. She has never been quite sure, and I thank God for that. Hester has been fearing somewhat, and she has been doubting, and it is this that may save her when the night sets in and the storm breaks over her head.

You, too, are thankful that her instincts served her true and that she never quite accepted the gift that seemed to have been proffered?

You have a right to demand the reason for my renewed attack. It is because I have learned the strength of her love. "You are blessed beyond words," I said two days ago, but as you reject the blessing, Hester must know it and you must tell her. Herbert, I am your friend.

Dane Kempton.

## XXXVI — From Herbert Wace to Dane Kempton

The Ridge,  
Berkeley, California.  
November 29, 19 — .

What a flutter of letters! And what a fluttery Dane Kempton it is! The wine of our western sunshine has bitten into your blood and you are grown over-warm. I am glad that you and Hester have found each other so quickly and intimately; glad that you are under her charm, as I know her to be under yours; but I am not glad when you spell yourself into her and write out your heart's forebodings on her heart. For you are strangely morbid, and you are certainly guilty of reading your own doubts and fears into her unspoken and unguessed thoughts.

Believe me, rather than the soul of her love seeming narrower than she hopes, the truth is she gives her love little thought at all. She is too busy — and too sensible. Like me, she has not the time. We are workers, not dreamers; and the minutes are too full for us to lavish them on an eternal weighing and measuring of heart throbs.

Besides, Hester is too large for that sort of stuff. She is the last woman in the world to peer down at the scales to see if she is getting full value. We leave that to the lesser creatures, who spend their courtship loudly protesting how unutterable, immeasurable, and inextinguishable is their love, as though, forsooth, each dreaded lest the other deem it a bad bargain. We do not bargain and chaffer over our feelings, Hester and I. Surely you mistake, and stir storms in teacups.

"Be outspoken," you say. If my conscience were not clear, I should be troubled by that. As it is, what have I hidden? What sharp business have I driven? And who is it that cried "cheated!"? Be outspoken — about what, pray?

You bid me tell her what she is to me. Which is to bid me tell her what she already knows, to tell her that she is the Mother Woman; that of all women she is dearest to me; that of all the walks of life, that one is pleasantest wherein I may walk with her; that with her I shall find the supreme expression of myself and the life that is in me; that in all this I honour her in the finest, loftiest fashion that man can honour woman. Tell her this, Dane. By all means tell her.

"Ah, I do not mean that," I hear you say. Well, let me tell you what you mean, in my own way, and bid you tell her for me. In the lust of my eyes she is nothing to me. She is not a mere sense delight, a toy for the debauchery of my intellect and the

enthronement of emotion. She is not the woman to make my pulse go fevered and me go mad. Nor is she the woman to make me forget my manhood and pride, to tumble me down doddering at her feet and gibbering like an ape. She is not the woman to put my thoughts out of joint and the world out of gear, and so to befuddle and make me drunk with the beast that is in me, that I am ready to sacrifice truth, honesty, duty, and purpose for the sake of possession. She is not the woman ever to make me swamp honour and poise and right conduct in the vortex of blind sex passion. She is not the woman to arouse in me such uncontrolled desire that for gratification I would do one ill deed, or put the slightest hurt upon the least of human creatures. She is not the most beautiful woman God Almighty ever planted on His footstool. (There have been and are many women as true and pure and noble). She is not the woman for whose bedazzlement I must advertise the value of my goods by sweating sonnets to her, or shivering serenades at her, or perpetuating follies for her. In short, she is not anything to me that the woman of conventional love is to the man.

And again, what is she to me? She is my other self, as it were, my good comrade, and fellow-worker and joy-sharer. With her woman she complements my man and makes us one, and this is the highest civilised sense of union. She is to me the culmination of the thousands of generations of women. It took civilisation to make her, as it takes civilisation to make our marriage. She is to me the partner in a marriage of the gods, for we become gods, we half brutes, when we muzzle the beast and are not menaced by his growls. Under heaven she is my wife and the mother of my children.

Tell her, then, tell her all you wish, you dear old fluttery, mothery poet father — as though it made any difference.

Herbert.

## XXXVII — From Dane Kempton to Herbert Wace

Stanford University.

December 3, 19 — .

Not three weeks ago you were sitting opposite me and speaking of Hester. You admitted many things that night, amongst them that the girl never carried you off your feet. You stated over again with precision all you had written. You betrothed yourself, not because Hester is different from everybody else in the world, but because she is like. You took her for what is typical in her, not for what is individual. You preferred to walk toward her before your steps were impelled, because you feared that impulsions would preclude rational choice. With the hope of out-tricking nature, you reached for Hester Stebbins, in order that there might be a wall between your heart's fancy and yourself, should your heart become rebellious. I was to understand that this is the new school, that so live the masters of matter and of self.

And as you spoke, I wondered about the woman Hester and the form of love-making which existed between you, and whether she was simple and without any charm despite her culture and her gift of song. "She either loves him too well to know or to have the strength to care, or she is, like him, of the new school," I thought. I sat and watched you, noting your youth, surprised by the scorn in your eyes and the sadness on your lips. You seemed hopeless and helpless. I closed my eyes. "What has he left himself?" I kept asking. "How will he tread 'The paths gray heads abhor?'" My own head bowed itself as before an irreparable loss. I had rejoined the child of my care only to find him blasted as by grief, the first sunshine smitten from his face and his heart weighted. One word, one ray lighting your looks in a wonted way, one uncontrolled movement of the hand, one little silence following the mention of her, would have led me to believe that I had not understood and that all was well. The night grew old with your plans and analyses. We parted with a sense of shame upon us that we should have written and spoken so long and with such heat, and to such little purpose.

You do not see how this answers your last letter. I will tell you. It shows you that you have explained yourself fully the night we spoke face to face.

You say that Hester is the woman to complement your man. This sounds like a lover, only I happen to know that she is not the irresistible woman. I found it out quite by accident — a few words dropped into a letter, a corroboration of the fact and further committal, a protracted defence of your position, running through a correspondence of over a year, and, finally, a face-to-face declaration. What boots it now that you

write prettily? You do not love Hester. You want her to mother your children, and you install her in your life for the purpose before the need.

Love is not lust, and it is good. The irresistible marriage, alone, is the right one. Upon it, alone, does the sacrament rest. The chivalry of your last letter refers less to the girl than to your own ends. It is not because Hester is what she is, that "of all the walks in life that one is pleasantest wherein you may walk with her," but because that walk is the one you choose beyond any other for your wife to follow. The mother woman is legion, and you refuse to specialise.

Hester does not peer down at the scales to see if she is getting full value, yet she does look to her dignity, and, being poor, will not account herself rich. Hester has felt since you made known to her that you wished her to be yours, that she counted punily in your scheme, that you placed little of yourself in charge of her. She loved you and avowed it, but she has never been happy. The tragedy of love is not (what it is thought to be) the unreciprocated love, but the meagerly returned love. It is better to be rejected, equal turned from equal, than to be held with slim desire for slight purpose. Can you see this, Herbert? You are hurting the girl's life. She will ask for what you withhold, though not a word rise to her lips; will thirst for it through the years, will herself grow cramped with your denial till her own love seem a thing of dream, unstable and vague and illusive. And all the time you are gentle. You are devoted to her interests, furthering her happiness to the best in your power; but your power cannot touch her happiness. It is not what you do; it is the motive to your acts, and Hester would know that she has left you unmoved. You respect the function of motherhood, but you do not love Hester. Tell her this, and prevent her from entering a union in which she must feel herself half useful, half wifely, half happy, and therefore all unhappy.

It is not Hester's fault that you cannot love her, and perhaps it is not her misfortune. There is no need for panic. Of two persons, one loving and one loath, the indifferent one is in the right. Can a tree defend itself from the hewer's axe? What would avail it, then, to feel pain at the blows? It is beyond our control to love or not to love, and no effort that we may put forth can draw love to us when it is denied. It does not avail us to suffer from unrequited love.

This which I have just said is an article of faith which the doctrine of experience often contradicts, for there may be mistake, and the one who does not love may be in the wrong. If only you could wait to see the beauty which is she before you call her! A year later and Hester may flower for you in a passionate blossoming; her face may challenge you to live. A year later and you may find that she is indeed the woman to guide you and to follow you; her voice a song; her eyes a light in the day. As yet, you have not gauged her, and you would put her to small uses. Stand aside, dear Herbert. It will be better.

I have played a surly part. I may be accused of having been to you both a Dmitri Roudin and an Iago. I beg you to believe that it has not been easy for me. I have uttered the earnest word, have driven you on by the goad of friendship, which drives

far. I looked upon the days that came tripping toward you out of the blue-white horizon of time and saw them gray for a dear woman, gray and silent as the tomb over a dead love, and heavy hearted for a man who is my son.

Ever wholly yours,  
Dane Kempton.

## XXXVIII — From Hester Stebbins to Herbert Wace

Stanford University.

December 15, 19 — .

Over and ended. It shall be as I said last night. Herbert, there is no call for anger; believe me, there is not. I am doing what I cannot help doing. You have not changed, but my faith in you has, and I cannot pretend to a happiness I do not feel.

Oh, but I laugh, my very dear one, I laugh that I could seem to choose to wrest myself from you. Did you at one time love me? That morning of wild sunshine when you took my hand and asked me to be your wife seems very long ago. I should have understood — the blame is all mine — I should have known you did not love me, I should have been filled with anger and shame instead of happiness. The blame is all mine.

Last night, while you were speaking, I was standing in the window wondering what all the trouble was about. I could afford to be calm since I knew I was not hurting you very deeply. At most I was disappointing a very self-sufficient man. How do women find courage, O God, to take from men who love them the love they gave? No such ordeal mine?

Farewell, Herbert. Let us think calmly of each other since we have helped each other for so long a stretch of life. Farewell, dear.

Always your friend,  
Hester Stebbins.



## XXXIX — From Hester Stebbins to Dane Kempton

Stanford University.

December 18, 19 — .

Herbert has analyzed the situation and has arrived at the conclusion that my dissatisfaction arises in an inordinate desire for happiness. You should not care so much about yourself, he says. Poor, dear, young Herbert! He is very young and cannot as yet conceive how much there is about oneself that demands care. I thought it out in the hills to-day. It was gray and there was a fitful wind. What is this selfishness but a prompting to make much of life? You and I and people of our kind are old before our time, that is the reason we are not reckless. Our dreams mature us. I was a mere girl when Herbert said he wished to marry me, but I was old enough to grasp the full meaning of the pact, as he could not grasp it. In a moment I had travelled my way to the grave and back. I looked at the sheer, quick clouds that flitted past the blue, and I felt that I had caught up with life; I had overtaken the wonders that hung in the sky of my dreaming. Then I looked at him and the sunshine got in my face and made me laugh (or cry) — I was so more than happy, being so much too sure of his need of me. I am glad I walked to-day. The view from the hills was beautiful. (You see I am not unhappy!) I stood on a rock and looked about me, thinking of you, of Barbara, — I feel I know her, — and of Herbert. He and I had often come to these spots. Oh, the hungry memories! Yet what were we but a young man and a young woman, who, without being battered into apathy by misfortune, without being wearied or ill, were taking each other for better or for worse because they seemed compatible? We were doing just that, to Herbert's certain knowledge! I failed him; he hoped for more complaisance. Marriage is a hazard, Mr. Kempton, confess it is, and a man does much when he binds himself to make a woman the mother of his children — nay, the grandmother of theirs, even that. What else and what more? I would never have been wholly in my husband's life, comrade and fellow to it. Herbert knew this clearly, and I vaguely but I acted with clearness on my vagueness. It was hard to do. It has left me breathless and a little afraid to be myself, — as if I had killed a dear thing, — and tearful, too, and spasmodic for your sympathy and sanction.

I told him that for a long time I did not understand, supposing myself beloved and desired and chosen for him by God, thinking he yearned for the subtlety and mystery of me, thinking all of him needed me and cleaved earths and parted seas to come to

me. Later, when I became oppressed by a lack and was made to hear the stillness that followed my unechoed words, I became grave and still myself. He had unloved me, I said, and I waited. Something seemed pending, and meanwhile I could love! I made much of every word of comfort that he dropped me, and dwelt with hope on the future. All this I told Herbert the night when I explained, and he turned pale. "You people fly away with yourselves. I cannot follow you. What is wrong, Hester?" He smiled in his distress. Yet was there in his softness an imperiousness, commanding me to be other than I am, forbidding me the right to crave in secret what I had made bold to ask for openly. His man was stronger than my woman, and I leapt to him again. "My husband," I whispered, my hands in his. This, even after I understood, dearest Mr. Kempton.

It is a sorry tangle. If only one could suit feeling to theory! It is not for a theory that I refuse to be Herbert's wife. Yet if I loved him enough, I could give up love itself for him. He hinted it, looking as from a distance at me in my attitude of protest and restraint. If I loved him enough, I could forego love itself for him. Somewhere there is a fault, it would seem, somewhere in my abandon is restraint, in my love, self-seeking. Remorse overcame me just as he was about to leave, and I schooled myself to think that there had been no affront, that it honours a woman to be wanted no matter for what end, that every use is a noble use, that we die the same, loved or used. If Herbert Wace wants a wife and thinks me fitting, why, it is well. I thought all this and aged as I thought. Nevertheless, my hand did not put itself out a second time to detain the man who had forced me to face this.

There is a youth here who loves me. If Herbert's face could shine like his for one hour, I believe I would be happier than I have ever been. And it would not spoil that happiness if this love were toward another than myself. Say you believe me. You must know it of me that before everything else in the world I pray that knowledge of love come to the man over whom the love of my girlhood was spilled.

Do you ask what is left me, dear friend? Work and tears and the intact dream. Believe me, I am not pitiable.

Hester.

# **The Sea-Wolf**

This 1904 psychological adventure novel features a literary critic as the protagonist. He is the survivor of an ocean collision, who comes under the dominance of Wolf Larsen, the powerful and amoral sea captain that rescues him. Its first printing of forty thousand copies were immediately sold out before publication due to the success of the previous novel *The Call of the Wild*.

The first edition

# Chapter I

I scarcely know where to begin, though I sometimes facetiously place the cause of it all to Charley Furuseth's credit. He kept a summer cottage in Mill Valley, under the shadow of Mount Tamalpais, and never occupied it except when he loafed through the winter months and read Nietzsche and Schopenhauer to rest his brain. When summer came on, he elected to sweat out a hot and dusty existence in the city and to toil incessantly. Had it not been my custom to run up to see him every Saturday afternoon and to stop over till Monday morning, this particular January Monday morning would not have found me afloat on San Francisco Bay.

Not but that I was afloat in a safe craft, for the Martinez was a new ferry-steamer, making her fourth or fifth trip on the run between Sausalito and San Francisco. The danger lay in the heavy fog which blanketed the bay, and of which, as a landsman, I had little apprehension. In fact, I remember the placid exaltation with which I took up my position on the forward upper deck, directly beneath the pilot-house, and allowed the mystery of the fog to lay hold of my imagination. A fresh breeze was blowing, and for a time I was alone in the moist obscurity — yet not alone, for I was dimly conscious of the presence of the pilot, and of what I took to be the captain, in the glass house above my head.

I remember thinking how comfortable it was, this division of labour which made it unnecessary for me to study fogs, winds, tides, and navigation, in order to visit my friend who lived across an arm of the sea. It was good that men should be specialists, I mused. The peculiar knowledge of the pilot and captain sufficed for many thousands of people who knew no more of the sea and navigation than I knew. On the other hand, instead of having to devote my energy to the learning of a multitude of things, I concentrated it upon a few particular things, such as, for instance, the analysis of Poe's place in American literature — an essay of mine, by the way, in the current Atlantic. Coming aboard, as I passed through the cabin, I had noticed with greedy eyes a stout gentleman reading the Atlantic, which was open at my very essay. And there it was again, the division of labour, the special knowledge of the pilot and captain which permitted the stout gentleman to read my special knowledge on Poe while they carried him safely from Sausalito to San Francisco.

A red-faced man, slamming the cabin door behind him and stumping out on the deck, interrupted my reflections, though I made a mental note of the topic for use in a projected essay which I had thought of calling "The Necessity for Freedom: A Plea for the Artist." The red-faced man shot a glance up at the pilot-house, gazed around at the fog, stumped across the deck and back (he evidently had artificial legs), and stood

still by my side, legs wide apart, and with an expression of keen enjoyment on his face. I was not wrong when I decided that his days had been spent on the sea.

"It's nasty weather like this here that turns heads grey before their time," he said, with a nod toward the pilot-house.

"I had not thought there was any particular strain," I answered. "It seems as simple as A, B, C. They know the direction by compass, the distance, and the speed. I should not call it anything more than mathematical certainty."

"Strain!" he snorted. "Simple as A, B, C! Mathematical certainty!"

He seemed to brace himself up and lean backward against the air as he stared at me. "How about this here tide that's rushin' out through the Golden Gate?" he demanded, or bellowed, rather. "How fast is she ebbin'? What's the drift, eh? Listen to that, will you? A bell-buoy, and we're a-top of it! See 'em alterin' the course!"

From out of the fog came the mournful tolling of a bell, and I could see the pilot turning the wheel with great rapidity. The bell, which had seemed straight ahead, was now sounding from the side. Our own whistle was blowing hoarsely, and from time to time the sound of other whistles came to us from out of the fog.

"That's a ferry-boat of some sort," the new-comer said, indicating a whistle off to the right. "And there! D'ye hear that? Blown by mouth. Some scow schooner, most likely. Better watch out, Mr. Schooner-man. Ah, I thought so. Now hell's a poppin' for somebody!"

The unseen ferry-boat was blowing blast after blast, and the mouth-blown horn was tooting in terror-stricken fashion.

"And now they're payin' their respects to each other and tryin' to get clear," the red-faced man went on, as the hurried whistling ceased.

His face was shining, his eyes flashing with excitement as he translated into articulate language the speech of the horns and sirens. "That's a steam-siren a-goin' it over there to the left. And you hear that fellow with a frog in his throat — a steam schooner as near as I can judge, crawlin' in from the Heads against the tide."

A shrill little whistle, piping as if gone mad, came from directly ahead and from very near at hand. Gongs sounded on the Martinez. Our paddle-wheels stopped, their pulsing beat died away, and then they started again. The shrill little whistle, like the chirping of a cricket amid the cries of great beasts, shot through the fog from more to the side and swiftly grew faint and fainter. I looked to my companion for enlightenment.

"One of them dare-devil launches," he said. "I almost wish we'd sunk him, the little rip! They're the cause of more trouble. And what good are they? Any jackass gets aboard one and runs it from hell to breakfast, blowin' his whistle to beat the band and tellin' the rest of the world to look out for him, because he's comin' and can't look out for himself! Because he's comin'! And you've got to look out, too! Right of way! Common decency! They don't know the meanin' of it!"

I felt quite amused at his unwarranted choler, and while he stumped indignantly up and down I fell to dwelling upon the romance of the fog. And romantic it certainly was — the fog, like the grey shadow of infinite mystery, brooding over the whirling speck of

earth; and men, mere motes of light and sparkle, cursed with an insane relish for work, riding their steeds of wood and steel through the heart of the mystery, groping their way blindly through the Unseen, and clamouring and clanging in confident speech the while their hearts are heavy with incertitude and fear.

The voice of my companion brought me back to myself with a laugh. I too had been groping and floundering, the while I thought I rode clear-eyed through the mystery.

"Hello! somebody comin' our way," he was saying. "And d'ye hear that? He's comin' fast. Walking right along. Guess he don't hear us yet. Wind's in wrong direction."

The fresh breeze was blowing right down upon us, and I could hear the whistle plainly, off to one side and a little ahead.

"Ferry-boat?" I asked.

He nodded, then added, "Or he wouldn't be keepin' up such a clip." He gave a short chuckle. "They're gettin' anxious up there."

I glanced up. The captain had thrust his head and shoulders out of the pilot-house, and was staring intently into the fog as though by sheer force of will he could penetrate it. His face was anxious, as was the face of my companion, who had stumped over to the rail and was gazing with a like intentness in the direction of the invisible danger.

Then everything happened, and with inconceivable rapidity. The fog seemed to break away as though split by a wedge, and the bow of a steamboat emerged, trailing fog-wreaths on either side like seaweed on the snout of Leviathan. I could see the pilot-house and a white-bearded man leaning partly out of it, on his elbows. He was clad in a blue uniform, and I remember noting how trim and quiet he was. His quietness, under the circumstances, was terrible. He accepted Destiny, marched hand in hand with it, and coolly measured the stroke. As he leaned there, he ran a calm and speculative eye over us, as though to determine the precise point of the collision, and took no notice whatever when our pilot, white with rage, shouted, "Now you've done it!"

On looking back, I realize that the remark was too obvious to make rejoinder necessary.

"Grab hold of something and hang on," the red-faced man said to me. All his bluster had gone, and he seemed to have caught the contagion of preternatural calm. "And listen to the women scream," he said grimly — almost bitterly, I thought, as though he had been through the experience before.

The vessels came together before I could follow his advice. We must have been struck squarely amidships, for I saw nothing, the strange steamboat having passed beyond my line of vision. The Martinez heeled over, sharply, and there was a crashing and rending of timber. I was thrown flat on the wet deck, and before I could scramble to my feet I heard the scream of the women. This it was, I am certain, — the most indescribable of blood-curdling sounds, — that threw me into a panic. I remembered the life-preservers stored in the cabin, but was met at the door and swept backward by a wild rush of men and women. What happened in the next few minutes I do not recollect, though I have a clear remembrance of pulling down life-preservers from the overhead racks, while the red-faced man fastened them about the bodies of an hysterical group of women. This

memory is as distinct and sharp as that of any picture I have seen. It is a picture, and I can see it now, — the jagged edges of the hole in the side of the cabin, through which the grey fog swirled and eddied; the empty upholstered seats, littered with all the evidences of sudden flight, such as packages, hand satchels, umbrellas, and wraps; the stout gentleman who had been reading my essay, encased in cork and canvas, the magazine still in his hand, and asking me with monotonous insistence if I thought there was any danger; the red-faced man, stumping gallantly around on his artificial legs and buckling life-preservers on all comers; and finally, the screaming bedlam of women.

This it was, the screaming of the women, that most tried my nerves. It must have tried, too, the nerves of the red-faced man, for I have another picture which will never fade from my mind. The stout gentleman is stuffing the magazine into his overcoat pocket and looking on curiously. A tangled mass of women, with drawn, white faces and open mouths, is shrieking like a chorus of lost souls; and the red-faced man, his face now purplish with wrath, and with arms extended overhead as in the act of hurling thunderbolts, is shouting, "Shut up! Oh, shut up!"

I remember the scene impelled me to sudden laughter, and in the next instant I realized I was becoming hysterical myself; for these were women of my own kind, like my mother and sisters, with the fear of death upon them and unwilling to die. And I remember that the sounds they made reminded me of the squealing of pigs under the knife of the butcher, and I was struck with horror at the vividness of the analogy. These women, capable of the most sublime emotions, of the tenderest sympathies, were open-mouthed and screaming. They wanted to live, they were helpless, like rats in a trap, and they screamed.

The horror of it drove me out on deck. I was feeling sick and squeamish, and sat down on a bench. In a hazy way I saw and heard men rushing and shouting as they strove to lower the boats. It was just as I had read descriptions of such scenes in books. The tackles jammed. Nothing worked. One boat lowered away with the plugs out, filled with women and children and then with water, and capsized. Another boat had been lowered by one end, and still hung in the tackle by the other end, where it had been abandoned. Nothing was to be seen of the strange steamboat which had caused the disaster, though I heard men saying that she would undoubtedly send boats to our assistance.

I descended to the lower deck. The Martinez was sinking fast, for the water was very near. Numbers of the passengers were leaping overboard. Others, in the water, were clamouring to be taken aboard again. No one heeded them. A cry arose that we were sinking. I was seized by the consequent panic, and went over the side in a surge of bodies. How I went over I do not know, though I did know, and instantly, why those in the water were so desirous of getting back on the steamer. The water was cold — so cold that it was painful. The pang, as I plunged into it, was as quick and sharp as that of fire. It bit to the marrow. It was like the grip of death. I gasped with the anguish and shock of it, filling my lungs before the life-preserver popped me to the



surface. The taste of the salt was strong in my mouth, and I was strangling with the acrid stuff in my throat and lungs.

But it was the cold that was most distressing. I felt that I could survive but a few minutes. People were struggling and floundering in the water about me. I could hear them crying out to one another. And I heard, also, the sound of oars. Evidently the strange steamboat had lowered its boats. As the time went by I marvelled that I was still alive. I had no sensation whatever in my lower limbs, while a chilling numbness was wrapping about my heart and creeping into it. Small waves, with spiteful foaming crests, continually broke over me and into my mouth, sending me off into more strangling paroxysms.

The noises grew indistinct, though I heard a final and despairing chorus of screams in the distance, and knew that the Martinez had gone down. Later, — how much later I have no knowledge, — I came to myself with a start of fear. I was alone. I could hear no calls or cries — only the sound of the waves, made weirdly hollow and reverberant by the fog. A panic in a crowd, which partakes of a sort of community of interest, is not so terrible as a panic when one is by oneself; and such a panic I now suffered. Whither was I drifting? The red-faced man had said that the tide was ebbing through the Golden Gate. Was I, then, being carried out to sea? And the life-preserver in which I floated? Was it not liable to go to pieces at any moment? I had heard of such things being made of paper and hollow rushes which quickly became saturated and lost all buoyancy. And I could not swim a stroke. And I was alone, floating, apparently, in the midst of a grey primordial vastness. I confess that a madness seized me, that I shrieked aloud as the women had shrieked, and beat the water with my numb hands.

How long this lasted I have no conception, for a blankness intervened, of which I remember no more than one remembers of troubled and painful sleep. When I aroused, it was as after centuries of time; and I saw, almost above me and emerging from the fog, the bow of a vessel, and three triangular sails, each shrewdly lapping the other and filled with wind. Where the bow cut the water there was a great foaming and gurgling, and I seemed directly in its path. I tried to cry out, but was too exhausted. The bow plunged down, just missing me and sending a swash of water clear over my head. Then the long, black side of the vessel began slipping past, so near that I could have touched it with my hands. I tried to reach it, in a mad resolve to claw into the wood with my nails, but my arms were heavy and lifeless. Again I strove to call out, but made no sound.

The stern of the vessel shot by, dropping, as it did so, into a hollow between the waves; and I caught a glimpse of a man standing at the wheel, and of another man who seemed to be doing little else than smoke a cigar. I saw the smoke issuing from his lips as he slowly turned his head and glanced out over the water in my direction. It was a careless, unpremeditated glance, one of those haphazard things men do when they have no immediate call to do anything in particular, but act because they are alive and must do something.

But life and death were in that glance. I could see the vessel being swallowed up in the fog; I saw the back of the man at the wheel, and the head of the other man turning, slowly turning, as his gaze struck the water and casually lifted along it toward me. His face wore an absent expression, as of deep thought, and I became afraid that if his eyes did light upon me he would nevertheless not see me. But his eyes did light upon me, and looked squarely into mine; and he did see me, for he sprang to the wheel, thrusting the other man aside, and whirled it round and round, hand over hand, at the same time shouting orders of some sort. The vessel seemed to go off at a tangent to its former course and leapt almost instantly from view into the fog.

I felt myself slipping into unconsciousness, and tried with all the power of my will to fight above the suffocating blankness and darkness that was rising around me. A little later I heard the stroke of oars, growing nearer and nearer, and the calls of a man. When he was very near I heard him crying, in vexed fashion, "Why in hell don't you sing out?" This meant me, I thought, and then the blankness and darkness rose over me.

## Chapter II

I seemed swinging in a mighty rhythm through orbit vastness. Sparkling points of light spluttered and shot past me. They were stars, I knew, and flaring comets, that peopled my flight among the suns. As I reached the limit of my swing and prepared to rush back on the counter swing, a great gong struck and thundered. For an immeasurable period, lapped in the rippling of placid centuries, I enjoyed and pondered my tremendous flight.

But a change came over the face of the dream, for a dream I told myself it must be. My rhythm grew shorter and shorter. I was jerked from swing to counter swing with irritating haste. I could scarcely catch my breath, so fiercely was I impelled through the heavens. The gong thundered more frequently and more furiously. I grew to await it with a nameless dread. Then it seemed as though I were being dragged over rasping sands, white and hot in the sun. This gave place to a sense of intolerable anguish. My skin was scorching in the torment of fire. The gong clanged and knelled. The sparkling points of light flashed past me in an interminable stream, as though the whole sidereal system were dropping into the void. I gasped, caught my breath painfully, and opened my eyes. Two men were kneeling beside me, working over me. My mighty rhythm was the lift and forward plunge of a ship on the sea. The terrific gong was a frying-pan, hanging on the wall, that rattled and clattered with each leap of the ship. The rasping, scorching sands were a man's hard hands chafing my naked chest. I squirmed under the pain of it, and half lifted my head. My chest was raw and red, and I could see tiny blood globules starting through the torn and inflamed cuticle.

"That'll do, Yonson," one of the men said. "Carn't yer see you've bloomin' well rubbed all the gent's skin orf?"

The man addressed as Yonson, a man of the heavy Scandinavian type, ceased chafing me, and arose awkwardly to his feet. The man who had spoken to him was clearly a Cockney, with the clean lines and weakly pretty, almost effeminate, face of the man who has absorbed the sound of Bow Bells with his mother's milk. A draggled muslin cap on his head and a dirty gunny-sack about his slim hips proclaimed him cook of the decidedly dirty ship's galley in which I found myself.

"An' 'ow yer feelin' now, sir?" he asked, with the subservient smirk which comes only of generations of tip-seeking ancestors.

For reply, I twisted weakly into a sitting posture, and was helped by Yonson to my feet. The rattle and bang of the frying-pan was grating horribly on my nerves. I could not collect my thoughts. Clutching the woodwork of the galley for support, — and I confess the grease with which it was scummed put my teeth on edge, — I reached

across a hot cooking-range to the offending utensil, unhooked it, and wedged it securely into the coal-box.

The cook grinned at my exhibition of nerves, and thrust into my hand a steaming mug with an "Ere, this'll do yer good." It was a nauseous mess, — ship's coffee, — but the heat of it was revivifying. Between gulps of the molten stuff I glanced down at my raw and bleeding chest and turned to the Scandinavian.

"Thank you, Mr. Yonson," I said; "but don't you think your measures were rather heroic?"

It was because he understood the reproof of my action, rather than of my words, that he held up his palm for inspection. It was remarkably calloused. I passed my hand over the horny projections, and my teeth went on edge once more from the horrible rasping sensation produced.

"My name is Johnson, not Yonson," he said, in very good, though slow, English, with no more than a shade of accent to it.

There was mild protest in his pale blue eyes, and withal a timid frankness and manliness that quite won me to him.

"Thank you, Mr. Johnson," I corrected, and reached out my hand for his.

He hesitated, awkward and bashful, shifted his weight from one leg to the other, then blunderingly gripped my hand in a hearty shake.

"Have you any dry clothes I may put on?" I asked the cook.

"Yes, sir," he answered, with cheerful alacrity. "I'll run down an' tyke a look over my kit, if you've no objections, sir, to wearin' my things."

He dived out of the galley door, or glided rather, with a swiftness and smoothness of gait that struck me as being not so much cat-like as oily. In fact, this oiliness, or greasiness, as I was later to learn, was probably the most salient expression of his personality.

"And where am I?" I asked Johnson, whom I took, and rightly, to be one of the sailors. "What vessel is this, and where is she bound?"

"Off the Farallones, heading about sou-west," he answered, slowly and methodically, as though groping for his best English, and rigidly observing the order of my queries. "The schooner Ghost, bound seal-hunting to Japan."

"And who is the captain? I must see him as soon as I am dressed."

Johnson looked puzzled and embarrassed. He hesitated while he groped in his vocabulary and framed a complete answer. "The cap'n is Wolf Larsen, or so men call him. I never heard his other name. But you better speak soft with him. He is mad this morning. The mate — "

But he did not finish. The cook had glided in.

"Better sling yer 'ook out of 'ere, Yonson," he said. "The old man'll be wantin' yer on deck, an' this ayn't no d'y to fall foul of 'im."

Johnson turned obediently to the door, at the same time, over the cook's shoulder, favouring me with an amazingly solemn and portentous wink as though to emphasize his interrupted remark and the need for me to be soft-spoken with the captain.

Hanging over the cook's arm was a loose and crumpled array of evil-looking and sour-smelling garments.

"They was put aw'y wet, sir," he vouchsafed explanation. "But you'll 'ave to make them do till I dry yours out by the fire."

Clinging to the woodwork, staggering with the roll of the ship, and aided by the cook, I managed to slip into a rough woollen undershirt. On the instant my flesh was creeping and crawling from the harsh contact. He noticed my involuntary twitching and grimacing, and smirked:

"I only 'ope yer don't ever 'ave to get used to such as that in this life, 'cos you've got a bloomin' soft skin, that you 'ave, more like a lydy's than any I know of. I was bloomin' well sure you was a gentleman as soon as I set eyes on yer."

I had taken a dislike to him at first, and as he helped to dress me this dislike increased. There was something repulsive about his touch. I shrank from his hand; my flesh revolted. And between this and the smells arising from various pots boiling and bubbling on the galley fire, I was in haste to get out into the fresh air. Further, there was the need of seeing the captain about what arrangements could be made for getting me ashore.

A cheap cotton shirt, with frayed collar and a bosom discoloured with what I took to be ancient blood-stains, was put on me amid a running and apologetic fire of comment. A pair of workman's brogans encased my feet, and for trousers I was furnished with a pair of pale blue, washed-out overalls, one leg of which was fully ten inches shorter than the other. The abbreviated leg looked as though the devil had there clutched for the Cockney's soul and missed the shadow for the substance.

"And whom have I to thank for this kindness?" I asked, when I stood completely arrayed, a tiny boy's cap on my head, and for coat a dirty, striped cotton jacket which ended at the small of my back and the sleeves of which reached just below my elbows.

The cook drew himself up in a smugly humble fashion, a deprecating smirk on his face. Out of my experience with stewards on the Atlantic liners at the end of the voyage, I could have sworn he was waiting for his tip. From my fuller knowledge of the creature I now know that the posture was unconscious. An hereditary servility, no doubt, was responsible.

"Mugridge, sir," he fawned, his effeminate features running into a greasy smile. "Thomas Mugridge, sir, an' at yer service."

"All right, Thomas," I said. "I shall not forget you — when my clothes are dry."

A soft light suffused his face and his eyes glistened, as though somewhere in the depths of his being his ancestors had quickened and stirred with dim memories of tips received in former lives.

"Thank you, sir," he said, very gratefully and very humbly indeed.

Precisely in the way that the door slid back, he slid aside, and I stepped out on deck. I was still weak from my prolonged immersion. A puff of wind caught me, — and I staggered across the moving deck to a corner of the cabin, to which I clung for support. The schooner, heeled over far out from the perpendicular, was bowing and

plunging into the long Pacific roll. If she were heading south-west as Johnson had said, the wind, then, I calculated, was blowing nearly from the south. The fog was gone, and in its place the sun sparkled crisply on the surface of the water, I turned to the east, where I knew California must lie, but could see nothing save low-lying fog-banks — the same fog, doubtless, that had brought about the disaster to the Martinez and placed me in my present situation. To the north, and not far away, a group of naked rocks thrust above the sea, on one of which I could distinguish a lighthouse. In the south-west, and almost in our course, I saw the pyramidal loom of some vessel's sails.

Having completed my survey of the horizon, I turned to my more immediate surroundings. My first thought was that a man who had come through a collision and rubbed shoulders with death merited more attention than I received. Beyond a sailor at the wheel who stared curiously across the top of the cabin, I attracted no notice whatever.

Everybody seemed interested in what was going on amid ships. There, on a hatch, a large man was lying on his back. He was fully clothed, though his shirt was ripped open in front. Nothing was to be seen of his chest, however, for it was covered with a mass of black hair, in appearance like the furry coat of a dog. His face and neck were hidden beneath a black beard, intershot with grey, which would have been stiff and bushy had it not been limp and draggled and dripping with water. His eyes were closed, and he was apparently unconscious; but his mouth was wide open, his breast, heaving as though from suffocation as he laboured noisily for breath. A sailor, from time to time and quite methodically, as a matter of routine, dropped a canvas bucket into the ocean at the end of a rope, hauled it in hand under hand, and sluiced its contents over the prostrate man.

Pacing back and forth the length of the hatchways and savagely chewing the end of a cigar, was the man whose casual glance had rescued me from the sea. His height was probably five feet ten inches, or ten and a half; but my first impression, or feel of the man, was not of this, but of his strength. And yet, while he was of massive build, with broad shoulders and deep chest, I could not characterize his strength as massive. It was what might be termed a sinewy, knotty strength, of the kind we ascribe to lean and wiry men, but which, in him, because of his heavy build, partook more of the enlarged gorilla order. Not that in appearance he seemed in the least gorilla-like. What I am striving to express is this strength itself, more as a thing apart from his physical semblance. It was a strength we are wont to associate with things primitive, with wild animals, and the creatures we imagine our tree-dwelling prototypes to have been — a strength savage, ferocious, alive in itself, the essence of life in that it is the potency of motion, the elemental stuff itself out of which the many forms of life have been moulded; in short, that which writhes in the body of a snake when the head is cut off, and the snake, as a snake, is dead, or which lingers in the shapeless lump of turtle-meat and recoils and quivers from the prod of a finger.

Such was the impression of strength I gathered from this man who paced up and down. He was firmly planted on his legs; his feet struck the deck squarely and with

surety; every movement of a muscle, from the heave of the shoulders to the tightening of the lips about the cigar, was decisive, and seemed to come out of a strength that was excessive and overwhelming. In fact, though this strength pervaded every action of his, it seemed but the advertisement of a greater strength that lurked within, that lay dormant and no more than stirred from time to time, but which might arouse, at any moment, terrible and compelling, like the rage of a lion or the wrath of a storm.

The cook stuck his head out of the galley door and grinned encouragingly at me, at the same time jerking his thumb in the direction of the man who paced up and down by the hatchway. Thus I was given to understand that he was the captain, the "Old Man," in the cook's vernacular, the individual whom I must interview and put to the trouble of somehow getting me ashore. I had half started forward, to get over with what I was certain would be a stormy five minutes, when a more violent suffocating paroxysm seized the unfortunate person who was lying on his back. He wrenched and writhed about convulsively. The chin, with the damp black beard, pointed higher in the air as the back muscles stiffened and the chest swelled in an unconscious and instinctive effort to get more air. Under the whiskers, and all unseen, I knew that the skin was taking on a purplish hue.

The captain, or Wolf Larsen, as men called him, ceased pacing and gazed down at the dying man. So fierce had this final struggle become that the sailor paused in the act of flinging more water over him and stared curiously, the canvas bucket partly tilted and dripping its contents to the deck. The dying man beat a tattoo on the hatch with his heels, straightened out his legs, and stiffened in one great tense effort, and rolled his head from side to side. Then the muscles relaxed, the head stopped rolling, and a sigh, as of profound relief, floated upward from his lips. The jaw dropped, the upper lip lifted, and two rows of tobacco-discoloured teeth appeared. It seemed as though his features had frozen into a diabolical grin at the world he had left and outwitted.

Then a most surprising thing occurred. The captain broke loose upon the dead man like a thunderclap. Oaths rolled from his lips in a continuous stream. And they were not namby-pamby oaths, or mere expressions of indecency. Each word was a blasphemy, and there were many words. They crisped and crackled like electric sparks. I had never heard anything like it in my life, nor could I have conceived it possible. With a turn for literary expression myself, and a penchant for forcible figures and phrases, I appreciated, as no other listener, I dare say, the peculiar vividness and strength and absolute blasphemy of his metaphors. The cause of it all, as near as I could make out, was that the man, who was mate, had gone on a debauch before leaving San Francisco, and then had the poor taste to die at the beginning of the voyage and leave Wolf Larsen short-handed.

It should be unnecessary to state, at least to my friends, that I was shocked. Oaths and vile language of any sort had always been repellent to me. I felt a wilting sensation, a sinking at the heart, and, I might just as well say, a giddiness. To me, death had always been invested with solemnity and dignity. It had been peaceful in its occurrence, sacred in its ceremonial. But death in its more sordid and terrible aspects was a thing

with which I had been unacquainted till now. As I say, while I appreciated the power of the terrific denunciation that swept out of Wolf Larsen's mouth, I was inexpressibly shocked. The scorching torrent was enough to wither the face of the corpse. I should not have been surprised if the wet black beard had frizzled and curled and flared up in smoke and flame. But the dead man was unconcerned. He continued to grin with a sardonic humour, with a cynical mockery and defiance. He was master of the situation.



## Chapter III

Wolf Larsen ceased swearing as suddenly as he had begun. He relighted his cigar and glanced around. His eyes chanced upon the cook.

“Well, Cooky?” he began, with a suaveness that was cold and of the temper of steel.

“Yes, sir,” the cook eagerly interpolated, with appeasing and apologetic servility.

“Don’t you think you’ve stretched that neck of yours just about enough? It’s unhealthy, you know. The mate’s gone, so I can’t afford to lose you too. You must be very, very careful of your health, Cooky. Understand?”

His last word, in striking contrast with the smoothness of his previous utterance, snapped like the lash of a whip. The cook quailed under it.

“Yes, sir,” was the meek reply, as the offending head disappeared into the galley.

At this sweeping rebuke, which the cook had only pointed, the rest of the crew became uninterested and fell to work at one task or another. A number of men, however, who were lounging about a companion-way between the galley and hatch, and who did not seem to be sailors, continued talking in low tones with one another. These, I afterward learned, were the hunters, the men who shot the seals, and a very superior breed to common sailor-folk.

“Johansen!” Wolf Larsen called out. A sailor stepped forward obediently. “Get your palm and needle and sew the beggar up. You’ll find some old canvas in the sail-locker. Make it do.”

“What’ll I put on his feet, sir?” the man asked, after the customary “Ay, ay, sir.”

“We’ll see to that,” Wolf Larsen answered, and elevated his voice in a call of “Cooky!” Thomas Mugridge popped out of his galley like a jack-in-the-box.

“Go below and fill a sack with coal.”

“Any of you fellows got a Bible or Prayer-book?” was the captain’s next demand, this time of the hunters lounging about the companion-way.

They shook their heads, and some one made a jocular remark which I did not catch, but which raised a general laugh.

Wolf Larsen made the same demand of the sailors. Bibles and Prayer-books seemed scarce articles, but one of the men volunteered to pursue the quest amongst the watch below, returning in a minute with the information that there was none.

The captain shrugged his shoulders. “Then we’ll drop him over without any palaver-ing, unless our clerical-looking castaway has the burial service at sea by heart.”

By this time he had swung fully around and was facing me. “You’re a preacher, aren’t you?” he asked.

The hunters, — there were six of them, — to a man, turned and regarded me. I was painfully aware of my likeness to a scarecrow. A laugh went up at my appearance, — a laugh that was not lessened or softened by the dead man stretched and grinning on the deck before us; a laugh that was as rough and harsh and frank as the sea itself; that arose out of coarse feelings and blunted sensibilities, from natures that knew neither courtesy nor gentleness.

Wolf Larsen did not laugh, though his grey eyes lighted with a slight glint of amusement; and in that moment, having stepped forward quite close to him, I received my first impression of the man himself, of the man as apart from his body, and from the torrent of blasphemy I had heard him spew forth. The face, with large features and strong lines, of the square order, yet well filled out, was apparently massive at first sight; but again, as with the body, the massiveness seemed to vanish, and a conviction to grow of a tremendous and excessive mental or spiritual strength that lay behind, sleeping in the deeps of his being. The jaw, the chin, the brow rising to a goodly height and swelling heavily above the eyes, — these, while strong in themselves, unusually strong, seemed to speak an immense vigour or virility of spirit that lay behind and beyond and out of sight. There was no sounding such a spirit, no measuring, no determining of metes and bounds, nor neatly classifying in some pigeon-hole with others of similar type.

The eyes — and it was my destiny to know them well — were large and handsome, wide apart as the true artist's are wide, sheltering under a heavy brow and arched over by thick black eyebrows. The eyes themselves were of that baffling protean grey which is never twice the same; which runs through many shades and colourings like intershot silk in sunshine; which is grey, dark and light, and greenish-grey, and sometimes of the clear azure of the deep sea. They were eyes that masked the soul with a thousand guises, and that sometimes opened, at rare moments, and allowed it to rush up as though it were about to fare forth nakedly into the world on some wonderful adventure, — eyes that could brood with the hopeless sombreness of leaden skies; that could snap and crackle points of fire like those which sparkle from a whirling sword; that could grow chill as an arctic landscape, and yet again, that could warm and soften and be all a-dance with love-lights, intense and masculine, luring and compelling, which at the same time fascinate and dominate women till they surrender in a gladness of joy and of relief and sacrifice.

But to return. I told him that, unhappily for the burial service, I was not a preacher, when he sharply demanded:

“What do you do for a living?”

I confess I had never had such a question asked me before, nor had I ever canvassed it. I was quite taken aback, and before I could find myself had sillily stammered, “I — I am a gentleman.”

His lip curled in a swift sneer.

"I have worked, I do work," I cried impetuously, as though he were my judge and I required vindication, and at the same time very much aware of my arrant idiocy in discussing the subject at all.

"For your living?"

There was something so imperative and masterful about him that I was quite beside myself — "rattled," as Furuseth would have termed it, like a quaking child before a stern school-master.

"Who feeds you?" was his next question.

"I have an income," I answered stoutly, and could have bitten my tongue the next instant. "All of which, you will pardon my observing, has nothing whatsoever to do with what I wish to see you about."

But he disregarded my protest.

"Who earned it? Eh? I thought so. Your father. You stand on dead men's legs. You've never had any of your own. You couldn't walk alone between two sunrises and hustle the meat for your belly for three meals. Let me see your hand."

His tremendous, dormant strength must have stirred, swiftly and accurately, or I must have slept a moment, for before I knew it he had stepped two paces forward, gripped my right hand in his, and held it up for inspection. I tried to withdraw it, but his fingers tightened, without visible effort, till I thought mine would be crushed. It is hard to maintain one's dignity under such circumstances. I could not squirm or struggle like a schoolboy. Nor could I attack such a creature who had but to twist my arm to break it. Nothing remained but to stand still and accept the indignity. I had time to notice that the pockets of the dead man had been emptied on the deck, and that his body and his grin had been wrapped from view in canvas, the folds of which the sailor, Johansen, was sewing together with coarse white twine, shoving the needle through with a leather contrivance fitted on the palm of his hand.

Wolf Larsen dropped my hand with a flirt of disdain.

"Dead men's hands have kept it soft. Good for little else than dish-washing and scullion work."

"I wish to be put ashore," I said firmly, for I now had myself in control. "I shall pay you whatever you judge your delay and trouble to be worth."

He looked at me curiously. Mockery shone in his eyes.

"I have a counter proposition to make, and for the good of your soul. My mate's gone, and there'll be a lot of promotion. A sailor comes aft to take mate's place, cabin-boy goes for'ard to take sailor's place, and you take the cabin-boy's place, sign the articles for the cruise, twenty dollars per month and found. Now what do you say? And mind you, it's for your own soul's sake. It will be the making of you. You might learn in time to stand on your own legs, and perhaps to toddle along a bit."

But I took no notice. The sails of the vessel I had seen off to the south-west had grown larger and plainer. They were of the same schooner-rig as the Ghost, though the hull itself, I could see, was smaller. She was a pretty sight, leaping and flying toward us, and evidently bound to pass at close range. The wind had been momentarily increasing,

and the sun, after a few angry gleams, had disappeared. The sea had turned a dull leaden grey and grown rougher, and was now tossing foaming whitecaps to the sky. We were travelling faster, and heeled farther over. Once, in a gust, the rail dipped under the sea, and the decks on that side were for the moment awash with water that made a couple of the hunters hastily lift their feet.

"That vessel will soon be passing us," I said, after a moment's pause. "As she is going in the opposite direction, she is very probably bound for San Francisco."

"Very probably," was Wolf Larsen's answer, as he turned partly away from me and cried out, "Cooky! Oh, Cooky!"

The Cockney popped out of the galley.

"Where's that boy? Tell him I want him."

"Yes, sir;" and Thomas Mugridge fled swiftly aft and disappeared down another companion-way near the wheel. A moment later he emerged, a heavy-set young fellow of eighteen or nineteen, with a glowering, villainous countenance, trailing at his heels.

"Ere 'e is, sir," the cook said.

But Wolf Larsen ignored that worthy, turning at once to the cabin-boy.

"What's your name, boy?"

"George Leach, sir," came the sullen answer, and the boy's bearing showed clearly that he divined the reason for which he had been summoned.

"Not an Irish name," the captain snapped sharply. "O'Toole or McCarthy would suit your mug a damn sight better. Unless, very likely, there's an Irishman in your mother's woodpile."

I saw the young fellow's hands clench at the insult, and the blood crawl scarlet up his neck.

"But let that go," Wolf Larsen continued. "You may have very good reasons for forgetting your name, and I'll like you none the worse for it as long as you toe the mark. Telegraph Hill, of course, is your port of entry. It sticks out all over your mug. Tough as they make them and twice as nasty. I know the kind. Well, you can make up your mind to have it taken out of you on this craft. Understand? Who shipped you, anyway?"

"McCready and Swanson."

"Sir!" Wolf Larsen thundered.

"McCready and Swanson, sir," the boy corrected, his eyes burning with a bitter light.

"Who got the advance money?"

"They did, sir."

"I thought as much. And damned glad you were to let them have it. Couldn't make yourself scarce too quick, with several gentlemen you may have heard of looking for you."

The boy metamorphosed into a savage on the instant. His body bunched together as though for a spring, and his face became as an infuriated beast's as he snarled, "It's a —"

"A what?" Wolf Larsen asked, a peculiar softness in his voice, as though he were overwhelmingly curious to hear the unspoken word.

The boy hesitated, then mastered his temper. "Nothin', sir. I take it back."

"And you have shown me I was right." This with a gratified smile. "How old are you?"

"Just turned sixteen, sir,"

"A lie. You'll never see eighteen again. Big for your age at that, with muscles like a horse. Pack up your kit and go for'ard into the fo'c'sle. You're a boat-puller now. You're promoted; see?"

Without waiting for the boy's acceptance, the captain turned to the sailor who had just finished the gruesome task of sewing up the corpse. "Johansen, do you know anything about navigation?"

"No, sir,"

"Well, never mind; you're mate just the same. Get your traps aft into the mate's berth."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the cheery response, as Johansen started forward.

In the meantime the erstwhile cabin-boy had not moved. "What are you waiting for?" Wolf Larsen demanded.

"I didn't sign for boat-puller, sir," was the reply. "I signed for cabin-boy. An' I don't want no boat-pullin' in mine."

"Pack up and go for'ard."

This time Wolf Larsen's command was thrillingly imperative. The boy glowered sullenly, but refused to move.

Then came another stirring of Wolf Larsen's tremendous strength. It was utterly unexpected, and it was over and done with between the ticks of two seconds. He had sprung fully six feet across the deck and driven his fist into the other's stomach. At the same moment, as though I had been struck myself, I felt a sickening shock in the pit of my stomach. I instance this to show the sensitiveness of my nervous organization at the time, and how unused I was to spectacles of brutality. The cabin-boy — and he weighed one hundred and sixty-five at the very least — crumpled up. His body wrapped limply about the fist like a wet rag about a stick. He lifted into the air, described a short curve, and struck the deck alongside the corpse on his head and shoulders, where he lay and writhed about in agony.

"Well?" Larsen asked of me. "Have you made up your mind?"

I had glanced occasionally at the approaching schooner, and it was now almost abreast of us and not more than a couple of hundred yards away. It was a very trim and neat little craft. I could see a large, black number on one of its sails, and I had seen pictures of pilot-boats.

"What vessel is that?" I asked.

"The pilot-boat Lady Mine," Wolf Larsen answered grimly. "Got rid of her pilots and running into San Francisco. She'll be there in five or six hours with this wind."

"Will you please signal it, then, so that I may be put ashore."

"Sorry, but I've lost the signal book overboard," he remarked, and the group of hunters grinned.

I debated a moment, looking him squarely in the eyes. I had seen the frightful treatment of the cabin-boy, and knew that I should very probably receive the same, if not worse. As I say, I debated with myself, and then I did what I consider the bravest act of my life. I ran to the side, waving my arms and shouting:

"Lady Mine ahoy! Take me ashore! A thousand dollars if you take me ashore!"

I waited, watching two men who stood by the wheel, one of them steering. The other was lifting a megaphone to his lips. I did not turn my head, though I expected every moment a killing blow from the human brute behind me. At last, after what seemed centuries, unable longer to stand the strain, I looked around. He had not moved. He was standing in the same position, swaying easily to the roll of the ship and lighting a fresh cigar.

"What is the matter? Anything wrong?"

This was the cry from the Lady Mine.

"Yes!" I shouted, at the top of my lungs. "Life or death! One thousand dollars if you take me ashore!"

"Too much 'Frisco tanglefoot for the health of my crew!" Wolf Larsen shouted after. "This one" — indicating me with his thumb — "fancies sea-serpents and monkeys just now!"

The man on the Lady Mine laughed back through the megaphone. The pilot-boat plunged past.

"Give him hell for me!" came a final cry, and the two men waved their arms in farewell.

I leaned despairingly over the rail, watching the trim little schooner swiftly increasing the bleak sweep of ocean between us. And she would probably be in San Francisco in five or six hours! My head seemed bursting. There was an ache in my throat as though my heart were up in it. A curling wave struck the side and splashed salt spray on my lips. The wind puffed strongly, and the Ghost heeled far over, burying her lee rail. I could hear the water rushing down upon the deck.

When I turned around, a moment later, I saw the cabin-boy staggering to his feet. His face was ghastly white, twitching with suppressed pain. He looked very sick.

"Well, Leach, are you going for'ard?" Wolf Larsen asked.

"Yes, sir," came the answer of a spirit cowed.

"And you?" I was asked.

"I'll give you a thousand — " I began, but was interrupted.

"Stow that! Are you going to take up your duties as cabin-boy? Or do I have to take you in hand?"

What was I to do? To be brutally beaten, to be killed perhaps, would not help my case. I looked steadily into the cruel grey eyes. They might have been granite for all the light and warmth of a human soul they contained. One may see the soul stir in some men's eyes, but his were bleak, and cold, and grey as the sea itself.

"Well?"

"Yes," I said.

"Say 'yes, sir.'"

"Yes, sir," I corrected.

"What is your name?"

"Van Weyden, sir."

"First name?"

"Humphrey, sir; Humphrey Van Weyden."

"Age?"

"Thirty-five, sir."

"That'll do. Go to the cook and learn your duties."

And thus it was that I passed into a state of involuntary servitude to Wolf Larsen. He was stronger than I, that was all. But it was very unreal at the time. It is no less unreal now that I look back upon it. It will always be to me a monstrous, inconceivable thing, a horrible nightmare.

"Hold on, don't go yet."

I stopped obediently in my walk toward the galley.

"Johansen, call all hands. Now that we've everything cleaned up, we'll have the funeral and get the decks cleared of useless lumber."

While Johansen was summoning the watch below, a couple of sailors, under the captain's direction, laid the canvas-swathed corpse upon a hatch-cover. On either side the deck, against the rail and bottoms up, were lashed a number of small boats. Several men picked up the hatch-cover with its ghastly freight, carried it to the lee side, and rested it on the boats, the feet pointing overboard. To the feet was attached the sack of coal which the cook had fetched.

I had always conceived a burial at sea to be a very solemn and awe-inspiring event, but I was quickly disillusioned, by this burial at any rate. One of the hunters, a little dark-eyed man whom his mates called "Smoke," was telling stories, liberally intersprinkled with oaths and obscenities; and every minute or so the group of hunters gave mouth to a laughter that sounded to me like a wolf-chorus or the barking of hell-hounds. The sailors trooped noisily aft, some of the watch below rubbing the sleep from their eyes, and talked in low tones together. There was an ominous and worried expression on their faces. It was evident that they did not like the outlook of a voyage under such a captain and begun so inauspiciously. From time to time they stole glances at Wolf Larsen, and I could see that they were apprehensive of the man.

He stepped up to the hatch-cover, and all caps came off. I ran my eyes over them — twenty men all told; twenty-two including the man at the wheel and myself. I was pardonably curious in my survey, for it appeared my fate to be pent up with them on this miniature floating world for I knew not how many weeks or months. The sailors, in the main, were English and Scandinavian, and their faces seemed of the heavy, stolid order. The hunters, on the other hand, had stronger and more diversified faces, with hard lines and the marks of the free play of passions. Strange to say, and

I noted it all once, Wolf Larsen's features showed no such evil stamp. There seemed nothing vicious in them. True, there were lines, but they were the lines of decision and firmness. It seemed, rather, a frank and open countenance, which frankness or openness was enhanced by the fact that he was smooth-shaven. I could hardly believe — until the next incident occurred — that it was the face of a man who could behave as he had behaved to the cabin-boy.

At this moment, as he opened his mouth to speak, puff after puff struck the schooner and pressed her side under. The wind shrieked a wild song through the rigging. Some of the hunters glanced anxiously aloft. The lee rail, where the dead man lay, was buried in the sea, and as the schooner lifted and righted the water swept across the deck wetting us above our shoe-tops. A shower of rain drove down upon us, each drop stinging like a hailstone. As it passed, Wolf Larsen began to speak, the bare-headed men swaying in unison, to the heave and lunge of the deck.

"I only remember one part of the service," he said, "and that is, 'And the body shall be cast into the sea.' So cast it in."

He ceased speaking. The men holding the hatch-cover seemed perplexed, puzzled no doubt by the briefness of the ceremony. He burst upon them in a fury.

"Lift up that end there, damn you! What the hell's the matter with you?"

They elevated the end of the hatch-cover with pitiful haste, and, like a dog flung overside, the dead man slid feet first into the sea. The coal at his feet dragged him down. He was gone.

"Johansen," Wolf Larsen said briskly to the new mate, "keep all hands on deck now they're here. Get in the topsails and jibs and make a good job of it. We're in for a sou'-easter. Better reef the jib and mainsail too, while you're about it."

In a moment the decks were in commotion, Johansen bellowing orders and the men pulling or letting go ropes of various sorts — all naturally confusing to a landsman such as myself. But it was the heartlessness of it that especially struck me. The dead man was an episode that was past, an incident that was dropped, in a canvas covering with a sack of coal, while the ship sped along and her work went on. Nobody had been affected. The hunters were laughing at a fresh story of Smoke's; the men pulling and hauling, and two of them climbing aloft; Wolf Larsen was studying the clouding sky to windward; and the dead man, dying obscenely, buried sordidly, and sinking down, down —

Then it was that the cruelty of the sea, its relentlessness and awfulness, rushed upon me. Life had become cheap and tawdry, a beastly and inarticulate thing, a soulless stirring of the ooze and slime. I held on to the weather rail, close by the shrouds, and gazed out across the desolate foaming waves to the low-lying fog-banks that hid San Francisco and the California coast. Rain-squalls were driving in between, and I could scarcely see the fog. And this strange vessel, with its terrible men, pressed under by wind and sea and ever leaping up and out, was heading away into the south-west, into the great and lonely Pacific expanse.



## Chapter IV

What happened to me next on the sealing-schooner Ghost, as I strove to fit into my new environment, are matters of humiliation and pain. The cook, who was called "the doctor" by the crew, "Tommy" by the hunters, and "Cooky" by Wolf Larsen, was a changed person. The difference worked in my status brought about a corresponding difference in treatment from him. Servile and fawning as he had been before, he was now as domineering and bellicose. In truth, I was no longer the fine gentleman with a skin soft as a "lydy's," but only an ordinary and very worthless cabin-boy.

He absurdly insisted upon my addressing him as Mr. Mugridge, and his behaviour and carriage were insufferable as he showed me my duties. Besides my work in the cabin, with its four small state-rooms, I was supposed to be his assistant in the galley, and my colossal ignorance concerning such things as peeling potatoes or washing greasy pots was a source of unending and sarcastic wonder to him. He refused to take into consideration what I was, or, rather, what my life and the things I was accustomed to had been. This was part of the attitude he chose to adopt toward me; and I confess, ere the day was done, that I hated him with more lively feelings than I had ever hated any one in my life before.

This first day was made more difficult for me from the fact that the Ghost, under close reefs (terms such as these I did not learn till later), was plunging through what Mr. Mugridge called an "owlin' sou'-easter." At half-past five, under his directions, I set the table in the cabin, with rough-weather trays in place, and then carried the tea and cooked food down from the galley. In this connection I cannot forbear relating my first experience with a boarding sea.

"Look sharp or you'll get doused," was Mr. Mugridge's parting injunction, as I left the galley with a big tea-pot in one hand, and in the hollow of the other arm several loaves of fresh-baked bread. One of the hunters, a tall, loose-jointed chap named Henderson, was going aft at the time from the steerage (the name the hunters facetiously gave their midships sleeping quarters) to the cabin. Wolf Larsen was on the poop, smoking his everlasting cigar.

"Ere she comes. Sling yer 'ook!" the cook cried.

I stopped, for I did not know what was coming, and saw the galley door slide shut with a bang. Then I saw Henderson leaping like a madman for the main rigging, up which he shot, on the inside, till he was many feet higher than my head. Also I saw a great wave, curling and foaming, poised far above the rail. I was directly under it. My mind did not work quickly, everything was so new and strange. I grasped that I was in

danger, but that was all. I stood still, in trepidation. Then Wolf Larsen shouted from the poop:

“Grab hold something, you — you Hump!”

But it was too late. I sprang toward the rigging, to which I might have clung, and was met by the descending wall of water. What happened after that was very confusing. I was beneath the water, suffocating and drowning. My feet were out from under me, and I was turning over and over and being swept along I knew not where. Several times I collided against hard objects, once striking my right knee a terrible blow. Then the flood seemed suddenly to subside and I was breathing the good air again. I had been swept against the galley and around the steerage companion-way from the weather side into the lee scuppers. The pain from my hurt knee was agonizing. I could not put my weight on it, or, at least, I thought I could not put my weight on it; and I felt sure the leg was broken. But the cook was after me, shouting through the lee galley door:

“Ere, you! Don’t tyke all night about it! Where’s the pot? Lost overboard? Serve you bloody well right if yer neck was broke!”

I managed to struggle to my feet. The great tea-pot was still in my hand. I limped to the galley and handed it to him. But he was consumed with indignation, real or feigned.

“Gawd blime me if you ayn’t a slob. Wot ’re you good for anyw’y, I’d like to know? Eh? Wot ’re you good for any’wy? Cawn’t even carry a bit of tea aft without losin’ it. Now I’ll ’ave to boil some more.

“An’ wot ’re you sniffin’ about?” he burst out at me, with renewed rage. “Cos you’ve ’urt yer pore little leg, pore little mamma’s darlin’.”

I was not sniffing, though my face might well have been drawn and twitching from the pain. But I called up all my resolution, set my teeth, and hobbled back and forth from galley to cabin and cabin to galley without further mishap. Two things I had acquired by my accident: an injured knee-cap that went undressed and from which I suffered for weary months, and the name of “Hump,” which Wolf Larsen had called me from the poop. Thereafter, fore and aft, I was known by no other name, until the term became a part of my thought-processes and I identified it with myself, thought of myself as Hump, as though Hump were I and had always been I.

It was no easy task, waiting on the cabin table, where sat Wolf Larsen, Johansen, and the six hunters. The cabin was small, to begin with, and to move around, as I was compelled to, was not made easier by the schooner’s violent pitching and wallowing. But what struck me most forcibly was the total lack of sympathy on the part of the men whom I served. I could feel my knee through my clothes, swelling, and swelling, and I was sick and faint from the pain of it. I could catch glimpses of my face, white and ghastly, distorted with pain, in the cabin mirror. All the men must have seen my condition, but not one spoke or took notice of me, till I was almost grateful to Wolf Larsen, later on (I was washing the dishes), when he said:

“Don’t let a little thing like that bother you. You’ll get used to such things in time. It may cripple you some, but all the same you’ll be learning to walk.

"That's what you call a paradox, isn't it?" he added.

He seemed pleased when I nodded my head with the customary "Yes, sir."

"I suppose you know a bit about literary things? Eh? Good. I'll have some talks with you some time."

And then, taking no further account of me, he turned his back and went up on deck.

That night, when I had finished an endless amount of work, I was sent to sleep in the steerage, where I made up a spare bunk. I was glad to get out of the detestable presence of the cook and to be off my feet. To my surprise, my clothes had dried on me and there seemed no indications of catching cold, either from the last soaking or from the prolonged soaking from the foundering of the *Martinez*. Under ordinary circumstances, after all that I had undergone, I should have been fit for bed and a trained nurse.

But my knee was bothering me terribly. As well as I could make out, the kneecap seemed turned up on edge in the midst of the swelling. As I sat in my bunk examining it (the six hunters were all in the steerage, smoking and talking in loud voices), Henderson took a passing glance at it.

"Looks nasty," he commented. "Tie a rag around it, and it'll be all right."

That was all; and on the land I would have been lying on the broad of my back, with a surgeon attending on me, and with strict injunctions to do nothing but rest. But I must do these men justice. Callous as they were to my suffering, they were equally callous to their own when anything befell them. And this was due, I believe, first, to habit; and second, to the fact that they were less sensitively organized. I really believe that a finely-organized, high-strung man would suffer twice and thrice as much as they from a like injury.

Tired as I was, — exhausted, in fact, — I was prevented from sleeping by the pain in my knee. It was all I could do to keep from groaning aloud. At home I should undoubtedly have given vent to my anguish; but this new and elemental environment seemed to call for a savage repression. Like the savage, the attitude of these men was stoical in great things, childish in little things. I remember, later in the voyage, seeing Kerfoot, another of the hunters, lose a finger by having it smashed to a jelly; and he did not even murmur or change the expression on his face. Yet I have seen the same man, time and again, fly into the most outrageous passion over a trifle.

He was doing it now, vociferating, bellowing, waving his arms, and cursing like a fiend, and all because of a disagreement with another hunter as to whether a seal pup knew instinctively how to swim. He held that it did, that it could swim the moment it was born. The other hunter, Latimer, a lean, Yankee-looking fellow with shrewd, narrow-slitted eyes, held otherwise, held that the seal pup was born on the land for no other reason than that it could not swim, that its mother was compelled to teach it to swim as birds were compelled to teach their nestlings how to fly.

For the most part, the remaining four hunters leaned on the table or lay in their bunks and left the discussion to the two antagonists. But they were supremely interested, for every little while they ardently took sides, and sometimes all were talking at

once, till their voices surged back and forth in waves of sound like mimic thunder-rolls in the confined space. Childish and immaterial as the topic was, the quality of their reasoning was still more childish and immaterial. In truth, there was very little reasoning or none at all. Their method was one of assertion, assumption, and denunciation. They proved that a seal pup could swim or not swim at birth by stating the proposition very bellicosely and then following it up with an attack on the opposing man's judgment, common sense, nationality, or past history. Rebuttal was precisely similar. I have related this in order to show the mental calibre of the men with whom I was thrown in contact. Intellectually they were children, inhabiting the physical forms of men.

And they smoked, incessantly smoked, using a coarse, cheap, and offensive-smelling tobacco. The air was thick and murky with the smoke of it; and this, combined with the violent movement of the ship as she struggled through the storm, would surely have made me sea-sick had I been a victim to that malady. As it was, it made me quite squeamish, though this nausea might have been due to the pain of my leg and exhaustion.

As I lay there thinking, I naturally dwelt upon myself and my situation. It was unparalleled, undreamed-of, that I, Humphrey Van Weyden, a scholar and a dilettante, if you please, in things artistic and literary, should be lying here on a Bering Sea seal-hunting schooner. Cabin-boy! I had never done any hard manual labour, or scullion labour, in my life. I had lived a placid, uneventful, sedentary existence all my days — the life of a scholar and a recluse on an assured and comfortable income. Violent life and athletic sports had never appealed to me. I had always been a book-worm; so my sisters and father had called me during my childhood. I had gone camping but once in my life, and then I left the party almost at its start and returned to the comforts and conveniences of a roof. And here I was, with dreary and endless vistas before me of table-setting, potato-peeling, and dish-washing. And I was not strong. The doctors had always said that I had a remarkable constitution, but I had never developed it or my body through exercise. My muscles were small and soft, like a woman's, or so the doctors had said time and again in the course of their attempts to persuade me to go in for physical-culture fads. But I had preferred to use my head rather than my body; and here I was, in no fit condition for the rough life in prospect.

These are merely a few of the things that went through my mind, and are related for the sake of vindicating myself in advance in the weak and helpless rôle I was destined to play. But I thought, also, of my mother and sisters, and pictured their grief. I was among the missing dead of the Martinez disaster, an unrecovered body. I could see the head-lines in the papers; the fellows at the University Club and the Bibelot shaking their heads and saying, "Poor chap!" And I could see Charley Furuseth, as I had said good-bye to him that morning, lounging in a dressing-gown on the be-pillowed window couch and delivering himself of oracular and pessimistic epigrams.

And all the while, rolling, plunging, climbing the moving mountains and falling and wallowing in the foaming valleys, the schooner Ghost was fighting her way farther

and farther into the heart of the Pacific — and I was on her. I could hear the wind above. It came to my ears as a muffled roar. Now and again feet stamped overhead. An endless creaking was going on all about me, the woodwork and the fittings groaning and squeaking and complaining in a thousand keys. The hunters were still arguing and roaring like some semi-human amphibious breed. The air was filled with oaths and indecent expressions. I could see their faces, flushed and angry, the brutality distorted and emphasized by the sickly yellow of the sea-lamps which rocked back and forth with the ship. Through the dim smoke-haze the bunks looked like the sleeping dens of animals in a menagerie. Oilskins and sea-boots were hanging from the walls, and here and there rifles and shotguns rested securely in the racks. It was a sea-fitting for the buccaneers and pirates of by-gone years. My imagination ran riot, and still I could not sleep. And it was a long, long night, weary and dreary and long.

## Chapter V

But my first night in the hunters' steerage was also my last. Next day Johansen, the new mate, was routed from the cabin by Wolf Larsen, and sent into the steerage to sleep thereafter, while I took possession of the tiny cabin state-room, which, on the first day of the voyage, had already had two occupants. The reason for this change was quickly learned by the hunters, and became the cause of a deal of grumbling on their part. It seemed that Johansen, in his sleep, lived over each night the events of the day. His incessant talking and shouting and bellowing of orders had been too much for Wolf Larsen, who had accordingly foisted the nuisance upon his hunters.

After a sleepless night, I arose weak and in agony, to hobble through my second day on the Ghost. Thomas Mugridge routed me out at half-past five, much in the fashion that Bill Sykes must have routed out his dog; but Mr. Mugridge's brutality to me was paid back in kind and with interest. The unnecessary noise he made (I had lain wide-eyed the whole night) must have awakened one of the hunters; for a heavy shoe whizzed through the semi-darkness, and Mr. Mugridge, with a sharp howl of pain, humbly begged everybody's pardon. Later on, in the galley, I noticed that his ear was bruised and swollen. It never went entirely back to its normal shape, and was called a "cauliflower ear" by the sailors.

The day was filled with miserable variety. I had taken my dried clothes down from the galley the night before, and the first thing I did was to exchange the cook's garments for them. I looked for my purse. In addition to some small change (and I have a good memory for such things), it had contained one hundred and eighty-five dollars in gold and paper. The purse I found, but its contents, with the exception of the small silver, had been abstracted. I spoke to the cook about it, when I went on deck to take up my duties in the galley, and though I had looked forward to a surly answer, I had not expected the belligerent harangue that I received.

"Look 'ere, 'Ump," he began, a malicious light in his eyes and a snarl in his throat; "d'ye want yer nose punched? If you think I'm a thief, just keep it to yerself, or you'll find 'ow bloody well mistyken you are. Strike me blind if this ayn't gratitude for yer! 'Ere you come, a pore mis'erable specimen of 'uman scum, an' I tykes yer into my galley an' treats yer 'ansom, an' this is wot I get for it. Nex' time you can go to 'ell, say I, an' I've a good mind to give you what-for anyw'y."

So saying, he put up his fists and started for me. To my shame be it, I cowered away from the blow and ran out the galley door. What else was I to do? Force, nothing but force, obtained on this brute-ship. Moral suasion was a thing unknown. Picture it to yourself: a man of ordinary stature, slender of build, and with weak, undeveloped

muscles, who has lived a peaceful, placid life, and is unused to violence of any sort — what could such a man possibly do? There was no more reason that I should stand and face these human beasts than that I should stand and face an infuriated bull.

So I thought it out at the time, feeling the need for vindication and desiring to be at peace with my conscience. But this vindication did not satisfy. Nor, to this day can I permit my manhood to look back upon those events and feel entirely exonerated. The situation was something that really exceeded rational formulas for conduct and demanded more than the cold conclusions of reason. When viewed in the light of formal logic, there is not one thing of which to be ashamed; but nevertheless a shame rises within me at the recollection, and in the pride of my manhood I feel that my manhood has in unaccountable ways been smirched and sullied.

All of which is neither here nor there. The speed with which I ran from the galley caused excruciating pain in my knee, and I sank down helplessly at the break of the poop. But the Cockney had not pursued me.

“Look at ’im run! Look at ’im run!” I could hear him crying. “An’ with a gyne leg at that! Come on back, you pore little mamma’s darling. I won’t ’it yer; no, I won’t.”

I came back and went on with my work; and here the episode ended for the time, though further developments were yet to take place. I set the breakfast-table in the cabin, and at seven o’clock waited on the hunters and officers. The storm had evidently broken during the night, though a huge sea was still running and a stiff wind blowing. Sail had been made in the early watches, so that the Ghost was racing along under everything except the two topsails and the flying jib. These three sails, I gathered from the conversation, were to be set immediately after breakfast. I learned, also, that Wolf Larsen was anxious to make the most of the storm, which was driving him to the south-west into that portion of the sea where he expected to pick up with the north-east trades. It was before this steady wind that he hoped to make the major portion of the run to Japan, curving south into the tropics and north again as he approached the coast of Asia.

After breakfast I had another unenviable experience. When I had finished washing the dishes, I cleaned the cabin stove and carried the ashes up on deck to empty them. Wolf Larsen and Henderson were standing near the wheel, deep in conversation. The sailor, Johnson, was steering. As I started toward the weather side I saw him make a sudden motion with his head, which I mistook for a token of recognition and good-morning. In reality, he was attempting to warn me to throw my ashes over the lee side. Unconscious of my blunder, I passed by Wolf Larsen and the hunter and flung the ashes over the side to windward. The wind drove them back, and not only over me, but over Henderson and Wolf Larsen. The next instant the latter kicked me, violently, as a cur is kicked. I had not realized there could be so much pain in a kick. I reeled away from him and leaned against the cabin in a half-fainting condition. Everything was swimming before my eyes, and I turned sick. The nausea overpowered me, and I managed to crawl to the side of the vessel. But Wolf Larsen did not follow me up. Brushing the ashes from his clothes, he had resumed his conversation with Henderson.

Johansen, who had seen the affair from the break of the poop, sent a couple of sailors aft to clean up the mess.

Later in the morning I received a surprise of a totally different sort. Following the cook's instructions, I had gone into Wolf Larsen's state-room to put it to rights and make the bed. Against the wall, near the head of the bunk, was a rack filled with books. I glanced over them, noting with astonishment such names as Shakespeare, Tennyson, Poe, and De Quincey. There were scientific works, too, among which were represented men such as Tyndall, Proctor, and Darwin. Astronomy and physics were represented, and I remarked Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*, Shaw's *History of English and American Literature*, and Johnson's *Natural History* in two large volumes. Then there were a number of grammars, such as Metcalf's, and Reed and Kellogg's; and I smiled as I saw a copy of *The Dean's English*.

I could not reconcile these books with the man from what I had seen of him, and I wondered if he could possibly read them. But when I came to make the bed I found, between the blankets, dropped apparently as he had sunk off to sleep, a complete Browning, the Cambridge Edition. It was open at "In a Balcony," and I noticed, here and there, passages underlined in pencil. Further, letting drop the volume during a lurch of the ship, a sheet of paper fell out. It was scrawled over with geometrical diagrams and calculations of some sort.

It was patent that this terrible man was no ignorant clod, such as one would inevitably suppose him to be from his exhibitions of brutality. At once he became an enigma. One side or the other of his nature was perfectly comprehensible; but both sides together were bewildering. I had already remarked that his language was excellent, marred with an occasional slight inaccuracy. Of course, in common speech with the sailors and hunters, it sometimes fairly bristled with errors, which was due to the vernacular itself; but in the few words he had held with me it had been clear and correct.

This glimpse I had caught of his other side must have emboldened me, for I resolved to speak to him about the money I had lost.

"I have been robbed," I said to him, a little later, when I found him pacing up and down the poop alone.

"Sir," he corrected, not harshly, but sternly.

"I have been robbed, sir," I amended.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

Then I told him the whole circumstance, how my clothes had been left to dry in the galley, and how, later, I was nearly beaten by the cook when I mentioned the matter.

He smiled at my recital. "Pickings," he concluded; "Cooky's pickings. And don't you think your miserable life worth the price? Besides, consider it a lesson. You'll learn in time how to take care of your money for yourself. I suppose, up to now, your lawyer has done it for you, or your business agent."

I could feel the quiet sneer through his words, but demanded, "How can I get it back again?"



"That's your look-out. You haven't any lawyer or business agent now, so you'll have to depend on yourself. When you get a dollar, hang on to it. A man who leaves his money lying around, the way you did, deserves to lose it. Besides, you have sinned. You have no right to put temptation in the way of your fellow-creatures. You tempted Cooky, and he fell. You have placed his immortal soul in jeopardy. By the way, do you believe in the immortal soul?"

His lids lifted lazily as he asked the question, and it seemed that the deeps were opening to me and that I was gazing into his soul. But it was an illusion. Far as it might have seemed, no man has ever seen very far into Wolf Larsen's soul, or seen it at all, — of this I am convinced. It was a very lonely soul, I was to learn, that never unmasked, though at rare moments it played at doing so.

"I read immortality in your eyes," I answered, dropping the "sir," — an experiment, for I thought the intimacy of the conversation warranted it.

He took no notice. "By that, I take it, you see something that is alive, but that necessarily does not have to live for ever."

"I read more than that," I continued boldly.

"Then you read consciousness. You read the consciousness of life that it is alive; but still no further away, no endlessness of life."

How clearly he thought, and how well he expressed what he thought! From regarding me curiously, he turned his head and glanced out over the leaden sea to windward. A bleakness came into his eyes, and the lines of his mouth grew severe and harsh. He was evidently in a pessimistic mood.

"Then to what end?" he demanded abruptly, turning back to me. "If I am immortal — why?"

I halted. How could I explain my idealism to this man? How could I put into speech a something felt, a something like the strains of music heard in sleep, a something that convinced yet transcended utterance?

"What do you believe, then?" I countered.

"I believe that life is a mess," he answered promptly. "It is like yeast, a ferment, a thing that moves and may move for a minute, an hour, a year, or a hundred years, but that in the end will cease to move. The big eat the little that they may continue to move, the strong eat the weak that they may retain their strength. The lucky eat the most and move the longest, that is all. What do you make of those things?"

He swept his arm in an impatient gesture toward a number of the sailors who were working on some kind of rope stuff amidships.

"They move, so does the jelly-fish move. They move in order to eat in order that they may keep moving. There you have it. They live for their belly's sake, and the belly is for their sake. It's a circle; you get nowhere. Neither do they. In the end they come to a standstill. They move no more. They are dead."

"They have dreams," I interrupted, "radiant, flashing dreams — "

"Of grub," he concluded sententiously.

"And of more — "

"Grub. Of a larger appetite and more luck in satisfying it." His voice sounded harsh. There was no levity in it. "For, look you, they dream of making lucky voyages which will bring them more money, of becoming the mates of ships, of finding fortunes — in short, of being in a better position for preying on their fellows, of having all night in, good grub and somebody else to do the dirty work. You and I are just like them. There is no difference, except that we have eaten more and better. I am eating them now, and you too. But in the past you have eaten more than I have. You have slept in soft beds, and worn fine clothes, and eaten good meals. Who made those beds? and those clothes? and those meals? Not you. You never made anything in your own sweat. You live on an income which your father earned. You are like a frigate bird swooping down upon the boobies and robbing them of the fish they have caught. You are one with a crowd of men who have made what they call a government, who are masters of all the other men, and who eat the food the other men get and would like to eat themselves. You wear the warm clothes. They made the clothes, but they shiver in rags and ask you, the lawyer, or business agent who handles your money, for a job."

"But that is beside the matter," I cried.

"Not at all." He was speaking rapidly now, and his eyes were flashing. "It is piggishness, and it is life. Of what use or sense is an immortality of piggishness? What is the end? What is it all about? You have made no food. Yet the food you have eaten or wasted might have saved the lives of a score of wretches who made the food but did not eat it. What immortal end did you serve? or did they? Consider yourself and me. What does your boasted immortality amount to when your life runs foul of mine? You would like to go back to the land, which is a favourable place for your kind of piggishness. It is a whim of mine to keep you aboard this ship, where my piggishness flourishes. And keep you I will. I may make or break you. You may die to-day, this week, or next month. I could kill you now, with a blow of my fist, for you are a miserable weakling. But if we are immortal, what is the reason for this? To be piggish as you and I have been all our lives does not seem to be just the thing for immortals to be doing. Again, what's it all about? Why have I kept you here? — "

"Because you are stronger," I managed to blurt out.

"But why stronger?" he went on at once with his perpetual queries. "Because I am a bigger bit of the ferment than you? Don't you see? Don't you see?"

"But the hopelessness of it," I protested.

"I agree with you," he answered. "Then why move at all, since moving is living? Without moving and being part of the yeast there would be no hopelessness. But, — and there it is, — we want to live and move, though we have no reason to, because it happens that it is the nature of life to live and move, to want to live and move. If it were not for this, life would be dead. It is because of this life that is in you that you dream of your immortality. The life that is in you is alive and wants to go on being alive for ever. Bah! An eternity of piggishness!"

He abruptly turned on his heel and started forward. He stopped at the break of the poop and called me to him.

“By the way, how much was it that Cooky got away with?” he asked.

“One hundred and eighty-five dollars, sir,” I answered.

He nodded his head. A moment later, as I started down the companion stairs to lay the table for dinner, I heard him loudly cursing some men amidships.

## Chapter VI

By the following morning the storm had blown itself quite out and the Ghost was rolling slightly on a calm sea without a breath of wind. Occasional light airs were felt, however, and Wolf Larsen patrolled the poop constantly, his eyes ever searching the sea to the north-eastward, from which direction the great trade-wind must blow.

The men were all on deck and busy preparing their various boats for the season's hunting. There are seven boats aboard, the captain's dingey, and the six which the hunters will use. Three, a hunter, a boat-puller, and a boat-steerer, compose a boat's crew. On board the schooner the boat-pullers and steerers are the crew. The hunters, too, are supposed to be in command of the watches, subject, always, to the orders of Wolf Larsen.

All this, and more, I have learned. The Ghost is considered the fastest schooner in both the San Francisco and Victoria fleets. In fact, she was once a private yacht, and was built for speed. Her lines and fittings — though I know nothing about such things — speak for themselves. Johnson was telling me about her in a short chat I had with him during yesterday's second dog-watch. He spoke enthusiastically, with the love for a fine craft such as some men feel for horses. He is greatly disgusted with the outlook, and I am given to understand that Wolf Larsen bears a very unsavoury reputation among the sealing captains. It was the Ghost herself that lured Johnson into signing for the voyage, but he is already beginning to repent.

As he told me, the Ghost is an eighty-ton schooner of a remarkably fine model. Her beam, or width, is twenty-three feet, and her length a little over ninety feet. A lead keel of fabulous but unknown weight makes her very stable, while she carries an immense spread of canvas. From the deck to the truck of the maintopmast is something over a hundred feet, while the foremast with its topmast is eight or ten feet shorter. I am giving these details so that the size of this little floating world which holds twenty-two men may be appreciated. It is a very little world, a mote, a speck, and I marvel that men should dare to venture the sea on a contrivance so small and fragile.

Wolf Larsen has, also, a reputation for reckless carrying on of sail. I overheard Henderson and another of the hunters, Standish, a Californian, talking about it. Two years ago he dismasted the Ghost in a gale on Bering Sea, whereupon the present masts were put in, which are stronger and heavier in every way. He is said to have remarked, when he put them in, that he preferred turning her over to losing the sticks.

Every man aboard, with the exception of Johansen, who is rather overcome by his promotion, seems to have an excuse for having sailed on the Ghost. Half the men forward are deep-water sailors, and their excuse is that they did not know anything

about her or her captain. And those who do know, whisper that the hunters, while excellent shots, were so notorious for their quarrelsome and rascally proclivities that they could not sign on any decent schooner.

I have made the acquaintance of another one of the crew, — Louis he is called, a rotund and jovial-faced Nova Scotia Irishman, and a very sociable fellow, prone to talk as long as he can find a listener. In the afternoon, while the cook was below asleep and I was peeling the everlasting potatoes, Louis dropped into the galley for a “yarn.” His excuse for being aboard was that he was drunk when he signed. He assured me again and again that it was the last thing in the world he would dream of doing in a sober moment. It seems that he has been seal-hunting regularly each season for a dozen years, and is accounted one of the two or three very best boat-steerers in both fleets.

“Ah, my boy,” he shook his head ominously at me, “’tis the worst schooner ye could iv selected, nor were ye drunk at the time as was I. ’Tis seain’ is the sailor’s paradise — on other ships than this. The mate was the first, but mark me words, there’ll be more dead men before the trip is done with. Hist, now, between you an’ meself and the stanchion there, this Wolf Larsen is a regular devil, an’ the Ghost’ll be a hell-ship like she’s always ben since he had hold iv her. Don’t I know? Don’t I know? Don’t I remember him in Hakodate two years gone, when he had a row an’ shot four iv his men? Wasn’t I a-layin’ on the Emma L., not three hundred yards away? An’ there was a man the same year he killed with a blow iv his fist. Yes, sir, killed ’im dead-oh. His head must iv smashed like an eggshell. An’ wasn’t there the Governor of Kura Island, an’ the Chief iv Police, Japanese gentlemen, sir, an’ didn’t they come aboard the Ghost as his guests, a-bringin’ their wives along — wee an’ pretty little bits of things like you see ’em painted on fans. An’ as he was a-gettin’ under way, didn’t the fond husbands get left astern-like in their sampan, as it might be by accident? An’ wasn’t it a week later that the poor little ladies was put ashore on the other side of the island, with nothin’ before ’em but to walk home acrost the mountains on their weeny-teeny little straw sandals which wouldn’t hang together a mile? Don’t I know? ’Tis the beast he is, this Wolf Larsen — the great big beast mentioned iv in Revelation; an’ no good end will he ever come to. But I’ve said nothin’ to ye, mind ye. I’ve whispered never a word; for old fat Louis’ll live the voyage out if the last mother’s son of yez go to the fishes.”

“Wolf Larsen!” he snorted a moment later. “Listen to the word, will ye! Wolf — ’tis what he is. He’s not black-hearted like some men. ’Tis no heart he has at all. Wolf, just wolf, ’tis what he is. D’ye wonder he’s well named?”

“But if he is so well-known for what he is,” I queried, “how is it that he can get men to ship with him?”

“An’ how is it ye can get men to do anything on God’s earth an’ sea?” Louis demanded with Celtic fire. “How d’ye find me aboard if ’twasn’t that I was drunk as a pig when I put me name down? There’s them that can’t sail with better men, like the hunters, and them that don’t know, like the poor devils of wind-jammers for’ard there.

But they'll come to it, they'll come to it, an' be sorry the day they was born. I could weep for the poor creatures, did I but forget poor old fat Louis and the troubles before him. But 'tis not a whisper I've dropped, mind ye, not a whisper."

"Them hunters is the wicked boys," he broke forth again, for he suffered from a constitutional plethora of speech. "But wait till they get to cutting up iv jinks and rowin' 'round. He's the boy'll fix 'em. 'Tis him that'll put the fear of God in their rotten black hearts. Look at that hunter iv mine, Horner. 'Jock' Horner they call him, so quiet-like an' easy-goin', soft-spoken as a girl, till ye'd think butter wouldn't melt in the mouth iv him. Didn't he kill his boat-steerer last year? 'Twas called a sad accident, but I met the boat-puller in Yokohama an' the straight iv it was given me. An' there's Smoke, the black little devil — didn't the Roosians have him for three years in the salt mines of Siberia, for poachin' on Copper Island, which is a Roosian preserve? Shackled he was, hand an' foot, with his mate. An' didn't they have words or a ruction of some kind? — for 'twas the other fellow Smoke sent up in the buckets to the top of the mine; an' a piece at a time he went up, a leg to-day, an' to-morrow an arm, the next day the head, an' so on."

"But you can't mean it!" I cried out, overcome with the horror of it.

"Mean what!" he demanded, quick as a flash. "'Tis nothin' I've said. Deef I am, and dumb, as ye should be for the sake iv your mother; an' never once have I opened me lips but to say fine things iv them an' him, God curse his soul, an' may he rot in purgatory ten thousand years, and then go down to the last an' deepest hell iv all!"

Johnson, the man who had chafed me raw when I first came aboard, seemed the least equivocal of the men forward or aft. In fact, there was nothing equivocal about him. One was struck at once by his straightforwardness and manliness, which, in turn, were tempered by a modesty which might be mistaken for timidity. But timid he was not. He seemed, rather, to have the courage of his convictions, the certainty of his manhood. It was this that made him protest, at the commencement of our acquaintance, against being called Yonson. And upon this, and him, Louis passed judgment and prophecy.

"'Tis a fine chap, that squarehead Johnson we've for'ard with us," he said. "The best sailorman in the fo'c'sle. He's my boat-puller. But it's to trouble he'll come with Wolf Larsen, as the sparks fly upward. It's meself that knows. I can see it brewin' an' comin' up like a storm in the sky. I've talked to him like a brother, but it's little he sees in takin' in his lights or flyin' false signals. He grumbles out when things don't go to suit him, and there'll be always some tell-tale carryin' word iv it aft to the Wolf. The Wolf is strong, and it's the way of a wolf to hate strength, an' strength it is he'll see in Johnson — no knucklin' under, and a 'Yes, sir, thank ye kindly, sir,' for a curse or a blow. Oh, she's a-comin'! She's a-comin'! An' God knows where I'll get another boat-puller! What does the fool up an' say, when the old man calls him Yonson, but 'Me name is Johnson, sir,' an' then spells it out, letter for letter. Ye should iv seen the old man's face! I thought he'd let drive at him on the spot. He didn't, but he will, an' he'll break that squarehead's heart, or it's little I know iv the ways iv men on the ships iv the sea."

Thomas Mugridge is becoming unendurable. I am compelled to Mister him and to Sir him with every speech. One reason for this is that Wolf Larsen seems to have taken a fancy to him. It is an unprecedented thing, I take it, for a captain to be chummy with the cook; but this is certainly what Wolf Larsen is doing. Two or three times he put his head into the galley and chaffed Mugridge good-naturedly, and once, this afternoon, he stood by the break of the poop and chatted with him for fully fifteen minutes. When it was over, and Mugridge was back in the galley, he became greasily radiant, and went about his work, humming coster songs in a nerve-racking and discordant falsetto.

"I always get along with the officers," he remarked to me in a confidential tone. "I know the w'y, I do, to myke myself uppreci-yted. There was my last skipper — w'y I thought nothin' of droppin' down in the cabin for a little chat and a friendly glass. 'Mugridge,' sez 'e to me, 'Mugridge,' sez 'e, 'you've missed yer vokytion.' 'An' 'ow's that?' sez I. 'Yer should 'a been born a gentleman, an' never 'ad to work for yer livin'.' God strike me dead, 'Ump, if that ayn't wot 'e sez, an' me a-sittin' there in 'is own cabin, jolly-like an' comfortable, a-smokin' 'is cigars an' drinkin' 'is rum."

This chitter-chatter drove me to distraction. I never heard a voice I hated so. His oily, insinuating tones, his greasy smile and his monstrous self-conceit grated on my nerves till sometimes I was all in a tremble. Positively, he was the most disgusting and loathsome person I have ever met. The filth of his cooking was indescribable; and, as he cooked everything that was eaten aboard, I was compelled to select what I ate with great circumspection, choosing from the least dirty of his concoctions.

My hands bothered me a great deal, unused as they were to work. The nails were discoloured and black, while the skin was already grained with dirt which even a scrubbing-brush could not remove. Then blisters came, in a painful and never-ending procession, and I had a great burn on my forearm, acquired by losing my balance in a roll of the ship and pitching against the galley stove. Nor was my knee any better. The swelling had not gone down, and the cap was still up on edge. Hobbling about on it from morning till night was not helping it any. What I needed was rest, if it were ever to get well.

Rest! I never before knew the meaning of the word. I had been resting all my life and did not know it. But now, could I sit still for one half-hour and do nothing, not even think, it would be the most pleasurable thing in the world. But it is a revelation, on the other hand. I shall be able to appreciate the lives of the working people hereafter. I did not dream that work was so terrible a thing. From half-past five in the morning till ten o'clock at night I am everybody's slave, with not one moment to myself, except such as I can steal near the end of the second dog-watch. Let me pause for a minute to look out over the sea sparkling in the sun, or to gaze at a sailor going aloft to the gaff-topsails, or running out the bowsprit, and I am sure to hear the hateful voice, "'Ere, you, 'Ump, no sodgerin'. I've got my peepers on yer."

There are signs of rampant bad temper in the steerage, and the gossip is going around that Smoke and Henderson have had a fight. Henderson seems the best of the hunters, a slow-going fellow, and hard to rouse; but roused he must have been, for

Smoke had a bruised and discoloured eye, and looked particularly vicious when he came into the cabin for supper.

A cruel thing happened just before supper, indicative of the callousness and brutishness of these men. There is one green hand in the crew, Harrison by name, a clumsy-looking country boy, mastered, I imagine, by the spirit of adventure, and making his first voyage. In the light baffling airs the schooner had been tacking about a great deal, at which times the sails pass from one side to the other and a man is sent aloft to shift over the fore-gaff-topsail. In some way, when Harrison was aloft, the sheet jammed in the block through which it runs at the end of the gaff. As I understood it, there were two ways of getting it cleared, — first, by lowering the foresail, which was comparatively easy and without danger; and second, by climbing out the peak-halyards to the end of the gaff itself, an exceedingly hazardous performance.

Johansen called out to Harrison to go out the halyards. It was patent to everybody that the boy was afraid. And well he might be, eighty feet above the deck, to trust himself on those thin and jerking ropes. Had there been a steady breeze it would not have been so bad, but the Ghost was rolling emptily in a long sea, and with each roll the canvas flapped and boomed and the halyards slacked and jerked taut. They were capable of snapping a man off like a fly from a whip-lash.

Harrison heard the order and understood what was demanded of him, but hesitated. It was probably the first time he had been aloft in his life. Johansen, who had caught the contagion of Wolf Larsen's masterfulness, burst out with a volley of abuse and curses.

"That'll do, Johansen," Wolf Larsen said brusquely. "I'll have you know that I do the swearing on this ship. If I need your assistance, I'll call you in."

"Yes, sir," the mate acknowledged submissively.

In the meantime Harrison had started out on the halyards. I was looking up from the galley door, and I could see him trembling, as if with ague, in every limb. He proceeded very slowly and cautiously, an inch at a time. Outlined against the clear blue of the sky, he had the appearance of an enormous spider crawling along the tracery of its web.

It was a slight uphill climb, for the foresail peaked high; and the halyards, running through various blocks on the gaff and mast, gave him separate holds for hands and feet. But the trouble lay in that the wind was not strong enough nor steady enough to keep the sail full. When he was half-way out, the Ghost took a long roll to windward and back again into the hollow between two seas. Harrison ceased his progress and held on tightly. Eighty feet beneath, I could see the agonized strain of his muscles as he gripped for very life. The sail emptied and the gaff swung amid-ships. The halyards slackened, and, though it all happened very quickly, I could see them sag beneath the weight of his body. Then the gag swung to the side with an abrupt swiftness, the great sail boomed like a cannon, and the three rows of reef-points slatted against the canvas like a volley of rifles. Harrison, clinging on, made the giddy rush through the air. This rush ceased abruptly. The halyards became instantly taut. It was the snap



of the whip. His clutch was broken. One hand was torn loose from its hold. The other lingered desperately for a moment, and followed. His body pitched out and down, but in some way he managed to save himself with his legs. He was hanging by them, head downward. A quick effort brought his hands up to the halyards again; but he was a long time regaining his former position, where he hung, a pitiable object.

"I'll bet he has no appetite for supper," I heard Wolf Larsen's voice, which came to me from around the corner of the galley. "Stand from under, you, Johansen! Watch out! Here she comes!"

In truth, Harrison was very sick, as a person is sea-sick; and for a long time he clung to his precarious perch without attempting to move. Johansen, however, continued violently to urge him on to the completion of his task.

"It is a shame," I heard Johnson growling in painfully slow and correct English. He was standing by the main rigging, a few feet away from me. "The boy is willing enough. He will learn if he has a chance. But this is —" He paused awhile, for the word "murder" was his final judgment.

"Hist, will ye!" Louis whispered to him, "For the love iv your mother hold your mouth!"

But Johnson, looking on, still continued his grumbling.

"Look here," the hunter Standish spoke to Wolf Larsen, "that's my boat-puller, and I don't want to lose him."

"That's all right, Standish," was the reply. "He's your boat-puller when you've got him in the boat; but he's my sailor when I have him aboard, and I'll do what I damn well please with him."

"But that's no reason —" Standish began in a torrent of speech.

"That'll do, easy as she goes," Wolf Larsen counselled back. "I've told you what's what, and let it stop at that. The man's mine, and I'll make soup of him and eat it if I want to."

There was an angry gleam in the hunter's eye, but he turned on his heel and entered the steerage companion-way, where he remained, looking upward. All hands were on deck now, and all eyes were aloft, where a human life was at grapples with death. The callousness of these men, to whom industrial organization gave control of the lives of other men, was appalling. I, who had lived out of the whirl of the world, had never dreamed that its work was carried on in such fashion. Life had always seemed a peculiarly sacred thing, but here it counted for nothing, was a cipher in the arithmetic of commerce. I must say, however, that the sailors themselves were sympathetic, as instance the case of Johnson; but the masters (the hunters and the captain) were heartlessly indifferent. Even the protest of Standish arose out of the fact that he did not wish to lose his boat-puller. Had it been some other hunter's boat-puller, he, like them, would have been no more than amused.

But to return to Harrison. It took Johansen, insulting and reviling the poor wretch, fully ten minutes to get him started again. A little later he made the end of the gaff, where, astride the spar itself, he had a better chance for holding on. He cleared the

sheet, and was free to return, slightly downhill now, along the halyards to the mast. But he had lost his nerve. Unsafe as was his present position, he was loath to forsake it for the more unsafe position on the halyards.

He looked along the airy path he must traverse, and then down to the deck. His eyes were wide and staring, and he was trembling violently. I had never seen fear so strongly stamped upon a human face. Johansen called vainly for him to come down. At any moment he was liable to be snapped off the gaff, but he was helpless with fright. Wolf Larsen, walking up and down with Smoke and in conversation, took no more notice of him, though he cried sharply, once, to the man at the wheel:

“You’re off your course, my man! Be careful, unless you’re looking for trouble!”

“Ay, ay, sir,” the helmsman responded, putting a couple of spokes down.

He had been guilty of running the Ghost several points off her course in order that what little wind there was should fill the foresail and hold it steady. He had striven to help the unfortunate Harrison at the risk of incurring Wolf Larsen’s anger.

The time went by, and the suspense, to me, was terrible. Thomas Mugridge, on the other hand, considered it a laughable affair, and was continually bobbing his head out the galley door to make jocose remarks. How I hated him! And how my hatred for him grew and grew, during that fearful time, to cyclopean dimensions. For the first time in my life I experienced the desire to murder — “saw red,” as some of our picturesque writers phrase it. Life in general might still be sacred, but life in the particular case of Thomas Mugridge had become very profane indeed. I was frightened when I became conscious that I was seeing red, and the thought flashed through my mind: was I, too, becoming tainted by the brutality of my environment? — I, who even in the most flagrant crimes had denied the justice and righteousness of capital punishment?

Fully half-an-hour went by, and then I saw Johnson and Louis in some sort of altercation. It ended with Johnson flinging off Louis’s detaining arm and starting forward. He crossed the deck, sprang into the fore rigging, and began to climb. But the quick eye of Wolf Larsen caught him.

“Here, you, what are you up to?” he cried.

Johnson’s ascent was arrested. He looked his captain in the eyes and replied slowly:

“I am going to get that boy down.”

“You’ll get down out of that rigging, and damn lively about it! D’ye hear? Get down!”

Johnson hesitated, but the long years of obedience to the masters of ships overpowered him, and he dropped sullenly to the deck and went on forward.

At half after five I went below to set the cabin table, but I hardly knew what I did, for my eyes and my brain were filled with the vision of a man, white-faced and trembling, comically like a bug, clinging to the thrashing gaff. At six o’clock, when I served supper, going on deck to get the food from the galley, I saw Harrison, still in the same position. The conversation at the table was of other things. Nobody seemed interested in the wantonly imperilled life. But making an extra trip to the galley a little

later, I was gladdened by the sight of Harrison staggering weakly from the rigging to the forecabin scuttle. He had finally summoned the courage to descend.

Before closing this incident, I must give a scrap of conversation I had with Wolf Larsen in the cabin, while I was washing the dishes.

"You were looking squeamish this afternoon," he began. "What was the matter?"

I could see that he knew what had made me possibly as sick as Harrison, that he was trying to draw me, and I answered, "It was because of the brutal treatment of that boy."

He gave a short laugh. "Like sea-sickness, I suppose. Some men are subject to it, and others are not."

"Not so," I objected.

"Just so," he went on. "The earth is as full of brutality as the sea is full of motion. And some men are made sick by the one, and some by the other. That's the only reason."

"But you, who make a mock of human life, don't you place any value upon it whatever?" I demanded.

"Value? What value?" He looked at me, and though his eyes were steady and motionless, there seemed a cynical smile in them. "What kind of value? How do you measure it? Who values it?"

"I do," I made answer.

"Then what is it worth to you? Another man's life, I mean. Come now, what is it worth?"

The value of life? How could I put a tangible value upon it? Somehow, I, who have always had expression, lacked expression when with Wolf Larsen. I have since determined that a part of it was due to the man's personality, but that the greater part was due to his totally different outlook. Unlike other materialists I had met and with whom I had something in common to start on, I had nothing in common with him. Perhaps, also, it was the elemental simplicity of his mind that baffled me. He drove so directly to the core of the matter, divesting a question always of all superfluous details, and with such an air of finality, that I seemed to find myself struggling in deep water, with no footing under me. Value of life? How could I answer the question on the spur of the moment? The sacredness of life I had accepted as axiomatic. That it was intrinsically valuable was a truism I had never questioned. But when he challenged the truism I was speechless.

"We were talking about this yesterday," he said. "I held that life was a ferment, a yeasty something which devoured life that it might live, and that living was merely successful piggishness. Why, if there is anything in supply and demand, life is the cheapest thing in the world. There is only so much water, so much earth, so much air; but the life that is demanding to be born is limitless. Nature is a spendthrift. Look at the fish and their millions of eggs. For that matter, look at you and me. In our loins are the possibilities of millions of lives. Could we but find time and opportunity and utilize the last bit and every bit of the unborn life that is in us, we could become the

fathers of nations and populate continents. Life? Bah! It has no value. Of cheap things it is the cheapest. Everywhere it goes begging. Nature spills it out with a lavish hand. Where there is room for one life, she sows a thousand lives, and it's life eats life till the strongest and most piggish life is left."

"You have read Darwin," I said. "But you read him misunderstandingly when you conclude that the struggle for existence sanctions your wanton destruction of life."

He shrugged his shoulders. "You know you only mean that in relation to human life, for of the flesh and the fowl and the fish you destroy as much as I or any other man. And human life is in no wise different, though you feel it is and think that you reason why it is. Why should I be parsimonious with this life which is cheap and without value? There are more sailors than there are ships on the sea for them, more workers than there are factories or machines for them. Why, you who live on the land know that you house your poor people in the slums of cities and loose famine and pestilence upon them, and that there still remain more poor people, dying for want of a crust of bread and a bit of meat (which is life destroyed), than you know what to do with. Have you ever seen the London dockers fighting like wild beasts for a chance to work?"

He started for the companion stairs, but turned his head for a final word. "Do you know the only value life has is what life puts upon itself? And it is of course overestimated since it is of necessity prejudiced in its own favour. Take that man I had aloft. He held on as if he were a precious thing, a treasure beyond diamonds or rubies. To you? No. To me? Not at all. To himself? Yes. But I do not accept his estimate. He sadly overrates himself. There is plenty more life demanding to be born. Had he fallen and dripped his brains upon the deck like honey from the comb, there would have been no loss to the world. He was worth nothing to the world. The supply is too large. To himself only was he of value, and to show how fictitious even this value was, being dead he is unconscious that he has lost himself. He alone rated himself beyond diamonds and rubies. Diamonds and rubies are gone, spread out on the deck to be washed away by a bucket of sea-water, and he does not even know that the diamonds and rubies are gone. He does not lose anything, for with the loss of himself he loses the knowledge of loss. Don't you see? And what have you to say?"

"That you are at least consistent," was all I could say, and I went on washing the dishes.

## Chapter VII

At last, after three days of variable winds, we have caught the north-east trades. I came on deck, after a good night's rest in spite of my poor knee, to find the Ghost foaming along, wing-and-wing, and every sail drawing except the jibs, with a fresh breeze astern. Oh, the wonder of the great trade-wind! All day we sailed, and all night, and the next day, and the next, day after day, the wind always astern and blowing steadily and strong. The schooner sailed herself. There was no pulling and hauling on sheets and tackles, no shifting of topsails, no work at all for the sailors to do except to steer. At night when the sun went down, the sheets were slackened; in the morning, when they yielded up the damp of the dew and relaxed, they were pulled tight again — and that was all.

Ten knots, twelve knots, eleven knots, varying from time to time, is the speed we are making. And ever out of the north-east the brave wind blows, driving us on our course two hundred and fifty miles between the dawns. It saddens me and gladdens me, the gait with which we are leaving San Francisco behind and with which we are foaming down upon the tropics. Each day grows perceptibly warmer. In the second dog-watch the sailors come on deck, stripped, and heave buckets of water upon one another from overside. Flying-fish are beginning to be seen, and during the night the watch above scrambles over the deck in pursuit of those that fall aboard. In the morning, Thomas Mugridge being duly bribed, the galley is pleasantly areek with the odour of their frying; while dolphin meat is served fore and aft on such occasions as Johnson catches the blazing beauties from the bowsprit end.

Johnson seems to spend all his spare time there or aloft at the crosstrees, watching the Ghost cleaving the water under press of sail. There is passion, adoration, in his eyes, and he goes about in a sort of trance, gazing in ecstasy at the swelling sails, the foaming wake, and the heave and the run of her over the liquid mountains that are moving with us in stately procession.

The days and nights are “all a wonder and a wild delight,” and though I have little time from my dreary work, I steal odd moments to gaze and gaze at the unending glory of what I never dreamed the world possessed. Above, the sky is stainless blue — blue as the sea itself, which under the forefoot is of the colour and sheen of azure satin. All around the horizon are pale, fleecy clouds, never changing, never moving, like a silver setting for the flawless turquoise sky.

I do not forget one night, when I should have been asleep, of lying on the forecathhead and gazing down at the spectral ripple of foam thrust aside by the Ghost's forefoot. It sounded like the gurgling of a brook over mossy stones in some quiet dell, and the

crooning song of it lured me away and out of myself till I was no longer Hump the cabin-boy, nor Van Weyden, the man who had dreamed away thirty-five years among books. But a voice behind me, the unmistakable voice of Wolf Larsen, strong with the invincible certitude of the man and mellow with appreciation of the words he was quoting, aroused me.

“O the blazing tropic night, when the wake’s a welt of light  
That holds the hot sky tame,  
And the steady forefoot snores through the planet-powdered floors  
Where the scared whale flukes in flame.  
Her plates are scarred by the sun, dear lass,  
And her ropes are taut with the dew,  
For we’re booming down on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail,  
We’re sagging south on the Long Trail — the trail that is always new.”

“Eh, Hump? How’s it strike you?” he asked, after the due pause which words and setting demanded.

I looked into his face. It was aglow with light, as the sea itself, and the eyes were flashing in the starshine.

“It strikes me as remarkable, to say the least, that you should show enthusiasm,” I answered coldly.

“Why, man, it’s living! it’s life!” he cried.

“Which is a cheap thing and without value.” I flung his words at him.

He laughed, and it was the first time I had heard honest mirth in his voice.

“Ah, I cannot get you to understand, cannot drive it into your head, what a thing this life is. Of course life is valueless, except to itself. And I can tell you that my life is pretty valuable just now — to myself. It is beyond price, which you will acknowledge is a terrific overrating, but which I cannot help, for it is the life that is in me that makes the rating.”

He appeared waiting for the words with which to express the thought that was in him, and finally went on.

“Do you know, I am filled with a strange uplift; I feel as if all time were echoing through me, as though all powers were mine. I know truth, divine good from evil, right from wrong. My vision is clear and far. I could almost believe in God. But,” and his voice changed and the light went out of his face, — “what is this condition in which I find myself? this joy of living? this exultation of life? this inspiration, I may well call it? It is what comes when there is nothing wrong with one’s digestion, when his stomach is in trim and his appetite has an edge, and all goes well. It is the bribe for living, the champagne of the blood, the effervescence of the ferment — that makes some men think holy thoughts, and other men to see God or to create him when they cannot see him. That is all, the drunkenness of life, the stirring and crawling of the yeast, the babbling of the life that is insane with consciousness that it is alive. And — bah! To-morrow I shall pay for it as the drunkard pays. And I shall know that I must die, at sea most likely, cease crawling of myself to be all a-crawl with the corruption

of the sea; to be fed upon, to be carrion, to yield up all the strength and movement of my muscles that it may become strength and movement in fin and scale and the guts of fishes. Bah! And bah! again. The champagne is already flat. The sparkle and bubble has gone out and it is a tasteless drink.”

He left me as suddenly as he had come, springing to the deck with the weight and softness of a tiger. The Ghost ploughed on her way. I noted the gurgling forefoot was very like a snore, and as I listened to it the effect of Wolf Larsen’s swift rush from sublime exultation to despair slowly left me. Then some deep-water sailor, from the waist of the ship, lifted a rich tenor voice in the “Song of the Trade Wind”:

“Oh, I am the wind the seamen love —  
I am steady, and strong, and true;  
They follow my track by the clouds above,  
O’er the fathomless tropic blue.

\* \* \* \* \*

Through daylight and dark I follow the bark  
I keep like a hound on her trail;  
I’m strongest at noon, yet under the moon,  
I stiffen the bunt of her sail.”

## Chapter VIII

Sometimes I think Wolf Larsen mad, or half-mad at least, what of his strange moods and vagaries. At other times I take him for a great man, a genius who has never arrived. And, finally, I am convinced that he is the perfect type of the primitive man, born a thousand years or generations too late and an anachronism in this culminating century of civilization. He is certainly an individualist of the most pronounced type. Not only that, but he is very lonely. There is no congeniality between him and the rest of the men aboard ship. His tremendous virility and mental strength wall him apart. They are more like children to him, even the hunters, and as children he treats them, descending perforce to their level and playing with them as a man plays with puppies. Or else he probes them with the cruel hand of a vivisectionist, groping about in their mental processes and examining their souls as though to see of what soul-stuff is made.

I have seen him a score of times, at table, insulting this hunter or that, with cool and level eyes and, withal, a certain air of interest, pondering their actions or replies or petty rages with a curiosity almost laughable to me who stood onlooker and who understood. Concerning his own rages, I am convinced that they are not real, that they are sometimes experiments, but that in the main they are the habits of a pose or attitude he has seen fit to take toward his fellow-men. I know, with the possible exception of the incident of the dead mate, that I have not seen him really angry; nor do I wish ever to see him in a genuine rage, when all the force of him is called into play.

While on the question of vagaries, I shall tell what befell Thomas Mugridge in the cabin, and at the same time complete an incident upon which I have already touched once or twice. The twelve o'clock dinner was over, one day, and I had just finished putting the cabin in order, when Wolf Larsen and Thomas Mugridge descended the companion stairs. Though the cook had a cubby-hole of a state-room opening off from the cabin, in the cabin itself he had never dared to linger or to be seen, and he flitted to and fro, once or twice a day, a timid spectre.

"So you know how to play 'Nap,'" Wolf Larsen was saying in a pleased sort of voice. "I might have guessed an Englishman would know. I learned it myself in English ships."

Thomas Mugridge was beside himself, a blithering imbecile, so pleased was he at chumming thus with the captain. The little airs he put on and the painful striving to assume the easy carriage of a man born to a dignified place in life would have been sickening had they not been ludicrous. He quite ignored my presence, though I credited him with being simply unable to see me. His pale, wishy-washy eyes were



swimming like lazy summer seas, though what blissful visions they beheld were beyond my imagination.

“Get the cards, Hump,” Wolf Larsen ordered, as they took seats at the table. “And bring out the cigars and the whisky you’ll find in my berth.”

I returned with the articles in time to hear the Cockney hinting broadly that there was a mystery about him, that he might be a gentleman’s son gone wrong or something or other; also, that he was a remittance man and was paid to keep away from England — “p’yed ’ansomely, sir,” was the way he put it; “p’yed ’ansomely to sling my ’ook an’ keep slingin’ it.”

I had brought the customary liquor glasses, but Wolf Larsen frowned, shook his head, and signalled with his hands for me to bring the tumblers. These he filled two-thirds full with undiluted whisky — “a gentleman’s drink?” quoth Thomas Mugridge, — and they clinked their glasses to the glorious game of “Nap,” lighted cigars, and fell to shuffling and dealing the cards.

They played for money. They increased the amounts of the bets. They drank whisky, they drank it neat, and I fetched more. I do not know whether Wolf Larsen cheated or not, — a thing he was thoroughly capable of doing, — but he won steadily. The cook made repeated journeys to his bunk for money. Each time he performed the journey with greater swagger, but he never brought more than a few dollars at a time. He grew maudlin, familiar, could hardly see the cards or sit upright. As a preliminary to another journey to his bunk, he hooked Wolf Larsen’s buttonhole with a greasy forefinger and vacuously proclaimed and reiterated, “I got money, I got money, I tell yer, an’ I’m a gentleman’s son.”

Wolf Larsen was unaffected by the drink, yet he drank glass for glass, and if anything his glasses were fuller. There was no change in him. He did not appear even amused at the other’s antics.

In the end, with loud protestations that he could lose like a gentleman, the cook’s last money was staked on the game — and lost. Whereupon he leaned his head on his hands and wept. Wolf Larsen looked curiously at him, as though about to probe and vivisect him, then changed his mind, as from the foregone conclusion that there was nothing there to probe.

“Hump,” he said to me, elaborately polite, “kindly take Mr. Mugridge’s arm and help him up on deck. He is not feeling very well.”

“And tell Johnson to douse him with a few buckets of salt water,” he added, in a lower tone for my ear alone.

I left Mr. Mugridge on deck, in the hands of a couple of grinning sailors who had been told off for the purpose. Mr. Mugridge was sleepily spluttering that he was a gentleman’s son. But as I descended the companion stairs to clear the table I heard him shriek as the first bucket of water struck him.

Wolf Larsen was counting his winnings.

“One hundred and eighty-five dollars even,” he said aloud. “Just as I thought. The beggar came aboard without a cent.”

"And what you have won is mine, sir," I said boldly.

He favoured me with a quizzical smile. "Hump, I have studied some grammar in my time, and I think your tenses are tangled. 'Was mine,' you should have said, not 'is mine.'"

"It is a question, not of grammar, but of ethics," I answered.

It was possibly a minute before he spoke.

"D'ye know, Hump," he said, with a slow seriousness which had in it an indefinable strain of sadness, "that this is the first time I have heard the word 'ethics' in the mouth of a man. You and I are the only men on this ship who know its meaning."

"At one time in my life," he continued, after another pause, "I dreamed that I might some day talk with men who used such language, that I might lift myself out of the place in life in which I had been born, and hold conversation and mingle with men who talked about just such things as ethics. And this is the first time I have ever heard the word pronounced. Which is all by the way, for you are wrong. It is a question neither of grammar nor ethics, but of fact."

"I understand," I said. "The fact is that you have the money."

His face brightened. He seemed pleased at my perspicacity. "But it is avoiding the real question," I continued, "which is one of right."

"Ah," he remarked, with a wry pucker of his mouth, "I see you still believe in such things as right and wrong."

"But don't you? — at all?" I demanded.

"Not the least bit. Might is right, and that is all there is to it. Weakness is wrong. Which is a very poor way of saying that it is good for oneself to be strong, and evil for oneself to be weak — or better yet, it is pleasurable to be strong, because of the profits; painful to be weak, because of the penalties. Just now the possession of this money is a pleasurable thing. It is good for one to possess it. Being able to possess it, I wrong myself and the life that is in me if I give it to you and forego the pleasure of possessing it."

"But you wrong me by withholding it," I objected.

"Not at all. One man cannot wrong another man. He can only wrong himself. As I see it, I do wrong always when I consider the interests of others. Don't you see? How can two particles of the yeast wrong each other by striving to devour each other? It is their inborn heritage to strive to devour, and to strive not to be devoured. When they depart from this they sin."

"Then you don't believe in altruism?" I asked.

He received the word as if it had a familiar ring, though he pondered it thoughtfully. "Let me see, it means something about coöperation, doesn't it?"

"Well, in a way there has come to be a sort of connection," I answered unsurprised by this time at such gaps in his vocabulary, which, like his knowledge, was the acquirement of a self-read, self-educated man, whom no one had directed in his studies, and who had thought much and talked little or not at all. "An altruistic act is an act performed

for the welfare of others. It is unselfish, as opposed to an act performed for self, which is selfish."

He nodded his head. "Oh, yes, I remember it now. I ran across it in Spencer."

"Spencer!" I cried. "Have you read him?"

"Not very much," was his confession. "I understood quite a good deal of First Principles, but his Biology took the wind out of my sails, and his Psychology left me butting around in the doldrums for many a day. I honestly could not understand what he was driving at. I put it down to mental deficiency on my part, but since then I have decided that it was for want of preparation. I had no proper basis. Only Spencer and myself know how hard I hammered. But I did get something out of his Data of Ethics. There's where I ran across 'altruism,' and I remember now how it was used."

I wondered what this man could have got from such a work. Spencer I remembered enough to know that altruism was imperative to his ideal of highest conduct. Wolf Larsen, evidently, had sifted the great philosopher's teachings, rejecting and selecting according to his needs and desires.

"What else did you run across?" I asked.

His brows drew in slightly with the mental effort of suitably phrasing thoughts which he had never before put into speech. I felt an elation of spirit. I was groping into his soul-stuff as he made a practice of groping in the soul-stuff of others. I was exploring virgin territory. A strange, a terribly strange, region was unrolling itself before my eyes.

"In as few words as possible," he began, "Spencer puts it something like this: First, a man must act for his own benefit — to do this is to be moral and good. Next, he must act for the benefit of his children. And third, he must act for the benefit of his race."

"And the highest, finest, right conduct," I interjected, "is that act which benefits at the same time the man, his children, and his race."

"I wouldn't stand for that," he replied. "Couldn't see the necessity for it, nor the common sense. I cut out the race and the children. I would sacrifice nothing for them. It's just so much slush and sentiment, and you must see it yourself, at least for one who does not believe in eternal life. With immortality before me, altruism would be a paying business proposition. I might elevate my soul to all kinds of altitudes. But with nothing eternal before me but death, given for a brief spell this yeasty crawling and squirming which is called life, why, it would be immoral for me to perform any act that was a sacrifice. Any sacrifice that makes me lose one crawl or squirm is foolish, — and not only foolish, for it is a wrong against myself and a wicked thing. I must not lose one crawl or squirm if I am to get the most out of the ferment. Nor will the eternal movelessness that is coming to me be made easier or harder by the sacrifices or selfishnesses of the time when I was yeasty and acrawl."

"Then you are an individualist, a materialist, and, logically, a hedonist."

"Big words," he smiled. "But what is a hedonist?"

He nodded agreement when I had given the definition. "And you are also," I continued, "a man one could not trust in the least thing where it was possible for a selfish interest to intervene?"

"Now you're beginning to understand," he said, brightening.

"You are a man utterly without what the world calls morals?"

"That's it."

"A man of whom to be always afraid — "

"That's the way to put it."

"As one is afraid of a snake, or a tiger, or a shark?"

"Now you know me," he said. "And you know me as I am generally known. Other men call me 'Wolf.'"

"You are a sort of monster," I added audaciously, "a Caliban who has pondered Setebos, and who acts as you act, in idle moments, by whim and fancy."

His brow clouded at the allusion. He did not understand, and I quickly learned that he did not know the poem.

"I'm just reading Browning," he confessed, "and it's pretty tough. I haven't got very far along, and as it is I've about lost my bearings."

Not to be tiresome, I shall say that I fetched the book from his state-room and read "Caliban" aloud. He was delighted. It was a primitive mode of reasoning and of looking at things that he understood thoroughly. He interrupted again and again with comment and criticism. When I finished, he had me read it over a second time, and a third. We fell into discussion — philosophy, science, evolution, religion. He betrayed the inaccuracies of the self-read man, and, it must be granted, the sureness and directness of the primitive mind. The very simplicity of his reasoning was its strength, and his materialism was far more compelling than the subtly complex materialism of Charley Furueth. Not that I — a confirmed and, as Furueth phrased it, a temperamental idealist — was to be compelled; but that Wolf Larsen stormed the last strongholds of my faith with a vigour that received respect, while not accorded conviction.

Time passed. Supper was at hand and the table not laid. I became restless and anxious, and when Thomas Mugridge glared down the companion-way, sick and angry of countenance, I prepared to go about my duties. But Wolf Larsen cried out to him:

"Cooky, you've got to hustle to-night. I'm busy with Hump, and you'll do the best you can without him."

And again the unprecedented was established. That night I sat at table with the captain and the hunters, while Thomas Mugridge waited on us and washed the dishes afterward — a whim, a Caliban-mood of Wolf Larsen's, and one I foresaw would bring me trouble. In the meantime we talked and talked, much to the disgust of the hunters, who could not understand a word.

## Chapter IX

Three days of rest, three blessed days of rest, are what I had with Wolf Larsen, eating at the cabin table and doing nothing but discuss life, literature, and the universe, the while Thomas Mugridge fumed and raged and did my work as well as his own.

"Watch out for squalls, is all I can say to you," was Louis's warning, given during a spare half-hour on deck while Wolf Larsen was engaged in straightening out a row among the hunters.

"Ye can't tell what'll be happenin'," Louis went on, in response to my query for more definite information. "The man's as contrary as air currents or water currents. You can never guess the ways iv him. 'Tis just as you're thinkin' you know him and are makin' a favourable slant along him, that he whirls around, dead ahead and comes howlin' down upon you and a-rippin' all iv your fine-weather sails to rags."

So I was not altogether surprised when the squall foretold by Louis smote me. We had been having a heated discussion, — upon life, of course, — and, grown over-bold, I was passing stiff strictures upon Wolf Larsen and the life of Wolf Larsen. In fact, I was vivisecting him and turning over his soul-stuff as keenly and thoroughly as it was his custom to do it to others. It may be a weakness of mine that I have an incisive way of speech; but I threw all restraint to the winds and cut and slashed until the whole man of him was snarling. The dark sun-bronze of his face went black with wrath, his eyes were ablaze. There was no clearness or sanity in them — nothing but the terrific rage of a madman. It was the wolf in him that I saw, and a mad wolf at that.

He sprang for me with a half-roar, gripping my arm. I had steeled myself to brazen it out, though I was trembling inwardly; but the enormous strength of the man was too much for my fortitude. He had gripped me by the biceps with his single hand, and when that grip tightened I wilted and shrieked aloud. My feet went out from under me. I simply could not stand upright and endure the agony. The muscles refused their duty. The pain was too great. My biceps was being crushed to a pulp.

He seemed to recover himself, for a lucid gleam came into his eyes, and he relaxed his hold with a short laugh that was more like a growl. I fell to the floor, feeling very faint, while he sat down, lighted a cigar, and watched me as a cat watches a mouse. As I writhed about I could see in his eyes that curiosity I had so often noted, that wonder and perplexity, that questing, that everlasting query of his as to what it was all about.

I finally crawled to my feet and ascended the companion stairs. Fair weather was over, and there was nothing left but to return to the galley. My left arm was numb, as though paralysed, and days passed before I could use it, while weeks went by before the last stiffness and pain went out of it. And he had done nothing but put his hand

upon my arm and squeeze. There had been no wrenching or jerking. He had just closed his hand with a steady pressure. What he might have done I did not fully realize till next day, when he put his head into the galley, and, as a sign of renewed friendliness, asked me how my arm was getting on.

"It might have been worse," he smiled.

I was peeling potatoes. He picked one up from the pan. It was fair-sized, firm, and unpeeled. He closed his hand upon it, squeezed, and the potato squirted out between his fingers in mushy streams. The pulpy remnant he dropped back into the pan and turned away, and I had a sharp vision of how it might have fared with me had the monster put his real strength upon me.

But the three days' rest was good in spite of it all, for it had given my knee the very chance it needed. It felt much better, the swelling had materially decreased, and the cap seemed descending into its proper place. Also, the three days' rest brought the trouble I had foreseen. It was plainly Thomas Mugridge's intention to make me pay for those three days. He treated me vilely, cursed me continually, and heaped his own work upon me. He even ventured to raise his fist to me, but I was becoming animal-like myself, and I snarled in his face so terribly that it must have frightened him back. It is no pleasant picture I can conjure up of myself, Humphrey Van Weyden, in that noisome ship's galley, crouched in a corner over my task, my face raised to the face of the creature about to strike me, my lips lifted and snarling like a dog's, my eyes gleaming with fear and helplessness and the courage that comes of fear and helplessness. I do not like the picture. It reminds me too strongly of a rat in a trap. I do not care to think of it; but it was elective, for the threatened blow did not descend.

Thomas Mugridge backed away, glaring as hatefully and viciously as I glared. A pair of beasts is what we were, penned together and showing our teeth. He was a coward, afraid to strike me because I had not quailed sufficiently in advance; so he chose a new way to intimidate me. There was only one galley knife that, as a knife, amounted to anything. This, through many years of service and wear, had acquired a long, lean blade. It was unusually cruel-looking, and at first I had shuddered every time I used it. The cook borrowed a stone from Johansen and proceeded to sharpen the knife. He did it with great ostentation, glancing significantly at me the while. He whetted it up and down all day long. Every odd moment he could find he had the knife and stone out and was whetting away. The steel acquired a razor edge. He tried it with the ball of his thumb or across the nail. He shaved hairs from the back of his hand, glanced along the edge with microscopic acuteness, and found, or feigned that he found, always, a slight inequality in its edge somewhere. Then he would put it on the stone again and whet, whet, whet, till I could have laughed aloud, it was so very ludicrous.

It was also serious, for I learned that he was capable of using it, that under all his cowardice there was a courage of cowardice, like mine, that would impel him to do the very thing his whole nature protested against doing and was afraid of doing. "Cooky's sharpening his knife for Hump," was being whispered about among the sailors, and some of them twitted him about it. This he took in good part, and was really pleased,

nodding his head with direful foreknowledge and mystery, until George Leach, the erstwhile cabin-boy, ventured some rough pleasantry on the subject.

Now it happened that Leach was one of the sailors told off to douse Mugridge after his game of cards with the captain. Leach had evidently done his task with a thoroughness that Mugridge had not forgiven, for words followed and evil names involving smirched ancestries. Mugridge menaced with the knife he was sharpening for me. Leach laughed and hurled more of his Telegraph Hill Billingsgate, and before either he or I knew what had happened, his right arm had been ripped open from elbow to wrist by a quick slash of the knife. The cook backed away, a fiendish expression on his face, the knife held before him in a position of defence. But Leach took it quite calmly, though blood was spouting upon the deck as generously as water from a fountain.

"I'm goin' to get you, Cooky," he said, "and I'll get you hard. And I won't be in no hurry about it. You'll be without that knife when I come for you."

So saying, he turned and walked quietly forward. Mugridge's face was livid with fear at what he had done and at what he might expect sooner or later from the man he had stabbed. But his demeanour toward me was more ferocious than ever. In spite of his fear at the reckoning he must expect to pay for what he had done, he could see that it had been an object-lesson to me, and he became more domineering and exultant. Also there was a lust in him, akin to madness, which had come with sight of the blood he had drawn. He was beginning to see red in whatever direction he looked. The psychology of it is sadly tangled, and yet I could read the workings of his mind as clearly as though it were a printed book.

Several days went by, the Ghost still foaming down the trades, and I could swear I saw madness growing in Thomas Mugridge's eyes. And I confess that I became afraid, very much afraid. Whet, whet, whet, it went all day long. The look in his eyes as he felt the keen edge and glared at me was positively carnivorous. I was afraid to turn my shoulder to him, and when I left the galley I went out backwards — to the amusement of the sailors and hunters, who made a point of gathering in groups to witness my exit. The strain was too great. I sometimes thought my mind would give way under it — a meet thing on this ship of madmen and brutes. Every hour, every minute of my existence was in jeopardy. I was a human soul in distress, and yet no soul, fore or aft, betrayed sufficient sympathy to come to my aid. At times I thought of throwing myself on the mercy of Wolf Larsen, but the vision of the mocking devil in his eyes that questioned life and sneered at it would come strong upon me and compel me to refrain. At other times I seriously contemplated suicide, and the whole force of my hopeful philosophy was required to keep me from going over the side in the darkness of night.

Several times Wolf Larsen tried to inveigle me into discussion, but I gave him short answers and eluded him. Finally, he commanded me to resume my seat at the cabin table for a time and let the cook do my work. Then I spoke frankly, telling him what I was enduring from Thomas Mugridge because of the three days of favouritism which had been shown me. Wolf Larsen regarded me with smiling eyes.

"So you're afraid, eh?" he sneered.

"Yes," I said defiantly and honestly, "I am afraid."

"That's the way with you fellows," he cried, half angrily, "sentimentalizing about your immortal souls and afraid to die. At sight of a sharp knife and a cowardly Cockney the clinging of life to life overcomes all your fond foolishness. Why, my dear fellow, you will live for ever. You are a god, and God cannot be killed. Cooky cannot hurt you. You are sure of your resurrection. What's there to be afraid of?"

"You have eternal life before you. You are a millionaire in immortality, and a millionaire whose fortune cannot be lost, whose fortune is less perishable than the stars and as lasting as space or time. It is impossible for you to diminish your principal. Immortality is a thing without beginning or end. Eternity is eternity, and though you die here and now you will go on living somewhere else and hereafter. And it is all very beautiful, this shaking off of the flesh and soaring of the imprisoned spirit. Cooky cannot hurt you. He can only give you a boost on the path you eternally must tread.

"Or, if you do not wish to be boosted just yet, why not boost Cooky? According to your ideas, he, too, must be an immortal millionaire. You cannot bankrupt him. His paper will always circulate at par. You cannot diminish the length of his living by killing him, for he is without beginning or end. He's bound to go on living, somewhere, somehow. Then boost him. Stick a knife in him and let his spirit free. As it is, it's in a nasty prison, and you'll do him only a kindness by breaking down the door. And who knows? — it may be a very beautiful spirit that will go soaring up into the blue from that ugly carcass. Boost him along, and I'll promote you to his place, and he's getting forty-five dollars a month."

It was plain that I could look for no help or mercy from Wolf Larsen. Whatever was to be done I must do for myself; and out of the courage of fear I evolved the plan of fighting Thomas Mugridge with his own weapons. I borrowed a whetstone from Johansen. Louis, the boat-steerer, had already begged me for condensed milk and sugar. The lazarette, where such delicacies were stored, was situated beneath the cabin floor. Watching my chance, I stole five cans of the milk, and that night, when it was Louis's watch on deck, I traded them with him for a dirk as lean and cruel-looking as Thomas Mugridge's vegetable knife. It was rusty and dull, but I turned the grindstone while Louis gave it an edge. I slept more soundly than usual that night.

Next morning, after breakfast, Thomas Mugridge began his whet, whet, whet. I glanced warily at him, for I was on my knees taking the ashes from the stove. When I returned from throwing them overside, he was talking to Harrison, whose honest yokel's face was filled with fascination and wonder.

"Yes," Mugridge was saying, "an' wot does 'is worship do but give me two years in Reading. But blimey if I cared. The other mug was fixed plenty. Should 'a seen 'im. Knife just like this. I stuck it in, like into soft butter, an' the w'y 'e squealed was better'n a tu-penny gaff." He shot a glance in my direction to see if I was taking it in, and went on. "'I didn't mean it Tommy,' 'e was sniffin'; 'so 'elp me Gawd, I didn't mean it!' 'I'll fix yer bloody well right,' I sez, an' kept right after 'im. I cut 'im in



ribbons, that's wot I did, an' 'e a-squealin' all the time. Once 'e got 'is 'and on the knife an' tried to 'old it. 'Ad 'is fingers around it, but I pulled it through, cuttin' to the bone. O, 'e was a sight, I can tell yer."

A call from the mate interrupted the gory narrative, and Harrison went aft. Mugridge sat down on the raised threshold to the galley and went on with his knife-sharpening. I put the shovel away and calmly sat down on the coal-box facing him. He favoured me with a vicious stare. Still calmly, though my heart was going pitapat, I pulled out Louis's dirk and began to whet it on the stone. I had looked for almost any sort of explosion on the Cockney's part, but to my surprise he did not appear aware of what I was doing. He went on whetting his knife. So did I. And for two hours we sat there, face to face, whet, whet, whet, till the news of it spread abroad and half the ship's company was crowding the galley doors to see the sight.

Encouragement and advice were freely tendered, and Jock Horner, the quiet, self-spoken hunter who looked as though he would not harm a mouse, advised me to leave the ribs alone and to thrust upward for the abdomen, at the same time giving what he called the "Spanish twist" to the blade. Leach, his bandaged arm prominently to the fore, begged me to leave a few remnants of the cook for him; and Wolf Larsen paused once or twice at the break of the poop to glance curiously at what must have been to him a stirring and crawling of the yeasty thing he knew as life.

And I make free to say that for the time being life assumed the same sordid values to me. There was nothing pretty about it, nothing divine — only two cowardly moving things that sat whetting steel upon stone, and a group of other moving things, cowardly and otherwise, that looked on. Half of them, I am sure, were anxious to see us shedding each other's blood. It would have been entertainment. And I do not think there was one who would have interfered had we closed in a death-struggle.

On the other hand, the whole thing was laughable and childish. Whet, whet, whet, — Humphrey Van Weyden sharpening his knife in a ship's galley and trying its edge with his thumb! Of all situations this was the most inconceivable. I know that my own kind could not have believed it possible. I had not been called "Sissy" Van Weyden all my days without reason, and that "Sissy" Van Weyden should be capable of doing this thing was a revelation to Humphrey Van Weyden, who knew not whether to be exultant or ashamed.

But nothing happened. At the end of two hours Thomas Mugridge put away knife and stone and held out his hand.

"Wot's the good of mykin' a 'oly show of ourselves for them mugs?" he demanded. "They don't love us, an' bloody well glad they'd be a-seein' us cuttin' our throats. Yer not 'arf bad, 'Ump! You've got spunk, as you Yanks s'y, an' I like yer in a w'y. So come on an' shyke."

Coward that I might be, I was less a coward than he. It was a distinct victory I had gained, and I refused to forego any of it by shaking his detestable hand.

“All right,” he said pridelessly, “tyke it or leave it, I’ll like yer none the less for it.” And to save his face he turned fiercely upon the onlookers. “Get outa my galley-doors, you bloomin’ swabs!”

This command was reinforced by a steaming kettle of water, and at sight of it the sailors scrambled out of the way. This was a sort of victory for Thomas Mugridge, and enabled him to accept more gracefully the defeat I had given him, though, of course, he was too discreet to attempt to drive the hunters away.

“I see Cooky’s finish,” I heard Smoke say to Horner.

“You bet,” was the reply. “Hump runs the galley from now on, and Cooky pulls in his horns.”

Mugridge heard and shot a swift glance at me, but I gave no sign that the conversation had reached me. I had not thought my victory was so far-reaching and complete, but I resolved to let go nothing I had gained. As the days went by, Smoke’s prophecy was verified. The Cockney became more humble and slavish to me than even to Wolf Larsen. I mistered him and sirred him no longer, washed no more greasy pots, and peeled no more potatoes. I did my own work, and my own work only, and when and in what fashion I saw fit. Also I carried the dirk in a sheath at my hip, sailor-fashion, and maintained toward Thomas Mugridge a constant attitude which was composed of equal parts of domineering, insult, and contempt.

## Chapter X

My intimacy with Wolf Larsen increases — if by intimacy may be denoted those relations which exist between master and man, or, better yet, between king and jester. I am to him no more than a toy, and he values me no more than a child values a toy. My function is to amuse, and so long as I amuse all goes well; but let him become bored, or let him have one of his black moods come upon him, and at once I am relegated from cabin table to galley, while, at the same time, I am fortunate to escape with my life and a whole body.

The loneliness of the man is slowly being borne in upon me. There is not a man aboard but hates or fears him, nor is there a man whom he does not despise. He seems consuming with the tremendous power that is in him and that seems never to have found adequate expression in works. He is as Lucifer would be, were that proud spirit banished to a society of soulless, Tomlinsonian ghosts.

This loneliness is bad enough in itself, but, to make it worse, he is oppressed by the primal melancholy of the race. Knowing him, I review the old Scandinavian myths with clearer understanding. The white-skinned, fair-haired savages who created that terrible pantheon were of the same fibre as he. The frivolity of the laughter-loving Latins is no part of him. When he laughs it is from a humour that is nothing else than ferocious. But he laughs rarely; he is too often sad. And it is a sadness as deep-reaching as the roots of the race. It is the race heritage, the sadness which has made the race sober-minded, clean-lived and fanatically moral, and which, in this latter connection, has culminated among the English in the Reformed Church and Mrs. Grundy.

In point of fact, the chief vent to this primal melancholy has been religion in its more agonizing forms. But the compensations of such religion are denied Wolf Larsen. His brutal materialism will not permit it. So, when his blue moods come on, nothing remains for him, but to be devilish. Were he not so terrible a man, I could sometimes feel sorry for him, as instance three mornings ago, when I went into his stateroom to fill his water-bottle and came unexpectedly upon him. He did not see me. His head was buried in his hands, and his shoulders were heaving convulsively as with sobs. He seemed torn by some mighty grief. As I softly withdrew I could hear him groaning, "God! God! God!" Not that he was calling upon God; it was a mere expletive, but it came from his soul.

At dinner he asked the hunters for a remedy for headache, and by evening, strong man that he was, he was half-blind and reeling about the cabin.

"I've never been sick in my life, Hump," he said, as I guided him to his room. "Nor did I ever have a headache except the time my head was healing after having been laid open for six inches by a capstan-bar."

For three days this blinding headache lasted, and he suffered as wild animals suffer, as it seemed the way on ship to suffer, without complaint, without sympathy, utterly alone.

This morning, however, on entering his state-room to make the bed and put things in order, I found him well and hard at work. Table and bunk were littered with designs and calculations. On a large transparent sheet, compass and square in hand, he was copying what appeared to be a scale of some sort or other.

"Hello, Hump," he greeted me genially. "I'm just finishing the finishing touches. Want to see it work?"

"But what is it?" I asked.

"A labour-saving device for mariners, navigation reduced to kindergarten simplicity," he answered gaily. "From to-day a child will be able to navigate a ship. No more long-winded calculations. All you need is one star in the sky on a dirty night to know instantly where you are. Look. I place the transparent scale on this star-map, revolving the scale on the North Pole. On the scale I've worked out the circles of altitude and the lines of bearing. All I do is to put it on a star, revolve the scale till it is opposite those figures on the map underneath, and presto! there you are, the ship's precise location!"

There was a ring of triumph in his voice, and his eyes, clear blue this morning as the sea, were sparkling with light.

"You must be well up in mathematics," I said. "Where did you go to school?"

"Never saw the inside of one, worse luck," was the answer. "I had to dig it out for myself."

"And why do you think I have made this thing?" he demanded, abruptly. "Dreaming to leave footprints on the sands of time?" He laughed one of his horrible mocking laughs. "Not at all. To get it patented, to make money from it, to revel in piggishness with all night in while other men do the work. That's my purpose. Also, I have enjoyed working it out."

"The creative joy," I murmured.

"I guess that's what it ought to be called. Which is another way of expressing the joy of life in that it is alive, the triumph of movement over matter, of the quick over the dead, the pride of the yeast because it is yeast and crawls."

I threw up my hands with helpless disapproval of his inveterate materialism and went about making the bed. He continued copying lines and figures upon the transparent scale. It was a task requiring the utmost nicety and precision, and I could not but admire the way he tempered his strength to the fineness and delicacy of the need.

When I had finished the bed, I caught myself looking at him in a fascinated sort of way. He was certainly a handsome man — beautiful in the masculine sense. And again, with never-failing wonder, I remarked the total lack of viciousness, or wickedness, or sinfulness in his face. It was the face, I am convinced, of a man who did no wrong. And by this I do not wish to be misunderstood. What I mean is that it was the face of a

man who either did nothing contrary to the dictates of his conscience, or who had no conscience. I am inclined to the latter way of accounting for it. He was a magnificent atavism, a man so purely primitive that he was of the type that came into the world before the development of the moral nature. He was not immoral, but merely unmoral.

As I have said, in the masculine sense his was a beautiful face. Smooth-shaven, every line was distinct, and it was cut as clear and sharp as a cameo; while sea and sun had tanned the naturally fair skin to a dark bronze which bespoke struggle and battle and added both to his savagery and his beauty. The lips were full, yet possessed of the firmness, almost harshness, which is characteristic of thin lips. The set of his mouth, his chin, his jaw, was likewise firm or harsh, with all the fierceness and indomitableness of the male — the nose also. It was the nose of a being born to conquer and command. It just hinted of the eagle beak. It might have been Grecian, it might have been Roman, only it was a shade too massive for the one, a shade too delicate for the other. And while the whole face was the incarnation of fierceness and strength, the primal melancholy from which he suffered seemed to greatness the lines of mouth and eye and brow, seemed to give a largeness and completeness which otherwise the face would have lacked.

And so I caught myself standing idly and studying him. I cannot say how greatly the man had come to interest me. Who was he? What was he? How had he happened to be? All powers seemed his, all potentialities — why, then, was he no more than the obscure master of a seal-hunting schooner with a reputation for frightful brutality amongst the men who hunted seals?

My curiosity burst from me in a flood of speech.

“Why is it that you have not done great things in this world? With the power that is yours you might have risen to any height. Unpossessed of conscience or moral instinct, you might have mastered the world, broken it to your hand. And yet here you are, at the top of your life, where diminishing and dying begin, living an obscure and sordid existence, hunting sea animals for the satisfaction of woman’s vanity and love of decoration, revelling in a piggishness, to use your own words, which is anything and everything except splendid. Why, with all that wonderful strength, have you not done something? There was nothing to stop you, nothing that could stop you. What was wrong? Did you lack ambition? Did you fall under temptation? What was the matter? What was the matter?”

He had lifted his eyes to me at the commencement of my outburst, and followed me complacently until I had done and stood before him breathless and dismayed. He waited a moment, as though seeking where to begin, and then said:

“Hump, do you know the parable of the sower who went forth to sow? If you will remember, some of the seed fell upon stony places, where there was not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them.”

“Well?” I said.

“Well?” he queried, half petulantly. “It was not well. I was one of those seeds.”

He dropped his head to the scale and resumed the copying. I finished my work and had opened the door to leave, when he spoke to me.

"Hump, if you will look on the west coast of the map of Norway you will see an indentation called Romsdal Fiord. I was born within a hundred miles of that stretch of water. But I was not born Norwegian. I am a Dane. My father and mother were Danes, and how they ever came to that bleak bight of land on the west coast I do not know. I never heard. Outside of that there is nothing mysterious. They were poor people and unlettered. They came of generations of poor unlettered people — peasants of the sea who sowed their sons on the waves as has been their custom since time began. There is no more to tell."

"But there is," I objected. "It is still obscure to me."

"What can I tell you?" he demanded, with a recrudescence of fierceness. "Of the meagreness of a child's life? of fish diet and coarse living? of going out with the boats from the time I could crawl? of my brothers, who went away one by one to the deep-sea farming and never came back? of myself, unable to read or write, cabin-boy at the mature age of ten on the coastwise, old-country ships? of the rough fare and rougher usage, where kicks and blows were bed and breakfast and took the place of speech, and fear and hatred and pain were my only soul-experiences? I do not care to remember. A madness comes up in my brain even now as I think of it. But there were coastwise skippers I would have returned and killed when a man's strength came to me, only the lines of my life were cast at the time in other places. I did return, not long ago, but unfortunately the skippers were dead, all but one, a mate in the old days, a skipper when I met him, and when I left him a cripple who would never walk again."

"But you who read Spencer and Darwin and have never seen the inside of a school, how did you learn to read and write?" I queried.

"In the English merchant service. Cabin-boy at twelve, ship's boy at fourteen, ordinary seamen at sixteen, able seaman at seventeen, and cock of the fo'c'sle, infinite ambition and infinite loneliness, receiving neither help nor sympathy, I did it all for myself — navigation, mathematics, science, literature, and what not. And of what use has it been? Master and owner of a ship at the top of my life, as you say, when I am beginning to diminish and die. Paltry, isn't it? And when the sun was up I was scorched, and because I had no root I withered away."

"But history tells of slaves who rose to the purple," I chided.

"And history tells of opportunities that came to the slaves who rose to the purple," he answered grimly. "No man makes opportunity. All the great men ever did was to know it when it came to them. The Corsican knew. I have dreamed as greatly as the Corsican. I should have known the opportunity, but it never came. The thorns sprung up and choked me. And, Hump, I can tell you that you know more about me than any living man, except my own brother."

"And what is he? And where is he?"

"Master of the steamship *Macedonia*, seal-hunter," was the answer. "We will meet him most probably on the Japan coast. Men call him 'Death' Larsen."

"Death Larsen!" I involuntarily cried. "Is he like you?"

"Hardly. He is a lump of an animal without any head. He has all my — my — "

"Brutishness," I suggested.

"Yes, — thank you for the word, — all my brutishness, but he can scarcely read or write."

"And he has never philosophized on life," I added.

"No," Wolf Larsen answered, with an indescribable air of sadness. "And he is all the happier for leaving life alone. He is too busy living it to think about it. My mistake was in ever opening the books."

# Chapter XI

The Ghost has attained the southernmost point of the arc she is describing across the Pacific, and is already beginning to edge away to the west and north toward some lone island, it is rumoured, where she will fill her water-casks before proceeding to the season's hunt along the coast of Japan. The hunters have experimented and practised with their rifles and shotguns till they are satisfied, and the boat-pullers and steerers have made their spritsails, bound the oars and rowlocks in leather and sennit so that they will make no noise when creeping on the seals, and put their boats in apple-pie order — to use Leach's homely phrase.

His arm, by the way, has healed nicely, though the scar will remain all his life. Thomas Mugridge lives in mortal fear of him, and is afraid to venture on deck after dark. There are two or three standing quarrels in the forecaskle. Louis tells me that the gossip of the sailors finds its way aft, and that two of the telltales have been badly beaten by their mates. He shakes his head dubiously over the outlook for the man Johnson, who is boat-puller in the same boat with him. Johnson has been guilty of speaking his mind too freely, and has collided two or three times with Wolf Larsen over the pronunciation of his name. Johansen he thrashed on the amidships deck the other night, since which time the mate has called him by his proper name. But of course it is out of the question that Johnson should thrash Wolf Larsen.

Louis has also given me additional information about Death Larsen, which tallies with the captain's brief description. We may expect to meet Death Larsen on the Japan coast. "And look out for squalls," is Louis's prophecy, "for they hate one another like the wolf whelps they are." Death Larsen is in command of the only sealing steamer in the fleet, the *Macedonia*, which carries fourteen boats, whereas the rest of the schooners carry only six. There is wild talk of cannon aboard, and of strange raids and expeditions she may make, ranging from opium smuggling into the States and arms smuggling into China, to blackbirding and open piracy. Yet I cannot but believe for I have never yet caught him in a lie, while he has a cyclopædic knowledge of sealing and the men of the sealing fleets.

As it is forward and in the galley, so it is in the steerage and aft, on this veritable hell-ship. Men fight and struggle ferociously for one another's lives. The hunters are looking for a shooting scrape at any moment between Smoke and Henderson, whose old quarrel has not healed, while Wolf Larsen says positively that he will kill the survivor of the affair, if such affair comes off. He frankly states that the position he takes is based on no moral grounds, that all the hunters could kill and eat one another so far as he is concerned, were it not that he needs them alive for the hunting. If they will



only hold their hands until the season is over, he promises them a royal carnival, when all grudges can be settled and the survivors may toss the non-survivors overboard and arrange a story as to how the missing men were lost at sea. I think even the hunters are appalled at his cold-bloodedness. Wicked men though they be, they are certainly very much afraid of him.

Thomas Mugridge is cur-like in his subjection to me, while I go about in secret dread of him. His is the courage of fear, — a strange thing I know well of myself, — and at any moment it may master the fear and impel him to the taking of my life. My knee is much better, though it often aches for long periods, and the stiffness is gradually leaving the arm which Wolf Larsen squeezed. Otherwise I am in splendid condition, feel that I am in splendid condition. My muscles are growing harder and increasing in size. My hands, however, are a spectacle for grief. They have a parboiled appearance, are afflicted with hang-nails, while the nails are broken and discoloured, and the edges of the quick seem to be assuming a fungoid sort of growth. Also, I am suffering from boils, due to the diet, most likely, for I was never afflicted in this manner before.

I was amused, a couple of evenings back, by seeing Wolf Larsen reading the Bible, a copy of which, after the futile search for one at the beginning of the voyage, had been found in the dead mate's sea-chest. I wondered what Wolf Larsen could get from it, and he read aloud to me from Ecclesiastes. I could imagine he was speaking the thoughts of his own mind as he read to me, and his voice, reverberating deeply and mournfully in the confined cabin, charmed and held me. He may be uneducated, but he certainly knows how to express the significance of the written word. I can hear him now, as I shall always hear him, the primal melancholy vibrant in his voice as he read:

"I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

"So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom returned with me.

"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

"All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

"This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all; yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

"For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

"For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

"Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun."

"There you have it, Hump," he said, closing the book upon his finger and looking up at me. "The Preacher who was king over Israel in Jerusalem thought as I think. You call me a pessimist. Is not this pessimism of the blackest? — 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit,' 'There is no profit under the sun,' 'There is one event unto all,' to the fool and the wise, the clean and the unclean, the sinner and the saint, and that event is death, and an evil thing, he says. For the Preacher loved life, and did not want to die, saying, 'For a living dog is better than a dead lion.' He preferred the vanity and vexation to the silence and unmovableness of the grave. And so I. To crawl is piggish; but to not crawl, to be as the clod and rock, is loathsome to contemplate. It is loathsome to the life that is in me, the very essence of which is movement, the power of movement, and the consciousness of the power of movement. Life itself is unsatisfaction, but to look ahead to death is greater unsatisfaction."

"You are worse off than Omar," I said. "He, at least, after the customary agonizing of youth, found content and made of his materialism a joyous thing."

"Who was Omar?" Wolf Larsen asked, and I did no more work that day, nor the next, nor the next.

In his random reading he had never chanced upon the Rubáiyát, and it was to him like a great find of treasure. Much I remembered, possibly two-thirds of the quatrains, and I managed to piece out the remainder without difficulty. We talked for hours over single stanzas, and I found him reading into them a wail of regret and a rebellion which, for the life of me, I could not discover myself. Possibly I recited with a certain joyous lilt which was my own, for — his memory was good, and at a second rendering, very often the first, he made a quatrain his own — he recited the same lines and invested them with an unrest and passionate revolt that was well-nigh convincing.

I was interested as to which quatrain he would like best, and was not surprised when he hit upon the one born of an instant's irritability, and quite at variance with the Persian's complacent philosophy and genial code of life:

"What, without asking, hither hurried Whence?

And, without asking, Whither hurried hence!

Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine

Must drown the memory of that insolence!"

"Great!" Wolf Larsen cried. "Great! That's the keynote. Insolence! He could not have used a better word."

In vain I objected and denied. He deluged me, overwhelmed me with argument.

"It's not the nature of life to be otherwise. Life, when it knows that it must cease living, will always rebel. It cannot help itself. The Preacher found life and the works of life all a vanity and vexation, an evil thing; but death, the ceasing to be able to be vain and vexed, he found an eviler thing. Through chapter after chapter he is worried

by the one event that cometh to all alike. So Omar, so I, so you, even you, for you rebelled against dying when Cooky sharpened a knife for you. You were afraid to die; the life that was in you, that composes you, that is greater than you, did not want to die. You have talked of the instinct of immortality. I talk of the instinct of life, which is to live, and which, when death looms near and large, masters the instinct, so called, of immortality. It mastered it in you (you cannot deny it), because a crazy Cockney cook sharpened a knife.

“You are afraid of him now. You are afraid of me. You cannot deny it. If I should catch you by the throat, thus,” — his hand was about my throat and my breath was shut off, — “and began to press the life out of you thus, and thus, your instinct of immortality will go glimmering, and your instinct of life, which is longing for life, will flutter up, and you will struggle to save yourself. Eh? I see the fear of death in your eyes. You beat the air with your arms. You exert all your puny strength to struggle to live. Your hand is clutching my arm, lightly it feels as a butterfly resting there. Your chest is heaving, your tongue protruding, your skin turning dark, your eyes swimming. ‘To live! To live! To live!’ you are crying; and you are crying to live here and now, not hereafter. You doubt your immortality, eh? Ha! ha! You are not sure of it. You won’t chance it. This life only you are certain is real. Ah, it is growing dark and darker. It is the darkness of death, the ceasing to be, the ceasing to feel, the ceasing to move, that is gathering about you, descending upon you, rising around you. Your eyes are becoming set. They are glazing. My voice sounds faint and far. You cannot see my face. And still you struggle in my grip. You kick with your legs. Your body draws itself up in knots like a snake’s. Your chest heaves and strains. To live! To live! To live — ”

I heard no more. Consciousness was blotted out by the darkness he had so graphically described, and when I came to myself I was lying on the floor and he was smoking a cigar and regarding me thoughtfully with that old familiar light of curiosity in his eyes.

“Well, have I convinced you?” he demanded. “Here take a drink of this. I want to ask you some questions.”

I rolled my head negatively on the floor. “Your arguments are too — er — forcible,” I managed to articulate, at cost of great pain to my aching throat.

“You’ll be all right in half-an-hour,” he assured me. “And I promise I won’t use any more physical demonstrations. Get up now. You can sit on a chair.”

And, toy that I was of this monster, the discussion of Omar and the Preacher was resumed. And half the night we sat up over it.

## Chapter XII

The last twenty-four hours have witnessed a carnival of brutality. From cabin to fore-castle it seems to have broken out like a contagion. I scarcely know where to begin. Wolf Larsen was really the cause of it. The relations among the men, strained and made tense by feuds, quarrels and grudges, were in a state of unstable equilibrium, and evil passions flared up in flame like prairie-grass.

Thomas Mugridge is a sneak, a spy, an informer. He has been attempting to curry favour and reinstate himself in the good graces of the captain by carrying tales of the men forward. He it was, I know, that carried some of Johnson's hasty talk to Wolf Larsen. Johnson, it seems, bought a suit of oilskins from the slop-chest and found them to be of greatly inferior quality. Nor was he slow in advertising the fact. The slop-chest is a sort of miniature dry-goods store which is carried by all sealing schooners and which is stocked with articles peculiar to the needs of the sailors. Whatever a sailor purchases is taken from his subsequent earnings on the sealing grounds; for, as it is with the hunters so it is with the boat-pullers and steerers — in the place of wages they receive a "lay," a rate of so much per skin for every skin captured in their particular boat.

But of Johnson's grumbling at the slop-chest I knew nothing, so that what I witnessed came with a shock of sudden surprise. I had just finished sweeping the cabin, and had been inveigled by Wolf Larsen into a discussion of Hamlet, his favourite Shakespearian character, when Johansen descended the companion stairs followed by Johnson. The latter's cap came off after the custom of the sea, and he stood respectfully in the centre of the cabin, swaying heavily and uneasily to the roll of the schooner and facing the captain.

"Shut the doors and draw the slide," Wolf Larsen said to me.

As I obeyed I noticed an anxious light come into Johnson's eyes, but I did not dream of its cause. I did not dream of what was to occur until it did occur, but he knew from the very first what was coming and awaited it bravely. And in his action I found complete refutation of all Wolf Larsen's materialism. The sailor Johnson was swayed by idea, by principle, and truth, and sincerity. He was right, he knew he was right, and he was unafraid. He would die for the right if needs be, he would be true to himself, sincere with his soul. And in this was portrayed the victory of the spirit over the flesh, the indomitability and moral grandeur of the soul that knows no restriction and rises above time and space and matter with a surety and invincibleness born of nothing else than eternity and immortality.

But to return. I noticed the anxious light in Johnson's eyes, but mistook it for the native shyness and embarrassment of the man. The mate, Johansen, stood away several feet to the side of him, and fully three yards in front of him sat Wolf Larsen on one of the pivotal cabin chairs. An appreciable pause fell after I had closed the doors and drawn the slide, a pause that must have lasted fully a minute. It was broken by Wolf Larsen.

"Yonson," he began.

"My name is Johnson, sir," the sailor boldly corrected.

"Well, Johnson, then, damn you! Can you guess why I have sent for you?"

"Yes, and no, sir," was the slow reply. "My work is done well. The mate knows that, and you know it, sir. So there cannot be any complaint."

"And is that all?" Wolf Larsen queried, his voice soft, and low, and purring.

"I know you have it in for me," Johnson continued with his unalterable and ponderous slowness. "You do not like me. You — you —"

"Go on," Wolf Larsen prompted. "Don't be afraid of my feelings."

"I am not afraid," the sailor retorted, a slight angry flush rising through his sunburn. "If I speak not fast, it is because I have not been from the old country as long as you. You do not like me because I am too much of a man; that is why, sir."

"You are too much of a man for ship discipline, if that is what you mean, and if you know what I mean," was Wolf Larsen's retort.

"I know English, and I know what you mean, sir," Johnson answered, his flush deepening at the slur on his knowledge of the English language.

"Johnson," Wolf Larsen said, with an air of dismissing all that had gone before as introductory to the main business in hand, "I understand you're not quite satisfied with those oilskins?"

"No, I am not. They are no good, sir."

"And you've been shooting off your mouth about them."

"I say what I think, sir," the sailor answered courageously, not failing at the same time in ship courtesy, which demanded that "sir" be appended to each speech he made.

It was at this moment that I chanced to glance at Johansen. His big fists were clenching and unclenching, and his face was positively fiendish, so malignantly did he look at Johnson. I noticed a black discoloration, still faintly visible, under Johansen's eye, a mark of the thrashing he had received a few nights before from the sailor. For the first time I began to divine that something terrible was about to be enacted, — what, I could not imagine.

"Do you know what happens to men who say what you've said about my slop-chest and me?" Wolf Larsen was demanding.

"I know, sir," was the answer.

"What?" Wolf Larsen demanded, sharply and imperatively.

"What you and the mate there are going to do to me, sir."

"Look at him, Hump," Wolf Larsen said to me, "look at this bit of animated dust, this aggregation of matter that moves and breathes and defies me and thoroughly believes

itself to be compounded of something good; that is impressed with certain human fictions such as righteousness and honesty, and that will live up to them in spite of all personal discomforts and menaces. What do you think of him, Hump? What do you think of him?"

"I think that he is a better man than you are," I answered, impelled, somehow, with a desire to draw upon myself a portion of the wrath I felt was about to break upon his head. "His human fictions, as you choose to call them, make for nobility and manhood. You have no fictions, no dreams, no ideals. You are a pauper."

He nodded his head with a savage pleasantness. "Quite true, Hump, quite true. I have no fictions that make for nobility and manhood. A living dog is better than a dead lion, say I with the Preacher. My only doctrine is the doctrine of expediency, and it makes for surviving. This bit of the ferment we call 'Johnson,' when he is no longer a bit of the ferment, only dust and ashes, will have no more nobility than any dust and ashes, while I shall still be alive and roaring."

"Do you know what I am going to do?" he questioned.

I shook my head.

"Well, I am going to exercise my prerogative of roaring and show you how fares nobility. Watch me."

Three yards away from Johnson he was, and sitting down. Nine feet! And yet he left the chair in full leap, without first gaining a standing position. He left the chair, just as he sat in it, squarely, springing from the sitting posture like a wild animal, a tiger, and like a tiger covered the intervening space. It was an avalanche of fury that Johnson strove vainly to fend off. He threw one arm down to protect the stomach, the other arm up to protect the head; but Wolf Larsen's fist drove midway between, on the chest, with a crushing, resounding impact. Johnson's breath, suddenly expelled, shot from his mouth and as suddenly checked, with the forced, audible expiration of a man wielding an axe. He almost fell backward, and swayed from side to side in an effort to recover his balance.

I cannot give the further particulars of the horrible scene that followed. It was too revolting. It turns me sick even now when I think of it. Johnson fought bravely enough, but he was no match for Wolf Larsen, much less for Wolf Larsen and the mate. It was frightful. I had not imagined a human being could endure so much and still live and struggle on. And struggle on Johnson did. Of course there was no hope for him, not the slightest, and he knew it as well as I, but by the manhood that was in him he could not cease from fighting for that manhood.

It was too much for me to witness. I felt that I should lose my mind, and I ran up the companion stairs to open the doors and escape on deck. But Wolf Larsen, leaving his victim for the moment, and with one of his tremendous springs, gained my side and flung me into the far corner of the cabin.

"The phenomena of life, Hump," he girded at me. "Stay and watch it. You may gather data on the immortality of the soul. Besides, you know, we can't hurt Johnson's soul. It's only the fleeting form we may demolish."

It seemed centuries — possibly it was no more than ten minutes that the beating continued. Wolf Larsen and Johansen were all about the poor fellow. They struck him with their fists, kicked him with their heavy shoes, knocked him down, and dragged him to his feet to knock him down again. His eyes were blinded so that he could not see, and the blood running from ears and nose and mouth turned the cabin into a shambles. And when he could no longer rise they still continued to beat and kick him where he lay.

“Easy, Johansen; easy as she goes,” Wolf Larsen finally said.

But the beast in the mate was up and rampant, and Wolf Larsen was compelled to brush him away with a back-handed sweep of the arm, gentle enough, apparently, but which hurled Johansen back like a cork, driving his head against the wall with a crash. He fell to the floor, half stunned for the moment, breathing heavily and blinking his eyes in a stupid sort of way.

“Jerk open the doors, — Hump,” I was commanded.

I obeyed, and the two brutes picked up the senseless man like a sack of rubbish and hove him clear up the companion stairs, through the narrow doorway, and out on deck. The blood from his nose gushed in a scarlet stream over the feet of the helmsman, who was none other than Louis, his boat-mate. But Louis took and gave a spoke and gazed imperturbably into the binnacle.

Not so was the conduct of George Leach, the erstwhile cabin-boy. Fore and aft there was nothing that could have surprised us more than his consequent behaviour. He it was that came up on the poop without orders and dragged Johnson forward, where he set about dressing his wounds as well as he could and making him comfortable. Johnson, as Johnson, was unrecognizable; and not only that, for his features, as human features at all, were unrecognizable, so discoloured and swollen had they become in the few minutes which had elapsed between the beginning of the beating and the dragging forward of the body.

But of Leach’s behaviour — By the time I had finished cleansing the cabin he had taken care of Johnson. I had come up on deck for a breath of fresh air and to try to get some repose for my overwrought nerves. Wolf Larsen was smoking a cigar and examining the patent log which the Ghost usually towed astern, but which had been hauled in for some purpose. Suddenly Leach’s voice came to my ears. It was tense and hoarse with an overmastering rage. I turned and saw him standing just beneath the break of the poop on the port side of the galley. His face was convulsed and white, his eyes were flashing, his clenched fists raised overhead.

“May God damn your soul to hell, Wolf Larsen, only hell’s too good for you, you coward, you murderer, you pig!” was his opening salutation.

I was thunderstruck. I looked for his instant annihilation. But it was not Wolf Larsen’s whim to annihilate him. He sauntered slowly forward to the break of the poop, and, leaning his elbow on the corner of the cabin, gazed down thoughtfully and curiously at the excited boy.

And the boy indicted Wolf Larsen as he had never been indicted before. The sailors assembled in a fearful group just outside the fore-castle scuttle and watched and listened. The hunters piled pell-mell out of the steerage, but as Leach's tirade continued I saw that there was no levity in their faces. Even they were frightened, not at the boy's terrible words, but at his terrible audacity. It did not seem possible that any living creature could thus beard Wolf Larsen in his teeth. I know for myself that I was shocked into admiration of the boy, and I saw in him the splendid invincibility of immortality rising above the flesh and the fears of the flesh, as in the prophets of old, to condemn unrighteousness.

And such condemnation! He haled forth Wolf Larsen's soul naked to the scorn of men. He rained upon it curses from God and High Heaven, and withered it with a heat of invective that savoured of a mediæval excommunication of the Catholic Church. He ran the gamut of denunciation, rising to heights of wrath that were sublime and almost Godlike, and from sheer exhaustion sinking to the vilest and most indecent abuse.

His rage was a madness. His lips were flecked with a soapy froth, and sometimes he choked and gurgled and became inarticulate. And through it all, calm and impassive, leaning on his elbow and gazing down, Wolf Larsen seemed lost in a great curiosity. This wild stirring of yeasty life, this terrific revolt and defiance of matter that moved, perplexed and interested him.

Each moment I looked, and everybody looked, for him to leap upon the boy and destroy him. But it was not his whim. His cigar went out, and he continued to gaze silently and curiously.

Leach had worked himself into an ecstasy of impotent rage.

"Pig! Pig! Pig!" he was reiterating at the top of his lungs. "Why don't you come down and kill me, you murderer? You can do it! I ain't afraid! There's no one to stop you! Damn sight better dead and outa your reach than alive and in your clutches! Come on, you coward! Kill me! Kill me! Kill me!"

It was at this stage that Thomas Mugridge's erratic soul brought him into the scene. He had been listening at the galley door, but he now came out, ostensibly to fling some scraps over the side, but obviously to see the killing he was certain would take place. He smirked greasily up into the face of Wolf Larsen, who seemed not to see him. But the Cockney was unabashed, though mad, stark mad. He turned to Leach, saying:

"Such langwidge! Shockin'!"

Leach's rage was no longer impotent. Here at last was something ready to hand. And for the first time since the stabbing the Cockney had appeared outside the galley without his knife. The words had barely left his mouth when he was knocked down by Leach. Three times he struggled to his feet, striving to gain the galley, and each time was knocked down.

"Oh, Lord!" he cried. "Elp! 'Elp! Tyke 'im aw'y, carn't yer? Tyke 'im aw'y!"

The hunters laughed from sheer relief. Tragedy had dwindled, the farce had begun. The sailors now crowded boldly aft, grinning and shuffling, to watch the pummelling of the hated Cockney. And even I felt a great joy surge up within me. I confess that



I delighted in this beating Leach was giving to Thomas Mugridge, though it was as terrible, almost, as the one Mugridge had caused to be given to Johnson. But the expression of Wolf Larsen's face never changed. He did not change his position either, but continued to gaze down with a great curiosity. For all his pragmatic certitude, it seemed as if he watched the play and movement of life in the hope of discovering something more about it, of discerning in its maddest writhings a something which had hitherto escaped him, — the key to its mystery, as it were, which would make all clear and plain.

But the beating! It was quite similar to the one I had witnessed in the cabin. The Cockney strove in vain to protect himself from the infuriated boy. And in vain he strove to gain the shelter of the cabin. He rolled toward it, grovelled toward it, fell toward it when he was knocked down. But blow followed blow with bewildering rapidity. He was knocked about like a shuttlecock, until, finally, like Johnson, he was beaten and kicked as he lay helpless on the deck. And no one interfered. Leach could have killed him, but, having evidently filled the measure of his vengeance, he drew away from his prostrate foe, who was whimpering and wailing in a puppyish sort of way, and walked forward.

But these two affairs were only the opening events of the day's programme. In the afternoon Smoke and Henderson fell foul of each other, and a fusillade of shots came up from the steerage, followed by a stampede of the other four hunters for the deck. A column of thick, acrid smoke — the kind always made by black powder — was arising through the open companion-way, and down through it leaped Wolf Larsen. The sound of blows and scuffling came to our ears. Both men were wounded, and he was thrashing them both for having disobeyed his orders and crippled themselves in advance of the hunting season. In fact, they were badly wounded, and, having thrashed them, he proceeded to operate upon them in a rough surgical fashion and to dress their wounds. I served as assistant while he probed and cleansed the passages made by the bullets, and I saw the two men endure his crude surgery without anæsthetics and with no more to uphold them than a stiff tumbler of whisky.

Then, in the first dog-watch, trouble came to a head in the fore-castle. It took its rise out of the tittle-tattle and tale-bearing which had been the cause of Johnson's beating, and from the noise we heard, and from the sight of the bruised men next day, it was patent that half the fore-castle had soundly drubbed the other half.

The second dog-watch and the day were wound up by a fight between Johansen and the lean, Yankee-looking hunter, Latimer. It was caused by remarks of Latimer's concerning the noises made by the mate in his sleep, and though Johansen was whipped, he kept the steerage awake for the rest of the night while he blissfully slumbered and fought the fight over and over again.

As for myself, I was oppressed with nightmare. The day had been like some horrible dream. Brutality had followed brutality, and flaming passions and cold-blooded cruelty had driven men to seek one another's lives, and to strive to hurt, and maim, and destroy. My nerves were shocked. My mind itself was shocked. All my days had been passed

in comparative ignorance of the animality of man. In fact, I had known life only in its intellectual phases. Brutality I had experienced, but it was the brutality of the intellect — the cutting sarcasm of Charley Furuseth, the cruel epigrams and occasional harsh witticisms of the fellows at the Bibelot, and the nasty remarks of some of the professors during my undergraduate days.

That was all. But that men should wreak their anger on others by the bruising of the flesh and the letting of blood was something strangely and fearfully new to me. Not for nothing had I been called “Sissy” Van Weyden, I thought, as I tossed restlessly on my bunk between one nightmare and another. And it seemed to me that my innocence of the realities of life had been complete indeed. I laughed bitterly to myself, and seemed to find in Wolf Larsen’s forbidding philosophy a more adequate explanation of life than I found in my own.

And I was frightened when I became conscious of the trend of my thought. The continual brutality around me was degenerative in its effect. It bid fair to destroy for me all that was best and brightest in life. My reason dictated that the beating Thomas Mugridge had received was an ill thing, and yet for the life of me I could not prevent my soul joying in it. And even while I was oppressed by the enormity of my sin, — for sin it was, — I chuckled with an insane delight. I was no longer Humphrey Van Weyden. I was Hump, cabin-boy on the schooner Ghost. Wolf Larsen was my captain, Thomas Mugridge and the rest were my companions, and I was receiving repeated impresses from the die which had stamped them all.

## Chapter XIII

For three days I did my own work and Thomas Mugridge's too; and I flatter myself that I did his work well. I know that it won Wolf Larsen's approval, while the sailors beamed with satisfaction during the brief time my régime lasted.

"The first clean bite since I come aboard," Harrison said to me at the galley door, as he returned the dinner pots and pans from the forecastle. "Somehow Tommy's grub always tastes of grease, stale grease, and I reckon he ain't changed his shirt since he left 'Frisco."

"I know he hasn't," I answered.

"And I'll bet he sleeps in it," Harrison added.

"And you won't lose," I agreed. "The same shirt, and he hasn't had it off once in all this time."

But three days was all Wolf Larsen allowed him in which to recover from the effects of the beating. On the fourth day, lame and sore, scarcely able to see, so closed were his eyes, he was haled from his bunk by the nape of the neck and set to his duty. He sniffled and wept, but Wolf Larsen was pitiless.

"And see that you serve no more slops," was his parting injunction. "No more grease and dirt, mind, and a clean shirt occasionally, or you'll get a tow over the side. Understand?"

Thomas Mugridge crawled weakly across the galley floor, and a short lurch of the Ghost sent him staggering. In attempting to recover himself, he reached for the iron railing which surrounded the stove and kept the pots from sliding off; but he missed the railing, and his hand, with his weight behind it, landed squarely on the hot surface. There was a sizzle and odour of burning flesh, and a sharp cry of pain.

"Oh, Gawd, Gawd, wot 'ave I done?" he wailed; sitting down in the coal-box and nursing his new hurt by rocking back and forth. "W'y 'as all this come on me? It mykes me fair sick, it does, an' I try so 'ard to go through life 'armless an' 'urtin' nobody."

The tears were running down his puffed and discoloured cheeks, and his face was drawn with pain. A savage expression flitted across it.

"Oh, 'ow I 'ate 'im! 'Ow I 'ate 'im!" he gritted out.

"Whom?" I asked; but the poor wretch was weeping again over his misfortunes. Less difficult it was to guess whom he hated than whom he did not hate. For I had come to see a malignant devil in him which impelled him to hate all the world. I sometimes thought that he hated even himself, so grotesquely had life dealt with him, and so monstrously. At such moments a great sympathy welled up within me, and I felt shame that I had ever joyed in his discomfiture or pain. Life had been unfair to

him. It had played him a scurvy trick when it fashioned him into the thing he was, and it had played him scurvy tricks ever since. What chance had he to be anything else than he was? And as though answering my unspoken thought, he wailed:

"I never 'ad no chance, not 'arf a chance! 'Oo was there to send me to school, or put tommy in my 'ungry belly, or wipe my bloody nose for me, w'en I was a kiddy? 'Oo ever did anything for me, heh? 'Oo, I s'y?"

"Never mind, Tommy," I said, placing a soothing hand on his shoulder. "Cheer up. It'll all come right in the end. You've long years before you, and you can make anything you please of yourself."

"It's a lie! a bloody lie!" he shouted in my face, flinging off the hand. "It's a lie, and you know it. I'm already myde, an' myde out of leavin's an' scraps. It's all right for you, 'Ump. You was born a gentleman. You never knew wot it was to go 'ungry, to cry yerself asleep with yer little belly gnawin' an' gnawin', like a rat inside yer. It carn't come right. If I was President of the United Stytes to-morrer, 'ow would it fill my belly for one time w'en I was a kiddy and it went empty?"

"'Ow could it, I s'y? I was born to sufferin' and sorrer. I've had more cruel sufferin' than any ten men, I 'ave. I've been in orspital arf my bleedin' life. I've 'ad the fever in Aspinwall, in 'Avana, in New Orleans. I near died of the scurvy and was rotten with it six months in Barbadoes. Smallpox in 'Onolulu, two broken legs in Shanghai, pnuemonia in Unalaska, three busted ribs an' my insides all twisted in 'Frisco. An' 'ere I am now. Look at me! Look at me! My ribs kicked loose from my back again. I'll be coughin' blood before eyght bells. 'Ow can it be myde up to me, I arsk? 'Oo's goin' to do it? Gawd? 'Ow Gawd must 'ave 'ated me w'en 'e signed me on for a voyage in this bloomin' world of 'is!"

This tirade against destiny went on for an hour or more, and then he buckled to his work, limping and groaning, and in his eyes a great hatred for all created things. His diagnosis was correct, however, for he was seized with occasional sicknesses, during which he vomited blood and suffered great pain. And as he said, it seemed God hated him too much to let him die, for he ultimately grew better and waxed more malignant than ever.

Several days more passed before Johnson crawled on deck and went about his work in a half-hearted way. He was still a sick man, and I more than once observed him creeping painfully aloft to a topsail, or drooping wearily as he stood at the wheel. But, still worse, it seemed that his spirit was broken. He was abject before Wolf Larsen and almost grovelled to Johansen. Not so was the conduct of Leach. He went about the deck like a tiger cub, glaring his hatred openly at Wolf Larsen and Johansen.

"I'll do for you yet, you slab-footed Swede," I heard him say to Johansen one night on deck.

The mate cursed him in the darkness, and the next moment some missile struck the galley a sharp rap. There was more cursing, and a mocking laugh, and when all was quiet I stole outside and found a heavy knife imbedded over an inch in the solid wood. A few minutes later the mate came fumbling about in search of it, but I returned it

privily to Leach next day. He grinned when I handed it over, yet it was a grin that contained more sincere thanks than a multitude of the verborities of speech common to the members of my own class.

Unlike any one else in the ship's company, I now found myself with no quarrels on my hands and in the good graces of all. The hunters possibly no more than tolerated me, though none of them disliked me; while Smoke and Henderson, convalescent under a deck awning and swinging day and night in their hammocks, assured me that I was better than any hospital nurse, and that they would not forget me at the end of the voyage when they were paid off. (As though I stood in need of their money! I, who could have bought them out, bag and baggage, and the schooner and its equipment, a score of times over!) But upon me had devolved the task of tending their wounds, and pulling them through, and I did my best by them.

Wolf Larsen underwent another bad attack of headache which lasted two days. He must have suffered severely, for he called me in and obeyed my commands like a sick child. But nothing I could do seemed to relieve him. At my suggestion, however, he gave up smoking and drinking; though why such a magnificent animal as he should have headaches at all puzzles me.

"'Tis the hand of God, I'm tellin' you," is the way Louis sees it. "'Tis a visitation for his black-hearted deeds, and there's more behind and comin', or else — "

"Or else," I prompted.

"God is noddin' and not doin' his duty, though it's me as shouldn't say it."

I was mistaken when I said that I was in the good graces of all. Not only does Thomas Mugridge continue to hate me, but he has discovered a new reason for hating me. It took me no little while to puzzle it out, but I finally discovered that it was because I was more luckily born than he — "gentleman born," he put it.

"And still no more dead men," I twitted Louis, when Smoke and Henderson, side by side, in friendly conversation, took their first exercise on deck.

Louis surveyed me with his shrewd grey eyes, and shook his head portentously. "She's a-comin', I tell you, and it'll be sheets and halyards, stand by all hands, when she begins to howl. I've had the feel iv it this long time, and I can feel it now as plainly as I feel the rigging iv a dark night. She's close, she's close."

"Who goes first?" I queried.

"Not fat old Louis, I promise you," he laughed. "For 'tis in the bones iv me I know that come this time next year I'll be gazin' in the old mother's eyes, weary with watchin' iv the sea for the five sons she gave to it."

"Wot's 'e been s'yin' to yer?" Thomas Mugridge demanded a moment later.

"That he's going home some day to see his mother," I answered diplomatically.

"I never 'ad none," was the Cockney's comment, as he gazed with lustreless, hopeless eyes into mine.

## Chapter XIV

It has dawned upon me that I have never placed a proper valuation upon womankind. For that matter, though not amative to any considerable degree so far as I have discovered, I was never outside the atmosphere of women until now. My mother and sisters were always about me, and I was always trying to escape them; for they worried me to distraction with their solicitude for my health and with their periodic inroads on my den, when my orderly confusion, upon which I prided myself, was turned into worse confusion and less order, though it looked neat enough to the eye. I never could find anything when they had departed. But now, alas, how welcome would have been the feel of their presence, the frou-frou and swish-swish of their skirts which I had so cordially detested! I am sure, if I ever get home, that I shall never be irritable with them again. They may dose me and doctor me morning, noon, and night, and dust and sweep and put my den to rights every minute of the day, and I shall only lean back and survey it all and be thankful in that I am possessed of a mother and some several sisters.

All of which has set me wondering. Where are the mothers of these twenty and odd men on the Ghost? It strikes me as unnatural and unhealthful that men should be totally separated from women and herd through the world by themselves. Coarseness and savagery are the inevitable results. These men about me should have wives, and sisters, and daughters; then would they be capable of softness, and tenderness, and sympathy. As it is, not one of them is married. In years and years not one of them has been in contact with a good woman, or within the influence, or redemption, which irresistibly radiates from such a creature. There is no balance in their lives. Their masculinity, which in itself is of the brute, has been over-developed. The other and spiritual side of their natures has been dwarfed — atrophied, in fact.

They are a company of celibates, grinding harshly against one another and growing daily more calloused from the grinding. It seems to me impossible sometimes that they ever had mothers. It would appear that they are a half-brute, half-human species, a race apart, wherein there is no such thing as sex; that they are hatched out by the sun like turtle eggs, or receive life in some similar and sordid fashion; and that all their days they fester in brutality and viciousness, and in the end die as unlovely as they have lived.

Rendered curious by this new direction of ideas, I talked with Johansen last night — the first superfluous words with which he has favoured me since the voyage began. He left Sweden when he was eighteen, is now thirty-eight, and in all the intervening

time has not been home once. He had met a townsman, a couple of years before, in some sailor boarding-house in Chile, so that he knew his mother to be still alive.

"She must be a pretty old woman now," he said, staring meditatively into the binnacle and then jerking a sharp glance at Harrison, who was steering a point off the course.

"When did you last write to her?"

He performed his mental arithmetic aloud. "Eighty-one; no — eighty-two, eh? no — eighty-three? Yes, eighty-three. Ten years ago. From some little port in Madagascar. I was trading.

"You see," he went on, as though addressing his neglected mother across half the girth of the earth, "each year I was going home. So what was the good to write? It was only a year. And each year something happened, and I did not go. But I am mate, now, and when I pay off at 'Frisco, maybe with five hundred dollars, I will ship myself on a windjammer round the Horn to Liverpool, which will give me more money; and then I will pay my passage from there home. Then she will not do any more work."

"But does she work? now? How old is she?"

"About seventy," he answered. And then, boastingly, "We work from the time we are born until we die, in my country. That's why we live so long. I will live to a hundred."

I shall never forget this conversation. The words were the last I ever heard him utter. Perhaps they were the last he did utter, too. For, going down into the cabin to turn in, I decided that it was too stuffy to sleep below. It was a calm night. We were out of the Trades, and the Ghost was forging ahead barely a knot an hour. So I tucked a blanket and pillow under my arm and went up on deck.

As I passed between Harrison and the binnacle, which was built into the top of the cabin, I noticed that he was this time fully three points off. Thinking that he was asleep, and wishing him to escape reprimand or worse, I spoke to him. But he was not asleep. His eyes were wide and staring. He seemed greatly perturbed, unable to reply to me.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Are you sick?"

He shook his head, and with a deep sigh as of awakening, caught his breath.

"You'd better get on your course, then," I chided.

He put a few spokes over, and I watched the compass-card swing slowly to N.N.W. and steady itself with slight oscillations.

I took a fresh hold on my bedclothes and was preparing to start on, when some movement caught my eye and I looked astern to the rail. A sinewy hand, dripping with water, was clutching the rail. A second hand took form in the darkness beside it. I watched, fascinated. What visitant from the gloom of the deep was I to behold? Whatever it was, I knew that it was climbing aboard by the log-line. I saw a head, the hair wet and straight, shape itself, and then the unmistakable eyes and face of Wolf Larsen. His right cheek was red with blood, which flowed from some wound in the head.

He drew himself inboard with a quick effort, and arose to his feet, glancing swiftly, as he did so, at the man at the wheel, as though to assure himself of his identity and that there was nothing to fear from him. The sea-water was streaming from him. It made little audible gurgles which distracted me. As he stepped toward me I shrank back instinctively, for I saw that in his eyes which spelled death.

"All right, Hump," he said in a low voice. "Where's the mate?"

I shook my head.

"Johansen!" he called softly. "Johansen!"

"Where is he?" he demanded of Harrison.

The young fellow seemed to have recovered his composure, for he answered steadily enough, "I don't know, sir. I saw him go for'ard a little while ago."

"So did I go for'ard. But you will observe that I didn't come back the way I went. Can you explain it?"

"You must have been overboard, sir."

"Shall I look for him in the steerage, sir?" I asked.

Wolf Larsen shook his head. "You wouldn't find him, Hump. But you'll do. Come on. Never mind your bedding. Leave it where it is."

I followed at his heels. There was nothing stirring amidships.

"Those cursed hunters," was his comment. "Too damned fat and lazy to stand a four-hour watch."

But on the fore-castle-head we found three sailors asleep. He turned them over and looked at their faces. They composed the watch on deck, and it was the ship's custom, in good weather, to let the watch sleep with the exception of the officer, the helmsman, and the look-out.

"Who's look-out?" he demanded.

"Me, sir," answered Holyoak, one of the deep-water sailors, a slight tremor in his voice. "I winked off just this very minute, sir. I'm sorry, sir. It won't happen again."

"Did you hear or see anything on deck?"

"No, sir, I — "

But Wolf Larsen had turned away with a snort of disgust, leaving the sailor rubbing his eyes with surprise at having been let off so easily.

"Softly, now," Wolf Larsen warned me in a whisper, as he doubled his body into the fore-castle scuttle and prepared to descend.

I followed with a quaking heart. What was to happen I knew no more than did I know what had happened. But blood had been shed, and it was through no whim of Wolf Larsen that he had gone over the side with his scalp laid open. Besides, Johansen was missing.

It was my first descent into the fore-castle, and I shall not soon forget my impression of it, caught as I stood on my feet at the bottom of the ladder. Built directly in the eyes of the schooner, it was of the shape of a triangle, along the three sides of which stood the bunks, in double-tier, twelve of them. It was no larger than a hall bedroom in Grub Street, and yet twelve men were herded into it to eat and sleep and carry



on all the functions of living. My bedroom at home was not large, yet it could have contained a dozen similar forecastles, and taking into consideration the height of the ceiling, a score at least.

It smelled sour and musty, and by the dim light of the swinging sea-lamp I saw every bit of available wall-space hung deep with sea-boots, oilskins, and garments, clean and dirty, of various sorts. These swung back and forth with every roll of the vessel, giving rise to a brushing sound, as of trees against a roof or wall. Somewhere a boot thumped loudly and at irregular intervals against the wall; and, though it was a mild night on the sea, there was a continual chorus of the creaking timbers and bulkheads and of abysmal noises beneath the flooring.

The sleepers did not mind. There were eight of them, — the two watches below, — and the air was thick with the warmth and odour of their breathing, and the ear was filled with the noise of their snoring and of their sighs and half-groans, tokens plain of the rest of the animal-man. But were they sleeping? all of them? Or had they been sleeping? This was evidently Wolf Larsen's quest — to find the men who appeared to be asleep and who were not asleep or who had not been asleep very recently. And he went about it in a way that reminded me of a story out of Boccaccio.

He took the sea-lamp from its swinging frame and handed it to me. He began at the first bunks forward on the star-board side. In the top one lay Oofty-Oofty, a Kanaka and splendid seaman, so named by his mates. He was asleep on his back and breathing as placidly as a woman. One arm was under his head, the other lay on top of the blankets. Wolf Larsen put thumb and forefinger to the wrist and counted the pulse. In the midst of it the Kanaka roused. He awoke as gently as he slept. There was no movement of the body whatever. The eyes, only, moved. They flashed wide open, big and black, and stared, unblinking, into our faces. Wolf Larsen put his finger to his lips as a sign for silence, and the eyes closed again.

In the lower bunk lay Louis, grossly fat and warm and sweaty, asleep unfeignedly and sleeping laboriously. While Wolf Larsen held his wrist he stirred uneasily, bowing his body so that for a moment it rested on shoulders and heels. His lips moved, and he gave voice to this enigmatic utterance:

"A shilling's worth a quarter; but keep your lamps out for thruppenny-bits, or the publicans 'll shove 'em on you for sixpence."

Then he rolled over on his side with a heavy, sobbing sigh, saying:

"A sixpence is a tanner, and a shilling a bob; but what a pony is I don't know."

Satisfied with the honesty of his and the Kanaka's sleep, Wolf Larsen passed on to the next two bunks on the starboard side, occupied top and bottom, as we saw in the light of the sea-lamp, by Leach and Johnson.

As Wolf Larsen bent down to the lower bunk to take Johnson's pulse, I, standing erect and holding the lamp, saw Leach's head rise stealthily as he peered over the side of his bunk to see what was going on. He must have divined Wolf Larsen's trick and the sureness of detection, for the light was at once dashed from my hand and the forecandle

was left in darkness. He must have leaped, also, at the same instant, straight down on Wolf Larsen.

The first sounds were those of a conflict between a bull and a wolf. I heard a great infuriated bellow go up from Wolf Larsen, and from Leach a snarling that was desperate and blood-curdling. Johnson must have joined him immediately, so that his abject and grovelling conduct on deck for the past few days had been no more than planned deception.

I was so terror-stricken by this fight in the dark that I leaned against the ladder, trembling and unable to ascend. And upon me was that old sickness at the pit of the stomach, caused always by the spectacle of physical violence. In this instance I could not see, but I could hear the impact of the blows — the soft crushing sound made by flesh striking forcibly against flesh. Then there was the crashing about of the entwined bodies, the laboured breathing, the short quick gasps of sudden pain.

There must have been more men in the conspiracy to murder the captain and mate, for by the sounds I knew that Leach and Johnson had been quickly reinforced by some of their mates.

“Get a knife somebody!” Leach was shouting.

“Pound him on the head! Mash his brains out!” was Johnson’s cry.

But after his first bellow, Wolf Larsen made no noise. He was fighting grimly and silently for life. He was sore beset. Down at the very first, he had been unable to gain his feet, and for all of his tremendous strength I felt that there was no hope for him.

The force with which they struggled was vividly impressed on me; for I was knocked down by their surging bodies and badly bruised. But in the confusion I managed to crawl into an empty lower bunk out of the way.

“All hands! We’ve got him! We’ve got him!” I could hear Leach crying.

“Who?” demanded those who had been really asleep, and who had wakened to they knew not what.

“It’s the bloody mate!” was Leach’s crafty answer, strained from him in a smothered sort of way.

This was greeted with whoops of joy, and from then on Wolf Larsen had seven strong men on top of him, Louis, I believe, taking no part in it. The forecastle was like an angry hive of bees aroused by some marauder.

“What ho! below there!” I heard Latimer shout down the scuttle, too cautious to descend into the inferno of passion he could hear raging beneath him in the darkness.

“Won’t somebody get a knife? Oh, won’t somebody get a knife?” Leach pleaded in the first interval of comparative silence.

The number of the assailants was a cause of confusion. They blocked their own efforts, while Wolf Larsen, with but a single purpose, achieved his. This was to fight his way across the floor to the ladder. Though in total darkness, I followed his progress by its sound. No man less than a giant could have done what he did, once he had gained the foot of the ladder. Step by step, by the might of his arms, the whole pack

of men striving to drag him back and down, he drew his body up from the floor till he stood erect. And then, step by step, hand and foot, he slowly struggled up the ladder.

The very last of all, I saw. For Latimer, having finally gone for a lantern, held it so that its light shone down the scuttle. Wolf Larsen was nearly to the top, though I could not see him. All that was visible was the mass of men fastened upon him. It squirmed about, like some huge many-legged spider, and swayed back and forth to the regular roll of the vessel. And still, step by step with long intervals between, the mass ascended. Once it tottered, about to fall back, but the broken hold was regained and it still went up.

“Who is it?” Latimer cried.

In the rays of the lantern I could see his perplexed face peering down.

“Larsen,” I heard a muffled voice from within the mass.

Latimer reached down with his free hand. I saw a hand shoot up to clasp his. Latimer pulled, and the next couple of steps were made with a rush. Then Wolf Larsen’s other hand reached up and clutched the edge of the scuttle. The mass swung clear of the ladder, the men still clinging to their escaping foe. They began to drop off, to be brushed off against the sharp edge of the scuttle, to be knocked off by the legs which were now kicking powerfully. Leach was the last to go, falling sheer back from the top of the scuttle and striking on head and shoulders upon his sprawling mates beneath. Wolf Larsen and the lantern disappeared, and we were left in darkness.

## Chapter XV

There was a deal of cursing and groaning as the men at the bottom of the ladder crawled to their feet.

"Somebody strike a light, my thumb's out of joint," said one of the men, Parsons, a swarthy, saturnine man, boat-steerer in Standish's boat, in which Harrison was puller.

"You'll find it knockin' about by the bitts," Leach said, sitting down on the edge of the bunk in which I was concealed.

There was a fumbling and a scratching of matches, and the sea-lamp flared up, dim and smoky, and in its weird light bare-legged men moved about nursing their bruises and caring for their hurts. Oofy-Oofy laid hold of Parsons's thumb, pulling it out stoutly and snapping it back into place. I noticed at the same time that the Kanaka's knuckles were laid open clear across and to the bone. He exhibited them, exposing beautiful white teeth in a grin as he did so, and explaining that the wounds had come from striking Wolf Larsen in the mouth.

"So it was you, was it, you black beggar?" belligerently demanded one Kelly, an Irish-American and a longshoreman, making his first trip to sea, and boat-puller for Kerfoot.

As he made the demand he spat out a mouthful of blood and teeth and shoved his pugnacious face close to Oofy-Oofy. The Kanaka leaped backward to his bunk, to return with a second leap, flourishing a long knife.

"Aw, go lay down, you make me tired," Leach interfered. He was evidently, for all of his youth and inexperience, cock of the forecastle. "G'wan, you Kelly. You leave Oofy alone. How in hell did he know it was you in the dark?"

Kelly subsided with some muttering, and the Kanaka flashed his white teeth in a grateful smile. He was a beautiful creature, almost feminine in the pleasing lines of his figure, and there was a softness and dreaminess in his large eyes which seemed to contradict his well-earned reputation for strife and action.

"How did he get away?" Johnson asked.

He was sitting on the side of his bunk, the whole pose of his figure indicating utter dejection and hopelessness. He was still breathing heavily from the exertion he had made. His shirt had been ripped entirely from him in the struggle, and blood from a gash in the cheek was flowing down his naked chest, marking a red path across his white thigh and dripping to the floor.

"Because he is the devil, as I told you before," was Leach's answer; and thereat he was on his feet and raging his disappointment with tears in his eyes.

"And not one of you to get a knife!" was his unceasing lament.

But the rest of the hands had a lively fear of consequences to come and gave no heed to him.

"How'll he know which was which?" Kelly asked, and as he went on he looked murderously about him — "unless one of us peaches."

"He'll know as soon as ever he claps eyes on us," Parsons replied. "One look at you'd be enough."

"Tell him the deck flopped up and gouged yer teeth out iv yer jaw," Louis grinned. He was the only man who was not out of his bunk, and he was jubilant in that he possessed no bruises to advertise that he had had a hand in the night's work. "Just wait till he gets a glimpse iv yer mugs to-morrow, the gang iv ye," he chuckled.

"We'll say we thought it was the mate," said one. And another, "I know what I'll say — that I heered a row, jumped out of my bunk, got a jolly good crack on the jaw for my pains, and sailed in myself. Couldn't tell who or what it was in the dark and just hit out."

"An' 'twas me you hit, of course," Kelly seconded, his face brightening for the moment.

Leach and Johnson took no part in the discussion, and it was plain to see that their mates looked upon them as men for whom the worst was inevitable, who were beyond hope and already dead. Leach stood their fears and reproaches for some time. Then he broke out:

"You make me tired! A nice lot of gazabas you are! If you talked less with yer mouth and did something with yer hands, he'd a-ben done with by now. Why couldn't one of you, just one of you, get me a knife when I sung out? You make me sick! A-beefin' and bellerin' 'round, as though he'd kill you when he gets you! You know damn well he wont. Can't afford to. No shipping masters or beach-combers over here, and he wants yer in his business, and he wants yer bad. Who's to pull or steer or sail ship if he loses yer? It's me and Johnson have to face the music. Get into yer bunks, now, and shut yer faces; I want to get some sleep."

"That's all right all right," Parsons spoke up. "Mebbe he won't do for us, but mark my words, hell 'll be an ice-box to this ship from now on."

All the while I had been apprehensive concerning my own predicament. What would happen to me when these men discovered my presence? I could never fight my way out as Wolf Larsen had done. And at this moment Latimer called down the scuttles:

"Hump! The old man wants you!"

"He ain't down here!" Parsons called back.

"Yes, he is," I said, sliding out of the bunk and striving my hardest to keep my voice steady and bold.

The sailors looked at me in consternation. Fear was strong in their faces, and the devilishness which comes of fear.

"I'm coming!" I shouted up to Latimer.

"No you don't!" Kelly cried, stepping between me and the ladder, his right hand shaped into a veritable strangler's clutch. "You damn little sneak! I'll shut yer mouth!"

"Let him go," Leach commanded.

"Not on yer life," was the angry retort.

Leach never changed his position on the edge of the bunk. "Let him go, I say," he repeated; but this time his voice was gritty and metallic.

The Irishman wavered. I made to step by him, and he stood aside. When I had gained the ladder, I turned to the circle of brutal and malignant faces peering at me through the semi-darkness. A sudden and deep sympathy welled up in me. I remembered the Cockney's way of putting it. How God must have hated them that they should be tortured so!

"I have seen and heard nothing, believe me," I said quietly.

"I tell yer, he's all right," I could hear Leach saying as I went up the ladder. "He don't like the old man no more nor you or me."

I found Wolf Larsen in the cabin, stripped and bloody, waiting for me. He greeted me with one of his whimsical smiles.

"Come, get to work, Doctor. The signs are favourable for an extensive practice this voyage. I don't know what the Ghost would have been without you, and if I could only cherish such noble sentiments I would tell you her master is deeply grateful."

I knew the run of the simple medicine-chest the Ghost carried, and while I was heating water on the cabin stove and getting the things ready for dressing his wounds, he moved about, laughing and chatting, and examining his hurts with a calculating eye. I had never before seen him stripped, and the sight of his body quite took my breath away. It has never been my weakness to exalt the flesh — far from it; but there is enough of the artist in me to appreciate its wonder.

I must say that I was fascinated by the perfect lines of Wolf Larsen's figure, and by what I may term the terrible beauty of it. I had noted the men in the fore-castle. Powerfully muscled though some of them were, there had been something wrong with all of them, an insufficient development here, an undue development there, a twist or a crook that destroyed symmetry, legs too short or too long, or too much sinew or bone exposed, or too little. Oofty-Oofty had been the only one whose lines were at all pleasing, while, in so far as they pleased, that far had they been what I should call feminine.

But Wolf Larsen was the man-type, the masculine, and almost a god in his perfectness. As he moved about or raised his arms the great muscles leapt and moved under the satiny skin. I have forgotten to say that the bronze ended with his face. His body, thanks to his Scandinavian stock, was fair as the fairest woman's. I remember his putting his hand up to feel of the wound on his head, and my watching the biceps move like a living thing under its white sheath. It was the biceps that had nearly crushed out my life once, that I had seen strike so many killing blows. I could not take my eyes from him. I stood motionless, a roll of antiseptic cotton in my hand unwinding and spilling itself down to the floor.

He noticed me, and I became conscious that I was staring at him.

"God made you well," I said.

"Did he?" he answered. "I have often thought so myself, and wondered why."

"Purpose — " I began.

"Utility," he interrupted. "This body was made for use. These muscles were made to grip, and tear, and destroy living things that get between me and life. But have you thought of the other living things? They, too, have muscles, of one kind and another, made to grip, and tear, and destroy; and when they come between me and life, I out-grip them, out-tear them, out-destroy them. Purpose does not explain that. Utility does."

"It is not beautiful," I protested.

"Life isn't, you mean," he smiled. "Yet you say I was made well. Do you see this?"

He braced his legs and feet, pressing the cabin floor with his toes in a clutching sort of way. Knots and ridges and mounds of muscles writhed and bunched under the skin.

"Feel them," he commanded.

They were hard as iron. And I observed, also, that his whole body had unconsciously drawn itself together, tense and alert; that muscles were softly crawling and shaping about the hips, along the back, and across the shoulders; that the arms were slightly lifted, their muscles contracting, the fingers crooking till the hands were like talons; and that even the eyes had changed expression and into them were coming watchfulness and measurement and a light none other than of battle.

"Stability, equilibrium," he said, relaxing on the instant and sinking his body back into repose. "Feet with which to clutch the ground, legs to stand on and to help withstand, while with arms and hands, teeth and nails, I struggle to kill and to be not killed. Purpose? Utility is the better word."

I did not argue. I had seen the mechanism of the primitive fighting beast, and I was as strongly impressed as if I had seen the engines of a great battleship or Atlantic liner.

I was surprised, considering the fierce struggle in the forecabin, at the superficiality of his hurts, and I pride myself that I dressed them dexterously. With the exception of several bad wounds, the rest were merely severe bruises and lacerations. The blow which he had received before going overboard had laid his scalp open several inches. This, under his direction, I cleansed and sewed together, having first shaved the edges of the wound. Then the calf of his leg was badly lacerated and looked as though it had been mangled by a bulldog. Some sailor, he told me, had laid hold of it by his teeth, at the beginning of the fight, and hung on and been dragged to the top of the forecabin ladder, when he was kicked loose.

"By the way, Hump, as I have remarked, you are a handy man," Wolf Larsen began, when my work was done. "As you know, we're short a mate. Hereafter you shall stand watches, receive seventy-five dollars per month, and be addressed fore and aft as Mr. Van Weyden."

"I — I don't understand navigation, you know," I gasped.

"Not necessary at all."

"I really do not care to sit in the high places," I objected. "I find life precarious enough in my present humble situation. I have no experience. Mediocrity, you see, has its compensations."

He smiled as though it were all settled.

"I won't be mate on this hell-ship!" I cried defiantly.

I saw his face grow hard and the merciless glitter come into his eyes. He walked to the door of his room, saying:

"And now, Mr. Van Weyden, good-night."

"Good-night, Mr. Larsen," I answered weakly.



## Chapter XVI

I cannot say that the position of mate carried with it anything more joyful than that there were no more dishes to wash. I was ignorant of the simplest duties of mate, and would have fared badly indeed, had the sailors not sympathized with me. I knew nothing of the minutiae of ropes and rigging, of the trimming and setting of sails; but the sailors took pains to put me to rights, — Louis proving an especially good teacher, — and I had little trouble with those under me.

With the hunters it was otherwise. Familiar in varying degree with the sea, they took me as a sort of joke. In truth, it was a joke to me, that I, the veriest landsman, should be filling the office of mate; but to be taken as a joke by others was a different matter. I made no complaint, but Wolf Larsen demanded the most punctilious sea etiquette in my case, — far more than poor Johansen had ever received; and at the expense of several rows, threats, and much grumbling, he brought the hunters to time. I was “Mr. Van Weyden” fore and aft, and it was only unofficially that Wolf Larsen himself ever addressed me as “Hump.”

It was amusing. Perhaps the wind would haul a few points while we were at dinner, and as I left the table he would say, “Mr. Van Weyden, will you kindly put about on the port tack.” And I would go on deck, beckon Louis to me, and learn from him what was to be done. Then, a few minutes later, having digested his instructions and thoroughly mastered the manœuvre, I would proceed to issue my orders. I remember an early instance of this kind, when Wolf Larsen appeared on the scene just as I had begun to give orders. He smoked his cigar and looked on quietly till the thing was accomplished, and then paced aft by my side along the weather poop.

“Hump,” he said, “I beg pardon, Mr. Van Weyden, I congratulate you. I think you can now fire your father’s legs back into the grave to him. You’ve discovered your own and learned to stand on them. A little rope-work, sail-making, and experience with storms and such things, and by the end of the voyage you could ship on any coasting schooner.”

It was during this period, between the death of Johansen and the arrival on the sealing grounds, that I passed my pleasantest hours on the Ghost. Wolf Larsen was quite considerate, the sailors helped me, and I was no longer in irritating contact with Thomas Mugridge. And I make free to say, as the days went by, that I found I was taking a certain secret pride in myself. Fantastic as the situation was, — a land-lubber second in command, — I was, nevertheless, carrying it off well; and during that brief time I was proud of myself, and I grew to love the heave and roll of the Ghost under

my feet as she wallowed north and west through the tropic sea to the islet where we filled our water-casks.

But my happiness was not unalloyed. It was comparative, a period of less misery slipped in between a past of great miseries and a future of great miseries. For the Ghost, so far as the seamen were concerned, was a hell-ship of the worst description. They never had a moment's rest or peace. Wolf Larsen treasured against them the attempt on his life and the drubbing he had received in the forecastle; and morning, noon, and night, and all night as well, he devoted himself to making life unlivable for them.

He knew well the psychology of the little thing, and it was the little things by which he kept the crew worked up to the verge of madness. I have seen Harrison called from his bunk to put properly away a misplaced paintbrush, and the two watches below haled from their tired sleep to accompany him and see him do it. A little thing, truly, but when multiplied by the thousand ingenious devices of such a mind, the mental state of the men in the forecastle may be slightly comprehended.

Of course much grumbling went on, and little outbursts were continually occurring. Blows were struck, and there were always two or three men nursing injuries at the hands of the human beast who was their master. Concerted action was impossible in face of the heavy arsenal of weapons carried in the steerage and cabin. Leach and Johnson were the two particular victims of Wolf Larsen's diabolic temper, and the look of profound melancholy which had settled on Johnson's face and in his eyes made my heart bleed.

With Leach it was different. There was too much of the fighting beast in him. He seemed possessed by an insatiable fury which gave no time for grief. His lips had become distorted into a permanent snarl, which at mere sight of Wolf Larsen broke out in sound, horrible and menacing and, I do believe, unconsciously. I have seen him follow Wolf Larsen about with his eyes, like an animal its keeper, the while the animal-like snarl sounded deep in his throat and vibrated forth between his teeth.

I remember once, on deck, in bright day, touching him on the shoulder as preliminary to giving an order. His back was toward me, and at the first feel of my hand he leaped upright in the air and away from me, snarling and turning his head as he leaped. He had for the moment mistaken me for the man he hated.

Both he and Johnson would have killed Wolf Larsen at the slightest opportunity, but the opportunity never came. Wolf Larsen was too wise for that, and, besides, they had no adequate weapons. With their fists alone they had no chance whatever. Time and again he fought it out with Leach who fought back always, like a wildcat, tooth and nail and fist, until stretched, exhausted or unconscious, on the deck. And he was never averse to another encounter. All the devil that was in him challenged the devil in Wolf Larsen. They had but to appear on deck at the same time, when they would be at it, cursing, snarling, striking; and I have seen Leach fling himself upon Wolf Larsen without warning or provocation. Once he threw his heavy sheath-knife, missing Wolf Larsen's throat by an inch. Another time he dropped a steel marlinspike from the

mizzen crosstree. It was a difficult cast to make on a rolling ship, but the sharp point of the spike, whistling seventy-five feet through the air, barely missed Wolf Larsen's head as he emerged from the cabin companion-way and drove its length two inches and over into the solid deck-planking. Still another time, he stole into the steerage, possessed himself of a loaded shot-gun, and was making a rush for the deck with it when caught by Kerfoot and disarmed.

I often wondered why Wolf Larsen did not kill him and make an end of it. But he only laughed and seemed to enjoy it. There seemed a certain spice about it, such as men must feel who take delight in making pets of ferocious animals.

"It gives a thrill to life," he explained to me, "when life is carried in one's hand. Man is a natural gambler, and life is the biggest stake he can lay. The greater the odds, the greater the thrill. Why should I deny myself the joy of exciting Leach's soul to fever-pitch? For that matter, I do him a kindness. The greatness of sensation is mutual. He is living more royally than any man for'ard, though he does not know it. For he has what they have not — purpose, something to do and be done, an all-absorbing end to strive to attain, the desire to kill me, the hope that he may kill me. Really, Hump, he is living deep and high. I doubt that he has ever lived so swiftly and keenly before, and I honestly envy him, sometimes, when I see him raging at the summit of passion and sensibility."

"Ah, but it is cowardly, cowardly!" I cried. "You have all the advantage."

"Of the two of us, you and I, who is the greater coward?" he asked seriously. "If the situation is unpleasing, you compromise with your conscience when you make yourself a party to it. If you were really great, really true to yourself, you would join forces with Leach and Johnson. But you are afraid, you are afraid. You want to live. The life that is in you cries out that it must live, no matter what the cost; so you live ignominiously, untrue to the best you dream of, sinning against your whole pitiful little code, and, if there were a hell, heading your soul straight for it. Bah! I play the braver part. I do no sin, for I am true to the promptings of the life that is in me. I am sincere with my soul at least, and that is what you are not."

There was a sting in what he said. Perhaps, after all, I was playing a cowardly part. And the more I thought about it the more it appeared that my duty to myself lay in doing what he had advised, lay in joining forces with Johnson and Leach and working for his death. Right here, I think, entered the austere conscience of my Puritan ancestry, impelling me toward lurid deeds and sanctioning even murder as right conduct. I dwelt upon the idea. It would be a most moral act to rid the world of such a monster. Humanity would be better and happier for it, life fairer and sweeter.

I pondered it long, lying sleepless in my bunk and reviewing in endless procession the facts of the situation. I talked with Johnson and Leach, during the night watches when Wolf Larsen was below. Both men had lost hope — Johnson, because of temperamental despondency; Leach, because he had beaten himself out in the vain struggle and was exhausted. But he caught my hand in a passionate grip one night, saying:

"I think yer square, Mr. Van Weyden. But stay where you are and keep yer mouth shut. Say nothin' but saw wood. We're dead men, I know it; but all the same you might be able to do us a favour some time when we need it damn bad."

It was only next day, when Wainwright Island loomed to windward, close abeam, that Wolf Larsen opened his mouth in prophecy. He had attacked Johnson, been attacked by Leach, and had just finished whipping the pair of them.

"Leach," he said, "you know I'm going to kill you some time or other, don't you?"

A snarl was the answer.

"And as for you, Johnson, you'll get so tired of life before I'm through with you that you'll fling yourself over the side. See if you don't."

"That's a suggestion," he added, in an aside to me. "I'll bet you a month's pay he acts upon it."

I had cherished a hope that his victims would find an opportunity to escape while filling our water-barrels, but Wolf Larsen had selected his spot well. The Ghost lay half-a-mile beyond the surf-line of a lonely beach. Here debauched a deep gorge, with precipitous, volcanic walls which no man could scale. And here, under his direct supervision — for he went ashore himself — Leach and Johnson filled the small casks and rolled them down to the beach. They had no chance to make a break for liberty in one of the boats.

Harrison and Kelly, however, made such an attempt. They composed one of the boats' crews, and their task was to ply between the schooner and the shore, carrying a single cask each trip. Just before dinner, starting for the beach with an empty barrel, they altered their course and bore away to the left to round the promontory which jutted into the sea between them and liberty. Beyond its foaming base lay the pretty villages of the Japanese colonists and smiling valleys which penetrated deep into the interior. Once in the fastnesses they promised, and the two men could defy Wolf Larsen.

I had observed Henderson and Smoke loitering about the deck all morning, and I now learned why they were there. Procuring their rifles, they opened fire in a leisurely manner, upon the deserters. It was a cold-blooded exhibition of marksmanship. At first their bullets zipped harmlessly along the surface of the water on either side the boat; but, as the men continued to pull lustily, they struck closer and closer.

"Now, watch me take Kelly's right oar," Smoke said, drawing a more careful aim.

I was looking through the glasses, and I saw the oar-blade shatter as he shot. Henderson duplicated it, selecting Harrison's right oar. The boat slewed around. The two remaining oars were quickly broken. The men tried to row with the splinters, and had them shot out of their hands. Kelly ripped up a bottom board and began paddling, but dropped it with a cry of pain as its splinters drove into his hands. Then they gave up, letting the boat drift till a second boat, sent from the shore by Wolf Larsen, took them in tow and brought them aboard.

Late that afternoon we hove up anchor and got away. Nothing was before us but the three or four months' hunting on the sealing grounds. The outlook was black indeed, and I went about my work with a heavy heart. An almost funereal gloom seemed to

have descended upon the Ghost. Wolf Larsen had taken to his bunk with one of his strange, splitting headaches. Harrison stood listlessly at the wheel, half supporting himself by it, as though wearied by the weight of his flesh. The rest of the men were morose and silent. I came upon Kelly crouching to the lee of the forecastle scuttle, his head on his knees, his arms about his head, in an attitude of unutterable despondency.

Johnson I found lying full length on the forecastle head, staring at the troubled churn of the forefoot, and I remembered with horror the suggestion Wolf Larsen had made. It seemed likely to bear fruit. I tried to break in on the man's morbid thoughts by calling him away, but he smiled sadly at me and refused to obey.

Leach approached me as I returned aft.

"I want to ask a favour, Mr. Van Weyden," he said. "If it's yer luck to ever make 'Frisco once more, will you hunt up Matt McCarthy? He's my old man. He lives on the Hill, back of the Mayfair bakery, runnin' a cobbler's shop that everybody knows, and you'll have no trouble. Tell him I lived to be sorry for the trouble I brought him and the things I done, and — and just tell him 'God bless him,' for me."

I nodded my head, but said, "We'll all win back to San Francisco, Leach, and you'll be with me when I go to see Matt McCarthy."

"I'd like to believe you," he answered, shaking my hand, "but I can't. Wolf Larsen 'll do for me, I know it; and all I can hope is, he'll do it quick."

And as he left me I was aware of the same desire at my heart. Since it was to be done, let it be done with despatch. The general gloom had gathered me into its folds. The worst appeared inevitable; and as I paced the deck, hour after hour, I found myself afflicted with Wolf Larsen's repulsive ideas. What was it all about? Where was the grandeur of life that it should permit such wanton destruction of human souls? It was a cheap and sordid thing after all, this life, and the sooner over the better. Over and done with! I, too, leaned upon the rail and gazed longingly into the sea, with the certainty that sooner or later I should be sinking down, down, through the cool green depths of its oblivion.

## Chapter XVII

Strange to say, in spite of the general foreboding, nothing of especial moment happened on the Ghost. We ran on to the north and west till we raised the coast of Japan and picked up with the great seal herd. Coming from no man knew where in the illimitable Pacific, it was travelling north on its annual migration to the rookeries of Bering Sea. And north we travelled with it, ravaging and destroying, flinging the naked carcasses to the shark and salting down the skins so that they might later adorn the fair shoulders of the women of the cities.

It was wanton slaughter, and all for woman's sake. No man ate of the seal meat or the oil. After a good day's killing I have seen our decks covered with hides and bodies, slippery with fat and blood, the scuppers running red; masts, ropes, and rails spattered with the sanguinary colour; and the men, like butchers plying their trade, naked and red of arm and hand, hard at work with ripping and flensing-knives, removing the skins from the pretty sea-creatures they had killed.

It was my task to tally the pelts as they came aboard from the boats, to oversee the skinning and afterward the cleansing of the decks and bringing things ship-shape again. It was not pleasant work. My soul and my stomach revolted at it; and yet, in a way, this handling and directing of many men was good for me. It developed what little executive ability I possessed, and I was aware of a toughening or hardening which I was undergoing and which could not be anything but wholesome for "Sissy" Van Weyden.

One thing I was beginning to feel, and that was that I could never again be quite the same man I had been. While my hope and faith in human life still survived Wolf Larsen's destructive criticism, he had nevertheless been a cause of change in minor matters. He had opened up for me the world of the real, of which I had known practically nothing and from which I had always shrunk. I had learned to look more closely at life as it was lived, to recognize that there were such things as facts in the world, to emerge from the realm of mind and idea and to place certain values on the concrete and objective phases of existence.

I saw more of Wolf Larsen than ever when we had gained the grounds. For when the weather was fair and we were in the midst of the herd, all hands were away in the boats, and left on board were only he and I, and Thomas Mugridge, who did not count. But there was no play about it. The six boats, spreading out fan-wise from the schooner until the first weather boat and the last lee boat were anywhere from ten to twenty miles apart, cruised along a straight course over the sea till nightfall or bad weather drove them in. It was our duty to sail the Ghost well to leeward of the last

lee boat, so that all the boats should have fair wind to run for us in case of squalls or threatening weather.

It is no slight matter for two men, particularly when a stiff wind has sprung up, to handle a vessel like the Ghost, steering, keeping look-out for the boats, and setting or taking in sail; so it devolved upon me to learn, and learn quickly. Steering I picked up easily, but running aloft to the crosstrees and swinging my whole weight by my arms when I left the ratlines and climbed still higher, was more difficult. This, too, I learned, and quickly, for I felt somehow a wild desire to vindicate myself in Wolf Larsen's eyes, to prove my right to live in ways other than of the mind. Nay, the time came when I took joy in the run of the masthead and in the clinging on by my legs at that precarious height while I swept the sea with glasses in search of the boats.

I remember one beautiful day, when the boats left early and the reports of the hunters' guns grew dim and distant and died away as they scattered far and wide over the sea. There was just the faintest wind from the westward; but it breathed its last by the time we managed to get to leeward of the last lee boat. One by one — I was at the masthead and saw — the six boats disappeared over the bulge of the earth as they followed the seal into the west. We lay, scarcely rolling on the placid sea, unable to follow. Wolf Larsen was apprehensive. The barometer was down, and the sky to the east did not please him. He studied it with unceasing vigilance.

"If she comes out of there," he said, "hard and snappy, putting us to windward of the boats, it's likely there'll be empty bunks in steerage and fo'c'sle."

By eleven o'clock the sea had become glass. By midday, though we were well up in the northerly latitudes, the heat was sickening. There was no freshness in the air. It was sultry and oppressive, reminding me of what the old Californians term "earthquake weather." There was something ominous about it, and in intangible ways one was made to feel that the worst was about to come. Slowly the whole eastern sky filled with clouds that over-towered us like some black sierra of the infernal regions. So clearly could one see cañon, gorge, and precipice, and the shadows that lie therein, that one looked unconsciously for the white surf-line and bellowing caverns where the sea charges on the land. And still we rocked gently, and there was no wind.

"It's no square" Wolf Larsen said. "Old Mother Nature's going to get up on her hind legs and howl for all that's in her, and it'll keep us jumping, Hump, to pull through with half our boats. You'd better run up and loosen the topsails."

"But if it is going to howl, and there are only two of us?" I asked, a note of protest in my voice.

"Why we've got to make the best of the first of it and run down to our boats before our canvas is ripped out of us. After that I don't give a rap what happens. The sticks 'll stand it, and you and I will have to, though we've plenty cut out for us."

Still the calm continued. We ate dinner, a hurried and anxious meal for me with eighteen men abroad on the sea and beyond the bulge of the earth, and with that heaven-rolling mountain range of clouds moving slowly down upon us. Wolf Larsen did not seem affected, however; though I noticed, when we returned to the deck, a slight

twitching of the nostrils, a perceptible quickness of movement. His face was stern, the lines of it had grown hard, and yet in his eyes — blue, clear blue this day — there was a strange brilliancy, a bright scintillating light. It struck me that he was joyous, in a ferocious sort of way; that he was glad there was an impending struggle; that he was thrilled and upborne with knowledge that one of the great moments of living, when the tide of life surges up in flood, was upon him.

Once, and unwitting that he did so or that I saw, he laughed aloud, mockingly and defiantly, at the advancing storm. I see him yet standing there like a pigmy out of the Arabian Nights before the huge front of some malignant genie. He was daring destiny, and he was unafraid.

He walked to the galley. "Cooky, by the time you've finished pots and pans you'll be wanted on deck. Stand ready for a call."

"Hump," he said, becoming cognizant of the fascinated gaze I bent upon him, "this beats whisky and is where your Omar misses. I think he only half lived after all."

The western half of the sky had by now grown murky. The sun had dimmed and faded out of sight. It was two in the afternoon, and a ghostly twilight, shot through by wandering purplish lights, had descended upon us. In this purplish light Wolf Larsen's face glowed and glowed, and to my excited fancy he appeared encircled by a halo. We lay in the midst of an unearthly quiet, while all about us were signs and omens of oncoming sound and movement. The sultry heat had become unendurable. The sweat was standing on my forehead, and I could feel it trickling down my nose. I felt as though I should faint, and reached out to the rail for support.

And then, just then, the faintest possible whisper of air passed by. It was from the east, and like a whisper it came and went. The drooping canvas was not stirred, and yet my face had felt the air and been cooled.

"Cooky," Wolf Larsen called in a low voice. Thomas Mugridge turned a pitiable scared face. "Let go that foreboom tackle and pass it across, and when she's willing let go the sheet and come in snug with the tackle. And if you make a mess of it, it will be the last you ever make. Understand?"

"Mr. Van Weyden, stand by to pass the head-sails over. Then jump for the topsails and spread them quick as God'll let you — the quicker you do it the easier you'll find it. As for Cooky, if he isn't lively bat him between the eyes."

I was aware of the compliment and pleased, in that no threat had accompanied my instructions. We were lying head to north-west, and it was his intention to jibe over all with the first puff.

"We'll have the breeze on our quarter," he explained to me. "By the last guns the boats were bearing away slightly to the south'ard."

He turned and walked aft to the wheel. I went forward and took my station at the jibs. Another whisper of wind, and another, passed by. The canvas flapped lazily.

"Thank Gawd she's not comin' all of a bunch, Mr. Van Weyden," was the Cockney's fervent ejaculation.



And I was indeed thankful, for I had by this time learned enough to know, with all our canvas spread, what disaster in such event awaited us. The whispers of wind became puffs, the sails filled, the Ghost moved. Wolf Larsen put the wheel hard up, to port, and we began to pay off. The wind was now dead astern, muttering and puffing stronger and stronger, and my head-sails were pounding lustily. I did not see what went on elsewhere, though I felt the sudden surge and heel of the schooner as the wind-pressures changed to the jibing of the fore-and main-sails. My hands were full with the flying-jib, jib, and staysail; and by the time this part of my task was accomplished the Ghost was leaping into the south-west, the wind on her quarter and all her sheets to starboard. Without pausing for breath, though my heart was beating like a trip-hammer from my exertions, I sprang to the topsails, and before the wind had become too strong we had them fairly set and were coiling down. Then I went aft for orders.

Wolf Larsen nodded approval and relinquished the wheel to me. The wind was strengthening steadily and the sea rising. For an hour I steered, each moment becoming more difficult. I had not the experience to steer at the gait we were going on a quartering course.

“Now take a run up with the glasses and raise some of the boats. We’ve made at least ten knots, and we’re going twelve or thirteen now. The old girl knows how to walk.”

I contested myself with the fore crosstrees, some seventy feet above the deck. As I searched the vacant stretch of water before me, I comprehended thoroughly the need for haste if we were to recover any of our men. Indeed, as I gazed at the heavy sea through which we were running, I doubted that there was a boat afloat. It did not seem possible that such frail craft could survive such stress of wind and water.

I could not feel the full force of the wind, for we were running with it; but from my lofty perch I looked down as though outside the Ghost and apart from her, and saw the shape of her outlined sharply against the foaming sea as she tore along instinct with life. Sometimes she would lift and send across some great wave, burying her starboard-rail from view, and covering her deck to the hatches with the boiling ocean. At such moments, starting from a windward roll, I would go flying through the air with dizzying swiftness, as though I clung to the end of a huge, inverted pendulum, the arc of which, between the greater rolls, must have been seventy feet or more. Once, the terror of this giddy sweep overpowered me, and for a while I clung on, hand and foot, weak and trembling, unable to search the sea for the missing boats or to behold aught of the sea but that which roared beneath and strove to overwhelm the Ghost.

But the thought of the men in the midst of it steadied me, and in my quest for them I forgot myself. For an hour I saw nothing but the naked, desolate sea. And then, where a vagrant shaft of sunlight struck the ocean and turned its surface to wrathful silver, I caught a small black speck thrust skyward for an instant and swallowed up. I waited patiently. Again the tiny point of black projected itself through the wrathful blaze a couple of points off our port-bow. I did not attempt to shout, but communicated

the news to Wolf Larsen by waving my arm. He changed the course, and I signalled affirmation when the speck showed dead ahead.

It grew larger, and so swiftly that for the first time I fully appreciated the speed of our flight. Wolf Larsen motioned for me to come down, and when I stood beside him at the wheel gave me instructions for heaving to.

“Expect all hell to break loose,” he cautioned me, “but don’t mind it. Yours is to do your own work and to have Cooky stand by the fore-sheet.”

I managed to make my way forward, but there was little choice of sides, for the weather-rail seemed buried as often as the lee. Having instructed Thomas Mugridge as to what he was to do, I clambered into the fore-rigging a few feet. The boat was now very close, and I could make out plainly that it was lying head to wind and sea and dragging on its mast and sail, which had been thrown overboard and made to serve as a sea-anchor. The three men were bailing. Each rolling mountain whelmed them from view, and I would wait with sickening anxiety, fearing that they would never appear again. Then, and with black suddenness, the boat would shoot clear through the foaming crest, bow pointed to the sky, and the whole length of her bottom showing, wet and dark, till she seemed on end. There would be a fleeting glimpse of the three men flinging water in frantic haste, when she would topple over and fall into the yawning valley, bow down and showing her full inside length to the stern upreared almost directly above the bow. Each time that she reappeared was a miracle.

The Ghost suddenly changed her course, keeping away, and it came to me with a shock that Wolf Larsen was giving up the rescue as impossible. Then I realized that he was preparing to heave to, and dropped to the deck to be in readiness. We were now dead before the wind, the boat far away and abreast of us. I felt an abrupt easing of the schooner, a loss for the moment of all strain and pressure, coupled with a swift acceleration of speed. She was rushing around on her heel into the wind.

As she arrived at right angles to the sea, the full force of the wind (from which we had hitherto run away) caught us. I was unfortunately and ignorantly facing it. It stood up against me like a wall, filling my lungs with air which I could not expel. And as I choked and strangled, and as the Ghost wallowed for an instant, broadside on and rolling straight over and far into the wind, I beheld a huge sea rise far above my head. I turned aside, caught my breath, and looked again. The wave over-topped the Ghost, and I gazed sheer up and into it. A shaft of sunlight smote the over-curl, and I caught a glimpse of translucent, rushing green, backed by a milky smother of foam.

Then it descended, pandemonium broke loose, everything happened at once. I was struck a crushing, stunning blow, nowhere in particular and yet everywhere. My hold had been broken loose, I was under water, and the thought passed through my mind that this was the terrible thing of which I had heard, the being swept in the trough of the sea. My body struck and pounded as it was dashed helplessly along and turned over and over, and when I could hold my breath no longer, I breathed the stinging salt water into my lungs. But through it all I clung to the one idea — I must get the jib backed over to windward. I had no fear of death. I had no doubt but that I should

come through somehow. And as this idea of fulfilling Wolf Larsen's order persisted in my dazed consciousness, I seemed to see him standing at the wheel in the midst of the wild welter, pitting his will against the will of the storm and defying it.

I brought up violently against what I took to be the rail, breathed, and breathed the sweet air again. I tried to rise, but struck my head and was knocked back on hands and knees. By some freak of the waters I had been swept clear under the fore-castle-head and into the eyes. As I scrambled out on all fours, I passed over the body of Thomas Mugridge, who lay in a groaning heap. There was no time to investigate. I must get the jib backed over.

When I emerged on deck it seemed that the end of everything had come. On all sides there was a rending and crashing of wood and steel and canvas. The Ghost was being wrenched and torn to fragments. The foresail and fore-topsail, emptied of the wind by the manœuvre, and with no one to bring in the sheet in time, were thundering into ribbons, the heavy boom threshing and splintering from rail to rail. The air was thick with flying wreckage, detached ropes and stays were hissing and coiling like snakes, and down through it all crashed the gaff of the foresail.

The spar could not have missed me by many inches, while it spurred me to action. Perhaps the situation was not hopeless. I remembered Wolf Larsen's caution. He had expected all hell to break loose, and here it was. And where was he? I caught sight of him toiling at the main-sheet, heaving it in and flat with his tremendous muscles, the stern of the schooner lifted high in the air and his body outlined against a white surge of sea sweeping past. All this, and more, — a whole world of chaos and wreck, — in possibly fifteen seconds I had seen and heard and grasped.

I did not stop to see what had become of the small boat, but sprang to the jib-sheet. The jib itself was beginning to slap, partially filling and emptying with sharp reports; but with a turn of the sheet and the application of my whole strength each time it slapped, I slowly backed it. This I know: I did my best. I pulled till I burst open the ends of all my fingers; and while I pulled, the flying-jib and staysail split their cloths apart and thundered into nothingness.

Still I pulled, holding what I gained each time with a double turn until the next slap gave me more. Then the sheet gave with greater ease, and Wolf Larsen was beside me, heaving in alone while I was busied taking up the slack.

"Make fast!" he shouted. "And come on!"

As I followed him, I noted that in spite of rack and ruin a rough order obtained. The Ghost was hove to. She was still in working order, and she was still working. Though the rest of her sails were gone, the jib, backed to windward, and the mainsail hauled down flat, were themselves holding, and holding her bow to the furious sea as well.

I looked for the boat, and, while Wolf Larsen cleared the boat-tackles, saw it lift to leeward on a big sea an not a score of feet away. And, so nicely had he made his calculation, we drifted fairly down upon it, so that nothing remained to do but hook the tackles to either end and hoist it aboard. But this was not done so easily as it is written.

In the bow was Kerfoot, Oofy-Oofy in the stern, and Kelly amidships. As we drifted closer the boat would rise on a wave while we sank in the trough, till almost straight above me I could see the heads of the three men craned overside and looking down. Then, the next moment, we would lift and soar upward while they sank far down beneath us. It seemed incredible that the next surge should not crush the Ghost down upon the tiny eggshell.

But, at the right moment, I passed the tackle to the Kanaka, while Wolf Larsen did the same thing forward to Kerfoot. Both tackles were hooked in a trice, and the three men, deftly timing the roll, made a simultaneous leap aboard the schooner. As the Ghost rolled her side out of water, the boat was lifted snugly against her, and before the return roll came, we had heaved it in over the side and turned it bottom up on the deck. I noticed blood spouting from Kerfoot's left hand. In some way the third finger had been crushed to a pulp. But he gave no sign of pain, and with his single right hand helped us lash the boat in its place.

"Stand by to let that jib over, you Oofy!" Wolf Larsen commanded, the very second we had finished with the boat. "Kelly, come aft and slack off the main-sheet! You, Kerfoot, go for'ard and see what's become of Cooky! Mr. Van Weyden, run aloft again, and cut away any stray stuff on your way!"

And having commanded, he went aft with his peculiar tigerish leaps to the wheel. While I toiled up the fore-shrouds the Ghost slowly paid off. This time, as we went into the trough of the sea and were swept, there were no sails to carry away. And, halfway to the crosstrees and flattened against the rigging by the full force of the wind so that it would have been impossible for me to have fallen, the Ghost almost on her beam-ends and the masts parallel with the water, I looked, not down, but at almost right angles from the perpendicular, to the deck of the Ghost. But I saw, not the deck, but where the deck should have been, for it was buried beneath a wild tumbling of water. Out of this water I could see the two masts rising, and that was all. The Ghost, for the moment, was buried beneath the sea. As she squared off more and more, escaping from the side pressure, she righted herself and broke her deck, like a whale's back, through the ocean surface.

Then we raced, and wildly, across the wild sea, the while I hung like a fly in the crosstrees and searched for the other boats. In half-an-hour I sighted the second one, swamped and bottom up, to which were desperately clinging Jock Horner, fat Louis, and Johnson. This time I remained aloft, and Wolf Larsen succeeded in heaving to without being swept. As before, we drifted down upon it. Tackles were made fast and lines flung to the men, who scrambled aboard like monkeys. The boat itself was crushed and splintered against the schooner's side as it came inboard; but the wreck was securely lashed, for it could be patched and made whole again.

Once more the Ghost bore away before the storm, this time so submerging herself that for some seconds I thought she would never reappear. Even the wheel, quite a deal higher than the waist, was covered and swept again and again. At such moments I felt strangely alone with God, alone with him and watching the chaos of his wrath. And

then the wheel would reappear, and Wolf Larsen's broad shoulders, his hands gripping the spokes and holding the schooner to the course of his will, himself an earth-god, dominating the storm, flinging its descending waters from him and riding it to his own ends. And oh, the marvel of it! the marvel of it! That tiny men should live and breathe and work, and drive so frail a contrivance of wood and cloth through so tremendous an elemental strife.

As before, the Ghost swung out of the trough, lifting her deck again out of the sea, and dashed before the howling blast. It was now half-past five, and half-an-hour later, when the last of the day lost itself in a dim and furious twilight, I sighted a third boat. It was bottom up, and there was no sign of its crew. Wolf Larsen repeated his manœuvre, holding off and then rounding up to windward and drifting down upon it. But this time he missed by forty feet, the boat passing astern.

"Number four boat!" Oofy-Oofy cried, his keen eyes reading its number in the one second when it lifted clear of the foam, and upside down.

It was Henderson's boat and with him had been lost Holyoak and Williams, another of the deep-water crowd. Lost they indubitably were; but the boat remained, and Wolf Larsen made one more reckless effort to recover it. I had come down to the deck, and I saw Horner and Kerfoot vainly protest against the attempt.

"By God, I'll not be robbed of my boat by any storm that ever blew out of hell!" he shouted, and though we four stood with our heads together that we might hear, his voice seemed faint and far, as though removed from us an immense distance.

"Mr. Van Weyden!" he cried, and I heard through the tumult as one might hear a whisper. "Stand by that jib with Johnson and Oofy! The rest of you tail aft to the mainsheet! Lively now! or I'll sail you all into Kingdom Come! Understand?"

And when he put the wheel hard over and the Ghost's bow swung off, there was nothing for the hunters to do but obey and make the best of a risky chance. How great the risk I realized when I was once more buried beneath the pounding seas and clinging for life to the pinrail at the foot of the foremast. My fingers were torn loose, and I swept across to the side and over the side into the sea. I could not swim, but before I could sink I was swept back again. A strong hand gripped me, and when the Ghost finally emerged, I found that I owed my life to Johnson. I saw him looking anxiously about him, and noted that Kelly, who had come forward at the last moment, was missing.

This time, having missed the boat, and not being in the same position as in the previous instances, Wolf Larsen was compelled to resort to a different manœuvre. Running off before the wind with everything to starboard, he came about, and returned close-hauled on the port tack.

"Grand!" Johnson shouted in my ear, as we successfully came through the attendant deluge, and I knew he referred, not to Wolf Larsen's seamanship, but to the performance of the Ghost herself.

It was now so dark that there was no sign of the boat; but Wolf Larsen held back through the frightful turmoil as if guided by unerring instinct. This time, though we

were continually half-buried, there was no trough in which to be swept, and we drifted squarely down upon the upturned boat, badly smashing it as it was heaved inboard.

Two hours of terrible work followed, in which all hands of us — two hunters, three sailors, Wolf Larsen and I — reefed, first one and then the other, the jib and mainsail. Hove to under this short canvas, our decks were comparatively free of water, while the Ghost bobbed and ducked amongst the combers like a cork.

I had burst open the ends of my fingers at the very first, and during the reefing I had worked with tears of pain running down my cheeks. And when all was done, I gave up like a woman and rolled upon the deck in the agony of exhaustion.

In the meantime Thomas Mugridge, like a drowned rat, was being dragged out from under the forecastle head where he had cravenly ensconced himself. I saw him pulled aft to the cabin, and noted with a shock of surprise that the galley had disappeared. A clean space of deck showed where it had stood.

In the cabin I found all hands assembled, sailors as well, and while coffee was being cooked over the small stove we drank whisky and crunched hard-tack. Never in my life had food been so welcome. And never had hot coffee tasted so good. So violently did the Ghost, pitch and toss and tumble that it was impossible for even the sailors to move about without holding on, and several times, after a cry of "Now she takes it!" we were heaped upon the wall of the port cabins as though it had been the deck.

"To hell with a look-out," I heard Wolf Larsen say when we had eaten and drunk our fill. "There's nothing can be done on deck. If anything's going to run us down we couldn't get out of its way. Turn in, all hands, and get some sleep."

The sailors slipped forward, setting the side-lights as they went, while the two hunters remained to sleep in the cabin, it not being deemed advisable to open the slide to the steerage companion-way. Wolf Larsen and I, between us, cut off Kerfoot's crushed finger and sewed up the stump. Mugridge, who, during all the time he had been compelled to cook and serve coffee and keep the fire going, had complained of internal pains, now swore that he had a broken rib or two. On examination we found that he had three. But his case was deferred to next day, principally for the reason that I did not know anything about broken ribs and would first have to read it up.

"I don't think it was worth it," I said to Wolf Larsen, "a broken boat for Kelly's life."

"But Kelly didn't amount to much," was the reply. "Good-night."

After all that had passed, suffering intolerable anguish in my finger-ends, and with three boats missing, to say nothing of the wild capers the Ghost was cutting, I should have thought it impossible to sleep. But my eyes must have closed the instant my head touched the pillow, and in utter exhaustion I slept throughout the night, the while the Ghost, lonely and undirected, fought her way through the storm.

## Chapter XVIII

The next day, while the storm was blowing itself out, Wolf Larsen and I crammed anatomy and surgery and set Mugridge's ribs. Then, when the storm broke, Wolf Larsen cruised back and forth over that portion of the ocean where we had encountered it, and somewhat more to the westward, while the boats were being repaired and new sails made and bent. Sealing schooner after sealing schooner we sighted and boarded, most of which were in search of lost boats, and most of which were carrying boats and crews they had picked up and which did not belong to them. For the thick of the fleet had been to the westward of us, and the boats, scattered far and wide, had headed in mad flight for the nearest refuge.

Two of our boats, with men all safe, we took off the Cisco, and, to Wolf Larsen's huge delight and my own grief, he culled Smoke, with Nilson and Leach, from the San Diego. So that, at the end of five days, we found ourselves short but four men — Henderson, Holyoak, Williams, and Kelly, — and were once more hunting on the flanks of the herd.

As we followed it north we began to encounter the dreaded sea-fogs. Day after day the boats lowered and were swallowed up almost ere they touched the water, while we on board pumped the horn at regular intervals and every fifteen minutes fired the bomb gun. Boats were continually being lost and found, it being the custom for a boat to hunt, on lay, with whatever schooner picked it up, until such time it was recovered by its own schooner. But Wolf Larsen, as was to be expected, being a boat short, took possession of the first stray one and compelled its men to hunt with the Ghost, not permitting them to return to their own schooner when we sighted it. I remember how he forced the hunter and his two men below, a riffle at their breasts, when their captain passed by at biscuit-toss and hailed us for information.

Thomas Mugridge, so strangely and pertinaciously clinging to life, was soon limping about again and performing his double duties of cook and cabin-boy. Johnson and Leach were bullied and beaten as much as ever, and they looked for their lives to end with the end of the hunting season; while the rest of the crew lived the lives of dogs and were worked like dogs by their pitiless master. As for Wolf Larsen and myself, we got along fairly well; though I could not quite rid myself of the idea that right conduct, for me, lay in killing him. He fascinated me immeasurably, and I feared him immeasurably. And yet, I could not imagine him lying prone in death. There was an endurance, as of perpetual youth, about him, which rose up and forbade the picture. I could see him only as living always, and dominating always, fighting and destroying, himself surviving.

One diversion of his, when we were in the midst of the herd and the sea was too rough to lower the boats, was to lower with two boat-pullers and a steerer and go out himself. He was a good shot, too, and brought many a skin aboard under what the hunters termed impossible hunting conditions. It seemed the breath of his nostrils, this carrying his life in his hands and struggling for it against tremendous odds.

I was learning more and more seamanship; and one clear day — a thing we rarely encountered now — I had the satisfaction of running and handling the Ghost and picking up the boats myself. Wolf Larsen had been smitten with one of his headaches, and I stood at the wheel from morning until evening, sailing across the ocean after the last lee boat, and heaving to and picking it and the other five up without command or suggestion from him.

Gales we encountered now and again, for it was a raw and stormy region, and, in the middle of June, a typhoon most memorable to me and most important because of the changes wrought through it upon my future. We must have been caught nearly at the centre of this circular storm, and Wolf Larsen ran out of it and to the southward, first under a double-reefed jib, and finally under bare poles. Never had I imagined so great a sea. The seas previously encountered were as ripples compared with these, which ran a half-mile from crest to crest and which upreared, I am confident, above our masthead. So great was it that Wolf Larsen himself did not dare heave to, though he was being driven far to the southward and out of the seal herd.

We must have been well in the path of the trans-Pacific steamships when the typhoon moderated, and here, to the surprise of the hunters, we found ourselves in the midst of seals — a second herd, or sort of rear-guard, they declared, and a most unusual thing. But it was “Boats over!” the boom-boom of guns, and the pitiful slaughter through the long day.

It was at this time that I was approached by Leach. I had just finished tallying the skins of the last boat aboard, when he came to my side, in the darkness, and said in a low tone:

“Can you tell me, Mr. Van Weyden, how far we are off the coast, and what the bearings of Yokohama are?”

My heart leaped with gladness, for I knew what he had in mind, and I gave him the bearings — west-north-west, and five hundred miles away.

“Thank you, sir,” was all he said as he slipped back into the darkness.

Next morning No. 3 boat and Johnson and Leach were missing. The water-breakers and grub-boxes from all the other boats were likewise missing, as were the beds and sea bags of the two men. Wolf Larsen was furious. He set sail and bore away into the west-north-west, two hunters constantly at the mastheads and sweeping the sea with glasses, himself pacing the deck like an angry lion. He knew too well my sympathy for the runaways to send me aloft as look-out.

The wind was fair but fitful, and it was like looking for a needle in a haystack to raise that tiny boat out of the blue immensity. But he put the Ghost through her best



paces so as to get between the deserters and the land. This accomplished, he cruised back and forth across what he knew must be their course.

On the morning of the third day, shortly after eight bells, a cry that the boat was sighted came down from Smoke at the masthead. All hands lined the rail. A snappy breeze was blowing from the west with the promise of more wind behind it; and there, to leeward, in the troubled silver of the rising sun, appeared and disappeared a black speck.

We squared away and ran for it. My heart was as lead. I felt myself turning sick in anticipation; and as I looked at the gleam of triumph in Wolf Larsen's eyes, his form swam before me, and I felt almost irresistibly impelled to fling myself upon him. So unnerved was I by the thought of impending violence to Leach and Johnson that my reason must have left me. I know that I slipped down into the steerage in a daze, and that I was just beginning the ascent to the deck, a loaded shot-gun in my hands, when I heard the startled cry:

"There's five men in that boat!"

I supported myself in the companion-way, weak and trembling, while the observation was being verified by the remarks of the rest of the men. Then my knees gave from under me and I sank down, myself again, but overcome by shock at knowledge of what I had so nearly done. Also, I was very thankful as I put the gun away and slipped back on deck.

No one had remarked my absence. The boat was near enough for us to make out that it was larger than any sealing boat and built on different lines. As we drew closer, the sail was taken in and the mast unstepped. Oars were shipped, and its occupants waited for us to heave to and take them aboard.

Smoke, who had descended to the deck and was now standing by my side, began to chuckle in a significant way. I looked at him inquiringly.

"Talk of a mess!" he giggled.

"What's wrong?" I demanded.

Again he chuckled. "Don't you see there, in the stern-sheets, on the bottom? May I never shoot a seal again if that ain't a woman!"

I looked closely, but was not sure until exclamations broke out on all sides. The boat contained four men, and its fifth occupant was certainly a woman. We were agog with excitement, all except Wolf Larsen, who was too evidently disappointed in that it was not his own boat with the two victims of his malice.

We ran down the flying jib, hauled the jib-sheets to wind-ward and the main-sheet flat, and came up into the wind. The oars struck the water, and with a few strokes the boat was alongside. I now caught my first fair glimpse of the woman. She was wrapped in a long ulster, for the morning was raw; and I could see nothing but her face and a mass of light brown hair escaping from under the seaman's cap on her head. The eyes were large and brown and lustrous, the mouth sweet and sensitive, and the face itself a delicate oval, though sun and exposure to briny wind had burnt the face scarlet.

She seemed to me like a being from another world. I was aware of a hungry out-reaching for her, as of a starving man for bread. But then, I had not seen a woman for a very long time. I know that I was lost in a great wonder, almost a stupor, — this, then, was a woman? — so that I forgot myself and my mate's duties, and took no part in helping the new-comers aboard. For when one of the sailors lifted her into Wolf Larsen's downstretched arms, she looked up into our curious faces and smiled amusedly and sweetly, as only a woman can smile, and as I had seen no one smile for so long that I had forgotten such smiles existed.

"Mr. Van Weyden!"

Wolf Larsen's voice brought me sharply back to myself.

"Will you take the lady below and see to her comfort? Make up that spare port cabin. Put Cooky to work on it. And see what you can do for that face. It's burned badly."

He turned brusquely away from us and began to question the new men. The boat was cast adrift, though one of them called it a "bloody shame" with Yokohama so near.

I found myself strangely afraid of this woman I was escorting aft. Also I was awkward. It seemed to me that I was realizing for the first time what a delicate, fragile creature a woman is; and as I caught her arm to help her down the companion stairs, I was startled by its smallness and softness. Indeed, she was a slender, delicate woman as women go, but to me she was so ethereally slender and delicate that I was quite prepared for her arm to crumble in my grasp. All this, in frankness, to show my first impression, after long denial of women in general and of Maud Brewster in particular.

"No need to go to any great trouble for me," she protested, when I had seated her in Wolf Larsen's arm-chair, which I had dragged hastily from his cabin. "The men were looking for land at any moment this morning, and the vessel should be in by night; don't you think so?"

Her simple faith in the immediate future took me aback. How could I explain to her the situation, the strange man who stalked the sea like Destiny, all that it had taken me months to learn? But I answered honestly:

"If it were any other captain except ours, I should say you would be ashore in Yokohama to-morrow. But our captain is a strange man, and I beg of you to be prepared for anything — understand? — for anything."

"I — I confess I hardly do understand," she hesitated, a perturbed but not frightened expression in her eyes. "Or is it a misconception of mine that shipwrecked people are always shown every consideration? This is such a little thing, you know. We are so close to land."

"Candidly, I do not know," I strove to reassure her. "I wished merely to prepare you for the worst, if the worst is to come. This man, this captain, is a brute, a demon, and one can never tell what will be his next fantastic act."

I was growing excited, but she interrupted me with an "Oh, I see," and her voice sounded weary. To think was patently an effort. She was clearly on the verge of physical collapse.

She asked no further questions, and I vouchsafed no remark, devoting myself to Wolf Larsen's command, which was to make her comfortable. I bustled about in quite housewifely fashion, procuring soothing lotions for her sunburn, raiding Wolf Larsen's private stores for a bottle of port I knew to be there, and directing Thomas Mugridge in the preparation of the spare state-room.

The wind was freshening rapidly, the Ghost heeling over more and more, and by the time the state-room was ready she was dashing through the water at a lively clip. I had quite forgotten the existence of Leach and Johnson, when suddenly, like a thunderclap, "Boat ho!" came down the open companion-way. It was Smoke's unmistakable voice, crying from the masthead. I shot a glance at the woman, but she was leaning back in the arm-chair, her eyes closed, unutterably tired. I doubted that she had heard, and I resolved to prevent her seeing the brutality I knew would follow the capture of the deserters. She was tired. Very good. She should sleep.

There were swift commands on deck, a stamping of feet and a slapping of reef-points as the Ghost shot into the wind and about on the other tack. As she filled away and heeled, the arm-chair began to slide across the cabin floor, and I sprang for it just in time to prevent the rescued woman from being spilled out.

Her eyes were too heavy to suggest more than a hint of the sleepy surprise that perplexed her as she looked up at me, and she half stumbled, half tottered, as I led her to her cabin. Mugridge grinned insinuatingly in my face as I shoved him out and ordered him back to his galley work; and he won his revenge by spreading glowing reports among the hunters as to what an excellent "lydy's-myde" I was proving myself to be.

She leaned heavily against me, and I do believe that she had fallen asleep again between the arm-chair and the state-room. This I discovered when she nearly fell into the bunk during a sudden lurch of the schooner. She aroused, smiled drowsily, and was off to sleep again; and asleep I left her, under a heavy pair of sailor's blankets, her head resting on a pillow I had appropriated from Wolf Larsen's bunk.

## Chapter XIX

I came on deck to find the Ghost heading up close on the port tack and cutting in to windward of a familiar spritsail close-hauled on the same tack ahead of us. All hands were on deck, for they knew that something was to happen when Leach and Johnson were dragged aboard.

It was four bells. Louis came aft to relieve the wheel. There was a dampness in the air, and I noticed he had on his oilskins.

"What are we going to have?" I asked him.

"A healthy young slip of a gale from the breath iv it, sir," he answered, "with a splatter iv rain just to wet our gills an' no more."

"Too bad we sighted them," I said, as the Ghost's bow was flung off a point by a large sea and the boat leaped for a moment past the jibs and into our line of vision.

Louis gave a spoke and temporized. "They'd never iv made the land, sir, I'm thinkin'."

"Think not?" I queried.

"No, sir. Did you feel that?" (A puff had caught the schooner, and he was forced to put the wheel up rapidly to keep her out of the wind.) "'Tis no egg-shell'll float on this sea an hour come, an' it's a stroke iv luck for them we're here to pick 'em up."

Wolf Larsen strode aft from amidships, where he had been talking with the rescued men. The cat-like springiness in his tread was a little more pronounced than usual, and his eyes were bright and snappy.

"Three oilers and a fourth engineer," was his greeting. "But we'll make sailors out of them, or boat-pullers at any rate. Now, what of the lady?"

I know not why, but I was aware of a twinge or pang like the cut of a knife when he mentioned her. I thought it a certain silly fastidiousness on my part, but it persisted in spite of me, and I merely shrugged my shoulders in answer.

Wolf Larsen pursed his lips in a long, quizzical whistle.

"What's her name, then?" he demanded.

"I don't know," I replied. "She is asleep. She was very tired. In fact, I am waiting to hear the news from you. What vessel was it?"

"Mail steamer," he answered shortly. "The City of Tokio, from 'Frisco, bound for Yokohama. Disabled in that typhoon. Old tub. Opened up top and bottom like a sieve. They were adrift four days. And you don't know who or what she is, eh? — maid, wife, or widow? Well, well."

He shook his head in a bantering way, and regarded me with laughing eyes.

"Are you — " I began. It was on the verge of my tongue to ask if he were going to take the castaways into Yokohama.

"Am I what?" he asked.

"What do you intend doing with Leach and Johnson?"

He shook his head. "Really, Hump, I don't know. You see, with these additions I've about all the crew I want."

"And they've about all the escaping they want," I said. "Why not give them a change of treatment? Take them aboard, and deal gently with them. Whatever they have done they have been hounded into doing."

"By me?"

"By you," I answered steadily. "And I give you warning, Wolf Larsen, that I may forget love of my own life in the desire to kill you if you go too far in maltreating those poor wretches."

"Bravo!" he cried. "You do me proud, Hump! You've found your legs with a vengeance. You're quite an individual. You were unfortunate in having your life cast in easy places, but you're developing, and I like you the better for it."

His voice and expression changed. His face was serious. "Do you believe in promises?" he asked. "Are they sacred things?"

"Of course," I answered.

"Then here's a compact," he went on, consummate actor. "If I promise not to lay my hands upon Leach will you promise, in turn, not to attempt to kill me?"

"Oh, not that I'm afraid of you, not that I'm afraid of you," he hastened to add.

I could hardly believe my ears. What was coming over the man?

"Is it a go?" he asked impatiently.

"A go," I answered.

His hand went out to mine, and as I shook it heartily I could have sworn I saw the mocking devil shine up for a moment in his eyes.

We strolled across the poop to the lee side. The boat was close at hand now, and in desperate plight. Johnson was steering, Leach bailing. We overhauled them about two feet to their one. Wolf Larsen motioned Louis to keep off slightly, and we dashed abreast of the boat, not a score of feet to windward. The Ghost blanketed it. The spritsail flapped emptily and the boat righted to an even keel, causing the two men swiftly to change position. The boat lost headway, and, as we lifted on a huge surge, toppled and fell into the trough.

It was at this moment that Leach and Johnson looked up into the faces of their shipmates, who lined the rail amidships. There was no greeting. They were as dead men in their comrades' eyes, and between them was the gulf that parts the living and the dead.

The next instant they were opposite the poop, where stood Wolf Larsen and I. We were falling in the trough, they were rising on the surge. Johnson looked at me, and I could see that his face was worn and haggard. I waved my hand to him, and he answered the greeting, but with a wave that was hopeless and despairing. It was as if

he were saying farewell. I did not see into the eyes of Leach, for he was looking at Wolf Larsen, the old and implacable snarl of hatred strong as ever on his face.

Then they were gone astern. The spritsail filled with the wind, suddenly, careening the frail open craft till it seemed it would surely capsize. A whitecap foamed above it and broke across in a snow-white smother. Then the boat emerged, half swamped, Leach flinging the water out and Johnson clinging to the steering-oar, his face white and anxious.

Wolf Larsen barked a short laugh in my ear and strode away to the weather side of the poop. I expected him to give orders for the Ghost to heave to, but she kept on her course and he made no sign. Louis stood imperturbably at the wheel, but I noticed the grouped sailors forward turning troubled faces in our direction. Still the Ghost tore along, till the boat dwindled to a speck, when Wolf Larsen's voice rang out in command and he went about on the starboard tack.

Back we held, two miles and more to windward of the struggling cockle-shell, when the flying jib was run down and the schooner hove to. The sealing boats are not made for windward work. Their hope lies in keeping a weather position so that they may run before the wind for the schooner when it breezes up. But in all that wild waste there was no refuge for Leach and Johnson save on the Ghost, and they resolutely began the windward beat. It was slow work in the heavy sea that was running. At any moment they were liable to be overwhelmed by the hissing combers. Time and again and countless times we watched the boat luff into the big whitecaps, lose headway, and be flung back like a cork.

Johnson was a splendid seaman, and he knew as much about small boats as he did about ships. At the end of an hour and a half he was nearly alongside, standing past our stern on the last leg out, aiming to fetch us on the next leg back.

"So you've changed your mind?" I heard Wolf Larsen mutter, half to himself, half to them as though they could hear. "You want to come aboard, eh? Well, then, just keep a-coming."

"Hard up with that helm!" he commanded Oofy-Oofy, the Kanaka, who had in the meantime relieved Louis at the wheel.

Command followed command. As the schooner paid off, the fore-and main-sheets were slacked away for fair wind. And before the wind we were, and leaping, when Johnson, easing his sheet at imminent peril, cut across our wake a hundred feet away. Again Wolf Larsen laughed, at the same time beckoning them with his arm to follow. It was evidently his intention to play with them, — a lesson, I took it, in lieu of a beating, though a dangerous lesson, for the frail craft stood in momentary danger of being overwhelmed.

Johnson squared away promptly and ran after us. There was nothing else for him to do. Death stalked everywhere, and it was only a matter of time when some one of those many huge seas would fall upon the boat, roll over it, and pass on.

"Tis the fear iv death at the hearts iv them," Louis muttered in my ear, as I passed forward to see to taking in the flying jib and staysail.

"Oh, he'll heave to in a little while and pick them up," I answered cheerfully. "He's bent upon giving them a lesson, that's all."

Louis looked at me shrewdly. "Think so?" he asked.

"Surely," I answered. "Don't you?"

"I think nothing but iv my own skin, these days," was his answer. "An' 'tis with wonder I'm filled as to the workin' out iv things. A pretty mess that 'Frisco whisky got me into, an' a prettier mess that woman's got you into aft there. Ah, it's myself that knows ye for a blitherin' fool."

"What do you mean?" I demanded; for, having sped his shaft, he was turning away.

"What do I mean?" he cried. "And it's you that asks me! 'Tis not what I mean, but what the Wolf 'll mean. The Wolf, I said, the Wolf!"

"If trouble comes, will you stand by?" I asked impulsively, for he had voiced my own fear.

"Stand by? 'Tis old fat Louis I stand by, an' trouble enough it'll be. We're at the beginnin' iv things, I'm tellin' ye, the bare beginnin' iv things."

"I had not thought you so great a coward," I sneered.

He favoured me with a contemptuous stare. "If I raised never a hand for that poor fool," — pointing astern to the tiny sail, — "d'ye think I'm hungerin' for a broken head for a woman I never laid me eyes upon before this day?"

I turned scornfully away and went aft.

"Better get in those topsails, Mr. Van Weyden," Wolf Larsen said, as I came on the poop.

I felt relief, at least as far as the two men were concerned. It was clear he did not wish to run too far away from them. I picked up hope at the thought and put the order swiftly into execution. I had scarcely opened my mouth to issue the necessary commands, when eager men were springing to halyards and downhauls, and others were racing aloft. This eagerness on their part was noted by Wolf Larsen with a grim smile.

Still we increased our lead, and when the boat had dropped astern several miles we hove to and waited. All eyes watched it coming, even Wolf Larsen's; but he was the only unperturbed man aboard. Louis, gazing fixedly, betrayed a trouble in his face he was not quite able to hide.

The boat drew closer and closer, hurling along through the seething green like a thing alive, lifting and sending and uptossing across the huge-backed breakers, or disappearing behind them only to rush into sight again and shoot skyward. It seemed impossible that it could continue to live, yet with each dizzying sweep it did achieve the impossible. A rain-squall drove past, and out of the flying wet the boat emerged, almost upon us.

"Hard up, there!" Wolf Larsen shouted, himself springing to the wheel and whirling it over.

Again the Ghost sprang away and raced before the wind, and for two hours Johnson and Leach pursued us. We hove to and ran away, hove to and ran away, and ever astern

the struggling patch of sail tossed skyward and fell into the rushing valleys. It was a quarter of a mile away when a thick squall of rain veiled it from view. It never emerged. The wind blew the air clear again, but no patch of sail broke the troubled surface. I thought I saw, for an instant, the boat's bottom show black in a breaking crest. At the best, that was all. For Johnson and Leach the travail of existence had ceased.

The men remained grouped amidships. No one had gone below, and no one was speaking. Nor were any looks being exchanged. Each man seemed stunned — deeply contemplative, as it were, and, not quite sure, trying to realize just what had taken place. Wolf Larsen gave them little time for thought. He at once put the Ghost upon her course — a course which meant the seal herd and not Yokohama harbour. But the men were no longer eager as they pulled and hauled, and I heard curses amongst them, which left their lips smothered and as heavy and lifeless as were they. Not so was it with the hunters. Smoke the irrepressible related a story, and they descended into the steerage, bellowing with laughter.

As I passed to leeward of the galley on my way aft I was approached by the engineer we had rescued. His face was white, his lips were trembling.

“Good God! sir, what kind of a craft is this?” he cried.

“You have eyes, you have seen,” I answered, almost brutally, what of the pain and fear at my own heart.

“Your promise?” I said to Wolf Larsen.

“I was not thinking of taking them aboard when I made that promise,” he answered. “And anyway, you’ll agree I’ve not laid my hands upon them.”

“Far from it, far from it,” he laughed a moment later.

I made no reply. I was incapable of speaking, my mind was too confused. I must have time to think, I knew. This woman, sleeping even now in the spare cabin, was a responsibility, which I must consider, and the only rational thought that flickered through my mind was that I must do nothing hastily if I were to be any help to her at all.



## Chapter XX

The remainder of the day passed uneventfully. The young slip of a gale, having wetted our gills, proceeded to moderate. The fourth engineer and the three oilers, after a warm interview with Wolf Larsen, were furnished with outfits from the slop-chests, assigned places under the hunters in the various boats and watches on the vessel, and bundled forward into the forecabin. They went protestingly, but their voices were not loud. They were awed by what they had already seen of Wolf Larsen's character, while the tale of woe they speedily heard in the forecabin took the last bit of rebellion out of them.

Miss Brewster — we had learned her name from the engineer — slept on and on. At supper I requested the hunters to lower their voices, so she was not disturbed; and it was not till next morning that she made her appearance. It had been my intention to have her meals served apart, but Wolf Larsen put down his foot. Who was she that she should be too good for cabin table and cabin society? had been his demand.

But her coming to the table had something amusing in it. The hunters fell silent as clams. Jock Horner and Smoke alone were unabashed, stealing stealthy glances at her now and again, and even taking part in the conversation. The other four men glued their eyes on their plates and chewed steadily and with thoughtful precision, their ears moving and wobbling, in time with their jaws, like the ears of so many animals.

Wolf Larsen had little to say at first, doing no more than reply when he was addressed. Not that he was abashed. Far from it. This woman was a new type to him, a different breed from any he had ever known, and he was curious. He studied her, his eyes rarely leaving her face unless to follow the movements of her hands or shoulders. I studied her myself, and though it was I who maintained the conversation, I know that I was a bit shy, not quite self-possessed. His was the perfect poise, the supreme confidence in self, which nothing could shake; and he was no more timid of a woman than he was of storm and battle.

"And when shall we arrive at Yokohama?" she asked, turning to him and looking him squarely in the eyes.

There it was, the question flat. The jaws stopped working, the ears ceased wobbling, and though eyes remained glued on plates, each man listened greedily for the answer.

"In four months, possibly three if the season closes early," Wolf Larsen said.

She caught her breath and stammered, "I — I thought — I was given to understand that Yokohama was only a day's sail away. It — " Here she paused and looked about the table at the circle of unsympathetic faces staring hard at the plates. "It is not right," she concluded.

"That is a question you must settle with Mr. Van Weyden there," he replied, nodding to me with a mischievous twinkle. "Mr. Van Weyden is what you may call an authority on such things as rights. Now I, who am only a sailor, would look upon the situation somewhat differently. It may possibly be your misfortune that you have to remain with us, but it is certainly our good fortune."

He regarded her smilingly. Her eyes fell before his gaze, but she lifted them again, and defiantly, to mine. I read the unspoken question there: was it right? But I had decided that the part I was to play must be a neutral one, so I did not answer.

"What do you think?" she demanded.

"That it is unfortunate, especially if you have any engagements falling due in the course of the next several months. But, since you say that you were voyaging to Japan for your health, I can assure you that it will improve no better anywhere than aboard the Ghost."

I saw her eyes flash with indignation, and this time it was I who dropped mine, while I felt my face flushing under her gaze. It was cowardly, but what else could I do?

"Mr. Van Weyden speaks with the voice of authority," Wolf Larsen laughed.

I nodded my head, and she, having recovered herself, waited expectantly.

"Not that he is much to speak of now," Wolf Larsen went on, "but he has improved wonderfully. You should have seen him when he came on board. A more scrawny, pitiful specimen of humanity one could hardly conceive. Isn't that so, Kerfoot?"

Kerfoot, thus directly addressed, was startled into dropping his knife on the floor, though he managed to grunt affirmation.

"Developed himself by peeling potatoes and washing dishes. Eh, Kerfoot?"

Again that worthy grunted.

"Look at him now. True, he is not what you would term muscular, but still he has muscles, which is more than he had when he came aboard. Also, he has legs to stand on. You would not think so to look at him, but he was quite unable to stand alone at first."

The hunters were snickering, but she looked at me with a sympathy in her eyes which more than compensated for Wolf Larsen's nastiness. In truth, it had been so long since I had received sympathy that I was softened, and I became then, and gladly, her willing slave. But I was angry with Wolf Larsen. He was challenging my manhood with his slurs, challenging the very legs he claimed to be instrumental in getting for me.

"I may have learned to stand on my own legs," I retorted. "But I have yet to stamp upon others with them."

He looked at me insolently. "Your education is only half completed, then," he said dryly, and turned to her.

"We are very hospitable upon the Ghost. Mr. Van Weyden has discovered that. We do everything to make our guests feel at home, eh, Mr. Van Weyden?"

"Even to the peeling of potatoes and the washing of dishes," I answered, "to say nothing to wringing their necks out of very fellowship."

"I beg of you not to receive false impressions of us from Mr. Van Weyden," he interposed with mock anxiety. "You will observe, Miss Brewster, that he carries a dirk in his belt, a — ahem — a most unusual thing for a ship's officer to do. While really very estimable, Mr. Van Weyden is sometimes — how shall I say? — er — quarrelsome, and harsh measures are necessary. He is quite reasonable and fair in his calm moments, and as he is calm now he will not deny that only yesterday he threatened my life."

I was well-nigh choking, and my eyes were certainly fiery. He drew attention to me.

"Look at him now. He can scarcely control himself in your presence. He is not accustomed to the presence of ladies anyway. I shall have to arm myself before I dare go on deck with him."

He shook his head sadly, murmuring, "Too bad, too bad," while the hunters burst into guffaws of laughter.

The deep-sea voices of these men, rumbling and bellowing in the confined space, produced a wild effect. The whole setting was wild, and for the first time, regarding this strange woman and realizing how incongruous she was in it, I was aware of how much a part of it I was myself. I knew these men and their mental processes, was one of them myself, living the seal-hunting life, eating the seal-hunting fare, thinking, largely, the seal-hunting thoughts. There was for me no strangeness to it, to the rough clothes, the coarse faces, the wild laughter, and the lurching cabin walls and swaying sea-lamps.

As I buttered a piece of bread my eyes chanced to rest upon my hand. The knuckles were skinned and inflamed clear across, the fingers swollen, the nails rimmed with black. I felt the mattress-like growth of beard on my neck, knew that the sleeve of my coat was ripped, that a button was missing from the throat of the blue shirt I wore. The dirk mentioned by Wolf Larsen rested in its sheath on my hip. It was very natural that it should be there, — how natural I had not imagined until now, when I looked upon it with her eyes and knew how strange it and all that went with it must appear to her.

But she divined the mockery in Wolf Larsen's words, and again favoured me with a sympathetic glance. But there was a look of bewilderment also in her eyes. That it was mockery made the situation more puzzling to her.

"I may be taken off by some passing vessel, perhaps," she suggested.

"There will be no passing vessels, except other sealing-schooners," Wolf Larsen made answer.

"I have no clothes, nothing," she objected. "You hardly realize, sir, that I am not a man, or that I am unaccustomed to the vagrant, careless life which you and your men seem to lead."

"The sooner you get accustomed to it, the better," he said.

"I'll furnish you with cloth, needles, and thread," he added. "I hope it will not be too dreadful a hardship for you to make yourself a dress or two."

She made a wry pucker with her mouth, as though to advertise her ignorance of dressmaking. That she was frightened and bewildered, and that she was bravely striving to hide it, was quite plain to me.

"I suppose you're like Mr. Van Weyden there, accustomed to having things done for you. Well, I think doing a few things for yourself will hardly dislocate any joints. By the way, what do you do for a living?"

She regarded him with amazement unconcealed.

"I mean no offence, believe me. People eat, therefore they must procure the where-withal. These men here shoot seals in order to live; for the same reason I sail this schooner; and Mr. Van Weyden, for the present at any rate, earns his salty grub by assisting me. Now what do you do?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you feed yourself? Or does some one else feed you?"

"I'm afraid some one else has fed me most of my life," she laughed, trying bravely to enter into the spirit of his quizzing, though I could see a terror dawning and growing in her eyes as she watched Wolf Larsen.

"And I suppose some one else makes your bed for you?"

"I have made beds," she replied.

"Very often?"

She shook her head with mock ruefulness.

"Do you know what they do to poor men in the States, who, like you, do not work for their living?"

"I am very ignorant," she pleaded. "What do they do to the poor men who are like me?"

"They send them to jail. The crime of not earning a living, in their case, is called vagrancy. If I were Mr. Van Weyden, who harps eternally on questions of right and wrong, I'd ask, by what right do you live when you do nothing to deserve living?"

"But as you are not Mr. Van Weyden, I don't have to answer, do I?"

She beamed upon him through her terror-filled eyes, and the pathos of it cut me to the heart. I must in some way break in and lead the conversation into other channels.

"Have you ever earned a dollar by your own labour?" he demanded, certain of her answer, a triumphant vindictiveness in his voice.

"Yes, I have," she answered slowly, and I could have laughed aloud at his crestfallen visage. "I remember my father giving me a dollar once, when I was a little girl, for remaining absolutely quiet for five minutes."

He smiled indulgently.

"But that was long ago," she continued. "And you would scarcely demand a little girl of nine to earn her own living."

"At present, however," she said, after another slight pause, "I earn about eighteen hundred dollars a year."

With one accord, all eyes left the plates and settled on her. A woman who earned eighteen hundred dollars a year was worth looking at. Wolf Larsen was undisguised in his admiration.

"Salary, or piece-work?" he asked.

"Piece-work," she answered promptly.

"Eighteen hundred," he calculated. "That's a hundred and fifty dollars a month. Well, Miss Brewster, there is nothing small about the Ghost. Consider yourself on salary during the time you remain with us."

She made no acknowledgment. She was too unused as yet to the whims of the man to accept them with equanimity.

"I forgot to inquire," he went on suavely, "as to the nature of your occupation. What commodities do you turn out? What tools and materials do you require?"

"Paper and ink," she laughed. "And, oh! also a typewriter."

"You are Maud Brewster," I said slowly and with certainty, almost as though I were charging her with a crime.

Her eyes lifted curiously to mine. "How do you know?"

"Aren't you?" I demanded.

She acknowledged her identity with a nod. It was Wolf Larsen's turn to be puzzled. The name and its magic signified nothing to him. I was proud that it did mean something to me, and for the first time in a weary while I was convincingly conscious of a superiority over him.

"I remember writing a review of a thin little volume — " I had begun carelessly, when she interrupted me.

"You!" she cried. "You are — "

She was now staring at me in wide-eyed wonder.

I nodded my identity, in turn.

"Humphrey Van Weyden," she concluded; then added with a sigh of relief, and unaware that she had glanced that relief at Wolf Larsen, "I am so glad."

"I remember the review," she went on hastily, becoming aware of the awkwardness of her remark; "that too, too flattering review."

"Not at all," I denied valiantly. "You impeach my sober judgment and make my canons of little worth. Besides, all my brother critics were with me. Didn't Lang include your 'Kiss Endured' among the four supreme sonnets by women in the English language?"

"But you called me the American Mrs. Meynell!"

"Was it not true?" I demanded.

"No, not that," she answered. "I was hurt."

"We can measure the unknown only by the known," I replied, in my finest academic manner. "As a critic I was compelled to place you. You have now become a yardstick yourself. Seven of your thin little volumes are on my shelves; and there are two thicker volumes, the essays, which, you will pardon my saying, and I know not which is flattered

more, fully equal your verse. The time is not far distant when some unknown will arise in England and the critics will name her the English Maud Brewster."

"You are very kind, I am sure," she murmured; and the very conventionality of her tones and words, with the host of associations it aroused of the old life on the other side of the world, gave me a quick thrill — rich with remembrance but stinging sharp with home-sickness.

"And you are Maud Brewster," I said solemnly, gazing across at her.

"And you are Humphrey Van Weyden," she said, gazing back at me with equal solemnity and awe. "How unusual! I don't understand. We surely are not to expect some wildly romantic sea-story from your sober pen."

"No, I am not gathering material, I assure you," was my answer. "I have neither aptitude nor inclination for fiction."

"Tell me, why have you always buried yourself in California?" she next asked. "It has not been kind of you. We of the East have seen too very little of you — too little, indeed, of the Dean of American Letters, the Second."

I bowed to, and disclaimed, the compliment. "I nearly met you, once, in Philadelphia, some Browning affair or other — you were to lecture, you know. My train was four hours late."

And then we quite forgot where we were, leaving Wolf Larsen stranded and silent in the midst of our flood of gossip. The hunters left the table and went on deck, and still we talked. Wolf Larsen alone remained. Suddenly I became aware of him, leaning back from the table and listening curiously to our alien speech of a world he did not know.

I broke short off in the middle of a sentence. The present, with all its perils and anxieties, rushed upon me with stunning force. It smote Miss Brewster likewise, a vague and nameless terror rushing into her eyes as she regarded Wolf Larsen.

He rose to his feet and laughed awkwardly. The sound of it was metallic.

"Oh, don't mind me," he said, with a self-depreciatory wave of his hand. "I don't count. Go on, go on, I pray you."

But the gates of speech were closed, and we, too, rose from the table and laughed awkwardly.

## Chapter XXI

The chagrin Wolf Larsen felt from being ignored by Maud Brewster and me in the conversation at table had to express itself in some fashion, and it fell to Thomas Mugridge to be the victim. He had not mended his ways nor his shirt, though the latter he contended he had changed. The garment itself did not bear out the assertion, nor did the accumulations of grease on stove and pot and pan attest a general cleanliness.

"I've given you warning, Cooky," Wolf Larsen said, "and now you've got to take your medicine."

Mugridge's face turned white under its sooty veneer, and when Wolf Larsen called for a rope and a couple of men, the miserable Cockney fled wildly out of the galley and dodged and ducked about the deck with the grinning crew in pursuit. Few things could have been more to their liking than to give him a tow over the side, for to the forecastle he had sent messes and concoctions of the vilest order. Conditions favoured the undertaking. The Ghost was slipping through the water at no more than three miles an hour, and the sea was fairly calm. But Mugridge had little stomach for a dip in it. Possibly he had seen men towed before. Besides, the water was frightfully cold, and his was anything but a rugged constitution.

As usual, the watches below and the hunters turned out for what promised sport. Mugridge seemed to be in rabid fear of the water, and he exhibited a nimbleness and speed we did not dream he possessed. Cornered in the right-angle of the poop and galley, he sprang like a cat to the top of the cabin and ran aft. But his pursuers forestalling him, he doubled back across the cabin, passed over the galley, and gained the deck by means of the steerage-scuttle. Straight forward he raced, the boat-puller Harrison at his heels and gaining on him. But Mugridge, leaping suddenly, caught the jib-boom-lift. It happened in an instant. Holding his weight by his arms, and in mid-air doubling his body at the hips, he let fly with both feet. The oncoming Harrison caught the kick squarely in the pit of the stomach, groaned involuntarily, and doubled up and sank backward to the deck.

Hand-clapping and roars of laughter from the hunters greeted the exploit, while Mugridge, eluding half of his pursuers at the foremast, ran aft and through the remainder like a runner on the football field. Straight aft he held, to the poop and along the poop to the stern. So great was his speed that as he curved past the corner of the cabin he slipped and fell. Nilson was standing at the wheel, and the Cockney's hurtling body struck his legs. Both went down together, but Mugridge alone arose. By some freak of pressures, his frail body had snapped the strong man's leg like a pipe-stem.

Parsons took the wheel, and the pursuit continued. Round and round the decks they went, Mugridge sick with fear, the sailors hallooing and shouting directions to one another, and the hunters bellowing encouragement and laughter. Mugridge went down on the fore-hatch under three men; but he emerged from the mass like an eel, bleeding at the mouth, the offending shirt ripped into tatters, and sprang for the main-rigging. Up he went, clear up, beyond the ratlines, to the very masthead.

Half-a-dozen sailors swarmed to the crosstrees after him, where they clustered and waited while two of their number, Oofy-Oofy and Black (who was Latimer's boat-steerer), continued up the thin steel stays, lifting their bodies higher and higher by means of their arms.

It was a perilous undertaking, for, at a height of over a hundred feet from the deck, holding on by their hands, they were not in the best of positions to protect themselves from Mugridge's feet. And Mugridge kicked savagely, till the Kanaka, hanging on with one hand, seized the Cockney's foot with the other. Black duplicated the performance a moment later with the other foot. Then the three writhed together in a swaying tangle, struggling, sliding, and falling into the arms of their mates on the crosstrees.

The aerial battle was over, and Thomas Mugridge, whining and gibbering, his mouth flecked with bloody foam, was brought down to deck. Wolf Larsen rove a bowline in a piece of rope and slipped it under his shoulders. Then he was carried aft and flung into the sea. Forty, — fifty, — sixty feet of line ran out, when Wolf Larsen cried "Belay!" Oofy-Oofy took a turn on a bitt, the rope tautened, and the Ghost, lunging onward, jerked the cook to the surface.

It was a pitiful spectacle. Though he could not drown, and was nine-lived in addition, he was suffering all the agonies of half-drowning. The Ghost was going very slowly, and when her stern lifted on a wave and she slipped forward she pulled the wretch to the surface and gave him a moment in which to breathe; but between each lift the stern fell, and while the bow lazily climbed the next wave the line slacked and he sank beneath.

I had forgotten the existence of Maud Brewster, and I remembered her with a start as she stepped lightly beside me. It was her first time on deck since she had come aboard. A dead silence greeted her appearance.

"What is the cause of the merriment?" she asked.

"Ask Captain Larsen," I answered composedly and coldly, though inwardly my blood was boiling at the thought that she should be witness to such brutality.

She took my advice and was turning to put it into execution, when her eyes lighted on Oofy-Oofy, immediately before her, his body instinct with alertness and grace as he held the turn of the rope.

"Are you fishing?" she asked him.

He made no reply. His eyes, fixed intently on the sea astern, suddenly flashed.

"Shark ho, sir!" he cried.

"Heave in! Lively! All hands tail on!" Wolf Larsen shouted, springing himself to the rope in advance of the quickest.



Mugridge had heard the Kanaka's warning cry and was screaming madly. I could see a black fin cutting the water and making for him with greater swiftness than he was being pulled aboard. It was an even toss whether the shark or we would get him, and it was a matter of moments. When Mugridge was directly beneath us, the stern descended the slope of a passing wave, thus giving the advantage to the shark. The fin disappeared. The belly flashed white in swift upward rush. Almost equally swift, but not quite, was Wolf Larsen. He threw his strength into one tremendous jerk. The Cockney's body left the water; so did part of the shark's. He drew up his legs, and the man-eater seemed no more than barely to touch one foot, sinking back into the water with a splash. But at the moment of contact Thomas Mugridge cried out. Then he came in like a fresh-caught fish on a line, clearing the rail generously and striking the deck in a heap, on hands and knees, and rolling over.

But a fountain of blood was gushing forth. The right foot was missing, amputated neatly at the ankle. I looked instantly to Maud Brewster. Her face was white, her eyes dilated with horror. She was gazing, not at Thomas Mugridge, but at Wolf Larsen. And he was aware of it, for he said, with one of his short laughs:

"Man-play, Miss Brewster. Somewhat rougher, I warrant, than what you have been used to, but still-man-play. The shark was not in the reckoning. It — "

But at this juncture, Mugridge, who had lifted his head and ascertained the extent of his loss, floundered over on the deck and buried his teeth in Wolf Larsen's leg. Wolf Larsen stooped, coolly, to the Cockney, and pressed with thumb and finger at the rear of the jaws and below the ears. The jaws opened with reluctance, and Wolf Larsen stepped free.

"As I was saying," he went on, as though nothing unwonted had happened, "the shark was not in the reckoning. It was — ahem — shall we say Providence?"

She gave no sign that she had heard, though the expression of her eyes changed to one of inexpressible loathing as she started to turn away. She no more than started, for she swayed and tottered, and reached her hand weakly out to mine. I caught her in time to save her from falling, and helped her to a seat on the cabin. I thought she might faint outright, but she controlled herself.

"Will you get a tourniquet, Mr. Van Weyden," Wolf Larsen called to me.

I hesitated. Her lips moved, and though they formed no words, she commanded me with her eyes, plainly as speech, to go to the help of the unfortunate man. "Please," she managed to whisper, and I could but obey.

By now I had developed such skill at surgery that Wolf Larsen, with a few words of advice, left me to my task with a couple of sailors for assistants. For his task he elected a vengeance on the shark. A heavy swivel-hook, baited with fat salt-pork, was dropped overside; and by the time I had compressed the severed veins and arteries, the sailors were singing and heaving in the offending monster. I did not see it myself, but my assistants, first one and then the other, deserted me for a few moments to run amidships and look at what was going on. The shark, a sixteen-footer, was hoisted up against the main-rigging. Its jaws were pried apart to their greatest extension, and a

stout stake, sharpened at both ends, was so inserted that when the pries were removed the spread jaws were fixed upon it. This accomplished, the hook was cut out. The shark dropped back into the sea, helpless, yet with its full strength, doomed — to lingering starvation — a living death less meet for it than for the man who devised the punishment.

## Chapter XXII

I knew what it was as she came toward me. For ten minutes I had watched her talking earnestly with the engineer, and now, with a sign for silence, I drew her out of earshot of the helmsman. Her face was white and set; her large eyes, larger than usual what of the purpose in them, looked penetratingly into mine. I felt rather timid and apprehensive, for she had come to search Humphrey Van Weyden's soul, and Humphrey Van Weyden had nothing of which to be particularly proud since his advent on the Ghost.

We walked to the break of the poop, where she turned and faced me. I glanced around to see that no one was within hearing distance.

"What is it?" I asked gently; but the expression of determination on her face did not relax.

"I can readily understand," she began, "that this morning's affair was largely an accident; but I have been talking with Mr. Haskins. He tells me that the day we were rescued, even while I was in the cabin, two men were drowned, deliberately drowned — murdered."

There was a query in her voice, and she faced me accusingly, as though I were guilty of the deed, or at least a party to it.

"The information is quite correct," I answered. "The two men were murdered."

"And you permitted it!" she cried.

"I was unable to prevent it, is a better way of phrasing it," I replied, still gently.

"But you tried to prevent it?" There was an emphasis on the "tried," and a pleading little note in her voice.

"Oh, but you didn't," she hurried on, divining my answer. "But why didn't you?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "You must remember, Miss Brewster, that you are a new inhabitant of this little world, and that you do not yet understand the laws which operate within it. You bring with you certain fine conceptions of humanity, manhood, conduct, and such things; but here you will find them misconceptions. I have found it so," I added, with an involuntary sigh.

She shook her head incredulously.

"What would you advise, then?" I asked. "That I should take a knife, or a gun, or an axe, and kill this man?"

She half started back.

"No, not that!"

"Then what should I do? Kill myself?"

"You speak in purely materialistic terms," she objected. "There is such a thing as moral courage, and moral courage is never without effect."

"Ah," I smiled, "you advise me to kill neither him nor myself, but to let him kill me." I held up my hand as she was about to speak. "For moral courage is a worthless asset on this little floating world. Leach, one of the men who were murdered, had moral courage to an unusual degree. So had the other man, Johnson. Not only did it not stand them in good stead, but it destroyed them. And so with me if I should exercise what little moral courage I may possess."

"You must understand, Miss Brewster, and understand clearly, that this man is a monster. He is without conscience. Nothing is sacred to him, nothing is too terrible for him to do. It was due to his whim that I was detained aboard in the first place. It is due to his whim that I am still alive. I do nothing, can do nothing, because I am a slave to this monster, as you are now a slave to him; because I desire to live, as you will desire to live; because I cannot fight and overcome him, just as you will not be able to fight and overcome him."

She waited for me to go on.

"What remains? Mine is the role of the weak. I remain silent and suffer ignominy, as you will remain silent and suffer ignominy. And it is well. It is the best we can do if we wish to live. The battle is not always to the strong. We have not the strength with which to fight this man; we must dissimulate, and win, if win we can, by craft. If you will be advised by me, this is what you will do. I know my position is perilous, and I may say frankly that yours is even more perilous. We must stand together, without appearing to do so, in secret alliance. I shall not be able to side with you openly, and, no matter what indignities may be put upon me, you are to remain likewise silent. We must provoke no scenes with this man, nor cross his will. And we must keep smiling faces and be friendly with him no matter how repulsive it may be."

She brushed her hand across her forehead in a puzzled way, saying, "Still I do not understand."

"You must do as I say," I interrupted authoritatively, for I saw Wolf Larsen's gaze wandering toward us from where he paced up and down with Latimer amidships. "Do as I say, and ere long you will find I am right."

"What shall I do, then?" she asked, detecting the anxious glance I had shot at the object of our conversation, and impressed, I flatter myself, with the earnestness of my manner.

"Dispense with all the moral courage you can," I said briskly. "Don't arouse this man's animosity. Be quite friendly with him, talk with him, discuss literature and art with him — he is fond of such things. You will find him an interested listener and no fool. And for your own sake try to avoid witnessing, as much as you can, the brutalities of the ship. It will make it easier for you to act your part."

"I am to lie," she said in steady, rebellious tones, "by speech and action to lie."

Wolf Larsen had separated from Latimer and was coming toward us. I was desperate.

"Please, please understand me," I said hurriedly, lowering my voice. "All your experience of men and things is worthless here. You must begin over again. I know, — I can see it — you have, among other ways, been used to managing people with your eyes, letting your moral courage speak out through them, as it were. You have already managed me with your eyes, commanded me with them. But don't try it on Wolf Larsen. You could as easily control a lion, while he would make a mock of you. He would — I have always been proud of the fact that I discovered him," I said, turning the conversation as Wolf Larsen stepped on the poop and joined us. "The editors were afraid of him and the publishers would have none of him. But I knew, and his genius and my judgment were vindicated when he made that magnificent hit with his 'Forge.'"

"And it was a newspaper poem," she said glibly.

"It did happen to see the light in a newspaper," I replied, "but not because the magazine editors had been denied a glimpse at it."

"We were talking of Harris," I said to Wolf Larsen.

"Oh, yes," he acknowledged. "I remember the 'Forge.' Filled with pretty sentiments and an almighty faith in human illusions. By the way, Mr. Van Weyden, you'd better look in on Cooky. He's complaining and restless."

Thus was I bluntly dismissed from the poop, only to find Mugridge sleeping soundly from the morphine I had given him. I made no haste to return on deck, and when I did I was gratified to see Miss Brewster in animated conversation with Wolf Larsen. As I say, the sight gratified me. She was following my advice. And yet I was conscious of a slight shock or hurt in that she was able to do the thing I had begged her to do and which she had notably disliked.

## Chapter XXIII

Brave winds, blowing fair, swiftly drove the Ghost northward into the seal herd. We encountered it well up to the forty-fourth parallel, in a raw and stormy sea across which the wind harried the fog-banks in eternal flight. For days at a time we could never see the sun nor take an observation; then the wind would sweep the face of the ocean clean, the waves would ripple and flash, and we would learn where we were. A day of clear weather might follow, or three days or four, and then the fog would settle down upon us, seemingly thicker than ever.

The hunting was perilous; yet the boats, lowered day after day, were swallowed up in the grey obscurity, and were seen no more till nightfall, and often not till long after, when they would creep in like sea-wraiths, one by one, out of the grey. Wainwright — the hunter whom Wolf Larsen had stolen with boat and men — took advantage of the veiled sea and escaped. He disappeared one morning in the encircling fog with his two men, and we never saw them again, though it was not many days when we learned that they had passed from schooner to schooner until they finally regained their own.

This was the thing I had set my mind upon doing, but the opportunity never offered. It was not in the mate's province to go out in the boats, and though I manœuvred cunningly for it, Wolf Larsen never granted me the privilege. Had he done so, I should have managed somehow to carry Miss Brewster away with me. As it was, the situation was approaching a stage which I was afraid to consider. I involuntarily shunned the thought of it, and yet the thought continually arose in my mind like a haunting spectre.

I had read sea-romances in my time, wherein figured, as a matter of course, the lone woman in the midst of a shipload of men; but I learned, now, that I had never comprehended the deeper significance of such a situation — the thing the writers harped upon and exploited so thoroughly. And here it was, now, and I was face to face with it. That it should be as vital as possible, it required no more than that the woman should be Maud Brewster, who now charmed me in person as she had long charmed me through her work.

No one more out of environment could be imagined. She was a delicate, ethereal creature, swaying and willowy, light and graceful of movement. It never seemed to me that she walked, or, at least, walked after the ordinary manner of mortals. Hers was an extreme lithesomeness, and she moved with a certain indefinable airiness, approaching one as down might float or as a bird on noiseless wings.

She was like a bit of Dresden china, and I was continually impressed with what I may call her fragility. As at the time I caught her arm when helping her below, so at any time I was quite prepared, should stress or rough handling befall her, to see

her crumble away. I have never seen body and spirit in such perfect accord. Describe her verse, as the critics have described it, as sublimated and spiritual, and you have described her body. It seemed to partake of her soul, to have analogous attributes, and to link it to life with the slenderest of chains. Indeed, she trod the earth lightly, and in her constitution there was little of the robust clay.

She was in striking contrast to Wolf Larsen. Each was nothing that the other was, everything that the other was not. I noted them walking the deck together one morning, and I likened them to the extreme ends of the human ladder of evolution — the one the culmination of all savagery, the other the finished product of the finest civilization. True, Wolf Larsen possessed intellect to an unusual degree, but it was directed solely to the exercise of his savage instincts and made him but the more formidable a savage. He was splendidly muscled, a heavy man, and though he strode with the certitude and directness of the physical man, there was nothing heavy about his stride. The jungle and the wilderness lurked in the uplift and downput of his feet. He was cat-footed, and lithe, and strong, always strong. I likened him to some great tiger, a beast of prowess and prey. He looked it, and the piercing glitter that arose at times in his eyes was the same piercing glitter I had observed in the eyes of caged leopards and other preying creatures of the wild.

But this day, as I noted them pacing up and down, I saw that it was she who terminated the walk. They came up to where I was standing by the entrance to the companion-way. Though she betrayed it by no outward sign, I felt, somehow, that she was greatly perturbed. She made some idle remark, looking at me, and laughed lightly enough; but I saw her eyes return to his, involuntarily, as though fascinated; then they fell, but not swiftly enough to veil the rush of terror that filled them.

It was in his eyes that I saw the cause of her perturbation. Ordinarily grey and cold and harsh, they were now warm and soft and golden, and all a-dance with tiny lights that dimmed and faded, or welled up till the full orbs were flooded with a glowing radiance. Perhaps it was to this that the golden colour was due; but golden his eyes were, enticing and masterful, at the same time luring and compelling, and speaking a demand and clamour of the blood which no woman, much less Maud Brewster, could misunderstand.

Her own terror rushed upon me, and in that moment of fear — the most terrible fear a man can experience — I knew that in inexpressible ways she was dear to me. The knowledge that I loved her rushed upon me with the terror, and with both emotions gripping at my heart and causing my blood at the same time to chill and to leap riotously, I felt myself drawn by a power without me and beyond me, and found my eyes returning against my will to gaze into the eyes of Wolf Larsen. But he had recovered himself. The golden colour and the dancing lights were gone. Cold and grey and glittering they were as he bowed brusquely and turned away.

“I am afraid,” she whispered, with a shiver. “I am so afraid.”

I, too, was afraid, and what of my discovery of how much she meant to me my mind was in a turmoil; but, I succeeded in answering quite calmly:

"All will come right, Miss Brewster. Trust me, it will come right."

She answered with a grateful little smile that sent my heart pounding, and started to descend the companion-stairs.

For a long while I remained standing where she had left me. There was imperative need to adjust myself, to consider the significance of the changed aspect of things. It had come, at last, love had come, when I least expected it and under the most forbidding conditions. Of course, my philosophy had always recognized the inevitableness of the love-call sooner or later; but long years of bookish silence had made me inattentive and unprepared.

And now it had come! Maud Brewster! My memory flashed back to that first thin little volume on my desk, and I saw before me, as though in the concrete, the row of thin little volumes on my library shelf. How I had welcomed each of them! Each year one had come from the press, and to me each was the advent of the year. They had voiced a kindred intellect and spirit, and as such I had received them into a camaraderie of the mind; but now their place was in my heart.

My heart? A revulsion of feeling came over me. I seemed to stand outside myself and to look at myself incredulously. Maud Brewster! Humphrey Van Weyden, "the cold-blooded fish," the "emotionless monster," the "analytical demon," of Charley Furuseth's christening, in love! And then, without rhyme or reason, all sceptical, my mind flew back to a small biographical note in the red-bound Who's Who, and I said to myself, "She was born in Cambridge, and she is twenty-seven years old." And then I said, "Twenty-seven years old and still free and fancy free?" But how did I know she was fancy free? And the pang of new-born jealousy put all incredulity to flight. There was no doubt about it. I was jealous; therefore I loved. And the woman I loved was Maud Brewster.

I, Humphrey Van Weyden, was in love! And again the doubt assailed me. Not that I was afraid of it, however, or reluctant to meet it. On the contrary, idealist that I was to the most pronounced degree, my philosophy had always recognized and guerdoned love as the greatest thing in the world, the aim and the summit of being, the most exquisite pitch of joy and happiness to which life could thrill, the thing of all things to be hailed and welcomed and taken into the heart. But now that it had come I could not believe. I could not be so fortunate. It was too good, too good to be true. Symons's lines came into my head:

"I wandered all these years among  
A world of women, seeking you."

And then I had ceased seeking. It was not for me, this greatest thing in the world, I had decided. Furuseth was right; I was abnormal, an "emotionless monster," a strange bookish creature, capable of pleasuring in sensations only of the mind. And though I had been surrounded by women all my days, my appreciation of them had been æsthetic and nothing more. I had actually, at times, considered myself outside the pale, a monkish fellow denied the eternal or the passing passions I saw and understood so well in others. And now it had come! Undreamed of and unheralded, it had come.



In what could have been no less than an ecstasy, I left my post at the head of the companion-way and started along the deck, murmuring to myself those beautiful lines of Mrs. Browning:

“I lived with visions for my company  
Instead of men and women years ago,  
And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know  
A sweeter music than they played to me.”

But the sweeter music was playing in my ears, and I was blind and oblivious to all about me. The sharp voice of Wolf Larsen aroused me.

“What the hell are you up to?” he was demanding.

I had strayed forward where the sailors were painting, and I came to myself to find my advancing foot on the verge of overturning a paint-pot.

“Sleep-walking, sunstroke, — what?” he barked.

“No; indigestion,” I retorted, and continued my walk as if nothing untoward had occurred.

## Chapter XXIV

Among the most vivid memories of my life are those of the events on the Ghost which occurred during the forty hours succeeding the discovery of my love for Maud Brewster. I, who had lived my life in quiet places, only to enter at the age of thirty-five upon a course of the most irrational adventure I could have imagined, never had more incident and excitement crammed into any forty hours of my experience. Nor can I quite close my ears to a small voice of pride which tells me I did not do so badly, all things considered.

To begin with, at the midday dinner, Wolf Larsen informed the hunters that they were to eat thenceforth in the steerage. It was an unprecedented thing on sealing-schooners, where it is the custom for the hunters to rank, unofficially as officers. He gave no reason, but his motive was obvious enough. Horner and Smoke had been displaying a gallantry toward Maud Brewster, ludicrous in itself and inoffensive to her, but to him evidently distasteful.

The announcement was received with black silence, though the other four hunters glanced significantly at the two who had been the cause of their banishment. Jock Horner, quiet as was his way, gave no sign; but the blood surged darkly across Smoke's forehead, and he half opened his mouth to speak. Wolf Larsen was watching him, waiting for him, the steely glitter in his eyes; but Smoke closed his mouth again without having said anything.

"Anything to say?" the other demanded aggressively.

It was a challenge, but Smoke refused to accept it.

"About what?" he asked, so innocently that Wolf Larsen was disconcerted, while the others smiled.

"Oh, nothing," Wolf Larsen said lamely. "I just thought you might want to register a kick."

"About what?" asked the imperturbable Smoke.

Smoke's mates were now smiling broadly. His captain could have killed him, and I doubt not that blood would have flowed had not Maud Brewster been present. For that matter, it was her presence which enabled Smoke to act as he did. He was too discreet and cautious a man to incur Wolf Larsen's anger at a time when that anger could be expressed in terms stronger than words. I was in fear that a struggle might take place, but a cry from the helmsman made it easy for the situation to save itself.

"Smoke ho!" the cry came down the open companion-way.

"How's it bear?" Wolf Larsen called up.

"Dead astern, sir."

"Maybe it's a Russian," suggested Latimer.

His words brought anxiety into the faces of the other hunters. A Russian could mean but one thing — a cruiser. The hunters, never more than roughly aware of the position of the ship, nevertheless knew that we were close to the boundaries of the forbidden sea, while Wolf Larsen's record as a poacher was notorious. All eyes centred upon him.

"We're dead safe," he assured them with a laugh. "No salt mines this time, Smoke. But I'll tell you what — I'll lay odds of five to one it's the Macedonia."

No one accepted his offer, and he went on: "In which event, I'll lay ten to one there's trouble breezing up."

"No, thank you," Latimer spoke up. "I don't object to losing my money, but I like to get a run for it anyway. There never was a time when there wasn't trouble when you and that brother of yours got together, and I'll lay twenty to one on that."

A general smile followed, in which Wolf Larsen joined, and the dinner went on smoothly, thanks to me, for he treated me abominably the rest of the meal, sneering at me and patronizing me till I was all a-tremble with suppressed rage. Yet I knew I must control myself for Maud Brewster's sake, and I received my reward when her eyes caught mine for a fleeting second, and they said, as distinctly as if she spoke, "Be brave, be brave."

We left the table to go on deck, for a steamer was a welcome break in the monotony of the sea on which we floated, while the conviction that it was Death Larsen and the Macedonia added to the excitement. The stiff breeze and heavy sea which had sprung up the previous afternoon had been moderating all morning, so that it was now possible to lower the boats for an afternoon's hunt. The hunting promised to be profitable. We had sailed since daylight across a sea barren of seals, and were now running into the herd.

The smoke was still miles astern, but overhauling us rapidly, when we lowered our boats. They spread out and struck a northerly course across the ocean. Now and again we saw a sail lower, heard the reports of the shot-guns, and saw the sail go up again. The seals were thick, the wind was dying away; everything favoured a big catch. As we ran off to get our leeward position of the last lee boat, we found the ocean fairly carpeted with sleeping seals. They were all about us, thicker than I had ever seen them before, in twos and threes and bunches, stretched full length on the surface and sleeping for all the world like so many lazy young dogs.

Under the approaching smoke the hull and upper-works of a steamer were growing larger. It was the Macedonia. I read her name through the glasses as she passed by scarcely a mile to starboard. Wolf Larsen looked savagely at the vessel, while Maud Brewster was curious.

"Where is the trouble you were so sure was breezing up, Captain Larsen?" she asked gaily.

He glanced at her, a moment's amusement softening his features.

"What did you expect? That they'd come aboard and cut our throats?"

"Something like that," she confessed. "You understand, seal-hunters are so new and strange to me that I am quite ready to expect anything."

He nodded his head. "Quite right, quite right. Your error is that you failed to expect the worst."

"Why, what can be worse than cutting our throats?" she asked, with pretty naïve surprise.

"Cutting our purses," he answered. "Man is so made these days that his capacity for living is determined by the money he possesses."

"Who steals my purse steals trash," she quoted.

"Who steals my purse steals my right to live," was the reply, "old saws to the contrary. For he steals my bread and meat and bed, and in so doing imperils my life. There are not enough soup-kitchens and bread-lines to go around, you know, and when men have nothing in their purses they usually die, and die miserably — unless they are able to fill their purses pretty speedily."

"But I fail to see that this steamer has any designs on your purse."

"Wait and you will see," he answered grimly.

We did not have long to wait. Having passed several miles beyond our line of boats, the Macedonia proceeded to lower her own. We knew she carried fourteen boats to our five (we were one short through the desertion of Wainwright), and she began dropping them far to leeward of our last boat, continued dropping them athwart our course, and finished dropping them far to windward of our first weather boat. The hunting, for us, was spoiled. There were no seals behind us, and ahead of us the line of fourteen boats, like a huge broom, swept the herd before it.

Our boats hunted across the two or three miles of water between them and the point where the Macedonia's had been dropped, and then headed for home. The wind had fallen to a whisper, the ocean was growing calmer and calmer, and this, coupled with the presence of the great herd, made a perfect hunting day — one of the two or three days to be encountered in the whole of a lucky season. An angry lot of men, boat-pullers and steerers as well as hunters, swarmed over our side. Each man felt that he had been robbed; and the boats were hoisted in amid curses, which, if curses had power, would have settled Death Larsen for all eternity — "Dead and damned for a dozen iv eternities," commented Louis, his eyes twinkling up at me as he rested from hauling taut the lashings of his boat.

"Listen to them, and find if it is hard to discover the most vital thing in their souls," said Wolf Larsen. "Faith? and love? and high ideals? The good? the beautiful? the true?"

"Their innate sense of right has been violated," Maud Brewster said, joining the conversation.

She was standing a dozen feet away, one hand resting on the main-shrouds and her body swaying gently to the slight roll of the ship. She had not raised her voice, and yet I was struck by its clear and bell-like tone. Ah, it was sweet in my ears! I scarcely dared look at her just then, for the fear of betraying myself. A boy's cap was perched on her

head, and her hair, light brown and arranged in a loose and fluffy order that caught the sun, seemed an aureole about the delicate oval of her face. She was positively bewitching, and, withal, sweetly spirituelle, if not saintly. All my old-time marvel at life returned to me at sight of this splendid incarnation of it, and Wolf Larsen's cold explanation of life and its meaning was truly ridiculous and laughable.

"A sentimentalist," he sneered, "like Mr. Van Weyden. Those men are cursing because their desires have been outraged. That is all. What desires? The desires for the good grub and soft beds ashore which a handsome pay-day brings them — the women and the drink, the gorging and the beastliness which so truly expresses them, the best that is in them, their highest aspirations, their ideals, if you please. The exhibition they make of their feelings is not a touching sight, yet it shows how deeply they have been touched, how deeply their purses have been touched, for to lay hands on their purses is to lay hands on their souls."

"You hardly behave as if your purse had been touched," she said, smilingly.

"Then it so happens that I am behaving differently, for my purse and my soul have both been touched. At the current price of skins in the London market, and based on a fair estimate of what the afternoon's catch would have been had not the Macedonia hogged it, the Ghost has lost about fifteen hundred dollars' worth of skins."

"You speak so calmly — " she began.

"But I do not feel calm; I could kill the man who robbed me," he interrupted. "Yes, yes, I know, and that man my brother — more sentiment! Bah!"

His face underwent a sudden change. His voice was less harsh and wholly sincere as he said:

"You must be happy, you sentimentalists, really and truly happy at dreaming and finding things good, and, because you find some of them good, feeling good yourself. Now, tell me, you two, do you find me good?"

"You are good to look upon — in a way," I qualified.

"There are in you all powers for good," was Maud Brewster's answer.

"There you are!" he cried at her, half angrily. "Your words are empty to me. There is nothing clear and sharp and definite about the thought you have expressed. You cannot pick it up in your two hands and look at it. In point of fact, it is not a thought. It is a feeling, a sentiment, a something based upon illusion and not a product of the intellect at all."

As he went on his voice again grew soft, and a confiding note came into it. "Do you know, I sometimes catch myself wishing that I, too, were blind to the facts of life and only knew its fancies and illusions. They're wrong, all wrong, of course, and contrary to reason; but in the face of them my reason tells me, wrong and most wrong, that to dream and live illusions gives greater delight. And after all, delight is the wage for living. Without delight, living is a worthless act. To labour at living and be unpaid is worse than to be dead. He who delights the most lives the most, and your dreams and unrealities are less disturbing to you and more gratifying than are my facts to me."

He shook his head slowly, pondering.

"I often doubt, I often doubt, the worthwhileness of reason. Dreams must be more substantial and satisfying. Emotional delight is more filling and lasting than intellectual delight; and, besides, you pay for your moments of intellectual delight by having the blues. Emotional delight is followed by no more than jaded senses which speedily recuperate. I envy you, I envy you."

He stopped abruptly, and then on his lips formed one of his strange quizzical smiles, as he added:

"It's from my brain I envy you, take notice, and not from my heart. My reason dictates it. The envy is an intellectual product. I am like a sober man looking upon drunken men, and, greatly weary, wishing he, too, were drunk."

"Or like a wise man looking upon fools and wishing he, too, were a fool," I laughed.

"Quite so," he said. "You are a blessed, bankrupt pair of fools. You have no facts in your pocketbook."

"Yet we spend as freely as you," was Maud Brewster's contribution.

"More freely, because it costs you nothing."

"And because we draw upon eternity," she retorted.

"Whether you do or think you do, it's the same thing. You spend what you haven't got, and in return you get greater value from spending what you haven't got than I get from spending what I have got, and what I have sweated to get."

"Why don't you change the basis of your coinage, then?" she queried teasingly.

He looked at her quickly, half-hopefully, and then said, all regretfully: "Too late. I'd like to, perhaps, but I can't. My pocketbook is stuffed with the old coinage, and it's a stubborn thing. I can never bring myself to recognize anything else as valid."

He ceased speaking, and his gaze wandered absently past her and became lost in the placid sea. The old primal melancholy was strong upon him. He was quivering to it. He had reasoned himself into a spell of the blues, and within few hours one could look for the devil within him to be up and stirring. I remembered Charley Furuseth, and knew this man's sadness as the penalty which the materialist ever pays for his materialism.

## Chapter XXV

"You've been on deck, Mr. Van Weyden," Wolf Larsen said, the following morning at the breakfast-table, "How do things look?"

"Clear enough," I answered, glancing at the sunshine which streamed down the open companion-way. "Fair westerly breeze, with a promise of stiffening, if Louis predicts correctly."

He nodded his head in a pleased way. "Any signs of fog?"

"Thick banks in the north and north-west."

He nodded his head again, evincing even greater satisfaction than before.

"What of the Macedonia?"

"Not sighted," I answered.

I could have sworn his face fell at the intelligence, but why he should be disappointed I could not conceive.

I was soon to learn. "Smoke ho!" came the hail from on deck, and his face brightened.

"Good!" he exclaimed, and left the table at once to go on deck and into the steerage, where the hunters were taking the first breakfast of their exile.

Maud Brewster and I scarcely touched the food before us, gazing, instead, in silent anxiety at each other, and listening to Wolf Larsen's voice, which easily penetrated the cabin through the intervening bulkhead. He spoke at length, and his conclusion was greeted with a wild roar of cheers. The bulkhead was too thick for us to hear what he said; but whatever it was it affected the hunters strongly, for the cheering was followed by loud exclamations and shouts of joy.

From the sounds on deck I knew that the sailors had been routed out and were preparing to lower the boats. Maud Brewster accompanied me on deck, but I left her at the break of the poop, where she might watch the scene and not be in it. The sailors must have learned whatever project was on hand, and the vim and snap they put into their work attested their enthusiasm. The hunters came trooping on deck with shot-guns and ammunition-boxes, and, most unusual, their rifles. The latter were rarely taken in the boats, for a seal shot at long range with a rifle invariably sank before a boat could reach it. But each hunter this day had his rifle and a large supply of cartridges. I noticed they grinned with satisfaction whenever they looked at the Macedonia's smoke, which was rising higher and higher as she approached from the west.

The five boats went over the side with a rush, spread out like the ribs of a fan, and set a northerly course, as on the preceding afternoon, for us to follow. I watched for some time, curiously, but there seemed nothing extraordinary about their behaviour. They

lowered sails, shot seals, and hoisted sails again, and continued on their way as I had always seen them do. The Macedonia repeated her performance of yesterday, "hogging" the sea by dropping her line of boats in advance of ours and across our course. Fourteen boats require a considerable spread of ocean for comfortable hunting, and when she had completely lapped our line she continued steaming into the north-east, dropping more boats as she went.

"What's up?" I asked Wolf Larsen, unable longer to keep my curiosity in check.

"Never mind what's up," he answered gruffly. "You won't be a thousand years in finding out, and in the meantime just pray for plenty of wind."

"Oh, well, I don't mind telling you," he said the next moment. "I'm going to give that brother of mine a taste of his own medicine. In short, I'm going to play the hog myself, and not for one day, but for the rest of the season, — if we're in luck."

"And if we're not?" I queried.

"Not to be considered," he laughed. "We simply must be in luck, or it's all up with us."

He had the wheel at the time, and I went forward to my hospital in the fore-castle, where lay the two crippled men, Nilson and Thomas Mugridge. Nilson was as cheerful as could be expected, for his broken leg was knitting nicely; but the Cockney was desperately melancholy, and I was aware of a great sympathy for the unfortunate creature. And the marvel of it was that still he lived and clung to life. The brutal years had reduced his meagre body to splintered wreckage, and yet the spark of life within burned brightly as ever.

"With an artificial foot — and they make excellent ones — you will be stumping ships' galleys to the end of time," I assured him jovially.

But his answer was serious, nay, solemn. "I don't know about wot you s'y, Mr. Van W'yden, but I do know I'll never rest 'appy till I see that 'ell-'ound bloody well dead. 'E cawn't live as long as me. 'E's got no right to live, an' as the Good Word puts it, 'E shall shorely die,' an' I s'y, 'Amen, an' damn soon at that.'"

When I returned on deck I found Wolf Larsen steering mainly with one hand, while with the other hand he held the marine glasses and studied the situation of the boats, paying particular attention to the position of the Macedonia. The only change noticeable in our boats was that they had hauled close on the wind and were heading several points west of north. Still, I could not see the expediency of the manoeuvre, for the free sea was still intercepted by the Macedonia's five weather boats, which, in turn, had hauled close on the wind. Thus they slowly diverged toward the west, drawing farther away from the remainder of the boats in their line. Our boats were rowing as well as sailing. Even the hunters were pulling, and with three pairs of oars in the water they rapidly overhauled what I may appropriately term the enemy.

The smoke of the Macedonia had dwindled to a dim blot on the north-eastern horizon. Of the steamer herself nothing was to be seen. We had been loafing along, till now, our sails shaking half the time and spilling the wind; and twice, for short periods, we had been hove to. But there was no more loafing. Sheets were trimmed, and Wolf



Larsen proceeded to put the Ghost through her paces. We ran past our line of boats and bore down upon the first weather boat of the other line.

"Down that flying jib, Mr. Van Weyden," Wolf Larsen commanded. "And stand by to back over the jibs."

I ran forward and had the downhaul of the flying jib all in and fast as we slipped by the boat a hundred feet to leeward. The three men in it gazed at us suspiciously. They had been hogging the sea, and they knew Wolf Larsen, by reputation at any rate. I noted that the hunter, a huge Scandinavian sitting in the bow, held his rifle, ready to hand, across his knees. It should have been in its proper place in the rack. When they came opposite our stern, Wolf Larsen greeted them with a wave of the hand, and cried:

"Come on board and have a 'gam'!"

"To gam," among the sealing-schooners, is a substitute for the verbs "to visit," "to gossip." It expresses the garrulity of the sea, and is a pleasant break in the monotony of the life.

The Ghost swung around into the wind, and I finished my work forward in time to run aft and lend a hand with the mainsheet.

"You will please stay on deck, Miss Brewster," Wolf Larsen said, as he started forward to meet his guest. "And you too, Mr. Van Weyden."

The boat had lowered its sail and run alongside. The hunter, golden bearded like a sea-king, came over the rail and dropped on deck. But his hugeness could not quite overcome his apprehensiveness. Doubt and distrust showed strongly in his face. It was a transparent face, for all of its hairy shield, and advertised instant relief when he glanced from Wolf Larsen to me, noted that there was only the pair of us, and then glanced over his own two men who had joined him. Surely he had little reason to be afraid. He towered like a Goliath above Wolf Larsen. He must have measured six feet eight or nine inches in stature, and I subsequently learned his weight — 240 pounds. And there was no fat about him. It was all bone and muscle.

A return of apprehension was apparent when, at the top of the companion-way, Wolf Larsen invited him below. But he reassured himself with a glance down at his host — a big man himself but dwarfed by the propinquity of the giant. So all hesitancy vanished, and the pair descended into the cabin. In the meantime, his two men, as was the wont of visiting sailors, had gone forward into the forecabin to do some visiting themselves.

Suddenly, from the cabin came a great, choking bellow, followed by all the sounds of a furious struggle. It was the leopard and the lion, and the lion made all the noise. Wolf Larsen was the leopard.

"You see the sacredness of our hospitality," I said bitterly to Maud Brewster.

She nodded her head that she heard, and I noted in her face the signs of the same sickness at sight or sound of violent struggle from which I had suffered so severely during my first weeks on the Ghost.

"Wouldn't it be better if you went forward, say by the steerage companion-way, until it is over?" I suggested.

She shook her head and gazed at me pitifully. She was not frightened, but appalled, rather, at the human animality of it.

"You will understand," I took advantage of the opportunity to say, "whatever part I take in what is going on and what is to come, that I am compelled to take it — if you and I are ever to get out of this scrape with our lives."

"It is not nice — for me," I added.

"I understand," she said, in a weak, far-away voice, and her eyes showed me that she did understand.

The sounds from below soon died away. Then Wolf Larsen came alone on deck. There was a slight flush under his bronze, but otherwise he bore no signs of the battle.

"Send those two men aft, Mr. Van Weyden," he said.

I obeyed, and a minute or two later they stood before him. "Hoist in your boat," he said to them. "Your hunter's decided to stay aboard awhile and doesn't want it pounding alongside."

"Hoist in your boat, I said," he repeated, this time in sharper tones as they hesitated to do his bidding.

"Who knows? you may have to sail with me for a time," he said, quite softly, with a silken threat that belied the softness, as they moved slowly to comply, "and we might as well start with a friendly understanding. Lively now! Death Larsen makes you jump better than that, and you know it!"

Their movements perceptibly quickened under his coaching, and as the boat swung inboard I was sent forward to let go the jibs. Wolf Larsen, at the wheel, directed the Ghost after the Macedonia's second weather boat.

Under way, and with nothing for the time being to do, I turned my attention to the situation of the boats. The Macedonia's third weather boat was being attacked by two of ours, the fourth by our remaining three; and the fifth, turn about, was taking a hand in the defence of its nearest mate. The fight had opened at long distance, and the rifles were cracking steadily. A quick, snappy sea was being kicked up by the wind, a condition which prevented fine shooting; and now and again, as we drew closer, we could see the bullets zip-zipping from wave to wave.

The boat we were pursuing had squared away and was running before the wind to escape us, and, in the course of its flight, to take part in repulsing our general boat attack.

Attending to sheets and tacks now left me little time to see what was taking place, but I happened to be on the poop when Wolf Larsen ordered the two strange sailors forward and into the forecastle. They went sullenly, but they went. He next ordered Miss Brewster below, and smiled at the instant horror that leapt into her eyes.

"You'll find nothing gruesome down there," he said, "only an unhurt man securely made fast to the ring-bolts. Bullets are liable to come aboard, and I don't want you killed, you know."

Even as he spoke, a bullet was deflected by a brass-capped spoke of the wheel between his hands and screeched off through the air to windward.

"You see," he said to her; and then to me, "Mr. Van Weyden, will you take the wheel?"

Maud Brewster had stepped inside the companion-way so that only her head was exposed. Wolf Larsen had procured a rifle and was throwing a cartridge into the barrel. I begged her with my eyes to go below, but she smiled and said:

"We may be feeble land-creatures without legs, but we can show Captain Larsen that we are at least as brave as he."

He gave her a quick look of admiration.

"I like you a hundred per cent. better for that," he said. "Books, and brains, and bravery. You are well-rounded, a blue-stocking fit to be the wife of a pirate chief. Ahem, we'll discuss that later," he smiled, as a bullet struck solidly into the cabin wall.

I saw his eyes flash golden as he spoke, and I saw the terror mount in her own.

"We are braver," I hastened to say. "At least, speaking for myself, I know I am braver than Captain Larsen."

It was I who was now favoured by a quick look. He was wondering if I were making fun of him. I put three or four spokes over to counteract a sheer toward the wind on the part of the Ghost, and then steadied her. Wolf Larsen was still waiting an explanation, and I pointed down to my knees.

"You will observe there," I said, "a slight trembling. It is because I am afraid, the flesh is afraid; and I am afraid in my mind because I do not wish to die. But my spirit masters the trembling flesh and the qualms of the mind. I am more than brave. I am courageous. Your flesh is not afraid. You are not afraid. On the one hand, it costs you nothing to encounter danger; on the other hand, it even gives you delight. You enjoy it. You may be unafraid, Mr. Larsen, but you must grant that the bravery is mine."

"You're right," he acknowledged at once. "I never thought of it in that way before. But is the opposite true? If you are braver than I, am I more cowardly than you?"

We both laughed at the absurdity, and he dropped down to the deck and rested his rifle across the rail. The bullets we had received had travelled nearly a mile, but by now we had cut that distance in half. He fired three careful shots. The first struck fifty feet to windward of the boat, the second alongside; and at the third the boat-steerer let loose his steering-oar and crumpled up in the bottom of the boat.

"I guess that'll fix them," Wolf Larsen said, rising to his feet. "I couldn't afford to let the hunter have it, and there is a chance the boat-puller doesn't know how to steer. In which case, the hunter cannot steer and shoot at the same time."

His reasoning was justified, for the boat rushed at once into the wind and the hunter sprang aft to take the boat-steerer's place. There was no more shooting, though the rifles were still cracking merrily from the other boats.

The hunter had managed to get the boat before the wind again, but we ran down upon it, going at least two feet to its one. A hundred yards away, I saw the boat-puller pass a rifle to the hunter. Wolf Larsen went amidships and took the coil of the throat-

halyards from its pin. Then he peered over the rail with levelled rifle. Twice I saw the hunter let go the steering-oar with one hand, reach for his rifle, and hesitate. We were now alongside and foaming past.

"Here, you!" Wolf Larsen cried suddenly to the boat-puller. "Take a turn!"

At the same time he flung the coil of rope. It struck fairly, nearly knocking the man over, but he did not obey. Instead, he looked to his hunter for orders. The hunter, in turn, was in a quandary. His rifle was between his knees, but if he let go the steering-oar in order to shoot, the boat would sweep around and collide with the schooner. Also he saw Wolf Larsen's rifle bearing upon him and knew he would be shot ere he could get his rifle into play.

"Take a turn," he said quietly to the man.

The boat-puller obeyed, taking a turn around the little forward thwart and paying the line as it jerked taut. The boat sheered out with a rush, and the hunter steadied it to a parallel course some twenty feet from the side of the Ghost.

"Now, get that sail down and come alongside!" Wolf Larsen ordered.

He never let go his rifle, even passing down the tackles with one hand. When they were fast, bow and stern, and the two uninjured men prepared to come aboard, the hunter picked up his rifle as if to place it in a secure position.

"Drop it!" Wolf Larsen cried, and the hunter dropped it as though it were hot and had burned him.

Once aboard, the two prisoners hoisted in the boat and under Wolf Larsen's direction carried the wounded boat-steerer down into the forecastle.

"If our five boats do as well as you and I have done, we'll have a pretty full crew," Wolf Larsen said to me.

"The man you shot — he is — I hope?" Maud Brewster quavered.

"In the shoulder," he answered. "Nothing serious, Mr. Van Weyden will pull him around as good as ever in three or four weeks."

"But he won't pull those chaps around, from the look of it," he added, pointing at the Macedonia's third boat, for which I had been steering and which was now nearly abreast of us. "That's Horner's and Smoke's work. I told them we wanted live men, not carcasses. But the joy of shooting to hit is a most compelling thing, when once you've learned how to shoot. Ever experienced it, Mr. Van Weyden?"

I shook my head and regarded their work. It had indeed been bloody, for they had drawn off and joined our other three boats in the attack on the remaining two of the enemy. The deserted boat was in the trough of the sea, rolling drunkenly across each comber, its loose spritsail out at right angles to it and fluttering and flapping in the wind. The hunter and boat-puller were both lying awkwardly in the bottom, but the boat-steerer lay across the gunwale, half in and half out, his arms trailing in the water and his head rolling from side to side.

"Don't look, Miss Brewster, please don't look," I had begged of her, and I was glad that she had minded me and been spared the sight.

"Head right into the bunch, Mr. Van Weyden," was Wolf Larsen's command.

As we drew nearer, the firing ceased, and we saw that the fight was over. The remaining two boats had been captured by our five, and the seven were grouped together, waiting to be picked up.

"Look at that!" I cried involuntarily, pointing to the north-east.

The blot of smoke which indicated the Macedonia's position had reappeared.

"Yes, I've been watching it," was Wolf Larsen's calm reply. He measured the distance away to the fog-bank, and for an instant paused to feel the weight of the wind on his cheek. "We'll make it, I think; but you can depend upon it that blessed brother of mine has twigged our little game and is just a-humping for us. Ah, look at that!"

The blot of smoke had suddenly grown larger, and it was very black.

"I'll beat you out, though, brother mine," he chuckled. "I'll beat you out, and I hope you no worse than that you rack your old engines into scrap."

When we hove to, a hasty though orderly confusion reigned. The boats came aboard from every side at once. As fast as the prisoners came over the rail they were marshalled forward to the forecastle by our hunters, while our sailors hoisted in the boats, pell-mell, dropping them anywhere upon the deck and not stopping to lash them. We were already under way, all sails set and drawing, and the sheets being slacked off for a wind abeam, as the last boat lifted clear of the water and swung in the tackles.

There was need for haste. The Macedonia, belching the blackest of smoke from her funnel, was charging down upon us from out of the north-east. Neglecting the boats that remained to her, she had altered her course so as to anticipate ours. She was not running straight for us, but ahead of us. Our courses were converging like the sides of an angle, the vertex of which was at the edge of the fog-bank. It was there, or not at all, that the Macedonia could hope to catch us. The hope for the Ghost lay in that she should pass that point before the Macedonia arrived at it.

Wolf Larsen was steering, his eyes glistening and snapping as they dwelt upon and leaped from detail to detail of the chase. Now he studied the sea to windward for signs of the wind slackening or freshening, now the Macedonia; and again, his eyes roved over every sail, and he gave commands to slack a sheet here a trifle, to come in on one there a trifle, till he was drawing out of the Ghost the last bit of speed she possessed. All feuds and grudges were forgotten, and I was surprised at the alacrity with which the men who had so long endured his brutality sprang to execute his orders. Strange to say, the unfortunate Johnson came into my mind as we lifted and surged and heeled along, and I was aware of a regret that he was not alive and present; he had so loved the Ghost and delighted in her sailing powers.

"Better get your rifles, you fellows," Wolf Larsen called to our hunters; and the five men lined the lee rail, guns in hand, and waited.

The Macedonia was now but a mile away, the black smoke pouring from her funnel at a right angle, so madly she raced, pounding through the sea at a seventeen-knot gait — "Sky-hooting through the brine," as Wolf Larsen quoted while gazing at her. We were not making more than nine knots, but the fog-bank was very near.

A puff of smoke broke from the Macedonia's deck, we heard a heavy report, and a round hole took form in the stretched canvas of our mainsail. They were shooting at us with one of the small cannon which rumour had said they carried on board. Our men, clustering amidships, waved their hats and raised a derisive cheer. Again there was a puff of smoke and a loud report, this time the cannon-ball striking not more than twenty feet astern and glancing twice from sea to sea to windward ere it sank.

But there was no rifle-firing for the reason that all their hunters were out in the boats or our prisoners. When the two vessels were half-a-mile apart, a third shot made another hole in our mainsail. Then we entered the fog. It was about us, veiling and hiding us in its dense wet gauze.

The sudden transition was startling. The moment before we had been leaping through the sunshine, the clear sky above us, the sea breaking and rolling wide to the horizon, and a ship, vomiting smoke and fire and iron missiles, rushing madly upon us. And at once, as in an instant's leap, the sun was blotted out, there was no sky, even our mastheads were lost to view, and our horizon was such as tear-blinded eyes may see. The grey mist drove by us like a rain. Every woollen filament of our garments, every hair of our heads and faces, was jewelled with a crystal globule. The shrouds were wet with moisture; it dripped from our rigging overhead; and on the underside of our booms drops of water took shape in long swaying lines, which were detached and flung to the deck in mimic showers at each surge of the schooner. I was aware of a pent, stifled feeling. As the sounds of the ship thrusting herself through the waves were hurled back upon us by the fog, so were one's thoughts. The mind recoiled from contemplation of a world beyond this wet veil which wrapped us around. This was the world, the universe itself, its bounds so near one felt impelled to reach out both arms and push them back. It was impossible, that the rest could be beyond these walls of grey. The rest was a dream, no more than the memory of a dream.

It was weird, strangely weird. I looked at Maud Brewster and knew that she was similarly affected. Then I looked at Wolf Larsen, but there was nothing subjective about his state of consciousness. His whole concern was with the immediate, objective present. He still held the wheel, and I felt that he was timing Time, reckoning the passage of the minutes with each forward lunge and leeward roll of the Ghost.

"Go for'ard and hard alee without any noise," he said to me in a low voice. "Clew up the topsails first. Set men at all the sheets. Let there be no rattling of blocks, no sound of voices. No noise, understand, no noise."

When all was ready, the word "hard-a-lee" was passed forward to me from man to man; and the Ghost heeled about on the port tack with practically no noise at all. And what little there was, — the slapping of a few reef-points and the creaking of a sheave in a block or two, — was ghostly under the hollow echoing pall in which we were swathed.

We had scarcely filled away, it seemed, when the fog thinned abruptly and we were again in the sunshine, the wide-stretching sea breaking before us to the sky-line. But

the ocean was bare. No wrathful Macedonia broke its surface nor blackened the sky with her smoke.

Wolf Larsen at once squared away and ran down along the rim of the fog-bank. His trick was obvious. He had entered the fog to windward of the steamer, and while the steamer had blindly driven on into the fog in the chance of catching him, he had come about and out of his shelter and was now running down to re-enter to leeward. Successful in this, the old simile of the needle in the haystack would be mild indeed compared with his brother's chance of finding him. He did not run long. Jibing the fore-and main-sails and setting the topsails again, we headed back into the bank. As we entered I could have sworn I saw a vague bulk emerging to windward. I looked quickly at Wolf Larsen. Already we were ourselves buried in the fog, but he nodded his head. He, too, had seen it — the Macedonia, guessing his manœuvre and failing by a moment in anticipating it. There was no doubt that we had escaped unseen.

"He can't keep this up," Wolf Larsen said. "He'll have to go back for the rest of his boats. Send a man to the wheel, Mr. Van Weyden, keep this course for the present, and you might as well set the watches, for we won't do any lingering to-night."

"I'd give five hundred dollars, though," he added, "just to be aboard the Macedonia for five minutes, listening to my brother curse."

"And now, Mr. Van Weyden," he said to me when he had been relieved from the wheel, "we must make these new-comers welcome. Serve out plenty of whisky to the hunters and see that a few bottles slip for'ard. I'll wager every man Jack of them is over the side to-morrow, hunting for Wolf Larsen as contentedly as ever they hunted for Death Larsen."

"But won't they escape as Wainwright did?" I asked.

He laughed shrewdly. "Not as long as our old hunters have anything to say about it. I'm dividing amongst them a dollar a skin for all the skins shot by our new hunters. At least half of their enthusiasm to-day was due to that. Oh, no, there won't be any escaping if they have anything to say about it. And now you'd better get for'ard to your hospital duties. There must be a full ward waiting for you."

## Chapter XXVI

Wolf Larsen took the distribution of the whisky off my hands, and the bottles began to make their appearance while I worked over the fresh batch of wounded men in the forecastle. I had seen whisky drunk, such as whisky-and-soda by the men of the clubs, but never as these men drank it, from pannikins and mugs, and from the bottles — great brimming drinks, each one of which was in itself a debauch. But they did not stop at one or two. They drank and drank, and ever the bottles slipped forward and they drank more.

Everybody drank; the wounded drank; Oofy-Oofy, who helped me, drank. Only Louis refrained, no more than cautiously wetting his lips with the liquor, though he joined in the revels with an abandon equal to that of most of them. It was a saturnalia. In loud voices they shouted over the day's fighting, wrangled about details, or waxed affectionate and made friends with the men whom they had fought. Prisoners and captors hiccoughed on one another's shoulders, and swore mighty oaths of respect and esteem. They wept over the miseries of the past and over the miseries yet to come under the iron rule of Wolf Larsen. And all cursed him and told terrible tales of his brutality.

It was a strange and frightful spectacle — the small, bunk-lined space, the floor and walls leaping and lurching, the dim light, the swaying shadows lengthening and foreshortening monstrously, the thick air heavy with smoke and the smell of bodies and iodoform, and the inflamed faces of the men — half-men, I should call them. I noted Oofy-Oofy, holding the end of a bandage and looking upon the scene, his velvety and luminous eyes glistening in the light like a deer's eyes, and yet I knew the barbaric devil that lurked in his breast and belied all the softness and tenderness, almost womanly, of his face and form. And I noticed the boyish face of Harrison, — a good face once, but now a demon's, — convulsed with passion as he told the new-comers of the hell-ship they were in and shrieked curses upon the head of Wolf Larsen.

Wolf Larsen it was, always Wolf Larsen, enslaver and tormentor of men, a male Circe and these his swine, suffering brutes that grovelled before him and revolted only in drunkenness and in secrecy. And was I, too, one of his swine? I thought. And Maud Brewster? No! I ground my teeth in my anger and determination till the man I was attending winced under my hand and Oofy-Oofy looked at me with curiosity. I felt endowed with a sudden strength. What of my new-found love, I was a giant. I feared nothing. I would work my will through it all, in spite of Wolf Larsen and of my own thirty-five bookish years. All would be well. I would make it well. And so, exalted, upborne by a sense of power, I turned my back on the howling inferno and climbed to



the deck, where the fog drifted ghostly through the night and the air was sweet and pure and quiet.

The steerage, where were two wounded hunters, was a repetition of the forecabin, except that Wolf Larsen was not being cursed; and it was with a great relief that I again emerged on deck and went aft to the cabin. Supper was ready, and Wolf Larsen and Maud were waiting for me.

While all his ship was getting drunk as fast as it could, he remained sober. Not a drop of liquor passed his lips. He did not dare it under the circumstances, for he had only Louis and me to depend upon, and Louis was even now at the wheel. We were sailing on through the fog without a look-out and without lights. That Wolf Larsen had turned the liquor loose among his men surprised me, but he evidently knew their psychology and the best method of cementing in cordiality, what had begun in bloodshed.

His victory over Death Larsen seemed to have had a remarkable effect upon him. The previous evening he had reasoned himself into the blues, and I had been waiting momentarily for one of his characteristic outbursts. Yet nothing had occurred, and he was now in splendid trim. Possibly his success in capturing so many hunters and boats had counteracted the customary reaction. At any rate, the blues were gone, and the blue devils had not put in an appearance. So I thought at the time; but, ah me, little I knew him or knew that even then, perhaps, he was meditating an outbreak more terrible than any I had seen.

As I say, he discovered himself in splendid trim when I entered the cabin. He had had no headaches for weeks, his eyes were clear blue as the sky, his bronze was beautiful with perfect health; life swelled through his veins in full and magnificent flood. While waiting for me he had engaged Maud in animated discussion. Temptation was the topic they had hit upon, and from the few words I heard I made out that he was contending that temptation was temptation only when a man was seduced by it and fell.

"For look you," he was saying, "as I see it, a man does things because of desire. He has many desires. He may desire to escape pain, or to enjoy pleasure. But whatever he does, he does because he desires to do it."

"But suppose he desires to do two opposite things, neither of which will permit him to do the other?" Maud interrupted.

"The very thing I was coming to," he said.

"And between these two desires is just where the soul of the man is manifest," she went on. "If it is a good soul, it will desire and do the good action, and the contrary if it is a bad soul. It is the soul that decides."

"Bosh and nonsense!" he exclaimed impatiently. "It is the desire that decides. Here is a man who wants to, say, get drunk. Also, he doesn't want to get drunk. What does he do? How does he do it? He is a puppet. He is the creature of his desires, and of the two desires he obeys the strongest one, that is all. His soul hasn't anything to do with it. How can he be tempted to get drunk and refuse to get drunk? If the desire to remain sober prevails, it is because it is the strongest desire. Temptation plays no

part, unless — ” he paused while grasping the new thought which had come into his mind — “unless he is tempted to remain sober.

“Ha! ha!” he laughed. “What do you think of that, Mr. Van Weyden?”

“That both of you are hair-splitting,” I said. “The man’s soul is his desires. Or, if you will, the sum of his desires is his soul. Therein you are both wrong. You lay the stress upon the desire apart from the soul, Miss Brewster lays the stress on the soul apart from the desire, and in point of fact soul and desire are the same thing.

“However,” I continued, “Miss Brewster is right in contending that temptation is temptation whether the man yield or overcome. Fire is fanned by the wind until it leaps up fiercely. So is desire like fire. It is fanned, as by a wind, by sight of the thing desired, or by a new and luring description or comprehension of the thing desired. There lies the temptation. It is the wind that fans the desire until it leaps up to mastery. That’s temptation. It may not fan sufficiently to make the desire overmastering, but in so far as it fans at all, that far is it temptation. And, as you say, it may tempt for good as well as for evil.”

I felt proud of myself as we sat down to the table. My words had been decisive. At least they had put an end to the discussion.

But Wolf Larsen seemed voluble, prone to speech as I had never seen him before. It was as though he were bursting with pent energy which must find an outlet somehow. Almost immediately he launched into a discussion on love. As usual, his was the sheer materialistic side, and Maud’s was the idealistic. For myself, beyond a word or so of suggestion or correction now and again, I took no part.

He was brilliant, but so was Maud, and for some time I lost the thread of the conversation through studying her face as she talked. It was a face that rarely displayed colour, but to-night it was flushed and vivacious. Her wit was playing keenly, and she was enjoying the tilt as much as Wolf Larsen, and he was enjoying it hugely. For some reason, though I know not why in the argument, so utterly had I lost it in the contemplation of one stray brown lock of Maud’s hair, he quoted from Iseult at Tintagel, where she says:

“Blessed am I beyond women even herein,  
That beyond all born women is my sin,  
And perfect my transgression.”

As he had read pessimism into Omar, so now he read triumph, stinging triumph and exultation, into Swinburne’s lines. And he read rightly, and he read well. He had hardly ceased reading when Louis put his head into the companion-way and whispered down:

“Be easy, will ye? The fog’s lifted, an’ ’tis the port light iv a steamer that’s crossin’ our bow this blessed minute.”

Wolf Larsen sprang on deck, and so swiftly that by the time we followed him he had pulled the steerage-slide over the drunken clamour and was on his way forward to close the forecastle-scuttle. The fog, though it remained, had lifted high, where it obscured the stars and made the night quite black. Directly ahead of us I could see a

bright red light and a white light, and I could hear the pulsing of a steamer's engines. Beyond a doubt it was the Macedonia.

Wolf Larsen had returned to the poop, and we stood in a silent group, watching the lights rapidly cross our bow.

"Lucky for me he doesn't carry a searchlight," Wolf Larsen said.

"What if I should cry out loudly?" I queried in a whisper.

"It would be all up," he answered. "But have you thought upon what would immediately happen?"

Before I had time to express any desire to know, he had me by the throat with his gorilla grip, and by a faint quiver of the muscles — a hint, as it were — he suggested to me the twist that would surely have broken my neck. The next moment he had released me and we were gazing at the Macedonia's lights.

"What if I should cry out?" Maud asked.

"I like you too well to hurt you," he said softly — nay, there was a tenderness and a caress in his voice that made me wince.

"But don't do it, just the same, for I'd promptly break Mr. Van Weyden's neck."

"Then she has my permission to cry out," I said defiantly.

"I hardly think you'll care to sacrifice the Dean of American Letters the Second," he sneered.

We spoke no more, though we had become too used to one another for the silence to be awkward; and when the red light and the white had disappeared we returned to the cabin to finish the interrupted supper.

Again they fell to quoting, and Maud gave Dowson's "Impenitentia Ultima." She rendered it beautifully, but I watched not her, but Wolf Larsen. I was fascinated by the fascinated look he bent upon Maud. He was quite out of himself, and I noticed the unconscious movement of his lips as he shaped word for word as fast as she uttered them. He interrupted her when she gave the lines:

"And her eyes should be my light while the sun went out behind me,  
And the viols in her voice be the last sound in my ear."

"There are viols in your voice," he said bluntly, and his eyes flashed their golden light.

I could have shouted with joy at her control. She finished the concluding stanza without faltering and then slowly guided the conversation into less perilous channels. And all the while I sat in a half-daze, the drunken riot of the steerage breaking through the bulkhead, the man I feared and the woman I loved talking on and on. The table was not cleared. The man who had taken Mugridge's place had evidently joined his comrades in the fore-castle.

If ever Wolf Larsen attained the summit of living, he attained it then. From time to time I forsook my own thoughts to follow him, and I followed in amaze, mastered for the moment by his remarkable intellect, under the spell of his passion, for he was preaching the passion of revolt. It was inevitable that Milton's Lucifer should be instanced, and the keenness with which Wolf Larsen analysed and depicted the

character was a revelation of his stifled genius. It reminded me of Taine, yet I knew the man had never heard of that brilliant though dangerous thinker.

"He led a lost cause, and he was not afraid of God's thunderbolts," Wolf Larsen was saying. "Hurling into hell, he was unbeaten. A third of God's angels he had led with him, and straightway he incited man to rebel against God, and gained for himself and hell the major portion of all the generations of man. Why was he beaten out of heaven? Because he was less brave than God? less proud? less aspiring? No! A thousand times no! God was more powerful, as he said, Whom thunder hath made greater. But Lucifer was a free spirit. To serve was to suffocate. He preferred suffering in freedom to all the happiness of a comfortable servility. He did not care to serve God. He cared to serve nothing. He was no figure-head. He stood on his own legs. He was an individual."

"The first Anarchist," Maud laughed, rising and preparing to withdraw to her stateroom.

"Then it is good to be an anarchist!" he cried. He, too, had risen, and he stood facing her, where she had paused at the door of her room, as he went on:

"Here at least

We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built  
Here for his envy; will not drive us hence;  
Here we may reign secure; and in my choice  
To reign is worth ambition, though in hell:  
Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven."

It was the defiant cry of a mighty spirit. The cabin still rang with his voice, as he stood there, swaying, his bronzed face shining, his head up and dominant, and his eyes, golden and masculine, intensely masculine and insistently soft, flashing upon Maud at the door.

Again that unnamable and unmistakable terror was in her eyes, and she said, almost in a whisper, "You are Lucifer."

The door closed and she was gone. He stood staring after her for a minute, then returned to himself and to me.

"I'll relieve Louis at the wheel," he said shortly, "and call upon you to relieve at midnight. Better turn in now and get some sleep."

He pulled on a pair of mittens, put on his cap, and ascended the companion-stairs, while I followed his suggestion by going to bed. For some unknown reason, prompted mysteriously, I did not undress, but lay down fully clothed. For a time I listened to the clamour in the steerage and marvelled upon the love which had come to me; but my sleep on the Ghost had become most healthful and natural, and soon the songs and cries died away, my eyes closed, and my consciousness sank down into the half-death of slumber.

I knew not what had aroused me, but I found myself out of my bunk, on my feet, wide awake, my soul vibrating to the warning of danger as it might have thrilled to a trumpet call. I threw open the door. The cabin light was burning low. I saw Maud, my Maud, straining and struggling and crushed in the embrace of Wolf Larsen's arms.

I could see the vain beat and flutter of her as she strove, pressing her face against his breast, to escape from him. All this I saw on the very instant of seeing and as I sprang forward.

I struck him with my fist, on the face, as he raised his head, but it was a puny blow. He roared in a ferocious, animal-like way, and gave me a shove with his hand. It was only a shove, a flirt of the wrist, yet so tremendous was his strength that I was hurled backward as from a catapult. I struck the door of the state-room which had formerly been Mugridge's, splintering and smashing the panels with the impact of my body. I struggled to my feet, with difficulty dragging myself clear of the wrecked door, unaware of any hurt whatever. I was conscious only of an overmastering rage. I think I, too, cried aloud, as I drew the knife at my hip and sprang forward a second time.

But something had happened. They were reeling apart. I was close upon him, my knife uplifted, but I withheld the blow. I was puzzled by the strangeness of it. Maud was leaning against the wall, one hand out for support; but he was staggering, his left hand pressed against his forehead and covering his eyes, and with the right he was groping about him in a dazed sort of way. It struck against the wall, and his body seemed to express a muscular and physical relief at the contact, as though he had found his bearings, his location in space as well as something against which to lean.

Then I saw red again. All my wrongs and humiliations flashed upon me with a dazzling brightness, all that I had suffered and others had suffered at his hands, all the enormity of the man's very existence. I sprang upon him, blindly, insanely, and drove the knife into his shoulder. I knew, then, that it was no more than a flesh wound, — I had felt the steel grate on his shoulder-blade, — and I raised the knife to strike at a more vital part.

But Maud had seen my first blow, and she cried, "Don't! Please don't!"

I dropped my arm for a moment, and a moment only. Again the knife was raised, and Wolf Larsen would have surely died had she not stepped between. Her arms were around me, her hair was brushing my face. My pulse rushed up in an unwonted manner, yet my rage mounted with it. She looked me bravely in the eyes.

"For my sake," she begged.

"I would kill him for your sake!" I cried, trying to free my arm without hurting her.

"Hush!" she said, and laid her fingers lightly on my lips. I could have kissed them, had I dared, even then, in my rage, the touch of them was so sweet, so very sweet. "Please, please," she pleaded, and she disarmed me by the words, as I was to discover they would ever disarm me.

I stepped back, separating from her, and replaced the knife in its sheath. I looked at Wolf Larsen. He still pressed his left hand against his forehead. It covered his eyes. His head was bowed. He seemed to have grown limp. His body was sagging at the hips, his great shoulders were drooping and shrinking forward.

"Van, Weyden!" he called hoarsely, and with a note of fright in his voice. "Oh, Van Weyden! where are you?"

I looked at Maud. She did not speak, but nodded her head.

"Here I am," I answered, stepping to his side. "What is the matter?"

"Help me to a seat," he said, in the same hoarse, frightened voice.

"I am a sick man; a very sick man, Hump," he said, as he left my sustaining grip and sank into a chair.

His head dropped forward on the table and was buried in his hands. From time to time it rocked back and forward as with pain. Once, when he half raised it, I saw the sweat standing in heavy drops on his forehead about the roots of his hair.

"I am a sick man, a very sick man," he repeated again, and yet once again.

"What is the matter?" I asked, resting my hand on his shoulder. "What can I do for you?"

But he shook my hand off with an irritated movement, and for a long time I stood by his side in silence. Maud was looking on, her face awed and frightened. What had happened to him we could not imagine.

"Hump," he said at last, "I must get into my bunk. Lend me a hand. I'll be all right in a little while. It's those damn headaches, I believe. I was afraid of them. I had a feeling — no, I don't know what I'm talking about. Help me into my bunk."

But when I got him into his bunk he again buried his face in his hands, covering his eyes, and as I turned to go I could hear him murmuring, "I am a sick man, a very sick man."

Maud looked at me inquiringly as I emerged. I shook my head, saying:

"Something has happened to him. What, I don't know. He is helpless, and frightened, I imagine, for the first time in his life. It must have occurred before he received the knife-thrust, which made only a superficial wound. You must have seen what happened."

She shook her head. "I saw nothing. It is just as mysterious to me. He suddenly released me and staggered away. But what shall we do? What shall I do?"

"If you will wait, please, until I come back," I answered.

I went on deck. Louis was at the wheel.

"You may go for'ard and turn in," I said, taking it from him.

He was quick to obey, and I found myself alone on the deck of the Ghost. As quietly as was possible, I clewed up the topsails, lowered the flying jib and staysail, backed the jib over, and flattened the mainsail. Then I went below to Maud. I placed my finger on my lips for silence, and entered Wolf Larsen's room. He was in the same position in which I had left him, and his head was rocking — almost writhing — from side to side.

"Anything I can do for you?" I asked.

He made no reply at first, but on my repeating the question he answered, "No, no; I'm all right. Leave me alone till morning."

But as I turned to go I noted that his head had resumed its rocking motion. Maud was waiting patiently for me, and I took notice, with a thrill of joy, of the queenly poise of her head and her glorious, calm eyes. Calm and sure they were as her spirit itself.

"Will you trust yourself to me for a journey of six hundred miles or so?" I asked.

"You mean — ?" she asked, and I knew she had guessed aright.

"Yes, I mean just that," I replied. "There is nothing left for us but the open boat."

"For me, you mean," she said. "You are certainly as safe here as you have been."

"No, there is nothing left for us but the open boat," I iterated stoutly. "Will you please dress as warmly as you can, at once, and make into a bundle whatever you wish to bring with you."

"And make all haste," I added, as she turned toward her state-room.

The lazarette was directly beneath the cabin, and, opening the trap-door in the floor and carrying a candle with me, I dropped down and began overhauling the ship's stores. I selected mainly from the canned goods, and by the time I was ready, willing hands were extended from above to receive what I passed up.

We worked in silence. I helped myself also to blankets, mittens, oilskins, caps, and such things, from the slop-chest. It was no light adventure, this trusting ourselves in a small boat to so raw and stormy a sea, and it was imperative that we should guard ourselves against the cold and wet.

We worked feverishly at carrying our plunder on deck and depositing it amidships, so feverishly that Maud, whose strength was hardly a positive quantity, had to give over, exhausted, and sit on the steps at the break of the poop. This did not serve to recover her, and she lay on her back, on the hard deck, arms stretched out, and whole body relaxed. It was a trick I remembered of my sister, and I knew she would soon be herself again. I knew, also, that weapons would not come in amiss, and I re-entered Wolf Larsen's state-room to get his rifle and shot-gun. I spoke to him, but he made no answer, though his head was still rocking from side to side and he was not asleep.

"Good-bye, Lucifer," I whispered to myself as I softly closed the door.

Next to obtain was a stock of ammunition, — an easy matter, though I had to enter the steerage companion-way to do it. Here the hunters stored the ammunition-boxes they carried in the boats, and here, but a few feet from their noisy revels, I took possession of two boxes.

Next, to lower a boat. Not so simple a task for one man. Having cast off the lashings, I hoisted first on the forward tackle, then on the aft, till the boat cleared the rail, when I lowered away, one tackle and then the other, for a couple of feet, till it hung snugly, above the water, against the schooner's side. I made certain that it contained the proper equipment of oars, rowlocks, and sail. Water was a consideration, and I robbed every boat aboard of its breaker. As there were nine boats all told, it meant that we should have plenty of water, and ballast as well, though there was the chance that the boat would be overloaded, what of the generous supply of other things I was taking.

While Maud was passing me the provisions and I was storing them in the boat, a sailor came on deck from the forecastle. He stood by the weather rail for a time (we were lowering over the lee rail), and then sauntered slowly amidships, where he again paused and stood facing the wind, with his back toward us. I could hear my heart beating as I crouched low in the boat. Maud had sunk down upon the deck and was, I knew, lying motionless, her body in the shadow of the bulwark. But the man never

turned, and, after stretching his arms above his head and yawning audibly, he retraced his steps to the forecastle scuttle and disappeared.

A few minutes sufficed to finish the loading, and I lowered the boat into the water. As I helped Maud over the rail and felt her form close to mine, it was all I could do to keep from crying out, "I love you! I love you!" Truly Humphrey Van Weyden was at last in love, I thought, as her fingers clung to mine while I lowered her down to the boat. I held on to the rail with one hand and supported her weight with the other, and I was proud at the moment of the feat. It was a strength I had not possessed a few months before, on the day I said good-bye to Charley Furuseth and started for San Francisco on the ill-fated Martinez.

As the boat ascended on a sea, her feet touched and I released her hands. I cast off the tackles and leaped after her. I had never rowed in my life, but I put out the oars and at the expense of much effort got the boat clear of the Ghost. Then I experimented with the sail. I had seen the boat-steerers and hunters set their spritsails many times, yet this was my first attempt. What took them possibly two minutes took me twenty, but in the end I succeeded in setting and trimming it, and with the steering-oar in my hands hauled on the wind.

"There lies Japan," I remarked, "straight before us."

"Humphrey Van Weyden," she said, "you are a brave man."

"Nay," I answered, "it is you who are a brave woman."

We turned our heads, swayed by a common impulse to see the last of the Ghost. Her low hull lifted and rolled to windward on a sea; her canvas loomed darkly in the night; her lashed wheel creaked as the rudder kicked; then sight and sound of her faded away, and we were alone on the dark sea.



## Chapter XXVII

Day broke, grey and chill. The boat was close-hauled on a fresh breeze and the compass indicated that we were just making the course which would bring us to Japan. Though stoutly mittened, my fingers were cold, and they pained from the grip on the steering-oar. My feet were stinging from the bite of the frost, and I hoped fervently that the sun would shine.

Before me, in the bottom of the boat, lay Maud. She, at least, was warm, for under her and over her were thick blankets. The top one I had drawn over her face to shelter it from the night, so I could see nothing but the vague shape of her, and her light-brown hair, escaped from the covering and jewelled with moisture from the air.

Long I looked at her, dwelling upon that one visible bit of her as only a man would who deemed it the most precious thing in the world. So insistent was my gaze that at last she stirred under the blankets, the top fold was thrown back and she smiled out on me, her eyes yet heavy with sleep.

“Good-morning, Mr. Van Weyden,” she said. “Have you sighted land yet?”

“No,” I answered, “but we are approaching it at a rate of six miles an hour.”

She made a mouè of disappointment.

“But that is equivalent to one hundred and forty-four miles in twenty-four hours,” I added reassuringly.

Her face brightened. “And how far have we to go?”

“Siberia lies off there,” I said, pointing to the west. “But to the south-west, some six hundred miles, is Japan. If this wind should hold, we’ll make it in five days.”

“And if it storms? The boat could not live?”

She had a way of looking one in the eyes and demanding the truth, and thus she looked at me as she asked the question.

“It would have to storm very hard,” I temporized.

“And if it storms very hard?”

I nodded my head. “But we may be picked up any moment by a sealing-schooner. They are plentifully distributed over this part of the ocean.”

“Why, you are chilled through!” she cried. “Look! You are shivering. Don’t deny it; you are. And here I have been lying warm as toast.”

“I don’t see that it would help matters if you, too, sat up and were chilled,” I laughed.

“It will, though, when I learn to steer, which I certainly shall.”

She sat up and began making her simple toilet. She shook down her hair, and it fell about her in a brown cloud, hiding her face and shoulders. Dear, damp brown hair! I wanted to kiss it, to ripple it through my fingers, to bury my face in it. I

gazed entranced, till the boat ran into the wind and the flapping sail warned me I was not attending to my duties. Idealist and romanticist that I was and always had been in spite of my analytical nature, yet I had failed till now in grasping much of the physical characteristics of love. The love of man and woman, I had always held, was a sublimated something related to spirit, a spiritual bond that linked and drew their souls together. The bonds of the flesh had little part in my cosmos of love. But I was learning the sweet lesson for myself that the soul transmuted itself, expressed itself, through the flesh; that the sight and sense and touch of the loved one's hair was as much breath and voice and essence of the spirit as the light that shone from the eyes and the thoughts that fell from the lips. After all, pure spirit was unknowable, a thing to be sensed and divined only; nor could it express itself in terms of itself. Jehovah was anthropomorphic because he could address himself to the Jews only in terms of their understanding; so he was conceived as in their own image, as a cloud, a pillar of fire, a tangible, physical something which the mind of the Israelites could grasp.

And so I gazed upon Maud's light-brown hair, and loved it, and learned more of love than all the poets and singers had taught me with all their songs and sonnets. She flung it back with a sudden adroit movement, and her face emerged, smiling.

"Why don't women wear their hair down always?" I asked. "It is so much more beautiful."

"If it didn't tangle so dreadfully," she laughed. "There! I've lost one of my precious hair-pins!"

I neglected the boat and had the sail spilling the wind again and again, such was my delight in following her every movement as she searched through the blankets for the pin. I was surprised, and joyfully, that she was so much the woman, and the display of each trait and mannerism that was characteristically feminine gave me keener joy. For I had been elevating her too highly in my concepts of her, removing her too far from the plane of the human, and too far from me. I had been making of her a creature goddess-like and unapproachable. So I hailed with delight the little traits that proclaimed her only woman after all, such as the toss of the head which flung back the cloud of hair, and the search for the pin. She was woman, my kind, on my plane, and the delightful intimacy of kind, of man and woman, was possible, as well as the reverence and awe in which I knew I should always hold her.

She found the pin with an adorable little cry, and I turned my attention more fully to my steering. I proceeded to experiment, lashing and wedging the steering-oar until the boat held on fairly well by the wind without my assistance. Occasionally it came up too close, or fell off too freely; but it always recovered itself and in the main behaved satisfactorily.

"And now we shall have breakfast," I said. "But first you must be more warmly clad."

I got out a heavy shirt, new from the slop-chest and made from blanket goods. I knew the kind, so thick and so close of texture that it could resist the rain and not be soaked through after hours of wetting. When she had slipped this on over her head, I exchanged the boy's cap she wore for a man's cap, large enough to cover her

hair, and, when the flap was turned down, to completely cover her neck and ears. The effect was charming. Her face was of the sort that cannot but look well under all circumstances. Nothing could destroy its exquisite oval, its well-nigh classic lines, its delicately stencilled brows, its large brown eyes, clear-seeing and calm, gloriously calm.

A puff, slightly stronger than usual, struck us just then. The boat was caught as it obliquely crossed the crest of a wave. It went over suddenly, burying its gunwale level with the sea and shipping a bucketful or so of water. I was opening a can of tongue at the moment, and I sprang to the sheet and cast it off just in time. The sail flapped and fluttered, and the boat paid off. A few minutes of regulating sufficed to put it on its course again, when I returned to the preparation of breakfast.

"It does very well, it seems, though I am not versed in things nautical," she said, nodding her head with grave approval at my steering contrivance.

"But it will serve only when we are sailing by the wind," I explained. "When running more freely, with the wind astern abeam, or on the quarter, it will be necessary for me to steer."

"I must say I don't understand your technicalities," she said, "but I do your conclusion, and I don't like it. You cannot steer night and day and for ever. So I shall expect, after breakfast, to receive my first lesson. And then you shall lie down and sleep. We'll stand watches just as they do on ships."

"I don't see how I am to teach you," I made protest. "I am just learning for myself. You little thought when you trusted yourself to me that I had had no experience whatever with small boats. This is the first time I have ever been in one."

"Then we'll learn together, sir. And since you've had a night's start you shall teach me what you have learned. And now, breakfast. My! this air does give one an appetite!"

"No coffee," I said regretfully, passing her buttered sea-biscuits and a slice of canned tongue. "And there will be no tea, no soups, nothing hot, till we have made land somewhere, somehow."

After the simple breakfast, capped with a cup of cold water, Maud took her lesson in steering. In teaching her I learned quite a deal myself, though I was applying the knowledge already acquired by sailing the Ghost and by watching the boat-steerers sail the small boats. She was an apt pupil, and soon learned to keep the course, to luff in the puffs and to cast off the sheet in an emergency.

Having grown tired, apparently, of the task, she relinquished the oar to me. I had folded up the blankets, but she now proceeded to spread them out on the bottom. When all was arranged snugly, she said:

"Now, sir, to bed. And you shall sleep until luncheon. Till dinner-time," she corrected, remembering the arrangement on the Ghost.

What could I do? She insisted, and said, "Please, please," whereupon I turned the oar over to her and obeyed. I experienced a positive sensuous delight as I crawled into the bed she had made with her hands. The calm and control which were so much a part of her seemed to have been communicated to the blankets, so that I was aware of a soft dreaminess and content, and of an oval face and brown eyes framed in a

fisherman's cap and tossing against a background now of grey cloud, now of grey sea, and then I was aware that I had been asleep.

I looked at my watch. It was one o'clock. I had slept seven hours! And she had been steering seven hours! When I took the steering-oar I had first to unbend her cramped fingers. Her modicum of strength had been exhausted, and she was unable even to move from her position. I was compelled to let go the sheet while I helped her to the nest of blankets and chafed her hands and arms.

"I am so tired," she said, with a quick intake of the breath and a sigh, drooping her head wearily.

But she straightened it the next moment. "Now don't scold, don't you dare scold," she cried with mock defiance.

"I hope my face does not appear angry," I answered seriously; "for I assure you I am not in the least angry."

"N-no," she considered. "It looks only reproachful."

"Then it is an honest face, for it looks what I feel. You were not fair to yourself, nor to me. How can I ever trust you again?"

She looked penitent. "I'll be good," she said, as a naughty child might say it. "I promise — "

"To obey as a sailor would obey his captain?"

"Yes," she answered. "It was stupid of me, I know."

"Then you must promise something else," I ventured.

"Readily."

"That you will not say, 'Please, please,' too often; for when you do you are sure to override my authority."

She laughed with amused appreciation. She, too, had noticed the power of the repeated "please."

"It is a good word — " I began.

"But I must not overwork it," she broke in.

But she laughed weakly, and her head drooped again. I left the oar long enough to tuck the blankets about her feet and to pull a single fold across her face. Alas! she was not strong. I looked with misgiving toward the south-west and thought of the six hundred miles of hardship before us — ay, if it were no worse than hardship. On this sea a storm might blow up at any moment and destroy us. And yet I was unafraid. I was without confidence in the future, extremely doubtful, and yet I felt no underlying fear. It must come right, it must come right, I repeated to myself, over and over again.

The wind freshened in the afternoon, raising a stiffer sea and trying the boat and me severely. But the supply of food and the nine breakers of water enabled the boat to stand up to the sea and wind, and I held on as long as I dared. Then I removed the sprit, tightly hauling down the peak of the sail, and we raced along under what sailors call a laugh-of-mutton.

Late in the afternoon I sighted a steamer's smoke on the horizon to leeward, and I knew it either for a Russian cruiser, or, more likely, the Macedonia still seeking the

Ghost. The sun had not shone all day, and it had been bitter cold. As night drew on, the clouds darkened and the wind freshened, so that when Maud and I ate supper it was with our mittens on and with me still steering and eating morsels between puffs.

By the time it was dark, wind and sea had become too strong for the boat, and I reluctantly took in the sail and set about making a drag or sea-anchor. I had learned of the device from the talk of the hunters, and it was a simple thing to manufacture. Furling the sail and lashing it securely about the mast, boom, sprit, and two pairs of spare oars, I threw it overboard. A line connected it with the bow, and as it floated low in the water, practically unexposed to the wind, it drifted less rapidly than the boat. In consequence it held the boat bow on to the sea and wind — the safest position in which to escape being swamped when the sea is breaking into whitecaps.

"And now?" Maud asked cheerfully, when the task was accomplished and I pulled on my mittens.

"And now we are no longer travelling toward Japan," I answered. "Our drift is to the south-east, or south-south-east, at the rate of at least two miles an hour."

"That will be only twenty-four miles," she urged, "if the wind remains high all night."

"Yes, and only one hundred and forty miles if it continues for three days and nights."

"But it won't continue," she said with easy confidence. "It will turn around and blow fair."

"The sea is the great faithless one."

"But the wind!" she retorted. "I have heard you grow eloquent over the brave trade-wind."

"I wish I had thought to bring Wolf Larsen's chronometer and sextant," I said, still gloomily. "Sailing one direction, drifting another direction, to say nothing of the set of the current in some third direction, makes a resultant which dead reckoning can never calculate. Before long we won't know where we are by five hundred miles."

Then I begged her pardon and promised I should not be disheartened any more. At her solicitation I let her take the watch till midnight, — it was then nine o'clock, but I wrapped her in blankets and put an oilskin about her before I lay down. I slept only cat-naps. The boat was leaping and pounding as it fell over the crests, I could hear the seas rushing past, and spray was continually being thrown aboard. And still, it was not a bad night, I mused — nothing to the nights I had been through on the Ghost; nothing, perhaps, to the nights we should go through in this cockle-shell. Its planking was three-quarters of an inch thick. Between us and the bottom of the sea was less than an inch of wood.

And yet, I aver it, and I aver it again, I was unafraid. The death which Wolf Larsen and even Thomas Mugridge had made me fear, I no longer feared. The coming of Maud Brewster into my life seemed to have transformed me. After all, I thought, it is better and finer to love than to be loved, if it makes something in life so worth while that one is not loath to die for it. I forget my own life in the love of another life; and yet, such is the paradox, I never wanted so much to live as right now when I place the least value upon my own life. I never had so much reason for living, was my concluding thought;

and after that, until I dozed, I contented myself with trying to pierce the darkness to where I knew Maud crouched low in the stern-sheets, watchful of the foaming sea and ready to call me on an instant's notice.

## Chapter XXVIII

There is no need of going into an extended recital of our suffering in the small boat during the many days we were driven and drifted, here and there, willy-nilly, across the ocean. The high wind blew from the north-west for twenty-four hours, when it fell calm, and in the night sprang up from the south-west. This was dead in our teeth, but I took in the sea-anchor and set sail, hauling a course on the wind which took us in a south-south-easterly direction. It was an even choice between this and the west-north-westerly course which the wind permitted; but the warm airs of the south fanned my desire for a warmer sea and swayed my decision.

In three hours — it was midnight, I well remember, and as dark as I had ever seen it on the sea — the wind, still blowing out of the south-west, rose furiously, and once again I was compelled to set the sea-anchor.

Day broke and found me wan-eyed and the ocean lashed white, the boat pitching, almost on end, to its drag. We were in imminent danger of being swamped by the whitecaps. As it was, spray and spume came aboard in such quantities that I bailed without cessation. The blankets were soaking. Everything was wet except Maud, and she, in oilskins, rubber boots, and sou'wester, was dry, all but her face and hands and a stray wisp of hair. She relieved me at the bailing-hole from time to time, and bravely she threw out the water and faced the storm. All things are relative. It was no more than a stiff blow, but to us, fighting for life in our frail craft, it was indeed a storm.

Cold and cheerless, the wind beating on our faces, the white seas roaring by, we struggled through the day. Night came, but neither of us slept. Day came, and still the wind beat on our faces and the white seas roared past. By the second night Maud was falling asleep from exhaustion. I covered her with oilskins and a tarpaulin. She was comparatively dry, but she was numb with the cold. I feared greatly that she might die in the night; but day broke, cold and cheerless, with the same clouded sky and beating wind and roaring seas.

I had had no sleep for forty-eight hours. I was wet and chilled to the marrow, till I felt more dead than alive. My body was stiff from exertion as well as from cold, and my aching muscles gave me the severest torture whenever I used them, and I used them continually. And all the time we were being driven off into the north-east, directly away from Japan and toward bleak Bering Sea.

And still we lived, and the boat lived, and the wind blew unabated. In fact, toward nightfall of the third day it increased a trifle and something more. The boat's bow plunged under a crest, and we came through quarter-full of water. I bailed like a madman. The liability of shipping another such sea was enormously increased by the

water that weighed the boat down and robbed it of its buoyancy. And another such sea meant the end. When I had the boat empty again I was forced to take away the tarpaulin which covered Maud, in order that I might lash it down across the bow. It was well I did, for it covered the boat fully a third of the way aft, and three times, in the next several hours, it flung off the bulk of the down-rushing water when the bow shoved under the seas.

Maud's condition was pitiable. She sat crouched in the bottom of the boat, her lips blue, her face grey and plainly showing the pain she suffered. But ever her eyes looked bravely at me, and ever her lips uttered brave words.

The worst of the storm must have blown that night, though little I noticed it. I had succumbed and slept where I sat in the stern-sheets. The morning of the fourth day found the wind diminished to a gentle whisper, the sea dying down and the sun shining upon us. Oh, the blessed sun! How we bathed our poor bodies in its delicious warmth, reviving like bugs and crawling things after a storm. We smiled again, said amusing things, and waxed optimistic over our situation. Yet it was, if anything, worse than ever. We were farther from Japan than the night we left the Ghost. Nor could I more than roughly guess our latitude and longitude. At a calculation of a two-mile drift per hour, during the seventy and odd hours of the storm, we had been driven at least one hundred and fifty miles to the north-east. But was such calculated drift correct? For all I knew, it might have been four miles per hour instead of two. In which case we were another hundred and fifty miles to the bad.

Where we were I did not know, though there was quite a likelihood that we were in the vicinity of the Ghost. There were seals about us, and I was prepared to sight a sealing-schooner at any time. We did sight one, in the afternoon, when the north-west breeze had sprung up freshly once more. But the strange schooner lost itself on the sky-line and we alone occupied the circle of the sea.

Came days of fog, when even Maud's spirit drooped and there were no merry words upon her lips; days of calm, when we floated on the lonely immensity of sea, oppressed by its greatness and yet marvelling at the miracle of tiny life, for we still lived and struggled to live; days of sleet and wind and snow-squalls, when nothing could keep us warm; or days of drizzling rain, when we filled our water-breakers from the drip of the wet sail.

And ever I loved Maud with an increasing love. She was so many-sided, so many-mooded — "protean-mooded" I called her. But I called her this, and other and dearer things, in my thoughts only. Though the declaration of my love urged and trembled on my tongue a thousand times, I knew that it was no time for such a declaration. If for no other reason, it was no time, when one was protecting and trying to save a woman, to ask that woman for her love. Delicate as was the situation, not alone in this but in other ways, I flattered myself that I was able to deal delicately with it; and also I flattered myself that by look or sign I gave no advertisement of the love I felt for her. We were like good comrades, and we grew better comrades as the days went by.



One thing about her which surprised me was her lack of timidity and fear. The terrible sea, the frail boat, the storms, the suffering, the strangeness and isolation of the situation, — all that should have frightened a robust woman, — seemed to make no impression upon her who had known life only in its most sheltered and consummately artificial aspects, and who was herself all fire and dew and mist, sublimated spirit, all that was soft and tender and clinging in woman. And yet I am wrong. She was timid and afraid, but she possessed courage. The flesh and the qualms of the flesh she was heir to, but the flesh bore heavily only on the flesh. And she was spirit, first and always spirit, etherealized essence of life, calm as her calm eyes, and sure of permanence in the changing order of the universe.

Came days of storm, days and nights of storm, when the ocean menaced us with its roaring whiteness, and the wind smote our struggling boat with a Titan's buffets. And ever we were flung off, farther and farther, to the north-east. It was in such a storm, and the worst that we had experienced, that I cast a weary glance to leeward, not in quest of anything, but more from the weariness of facing the elemental strife, and in mute appeal, almost, to the wrathful powers to cease and let us be. What I saw I could not at first believe. Days and nights of sleeplessness and anxiety had doubtless turned my head. I looked back at Maud, to identify myself, as it were, in time and space. The sight of her dear wet cheeks, her flying hair, and her brave brown eyes convinced me that my vision was still healthy. Again I turned my face to leeward, and again I saw the jutting promontory, black and high and naked, the raging surf that broke about its base and beat its front high up with spouting fountains, the black and forbidden coast-line running toward the south-east and fringed with a tremendous scarf of white.

"Maud," I said. "Maud."

She turned her head and beheld the sight.

"It cannot be Alaska!" she cried.

"Alas, no," I answered, and asked, "Can you swim?"

She shook her head.

"Neither can I," I said. "So we must get ashore without swimming, in some opening between the rocks through which we can drive the boat and clamber out. But we must be quick, most quick — and sure."

I spoke with a confidence she knew I did not feel, for she looked at me with that unfaltering gaze of hers and said:

"I have not thanked you yet for all you have done for me but — "

She hesitated, as if in doubt how best to word her gratitude.

"Well?" I said, brutally, for I was not quite pleased with her thanking me.

"You might help me," she smiled.

"To acknowledge your obligations before you die? Not at all. We are not going to die. We shall land on that island, and we shall be snug and sheltered before the day is done."

I spoke stoutly, but I did not believe a word. Nor was I prompted to lie through fear. I felt no fear, though I was sure of death in that boiling surge amongst the rocks which

was rapidly growing nearer. It was impossible to hoist sail and claw off that shore. The wind would instantly capsize the boat; the seas would swamp it the moment it fell into the trough; and, besides, the sail, lashed to the spare oars, dragged in the sea ahead of us.

As I say, I was not afraid to meet my own death, there, a few hundred yards to leeward; but I was appalled at the thought that Maud must die. My cursed imagination saw her beaten and mangled against the rocks, and it was too terrible. I strove to compel myself to think we would make the landing safely, and so I spoke, not what I believed, but what I preferred to believe.

I recoiled before contemplation of that frightful death, and for a moment I entertained the wild idea of seizing Maud in my arms and leaping overboard. Then I resolved to wait, and at the last moment, when we entered on the final stretch, to take her in my arms and proclaim my love, and, with her in my embrace, to make the desperate struggle and die.

Instinctively we drew closer together in the bottom of the boat. I felt her mittened hand come out to mine. And thus, without speech, we waited the end. We were not far off the line the wind made with the western edge of the promontory, and I watched in the hope that some set of the current or send of the sea would drift us past before we reached the surf.

"We shall go clear," I said, with a confidence which I knew deceived neither of us.

"By God, we will go clear!" I cried, five minutes later.

The oath left my lips in my excitement — the first, I do believe, in my life, unless "trouble it," an expletive of my youth, be accounted an oath.

"I beg your pardon," I said.

"You have convinced me of your sincerity," she said, with a faint smile. "I do know, now, that we shall go clear."

I had seen a distant headland past the extreme edge of the promontory, and as we looked we could see grow the intervening coastline of what was evidently a deep cove. At the same time there broke upon our ears a continuous and mighty bellowing. It partook of the magnitude and volume of distant thunder, and it came to us directly from leeward, rising above the crash of the surf and travelling directly in the teeth of the storm. As we passed the point the whole cove burst upon our view, a half-moon of white sandy beach upon which broke a huge surf, and which was covered with myriads of seals. It was from them that the great bellowing went up.

"A rookery!" I cried. "Now are we indeed saved. There must be men and cruisers to protect them from the seal-hunters. Possibly there is a station ashore."

But as I studied the surf which beat upon the beach, I said, "Still bad, but not so bad. And now, if the gods be truly kind, we shall drift by that next headland and come upon a perfectly sheltered beach, where we may land without wetting our feet."

And the gods were kind. The first and second headlands were directly in line with the south-west wind; but once around the second, — and we went perilously near, — we picked up the third headland, still in line with the wind and with the other two.

But the cove that intervened! It penetrated deep into the land, and the tide, setting in, drifted us under the shelter of the point. Here the sea was calm, save for a heavy but smooth ground-swell, and I took in the sea-anchor and began to row. From the point the shore curved away, more and more to the south and west, until at last it disclosed a cove within the cove, a little land-locked harbour, the water level as a pond, broken only by tiny ripples where vagrant breaths and wisps of the storm hurtled down from over the frowning wall of rock that backed the beach a hundred feet inshore.

Here were no seals whatever. The boat's stern touched the hard shingle. I sprang out, extending my hand to Maud. The next moment she was beside me. As my fingers released hers, she clutched for my arm hastily. At the same moment I swayed, as about to fall to the sand. This was the startling effect of the cessation of motion. We had been so long upon the moving, rocking sea that the stable land was a shock to us. We expected the beach to lift up this way and that, and the rocky walls to swing back and forth like the sides of a ship; and when we braced ourselves, automatically, for these various expected movements, their non-occurrence quite overcame our equilibrium.

"I really must sit down," Maud said, with a nervous laugh and a dizzy gesture, and forthwith she sat down on the sand.

I attended to making the boat secure and joined her. Thus we landed on Endeavour Island, as we came to it, land-sick from long custom of the sea.

## Chapter XXIX

"Fool!" I cried aloud in my vexation.

I had unloaded the boat and carried its contents high up on the beach, where I had set about making a camp. There was driftwood, though not much, on the beach, and the sight of a coffee tin I had taken from the Ghost's larder had given me the idea of a fire.

"Blithering idiot!" I was continuing.

But Maud said, "Tut, tut," in gentle reproof, and then asked why I was a blithering idiot.

"No matches," I groaned. "Not a match did I bring. And now we shall have no hot coffee, soup, tea, or anything!"

"Wasn't it — er — Crusoe who rubbed sticks together?" she drawled.

"But I have read the personal narratives of a score of shipwrecked men who tried, and tried in vain," I answered. "I remember Winters, a newspaper fellow with an Alaskan and Siberian reputation. Met him at the Bibelot once, and he was telling us how he attempted to make a fire with a couple of sticks. It was most amusing. He told it inimitably, but it was the story of a failure. I remember his conclusion, his black eyes flashing as he said, 'Gentlemen, the South Sea Islander may do it, the Malay may do it, but take my word it's beyond the white man.'"

"Oh, well, we've managed so far without it," she said cheerfully. "And there's no reason why we cannot still manage without it."

"But think of the coffee!" I cried. "It's good coffee, too, I know. I took it from Larsen's private stores. And look at that good wood."

I confess, I wanted the coffee badly; and I learned, not long afterward, that the berry was likewise a little weakness of Maud's. Besides, we had been so long on a cold diet that we were numb inside as well as out. Anything warm would have been most gratifying. But I complained no more and set about making a tent of the sail for Maud.

I had looked upon it as a simple task, what of the oars, mast, boom, and sprit, to say nothing of plenty of lines. But as I was without experience, and as every detail was an experiment and every successful detail an invention, the day was well gone before her shelter was an accomplished fact. And then, that night, it rained, and she was flooded out and driven back into the boat.

The next morning I dug a shallow ditch around the tent, and, an hour later, a sudden gust of wind, whipping over the rocky wall behind us, picked up the tent and smashed it down on the sand thirty yards away.

Maud laughed at my crestfallen expression, and I said, "As soon as the wind abates I intend going in the boat to explore the island. There must be a station somewhere, and men. And ships must visit the station. Some Government must protect all these seals. But I wish to have you comfortable before I start."

"I should like to go with you," was all she said.

"It would be better if you remained. You have had enough of hardship. It is a miracle that you have survived. And it won't be comfortable in the boat rowing and sailing in this rainy weather. What you need is rest, and I should like you to remain and get it."

Something suspiciously akin to moistness dimmed her beautiful eyes before she dropped them and partly turned away her head.

"I should prefer going with you," she said in a low voice, in which there was just a hint of appeal.

"I might be able to help you a — " her voice broke, — "a little. And if anything should happen to you, think of me left here alone."

"Oh, I intend being very careful," I answered. "And I shall not go so far but what I can get back before night. Yes, all said and done, I think it vastly better for you to remain, and sleep, and rest and do nothing."

She turned and looked me in the eyes. Her gaze was unfaltering, but soft.

"Please, please," she said, oh, so softly.

I stiffened myself to refuse, and shook my head. Still she waited and looked at me. I tried to word my refusal, but wavered. I saw the glad light spring into her eyes and knew that I had lost. It was impossible to say no after that.

The wind died down in the afternoon, and we were prepared to start the following morning. There was no way of penetrating the island from our cove, for the walls rose perpendicularly from the beach, and, on either side of the cove, rose from the deep water.

Morning broke dull and grey, but calm, and I was awake early and had the boat in readiness.

"Fool! Imbecile! Yahoo!" I shouted, when I thought it was meet to arouse Maud; but this time I shouted in merriment as I danced about the beach, bareheaded, in mock despair.

Her head appeared under the flap of the sail.

"What now?" she asked sleepily, and, withal, curiously.

"Coffee!" I cried. "What do you say to a cup of coffee? hot coffee? piping hot?"

"My!" she murmured, "you startled me, and you are cruel. Here I have been composing my soul to do without it, and here you are vexing me with your vain suggestions."

"Watch me," I said.

From under clefts among the rocks I gathered a few dry sticks and chips. These I whittled into shavings or split into kindling. From my note-book I tore out a page, and from the ammunition box took a shot-gun shell. Removing the wads from the latter with my knife, I emptied the powder on a flat rock. Next I pried the primer, or cap, from the shell, and laid it on the rock, in the midst of the scattered powder. All was

ready. Maud still watched from the tent. Holding the paper in my left hand, I smashed down upon the cap with a rock held in my right. There was a puff of white smoke, a burst of flame, and the rough edge of the paper was alight.

Maud clapped her hands gleefully. "Prometheus!" she cried.

But I was too occupied to acknowledge her delight. The feeble flame must be cherished tenderly if it were to gather strength and live. I fed it, shaving by shaving, and sliver by sliver, till at last it was snapping and crackling as it laid hold of the smaller chips and sticks. To be cast away on an island had not entered into my calculations, so we were without a kettle or cooking utensils of any sort; but I made shift with the tin used for bailing the boat, and later, as we consumed our supply of canned goods, we accumulated quite an imposing array of cooking vessels.

I boiled the water, but it was Maud who made the coffee. And how good it was! My contribution was canned beef fried with crumbled sea-biscuit and water. The breakfast was a success, and we sat about the fire much longer than enterprising explorers should have done, sipping the hot black coffee and talking over our situation.

I was confident that we should find a station in some one of the coves, for I knew that the rookeries of Bering Sea were thus guarded; but Maud advanced the theory — to prepare me for disappointment, I do believe, if disappointment were to come — that we had discovered an unknown rookery. She was in very good spirits, however, and made quite merry in accepting our plight as a grave one.

"If you are right," I said, "then we must prepare to winter here. Our food will not last, but there are the seals. They go away in the fall, so I must soon begin to lay in a supply of meat. Then there will be huts to build and driftwood to gather. Also we shall try out seal fat for lighting purposes. Altogether, we'll have our hands full if we find the island uninhabited. Which we shall not, I know."

But she was right. We sailed with a beam wind along the shore, searching the coves with our glasses and landing occasionally, without finding a sign of human life. Yet we learned that we were not the first who had landed on Endeavour Island. High up on the beach of the second cove from ours, we discovered the splintered wreck of a boat — a sealer's boat, for the rowlocks were bound in sennit, a gun-rack was on the starboard side of the bow, and in white letters was faintly visible *Gazelle No. 2*. The boat had lain there for a long time, for it was half filled with sand, and the splintered wood had that weather-worn appearance due to long exposure to the elements. In the stern-sheets I found a rusty ten-gauge shot-gun and a sailor's sheath-knife broken short across and so rusted as to be almost unrecognizable.

"They got away," I said cheerfully; but I felt a sinking at the heart and seemed to divine the presence of bleached bones somewhere on that beach.

I did not wish Maud's spirits to be dampened by such a find, so I turned seaward again with our boat and skirted the north-eastern point of the island. There were no beaches on the southern shore, and by early afternoon we rounded the black promontory and completed the circumnavigation of the island. I estimated its circumference at twenty-five miles, its width as varying from two to five miles; while my most conser-

vative calculation placed on its beaches two hundred thousand seals. The island was highest at its extreme south-western point, the headlands and backbone diminishing regularly until the north-eastern portion was only a few feet above the sea. With the exception of our little cove, the other beaches sloped gently back for a distance of half-a-mile or so, into what I might call rocky meadows, with here and there patches of moss and tundra grass. Here the seals hauled out, and the old bulls guarded their harems, while the young bulls hauled out by themselves.

This brief description is all that Endeavour Island merits. Damp and soggy where it was not sharp and rocky, buffeted by storm winds and lashed by the sea, with the air continually a-tremble with the bellowing of two hundred thousand amphibians, it was a melancholy and miserable sojourning-place. Maud, who had prepared me for disappointment, and who had been sprightly and vivacious all day, broke down as we landed in our own little cove. She strove bravely to hide it from me, but while I was kindling another fire I knew she was stifling her sobs in the blankets under the sail-tent.

It was my turn to be cheerful, and I played the part to the best of my ability, and with such success that I brought the laughter back into her dear eyes and song on her lips; for she sang to me before she went to an early bed. It was the first time I had heard her sing, and I lay by the fire, listening and transported, for she was nothing if not an artist in everything she did, and her voice, though not strong, was wonderfully sweet and expressive.

I still slept in the boat, and I lay awake long that night, gazing up at the first stars I had seen in many nights and pondering the situation. Responsibility of this sort was a new thing to me. Wolf Larsen had been quite right. I had stood on my father's legs. My lawyers and agents had taken care of my money for me. I had had no responsibilities at all. Then, on the Ghost I had learned to be responsible for myself. And now, for the first time in my life, I found myself responsible for some one else. And it was required of me that this should be the gravest of responsibilities, for she was the one woman in the world — the one small woman, as I loved to think of her.

## Chapter XXX

No wonder we called it Endeavour Island. For two weeks we toiled at building a hut. Maud insisted on helping, and I could have wept over her bruised and bleeding hands. And still, I was proud of her because of it. There was something heroic about this gently-bred woman enduring our terrible hardship and with her pittance of strength bending to the tasks of a peasant woman. She gathered many of the stones which I built into the walls of the hut; also, she turned a deaf ear to my entreaties when I begged her to desist. She compromised, however, by taking upon herself the lighter labours of cooking and gathering driftwood and moss for our winter's supply.

The hut's walls rose without difficulty, and everything went smoothly until the problem of the roof confronted me. Of what use the four walls without a roof? And of what could a roof be made? There were the spare oars, very true. They would serve as roof-beams; but with what was I to cover them? Moss would never do. Tundra grass was impracticable. We needed the sail for the boat, and the tarpaulin had begun to leak.

"Winters used walrus skins on his hut," I said.

"There are the seals," she suggested.

So next day the hunting began. I did not know how to shoot, but I proceeded to learn. And when I had expended some thirty shells for three seals, I decided that the ammunition would be exhausted before I acquired the necessary knowledge. I had used eight shells for lighting fires before I hit upon the device of banking the embers with wet moss, and there remained not over a hundred shells in the box.

"We must club the seals," I announced, when convinced of my poor marksmanship. "I have heard the sealers talk about clubbing them."

"They are so pretty," she objected. "I cannot bear to think of it being done. It is so directly brutal, you know; so different from shooting them."

"That roof must go on," I answered grimly. "Winter is almost here. It is our lives against theirs. It is unfortunate we haven't plenty of ammunition, but I think, anyway, that they suffer less from being clubbed than from being all shot up. Besides, I shall do the clubbing."

"That's just it," she began eagerly, and broke off in sudden confusion.

"Of course," I began, "if you prefer —"

"But what shall I be doing?" she interrupted, with that softness I knew full well to be insistence.

"Gathering firewood and cooking dinner," I answered lightly.

She shook her head. "It is too dangerous for you to attempt alone."



"I know, I know," she waived my protest. "I am only a weak woman, but just my small assistance may enable you to escape disaster."

"But the clubbing?" I suggested.

"Of course, you will do that. I shall probably scream. I'll look away when — "

"The danger is most serious," I laughed.

"I shall use my judgment when to look and when not to look," she replied with a grand air.

The upshot of the affair was that she accompanied me next morning. I rowed into the adjoining cove and up to the edge of the beach. There were seals all about us in the water, and the bellowing thousands on the beach compelled us to shout at each other to make ourselves heard.

"I know men club them," I said, trying to reassure myself, and gazing doubtfully at a large bull, not thirty feet away, upreared on his fore-flippers and regarding me intently. "But the question is, How do they club them?"

"Let us gather tundra grass and thatch the roof," Maud said.

She was as frightened as I at the prospect, and we had reason to be gazing at close range at the gleaming teeth and dog-like mouths.

"I always thought they were afraid of men," I said.

"How do I know they are not afraid?" I queried a moment later, after having rowed a few more strokes along the beach. "Perhaps, if I were to step boldly ashore, they would cut for it, and I could not catch up with one." And still I hesitated.

"I heard of a man, once, who invaded the nesting grounds of wild geese," Maud said. "They killed him."

"The geese?"

"Yes, the geese. My brother told me about it when I was a little girl."

"But I know men club them," I persisted.

"I think the tundra grass will make just as good a roof," she said.

Far from her intention, her words were maddening me, driving me on. I could not play the coward before her eyes. "Here goes," I said, backing water with one oar and running the bow ashore.

I stepped out and advanced valiantly upon a long-maned bull in the midst of his wives. I was armed with the regular club with which the boat-pullers killed the wounded seals gaffed aboard by the hunters. It was only a foot and a half long, and in my superb ignorance I never dreamed that the club used ashore when raiding the rookeries measured four to five feet. The cows lumbered out of my way, and the distance between me and the bull decreased. He raised himself on his flippers with an angry movement. We were a dozen feet apart. Still I advanced steadily, looking for him to turn tail at any moment and run.

At six feet the panicky thought rushed into my mind, What if he will not run? Why, then I shall club him, came the answer. In my fear I had forgotten that I was there to get the bull instead of to make him run. And just then he gave a snort and a snarl and rushed at me. His eyes were blazing, his mouth was wide open; the teeth gleamed

cruelly white. Without shame, I confess that it was I who turned and footed it. He ran awkwardly, but he ran well. He was but two paces behind when I tumbled into the boat, and as I shoved off with an oar his teeth crunched down upon the blade. The stout wood was crushed like an egg-shell. Maud and I were astounded. A moment later he had dived under the boat, seized the keel in his mouth, and was shaking the boat violently.

“My!” said Maud. “Let’s go back.”

I shook my head. “I can do what other men have done, and I know that other men have clubbed seals. But I think I’ll leave the bulls alone next time.”

“I wish you wouldn’t,” she said.

“Now don’t say, ‘Please, please,’” I cried, half angrily, I do believe.

She made no reply, and I knew my tone must have hurt her.

“I beg your pardon,” I said, or shouted, rather, in order to make myself heard above the roar of the rookery. “If you say so, I’ll turn and go back; but honestly, I’d rather stay.”

“Now don’t say that this is what you get for bringing a woman along,” she said. She smiled at me whimsically, gloriously, and I knew there was no need for forgiveness.

I rowed a couple of hundred feet along the beach so as to recover my nerves, and then stepped ashore again.

“Do be cautious,” she called after me.

I nodded my head and proceeded to make a flank attack on the nearest harem. All went well until I aimed a blow at an outlying cowl’s head and fell short. She snorted and tried to scramble away. I ran in close and struck another blow, hitting the shoulder instead of the head.

“Watch out!” I heard Maud scream.

In my excitement I had not been taking notice of other things, and I looked up to see the lord of the harem charging down upon me. Again I fled to the boat, hotly pursued; but this time Maud made no suggestion of turning back.

“It would be better, I imagine, if you let harems alone and devoted your attention to lonely and inoffensive-looking seals,” was what she said. “I think I have read something about them. Dr. Jordan’s book, I believe. They are the young bulls, not old enough to have harems of their own. He called them the holluschickie, or something like that. It seems to me if we find where they haul out — ”

“It seems to me that your fighting instinct is aroused,” I laughed.

She flushed quickly and prettily. “I’ll admit I don’t like defeat any more than you do, or any more than I like the idea of killing such pretty, inoffensive creatures.”

“Pretty!” I sniffed. “I failed to mark anything pre-eminently pretty about those foamy-mouthed beasts that raced me.”

“Your point of view,” she laughed. “You lacked perspective. Now if you did not have to get so close to the subject — ”

“The very thing!” I cried. “What I need is a longer club. And there’s that broken oar ready to hand.”

"It just comes to me," she said, "that Captain Larsen was telling me how the men raided the rookeries. They drive the seals, in small herds, a short distance inland before they kill them."

"I don't care to undertake the herding of one of those harems," I objected.

"But there are the holluschickie," she said. "The holluschickie haul out by themselves, and Dr. Jordan says that paths are left between the harems, and that as long as the holluschickie keep strictly to the path they are unmolested by the masters of the harem."

"There's one now," I said, pointing to a young bull in the water. "Let's watch him, and follow him if he hauls out."

He swam directly to the beach and clambered out into a small opening between two harems, the masters of which made warning noises but did not attack him. We watched him travel slowly inward, threading about among the harems along what must have been the path.

"Here goes," I said, stepping out; but I confess my heart was in my mouth as I thought of going through the heart of that monstrous herd.

"It would be wise to make the boat fast," Maud said.

She had stepped out beside me, and I regarded her with wonderment.

She nodded her head determinedly. "Yes, I'm going with you, so you may as well secure the boat and arm me with a club."

"Let's go back," I said dejectedly. "I think tundra grass, will do, after all."

"You know it won't," was her reply. "Shall I lead?"

With a shrug of the shoulders, but with the warmest admiration and pride at heart for this woman, I equipped her with the broken oar and took another for myself. It was with nervous trepidation that we made the first few rods of the journey. Once Maud screamed in terror as a cow thrust an inquisitive nose toward her foot, and several times I quickened my pace for the same reason. But, beyond warning coughs from either side, there were no signs of hostility. It was a rookery which had never been raided by the hunters, and in consequence the seals were mild-tempered and at the same time unafraid.

In the very heart of the herd the din was terrific. It was almost dizzying in its effect. I paused and smiled reassuringly at Maud, for I had recovered my equanimity sooner than she. I could see that she was still badly frightened. She came close to me and shouted:

"I'm dreadfully afraid!"

And I was not. Though the novelty had not yet worn off, the peaceful comportment of the seals had quieted my alarm. Maud was trembling.

"I'm afraid, and I'm not afraid," she chattered with shaking jaws. "It's my miserable body, not I."

"It's all right, it's all right," I reassured her, my arm passing instinctively and protectingly around her.

I shall never forget, in that moment, how instantly conscious I became of my manhood. The primitive deeps of my nature stirred. I felt myself masculine, the protector of the weak, the fighting male. And, best of all, I felt myself the protector of my loved one. She leaned against me, so light and lily-frail, and as her trembling eased away it seemed as though I became aware of prodigious strength. I felt myself a match for the most ferocious bull in the herd, and I know, had such a bull charged upon me, that I should have met it unflinchingly and quite coolly, and I know that I should have killed it.

"I am all right now," she said, looking up at me gratefully. "Let us go on."

And that the strength in me had quieted her and given her confidence, filled me with an exultant joy. The youth of the race seemed burgeoning in me, over-civilized man that I was, and I lived for myself the old hunting days and forest nights of my remote and forgotten ancestry. I had much for which to thank Wolf Larsen, was my thought as we went along the path between the jostling harems.

A quarter of a mile inland we came upon the holluschickie — sleek young bulls, living out the loneliness of their bachelorhood and gathering strength against the day when they would fight their way into the ranks of the Benedicts.

Everything now went smoothly. I seemed to know just what to do and how to do it. Shouting, making threatening gestures with my club, and even prodding the lazy ones, I quickly cut out a score of the young bachelors from their companions. Whenever one made an attempt to break back toward the water, I headed it off. Maud took an active part in the drive, and with her cries and flourishings of the broken oar was of considerable assistance. I noticed, though, that whenever one looked tired and lagged, she let it slip past. But I noticed, also, whenever one, with a show of fight, tried to break past, that her eyes glinted and showed bright, and she rapped it smartly with her club.

"My, it's exciting!" she cried, pausing from sheer weakness. "I think I'll sit down."

I drove the little herd (a dozen strong, now, what of the escapes she had permitted) a hundred yards farther on; and by the time she joined me I had finished the slaughter and was beginning to skin. An hour later we went proudly back along the path between the harems. And twice again we came down the path burdened with skins, till I thought we had enough to roof the hut. I set the sail, laid one tack out of the cove, and on the other tack made our own little inner cove.

"It's just like home-coming," Maud said, as I ran the boat ashore.

I heard her words with a responsive thrill, it was all so dearly intimate and natural, and I said:

"It seems as though I have lived this life always. The world of books and bookish folk is very vague, more like a dream memory than an actuality. I surely have hunted and forayed and fought all the days of my life. And you, too, seem a part of it. You are — " I was on the verge of saying, "my woman, my mate," but glibly changed it to — "standing the hardship well."

But her ear had caught the flaw. She recognized a flight that midmost broke. She gave me a quick look.

“Not that. You were saying — ?”

“That the American Mrs. Meynell was living the life of a savage and living it quite successfully,” I said easily.

“Oh,” was all she replied; but I could have sworn there was a note of disappointment in her voice.

But “my woman, my mate” kept ringing in my head for the rest of the day and for many days. Yet never did it ring more loudly than that night, as I watched her draw back the blanket of moss from the coals, blow up the fire, and cook the evening meal. It must have been latent savagery stirring in me, for the old words, so bound up with the roots of the race, to grip me and thrill me. And grip and thrill they did, till I fell asleep, murmuring them to myself over and over again.

## Chapter XXXI

"It will smell," I said, "but it will keep in the heat and keep out the rain and snow."  
We were surveying the completed seal-skin roof.

"It is clumsy, but it will serve the purpose, and that is the main thing," I went on, yearning for her praise.

And she clapped her hands and declared that she was hugely pleased.

"But it is dark in here," she said the next moment, her shoulders shrinking with a little involuntary shiver.

"You might have suggested a window when the walls were going up," I said. "It was for you, and you should have seen the need of a window."

"But I never do see the obvious, you know," she laughed back. "And besides, you can knock a hole in the wall at any time."

"Quite true; I had not thought of it," I replied, wagging my head sagely. "But have you thought of ordering the window-glass? Just call up the firm, — Red, 4451, I think it is, — and tell them what size and kind of glass you wish."

"That means — " she began.

"No window."

It was a dark and evil-appearing thing, that hut, not fit for aught better than swine in a civilized land; but for us, who had known the misery of the open boat, it was a snug little habitation. Following the housewarming, which was accomplished by means of seal-oil and a wick made from cotton calking, came the hunting for our winter's meat and the building of the second hut. It was a simple affair, now, to go forth in the morning and return by noon with a boatload of seals. And then, while I worked at building the hut, Maud tried out the oil from the blubber and kept a slow fire under the frames of meat. I had heard of jerking beef on the plains, and our seal-meat, cut in thin strips and hung in the smoke, cured excellently.

The second hut was easier to erect, for I built it against the first, and only three walls were required. But it was work, hard work, all of it. Maud and I worked from dawn till dark, to the limit of our strength, so that when night came we crawled stiffly to bed and slept the animal-like sleep exhaustion. And yet Maud declared that she had never felt better or stronger in her life. I knew this was true of myself, but hers was such a lily strength that I feared she would break down. Often and often, her last-reserve force gone, I have seen her stretched flat on her back on the sand in the way she had of resting and recuperating. And then she would be up on her feet and toiling hard as ever. Where she obtained this strength was the marvel to me.

"Think of the long rest this winter," was her reply to my remonstrances. "Why, we'll be clamorous for something to do."

We held a housewarming in my hut the night it was roofed. It was the end of the third day of a fierce storm which had swung around the compass from the south-east to the north-west, and which was then blowing directly in upon us. The beaches of the outer cove were thundering with the surf, and even in our land-locked inner cove a respectable sea was breaking. No high backbone of island sheltered us from the wind, and it whistled and bellowed about the hut till at times I feared for the strength of the walls. The skin roof, stretched tightly as a drumhead, I had thought, sagged and bellied with every gust; and innumerable interstices in the walls, not so tightly stuffed with moss as Maud had supposed, disclosed themselves. Yet the seal-oil burned brightly and we were warm and comfortable.

It was a pleasant evening indeed, and we voted that as a social function on Endeavour Island it had not yet been eclipsed. Our minds were at ease. Not only had we resigned ourselves to the bitter winter, but we were prepared for it. The seals could depart on their mysterious journey into the south at any time, now, for all we cared; and the storms held no terror for us. Not only were we sure of being dry and warm and sheltered from the wind, but we had the softest and most luxurious mattresses that could be made from moss. This had been Maud's idea, and she had herself jealously gathered all the moss. This was to be my first night on the mattress, and I knew I should sleep the sweeter because she had made it.

As she rose to go she turned to me with the whimsical way she had, and said:

"Something is going to happen — is happening, for that matter. I feel it. Something is coming here, to us. It is coming now. I don't know what, but it is coming."

"Good or bad?" I asked.

She shook her head. "I don't know, but it is there, somewhere."

She pointed in the direction of the sea and wind.

"It's a lee shore," I laughed, "and I am sure I'd rather be here than arriving, a night like this."

"You are not frightened?" I asked, as I stepped to open the door for her.

Her eyes looked bravely into mine.

"And you feel well? perfectly well?"

"Never better," was her answer.

We talked a little longer before she went.

"Good-night, Maud," I said.

"Good-night, Humphrey," she said.

This use of our given names had come about quite as a matter of course, and was as unpremeditated as it was natural. In that moment I could have put my arms around her and drawn her to me. I should certainly have done so out in that world to which we belonged. As it was, the situation stopped there in the only way it could; but I was left alone in my little hut, glowing warmly through and through with a pleasant

satisfaction; and I knew that a tie, or a tacit something, existed between us which had not existed before.



## Chapter XXXII

I awoke, oppressed by a mysterious sensation. There seemed something missing in my environment. But the mystery and oppressiveness vanished after the first few seconds of waking, when I identified the missing something as the wind. I had fallen asleep in that state of nerve tension with which one meets the continuous shock of sound or movement, and I had awakened, still tense, bracing myself to meet the pressure of something which no longer bore upon me.

It was the first night I had spent under cover in several months, and I lay luxuriously for some minutes under my blankets (for once not wet with fog or spray), analysing, first, the effect produced upon me by the cessation of the wind, and next, the joy which was mine from resting on the mattress made by Maud's hands. When I had dressed and opened the door, I heard the waves still lapping on the beach, garrulously attesting the fury of the night. It was a clear day, and the sun was shining. I had slept late, and I stepped outside with sudden energy, bent upon making up lost time as befitted a dweller on Endeavour Island.

And when outside, I stopped short. I believed my eyes without question, and yet I was for the moment stunned by what they disclosed to me. There, on the beach, not fifty feet away, bow on, dismasted, was a black-hulled vessel. Masts and booms, tangled with shrouds, sheets, and rent canvas, were rubbing gently alongside. I could have rubbed my eyes as I looked. There was the home-made galley we had built, the familiar break of the poop, the low yacht-cabin scarcely rising above the rail. It was the Ghost.

What freak of fortune had brought it here — here of all spots? what chance of chances? I looked at the bleak, inaccessible wall at my back and knew the profundity of despair. Escape was hopeless, out of the question. I thought of Maud, asleep there in the hut we had reared; I remembered her "Good-night, Humphrey"; "my woman, my mate," went ringing through my brain, but now, alas, it was a knell that sounded. Then everything went black before my eyes.

Possibly it was the fraction of a second, but I had no knowledge of how long an interval had lapsed before I was myself again. There lay the Ghost, bow on to the beach, her splintered bowsprit projecting over the sand, her tangled spars rubbing against her side to the lift of the crooning waves. Something must be done, must be done.

It came upon me suddenly, as strange, that nothing moved aboard. Wearied from the night of struggle and wreck, all hands were yet asleep, I thought. My next thought was that Maud and I might yet escape. If we could take to the boat and make round

the point before any one awoke? I would call her and start. My hand was lifted at her door to knock, when I recollected the smallness of the island. We could never hide ourselves upon it. There was nothing for us but the wide raw ocean. I thought of our snug little huts, our supplies of meat and oil and moss and firewood, and I knew that we could never survive the wintry sea and the great storms which were to come.

So I stood, with hesitant knuckle, without her door. It was impossible, impossible. A wild thought of rushing in and killing her as she slept rose in my mind. And then, in a flash, the better solution came to me. All hands were asleep. Why not creep aboard the Ghost, — well I knew the way to Wolf Larsen's bunk, — and kill him in his sleep? After that — well, we would see. But with him dead there was time and space in which to prepare to do other things; and besides, whatever new situation arose, it could not possibly be worse than the present one.

My knife was at my hip. I returned to my hut for the shot-gun, made sure it was loaded, and went down to the Ghost. With some difficulty, and at the expense of a wetting to the waist, I climbed aboard. The forecastle scuttle was open. I paused to listen for the breathing of the men, but there was no breathing. I almost gasped as the thought came to me: What if the Ghost is deserted? I listened more closely. There was no sound. I cautiously descended the ladder. The place had the empty and musty feel and smell usual to a dwelling no longer inhabited. Everywhere was a thick litter of discarded and ragged garments, old sea-boots, leaky oilskins — all the worthless forecastle dunnage of a long voyage.

Abandoned hastily, was my conclusion, as I ascended to the deck. Hope was alive again in my breast, and I looked about me with greater coolness. I noted that the boats were missing. The steerage told the same tale as the forecastle. The hunters had packed their belongings with similar haste. The Ghost was deserted. It was Maud's and mine. I thought of the ship's stores and the lazarette beneath the cabin, and the idea came to me of surprising Maud with something nice for breakfast.

The reaction from my fear, and the knowledge that the terrible deed I had come to do was no longer necessary, made me boyish and eager. I went up the steerage companion-way two steps at a time, with nothing distinct in my mind except joy and the hope that Maud would sleep on until the surprise breakfast was quite ready for her. As I rounded the galley, a new satisfaction was mine at thought of all the splendid cooking utensils inside. I sprang up the break of the poop, and saw — Wolf Larsen. What of my impetus and the stunning surprise, I clattered three or four steps along the deck before I could stop myself. He was standing in the companion-way, only his head and shoulders visible, staring straight at me. His arms were resting on the half-open slide. He made no movement whatever — simply stood there, staring at me.

I began to tremble. The old stomach sickness clutched me. I put one hand on the edge of the house to steady myself. My lips seemed suddenly dry and I moistened them against the need of speech. Nor did I for an instant take my eyes off him. Neither of us spoke. There was something ominous in his silence, his immobility. All my old fear of

him returned and by new fear was increased an hundred-fold. And still we stood, the pair of us, staring at each other.

I was aware of the demand for action, and, my old helplessness strong upon me, I was waiting for him to take the initiative. Then, as the moments went by, it came to me that the situation was analogous to the one in which I had approached the long-maned bull, my intention of clubbing obscured by fear until it became a desire to make him run. So it was at last impressed upon me that I was there, not to have Wolf Larsen take the initiative, but to take it myself.

I cocked both barrels and levelled the shot-gun at him. Had he moved, attempted to drop down the companion-way, I know I would have shot him. But he stood motionless and staring as before. And as I faced him, with levelled gun shaking in my hands, I had time to note the worn and haggard appearance of his face. It was as if some strong anxiety had wasted it. The cheeks were sunken, and there was a wearied, puckered expression on the brow. And it seemed to me that his eyes were strange, not only the expression, but the physical seeming, as though the optic nerves and supporting muscles had suffered strain and slightly twisted the eyeballs.

All this I saw, and my brain now working rapidly, I thought a thousand thoughts; and yet I could not pull the triggers. I lowered the gun and stepped to the corner of the cabin, primarily to relieve the tension on my nerves and to make a new start, and incidentally to be closer. Again I raised the gun. He was almost at arm's length. There was no hope for him. I was resolved. There was no possible chance of missing him, no matter how poor my marksmanship. And yet I wrestled with myself and could not pull the triggers.

"Well?" he demanded impatiently.

I strove vainly to force my fingers down on the triggers, and vainly I strove to say something.

"Why don't you shoot?" he asked.

I cleared my throat of a huskiness which prevented speech. "Hump," he said slowly, "you can't do it. You are not exactly afraid. You are impotent. Your conventional morality is stronger than you. You are the slave to the opinions which have credence among the people you have known and have read about. Their code has been drummed into your head from the time you lisped, and in spite of your philosophy, and of what I have taught you, it won't let you kill an unarmed, unresisting man."

"I know it," I said hoarsely.

"And you know that I would kill an unarmed man as readily as I would smoke a cigar," he went on. "You know me for what I am, — my worth in the world by your standard. You have called me snake, tiger, shark, monster, and Caliban. And yet, you little rag puppet, you little echoing mechanism, you are unable to kill me as you would a snake or a shark, because I have hands, feet, and a body shaped somewhat like yours. Bah! I had hoped better things of you, Hump."

He stepped out of the companion-way and came up to me.

"Put down that gun. I want to ask you some questions. I haven't had a chance to look around yet. What place is this? How is the Ghost lying? How did you get wet? Where's Maud? — I beg your pardon, Miss Brewster — or should I say, 'Mrs. Van Weyden'?"

I had backed away from him, almost weeping at my inability to shoot him, but not fool enough to put down the gun. I hoped, desperately, that he might commit some hostile act, attempt to strike me or choke me; for in such way only I knew I could be stirred to shoot.

"This is Endeavour Island," I said.

"Never heard of it," he broke in.

"At least, that's our name for it," I amended.

"Our?" he queried. "Who's our?"

"Miss Brewster and myself. And the Ghost is lying, as you can see for yourself, bow on to the beach."

"There are seals here," he said. "They woke me up with their barking, or I'd be sleeping yet. I heard them when I drove in last night. They were the first warning that I was on a lee shore. It's a rookery, the kind of a thing I've hunted for years. Thanks to my brother Death, I've lighted on a fortune. It's a mint. What's its bearings?"

"Haven't the least idea," I said. "But you ought to know quite closely. What were your last observations?"

He smiled inscrutably, but did not answer.

"Well, where's all hands?" I asked. "How does it come that you are alone?"

I was prepared for him again to set aside my question, and was surprised at the readiness of his reply.

"My brother got me inside forty-eight hours, and through no fault of mine. Boarded me in the night with only the watch on deck. Hunters went back on me. He gave them a bigger lay. Heard him offering it. Did it right before me. Of course the crew gave me the go-by. That was to be expected. All hands went over the side, and there I was, marooned on my own vessel. It was Death's turn, and it's all in the family anyway."

"But how did you lose the masts?" I asked.

"Walk over and examine those lanyards," he said, pointing to where the mizzen-rigging should have been.

"They have been cut with a knife!" I exclaimed.

"Not quite," he laughed. "It was a neater job. Look again."

I looked. The lanyards had been almost severed, with just enough left to hold the shrouds till some severe strain should be put upon them.

"Cooky did that," he laughed again. "I know, though I didn't spot him at it. Kind of evened up the score a bit."

"Good for Mugridge!" I cried.

"Yes, that's what I thought when everything went over the side. Only I said it on the other side of my mouth."

"But what were you doing while all this was going on?" I asked.

"My best, you may be sure, which wasn't much under the circumstances."

I turned to re-examine Thomas Mugridge's work.

"I guess I'll sit down and take the sunshine," I heard Wolf Larsen saying.

There was a hint, just a slight hint, of physical feebleness in his voice, and it was so strange that I looked quickly at him. His hand was sweeping nervously across his face, as though he were brushing away cobwebs. I was puzzled. The whole thing was so unlike the Wolf Larsen I had known.

"How are your headaches?" I asked.

"They still trouble me," was his answer. "I think I have one coming on now."

He slipped down from his sitting posture till he lay on the deck. Then he rolled over on his side, his head resting on the biceps of the under arm, the forearm shielding his eyes from the sun. I stood regarding him wonderingly.

"Now's your chance, Hump," he said.

"I don't understand," I lied, for I thoroughly understood.

"Oh, nothing," he added softly, as if he were drowsing; "only you've got me where you want me."

"No, I haven't," I retorted; "for I want you a few thousand miles away from here."

He chuckled, and thereafter spoke no more. He did not stir as I passed by him and went down into the cabin. I lifted the trap in the floor, but for some moments gazed dubiously into the darkness of the lazarette beneath. I hesitated to descend. What if his lying down were a ruse? Pretty, indeed, to be caught there like a rat. I crept softly up the companion-way and peeped at him. He was lying as I had left him. Again I went below; but before I dropped into the lazarette I took the precaution of casting down the door in advance. At least there would be no lid to the trap. But it was all needless. I regained the cabin with a store of jams, sea-biscuits, canned meats, and such things, — all I could carry, — and replaced the trap-door.

A peep at Wolf Larsen showed me that he had not moved. A bright thought struck me. I stole into his state-room and possessed myself of his revolvers. There were no other weapons, though I thoroughly ransacked the three remaining state-rooms. To make sure, I returned and went through the steerage and forecastle, and in the galley gathered up all the sharp meat and vegetable knives. Then I bethought me of the great yachtsman's knife he always carried, and I came to him and spoke to him, first softly, then loudly. He did not move. I bent over and took it from his pocket. I breathed more freely. He had no arms with which to attack me from a distance; while I, armed, could always forestall him should he attempt to grapple me with his terrible gorilla arms.

Filling a coffee-pot and frying-pan with part of my plunder, and taking some chinaware from the cabin pantry, I left Wolf Larsen lying in the sun and went ashore.

Maud was still asleep. I blew up the embers (we had not yet arranged a winter kitchen), and quite feverishly cooked the breakfast. Toward the end, I heard her moving about within the hut, making her toilet. Just as all was ready and the coffee poured, the door opened and she came forth.

"It's not fair of you," was her greeting. "You are usurping one of my prerogatives. You know you I agreed that the cooking should be mine, and — "

"But just this once," I pleaded.

"If you promise not to do it again," she smiled. "Unless, of course, you have grown tired of my poor efforts."

To my delight she never once looked toward the beach, and I maintained the banter with such success all unconsciously she sipped coffee from the china cup, ate fried evaporated potatoes, and spread marmalade on her biscuit. But it could not last. I saw the surprise that came over her. She had discovered the china plate from which she was eating. She looked over the breakfast, noting detail after detail. Then she looked at me, and her face turned slowly toward the beach.

"Humphrey!" she said.

The old unnamable terror mounted into her eyes.

"Is — he?" she quavered.

I nodded my head.

## Chapter XXXIIII

We waited all day for Wolf Larsen to come ashore. It was an intolerable period of anxiety. Each moment one or the other of us cast expectant glances toward the Ghost. But he did not come. He did not even appear on deck.

"Perhaps it is his headache," I said. "I left him lying on the poop. He may lie there all night. I think I'll go and see."

Maud looked entreaty at me.

"It is all right," I assured her. "I shall take the revolvers. You know I collected every weapon on board."

"But there are his arms, his hands, his terrible, terrible hands!" she objected. And then she cried, "Oh, Humphrey, I am afraid of him! Don't go — please don't go!"

She rested her hand appealingly on mine, and sent my pulse fluttering. My heart was surely in my eyes for a moment. The dear and lovely woman! And she was so much the woman, clinging and appealing, sunshine and dew to my manhood, rooting it deeper and sending through it the sap of a new strength. I was for putting my arm around her, as when in the midst of the seal herd; but I considered, and refrained.

"I shall not take any risks," I said. "I'll merely peep over the bow and see."

She pressed my hand earnestly and let me go. But the space on deck where I had left him lying was vacant. He had evidently gone below. That night we stood alternate watches, one of us sleeping at a time; for there was no telling what Wolf Larsen might do. He was certainly capable of anything.

The next day we waited, and the next, and still he made no sign.

"These headaches of his, these attacks," Maud said, on the afternoon of the fourth day; "Perhaps he is ill, very ill. He may be dead."

"Or dying," was her afterthought when she had waited some time for me to speak.

"Better so," I answered.

"But think, Humphrey, a fellow-creature in his last lonely hour."

"Perhaps," I suggested.

"Yes, even perhaps," she acknowledged. "But we do not know. It would be terrible if he were. I could never forgive myself. We must do something."

"Perhaps," I suggested again.

I waited, smiling inwardly at the woman of her which compelled a solicitude for Wolf Larsen, of all creatures. Where was her solicitude for me, I thought, — for me whom she had been afraid to have merely peep aboard?

She was too subtle not to follow the trend of my silence. And she was as direct as she was subtle.

"You must go aboard, Humphrey, and find out," she said. "And if you want to laugh at me, you have my consent and forgiveness."

I arose obediently and went down the beach.

"Do be careful," she called after me.

I waved my arm from the forecastle head and dropped down to the deck. Aft I walked to the cabin companion, where I contented myself with hailing below. Wolf Larsen answered, and as he started to ascend the stairs I cocked my revolver. I displayed it openly during our conversation, but he took no notice of it. He appeared the same, physically, as when last I saw him, but he was gloomy and silent. In fact, the few words we spoke could hardly be called a conversation. I did not inquire why he had not been ashore, nor did he ask why I had not come aboard. His head was all right again, he said, and so, without further parley, I left him.

Maud received my report with obvious relief, and the sight of smoke which later rose in the galley put her in a more cheerful mood. The next day, and the next, we saw the galley smoke rising, and sometimes we caught glimpses of him on the poop. But that was all. He made no attempt to come ashore. This we knew, for we still maintained our night-watches. We were waiting for him to do something, to show his hand, so to say, and his inaction puzzled and worried us.

A week of this passed by. We had no other interest than Wolf Larsen, and his presence weighed us down with an apprehension which prevented us from doing any of the little things we had planned.

But at the end of the week the smoke ceased rising from the galley, and he no longer showed himself on the poop. I could see Maud's solicitude again growing, though she timidly — and even proudly, I think — forbore a repetition of her request. After all, what censure could be put upon her? She was divinely altruistic, and she was a woman. Besides, I was myself aware of hurt at thought of this man whom I had tried to kill, dying alone with his fellow-creatures so near. He was right. The code of my group was stronger than I. The fact that he had hands, feet, and a body shaped somewhat like mine, constituted a claim which I could not ignore.

So I did not wait a second time for Maud to send me. I discovered that we stood in need of condensed milk and marmalade, and announced that I was going aboard. I could see that she wavered. She even went so far as to murmur that they were non-essentials and that my trip after them might be inexpedient. And as she had followed the trend of my silence, she now followed the trend of my speech, and she knew that I was going aboard, not because of condensed milk and marmalade, but because of her and of her anxiety, which she knew she had failed to hide.

I took off my shoes when I gained the forecastle head, and went noiselessly aft in my stocking feet. Nor did I call this time from the top of the companion-way. Cautiously descending, I found the cabin deserted. The door to his state-room was closed. At first I thought of knocking, then I remembered my ostensible errand and resolved to carry it out. Carefully avoiding noise, I lifted the trap-door in the floor and set it to one



side. The slop-chest, as well as the provisions, was stored in the lazarette, and I took advantage of the opportunity to lay in a stock of underclothing.

As I emerged from the lazarette I heard sounds in Wolf Larsen's state-room. I crouched and listened. The door-knob rattled. Furtively, instinctively, I slunk back behind the table and drew and cocked my revolver. The door swung open and he came forth. Never had I seen so profound a despair as that which I saw on his face, — the face of Wolf Larsen the fighter, the strong man, the indomitable one. For all the world like a woman wringing her hands, he raised his clenched fists and groaned. One fist unclosed, and the open palm swept across his eyes as though brushing away cobwebs.

"God! God!" he groaned, and the clenched fists were raised again to the infinite despair with which his throat vibrated.

It was horrible. I was trembling all over, and I could feel the shivers running up and down my spine and the sweat standing out on my forehead. Surely there can be little in this world more awful than the spectacle of a strong man in the moment when he is utterly weak and broken.

But Wolf Larsen regained control of himself by an exertion of his remarkable will. And it was exertion. His whole frame shook with the struggle. He resembled a man on the verge of a fit. His face strove to compose itself, writhing and twisting in the effort till he broke down again. Once more the clenched fists went upward and he groaned. He caught his breath once or twice and sobbed. Then he was successful. I could have thought him the old Wolf Larsen, and yet there was in his movements a vague suggestion of weakness and indecision. He started for the companion-way, and stepped forward quite as I had been accustomed to see him do; and yet again, in his very walk, there seemed that suggestion of weakness and indecision.

I was now concerned with fear for myself. The open trap lay directly in his path, and his discovery of it would lead instantly to his discovery of me. I was angry with myself for being caught in so cowardly a position, crouching on the floor. There was yet time. I rose swiftly to my feet, and, I know, quite unconsciously assumed a defiant attitude. He took no notice of me. Nor did he notice the open trap. Before I could grasp the situation, or act, he had walked right into the trap. One foot was descending into the opening, while the other foot was just on the verge of beginning the uplift. But when the descending foot missed the solid flooring and felt vacancy beneath, it was the old Wolf Larsen and the tiger muscles that made the falling body spring across the opening, even as it fell, so that he struck on his chest and stomach, with arms outstretched, on the floor of the opposite side. The next instant he had drawn up his legs and rolled clear. But he rolled into my marmalade and underclothes and against the trap-door.

The expression on his face was one of complete comprehension. But before I could guess what he had comprehended, he had dropped the trap-door into place, closing the lazarette. Then I understood. He thought he had me inside. Also, he was blind, blind as a bat. I watched him, breathing carefully so that he should not hear me. He stepped quickly to his state-room. I saw his hand miss the door-knob by an inch, quickly fumble

for it, and find it. This was my chance. I tiptoed across the cabin and to the top of the stairs. He came back, dragging a heavy sea-chest, which he deposited on top of the trap. Not content with this he fetched a second chest and placed it on top of the first. Then he gathered up the marmalade and underclothes and put them on the table. When he started up the companion-way, I retreated, silently rolling over on top of the cabin.

He shoved the slide part way back and rested his arms on it, his body still in the companion-way. His attitude was of one looking forward the length of the schooner, or staring, rather, for his eyes were fixed and unblinking. I was only five feet away and directly in what should have been his line of vision. It was uncanny. I felt myself a ghost, what of my invisibility. I waved my hand back and forth, of course without effect; but when the moving shadow fell across his face I saw at once that he was susceptible to the impression. His face became more expectant and tense as he tried to analyze and identify the impression. He knew that he had responded to something from without, that his sensibility had been touched by a changing something in his environment; but what it was he could not discover. I ceased waving my hand, so that the shadow remained stationary. He slowly moved his head back and forth under it and turned from side to side, now in the sunshine, now in the shade, feeling the shadow, as it were, testing it by sensation.

I, too, was busy, trying to reason out how he was aware of the existence of so intangible a thing as a shadow. If it were his eyeballs only that were affected, or if his optic nerve were not wholly destroyed, the explanation was simple. If otherwise, then the only conclusion I could reach was that the sensitive skin recognized the difference of temperature between shade and sunshine. Or, perhaps, — who can tell? — it was that fabled sixth sense which conveyed to him the loom and feel of an object close at hand.

Giving over his attempt to determine the shadow, he stepped on deck and started forward, walking with a swiftness and confidence which surprised me. And still there was that hint of the feebleness of the blind in his walk. I knew it now for what it was.

To my amused chagrin, he discovered my shoes on the forecastle head and brought them back with him into the galley. I watched him build the fire and set about cooking food for himself; then I stole into the cabin for my marmalade and underclothes, slipped back past the galley, and climbed down to the beach to deliver my barefoot report.

## Chapter XXXIV

"It's too bad the Ghost has lost her masts. Why we could sail away in her. Don't you think we could, Humphrey?"

I sprang excitedly to my feet.

"I wonder, I wonder," I repeated, pacing up and down.

Maud's eyes were shining with anticipation as they followed me. She had such faith in me! And the thought of it was so much added power. I remembered Michelet's "To man, woman is as the earth was to her legendary son; he has but to fall down and kiss her breast and he is strong again." For the first time I knew the wonderful truth of his words. Why, I was living them. Maud was all this to me, an unfailing, source of strength and courage. I had but to look at her, or think of her, and be strong again.

"It can be done, it can be done," I was thinking and asserting aloud. "What men have done, I can do; and if they have never done this before, still I can do it."

"What? for goodness' sake," Maud demanded. "Do be merciful. What is it you can do?"

"We can do it," I amended. "Why, nothing else than put the masts back into the Ghost and sail away."

"Humphrey!" she exclaimed.

And I felt as proud of my conception as if it were already a fact accomplished.

"But how is it possible to be done?" she asked.

"I don't know," was my answer. "I know only that I am capable of doing anything these days."

I smiled proudly at her — too proudly, for she dropped her eyes and was for the moment silent.

"But there is Captain Larsen," she objected.

"Blind and helpless," I answered promptly, waving him aside as a straw.

"But those terrible hands of his! You know how he leaped across the opening of the lazarette."

"And you know also how I crept about and avoided him," I contended gaily.

"And lost your shoes."

"You'd hardly expect them to avoid Wolf Larsen without my feet inside of them."

We both laughed, and then went seriously to work constructing the plan whereby we were to step the masts of the Ghost and return to the world. I remembered hazily the physics of my school days, while the last few months had given me practical experience with mechanical purchases. I must say, though, when we walked down to the Ghost to inspect more closely the task before us, that the sight of the great masts lying in

the water almost disheartened me. Where were we to begin? If there had been one mast standing, something high up to which to fasten blocks and tackles! But there was nothing. It reminded me of the problem of lifting oneself by one's boot-straps. I understood the mechanics of levers; but where was I to get a fulcrum?

There was the mainmast, fifteen inches in diameter at what was now the butt, still sixty-five feet in length, and weighing, I roughly calculated, at least three thousand pounds. And then came the foremast, larger in diameter, and weighing surely thirty-five hundred pounds. Where was I to begin? Maud stood silently by my side, while I evolved in my mind the contrivance known among sailors as "shears." But, though known to sailors, I invented it there on Endeavour Island. By crossing and lashing the ends of two spars, and then elevating them in the air like an inverted "V," I could get a point above the deck to which to make fast my hoisting tackle. To this hoisting tackle I could, if necessary, attach a second hoisting tackle. And then there was the windlass!

Maud saw that I had achieved a solution, and her eyes warmed sympathetically.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"Clear that raffle," I answered, pointing to the tangled wreckage overside.

Ah, the decisiveness, the very sound of the words, was good in my ears. "Clear that raffle!" Imagine so salty a phrase on the lips of the Humphrey Van Weyden of a few months gone!

There must have been a touch of the melodramatic in my pose and voice, for Maud smiled. Her appreciation of the ridiculous was keen, and in all things she unerringly saw and felt, where it existed, the touch of sham, the overshadowing, the overtone. It was this which had given poise and penetration to her own work and made her of worth to the world. The serious critic, with the sense of humour and the power of expression, must inevitably command the world's ear. And so it was that she had commanded. Her sense of humour was really the artist's instinct for proportion.

"I'm sure I've heard it before, somewhere, in books," she murmured gleefully.

I had an instinct for proportion myself, and I collapsed forthwith, descending from the dominant pose of a master of matter to a state of humble confusion which was, to say the least, very miserable.

Her hand leapt out at once to mine.

"I'm so sorry," she said.

"No need to be," I gulped. "It does me good. There's too much of the schoolboy in me. All of which is neither here nor there. What we've got to do is actually and literally to clear that raffle. If you'll come with me in the boat, we'll get to work and straighten things out."

"When the topmen clear the raffle with their clasp-knives in their teeth," she quoted at me; and for the rest of the afternoon we made merry over our labour.

Her task was to hold the boat in position while I worked at the tangle. And such a tangle — halyards, sheets, guys, down-hauls, shrouds, stays, all washed about and back and forth and through, and twined and knotted by the sea. I cut no more than was necessary, and what with passing the long ropes under and around the booms and

masts, of unreeving the halyards and sheets, of coiling down in the boat and uncoiling in order to pass through another knot in the bight, I was soon wet to the skin.

The sails did require some cutting, and the canvas, heavy with water, tried my strength severely; but I succeeded before nightfall in getting it all spread out on the beach to dry. We were both very tired when we knocked off for supper, and we had done good work, too, though to the eye it appeared insignificant.

Next morning, with Maud as able assistant, I went into the hold of the Ghost to clear the steps of the mast-butts. We had no more than begun work when the sound of my knocking and hammering brought Wolf Larsen.

"Hello below!" he cried down the open hatch.

The sound of his voice made Maud quickly draw close to me, as for protection, and she rested one hand on my arm while we parleyed.

"Hello on deck," I replied. "Good-morning to you."

"What are you doing down there?" he demanded. "Trying to scuttle my ship for me?"

"Quite the opposite; I'm repairing her," was my answer.

"But what in thunder are you repairing?" There was puzzlement in his voice.

"Why, I'm getting everything ready for re-stepping the masts," I replied easily, as though it were the simplest project imaginable.

"It seems as though you're standing on your own legs at last, Hump," we heard him say; and then for some time he was silent.

"But I say, Hump," he called down. "You can't do it."

"Oh, yes, I can," I retorted. "I'm doing it now."

"But this is my vessel, my particular property. What if I forbid you?"

"You forget," I replied. "You are no longer the biggest bit of the ferment. You were, once, and able to eat me, as you were pleased to phrase it; but there has been a diminishing, and I am now able to eat you. The yeast has grown stale."

He gave a short, disagreeable laugh. "I see you're working my philosophy back on me for all it is worth. But don't make the mistake of under-estimating me. For your own good I warn you."

"Since when have you become a philanthropist?" I queried. "Confess, now, in warning me for my own good, that you are very consistent."

He ignored my sarcasm, saying, "Suppose I clap the hatch on, now? You won't fool me as you did in the lazarette."

"Wolf Larsen," I said sternly, for the first time addressing him by this his most familiar name, "I am unable to shoot a helpless, unresisting man. You have proved that to my satisfaction as well as yours. But I warn you now, and not so much for your own good as for mine, that I shall shoot you the moment you attempt a hostile act. I can shoot you now, as I stand here; and if you are so minded, just go ahead and try to clap on the hatch."

"Nevertheless, I forbid you, I distinctly forbid your tampering with my ship."

"But, man!" I expostulated, "you advance the fact that it is your ship as though it were a moral right. You have never considered moral rights in your dealings with others. You surely do not dream that I'll consider them in dealing with you?"

I had stepped underneath the open hatchway so that I could see him. The lack of expression on his face, so different from when I had watched him unseen, was enhanced by the unblinking, staring eyes. It was not a pleasant face to look upon.

"And none so poor, not even Hump, to do him reverence," he sneered.

The sneer was wholly in his voice. His face remained expressionless as ever.

"How do you do, Miss Brewster," he said suddenly, after a pause.

I started. She had made no noise whatever, had not even moved. Could it be that some glimmer of vision remained to him? or that his vision was coming back?

"How do you do, Captain Larsen," she answered. "Pray, how did you know I was here?"

"Heard you breathing, of course. I say, Hump's improving, don't you think so?"

"I don't know," she answered, smiling at me. "I have never seen him otherwise."

"You should have seen him before, then."

"Wolf Larsen, in large doses," I murmured, "before and after taking."

"I want to tell you again, Hump," he said threateningly, "that you'd better leave things alone."

"But don't you care to escape as well as we?" I asked incredulously.

"No," was his answer. "I intend dying here."

"Well, we don't," I concluded defiantly, beginning again my knocking and hammering.

## Chapter XXXV

Next day, the mast-steps clear and everything in readiness, we started to get the two topmasts aboard. The maintopmast was over thirty feet in length, the foretopmast nearly thirty, and it was of these that I intended making the shears. It was puzzling work. Fastening one end of a heavy tackle to the windlass, and with the other end fast to the butt of the foretopmast, I began to heave. Maud held the turn on the windlass and coiled down the slack.

We were astonished at the ease with which the spar was lifted. It was an improved crank windlass, and the purchase it gave was enormous. Of course, what it gave us in power we paid for in distance; as many times as it doubled my strength, that many times was doubled the length of rope I heaved in. The tackle dragged heavily across the rail, increasing its drag as the spar arose more and more out of the water, and the exertion on the windlass grew severe.

But when the butt of the topmast was level with the rail, everything came to a standstill.

"I might have known it," I said impatiently. "Now we have to do it all over again."

"Why not fasten the tackle part way down the mast?" Maud suggested.

"It's what I should have done at first," I answered, hugely disgusted with myself.

Slipping off a turn, I lowered the mast back into the water and fastened the tackle a third of the way down from the butt. In an hour, what of this and of rests between the heaving, I had hoisted it to the point where I could hoist no more. Eight feet of the butt was above the rail, and I was as far away as ever from getting the spar on board. I sat down and pondered the problem. It did not take long. I sprang jubilantly to my feet.

"Now I have it!" I cried. "I ought to make the tackle fast at the point of balance. And what we learn of this will serve us with everything else we have to hoist aboard."

Once again I undid all my work by lowering the mast into the water. But I miscalculated the point of balance, so that when I heaved the top of the mast came up instead of the butt. Maud looked despair, but I laughed and said it would do just as well.

Instructing her how to hold the turn and be ready to slack away at command, I laid hold of the mast with my hands and tried to balance it inboard across the rail. When I thought I had it I cried to her to slack away; but the spar righted, despite my efforts, and dropped back toward the water. Again I heaved it up to its old position, for I had now another idea. I remembered the watch-tackle — a small double and single block affair — and fetched it.

While I was rigging it between the top of the spar and the opposite rail, Wolf Larsen came on the scene. We exchanged nothing more than good-mornings, and, though he could not see, he sat on the rail out of the way and followed by the sound all that I did.

Again instructing Maud to slack away at the windlass when I gave the word, I proceeded to heave on the watch-tackle. Slowly the mast swung in until it balanced at right angles across the rail; and then I discovered to my amazement that there was no need for Maud to slack away. In fact, the very opposite was necessary. Making the watch-tackle fast, I hove on the windlass and brought in the mast, inch by inch, till its top tilted down to the deck and finally its whole length lay on the deck.

I looked at my watch. It was twelve o'clock. My back was aching sorely, and I felt extremely tired and hungry. And there on the deck was a single stick of timber to show for a whole morning's work. For the first time I thoroughly realized the extent of the task before us. But I was learning, I was learning. The afternoon would show far more accomplished. And it did; for we returned at one o'clock, rested and strengthened by a hearty dinner.

In less than an hour I had the maintopmast on deck and was constructing the shears. Lashing the two topmasts together, and making allowance for their unequal length, at the point of intersection I attached the double block of the main throat-halyards. This, with the single block and the throat-halyards themselves, gave me a hoisting tackle. To prevent the butts of the masts from slipping on the deck, I nailed down thick cleats. Everything in readiness, I made a line fast to the apex of the shears and carried it directly to the windlass. I was growing to have faith in that windlass, for it gave me power beyond all expectation. As usual, Maud held the turn while I heaved. The shears rose in the air.

Then I discovered I had forgotten guy-ropes. This necessitated my climbing the shears, which I did twice, before I finished guying it fore and aft and to either side. Twilight had set in by the time this was accomplished. Wolf Larsen, who had sat about and listened all afternoon and never opened his mouth, had taken himself off to the galley and started his supper. I felt quite stiff across the small of the back, so much so that I straightened up with an effort and with pain. I looked proudly at my work. It was beginning to show. I was wild with desire, like a child with a new toy, to hoist something with my shears.

"I wish it weren't so late," I said. "I'd like to see how it works."

"Don't be a glutton, Humphrey," Maud chided me. "Remember, to-morrow is coming, and you're so tired now that you can hardly stand."

"And you?" I said, with sudden solicitude. "You must be very tired. You have worked hard and nobly. I am proud of you, Maud."

"Not half so proud as I am of you, nor with half the reason," she answered, looking me straight in the eyes for a moment with an expression in her own and a dancing, tremulous light which I had not seen before and which gave me a pang of quick delight,



I know not why, for I did not understand it. Then she dropped her eyes, to lift them again, laughing.

"If our friends could see us now," she said. "Look at us. Have you ever paused for a moment to consider our appearance?"

"Yes, I have considered yours, frequently," I answered, puzzling over what I had seen in her eyes and puzzled by her sudden change of subject.

"Mercy!" she cried. "And what do I look like, pray?"

"A scarecrow, I'm afraid," I replied. "Just glance at your draggled skirts, for instance. Look at those three-cornered tears. And such a waist! It would not require a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that you have been cooking over a camp-fire, to say nothing of trying out seal-blubber. And to cap it all, that cap! And all that is the woman who wrote 'A Kiss Endured.'"

She made me an elaborate and stately courtesy, and said, "As for you, sir — "

And yet, through the five minutes of banter which followed, there was a serious something underneath the fun which I could not but relate to the strange and fleeting expression I had caught in her eyes. What was it? Could it be that our eyes were speaking beyond the will of our speech? My eyes had spoken, I knew, until I had found the culprits out and silenced them. This had occurred several times. But had she seen the clamour in them and understood? And had her eyes so spoken to me? What else could that expression have meant — that dancing, tremulous light, and a something more which words could not describe. And yet it could not be. It was impossible. Besides, I was not skilled in the speech of eyes. I was only Humphrey Van Weyden, a bookish fellow who loved. And to love, and to wait and win love, that surely was glorious enough for me. And thus I thought, even as we chaffed each other's appearance, until we arrived ashore and there were other things to think about.

"It's a shame, after working hard all day, that we cannot have an uninterrupted night's sleep," I complained, after supper.

"But there can be no danger now? from a blind man?" she queried.

"I shall never be able to trust him," I averred, "and far less now that he is blind. The liability is that his part helplessness will make him more malignant than ever. I know what I shall do to-morrow, the first thing — run out a light anchor and kedge the schooner off the beach. And each night when we come ashore in the boat, Mr. Wolf Larsen will be left a prisoner on board. So this will be the last night we have to stand watch, and because of that it will go the easier."

We were awake early and just finishing breakfast as daylight came.

"Oh, Humphrey!" I heard Maud cry in dismay and suddenly stop.

I looked at her. She was gazing at the Ghost. I followed her gaze, but could see nothing unusual. She looked at me, and I looked inquiry back.

"The shears," she said, and her voice trembled.

I had forgotten their existence. I looked again, but could not see them.

"If he has — " I muttered savagely.

She put her hand sympathetically on mine, and said, "You will have to begin over again."

"Oh, believe me, my anger means nothing; I could not hurt a fly," I smiled back bitterly. "And the worst of it is, he knows it. You are right. If he has destroyed the shears, I shall do nothing except begin over again."

"But I'll stand my watch on board hereafter," I blurted out a moment later. "And if he interferes — "

"But I dare not stay ashore all night alone," Maud was saying when I came back to myself. "It would be so much nicer if he would be friendly with us and help us. We could all live comfortably aboard."

"We will," I asserted, still savagely, for the destruction of my beloved shears had hit me hard. "That is, you and I will live aboard, friendly or not with Wolf Larsen."

"It's childish," I laughed later, "for him to do such things, and for me to grow angry over them, for that matter."

But my heart smote me when we climbed aboard and looked at the havoc he had done. The shears were gone altogether. The guys had been slashed right and left. The throat-halyards which I had rigged were cut across through every part. And he knew I could not splice. A thought struck me. I ran to the windlass. It would not work. He had broken it. We looked at each other in consternation. Then I ran to the side. The masts, booms, and gaffs I had cleared were gone. He had found the lines which held them, and cast them adrift.

Tears were in Maud's eyes, and I do believe they were for me. I could have wept myself. Where now was our project of remasting the Ghost? He had done his work well. I sat down on the hatch-combing and rested my chin on my hands in black despair.

"He deserves to die," I cried out; "and God forgive me, I am not man enough to be his executioner."

But Maud was by my side, passing her hand soothingly through my hair as though I were a child, and saying, "There, there; it will all come right. We are in the right, and it must come right."

I remembered Michelet and leaned my head against her; and truly I became strong again. The blessed woman was an unfailing fount of power to me. What did it matter? Only a set-back, a delay. The tide could not have carried the masts far to seaward, and there had been no wind. It meant merely more work to find them and tow them back. And besides, it was a lesson. I knew what to expect. He might have waited and destroyed our work more effectually when we had more accomplished.

"Here he comes now," she whispered.

I glanced up. He was strolling leisurely along the poop on the port side.

"Take no notice of him," I whispered. "He's coming to see how we take it. Don't let him know that we know. We can deny him that satisfaction. Take off your shoes — that's right — and carry them in your hand."

And then we played hide-and-seek with the blind man. As he came up the port side we slipped past on the starboard; and from the poop we watched him turn and start aft on our track.

He must have known, somehow, that we were on board, for he said "Good-morning" very confidently, and waited, for the greeting to be returned. Then he strolled aft, and we slipped forward.

"Oh, I know you're aboard," he called out, and I could see him listen intently after he had spoken.

It reminded me of the great hoot-owl, listening, after its booming cry, for the stir of its frightened prey. But we did not fir, and we moved only when he moved. And so we dodged about the deck, hand in hand, like a couple of children chased by a wicked ogre, till Wolf Larsen, evidently in disgust, left the deck for the cabin. There was glee in our eyes, and suppressed titters in our mouths, as we put on our shoes and clambered over the side into the boat. And as I looked into Maud's clear brown eyes I forgot the evil he had done, and I knew only that I loved her, and that because of her the strength was mine to win our way back to the world.

## Chapter XXXVI

For two days Maud and I ranged the sea and explored the beaches in search of the missing masts. But it was not till the third day that we found them, all of them, the shears included, and, of all perilous places, in the pounding surf of the grim southwestern promontory. And how we worked! At the dark end of the first day we returned, exhausted, to our little cove, towing the mainmast behind us. And we had been compelled to row, in a dead calm, practically every inch of the way.

Another day of heart-breaking and dangerous toil saw us in camp with the two top-masts to the good. The day following I was desperate, and I rafted together the foremast, the fore and main booms, and the fore and main gaffs. The wind was favourable, and I had thought to tow them back under sail, but the wind baffled, then died away, and our progress with the oars was a snail's pace. And it was such dispiriting effort. To throw one's whole strength and weight on the oars and to feel the boat checked in its forward lunge by the heavy drag behind, was not exactly exhilarating.

Night began to fall, and to make matters worse, the wind sprang up ahead. Not only did all forward motion cease, but we began to drift back and out to sea. I struggled at the oars till I was played out. Poor Maud, whom I could never prevent from working to the limit of her strength, lay weakly back in the stern-sheets. I could row no more. My bruised and swollen hands could no longer close on the oar handles. My wrists and arms ached intolerably, and though I had eaten heartily of a twelve-o'clock lunch, I had worked so hard that I was faint from hunger.

I pulled in the oars and bent forward to the line which held the tow. But Maud's hand leaped out restrainingly to mine.

"What are you going to do?" she asked in a strained, tense voice.

"Cast it off," I answered, slipping a turn of the rope.

But her fingers closed on mine.

"Please don't," she begged.

"It is useless," I answered. "Here is night and the wind blowing us off the land."

"But think, Humphrey. If we cannot sail away on the Ghost, we may remain for years on the island — for life even. If it has never been discovered all these years, it may never be discovered."

"You forget the boat we found on the beach," I reminded her.

"It was a seal-hunting boat," she replied, "and you know perfectly well that if the men had escaped they would have been back to make their fortunes from the rookery. You know they never escaped."

I remained silent, undecided.

"Besides," she added haltingly, "it's your idea, and I want to see you succeed."

Now I could harden my heart. As soon as she put it on a flattering personal basis, generosity compelled me to deny her.

"Better years on the island than to die to-night, or to-morrow, or the next day, in the open boat. We are not prepared to brave the sea. We have no food, no water, no blankets, nothing. Why, you'd not survive the night without blankets: I know how strong you are. You are shivering now."

"It is only nervousness," she answered. "I am afraid you will cast off the masts in spite of me."

"Oh, please, please, Humphrey, don't!" she burst out, a moment later.

And so it ended, with the phrase she knew had all power over me. We shivered miserably throughout the night. Now and again I fitfully slept, but the pain of the cold always aroused me. How Maud could stand it was beyond me. I was too tired to thrash my arms about and warm myself, but I found strength time and again to chafe her hands and feet to restore the circulation. And still she pleaded with me not to cast off the masts. About three in the morning she was caught by a cold cramp, and after I had rubbed her out of that she became quite numb. I was frightened. I got out the oars and made her row, though she was so weak I thought she would faint at every stroke.

Morning broke, and we looked long in the growing light for our island. At last it showed, small and black, on the horizon, fully fifteen miles away. I scanned the sea with my glasses. Far away in the south-west I could see a dark line on the water, which grew even as I looked at it.

"Fair wind!" I cried in a husky voice I did not recognize as my own.

Maud tried to reply, but could not speak. Her lips were blue with cold, and she was hollow-eyed — but oh, how bravely her brown eyes looked at me! How piteously brave!

Again I fell to chafing her hands and to moving her arms up and down and about until she could thrash them herself. Then I compelled her to stand up, and though she would have fallen had I not supported her, I forced her to walk back and forth the several steps between the thwart and the stern-sheets, and finally to spring up and down.

"Oh, you brave, brave woman," I said, when I saw the life coming back into her face. "Did you know that you were brave?"

"I never used to be," she answered. "I was never brave till I knew you. It is you who have made me brave."

"Nor I, until I knew you," I answered.

She gave me a quick look, and again I caught that dancing, tremulous light and something more in her eyes. But it was only for the moment. Then she smiled.

"It must have been the conditions," she said; but I knew she was wrong, and I wondered if she likewise knew. Then the wind came, fair and fresh, and the boat was soon labouring through a heavy sea toward the island. At half-past three in the afternoon we passed the south-western promontory. Not only were we hungry, but we

were now suffering from thirst. Our lips were dry and cracked, nor could we longer moisten them with our tongues. Then the wind slowly died down. By night it was dead calm and I was toiling once more at the oars — but weakly, most weakly. At two in the morning the boat's bow touched the beach of our own inner cove and I staggered out to make the painter fast. Maud could not stand, nor had I strength to carry her. I fell in the sand with her, and, when I had recovered, contented myself with putting my hands under her shoulders and dragging her up the beach to the hut.

The next day we did no work. In fact, we slept till three in the afternoon, or at least I did, for I awoke to find Maud cooking dinner. Her power of recuperation was wonderful. There was something tenacious about that lily-frail body of hers, a clutch on existence which one could not reconcile with its patent weakness.

"You know I was travelling to Japan for my health," she said, as we lingered at the fire after dinner and delighted in the movelessness of loafing. "I was not very strong. I never was. The doctors recommended a sea voyage, and I chose the longest."

"You little knew what you were choosing," I laughed.

"But I shall be a different woman for the experience, as well as a stronger woman," she answered; "and, I hope a better woman. At least I shall understand a great deal more life."

Then, as the short day waned, we fell to discussing Wolf Larsen's blindness. It was inexplicable. And that it was grave, I instanced his statement that he intended to stay and die on Endeavour Island. When he, strong man that he was, loving life as he did, accepted his death, it was plain that he was troubled by something more than mere blindness. There had been his terrific headaches, and we were agreed that it was some sort of brain break-down, and that in his attacks he endured pain beyond our comprehension.

I noticed as we talked over his condition, that Maud's sympathy went out to him more and more; yet I could not but love her for it, so sweetly womanly was it. Besides, there was no false sentiment about her feeling. She was agreed that the most rigorous treatment was necessary if we were to escape, though she recoiled at the suggestion that I might some time be compelled to take his life to save my own — "our own," she put it.

In the morning we had breakfast and were at work by daylight. I found a light kedge anchor in the fore-hold, where such things were kept; and with a deal of exertion got it on deck and into the boat. With a long running-line coiled down in the stem, I rowed well out into our little cove and dropped the anchor into the water. There was no wind, the tide was high, and the schooner floated. Casting off the shore-lines, I kedged her out by main strength (the windlass being broken), till she rode nearly up and down to the small anchor — too small to hold her in any breeze. So I lowered the big starboard anchor, giving plenty of slack; and by afternoon I was at work on the windlass.

Three days I worked on that windlass. Least of all things was I a mechanic, and in that time I accomplished what an ordinary machinist would have done in as many hours. I had to learn my tools to begin with, and every simple mechanical principle

which such a man would have at his finger ends I had likewise to learn. And at the end of three days I had a windlass which worked clumsily. It never gave the satisfaction the old windlass had given, but it worked and made my work possible.

In half a day I got the two topmasts aboard and the shears rigged and guyed as before. And that night I slept on board and on deck beside my work. Maud, who refused to stay alone ashore, slept in the forecabin. Wolf Larsen had sat about, listening to my repairing the windlass and talking with Maud and me upon indifferent subjects. No reference was made on either side to the destruction of the shears; nor did he say anything further about my leaving his ship alone. But still I had feared him, blind and helpless and listening, always listening, and I never let his strong arms get within reach of me while I worked.

On this night, sleeping under my beloved shears, I was aroused by his footsteps on the deck. It was a starlight night, and I could see the bulk of him dimly as he moved about. I rolled out of my blankets and crept noiselessly after him in my stocking feet. He had armed himself with a draw-knife from the tool-locker, and with this he prepared to cut across the throat-halyards I had again rigged to the shears. He felt the halyards with his hands and discovered that I had not made them fast. This would not do for a draw-knife, so he laid hold of the running part, hove taut, and made fast. Then he prepared to saw across with the draw-knife.

"I wouldn't, if I were you," I said quietly.

He heard the click of my pistol and laughed.

"Hello, Hump," he said. "I knew you were here all the time. You can't fool my ears."

"That's a lie, Wolf Larsen," I said, just as quietly as before. "However, I am aching for a chance to kill you, so go ahead and cut."

"You have the chance always," he sneered.

"Go ahead and cut," I threatened ominously.

"I'd rather disappoint you," he laughed, and turned on his heel and went aft.

"Something must be done, Humphrey," Maud said, next morning, when I had told her of the night's occurrence. "If he has liberty, he may do anything. He may sink the vessel, or set fire to it. There is no telling what he may do. We must make him a prisoner."

"But how?" I asked, with a helpless shrug. "I dare not come within reach of his arms, and he knows that so long as his resistance is passive I cannot shoot him."

"There must be some way," she contended. "Let me think."

"There is one way," I said grimly.

She waited.

I picked up a seal-club.

"It won't kill him," I said. "And before he could recover I'd have him bound hard and fast."

She shook her head with a shudder. "No, not that. There must be some less brutal way. Let us wait."

But we did not have to wait long, and the problem solved itself. In the morning, after several trials, I found the point of balance in the foremast and attached my hoisting tackle a few feet above it. Maud held the turn on the windlass and coiled down while I heaved. Had the windlass been in order it would not have been so difficult; as it was, I was compelled to apply all my weight and strength to every inch of the heaving. I had to rest frequently. In truth, my spells of resting were longer than those of working. Maud even contrived, at times when all my efforts could not budge the windlass, to hold the turn with one hand and with the other to throw the weight of her slim body to my assistance.

At the end of an hour the single and double blocks came together at the top of the shears. I could hoist no more. And yet the mast was not swung entirely inboard. The butt rested against the outside of the port rail, while the top of the mast overhung the water far beyond the starboard rail. My shears were too short. All my work had been for nothing. But I no longer despaired in the old way. I was acquiring more confidence in myself and more confidence in the possibilities of windlasses, shears, and hoisting tackles. There was a way in which it could be done, and it remained for me to find that way.

While I was considering the problem, Wolf Larsen came on deck. We noticed something strange about him at once. The indecisiveness, or feebleness, of his movements was more pronounced. His walk was actually tottery as he came down the port side of the cabin. At the break of the poop he reeled, raised one hand to his eyes with the familiar brushing gesture, and fell down the steps — still on his feet — to the main deck, across which he staggered, falling and flinging out his arms for support. He regained his balance by the steerage companion-way and stood there dizzily for a space, when he suddenly crumpled up and collapsed, his legs bending under him as he sank to the deck.

“One of his attacks,” I whispered to Maud.

She nodded her head; and I could see sympathy warm in eyes.

We went up to him, but he seemed unconscious, breathing spasmodically. She took charge of him, lifting his head to keep the blood out of it and despatching me to the cabin for a pillow. I also brought blankets, and we made him comfortable. I took his pulse. It beat steadily and strong, and was quite normal. This puzzled me. I became suspicious.

“What if he should be feigning this?” I asked, still holding his wrist.

Maud shook her head, and there was reproof in her eyes. But just then the wrist I held leaped from my hand, and the hand clasped like a steel trap about my wrist. I cried aloud in awful fear, a wild inarticulate cry; and I caught one glimpse of his face, malignant and triumphant, as his other hand compassed my body and I was drawn down to him in a terrible grip.

My wrist was released, but his other arm, passed around my back, held both my arms so that I could not move. His free hand went to my throat, and in that moment I knew the bitterest foretaste of death earned by one’s own idiocy. Why had I trusted



myself within reach of those terrible arms? I could feel other hands at my throat. They were Maud's hands, striving vainly to tear loose the hand that was throttling me. She gave it up, and I heard her scream in a way that cut me to the soul, for it was a woman's scream of fear and heart-breaking despair. I had heard it before, during the sinking of the Martinez.

My face was against his chest and I could not see, but I heard Maud turn and run swiftly away along the deck. Everything was happening quickly. I had not yet had a glimmering of unconsciousness, and it seemed that an interminable period of time was lapsing before I heard her feet flying back. And just then I felt the whole man sink under me. The breath was leaving his lungs and his chest was collapsing under my weight. Whether it was merely the expelled breath, or his consciousness of his growing impotence, I know not, but his throat vibrated with a deep groan. The hand at my throat relaxed. I breathed. It fluttered and tightened again. But even his tremendous will could not overcome the dissolution that assailed it. That will of his was breaking down. He was fainting.

Maud's footsteps were very near as his hand fluttered for the last time and my throat was released. I rolled off and over to the deck on my back, gasping and blinking in the sunshine. Maud was pale but composed, — my eyes had gone instantly to her face, — and she was looking at me with mingled alarm and relief. A heavy seal-club in her hand caught my eyes, and at that moment she followed my gaze down to it. The club dropped from her hand as though it had suddenly stung her, and at the same moment my heart surged with a great joy. Truly she was my woman, my mate-woman, fighting with me and for me as the mate of a caveman would have fought, all the primitive in her aroused, forgetful of her culture, hard under the softening civilization of the only life she had ever known.

"Dear woman!" I cried, scrambling to my feet.

The next moment she was in my arms, weeping convulsively on my shoulder while I clasped her close. I looked down at the brown glory of her hair, glinting gems in the sunshine far more precious to me than those in the treasure-chests of kings. And I bent my head and kissed her hair softly, so softly that she did not know.

Then sober thought came to me. After all, she was only a woman, crying her relief, now that the danger was past, in the arms of her protector or of the one who had been endangered. Had I been father or brother, the situation would have been in nowise different. Besides, time and place were not meet, and I wished to earn a better right to declare my love. So once again I softly kissed her hair as I felt her receding from my clasp.

"It was a real attack this time," I said: "another shock like the one that made him blind. He feigned at first, and in doing so brought it on."

Maud was already rearranging his pillow.

"No," I said, "not yet. Now that I have him helpless, helpless he shall remain. From this day we live in the cabin. Wolf Larsen shall live in the steerage."

I caught him under the shoulders and dragged him to the companion-way. At my direction Maud fetched a rope. Placing this under his shoulders, I balanced him across the threshold and lowered him down the steps to the floor. I could not lift him directly into a bunk, but with Maud's help I lifted first his shoulders and head, then his body, balanced him across the edge, and rolled him into a lower bunk.

But this was not to be all. I recollected the handcuffs in his state-room, which he preferred to use on sailors instead of the ancient and clumsy ship irons. So, when we left him, he lay handcuffed hand and foot. For the first time in many days I breathed freely. I felt strangely light as I came on deck, as though a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I felt, also, that Maud and I had drawn more closely together. And I wondered if she, too, felt it, as we walked along the deck side by side to where the stalled foremast hung in the shears.

## Chapter XXXVII

At once we moved aboard the Ghost, occupying our old state-rooms and cooking in the galley. The imprisonment of Wolf Larsen had happened most opportunely, for what must have been the Indian summer of this high latitude was gone and drizzling stormy weather had set in. We were very comfortable, and the inadequate shears, with the foremast suspended from them, gave a business-like air to the schooner and a promise of departure.

And now that we had Wolf Larsen in irons, how little did we need it! Like his first attack, his second had been accompanied by serious disablement. Maud made the discovery in the afternoon while trying to give him nourishment. He had shown signs of consciousness, and she had spoken to him, eliciting no response. He was lying on his left side at the time, and in evident pain. With a restless movement he rolled his head around, clearing his left ear from the pillow against which it had been pressed. At once he heard and answered her, and at once she came to me.

Pressing the pillow against his left ear, I asked him if he heard me, but he gave no sign. Removing the pillow and, repeating the question he answered promptly that he did.

"Do you know you are deaf in the right ear?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered in a low, strong voice, "and worse than that. My whole right side is affected. It seems asleep. I cannot move arm or leg."

"Feigning again?" I demanded angrily.

He shook his head, his stern mouth shaping the strangest, twisted smile. It was indeed a twisted smile, for it was on the left side only, the facial muscles of the right side moving not at all.

"That was the last play of the Wolf," he said. "I am paralysed. I shall never walk again. Oh, only on the other side," he added, as though divining the suspicious glance I flung at his left leg, the knee of which had just then drawn up, and elevated the blankets.

"It's unfortunate," he continued. "I'd liked to have done for you first, Hump. And I thought I had that much left in me."

"But why?" I asked; partly in horror, partly out of curiosity.

Again his stern mouth framed the twisted smile, as he said:

"Oh, just to be alive, to be living and doing, to be the biggest bit of the ferment to the end, to eat you. But to die this way."

He shrugged his shoulders, or attempted to shrug them, rather, for the left shoulder alone moved. Like the smile, the shrug was twisted.

"But how can you account for it?" I asked. "Where is the seat of your trouble?"

"The brain," he said at once. "It was those cursed headaches brought it on."

"Symptoms," I said.

He nodded his head. "There is no accounting for it. I was never sick in my life. Something's gone wrong with my brain. A cancer, a tumour, or something of that nature, — a thing that devours and destroys. It's attacking my nerve-centres, eating them up, bit by bit, cell by cell — from the pain."

"The motor-centres, too," I suggested.

"So it would seem; and the curse of it is that I must lie here, conscious, mentally unimpaired, knowing that the lines are going down, breaking bit by bit communication with the world. I cannot see, hearing and feeling are leaving me, at this rate I shall soon cease to speak; yet all the time I shall be here, alive, active, and powerless."

"When you say you are here, I'd suggest the likelihood of the soul," I said.

"Bosh!" was his retort. "It simply means that in the attack on my brain the higher psychical centres are untouched. I can remember, I can think and reason. When that goes, I go. I am not. The soul?"

He broke out in mocking laughter, then turned his left ear to the pillow as a sign that he wished no further conversation.

Maud and I went about our work oppressed by the fearful fate which had overtaken him, — how fearful we were yet fully to realize. There was the awfulness of retribution about it. Our thoughts were deep and solemn, and we spoke to each other scarcely above whispers.

"You might remove the handcuffs," he said that night, as we stood in consultation over him. "It's dead safe. I'm a paralytic now. The next thing to watch out for is bed sores."

He smiled his twisted smile, and Maud, her eyes wide with horror, was compelled to turn away her head.

"Do you know that your smile is crooked?" I asked him; for I knew that she must attend him, and I wished to save her as much as possible.

"Then I shall smile no more," he said calmly. "I thought something was wrong. My right cheek has been numb all day. Yes, and I've had warnings of this for the last three days; by spells, my right side seemed going to sleep, sometimes arm or hand, sometimes leg or foot."

"So my smile is crooked?" he queried a short while after. "Well, consider henceforth that I smile internally, with my soul, if you please, my soul. Consider that I am smiling now."

And for the space of several minutes he lay there, quiet, indulging his grotesque fancy.

The man of him was not changed. It was the old, indomitable, terrible Wolf Larsen, imprisoned somewhere within that flesh which had once been so invincible and splendid. Now it bound him with insentient fetters, walling his soul in darkness and silence, blocking it from the world which to him had been a riot of action. No more would he

conjugate the verb "to do in every mood and tense." "To be" was all that remained to him — to be, as he had defined death, without movement; to will, but not to execute; to think and reason and in the spirit of him to be as alive as ever, but in the flesh to be dead, quite dead.

And yet, though I even removed the handcuffs, we could not adjust ourselves to his condition. Our minds revolted. To us he was full of potentiality. We knew not what to expect of him next, what fearful thing, rising above the flesh, he might break out and do. Our experience warranted this state of mind, and we went about our work with anxiety always upon us.

I had solved the problem which had arisen through the shortness of the shears. By means of the watch-tackle (I had made a new one), I heaved the butt of the foremast across the rail and then lowered it to the deck. Next, by means of the shears, I hoisted the main boom on board. Its forty feet of length would supply the height necessary properly to swing the mast. By means of a secondary tackle I had attached to the shears, I swung the boom to a nearly perpendicular position, then lowered the butt to the deck, where, to prevent slipping, I spiked great cleats around it. The single block of my original shears-tackle I had attached to the end of the boom. Thus, by carrying this tackle to the windlass, I could raise and lower the end of the boom at will, the butt always remaining stationary, and, by means of guys, I could swing the boom from side to side. To the end of the boom I had likewise rigged a hoisting tackle; and when the whole arrangement was completed I could not but be startled by the power and latitude it gave me.

Of course, two days' work was required for the accomplishment of this part of my task, and it was not till the morning of the third day that I swung the foremast from the deck and proceeded to square its butt to fit the step. Here I was especially awkward. I sawed and chopped and chiselled the weathered wood till it had the appearance of having been gnawed by some gigantic mouse. But it fitted.

"It will work, I know it will work," I cried.

"Do you know Dr. Jordan's final test of truth?" Maud asked.

I shook my head and paused in the act of dislodging the shavings which had drifted down my neck.

"Can we make it work? Can we trust our lives to it? is the test."

"He is a favourite of yours," I said.

"When I dismantled my old Pantheon and cast out Napoleon and Cæsar and their fellows, I straightway erected a new Pantheon," she answered gravely, "and the first I installed as Dr. Jordan."

"A modern hero."

"And a greater because modern," she added. "How can the Old World heroes compare with ours?"

I shook my head. We were too much alike in many things for argument. Our points of view and outlook on life at least were very alike.

"For a pair of critics we agree famously," I laughed.

"And as shipwright and able assistant," she laughed back.

But there was little time for laughter in those days, what of our heavy work and of the awfulness of Wolf Larsen's living death.

He had received another stroke. He had lost his voice, or he was losing it. He had only intermittent use of it. As he phrased it, the wires were like the stock market, now up, now down. Occasionally the wires were up and he spoke as well as ever, though slowly and heavily. Then speech would suddenly desert him, in the middle of a sentence perhaps, and for hours, sometimes, we would wait for the connection to be re-established. He complained of great pain in his head, and it was during this period that he arranged a system of communication against the time when speech should leave him altogether — one pressure of the hand for "yes," two for "no." It was well that it was arranged, for by evening his voice had gone from him. By hand pressures, after that, he answered our questions, and when he wished to speak he scrawled his thoughts with his left hand, quite legibly, on a sheet of paper.

The fierce winter had now descended upon us. Gale followed gale, with snow and sleet and rain. The seals had started on their great southern migration, and the rookery was practically deserted. I worked feverishly. In spite of the bad weather, and of the wind which especially hindered me, I was on deck from daylight till dark and making substantial progress.

I profited by my lesson learned through raising the shears and then climbing them to attach the guys. To the top of the foremast, which was just lifted conveniently from the deck, I attached the rigging, stays and throat and peak halyards. As usual, I had underrated the amount of work involved in this portion of the task, and two long days were necessary to complete it. And there was so much yet to be done — the sails, for instance, which practically had to be made over.

While I toiled at rigging the foremast, Maud sewed on canvas, ready always to drop everything and come to my assistance when more hands than two were required. The canvas was heavy and hard, and she sewed with the regular sailor's palm and three-cornered sail-needle. Her hands were soon sadly blistered, but she struggled bravely on, and in addition doing the cooking and taking care of the sick man.

"A fig for superstition," I said on Friday morning. "That mast goes in to-day."

Everything was ready for the attempt. Carrying the boom-tackle to the windlass, I hoisted the mast nearly clear of the deck. Making this tackle fast, I took to the windlass the shears-tackle (which was connected with the end of the boom), and with a few turns had the mast perpendicular and clear.

Maud clapped her hands the instant she was relieved from holding the turn, crying: "It works! It works! We'll trust our lives to it!"

Then she assumed a rueful expression.

"It's not over the hole," she add. "Will you have to begin all over?"

I smiled in superior fashion, and, slacking off on one of the boom-guys and taking in on the other, swung the mast perfectly in the centre of the deck. Still it was not over the hole. Again the rueful expression came on her face, and again I smiled in a

superior way. Slacking away on the boom-tackle and hoisting an equivalent amount on the shears-tackle, I brought the butt of the mast into position directly over the hole in the deck. Then I gave Maud careful instructions for lowering away and went into the hold to the step on the schooner's bottom.

I called to her, and the mast moved easily and accurately. Straight toward the square hole of the step the square butt descended; but as it descended it slowly twisted so that square would not fit into square. But I had not even a moment's indecision. Calling to Maud to cease lowering, I went on deck and made the watch-tackle fast to the mast with a rolling hitch. I left Maud to pull on it while I went below. By the light of the lantern I saw the butt twist slowly around till its sides coincided with the sides of the step. Maud made fast and returned to the windlass. Slowly the butt descended the several intervening inches, at the same time slightly twisting again. Again Maud rectified the twist with the watch-tackle, and again she lowered away from the windlass. Square fitted into square. The mast was stepped.

I raised a shout, and she ran down to see. In the yellow lantern light we peered at what we had accomplished. We looked at each other, and our hands felt their way and clasped. The eyes of both of us, I think, were moist with the joy of success.

"It was done so easily after all," I remarked. "All the work was in the preparation."

"And all the wonder in the completion," Maud added. "I can scarcely bring myself to realize that that great mast is really up and in; that you have lifted it from the water, swung it through the air, and deposited it here where it belongs. It is a Titan's task."

"And they made themselves many inventions," I began merrily, then paused to sniff the air.

I looked hastily at the lantern. It was not smoking. Again I sniffed.

"Something is burning," Maud said, with sudden conviction.

We sprang together for the ladder, but I raced past her to the deck. A dense volume of smoke was pouring out of the steerage companion-way.

"The Wolf is not yet dead," I muttered to myself as I sprang down through the smoke.

It was so thick in the confined space that I was compelled to feel my way; and so potent was the spell of Wolf Larsen on my imagination, I was quite prepared for the helpless giant to grip my neck in a strangle hold. I hesitated, the desire to race back and up the steps to the deck almost overpowering me. Then I recollected Maud. The vision of her, as I had last seen her, in the lantern light of the schooner's hold, her brown eyes warm and moist with joy, flashed before me, and I knew that I could not go back.

I was choking and suffocating by the time I reached Wolf Larsen's bunk. I reached my hand and felt for his. He was lying motionless, but moved slightly at the touch of my hand. I felt over and under his blankets. There was no warmth, no sign of fire. Yet that smoke which blinded me and made me cough and gasp must have a source. I lost my head temporarily and dashed frantically about the steerage. A collision with the

table partially knocked the wind from my body and brought me to myself. I reasoned that a helpless man could start a fire only near to where he lay.

I returned to Wolf Larsen's bunk. There I encountered Maud. How long she had been there in that suffocating atmosphere I could not guess.

"Go up on deck!" I commanded peremptorily.

"But, Humphrey — " she began to protest in a queer, husky voice.

"Please! please!" I shouted at her harshly.

She drew away obediently, and then I thought, What if she cannot find the steps? I started after her, to stop at the foot of the companion-way. Perhaps she had gone up. As I stood there, hesitant, I heard her cry softly:

"Oh, Humphrey, I am lost."

I found her fumbling at the wall of the after bulkhead, and, half leading her, half carrying her, I took her up the companion-way. The pure air was like nectar. Maud was only faint and dizzy, and I left her lying on the deck when I took my second plunge below.

The source of the smoke must be very close to Wolf Larsen — my mind was made up to this, and I went straight to his bunk. As I felt about among his blankets, something hot fell on the back of my hand. It burned me, and I jerked my hand away. Then I understood. Through the cracks in the bottom of the upper bunk he had set fire to the mattress. He still retained sufficient use of his left arm to do this. The damp straw of the mattress, fired from beneath and denied air, had been smouldering all the while.

As I dragged the mattress out of the bunk it seemed to disintegrate in mid-air, at the same time bursting into flames. I beat out the burning remnants of straw in the bunk, then made a dash for the deck for fresh air.

Several buckets of water sufficed to put out the burning mattress in the middle of the steerage floor; and ten minutes later, when the smoke had fairly cleared, I allowed Maud to come below. Wolf Larsen was unconscious, but it was a matter of minutes for the fresh air to restore him. We were working over him, however, when he signed for paper and pencil.

"Pray do not interrupt me," he wrote. "I am smiling."

"I am still a bit of the ferment, you see," he wrote a little later.

"I am glad you are as small a bit as you are," I said.

"Thank you," he wrote. "But just think of how much smaller I shall be before I die."

"And yet I am all here, Hump," he wrote with a final flourish. "I can think more clearly than ever in my life before. Nothing to disturb me. Concentration is perfect. I am all here and more than here."

It was like a message from the night of the grave; for this man's body had become his mausoleum. And there, in so strange sepulchre, his spirit fluttered and lived. It would flutter and live till the last line of communication was broken, and after that who was to say how much longer it might continue to flutter and live?



## Chapter XXXVIII

"I think my left side is going," Wolf Larsen wrote, the morning after his attempt to fire the ship. "The numbness is growing. I can hardly move my hand. You will have to speak louder. The last lines are going down."

"Are you in pain?" I asked.

I was compelled to repeat my question loudly before he answered:

"Not all the time."

The left hand stumbled slowly and painfully across the paper, and it was with extreme difficulty that we deciphered the scrawl. It was like a "spirit message," such as are delivered at séances of spiritualists for a dollar admission.

"But I am still here, all here," the hand scrawled more slowly and painfully than ever.

The pencil dropped, and we had to replace it in the hand.

"When there is no pain I have perfect peace and quiet. I have never thought so clearly. I can ponder life and death like a Hindoo sage."

"And immortality?" Maud queried loudly in the ear.

Three times the hand essayed to write but fumbled hopelessly. The pencil fell. In vain we tried to replace it. The fingers could not close on it. Then Maud pressed and held the fingers about the pencil with her own hand and the hand wrote, in large letters, and so slowly that the minutes ticked off to each letter:

"B-O-S-H."

It was Wolf Larsen's last word, "bosh," sceptical and invincible to the end. The arm and hand relaxed. The trunk of the body moved slightly. Then there was no movement. Maud released the hand. The fingers spread slightly, falling apart of their own weight, and the pencil rolled away.

"Do you still hear?" I shouted, holding the fingers and waiting for the single pressure which would signify "Yes." There was no response. The hand was dead.

"I noticed the lips slightly move," Maud said.

I repeated the question. The lips moved. She placed the tips of her fingers on them. Again I repeated the question. "Yes," Maud announced. We looked at each other expectantly.

"What good is it?" I asked. "What can we say now?"

"Oh, ask him — "

She hesitated.

"Ask him something that requires no for an answer," I suggested. "Then we will know for certainty."

"Are you hungry?" she cried.

The lips moved under her fingers, and she answered, "Yes."

"Will you have some beef?" was her next query.

"No," she announced.

"Beef-tea?"

"Yes, he will have some beef-tea," she said, quietly, looking up at me. "Until his hearing goes we shall be able to communicate with him. And after that — "

She looked at me queerly. I saw her lips trembling and the tears swimming up in her eyes. She swayed toward me and I caught her in my arms.

"Oh, Humphrey," she sobbed, "when will it all end? I am so tired, so tired."

She buried her head on my shoulder, her frail form shaken with a storm of weeping. She was like a feather in my arms, so slender, so ethereal. "She has broken down at last," I thought. "What can I do without her help?"

But I soothed and comforted her, till she pulled herself bravely together and recuperated mentally as quickly as she was wont to do physically.

"I ought to be ashamed of myself," she said. Then added, with the whimsical smile I adored, "but I am only one, small woman."

That phrase, the "one small woman," startled me like an electric shock. It was my own phrase, my pet, secret phrase, my love phrase for her.

"Where did you get that phrase?" I demanded, with an abruptness that in turn startled her.

"What phrase?" she asked.

"One small woman."

"Is it yours?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered. "Mine. I made it."

"Then you must have talked in your sleep," she smiled.

The dancing, tremulous light was in her eyes. Mine, I knew, were speaking beyond the will of my speech. I leaned toward her. Without volition I leaned toward her, as a tree is swayed by the wind. Ah, we were very close together in that moment. But she shook her head, as one might shake off sleep or a dream, saying:

"I have known it all my life. It was my father's name for my mother."

"It is my phrase too," I said stubbornly.

"For your mother?"

"No," I answered, and she questioned no further, though I could have sworn her eyes retained for some time a mocking, teasing expression.

With the foremast in, the work now went on apace. Almost before I knew it, and without one serious hitch, I had the mainmast stepped. A derrick-boom, rigged to the foremast, had accomplished this; and several days more found all stays and shrouds in place, and everything set up taut. Topsails would be a nuisance and a danger for a crew of two, so I heaved the topmasts on deck and lashed them fast.

Several more days were consumed in finishing the sails and putting them on. There were only three — the jib, foresail, and mainsail; and, patched, shortened, and distorted, they were a ridiculously ill-fitting suit for so trim a craft as the Ghost.

“But they’ll work!” Maud cried jubilantly. “We’ll make them work, and trust our lives to them!”

Certainly, among my many new trades, I shone least as a sail-maker. I could sail them better than make them, and I had no doubt of my power to bring the schooner to some northern port of Japan. In fact, I had crammed navigation from text-books aboard; and besides, there was Wolf Larsen’s star-scale, so simple a device that a child could work it.

As for its inventor, beyond an increasing deafness and the movement of the lips growing fainter and fainter, there had been little change in his condition for a week. But on the day we finished bending the schooner’s sails, he heard his last, and the last movement of his lips died away — but not before I had asked him, “Are you all there?” and the lips had answered, “Yes.”

The last line was down. Somewhere within that tomb of the flesh still dwelt the soul of the man. Walled by the living clay, that fierce intelligence we had known burned on; but it burned on in silence and darkness. And it was disembodied. To that intelligence there could be no objective knowledge of a body. It knew no body. The very world was not. It knew only itself and the vastness and profundity of the quiet and the dark.

## Chapter XXXIX

The day came for our departure. There was no longer anything to detain us on Endeavour Island. The Ghost's stumpy masts were in place, her crazy sails bent. All my handiwork was strong, none of it beautiful; but I knew that it would work, and I felt myself a man of power as I looked at it.

"I did it! I did it! With my own hands I did it!" I wanted to cry aloud.

But Maud and I had a way of voicing each other's thoughts, and she said, as we prepared to hoist the mainsail:

"To think, Humphrey, you did it all with your own hands?"

"But there were two other hands," I answered. "Two small hands, and don't say that was a phrase, also, of your father."

She laughed and shook her head, and held her hands up for inspection.

"I can never get them clean again," she wailed, "nor soften the weather-beat."

"Then dirt and weather-beat shall be your guerdon of honour," I said, holding them in mine; and, spite of my resolutions, I would have kissed the two dear hands had she not swiftly withdrawn them.

Our comradeship was becoming tremulous, I had mastered my love long and well, but now it was mastering me. Wilfully had it disobeyed and won my eyes to speech, and now it was winning my tongue — ay, and my lips, for they were mad this moment to kiss the two small hands which had toiled so faithfully and hard. And I, too, was mad. There was a cry in my being like bugles calling me to her. And there was a wind blowing upon me which I could not resist, swaying the very body of me till I leaned toward her, all unconscious that I leaned. And she knew it. She could not but know it as she swiftly drew away her hands, and yet, could not forbear one quick searching look before she turned away her eyes.

By means of deck-tackles I had arranged to carry the halyards forward to the windlass; and now I hoisted the mainsail, peak and throat, at the same time. It was a clumsy way, but it did not take long, and soon the foresail as well was up and fluttering.

"We can never get that anchor up in this narrow place, once it has left the bottom," I said. "We should be on the rocks first."

"What can you do?" she asked.

"Slip it," was my answer. "And when I do, you must do your first work on the windlass. I shall have to run at once to the wheel, and at the same time you must be hoisting the jib."

This manœuvre of getting under way I had studied and worked out a score of times; and, with the jib-halyard to the windlass, I knew Maud was capable of hoisting that

most necessary sail. A brisk wind was blowing into the cove, and though the water was calm, rapid work was required to get us safely out.

When I knocked the shackle-bolt loose, the chain roared out through the hawse-hole and into the sea. I raced aft, putting the wheel up. The Ghost seemed to start into life as she heeled to the first fill of her sails. The jib was rising. As it filled, the Ghost's bow swung off and I had to put the wheel down a few spokes and steady her.

I had devised an automatic jib-sheet which passed the jib across of itself, so there was no need for Maud to attend to that; but she was still hoisting the jib when I put the wheel hard down. It was a moment of anxiety, for the Ghost was rushing directly upon the beach, a stone's throw distant. But she swung obediently on her heel into the wind. There was a great fluttering and flapping of canvas and reef-points, most welcome to my ears, then she filled away on the other tack.

Maud had finished her task and come aft, where she stood beside me, a small cap perched on her wind-blown hair, her cheeks flushed from exertion, her eyes wide and bright with the excitement, her nostrils quivering to the rush and bite of the fresh salt air. Her brown eyes were like a startled deer's. There was a wild, keen look in them I had never seen before, and her lips parted and her breath suspended as the Ghost, charging upon the wall of rock at the entrance to the inner cove, swept into the wind and filled away into safe water.

My first mate's berth on the sealing grounds stood me in good stead, and I cleared the inner cove and laid a long tack along the shore of the outer cove. Once again about, and the Ghost headed out to open sea. She had now caught the bosom-breathing of the ocean, and was herself a-breath with the rhythm of it as she smoothly mounted and slipped down each broad-backed wave. The day had been dull and overcast, but the sun now burst through the clouds, a welcome omen, and shone upon the curving beach where together we had dared the lords of the harem and slain the holluschickie. All Endeavour Island brightened under the sun. Even the grim south-western promontory showed less grim, and here and there, where the sea-spray wet its surface, high lights flashed and dazzled in the sun.

"I shall always think of it with pride," I said to Maud.

She threw her head back in a queenly way but said, "Dear, dear Endeavour Island! I shall always love it."

"And I," I said quickly.

It seemed our eyes must meet in a great understanding, and yet, loath, they struggled away and did not meet.

There was a silence I might almost call awkward, till I broke it, saying:

"See those black clouds to windward. You remember, I told you last night the barometer was falling."

"And the sun is gone," she said, her eyes still fixed upon our island, where we had proved our mastery over matter and attained to the truest comradeship that may fall to man and woman.

“And it’s slack off the sheets for Japan!” I cried gaily. “A fair wind and a flowing sheet, you know, or however it goes.”

Lashing the wheel I ran forward, eased the fore and mainsheets, took in on the boom-tackles and trimmed everything for the quartering breeze which was ours. It was a fresh breeze, very fresh, but I resolved to run as long as I dared. Unfortunately, when running free, it is impossible to lash the wheel, so I faced an all-night watch. Maud insisted on relieving me, but proved that she had not the strength to steer in a heavy sea, even if she could have gained the wisdom on such short notice. She appeared quite heart-broken over the discovery, but recovered her spirits by coiling down tackles and halyards and all stray ropes. Then there were meals to be cooked in the galley, beds to make, Wolf Larsen to be attended upon, and she finished the day with a grand house-cleaning attack upon the cabin and steerage.

All night I steered, without relief, the wind slowly and steadily increasing and the sea rising. At five in the morning Maud brought me hot coffee and biscuits she had baked, and at seven a substantial and piping hot breakfast put new lift into me.

Throughout the day, and as slowly and steadily as ever, the wind increased. It impressed one with its sullen determination to blow, and blow harder, and keep on blowing. And still the Ghost foamed along, racing off the miles till I was certain she was making at least eleven knots. It was too good to lose, but by nightfall I was exhausted. Though in splendid physical trim, a thirty-six-hour trick at the wheel was the limit of my endurance. Besides, Maud begged me to heave to, and I knew, if the wind and sea increased at the same rate during the night, that it would soon be impossible to heave to. So, as twilight deepened, gladly and at the same time reluctantly, I brought the Ghost up on the wind.

But I had not reckoned upon the colossal task the reefing of three sails meant for one man. While running away from the wind I had not appreciated its force, but when we ceased to run I learned to my sorrow, and well-nigh to my despair, how fiercely it was really blowing. The wind balked my every effort, ripping the canvas out of my hands and in an instant undoing what I had gained by ten minutes of severest struggle. At eight o’clock I had succeeded only in putting the second reef into the foresail. At eleven o’clock I was no farther along. Blood dripped from every finger-end, while the nails were broken to the quick. From pain and sheer exhaustion I wept in the darkness, secretly, so that Maud should not know.

Then, in desperation, I abandoned the attempt to reef the mainsail and resolved to try the experiment of heaving to under the close-reefed foresail. Three hours more were required to gasket the mainsail and jib, and at two in the morning, nearly dead, the life almost buffeted and worked out of me, I had barely sufficient consciousness to know the experiment was a success. The close-reefed foresail worked. The Ghost clung on close to the wind and betrayed no inclination to fall off broadside to the trough.

I was famished, but Maud tried vainly to get me to eat. I dozed with my mouth full of food. I would fall asleep in the act of carrying food to my mouth and waken in torment to find the act yet uncompleted. So sleepily helpless was I that she was

compelled to hold me in my chair to prevent my being flung to the floor by the violent pitching of the schooner.

Of the passage from the galley to the cabin I knew nothing. It was a sleep-walker Maud guided and supported. In fact, I was aware of nothing till I awoke, how long after I could not imagine, in my bunk with my boots off. It was dark. I was stiff and lame, and cried out with pain when the bed-clothes touched my poor finger-ends.

Morning had evidently not come, so I closed my eyes and went to sleep again. I did not know it, but I had slept the clock around and it was night again.

Once more I woke, troubled because I could sleep no better. I struck a match and looked at my watch. It marked midnight. And I had not left the deck until three! I should have been puzzled had I not guessed the solution. No wonder I was sleeping brokenly. I had slept twenty-one hours. I listened for a while to the behaviour of the Ghost, to the pounding of the seas and the muffled roar of the wind on deck, and then turned over on my side and slept peacefully until morning.

When I arose at seven I saw no sign of Maud and concluded she was in the galley preparing breakfast. On deck I found the Ghost doing splendidly under her patch of canvas. But in the galley, though a fire was burning and water boiling, I found no Maud.

I discovered her in the steerage, by Wolf Larsen's bunk. I looked at him, the man who had been hurled down from the topmost pitch of life to be buried alive and be worse than dead. There seemed a relaxation of his expressionless face which was new. Maud looked at me and I understood.

"His life flickered out in the storm," I said.

"But he still lives," she answered, infinite faith in her voice.

"He had too great strength."

"Yes," she said, "but now it no longer shackles him. He is a free spirit."

"He is a free spirit surely," I answered; and, taking her hand, I led her on deck.

The storm broke that night, which is to say that it diminished as slowly as it had arisen. After breakfast next morning, when I had hoisted Wolf Larsen's body on deck ready for burial, it was still blowing heavily and a large sea was running. The deck was continually awash with the sea which came inboard over the rail and through the scuppers. The wind smote the schooner with a sudden gust, and she heeled over till her lee rail was buried, the roar in her rigging rising in pitch to a shriek. We stood in the water to our knees as I bared my head.

"I remember only one part of the service," I said, "and that is, 'And the body shall be cast into the sea.'"

Maud looked at me, surprised and shocked; but the spirit of something I had seen before was strong upon me, impelling me to give service to Wolf Larsen as Wolf Larsen had once given service to another man. I lifted the end of the hatch cover and the canvas-shrouded body slipped feet first into the sea. The weight of iron dragged it down. It was gone.

“Good-bye, Lucifer, proud spirit,” Maud whispered, so low that it was drowned by the shouting of the wind; but I saw the movement of her lips and knew.

As we clung to the lee rail and worked our way aft, I happened to glance to leeward. The Ghost, at the moment, was uptossed on a sea, and I caught a clear view of a small steamship two or three miles away, rolling and pitching, head on to the sea, as it steamed toward us. It was painted black, and from the talk of the hunters of their poaching exploits I recognized it as a United States revenue cutter. I pointed it out to Maud and hurriedly led her aft to the safety of the poop.

I started to rush below to the flag-locker, then remembered that in rigging the Ghost. I had forgotten to make provision for a flag-halyard.

“We need no distress signal,” Maud said. “They have only to see us.”

“We are saved,” I said, soberly and solemnly. And then, in an exuberance of joy, “I hardly know whether to be glad or not.”

I looked at her. Our eyes were not loath to meet. We leaned toward each other, and before I knew it my arms were about her.

“Need I?” I asked.

And she answered, “There is no need, though the telling of it would be sweet, so sweet.”

Her lips met the press of mine, and, by what strange trick of the imagination I know not, the scene in the cabin of the Ghost flashed upon me, when she had pressed her fingers lightly on my lips and said, “Hush, hush.”

“My woman, my one small woman,” I said, my free hand petting her shoulder in the way all lovers know though never learn in school.

“My man,” she said, looking at me for an instant with tremulous lids which fluttered down and veiled her eyes as she snuggled her head against my breast with a happy little sigh.

I looked toward the cutter. It was very close. A boat was being lowered.

“One kiss, dear love,” I whispered. “One kiss more before they come.”

“And rescue us from ourselves,” she completed, with a most adorable smile, whimsical as I had never seen it, for it was whimsical with love.



**The End**

# The Game

This novel was first published in 1906. The novel deals with the theme of boxing, one of London's passionate interests. *The Game* is one of the most powerful and evocative portraits ever given of prizefighters in the grip of their fervor.

London's mother, who was a music teacher and a spiritualist

# Chapter I

Many patterns of carpet lay rolled out before them on the floor — two of Brussels showed the beginning of their quest, and its ending in that direction; while a score of ingrains lured their eyes and prolonged the debate between desire pocket-book. The head of the department did them the honor of waiting upon them himself — or did Joe the honor, as she well knew, for she had noted the open-mouthed awe of the elevator boy who brought them up. Nor had she been blind to the marked respect shown Joe by the urchins and groups of young fellows on corners, when she walked with him in their own neighborhood down at the west end of the town.

But the head of the department was called away to the telephone, and in her mind the splendid promise of the carpets and the irk of the pocket-book were thrust aside by a greater doubt and anxiety.

“But I don’t see what you find to like in it, Joe,” she said softly, the note of insistence in her words betraying recent and unsatisfactory discussion.

For a fleeting moment a shadow darkened his boyish face, to be replaced by the glow of tenderness. He was only a boy, as she was only a girl — two young things on the threshold of life, house-renting and buying carpets together.

“What’s the good of worrying?” he questioned. “It’s the last go, the very last.”

He smiled at her, but she saw on his lips the unconscious and all but breathed sigh of renunciation, and with the instinctive monopoly of woman for her mate, she feared this thing she did not understand and which gripped his life so strongly.

“You know the go with O’Neil cleared the last payment on mother’s house,” he went on. “And that’s off my mind. Now this last with Ponta will give me a hundred dollars in bank — an even hundred, that’s the purse — for you and me to start on, a nest-egg.”

She disregarded the money appeal. “But you like it, this — this ‘game’ you call it. Why?”

He lacked speech-expression. He expressed himself with his hands, at his work, and with his body and the play of his muscles in the squared ring; but to tell with his own lips the charm of the squared ring was beyond him. Yet he essayed, and haltingly at first, to express what he felt and analyzed when playing the Game at the supreme summit of existence.

“All I know, Genevieve, is that you feel good in the ring when you’ve got the man where you want him, when he’s had a punch up both sleeves waiting for you and you’ve never given him an opening to land ’em, when you’ve landed your own little punch an’ he’s goin’ groggy, an’ holdin’ on, an’ the referee’s dragging him off so’s you can go in an’ finish ’m, an’ all the house is shouting an’ tearin’ itself loose, an’ you know you’re

the best man, an' that you played m' fair an' won out because you're the best man. I tell you — ”

He ceased brokenly, alarmed by his own volubility and by Genevieve's look of alarm. As he talked she had watched his face while fear dawned in her own. As he described the moment of moments to her, on his inward vision were lined the tottering man, the lights, the shouting house, and he swept out and away from her on this tide of life that was beyond her comprehension, menacing, irresistible, making her love pitiful and weak. The Joe she knew receded, faded, became lost. The fresh boyish face was gone, the tenderness of the eyes, the sweetness of the mouth with its curves and pictured corners. It was a man's face she saw, a face of steel, tense and immobile; a mouth of steel, the lips like the jaws of a trap; eyes of steel, dilated, intent, and the light in them and the glitter were the light and glitter of steel. The face of a man, and she had known only his boy face. This face she did not know at all.

And yet, while it frightened her, she was vaguely stirred with pride in him. His masculinity, the masculinity of the fighting male, made its inevitable appeal to her, a female, moulded by all her heredity to seek out the strong man for mate, and to lean against the wall of his strength. She did not understand this force of his being that rose mightier than her love and laid its compulsion upon him; and yet, in her woman's heart she was aware of the sweet pang which told her that for her sake, for Love's own sake, he had surrendered to her, abandoned all that portion of his life, and with this one last fight would never fight again.

“Mrs. Silverstein doesn't like prize-fighting,” she said. “She's down on it, and she knows something, too.”

He smiled indulgently, concealing a hurt, not altogether new, at her persistent inappreciation of this side of his nature and life in which he took the greatest pride. It was to him power and achievement, earned by his own effort and hard work; and in the moment when he had offered himself and all that he was to Genevieve, it was this, and this alone, that he was proudly conscious of laying at her feet. It was the merit of work performed, a guerdon of manhood finer and greater than any other man could offer, and it had been to him his justification and right to possess her. And she had not understood it then, as she did not understand it now, and he might well have wondered what else she found in him to make him worthy.

“Mrs. Silverstein is a dub, and a softy, and a knocker,” he said good-humoredly. “What's she know about such things, anyway? I tell you it is good, and healthy, too,” — this last as an afterthought. “Look at me. I tell you I have to live clean to be in condition like this. I live cleaner than she does, or her old man, or anybody you know — baths, rub-downs, exercise, regular hours, good food and no makin' a pig of myself, no drinking, no smoking, nothing that'll hurt me. Why, I live cleaner than you, Genevieve — ”

“Honest, I do,” he hastened to add at sight of her shocked face. “I don't mean water an' soap, but look there.” His hand closed reverently but firmly on her arm. “Soft, you're all soft, all over. Not like mine. Here, feel this.”

He pressed the ends of her fingers into his hard arm-muscles until she winced from the hurt.

“Hard all over just like that,” he went on. “Now that’s what I call clean. Every bit of flesh an’ blood an’ muscle is clean right down to the bones — and they’re clean, too. No soap and water only on the skin, but clean all the way in. I tell you it feels clean. It knows it’s clean itself. When I wake up in the morning an’ go to work, every drop of blood and bit of meat is shouting right out that it is clean. Oh, I tell you — ”

He paused with swift awkwardness, again confounded by his unwonted flow of speech. Never in his life had he been stirred to such utterance, and never in his life had there been cause to be so stirred. For it was the Game that had been questioned, its verity and worth, the Game itself, the biggest thing in the world — or what had been the biggest thing in the world until that chance afternoon and that chance purchase in Silverstein’s candy store, when Genevieve loomed suddenly colossal in his life, overshadowing all other things. He was beginning to see, though vaguely, the sharp conflict between woman and career, between a man’s work in the world and woman’s need of the man. But he was not capable of generalization. He saw only the antagonism between the concrete, flesh-and-blood Genevieve and the great, abstract, living Game. Each resented the other, each claimed him; he was torn with the strife, and yet drifted helpless on the currents of their contention.

His words had drawn Genevieve’s gaze to his face, and she had pleased in the clear skin, the clear eyes, the cheek soft and smooth as a girl’s. She saw the force of his argument and disliked it accordingly. She revolted instinctively against this Game which drew him away from her, robbed her of part of him. It was a rival she did not understand. Nor could she understand its seductions. Had it been a woman rival, another girl, knowledge and light and sight would have been hers. As it was, she grappled in the dark with an intangible adversary about which she knew nothing. What truth she felt in his speech made the Game but the more formidable.

A sudden conception of her weakness came to her. She felt pity for herself, and sorrow. She wanted him, all of him, her woman’s need would not be satisfied with less; and he eluded her, slipped away here and there from the embrace with which she tried to clasp him. Tears swam into her eyes, and her lips trembled, turning defeat into victory, routing the all-potent Game with the strength of her weakness.

“Don’t, Genevieve, don’t,” the boy pleaded, all contrition, though he was confused and dazed. To his masculine mind there was nothing relevant about her break-down; yet all else was forgotten at sight of her tears.

She smiled forgiveness through her wet eyes, and though he knew of nothing for which to be forgiven, he melted utterly. His hand went out impulsively to hers, but she avoided the clasp by a sort of bodily stiffening and chill, the while the eyes smiled still more gloriously.

“Here comes Mr. Clausen,” she said, at the same time, by some transforming alchemy of woman, presenting to the newcomer eyes that showed no hint of moistness.

"Think I was never coming back, Joe?" queried the head of the department, a pink-and-white-faced man, whose austere side-whiskers were belied by genial little eyes.

"Now let me see — hum, yes, we was discussing ingrain," he continued briskly. "That tasty little pattern there catches your eye, don't it now, eh? Yes, yes, I know all about it. I set up housekeeping when I was getting fourteen a week. But nothing's too good for the little nest, eh? Of course I know, and it's only seven cents more, and the dearest is the cheapest, I say. Tell you what I'll do, Joe," — this with a burst of philanthropic impulsiveness and a confidential lowering of voice, — "seein's it's you, and I wouldn't do it for anybody else, I'll reduce it to five cents. Only," — here his voice became impressively solemn, — "only you mustn't ever tell how much you really did pay."

"Sewed, lined, and laid — of course that's included," he said, after Joe and Genevieve had conferred together and announced their decision.

"And the little nest, eh?" he queried. "When do you spread your wings and fly away? To-morrow! So soon? Beautiful! Beautiful!"

He rolled his eyes ecstatically for a moment, then beamed upon them with a fatherly air.

Joe had replied sturdily enough, and Genevieve had blushed prettily; but both felt that it was not exactly proper. Not alone because of the privacy and holiness of the subject, but because of what might have been prudery in the middle class, but which in them was the modesty and reticence found in individuals of the working class when they strive after clean living and morality.

Mr. Clausen accompanied them to the elevator, all smiles, patronage, and beneficence, while the clerks turned their heads to follow Joe's retreating figure.

"And to-night, Joe?" Mr. Clausen asked anxiously, as they waited at the shaft. "How do you feel? Think you'll do him?"

"Sure," Joe answered. "Never felt better in my life."

"You feel all right, eh? Good! Good! You see, I was just a-wonderin' — you know, ha! ha! — goin' to get married and the rest — thought you might be unstrung, eh, a trifle? — nerves just a bit off, you know. Know how gettin' married is myself. But you're all right, eh? Of course you are. No use asking you that. Ha! ha! Well, good luck, my boy! I know you'll win. Never had the least doubt, of course, of course."

"And good-by, Miss Pritchard," he said to Genevieve, gallantly handing her into the elevator. "Hope you call often. Will be charmed — charmed — I assure you."

"Everybody calls you 'Joe'," she said reproachfully, as the car dropped downward. "Why don't they call you 'Mr. Fleming'? That's no more than proper."

But he was staring moodily at the elevator boy and did not seem to hear.

"What's the matter, Joe?" she asked, with a tenderness the power of which to thrill him she knew full well.

"Oh, nothing," he said. "I was only thinking — and wishing."

"Wishing? — what?" Her voice was seduction itself, and her eyes would have melted stronger than he, though they failed in calling his up to them.

Then, deliberately, his eyes lifted to hers. "I was wishing you could see me fight just once."

She made a gesture of disgust, and his face fell. It came to her sharply that the rival had thrust between and was bearing him away.

"I — I'd like to," she said hastily with an effort, striving after that sympathy which weakens the strongest men and draws their heads to women's breasts.

"Will you?"

Again his eyes lifted and looked into hers. He meant it — she knew that. It seemed a challenge to the greatness of her love.

"It would be the proudest moment of my life," he said simply.

It may have been the apprehensiveness of love, the wish to meet his need for her sympathy, and the desire to see the Game face to face for wisdom's sake, — and it may have been the clarion call of adventure ringing through the narrow confines of uneventful existence; for a great daring thrilled through her, and she said, just as simply, "I will."

"I didn't think you would, or I wouldn't have asked," he confessed, as they walked out to the sidewalk.

"But can't it be done?" she asked anxiously, before her resolution could cool.

"Oh, I can fix that; but I didn't think you would."

"I didn't think you would," he repeated, still amazed, as he helped her upon the electric car and felt in his pocket for the fare.



## Chapter II

Genevieve and Joe were working-class aristocrats. In an environment made up largely of sordidness and wretchedness they had kept themselves unsullied and wholesome. Theirs was a self-respect, a regard for the niceties and clean things of life, which had held them aloof from their kind. Friends did not come to them easily; nor had either ever possessed a really intimate friend, a heart-companion with whom to chum and have things in common. The social instinct was strong in them, yet they had remained lonely because they could not satisfy that instinct and at that same time satisfy their desire for cleanness and decency.

If ever a girl of the working class had led the sheltered life, it was Genevieve. In the midst of roughness and brutality, she had shunned all that was rough and brutal. She saw but what she chose to see, and she chose always to see the best, avoiding coarseness and uncouthness without effort, as a matter of instinct. To begin with, she had been peculiarly unexposed. An only child, with an invalid mother upon whom she attended, she had not joined in the street games and frolics of the children of the neighbourhood. Her father, a mild-tempered, narrow-chested, anæmic little clerk, domestic because of his inherent disability to mix with men, had done his full share toward giving the home an atmosphere of sweetness and tenderness.

An orphan at twelve, Genevieve had gone straight from her father's funeral to live with the Silversteins in their rooms above the candy store; and here, sheltered by kindly aliens, she earned her keep and clothes by waiting on the shop. Being Gentile, she was especially necessary to the Silversteins, who would not run the business themselves when the day of their Sabbath came round.

And here, in the uneventful little shop, six maturing years had slipped by. Her acquaintances were few. She had elected to have no girl chum for the reason that no satisfactory girl had appeared. Nor did she choose to walk with the young fellows of the neighbourhood, as was the custom of girls from their fifteenth year. "That stuck-up doll-face," was the way the girls of the neighbourhood described her; and though she earned their enmity by her beauty and aloofness, she none the less commanded their respect. "Peaches and cream," she was called by the young men — though softly and amongst themselves, for they were afraid of arousing the ire of the other girls, while they stood in awe of Genevieve, in a dimly religious way, as a something mysteriously beautiful and unapproachable.

For she was indeed beautiful. Springing from a long line of American descent, she was one of those wonderful working-class blooms which occasionally appear, defying all precedent of forebears and environment, apparently without cause or explanation. She

was a beauty in color, the blood spraying her white skin so deliciously as to earn for her the apt description, "peaches and cream." She was a beauty in the regularity of her features; and, if for no other reason, she was a beauty in the mere delicacy of the lines on which she was moulded. Quiet, low-voiced, stately, and dignified, she somehow had the knack of dress, and but befitted her beauty and dignity with anything she put on. Withal, she was sheerly feminine, tender and soft and clinging, with the smouldering passion of the mate and the motherliness of the woman. But this side of her nature had lain dormant through the years, waiting for the mate to appear.

Then Joe came into Silverstein's shop one hot Saturday afternoon to cool himself with ice-cream soda. She had not noticed his entrance, being busy with one other customer, an urchin of six or seven who gravely analyzed his desires before the showcase wherein truly generous and marvellous candy creations reposed under a cardboard announcement, "Five for Five Cents."

She had heard, "Ice-cream soda, please," and had herself asked, "What flavor?" without seeing his face. For that matter, it was not a custom of hers to notice young men. There was something about them she did not understand. The way they looked at her made her uncomfortable, she knew not why; while there was an uncouthness and roughness about them that did not please her. As yet, her imagination had been untouched by man. The young fellows she had seen had held no lure for her, had been without meaning to her. In short, had she been asked to give one reason for the existence of men on the earth, she would have been nonplussed for a reply.

As she emptied the measure of ice-cream into the glass, her casual glance rested on Joe's face, and she experienced on the instant a pleasant feeling of satisfaction. The next instant his eyes were upon her face, her eyes had dropped, and she was turning away toward the soda fountain. But at the fountain, filling the glass, she was impelled to look at him again — but for no more than an instant, for this time she found his eyes already upon her, waiting to meet hers, while on his face was a frankness of interest that caused her quickly to look away.

That such pleasingness would reside for her in any man astonished her. "What a pretty boy," she thought to herself, innocently and instinctively trying to ward off the power to hold and draw her that lay behind the mere prettiness. "Besides, he isn't pretty," she thought, as she placed the glass before him, received the silver dime in payment, and for the third time looked into his eyes. Her vocabulary was limited, and she knew little of the worth of words; but the strong masculinity of his boy's face told her that the term was inappropriate.

"He must be handsome, then," was her next thought, as she again dropped her eyes before his. But all good-looking men were called handsome, and that term, too, displeased her. But whatever it was, he was good to see, and she was irritably aware of a desire to look at him again and again.

As for Joe, he had never seen anything like this girl across the counter. While he was wiser in natural philosophy than she, and could have given immediately the reason for woman's existence on the earth, nevertheless woman had no part in his cosmos. His

imagination was as untouched by woman as the girl's was by man. But his imagination was touched now, and the woman was Genevieve. He had never dreamed a girl could be so beautiful, and he could not keep his eyes from her face. Yet every time he looked at her, and her eyes met his, he felt painful embarrassment, and would have looked away had not her eyes dropped so quickly.

But when, at last, she slowly lifted her eyes and held their gaze steadily, it was his own eyes that dropped, his own cheek that mantled red. She was much less embarrassed than he, while she betrayed her embarrassment not at all. She was aware of a flutter within, such as she had never known before, but in no way did it disturb her outward serenity. Joe, on the contrary, was obviously awkward and delightfully miserable.

Neither knew love, and all that either was aware was an overwhelming desire to look at the other. Both had been troubled and roused, and they were drawing together with the sharpness and imperativeness of uniting elements. He toyed with his spoon, and flushed his embarrassment over his soda, but lingered on; and she spoke softly, dropped her eyes, and wove her witchery about him.

But he could not linger forever over a glass of ice-cream soda, while he did not dare ask for a second glass. So he left her to remain in the shop in a waking trance, and went away himself down the street like a somnambulist. Genevieve dreamed through the afternoon and knew that she was in love. Not so with Joe. He knew only that he wanted to look at her again, to see her face. His thoughts did not get beyond this, and besides, it was scarcely a thought, being more a dim and inarticulate desire.

The urge of this desire he could not escape. Day after day it worried him, and the candy shop and the girl behind the counter continually obtruded themselves. He fought off the desire. He was afraid and ashamed to go back to the candy shop. He solaced his fear with, "I ain't a ladies' man." Not once, nor twice, but scores of times, he muttered the thought to himself, but it did no good. And by the middle of the week, in the evening, after work, he came into the shop. He tried to come in carelessly and casually, but his whole carriage advertised the strong effort of will that compelled his legs to carry his reluctant body thither. Also, he was shy, and awkward than ever. Genevieve, on the contrary, was serener than ever, though fluttering most alarmingly within. He was incapable of speech, mumbled his order, looked anxiously at the clock, despatched his ice-cream soda in tremendous haste, and was gone.

She was ready to weep with vexation. Such meagre reward for four days' waiting, and assuming all the time that she loved! He was a nice boy and all that, she knew, but he needn't have been in so disgraceful a hurry. But Joe had not reached the corner before he wanted to be back with her again. He just wanted to look at her. He had no thought that it was love. Love? That was when young fellows and girls walked out together. As for him — And then his desire took sharper shape, and he discovered that that was the very thing he wanted her to do. He wanted to see her, to look at her, and well could he do all this if she but walked out with him. Then that was why the young fellows and girls walked out together, he mused, as the week-end drew near. He had remotely considered this walking out to be a mere form or observance preliminary

to matrimony. Now he saw the deeper wisdom in it, wanted it himself, and concluded therefrom that he was in love.

Both were now of the same mind, and there could be but the one ending; and it was the mild nine days' wonder of Genevieve's neighborhood when she and Joe walked out together.

Both were blessed with an avarice of speech, and because of it their courtship was a long one. As he expressed himself in action, she expressed herself in repose and control, and by the love-light in her eyes — though this latter she would have suppressed in all maiden modesty had she been conscious of the speech her heart printed so plainly there. "Dear" and "darling" were too terribly intimate for them to achieve quickly; and, unlike most mating couples, they did not overwork the love-words. For a long time they were content to walk together in the evenings, or to sit side by side on a bench in the park, neither uttering a word for an hour at a time, merely gazing into each other's eyes, too faintly luminous in the starshine to be a cause for self-consciousness and embarrassment.

He was as chivalrous and delicate in his attention as any knight to his lady. When they walked along the street, he was careful to be on the outside, — somewhere he had heard that this was the proper thing to do, — and when a crossing to the opposite side of the street put him on the inside, he swiftly side-stepped behind her to gain the outside again. He carried her parcels for her, and once, when rain threatened, her umbrella. He had never heard of the custom of sending flowers to one's lady-love, so he sent Genevieve fruit instead. There was utility in fruit. It was good to eat. Flowers never entered his mind, until, one day, he noticed a pale rose in her hair. It drew his gaze again and again. It was her hair, therefore the presence of the flower interested him. Again, it interested him because she had chosen to put it there. For these reasons he was led to observe the rose more closely. He discovered that the effect in itself was beautiful, and it fascinated him. His ingenuous delight in it was a delight to her, and a new and mutual love-thrill was theirs — because of a flower. Straightway he became a lover of flowers. Also, he became an inventor in gallantry. He sent her a bunch of violets. The idea was his own. He had never heard of a man sending flowers to a woman. Flowers were used for decorative purposes, also for funerals. He sent Genevieve flowers nearly every day, and so far as he was concerned the idea was original, as positive an invention as ever arose in the mind of man.

He was tremulous in his devotion to her — as tremulous as was she in her reception of him. She was all that was pure and good, a holy of holies not lightly to be profaned even by what might possibly be the too ardent reverence of a devotee. She was a being wholly different from any he had ever known. She was not as other girls. It never entered his head that she was of the same clay as his own sisters, or anybody's sister. She was more than mere girl, than mere woman. She was — well, she was Genevieve, a being of a class by herself, nothing less than a miracle of creation.

And for her, in turn, there was in him but little less of illusion. Her judgment of him in minor things might be critical (while his judgment of her was sheer worship,

and had in it nothing critical at all); but in her judgment of him as a whole she forgot the sum of the parts, and knew him only as a creature of wonder, who gave meaning to life, and for whom she could die as willingly as she could live. She often beguiled her waking dreams of him with fancied situations, wherein, dying for him, she at last adequately expressed the love she felt for him, and which, living, she knew she could never fully express.

Their love was all fire and dew. The physical scarcely entered into it, for such seemed profanation. The ultimate physical facts of their relation were something which they never considered. Yet the immediate physical facts they knew, the immediate yearnings and raptures of the flesh — the touch of finger tips on hand or arm, the momentary pressure of a hand-clasp, the rare lip-caress of a kiss, the tingling thrill of her hair upon his cheek, of her hand lightly thrusting back the locks from above his eyes. All this they knew, but also, and they knew not why, there seemed a hint of sin about these caresses and sweet bodily contacts.

There were times when she felt impelled to throw her arms around him in a very abandonment of love, but always some sanctity restrained her. At such moments she was distinctly and unpleasantly aware of some unguessed sin that lurked within her. It was wrong, undoubtedly wrong, that she should wish to caress her lover in so unbecoming a fashion. No self-respecting girl could dream of doing such a thing. It was unwomanly. Besides, if she had done it, what would he have thought of it? And while she contemplated so horrible a catastrophe, she seemed to shrivel and wilt in a furnace of secret shame.

Nor did Joe escape the prick of curious desires, chiefest among which, perhaps, was the desire to hurt Genevieve. When, after long and tortuous degrees, he had achieved the bliss of putting his arm round her waist, he felt spasmodic impulses to make the embrace crushing, till she should cry out with the hurt. It was not his nature to wish to hurt any living thing. Even in the ring, to hurt was never the intention of any blow he struck. In such case he played the Game, and the goal of the Game was to down an antagonist and keep that antagonist down for a space of ten seconds. So he never struck merely to hurt; the hurt was incidental to the end, and the end was quite another matter. And yet here, with this girl he loved, came the desire to hurt. Why, when with thumb and forefinger he had ringed her wrist, he should desire to contract that ring till it crushed, was beyond him. He could not understand, and felt that he was discovering depths of brutality in his nature of which he had never dreamed.

Once, on parting, he threw his arms around her and swiftly drew her against him. Her gasping cry of surprise and pain brought him to his senses and left him there very much embarrassed and still trembling with a vague and nameless delight. And she, too, was trembling. In the hurt itself, which was the essence of the vigorous embrace, she had found delight; and again she knew sin, though she knew not its nature nor why it should be sin.

Came the day, very early in their walking out, when Silverstein chanced upon Joe in his store and stared at him with saucer-eyes. Came likewise the scene, after Joe

had departed, when the maternal feelings of Mrs. Silverstein found vent in a diatribe against all prize-fighters and against Joe Fleming in particular. Vainly had Silverstein striven to stay the spouse's wrath. There was need for her wrath. All the maternal feelings were hers but none of the maternal rights.

Genevieve was aware only of the diatribe; she knew a flood of abuse was pouring from the lips of the Jewess, but she was too stunned to hear the details of the abuse. Joe, her Joe, was Joe Fleming the prize-fighter. It was abhorrent, impossible, too grotesque to be believable. Her clear-eyed, girl-cheeked Joe might be anything but a prize-fighter. She had never seen one, but he in no way resembled her conception of what a prize-fighter must be — the human brute with tiger eyes and a streak for a forehead. Of course she had heard of Joe Fleming — who in West Oakland had not? — but that there should be anything more than a coincidence of names had never crossed her mind.

She came out of her daze to hear Mrs. Silverstein's hysterical sneer, "keepin' company vit a bruiser." Next, Silverstein and his wife fell to differing on "noted" and "notorious" as applicable to her lover.

"But he iss a good boy," Silverstein was contending. "He make der money, an' he safe der money."

"You tell me dat!" Mrs. Silverstein screamed. "Vat you know? You know too much. You spend good money on der prize-fighters. How you know? Tell me dat! How you know?"

"I know vat I know," Silverstein held on sturdily — a thing Genevieve had never before seen him do when his wife was in her tantrums. "His fader die, he go to work in Hansen's sail-loft. He haf six brudders an' sisters younger as he iss. He iss der liddle fader. He vork hard, all der time. He buy der pread an' der meat, an' pay der rent. On Saturday night he bring home ten dollar. Den Hansen gif him twelve dollar — vat he do? He iss der liddle fader, he bring it home to der mudder. He vork all der time, he get twenty dollar — vat he do? He bring it home. Der liddle brudders an' sisters go to school, vear good clothes, haf better pread an' meat; der mudder lif fat, dere iss joy in der eye, an' she iss proud of her good boy Joe.

"But he haf der beautiful body — ach, Gott, der beautiful body! — stronger as der ox, k-vicker as der tiger-cat, der head cooler as der ice-box, der eyes vat see eferytings, k-vick, just like dat. He put on der gloves vit der boys at Hansen's loft, he put on der gloves vit de boys at der varehouse. He go before der club; he knock out der Spider, k-vick, one punch, just like dat, der first time. Der purse iss five dollar — vat he do? He bring it home to der mudder.

"He go many times before der clubs; he get many purses — ten dollar, fifty dollar, one hundred dollar. Vat he do? Tell me dat! Quit der job at Hansen's? Haf der good time vit der boys? No, no; he iss der good boy. He vork efery day. He fight at night before der clubs. He say, 'Vat for I pay der rent, Silverstein?' — to me, Silverstein, he say dat. Nefer mind vat I say, but he buy der good house for der mudder. All der time he vork at Hansen's and fight before der clubs to pay for der house. He buy der piano

for der sisters, der carpets, der pictures on der vall. An' he iss all der time straight. He bet on himself — dat iss der good sign. Ven der man bets on himself dat is der time you bet too — ”

Here Mrs. Silverstein groaned her horror of gambling, and her husband, aware that his eloquence had betrayed him, collapsed into voluble assurances that he was ahead of the game. “An' all because of Joe Fleming,” he concluded. “I back him efery time to vin.”

But Genevieve and Joe were preëminently mated, and nothing, not even this terrible discovery, could keep them apart. In vain Genevieve tried to steel herself against him; but she fought herself, not him. To her surprise she discovered a thousand excuses for him, found him lovable as ever; and she entered into his life to be his destiny, and to control him after the way of women. She saw his future and hers through glowing vistas of reform, and her first great deed was when she wrung from him his promise to cease fighting.

And he, after the way of men, pursuing the dream of love and striving for possession of the precious and deathless object of desire, had yielded. And yet, in the very moment of promising her, he knew vaguely, deep down, that he could never abandon the Game; that somewhere, sometime, in the future, he must go back to it. And he had had a swift vision of his mother and brothers and sisters, their multitudinous wants, the house with its painting and repairing, its street assessments and taxes, and of the coming of children to him and Genevieve, and of his own daily wage in the sail-making loft. But the next moment the vision was dismissed, as such warnings are always dismissed, and he saw before him only Genevieve, and he knew only his hunger for her and the call of his being to her; and he accepted calmly her calm assumption of his life and actions.

He was twenty, she was eighteen, boy and girl, the pair of them, and made for progeny, healthy and normal, with steady blood pounding through their bodies; and wherever they went together, even on Sunday outings across the bay amongst people who did not know him, eyes were continually drawn to them. He matched her girl's beauty with his boy's beauty, her grace with his strength, her delicacy of line and fibre with the harsher vigor and muscle of the male. Frank-faced, fresh-colored, almost ingenuous in expression, eyes blue and wide apart, he drew and held the gaze of more than one woman far above him in the social scale. Of such glances and dim maternal promptings he was quite unconscious, though Genevieve was quick to see and understand; and she knew each time the pang of a fierce joy in that he was hers and that she held him in the hollow of her hand. He did see, however, and rather resented, the men's glances drawn by her. These, too, she saw and understood as he did not dream of understanding.

## Chapter III

Genevieve slipped on a pair of Joe's shoes, light-soled and dapper, and laughed with Lottie, who stooped to turn up the trousers for her. Lottie was his sister, and in the secret. To her was due the inveigling of his mother into making a neighborhood call so that they could have the house to themselves. They went down into the kitchen where Joe was waiting. His face brightened as he came to meet her, love shining frankly forth.

"Now get up those skirts, Lottie," he commanded. "Haven't any time to waste. There, that'll do. You see, you only want the bottoms of the pants to show. The coat will cover the rest. Now let's see how it'll fit.

"Borrowed it from Chris; he's a dead sporty sport — little, but oh, my!" he went on, helping Genevieve into an overcoat which fell to her heels and which fitted her as a tailor-made overcoat should fit the man for whom it is made.

Joe put a cap on her head and turned up the collar, which was generous to exaggeration, meeting the cap and completely hiding her hair. When he buttoned the collar in front, its points served to cover the cheeks, chin and mouth were buried in its depths, and a close scrutiny revealed only shadowy eyes and a little less shadowy nose. She walked across the room, the bottom of the trousers just showing as the bang of the coat was disturbed by movement.

"A sport with a cold and afraid of catching more, all right all right," the boy laughed, proudly surveying his handiwork. "How much money you got? I'm layin' ten to six. Will you take the short end?"

"Who's short?" she asked.

"Ponta, of course," Lottie blurted out her hurt, as though there could be any question of it even for an instant.

"Of course," Genevieve said sweetly, "only I don't know much about such things."

This time Lottie kept her lips together, but the new hurt showed on her face. Joe looked at his watch and said it was time to go. His sister's arms went about his neck, and she kissed him soundly on the lips. She kissed Genevieve, too, and saw them to the gate, one arm of her brother about her waist.

"What does ten to six mean?" Genevieve asked, the while their footfalls rang out on the frosty air.

"That I'm the long end, the favorite," he answered. "That a man bets ten dollars at the ring side that I win against six dollars another man is betting that I lose."

"But if you're the favorite and everybody thinks you'll win, how does anybody bet against you?"



"That's what makes prize-fighting — difference of opinion," he laughed. "Besides, there's always the chance of a lucky punch, an accident. Lots of chance," he said gravely.

She shrank against him, clingingly and protectingly, and he laughed with surety.

"You wait, and you'll see. An' don't get scared at the start. The first few rounds'll be something fierce. That's Ponta's strong point. He's a wild man, with an kinds of punches, — a whirlwind, — and he gets his man in the first rounds. He's put away a whole lot of cleverer and better men than him. It's up to me to live through it, that's all. Then he'll be all in. Then I go after him, just watch. You'll know when I go after him, an' I'll get'm, too."

They came to the hall, on a dark street-corner, ostensibly the quarters of an athletic club, but in reality an institution designed for pulling off fights and keeping within the police ordinance. Joe drew away from her, and they walked apart to the entrance.

"Keep your hands in your pockets whatever you do," Joe warned her, "and it'll be all right. Only a couple of minutes of it."

"He's with me," Joe said to the door-keeper, who was talking with a policeman.

Both men greeted him familiarly, taking no notice of his companion.

"They never tumbled; nobody'll tumble," Joe assured her, as they climbed the stairs to the second story. "And even if they did, they wouldn't know who it was and they's keep it mum for me. Here, come in here!"

He whisked her into a little office-like room and left her seated on a dusty, broken-bottomed chair. A few minutes later he was back again, clad in a long bath robe, canvas shoes on his feet. She began to tremble against him, and his arm passed gently around her.

"It'll be all right, Genevieve," he said encouragingly. "I've got it all fixed. Nobody'll tumble."

"It's you, Joe," she said. "I don't care for myself. It's you."

"Don't care for yourself! But that's what I thought you were afraid of!"

He looked at her in amazement, the wonder of woman bursting upon him in a more transcendent glory than ever, and he had seen much of the wonder of woman in Genevieve. He was speechless for a moment, and then stammered: —

"You mean me? And you don't care what people think? or anything? — or anything?"

A sharp double knock at the door, and a sharper "Get a move on yerself, Joe!" brought him back to immediate things.

"Quick, one last kiss, Genevieve," he whispered, almost holily. "It's my last fight, an' I'll fight as never before with you lookin' at me."

The next she knew, the pressure of his lips yet warm on hers, she was in a group of jostling young fellows, none of whom seemed to take the slightest notice of her. Several had their coats off and their shirt sleeves rolled up. They entered the hall from the rear, still keeping the casual formation of the group, and moved slowly up a side aisle.

It was a crowded, ill-lighted hall, barn-like in its proportions, and the smoke-laden air gave a peculiar distortion to everything. She felt as though she would stifle. There were shrill cries of boys selling programmes and soda water, and there was a great bass rumble of masculine voices. She heard a voice offering ten to six on Joe Fleming. The utterance was monotonous — hopeless, it seemed to her, and she felt a quick thrill. It was her Joe against whom everybody was to bet.

And she felt other thrills. Her blood was touched, as by fire, with romance, adventure — the unknown, the mysterious, the terrible — as she penetrated this haunt of men where women came not. And there were other thrills. It was the only time in her life she had dared the rash thing. For the first time she was overstepping the bounds laid down by that harshest of tyrants, the Mrs. Grundy of the working class. She felt fear, and for herself, though the moment before she had been thinking only of Joe.

Before she knew it, the front of the hall had been reached, and she had gone up half a dozen steps into a small dressing-room. This was crowded to suffocation — by men who played the Game, she concluded, in one capacity or another. And here she lost Joe. But before the real personal fright could soundly clutch her, one of the young fellows said gruffly, "Come along with me, you," and as she wedged out at his heels she noticed that another one of the escort was following her.

They came upon a sort of stage, which accommodated three rows of men; and she caught her first glimpse of the squared ring. She was on a level with it, and so near that she could have reached out and touched its ropes. She noticed that it was covered with padded canvas. Beyond the ring, and on either side, as in a fog, she could see the crowded house.

The dressing-room she had left abutted upon one corner of the ring. Squeezing her way after her guide through the seated men, she crossed the end of the hall and entered a similar dressing-room at the other corner of the ring.

"Now don't make a noise, and stay here till I come for you," instructed her guide, pointing out a peep-hole arrangement in the wall of the room.

## Chapter IV

She hurried to the peep-hole, and found herself against the ring. She could see the whole of it, though part of the audience was shut off. The ring was well lighted by an overhead cluster of patent gas-burners. The front row of the men she had squeezed past, because of their paper and pencils, she decided to be reporters from the local papers up-town. One of them was chewing gum. Behind them, on the other two rows of seats, she could make out firemen from the near-by engine-house and several policemen in uniform. In the middle of the front row, flanked by the reporters, sat the young chief of police. She was startled by catching sight of Mr. Clausen on the opposite side of the ring. There he sat, austere, side-whiskered, pink and white, close up against the front of the ring. Several seats farther on, in the same front row, she discovered Silverstein, his weazen features glowing with anticipation.

A few cheers heralded the advent of several young fellows, in shirt-sleeves, carrying buckets, bottles, and towels, who crawled through the ropes and crossed to the diagonal corner from her. One of them sat down on a stool and leaned back against the ropes. She saw that he was bare-legged, with canvas shoes on his feet, and that his body was swathed in a heavy white sweater. In the meantime another group had occupied the corner directly against her. Louder cheers drew her attention to it, and she saw Joe seated on a stool still clad in the bath robe, his short chestnut curls within a yard of her eyes.

A young man, in a black suit, with a mop of hair and a preposterously tall starched collar, walked to the centre of the ring and held up his hand.

"Gentlemen will please stop smoking," he said.

His effort was applauded by groans and cat-calls, and she noticed with indignation that nobody stopped smoking. Mr. Clausen held a burning match in his fingers while the announcement was being made, and then calmly lighted his cigar. She felt that she hated him in that moment. How was her Joe to fight in such an atmosphere? She could scarcely breathe herself, and she was only sitting down.

The announcer came over to Joe. He stood up. His bath robe fell away from him, and he stepped forth to the centre of the ring, naked save for the low canvas shoes and a narrow hip-cloth of white. Genevieve's eyes dropped. She sat alone, with none to see, but her face was burning with shame at sight of the beautiful nakedness of her lover. But she looked again, guiltily, for the joy that was hers in beholding what she knew must be sinful to behold. The leap of something within her and the stir of her being toward him must be sinful. But it was delicious sin, and she did not deny her eyes. In vain Mrs. Grundy admonished her. The pagan in her, original sin, and all nature

urged her on. The mothers of all the past were whispering through her, and there was a clamour of the children unborn. But of this she knew nothing. She knew only that it was sin, and she lifted her head proudly, recklessly resolved, in one great surge of revolt, to sin to the uttermost.

She had never dreamed of the form under the clothes. The form, beyond the hands and the face, had no part in her mental processes. A child of garmented civilization, the garment was to her the form. The race of men was to her a race of garmented bipeds, with hands and faces and hair-covered heads. When she thought of Joe, the Joe instantly visualized on her mind was a clothed Joe — girl-cheeked, blue-eyed, curly-headed, but clothed. And there he stood, all but naked, godlike, in a white blaze of light. She had never conceived of the form of God except as nebulously naked, and the thought-association was startling. It seemed to her that her sin partook of sacrilege or blasphemy.

Her chromo-trained æsthetic sense exceeded its education and told her that here were beauty and wonder. She had always liked the physical presentment of Joe, but it was a presentment of clothes, and she had thought the pleasingness of it due to the neatness and taste with which he dressed. She had never dreamed that this lurked beneath. It dazzled her. His skin was fair as a woman's, far more satiny, and no rudimentary hair-growth marred its white lustre. This she perceived, but all the rest, the perfection of line and strength and development, gave pleasure without her knowing why. There was a cleanness and grace about it. His face was like a cameo, and his lips, parted in a smile, made it very boyish.

He smiled as he faced the audience, when the announcer, placing a hand on his shoulder, said: "Joe Fleming, the Pride of West Oakland."

Cheers and hand-clappings stormed up, and she heard affectionate cries of "Oh, you, Joe!" Men shouted it at him again and again.

He walked back to his corner. Never to her did he seem less a fighter than then. His eyes were too mild; there was not a spark of the beast in them, nor in his face, while his body seemed too fragile, what of its fairness and smoothness, and his face too boyish and sweet-tempered and intelligent. She did not have the expert's eye for the depth of chest, the wide nostrils, the recuperative lungs, and the muscles under their satin sheaths — crypts of energy wherein lurked the chemistry of destruction. To her he looked like a something of Dresden china, to be handled gently and with care, liable to be shattered to fragments by the first rough touch.

John Ponta, stripped of his white sweater by the pulling and hauling of two of his seconds, came to the centre of the ring. She knew terror as she looked at him. Here was the fighter — the beast with a streak for a forehead, with beady eyes under lowering and bushy brows, flat-nosed, thick-lipped, sullen-mouthed. He was heavy-jawed, bull-necked, and the short, straight hair of the head seemed to her frightened eyes the stiff bristles on a hog's back. Here were coarseness and brutishness — a thing savage, primordial, ferocious. He was swarthy to blackness, and his body was covered with a hairy growth that matted like a dog's on his chest and shoulders. He was deep-chested,

thick-legged, large-muscled, but unshapely. His muscles were knots, and he was gnarled and knobby, twisted out of beauty by excess of strength.

"John Ponta, West Bay Athletic Club," said the announcer.

A much smaller volume of cheers greeted him. It was evident that the crowd favored Joe with its sympathy.

"Go in an' eat 'm, Ponta! Eat 'm up!" a voice shouted in the lull.

This was received by scornful cries and groans. He did not like it, for his sullen mouth twisted into a half-snarl as he went back to his corner. He was too decided an atavism to draw the crowd's admiration. Instinctively the crowd disliked him. He was an animal, lacking in intelligence and spirit, a menace and a thing of fear, as the tiger and the snake are menaces and things of fear, better behind the bars of a cage than running free in the open.

And he felt that the crowd had no relish for him. He was like an animal in the circle of its enemies, and he turned and glared at them with malignant eyes. Little Silverstein, shouting out Joe's name with high glee, shrank away from Ponta's gaze, shrivelled as in fierce heat, the sound gurgling and dying in his throat. Genevieve saw the little by-play, and as Ponta's eyes slowly swept round the circle of their hate and met hers, she, too, shrivelled and shrank back. The next moment they were past, pausing to centre long on Joe. It seemed to her that Ponta was working himself into a rage. Joe returned the gaze with mild boy's eyes, but his face grew serious.

The announcer escorted a third man to the centre of the ring, a genial-faced young fellow in shirt-sleeves.

"Eddy Jones, who will referee this contest," said the announcer.

"Oh, you, Eddy!" men shouted in the midst of the applause, and it was apparent to Genevieve that he, too, was well beloved.

Both men were being helped into the gloves by their seconds, and one of Ponta's seconds came over and examined the gloves before they went on Joe's hands. The referee called them to the centre of the ring. The seconds followed, and they made quite a group, Joe and Ponta facing each other, the referee in the middle, the seconds leaning with hands on one another's shoulders, their heads craned forward. The referee was talking, and all listened attentively.

The group broke up. Again the announcer came to the front.

"Joe Fleming fights at one hundred and twenty-eight," he said; "John Ponta at one hundred and forty. They will fight as long as one hand is free, and take care of themselves in the breakaway. The audience must remember that a decision must be given. There are no draws fought before this club."

He crawled through the ropes and dropped from the ring to the floor. There was a scuttling in the corners as the seconds cleared out through the ropes, taking with them the stools and buckets. Only remained in the ring the two fighters and the referee. A gong sounded. The two men advanced rapidly to the centre. Their right hands extended and for a fraction of an instant met in a perfunctory shake. Then Ponta lashed out,

savagely, right and left, and Joe escaped by springing back. Like a projectile, Ponta hurled himself after him and upon him.

The fight was on. Genevieve clutched one hand to her breast and watched. She was bewildered by the swiftness and savagery of Ponta's assault, and by the multitude of blows he struck. She felt that Joe was surely being destroyed. At times she could not see his face, so obscured was it by the flying gloves. But she could hear the resounding blows, and with the sound of each blow she felt a sickening sensation in the pit of her stomach. She did not know that what she heard was the impact of glove on glove, or glove on shoulder, and that no damage was being done.

She was suddenly aware that a change had come over the fight. Both men were clutching each other in a tense embrace; no blows were being struck at all. She recognized it to be what Joe had described to her as the "clinch." Ponta was struggling to free himself, Joe was holding on.

The referee shouted, "Break!" Joe made an effort to get away, but Ponta got one hand free and Joe rushed back into a second clinch, to escape the blow. But this time, she noticed, the heel of his glove was pressed against Ponta's mouth and chin, and at the second "Break!" of the referee, Joe shoved his opponent's head back and sprang clear himself.

For a brief several seconds she had an unobstructed view of her lover. Left foot a trifle advanced, knees slightly bent, he was crouching, with his head drawn well down between his shoulders and shielded by them. His hands were in position before him, ready either to attack or defend. The muscles of his body were tense, and as he moved about she could see them bunch up and writhe and crawl like live things under the white skin.

But again Ponta was upon him and he was struggling to live. He crouched a bit more, drew his body more compactly together, and covered up with his hands, elbows, and forearms. Blows rained upon him, and it looked to her as though he were being beaten to death.

But he was receiving the blows on his gloves and shoulders, rocking back and forth to the force of them like a tree in a storm, while the house cheered its delight. It was not until she understood this applause, and saw Silverstein half out of his seat and intensely, madly happy, and heard the "Oh, you, Joe's!" from many throats, that she realized that instead of being cruelly punished he was acquitting himself well. Then he would emerge for a moment, again to be enveloped and hidden in the whirlwind of Ponta's ferocity.

## Chapter V

The gong sounded. It seemed they had been fighting half an hour, though from what Joe had told her she knew it had been only three minutes. With the crash of the gong Joe's seconds were through the ropes and running him into his corner for the blessed minute of rest. One man, squatting on the floor between his outstretched feet and elevating them by resting them on his knees, was violently chafing his legs. Joe sat on the stool, leaning far back into the corner, head thrown back and arms outstretched on the ropes to give easy expansion to the chest. With wide-open mouth he was breathing the towel-driven air furnished by two of the seconds, while listening to the counsel of still another second who talked with low voice in his ear and at the same time sponged off his face, shoulders, and chest.

Hardly had all this been accomplished (it had taken no more than several seconds), when the gong sounded, the seconds scuttled through the ropes with their paraphernalia, and Joe and Ponta were advancing against each other to the centre of the ring. Genevieve had no idea that a minute could be so short. For a moment she felt that this rest had been cut, and was suspicious of she knew not what.

Ponta lashed out, right and left, savagely as ever, and though Joe blocked the blows, such was the force of them that he was knocked backward several steps. Ponta was after him with the spring of a tiger. In the involuntary effort to maintain equilibrium, Joe had uncovered himself, flinging one arm out and lifting his head from beneath the sheltering shoulders. So swiftly had Ponta followed him, that a terrible swinging blow was coming at his unguarded jaw. He ducked forward and down, Ponta's fist just missing the back of his head. As he came back to the perpendicular, Ponta's left fist drove at him in a straight punch that would have knocked him backward through the ropes. Again, and with a swiftness an inappreciable fraction of time quicker than Ponta's, he ducked forward. Ponta's fist grazed the backward slope of the shoulder, and glanced off into the air. Ponta's right drove straight out, and the graze was repeated as Joe ducked into the safety of a clinch.

Genevieve sighed with relief, her tense body relaxing and a faintness coming over her. The crowd was cheering madly. Silverstein was on his feet, shouting, gesticulating, completely out of himself. And even Mr. Clausen was yelling his enthusiasm, at the top of his lungs, into the ear of his nearest neighbor.

The clinch was broken and the fight went on. Joe blocked, and backed, and slid around the ring, avoiding blows and living somehow through the whirlwind onslaughts. Rarely did he strike blows himself, for Ponta had a quick eye and could defend as well

as attack, while Joe had no chance against the other's enormous vitality. His hope lay in that Ponta himself should ultimately consume his strength.

But Genevieve was beginning to wonder why her lover did not fight. She grew angry. She wanted to see him wreak vengeance on this beast that had persecuted him so. Even as she waxed impatient, the chance came, and Joe whipped his fist to Ponta's mouth. It was a staggering blow. She saw Ponta's head go back with a jerk and the quick dye of blood upon his lips. The blow, and the great shout from the audience, angered him. He rushed like a wild man. The fury of his previous assaults was as nothing compared with the fury of this one. And there was no more opportunity for another blow. Joe was too busy living through the storm he had already caused, blocking, covering up, and ducking into the safety and respite of the clinches.

But the clinch was not all safety and respite. Every instant of it was intense watchfulness, while the breakaway was still more dangerous. Genevieve had noticed, with a slight touch of amusement, the curious way in which Joe snuggled his body in against Ponta's in the clinches; but she had not realized why, until, in one such clinch, before the snuggling in could be effected, Ponta's fist whipped straight up in the air from under, and missed Joe's chin by a hair's-breadth. In another and later clinch, when she had already relaxed and sighed her relief at seeing him safely snuggled, Ponta, his chin over Joe's shoulder, lifted his right arm and struck a terrible downward blow on the small of the back. The crowd groaned its apprehension, while Joe quickly locked his opponent's arms to prevent a repetition of the blow.

The gong struck, and after the fleeting minute of rest, they went at it again — in Joe's corner, for Ponta had made a rush to meet him clear across the ring. Where the blow had been over the kidneys, the white skin had become bright red. This splash of color, the size of the glove, fascinated and frightened Genevieve so that she could scarcely take her eyes from it. Promptly, in the next clinch, the blow was repeated; but after that Joe usually managed to give Ponta the heel of the glove on the mouth and so hold his head back. This prevented the striking of the blow; but three times more, before the round ended, Ponta effected the trick, each time striking the same vulnerable part.

Another rest and another round went by, with no further damage to Joe and no diminution of strength on the part of Ponta. But in the beginning of the fifth round, Joe, caught in a corner, made as though to duck into a clinch. Just before it was effected, and at the precise moment that Ponta was ready with his own body to receive the snuggling in of Joe's body, Joe drew back slightly and drove with his fists at his opponent's unprotected stomach. Lightning-like blows they were, four of them, right and left; and heavy they were, for Ponta winced away from them and staggered back, half dropping his arms, his shoulders drooping forward and in, as though he were about to double in at the waist and collapse. Joe's quick eye saw the opening, and he smashed straight out upon Ponta's mouth, following instantly with a half swing, half hook, for the jaw. It missed, striking the cheek instead, and sending Ponta staggering sideways.



The house was on its feet, shouting, to a man. Genevieve could hear men crying, "He's got 'm, he's got 'm!" and it seemed to her the beginning of the end. She, too, was out of herself; softness and tenderness had vanished; she exulted with each crushing blow her lover delivered.

But Ponta's vitality was yet to be reckoned with. As, like a tiger, he had followed Joe up, Joe now followed him up. He made another half swing, half hook, for Ponta's jaw, and Ponta, already recovering his wits and strength, ducked cleanly. Joe's fist passed on through empty air, and so great was the momentum of the blow that it carried him around, in a half twirl, sideways. Then Ponta lashed out with his left. His glove landed on Joe's ungarded neck. Genevieve saw her lover's arms drop to his sides as his body lifted, went backward, and fell limply to the floor. The referee, bending over him, began to count the seconds, emphasizing the passage of each second with a downward sweep of his right arm.

The audience was still as death. Ponta had partly turned to the house to receive the approval that was his due, only to be met by this chill, graveyard silence. Quick wrath surged up in him. It was unfair. His opponent only was applauded — if he struck a blow, if he escaped a blow; he, Ponta, who had forced the fighting from the start, had received no word of cheer.

His eyes blazed as he gathered himself together and sprang to his prostrate foe. He crouched alongside of him, right arm drawn back and ready for a smashing blow the instant Joe should start to rise. The referee, still bending over and counting with his right hand, shoved Ponta back with his left. The latter, crouching, circled around, and the referee circled with him, thrusting him back and keeping between him and the fallen man.

"Four — five — six —" the count went on, and Joe, rolling over on his face, squirmed weakly to draw himself to his knees. This he succeeded in doing, resting on one knee, a hand to the floor on either side and the other leg bent under him to help him rise. "Take the count! Take the count!" a dozen voices rang out from the audience.

"For God's sake, take the count!" one of Joe's seconds cried warningly from the edge of the ring. Genevieve gave him one swift glance, and saw the young fellow's face, drawn and white, his lips unconsciously moving as he kept the count with the referee.

"Seven — eight — nine —" the seconds went.

The ninth sounded and was gone, when the referee gave Ponta a last backward shove and Joe came to his feet, bunched up, covered up, weak, but cool, very cool. Ponta hurled himself upon him with terrific force, delivering an uppercut and a straight punch. But Joe blocked the two, ducked a third, stepped to the side to avoid a fourth, and was then driven backward into a corner by a hurricane of blows. He was exceedingly weak. He tottered as he kept his footing, and staggered back and forth. His back was against the ropes. There was no further retreat. Ponta paused, as if to make doubly sure, then feinted with his left and struck fiercely with his right with all his strength. But Joe ducked into a clinch and was for a moment saved.

Ponta struggled frantically to free himself. He wanted to give the finish to this foe already so far gone. But Joe was holding on for life, resisting the other's every effort, as fast as one hold or grip was torn loose finding a new one by which to cling. "Break!" the referee commanded. Joe held on tighter. "Make 'm break! Why the hell don't you make 'm break?" Ponta panted at the referee. Again the latter commanded the break. Joe refused, keeping, as he well knew, within his rights. Each moment of the clinch his strength was coming back to him, his brain was clearing, the cobwebs were disappearing from before his eyes. The round was young, and he must live, somehow, through the nearly three minutes of it yet to run.

The referee clutched each by the shoulder and sundered them violently, passing quickly between them as he thrust them backward in order to make a clean break of it. The moment he was free, Ponta sprang at Joe like a wild animal bearing down its prey. But Joe covered up, blocked, and fell into a clinch. Again Ponta struggled to get free, Joe held on, and the referee thrust them apart. And again Joe avoided damage and clinched.

Genevieve realized that in the clinches he was not being beaten — why, then, did not the referee let him hold on? It was cruel. She hated the genial-faced Eddy Jones in those moments, and she partly rose from her chair, her hands clenched with anger, the nails cutting into the palms till they hurt. The rest of the round, the three long minutes of it, was a succession of clinches and breaks. Not once did Ponta succeed in striking his opponent the deadly final blow. And Ponta was like a madman, raging because of his impotency in the face of his helpless and all but vanquished foe. One blow, only one blow, and he could not deliver it! Joe's ring experience and coolness saved him. With shaken consciousness and trembling body, he clutched and held on, while the ebbing life turned and flooded up in him again. Once, in his passion, unable to hit him, Ponta made as though to lift him up and hurl him to the floor.

"V'y don't you bite him?" Silverstein taunted shrilly.

In the stillness the sally was heard over the whole house, and the audience, relieved of its anxiety for its favorite, laughed with an uproariousness that had in it the note of hysteria. Even Genevieve felt that there was something irresistibly funny in the remark, and the relief of the audience was communicated to her; yet she felt sick and faint, and was overwrought with horror at what she had seen and was seeing.

"Bite 'm! Bite 'm!" voices from the recovered audience were shouting. "Chew his ear off, Ponta! That's the only way you can get 'm! Eat 'm up! Eat 'm up! Oh, why don't you eat 'm up?"

The effect was bad on Ponta. He became more frenzied than ever, and more impotent. He panted and sobbed, wasting his effort by too much effort, losing sanity and control and futilely trying to compensate for the loss by excess of physical endeavor. He knew only the blind desire to destroy, shook Joe in the clinches as a terrier might a rat, strained and struggled for freedom of body and arms, and all the while Joe calmly clutched and held on. The referee worked manfully and fairly to separate them. Perspiration ran down his face. It took all his strength to split those clinging bodies,

and no sooner had he split them than Joe fell unharmed into another embrace and the work had to be done all over again. In vain, when freed, did Ponta try to avoid the clutching arms and twining body. He could not keep away. He had to come close in order to strike, and each time Joe baffled him and caught him in his arms.

And Genevieve, crouched in the little dressing-room and peering through the peephole, was baffled, too. She was an interested party in what seemed a death-struggle — was not one of the fighters her Joe? — but the audience understood and she did not. The Game had not unveiled to her. The lure of it was beyond her. It was greater mystery than ever. She could not comprehend its power. What delight could there be for Joe in that brutal surging and straining of bodies, those fierce clutches, fiercer blows, and terrible hurts? Surely, she, Genevieve, offered more than that — rest, and content, and sweet, calm joy. Her bid for the heart of him and the soul of him was finer and more generous than the bid of the Game; yet he dallied with both — held her in his arms, but turned his head to listen to that other and siren call she could not understand.

The gong struck. The round ended with a break in Ponta's corner. The white-faced young second was through the ropes with the first clash of sound. He seized Joe in his arms, lifted him clear of the floor, and ran with him across the ring to his own corner. His seconds worked over him furiously, chafing his legs, slapping his abdomen, stretching the hip-cloth out with their fingers so that he might breathe more easily. For the first time Genevieve saw the stomach-breathing of a man, an abdomen that rose and fell far more with every breath than her breast rose and fell after she had run for a car. The pungency of ammonia bit her nostrils, wafted to her from the soaked sponge wherefrom he breathed the fiery fumes that cleared his brain. He gargled his mouth and throat, took a suck at a divided lemon, and all the while the towels worked like mad, driving oxygen into his lungs to purge the pounding blood and send it back revived for the struggle yet to come. His heated body was sponged with water, doused with it, and bottles were turned mouth-downward on his head.

# Chapter VI

The gong for the sixth round struck, and both men advanced to meet each other, their bodies glistening with water. Ponta rushed two-thirds of the way across the ring, so intent was he on getting at his man before full recovery could be effected. But Joe had lived through. He was strong again, and getting stronger. He blocked several vicious blows and then smashed back, sending Ponta reeling. He attempted to follow up, but wisely forbore and contented himself with blocking and covering up in the whirlwind his blow had raised.

The fight was as it had been at the beginning — Joe protecting, Ponta rushing. But Ponta was never at ease. He did not have it all his own way. At any moment, in his fiercest onslaughts, his opponent was liable to lash out and reach him. Joe saved his strength. He struck one blow to Ponta's ten, but his one blow rarely missed. Ponta overwhelmed him in the attacks, yet could do nothing with him, while Joe's tiger-like strokes, always imminent, compelled respect. They toned Ponta's ferocity. He was no longer able to go in with the complete abandon of destructiveness which had marked his earlier efforts.

But a change was coming over the fight. The audience was quick to note it, and even Genevieve saw it by the beginning of the ninth round. Joe was taking the offensive. In the clinches it was he who brought his fist down on the small of the back, striking the terrible kidney blow. He did it once, in each clinch, but with all his strength, and he did it every clinch. Then, in the breakaways, he began to uppercut Ponta on the stomach, or to hook his jaw or strike straight out upon the mouth. But at first sign of a coming of a whirlwind, Joe would dance nimbly away and cover up.

Two rounds of this went by, and three, but Ponta's strength, though perceptibly less, did not diminish rapidly. Joe's task was to wear down that strength, not with one blow, nor ten, but with blow after blow, without end, until that enormous strength should be beaten sheer out of its body. There was no rest for the man. Joe followed him up, step by step, his advancing left foot making an audible tap, tap, tap, on the hard canvas. Then there would come a sudden leap in, tiger-like, a blow struck, or blows, and a swift leap back, whereupon the left foot would take up again its tapping advance. When Ponta made his savage rushes, Joe carefully covered up, only to emerge, his left foot going tap, tap, tap, as he immediately followed up.

Ponta was slowly weakening. To the crowd the end was a foregone conclusion.

"Oh, you, Joe!" it yelled its admiration and affection.

"It's a shame to take the money!" it mocked. "Why don't you eat 'm, Ponta? Go on in an' eat 'm!"

In the one-minute intermissions Ponta's seconds worked over him as they had not worked before. Their calm trust in his tremendous vitality had been betrayed. Genevieve watched their excited efforts, while she listened to the white-faced second cautioning Joe.

"Take your time," he was saying. "You've got 'm, but you got to take your time. I've seen 'm fight. He's got a punch to the end of the count. I've seen 'm knocked out and clean batty, an' go on punching just the same. Mickey Sullivan had 'm goin'. Puts 'm to the mat as fast as he crawls up, six times, an' then leaves an opening. Ponta reaches for his jaw, an two minutes afterward Mickey's openin' his eyes an' askin' what's doin'. So you've got to watch 'm. No goin' in an' absorbin' one of them lucky punches, now. I got money on this fight, but I don't call it mine till he's counted out."

Ponta was being doused with water. As the gong sounded, one of his seconds inverted a water bottle on his head. He started toward the centre of the ring, and the second followed him for several steps, keeping the bottle still inverted. The referee shouted at him, and he fled the ring, dropping the bottle as he fled. It rolled over and over, the water gurgling out upon the canvas till the referee, with a quick flirt of his toe, sent the bottle rolling through the ropes.

In all the previous rounds Genevieve had not seen Joe's fighting face which had been prefigured to her that morning in the department store. Sometimes his face had been quite boyish; other times, when taking his fiercest punishment, it had been bleak and gray; and still later, when living through and clutching and holding on, it had taken on a wistful expression. But now, out of danger himself and as he forced the fight, his fighting face came upon him. She saw it and shuddered. It removed him so far from her. She had thought she knew him, all of him, and held him in the hollow of her hand; but this she did not know — this face of steel, this mouth of steel, these eyes of steel flashing the light and glitter of steel. It seemed to her the passionless face of an avenging angel, stamped only with the purpose of the Lord.

Ponta attempted one of his old-time rushes, but was stopped on the mouth. Implacable, insistent, ever menacing, never letting him rest, Joe followed him up. The round, the thirteenth, closed with a rush, in Ponta's corner. He attempted a rally, was brought to his knees, took the nine seconds' count, and then tried to clinch into safety, only to receive four of Joe's terrible stomach punches, so that with the gong he fell back, gasping, into the arms of his seconds.

Joe ran across the ring to his own corner.

"Now I'm going to get 'm," he said to his second.

"You sure fixed 'm that time," the latter answered. "Nothin' to stop you now but a lucky punch. Watch out for it."

Joe leaned forward, feet gathered under him for a spring, like a foot-racer waiting the start. He was waiting for the gong. When it sounded he shot forward and across the ring, catching Ponta in the midst of his seconds as he rose from his stool. And in the midst of his seconds he went down, knocked down by a right-hand blow. As he

arose from the confusion of buckets, stools, and seconds, Joe put him down again. And yet a third time he went down before he could escape from his own corner.

Joe had at last become the whirlwind. Genevieve remembered his “just watch, you’ll know when I go after him.” The house knew it, too. It was on its feet, every voice raised in a fierce yell. It was the blood-cry of the crowd, and it sounded to her like what she imagined must be the howling of wolves. And what with confidence in her lover’s victory she found room in her heart to pity Ponta.

In vain he struggled to defend himself, to block, to cover up, to duck, to clinch into a moment’s safety. That moment was denied him. Knockdown after knockdown was his portion. He was knocked to the canvas backwards, and sideways, was punched in the clinches and in the breakaways — stiff, jolty blows that dazed his brain and drove the strength from his muscles. He was knocked into the corners and out again, against the ropes, rebounding, and with another blow against the ropes once more. He fanned the air with his arms, showering savage blows upon emptiness. There was nothing human left in him. He was the beast incarnate, roaring and raging and being destroyed. He was smashed down to his knees, but refused to take the count, staggering to his feet only to be met stiff-handed on the mouth and sent hurling back against the ropes.

In sore travail, gasping, reeling, panting, with glazing eyes and sobbing breath, grotesque and heroic, fighting to the last, striving to get at his antagonist, he surged and was driven about the ring. And in that moment Joe’s foot slipped on the wet canvas. Ponta’s swimming eyes saw and knew the chance. All the fleeing strength of his body gathered itself together for the lightning lucky punch. Even as Joe slipped the other smote him, fairly on the point of the chin. He went over backward. Genevieve saw his muscles relax while he was yet in the air, and she heard the thud of his head on the canvas.

The noise of the yelling house died suddenly. The referee, stooping over the inert body, was counting the seconds. Ponta tottered and fell to his knees. He struggled to his feet, swaying back and forth as he tried to sweep the audience with his hatred. His legs were trembling and bending under him; he was choking and sobbing, fighting to breathe. He reeled backward, and saved himself from falling by a blind clutching for the ropes. He clung there, drooping and bending and giving in all his body, his head upon his chest, until the referee counted the fatal tenth second and pointed to him in token that he had won.

He received no applause, and he squirmed through the ropes, snakelike, into the arms of his seconds, who helped him to the floor and supported him down the aisle into the crowd. Joe remained where he had fallen. His seconds carried him into his corner and placed him on the stool. Men began climbing into the ring, curious to see, but were roughly shoved out by the policemen, who were already there.

Genevieve looked on from her peep-hole. She was not greatly perturbed. Her lover had been knocked out. In so far as disappointment was his, she shared it with him; but that was all. She even felt glad in a way. The Game had played him false, and he was more surely hers. She had heard of knockouts from him. It often took men some

time to recover from the effects. It was not till she heard the seconds asking for the doctor that she felt really worried.

They passed his limp body through the ropes to the stage, and it disappeared beyond the limits of her peep-hole. Then the door of her dressing-room was thrust open and a number of men came in. They were carrying Joe. He was laid down on the dusty floor, his head resting on the knee of one of the seconds. No one seemed surprised by her presence. She came over and knelt beside him. His eyes were closed, his lips slightly parted. His wet hair was plastered in straight locks about his face. She lifted one of his hands. It was very heavy, and the lifelessness of it shocked her. She looked suddenly at the faces of the seconds and of the men about her. They seemed frightened, all save one, and he was cursing, in a low voice, horribly. She looked up and saw Silverstein standing beside her. He, too, seemed frightened. He rested a kindly hand on her shoulder, tightening the fingers with a sympathetic pressure.

This sympathy frightened her. She began to feel dazed. There was a bustle as somebody entered the room. The person came forward, proclaiming irritably: "Get out! Get out! You've got to clear the room!"

A number of men silently obeyed.

"Who are you?" he abruptly demanded of Genevieve. "A girl, as I'm alive!"

"That's all right, she's his girl," spoke up a young fellow she recognized as her guide.

"And you?" the other man blurted explosively at Silverstein.

"I'm vit her," he answered truculently.

"She works for him," explained the young fellow. "It's all right, I tell you."

The newcomer grunted and knelt down. He passed a hand over the damp head, grunted again, and arose to his feet.

"This is no case for me," he said. "Send for the ambulance."

Then the thing became a dream to Genevieve. Maybe she had fainted, she did not know, but for what other reason should Silverstein have his arm around her supporting her? All the faces seemed blurred and unreal. Fragments of a discussion came to her ears. The young fellow who had been her guide was saying something about reporters. "You vill get your name in der papers," she could hear Silverstein saying to her, as from a great distance; and she knew she was shaking her head in refusal.

There was an eruption of new faces, and she saw Joe carried out on a canvas stretcher. Silverstein was buttoning the long overcoat and drawing the collar about her face. She felt the night air on her cheek, and looking up saw the clear, cold stars. She jammed into a seat. Silverstein was beside her. Joe was there, too, still on his stretcher, with blankets over his naked body; and there was a man in blue uniform who spoke kindly to her, though she did not know what he said. Horses' hoofs were clattering, and she was lurching somewhere through the night.

Next, light and voices, and a smell of iodoform. This must be the receiving hospital, she thought, this the operating table, those the doctors. They were examining Joe. One of them, a dark-eyed, dark-bearded, foreign-looking man, rose up from bending over the table.

"Never saw anything like it," he was saying to another man. "The whole back of the skull."

Her lips were hot and dry, and there was an intolerable ache in her throat. But why didn't she cry? She ought to cry; she felt it incumbent upon her. There was Lottie (there had been another change in the dream), across the little narrow cot from her, and she was crying. Somebody was saying something about the coma of death. It was not the foreign-looking doctor, but somebody else. It did not matter who it was. What time was it? As if in answer, she saw the faint white light of dawn on the windows.

"I was going to be married to-day," she said to Lottie.

And from across the cot his sister wailed, "Don't, don't!" and, covering her face, sobbed afresh.

This, then, was the end of it all — of the carpets, and furniture, and the little rented house; of the meetings and walking out, the thrilling nights of starshine, the deliciousness of surrender, the loving and the being loved. She was stunned by the awful facts of this Game she did not understand — the grip it laid on men's souls, its irony and faithlessness, its risks and hazards and fierce insurgences of the blood, making woman pitiful, not the be-all and end-all of man, but his toy and his pastime; to woman his mothering and caretaking, his moods and his moments, but to the Game his days and nights of striving, the tribute of his head and hand, his most patient toil and wildest effort, all the strain and the stress of his being — to the Game, his heart's desire.

Silverstein was helping her to her feet. She obeyed blindly, the daze of the dream still on her. His hand grasped her arm and he was turning her toward the door.

"Oh, why don't you kiss him?" Lottie cried out, her dark eyes mournful and passionate.

Genevieve stooped obediently over the quiet clay and pressed her lips to the lips yet warm. The door opened and she passed into another room. There stood Mrs. Silverstein, with angry eyes that snapped vindictively at sight of her boy's clothes.

Silverstein looked beseechingly at his spouse, but she burst forth savagely: —

"Vot did I tell you, eh? Vot did I tell you? You vood haf a bruiser for your steady! An' now your name vill be in all der papers! At a prize fight — vit boy's clothes on! You liddle strumpet! You hussy! You — "

But a flood of tears welled into her eyes and voice, and with her fat arms outstretched, ungainly, ludicrous, holy with motherhood, she tottered over to the quiet girl and folded her to her breast. She muttered gasping, inarticulate love-words, rocking slowly to and fro the while, and patting Genevieve's shoulder with her ponderous hand.



# White Fang

This famous novel was first serialised in *Outing* magazine and published in book format in 1906. Serving as a companion novel to *The Call of the Wild*, the story takes place in Yukon Territory, Canada, during the Klondike Gold Rush at the end of the 19th-century, and details a wild wolfdog's journey to domestication. The majority of the novel is written from the viewpoint of a canine character, enabling London to explore how animals view their world and their human companions.

The first edition

# Part I

## Chapter I — The Trail of the Meat

Dark spruce forest frowned on either side the frozen waterway. The trees had been stripped by a recent wind of their white covering of frost, and they seemed to lean towards each other, black and ominous, in the fading light. A vast silence reigned over the land. The land itself was a desolation, lifeless, without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness. There was a hint in it of laughter, but of a laughter more terrible than any sadness — a laughter that was mirthless as the smile of the sphinx, a laughter cold as the frost and partaking of the grimness of infallibility. It was the masterful and incommunicable wisdom of eternity laughing at the futility of life and the effort of life. It was the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild.

But there was life, abroad in the land and defiant. Down the frozen waterway toiled a string of wolfish dogs. Their bristly fur was rimed with frost. Their breath froze in the air as it left their mouths, spouting forth in spumes of vapour that settled upon the hair of their bodies and formed into crystals of frost. Leather harness was on the dogs, and leather traces attached them to a sled which dragged along behind. The sled was without runners. It was made of stout birch-bark, and its full surface rested on the snow. The front end of the sled was turned up, like a scroll, in order to force down and under the bore of soft snow that surged like a wave before it. On the sled, securely lashed, was a long and narrow oblong box. There were other things on the sled — blankets, an axe, and a coffee-pot and frying-pan; but prominent, occupying most of the space, was the long and narrow oblong box.

In advance of the dogs, on wide snowshoes, toiled a man. At the rear of the sled toiled a second man. On the sled, in the box, lay a third man whose toil was over, — a man whom the Wild had conquered and beaten down until he would never move nor struggle again. It is not the way of the Wild to like movement. Life is an offence to it, for life is movement; and the Wild aims always to destroy movement. It freezes the water to prevent it running to the sea; it drives the sap out of the trees till they are frozen to their mighty hearts; and most ferociously and terribly of all does the Wild harry and crush into submission man — man who is the most restless of life, ever in revolt against the dictum that all movement must in the end come to the cessation of movement.

But at front and rear, unawed and indomitable, toiled the two men who were not yet dead. Their bodies were covered with fur and soft-tanned leather. Eyelashes and cheeks and lips were so coated with the crystals from their frozen breath that their faces were not discernible. This gave them the seeming of ghostly masques, undertakers in a spectral world at the funeral of some ghost. But under it all they were men, penetrating the land of desolation and mockery and silence, puny adventurers bent on colossal adventure, pitting themselves against the might of a world as remote and alien and pulseless as the abysses of space.

They travelled on without speech, saving their breath for the work of their bodies. On every side was the silence, pressing upon them with a tangible presence. It affected their minds as the many atmospheres of deep water affect the body of the diver. It crushed them with the weight of unending vastness and unalterable decree. It crushed them into the remotest recesses of their own minds, pressing out of them, like juices from the grape, all the false ardours and exaltations and undue self-values of the human soul, until they perceived themselves finite and small, specks and motes, moving with weak cunning and little wisdom amidst the play and inter-play of the great blind elements and forces.

An hour went by, and a second hour. The pale light of the short sunless day was beginning to fade, when a faint far cry arose on the still air. It soared upward with a swift rush, till it reached its topmost note, where it persisted, palpitant and tense, and then slowly died away. It might have been a lost soul wailing, had it not been invested with a certain sad fierceness and hungry eagerness. The front man turned his head until his eyes met the eyes of the man behind. And then, across the narrow oblong box, each nodded to the other.

A second cry arose, piercing the silence with needle-like shrillness. Both men located the sound. It was to the rear, somewhere in the snow expanse they had just traversed. A third and answering cry arose, also to the rear and to the left of the second cry.

"They're after us, Bill," said the man at the front.

His voice sounded hoarse and unreal, and he had spoken with apparent effort.

"Meat is scarce," answered his comrade. "I ain't seen a rabbit sign for days."

Thereafter they spoke no more, though their ears were keen for the hunting-cries that continued to rise behind them.

At the fall of darkness they swung the dogs into a cluster of spruce trees on the edge of the waterway and made a camp. The coffin, at the side of the fire, served for seat and table. The wolf-dogs, clustered on the far side of the fire, snarled and bickered among themselves, but evinced no inclination to stray off into the darkness.

"Seems to me, Henry, they're stayin' remarkable close to camp," Bill commented.

Henry, squatting over the fire and settling the pot of coffee with a piece of ice, nodded. Nor did he speak till he had taken his seat on the coffin and begun to eat.

"They know where their hides is safe," he said. "They'd sooner eat grub than be grub. They're pretty wise, them dogs."

Bill shook his head. "Oh, I don't know."

His comrade looked at him curiously. "First time I ever heard you say anything about their not bein' wise."

"Henry," said the other, munching with deliberation the beans he was eating, "did you happen to notice the way them dogs kicked up when I was a-feedin' 'em?"

"They did cut up more'n usual," Henry acknowledged.

"How many dogs 've we got, Henry?"

"Six."

"Well, Henry . . ." Bill stopped for a moment, in order that his words might gain greater significance. "As I was sayin', Henry, we've got six dogs. I took six fish out of the bag. I gave one fish to each dog, an', Henry, I was one fish short."

"You counted wrong."

"We've got six dogs," the other reiterated dispassionately. "I took out six fish. One Ear didn't get no fish. I came back to the bag afterward an' got 'm his fish."

"We've only got six dogs," Henry said.

"Henry," Bill went on. "I won't say they was all dogs, but there was seven of 'm that got fish."

Henry stopped eating to glance across the fire and count the dogs.

"There's only six now," he said.

"I saw the other one run off across the snow," Bill announced with cool positiveness. "I saw seven."

Henry looked at him commiseratingly, and said, "I'll be almighty glad when this trip's over."

"What d'ye mean by that?" Bill demanded.

"I mean that this load of ourn is gettin' on your nerves, an' that you're beginnin' to see things."

"I thought of that," Bill answered gravely. "An' so, when I saw it run off across the snow, I looked in the snow an' saw its tracks. Then I counted the dogs an' there was still six of 'em. The tracks is there in the snow now. D'ye want to look at 'em? I'll show 'em to you."

Henry did not reply, but munched on in silence, until, the meal finished, he topped it with a final cup of coffee. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and said:

"Then you're thinkin' as it was — "

A long wailing cry, fiercely sad, from somewhere in the darkness, had interrupted him. He stopped to listen to it, then he finished his sentence with a wave of his hand toward the sound of the cry, " — one of them?"

Bill nodded. "I'd a blame sight sooner think that than anything else. You noticed yourself the row the dogs made."

Cry after cry, and answering cries, were turning the silence into a bedlam. From every side the cries arose, and the dogs betrayed their fear by huddling together and so close to the fire that their hair was scorched by the heat. Bill threw on more wood, before lighting his pipe.

"I'm thinking you're down in the mouth some," Henry said.

"Henry . . ." He sucked meditatively at his pipe for some time before he went on. "Henry, I was a-thinkin' what a blame sight luckier he is than you an' me'll ever be."

He indicated the third person by a downward thrust of the thumb to the box on which they sat.

"You an' me, Henry, when we die, we'll be lucky if we get enough stones over our carcasses to keep the dogs off of us."

"But we ain't got people an' money an' all the rest, like him," Henry rejoined. "Long-distance funerals is somethin' you an' me can't exactly afford."

"What gets me, Henry, is what a chap like this, that's a lord or something in his own country, and that's never had to bother about grub nor blankets; why he comes a-buttin' round the Godforsaken ends of the earth — that's what I can't exactly see."

"He might have lived to a ripe old age if he'd stayed at home," Henry agreed.

Bill opened his mouth to speak, but changed his mind. Instead, he pointed towards the wall of darkness that pressed about them from every side. There was no suggestion of form in the utter blackness; only could be seen a pair of eyes gleaming like live coals. Henry indicated with his head a second pair, and a third. A circle of the gleaming eyes had drawn about their camp. Now and again a pair of eyes moved, or disappeared to appear again a moment later.

The unrest of the dogs had been increasing, and they stampeded, in a surge of sudden fear, to the near side of the fire, cringing and crawling about the legs of the men. In the scramble one of the dogs had been overturned on the edge of the fire, and it had yelped with pain and fright as the smell of its singed coat possessed the air. The commotion caused the circle of eyes to shift restlessly for a moment and even to withdraw a bit, but it settled down again as the dogs became quiet.

"Henry, it's a blame misfortune to be out of ammunition."

Bill had finished his pipe and was helping his companion to spread the bed of fur and blanket upon the spruce boughs which he had laid over the snow before supper. Henry grunted, and began unlacing his mocassins.

"How many cartridges did you say you had left?" he asked.

"Three," came the answer. "An' I wisht 'twas three hundred. Then I'd show 'em what for, damn 'em!"

He shook his fist angrily at the gleaming eyes, and began securely to prop his moccasins before the fire.

"An' I wisht this cold snap'd break," he went on. "It's ben fifty below for two weeks now. An' I wisht I'd never started on this trip, Henry. I don't like the looks of it. I don't feel right, somehow. An' while I'm wishin', I wisht the trip was over an' done with, an' you an' me a-sittin' by the fire in Fort McGurry just about now an' playing cribbage — that's what I wisht."

Henry grunted and crawled into bed. As he dozed off he was aroused by his comrade's voice.

"Say, Henry, that other one that come in an' got a fish — why didn't the dogs pitch into it? That's what's botherin' me."

"You're botherin' too much, Bill," came the sleepy response. "You was never like this before. You jes' shut up now, an' go to sleep, an' you'll be all hunkydory in the mornin'. Your stomach's sour, that's what's botherin' you."

The men slept, breathing heavily, side by side, under the one covering. The fire died down, and the gleaming eyes drew closer the circle they had flung about the camp. The dogs clustered together in fear, now and again snarling menacingly as a pair of eyes drew close. Once their uproar became so loud that Bill woke up. He got out of bed carefully, so as not to disturb the sleep of his comrade, and threw more wood on the fire. As it began to flame up, the circle of eyes drew farther back. He glanced casually at the huddling dogs. He rubbed his eyes and looked at them more sharply. Then he crawled back into the blankets.

"Henry," he said. "Oh, Henry."

Henry groaned as he passed from sleep to waking, and demanded, "What's wrong now?"

"Nothin'," came the answer; "only there's seven of 'em again. I just counted."

Henry acknowledged receipt of the information with a grunt that slid into a snore as he drifted back into sleep.

In the morning it was Henry who awoke first and routed his companion out of bed. Daylight was yet three hours away, though it was already six o'clock; and in the darkness Henry went about preparing breakfast, while Bill rolled the blankets and made the sled ready for lashing.

"Say, Henry," he asked suddenly, "how many dogs did you say we had?"

"Six."

"Wrong," Bill proclaimed triumphantly.

"Seven again?" Henry queried.

"No, five; one's gone."

"The hell!" Henry cried in wrath, leaving the cooking to come and count the dogs.

"You're right, Bill," he concluded. "Fatty's gone."

"An' he went like greased lightnin' once he got started. Couldn't 've seen 'm for smoke."

"No chance at all," Henry concluded. "They jes' swallowed 'm alive. I bet he was yelpin' as he went down their throats, damn 'em!"

"He always was a fool dog," said Bill.

"But no fool dog ought to be fool enough to go off an' commit suicide that way." He looked over the remainder of the team with a speculative eye that summed up instantly the salient traits of each animal. "I bet none of the others would do it."

"Couldn't drive 'em away from the fire with a club," Bill agreed. "I always did think there was somethin' wrong with Fatty anyway."

And this was the epitaph of a dead dog on the Northland trail — less scant than the epitaph of many another dog, of many a man.

## Chapter II — The She-Wolf

Breakfast eaten and the slim camp-outfit lashed to the sled, the men turned their backs on the cheery fire and launched out into the darkness. At once began to rise the cries that were fiercely sad — cries that called through the darkness and cold to one another and answered back. Conversation ceased. Daylight came at nine o'clock. At midday the sky to the south warmed to rose-colour, and marked where the bulge of the earth intervened between the meridian sun and the northern world. But the rose-colour swiftly faded. The grey light of day that remained lasted until three o'clock, when it, too, faded, and the pall of the Arctic night descended upon the lone and silent land.

As darkness came on, the hunting-cries to right and left and rear drew closer — so close that more than once they sent surges of fear through the toiling dogs, throwing them into short-lived panics.

At the conclusion of one such panic, when he and Henry had got the dogs back in the traces, Bill said:

"I wisht they'd strike game somewheres, an' go away an' leave us alone."

"They do get on the nerves horrible," Henry sympathised.

They spoke no more until camp was made.

Henry was bending over and adding ice to the babbling pot of beans when he was startled by the sound of a blow, an exclamation from Bill, and a sharp snarling cry of pain from among the dogs. He straightened up in time to see a dim form disappearing across the snow into the shelter of the dark. Then he saw Bill, standing amid the dogs, half triumphant, half crestfallen, in one hand a stout club, in the other the tail and part of the body of a sun-cured salmon.

"It got half of it," he announced; "but I got a whack at it jes' the same. D'ye hear it squeal?"

"What'd it look like?" Henry asked.

"Couldn't see. But it had four legs an' a mouth an' hair an' looked like any dog."

"Must be a tame wolf, I reckon."

"It's damned tame, whatever it is, comin' in here at feedin' time an' gettin' its whack of fish."

That night, when supper was finished and they sat on the oblong box and pulled at their pipes, the circle of gleaming eyes drew in even closer than before.

"I wisht they'd spring up a bunch of moose or something, an' go away an' leave us alone," Bill said.

Henry grunted with an intonation that was not all sympathy, and for a quarter of an hour they sat on in silence, Henry staring at the fire, and Bill at the circle of eyes that burned in the darkness just beyond the firelight.

"I wisht we was pullin' into McGurry right now," he began again.

"Shut up your wishin' and your croakin'," Henry burst out angrily. "Your stomach's sour. That's what's ailin' you. Swallow a spoonful of sody, an' you'll sweeten up wonderful an' be more pleasant company."



In the morning Henry was aroused by fervid blasphemy that proceeded from the mouth of Bill. Henry propped himself up on an elbow and looked to see his comrade standing among the dogs beside the replenished fire, his arms raised in objurgation, his face distorted with passion.

"Hello!" Henry called. "What's up now?"

"Frog's gone," came the answer.

"No."

"I tell you yes."

Henry leaped out of the blankets and to the dogs. He counted them with care, and then joined his partner in cursing the power of the Wild that had robbed them of another dog.

"Frog was the strongest dog of the bunch," Bill pronounced finally.

"An' he was no fool dog neither," Henry added.

And so was recorded the second epitaph in two days.

A gloomy breakfast was eaten, and the four remaining dogs were harnessed to the sled. The day was a repetition of the days that had gone before. The men toiled without speech across the face of the frozen world. The silence was unbroken save by the cries of their pursuers, that, unseen, hung upon their rear. With the coming of night in the mid-afternoon, the cries sounded closer as the pursuers drew in according to their custom; and the dogs grew excited and frightened, and were guilty of panics that tangled the traces and further depressed the two men.

"There, that'll fix you fool critters," Bill said with satisfaction that night, standing erect at completion of his task.

Henry left the cooking to come and see. Not only had his partner tied the dogs up, but he had tied them, after the Indian fashion, with sticks. About the neck of each dog he had fastened a leather thong. To this, and so close to the neck that the dog could not get his teeth to it, he had tied a stout stick four or five feet in length. The other end of the stick, in turn, was made fast to a stake in the ground by means of a leather thong. The dog was unable to gnaw through the leather at his own end of the stick. The stick prevented him from getting at the leather that fastened the other end.

Henry nodded his head approvingly.

"It's the only contraption that'll ever hold One Ear," he said. "He can gnaw through leather as clean as a knife an' jes' about half as quick. They all'll be here in the mornin' hunkydory."

"You jes' bet they will," Bill affirmed. "If one of em' turns up missin', I'll go without my coffee."

"They jes' know we ain't loaded to kill," Henry remarked at bed-time, indicating the gleaming circle that hemmed them in. "If we could put a couple of shots into 'em, they'd be more respectful. They come closer every night. Get the firelight out of your eyes an' look hard — there! Did you see that one?"

For some time the two men amused themselves with watching the movement of vague forms on the edge of the firelight. By looking closely and steadily at where a

pair of eyes burned in the darkness, the form of the animal would slowly take shape. They could even see these forms move at times.

A sound among the dogs attracted the men's attention. One Ear was uttering quick, eager whines, lunging at the length of his stick toward the darkness, and desisting now and again in order to make frantic attacks on the stick with his teeth.

"Look at that, Bill," Henry whispered.

Full into the firelight, with a stealthy, sidelong movement, glided a doglike animal. It moved with commingled mistrust and daring, cautiously observing the men, its attention fixed on the dogs. One Ear strained the full length of the stick toward the intruder and whined with eagerness.

"That fool One Ear don't seem scairt much," Bill said in a low tone.

"It's a she-wolf," Henry whispered back, "an' that accounts for Fatty an' Frog. She's the decoy for the pack. She draws out the dog an' then all the rest pitches in an' eats 'm up."

The fire crackled. A log fell apart with a loud spluttering noise. At the sound of it the strange animal leaped back into the darkness.

"Henry, I'm a-thinkin'," Bill announced.

"Thinkin' what?"

"I'm a-thinkin' that was the one I lambasted with the club."

"Ain't the slightest doubt in the world," was Henry's response.

"An' right here I want to remark," Bill went on, "that that animal's familiarity with campfires is suspicious an' immoral."

"It knows for certain more'n a self-respectin' wolf ought to know," Henry agreed. "A wolf that knows enough to come in with the dogs at feedin' time has had experiences."

"Ol' Villan had a dog once that run away with the wolves," Bill cogitates aloud. "I ought to know. I shot it out of the pack in a moose pasture over 'on Little Stick. An' Ol' Villan cried like a baby. Hadn't seen it for three years, he said. Ben with the wolves all that time."

"I reckon you've called the turn, Bill. That wolf's a dog, an' it's eaten fish many's the time from the hand of man."

"An if I get a chance at it, that wolf that's a dog'll be jes' meat," Bill declared. "We can't afford to lose no more animals."

"But you've only got three cartridges," Henry objected.

"I'll wait for a dead sure shot," was the reply.

In the morning Henry renewed the fire and cooked breakfast to the accompaniment of his partner's snoring.

"You was sleepin' jes' too comfortable for anything," Henry told him, as he routed him out for breakfast. "I hadn't the heart to rouse you."

Bill began to eat sleepily. He noticed that his cup was empty and started to reach for the pot. But the pot was beyond arm's length and beside Henry.

"Say, Henry," he chided gently, "ain't you forgot somethin'?"

Henry looked about with great carefulness and shook his head. Bill held up the empty cup.

"You don't get no coffee," Henry announced.

"Ain't run out?" Bill asked anxiously.

"Nope."

"Ain't thinkin' it'll hurt my digestion?"

"Nope."

A flush of angry blood pervaded Bill's face.

"Then it's jes' warm an' anxious I am to be hearin' you explain yourself," he said.

"Spanker's gone," Henry answered.

Without haste, with the air of one resigned to misfortune Bill turned his head, and from where he sat counted the dogs.

"How'd it happen?" he asked apathetically.

Henry shrugged his shoulders. "Don't know. Unless One Ear gnawed 'm loose. He couldn't a-done it himself, that's sure."

"The darned cuss." Bill spoke gravely and slowly, with no hint of the anger that was raging within. "Jes' because he couldn't chew himself loose, he chews Spanker loose."

"Well, Spanker's troubles is over anyway; I guess he's digested by this time an' cavortin' over the landscape in the bellies of twenty different wolves," was Henry's epitaph on this, the latest lost dog. "Have some coffee, Bill."

But Bill shook his head.

"Go on," Henry pleaded, elevating the pot.

Bill shoved his cup aside. "I'll be ding-dong-danged if I do. I said I wouldn't if ary dog turned up missin', an' I won't."

"It's darn good coffee," Henry said enticingly.

But Bill was stubborn, and he ate a dry breakfast washed down with mumbled curses at One Ear for the trick he had played.

"I'll tie 'em up out of reach of each other to-night," Bill said, as they took the trail.

They had travelled little more than a hundred yards, when Henry, who was in front, bent down and picked up something with which his snowshoe had collided. It was dark, and he could not see it, but he recognised it by the touch. He flung it back, so that it struck the sled and bounced along until it fetched up on Bill's snowshoes.

"Mebbe you'll need that in your business," Henry said.

Bill uttered an exclamation. It was all that was left of Spanker — the stick with which he had been tied.

"They ate 'm hide an' all," Bill announced. "The stick's as clean as a whistle. They've ate the leather offen both ends. They're damn hungry, Henry, an' they'll have you an' me guessin' before this trip's over."

Henry laughed defiantly. "I ain't been trailed this way by wolves before, but I've gone through a whole lot worse an' kept my health. Takes more'n a handful of them pesky critters to do for yours truly, Bill, my son."

"I don't know, I don't know," Bill muttered ominously.

"Well, you'll know all right when we pull into McGurry."

"I ain't feelin' special enthusiastic," Bill persisted.

"You're off colour, that's what's the matter with you," Henry dogmatized. "What you need is quinine, an' I'm goin' to dose you up stiff as soon as we make McGurry."

Bill grunted his disagreement with the diagnosis, and lapsed into silence. The day was like all the days. Light came at nine o'clock. At twelve o'clock the southern horizon was warmed by the unseen sun; and then began the cold grey of afternoon that would merge, three hours later, into night.

It was just after the sun's futile effort to appear, that Bill slipped the rifle from under the sled-lashings and said:

"You keep right on, Henry, I'm goin' to see what I can see."

"You'd better stick by the sled," his partner protested. "You've only got three cartridges, an' there's no tellin' what might happen."

"Who's croaking now?" Bill demanded triumphantly.

Henry made no reply, and plodded on alone, though often he cast anxious glances back into the grey solitude where his partner had disappeared. An hour later, taking advantage of the cut-offs around which the sled had to go, Bill arrived.

"They're scattered an' rangin' along wide," he said: "keeping up with us an' lookin' for game at the same time. You see, they're sure of us, only they know they've got to wait to get us. In the meantime they're willin' to pick up anything eatable that comes handy."

"You mean they think they're sure of us," Henry objected pointedly.

But Bill ignored him. "I seen some of them. They're pretty thin. They ain't had a bite in weeks I reckon, outside of Fatty an' Frog an' Spanker; an' there's so many of 'em that that didn't go far. They're remarkable thin. Their ribs is like wash-boards, an' their stomachs is right up against their backbones. They're pretty desperate, I can tell you. They'll be goin' mad, yet, an' then watch out."

A few minutes later, Henry, who was now travelling behind the sled, emitted a low, warning whistle. Bill turned and looked, then quietly stopped the dogs. To the rear, from around the last bend and plainly into view, on the very trail they had just covered, trotted a furry, slinking form. Its nose was to the trail, and it trotted with a peculiar, sliding, effortless gait. When they halted, it halted, throwing up its head and regarding them steadily with nostrils that twitched as it caught and studied the scent of them.

"It's the she-wolf," Bill answered.

The dogs had lain down in the snow, and he walked past them to join his partner in the sled. Together they watched the strange animal that had pursued them for days and that had already accomplished the destruction of half their dog-team.

After a searching scrutiny, the animal trotted forward a few steps. This it repeated several times, till it was a short hundred yards away. It paused, head up, close by a clump of spruce trees, and with sight and scent studied the outfit of the watching men. It looked at them in a strangely wistful way, after the manner of a dog; but in its

wistfulness there was none of the dog affection. It was a wistfulness bred of hunger, as cruel as its own fangs, as merciless as the frost itself.

It was large for a wolf, its gaunt frame advertising the lines of an animal that was among the largest of its kind.

"Stands pretty close to two feet an' a half at the shoulders," Henry commented. "An' I'll bet it ain't far from five feet long."

"Kind of strange colour for a wolf," was Bill's criticism. "I never seen a red wolf before. Looks almost cinnamon to me."

The animal was certainly not cinnamon-coloured. Its coat was the true wolf-coat. The dominant colour was grey, and yet there was to it a faint reddish hue — a hue that was baffling, that appeared and disappeared, that was more like an illusion of the vision, now grey, distinctly grey, and again giving hints and glints of a vague redness of colour not classifiable in terms of ordinary experience.

"Looks for all the world like a big husky sled-dog," Bill said. "I wouldn't be s'prised to see it wag its tail."

"Hello, you husky!" he called. "Come here, you whatever-your-name-is."

"Ain't a bit scairt of you," Henry laughed.

Bill waved his hand at it threateningly and shouted loudly; but the animal betrayed no fear. The only change in it that they could notice was an accession of alertness. It still regarded them with the merciless wistfulness of hunger. They were meat, and it was hungry; and it would like to go in and eat them if it dared.

"Look here, Henry," Bill said, unconsciously lowering his voice to a whisper because of what he imitated. "We've got three cartridges. But it's a dead shot. Couldn't miss it. It's got away with three of our dogs, an' we oughter put a stop to it. What d'ye say?"

Henry nodded his consent. Bill cautiously slipped the gun from under the sled-lashing. The gun was on the way to his shoulder, but it never got there. For in that instant the she-wolf leaped sidewise from the trail into the clump of spruce trees and disappeared.

The two men looked at each other. Henry whistled long and comprehendingly.

"I might have knowed it," Bill chided himself aloud as he replaced the gun. "Of course a wolf that knows enough to come in with the dogs at feedin' time, 'd know all about shooting-irons. I tell you right now, Henry, that critter's the cause of all our trouble. We'd have six dogs at the present time, 'stead of three, if it wasn't for her. An' I tell you right now, Henry, I'm goin' to get her. She's too smart to be shot in the open. But I'm goin' to lay for her. I'll bushwhack her as sure as my name is Bill."

"You needn't stray off too far in doin' it," his partner admonished. "If that pack ever starts to jump you, them three cartridges'd be wuth no more'n three whoops in hell. Them animals is damn hungry, an' once they start in, they'll sure get you, Bill."

They camped early that night. Three dogs could not drag the sled so fast nor for so long hours as could six, and they were showing unmistakable signs of playing out.

And the men went early to bed, Bill first seeing to it that the dogs were tied out of gnawing-reach of one another.

But the wolves were growing bolder, and the men were aroused more than once from their sleep. So near did the wolves approach, that the dogs became frantic with terror, and it was necessary to replenish the fire from time to time in order to keep the adventurous marauders at safer distance.

"I've hearn sailors talk of sharks followin' a ship," Bill remarked, as he crawled back into the blankets after one such replenishing of the fire. "Well, them wolves is land sharks. They know their business better'n we do, an' they ain't a-holdin' our trail this way for their health. They're goin' to get us. They're sure goin' to get us, Henry."

"They've half got you a'ready, a-talkin' like that," Henry retorted sharply. "A man's half licked when he says he is. An' you're half eaten from the way you're goin' on about it."

"They've got away with better men than you an' me," Bill answered.

"Oh, shet up your croakin'. You make me all-fired tired."

Henry rolled over angrily on his side, but was surprised that Bill made no similar display of temper. This was not Bill's way, for he was easily angered by sharp words. Henry thought long over it before he went to sleep, and as his eyelids fluttered down and he dozed off, the thought in his mind was: "There's no mistakin' it, Bill's almighty blue. I'll have to cheer him up to-morrow."

## Chapter III — The Hunger Cry

The day began auspiciously. They had lost no dogs during the night, and they swung out upon the trail and into the silence, the darkness, and the cold with spirits that were fairly light. Bill seemed to have forgotten his forebodings of the previous night, and even waxed facetious with the dogs when, at midday, they overturned the sled on a bad piece of trail.

It was an awkward mix-up. The sled was upside down and jammed between a tree-trunk and a huge rock, and they were forced to unharness the dogs in order to straighten out the tangle. The two men were bent over the sled and trying to right it, when Henry observed One Ear sidling away.

"Here, you, One Ear!" he cried, straightening up and turning around on the dog.

But One Ear broke into a run across the snow, his traces trailing behind him. And there, out in the snow of their back track, was the she-wolf waiting for him. As he neared her, he became suddenly cautious. He slowed down to an alert and mincing walk and then stopped. He regarded her carefully and dubiously, yet desirefully. She seemed to smile at him, showing her teeth in an ingratiating rather than a menacing way. She moved toward him a few steps, playfully, and then halted. One Ear drew near to her, still alert and cautious, his tail and ears in the air, his head held high.

He tried to sniff noses with her, but she retreated playfully and coyly. Every advance on his part was accompanied by a corresponding retreat on her part. Step by step she was luring him away from the security of his human companionship. Once, as though a warning had in vague ways flitted through his intelligence, he turned his head and looked back at the overturned sled, at his team-mates, and at the two men who were calling to him.

But whatever idea was forming in his mind, was dissipated by the she-wolf, who advanced upon him, sniffed noses with him for a fleeting instant, and then resumed her coy retreat before his renewed advances.

In the meantime, Bill had bethought himself of the rifle. But it was jammed beneath the overturned sled, and by the time Henry had helped him to right the load, One Ear and the she-wolf were too close together and the distance too great to risk a shot.

Too late One Ear learned his mistake. Before they saw the cause, the two men saw him turn and start to run back toward them. Then, approaching at right angles to the trail and cutting off his retreat they saw a dozen wolves, lean and grey, bounding across the snow. On the instant, the she-wolf's coyness and playfulness disappeared. With a snarl she sprang upon One Ear. He thrust her off with his shoulder, and, his retreat cut off and still intent on regaining the sled, he altered his course in an attempt to circle around to it. More wolves were appearing every moment and joining in the chase. The she-wolf was one leap behind One Ear and holding her own.

"Where are you goin'?" Henry suddenly demanded, laying his hand on his partner's arm.

Bill shook it off. "I won't stand it," he said. "They ain't a-goin' to get any more of our dogs if I can help it."

Gun in hand, he plunged into the underbrush that lined the side of the trail. His intention was apparent enough. Taking the sled as the centre of the circle that One Ear was making, Bill planned to tap that circle at a point in advance of the pursuit. With his rifle, in the broad daylight, it might be possible for him to awe the wolves and save the dog.

"Say, Bill!" Henry called after him. "Be careful! Don't take no chances!"

Henry sat down on the sled and watched. There was nothing else for him to do. Bill had already gone from sight; but now and again, appearing and disappearing amongst the underbrush and the scattered clumps of spruce, could be seen One Ear. Henry judged his case to be hopeless. The dog was thoroughly alive to its danger, but it was running on the outer circle while the wolf-pack was running on the inner and shorter circle. It was vain to think of One Ear so outdistancing his pursuers as to be able to cut across their circle in advance of them and to regain the sled.

The different lines were rapidly approaching a point. Somewhere out there in the snow, screened from his sight by trees and thickets, Henry knew that the wolf-pack, One Ear, and Bill were coming together. All too quickly, far more quickly than he had expected, it happened. He heard a shot, then two shots, in rapid succession, and he knew that Bill's ammunition was gone. Then he heard a great outcry of snarls and

yelps. He recognised One Ear's yell of pain and terror, and he heard a wolf-cry that bespoke a stricken animal. And that was all. The snarls ceased. The yelping died away. Silence settled down again over the lonely land.

He sat for a long while upon the sled. There was no need for him to go and see what had happened. He knew it as though it had taken place before his eyes. Once, he roused with a start and hastily got the axe out from underneath the lashings. But for some time longer he sat and brooded, the two remaining dogs crouching and trembling at his feet.

At last he arose in a weary manner, as though all the resilience had gone out of his body, and proceeded to fasten the dogs to the sled. He passed a rope over his shoulder, a man-trace, and pulled with the dogs. He did not go far. At the first hint of darkness he hastened to make a camp, and he saw to it that he had a generous supply of firewood. He fed the dogs, cooked and ate his supper, and made his bed close to the fire.

But he was not destined to enjoy that bed. Before his eyes closed the wolves had drawn too near for safety. It no longer required an effort of the vision to see them. They were all about him and the fire, in a narrow circle, and he could see them plainly in the firelight lying down, sitting up, crawling forward on their bellies, or slinking back and forth. They even slept. Here and there he could see one curled up in the snow like a dog, taking the sleep that was now denied himself.

He kept the fire brightly blazing, for he knew that it alone intervened between the flesh of his body and their hungry fangs. His two dogs stayed close by him, one on either side, leaning against him for protection, crying and whimpering, and at times snarling desperately when a wolf approached a little closer than usual. At such moments, when his dogs snarled, the whole circle would be agitated, the wolves coming to their feet and pressing tentatively forward, a chorus of snarls and eager yelps rising about him. Then the circle would lie down again, and here and there a wolf would resume its broken nap.

But this circle had a continuous tendency to draw in upon him. Bit by bit, an inch at a time, with here a wolf bellying forward, and there a wolf bellying forward, the circle would narrow until the brutes were almost within springing distance. Then he would seize brands from the fire and hurl them into the pack. A hasty drawing back always resulted, accompanied by angry yelps and frightened snarls when a well-aimed brand struck and scorched a too daring animal.

Morning found the man haggard and worn, wide-eyed from want of sleep. He cooked breakfast in the darkness, and at nine o'clock, when, with the coming of daylight, the wolf-pack drew back, he set about the task he had planned through the long hours of the night. Chopping down young saplings, he made them cross-bars of a scaffold by lashing them high up to the trunks of standing trees. Using the sled-lashing for a heaving rope, and with the aid of the dogs, he hoisted the coffin to the top of the scaffold.



"They got Bill, an' they may get me, but they'll sure never get you, young man," he said, addressing the dead body in its tree-sepulchre.

Then he took the trail, the lightened sled bounding along behind the willing dogs; for they, too, knew that safety lay open in the gaining of Fort McGurry. The wolves were now more open in their pursuit, trotting sedately behind and ranging along on either side, their red tongues lolling out, their lean sides showing the undulating ribs with every movement. They were very lean, mere skin-bags stretched over bony frames, with strings for muscles — so lean that Henry found it in his mind to marvel that they still kept their feet and did not collapse forthright in the snow.

He did not dare travel until dark. At midday, not only did the sun warm the southern horizon, but it even thrust its upper rim, pale and golden, above the sky-line. He received it as a sign. The days were growing longer. The sun was returning. But scarcely had the cheer of its light departed, than he went into camp. There were still several hours of grey daylight and sombre twilight, and he utilised them in chopping an enormous supply of fire-wood.

With night came horror. Not only were the starving wolves growing bolder, but lack of sleep was telling upon Henry. He dozed despite himself, crouching by the fire, the blankets about his shoulders, the axe between his knees, and on either side a dog pressing close against him. He awoke once and saw in front of him, not a dozen feet away, a big grey wolf, one of the largest of the pack. And even as he looked, the brute deliberately stretched himself after the manner of a lazy dog, yawning full in his face and looking upon him with a possessive eye, as if, in truth, he were merely a delayed meal that was soon to be eaten.

This certitude was shown by the whole pack. Fully a score he could count, staring hungrily at him or calmly sleeping in the snow. They reminded him of children gathered about a spread table and awaiting permission to begin to eat. And he was the food they were to eat! He wondered how and when the meal would begin.

As he piled wood on the fire he discovered an appreciation of his own body which he had never felt before. He watched his moving muscles and was interested in the cunning mechanism of his fingers. By the light of the fire he crooked his fingers slowly and repeatedly now one at a time, now all together, spreading them wide or making quick gripping movements. He studied the nail-formation, and prodded the finger-tips, now sharply, and again softly, gauging the while the nerve-sensations produced. It fascinated him, and he grew suddenly fond of this subtle flesh of his that worked so beautifully and smoothly and delicately. Then he would cast a glance of fear at the wolf-circle drawn expectantly about him, and like a blow the realisation would strike him that this wonderful body of his, this living flesh, was no more than so much meat, a quest of ravenous animals, to be torn and slashed by their hungry fangs, to be sustenance to them as the moose and the rabbit had often been sustenance to him.

He came out of a doze that was half nightmare, to see the red-hued she-wolf before him. She was not more than half a dozen feet away sitting in the snow and wistfully regarding him. The two dogs were whimpering and snarling at his feet, but she took

no notice of them. She was looking at the man, and for some time he returned her look. There was nothing threatening about her. She looked at him merely with a great wistfulness, but he knew it to be the wistfulness of an equally great hunger. He was the food, and the sight of him excited in her the gustatory sensations. Her mouth opened, the saliva drooled forth, and she licked her chops with the pleasure of anticipation.

A spasm of fear went through him. He reached hastily for a brand to throw at her. But even as he reached, and before his fingers had closed on the missile, she sprang back into safety; and he knew that she was used to having things thrown at her. She had snarled as she sprang away, baring her white fangs to their roots, all her wistfulness vanishing, being replaced by a carnivorous malignity that made him shudder. He glanced at the hand that held the brand, noticing the cunning delicacy of the fingers that gripped it, how they adjusted themselves to all the inequalities of the surface, curling over and under and about the rough wood, and one little finger, too close to the burning portion of the brand, sensitively and automatically writhing back from the hurtful heat to a cooler gripping-place; and in the same instant he seemed to see a vision of those same sensitive and delicate fingers being crushed and torn by the white teeth of the she-wolf. Never had he been so fond of this body of his as now when his tenure of it was so precarious.

All night, with burning brands, he fought off the hungry pack. When he dozed despite himself, the whimpering and snarling of the dogs aroused him. Morning came, but for the first time the light of day failed to scatter the wolves. The man waited in vain for them to go. They remained in a circle about him and his fire, displaying an arrogance of possession that shook his courage born of the morning light.

He made one desperate attempt to pull out on the trail. But the moment he left the protection of the fire, the boldest wolf leaped for him, but leaped short. He saved himself by springing back, the jaws snapping together a scant six inches from his thigh. The rest of the pack was now up and surging upon him, and a throwing of firebrands right and left was necessary to drive them back to a respectful distance.

Even in the daylight he did not dare leave the fire to chop fresh wood. Twenty feet away towered a huge dead spruce. He spent half the day extending his campfire to the tree, at any moment a half dozen burning faggots ready at hand to fling at his enemies. Once at the tree, he studied the surrounding forest in order to fell the tree in the direction of the most firewood.

The night was a repetition of the night before, save that the need for sleep was becoming overpowering. The snarling of his dogs was losing its efficacy. Besides, they were snarling all the time, and his benumbed and drowsy senses no longer took note of changing pitch and intensity. He awoke with a start. The she-wolf was less than a yard from him. Mechanically, at short range, without letting go of it, he thrust a brand full into her open and snarling mouth. She sprang away, yelling with pain, and while he took delight in the smell of burning flesh and hair, he watched her shaking her head and growling wrathfully a score of feet away.

But this time, before he dozed again, he tied a burning pine-knot to his right hand. His eyes were closed but few minutes when the burn of the flame on his flesh awakened him. For several hours he adhered to this programme. Every time he was thus awakened he drove back the wolves with flying brands, replenished the fire, and rearranged the pine-knot on his hand. All worked well, but there came a time when he fastened the pine-knot insecurely. As his eyes closed it fell away from his hand.

He dreamed. It seemed to him that he was in Fort McGurry. It was warm and comfortable, and he was playing cribbage with the Factor. Also, it seemed to him that the fort was besieged by wolves. They were howling at the very gates, and sometimes he and the Factor paused from the game to listen and laugh at the futile efforts of the wolves to get in. And then, so strange was the dream, there was a crash. The door was burst open. He could see the wolves flooding into the big living-room of the fort. They were leaping straight for him and the Factor. With the bursting open of the door, the noise of their howling had increased tremendously. This howling now bothered him. His dream was merging into something else — he knew not what; but through it all, following him, persisted the howling.

And then he awoke to find the howling real. There was a great snarling and yelping. The wolves were rushing him. They were all about him and upon him. The teeth of one had closed upon his arm. Instinctively he leaped into the fire, and as he leaped, he felt the sharp slash of teeth that tore through the flesh of his leg. Then began a fire fight. His stout mittens temporarily protected his hands, and he scooped live coals into the air in all directions, until the campfire took on the semblance of a volcano.

But it could not last long. His face was blistering in the heat, his eyebrows and lashes were singed off, and the heat was becoming unbearable to his feet. With a flaming brand in each hand, he sprang to the edge of the fire. The wolves had been driven back. On every side, wherever the live coals had fallen, the snow was sizzling, and every little while a retiring wolf, with wild leap and snort and snarl, announced that one such live coal had been stepped upon.

Flinging his brands at the nearest of his enemies, the man thrust his smouldering mittens into the snow and stamped about to cool his feet. His two dogs were missing, and he well knew that they had served as a course in the protracted meal which had begun days before with Fatty, the last course of which would likely be himself in the days to follow.

“You ain’t got me yet!” he cried, savagely shaking his fist at the hungry beasts; and at the sound of his voice the whole circle was agitated, there was a general snarl, and the she-wolf slid up close to him across the snow and watched him with hungry wistfulness.

He set to work to carry out a new idea that had come to him. He extended the fire into a large circle. Inside this circle he crouched, his sleeping outfit under him as a protection against the melting snow. When he had thus disappeared within his shelter of flame, the whole pack came curiously to the rim of the fire to see what had become of him. Hitherto they had been denied access to the fire, and they now settled down in

a close-drawn circle, like so many dogs, blinking and yawning and stretching their lean bodies in the unaccustomed warmth. Then the she-wolf sat down, pointed her nose at a star, and began to howl. One by one the wolves joined her, till the whole pack, on haunches, with noses pointed skyward, was howling its hunger cry.

Dawn came, and daylight. The fire was burning low. The fuel had run out, and there was need to get more. The man attempted to step out of his circle of flame, but the wolves surged to meet him. Burning brands made them spring aside, but they no longer sprang back. In vain he strove to drive them back. As he gave up and stumbled inside his circle, a wolf leaped for him, missed, and landed with all four feet in the coals. It cried out with terror, at the same time snarling, and scrambled back to cool its paws in the snow.

The man sat down on his blankets in a crouching position. His body leaned forward from the hips. His shoulders, relaxed and drooping, and his head on his knees advertised that he had given up the struggle. Now and again he raised his head to note the dying down of the fire. The circle of flame and coals was breaking into segments with openings in between. These openings grew in size, the segments diminished.

"I guess you can come an' get me any time," he mumbled. "Anyway, I'm goin' to sleep."

Once he awakened, and in an opening in the circle, directly in front of him, he saw the she-wolf gazing at him.

Again he awakened, a little later, though it seemed hours to him. A mysterious change had taken place — so mysterious a change that he was shocked wider awake. Something had happened. He could not understand at first. Then he discovered it. The wolves were gone. Remained only the trampled snow to show how closely they had pressed him. Sleep was welling up and gripping him again, his head was sinking down upon his knees, when he roused with a sudden start.

There were cries of men, and churn of sleds, the creaking of harnesses, and the eager whimpering of straining dogs. Four sleds pulled in from the river bed to the camp among the trees. Half a dozen men were about the man who crouched in the centre of the dying fire. They were shaking and prodding him into consciousness. He looked at them like a drunken man and maundered in strange, sleepy speech.

"Red she-wolf. . . . Come in with the dogs at feedin' time. . . . First she ate the dog-food. . . . Then she ate the dogs. . . . An' after that she ate Bill. . . ."

"Where's Lord Alfred?" one of the men bellowed in his ear, shaking him roughly.

He shook his head slowly. "No, she didn't eat him. . . . He's roostin' in a tree at the last camp."

"Dead?" the man shouted.

"An' in a box," Henry answered. He jerked his shoulder petulantly away from the grip of his questioner. "Say, you lemme alone. . . . I'm jes' plump tuckered out. . . . Goo' night, everybody."

His eyes fluttered and went shut. His chin fell forward on his chest. And even as they eased him down upon the blankets his snores were rising on the frosty air.

But there was another sound. Far and faint it was, in the remote distance, the cry of the hungry wolf-pack as it took the trail of other meat than the man it had just missed.

# Part II

## Chapter I — The Battle of the Fangs

It was the she-wolf who had first caught the sound of men's voices and the whining of the sled-dogs; and it was the she-wolf who was first to spring away from the cornered man in his circle of dying flame. The pack had been loath to forego the kill it had hunted down, and it lingered for several minutes, making sure of the sounds, and then it, too, sprang away on the trail made by the she-wolf.

Running at the forefront of the pack was a large grey wolf — one of its several leaders. It was he who directed the pack's course on the heels of the she-wolf. It was he who snarled warningly at the younger members of the pack or slashed at them with his fangs when they ambitiously tried to pass him. And it was he who increased the pace when he sighted the she-wolf, now trotting slowly across the snow.

She dropped in alongside by him, as though it were her appointed position, and took the pace of the pack. He did not snarl at her, nor show his teeth, when any leap of hers chanced to put her in advance of him. On the contrary, he seemed kindly disposed toward her — too kindly to suit her, for he was prone to run near to her, and when he ran too near it was she who snarled and showed her teeth. Nor was she above slashing his shoulder sharply on occasion. At such times he betrayed no anger. He merely sprang to the side and ran stiffly ahead for several awkward leaps, in carriage and conduct resembling an abashed country swain.

This was his one trouble in the running of the pack; but she had other troubles. On her other side ran a gaunt old wolf, grizzled and marked with the scars of many battles. He ran always on her right side. The fact that he had but one eye, and that the left eye, might account for this. He, also, was addicted to crowding her, to veering toward her till his scarred muzzle touched her body, or shoulder, or neck. As with the running mate on the left, she repelled these attentions with her teeth; but when both bestowed their attentions at the same time she was roughly jostled, being compelled, with quick snaps to either side, to drive both lovers away and at the same time to maintain her forward leap with the pack and see the way of her feet before her. At such times her running mates flashed their teeth and growled threateningly across at each other. They might have fought, but even wooing and its rivalry waited upon the more pressing hunger-need of the pack.

After each repulse, when the old wolf sheered abruptly away from the sharp-toothed object of his desire, he shouldered against a young three-year-old that ran on his blind

right side. This young wolf had attained his full size; and, considering the weak and famished condition of the pack, he possessed more than the average vigour and spirit. Nevertheless, he ran with his head even with the shoulder of his one-eyed elder. When he ventured to run abreast of the older wolf (which was seldom), a snarl and a snap sent him back even with the shoulder again. Sometimes, however, he dropped cautiously and slowly behind and edged in between the old leader and the she-wolf. This was doubly resented, even triply resented. When she snarled her displeasure, the old leader would whirl on the three-year-old. Sometimes she whirled with him. And sometimes the young leader on the left whirled, too.

At such times, confronted by three sets of savage teeth, the young wolf stopped precipitately, throwing himself back on his haunches, with fore-legs stiff, mouth menacing, and mane bristling. This confusion in the front of the moving pack always caused confusion in the rear. The wolves behind collided with the young wolf and expressed their displeasure by administering sharp nips on his hind-legs and flanks. He was laying up trouble for himself, for lack of food and short tempers went together; but with the boundless faith of youth he persisted in repeating the manoeuvre every little while, though it never succeeded in gaining anything for him but discomfiture.

Had there been food, love-making and fighting would have gone on apace, and the pack-formation would have been broken up. But the situation of the pack was desperate. It was lean with long-standing hunger. It ran below its ordinary speed. At the rear limped the weak members, the very young and the very old. At the front were the strongest. Yet all were more like skeletons than full-bodied wolves. Nevertheless, with the exception of the ones that limped, the movements of the animals were effortless and tireless. Their stringy muscles seemed founts of inexhaustible energy. Behind every steel-like contraction of a muscle, lay another steel-like contraction, and another, and another, apparently without end.

They ran many miles that day. They ran through the night. And the next day found them still running. They were running over the surface of a world frozen and dead. No life stirred. They alone moved through the vast inertness. They alone were alive, and they sought for other things that were alive in order that they might devour them and continue to live.

They crossed low divides and ranged a dozen small streams in a lower-lying country before their quest was rewarded. Then they came upon moose. It was a big bull they first found. Here was meat and life, and it was guarded by no mysterious fires nor flying missiles of flame. Splay hoofs and palmated antlers they knew, and they flung their customary patience and caution to the wind. It was a brief fight and fierce. The big bull was beset on every side. He ripped them open or split their skulls with shrewdly driven blows of his great hoofs. He crushed them and broke them on his large horns. He stamped them into the snow under him in the wallowing struggle. But he was foredoomed, and he went down with the she-wolf tearing savagely at his throat, and with other teeth fixed everywhere upon him, devouring him alive, before ever his last struggles ceased or his last damage had been wrought.

There was food in plenty. The bull weighed over eight hundred pounds — fully twenty pounds of meat per mouth for the forty-odd wolves of the pack. But if they could fast prodigiously, they could feed prodigiously, and soon a few scattered bones were all that remained of the splendid live brute that had faced the pack a few hours before.

There was now much resting and sleeping. With full stomachs, bickering and quarrelling began among the younger males, and this continued through the few days that followed before the breaking-up of the pack. The famine was over. The wolves were now in the country of game, and though they still hunted in pack, they hunted more cautiously, cutting out heavy cows or crippled old bulls from the small moose-herds they ran across.

There came a day, in this land of plenty, when the wolf-pack split in half and went in different directions. The she-wolf, the young leader on her left, and the one-eyed elder on her right, led their half of the pack down to the Mackenzie River and across into the lake country to the east. Each day this remnant of the pack dwindled. Two by two, male and female, the wolves were deserting. Occasionally a solitary male was driven out by the sharp teeth of his rivals. In the end there remained only four: the she-wolf, the young leader, the one-eyed one, and the ambitious three-year-old.

The she-wolf had by now developed a ferocious temper. Her three suitors all bore the marks of her teeth. Yet they never replied in kind, never defended themselves against her. They turned their shoulders to her most savage slashes, and with wagging tails and mincing steps strove to placate her wrath. But if they were all mildness toward her, they were all fierceness toward one another. The three-year-old grew too ambitious in his fierceness. He caught the one-eyed elder on his blind side and ripped his ear into ribbons. Though the grizzled old fellow could see only on one side, against the youth and vigour of the other he brought into play the wisdom of long years of experience. His lost eye and his scarred muzzle bore evidence to the nature of his experience. He had survived too many battles to be in doubt for a moment about what to do.

The battle began fairly, but it did not end fairly. There was no telling what the outcome would have been, for the third wolf joined the elder, and together, old leader and young leader, they attacked the ambitious three-year-old and proceeded to destroy him. He was beset on either side by the merciless fangs of his erstwhile comrades. Forgotten were the days they had hunted together, the game they had pulled down, the famine they had suffered. That business was a thing of the past. The business of love was at hand — ever a sterner and crueller business than that of food-getting.

And in the meanwhile, the she-wolf, the cause of it all, sat down contentedly on her haunches and watched. She was even pleased. This was her day — and it came not often — when manes bristled, and fang smote fang or ripped and tore the yielding flesh, all for the possession of her.

And in the business of love the three-year-old, who had made this his first adventure upon it, yielded up his life. On either side of his body stood his two rivals. They were gazing at the she-wolf, who sat smiling in the snow. But the elder leader was wise, very



wise, in love even as in battle. The younger leader turned his head to lick a wound on his shoulder. The curve of his neck was turned toward his rival. With his one eye the elder saw the opportunity. He darted in low and closed with his fangs. It was a long, ripping slash, and deep as well. His teeth, in passing, burst the wall of the great vein of the throat. Then he leaped clear.

The young leader snarled terribly, but his snarl broke midmost into a tickling cough. Bleeding and coughing, already stricken, he sprang at the elder and fought while life faded from him, his legs going weak beneath him, the light of day dulling on his eyes, his blows and springs falling shorter and shorter.

And all the while the she-wolf sat on her haunches and smiled. She was made glad in vague ways by the battle, for this was the love-making of the Wild, the sex-tragedy of the natural world that was tragedy only to those that died. To those that survived it was not tragedy, but realisation and achievement.

When the young leader lay in the snow and moved no more, One Eye stalked over to the she-wolf. His carriage was one of mingled triumph and caution. He was plainly expectant of a rebuff, and he was just as plainly surprised when her teeth did not flash out at him in anger. For the first time she met him with a kindly manner. She sniffed noses with him, and even condescended to leap about and frisk and play with him in quite puppyish fashion. And he, for all his grey years and sage experience, behaved quite as puppyishly and even a little more foolishly.

Forgotten already were the vanquished rivals and the love-tale red-written on the snow. Forgotten, save once, when old One Eye stopped for a moment to lick his stiffening wounds. Then it was that his lips half writhed into a snarl, and the hair of his neck and shoulders involuntarily bristled, while he half crouched for a spring, his claws spasmodically clutching into the snow-surface for firmer footing. But it was all forgotten the next moment, as he sprang after the she-wolf, who was coyly leading him a chase through the woods.

After that they ran side by side, like good friends who have come to an understanding. The days passed by, and they kept together, hunting their meat and killing and eating it in common. After a time the she-wolf began to grow restless. She seemed to be searching for something that she could not find. The hollows under fallen trees seemed to attract her, and she spent much time nosing about among the larger snow-piled crevices in the rocks and in the caves of overhanging banks. Old One Eye was not interested at all, but he followed her good-naturedly in her quest, and when her investigations in particular places were unusually protracted, he would lie down and wait until she was ready to go on.

They did not remain in one place, but travelled across country until they regained the Mackenzie River, down which they slowly went, leaving it often to hunt game along the small streams that entered it, but always returning to it again. Sometimes they chanced upon other wolves, usually in pairs; but there was no friendliness of intercourse displayed on either side, no gladness at meeting, no desire to return to the pack-formation. Several times they encountered solitary wolves. These were always

males, and they were pressingly insistent on joining with One Eye and his mate. This he resented, and when she stood shoulder to shoulder with him, bristling and showing her teeth, the aspiring solitary ones would back off, turn-tail, and continue on their lonely way.

One moonlight night, running through the quiet forest, One Eye suddenly halted. His muzzle went up, his tail stiffened, and his nostrils dilated as he scented the air. One foot also he held up, after the manner of a dog. He was not satisfied, and he continued to smell the air, striving to understand the message borne upon it to him. One careless sniff had satisfied his mate, and she trotted on to reassure him. Though he followed her, he was still dubious, and he could not forbear an occasional halt in order more carefully to study the warning.

She crept out cautiously on the edge of a large open space in the midst of the trees. For some time she stood alone. Then One Eye, creeping and crawling, every sense on the alert, every hair radiating infinite suspicion, joined her. They stood side by side, watching and listening and smelling.

To their ears came the sounds of dogs wrangling and scuffling, the guttural cries of men, the sharper voices of scolding women, and once the shrill and plaintive cry of a child. With the exception of the huge bulks of the skin-lodges, little could be seen save the flames of the fire, broken by the movements of intervening bodies, and the smoke rising slowly on the quiet air. But to their nostrils came the myriad smells of an Indian camp, carrying a story that was largely incomprehensible to One Eye, but every detail of which the she-wolf knew.

She was strangely stirred, and sniffed and sniffed with an increasing delight. But old One Eye was doubtful. He betrayed his apprehension, and started tentatively to go. She turned and touched his neck with her muzzle in a reassuring way, then regarded the camp again. A new wistfulness was in her face, but it was not the wistfulness of hunger. She was thrilling to a desire that urged her to go forward, to be in closer to that fire, to be squabbling with the dogs, and to be avoiding and dodging the stumbling feet of men.

One Eye moved impatiently beside her; her unrest came back upon her, and she knew again her pressing need to find the thing for which she searched. She turned and trotted back into the forest, to the great relief of One Eye, who trotted a little to the fore until they were well within the shelter of the trees.

As they slid along, noiseless as shadows, in the moonlight, they came upon a run-way. Both noses went down to the footprints in the snow. These footprints were very fresh. One Eye ran ahead cautiously, his mate at his heels. The broad pads of their feet were spread wide and in contact with the snow were like velvet. One Eye caught sight of a dim movement of white in the midst of the white. His sliding gait had been deceptively swift, but it was as nothing to the speed at which he now ran. Before him was bounding the faint patch of white he had discovered.

They were running along a narrow alley flanked on either side by a growth of young spruce. Through the trees the mouth of the alley could be seen, opening out on a

moonlit glade. Old One Eye was rapidly overhauling the fleeing shape of white. Bound by bound he gained. Now he was upon it. One leap more and his teeth would be sinking into it. But that leap was never made. High in the air, and straight up, soared the shape of white, now a struggling snowshoe rabbit that leaped and bounded, executing a fantastic dance there above him in the air and never once returning to earth.

One Eye sprang back with a snort of sudden fright, then shrank down to the snow and crouched, snarling threats at this thing of fear he did not understand. But the she-wolf coolly thrust past him. She poised for a moment, then sprang for the dancing rabbit. She, too, soared high, but not so high as the quarry, and her teeth clipped emptily together with a metallic snap. She made another leap, and another.

Her mate had slowly relaxed from his crouch and was watching her. He now evinced displeasure at her repeated failures, and himself made a mighty spring upward. His teeth closed upon the rabbit, and he bore it back to earth with him. But at the same time there was a suspicious crackling movement beside him, and his astonished eye saw a young spruce sapling bending down above him to strike him. His jaws let go their grip, and he leaped backward to escape this strange danger, his lips drawn back from his fangs, his throat snarling, every hair bristling with rage and fright. And in that moment the sapling reared its slender length upright and the rabbit soared dancing in the air again.

The she-wolf was angry. She sank her fangs into her mate's shoulder in reproof; and he, frightened, unaware of what constituted this new onslaught, struck back ferociously and in still greater fright, ripping down the side of the she-wolf's muzzle. For him to resent such reproof was equally unexpected to her, and she sprang upon him in snarling indignation. Then he discovered his mistake and tried to placate her. But she proceeded to punish him roundly, until he gave over all attempts at placation, and whirled in a circle, his head away from her, his shoulders receiving the punishment of her teeth.

In the meantime the rabbit danced above them in the air. The she-wolf sat down in the snow, and old One Eye, now more in fear of his mate than of the mysterious sapling, again sprang for the rabbit. As he sank back with it between his teeth, he kept his eye on the sapling. As before, it followed him back to earth. He crouched down under the impending blow, his hair bristling, but his teeth still keeping tight hold of the rabbit. But the blow did not fall. The sapling remained bent above him. When he moved it moved, and he growled at it through his clenched jaws; when he remained still, it remained still, and he concluded it was safer to continue remaining still. Yet the warm blood of the rabbit tasted good in his mouth.

It was his mate who relieved him from the quandary in which he found himself. She took the rabbit from him, and while the sapling swayed and teetered threateningly above her she calmly gnawed off the rabbit's head. At once the sapling shot up, and after that gave no more trouble, remaining in the decorous and perpendicular position in which nature had intended it to grow. Then, between them, the she-wolf and One Eye devoured the game which the mysterious sapling had caught for them.

There were other run-ways and alleys where rabbits were hanging in the air, and the wolf-pair prospected them all, the she-wolf leading the way, old One Eye following and observant, learning the method of robbing snares — a knowledge destined to stand him in good stead in the days to come.

## Chapter II — The Lair

For two days the she-wolf and One Eye hung about the Indian camp. He was worried and apprehensive, yet the camp lured his mate and she was loath to depart. But when, one morning, the air was rent with the report of a rifle close at hand, and a bullet smashed against a tree trunk several inches from One Eye's head, they hesitated no more, but went off on a long, swinging lope that put quick miles between them and the danger.

They did not go far — a couple of days' journey. The she-wolf's need to find the thing for which she searched had now become imperative. She was getting very heavy, and could run but slowly. Once, in the pursuit of a rabbit, which she ordinarily would have caught with ease, she gave over and lay down and rested. One Eye came to her; but when he touched her neck gently with his muzzle she snapped at him with such quick fierceness that he tumbled over backward and cut a ridiculous figure in his effort to escape her teeth. Her temper was now shorter than ever; but he had become more patient than ever and more solicitous.

And then she found the thing for which she sought. It was a few miles up a small stream that in the summer time flowed into the Mackenzie, but that then was frozen over and frozen down to its rocky bottom — a dead stream of solid white from source to mouth. The she-wolf was trotting wearily along, her mate well in advance, when she came upon the overhanging, high clay-bank. She turned aside and trotted over to it. The wear and tear of spring storms and melting snows had underwashed the bank and in one place had made a small cave out of a narrow fissure.

She paused at the mouth of the cave and looked the wall over carefully. Then, on one side and the other, she ran along the base of the wall to where its abrupt bulk merged from the softer-lined landscape. Returning to the cave, she entered its narrow mouth. For a short three feet she was compelled to crouch, then the walls widened and rose higher in a little round chamber nearly six feet in diameter. The roof barely cleared her head. It was dry and cosy. She inspected it with painstaking care, while One Eye, who had returned, stood in the entrance and patiently watched her. She dropped her head, with her nose to the ground and directed toward a point near to her closely bunched feet, and around this point she circled several times; then, with a tired sigh that was almost a grunt, she curled her body in, relaxed her legs, and dropped down, her head toward the entrance. One Eye, with pointed, interested ears, laughed at her, and beyond, outlined against the white light, she could see the brush of his tail waving good-naturedly. Her own ears, with a snuggling movement, laid their

sharp points backward and down against the head for a moment, while her mouth opened and her tongue lolled peaceably out, and in this way she expressed that she was pleased and satisfied.

One Eye was hungry. Though he lay down in the entrance and slept, his sleep was fitful. He kept awaking and cocking his ears at the bright world without, where the April sun was blazing across the snow. When he dozed, upon his ears would steal the faint whispers of hidden trickles of running water, and he would rouse and listen intently. The sun had come back, and all the awakening Northland world was calling to him. Life was stirring. The feel of spring was in the air, the feel of growing life under the snow, of sap ascending in the trees, of buds bursting the shackles of the frost.

He cast anxious glances at his mate, but she showed no desire to get up. He looked outside, and half a dozen snow-birds fluttered across his field of vision. He started to get up, then looked back to his mate again, and settled down and dozed. A shrill and minute singing stole upon his hearing. Once, and twice, he sleepily brushed his nose with his paw. Then he woke up. There, buzzing in the air at the tip of his nose, was a lone mosquito. It was a full-grown mosquito, one that had lain frozen in a dry log all winter and that had now been thawed out by the sun. He could resist the call of the world no longer. Besides, he was hungry.

He crawled over to his mate and tried to persuade her to get up. But she only snarled at him, and he walked out alone into the bright sunshine to find the snow-surface soft under foot and the travelling difficult. He went up the frozen bed of the stream, where the snow, shaded by the trees, was yet hard and crystalline. He was gone eight hours, and he came back through the darkness hungrier than when he had started. He had found game, but he had not caught it. He had broken through the melting snow crust, and wallowed, while the snowshoe rabbits had skimmed along on top lightly as ever.

He paused at the mouth of the cave with a sudden shock of suspicion. Faint, strange sounds came from within. They were sounds not made by his mate, and yet they were remotely familiar. He bellied cautiously inside and was met by a warning snarl from the she-wolf. This he received without perturbation, though he obeyed it by keeping his distance; but he remained interested in the other sounds — faint, muffled sobbings and slubberings.

His mate warned him irritably away, and he curled up and slept in the entrance. When morning came and a dim light pervaded the lair, he again sought after the source of the remotely familiar sounds. There was a new note in his mate's warning snarl. It was a jealous note, and he was very careful in keeping a respectful distance. Nevertheless, he made out, sheltering between her legs against the length of her body, five strange little bundles of life, very feeble, very helpless, making tiny whimpering noises, with eyes that did not open to the light. He was surprised. It was not the first time in his long and successful life that this thing had happened. It had happened many times, yet each time it was as fresh a surprise as ever to him.

His mate looked at him anxiously. Every little while she emitted a low growl, and at times, when it seemed to her he approached too near, the growl shot up in her throat

to a sharp snarl. Of her own experience she had no memory of the thing happening; but in her instinct, which was the experience of all the mothers of wolves, there lurked a memory of fathers that had eaten their new-born and helpless progeny. It manifested itself as a fear strong within her, that made her prevent One Eye from more closely inspecting the cubs he had fathered.

But there was no danger. Old One Eye was feeling the urge of an impulse, that was, in turn, an instinct that had come down to him from all the fathers of wolves. He did not question it, nor puzzle over it. It was there, in the fibre of his being; and it was the most natural thing in the world that he should obey it by turning his back on his new-born family and by trotting out and away on the meat-trail whereby he lived.

Five or six miles from the lair, the stream divided, its forks going off among the mountains at a right angle. Here, leading up the left fork, he came upon a fresh track. He smelled it and found it so recent that he crouched swiftly, and looked in the direction in which it disappeared. Then he turned deliberately and took the right fork. The footprint was much larger than the one his own feet made, and he knew that in the wake of such a trail there was little meat for him.

Half a mile up the right fork, his quick ears caught the sound of gnawing teeth. He stalked the quarry and found it to be a porcupine, standing upright against a tree and trying his teeth on the bark. One Eye approached carefully but hopelessly. He knew the breed, though he had never met it so far north before; and never in his long life had porcupine served him for a meal. But he had long since learned that there was such a thing as Chance, or Opportunity, and he continued to draw near. There was never any telling what might happen, for with live things events were somehow always happening differently.

The porcupine rolled itself into a ball, radiating long, sharp needles in all directions that defied attack. In his youth One Eye had once sniffed too near a similar, apparently inert ball of quills, and had the tail flick out suddenly in his face. One quill he had carried away in his muzzle, where it had remained for weeks, a rankling flame, until it finally worked out. So he lay down, in a comfortable crouching position, his nose fully a foot away, and out of the line of the tail. Thus he waited, keeping perfectly quiet. There was no telling. Something might happen. The porcupine might unroll. There might be opportunity for a deft and ripping thrust of paw into the tender, unguarded belly.

But at the end of half an hour he arose, growled wrathfully at the motionless ball, and trotted on. He had waited too often and futilely in the past for porcupines to unroll, to waste any more time. He continued up the right fork. The day wore along, and nothing rewarded his hunt.

The urge of his awakened instinct of fatherhood was strong upon him. He must find meat. In the afternoon he blundered upon a ptarmigan. He came out of a thicket and found himself face to face with the slow-witted bird. It was sitting on a log, not a foot beyond the end of his nose. Each saw the other. The bird made a startled rise, but he struck it with his paw, and smashed it down to earth, then pounced upon it, and

caught it in his teeth as it scuttled across the snow trying to rise in the air again. As his teeth crunched through the tender flesh and fragile bones, he began naturally to eat. Then he remembered, and, turning on the back-track, started for home, carrying the ptarmigan in his mouth.

A mile above the forks, running velvet-footed as was his custom, a gliding shadow that cautiously prospected each new vista of the trail, he came upon later imprints of the large tracks he had discovered in the early morning. As the track led his way, he followed, prepared to meet the maker of it at every turn of the stream.

He slid his head around a corner of rock, where began an unusually large bend in the stream, and his quick eyes made out something that sent him crouching swiftly down. It was the maker of the track, a large female lynx. She was crouching as he had crouched once that day, in front of her the tight-rolled ball of quills. If he had been a gliding shadow before, he now became the ghost of such a shadow, as he crept and circled around, and came up well to leeward of the silent, motionless pair.

He lay down in the snow, depositing the ptarmigan beside him, and with eyes peering through the needles of a low-growing spruce he watched the play of life before him — the waiting lynx and the waiting porcupine, each intent on life; and, such was the curiousness of the game, the way of life for one lay in the eating of the other, and the way of life for the other lay in being not eaten. While old One Eye, the wolf crouching in the covert, played his part, too, in the game, waiting for some strange freak of Chance, that might help him on the meat-trail which was his way of life.

Half an hour passed, an hour; and nothing happened. The balls of quills might have been a stone for all it moved; the lynx might have been frozen to marble; and old One Eye might have been dead. Yet all three animals were keyed to a tenseness of living that was almost painful, and scarcely ever would it come to them to be more alive than they were then in their seeming petrification.

One Eye moved slightly and peered forth with increased eagerness. Something was happening. The porcupine had at last decided that its enemy had gone away. Slowly, cautiously, it was unrolling its ball of impregnable armour. It was agitated by no tremor of anticipation. Slowly, slowly, the bristling ball straightened out and lengthened. One Eye watching, felt a sudden moistness in his mouth and a drooling of saliva, involuntary, excited by the living meat that was spreading itself like a repast before him.

Not quite entirely had the porcupine unrolled when it discovered its enemy. In that instant the lynx struck. The blow was like a flash of light. The paw, with rigid claws curving like talons, shot under the tender belly and came back with a swift ripping movement. Had the porcupine been entirely unrolled, or had it not discovered its enemy a fraction of a second before the blow was struck, the paw would have escaped unscathed; but a side-flick of the tail sank sharp quills into it as it was withdrawn.

Everything had happened at once — the blow, the counter-blow, the squeal of agony from the porcupine, the big cat's squall of sudden hurt and astonishment. One Eye half arose in his excitement, his ears up, his tail straight out and quivering behind him. The lynx's bad temper got the best of her. She sprang savagely at the thing that had

hurt her. But the porcupine, squealing and grunting, with disrupted anatomy trying feebly to roll up into its ball-protection, flicked out its tail again, and again the big cat squalled with hurt and astonishment. Then she fell to backing away and sneezing, her nose bristling with quills like a monstrous pin-cushion. She brushed her nose with her paws, trying to dislodge the fiery darts, thrust it into the snow, and rubbed it against twigs and branches, and all the time leaping about, ahead, sidewise, up and down, in a frenzy of pain and fright.

She sneezed continually, and her stub of a tail was doing its best toward lashing about by giving quick, violent jerks. She quit her antics, and quieted down for a long minute. One Eye watched. And even he could not repress a start and an involuntary bristling of hair along his back when she suddenly leaped, without warning, straight up in the air, at the same time emitting a long and most terrible squall. Then she sprang away, up the trail, squalling with every leap she made.

It was not until her racket had faded away in the distance and died out that One Eye ventured forth. He walked as delicately as though all the snow were carpeted with porcupine quills, erect and ready to pierce the soft pads of his feet. The porcupine met his approach with a furious squealing and a clashing of its long teeth. It had managed to roll up in a ball again, but it was not quite the old compact ball; its muscles were too much torn for that. It had been ripped almost in half, and was still bleeding profusely.

One Eye scooped out mouthfuls of the blood-soaked snow, and chewed and tasted and swallowed. This served as a relish, and his hunger increased mightily; but he was too old in the world to forget his caution. He waited. He lay down and waited, while the porcupine grated its teeth and uttered grunts and sobs and occasional sharp little squeals. In a little while, One Eye noticed that the quills were drooping and that a great quivering had set up. The quivering came to an end suddenly. There was a final defiant clash of the long teeth. Then all the quills drooped quite down, and the body relaxed and moved no more.

With a nervous, shrinking paw, One Eye stretched out the porcupine to its full length and turned it over on its back. Nothing had happened. It was surely dead. He studied it intently for a moment, then took a careful grip with his teeth and started off down the stream, partly carrying, partly dragging the porcupine, with head turned to the side so as to avoid stepping on the prickly mass. He recollected something, dropped the burden, and trotted back to where he had left the ptarmigan. He did not hesitate a moment. He knew clearly what was to be done, and this he did by promptly eating the ptarmigan. Then he returned and took up his burden.

When he dragged the result of his day's hunt into the cave, the she-wolf inspected it, turned her muzzle to him, and lightly licked him on the neck. But the next instant she was warning him away from the cubs with a snarl that was less harsh than usual and that was more apologetic than menacing. Her instinctive fear of the father of her progeny was toning down. He was behaving as a wolf-father should, and manifesting no unholy desire to devour the young lives she had brought into the world.



## Chapter III — The Grey Cub

He was different from his brothers and sisters. Their hair already betrayed the reddish hue inherited from their mother, the she-wolf; while he alone, in this particular, took after his father. He was the one little grey cub of the litter. He had bred true to the straight wolf-stock — in fact, he had bred true to old One Eye himself, physically, with but a single exception, and that was he had two eyes to his father's one.

The grey cub's eyes had not been open long, yet already he could see with steady clearness. And while his eyes were still closed, he had felt, tasted, and smelled. He knew his two brothers and his two sisters very well. He had begun to romp with them in a feeble, awkward way, and even to squabble, his little throat vibrating with a queer rasping noise (the forerunner of the growl), as he worked himself into a passion. And long before his eyes had opened he had learned by touch, taste, and smell to know his mother — a fount of warmth and liquid food and tenderness. She possessed a gentle, caressing tongue that soothed him when it passed over his soft little body, and that impelled him to snuggle close against her and to doze off to sleep.

Most of the first month of his life had been passed thus in sleeping; but now he could see quite well, and he stayed awake for longer periods of time, and he was coming to learn his world quite well. His world was gloomy; but he did not know that, for he knew no other world. It was dim-lighted; but his eyes had never had to adjust themselves to any other light. His world was very small. Its limits were the walls of the lair; but as he had no knowledge of the wide world outside, he was never oppressed by the narrow confines of his existence.

But he had early discovered that one wall of his world was different from the rest. This was the mouth of the cave and the source of light. He had discovered that it was different from the other walls long before he had any thoughts of his own, any conscious volitions. It had been an irresistible attraction before ever his eyes opened and looked upon it. The light from it had beat upon his sealed lids, and the eyes and the optic nerves had pulsated to little, sparklike flashes, warm-coloured and strangely pleasing. The life of his body, and of every fibre of his body, the life that was the very substance of his body and that was apart from his own personal life, had yearned toward this light and urged his body toward it in the same way that the cunning chemistry of a plant urges it toward the sun.

Always, in the beginning, before his conscious life dawned, he had crawled toward the mouth of the cave. And in this his brothers and sisters were one with him. Never, in that period, did any of them crawl toward the dark corners of the back-wall. The light drew them as if they were plants; the chemistry of the life that composed them demanded the light as a necessity of being; and their little puppet-bodies crawled blindly and chemically, like the tendrils of a vine. Later on, when each developed individuality and became personally conscious of impulsions and desires, the attraction of the light increased. They were always crawling and sprawling toward it, and being driven back from it by their mother.

It was in this way that the grey cub learned other attributes of his mother than the soft, soothing, tongue. In his insistent crawling toward the light, he discovered in her a nose that with a sharp nudge administered rebuke, and later, a paw, that crushed him down and rolled him over and over with swift, calculating stroke. Thus he learned hurt; and on top of it he learned to avoid hurt, first, by not incurring the risk of it; and second, when he had incurred the risk, by dodging and by retreating. These were conscious actions, and were the results of his first generalisations upon the world. Before that he had recoiled automatically from hurt, as he had crawled automatically toward the light. After that he recoiled from hurt because he knew that it was hurt.

He was a fierce little cub. So were his brothers and sisters. It was to be expected. He was a carnivorous animal. He came of a breed of meat-killers and meat-eaters. His father and mother lived wholly upon meat. The milk he had sucked with his first flickering life, was milk transformed directly from meat, and now, at a month old, when his eyes had been open for but a week, he was beginning himself to eat meat — meat half-digested by the she-wolf and disgorged for the five growing cubs that already made too great demand upon her breast.

But he was, further, the fiercest of the litter. He could make a louder rasping growl than any of them. His tiny rages were much more terrible than theirs. It was he that first learned the trick of rolling a fellow-cub over with a cunning paw-stroke. And it was he that first gripped another cub by the ear and pulled and tugged and growled through jaws tight-clenched. And certainly it was he that caused the mother the most trouble in keeping her litter from the mouth of the cave.

The fascination of the light for the grey cub increased from day to day. He was perpetually departing on yard-long adventures toward the cave's entrance, and as perpetually being driven back. Only he did not know it for an entrance. He did not know anything about entrances — passages whereby one goes from one place to another place. He did not know any other place, much less of a way to get there. So to him the entrance of the cave was a wall — a wall of light. As the sun was to the outside dweller, this wall was to him the sun of his world. It attracted him as a candle attracts a moth. He was always striving to attain it. The life that was so swiftly expanding within him, urged him continually toward the wall of light. The life that was within him knew that it was the one way out, the way he was predestined to tread. But he himself did not know anything about it. He did not know there was any outside at all.

There was one strange thing about this wall of light. His father (he had already come to recognise his father as the one other dweller in the world, a creature like his mother, who slept near the light and was a bringer of meat) — his father had a way of walking right into the white far wall and disappearing. The grey cub could not understand this. Though never permitted by his mother to approach that wall, he had approached the other walls, and encountered hard obstruction on the end of his tender nose. This hurt. And after several such adventures, he left the walls alone. Without thinking about it, he accepted this disappearing into the wall as a peculiarity of his father, as milk and half-digested meat were peculiarities of his mother.

In fact, the grey cub was not given to thinking — at least, to the kind of thinking customary of men. His brain worked in dim ways. Yet his conclusions were as sharp and distinct as those achieved by men. He had a method of accepting things, without questioning the why and wherefore. In reality, this was the act of classification. He was never disturbed over why a thing happened. How it happened was sufficient for him. Thus, when he had bumped his nose on the back-wall a few times, he accepted that he would not disappear into walls. In the same way he accepted that his father could disappear into walls. But he was not in the least disturbed by desire to find out the reason for the difference between his father and himself. Logic and physics were no part of his mental make-up.

Like most creatures of the Wild, he early experienced famine. There came a time when not only did the meat-supply cease, but the milk no longer came from his mother's breast. At first, the cubs whimpered and cried, but for the most part they slept. It was not long before they were reduced to a coma of hunger. There were no more spats and squabbles, no more tiny rages nor attempts at growling; while the adventures toward the far white wall ceased altogether. The cubs slept, while the life that was in them flickered and died down.

One Eye was desperate. He ranged far and wide, and slept but little in the lair that had now become cheerless and miserable. The she-wolf, too, left her litter and went out in search of meat. In the first days after the birth of the cubs, One Eye had journeyed several times back to the Indian camp and robbed the rabbit snares; but, with the melting of the snow and the opening of the streams, the Indian camp had moved away, and that source of supply was closed to him.

When the grey cub came back to life and again took interest in the far white wall, he found that the population of his world had been reduced. Only one sister remained to him. The rest were gone. As he grew stronger, he found himself compelled to play alone, for the sister no longer lifted her head nor moved about. His little body rounded out with the meat he now ate; but the food had come too late for her. She slept continuously, a tiny skeleton flung round with skin in which the flame flickered lower and lower and at last went out.

Then there came a time when the grey cub no longer saw his father appearing and disappearing in the wall nor lying down asleep in the entrance. This had happened at the end of a second and less severe famine. The she-wolf knew why One Eye never came back, but there was no way by which she could tell what she had seen to the grey cub. Hunting herself for meat, up the left fork of the stream where lived the lynx, she had followed a day-old trail of One Eye. And she had found him, or what remained of him, at the end of the trail. There were many signs of the battle that had been fought, and of the lynx's withdrawal to her lair after having won the victory. Before she went away, the she-wolf had found this lair, but the signs told her that the lynx was inside, and she had not dared to venture in.

After that, the she-wolf in her hunting avoided the left fork. For she knew that in the lynx's lair was a litter of kittens, and she knew the lynx for a fierce, bad-tempered

creature and a terrible fighter. It was all very well for half a dozen wolves to drive a lynx, spitting and bristling, up a tree; but it was quite a different matter for a lone wolf to encounter a lynx — especially when the lynx was known to have a litter of hungry kittens at her back.

But the Wild is the Wild, and motherhood is motherhood, at all times fiercely protective whether in the Wild or out of it; and the time was to come when the she-wolf, for her grey cub's sake, would venture the left fork, and the lair in the rocks, and the lynx's wrath.

## Chapter IV — The Wall of the World

By the time his mother began leaving the cave on hunting expeditions, the cub had learned well the law that forbade his approaching the entrance. Not only had this law been forcibly and many times impressed on him by his mother's nose and paw, but in him the instinct of fear was developing. Never, in his brief cave-life, had he encountered anything of which to be afraid. Yet fear was in him. It had come down to him from a remote ancestry through a thousand thousand lives. It was a heritage he had received directly from One Eye and the she-wolf; but to them, in turn, it had been passed down through all the generations of wolves that had gone before. Fear! — that legacy of the Wild which no animal may escape nor exchange for pottage.

So the grey cub knew fear, though he knew not the stuff of which fear was made. Possibly he accepted it as one of the restrictions of life. For he had already learned that there were such restrictions. Hunger he had known; and when he could not appease his hunger he had felt restriction. The hard obstruction of the cave-wall, the sharp nudge of his mother's nose, the smashing stroke of her paw, the hunger unappeased of several famines, had borne in upon him that all was not freedom in the world, that to life there was limitations and restraints. These limitations and restraints were laws. To be obedient to them was to escape hurt and make for happiness.

He did not reason the question out in this man fashion. He merely classified the things that hurt and the things that did not hurt. And after such classification he avoided the things that hurt, the restrictions and restraints, in order to enjoy the satisfactions and the remunerations of life.

Thus it was that in obedience to the law laid down by his mother, and in obedience to the law of that unknown and nameless thing, fear, he kept away from the mouth of the cave. It remained to him a white wall of light. When his mother was absent, he slept most of the time, while during the intervals that he was awake he kept very quiet, suppressing the whimpering cries that tickled in his throat and strove for noise.

Once, lying awake, he heard a strange sound in the white wall. He did not know that it was a wolverine, standing outside, all a-trembling with its own daring, and cautiously scenting out the contents of the cave. The cub knew only that the sniff was

strange, a something unclassified, therefore unknown and terrible — for the unknown was one of the chief elements that went into the making of fear.

The hair bristled upon the grey cub's back, but it bristled silently. How was he to know that this thing that sniffed was a thing at which to bristle? It was not born of any knowledge of his, yet it was the visible expression of the fear that was in him, and for which, in his own life, there was no accounting. But fear was accompanied by another instinct — that of concealment. The cub was in a frenzy of terror, yet he lay without movement or sound, frozen, petrified into immobility, to all appearances dead. His mother, coming home, growled as she smelt the wolverine's track, and bounded into the cave and licked and nozzled him with undue vehemence of affection. And the cub felt that somehow he had escaped a great hurt.

But there were other forces at work in the cub, the greatest of which was growth. Instinct and law demanded of him obedience. But growth demanded disobedience. His mother and fear impelled him to keep away from the white wall. Growth is life, and life is for ever destined to make for light. So there was no damming up the tide of life that was rising within him — rising with every mouthful of meat he swallowed, with every breath he drew. In the end, one day, fear and obedience were swept away by the rush of life, and the cub straddled and sprawled toward the entrance.

Unlike any other wall with which he had had experience, this wall seemed to recede from him as he approached. No hard surface collided with the tender little nose he thrust out tentatively before him. The substance of the wall seemed as permeable and yielding as light. And as condition, in his eyes, had the seeming of form, so he entered into what had been wall to him and bathed in the substance that composed it.

It was bewildering. He was sprawling through solidity. And ever the light grew brighter. Fear urged him to go back, but growth drove him on. Suddenly he found himself at the mouth of the cave. The wall, inside which he had thought himself, as suddenly leaped back before him to an immeasurable distance. The light had become painfully bright. He was dazzled by it. Likewise he was made dizzy by this abrupt and tremendous extension of space. Automatically, his eyes were adjusting themselves to the brightness, focusing themselves to meet the increased distance of objects. At first, the wall had leaped beyond his vision. He now saw it again; but it had taken upon itself a remarkable remoteness. Also, its appearance had changed. It was now a variegated wall, composed of the trees that fringed the stream, the opposing mountain that towered above the trees, and the sky that out-towered the mountain.

A great fear came upon him. This was more of the terrible unknown. He crouched down on the lip of the cave and gazed out on the world. He was very much afraid. Because it was unknown, it was hostile to him. Therefore the hair stood up on end along his back and his lips wrinkled weakly in an attempt at a ferocious and intimidating snarl. Out of his puniness and fright he challenged and menaced the whole wide world.

Nothing happened. He continued to gaze, and in his interest he forgot to snarl. Also, he forgot to be afraid. For the time, fear had been routed by growth, while growth had assumed the guise of curiosity. He began to notice near objects — an open portion of

the stream that flashed in the sun, the blasted pine-tree that stood at the base of the slope, and the slope itself, that ran right up to him and ceased two feet beneath the lip of the cave on which he crouched.

Now the grey cub had lived all his days on a level floor. He had never experienced the hurt of a fall. He did not know what a fall was. So he stepped boldly out upon the air. His hind-legs still rested on the cave-lip, so he fell forward head downward. The earth struck him a harsh blow on the nose that made him yelp. Then he began rolling down the slope, over and over. He was in a panic of terror. The unknown had caught him at last. It had gripped savagely hold of him and was about to wreak upon him some terrific hurt. Growth was now routed by fear, and he ki-yi'd like any frightened puppy.

The unknown bore him on he knew not to what frightful hurt, and he yelped and ki-yi'd unceasingly. This was a different proposition from crouching in frozen fear while the unknown lurked just alongside. Now the unknown had caught tight hold of him. Silence would do no good. Besides, it was not fear, but terror, that convulsed him.

But the slope grew more gradual, and its base was grass-covered. Here the cub lost momentum. When at last he came to a stop, he gave one last agonised yell and then a long, whimpering wail. Also, and quite as a matter of course, as though in his life he had already made a thousand toilets, he proceeded to lick away the dry clay that soiled him.

After that he sat up and gazed about him, as might the first man of the earth who landed upon Mars. The cub had broken through the wall of the world, the unknown had let go its hold of him, and here he was without hurt. But the first man on Mars would have experienced less unfamiliarity than did he. Without any antecedent knowledge, without any warning whatever that such existed, he found himself an explorer in a totally new world.

Now that the terrible unknown had let go of him, he forgot that the unknown had any terrors. He was aware only of curiosity in all the things about him. He inspected the grass beneath him, the moss-berry plant just beyond, and the dead trunk of the blasted pine that stood on the edge of an open space among the trees. A squirrel, running around the base of the trunk, came full upon him, and gave him a great fright. He cowered down and snarled. But the squirrel was as badly scared. It ran up the tree, and from a point of safety chattered back savagely.

This helped the cub's courage, and though the woodpecker he next encountered gave him a start, he proceeded confidently on his way. Such was his confidence, that when a moose-bird impudently hopped up to him, he reached out at it with a playful paw. The result was a sharp peck on the end of his nose that made him cower down and ki-yi. The noise he made was too much for the moose-bird, who sought safety in flight.

But the cub was learning. His misty little mind had already made an unconscious classification. There were live things and things not alive. Also, he must watch out for the live things. The things not alive remained always in one place, but the live things

moved about, and there was no telling what they might do. The thing to expect of them was the unexpected, and for this he must be prepared.

He travelled very clumsily. He ran into sticks and things. A twig that he thought a long way off, would the next instant hit him on the nose or rake along his ribs. There were inequalities of surface. Sometimes he overstepped and stubbed his nose. Quite as often he understepped and stubbed his feet. Then there were the pebbles and stones that turned under him when he trod upon them; and from them he came to know that the things not alive were not all in the same state of stable equilibrium as was his cave — also, that small things not alive were more liable than large things to fall down or turn over. But with every mishap he was learning. The longer he walked, the better he walked. He was adjusting himself. He was learning to calculate his own muscular movements, to know his physical limitations, to measure distances between objects, and between objects and himself.

His was the luck of the beginner. Born to be a hunter of meat (though he did not know it), he blundered upon meat just outside his own cave-door on his first foray into the world. It was by sheer blundering that he chanced upon the shrewdly hidden ptarmigan nest. He fell into it. He had essayed to walk along the trunk of a fallen pine. The rotten bark gave way under his feet, and with a despairing yelp he pitched down the rounded crescent, smashed through the leafage and stalks of a small bush, and in the heart of the bush, on the ground, fetched up in the midst of seven ptarmigan chicks.

They made noises, and at first he was frightened at them. Then he perceived that they were very little, and he became bolder. They moved. He placed his paw on one, and its movements were accelerated. This was a source of enjoyment to him. He smelled it. He picked it up in his mouth. It struggled and tickled his tongue. At the same time he was made aware of a sensation of hunger. His jaws closed together. There was a crunching of fragile bones, and warm blood ran in his mouth. The taste of it was good. This was meat, the same as his mother gave him, only it was alive between his teeth and therefore better. So he ate the ptarmigan. Nor did he stop till he had devoured the whole brood. Then he licked his chops in quite the same way his mother did, and began to crawl out of the bush.

He encountered a feathered whirlwind. He was confused and blinded by the rush of it and the beat of angry wings. He hid his head between his paws and yelped. The blows increased. The mother ptarmigan was in a fury. Then he became angry. He rose up, snarling, striking out with his paws. He sank his tiny teeth into one of the wings and pulled and tugged sturdily. The ptarmigan struggled against him, showering blows upon him with her free wing. It was his first battle. He was elated. He forgot all about the unknown. He no longer was afraid of anything. He was fighting, tearing at a live thing that was striking at him. Also, this live thing was meat. The lust to kill was on him. He had just destroyed little live things. He would now destroy a big live thing. He was too busy and happy to know that he was happy. He was thrilling and exulting in ways new to him and greater to him than any he had known before.

He held on to the wing and growled between his tight-clenched teeth. The ptarmigan dragged him out of the bush. When she turned and tried to drag him back into the bush's shelter, he pulled her away from it and on into the open. And all the time she was making outcry and striking with her free wing, while feathers were flying like a snow-fall. The pitch to which he was aroused was tremendous. All the fighting blood of his breed was up in him and surging through him. This was living, though he did not know it. He was realising his own meaning in the world; he was doing that for which he was made — killing meat and battling to kill it. He was justifying his existence, than which life can do no greater; for life achieves its summit when it does to the uttermost that which it was equipped to do.

After a time, the ptarmigan ceased her struggling. He still held her by the wing, and they lay on the ground and looked at each other. He tried to growl threateningly, ferociously. She pecked on his nose, which by now, what of previous adventures was sore. He winced but held on. She pecked him again and again. From wincing he went to whimpering. He tried to back away from her, oblivious to the fact that by his hold on her he dragged her after him. A rain of pecks fell on his ill-used nose. The flood of fight ebbed down in him, and, releasing his prey, he turned tail and scampered on across the open in inglorious retreat.

He lay down to rest on the other side of the open, near the edge of the bushes, his tongue lolling out, his chest heaving and panting, his nose still hurting him and causing him to continue his whimper. But as he lay there, suddenly there came to him a feeling as of something terrible impending. The unknown with all its terrors rushed upon him, and he shrank back instinctively into the shelter of the bush. As he did so, a draught of air fanned him, and a large, winged body swept ominously and silently past. A hawk, driving down out of the blue, had barely missed him.

While he lay in the bush, recovering from his fright and peering fearfully out, the mother-ptarmigan on the other side of the open space fluttered out of the ravaged nest. It was because of her loss that she paid no attention to the winged bolt of the sky. But the cub saw, and it was a warning and a lesson to him — the swift downward swoop of the hawk, the short skim of its body just above the ground, the strike of its talons in the body of the ptarmigan, the ptarmigan's squawk of agony and fright, and the hawk's rush upward into the blue, carrying the ptarmigan away with it.

It was a long time before the cub left its shelter. He had learned much. Live things were meat. They were good to eat. Also, live things when they were large enough, could give hurt. It was better to eat small live things like ptarmigan chicks, and to let alone large live things like ptarmigan hens. Nevertheless he felt a little prick of ambition, a sneaking desire to have another battle with that ptarmigan hen — only the hawk had carried her away. May be there were other ptarmigan hens. He would go and see.

He came down a shelving bank to the stream. He had never seen water before. The footing looked good. There were no inequalities of surface. He stepped boldly out on it; and went down, crying with fear, into the embrace of the unknown. It was cold, and he gasped, breathing quickly. The water rushed into his lungs instead of the air that



had always accompanied his act of breathing. The suffocation he experienced was like the pang of death. To him it signified death. He had no conscious knowledge of death, but like every animal of the Wild, he possessed the instinct of death. To him it stood as the greatest of hurts. It was the very essence of the unknown; it was the sum of the terrors of the unknown, the one culminating and unthinkable catastrophe that could happen to him, about which he knew nothing and about which he feared everything.

He came to the surface, and the sweet air rushed into his open mouth. He did not go down again. Quite as though it had been a long-established custom of his he struck out with all his legs and began to swim. The near bank was a yard away; but he had come up with his back to it, and the first thing his eyes rested upon was the opposite bank, toward which he immediately began to swim. The stream was a small one, but in the pool it widened out to a score of feet.

Midway in the passage, the current picked up the cub and swept him downstream. He was caught in the miniature rapid at the bottom of the pool. Here was little chance for swimming. The quiet water had become suddenly angry. Sometimes he was under, sometimes on top. At all times he was in violent motion, now being turned over or around, and again, being smashed against a rock. And with every rock he struck, he yelped. His progress was a series of yelps, from which might have been adduced the number of rocks he encountered.

Below the rapid was a second pool, and here, captured by the eddy, he was gently borne to the bank, and as gently deposited on a bed of gravel. He crawled frantically clear of the water and lay down. He had learned some more about the world. Water was not alive. Yet it moved. Also, it looked as solid as the earth, but was without any solidity at all. His conclusion was that things were not always what they appeared to be. The cub's fear of the unknown was an inherited distrust, and it had now been strengthened by experience. Thenceforth, in the nature of things, he would possess an abiding distrust of appearances. He would have to learn the reality of a thing before he could put his faith into it.

One other adventure was destined for him that day. He had recollected that there was such a thing in the world as his mother. And then there came to him a feeling that he wanted her more than all the rest of the things in the world. Not only was his body tired with the adventures it had undergone, but his little brain was equally tired. In all the days he had lived it had not worked so hard as on this one day. Furthermore, he was sleepy. So he started out to look for the cave and his mother, feeling at the same time an overwhelming rush of loneliness and helplessness.

He was sprawling along between some bushes, when he heard a sharp intimidating cry. There was a flash of yellow before his eyes. He saw a weasel leaping swiftly away from him. It was a small live thing, and he had no fear. Then, before him, at his feet, he saw an extremely small live thing, only several inches long, a young weasel, that, like himself, had disobediently gone out adventuring. It tried to retreat before him. He turned it over with his paw. It made a queer, grating noise. The next moment the flash of yellow reappeared before his eyes. He heard again the intimidating cry, and at the

same instant received a sharp blow on the side of the neck and felt the sharp teeth of the mother-weasel cut into his flesh.

While he yelped and ki-yi'd and scrambled backward, he saw the mother-weasel leap upon her young one and disappear with it into the neighbouring thicket. The cut of her teeth in his neck still hurt, but his feelings were hurt more grievously, and he sat down and weakly whimpered. This mother-weasel was so small and so savage. He was yet to learn that for size and weight the weasel was the most ferocious, vindictive, and terrible of all the killers of the Wild. But a portion of this knowledge was quickly to be his.

He was still whimpering when the mother-weasel reappeared. She did not rush him, now that her young one was safe. She approached more cautiously, and the cub had full opportunity to observe her lean, snakelike body, and her head, erect, eager, and snake-like itself. Her sharp, menacing cry sent the hair bristling along his back, and he snarled warningly at her. She came closer and closer. There was a leap, swifter than his unpractised sight, and the lean, yellow body disappeared for a moment out of the field of his vision. The next moment she was at his throat, her teeth buried in his hair and flesh.

At first he snarled and tried to fight; but he was very young, and this was only his first day in the world, and his snarl became a whimper, his fight a struggle to escape. The weasel never relaxed her hold. She hung on, striving to press down with her teeth to the great vein where his life-blood bubbled. The weasel was a drinker of blood, and it was ever her preference to drink from the throat of life itself.

The grey cub would have died, and there would have been no story to write about him, had not the she-wolf come bounding through the bushes. The weasel let go the cub and flashed at the she-wolf's throat, missing, but getting a hold on the jaw instead. The she-wolf flitted her head like the snap of a whip, breaking the weasel's hold and flinging it high in the air. And, still in the air, the she-wolf's jaws closed on the lean, yellow body, and the weasel knew death between the crunching teeth.

The cub experienced another access of affection on the part of his mother. Her joy at finding him seemed even greater than his joy at being found. She nozzled him and caressed him and licked the cuts made in him by the weasel's teeth. Then, between them, mother and cub, they ate the blood-drinker, and after that went back to the cave and slept.

## Chapter V — The Law of Meat

The cub's development was rapid. He rested for two days, and then ventured forth from the cave again. It was on this adventure that he found the young weasel whose mother he had helped eat, and he saw to it that the young weasel went the way of its mother. But on this trip he did not get lost. When he grew tired, he found his way

back to the cave and slept. And every day thereafter found him out and ranging a wider area.

He began to get accurate measurement of his strength and his weakness, and to know when to be bold and when to be cautious. He found it expedient to be cautious all the time, except for the rare moments, when, assured of his own intrepidity, he abandoned himself to petty rages and lusts.

He was always a little demon of fury when he chanced upon a stray ptarmigan. Never did he fail to respond savagely to the chatter of the squirrel he had first met on the blasted pine. While the sight of a moose-bird almost invariably put him into the wildest of rages; for he never forgot the peck on the nose he had received from the first of that ilk he encountered.

But there were times when even a moose-bird failed to affect him, and those were times when he felt himself to be in danger from some other prowling meat hunter. He never forgot the hawk, and its moving shadow always sent him crouching into the nearest thicket. He no longer sprawled and straddled, and already he was developing the gait of his mother, slinking and furtive, apparently without exertion, yet sliding along with a swiftness that was as deceptive as it was imperceptible.

In the matter of meat, his luck had been all in the beginning. The seven ptarmigan chicks and the baby weasel represented the sum of his killings. His desire to kill strengthened with the days, and he cherished hungry ambitions for the squirrel that chattered so volubly and always informed all wild creatures that the wolf-cub was approaching. But as birds flew in the air, squirrels could climb trees, and the cub could only try to crawl unobserved upon the squirrel when it was on the ground.

The cub entertained a great respect for his mother. She could get meat, and she never failed to bring him his share. Further, she was unafraid of things. It did not occur to him that this fearlessness was founded upon experience and knowledge. Its effect on him was that of an impression of power. His mother represented power; and as he grew older he felt this power in the sharper admonishment of her paw; while the reproving nudge of her nose gave place to the slash of her fangs. For this, likewise, he respected his mother. She compelled obedience from him, and the older he grew the shorter grew her temper.

Famine came again, and the cub with clearer consciousness knew once more the bite of hunger. The she-wolf ran herself thin in the quest for meat. She rarely slept any more in the cave, spending most of her time on the meat-trail, and spending it vainly. This famine was not a long one, but it was severe while it lasted. The cub found no more milk in his mother's breast, nor did he get one mouthful of meat for himself.

Before, he had hunted in play, for the sheer joyousness of it; now he hunted in deadly earnestness, and found nothing. Yet the failure of it accelerated his development. He studied the habits of the squirrel with greater carefulness, and strove with greater craft to steal upon it and surprise it. He studied the wood-mice and tried to dig them out of their burrows; and he learned much about the ways of moose-birds and woodpeckers. And there came a day when the hawk's shadow did not drive him crouching into the

bushes. He had grown stronger and wiser, and more confident. Also, he was desperate. So he sat on his haunches, conspicuously in an open space, and challenged the hawk down out of the sky. For he knew that there, floating in the blue above him, was meat, the meat his stomach yearned after so insistently. But the hawk refused to come down and give battle, and the cub crawled away into a thicket and whimpered his disappointment and hunger.

The famine broke. The she-wolf brought home meat. It was strange meat, different from any she had ever brought before. It was a lynx kitten, partly grown, like the cub, but not so large. And it was all for him. His mother had satisfied her hunger elsewhere; though he did not know that it was the rest of the lynx litter that had gone to satisfy her. Nor did he know the desperateness of her deed. He knew only that the velvet-furred kitten was meat, and he ate and waxed happier with every mouthful.

A full stomach conduces to inaction, and the cub lay in the cave, sleeping against his mother's side. He was aroused by her snarling. Never had he heard her snarl so terribly. Possibly in her whole life it was the most terrible snarl she ever gave. There was reason for it, and none knew it better than she. A lynx's lair is not despoiled with impunity. In the full glare of the afternoon light, crouching in the entrance of the cave, the cub saw the lynx-mother. The hair rippled up along his back at the sight. Here was fear, and it did not require his instinct to tell him of it. And if sight alone were not sufficient, the cry of rage the intruder gave, beginning with a snarl and rushing abruptly upward into a hoarse screech, was convincing enough in itself.

The cub felt the prod of the life that was in him, and stood up and snarled valiantly by his mother's side. But she thrust him ignominiously away and behind her. Because of the low-roofed entrance the lynx could not leap in, and when she made a crawling rush of it the she-wolf sprang upon her and pinned her down. The cub saw little of the battle. There was a tremendous snarling and spitting and screeching. The two animals threshed about, the lynx ripping and tearing with her claws and using her teeth as well, while the she-wolf used her teeth alone.

Once, the cub sprang in and sank his teeth into the hind leg of the lynx. He clung on, growling savagely. Though he did not know it, by the weight of his body he clogged the action of the leg and thereby saved his mother much damage. A change in the battle crushed him under both their bodies and wrenched loose his hold. The next moment the two mothers separated, and, before they rushed together again, the lynx lashed out at the cub with a huge fore-paw that ripped his shoulder open to the bone and sent him hurtling sidewise against the wall. Then was added to the uproar the cub's shrill yelp of pain and fright. But the fight lasted so long that he had time to cry himself out and to experience a second burst of courage; and the end of the battle found him again clinging to a hind-leg and furiously growling between his teeth.

The lynx was dead. But the she-wolf was very weak and sick. At first she caressed the cub and licked his wounded shoulder; but the blood she had lost had taken with it her strength, and for all of a day and a night she lay by her dead foe's side, without movement, scarcely breathing. For a week she never left the cave, except for water,

and then her movements were slow and painful. At the end of that time the lynx was devoured, while the she-wolf's wounds had healed sufficiently to permit her to take the meat-trail again.

The cub's shoulder was stiff and sore, and for some time he limped from the terrible slash he had received. But the world now seemed changed. He went about in it with greater confidence, with a feeling of prowess that had not been his in the days before the battle with the lynx. He had looked upon life in a more ferocious aspect; he had fought; he had buried his teeth in the flesh of a foe; and he had survived. And because of all this, he carried himself more boldly, with a touch of defiance that was new in him. He was no longer afraid of minor things, and much of his timidity had vanished, though the unknown never ceased to press upon him with its mysteries and terrors, intangible and ever-menacing.

He began to accompany his mother on the meat-trail, and he saw much of the killing of meat and began to play his part in it. And in his own dim way he learned the law of meat. There were two kinds of life — his own kind and the other kind. His own kind included his mother and himself. The other kind included all live things that moved. But the other kind was divided. One portion was what his own kind killed and ate. This portion was composed of the non-killers and the small killers. The other portion killed and ate his own kind, or was killed and eaten by his own kind. And out of this classification arose the law. The aim of life was meat. Life itself was meat. Life lived on life. There were the eaters and the eaten. The law was: EAT OR BE EATEN. He did not formulate the law in clear, set terms and moralise about it. He did not even think the law; he merely lived the law without thinking about it at all.

He saw the law operating around him on every side. He had eaten the ptarmigan chicks. The hawk had eaten the ptarmigan-mother. The hawk would also have eaten him. Later, when he had grown more formidable, he wanted to eat the hawk. He had eaten the lynx kitten. The lynx-mother would have eaten him had she not herself been killed and eaten. And so it went. The law was being lived about him by all live things, and he himself was part and parcel of the law. He was a killer. His only food was meat, live meat, that ran away swiftly before him, or flew into the air, or climbed trees, or hid in the ground, or faced him and fought with him, or turned the tables and ran after him.

Had the cub thought in man-fashion, he might have epitomised life as a voracious appetite and the world as a place wherein ranged a multitude of appetites, pursuing and being pursued, hunting and being hunted, eating and being eaten, all in blindness and confusion, with violence and disorder, a chaos of gluttony and slaughter, ruled over by chance, merciless, planless, endless.

But the cub did not think in man-fashion. He did not look at things with wide vision. He was single-purposed, and entertained but one thought or desire at a time. Besides the law of meat, there were a myriad other and lesser laws for him to learn and obey. The world was filled with surprise. The stir of the life that was in him, the play of his muscles, was an unending happiness. To run down meat was to experience

thrills and elations. His rages and battles were pleasures. Terror itself, and the mystery of the unknown, led to his living.

And there were easements and satisfactions. To have a full stomach, to doze lazily in the sunshine — such things were remuneration in full for his ardours and toils, while his ardours and toils were in themselves self-remunerative. They were expressions of life, and life is always happy when it is expressing itself. So the cub had no quarrel with his hostile environment. He was very much alive, very happy, and very proud of himself.

# Part III

## Chapter I — The Makers of Fire

The cub came upon it suddenly. It was his own fault. He had been careless. He had left the cave and run down to the stream to drink. It might have been that he took no notice because he was heavy with sleep. (He had been out all night on the meat-trail, and had but just then awakened.) And his carelessness might have been due to the familiarity of the trail to the pool. He had travelled it often, and nothing had ever happened on it.

He went down past the blasted pine, crossed the open space, and trotted in amongst the trees. Then, at the same instant, he saw and smelt. Before him, sitting silently on their haunches, were five live things, the like of which he had never seen before. It was his first glimpse of mankind. But at the sight of him the five men did not spring to their feet, nor show their teeth, nor snarl. They did not move, but sat there, silent and ominous.

Nor did the cub move. Every instinct of his nature would have impelled him to dash wildly away, had there not suddenly and for the first time arisen in him another and counter instinct. A great awe descended upon him. He was beaten down to movelessness by an overwhelming sense of his own weakness and littleness. Here was mastery and power, something far and away beyond him.

The cub had never seen man, yet the instinct concerning man was his. In dim ways he recognised in man the animal that had fought itself to primacy over the other animals of the Wild. Not alone out of his own eyes, but out of the eyes of all his ancestors was the cub now looking upon man — out of eyes that had circled in the darkness around countless winter camp-fires, that had peered from safe distances and from the hearts of thickets at the strange, two-legged animal that was lord over living things. The spell of the cub's heritage was upon him, the fear and the respect born of the centuries of struggle and the accumulated experience of the generations. The heritage was too compelling for a wolf that was only a cub. Had he been full-grown, he would have run away. As it was, he cowered down in a paralysis of fear, already half proffering the submission that his kind had proffered from the first time a wolf came in to sit by man's fire and be made warm.

One of the Indians arose and walked over to him and stooped above him. The cub cowered closer to the ground. It was the unknown, objectified at last, in concrete flesh and blood, bending over him and reaching down to seize hold of him. His hair bristled

involuntarily; his lips writhed back and his little fangs were bared. The hand, poised like doom above him, hesitated, and the man spoke laughing, "Wabam wabisca ip pit tah." ("Look! The white fangs!")

The other Indians laughed loudly, and urged the man on to pick up the cub. As the hand descended closer and closer, there raged within the cub a battle of the instincts. He experienced two great impulsions — to yield and to fight. The resulting action was a compromise. He did both. He yielded till the hand almost touched him. Then he fought, his teeth flashing in a snap that sank them into the hand. The next moment he received a clout alongside the head that knocked him over on his side. Then all fight fled out of him. His puppyhood and the instinct of submission took charge of him. He sat up on his haunches and ki-yi'd. But the man whose hand he had bitten was angry. The cub received a clout on the other side of his head. Whereupon he sat up and ki-yi'd louder than ever.

The four Indians laughed more loudly, while even the man who had been bitten began to laugh. They surrounded the cub and laughed at him, while he wailed out his terror and his hurt. In the midst of it, he heard something. The Indians heard it too. But the cub knew what it was, and with a last, long wail that had in it more of triumph than grief, he ceased his noise and waited for the coming of his mother, of his ferocious and indomitable mother who fought and killed all things and was never afraid. She was snarling as she ran. She had heard the cry of her cub and was dashing to save him.

She bounded in amongst them, her anxious and militant motherhood making her anything but a pretty sight. But to the cub the spectacle of her protective rage was pleasing. He uttered a glad little cry and bounded to meet her, while the man-animals went back hastily several steps. The she-wolf stood over against her cub, facing the men, with bristling hair, a snarl rumbling deep in her throat. Her face was distorted and malignant with menace, even the bridge of the nose wrinkling from tip to eyes so prodigious was her snarl.

Then it was that a cry went up from one of the men. "Kiche!" was what he uttered. It was an exclamation of surprise. The cub felt his mother wilting at the sound.

"Kiche!" the man cried again, this time with sharpness and authority.

And then the cub saw his mother, the she-wolf, the fearless one, crouching down till her belly touched the ground, whimpering, wagging her tail, making peace signs. The cub could not understand. He was appalled. The awe of man rushed over him again. His instinct had been true. His mother verified it. She, too, rendered submission to the man-animals.

The man who had spoken came over to her. He put his hand upon her head, and she only crouched closer. She did not snap, nor threaten to snap. The other men came up, and surrounded her, and felt her, and pawed her, which actions she made no attempt to resent. They were greatly excited, and made many noises with their mouths. These noises were not indication of danger, the cub decided, as he crouched near his mother still bristling from time to time but doing his best to submit.



"It is not strange," an Indian was saying. "Her father was a wolf. It is true, her mother was a dog; but did not my brother tie her out in the woods all of three nights in the mating season? Therefore was the father of Kiche a wolf."

"It is a year, Grey Beaver, since she ran away," spoke a second Indian.

"It is not strange, Salmon Tongue," Grey Beaver answered. "It was the time of the famine, and there was no meat for the dogs."

"She has lived with the wolves," said a third Indian.

"So it would seem, Three Eagles," Grey Beaver answered, laying his hand on the cub; "and this be the sign of it."

The cub snarled a little at the touch of the hand, and the hand flew back to administer a clout. Whereupon the cub covered its fangs, and sank down submissively, while the hand, returning, rubbed behind his ears, and up and down his back.

"This be the sign of it," Grey Beaver went on. "It is plain that his mother is Kiche. But his father was a wolf. Wherefore is there in him little dog and much wolf. His fangs be white, and White Fang shall be his name. I have spoken. He is my dog. For was not Kiche my brother's dog? And is not my brother dead?"

The cub, who had thus received a name in the world, lay and watched. For a time the man-animals continued to make their mouth-noises. Then Grey Beaver took a knife from a sheath that hung around his neck, and went into the thicket and cut a stick. White Fang watched him. He notched the stick at each end and in the notches fastened strings of raw-hide. One string he tied around the throat of Kiche. Then he led her to a small pine, around which he tied the other string.

White Fang followed and lay down beside her. Salmon Tongue's hand reached out to him and rolled him over on his back. Kiche looked on anxiously. White Fang felt fear mounting in him again. He could not quite suppress a snarl, but he made no offer to snap. The hand, with fingers crooked and spread apart, rubbed his stomach in a playful way and rolled him from side to side. It was ridiculous and ungainly, lying there on his back with legs sprawling in the air. Besides, it was a position of such utter helplessness that White Fang's whole nature revolted against it. He could do nothing to defend himself. If this man-animal intended harm, White Fang knew that he could not escape it. How could he spring away with his four legs in the air above him? Yet submission made him master his fear, and he only growled softly. This growl he could not suppress; nor did the man-animal resent it by giving him a blow on the head. And furthermore, such was the strangeness of it, White Fang experienced an unaccountable sensation of pleasure as the hand rubbed back and forth. When he was rolled on his side he ceased to growl, when the fingers pressed and prodded at the base of his ears the pleasurable sensation increased; and when, with a final rub and scratch, the man left him alone and went away, all fear had died out of White Fang. He was to know fear many times in his dealing with man; yet it was a token of the fearless companionship with man that was ultimately to be his.

After a time, White Fang heard strange noises approaching. He was quick in his classification, for he knew them at once for man-animal noises. A few minutes later the

remainder of the tribe, strung out as it was on the march, trailed in. There were more men and many women and children, forty souls of them, and all heavily burdened with camp equipage and outfit. Also there were many dogs; and these, with the exception of the part-grown puppies, were likewise burdened with camp outfit. On their backs, in bags that fastened tightly around underneath, the dogs carried from twenty to thirty pounds of weight.

White Fang had never seen dogs before, but at sight of them he felt that they were his own kind, only somehow different. But they displayed little difference from the wolf when they discovered the cub and his mother. There was a rush. White Fang bristled and snarled and snapped in the face of the open-mouthed oncoming wave of dogs, and went down and under them, feeling the sharp slash of teeth in his body, himself biting and tearing at the legs and bellies above him. There was a great uproar. He could hear the snarl of Kiche as she fought for him; and he could hear the cries of the man-animals, the sound of clubs striking upon bodies, and the yelps of pain from the dogs so struck.

Only a few seconds elapsed before he was on his feet again. He could now see the man-animals driving back the dogs with clubs and stones, defending him, saving him from the savage teeth of his kind that somehow was not his kind. And though there was no reason in his brain for a clear conception of so abstract a thing as justice, nevertheless, in his own way, he felt the justice of the man-animals, and he knew them for what they were — makers of law and executors of law. Also, he appreciated the power with which they administered the law. Unlike any animals he had ever encountered, they did not bite nor claw. They enforced their live strength with the power of dead things. Dead things did their bidding. Thus, sticks and stones, directed by these strange creatures, leaped through the air like living things, inflicting grievous hurts upon the dogs.

To his mind this was power unusual, power inconceivable and beyond the natural, power that was godlike. White Fang, in the very nature of him, could never know anything about gods; at the best he could know only things that were beyond knowing — but the wonder and awe that he had of these man-animals in ways resembled what would be the wonder and awe of man at sight of some celestial creature, on a mountain top, hurling thunderbolts from either hand at an astonished world.

The last dog had been driven back. The hubbub died down. And White Fang licked his hurts and meditated upon this, his first taste of pack-cruelty and his introduction to the pack. He had never dreamed that his own kind consisted of more than One Eye, his mother, and himself. They had constituted a kind apart, and here, abruptly, he had discovered many more creatures apparently of his own kind. And there was a subconscious resentment that these, his kind, at first sight had pitched upon him and tried to destroy him. In the same way he resented his mother being tied with a stick, even though it was done by the superior man-animals. It savoured of the trap, of bondage. Yet of the trap and of bondage he knew nothing. Freedom to roam and run and lie down at will, had been his heritage; and here it was being infringed upon. His mother's movements were restricted to the length of a stick, and by the length of that

same stick was he restricted, for he had not yet got beyond the need of his mother's side.

He did not like it. Nor did he like it when the man-animals arose and went on with their march; for a tiny man-animal took the other end of the stick and led Kiche captive behind him, and behind Kiche followed White Fang, greatly perturbed and worried by this new adventure he had entered upon.

They went down the valley of the stream, far beyond White Fang's widest ranging, until they came to the end of the valley, where the stream ran into the Mackenzie River. Here, where canoes were cached on poles high in the air and where stood fish-racks for the drying of fish, camp was made; and White Fang looked on with wondering eyes. The superiority of these man-animals increased with every moment. There was their mastery over all these sharp-fanged dogs. It breathed of power. But greater than that, to the wolf-cub, was their mastery over things not alive; their capacity to communicate motion to unmoving things; their capacity to change the very face of the world.

It was this last that especially affected him. The elevation of frames of poles caught his eye; yet this in itself was not so remarkable, being done by the same creatures that flung sticks and stones to great distances. But when the frames of poles were made into tepees by being covered with cloth and skins, White Fang was astounded. It was the colossal bulk of them that impressed him. They arose around him, on every side, like some monstrous quick-growing form of life. They occupied nearly the whole circumference of his field of vision. He was afraid of them. They loomed ominously above him; and when the breeze stirred them into huge movements, he cowered down in fear, keeping his eyes warily upon them, and prepared to spring away if they attempted to precipitate themselves upon him.

But in a short while his fear of the tepees passed away. He saw the women and children passing in and out of them without harm, and he saw the dogs trying often to get into them, and being driven away with sharp words and flying stones. After a time, he left Kiche's side and crawled cautiously toward the wall of the nearest tepee. It was the curiosity of growth that urged him on — the necessity of learning and living and doing that brings experience. The last few inches to the wall of the tepee were crawled with painful slowness and precaution. The day's events had prepared him for the unknown to manifest itself in most stupendous and unthinkable ways. At last his nose touched the canvas. He waited. Nothing happened. Then he smelled the strange fabric, saturated with the man-smell. He closed on the canvas with his teeth and gave a gentle tug. Nothing happened, though the adjacent portions of the tepee moved. He tugged harder. There was a greater movement. It was delightful. He tugged still harder, and repeatedly, until the whole tepee was in motion. Then the sharp cry of a squaw inside sent him scampering back to Kiche. But after that he was afraid no more of the looming bulks of the tepees.

A moment later he was straying away again from his mother. Her stick was tied to a peg in the ground and she could not follow him. A part-grown puppy, somewhat larger and older than he, came toward him slowly, with ostentatious and belligerent

importance. The puppy's name, as White Fang was afterward to hear him called, was Lip-lip. He had had experience in puppy fights and was already something of a bully.

Lip-lip was White Fang's own kind, and, being only a puppy, did not seem dangerous; so White Fang prepared to meet him in a friendly spirit. But when the strangers walk became stiff-legged and his lips lifted clear of his teeth, White Fang stiffened too, and answered with lifted lips. They half circled about each other, tentatively, snarling and bristling. This lasted several minutes, and White Fang was beginning to enjoy it, as a sort of game. But suddenly, with remarkable swiftness, Lip-lip leaped in, delivering a slashing snap, and leaped away again. The snap had taken effect on the shoulder that had been hurt by the lynx and that was still sore deep down near the bone. The surprise and hurt of it brought a yelp out of White Fang; but the next moment, in a rush of anger, he was upon Lip-lip and snapping viciously.

But Lip-lip had lived his life in camp and had fought many puppy fights. Three times, four times, and half a dozen times, his sharp little teeth scored on the newcomer, until White Fang, yelping shamelessly, fled to the protection of his mother. It was the first of the many fights he was to have with Lip-lip, for they were enemies from the start, born so, with natures destined perpetually to clash.

Kiche licked White Fang soothingly with her tongue, and tried to prevail upon him to remain with her. But his curiosity was rampant, and several minutes later he was venturing forth on a new quest. He came upon one of the man-animals, Grey Beaver, who was squatting on his hams and doing something with sticks and dry moss spread before him on the ground. White Fang came near to him and watched. Grey Beaver made mouth-noises which White Fang interpreted as not hostile, so he came still nearer.

Women and children were carrying more sticks and branches to Grey Beaver. It was evidently an affair of moment. White Fang came in until he touched Grey Beaver's knee, so curious was he, and already forgetful that this was a terrible man-animal. Suddenly he saw a strange thing like mist beginning to arise from the sticks and moss beneath Grey Beaver's hands. Then, amongst the sticks themselves, appeared a live thing, twisting and turning, of a colour like the colour of the sun in the sky. White Fang knew nothing about fire. It drew him as the light, in the mouth of the cave had drawn him in his early puppyhood. He crawled the several steps toward the flame. He heard Grey Beaver chuckle above him, and he knew the sound was not hostile. Then his nose touched the flame, and at the same instant his little tongue went out to it.

For a moment he was paralysed. The unknown, lurking in the midst of the sticks and moss, was savagely clutching him by the nose. He scrambled backward, bursting out in an astonished explosion of ki-yi's. At the sound, Kiche leaped snarling to the end of her stick, and there raged terribly because she could not come to his aid. But Grey Beaver laughed loudly, and slapped his thighs, and told the happening to all the rest of the camp, till everybody was laughing uproariously. But White Fang sat on his haunches and ki-yi'd and ki-yi'd, a forlorn and pitiable little figure in the midst of the man-animals.

It was the worst hurt he had ever known. Both nose and tongue had been scorched by the live thing, sun-coloured, that had grown up under Grey Beaver's hands. He cried and cried interminably, and every fresh wail was greeted by bursts of laughter on the part of the man-animals. He tried to soothe his nose with his tongue, but the tongue was burnt too, and the two hurts coming together produced greater hurt; whereupon he cried more hopelessly and helplessly than ever.

And then shame came to him. He knew laughter and the meaning of it. It is not given us to know how some animals know laughter, and know when they are being laughed at; but it was this same way that White Fang knew it. And he felt shame that the man-animals should be laughing at him. He turned and fled away, not from the hurt of the fire, but from the laughter that sank even deeper, and hurt in the spirit of him. And he fled to Kiche, raging at the end of her stick like an animal gone mad — to Kiche, the one creature in the world who was not laughing at him.

Twilight drew down and night came on, and White Fang lay by his mother's side. His nose and tongue still hurt, but he was perplexed by a greater trouble. He was homesick. He felt a vacancy in him, a need for the hush and quietude of the stream and the cave in the cliff. Life had become too populous. There were so many of the man-animals, men, women, and children, all making noises and irritations. And there were the dogs, ever squabbling and bickering, bursting into uproars and creating confusions. The restful loneliness of the only life he had known was gone. Here the very air was palpitant with life. It hummed and buzzed unceasingly. Continually changing its intensity and abruptly variant in pitch, it impinged on his nerves and senses, made him nervous and restless and worried him with a perpetual imminence of happening.

He watched the man-animals coming and going and moving about the camp. In fashion distantly resembling the way men look upon the gods they create, so looked White Fang upon the man-animals before him. They were superior creatures, of a verity, gods. To his dim comprehension they were as much wonder-workers as gods are to men. They were creatures of mastery, possessing all manner of unknown and impossible potencies, overlords of the alive and the not alive — making obey that which moved, imparting movement to that which did not move, and making life, sun-coloured and biting life, to grow out of dead moss and wood. They were fire-makers! They were gods.

## Chapter II — The Bondage

The days were thronged with experience for White Fang. During the time that Kiche was tied by the stick, he ran about over all the camp, inquiring, investigating, learning. He quickly came to know much of the ways of the man-animals, but familiarity did not breed contempt. The more he came to know them, the more they vindicated their superiority, the more they displayed their mysterious powers, the greater loomed their god-likeness.

To man has been given the grief, often, of seeing his gods overthrown and his altars crumbling; but to the wolf and the wild dog that have come in to crouch at man's feet, this grief has never come. Unlike man, whose gods are of the unseen and the overguessed, vapours and mists of fancy eluding the garmenture of reality, wandering wraiths of desired goodness and power, intangible out-croppings of self into the realm of spirit — unlike man, the wolf and the wild dog that have come in to the fire find their gods in the living flesh, solid to the touch, occupying earth-space and requiring time for the accomplishment of their ends and their existence. No effort of faith is necessary to believe in such a god; no effort of will can possibly induce disbelief in such a god. There is no getting away from it. There it stands, on its two hind-legs, club in hand, immensely potential, passionate and wrathful and loving, god and mystery and power all wrapped up and around by flesh that bleeds when it is torn and that is good to eat like any flesh.

And so it was with White Fang. The man-animals were gods unmistakable and unescapable. As his mother, Kiche, had rendered her allegiance to them at the first cry of her name, so he was beginning to render his allegiance. He gave them the trail as a privilege indubitably theirs. When they walked, he got out of their way. When they called, he came. When they threatened, he cowered down. When they commanded him to go, he went away hurriedly. For behind any wish of theirs was power to enforce that wish, power that hurt, power that expressed itself in clouts and clubs, in flying stones and stinging lashes of whips.

He belonged to them as all dogs belonged to them. His actions were theirs to command. His body was theirs to maul, to stamp upon, to tolerate. Such was the lesson that was quickly borne in upon him. It came hard, going as it did, counter to much that was strong and dominant in his own nature; and, while he disliked it in the learning of it, unknown to himself he was learning to like it. It was a placing of his destiny in another's hands, a shifting of the responsibilities of existence. This in itself was compensation, for it is always easier to lean upon another than to stand alone.

But it did not all happen in a day, this giving over of himself, body and soul, to the man-animals. He could not immediately forego his wild heritage and his memories of the Wild. There were days when he crept to the edge of the forest and stood and listened to something calling him far and away. And always he returned, restless and uncomfortable, to whimper softly and wistfully at Kiche's side and to lick her face with eager, questioning tongue.

White Fang learned rapidly the ways of the camp. He knew the injustice and greediness of the older dogs when meat or fish was thrown out to be eaten. He came to know that men were more just, children more cruel, and women more kindly and more likely to toss him a bit of meat or bone. And after two or three painful adventures with the mothers of part-grown puppies, he came into the knowledge that it was always good policy to let such mothers alone, to keep away from them as far as possible, and to avoid them when he saw them coming.

But the bane of his life was Lip-lip. Larger, older, and stronger, Lip-lip had selected White Fang for his special object of persecution. While Fang fought willingly enough, but he was outclassed. His enemy was too big. Lip-lip became a nightmare to him. Whenever he ventured away from his mother, the bully was sure to appear, trailing at his heels, snarling at him, picking upon him, and watchful of an opportunity, when no man-animal was near, to spring upon him and force a fight. As Lip-lip invariably won, he enjoyed it hugely. It became his chief delight in life, as it became White Fang's chief torment.

But the effect upon White Fang was not to cow him. Though he suffered most of the damage and was always defeated, his spirit remained unsubdued. Yet a bad effect was produced. He became malignant and morose. His temper had been savage by birth, but it became more savage under this unending persecution. The genial, playful, puppyish side of him found little expression. He never played and gambolled about with the other puppies of the camp. Lip-lip would not permit it. The moment White Fang appeared near them, Lip-lip was upon him, bullying and hectoring him, or fighting with him until he had driven him away.

The effect of all this was to rob White Fang of much of his puppyhood and to make him in his comportment older than his age. Denied the outlet, through play, of his energies, he recoiled upon himself and developed his mental processes. He became cunning; he had idle time in which to devote himself to thoughts of trickery. Prevented from obtaining his share of meat and fish when a general feed was given to the camp-dogs, he became a clever thief. He had to forage for himself, and he foraged well, though he was oft-times a plague to the squaws in consequence. He learned to sneak about camp, to be crafty, to know what was going on everywhere, to see and to hear everything and to reason accordingly, and successfully to devise ways and means of avoiding his implacable persecutor.

It was early in the days of his persecution that he played his first really big crafty game and got there from his first taste of revenge. As Kiche, when with the wolves, had lured out to destruction dogs from the camps of men, so White Fang, in manner somewhat similar, lured Lip-lip into Kiche's avenging jaws. Retreating before Lip-lip, White Fang made an indirect flight that led in and out and around the various tepees of the camp. He was a good runner, swifter than any puppy of his size, and swifter than Lip-lip. But he did not run his best in this chase. He barely held his own, one leap ahead of his pursuer.

Lip-lip, excited by the chase and by the persistent nearness of his victim, forgot caution and locality. When he remembered locality, it was too late. Dashing at top speed around a tepee, he ran full tilt into Kiche lying at the end of her stick. He gave one yelp of consternation, and then her punishing jaws closed upon him. She was tied, but he could not get away from her easily. She rolled him off his legs so that he could not run, while she repeatedly ripped and slashed him with her fangs.

When at last he succeeded in rolling clear of her, he crawled to his feet, badly dishevelled, hurt both in body and in spirit. His hair was standing out all over him in

tufts where her teeth had mauled. He stood where he had arisen, opened his mouth, and broke out the long, heart-broken puppy wail. But even this he was not allowed to complete. In the middle of it, White Fang, rushing in, sank his teeth into Lip-lip's hind leg. There was no fight left in Lip-lip, and he ran away shamelessly, his victim hot on his heels and worrying him all the way back to his own tepee. Here the squaws came to his aid, and White Fang, transformed into a raging demon, was finally driven off only by a fusillade of stones.

Came the day when Grey Beaver, deciding that the liability of her running away was past, released Kiche. White Fang was delighted with his mother's freedom. He accompanied her joyfully about the camp; and, so long as he remained close by her side, Lip-lip kept a respectful distance. White-Fang even bristled up to him and walked stiff-legged, but Lip-lip ignored the challenge. He was no fool himself, and whatever vengeance he desired to wreak, he could wait until he caught White Fang alone.

Later on that day, Kiche and White Fang strayed into the edge of the woods next to the camp. He had led his mother there, step by step, and now when she stopped, he tried to inveigle her farther. The stream, the lair, and the quiet woods were calling to him, and he wanted her to come. He ran on a few steps, stopped, and looked back. She had not moved. He whined pleadingly, and scurried playfully in and out of the underbrush. He ran back to her, licked her face, and ran on again. And still she did not move. He stopped and regarded her, all of an intentness and eagerness, physically expressed, that slowly faded out of him as she turned her head and gazed back at the camp.

There was something calling to him out there in the open. His mother heard it too. But she heard also that other and louder call, the call of the fire and of man — the call which has been given alone of all animals to the wolf to answer, to the wolf and the wild-dog, who are brothers.

Kiche turned and slowly trotted back toward camp. Stronger than the physical restraint of the stick was the clutch of the camp upon her. Unseen and occultly, the gods still gripped with their power and would not let her go. White Fang sat down in the shadow of a birch and whimpered softly. There was a strong smell of pine, and subtle wood fragrances filled the air, reminding him of his old life of freedom before the days of his bondage. But he was still only a part-grown puppy, and stronger than the call either of man or of the Wild was the call of his mother. All the hours of his short life he had depended upon her. The time was yet to come for independence. So he arose and trotted forlornly back to camp, pausing once, and twice, to sit down and whimper and to listen to the call that still sounded in the depths of the forest.

In the Wild the time of a mother with her young is short; but under the dominion of man it is sometimes even shorter. Thus it was with White Fang. Grey Beaver was in the debt of Three Eagles. Three Eagles was going away on a trip up the Mackenzie to the Great Slave Lake. A strip of scarlet cloth, a bearskin, twenty cartridges, and Kiche, went to pay the debt. White Fang saw his mother taken aboard Three Eagles' canoe, and tried to follow her. A blow from Three Eagles knocked him backward to the land.



The canoe shoved off. He sprang into the water and swam after it, deaf to the sharp cries of Grey Beaver to return. Even a man-animal, a god, White Fang ignored, such was the terror he was in of losing his mother.

But gods are accustomed to being obeyed, and Grey Beaver wrathfully launched a canoe in pursuit. When he overtook White Fang, he reached down and by the nape of the neck lifted him clear of the water. He did not deposit him at once in the bottom of the canoe. Holding him suspended with one hand, with the other hand he proceeded to give him a beating. And it was a beating. His hand was heavy. Every blow was shrewd to hurt; and he delivered a multitude of blows.

Impelled by the blows that rained upon him, now from this side, now from that, White Fang swung back and forth like an erratic and jerky pendulum. Varying were the emotions that surged through him. At first, he had known surprise. Then came a momentary fear, when he yelped several times to the impact of the hand. But this was quickly followed by anger. His free nature asserted itself, and he showed his teeth and snarled fearlessly in the face of the wrathful god. This but served to make the god more wrathful. The blows came faster, heavier, more shrewd to hurt.

Grey Beaver continued to beat, White Fang continued to snarl. But this could not last for ever. One or the other must give over, and that one was White Fang. Fear surged through him again. For the first time he was being really man-handled. The occasional blows of sticks and stones he had previously experienced were as caresses compared with this. He broke down and began to cry and yelp. For a time each blow brought a yelp from him; but fear passed into terror, until finally his yelps were voiced in unbroken succession, unconnected with the rhythm of the punishment.

At last Grey Beaver withheld his hand. White Fang, hanging limply, continued to cry. This seemed to satisfy his master, who flung him down roughly in the bottom of the canoe. In the meantime the canoe had drifted down the stream. Grey Beaver picked up the paddle. White Fang was in his way. He spurned him savagely with his foot. In that moment White Fang's free nature flashed forth again, and he sank his teeth into the moccasined foot.

The beating that had gone before was as nothing compared with the beating he now received. Grey Beaver's wrath was terrible; likewise was White Fang's fright. Not only the hand, but the hard wooden paddle was used upon him; and he was bruised and sore in all his small body when he was again flung down in the canoe. Again, and this time with purpose, did Grey Beaver kick him. White Fang did not repeat his attack on the foot. He had learned another lesson of his bondage. Never, no matter what the circumstance, must he dare to bite the god who was lord and master over him; the body of the lord and master was sacred, not to be defiled by the teeth of such as he. That was evidently the crime of crimes, the one offence there was no condoning nor overlooking.

When the canoe touched the shore, White Fang lay whimpering and motionless, waiting the will of Grey Beaver. It was Grey Beaver's will that he should go ashore, for ashore he was flung, striking heavily on his side and hurting his bruises afresh. He

crawled tremblingly to his feet and stood whimpering. Lip-lip, who had watched the whole proceeding from the bank, now rushed upon him, knocking him over and sinking his teeth into him. White Fang was too helpless to defend himself, and it would have gone hard with him had not Grey Beaver's foot shot out, lifting Lip-lip into the air with its violence so that he smashed down to earth a dozen feet away. This was the man-animal's justice; and even then, in his own pitiable plight, White Fang experienced a little grateful thrill. At Grey Beaver's heels he limped obediently through the village to the tepee. And so it came that White Fang learned that the right to punish was something the gods reserved for themselves and denied to the lesser creatures under them.

That night, when all was still, White Fang remembered his mother and sorrowed for her. He sorrowed too loudly and woke up Grey Beaver, who beat him. After that he mourned gently when the gods were around. But sometimes, straying off to the edge of the woods by himself, he gave vent to his grief, and cried it out with loud whimperings and wailings.

It was during this period that he might have harkened to the memories of the lair and the stream and run back to the Wild. But the memory of his mother held him. As the hunting man-animals went out and came back, so she would come back to the village some time. So he remained in his bondage waiting for her.

But it was not altogether an unhappy bondage. There was much to interest him. Something was always happening. There was no end to the strange things these gods did, and he was always curious to see. Besides, he was learning how to get along with Grey Beaver. Obedience, rigid, undeviating obedience, was what was exacted of him; and in return he escaped beatings and his existence was tolerated.

Nay, Grey Beaver himself sometimes tossed him a piece of meat, and defended him against the other dogs in the eating of it. And such a piece of meat was of value. It was worth more, in some strange way, than a dozen pieces of meat from the hand of a squaw. Grey Beaver never petted nor caressed. Perhaps it was the weight of his hand, perhaps his justice, perhaps the sheer power of him, and perhaps it was all these things that influenced White Fang; for a certain tie of attachment was forming between him and his surly lord.

Insidiously, and by remote ways, as well as by the power of stick and stone and clout of hand, were the shackles of White Fang's bondage being riveted upon him. The qualities in his kind that in the beginning made it possible for them to come in to the fires of men, were qualities capable of development. They were developing in him, and the camp-life, replete with misery as it was, was secretly endearing itself to him all the time. But White Fang was unaware of it. He knew only grief for the loss of Kiche, hope for her return, and a hungry yearning for the free life that had been his.

## Chapter III — The Outcast

Lip-lip continued so to darken his days that White Fang became wicked and more ferocious than it was his natural right to be. Savageness was a part of his make-up, but the savageness thus developed exceeded his make-up. He acquired a reputation for wickedness amongst the man-animals themselves. Wherever there was trouble and uproar in camp, fighting and squabbling or the outcry of a squaw over a bit of stolen meat, they were sure to find White Fang mixed up in it and usually at the bottom of it. They did not bother to look after the causes of his conduct. They saw only the effects, and the effects were bad. He was a sneak and a thief, a mischief-maker, a fomentor of trouble; and irate squaws told him to his face, the while he eyed them alert and ready to dodge any quick-flung missile, that he was a wolf and worthless and bound to come to an evil end.

He found himself an outcast in the midst of the populous camp. All the young dogs followed Lip-lip's lead. There was a difference between White Fang and them. Perhaps they sensed his wild-wood breed, and instinctively felt for him the enmity that the domestic dog feels for the wolf. But be that as it may, they joined with Lip-lip in the persecution. And, once declared against him, they found good reason to continue declared against him. One and all, from time to time, they felt his teeth; and to his credit, he gave more than he received. Many of them he could whip in single fight; but single fight was denied him. The beginning of such a fight was a signal for all the young dogs in camp to come running and pitch upon him.

Out of this pack-persecution he learned two important things: how to take care of himself in a mass-fight against him — and how, on a single dog, to inflict the greatest amount of damage in the briefest space of time. To keep one's feet in the midst of the hostile mass meant life, and this he learnt well. He became cat-like in his ability to stay on his feet. Even grown dogs might hurtle him backward or sideways with the impact of their heavy bodies; and backward or sideways he would go, in the air or sliding on the ground, but always with his legs under him and his feet downward to the mother earth.

When dogs fight, there are usually preliminaries to the actual combat — snarlings and bristlings and stiff-legged struttings. But White Fang learned to omit these preliminaries. Delay meant the coming against him of all the young dogs. He must do his work quickly and get away. So he learnt to give no warning of his intention. He rushed in and snapped and slashed on the instant, without notice, before his foe could prepare to meet him. Thus he learned how to inflict quick and severe damage. Also he learned the value of surprise. A dog, taken off its guard, its shoulder slashed open or its ear ripped in ribbons before it knew what was happening, was a dog half whipped.

Furthermore, it was remarkably easy to overthrow a dog taken by surprise; while a dog, thus overthrown, invariably exposed for a moment the soft underside of its neck — the vulnerable point at which to strike for its life. White Fang knew this point. It was a knowledge bequeathed to him directly from the hunting generation of wolves.

So it was that White Fang's method when he took the offensive, was: first to find a young dog alone; second, to surprise it and knock it off its feet; and third, to drive in with his teeth at the soft throat.

Being but partly grown his jaws had not yet become large enough nor strong enough to make his throat-attack deadly; but many a young dog went around camp with a lacerated throat in token of White Fang's intention. And one day, catching one of his enemies alone on the edge of the woods, he managed, by repeatedly overthrowing him and attacking the throat, to cut the great vein and let out the life. There was a great row that night. He had been observed, the news had been carried to the dead dog's master, the squaws remembered all the instances of stolen meat, and Grey Beaver was beset by many angry voices. But he resolutely held the door of his tepee, inside which he had placed the culprit, and refused to permit the vengeance for which his tribespeople clamoured.

White Fang became hated by man and dog. During this period of his development he never knew a moment's security. The tooth of every dog was against him, the hand of every man. He was greeted with snarls by his kind, with curses and stones by his gods. He lived tensely. He was always keyed up, alert for attack, wary of being attacked, with an eye for sudden and unexpected missiles, prepared to act precipitately and coolly, to leap in with a flash of teeth, or to leap away with a menacing snarl.

As for snarling he could snarl more terribly than any dog, young or old, in camp. The intent of the snarl is to warn or frighten, and judgment is required to know when it should be used. White Fang knew how to make it and when to make it. Into his snarl he incorporated all that was vicious, malignant, and horrible. With nose serrulated by continuous spasms, hair bristling in recurrent waves, tongue whipping out like a red snake and whipping back again, ears flattened down, eyes gleaming hatred, lips wrinkled back, and fangs exposed and dripping, he could compel a pause on the part of almost any assailant. A temporary pause, when taken off his guard, gave him the vital moment in which to think and determine his action. But often a pause so gained lengthened out until it evolved into a complete cessation from the attack. And before more than one of the grown dogs White Fang's snarl enabled him to beat an honourable retreat.

An outcast himself from the pack of the part-grown dogs, his sanguinary methods and remarkable efficiency made the pack pay for its persecution of him. Not permitted himself to run with the pack, the curious state of affairs obtained that no member of the pack could run outside the pack. White Fang would not permit it. What of his bushwhacking and waylaying tactics, the young dogs were afraid to run by themselves. With the exception of Lip-lip, they were compelled to hunch together for mutual protection against the terrible enemy they had made. A puppy alone by the river bank meant a puppy dead or a puppy that aroused the camp with its shrill pain and terror as it fled back from the wolf-cub that had waylaid it.

But White Fang's reprisals did not cease, even when the young dogs had learned thoroughly that they must stay together. He attacked them when he caught them

alone, and they attacked him when they were bunched. The sight of him was sufficient to start them rushing after him, at which times his swiftness usually carried him into safety. But woe the dog that outran his fellows in such pursuit! White Fang had learned to turn suddenly upon the pursuer that was ahead of the pack and thoroughly to rip him up before the pack could arrive. This occurred with great frequency, for, once in full cry, the dogs were prone to forget themselves in the excitement of the chase, while White Fang never forgot himself. Stealing backward glances as he ran, he was always ready to whirl around and down the overzealous pursuer that outran his fellows.

Young dogs are bound to play, and out of the exigencies of the situation they realised their play in this mimic warfare. Thus it was that the hunt of White Fang became their chief game — a deadly game, withal, and at all times a serious game. He, on the other hand, being the fastest-footed, was unafraid to venture anywhere. During the period that he waited vainly for his mother to come back, he led the pack many a wild chase through the adjacent woods. But the pack invariably lost him. Its noise and outcry warned him of its presence, while he ran alone, velvet-footed, silently, a moving shadow among the trees after the manner of his father and mother before him. Further he was more directly connected with the Wild than they; and he knew more of its secrets and stratagems. A favourite trick of his was to lose his trail in running water and then lie quietly in a near-by thicket while their baffled cries arose around him.

Hated by his kind and by mankind, indomitable, perpetually warred upon and himself waging perpetual war, his development was rapid and one-sided. This was no soil for kindness and affection to blossom in. Of such things he had not the faintest glimmering. The code he learned was to obey the strong and to oppress the weak. Grey Beaver was a god, and strong. Therefore White Fang obeyed him. But the dog younger or smaller than himself was weak, a thing to be destroyed. His development was in the direction of power. In order to face the constant danger of hurt and even of destruction, his predatory and protective faculties were unduly developed. He became quicker of movement than the other dogs, swifter of foot, craftier, deadlier, more lithe, more lean with ironlike muscle and sinew, more enduring, more cruel, more ferocious, and more intelligent. He had to become all these things, else he would not have held his own nor survive the hostile environment in which he found himself.

## Chapter IV — The Trail of the Gods

In the fall of the year, when the days were shortening and the bite of the frost was coming into the air, White Fang got his chance for liberty. For several days there had been a great hubbub in the village. The summer camp was being dismantled, and the tribe, bag and baggage, was preparing to go off to the fall hunting. White Fang watched it all with eager eyes, and when the tepees began to come down and the canoes were loading at the bank, he understood. Already the canoes were departing, and some had disappeared down the river.

Quite deliberately he determined to stay behind. He waited his opportunity to slink out of camp to the woods. Here, in the running stream where ice was beginning to form, he hid his trail. Then he crawled into the heart of a dense thicket and waited. The time passed by, and he slept intermittently for hours. Then he was aroused by Grey Beaver's voice calling him by name. There were other voices. White Fang could hear Grey Beaver's squaw taking part in the search, and Mit-sah, who was Grey Beaver's son.

White Fang trembled with fear, and though the impulse came to crawl out of his hiding-place, he resisted it. After a time the voices died away, and some time after that he crept out to enjoy the success of his undertaking. Darkness was coming on, and for a while he played about among the trees, pleasuring in his freedom. Then, and quite suddenly, he became aware of loneliness. He sat down to consider, listening to the silence of the forest and perturbed by it. That nothing moved nor sounded, seemed ominous. He felt the lurking of danger, unseen and unguessed. He was suspicious of the looming bulks of the trees and of the dark shadows that might conceal all manner of perilous things.

Then it was cold. Here was no warm side of a tepee against which to snuggle. The frost was in his feet, and he kept lifting first one fore-foot and then the other. He curved his bushy tail around to cover them, and at the same time he saw a vision. There was nothing strange about it. Upon his inward sight was impressed a succession of memory-pictures. He saw the camp again, the tepees, and the blaze of the fires. He heard the shrill voices of the women, the gruff basses of the men, and the snarling of the dogs. He was hungry, and he remembered pieces of meat and fish that had been thrown him. Here was no meat, nothing but a threatening and inedible silence.

His bondage had softened him. Irresponsibility had weakened him. He had forgotten how to shift for himself. The night yawned about him. His senses, accustomed to the hum and bustle of the camp, used to the continuous impact of sights and sounds, were now left idle. There was nothing to do, nothing to see nor hear. They strained to catch some interruption of the silence and immobility of nature. They were appalled by inaction and by the feel of something terrible impending.

He gave a great start of fright. A colossal and formless something was rushing across the field of his vision. It was a tree-shadow flung by the moon, from whose face the clouds had been brushed away. Reassured, he whimpered softly; then he suppressed the whimper for fear that it might attract the attention of the lurking dangers.

A tree, contracting in the cool of the night, made a loud noise. It was directly above him. He yelped in his fright. A panic seized him, and he ran madly toward the village. He knew an overpowering desire for the protection and companionship of man. In his nostrils was the smell of the camp-smoke. In his ears the camp-sounds and cries were ringing loud. He passed out of the forest and into the moonlit open where were no shadows nor darkneses. But no village greeted his eyes. He had forgotten. The village had gone away.

His wild flight ceased abruptly. There was no place to which to flee. He slunk forlornly through the deserted camp, smelling the rubbish-heaps and the discarded rags and tags of the gods. He would have been glad for the rattle of stones about him, flung by an angry squaw, glad for the hand of Grey Beaver descending upon him in wrath; while he would have welcomed with delight Lip-lip and the whole snarling, cowardly pack.

He came to where Grey Beaver's tepee had stood. In the centre of the space it had occupied, he sat down. He pointed his nose at the moon. His throat was afflicted by rigid spasms, his mouth opened, and in a heart-broken cry bubbled up his loneliness and fear, his grief for Kiche, all his past sorrows and miseries as well as his apprehension of sufferings and dangers to come. It was the long wolf-howl, full-throated and mournful, the first howl he had ever uttered.

The coming of daylight dispelled his fears but increased his loneliness. The naked earth, which so shortly before had been so populous; thrust his loneliness more forcibly upon him. It did not take him long to make up his mind. He plunged into the forest and followed the river bank down the stream. All day he ran. He did not rest. He seemed made to run on for ever. His iron-like body ignored fatigue. And even after fatigue came, his heritage of endurance braced him to endless endeavour and enabled him to drive his complaining body onward.

Where the river swung in against precipitous bluffs, he climbed the high mountains behind. Rivers and streams that entered the main river he forded or swam. Often he took to the rim-ice that was beginning to form, and more than once he crashed through and struggled for life in the icy current. Always he was on the lookout for the trail of the gods where it might leave the river and proceed inland.

White Fang was intelligent beyond the average of his kind; yet his mental vision was not wide enough to embrace the other bank of the Mackenzie. What if the trail of the gods led out on that side? It never entered his head. Later on, when he had travelled more and grown older and wiser and come to know more of trails and rivers, it might be that he could grasp and apprehend such a possibility. But that mental power was yet in the future. Just now he ran blindly, his own bank of the Mackenzie alone entering into his calculations.

All night he ran, blundering in the darkness into mishaps and obstacles that delayed but did not daunt. By the middle of the second day he had been running continuously for thirty hours, and the iron of his flesh was giving out. It was the endurance of his mind that kept him going. He had not eaten in forty hours, and he was weak with hunger. The repeated drenchings in the icy water had likewise had their effect on him. His handsome coat was draggled. The broad pads of his feet were bruised and bleeding. He had begun to limp, and this limp increased with the hours. To make it worse, the light of the sky was obscured and snow began to fall — a raw, moist, melting, clinging snow, slippery under foot, that hid from him the landscape he traversed, and that covered over the inequalities of the ground so that the way of his feet was more difficult and painful.

Grey Beaver had intended camping that night on the far bank of the Mackenzie, for it was in that direction that the hunting lay. But on the near bank, shortly before dark, a moose coming down to drink, had been espied by Kloo-kooch, who was Grey Beaver's squaw. Now, had not the moose come down to drink, had not Mit-sah been steering out of the course because of the snow, had not Kloo-kooch sighted the moose, and had not Grey Beaver killed it with a lucky shot from his rifle, all subsequent things would have happened differently. Grey Beaver would not have camped on the near side of the Mackenzie, and White Fang would have passed by and gone on, either to die or to find his way to his wild brothers and become one of them — a wolf to the end of his days.

Night had fallen. The snow was flying more thickly, and White Fang, whimpering softly to himself as he stumbled and limped along, came upon a fresh trail in the snow. So fresh was it that he knew it immediately for what it was. Whining with eagerness, he followed back from the river bank and in among the trees. The camp-sounds came to his ears. He saw the blaze of the fire, Kloo-kooch cooking, and Grey Beaver squatting on his hams and mumbling a chunk of raw tallow. There was fresh meat in camp!

White Fang expected a beating. He crouched and bristled a little at the thought of it. Then he went forward again. He feared and disliked the beating he knew to be waiting for him. But he knew, further, that the comfort of the fire would be his, the protection of the gods, the companionship of the dogs — the last, a companionship of enmity, but none the less a companionship and satisfying to his gregarious needs.

He came cringing and crawling into the firelight. Grey Beaver saw him, and stopped munching the tallow. White Fang crawled slowly, cringing and grovelling in the abjectness of his abasement and submission. He crawled straight toward Grey Beaver, every inch of his progress becoming slower and more painful. At last he lay at the master's feet, into whose possession he now surrendered himself, voluntarily, body and soul. Of his own choice, he came in to sit by man's fire and to be ruled by him. White Fang trembled, waiting for the punishment to fall upon him. There was a movement of the hand above him. He cringed involuntarily under the expected blow. It did not fall. He stole a glance upward. Grey Beaver was breaking the lump of tallow in half! Grey Beaver was offering him one piece of the tallow! Very gently and somewhat suspiciously, he first smelled the tallow and then proceeded to eat it. Grey Beaver ordered meat to be brought to him, and guarded him from the other dogs while he ate. After that, grateful and content, White Fang lay at Grey Beaver's feet, gazing at the fire that warmed him, blinking and dozing, secure in the knowledge that the morrow would find him, not wandering forlorn through bleak forest-stretches, but in the camp of the man-animals, with the gods to whom he had given himself and upon whom he was now dependent.



## Chapter V — The Covenant

When December was well along, Grey Beaver went on a journey up the Mackenzie. Mit-sah and Kloo-kooch went with him. One sled he drove himself, drawn by dogs he had traded for or borrowed. A second and smaller sled was driven by Mit-sah, and to this was harnessed a team of puppies. It was more of a toy affair than anything else, yet it was the delight of Mit-sah, who felt that he was beginning to do a man's work in the world. Also, he was learning to drive dogs and to train dogs; while the puppies themselves were being broken in to the harness. Furthermore, the sled was of some service, for it carried nearly two hundred pounds of outfit and food.

White Fang had seen the camp-dogs toiling in the harness, so that he did not resent overmuch the first placing of the harness upon himself. About his neck was put a moss-stuffed collar, which was connected by two pulling-traces to a strap that passed around his chest and over his back. It was to this that was fastened the long rope by which he pulled at the sled.

There were seven puppies in the team. The others had been born earlier in the year and were nine and ten months old, while White Fang was only eight months old. Each dog was fastened to the sled by a single rope. No two ropes were of the same length, while the difference in length between any two ropes was at least that of a dog's body. Every rope was brought to a ring at the front end of the sled. The sled itself was without runners, being a birch-bark toboggan, with upturned forward end to keep it from ploughing under the snow. This construction enabled the weight of the sled and load to be distributed over the largest snow-surface; for the snow was crystal-powder and very soft. Observing the same principle of widest distribution of weight, the dogs at the ends of their ropes radiated fan-fashion from the nose of the sled, so that no dog trod in another's footsteps.

There was, furthermore, another virtue in the fan-formation. The ropes of varying length prevented the dogs attacking from the rear those that ran in front of them. For a dog to attack another, it would have to turn upon one at a shorter rope. In which case it would find itself face to face with the dog attacked, and also it would find itself facing the whip of the driver. But the most peculiar virtue of all lay in the fact that the dog that strove to attack one in front of him must pull the sled faster, and that the faster the sled travelled, the faster could the dog attacked run away. Thus, the dog behind could never catch up with the one in front. The faster he ran, the faster ran the one he was after, and the faster ran all the dogs. Incidentally, the sled went faster, and thus, by cunning indirection, did man increase his mastery over the beasts.

Mit-sah resembled his father, much of whose grey wisdom he possessed. In the past he had observed Lip-lip's persecution of White Fang; but at that time Lip-lip was another man's dog, and Mit-sah had never dared more than to shy an occasional stone at him. But now Lip-lip was his dog, and he proceeded to wreak his vengeance on him by putting him at the end of the longest rope. This made Lip-lip the leader, and was apparently an honour! but in reality it took away from him all honour, and instead of

being bully and master of the pack, he now found himself hated and persecuted by the pack.

Because he ran at the end of the longest rope, the dogs had always the view of him running away before them. All that they saw of him was his bushy tail and fleeing hind legs — a view far less ferocious and intimidating than his bristling mane and gleaming fangs. Also, dogs being so constituted in their mental ways, the sight of him running away gave desire to run after him and a feeling that he ran away from them.

The moment the sled started, the team took after Lip-lip in a chase that extended throughout the day. At first he had been prone to turn upon his pursuers, jealous of his dignity and wrathful; but at such times Mit-sah would throw the stinging lash of the thirty-foot cariboo-gut whip into his face and compel him to turn tail and run on. Lip-lip might face the pack, but he could not face that whip, and all that was left him to do was to keep his long rope taut and his flanks ahead of the teeth of his mates.

But a still greater cunning lurked in the recesses of the Indian mind. To give point to unending pursuit of the leader, Mit-sah favoured him over the other dogs. These favours aroused in them jealousy and hatred. In their presence Mit-sah would give him meat and would give it to him only. This was maddening to them. They would rage around just outside the throwing-distance of the whip, while Lip-lip devoured the meat and Mit-sah protected him. And when there was no meat to give, Mit-sah would keep the team at a distance and make believe to give meat to Lip-lip.

White Fang took kindly to the work. He had travelled a greater distance than the other dogs in the yielding of himself to the rule of the gods, and he had learned more thoroughly the futility of opposing their will. In addition, the persecution he had suffered from the pack had made the pack less to him in the scheme of things, and man more. He had not learned to be dependent on his kind for companionship. Besides, Kiche was well-nigh forgotten; and the chief outlet of expression that remained to him was in the allegiance he tendered the gods he had accepted as masters. So he worked hard, learned discipline, and was obedient. Faithfulness and willingness characterised his toil. These are essential traits of the wolf and the wild-dog when they have become domesticated, and these traits White Fang possessed in unusual measure.

A companionship did exist between White Fang and the other dogs, but it was one of warfare and enmity. He had never learned to play with them. He knew only how to fight, and fight with them he did, returning to them a hundred-fold the snaps and slashes they had given him in the days when Lip-lip was leader of the pack. But Lip-lip was no longer leader — except when he fled away before his mates at the end of his rope, the sled bounding along behind. In camp he kept close to Mit-sah or Grey Beaver or Kloo-kooch. He did not dare venture away from the gods, for now the fangs of all dogs were against him, and he tasted to the dregs the persecution that had been White Fang's.

With the overthrow of Lip-lip, White Fang could have become leader of the pack. But he was too morose and solitary for that. He merely thrashed his team-mates. Otherwise he ignored them. They got out of his way when he came along; nor did the

boldest of them ever dare to rob him of his meat. On the contrary, they devoured their own meat hurriedly, for fear that he would take it away from them. White Fang knew the law well: to oppress the weak and obey the strong. He ate his share of meat as rapidly as he could. And then woe the dog that had not yet finished! A snarl and a flash of fangs, and that dog would wail his indignation to the uncomfortable stars while White Fang finished his portion for him.

Every little while, however, one dog or another would flame up in revolt and be promptly subdued. Thus White Fang was kept in training. He was jealous of the isolation in which he kept himself in the midst of the pack, and he fought often to maintain it. But such fights were of brief duration. He was too quick for the others. They were slashed open and bleeding before they knew what had happened, were whipped almost before they had begun to fight.

As rigid as the sled-discipline of the gods, was the discipline maintained by White Fang amongst his fellows. He never allowed them any latitude. He compelled them to an unremitting respect for him. They might do as they pleased amongst themselves. That was no concern of his. But it was his concern that they leave him alone in his isolation, get out of his way when he elected to walk among them, and at all times acknowledge his mastery over them. A hint of stiff-leggedness on their part, a lifted lip or a bristle of hair, and he would be upon them, merciless and cruel, swiftly convincing them of the error of their way.

He was a monstrous tyrant. His mastery was rigid as steel. He oppressed the weak with a vengeance. Not for nothing had he been exposed to the pitiless struggles for life in the day of his cubhood, when his mother and he, alone and unaided, held their own and survived in the ferocious environment of the Wild. And not for nothing had he learned to walk softly when superior strength went by. He oppressed the weak, but he respected the strong. And in the course of the long journey with Grey Beaver he walked softly indeed amongst the full-grown dogs in the camps of the strange man-animals they encountered.

The months passed by. Still continued the journey of Grey Beaver. White Fang's strength was developed by the long hours on trail and the steady toil at the sled; and it would have seemed that his mental development was well-nigh complete. He had come to know quite thoroughly the world in which he lived. His outlook was bleak and materialistic. The world as he saw it was a fierce and brutal world, a world without warmth, a world in which caresses and affection and the bright sweetnesses of the spirit did not exist.

He had no affection for Grey Beaver. True, he was a god, but a most savage god. White Fang was glad to acknowledge his lordship, but it was a lordship based upon superior intelligence and brute strength. There was something in the fibre of White Fang's being that made his lordship a thing to be desired, else he would not have come back from the Wild when he did to tender his allegiance. There were deeps in his nature which had never been sounded. A kind word, a caressing touch of the hand, on the part of Grey Beaver, might have sounded these deeps; but Grey Beaver did not

caress, nor speak kind words. It was not his way. His primacy was savage, and savagely he ruled, administering justice with a club, punishing transgression with the pain of a blow, and rewarding merit, not by kindness, but by withholding a blow.

So White Fang knew nothing of the heaven a man's hand might contain for him. Besides, he did not like the hands of the man-animals. He was suspicious of them. It was true that they sometimes gave meat, but more often they gave hurt. Hands were things to keep away from. They hurled stones, wielded sticks and clubs and whips, administered slaps and clouts, and, when they touched him, were cunning to hurt with pinch and twist and wrench. In strange villages he had encountered the hands of the children and learned that they were cruel to hurt. Also, he had once nearly had an eye poked out by a toddling papoose. From these experiences he became suspicious of all children. He could not tolerate them. When they came near with their ominous hands, he got up.

It was in a village at the Great Slave Lake, that, in the course of resenting the evil of the hands of the man-animals, he came to modify the law that he had learned from Grey Beaver: namely, that the unpardonable crime was to bite one of the gods. In this village, after the custom of all dogs in all villages, White Fang went foraging, for food. A boy was chopping frozen moose-meat with an axe, and the chips were flying in the snow. White Fang, sliding by in quest of meat, stopped and began to eat the chips. He observed the boy lay down the axe and take up a stout club. White Fang sprang clear, just in time to escape the descending blow. The boy pursued him, and he, a stranger in the village, fled between two tepees to find himself cornered against a high earth bank.

There was no escape for White Fang. The only way out was between the two tepees, and this the boy guarded. Holding his club prepared to strike, he drew in on his cornered quarry. White Fang was furious. He faced the boy, bristling and snarling, his sense of justice outraged. He knew the law of forage. All the wastage of meat, such as the frozen chips, belonged to the dog that found it. He had done no wrong, broken no law, yet here was this boy preparing to give him a beating. White Fang scarcely knew what happened. He did it in a surge of rage. And he did it so quickly that the boy did not know either. All the boy knew was that he had in some unaccountable way been overturned into the snow, and that his club-hand had been ripped wide open by White Fang's teeth.

But White Fang knew that he had broken the law of the gods. He had driven his teeth into the sacred flesh of one of them, and could expect nothing but a most terrible punishment. He fled away to Grey Beaver, behind whose protecting legs he crouched when the bitten boy and the boy's family came, demanding vengeance. But they went away with vengeance unsatisfied. Grey Beaver defended White Fang. So did Mit-sah and Kloo-kooch. White Fang, listening to the wordy war and watching the angry gestures, knew that his act was justified. And so it came that he learned there were gods and gods. There were his gods, and there were other gods, and between them there was a difference. Justice or injustice, it was all the same, he must take all

things from the hands of his own gods. But he was not compelled to take injustice from the other gods. It was his privilege to resent it with his teeth. And this also was a law of the gods.

Before the day was out, White Fang was to learn more about this law. Mit-sah, alone, gathering firewood in the forest, encountered the boy that had been bitten. With him were other boys. Hot words passed. Then all the boys attacked Mit-sah. It was going hard with him. Blows were raining upon him from all sides. White Fang looked on at first. This was an affair of the gods, and no concern of his. Then he realised that this was Mit-sah, one of his own particular gods, who was being maltreated. It was no reasoned impulse that made White Fang do what he then did. A mad rush of anger sent him leaping in amongst the combatants. Five minutes later the landscape was covered with fleeing boys, many of whom dripped blood upon the snow in token that White Fang's teeth had not been idle. When Mit-sah told the story in camp, Grey Beaver ordered meat to be given to White Fang. He ordered much meat to be given, and White Fang, gorged and sleepy by the fire, knew that the law had received its verification.

It was in line with these experiences that White Fang came to learn the law of property and the duty of the defence of property. From the protection of his god's body to the protection of his god's possessions was a step, and this step he made. What was his god's was to be defended against all the world — even to the extent of biting other gods. Not only was such an act sacrilegious in its nature, but it was fraught with peril. The gods were all-powerful, and a dog was no match against them; yet White Fang learned to face them, fiercely belligerent and unafraid. Duty rose above fear, and thieving gods learned to leave Grey Beaver's property alone.

One thing, in this connection, White Fang quickly learnt, and that was that a thieving god was usually a cowardly god and prone to run away at the sounding of the alarm. Also, he learned that but brief time elapsed between his sounding of the alarm and Grey Beaver coming to his aid. He came to know that it was not fear of him that drove the thief away, but fear of Grey Beaver. White Fang did not give the alarm by barking. He never barked. His method was to drive straight at the intruder, and to sink his teeth in if he could. Because he was morose and solitary, having nothing to do with the other dogs, he was unusually fitted to guard his master's property; and in this he was encouraged and trained by Grey Beaver. One result of this was to make White Fang more ferocious and indomitable, and more solitary.

The months went by, binding stronger and stronger the covenant between dog and man. This was the ancient covenant that the first wolf that came in from the Wild entered into with man. And, like all succeeding wolves and wild dogs that had done likewise, White Fang worked the covenant out for himself. The terms were simple. For the possession of a flesh-and-blood god, he exchanged his own liberty. Food and fire, protection and companionship, were some of the things he received from the god. In return, he guarded the god's property, defended his body, worked for him, and obeyed him.

The possession of a god implies service. White Fang's was a service of duty and awe, but not of love. He did not know what love was. He had no experience of love. Kiche was a remote memory. Besides, not only had he abandoned the Wild and his kind when he gave himself up to man, but the terms of the covenant were such that if ever he met Kiche again he would not desert his god to go with her. His allegiance to man seemed somehow a law of his being greater than the love of liberty, of kind and kin.

## Chapter VI — The Famine

The spring of the year was at hand when Grey Beaver finished his long journey. It was April, and White Fang was a year old when he pulled into the home villages and was loosed from the harness by Mit-sah. Though a long way from his full growth, White Fang, next to Lip-lip, was the largest yearling in the village. Both from his father, the wolf, and from Kiche, he had inherited stature and strength, and already he was measuring up alongside the full-grown dogs. But he had not yet grown compact. His body was slender and rangy, and his strength more stringy than massive. His coat was the true wolf-grey, and to all appearances he was true wolf himself. The quarter-strain of dog he had inherited from Kiche had left no mark on him physically, though it had played its part in his mental make-up.

He wandered through the village, recognising with staid satisfaction the various gods he had known before the long journey. Then there were the dogs, puppies growing up like himself, and grown dogs that did not look so large and formidable as the memory pictures he retained of them. Also, he stood less in fear of them than formerly, stalking among them with a certain careless ease that was as new to him as it was enjoyable.

There was Baseek, a grizzled old fellow that in his younger days had but to uncover his fangs to send White Fang cringing and crouching to the right about. From him White Fang had learned much of his own insignificance; and from him he was now to learn much of the change and development that had taken place in himself. While Baseek had been growing weaker with age, White Fang had been growing stronger with youth.

It was at the cutting-up of a moose, fresh-killed, that White Fang learned of the changed relations in which he stood to the dog-world. He had got for himself a hoof and part of the shin-bone, to which quite a bit of meat was attached. Withdrawn from the immediate scramble of the other dogs — in fact out of sight behind a thicket — he was devouring his prize, when Baseek rushed in upon him. Before he knew what he was doing, he had slashed the intruder twice and sprung clear. Baseek was surprised by the other's temerity and swiftness of attack. He stood, gazing stupidly across at White Fang, the raw, red shin-bone between them.

Baseek was old, and already he had come to know the increasing valour of the dogs it had been his wont to bully. Bitter experiences these, which, perforce, he swallowed,

calling upon all his wisdom to cope with them. In the old days he would have sprung upon White Fang in a fury of righteous wrath. But now his waning powers would not permit such a course. He bristled fiercely and looked ominously across the shin-bone at White Fang. And White Fang, resurrecting quite a deal of the old awe, seemed to wilt and to shrink in upon himself and grow small, as he cast about in his mind for a way to beat a retreat not too inglorious.

And right here Baseek erred. Had he contented himself with looking fierce and ominous, all would have been well. White Fang, on the verge of retreat, would have retreated, leaving the meat to him. But Baseek did not wait. He considered the victory already his and stepped forward to the meat. As he bent his head carelessly to smell it, White Fang bristled slightly. Even then it was not too late for Baseek to retrieve the situation. Had he merely stood over the meat, head up and glowering, White Fang would ultimately have slunk away. But the fresh meat was strong in Baseek's nostrils, and greed urged him to take a bite of it.

This was too much for White Fang. Fresh upon his months of mastery over his own team-mates, it was beyond his self-control to stand idly by while another devoured the meat that belonged to him. He struck, after his custom, without warning. With the first slash, Baseek's right ear was ripped into ribbons. He was astounded at the suddenness of it. But more things, and most grievous ones, were happening with equal suddenness. He was knocked off his feet. His throat was bitten. While he was struggling to his feet the young dog sank teeth twice into his shoulder. The swiftness of it was bewildering. He made a futile rush at White Fang, clipping the empty air with an outraged snap. The next moment his nose was laid open, and he was staggering backward away from the meat.

The situation was now reversed. White Fang stood over the shin-bone, bristling and menacing, while Baseek stood a little way off, preparing to retreat. He dared not risk a fight with this young lightning-flash, and again he knew, and more bitterly, the enfeeblement of oncoming age. His attempt to maintain his dignity was heroic. Calmly turning his back upon young dog and shin-bone, as though both were beneath his notice and unworthy of his consideration, he stalked grandly away. Nor, until well out of sight, did he stop to lick his bleeding wounds.

The effect on White Fang was to give him a greater faith in himself, and a greater pride. He walked less softly among the grown dogs; his attitude toward them was less compromising. Not that he went out of his way looking for trouble. Far from it. But upon his way he demanded consideration. He stood upon his right to go his way unmolested and to give trail to no dog. He had to be taken into account, that was all. He was no longer to be disregarded and ignored, as was the lot of puppies, and as continued to be the lot of the puppies that were his team-mates. They got out of the way, gave trail to the grown dogs, and gave up meat to them under compulsion. But White Fang, uncompanionable, solitary, morose, scarcely looking to right or left, redoubtable, forbidding of aspect, remote and alien, was accepted as an equal by his puzzled elders. They quickly learned to leave him alone, neither venturing hostile acts

nor making overtures of friendliness. If they left him alone, he left them alone — a state of affairs that they found, after a few encounters, to be pre-eminently desirable.

In midsummer White Fang had an experience. Trotting along in his silent way to investigate a new tepee which had been erected on the edge of the village while he was away with the hunters after moose, he came full upon Kiche. He paused and looked at her. He remembered her vaguely, but he remembered her, and that was more than could be said for her. She lifted her lip at him in the old snarl of menace, and his memory became clear. His forgotten cubhood, all that was associated with that familiar snarl, rushed back to him. Before he had known the gods, she had been to him the centre-pin of the universe. The old familiar feelings of that time came back upon him, surged up within him. He bounded towards her joyously, and she met him with shrewd fangs that laid his cheek open to the bone. He did not understand. He backed away, bewildered and puzzled.

But it was not Kiche's fault. A wolf-mother was not made to remember her cubs of a year or so before. So she did not remember White Fang. He was a strange animal, an intruder; and her present litter of puppies gave her the right to resent such intrusion.

One of the puppies sprawled up to White Fang. They were half-brothers, only they did not know it. White Fang sniffed the puppy curiously, whereupon Kiche rushed upon him, gashing his face a second time. He backed farther away. All the old memories and associations died down again and passed into the grave from which they had been resurrected. He looked at Kiche licking her puppy and stopping now and then to snarl at him. She was without value to him. He had learned to get along without her. Her meaning was forgotten. There was no place for her in his scheme of things, as there was no place for him in hers.

He was still standing, stupid and bewildered, the memories forgotten, wondering what it was all about, when Kiche attacked him a third time, intent on driving him away altogether from the vicinity. And White Fang allowed himself to be driven away. This was a female of his kind, and it was a law of his kind that the males must not fight the females. He did not know anything about this law, for it was no generalisation of the mind, not a something acquired by experience of the world. He knew it as a secret prompting, as an urge of instinct — of the same instinct that made him howl at the moon and stars of nights, and that made him fear death and the unknown.

The months went by. White Fang grew stronger, heavier, and more compact, while his character was developing along the lines laid down by his heredity and his environment. His heredity was a life-stuff that may be likened to clay. It possessed many possibilities, was capable of being moulded into many different forms. Environment served to model the clay, to give it a particular form. Thus, had White Fang never come in to the fires of man, the Wild would have moulded him into a true wolf. But the gods had given him a different environment, and he was moulded into a dog that was rather wolfish, but that was a dog and not a wolf.

And so, according to the clay of his nature and the pressure of his surroundings, his character was being moulded into a certain particular shape. There was no escaping it.



He was becoming more morose, more uncompanionable, more solitary, more ferocious; while the dogs were learning more and more that it was better to be at peace with him than at war, and Grey Beaver was coming to prize him more greatly with the passage of each day.

White Fang, seeming to sum up strength in all his qualities, nevertheless suffered from one besetting weakness. He could not stand being laughed at. The laughter of men was a hateful thing. They might laugh among themselves about anything they pleased except himself, and he did not mind. But the moment laughter was turned upon him he would fly into a most terrible rage. Grave, dignified, sombre, a laugh made him frantic to ridiculousness. It so outraged him and upset him that for hours he would behave like a demon. And woe to the dog that at such times ran foul of him. He knew the law too well to take it out of Grey Beaver; behind Grey Beaver were a club and godhead. But behind the dogs there was nothing but space, and into this space they flew when White Fang came on the scene, made mad by laughter.

In the third year of his life there came a great famine to the Mackenzie Indians. In the summer the fish failed. In the winter the cariboo forsook their accustomed track. Moose were scarce, the rabbits almost disappeared, hunting and preying animals perished. Denied their usual food-supply, weakened by hunger, they fell upon and devoured one another. Only the strong survived. White Fang's gods were always hunting animals. The old and the weak of them died of hunger. There was wailing in the village, where the women and children went without in order that what little they had might go into the bellies of the lean and hollow-eyed hunters who trod the forest in the vain pursuit of meat.

To such extremity were the gods driven that they ate the soft-tanned leather of their mocassins and mittens, while the dogs ate the harnesses off their backs and the very whip-lashes. Also, the dogs ate one another, and also the gods ate the dogs. The weakest and the more worthless were eaten first. The dogs that still lived, looked on and understood. A few of the boldest and wisest forsook the fires of the gods, which had now become a shambles, and fled into the forest, where, in the end, they starved to death or were eaten by wolves.

In this time of misery, White Fang, too, stole away into the woods. He was better fitted for the life than the other dogs, for he had the training of his cubhood to guide him. Especially adept did he become in stalking small living things. He would lie concealed for hours, following every movement of a cautious tree-squirrel, waiting, with a patience as huge as the hunger he suffered from, until the squirrel ventured out upon the ground. Even then, White Fang was not premature. He waited until he was sure of striking before the squirrel could gain a tree-refuge. Then, and not until then, would he flash from his hiding-place, a grey projectile, incredibly swift, never failing its mark — the fleeing squirrel that fled not fast enough.

Successful as he was with squirrels, there was one difficulty that prevented him from living and growing fat on them. There were not enough squirrels. So he was driven to hunt still smaller things. So acute did his hunger become at times that he was not

above rooting out wood-mice from their burrows in the ground. Nor did he scorn to do battle with a weasel as hungry as himself and many times more ferocious.

In the worst pinches of the famine he stole back to the fires of the gods. But he did not go into the fires. He lurked in the forest, avoiding discovery and robbing the snares at the rare intervals when game was caught. He even robbed Grey Beaver's snare of a rabbit at a time when Grey Beaver staggered and tottered through the forest, sitting down often to rest, what of weakness and of shortness of breath.

One day White Fang encountered a young wolf, gaunt and scrawny, loose-jointed with famine. Had he not been hungry himself, White Fang might have gone with him and eventually found his way into the pack amongst his wild brethren. As it was, he ran the young wolf down and killed and ate him.

Fortune seemed to favour him. Always, when hardest pressed for food, he found something to kill. Again, when he was weak, it was his luck that none of the larger preying animals chanced upon him. Thus, he was strong from the two days' eating a lynx had afforded him when the hungry wolf-pack ran full tilt upon him. It was a long, cruel chase, but he was better nourished than they, and in the end outran them. And not only did he outrun them, but, circling widely back on his track, he gathered in one of his exhausted pursuers.

After that he left that part of the country and journeyed over to the valley wherein he had been born. Here, in the old lair, he encountered Kiche. Up to her old tricks, she, too, had fled the inhospitable fires of the gods and gone back to her old refuge to give birth to her young. Of this litter but one remained alive when White Fang came upon the scene, and this one was not destined to live long. Young life had little chance in such a famine.

Kiche's greeting of her grown son was anything but affectionate. But White Fang did not mind. He had outgrown his mother. So he turned tail philosophically and trotted on up the stream. At the forks he took the turning to the left, where he found the lair of the lynx with whom his mother and he had fought long before. Here, in the abandoned lair, he settled down and rested for a day.

During the early summer, in the last days of the famine, he met Lip-lip, who had likewise taken to the woods, where he had eked out a miserable existence.

White Fang came upon him unexpectedly. Trotting in opposite directions along the base of a high bluff, they rounded a corner of rock and found themselves face to face. They paused with instant alarm, and looked at each other suspiciously.

White Fang was in splendid condition. His hunting had been good, and for a week he had eaten his fill. He was even gorged from his latest kill. But in the moment he looked at Lip-lip his hair rose on end all along his back. It was an involuntary bristling on his part, the physical state that in the past had always accompanied the mental state produced in him by Lip-lip's bullying and persecution. As in the past he had bristled and snarled at sight of Lip-lip, so now, and automatically, he bristled and snarled. He did not waste any time. The thing was done thoroughly and with despatch. Lip-lip essayed to back away, but White Fang struck him hard, shoulder to shoulder.

Lip-lip was overthrown and rolled upon his back. White Fang's teeth drove into the scrawny throat. There was a death-struggle, during which White Fang walked around, stiff-legged and observant. Then he resumed his course and trotted on along the base of the bluff.

One day, not long after, he came to the edge of the forest, where a narrow stretch of open land sloped down to the Mackenzie. He had been over this ground before, when it was bare, but now a village occupied it. Still hidden amongst the trees, he paused to study the situation. Sights and sounds and scents were familiar to him. It was the old village changed to a new place. But sights and sounds and smells were different from those he had last had when he fled away from it. There was no whimpering nor wailing. Contented sounds saluted his ear, and when he heard the angry voice of a woman he knew it to be the anger that proceeds from a full stomach. And there was a smell in the air of fish. There was food. The famine was gone. He came out boldly from the forest and trotted into camp straight to Grey Beaver's tepee. Grey Beaver was not there; but Kloo-kooch welcomed him with glad cries and the whole of a fresh-caught fish, and he lay down to wait Grey Beaver's coming.

# Part IV

## Chapter I — The Enemy of His Kind

Had there been in White Fang's nature any possibility, no matter how remote, of his ever coming to fraternise with his kind, such possibility was irretrievably destroyed when he was made leader of the sled-team. For now the dogs hated him — hated him for the extra meat bestowed upon him by Mit-sah; hated him for all the real and fancied favours he received; hated him for that he fled always at the head of the team, his waving brush of a tail and his perpetually retreating hind-quarters for ever maddening their eyes.

And White Fang just as bitterly hated them back. Being sled-leader was anything but gratifying to him. To be compelled to run away before the yelling pack, every dog of which, for three years, he had thrashed and mastered, was almost more than he could endure. But endure it he must, or perish, and the life that was in him had no desire to perish out. The moment Mit-sah gave his order for the start, that moment the whole team, with eager, savage cries, sprang forward at White Fang.

There was no defence for him. If he turned upon them, Mit-sah would throw the stinging lash of the whip into his face. Only remained to him to run away. He could not encounter that howling horde with his tail and hind-quarters. These were scarcely fit weapons with which to meet the many merciless fangs. So run away he did, violating his own nature and pride with every leap he made, and leaping all day long.

One cannot violate the promptings of one's nature without having that nature recoil upon itself. Such a recoil is like that of a hair, made to grow out from the body, turning unnaturally upon the direction of its growth and growing into the body — a rankling, festering thing of hurt. And so with White Fang. Every urge of his being impelled him to spring upon the pack that cried at his heels, but it was the will of the gods that this should not be; and behind the will, to enforce it, was the whip of cariboo-gut with its biting thirty-foot lash. So White Fang could only eat his heart in bitterness and develop a hatred and malice commensurate with the ferocity and indomitability of his nature.

If ever a creature was the enemy of its kind, White Fang was that creature. He asked no quarter, gave none. He was continually marred and scarred by the teeth of the pack, and as continually he left his own marks upon the pack. Unlike most leaders, who, when camp was made and the dogs were unhitched, huddled near to the gods for protection, White Fang disdained such protection. He walked boldly about the camp,

inflicting punishment in the night for what he had suffered in the day. In the time before he was made leader of the team, the pack had learned to get out of his way. But now it was different. Excited by the day-long pursuit of him, swayed subconsciously by the insistent iteration on their brains of the sight of him fleeing away, mastered by the feeling of mastery enjoyed all day, the dogs could not bring themselves to give way to him. When he appeared amongst them, there was always a squabble. His progress was marked by snarl and snap and growl. The very atmosphere he breathed was surcharged with hatred and malice, and this but served to increase the hatred and malice within him.

When Mit-sah cried out his command for the team to stop, White Fang obeyed. At first this caused trouble for the other dogs. All of them would spring upon the hated leader only to find the tables turned. Behind him would be Mit-sah, the great whip singing in his hand. So the dogs came to understand that when the team stopped by order, White Fang was to be let alone. But when White Fang stopped without orders, then it was allowed them to spring upon him and destroy him if they could. After several experiences, White Fang never stopped without orders. He learned quickly. It was in the nature of things, that he must learn quickly if he were to survive the unusually severe conditions under which life was vouchsafed him.

But the dogs could never learn the lesson to leave him alone in camp. Each day, pursuing him and crying defiance at him, the lesson of the previous night was erased, and that night would have to be learned over again, to be as immediately forgotten. Besides, there was a greater consistence in their dislike of him. They sensed between themselves and him a difference of kind — cause sufficient in itself for hostility. Like him, they were domesticated wolves. But they had been domesticated for generations. Much of the Wild had been lost, so that to them the Wild was the unknown, the terrible, the ever-menacing and ever warring. But to him, in appearance and action and impulse, still clung the Wild. He symbolised it, was its personification: so that when they showed their teeth to him they were defending themselves against the powers of destruction that lurked in the shadows of the forest and in the dark beyond the camp-fire.

But there was one lesson the dogs did learn, and that was to keep together. White Fang was too terrible for any of them to face single-handed. They met him with the mass-formation, otherwise he would have killed them, one by one, in a night. As it was, he never had a chance to kill them. He might roll a dog off its feet, but the pack would be upon him before he could follow up and deliver the deadly throat-stroke. At the first hint of conflict, the whole team drew together and faced him. The dogs had quarrels among themselves, but these were forgotten when trouble was brewing with White Fang.

On the other hand, try as they would, they could not kill White Fang. He was too quick for them, too formidable, too wise. He avoided tight places and always backed out of it when they bade fair to surround him. While, as for getting him off his feet, there was no dog among them capable of doing the trick. His feet clung to the earth

with the same tenacity that he clung to life. For that matter, life and footing were synonymous in this unending warfare with the pack, and none knew it better than White Fang.

So he became the enemy of his kind, domesticated wolves that they were, softened by the fires of man, weakened in the sheltering shadow of man's strength. White Fang was bitter and implacable. The clay of him was so moulded. He declared a vendetta against all dogs. And so terribly did he live this vendetta that Grey Beaver, fierce savage himself, could not but marvel at White Fang's ferocity. Never, he swore, had there been the like of this animal; and the Indians in strange villages swore likewise when they considered the tale of his killings amongst their dogs.

When White Fang was nearly five years old, Grey Beaver took him on another great journey, and long remembered was the havoc he worked amongst the dogs of the many villages along the Mackenzie, across the Rockies, and down the Porcupine to the Yukon. He revelled in the vengeance he wreaked upon his kind. They were ordinary, unsuspecting dogs. They were not prepared for his swiftness and directness, for his attack without warning. They did not know him for what he was, a lightning-flash of slaughter. They bristled up to him, stiff-legged and challenging, while he, wasting no time on elaborate preliminaries, snapping into action like a steel spring, was at their throats and destroying them before they knew what was happening and while they were yet in the throes of surprise.

He became an adept at fighting. He economised. He never wasted his strength, never tussled. He was in too quickly for that, and, if he missed, was out again too quickly. The dislike of the wolf for close quarters was his to an unusual degree. He could not endure a prolonged contact with another body. It smacked of danger. It made him frantic. He must be away, free, on his own legs, touching no living thing. It was the Wild still clinging to him, asserting itself through him. This feeling had been accentuated by the Ishmaelite life he had led from his puppyhood. Danger lurked in contacts. It was the trap, ever the trap, the fear of it lurking deep in the life of him, woven into the fibre of him.

In consequence, the strange dogs he encountered had no chance against him. He eluded their fangs. He got them, or got away, himself untouched in either event. In the natural course of things there were exceptions to this. There were times when several dogs, pitching on to him, punished him before he could get away; and there were times when a single dog scored deeply on him. But these were accidents. In the main, so efficient a fighter had he become, he went his way unscathed.

Another advantage he possessed was that of correctly judging time and distance. Not that he did this consciously, however. He did not calculate such things. It was all automatic. His eyes saw correctly, and the nerves carried the vision correctly to his brain. The parts of him were better adjusted than those of the average dog. They worked together more smoothly and steadily. His was a better, far better, nervous, mental, and muscular co-ordination. When his eyes conveyed to his brain the moving image of an action, his brain without conscious effort, knew the space that limited

that action and the time required for its completion. Thus, he could avoid the leap of another dog, or the drive of its fangs, and at the same moment could seize the infinitesimal fraction of time in which to deliver his own attack. Body and brain, his was a more perfected mechanism. Not that he was to be praised for it. Nature had been more generous to him than to the average animal, that was all.

It was in the summer that White Fang arrived at Fort Yukon. Grey Beaver had crossed the great watershed between Mackenzie and the Yukon in the late winter, and spent the spring in hunting among the western outlying spurs of the Rockies. Then, after the break-up of the ice on the Porcupine, he had built a canoe and paddled down that stream to where it effected its junction with the Yukon just under the Arctic circle. Here stood the old Hudson's Bay Company fort; and here were many Indians, much food, and unprecedented excitement. It was the summer of 1898, and thousands of gold-hunters were going up the Yukon to Dawson and the Klondike. Still hundreds of miles from their goal, nevertheless many of them had been on the way for a year, and the least any of them had travelled to get that far was five thousand miles, while some had come from the other side of the world.

Here Grey Beaver stopped. A whisper of the gold-rush had reached his ears, and he had come with several bales of furs, and another of gut-sewn mittens and moccasins. He would not have ventured so long a trip had he not expected generous profits. But what he had expected was nothing to what he realised. His wildest dreams had not exceeded a hundred per cent. profit; he made a thousand per cent. And like a true Indian, he settled down to trade carefully and slowly, even if it took all summer and the rest of the winter to dispose of his goods.

It was at Fort Yukon that White Fang saw his first white men. As compared with the Indians he had known, they were to him another race of beings, a race of superior gods. They impressed him as possessing superior power, and it is on power that godhead rests. White Fang did not reason it out, did not in his mind make the sharp generalisation that the white gods were more powerful. It was a feeling, nothing more, and yet none the less potent. As, in his puppyhood, the looming bulks of the tepees, man-reared, had affected him as manifestations of power, so was he affected now by the houses and the huge fort all of massive logs. Here was power. Those white gods were strong. They possessed greater mastery over matter than the gods he had known, most powerful among which was Grey Beaver. And yet Grey Beaver was as a child-god among these white-skinned ones.

To be sure, White Fang only felt these things. He was not conscious of them. Yet it is upon feeling, more often than thinking, that animals act; and every act White Fang now performed was based upon the feeling that the white men were the superior gods. In the first place he was very suspicious of them. There was no telling what unknown terrors were theirs, what unknown hurts they could administer. He was curious to observe them, fearful of being noticed by them. For the first few hours he was content with slinking around and watching them from a safe distance. Then he saw that no harm befell the dogs that were near to them, and he came in closer.

In turn he was an object of great curiosity to them. His wolfish appearance caught their eyes at once, and they pointed him out to one another. This act of pointing put White Fang on his guard, and when they tried to approach him he showed his teeth and backed away. Not one succeeded in laying a hand on him, and it was well that they did not.

White Fang soon learned that very few of these gods — not more than a dozen — lived at this place. Every two or three days a steamer (another and colossal manifestation of power) came into the bank and stopped for several hours. The white men came from off these steamers and went away on them again. There seemed untold numbers of these white men. In the first day or so, he saw more of them than he had seen Indians in all his life; and as the days went by they continued to come up the river, stop, and then go on up the river out of sight.

But if the white gods were all-powerful, their dogs did not amount to much. This White Fang quickly discovered by mixing with those that came ashore with their masters. They were irregular shapes and sizes. Some were short-legged — too short; others were long-legged — too long. They had hair instead of fur, and a few had very little hair at that. And none of them knew how to fight.

As an enemy of his kind, it was in White Fang's province to fight with them. This he did, and he quickly achieved for them a mighty contempt. They were soft and helpless, made much noise, and floundered around clumsily trying to accomplish by main strength what he accomplished by dexterity and cunning. They rushed bellowing at him. He sprang to the side. They did not know what had become of him; and in that moment he struck them on the shoulder, rolling them off their feet and delivering his stroke at the throat.

Sometimes this stroke was successful, and a stricken dog rolled in the dirt, to be pounced upon and torn to pieces by the pack of Indian dogs that waited. White Fang was wise. He had long since learned that the gods were made angry when their dogs were killed. The white men were no exception to this. So he was content, when he had overthrown and slashed wide the throat of one of their dogs, to drop back and let the pack go in and do the cruel finishing work. It was then that the white men rushed in, visiting their wrath heavily on the pack, while White Fang went free. He would stand off at a little distance and look on, while stones, clubs, axes, and all sorts of weapons fell upon his fellows. White Fang was very wise.

But his fellows grew wise in their own way; and in this White Fang grew wise with them. They learned that it was when a steamer first tied to the bank that they had their fun. After the first two or three strange dogs had been downed and destroyed, the white men hustled their own animals back on board and wrecked savage vengeance on the offenders. One white man, having seen his dog, a setter, torn to pieces before his eyes, drew a revolver. He fired rapidly, six times, and six of the pack lay dead or dying — another manifestation of power that sank deep into White Fang's consciousness.

White Fang enjoyed it all. He did not love his kind, and he was shrewd enough to escape hurt himself. At first, the killing of the white men's dogs had been a diversion.



After a time it became his occupation. There was no work for him to do. Grey Beaver was busy trading and getting wealthy. So White Fang hung around the landing with the disreputable gang of Indian dogs, waiting for steamers. With the arrival of a steamer the fun began. After a few minutes, by the time the white men had got over their surprise, the gang scattered. The fun was over until the next steamer should arrive.

But it can scarcely be said that White Fang was a member of the gang. He did not mingle with it, but remained aloof, always himself, and was even feared by it. It is true, he worked with it. He picked the quarrel with the strange dog while the gang waited. And when he had overthrown the strange dog the gang went in to finish it. But it is equally true that he then withdrew, leaving the gang to receive the punishment of the outraged gods.

It did not require much exertion to pick these quarrels. All he had to do, when the strange dogs came ashore, was to show himself. When they saw him they rushed for him. It was their instinct. He was the Wild — the unknown, the terrible, the ever-menacing, the thing that prowled in the darkness around the fires of the primeval world when they, cowering close to the fires, were reshaping their instincts, learning to fear the Wild out of which they had come, and which they had deserted and betrayed. Generation by generation, down all the generations, had this fear of the Wild been stamped into their natures. For centuries the Wild had stood for terror and destruction. And during all this time free licence had been theirs, from their masters, to kill the things of the Wild. In doing this they had protected both themselves and the gods whose companionship they shared.

And so, fresh from the soft southern world, these dogs, trotting down the gang-plank and out upon the Yukon shore had but to see White Fang to experience the irresistible impulse to rush upon him and destroy him. They might be town-reared dogs, but the instinctive fear of the Wild was theirs just the same. Not alone with their own eyes did they see the wolfish creature in the clear light of day, standing before them. They saw him with the eyes of their ancestors, and by their inherited memory they knew White Fang for the wolf, and they remembered the ancient feud.

All of which served to make White Fang's days enjoyable. If the sight of him drove these strange dogs upon him, so much the better for him, so much the worse for them. They looked upon him as legitimate prey, and as legitimate prey he looked upon them.

Not for nothing had he first seen the light of day in a lonely lair and fought his first fights with the ptarmigan, the weasel, and the lynx. And not for nothing had his puppyhood been made bitter by the persecution of Lip-lip and the whole puppy pack. It might have been otherwise, and he would then have been otherwise. Had Lip-lip not existed, he would have passed his puppyhood with the other puppies and grown up more doglike and with more liking for dogs. Had Grey Beaver possessed the plummet of affection and love, he might have sounded the deeps of White Fang's nature and brought up to the surface all manner of kindly qualities. But these things had not been so. The clay of White Fang had been moulded until he became what he was, morose and lonely, unloving and ferocious, the enemy of all his kind.

## Chapter II — The Mad God

A small number of white men lived in Fort Yukon. These men had been long in the country. They called themselves Sour-doughs, and took great pride in so classifying themselves. For other men, new in the land, they felt nothing but disdain. The men who came ashore from the steamers were newcomers. They were known as chechaquos, and they always wilted at the application of the name. They made their bread with baking-powder. This was the invidious distinction between them and the Sour-doughs, who, forsooth, made their bread from sour-dough because they had no baking-powder.

All of which is neither here nor there. The men in the fort disdained the newcomers and enjoyed seeing them come to grief. Especially did they enjoy the havoc worked amongst the newcomers' dogs by White Fang and his disreputable gang. When a steamer arrived, the men of the fort made it a point always to come down to the bank and see the fun. They looked forward to it with as much anticipation as did the Indian dogs, while they were not slow to appreciate the savage and crafty part played by White Fang.

But there was one man amongst them who particularly enjoyed the sport. He would come running at the first sound of a steamboat's whistle; and when the last fight was over and White Fang and the pack had scattered, he would return slowly to the fort, his face heavy with regret. Sometimes, when a soft southland dog went down, shrieking its death-cry under the fangs of the pack, this man would be unable to contain himself, and would leap into the air and cry out with delight. And always he had a sharp and covetous eye for White Fang.

This man was called "Beauty" by the other men of the fort. No one knew his first name, and in general he was known in the country as Beauty Smith. But he was anything save a beauty. To antithesis was due his naming. He was pre-eminently un-beautiful. Nature had been niggardly with him. He was a small man to begin with; and upon his meagre frame was deposited an even more strikingly meagre head. Its apex might be likened to a point. In fact, in his boyhood, before he had been named Beauty by his fellows, he had been called "Pinhead."

Backward, from the apex, his head slanted down to his neck and forward it slanted uncompromisingly to meet a low and remarkably wide forehead. Beginning here, as though regretting her parsimony, Nature had spread his features with a lavish hand. His eyes were large, and between them was the distance of two eyes. His face, in relation to the rest of him, was prodigious. In order to discover the necessary area, Nature had given him an enormous prognathous jaw. It was wide and heavy, and protruded outward and down until it seemed to rest on his chest. Possibly this appearance was due to the weariness of the slender neck, unable properly to support so great a burden.

This jaw gave the impression of ferocious determination. But something lacked. Perhaps it was from excess. Perhaps the jaw was too large. At any rate, it was a lie. Beauty Smith was known far and wide as the weakest of weak-kneed and snivelling cowards. To complete his description, his teeth were large and yellow, while the two

eye-teeth, larger than their fellows, showed under his lean lips like fangs. His eyes were yellow and muddy, as though Nature had run short on pigments and squeezed together the dregs of all her tubes. It was the same with his hair, sparse and irregular of growth, muddy-yellow and dirty-yellow, rising on his head and sprouting out of his face in unexpected tufts and bunches, in appearance like clumped and wind-blown grain.

In short, Beauty Smith was a monstrosity, and the blame of it lay elsewhere. He was not responsible. The clay of him had been so moulded in the making. He did the cooking for the other men in the fort, the dish-washing and the drudgery. They did not despise him. Rather did they tolerate him in a broad human way, as one tolerates any creature evilly treated in the making. Also, they feared him. His cowardly rages made them dread a shot in the back or poison in their coffee. But somebody had to do the cooking, and whatever else his shortcomings, Beauty Smith could cook.

This was the man that looked at White Fang, delighted in his ferocious prowess, and desired to possess him. He made overtures to White Fang from the first. White Fang began by ignoring him. Later on, when the overtures became more insistent, White Fang bristled and bared his teeth and backed away. He did not like the man. The feel of him was bad. He sensed the evil in him, and feared the extended hand and the attempts at soft-spoken speech. Because of all this, he hated the man.

With the simpler creatures, good and bad are things simply understood. The good stands for all things that bring easement and satisfaction and surcease from pain. Therefore, the good is liked. The bad stands for all things that are fraught with discomfort, menace, and hurt, and is hated accordingly. White Fang's feel of Beauty Smith was bad. From the man's distorted body and twisted mind, in occult ways, like mists rising from malarial marshes, came emanations of the unhealth within. Not by reasoning, not by the five senses alone, but by other and remoter and uncharted senses, came the feeling to White Fang that the man was ominous with evil, pregnant with hurtfulness, and therefore a thing bad, and wisely to be hated.

White Fang was in Grey Beaver's camp when Beauty Smith first visited it. At the faint sound of his distant feet, before he came in sight, White Fang knew who was coming and began to bristle. He had been lying down in an abandon of comfort, but he arose quickly, and, as the man arrived, slid away in true wolf-fashion to the edge of the camp. He did not know what they said, but he could see the man and Grey Beaver talking together. Once, the man pointed at him, and White Fang snarled back as though the hand were just descending upon him instead of being, as it was, fifty feet away. The man laughed at this; and White Fang slunk away to the sheltering woods, his head turned to observe as he glided softly over the ground.

Grey Beaver refused to sell the dog. He had grown rich with his trading and stood in need of nothing. Besides, White Fang was a valuable animal, the strongest sled-dog he had ever owned, and the best leader. Furthermore, there was no dog like him on the Mackenzie nor the Yukon. He could fight. He killed other dogs as easily as men killed mosquitoes. (Beauty Smith's eyes lighted up at this, and he licked his thin lips with an eager tongue). No, White Fang was not for sale at any price.

But Beauty Smith knew the ways of Indians. He visited Grey Beaver's camp often, and hidden under his coat was always a black bottle or so. One of the potencies of whisky is the breeding of thirst. Grey Beaver got the thirst. His fevered membranes and burnt stomach began to clamour for more and more of the scorching fluid; while his brain, thrust all awry by the unwonted stimulant, permitted him to go any length to obtain it. The money he had received for his furs and mittens and moccasins began to go. It went faster and faster, and the shorter his money-sack grew, the shorter grew his temper.

In the end his money and goods and temper were all gone. Nothing remained to him but his thirst, a prodigious possession in itself that grew more prodigious with every sober breath he drew. Then it was that Beauty Smith had talk with him again about the sale of White Fang; but this time the price offered was in bottles, not dollars, and Grey Beaver's ears were more eager to hear.

"You ketch um dog you take um all right," was his last word.

The bottles were delivered, but after two days. "You ketch um dog," were Beauty Smith's words to Grey Beaver.

White Fang slunk into camp one evening and dropped down with a sigh of content. The dreaded white god was not there. For days his manifestations of desire to lay hands on him had been growing more insistent, and during that time White Fang had been compelled to avoid the camp. He did not know what evil was threatened by those insistent hands. He knew only that they did threaten evil of some sort, and that it was best for him to keep out of their reach.

But scarcely had he lain down when Grey Beaver staggered over to him and tied a leather thong around his neck. He sat down beside White Fang, holding the end of the thong in his hand. In the other hand he held a bottle, which, from time to time, was inverted above his head to the accompaniment of gurgling noises.

An hour of this passed, when the vibrations of feet in contact with the ground foreran the one who approached. White Fang heard it first, and he was bristling with recognition while Grey Beaver still nodded stupidly. White Fang tried to draw the thong softly out of his master's hand; but the relaxed fingers closed tightly and Grey Beaver roused himself.

Beauty Smith strode into camp and stood over White Fang. He snarled softly up at the thing of fear, watching keenly the deportment of the hands. One hand extended outward and began to descend upon his head. His soft snarl grew tense and harsh. The hand continued slowly to descend, while he crouched beneath it, eyeing it malignantly, his snarl growing shorter and shorter as, with quickening breath, it approached its culmination. Suddenly he snapped, striking with his fangs like a snake. The hand was jerked back, and the teeth came together emptily with a sharp click. Beauty Smith was frightened and angry. Grey Beaver clouted White Fang alongside the head, so that he cowered down close to the earth in respectful obedience.

White Fang's suspicious eyes followed every movement. He saw Beauty Smith go away and return with a stout club. Then the end of the thong was given over to him by

Grey Beaver. Beauty Smith started to walk away. The thong grew taut. White Fang resisted it. Grey Beaver clouted him right and left to make him get up and follow. He obeyed, but with a rush, hurling himself upon the stranger who was dragging him away. Beauty Smith did not jump away. He had been waiting for this. He swung the club smartly, stopping the rush midway and smashing White Fang down upon the ground. Grey Beaver laughed and nodded approval. Beauty Smith tightened the thong again, and White Fang crawled limply and dizzily to his feet.

He did not rush a second time. One smash from the club was sufficient to convince him that the white god knew how to handle it, and he was too wise to fight the inevitable. So he followed morosely at Beauty Smith's heels, his tail between his legs, yet snarling softly under his breath. But Beauty Smith kept a wary eye on him, and the club was held always ready to strike.

At the fort Beauty Smith left him securely tied and went in to bed. White Fang waited an hour. Then he applied his teeth to the thong, and in the space of ten seconds was free. He had wasted no time with his teeth. There had been no useless gnawing. The thong was cut across, diagonally, almost as clean as though done by a knife. White Fang looked up at the fort, at the same time bristling and growling. Then he turned and trotted back to Grey Beaver's camp. He owed no allegiance to this strange and terrible god. He had given himself to Grey Beaver, and to Grey Beaver he considered he still belonged.

But what had occurred before was repeated — with a difference. Grey Beaver again made him fast with a thong, and in the morning turned him over to Beauty Smith. And here was where the difference came in. Beauty Smith gave him a beating. Tied securely, White Fang could only rage futilely and endure the punishment. Club and whip were both used upon him, and he experienced the worst beating he had ever received in his life. Even the big beating given him in his puppyhood by Grey Beaver was mild compared with this.

Beauty Smith enjoyed the task. He delighted in it. He gloated over his victim, and his eyes flamed dully, as he swung the whip or club and listened to White Fang's cries of pain and to his helpless bellows and snarls. For Beauty Smith was cruel in the way that cowards are cruel. Cringing and snivelling himself before the blows or angry speech of a man, he revenged himself, in turn, upon creatures weaker than he. All life likes power, and Beauty Smith was no exception. Denied the expression of power amongst his own kind, he fell back upon the lesser creatures and there vindicated the life that was in him. But Beauty Smith had not created himself, and no blame was to be attached to him. He had come into the world with a twisted body and a brute intelligence. This had constituted the clay of him, and it had not been kindly moulded by the world.

White Fang knew why he was being beaten. When Grey Beaver tied the thong around his neck, and passed the end of the thong into Beauty Smith's keeping, White Fang knew that it was his god's will for him to go with Beauty Smith. And when Beauty Smith left him tied outside the fort, he knew that it was Beauty Smith's will

that he should remain there. Therefore, he had disobeyed the will of both the gods, and earned the consequent punishment. He had seen dogs change owners in the past, and he had seen the runaways beaten as he was being beaten. He was wise, and yet in the nature of him there were forces greater than wisdom. One of these was fidelity. He did not love Grey Beaver, yet, even in the face of his will and his anger, he was faithful to him. He could not help it. This faithfulness was a quality of the clay that composed him. It was the quality that was peculiarly the possession of his kind; the quality that set apart his species from all other species; the quality that has enabled the wolf and the wild dog to come in from the open and be the companions of man.

After the beating, White Fang was dragged back to the fort. But this time Beauty Smith left him tied with a stick. One does not give up a god easily, and so with White Fang. Grey Beaver was his own particular god, and, in spite of Grey Beaver's will, White Fang still clung to him and would not give him up. Grey Beaver had betrayed and forsaken him, but that had no effect upon him. Not for nothing had he surrendered himself body and soul to Grey Beaver. There had been no reservation on White Fang's part, and the bond was not to be broken easily.

So, in the night, when the men in the fort were asleep, White Fang applied his teeth to the stick that held him. The wood was seasoned and dry, and it was tied so closely to his neck that he could scarcely get his teeth to it. It was only by the severest muscular exertion and neck-arching that he succeeded in getting the wood between his teeth, and barely between his teeth at that; and it was only by the exercise of an immense patience, extending through many hours, that he succeeded in gnawing through the stick. This was something that dogs were not supposed to do. It was unprecedented. But White Fang did it, trotting away from the fort in the early morning, with the end of the stick hanging to his neck.

He was wise. But had he been merely wise he would not have gone back to Grey Beaver who had already twice betrayed him. But there was his faithfulness, and he went back to be betrayed yet a third time. Again he yielded to the tying of a thong around his neck by Grey Beaver, and again Beauty Smith came to claim him. And this time he was beaten even more severely than before.

Grey Beaver looked on stolidly while the white man wielded the whip. He gave no protection. It was no longer his dog. When the beating was over White Fang was sick. A soft southland dog would have died under it, but not he. His school of life had been sterner, and he was himself of sterner stuff. He had too great vitality. His clutch on life was too strong. But he was very sick. At first he was unable to drag himself along, and Beauty Smith had to wait half-an-hour for him. And then, blind and reeling, he followed at Beauty Smith's heels back to the fort.

But now he was tied with a chain that defied his teeth, and he strove in vain, by lunging, to draw the staple from the timber into which it was driven. After a few days, sober and bankrupt, Grey Beaver departed up the Porcupine on his long journey to the Mackenzie. White Fang remained on the Yukon, the property of a man more than half mad and all brute. But what is a dog to know in its consciousness of madness?

To White Fang, Beauty Smith was a veritable, if terrible, god. He was a mad god at best, but White Fang knew nothing of madness; he knew only that he must submit to the will of this new master, obey his every whim and fancy.

### Chapter III — The Reign of Hate

Under the tutelage of the mad god, White Fang became a fiend. He was kept chained in a pen at the rear of the fort, and here Beauty Smith teased and irritated and drove him wild with petty torments. The man early discovered White Fang's susceptibility to laughter, and made it a point after painfully tricking him, to laugh at him. This laughter was uproarious and scornful, and at the same time the god pointed his finger derisively at White Fang. At such times reason fled from White Fang, and in his transports of rage he was even more mad than Beauty Smith.

Formerly, White Fang had been merely the enemy of his kind, withal a ferocious enemy. He now became the enemy of all things, and more ferocious than ever. To such an extent was he tormented, that he hated blindly and without the faintest spark of reason. He hated the chain that bound him, the men who peered in at him through the slats of the pen, the dogs that accompanied the men and that snarled malignantly at him in his helplessness. He hated the very wood of the pen that confined him. And, first, last, and most of all, he hated Beauty Smith.

But Beauty Smith had a purpose in all that he did to White Fang. One day a number of men gathered about the pen. Beauty Smith entered, club in hand, and took the chain off from White Fang's neck. When his master had gone out, White Fang turned loose and tore around the pen, trying to get at the men outside. He was magnificently terrible. Fully five feet in length, and standing two and one-half feet at the shoulder, he far outweighed a wolf of corresponding size. From his mother he had inherited the heavier proportions of the dog, so that he weighed, without any fat and without an ounce of superfluous flesh, over ninety pounds. It was all muscle, bone, and sinew-fighting flesh in the finest condition.

The door of the pen was being opened again. White Fang paused. Something unusual was happening. He waited. The door was opened wider. Then a huge dog was thrust inside, and the door was slammed shut behind him. White Fang had never seen such a dog (it was a mastiff); but the size and fierce aspect of the intruder did not deter him. Here was some thing, not wood nor iron, upon which to wreak his hate. He leaped in with a flash of fangs that ripped down the side of the mastiff's neck. The mastiff shook his head, growled hoarsely, and plunged at White Fang. But White Fang was here, there, and everywhere, always evading and eluding, and always leaping in and slashing with his fangs and leaping out again in time to escape punishment.

The men outside shouted and applauded, while Beauty Smith, in an ecstasy of delight, gloated over the ripping and mangling performed by White Fang. There was no hope for the mastiff from the first. He was too ponderous and slow. In the end,

while Beauty Smith beat White Fang back with a club, the mastiff was dragged out by its owner. Then there was a payment of bets, and money clinked in Beauty Smith's hand.

White Fang came to look forward eagerly to the gathering of the men around his pen. It meant a fight; and this was the only way that was now vouchsafed him of expressing the life that was in him. Tormented, incited to hate, he was kept a prisoner so that there was no way of satisfying that hate except at the times his master saw fit to put another dog against him. Beauty Smith had estimated his powers well, for he was invariably the victor. One day, three dogs were turned in upon him in succession. Another day a full-grown wolf, fresh-caught from the Wild, was shoved in through the door of the pen. And on still another day two dogs were set against him at the same time. This was his severest fight, and though in the end he killed them both he was himself half killed in doing it.

In the fall of the year, when the first snows were falling and mush-ice was running in the river, Beauty Smith took passage for himself and White Fang on a steamboat bound up the Yukon to Dawson. White Fang had now achieved a reputation in the land. As "the Fighting Wolf" he was known far and wide, and the cage in which he was kept on the steam-boat's deck was usually surrounded by curious men. He raged and snarled at them, or lay quietly and studied them with cold hatred. Why should he not hate them? He never asked himself the question. He knew only hate and lost himself in the passion of it. Life had become a hell to him. He had not been made for the close confinement wild beasts endure at the hands of men. And yet it was in precisely this way that he was treated. Men stared at him, poked sticks between the bars to make him snarl, and then laughed at him.

They were his environment, these men, and they were moulding the clay of him into a more ferocious thing than had been intended by Nature. Nevertheless, Nature had given him plasticity. Where many another animal would have died or had its spirit broken, he adjusted himself and lived, and at no expense of the spirit. Possibly Beauty Smith, arch-fiend and tormentor, was capable of breaking White Fang's spirit, but as yet there were no signs of his succeeding.

If Beauty Smith had in him a devil, White Fang had another; and the two of them raged against each other unceasingly. In the days before, White Fang had had the wisdom to cower down and submit to a man with a club in his hand; but this wisdom now left him. The mere sight of Beauty Smith was sufficient to send him into transports of fury. And when they came to close quarters, and he had been beaten back by the club, he went on growling and snarling, and showing his fangs. The last growl could never be extracted from him. No matter how terribly he was beaten, he had always another growl; and when Beauty Smith gave up and withdrew, the defiant growl followed after him, or White Fang sprang at the bars of the cage bellowing his hatred.

When the steamboat arrived at Dawson, White Fang went ashore. But he still lived a public life, in a cage, surrounded by curious men. He was exhibited as "the Fighting



Wolf,” and men paid fifty cents in gold dust to see him. He was given no rest. Did he lie down to sleep, he was stirred up by a sharp stick — so that the audience might get its money’s worth. In order to make the exhibition interesting, he was kept in a rage most of the time. But worse than all this, was the atmosphere in which he lived. He was regarded as the most fearful of wild beasts, and this was borne in to him through the bars of the cage. Every word, every cautious action, on the part of the men, impressed upon him his own terrible ferocity. It was so much added fuel to the flame of his fierceness. There could be but one result, and that was that his ferocity fed upon itself and increased. It was another instance of the plasticity of his clay, of his capacity for being moulded by the pressure of environment.

In addition to being exhibited he was a professional fighting animal. At irregular intervals, whenever a fight could be arranged, he was taken out of his cage and led off into the woods a few miles from town. Usually this occurred at night, so as to avoid interference from the mounted police of the Territory. After a few hours of waiting, when daylight had come, the audience and the dog with which he was to fight arrived. In this manner it came about that he fought all sizes and breeds of dogs. It was a savage land, the men were savage, and the fights were usually to the death.

Since White Fang continued to fight, it is obvious that it was the other dogs that died. He never knew defeat. His early training, when he fought with Lip-lip and the whole puppy-pack, stood him in good stead. There was the tenacity with which he clung to the earth. No dog could make him lose his footing. This was the favourite trick of the wolf breeds — to rush in upon him, either directly or with an unexpected swerve, in the hope of striking his shoulder and overthrowing him. Mackenzie hounds, Eskimo and Labrador dogs, huskies and Malemutes — all tried it on him, and all failed. He was never known to lose his footing. Men told this to one another, and looked each time to see it happen; but White Fang always disappointed them.

Then there was his lightning quickness. It gave him a tremendous advantage over his antagonists. No matter what their fighting experience, they had never encountered a dog that moved so swiftly as he. Also to be reckoned with, was the immediateness of his attack. The average dog was accustomed to the preliminaries of snarling and bristling and growling, and the average dog was knocked off his feet and finished before he had begun to fight or recovered from his surprise. So often did this happen, that it became the custom to hold White Fang until the other dog went through its preliminaries, was good and ready, and even made the first attack.

But greatest of all the advantages in White Fang’s favour, was his experience. He knew more about fighting than did any of the dogs that faced him. He had fought more fights, knew how to meet more tricks and methods, and had more tricks himself, while his own method was scarcely to be improved upon.

As the time went by, he had fewer and fewer fights. Men despaired of matching him with an equal, and Beauty Smith was compelled to pit wolves against him. These were trapped by the Indians for the purpose, and a fight between White Fang and a wolf was always sure to draw a crowd. Once, a full-grown female lynx was secured, and this

time White Fang fought for his life. Her quickness matched his; her ferocity equalled his; while he fought with his fangs alone, and she fought with her sharp-clawed feet as well.

But after the lynx, all fighting ceased for White Fang. There were no more animals with which to fight — at least, there was none considered worthy of fighting with him. So he remained on exhibition until spring, when one Tim Keenan, a faro-dealer, arrived in the land. With him came the first bull-dog that had ever entered the Klondike. That this dog and White Fang should come together was inevitable, and for a week the anticipated fight was the mainspring of conversation in certain quarters of the town.

## Chapter IV — The Clinging Death

Beauty Smith slipped the chain from his neck and stepped back.

For once White Fang did not make an immediate attack. He stood still, ears pricked forward, alert and curious, surveying the strange animal that faced him. He had never seen such a dog before. Tim Keenan shoved the bull-dog forward with a muttered "Go to it." The animal waddled toward the centre of the circle, short and squat and ungainly. He came to a stop and blinked across at White Fang.

There were cries from the crowd of, "Go to him, Cherokee! Sick 'm, Cherokee! Eat 'm up!"

But Cherokee did not seem anxious to fight. He turned his head and blinked at the men who shouted, at the same time wagging his stump of a tail good-naturedly. He was not afraid, but merely lazy. Besides, it did not seem to him that it was intended he should fight with the dog he saw before him. He was not used to fighting with that kind of dog, and he was waiting for them to bring on the real dog.

Tim Keenan stepped in and bent over Cherokee, fondling him on both sides of the shoulders with hands that rubbed against the grain of the hair and that made slight, pushing-forward movements. These were so many suggestions. Also, their effect was irritating, for Cherokee began to growl, very softly, deep down in his throat. There was a correspondence in rhythm between the growls and the movements of the man's hands. The growl rose in the throat with the culmination of each forward-pushing movement, and ebbed down to start up afresh with the beginning of the next movement. The end of each movement was the accent of the rhythm, the movement ending abruptly and the growling rising with a jerk.

This was not without its effect on White Fang. The hair began to rise on his neck and across the shoulders. Tim Keenan gave a final shove forward and stepped back again. As the impetus that carried Cherokee forward died down, he continued to go forward of his own volition, in a swift, bow-legged run. Then White Fang struck. A cry of startled admiration went up. He had covered the distance and gone in more like a cat than a dog; and with the same cat-like swiftness he had slashed with his fangs and leaped clear.

The bull-dog was bleeding back of one ear from a rip in his thick neck. He gave no sign, did not even snarl, but turned and followed after White Fang. The display on both sides, the quickness of the one and the steadiness of the other, had excited the partisan spirit of the crowd, and the men were making new bets and increasing original bets. Again, and yet again, White Fang sprang in, slashed, and got away untouched, and still his strange foe followed after him, without too great haste, not slowly, but deliberately and determinedly, in a businesslike sort of way. There was purpose in his method — something for him to do that he was intent upon doing and from which nothing could distract him.

His whole demeanour, every action, was stamped with this purpose. It puzzled White Fang. Never had he seen such a dog. It had no hair protection. It was soft, and bled easily. There was no thick mat of fur to baffle White Fang's teeth as they were often baffled by dogs of his own breed. Each time that his teeth struck they sank easily into the yielding flesh, while the animal did not seem able to defend itself. Another disconcerting thing was that it made no outcry, such as he had been accustomed to with the other dogs he had fought. Beyond a growl or a grunt, the dog took its punishment silently. And never did it flag in its pursuit of him.

Not that Cherokee was slow. He could turn and whirl swiftly enough, but White Fang was never there. Cherokee was puzzled, too. He had never fought before with a dog with which he could not close. The desire to close had always been mutual. But here was a dog that kept at a distance, dancing and dodging here and there and all about. And when it did get its teeth into him, it did not hold on but let go instantly and darted away again.

But White Fang could not get at the soft underside of the throat. The bull-dog stood too short, while its massive jaws were an added protection. White Fang darted in and out unscathed, while Cherokee's wounds increased. Both sides of his neck and head were ripped and slashed. He bled freely, but showed no signs of being disconcerted. He continued his plodding pursuit, though once, for the moment baffled, he came to a full stop and blinked at the men who looked on, at the same time wagging his stump of a tail as an expression of his willingness to fight.

In that moment White Fang was in upon him and out, in passing ripping his trimmed remnant of an ear. With a slight manifestation of anger, Cherokee took up the pursuit again, running on the inside of the circle White Fang was making, and striving to fasten his deadly grip on White Fang's throat. The bull-dog missed by a hair's-breadth, and cries of praise went up as White Fang doubled suddenly out of danger in the opposite direction.

The time went by. White Fang still danced on, dodging and doubling, leaping in and out, and ever inflicting damage. And still the bull-dog, with grim certitude, toiled after him. Sooner or later he would accomplish his purpose, get the grip that would win the battle. In the meantime, he accepted all the punishment the other could deal him. His tufts of ears had become tassels, his neck and shoulders were slashed in a

score of places, and his very lips were cut and bleeding — all from these lightning snaps that were beyond his foreseeing and guarding.

Time and again White Fang had attempted to knock Cherokee off his feet; but the difference in their height was too great. Cherokee was too squat, too close to the ground. White Fang tried the trick once too often. The chance came in one of his quick doublings and counter-circlings. He caught Cherokee with head turned away as he whirled more slowly. His shoulder was exposed. White Fang drove in upon it: but his own shoulder was high above, while he struck with such force that his momentum carried him on across over the other's body. For the first time in his fighting history, men saw White Fang lose his footing. His body turned a half-somersault in the air, and he would have landed on his back had he not twisted, catlike, still in the air, in the effort to bring his feet to the earth. As it was, he struck heavily on his side. The next instant he was on his feet, but in that instant Cherokee's teeth closed on his throat.

It was not a good grip, being too low down toward the chest; but Cherokee held on. White Fang sprang to his feet and tore wildly around, trying to shake off the bulldog's body. It made him frantic, this clinging, dragging weight. It bound his movements, restricted his freedom. It was like the trap, and all his instinct resented it and revolted against it. It was a mad revolt. For several minutes he was to all intents insane. The basic life that was in him took charge of him. The will to exist of his body surged over him. He was dominated by this mere flesh-love of life. All intelligence was gone. It was as though he had no brain. His reason was unseated by the blind yearning of the flesh to exist and move, at all hazards to move, to continue to move, for movement was the expression of its existence.

Round and round he went, whirling and turning and reversing, trying to shake off the fifty-pound weight that dragged at his throat. The bulldog did little but keep his grip. Sometimes, and rarely, he managed to get his feet to the earth and for a moment to brace himself against White Fang. But the next moment his footing would be lost and he would be dragging around in the whirl of one of White Fang's mad gyrations. Cherokee identified himself with his instinct. He knew that he was doing the right thing by holding on, and there came to him certain blissful thrills of satisfaction. At such moments he even closed his eyes and allowed his body to be hurled hither and thither, willy-nilly, careless of any hurt that might thereby come to it. That did not count. The grip was the thing, and the grip he kept.

White Fang ceased only when he had tired himself out. He could do nothing, and he could not understand. Never, in all his fighting, had this thing happened. The dogs he had fought with did not fight that way. With them it was snap and slash and get away, snap and slash and get away. He lay partly on his side, panting for breath. Cherokee still holding his grip, urged against him, trying to get him over entirely on his side. White Fang resisted, and he could feel the jaws shifting their grip, slightly relaxing and coming together again in a chewing movement. Each shift brought the grip closer to his throat. The bulldog's method was to hold what he had, and when opportunity

favoured to work in for more. Opportunity favoured when White Fang remained quiet. When White Fang struggled, Cherokee was content merely to hold on.

The bulging back of Cherokee's neck was the only portion of his body that White Fang's teeth could reach. He got hold toward the base where the neck comes out from the shoulders; but he did not know the chewing method of fighting, nor were his jaws adapted to it. He spasmodically ripped and tore with his fangs for a space. Then a change in their position diverted him. The bull-dog had managed to roll him over on his back, and still hanging on to his throat, was on top of him. Like a cat, White Fang bowed his hind-quarters in, and, with the feet digging into his enemy's abdomen above him, he began to claw with long tearing-strokes. Cherokee might well have been disembowelled had he not quickly pivoted on his grip and got his body off of White Fang's and at right angles to it.

There was no escaping that grip. It was like Fate itself, and as inexorable. Slowly it shifted up along the jugular. All that saved White Fang from death was the loose skin of his neck and the thick fur that covered it. This served to form a large roll in Cherokee's mouth, the fur of which well-nigh defied his teeth. But bit by bit, whenever the chance offered, he was getting more of the loose skin and fur in his mouth. The result was that he was slowly throttling White Fang. The latter's breath was drawn with greater and greater difficulty as the moments went by.

It began to look as though the battle were over. The backers of Cherokee waxed jubilant and offered ridiculous odds. White Fang's backers were correspondingly depressed, and refused bets of ten to one and twenty to one, though one man was rash enough to close a wager of fifty to one. This man was Beauty Smith. He took a step into the ring and pointed his finger at White Fang. Then he began to laugh derisively and scornfully. This produced the desired effect. White Fang went wild with rage. He called up his reserves of strength, and gained his feet. As he struggled around the ring, the fifty pounds of his foe ever dragging on his throat, his anger passed on into panic. The basic life of him dominated him again, and his intelligence fled before the will of his flesh to live. Round and round and back again, stumbling and falling and rising, even uprearing at times on his hind-legs and lifting his foe clear of the earth, he struggled vainly to shake off the clinging death.

At last he fell, toppling backward, exhausted; and the bull-dog promptly shifted his grip, getting in closer, mangling more and more of the fur-folded flesh, throttling White Fang more severely than ever. Shouts of applause went up for the victor, and there were many cries of "Cherokee!" "Cherokee!" To this Cherokee responded by vigorous wagging of the stump of his tail. But the clamour of approval did not distract him. There was no sympathetic relation between his tail and his massive jaws. The one might wag, but the others held their terrible grip on White Fang's throat.

It was at this time that a diversion came to the spectators. There was a jingle of bells. Dog-mushers' cries were heard. Everybody, save Beauty Smith, looked apprehensively, the fear of the police strong upon them. But they saw, up the trail, and not down, two men running with sled and dogs. They were evidently coming down the creek

from some prospecting trip. At sight of the crowd they stopped their dogs and came over and joined it, curious to see the cause of the excitement. The dog-musher wore a moustache, but the other, a taller and younger man, was smooth-shaven, his skin rosy from the pounding of his blood and the running in the frosty air.

White Fang had practically ceased struggling. Now and again he resisted spasmodically and to no purpose. He could get little air, and that little grew less and less under the merciless grip that ever tightened. In spite of his armour of fur, the great vein of his throat would have long since been torn open, had not the first grip of the bull-dog been so low down as to be practically on the chest. It had taken Cherokee a long time to shift that grip upward, and this had also tended further to clog his jaws with fur and skin-fold.

In the meantime, the abysmal brute in Beauty Smith had been rising into his brain and mastering the small bit of sanity that he possessed at best. When he saw White Fang's eyes beginning to glaze, he knew beyond doubt that the fight was lost. Then he broke loose. He sprang upon White Fang and began savagely to kick him. There were hisses from the crowd and cries of protest, but that was all. While this went on, and Beauty Smith continued to kick White Fang, there was a commotion in the crowd. The tall young newcomer was forcing his way through, shouldering men right and left without ceremony or gentleness. When he broke through into the ring, Beauty Smith was just in the act of delivering another kick. All his weight was on one foot, and he was in a state of unstable equilibrium. At that moment the newcomer's fist landed a smashing blow full in his face. Beauty Smith's remaining leg left the ground, and his whole body seemed to lift into the air as he turned over backward and struck the snow. The newcomer turned upon the crowd.

"You cowards!" he cried. "You beasts!"

He was in a rage himself — a sane rage. His grey eyes seemed metallic and steel-like as they flashed upon the crowd. Beauty Smith regained his feet and came toward him, sniffing and cowardly. The new-comer did not understand. He did not know how abject a coward the other was, and thought he was coming back intent on fighting. So, with a "You beast!" he smashed Beauty Smith over backward with a second blow in the face. Beauty Smith decided that the snow was the safest place for him, and lay where he had fallen, making no effort to get up.

"Come on, Matt, lend a hand," the newcomer called the dog-musher, who had followed him into the ring.

Both men bent over the dogs. Matt took hold of White Fang, ready to pull when Cherokee's jaws should be loosened. This the younger man endeavoured to accomplish by clutching the bulldog's jaws in his hands and trying to spread them. It was a vain undertaking. As he pulled and tugged and wrenched, he kept exclaiming with every expulsion of breath, "Beasts!"

The crowd began to grow unruly, and some of the men were protesting against the spoiling of the sport; but they were silenced when the newcomer lifted his head from his work for a moment and glared at them.

"You damn beasts!" he finally exploded, and went back to his task.

"It's no use, Mr. Scott, you can't break 'em apart that way," Matt said at last.

The pair paused and surveyed the locked dogs.

"Ain't bleedin' much," Matt announced. "Ain't got all the way in yet."

"But he's liable to any moment," Scott answered. "There, did you see that! He shifted his grip in a bit."

The younger man's excitement and apprehension for White Fang was growing. He struck Cherokee about the head savagely again and again. But that did not loosen the jaws. Cherokee wagged the stump of his tail in advertisement that he understood the meaning of the blows, but that he knew he was himself in the right and only doing his duty by keeping his grip.

"Won't some of you help?" Scott cried desperately at the crowd.

But no help was offered. Instead, the crowd began sarcastically to cheer him on and showered him with facetious advice.

"You'll have to get a pry," Matt counselled.

The other reached into the holster at his hip, drew his revolver, and tried to thrust its muzzle between the bull-dog's jaws. He shoved, and shoved hard, till the grating of the steel against the locked teeth could be distinctly heard. Both men were on their knees, bending over the dogs. Tim Keenan strode into the ring. He paused beside Scott and touched him on the shoulder, saying ominously:

"Don't break them teeth, stranger."

"Then I'll break his neck," Scott retorted, continuing his shoving and wedging with the revolver muzzle.

"I said don't break them teeth," the faro-dealer repeated more ominously than before.

But if it was a bluff he intended, it did not work. Scott never desisted from his efforts, though he looked up coolly and asked:

"Your dog?"

The faro-dealer grunted.

"Then get in here and break this grip."

"Well, stranger," the other drawled irritatingly, "I don't mind telling you that's something I ain't worked out for myself. I don't know how to turn the trick."

"Then get out of the way," was the reply, "and don't bother me. I'm busy."

Tim Keenan continued standing over him, but Scott took no further notice of his presence. He had managed to get the muzzle in between the jaws on one side, and was trying to get it out between the jaws on the other side. This accomplished, he pried gently and carefully, loosening the jaws a bit at a time, while Matt, a bit at a time, extricated White Fang's mangled neck.

"Stand by to receive your dog," was Scott's peremptory order to Cherokee's owner.

The faro-dealer stooped down obediently and got a firm hold on Cherokee.

"Now!" Scott warned, giving the final pry.

The dogs were drawn apart, the bull-dog struggling vigorously.

"Take him away," Scott commanded, and Tim Keenan dragged Cherokee back into the crowd.

White Fang made several ineffectual efforts to get up. Once he gained his feet, but his legs were too weak to sustain him, and he slowly wilted and sank back into the snow. His eyes were half closed, and the surface of them was glassy. His jaws were apart, and through them the tongue protruded, draggled and limp. To all appearances he looked like a dog that had been strangled to death. Matt examined him.

"Just about all in," he announced; "but he's breathin' all right."

Beauty Smith had regained his feet and come over to look at White Fang.

"Matt, how much is a good sled-dog worth?" Scott asked.

The dog-musher, still on his knees and stooped over White Fang, calculated for a moment.

"Three hundred dollars," he answered.

"And how much for one that's all chewed up like this one?" Scott asked, nudging White Fang with his foot.

"Half of that," was the dog-musher's judgment. Scott turned upon Beauty Smith.

"Did you hear, Mr. Beast? I'm going to take your dog from you, and I'm going to give you a hundred and fifty for him."

He opened his pocket-book and counted out the bills.

Beauty Smith put his hands behind his back, refusing to touch the proffered money.

"I ain't a-sellin'," he said.

"Oh, yes you are," the other assured him. "Because I'm buying. Here's your money. The dog's mine."

Beauty Smith, his hands still behind him, began to back away.

Scott sprang toward him, drawing his fist back to strike. Beauty Smith cowered down in anticipation of the blow.

"I've got my rights," he whimpered.

"You've forfeited your rights to own that dog," was the rejoinder. "Are you going to take the money? or do I have to hit you again?"

"All right," Beauty Smith spoke up with the alacrity of fear. "But I take the money under protest," he added. "The dog's a mint. I ain't a-goin' to be robbed. A man's got his rights."

"Correct," Scott answered, passing the money over to him. "A man's got his rights. But you're not a man. You're a beast."

"Wait till I get back to Dawson," Beauty Smith threatened. "I'll have the law on you."

"If you open your mouth when you get back to Dawson, I'll have you run out of town. Understand?"

Beauty Smith replied with a grunt.

"Understand?" the other thundered with abrupt fierceness.

"Yes," Beauty Smith grunted, shrinking away.

"Yes what?"



"Yes, sir," Beauty Smith snarled.

"Look out! He'll bite!" some one shouted, and a guffaw of laughter went up.

Scott turned his back on him, and returned to help the dog-musher, who was working over White Fang.

Some of the men were already departing; others stood in groups, looking on and talking. Tim Keenan joined one of the groups.

"Who's that mug?" he asked.

"Weedon Scott," some one answered.

"And who in hell is Weedon Scott?" the faro-dealer demanded.

"Oh, one of them crackerjack minin' experts. He's in with all the big bugs. If you want to keep out of trouble, you'll steer clear of him, that's my talk. He's all hunky with the officials. The Gold Commissioner's a special pal of his."

"I thought he must be somebody," was the faro-dealer's comment. "That's why I kept my hands off him at the start."

## Chapter V — The Indomitable

"It's hopeless," Weedon Scott confessed.

He sat on the step of his cabin and stared at the dog-musher, who responded with a shrug that was equally hopeless.

Together they looked at White Fang at the end of his stretched chain, bristling, snarling, ferocious, straining to get at the sled-dogs. Having received sundry lessons from Matt, said lessons being imparted by means of a club, the sled-dogs had learned to leave White Fang alone; and even then they were lying down at a distance, apparently oblivious of his existence.

"It's a wolf and there's no taming it," Weedon Scott announced.

"Oh, I don't know about that," Matt objected. "Might be a lot of dog in 'm, for all you can tell. But there's one thing I know sure, an' that there's no gettin' away from."

The dog-musher paused and nodded his head confidentially at Moosehide Mountain.

"Well, don't be a miser with what you know," Scott said sharply, after waiting a suitable length of time. "Spit it out. What is it?"

The dog-musher indicated White Fang with a backward thrust of his thumb.

"Wolf or dog, it's all the same — he's ben tamed 'ready."

"No!"

"I tell you yes, an' broke to harness. Look close there. D'ye see them marks across the chest?"

"You're right, Matt. He was a sled-dog before Beauty Smith got hold of him."

"And there's not much reason against his bein' a sled-dog again."

"What d'ye think?" Scott queried eagerly. Then the hope died down as he added, shaking his head, "We've had him two weeks now, and if anything he's wilder than ever at the present moment."

"Give 'm a chance," Matt counselled. "Turn 'm loose for a spell."

The other looked at him incredulously.

"Yes," Matt went on, "I know you've tried to, but you didn't take a club."

"You try it then."

The dog-musher secured a club and went over to the chained animal. White Fang watched the club after the manner of a caged lion watching the whip of its trainer.

"See 'm keep his eye on that club," Matt said. "That's a good sign. He's no fool. Don't dast tackle me so long as I got that club handy. He's not clean crazy, sure."

As the man's hand approached his neck, White Fang bristled and snarled and crouched down. But while he eyed the approaching hand, he at the same time contrived to keep track of the club in the other hand, suspended threateningly above him. Matt unsnapped the chain from the collar and stepped back.

White Fang could scarcely realise that he was free. Many months had gone by since he passed into the possession of Beauty Smith, and in all that period he had never known a moment of freedom except at the times he had been loosed to fight with other dogs. Immediately after such fights he had always been imprisoned again.

He did not know what to make of it. Perhaps some new devilry of the gods was about to be perpetrated on him. He walked slowly and cautiously, prepared to be assailed at any moment. He did not know what to do, it was all so unprecedented. He took the precaution to sheer off from the two watching gods, and walked carefully to the corner of the cabin. Nothing happened. He was plainly perplexed, and he came back again, pausing a dozen feet away and regarding the two men intently.

"Won't he run away?" his new owner asked.

Matt shrugged his shoulders. "Got to take a gamble. Only way to find out is to find out."

"Poor devil," Scott murmured pityingly. "What he needs is some show of human kindness," he added, turning and going into the cabin.

He came out with a piece of meat, which he tossed to White Fang. He sprang away from it, and from a distance studied it suspiciously.

"Hi-yu, Major!" Matt shouted warningly, but too late.

Major had made a spring for the meat. At the instant his jaws closed on it, White Fang struck him. He was overthrown. Matt rushed in, but quicker than he was White Fang. Major staggered to his feet, but the blood spouting from his throat reddened the snow in a widening path.

"It's too bad, but it served him right," Scott said hastily.

But Matt's foot had already started on its way to kick White Fang. There was a leap, a flash of teeth, a sharp exclamation. White Fang, snarling fiercely, scrambled backward for several yards, while Matt stooped and investigated his leg.

"He got me all right," he announced, pointing to the torn trousers and undercloths, and the growing stain of red.

"I told you it was hopeless, Matt," Scott said in a discouraged voice. "I've thought about it off and on, while not wanting to think of it. But we've come to it now. It's the only thing to do."

As he talked, with reluctant movements he drew his revolver, threw open the cylinder, and assured himself of its contents.

"Look here, Mr. Scott," Matt objected; "that dog's ben through hell. You can't expect 'm to come out a white an' shinin' angel. Give 'm time."

"Look at Major," the other rejoined.

The dog-musher surveyed the stricken dog. He had sunk down on the snow in the circle of his blood and was plainly in the last gasp.

"Served 'm right. You said so yourself, Mr. Scott. He tried to take White Fang's meat, an' he's dead-O. That was to be expected. I wouldn't give two whoops in hell for a dog that wouldn't fight for his own meat."

"But look at yourself, Matt. It's all right about the dogs, but we must draw the line somewhere."

"Served me right," Matt argued stubbornly. "What'd I want to kick 'm for? You said yourself that he'd done right. Then I had no right to kick 'm."

"It would be a mercy to kill him," Scott insisted. "He's untamable."

"Now look here, Mr. Scott, give the poor devil a fightin' chance. He ain't had no chance yet. He's just come through hell, an' this is the first time he's ben loose. Give 'm a fair chance, an' if he don't deliver the goods, I'll kill 'm myself. There!"

"God knows I don't want to kill him or have him killed," Scott answered, putting away the revolver. "We'll let him run loose and see what kindness can do for him. And here's a try at it."

He walked over to White Fang and began talking to him gently and soothingly.

"Better have a club handy," Matt warned.

Scott shook his head and went on trying to win White Fang's confidence.

White Fang was suspicious. Something was impending. He had killed this god's dog, bitten his companion god, and what else was to be expected than some terrible punishment? But in the face of it he was indomitable. He bristled and showed his teeth, his eyes vigilant, his whole body wary and prepared for anything. The god had no club, so he suffered him to approach quite near. The god's hand had come out and was descending upon his head. White Fang shrank together and grew tense as he crouched under it. Here was danger, some treachery or something. He knew the hands of the gods, their proved mastery, their cunning to hurt. Besides, there was his old antipathy to being touched. He snarled more menacingly, crouched still lower, and still the hand descended. He did not want to bite the hand, and he endured the peril of it until his instinct surged up in him, mastering him with its insatiable yearning for life.

Weedon Scott had believed that he was quick enough to avoid any snap or slash. But he had yet to learn the remarkable quickness of White Fang, who struck with the certainty and swiftness of a coiled snake.

Scott cried out sharply with surprise, catching his torn hand and holding it tightly in his other hand. Matt uttered a great oath and sprang to his side. White Fang crouched down, and backed away, bristling, showing his fangs, his eyes malignant with menace. Now he could expect a beating as fearful as any he had received from Beauty Smith.

"Here! What are you doing?" Scott cried suddenly.

Matt had dashed into the cabin and come out with a rifle.

"Nothin'," he said slowly, with a careless calmness that was assumed, "only goin' to keep that promise I made. I reckon it's up to me to kill 'm as I said I'd do."

"No you don't!"

"Yes I do. Watch me."

As Matt had pleaded for White Fang when he had been bitten, it was now Weedon Scott's turn to plead.

"You said to give him a chance. Well, give it to him. We've only just started, and we can't quit at the beginning. It served me right, this time. And — look at him!"

White Fang, near the corner of the cabin and forty feet away, was snarling with blood-curdling viciousness, not at Scott, but at the dog-musher.

"Well, I'll be everlastingly gosh-swoggled!" was the dog-musher's expression of astonishment.

"Look at the intelligence of him," Scott went on hastily. "He knows the meaning of firearms as well as you do. He's got intelligence and we've got to give that intelligence a chance. Put up the gun."

"All right, I'm willin'," Matt agreed, leaning the rifle against the woodpile.

"But will you look at that!" he exclaimed the next moment.

White Fang had quieted down and ceased snarling. "This is worth investigatin'. Watch."

Matt, reached for the rifle, and at the same moment White Fang snarled. He stepped away from the rifle, and White Fang's lifted lips descended, covering his teeth.

"Now, just for fun."

Matt took the rifle and began slowly to raise it to his shoulder. White Fang's snarling began with the movement, and increased as the movement approached its culmination. But the moment before the rifle came to a level on him, he leaped sideways behind the corner of the cabin. Matt stood staring along the sights at the empty space of snow which had been occupied by White Fang.

The dog-musher put the rifle down solemnly, then turned and looked at his employer.

"I agree with you, Mr. Scott. That dog's too intelligent to kill."

## Chapter VI — The Love-master

As White Fang watched Weedon Scott approach, he bristled and snarled to advertise that he would not submit to punishment. Twenty-four hours had passed since he had slashed open the hand that was now bandaged and held up by a sling to keep the

blood out of it. In the past White Fang had experienced delayed punishments, and he apprehended that such a one was about to befall him. How could it be otherwise? He had committed what was to him sacrilege, sunk his fangs into the holy flesh of a god, and of a white-skinned superior god at that. In the nature of things, and of intercourse with gods, something terrible awaited him.

The god sat down several feet away. White Fang could see nothing dangerous in that. When the gods administered punishment they stood on their legs. Besides, this god had no club, no whip, no firearm. And furthermore, he himself was free. No chain nor stick bound him. He could escape into safety while the god was scrambling to his feet. In the meantime he would wait and see.

The god remained quiet, made no movement; and White Fang's snarl slowly dwindled to a growl that ebbed down in his throat and ceased. Then the god spoke, and at the first sound of his voice, the hair rose on White Fang's neck and the growl rushed up in his throat. But the god made no hostile movement, and went on calmly talking. For a time White Fang growled in unison with him, a correspondence of rhythm being established between growl and voice. But the god talked on interminably. He talked to White Fang as White Fang had never been talked to before. He talked softly and soothingly, with a gentleness that somehow, somewhere, touched White Fang. In spite of himself and all the pricking warnings of his instinct, White Fang began to have confidence in this god. He had a feeling of security that was belied by all his experience with men.

After a long time, the god got up and went into the cabin. White Fang scanned him apprehensively when he came out. He had neither whip nor club nor weapon. Nor was his uninjured hand behind his back hiding something. He sat down as before, in the same spot, several feet away. He held out a small piece of meat. White Fang pricked his ears and investigated it suspiciously, managing to look at the same time both at the meat and the god, alert for any overt act, his body tense and ready to spring away at the first sign of hostility.

Still the punishment delayed. The god merely held near to his nose a piece of meat. And about the meat there seemed nothing wrong. Still White Fang suspected; and though the meat was proffered to him with short inviting thrusts of the hand, he refused to touch it. The gods were all-wise, and there was no telling what masterful treachery lurked behind that apparently harmless piece of meat. In past experience, especially in dealing with squaws, meat and punishment had often been disastrously related.

In the end, the god tossed the meat on the snow at White Fang's feet. He smelled the meat carefully; but he did not look at it. While he smelled it he kept his eyes on the god. Nothing happened. He took the meat into his mouth and swallowed it. Still nothing happened. The god was actually offering him another piece of meat. Again he refused to take it from the hand, and again it was tossed to him. This was repeated a number of times. But there came a time when the god refused to toss it. He kept it in his hand and steadfastly proffered it.

The meat was good meat, and White Fang was hungry. Bit by bit, infinitely cautious, he approached the hand. At last the time came that he decided to eat the meat from the hand. He never took his eyes from the god, thrusting his head forward with ears flattened back and hair involuntarily rising and cresting on his neck. Also a low growl rumbled in his throat as warning that he was not to be trifled with. He ate the meat, and nothing happened. Piece by piece, he ate all the meat, and nothing happened. Still the punishment delayed.

He licked his chops and waited. The god went on talking. In his voice was kindness — something of which White Fang had no experience whatever. And within him it aroused feelings which he had likewise never experienced before. He was aware of a certain strange satisfaction, as though some need were being gratified, as though some void in his being were being filled. Then again came the prod of his instinct and the warning of past experience. The gods were ever crafty, and they had unguessed ways of attaining their ends.

Ah, he had thought so! There it came now, the god's hand, cunning to hurt, thrusting out at him, descending upon his head. But the god went on talking. His voice was soft and soothing. In spite of the menacing hand, the voice inspired confidence. And in spite of the assuring voice, the hand inspired distrust. White Fang was torn by conflicting feelings, impulses. It seemed he would fly to pieces, so terrible was the control he was exerting, holding together by an unwonted indecision the counter-forces that struggled within him for mastery.

He compromised. He snarled and bristled and flattened his ears. But he neither snapped nor sprang away. The hand descended. Nearer and nearer it came. It touched the ends of his upstanding hair. He shrank down under it. It followed down after him, pressing more closely against him. Shrinking, almost shivering, he still managed to hold himself together. It was a torment, this hand that touched him and violated his instinct. He could not forget in a day all the evil that had been wrought him at the hands of men. But it was the will of the god, and he strove to submit.

The hand lifted and descended again in a patting, caressing movement. This continued, but every time the hand lifted, the hair lifted under it. And every time the hand descended, the ears flattened down and a cavernous growl surged in his throat. White Fang growled and growled with insistent warning. By this means he announced that he was prepared to retaliate for any hurt he might receive. There was no telling when the god's ulterior motive might be disclosed. At any moment that soft, confidence-inspiring voice might break forth in a roar of wrath, that gentle and caressing hand transform itself into a vice-like grip to hold him helpless and administer punishment.

But the god talked on softly, and ever the hand rose and fell with non-hostile pats. White Fang experienced dual feelings. It was distasteful to his instinct. It restrained him, opposed the will of him toward personal liberty. And yet it was not physically painful. On the contrary, it was even pleasant, in a physical way. The patting movement slowly and carefully changed to a rubbing of the ears about their bases, and the physical pleasure even increased a little. Yet he continued to fear, and he stood on

guard, expectant of unguessed evil, alternately suffering and enjoying as one feeling or the other came uppermost and swayed him.

“Well, I’ll be gosh-swoggled!”

So spoke Matt, coming out of the cabin, his sleeves rolled up, a pan of dirty dish-water in his hands, arrested in the act of emptying the pan by the sight of Weedon Scott patting White Fang.

At the instant his voice broke the silence, White Fang leaped back, snarling savagely at him.

Matt regarded his employer with grieved disapproval.

“If you don’t mind my expressin’ my feelin’s, Mr. Scott, I’ll make free to say you’re seventeen kinds of a damn fool an’ all of ’em different, an’ then some.”

Weedon Scott smiled with a superior air, gained his feet, and walked over to White Fang. He talked soothingly to him, but not for long, then slowly put out his hand, rested it on White Fang’s head, and resumed the interrupted patting. White Fang endured it, keeping his eyes fixed suspiciously, not upon the man that patted him, but upon the man that stood in the doorway.

“You may be a number one, tip-top minin’ expert, all right all right,” the dog-musher delivered himself oracularly, “but you missed the chance of your life when you was a boy an’ didn’t run off an’ join a circus.”

White Fang snarled at the sound of his voice, but this time did not leap away from under the hand that was caressing his head and the back of his neck with long, soothing strokes.

It was the beginning of the end for White Fang — the ending of the old life and the reign of hate. A new and incomprehensibly fairer life was dawning. It required much thinking and endless patience on the part of Weedon Scott to accomplish this. And on the part of White Fang it required nothing less than a revolution. He had to ignore the urges and promptings of instinct and reason, defy experience, give the lie to life itself.

Life, as he had known it, not only had had no place in it for much that he now did; but all the currents had gone counter to those to which he now abandoned himself. In short, when all things were considered, he had to achieve an orientation far vaster than the one he had achieved at the time he came voluntarily in from the Wild and accepted Grey Beaver as his lord. At that time he was a mere puppy, soft from the making, without form, ready for the thumb of circumstance to begin its work upon him. But now it was different. The thumb of circumstance had done its work only too well. By it he had been formed and hardened into the Fighting Wolf, fierce and implacable, unloving and unlovable. To accomplish the change was like a reflux of being, and this when the plasticity of youth was no longer his; when the fibre of him had become tough and knotty; when the warp and the woof of him had made of him an adamant texture, harsh and unyielding; when the face of his spirit had become iron and all his instincts and axioms had crystallised into set rules, cautions, dislikes, and desires.

Yet again, in this new orientation, it was the thumb of circumstance that pressed and prodded him, softening that which had become hard and remoulding it into fairer form. Weedon Scott was in truth this thumb. He had gone to the roots of White Fang's nature, and with kindness touched to life potencies that had languished and well-nigh perished. One such potency was love. It took the place of like, which latter had been the highest feeling that thrilled him in his intercourse with the gods.

But this love did not come in a day. It began with like and out of it slowly developed. White Fang did not run away, though he was allowed to remain loose, because he liked this new god. This was certainly better than the life he had lived in the cage of Beauty Smith, and it was necessary that he should have some god. The lordship of man was a need of his nature. The seal of his dependence on man had been set upon him in that early day when he turned his back on the Wild and crawled to Grey Beaver's feet to receive the expected beating. This seal had been stamped upon him again, and ineradicably, on his second return from the Wild, when the long famine was over and there was fish once more in the village of Grey Beaver.

And so, because he needed a god and because he preferred Weedon Scott to Beauty Smith, White Fang remained. In acknowledgment of fealty, he proceeded to take upon himself the guardianship of his master's property. He prowled about the cabin while the sled-dogs slept, and the first night-visitor to the cabin fought him off with a club until Weedon Scott came to the rescue. But White Fang soon learned to differentiate between thieves and honest men, to appraise the true value of step and carriage. The man who travelled, loud-stepping, the direct line to the cabin door, he let alone — though he watched him vigilantly until the door opened and he received the endorsement of the master. But the man who went softly, by circuitous ways, peering with caution, seeking after secrecy — that was the man who received no suspension of judgment from White Fang, and who went away abruptly, hurriedly, and without dignity.

Weedon Scott had set himself the task of redeeming White Fang — or rather, of redeeming mankind from the wrong it had done White Fang. It was a matter of principle and conscience. He felt that the ill done White Fang was a debt incurred by man and that it must be paid. So he went out of his way to be especially kind to the Fighting Wolf. Each day he made it a point to caress and pet White Fang, and to do it at length.

At first suspicious and hostile, White Fang grew to like this petting. But there was one thing that he never outgrew — his growling. Growl he would, from the moment the petting began till it ended. But it was a growl with a new note in it. A stranger could not hear this note, and to such a stranger the growling of White Fang was an exhibition of primordial savagery, nerve-racking and blood-curdling. But White Fang's throat had become harsh-fibred from the making of ferocious sounds through the many years since his first little rasp of anger in the lair of his cubhood, and he could not soften the sounds of that throat now to express the gentleness he felt. Nevertheless, Weedon Scott's ear and sympathy were fine enough to catch the new note all but



drowned in the fierceness — the note that was the faintest hint of a croon of content and that none but he could hear.

As the days went by, the evolution of like into love was accelerated. White Fang himself began to grow aware of it, though in his consciousness he knew not what love was. It manifested itself to him as a void in his being — a hungry, aching, yearning void that clamoured to be filled. It was a pain and an unrest; and it received easement only by the touch of the new god's presence. At such times love was joy to him, a wild, keen-thrilling satisfaction. But when away from his god, the pain and the unrest returned; the void in him sprang up and pressed against him with its emptiness, and the hunger gnawed and gnawed unceasingly.

White Fang was in the process of finding himself. In spite of the maturity of his years and of the savage rigidity of the mould that had formed him, his nature was undergoing an expansion. There was a burgeoning within him of strange feelings and unwonted impulses. His old code of conduct was changing. In the past he had liked comfort and surcease from pain, disliked discomfort and pain, and he had adjusted his actions accordingly. But now it was different. Because of this new feeling within him, he oftentimes elected discomfort and pain for the sake of his god. Thus, in the early morning, instead of roaming and foraging, or lying in a sheltered nook, he would wait for hours on the cheerless cabin-stoop for a sight of the god's face. At night, when the god returned home, White Fang would leave the warm sleeping-place he had burrowed in the snow in order to receive the friendly snap of fingers and the word of greeting. Meat, even meat itself, he would forego to be with his god, to receive a caress from him or to accompany him down into the town.

Like had been replaced by love. And love was the plummet dropped down into the deeps of him where like had never gone. And responsive out of his deeps had come the new thing — love. That which was given unto him did he return. This was a god indeed, a love-god, a warm and radiant god, in whose light White Fang's nature expanded as a flower expands under the sun.

But White Fang was not demonstrative. He was too old, too firmly moulded, to become adept at expressing himself in new ways. He was too self-possessed, too strongly poised in his own isolation. Too long had he cultivated reticence, aloofness, and moroseness. He had never barked in his life, and he could not now learn to bark a welcome when his god approached. He was never in the way, never extravagant nor foolish in the expression of his love. He never ran to meet his god. He waited at a distance; but he always waited, was always there. His love partook of the nature of worship, dumb, inarticulate, a silent adoration. Only by the steady regard of his eyes did he express his love, and by the unceasing following with his eyes of his god's every movement. Also, at times, when his god looked at him and spoke to him, he betrayed an awkward self-consciousness, caused by the struggle of his love to express itself and his physical inability to express it.

He learned to adjust himself in many ways to his new mode of life. It was borne in upon him that he must let his master's dogs alone. Yet his dominant nature asserted

itself, and he had first to thrash them into an acknowledgment of his superiority and leadership. This accomplished, he had little trouble with them. They gave trail to him when he came and went or walked among them, and when he asserted his will they obeyed.

In the same way, he came to tolerate Matt — as a possession of his master. His master rarely fed him. Matt did that, it was his business; yet White Fang divined that it was his master's food he ate and that it was his master who thus fed him vicariously. Matt it was who tried to put him into the harness and make him haul sled with the other dogs. But Matt failed. It was not until Weedon Scott put the harness on White Fang and worked him, that he understood. He took it as his master's will that Matt should drive him and work him just as he drove and worked his master's other dogs.

Different from the Mackenzie toboggans were the Klondike sleds with runners under them. And different was the method of driving the dogs. There was no fan-formation of the team. The dogs worked in single file, one behind another, hauling on double traces. And here, in the Klondike, the leader was indeed the leader. The wisest as well as strongest dog was the leader, and the team obeyed him and feared him. That White Fang should quickly gain this post was inevitable. He could not be satisfied with less, as Matt learned after much inconvenience and trouble. White Fang picked out the post for himself, and Matt backed his judgment with strong language after the experiment had been tried. But, though he worked in the sled in the day, White Fang did not forego the guarding of his master's property in the night. Thus he was on duty all the time, ever vigilant and faithful, the most valuable of all the dogs.

"Makin' free to spit out what's in me," Matt said one day, "I beg to state that you was a wise guy all right when you paid the price you did for that dog. You clean swindled Beauty Smith on top of pushin' his face in with your fist."

A recrudescence of anger glinted in Weedon Scott's grey eyes, and he muttered savagely, "The beast!"

In the late spring a great trouble came to White Fang. Without warning, the love-master disappeared. There had been warning, but White Fang was unversed in such things and did not understand the packing of a grip. He remembered afterwards that his packing had preceded the master's disappearance; but at the time he suspected nothing. That night he waited for the master to return. At midnight the chill wind that blew drove him to shelter at the rear of the cabin. There he drowsed, only half asleep, his ears keyed for the first sound of the familiar step. But, at two in the morning, his anxiety drove him out to the cold front stoop, where he crouched, and waited.

But no master came. In the morning the door opened and Matt stepped outside. White Fang gazed at him wistfully. There was no common speech by which he might learn what he wanted to know. The days came and went, but never the master. White Fang, who had never known sickness in his life, became sick. He became very sick, so sick that Matt was finally compelled to bring him inside the cabin. Also, in writing to his employer, Matt devoted a postscript to White Fang.

Weedon Scott reading the letter down in Circle City, came upon the following:

"That dam wolf won't work. Won't eat. Aint got no spunk left. All the dogs is licking him. Wants to know what has become of you, and I don't know how to tell him. Mebbe he is going to die."

It was as Matt had said. White Fang had ceased eating, lost heart, and allowed every dog of the team to thrash him. In the cabin he lay on the floor near the stove, without interest in food, in Matt, nor in life. Matt might talk gently to him or swear at him, it was all the same; he never did more than turn his dull eyes upon the man, then drop his head back to its customary position on his fore-paws.

And then, one night, Matt, reading to himself with moving lips and mumbled sounds, was startled by a low whine from White Fang. He had got upon his feet, his ears cocked towards the door, and he was listening intently. A moment later, Matt heard a footstep. The door opened, and Weedon Scott stepped in. The two men shook hands. Then Scott looked around the room.

"Where's the wolf?" he asked.

Then he discovered him, standing where he had been lying, near to the stove. He had not rushed forward after the manner of other dogs. He stood, watching and waiting.

"Holy smoke!" Matt exclaimed. "Look at 'm wag his tail!"

Weedon Scott strode half across the room toward him, at the same time calling him. White Fang came to him, not with a great bound, yet quickly. He was awakened from self-consciousness, but as he drew near, his eyes took on a strange expression. Something, an incommunicable vastness of feeling, rose up into his eyes as a light and shone forth.

"He never looked at me that way all the time you was gone!" Matt commented.

Weedon Scott did not hear. He was squatting down on his heels, face to face with White Fang and petting him — rubbing at the roots of the ears, making long caressing strokes down the neck to the shoulders, tapping the spine gently with the balls of his fingers. And White Fang was growling responsively, the crooning note of the growl more pronounced than ever.

But that was not all. What of his joy, the great love in him, ever surging and struggling to express itself, succeeding in finding a new mode of expression. He suddenly thrust his head forward and nudged his way in between the master's arm and body. And here, confined, hidden from view all except his ears, no longer growling, he continued to nudge and snuggle.

The two men looked at each other. Scott's eyes were shining.

"Gosh!" said Matt in an awe-stricken voice.

A moment later, when he had recovered himself, he said, "I always insisted that wolf was a dog. Look at 'm!"

With the return of the love-master, White Fang's recovery was rapid. Two nights and a day he spent in the cabin. Then he sallied forth. The sled-dogs had forgotten his prowess. They remembered only the latest, which was his weakness and sickness. At the sight of him as he came out of the cabin, they sprang upon him.

"Talk about your rough-houses," Matt murmured gleefully, standing in the doorway and looking on.

"Give 'm hell, you wolf! Give 'm hell! — an' then some!"

White Fang did not need the encouragement. The return of the love-master was enough. Life was flowing through him again, splendid and indomitable. He fought from sheer joy, finding in it an expression of much that he felt and that otherwise was without speech. There could be but one ending. The team dispersed in ignominious defeat, and it was not until after dark that the dogs came sneaking back, one by one, by meekness and humility signifying their fealty to White Fang.

Having learned to snuggle, White Fang was guilty of it often. It was the final word. He could not go beyond it. The one thing of which he had always been particularly jealous was his head. He had always disliked to have it touched. It was the Wild in him, the fear of hurt and of the trap, that had given rise to the panicky impulses to avoid contacts. It was the mandate of his instinct that that head must be free. And now, with the love-master, his snuggling was the deliberate act of putting himself into a position of hopeless helplessness. It was an expression of perfect confidence, of absolute self-surrender, as though he said: "I put myself into thy hands. Work thou thy will with me."

One night, not long after the return, Scott and Matt sat at a game of cribbage preliminary to going to bed. "Fifteen-two, fifteen-four an' a pair makes six," Mat was pegging up, when there was an outcry and sound of snarling without. They looked at each other as they started to rise to their feet.

"The wolf's nailed somebody," Matt said.

A wild scream of fear and anguish hastened them.

"Bring a light!" Scott shouted, as he sprang outside.

Matt followed with the lamp, and by its light they saw a man lying on his back in the snow. His arms were folded, one above the other, across his face and throat. Thus he was trying to shield himself from White Fang's teeth. And there was need for it. White Fang was in a rage, wickedly making his attack on the most vulnerable spot. From shoulder to wrist of the crossed arms, the coat-sleeve, blue flannel shirt and undershirt were ripped in rags, while the arms themselves were terribly slashed and streaming blood.

All this the two men saw in the first instant. The next instant Weedon Scott had White Fang by the throat and was dragging him clear. White Fang struggled and snarled, but made no attempt to bite, while he quickly quieted down at a sharp word from the master.

Matt helped the man to his feet. As he arose he lowered his crossed arms, exposing the bestial face of Beauty Smith. The dog-musher let go of him precipitately, with action similar to that of a man who has picked up live fire. Beauty Smith blinked in the lamplight and looked about him. He caught sight of White Fang and terror rushed into his face.

At the same moment Matt noticed two objects lying in the snow. He held the lamp close to them, indicating them with his toe for his employer's benefit — a steel dog-chain and a stout club.

Weedon Scott saw and nodded. Not a word was spoken. The dog-musher laid his hand on Beauty Smith's shoulder and faced him to the right about. No word needed to be spoken. Beauty Smith started.

In the meantime the love-master was patting White Fang and talking to him.

"Tried to steal you, eh? And you wouldn't have it! Well, well, he made a mistake, didn't he?"

"Must 'a' thought he had hold of seventeen devils," the dog-musher sniggered.

White Fang, still wrought up and bristling, growled and growled, the hair slowly lying down, the crooning note remote and dim, but growing in his throat.

# Part V

## Chapter I — The Long Trail

It was in the air. White Fang sensed the coming calamity, even before there was tangible evidence of it. In vague ways it was borne in upon him that a change was impending. He knew not how nor why, yet he got his feel of the oncoming event from the gods themselves. In ways subtler than they knew, they betrayed their intentions to the wolf-dog that haunted the cabin-stoop, and that, though he never came inside the cabin, knew what went on inside their brains.

"Listen to that, will you!" the dog-musher exclaimed at supper one night.

Weedon Scott listened. Through the door came a low, anxious whine, like a sobbing under the breath that had just grown audible. Then came the long sniff, as White Fang reassured himself that his god was still inside and had not yet taken himself off in mysterious and solitary flight.

"I do believe that wolf's on to you," the dog-musher said.

Weedon Scott looked across at his companion with eyes that almost pleaded, though this was given the lie by his words.

"What the devil can I do with a wolf in California?" he demanded.

"That's what I say," Matt answered. "What the devil can you do with a wolf in California?"

But this did not satisfy Weedon Scott. The other seemed to be judging him in a non-committal sort of way.

"White man's dogs would have no show against him," Scott went on. "He'd kill them on sight. If he didn't bankrupt me with damaged suits, the authorities would take him away from me and electrocute him."

"He's a downright murderer, I know," was the dog-musher's comment.

Weedon Scott looked at him suspiciously.

"It would never do," he said decisively.

"It would never do!" Matt concurred. "Why you'd have to hire a man 'specially to take care of 'm."

The other suspicion was allayed. He nodded cheerfully. In the silence that followed, the low, half-sobbing whine was heard at the door and then the long, questing sniff.

"There's no denyin' he thinks a hell of a lot of you," Matt said.

The other glared at him in sudden wrath. "Damn it all, man! I know my own mind and what's best!"

"I'm agreein' with you, only . . . "

"Only what?" Scott snapped out.

"Only . . . " the dog-musher began softly, then changed his mind and betrayed a rising anger of his own. "Well, you needn't get so all-fired het up about it. Judgin' by your actions one'd think you didn't know your own mind."

Weedon Scott debated with himself for a while, and then said more gently: "You are right, Matt. I don't know my own mind, and that's what's the trouble."

"Why, it would be rank ridiculousness for me to take that dog along," he broke out after another pause.

"I'm agreein' with you," was Matt's answer, and again his employer was not quite satisfied with him.

"But how in the name of the great Sardanapolis he knows you're goin' is what gets me," the dog-musher continued innocently.

"It's beyond me, Matt," Scott answered, with a mournful shake of the head.

Then came the day when, through the open cabin door, White Fang saw the fatal grip on the floor and the love-master packing things into it. Also, there were comings and goings, and the erstwhile placid atmosphere of the cabin was vexed with strange perturbations and unrest. Here was indubitable evidence. White Fang had already scented it. He now reasoned it. His god was preparing for another flight. And since he had not taken him with him before, so, now, he could look to be left behind.

That night he lifted the long wolf-howl. As he had howled, in his puppy days, when he fled back from the Wild to the village to find it vanished and naught but a rubbish-heap to mark the site of Grey Beaver's tepee, so now he pointed his muzzle to the cold stars and told to them his woe.

Inside the cabin the two men had just gone to bed.

"He's gone off his food again," Matt remarked from his bunk.

There was a grunt from Weedon Scott's bunk, and a stir of blankets.

"From the way he cut up the other time you went away, I wouldn't wonder this time but what he died."

The blankets in the other bunk stirred irritably.

"Oh, shut up!" Scott cried out through the darkness. "You nag worse than a woman."

"I'm agreein' with you," the dog-musher answered, and Weedon Scott was not quite sure whether or not the other had snickered.

The next day White Fang's anxiety and restlessness were even more pronounced. He dogged his master's heels whenever he left the cabin, and haunted the front stoop when he remained inside. Through the open door he could catch glimpses of the luggage on the floor. The grip had been joined by two large canvas bags and a box. Matt was rolling the master's blankets and fur robe inside a small tarpaulin. White Fang whined as he watched the operation.

Later on two Indians arrived. He watched them closely as they shouldered the luggage and were led off down the hill by Matt, who carried the bedding and the grip.

But White Fang did not follow them. The master was still in the cabin. After a time, Matt returned. The master came to the door and called White Fang inside.

"You poor devil," he said gently, rubbing White Fang's ears and tapping his spine. "I'm hitting the long trail, old man, where you cannot follow. Now give me a growl — the last, good, good-bye growl."

But White Fang refused to growl. Instead, and after a wistful, searching look, he snuggled in, burrowing his head out of sight between the master's arm and body.

"There she blows!" Matt cried. From the Yukon arose the hoarse bellowing of a river steamboat. "You've got to cut it short. Be sure and lock the front door. I'll go out the back. Get a move on!"

The two doors slammed at the same moment, and Weedon Scott waited for Matt to come around to the front. From inside the door came a low whining and sobbing. Then there were long, deep-drawn sniffs.

"You must take good care of him, Matt," Scott said, as they started down the hill. "Write and let me know how he gets along."

"Sure," the dog-musher answered. "But listen to that, will you!"

Both men stopped. White Fang was howling as dogs howl when their masters lie dead. He was voicing an utter woe, his cry bursting upward in great heart-breaking rushes, dying down into quavering misery, and bursting upward again with a rush upon rush of grief.

The Aurora was the first steamboat of the year for the Outside, and her decks were jammed with prosperous adventurers and broken gold seekers, all equally as mad to get to the Outside as they had been originally to get to the Inside. Near the gang-plank, Scott was shaking hands with Matt, who was preparing to go ashore. But Matt's hand went limp in the other's grasp as his gaze shot past and remained fixed on something behind him. Scott turned to see. Sitting on the deck several feet away and watching wistfully was White Fang.

The dog-musher swore softly, in awe-stricken accents. Scott could only look in wonder.

"Did you lock the front door?" Matt demanded. The other nodded, and asked, "How about the back?"

"You just bet I did," was the fervent reply.

White Fang flattened his ears ingratiatingly, but remained where he was, making no attempt to approach.

"I'll have to take 'm ashore with me."

Matt made a couple of steps toward White Fang, but the latter slid away from him. The dog-musher made a rush of it, and White Fang dodged between the legs of a group of men. Ducking, turning, doubling, he slid about the deck, eluding the other's efforts to capture him.

But when the love-master spoke, White Fang came to him with prompt obedience.



"Won't come to the hand that's fed 'm all these months," the dog-musher muttered resentfully. "And you — you ain't never fed 'm after them first days of gettin' acquainted. I'm blamed if I can see how he works it out that you're the boss."

Scott, who had been patting White Fang, suddenly bent closer and pointed out fresh-made cuts on his muzzle, and a gash between the eyes.

Matt bent over and passed his hand along White Fang's belly.

"We plump forgot the window. He's all cut an' gouged underneath. Must 'a' butted clean through it, b'gosh!"

But Weedon Scott was not listening. He was thinking rapidly. The Aurora's whistle hooted a final announcement of departure. Men were scurrying down the gang-plank to the shore. Matt loosened the bandana from his own neck and started to put it around White Fang's. Scott grasped the dog-musher's hand.

"Good-bye, Matt, old man. About the wolf — you needn't write. You see, I've . . . !"

"What!" the dog-musher exploded. "You don't mean to say . . .?"

"The very thing I mean. Here's your bandana. I'll write to you about him."

Matt paused halfway down the gang-plank.

"He'll never stand the climate!" he shouted back. "Unless you clip 'm in warm weather!"

The gang-plank was hauled in, and the Aurora swung out from the bank. Weedon Scott waved a last good-bye. Then he turned and bent over White Fang, standing by his side.

"Now growl, damn you, growl," he said, as he patted the responsive head and rubbed the flattening ears.

## Chapter II — The Southland

White Fang landed from the steamer in San Francisco. He was appalled. Deep in him, below any reasoning process or act of consciousness, he had associated power with godhead. And never had the white men seemed such marvellous gods as now, when he trod the slimy pavement of San Francisco. The log cabins he had known were replaced by towering buildings. The streets were crowded with perils — waggons, carts, automobiles; great, straining horses pulling huge trucks; and monstrous cable and electric cars hooting and clanging through the midst, screeching their insistent menace after the manner of the lynxes he had known in the northern woods.

All this was the manifestation of power. Through it all, behind it all, was man, governing and controlling, expressing himself, as of old, by his mastery over matter. It was colossal, stunning. White Fang was awed. Fear sat upon him. As in his cubhood he had been made to feel his smallness and puniness on the day he first came in from the Wild to the village of Grey Beaver, so now, in his full-grown stature and pride of strength, he was made to feel small and puny. And there were so many gods! He

was made dizzy by the swarming of them. The thunder of the streets smote upon his ears. He was bewildered by the tremendous and endless rush and movement of things. As never before, he felt his dependence on the love-master, close at whose heels he followed, no matter what happened never losing sight of him.

But White Fang was to have no more than a nightmare vision of the city — an experience that was like a bad dream, unreal and terrible, that haunted him for long after in his dreams. He was put into a baggage-car by the master, chained in a corner in the midst of heaped trunks and valises. Here a squat and brawny god held sway, with much noise, hurling trunks and boxes about, dragging them in through the door and tossing them into the piles, or flinging them out of the door, smashing and crashing, to other gods who awaited them.

And here, in this inferno of luggage, was White Fang deserted by the master. Or at least White Fang thought he was deserted, until he smelled out the master's canvas clothes-bags alongside of him, and proceeded to mount guard over them.

"Bout time you come," growled the god of the car, an hour later, when Weedon Scott appeared at the door. "That dog of yours won't let me lay a finger on your stuff."

White Fang emerged from the car. He was astonished. The nightmare city was gone. The car had been to him no more than a room in a house, and when he had entered it the city had been all around him. In the interval the city had disappeared. The roar of it no longer dinned upon his ears. Before him was smiling country, streaming with sunshine, lazy with quietude. But he had little time to marvel at the transformation. He accepted it as he accepted all the unaccountable doings and manifestations of the gods. It was their way.

There was a carriage waiting. A man and a woman approached the master. The woman's arms went out and clutched the master around the neck — a hostile act! The next moment Weedon Scott had torn loose from the embrace and closed with White Fang, who had become a snarling, raging demon.

"It's all right, mother," Scott was saying as he kept tight hold of White Fang and placated him. "He thought you were going to injure me, and he wouldn't stand for it. It's all right. It's all right. He'll learn soon enough."

"And in the meantime I may be permitted to love my son when his dog is not around," she laughed, though she was pale and weak from the fright.

She looked at White Fang, who snarled and bristled and glared malevolently.

"He'll have to learn, and he shall, without postponement," Scott said.

He spoke softly to White Fang until he had quieted him, then his voice became firm.

"Down, sir! Down with you!"

This had been one of the things taught him by the master, and White Fang obeyed, though he lay down reluctantly and sullenly.

"Now, mother."

Scott opened his arms to her, but kept his eyes on White Fang.

"Down!" he warned. "Down!"

White Fang, bristling silently, half-crouching as he rose, sank back and watched the hostile act repeated. But no harm came of it, nor of the embrace from the strange man-god that followed. Then the clothes-bags were taken into the carriage, the strange gods and the love-master followed, and White Fang pursued, now running vigilantly behind, now bristling up to the running horses and warning them that he was there to see that no harm befell the god they dragged so swiftly across the earth.

At the end of fifteen minutes, the carriage swung in through a stone gateway and on between a double row of arched and interlacing walnut trees. On either side stretched lawns, their broad sweep broken here and there by great sturdy-limbed oaks. In the near distance, in contrast with the young-green of the tended grass, sunburnt hay-fields showed tan and gold; while beyond were the tawny hills and upland pastures. From the head of the lawn, on the first soft swell from the valley-level, looked down the deep-porched, many-windowed house.

Little opportunity was given White Fang to see all this. Hardly had the carriage entered the grounds, when he was set upon by a sheep-dog, bright-eyed, sharp-muzzled, righteously indignant and angry. It was between him and the master, cutting him off. White Fang snarled no warning, but his hair bristled as he made his silent and deadly rush. This rush was never completed. He halted with awkward abruptness, with stiff fore-legs bracing himself against his momentum, almost sitting down on his haunches, so desirous was he of avoiding contact with the dog he was in the act of attacking. It was a female, and the law of his kind thrust a barrier between. For him to attack her would require nothing less than a violation of his instinct.

But with the sheep-dog it was otherwise. Being a female, she possessed no such instinct. On the other hand, being a sheep-dog, her instinctive fear of the Wild, and especially of the wolf, was unusually keen. White Fang was to her a wolf, the hereditary marauder who had preyed upon her flocks from the time sheep were first herded and guarded by some dim ancestor of hers. And so, as he abandoned his rush at her and braced himself to avoid the contact, she sprang upon him. He snarled involuntarily as he felt her teeth in his shoulder, but beyond this made no offer to hurt her. He backed away, stiff-legged with self-consciousness, and tried to go around her. He dodged this way and that, and curved and turned, but to no purpose. She remained always between him and the way he wanted to go.

"Here, Collie!" called the strange man in the carriage.

Weedon Scott laughed.

"Never mind, father. It is good discipline. White Fang will have to learn many things, and it's just as well that he begins now. He'll adjust himself all right."

The carriage drove on, and still Collie blocked White Fang's way. He tried to outrun her by leaving the drive and circling across the lawn but she ran on the inner and smaller circle, and was always there, facing him with her two rows of gleaming teeth. Back he circled, across the drive to the other lawn, and again she headed him off.

The carriage was bearing the master away. White Fang caught glimpses of it disappearing amongst the trees. The situation was desperate. He essayed another circle. She

followed, running swiftly. And then, suddenly, he turned upon her. It was his old fighting trick. Shoulder to shoulder, he struck her squarely. Not only was she overthrown. So fast had she been running that she rolled along, now on her back, now on her side, as she struggled to stop, clawing gravel with her feet and crying shrilly her hurt pride and indignation.

White Fang did not wait. The way was clear, and that was all he had wanted. She took after him, never ceasing her outcry. It was the straightaway now, and when it came to real running, White Fang could teach her things. She ran frantically, hysterically, straining to the utmost, advertising the effort she was making with every leap: and all the time White Fang slid smoothly away from her silently, without effort, gliding like a ghost over the ground.

As he rounded the house to the porte-cochère, he came upon the carriage. It had stopped, and the master was alighting. At this moment, still running at top speed, White Fang became suddenly aware of an attack from the side. It was a deer-hound rushing upon him. White Fang tried to face it. But he was going too fast, and the hound was too close. It struck him on the side; and such was his forward momentum and the unexpectedness of it, White Fang was hurled to the ground and rolled clear over. He came out of the tangle a spectacle of malignancy, ears flattened back, lips writhing, nose wrinkling, his teeth clipping together as the fangs barely missed the hound's soft throat.

The master was running up, but was too far away; and it was Collie that saved the hound's life. Before White Fang could spring in and deliver the fatal stroke, and just as he was in the act of springing in, Collie arrived. She had been out-manoeuvred and out-run, to say nothing of her having been unceremoniously tumbled in the gravel, and her arrival was like that of a tornado — made up of offended dignity, justifiable wrath, and instinctive hatred for this marauder from the Wild. She struck White Fang at right angles in the midst of his spring, and again he was knocked off his feet and rolled over.

The next moment the master arrived, and with one hand held White Fang, while the father called off the dogs.

"I say, this is a pretty warm reception for a poor lone wolf from the Arctic," the master said, while White Fang calmed down under his caressing hand. "In all his life he's only been known once to go off his feet, and here he's been rolled twice in thirty seconds."

The carriage had driven away, and other strange gods had appeared from out the house. Some of these stood respectfully at a distance; but two of them, women, perpetrated the hostile act of clutching the master around the neck. White Fang, however, was beginning to tolerate this act. No harm seemed to come of it, while the noises the gods made were certainly not threatening. These gods also made overtures to White Fang, but he warned them off with a snarl, and the master did likewise with word of mouth. At such times White Fang leaned in close against the master's legs and received reassuring pats on the head.

The hound, under the command, "Dick! Lie down, sir!" had gone up the steps and lain down to one side of the porch, still growling and keeping a sullen watch on the intruder. Collie had been taken in charge by one of the woman-gods, who held arms around her neck and petted and caressed her; but Collie was very much perplexed and worried, whining and restless, outraged by the permitted presence of this wolf and confident that the gods were making a mistake.

All the gods started up the steps to enter the house. White Fang followed closely at the master's heels. Dick, on the porch, growled, and White Fang, on the steps, bristled and growled back.

"Take Collie inside and leave the two of them to fight it out," suggested Scott's father. "After that they'll be friends."

"Then White Fang, to show his friendship, will have to be chief mourner at the funeral," laughed the master.

The elder Scott looked incredulously, first at White Fang, then at Dick, and finally at his son.

"You mean . . .?"

Weedon nodded his head. "I mean just that. You'd have a dead Dick inside one minute — two minutes at the farthest."

He turned to White Fang. "Come on, you wolf. It's you that'll have to come inside."

White Fang walked stiff-legged up the steps and across the porch, with tail rigidly erect, keeping his eyes on Dick to guard against a flank attack, and at the same time prepared for whatever fierce manifestation of the unknown that might pounce out upon him from the interior of the house. But no thing of fear pounced out, and when he had gained the inside he scouted carefully around, looking at it and finding it not. Then he lay down with a contented grunt at the master's feet, observing all that went on, ever ready to spring to his feet and fight for life with the terrors he felt must lurk under the trap-roof of the dwelling.

## Chapter III — The God's Domain

Not only was White Fang adaptable by nature, but he had travelled much, and knew the meaning and necessity of adjustment. Here, in Sierra Vista, which was the name of Judge Scott's place, White Fang quickly began to make himself at home. He had no further serious trouble with the dogs. They knew more about the ways of the Southland gods than did he, and in their eyes he had qualified when he accompanied the gods inside the house. Wolf that he was, and unprecedented as it was, the gods had sanctioned his presence, and they, the dogs of the gods, could only recognise this sanction.

Dick, perforce, had to go through a few stiff formalities at first, after which he calmly accepted White Fang as an addition to the premises. Had Dick had his way, they would have been good friends. All but White Fang was averse to friendship. All

he asked of other dogs was to be let alone. His whole life he had kept aloof from his kind, and he still desired to keep aloof. Dick's overtures bothered him, so he snarled Dick away. In the north he had learned the lesson that he must let the master's dogs alone, and he did not forget that lesson now. But he insisted on his own privacy and self-seclusion, and so thoroughly ignored Dick that that good-natured creature finally gave him up and scarcely took as much interest in him as in the hitching-post near the stable.

Not so with Collie. While she accepted him because it was the mandate of the gods, that was no reason that she should leave him in peace. Woven into her being was the memory of countless crimes he and his had perpetrated against her ancestry. Not in a day nor a generation were the ravaged sheepfolds to be forgotten. All this was a spur to her, pricking her to retaliation. She could not fly in the face of the gods who permitted him, but that did not prevent her from making life miserable for him in petty ways. A feud, ages old, was between them, and she, for one, would see to it that he was reminded.

So Collie took advantage of her sex to pick upon White Fang and maltreat him. His instinct would not permit him to attack her, while her persistence would not permit him to ignore her. When she rushed at him he turned his fur-protected shoulder to her sharp teeth and walked away stiff-legged and stately. When she forced him too hard, he was compelled to go about in a circle, his shoulder presented to her, his head turned from her, and on his face and in his eyes a patient and bored expression. Sometimes, however, a nip on his hind-quarters hastened his retreat and made it anything but stately. But as a rule he managed to maintain a dignity that was almost solemnity. He ignored her existence whenever it was possible, and made it a point to keep out of her way. When he saw or heard her coming, he got up and walked off.

There was much in other matters for White Fang to learn. Life in the Northland was simplicity itself when compared with the complicated affairs of Sierra Vista. First of all, he had to learn the family of the master. In a way he was prepared to do this. As Mit-sah and Kloo-kooch had belonged to Grey Beaver, sharing his food, his fire, and his blankets, so now, at Sierra Vista, belonged to the love-master all the denizens of the house.

But in this matter there was a difference, and many differences. Sierra Vista was a far vaster affair than the tepee of Grey Beaver. There were many persons to be considered. There was Judge Scott, and there was his wife. There were the master's two sisters, Beth and Mary. There was his wife, Alice, and then there were his children, Weedon and Maud, toddlers of four and six. There was no way for anybody to tell him about all these people, and of blood-ties and relationship he knew nothing whatever and never would be capable of knowing. Yet he quickly worked it out that all of them belonged to the master. Then, by observation, whenever opportunity offered, by study of action, speech, and the very intonations of the voice, he slowly learned the intimacy and the degree of favour they enjoyed with the master. And by this ascertained standard, White

Fang treated them accordingly. What was of value to the master he valued; what was dear to the master was to be cherished by White Fang and guarded carefully.

Thus it was with the two children. All his life he had disliked children. He hated and feared their hands. The lessons were not tender that he had learned of their tyranny and cruelty in the days of the Indian villages. When Weedon and Maud had first approached him, he growled warningly and looked malignant. A cuff from the master and a sharp word had then compelled him to permit their caresses, though he growled and growled under their tiny hands, and in the growl there was no crooning note. Later, he observed that the boy and girl were of great value in the master's eyes. Then it was that no cuff nor sharp word was necessary before they could pat him.

Yet White Fang was never effusively affectionate. He yielded to the master's children with an ill but honest grace, and endured their fooling as one would endure a painful operation. When he could no longer endure, he would get up and stalk determinedly away from them. But after a time, he grew even to like the children. Still he was not demonstrative. He would not go up to them. On the other hand, instead of walking away at sight of them, he waited for them to come to him. And still later, it was noticed that a pleased light came into his eyes when he saw them approaching, and that he looked after them with an appearance of curious regret when they left him for other amusements.

All this was a matter of development, and took time. Next in his regard, after the children, was Judge Scott. There were two reasons, possibly, for this. First, he was evidently a valuable possession of the master's, and next, he was undemonstrative. White Fang liked to lie at his feet on the wide porch when he read the newspaper, from time to time favouring White Fang with a look or a word — untroublesome tokens that he recognised White Fang's presence and existence. But this was only when the master was not around. When the master appeared, all other beings ceased to exist so far as White Fang was concerned.

White Fang allowed all the members of the family to pet him and make much of him; but he never gave to them what he gave to the master. No caress of theirs could put the love-croon into his throat, and, try as they would, they could never persuade him into snuggling against them. This expression of abandon and surrender, of absolute trust, he reserved for the master alone. In fact, he never regarded the members of the family in any other light than possessions of the love-master.

Also White Fang had early come to differentiate between the family and the servants of the household. The latter were afraid of him, while he merely refrained from attacking them. This because he considered that they were likewise possessions of the master. Between White Fang and them existed a neutrality and no more. They cooked for the master and washed the dishes and did other things just as Matt had done up in the Klondike. They were, in short, appurtenances of the household.

Outside the household there was even more for White Fang to learn. The master's domain was wide and complex, yet it had its metes and bounds. The land itself ceased at the county road. Outside was the common domain of all gods — the roads and

streets. Then inside other fences were the particular domains of other gods. A myriad laws governed all these things and determined conduct; yet he did not know the speech of the gods, nor was there any way for him to learn save by experience. He obeyed his natural impulses until they ran him counter to some law. When this had been done a few times, he learned the law and after that observed it.

But most potent in his education was the cuff of the master's hand, the censure of the master's voice. Because of White Fang's very great love, a cuff from the master hurt him far more than any beating Grey Beaver or Beauty Smith had ever given him. They had hurt only the flesh of him; beneath the flesh the spirit had still raged, splendid and invincible. But with the master the cuff was always too light to hurt the flesh. Yet it went deeper. It was an expression of the master's disapproval, and White Fang's spirit wilted under it.

In point of fact, the cuff was rarely administered. The master's voice was sufficient. By it White Fang knew whether he did right or not. By it he trimmed his conduct and adjusted his actions. It was the compass by which he steered and learned to chart the manners of a new land and life.

In the Northland, the only domesticated animal was the dog. All other animals lived in the Wild, and were, when not too formidable, lawful spoil for any dog. All his days White Fang had foraged among the live things for food. It did not enter his head that in the Southland it was otherwise. But this he was to learn early in his residence in Santa Clara Valley. Sauntering around the corner of the house in the early morning, he came upon a chicken that had escaped from the chicken-yard. White Fang's natural impulse was to eat it. A couple of bounds, a flash of teeth and a frightened squawk, and he had scooped in the adventurous fowl. It was farm-bred and fat and tender; and White Fang licked his chops and decided that such fare was good.

Later in the day, he chanced upon another stray chicken near the stables. One of the grooms ran to the rescue. He did not know White Fang's breed, so for weapon he took a light buggy-whip. At the first cut of the whip, White Fang left the chicken for the man. A club might have stopped White Fang, but not a whip. Silently, without flinching, he took a second cut in his forward rush, and as he leaped for the throat the groom cried out, "My God!" and staggered backward. He dropped the whip and shielded his throat with his arms. In consequence, his forearm was ripped open to the bone.

The man was badly frightened. It was not so much White Fang's ferocity as it was his silence that unnerved the groom. Still protecting his throat and face with his torn and bleeding arm, he tried to retreat to the barn. And it would have gone hard with him had not Collie appeared on the scene. As she had saved Dick's life, she now saved the groom's. She rushed upon White Fang in frenzied wrath. She had been right. She had known better than the blundering gods. All her suspicions were justified. Here was the ancient marauder up to his old tricks again.

The groom escaped into the stables, and White Fang backed away before Collie's wicked teeth, or presented his shoulder to them and circled round and round. But



Collie did not give over, as was her wont, after a decent interval of chastisement. On the contrary, she grew more excited and angry every moment, until, in the end, White Fang flung dignity to the winds and frankly fled away from her across the fields.

"He'll learn to leave chickens alone," the master said. "But I can't give him the lesson until I catch him in the act."

Two nights later came the act, but on a more generous scale than the master had anticipated. White Fang had observed closely the chicken-yards and the habits of the chickens. In the night-time, after they had gone to roost, he climbed to the top of a pile of newly hauled lumber. From there he gained the roof of a chicken-house, passed over the ridgepole and dropped to the ground inside. A moment later he was inside the house, and the slaughter began.

In the morning, when the master came out on to the porch, fifty white Leghorn hens, laid out in a row by the groom, greeted his eyes. He whistled to himself, softly, first with surprise, and then, at the end, with admiration. His eyes were likewise greeted by White Fang, but about the latter there were no signs of shame nor guilt. He carried himself with pride, as though, forsooth, he had achieved a deed praiseworthy and meritorious. There was about him no consciousness of sin. The master's lips tightened as he faced the disagreeable task. Then he talked harshly to the unwitting culprit, and in his voice there was nothing but godlike wrath. Also, he held White Fang's nose down to the slain hens, and at the same time cuffed him soundly.

White Fang never raided a chicken-roost again. It was against the law, and he had learned it. Then the master took him into the chicken-yards. White Fang's natural impulse, when he saw the live food fluttering about him and under his very nose, was to spring upon it. He obeyed the impulse, but was checked by the master's voice. They continued in the yards for half an hour. Time and again the impulse surged over White Fang, and each time, as he yielded to it, he was checked by the master's voice. Thus it was he learned the law, and ere he left the domain of the chickens, he had learned to ignore their existence.

"You can never cure a chicken-killer." Judge Scott shook his head sadly at luncheon table, when his son narrated the lesson he had given White Fang. "Once they've got the habit and the taste of blood . . ." Again he shook his head sadly.

But Weedon Scott did not agree with his father. "I'll tell you what I'll do," he challenged finally. "I'll lock White Fang in with the chickens all afternoon."

"But think of the chickens," objected the judge.

"And furthermore," the son went on, "for every chicken he kills, I'll pay you one dollar gold coin of the realm."

"But you should penalise father, too," interpose Beth.

Her sister seconded her, and a chorus of approval arose from around the table. Judge Scott nodded his head in agreement.

"All right." Weedon Scott pondered for a moment. "And if, at the end of the afternoon White Fang hasn't harmed a chicken, for every ten minutes of the time he has spent in the yard, you will have to say to him, gravely and with deliberation, just as

if you were sitting on the bench and solemnly passing judgment, 'White Fang, you are smarter than I thought.'"

From hidden points of vantage the family watched the performance. But it was a fizzle. Locked in the yard and there deserted by the master, White Fang lay down and went to sleep. Once he got up and walked over to the trough for a drink of water. The chickens he calmly ignored. So far as he was concerned they did not exist. At four o'clock he executed a running jump, gained the roof of the chicken-house and leaped to the ground outside, whence he sauntered gravely to the house. He had learned the law. And on the porch, before the delighted family, Judge Scott, face to face with White Fang, said slowly and solemnly, sixteen times, "White Fang, you are smarter than I thought."

But it was the multiplicity of laws that befuddled White Fang and often brought him into disgrace. He had to learn that he must not touch the chickens that belonged to other gods. Then there were cats, and rabbits, and turkeys; all these he must let alone. In fact, when he had but partly learned the law, his impression was that he must leave all live things alone. Out in the back-pasture, a quail could flutter up under his nose unharmed. All tense and trembling with eagerness and desire, he mastered his instinct and stood still. He was obeying the will of the gods.

And then, one day, again out in the back-pasture, he saw Dick start a jackrabbit and run it. The master himself was looking on and did not interfere. Nay, he encouraged White Fang to join in the chase. And thus he learned that there was no taboo on jackrabbits. In the end he worked out the complete law. Between him and all domestic animals there must be no hostilities. If not amity, at least neutrality must obtain. But the other animals — the squirrels, and quail, and cottontails, were creatures of the Wild who had never yielded allegiance to man. They were the lawful prey of any dog. It was only the tame that the gods protected, and between the tame deadly strife was not permitted. The gods held the power of life and death over their subjects, and the gods were jealous of their power.

Life was complex in the Santa Clara Valley after the simplicities of the Northland. And the chief thing demanded by these intricacies of civilisation was control, restraint — a poise of self that was as delicate as the fluttering of gossamer wings and at the same time as rigid as steel. Life had a thousand faces, and White Fang found he must meet them all — thus, when he went to town, in to San Jose, running behind the carriage or loafing about the streets when the carriage stopped. Life flowed past him, deep and wide and varied, continually impinging upon his senses, demanding of him instant and endless adjustments and correspondences, and compelling him, almost always, to suppress his natural impulses.

There were butcher-shops where meat hung within reach. This meat he must not touch. There were cats at the houses the master visited that must be let alone. And there were dogs everywhere that snarled at him and that he must not attack. And then, on the crowded sidewalks there were persons innumerable whose attention he attracted. They would stop and look at him, point him out to one another, examine

him, talk of him, and, worst of all, pat him. And these perilous contacts from all these strange hands he must endure. Yet this endurance he achieved. Furthermore, he got over being awkward and self-conscious. In a lofty way he received the attentions of the multitudes of strange gods. With condescension he accepted their condescension. On the other hand, there was something about him that prevented great familiarity. They patted him on the head and passed on, contented and pleased with their own daring.

But it was not all easy for White Fang. Running behind the carriage in the outskirts of San Jose, he encountered certain small boys who made a practice of flinging stones at him. Yet he knew that it was not permitted him to pursue and drag them down. Here he was compelled to violate his instinct of self-preservation, and violate it he did, for he was becoming tame and qualifying himself for civilisation.

Nevertheless, White Fang was not quite satisfied with the arrangement. He had no abstract ideas about justice and fair play. But there is a certain sense of equity that resides in life, and it was this sense in him that resented the unfairness of his being permitted no defence against the stone-throwers. He forgot that in the covenant entered into between him and the gods they were pledged to care for him and defend him. But one day the master sprang from the carriage, whip in hand, and gave the stone-throwers a thrashing. After that they threw stones no more, and White Fang understood and was satisfied.

One other experience of similar nature was his. On the way to town, hanging around the saloon at the cross-roads, were three dogs that made a practice of rushing out upon him when he went by. Knowing his deadly method of fighting, the master had never ceased impressing upon White Fang the law that he must not fight. As a result, having learned the lesson well, White Fang was hard put whenever he passed the cross-roads saloon. After the first rush, each time, his snarl kept the three dogs at a distance but they trailed along behind, yelping and bickering and insulting him. This endured for some time. The men at the saloon even urged the dogs on to attack White Fang. One day they openly sicked the dogs on him. The master stopped the carriage.

"Go to it," he said to White Fang.

But White Fang could not believe. He looked at the master, and he looked at the dogs. Then he looked back eagerly and questioningly at the master.

The master nodded his head. "Go to them, old fellow. Eat them up."

White Fang no longer hesitated. He turned and leaped silently among his enemies. All three faced him. There was a great snarling and growling, a clashing of teeth and a flurry of bodies. The dust of the road arose in a cloud and screened the battle. But at the end of several minutes two dogs were struggling in the dirt and the third was in full flight. He leaped a ditch, went through a rail fence, and fled across a field. White Fang followed, sliding over the ground in wolf fashion and with wolf speed, swiftly and without noise, and in the centre of the field he dragged down and slew the dog.

With this triple killing his main troubles with dogs ceased. The word went up and down the valley, and men saw to it that their dogs did not molest the Fighting Wolf.

## Chapter IV — The Call of Kind

The months came and went. There was plenty of food and no work in the Southland, and White Fang lived fat and prosperous and happy. Not alone was he in the geographical Southland, for he was in the Southland of life. Human kindness was like a sun shining upon him, and he flourished like a flower planted in good soil.

And yet he remained somehow different from other dogs. He knew the law even better than did the dogs that had known no other life, and he observed the law more punctiliously; but still there was about him a suggestion of lurking ferocity, as though the Wild still lingered in him and the wolf in him merely slept.

He never chummed with other dogs. Lonely he had lived, so far as his kind was concerned, and lonely he would continue to live. In his puppyhood, under the persecution of Lip-lip and the puppy-pack, and in his fighting days with Beauty Smith, he had acquired a fixed aversion for dogs. The natural course of his life had been diverted, and, recoiling from his kind, he had clung to the human.

Besides, all Southland dogs looked upon him with suspicion. He aroused in them their instinctive fear of the Wild, and they greeted him always with snarl and growl and belligerent hatred. He, on the other hand, learned that it was not necessary to use his teeth upon them. His naked fangs and writhing lips were uniformly efficacious, rarely failing to send a bellowing on-rushing dog back on its haunches.

But there was one trial in White Fang's life — Collie. She never gave him a moment's peace. She was not so amenable to the law as he. She defied all efforts of the master to make her become friends with White Fang. Ever in his ears was sounding her sharp and nervous snarl. She had never forgiven him the chicken-killing episode, and persistently held to the belief that his intentions were bad. She found him guilty before the act, and treated him accordingly. She became a pest to him, like a policeman following him around the stable and the hounds, and, if he even so much as glanced curiously at a pigeon or chicken, bursting into an outcry of indignation and wrath. His favourite way of ignoring her was to lie down, with his head on his fore-paws, and pretend sleep. This always dumfounded and silenced her.

With the exception of Collie, all things went well with White Fang. He had learned control and poise, and he knew the law. He achieved a staidness, and calmness, and philosophic tolerance. He no longer lived in a hostile environment. Danger and hurt and death did not lurk everywhere about him. In time, the unknown, as a thing of terror and menace ever impending, faded away. Life was soft and easy. It flowed along smoothly, and neither fear nor foe lurked by the way.

He missed the snow without being aware of it. "An unduly long summer," would have been his thought had he thought about it; as it was, he merely missed the snow in a vague, subconscious way. In the same fashion, especially in the heat of summer when he suffered from the sun, he experienced faint longings for the Northland. Their only effect upon him, however, was to make him uneasy and restless without his knowing what was the matter.

White Fang had never been very demonstrative. Beyond his snuggling and the throwing of a crooning note into his love-growl, he had no way of expressing his love. Yet it was given him to discover a third way. He had always been susceptible to the laughter of the gods. Laughter had affected him with madness, made him frantic with rage. But he did not have it in him to be angry with the love-master, and when that god elected to laugh at him in a good-natured, bantering way, he was nonplussed. He could feel the pricking and stinging of the old anger as it strove to rise up in him, but it strove against love. He could not be angry; yet he had to do something. At first he was dignified, and the master laughed the harder. Then he tried to be more dignified, and the master laughed harder than before. In the end, the master laughed him out of his dignity. His jaws slightly parted, his lips lifted a little, and a quizzical expression that was more love than humour came into his eyes. He had learned to laugh.

Likewise he learned to romp with the master, to be tumbled down and rolled over, and be the victim of innumerable rough tricks. In return he feigned anger, bristling and growling ferociously, and clipping his teeth together in snaps that had all the seeming of deadly intention. But he never forgot himself. Those snaps were always delivered on the empty air. At the end of such a romp, when blow and cuff and snap and snarl were last and furious, they would break off suddenly and stand several feet apart, glaring at each other. And then, just as suddenly, like the sun rising on a stormy sea, they would begin to laugh. This would always culminate with the master's arms going around White Fang's neck and shoulders while the latter crooned and growled his love-song.

But nobody else ever romped with White Fang. He did not permit it. He stood on his dignity, and when they attempted it, his warning snarl and bristling mane were anything but playful. That he allowed the master these liberties was no reason that he should be a common dog, loving here and loving there, everybody's property for a romp and good time. He loved with single heart and refused to cheapen himself or his love.

The master went out on horseback a great deal, and to accompany him was one of White Fang's chief duties in life. In the Northland he had evidenced his fealty by toiling in the harness; but there were no sleds in the Southland, nor did dogs pack burdens on their backs. So he rendered fealty in the new way, by running with the master's horse. The longest day never played White Fang out. His was the gait of the wolf, smooth, tireless and effortless, and at the end of fifty miles he would come in jauntily ahead of the horse.

It was in connection with the riding, that White Fang achieved one other mode of expression — remarkable in that he did it but twice in all his life. The first time occurred when the master was trying to teach a spirited thoroughbred the method of opening and closing gates without the rider's dismounting. Time and again and many times he ranged the horse up to the gate in the effort to close it and each time the horse became frightened and backed and plunged away. It grew more nervous and excited every moment. When it reared, the master put the spurs to it and made it drop its fore-legs back to earth, whereupon it would begin kicking with its hind-legs. White

Fang watched the performance with increasing anxiety until he could contain himself no longer, when he sprang in front of the horse and barked savagely and warningly.

Though he often tried to bark thereafter, and the master encouraged him, he succeeded only once, and then it was not in the master's presence. A scamper across the pasture, a jackrabbit rising suddenly under the horse's feet, a violent sheer, a stumble, a fall to earth, and a broken leg for the master, was the cause of it. White Fang sprang in a rage at the throat of the offending horse, but was checked by the master's voice.

"Home! Go home!" the master commanded when he had ascertained his injury.

White Fang was disinclined to desert him. The master thought of writing a note, but searched his pockets vainly for pencil and paper. Again he commanded White Fang to go home.

The latter regarded him wistfully, started away, then returned and whined softly. The master talked to him gently but seriously, and he cocked his ears, and listened with painful intentness.

"That's all right, old fellow, you just run along home," ran the talk. "Go on home and tell them what's happened to me. Home with you, you wolf. Get along home!"

White Fang knew the meaning of "home," and though he did not understand the remainder of the master's language, he knew it was his will that he should go home. He turned and trotted reluctantly away. Then he stopped, undecided, and looked back over his shoulder.

"Go home!" came the sharp command, and this time he obeyed.

The family was on the porch, taking the cool of the afternoon, when White Fang arrived. He came in among them, panting, covered with dust.

"Weedon's back," Weedon's mother announced.

The children welcomed White Fang with glad cries and ran to meet him. He avoided them and passed down the porch, but they cornered him against a rocking-chair and the railing. He growled and tried to push by them. Their mother looked apprehensively in their direction.

"I confess, he makes me nervous around the children," she said. "I have a dread that he will turn upon them unexpectedly some day."

Growling savagely, White Fang sprang out of the corner, overturning the boy and the girl. The mother called them to her and comforted them, telling them not to bother White Fang.

"A wolf is a wolf!" commented Judge Scott. "There is no trusting one."

"But he is not all wolf," interposed Beth, standing for her brother in his absence.

"You have only Weedon's opinion for that," rejoined the judge. "He merely surmises that there is some strain of dog in White Fang; but as he will tell you himself, he knows nothing about it. As for his appearance — "

He did not finish his sentence. White Fang stood before him, growling fiercely.

"Go away! Lie down, sir!" Judge Scott commanded.

White Fang turned to the love-master's wife. She screamed with fright as he seized her dress in his teeth and dragged on it till the frail fabric tore away. By this time he had become the centre of interest.

He had ceased from his growling and stood, head up, looking into their faces. His throat worked spasmodically, but made no sound, while he struggled with all his body, convulsed with the effort to rid himself of the incommunicable something that strained for utterance.

"I hope he is not going mad," said Weedon's mother. "I told Weedon that I was afraid the warm climate would not agree with an Arctic animal."

"He's trying to speak, I do believe," Beth announced.

At this moment speech came to White Fang, rushing up in a great burst of barking.

"Something has happened to Weedon," his wife said decisively.

They were all on their feet now, and White Fang ran down the steps, looking back for them to follow. For the second and last time in his life he had barked and made himself understood.

After this event he found a warmer place in the hearts of the Sierra Vista people, and even the groom whose arm he had slashed admitted that he was a wise dog even if he was a wolf. Judge Scott still held to the same opinion, and proved it to everybody's dissatisfaction by measurements and descriptions taken from the encyclopaedia and various works on natural history.

The days came and went, streaming their unbroken sunshine over the Santa Clara Valley. But as they grew shorter and White Fang's second winter in the Southland came on, he made a strange discovery. Collie's teeth were no longer sharp. There was a playfulness about her nips and a gentleness that prevented them from really hurting him. He forgot that she had made life a burden to him, and when she disported herself around him he responded solemnly, striving to be playful and becoming no more than ridiculous.

One day she led him off on a long chase through the back-pasture land into the woods. It was the afternoon that the master was to ride, and White Fang knew it. The horse stood saddled and waiting at the door. White Fang hesitated. But there was that in him deeper than all the law he had learned, than the customs that had moulded him, than his love for the master, than the very will to live of himself; and when, in the moment of his indecision, Collie nipped him and scampered off, he turned and followed after. The master rode alone that day; and in the woods, side by side, White Fang ran with Collie, as his mother, Kiche, and old One Eye had run long years before in the silent Northland forest.

## Chapter V — The Sleeping Wolf

It was about this time that the newspapers were full of the daring escape of a convict from San Quentin prison. He was a ferocious man. He had been ill-made in the

making. He had not been born right, and he had not been helped any by the moulding he had received at the hands of society. The hands of society are harsh, and this man was a striking sample of its handiwork. He was a beast — a human beast, it is true, but nevertheless so terrible a beast that he can best be characterised as carnivorous.

In San Quentin prison he had proved incorrigible. Punishment failed to break his spirit. He could die dumb-mad and fighting to the last, but he could not live and be beaten. The more fiercely he fought, the more harshly society handled him, and the only effect of harshness was to make him fiercer. Straight-jackets, starvation, and beatings and clubbings were the wrong treatment for Jim Hall; but it was the treatment he received. It was the treatment he had received from the time he was a little pulpy boy in a San Francisco slum — soft clay in the hands of society and ready to be formed into something.

It was during Jim Hall's third term in prison that he encountered a guard that was almost as great a beast as he. The guard treated him unfairly, lied about him to the warden, lost his credits, persecuted him. The difference between them was that the guard carried a bunch of keys and a revolver. Jim Hall had only his naked hands and his teeth. But he sprang upon the guard one day and used his teeth on the other's throat just like any jungle animal.

After this, Jim Hall went to live in the incorrigible cell. He lived there three years. The cell was of iron, the floor, the walls, the roof. He never left this cell. He never saw the sky nor the sunshine. Day was a twilight and night was a black silence. He was in an iron tomb, buried alive. He saw no human face, spoke to no human thing. When his food was shoved in to him, he growled like a wild animal. He hated all things. For days and nights he bellowed his rage at the universe. For weeks and months he never made a sound, in the black silence eating his very soul. He was a man and a monstrosity, as fearful a thing of fear as ever gibbered in the visions of a maddened brain.

And then, one night, he escaped. The warders said it was impossible, but nevertheless the cell was empty, and half in half out of it lay the body of a dead guard. Two other dead guards marked his trail through the prison to the outer walls, and he had killed with his hands to avoid noise.

He was armed with the weapons of the slain guards — a live arsenal that fled through the hills pursued by the organised might of society. A heavy price of gold was upon his head. Avaricious farmers hunted him with shot-guns. His blood might pay off a mortgage or send a son to college. Public-spirited citizens took down their rifles and went out after him. A pack of bloodhounds followed the way of his bleeding feet. And the sleuth-hounds of the law, the paid fighting animals of society, with telephone, and telegraph, and special train, clung to his trail night and day.

Sometimes they came upon him, and men faced him like heroes, or stampeded through barbed-wire fences to the delight of the commonwealth reading the account at the breakfast table. It was after such encounters that the dead and wounded were carted back to the towns, and their places filled by men eager for the man-hunt.



And then Jim Hall disappeared. The bloodhounds vainly quested on the lost trail. Inoffensive ranchers in remote valleys were held up by armed men and compelled to identify themselves. While the remains of Jim Hall were discovered on a dozen mountain-sides by greedy claimants for blood-money.

In the meantime the newspapers were read at Sierra Vista, not so much with interest as with anxiety. The women were afraid. Judge Scott pooh-poohed and laughed, but not with reason, for it was in his last days on the bench that Jim Hall had stood before him and received sentence. And in open court-room, before all men, Jim Hall had proclaimed that the day would come when he would wreak vengeance on the Judge that sentenced him.

For once, Jim Hall was right. He was innocent of the crime for which he was sentenced. It was a case, in the parlance of thieves and police, of "rail-roading." Jim Hall was being "rail-roaded" to prison for a crime he had not committed. Because of the two prior convictions against him, Judge Scott imposed upon him a sentence of fifty years.

Judge Scott did not know all things, and he did not know that he was party to a police conspiracy, that the evidence was hatched and perjured, that Jim Hall was guiltless of the crime charged. And Jim Hall, on the other hand, did not know that Judge Scott was merely ignorant. Jim Hall believed that the judge knew all about it and was hand in glove with the police in the perpetration of the monstrous injustice. So it was, when the doom of fifty years of living death was uttered by Judge Scott, that Jim Hall, hating all things in the society that misused him, rose up and raged in the court-room until dragged down by half a dozen of his blue-coated enemies. To him, Judge Scott was the keystone in the arch of injustice, and upon Judge Scott he emptied the vials of his wrath and hurled the threats of his revenge yet to come. Then Jim Hall went to his living death . . . and escaped.

Of all this White Fang knew nothing. But between him and Alice, the master's wife, there existed a secret. Each night, after Sierra Vista had gone to bed, she rose and let in White Fang to sleep in the big hall. Now White Fang was not a house-dog, nor was he permitted to sleep in the house; so each morning, early, she slipped down and let him out before the family was awake.

On one such night, while all the house slept, White Fang awoke and lay very quietly. And very quietly he smelled the air and read the message it bore of a strange god's presence. And to his ears came sounds of the strange god's movements. White Fang burst into no furious outcry. It was not his way. The strange god walked softly, but more softly walked White Fang, for he had no clothes to rub against the flesh of his body. He followed silently. In the Wild he had hunted live meat that was infinitely timid, and he knew the advantage of surprise.

The strange god paused at the foot of the great staircase and listened, and White Fang was as dead, so without movement was he as he watched and waited. Up that staircase the way led to the love-master and to the love-master's dearest possessions.

White Fang bristled, but waited. The strange god's foot lifted. He was beginning the ascent.

Then it was that White Fang struck. He gave no warning, with no snarl anticipated his own action. Into the air he lifted his body in the spring that landed him on the strange god's back. White Fang clung with his fore-paws to the man's shoulders, at the same time burying his fangs into the back of the man's neck. He clung on for a moment, long enough to drag the god over backward. Together they crashed to the floor. White Fang leaped clear, and, as the man struggled to rise, was in again with the slashing fangs.

Sierra Vista awoke in alarm. The noise from downstairs was as that of a score of battling fiends. There were revolver shots. A man's voice screamed once in horror and anguish. There was a great snarling and growling, and over all arose a smashing and crashing of furniture and glass.

But almost as quickly as it had arisen, the commotion died away. The struggle had not lasted more than three minutes. The frightened household clustered at the top of the stairway. From below, as from out an abyss of blackness, came up a gurgling sound, as of air bubbling through water. Sometimes this gurgle became sibilant, almost a whistle. But this, too, quickly died down and ceased. Then naught came up out of the blackness save a heavy panting of some creature struggling sorely for air.

Weedon Scott pressed a button, and the staircase and downstairs hall were flooded with light. Then he and Judge Scott, revolvers in hand, cautiously descended. There was no need for this caution. White Fang had done his work. In the midst of the wreckage of overthrown and smashed furniture, partly on his side, his face hidden by an arm, lay a man. Weedon Scott bent over, removed the arm and turned the man's face upward. A gaping throat explained the manner of his death.

"Jim Hall," said Judge Scott, and father and son looked significantly at each other.

Then they turned to White Fang. He, too, was lying on his side. His eyes were closed, but the lids slightly lifted in an effort to look at them as they bent over him, and the tail was perceptibly agitated in a vain effort to wag. Weedon Scott patted him, and his throat rumbled an acknowledging growl. But it was a weak growl at best, and it quickly ceased. His eyelids drooped and went shut, and his whole body seemed to relax and flatten out upon the floor.

"He's all in, poor devil," muttered the master.

"We'll see about that," asserted the Judge, as he started for the telephone.

"Frankly, he has one chance in a thousand," announced the surgeon, after he had worked an hour and a half on White Fang.

Dawn was breaking through the windows and dimming the electric lights. With the exception of the children, the whole family was gathered about the surgeon to hear his verdict.

"One broken hind-leg," he went on. "Three broken ribs, one at least of which has pierced the lungs. He has lost nearly all the blood in his body. There is a large likelihood of internal injuries. He must have been jumped upon. To say nothing of three bullet

holes clear through him. One chance in a thousand is really optimistic. He hasn't a chance in ten thousand."

"But he mustn't lose any chance that might be of help to him," Judge Scott exclaimed. "Never mind expense. Put him under the X-ray — anything. Weedon, telegraph at once to San Francisco for Doctor Nichols. No reflection on you, doctor, you understand; but he must have the advantage of every chance."

The surgeon smiled indulgently. "Of course I understand. He deserves all that can be done for him. He must be nursed as you would nurse a human being, a sick child. And don't forget what I told you about temperature. I'll be back at ten o'clock again."

White Fang received the nursing. Judge Scott's suggestion of a trained nurse was indignantly clamoured down by the girls, who themselves undertook the task. And White Fang won out on the one chance in ten thousand denied him by the surgeon.

The latter was not to be censured for his misjudgment. All his life he had tended and operated on the soft humans of civilisation, who lived sheltered lives and had descended out of many sheltered generations. Compared with White Fang, they were frail and flabby, and clutched life without any strength in their grip. White Fang had come straight from the Wild, where the weak perish early and shelter is vouchsafed to none. In neither his father nor his mother was there any weakness, nor in the generations before them. A constitution of iron and the vitality of the Wild were White Fang's inheritance, and he clung to life, the whole of him and every part of him, in spirit and in flesh, with the tenacity that of old belonged to all creatures.

Bound down a prisoner, denied even movement by the plaster casts and bandages, White Fang lingered out the weeks. He slept long hours and dreamed much, and through his mind passed an unending pageant of Northland visions. All the ghosts of the past arose and were with him. Once again he lived in the lair with Kiche, crept trembling to the knees of Grey Beaver to tender his allegiance, ran for his life before Lip-lip and all the howling bedlam of the puppy-pack.

He ran again through the silence, hunting his living food through the months of famine; and again he ran at the head of the team, the gut-whips of Mit-sah and Grey Beaver snapping behind, their voices crying "Ra! Raa!" when they came to a narrow passage and the team closed together like a fan to go through. He lived again all his days with Beauty Smith and the fights he had fought. At such times he whimpered and snarled in his sleep, and they that looked on said that his dreams were bad.

But there was one particular nightmare from which he suffered — the clanking, clanging monsters of electric cars that were to him colossal screaming lynxes. He would lie in a screen of bushes, watching for a squirrel to venture far enough out on the ground from its tree-refuge. Then, when he sprang out upon it, it would transform itself into an electric car, menacing and terrible, towering over him like a mountain, screaming and clanking and spitting fire at him. It was the same when he challenged the hawk down out of the sky. Down out of the blue it would rush, as it dropped upon him changing itself into the ubiquitous electric car. Or again, he would be in the pen of Beauty Smith. Outside the pen, men would be gathering, and he knew that a fight

was on. He watched the door for his antagonist to enter. The door would open, and thrust in upon him would come the awful electric car. A thousand times this occurred, and each time the terror it inspired was as vivid and great as ever.

Then came the day when the last bandage and the last plaster cast were taken off. It was a gala day. All Sierra Vista was gathered around. The master rubbed his ears, and he crooned his love-growl. The master's wife called him the "Blessed Wolf," which name was taken up with acclaim and all the women called him the Blessed Wolf.

He tried to rise to his feet, and after several attempts fell down from weakness. He had lain so long that his muscles had lost their cunning, and all the strength had gone out of them. He felt a little shame because of his weakness, as though, forsooth, he were failing the gods in the service he owed them. Because of this he made heroic efforts to arise and at last he stood on his four legs, tottering and swaying back and forth.

"The Blessed Wolf!" chorused the women.

Judge Scott surveyed them triumphantly.

"Out of your own mouths be it," he said. "Just as I contended right along. No mere dog could have done what he did. He's a wolf."

"A Blessed Wolf," amended the Judge's wife.

"Yes, Blessed Wolf," agreed the Judge. "And henceforth that shall be my name for him."

"He'll have to learn to walk again," said the surgeon; "so he might as well start in right now. It won't hurt him. Take him outside."

And outside he went, like a king, with all Sierra Vista about him and tending on him. He was very weak, and when he reached the lawn he lay down and rested for a while.

Then the procession started on, little spurts of strength coming into White Fang's muscles as he used them and the blood began to surge through them. The stables were reached, and there in the doorway, lay Collie, a half-dozen pudgy puppies playing about her in the sun.

White Fang looked on with a wondering eye. Collie snarled warningly at him, and he was careful to keep his distance. The master with his toe helped one sprawling puppy toward him. He bristled suspiciously, but the master warned him that all was well. Collie, clasped in the arms of one of the women, watched him jealously and with a snarl warned him that all was not well.

The puppy sprawled in front of him. He cocked his ears and watched it curiously. Then their noses touched, and he felt the warm little tongue of the puppy on his jowl. White Fang's tongue went out, he knew not why, and he licked the puppy's face.

Hand-clapping and pleased cries from the gods greeted the performance. He was surprised, and looked at them in a puzzled way. Then his weakness asserted itself, and he lay down, his ears cocked, his head on one side, as he watched the puppy. The other puppies came sprawling toward him, to Collie's great disgust; and he gravely permitted them to clamber and tumble over him. At first, amid the applause of the

gods, he betrayed a trifle of his old self-consciousness and awkwardness. This passed away as the puppies' antics and mauling continued, and he lay with half-shut patient eyes, drowsing in the sun.

**Before Adam**

Serialised in 1906 and 1907 in Everybody's Magazine, this novel tells the story of a boy who dreams he lives the life of an early hominid Australopithecine. The narrative offers an early view of human evolution, with the majority of the story told through the eyes of the boy's hominid alter ego, one of the Cave People.

The first edition

# Chapter I

Pictures! Pictures! Pictures! Often, before I learned, did I wonder whence came the multitudes of pictures that thronged my dreams; for they were pictures the like of which I had never seen in real wake-a-day life. They tormented my childhood, making of my dreams a procession of nightmares and a little later convincing me that I was different from my kind, a creature unnatural and accursed.

In my days only did I attain any measure of happiness. My nights marked the reign of fear — and such fear! I make bold to state that no man of all the men who walk the earth with me ever suffer fear of like kind and degree. For my fear is the fear of long ago, the fear that was rampant in the Younger World, and in the youth of the Younger World. In short, the fear that reigned supreme in that period known as the Mid-Pleistocene.

What do I mean? I see explanation is necessary before I can tell you of the substance of my dreams. Otherwise, little could you know of the meaning of the things I know so well. As I write this, all the beings and happenings of that other world rise up before me in vast phantasmagoria, and I know that to you they would be rhymeless and reasonless.

What to you the friendship of Lop-Ear, the warm lure of the Swift One, the lust and the atavism of Red-Eye? A screaming incoherence and no more. And a screaming incoherence, likewise, the doings of the Fire People and the Tree People, and the gibbering councils of the horde. For you know not the peace of the cool caves in the cliffs, the circus of the drinking-places at the end of the day. You have never felt the bite of the morning wind in the tree-tops, nor is the taste of young bark sweet in your mouth.

It would be better, I dare say, for you to make your approach, as I made mine, through my childhood. As a boy I was very like other boys — in my waking hours. It was in my sleep that I was different. From my earliest recollection my sleep was a period of terror. Rarely were my dreams tintured with happiness. As a rule, they were stuffed with fear — and with a fear so strange and alien that it had no ponderable quality. No fear that I experienced in my waking life resembled the fear that possessed me in my sleep. It was of a quality and kind that transcended all my experiences.

For instance, I was a city boy, a city child, rather, to whom the country was an unexplored domain. Yet I never dreamed of cities; nor did a house ever occur in any of my dreams. Nor, for that matter, did any of my human kind ever break through the wall of my sleep. I, who had seen trees only in parks and illustrated books, wandered in my sleep through interminable forests. And further, these dream trees were not a



mere blur on my vision. They were sharp and distinct. I was on terms of practised intimacy with them. I saw every branch and twig; I saw and knew every different leaf.

Well do I remember the first time in my waking life that I saw an oak tree. As I looked at the leaves and branches and gnarls, it came to me with distressing vividness that I had seen that same kind of tree many and countless times in my sleep. So I was not surprised, still later on in my life, to recognize instantly, the first time I saw them, trees such as the spruce, the yew, the birch, and the laurel. I had seen them all before, and was seeing them even then, every night, in my sleep.

This, as you have already discerned, violates the first law of dreaming, namely, that in one's dreams one sees only what he has seen in his waking life, or combinations of the things he has seen in his waking life. But all my dreams violated this law. In my dreams I never saw ANYTHING of which I had knowledge in my waking life. My dream life and my waking life were lives apart, with not one thing in common save myself. I was the connecting link that somehow lived both lives.

Early in my childhood I learned that nuts came from the grocer, berries from the fruit man; but before ever that knowledge was mine, in my dreams I picked nuts from trees, or gathered them and ate them from the ground underneath trees, and in the same way I ate berries from vines and bushes. This was beyond any experience of mine.

I shall never forget the first time I saw blueberries served on the table. I had never seen blueberries before, and yet, at the sight of them, there leaped up in my mind memories of dreams wherein I had wandered through swampy land eating my fill of them. My mother set before me a dish of the berries. I filled my spoon, but before I raised it to my mouth I knew just how they would taste. Nor was I disappointed. It was the same tang that I had tasted a thousand times in my sleep.

Snakes? Long before I had heard of the existence of snakes, I was tormented by them in my sleep. They lurked for me in the forest glades; leaped up, striking, under my feet; squirmed off through the dry grass or across naked patches of rock; or pursued me into the tree-tops, encircling the trunks with their great shining bodies, driving me higher and higher or farther and farther out on swaying and crackling branches, the ground a dizzy distance beneath me. Snakes! — with their forked tongues, their beady eyes and glittering scales, their hissing and their rattling — did I not already know them far too well on that day of my first circus when I saw the snake-charmer lift them up?

They were old friends of mine, enemies rather, that peopled my nights with fear.

Ah, those endless forests, and their horror-haunted gloom! For what eternities have I wandered through them, a timid, hunted creature, starting at the least sound, frightened of my own shadow, keyed-up, ever alert and vigilant, ready on the instant to dash away in mad flight for my life. For I was the prey of all manner of fierce life that dwelt in the forest, and it was in ecstasies of fear that I fled before the hunting monsters.

When I was five years old I went to my first circus. I came home from it sick — but not from peanuts and pink lemonade. Let me tell you. As we entered the animal tent, a hoarse roaring shook the air. I tore my hand loose from my father's and dashed

wildly back through the entrance. I collided with people, fell down; and all the time I was screaming with terror. My father caught me and soothed me. He pointed to the crowd of people, all careless of the roaring, and cheered me with assurances of safety.

Nevertheless, it was in fear and trembling, and with much encouragement on his part, that I at last approached the lion's cage. Ah, I knew him on the instant. The beast! The terrible one! And on my inner vision flashed the memories of my dreams, — the midday sun shining on tall grass, the wild bull grazing quietly, the sudden parting of the grass before the swift rush of the tawny one, his leap to the bull's back, the crashing and the bellowing, and the crunch crunch of bones; or again, the cool quiet of the water-hole, the wild horse up to his knees and drinking softly, and then the tawny one — always the tawny one! — the leap, the screaming and the splashing of the horse, and the crunch crunch of bones; and yet again, the sombre twilight and the sad silence of the end of day, and then the great full-throated roar, sudden, like a trump of doom, and swift upon it the insane shrieking and chattering among the trees, and I, too, am trembling with fear and am one of the many shrieking and chattering among the trees.

At the sight of him, helpless, within the bars of his cage, I became enraged. I gritted my teeth at him, danced up and down, screaming an incoherent mockery and making antic faces. He responded, rushing against the bars and roaring back at me his impotent wrath. Ah, he knew me, too, and the sounds I made were the sounds of old time and intelligible to him.

My parents were frightened. "The child is ill," said my mother. "He is hysterical," said my father. I never told them, and they never knew. Already had I developed reticence concerning this quality of mine, this semi-disassociation of personality as I think I am justified in calling it.

I saw the snake-charmer, and no more of the circus did I see that night. I was taken home, nervous and overwrought, sick with the invasion of my real life by that other life of my dreams.

I have mentioned my reticence. Only once did I confide the strangeness of it all to another. He was a boy — my chum; and we were eight years old. From my dreams I reconstructed for him pictures of that vanished world in which I do believe I once lived. I told him of the terrors of that early time, of Lop-Ear and the pranks we played, of the gibbering councils, and of the Fire People and their squatting places.

He laughed at me, and jeered, and told me tales of ghosts and of the dead that walk at night. But mostly did he laugh at my feeble fancy. I told him more, and he laughed the harder. I swore in all earnestness that these things were so, and he began to look upon me queerly. Also, he gave amazing garblings of my tales to our playmates, until all began to look upon me queerly.

It was a bitter experience, but I learned my lesson. I was different from my kind. I was abnormal with something they could not understand, and the telling of which would cause only misunderstanding. When the stories of ghosts and goblins went around, I kept quiet. I smiled grimly to myself. I thought of my nights of fear, and

knew that mine were the real things — real as life itself, not attenuated vapors and surmised shadows.

For me no terrors resided in the thought of bugaboos and wicked ogres. The fall through leafy branches and the dizzy heights; the snakes that struck at me as I dodged and leaped away in chattering flight; the wild dogs that hunted me across the open spaces to the timber — these were terrors concrete and actual, happenings and not imaginings, things of the living flesh and of sweat and blood. Ogres and bugaboos and I had been happy bed-fellows, compared with these terrors that made their bed with me throughout my childhood, and that still bed with me, now, as I write this, full of years.

## Chapter II

I have said that in my dreams I never saw a human being. Of this fact I became aware very early, and felt poignantly the lack of my own kind. As a very little child, even, I had a feeling, in the midst of the horror of my dreaming, that if I could find but one man, only one human, I should be saved from my dreaming, that I should be surrounded no more by haunting terrors. This thought obsessed me every night of my life for years — if only I could find that one human and be saved!

I must iterate that I had this thought in the midst of my dreaming, and I take it as an evidence of the merging of my two personalities, as evidence of a point of contact between the two disassociated parts of me. My dream personality lived in the long ago, before ever man, as we know him, came to be; and my other and wake-a-day personality projected itself, to the extent of the knowledge of man's existence, into the substance of my dreams.

Perhaps the psychologists of the book will find fault with my way of using the phrase, "disassociation of personality." I know their use of it, yet am compelled to use it in my own way in default of a better phrase. I take shelter behind the inadequacy of the English language. And now to the explanation of my use, or misuse, of the phrase.

It was not till I was a young man, at college, that I got any clew to the significance of my dreams, and to the cause of them. Up to that time they had been meaningless and without apparent causation. But at college I discovered evolution and psychology, and learned the explanation of various strange mental states and experiences. For instance, there was the falling-through-space dream — the commonest dream experience, one practically known, by first-hand experience, to all men.

This, my professor told me, was a racial memory. It dated back to our remote ancestors who lived in trees. With them, being tree-dwellers, the liability of falling was an ever-present menace. Many lost their lives that way; all of them experienced terrible falls, saving themselves by clutching branches as they fell toward the ground.

Now a terrible fall, averted in such fashion, was productive of shock. Such shock was productive of molecular changes in the cerebral cells. These molecular changes were transmitted to the cerebral cells of progeny, became, in short, racial memories. Thus, when you and I, asleep or dozing off to sleep, fall through space and awake to sickening consciousness just before we strike, we are merely remembering what happened to our arboreal ancestors, and which has been stamped by cerebral changes into the heredity of the race.

There is nothing strange in this, any more than there is anything strange in an instinct. An instinct is merely a habit that is stamped into the stuff of our heredity,

that is all. It will be noted, in passing, that in this falling dream which is so familiar to you and me and all of us, we never strike bottom. To strike bottom would be destruction. Those of our arboreal ancestors who struck bottom died forthwith. True, the shock of their fall was communicated to the cerebral cells, but they died immediately, before they could have progeny. You and I are descended from those that did not strike bottom; that is why you and I, in our dreams, never strike bottom.

And now we come to disassociation of personality. We never have this sense of falling when we are wide awake. Our wake-a-day personality has no experience of it. Then — and here the argument is irresistible — it must be another and distinct personality that falls when we are asleep, and that has had experience of such falling — that has, in short, a memory of past-day race experiences, just as our wake-a-day personality has a memory of our wake-a-day experiences.

It was at this stage in my reasoning that I began to see the light. And quickly the light burst upon me with dazzling brightness, illuminating and explaining all that had been weird and uncanny and unnaturally impossible in my dream experiences. In my sleep it was not my wake-a-day personality that took charge of me; it was another and distinct personality, possessing a new and totally different fund of experiences, and, to the point of my dreaming, possessing memories of those totally different experiences.

What was this personality? When had it itself lived a wake-a-day life on this planet in order to collect this fund of strange experiences? These were questions that my dreams themselves answered. He lived in the long ago, when the world was young, in that period that we call the Mid-Pleistocene. He fell from the trees but did not strike bottom. He gibbered with fear at the roaring of the lions. He was pursued by beasts of prey, struck at by deadly snakes. He chattered with his kind in council, and he received rough usage at the hands of the Fire People in the day that he fled before them.

But, I hear you objecting, why is it that these racial memories are not ours as well, seeing that we have a vague other-personality that falls through space while we sleep?

And I may answer with another question. Why is a two-headed calf? And my own answer to this is that it is a freak. And so I answer your question. I have this other-personality and these complete racial memories because I am a freak.

But let me be more explicit.

The commonest race memory we have is the falling-through-space dream. This other-personality is very vague. About the only memory it has is that of falling. But many of us have sharper, more distinct other-personalities. Many of us have the flying dream, the pursuing-monster dream, color dreams, suffocation dreams, and the reptile and vermin dreams. In short, while this other-personality is vestigial in all of us, in some of us it is almost obliterated, while in others of us it is more pronounced. Some of us have stronger and completer race memories than others.

It is all a question of varying degree of possession of the other-personality. In myself, the degree of possession is enormous. My other-personality is almost equal in power with my own personality. And in this matter I am, as I said, a freak — a freak of heredity.

I do believe that it is the possession of this other-personality — but not so strong a one as mine — that has in some few others given rise to belief in personal reincarnation experiences. It is very plausible to such people, a most convincing hypothesis. When they have visions of scenes they have never seen in the flesh, memories of acts and events dating back in time, the simplest explanation is that they have lived before.

But they make the mistake of ignoring their own duality. They do not recognize their other-personality. They think it is their own personality, that they have only one personality; and from such a premise they can conclude only that they have lived previous lives.

But they are wrong. It is not reincarnation. I have visions of myself roaming through the forests of the Younger World; and yet it is not myself that I see but one that is only remotely a part of me, as my father and my grandfather are parts of me less remote. This other-self of mine is an ancestor, a progenitor of my progenitors in the early line of my race, himself the progeny of a line that long before his time developed fingers and toes and climbed up into the trees.

I must again, at the risk of boring, repeat that I am, in this one thing, to be considered a freak. Not alone do I possess racial memory to an enormous extent, but I possess the memories of one particular and far-removed progenitor. And yet, while this is most unusual, there is nothing over-remarkable about it.

Follow my reasoning. An instinct is a racial memory. Very good. Then you and I and all of us receive these memories from our fathers and mothers, as they received them from their fathers and mothers. Therefore there must be a medium whereby these memories are transmitted from generation to generation. This medium is what Weismann terms the “germplasm.” It carries the memories of the whole evolution of the race. These memories are dim and confused, and many of them are lost. But some strains of germplasm carry an excessive freightage of memories — are, to be scientific, more atavistic than other strains; and such a strain is mine. I am a freak of heredity, an atavistic nightmare — call me what you will; but here I am, real and alive, eating three hearty meals a day, and what are you going to do about it?

And now, before I take up my tale, I want to anticipate the doubting Thomases of psychology, who are prone to scoff, and who would otherwise surely say that the coherence of my dreams is due to overstudy and the subconscious projection of my knowledge of evolution into my dreams. In the first place, I have never been a zealous student. I graduated last of my class. I cared more for athletics, and — there is no reason I should not confess it — more for billiards.

Further, I had no knowledge of evolution until I was at college, whereas in my childhood and youth I had already lived in my dreams all the details of that other, long-ago life. I will say, however, that these details were mixed and incoherent until I came to know the science of evolution. Evolution was the key. It gave the explanation, gave sanity to the pranks of this atavistic brain of mine that, modern and normal, harked back to a past so remote as to be contemporaneous with the raw beginnings of mankind.

For in this past I know of, man, as we to-day know him, did not exist. It was in the period of his becoming that I must have lived and had my being.

## Chapter III

The commonest dream of my early childhood was something like this: It seemed that I was very small and that I lay curled up in a sort of nest of twigs and boughs. Sometimes I was lying on my back. In this position it seemed that I spent many hours, watching the play of sunlight on the foliage and the stirring of the leaves by the wind. Often the nest itself moved back and forth when the wind was strong.

But always, while so lying in the nest, I was mastered as of tremendous space beneath me. I never saw it, I never peered over the edge of the nest to see; but I KNEW and feared that space that lurked just beneath me and that ever threatened me like a maw of some all-devouring monster.

This dream, in which I was quiescent and which was more like a condition than an experience of action, I dreamed very often in my early childhood. But suddenly, there would rush into the very midst of it strange forms and ferocious happenings, the thunder and crashing of storm, or unfamiliar landscapes such as in my wake-a-day life I had never seen. The result was confusion and nightmare. I could comprehend nothing of it. There was no logic of sequence.

You see, I did not dream consecutively. One moment I was a wee babe of the Younger World lying in my tree nest; the next moment I was a grown man of the Younger World locked in combat with the hideous Red-Eye; and the next moment I was creeping carefully down to the water-hole in the heat of the day. Events, years apart in their occurrence in the Younger World, occurred with me within the space of several minutes, or seconds.

It was all a jumble, but this jumble I shall not inflict upon you. It was not until I was a young man and had dreamed many thousand times, that everything straightened out and became clear and plain. Then it was that I got the clew of time, and was able to piece together events and actions in their proper order. Thus was I able to reconstruct the vanished Younger World as it was at the time I lived in it — or at the time my other-self lived in it. The distinction does not matter; for I, too, the modern man, have gone back and lived that early life in the company of my other-self.

For your convenience, since this is to be no sociological screed, I shall frame together the different events into a comprehensive story. For there is a certain thread of continuity and happening that runs through all the dreams. There is my friendship with Lop-Ear, for instance. Also, there is the enmity of Red-Eye, and the love of the Swift One. Taking it all in all, a fairly coherent and interesting story I am sure you will agree.



I do not remember much of my mother. Possibly the earliest recollection I have of her — and certainly the sharpest — is the following: It seemed I was lying on the ground. I was somewhat older than during the nest days, but still helpless. I rolled about in the dry leaves, playing with them and making crooning, rasping noises in my throat. The sun shone warmly and I was happy, and comfortable. I was in a little open space. Around me, on all sides, were bushes and fern-like growths, and overhead and all about were the trunks and branches of forest trees.

Suddenly I heard a sound. I sat upright and listened. I made no movement. The little noises died down in my throat, and I sat as one petrified. The sound drew closer. It was like the grunt of a pig. Then I began to hear the sounds caused by the moving of a body through the brush. Next I saw the ferns agitated by the passage of the body. Then the ferns parted, and I saw gleaming eyes, a long snout, and white tusks.

It was a wild boar. He peered at me curiously. He grunted once or twice and shifted his weight from one foreleg to the other, at the same time moving his head from side to side and swaying the ferns. Still I sat as one petrified, my eyes unblinking as I stared at him, fear eating at my heart.

It seemed that this movelessness and silence on my part was what was expected of me. I was not to cry out in the face of fear. It was a dictate of instinct. And so I sat there and waited for I knew not what. The boar thrust the ferns aside and stepped into the open. The curiosity went out of his eyes, and they gleamed cruelly. He tossed his head at me threateningly and advanced a step. This he did again, and yet again.

Then I screamed...or shrieked — I cannot describe it, but it was a shrill and terrible cry. And it seems that it, too, at this stage of the proceedings, was the thing expected of me. From not far away came an answering cry. My sounds seemed momentarily to disconcert the boar, and while he halted and shifted his weight with indecision, an apparition burst upon us.

She was like a large orangutan, my mother, or like a chimpanzee, and yet, in sharp and definite ways, quite different. She was heavier of build than they, and had less hair. Her arms were not so long, and her legs were stouter. She wore no clothes — only her natural hair. And I can tell you she was a fury when she was excited.

And like a fury she dashed upon the scene. She was gritting her teeth, making frightful grimaces, snarling, uttering sharp and continuous cries that sounded like “kh-ah! kh-ah!” So sudden and formidable was her appearance that the boar involuntarily bunched himself together on the defensive and bristled as she swerved toward him. Then she swerved toward me. She had quite taken the breath out of him. I knew just what to do in that moment of time she had gained. I leaped to meet her, catching her about the waist and holding on hand and foot — yes, by my feet; I could hold on by them as readily as by my hands. I could feel in my tense grip the pull of the hair as her skin and her muscles moved beneath with her efforts.

As I say, I leaped to meet her, and on the instant she leaped straight up into the air, catching an overhanging branch with her hands. The next instant, with clashing tusks, the boar drove past underneath. He had recovered from his surprise and sprung

forward, emitting a squeal that was almost a trumpeting. At any rate it was a call, for it was followed by the rushing of bodies through the ferns and brush from all directions.

From every side wild hogs dashed into the open space — a score of them. But my mother swung over the top of a thick limb, a dozen feet from the ground, and, still holding on to her, we perched there in safety. She was very excited. She chattered and screamed, and scolded down at the bristling, tooth-gnashing circle that had gathered beneath. I, too, trembling, peered down at the angry beasts and did my best to imitate my mother's cries.

From the distance came similar cries, only pitched deeper, into a sort of roaring bass. These grew momentarily louder, and soon I saw him approaching, my father — at least, by all the evidence of the times, I am driven to conclude that he was my father.

He was not an extremely prepossessing father, as fathers go. He seemed half man, and half ape, and yet not ape, and not yet man. I fail to describe him. There is nothing like him to-day on the earth, under the earth, nor in the earth. He was a large man in his day, and he must have weighed all of a hundred and thirty pounds. His face was broad and flat, and the eyebrows over-hung the eyes. The eyes themselves were small, deep-set, and close together. He had practically no nose at all. It was squat and broad, apparently with-out any bridge, while the nostrils were like two holes in the face, opening outward instead of down.

The forehead slanted back from the eyes, and the hair began right at the eyes and ran up over the head. The head itself was preposterously small and was supported on an equally preposterous, thick, short neck.

There was an elemental economy about his body — as was there about all our bodies. The chest was deep, it is true, cavernously deep; but there were no full-swelling muscles, no wide-spreading shoulders, no clean-limbed straightness, no generous symmetry of outline. It represented strength, that body of my father's, strength without beauty; ferocious, primordial strength, made to clutch and gripe and rend and destroy.

His hips were thin; and the legs, lean and hairy, were crooked and stringy-muscled. In fact, my father's legs were more like arms. They were twisted and gnarly, and with scarcely the semblance of the full meaty calf such as graces your leg and mine. I remember he could not walk on the flat of his foot. This was because it was a prehensile foot, more like a hand than a foot. The great toe, instead of being in line with the other toes, opposed them, like a thumb, and its opposition to the other toes was what enabled him to get a grip with his foot. This was why he could not walk on the flat of his foot.

But his appearance was no more unusual than the manner of his coming, there to my mother and me as we perched above the angry wild pigs. He came through the trees, leaping from limb to limb and from tree to tree; and he came swiftly. I can see him now, in my wake-a-day life, as I write this, swinging along through the trees, a four-handed, hairy creature, howling with rage, pausing now and again to beat his chest with his clenched fist, leaping ten-and-fifteen-foot gaps, catching a branch with

one hand and swinging on across another gap to catch with his other hand and go on, never hesitating, never at a loss as to how to proceed on his arboreal way.

And as I watched him I felt in my own being, in my very muscles themselves, the surge and thrill of desire to go leaping from bough to bough; and I felt also the guarantee of the latent power in that being and in those muscles of mine. And why not? Little boys watch their fathers swing axes and fell trees, and feel in themselves that some day they, too, will swing axes and fell trees. And so with me. The life that was in me was constituted to do what my father did, and it whispered to me secretly and ambitiously of aerial paths and forest flights.

At last my father joined us. He was extremely angry. I remember the out-thrust of his protruding underlip as he glared down at the wild pigs. He snarled something like a dog, and I remember that his eye-teeth were large, like fangs, and that they impressed me tremendously.

His conduct served only the more to infuriate the pigs. He broke off twigs and small branches and flung them down upon our enemies. He even hung by one hand, tantalizingly just beyond reach, and mocked them as they gnashed their tusks with impotent rage. Not content with this, he broke off a stout branch, and, holding on with one hand and foot, jabbed the infuriated beasts in the sides and whacked them across their noses. Needless to state, my mother and I enjoyed the sport.

But one tires of all good things, and in the end, my father, chuckling maliciously the while, led the way across the trees. Now it was that my ambitions ebbed away, and I became timid, holding tightly to my mother as she climbed and swung through space. I remember when the branch broke with her weight. She had made a wide leap, and with the snap of the wood I was overwhelmed with the sickening consciousness of falling through space, the pair of us. The forest and the sunshine on the rustling leaves vanished from my eyes. I had a fading glimpse of my father abruptly arresting his progress to look, and then all was blackness.

The next moment I was awake, in my sheeted bed, sweating, trembling, nauseated. The window was up, and a cool air was blowing through the room. The night-lamp was burning calmly. And because of this I take it that the wild pigs did not get us, that we never fetched bottom; else I should not be here now, a thousand centuries after, to remember the event.

And now put yourself in my place for a moment. Walk with me a bit in my tender childhood, bed with me a night and imagine yourself dreaming such incomprehensible horrors. Remember I was an inexperienced child. I had never seen a wild boar in my life. For that matter I had never seen a domesticated pig. The nearest approach to one that I had seen was breakfast bacon sizzling in its fat. And yet here, real as life, wild boars dashed through my dreams, and I, with fantastic parents, swung through the lofty tree-spaces.

Do you wonder that I was frightened and oppressed by my nightmare-ridden nights? I was accursed. And, worst of all, I was afraid to tell. I do not know why, except that I had a feeling of guilt, though I knew no better of what I was guilty. So it was, through

long years, that I suffered in silence, until I came to man's estate and learned the why and wherefore of my dreams.

## Chapter IV

There is one puzzling thing about these prehistoric memories of mine. It is the vagueness of the time element. I do not always know the order of events; — or can I tell, between some events, whether one, two, or four or five years have elapsed. I can only roughly tell the passage of time by judging the changes in the appearance and pursuits of my fellows.

Also, I can apply the logic of events to the various happenings. For instance, there is no doubt whatever that my mother and I were treed by the wild pigs and fled and fell in the days before I made the acquaintance of Lop-Ear, who became what I may call my boyhood chum. And it is just as conclusive that between these two periods I must have left my mother.

I have no memory of my father than the one I have given. Never, in the years that followed, did he reappear. And from my knowledge of the times, the only explanation possible lies in that he perished shortly after the adventure with the wild pigs. That it must have been an untimely end, there is no discussion. He was in full vigor, and only sudden and violent death could have taken him off. But I know not the manner of his going — whether he was drowned in the river, or was swallowed by a snake, or went into the stomach of old Saber-Tooth, the tiger, is beyond my knowledge.

For know that I remember only the things I saw myself, with my own eyes, in those prehistoric days. If my mother knew my father's end, she never told me. For that matter I doubt if she had a vocabulary adequate to convey such information. Perhaps, all told, the Folk in that day had a vocabulary of thirty or forty sounds.

I call them SOUNDS, rather than WORDS, because sounds they were primarily. They had no fixed values, to be altered by adjectives and adverbs. These latter were tools of speech not yet invented. Instead of qualifying nouns or verbs by the use of adjectives and adverbs, we qualified sounds by intonation, by changes in quantity and pitch, by retarding and by accelerating. The length of time employed in the utterance of a particular sound shaded its meaning.

We had no conjugation. One judged the tense by the context. We talked only concrete things because we thought only concrete things. Also, we depended largely on pantomime. The simplest abstraction was practically beyond our thinking; and when one did happen to think one, he was hard put to communicate it to his fellows. There were no sounds for it. He was pressing beyond the limits of his vocabulary. If he invented sounds for it, his fellows did not understand the sounds. Then it was that he fell back on pantomime, illustrating the thought wherever possible and at the same time repeating the new sound over and over again.

Thus language grew. By the few sounds we possessed we were enabled to think a short distance beyond those sounds; then came the need for new sounds wherewith to express the new thought. Sometimes, however, we thought too long a distance in advance of our sounds, managed to achieve abstractions (dim ones I grant), which we failed utterly to make known to other folk. After all, language did not grow fast in that day.

Oh, believe me, we were amazingly simple. But we did know a lot that is not known to-day. We could twitch our ears, prick them up and flatten them down at will. And we could scratch between our shoulders with ease. We could throw stones with our feet. I have done it many a time. And for that matter, I could keep my knees straight, bend forward from the hips, and touch, not the tips of my fingers, but the points of my elbows, to the ground. And as for bird-nesting — well, I only wish the twentieth-century boy could see us. But we made no collections of eggs. We ate them.

I remember — but I out-run my story. First let me tell of Lop-Ear and our friendship. Very early in my life, I separated from my mother. Possibly this was because, after the death of my father, she took to herself a second husband. I have few recollections of him, and they are not of the best. He was a light fellow. There was no solidity to him. He was too voluble. His infernal chattering worries me even now as I think of it. His mind was too inconsequential to permit him to possess purpose. Monkeys in their cages always remind me of him. He was monkeyish. That is the best description I can give of him.

He hated me from the first. And I quickly learned to be afraid of him and his malicious pranks. Whenever he came in sight I crept close to my mother and clung to her. But I was growing older all the time, and it was inevitable that I should from time to time stray from her, and stray farther and farther. And these were the opportunities that the Chatterer waited for. (I may as well explain that we bore no names in those days; were not known by any name. For the sake of convenience I have myself given names to the various Folk I was more closely in contact with, and the “Chatterer” is the most fitting description I can find for that precious stepfather of mine. As for me, I have named myself “Big-Tooth.” My eye-teeth were pronouncedly large.)

But to return to the Chatterer. He persistently terrorized me. He was always pinching me and cuffing me, and on occasion he was not above biting me. Often my mother interfered, and the way she made his fur fly was a joy to see. But the result of all this was a beautiful and unending family quarrel, in which I was the bone of contention.

No, my home-life was not happy. I smile to myself as I write the phrase. Home-life! Home! I had no home in the modern sense of the term. My home was an association, not a habitation. I lived in my mother’s care, not in a house. And my mother lived anywhere, so long as when night came she was above the ground.

My mother was old-fashioned. She still clung to her trees. It is true, the more progressive members of our horde lived in the caves above the river. But my mother was suspicious and unprogressive. The trees were good enough for her. Of course, we had one particular tree in which we usually roosted, though we often roosted in other

trees when nightfall caught us. In a convenient fork was a sort of rude platform of twigs and branches and creeping things. It was more like a huge bird-nest than anything else, though it was a thousand times cruder in the weaving than any bird-nest. But it had one feature that I have never seen attached to any bird-nest, namely, a roof.

Oh, not a roof such as modern man makes! Nor a roof such as is made by the lowest aborigines of to-day. It was infinitely more clumsy than the clumsiest handiwork of man — of man as we know him. It was put together in a casual, helter-skelter sort of way. Above the fork of the tree whereon we rested was a pile of dead branches and brush. Four or five adjacent forks held what I may term the various ridge-poles. These were merely stout sticks an inch or so in diameter. On them rested the brush and branches. These seemed to have been tossed on almost aimlessly. There was no attempt at thatching. And I must confess that the roof leaked miserably in a heavy rain.

But the Chatterer. He made home-life a burden for both my mother and me — and by home-life I mean, not the leaky nest in the tree, but the group-life of the three of us. He was most malicious in his persecution of me. That was the one purpose to which he held steadfastly for longer than five minutes. Also, as time went by, my mother was less eager in her defence of me. I think, what of the continuous rows raised by the Chatterer, that I must have become a nuisance to her. At any rate, the situation went from bad to worse so rapidly that I should soon, of my own volition, have left home. But the satisfaction of performing so independent an act was denied me. Before I was ready to go, I was thrown out. And I mean this literally.

The opportunity came to the Chatterer one day when I was alone in the nest. My mother and the Chatterer had gone away together toward the blueberry swamp. He must have planned the whole thing, for I heard him returning alone through the forest, roaring with self-induced rage as he came. Like all the men of our horde, when they were angry or were trying to make themselves angry, he stopped now and again to hammer on his chest with his fist.

I realized the helplessness of my situation, and crouched trembling in the nest. The Chatterer came directly to the tree — I remember it was an oak tree — and began to climb up. And he never ceased for a moment from his infernal row. As I have said, our language was extremely meagre, and he must have strained it by the variety of ways in which he informed me of his undying hatred of me and of his intention there and then to have it out with me.

As he climbed to the fork, I fled out the great horizontal limb. He followed me, and out I went, farther and farther. At last I was out amongst the small twigs and leaves. The Chatterer was ever a coward, and greater always than any anger he ever worked up was his caution. He was afraid to follow me out amongst the leaves and twigs. For that matter, his greater weight would have crashed him through the foliage before he could have got to me.

But it was not necessary for him to reach me, and well he knew it, the scoundrel! With a malevolent expression on his face, his beady eyes gleaming with cruel intelli-

gence, he began teetering. Teetering! — and with me out on the very edge of the bough, clutching at the twigs that broke continually with my weight. Twenty feet beneath me was the earth.

Wildly and more — wildly he teetered, grinning at me his gloating hatred. Then came the end. All four holds broke at the same time, and I fell, back-downward, looking up at him, my hands and feet still clutching the broken twigs. Luckily, there were no wild pigs under me, and my fall was broken by the tough and springy bushes.

Usually, my falls destroy my dreams, the nervous shock being sufficient to bridge the thousand centuries in an instant and hurl me wide awake into my little bed, where, perchance, I lie sweating and trembling and hear the cuckoo clock calling the hour in the hall. But this dream of my leaving home I have had many times, and never yet have I been awakened by it. Always do I crash, shrieking, down through the brush and fetch up with a bump on the ground.

Scratched and bruised and whimpering, I lay where I had fallen. Peering up through the bushes, I could see the Chatterer. He had set up a demoniacal chant of joy and was keeping time to it with his teetering. I quickly hushed my whimpering. I was no longer in the safety of the trees, and I knew the danger I ran of bringing upon myself the hunting animals by too audible an expression of my grief.

I remember, as my sobs died down, that I became interested in watching the strange light-effects produced by partially opening and closing my tear-wet eyelids. Then I began to investigate, and found that I was not so very badly damaged by my fall. I had lost some hair and hide, here and there; the sharp and jagged end of a broken branch had thrust fully an inch into my forearm; and my right hip, which had borne the brunt of my contact with the ground, was aching intolerably. But these, after all, were only petty hurts. No bones were broken, and in those days the flesh of man had finer healing qualities than it has to-day. Yet it was a severe fall, for I limped with my injured hip for fully a week afterward.

Next, as I lay in the bushes, there came upon me a feeling of desolation, a consciousness that I was homeless. I made up my mind never to return to my mother and the Chatterer. I would go far away through the terrible forest, and find some tree for myself in which to roost. As for food, I knew where to find it. For the last year at least I had not been beholden to my mother for food. All she had furnished me was protection and guidance.

I crawled softly out through the bushes. Once I looked back and saw the Chatterer still chanting and teetering. It was not a pleasant sight. I knew pretty well how to be cautious, and I was exceedingly careful on this my first journey in the world.

I gave no thought as to where I was going. I had but one purpose, and that was to go away beyond the reach of the Chatterer. I climbed into the trees and wandered on amongst them for hours, passing from tree to tree and never touching the ground. But I did not go in any particular direction, nor did I travel steadily. It was my nature, as it was the nature of all my folk, to be inconsequential. Besides, I was a mere child, and I stopped a great deal to play by the way.



The events that befell me on my leaving home are very vague in my mind. My dreams do not cover them. Much has my other-self forgotten, and particularly at this very period. Nor have I been able to frame up the various dreams so as to bridge the gap between my leaving the home-tree and my arrival at the caves.

I remember that several times I came to open spaces. These I crossed in great trepidation, descending to the ground and running at the top of my speed. I remember that there were days of rain and days of sunshine, so that I must have wandered alone for quite a time. I especially dream of my misery in the rain, and of my sufferings from hunger and how I appeased it. One very strong impression is of hunting little lizards on the rocky top of an open knoll. They ran under the rocks, and most of them escaped; but occasionally I turned over a stone and caught one. I was frightened away from this knoll by snakes. They did not pursue me. They were merely basking on flat rocks in the sun. But such was my inherited fear of them that I fled as fast as if they had been after me.

Then I gnawed bitter bark from young trees. I remember vaguely the eating of many green nuts, with soft shells and milky kernels. And I remember most distinctly suffering from a stomach-ache. It may have been caused by the green nuts, and maybe by the lizards. I do not know. But I do know that I was fortunate in not being devoured during the several hours I was knotted up on the ground with the colic.

## Chapter V

My vision of the scene came abruptly, as I emerged from the forest. I found myself on the edge of a large clear space. On one side of this space rose up high bluffs. On the other side was the river. The earth bank ran steeply down to the water, but here and there, in several places, where at some time slides of earth had occurred, there were run-ways. These were the drinking-places of the Folk that lived in the caves.

And this was the main abiding-place of the Folk that I had chanced upon. This was, I may say, by stretching the word, the village. My mother and the Chatterer and I, and a few other simple bodies, were what might be termed suburban residents. We were part of the horde, though we lived a distance away from it. It was only a short distance, though it had taken me, what of my wandering, all of a week to arrive. Had I come directly, I could have covered the trip in an hour.

But to return. From the edge of the forest I saw the caves in the bluff, the open space, and the run-ways to the drinking-places. And in the open space I saw many of the Folk. I had been straying, alone and a child, for a week. During that time I had seen not one of my kind. I had lived in terror and desolation. And now, at the sight of my kind, I was overcome with gladness, and I ran wildly toward them.

Then it was that a strange thing happened. Some one of the Folk saw me and uttered a warning cry. On the instant, crying out with fear and panic, the Folk fled away. Leaping and scrambling over the rocks, they plunged into the mouths of the caves and disappeared...all but one, a little baby, that had been dropped in the excitement close to the base of the bluff. He was wailing dolefully. His mother dashed out; he sprang to meet her and held on tightly as she scrambled back into the cave.

I was all alone. The populous open space had of a sudden become deserted. I sat down forlornly and whimpered. I could not understand. Why had the Folk run away from me? In later time, when I came to know their ways, I was to learn. When they saw me dashing out of the forest at top speed they concluded that I was being pursued by some hunting animal. By my unceremonious approach I had stampeded them.

As I sat and watched the cave-mouths I became aware that the Folk were watching me. Soon they were thrusting their heads out. A little later they were calling back and forth to one another. In the hurry and confusion it had happened that all had not gained their own caves. Some of the young ones had sought refuge in other caves. The mothers did not call for them by name, because that was an invention we had not yet made. All were nameless. The mothers uttered querulous, anxious cries, which were recognized by the young ones. Thus, had my mother been there calling to me, I should

have recognized her voice amongst the voices of a thousand mothers, and in the same way would she have recognized mine amongst a thousand.

This calling back and forth continued for some time, but they were too cautious to come out of their caves and descend to the ground. Finally one did come. He was destined to play a large part in my life, and for that matter he already played a large part in the lives of all the members of the horde. He it was whom I shall call Red-Eye in the pages of this history — so called because of his inflamed eyes, the lids being always red, and, by the peculiar effect they produced, seeming to advertise the terrible savagery of him. The color of his soul was red.

He was a monster in all ways. Physically he was a giant. He must have weighed one hundred and seventy pounds. He was the largest one of our kind I ever saw. Nor did I ever see one of the Fire People so large as he, nor one of the Tree People. Sometimes, when in the newspapers I happen upon descriptions of our modern bruisers and prizefighters, I wonder what chance the best of them would have had against him.

I am afraid not much of a chance. With one grip of his iron fingers and a pull, he could have plucked a muscle, say a biceps, by the roots, clear out of their bodies. A back-handed, loose blow of his fist could have smashed their skulls like egg-shells. With a sweep of his wicked feet (or hind-hands) he could have disembowelled them. A twist could have broken their necks, and I know that with a single crunch of his jaws he could have pierced, at the same moment, the great vein of the throat in front and the spinal marrow at the back.

He could spring twenty feet horizontally from a sitting position. He was abominably hairy. It was a matter of pride with us to be not very hairy. But he was covered with hair all over, on the inside of the arms as well as the outside, and even the ears themselves. The only places on him where the hair did not grow were the soles of his hands and feet and beneath his eyes. He was frightfully ugly, his ferocious grinning mouth and huge down-hanging under-lip being but in harmony with his terrible eyes.

This was Red-Eye. And right gingerly he crept out of his cave and descended to the ground. Ignoring me, he proceeded to reconnoitre. He bent forward from the hips as he walked; and so far forward did he bend, and so long were his arms, that with every step he touched the knuckles of his hands to the ground on either side of him. He was awkward in the semi-erect position of walking that he assumed, and he really touched his knuckles to the ground in order to balance himself. But oh, I tell you he could run on all-fours! Now this was something at which we were particularly awkward. Furthermore, it was a rare individual among us who balanced himself with his knuckles when walking. Such an individual was an atavism, and Red-Eye was an even greater atavism.

That is what he was — an atavism. We were in the process of changing our tree-life to life on the ground. For many generations we had been going through this change, and our bodies and carriage had likewise changed. But Red-Eye had reverted to the more primitive tree-dwelling type. Perforce, because he was born in our horde he stayed with us; but in actuality he was an atavism and his place was elsewhere.

Very circumspect and very alert, he moved here and there about the open space, peering through the vistas among the trees and trying to catch a glimpse of the hunting animal that all suspected had pursued me. And while he did this, taking no notice of me, the Folk crowded at the cave-mouths and watched.

At last he evidently decided that there was no danger lurking about. He was returning from the head of the run-way, from where he had taken a peep down at the drinking-place. His course brought him near, but still he did not notice me. He proceeded casually on his way until abreast of me, and then, without warning and with incredible swiftness, he smote me a buffet on the head. I was knocked backward fully a dozen feet before I fetched up against the ground, and I remember, half-stunned, even as the blow was struck, hearing the wild uproar of clucking and shrieking laughter that arose from the caves. It was a great joke — at least in that day; and right heartily the Folk appreciated it.

Thus was I received into the horde. Red-Eye paid no further attention to me, and I was at liberty to whimper and sob to my heart's content. Several of the women gathered curiously about me, and I recognized them. I had encountered them the preceding year when my mother had taken me to the hazelnut canyons.

But they quickly left me alone, being replaced by a dozen curious and teasing youngsters. They formed a circle around me, pointing their fingers, making faces, and poking and pinching me. I was frightened, and for a time I endured them, then anger got the best of me and I sprang tooth and nail upon the most audacious one of them — none other than Lop-Ear himself. I have so named him because he could prick up only one of his ears. The other ear always hung limp and without movement. Some accident had injured the muscles and deprived him of the use of it.

He closed with me, and we went at it for all the world like a couple of small boys fighting. We scratched and bit, pulled hair, clinched, and threw each other down. I remember I succeeded in getting on him what in my college days I learned was called a half-Nelson. This hold gave me the decided advantage. But I did not enjoy it long. He twisted up one leg, and with the foot (or hind-hand) made so savage an onslaught upon my abdomen as to threaten to disembowel me. I had to release him in order to save myself, and then we went at it again.

Lop-Ear was a year older than I, but I was several times angrier than he, and in the end he took to his heels. I chased him across the open and down a run-way to the river. But he was better acquainted with the locality and ran along the edge of the water and up another run-way. He cut diagonally across the open space and dashed into a wide-mouthed cave.

Before I knew it, I had plunged after him into the darkness. The next moment I was badly frightened. I had never been in a cave before. I began to whimper and cry out. Lop-Ear chattered mockingly at me, and, springing upon me unseen, tumbled me over. He did not risk a second encounter, however, and took himself off. I was between him and the entrance, and he did not pass me; yet he seemed to have gone away. I listened,

but could get no clew as to where he was. This puzzled me, and when I regained the outside I sat down to watch.

He never came out of the entrance, of that I was certain; yet at the end of several minutes he chuckled at my elbow. Again I ran after him, and again he ran into the cave; but this time I stopped at the mouth. I dropped back a short distance and watched. He did not come out, yet, as before, he chuckled at my elbow and was chased by me a third time into the cave.

This performance was repeated several times. Then I followed him into the cave, where I searched vainly for him. I was curious. I could not understand how he eluded me. Always he went into the cave, never did he come out of it, yet always did he arrive there at my elbow and mock me. Thus did our fight transform itself into a game of hide and seek.

All afternoon, with occasional intervals, we kept it up, and a playful, friendly spirit arose between us. In the end, he did not run away from me, and we sat together with our arms around each other. A little later he disclosed the mystery of the wide-mouthed cave. Holding me by the hand he led me inside. It connected by a narrow crevice with another cave, and it was through this that we regained the open air.

We were now good friends. When the other young ones gathered around to tease, he joined with me in attacking them; and so viciously did we behave that before long I was let alone. Lop-Ear made me acquainted with the village. There was little that he could tell me of conditions and customs — he had not the necessary vocabulary; but by observing his actions I learned much, and also he showed me places and things.

He took me up the open space, between the caves and the river, and into the forest beyond, where, in a grassy place among the trees, we made a meal of stringy-rooted carrots. After that we had a good drink at the river and started up the run-way to the caves.

It was in the run-way that we came upon Red-Eye again. The first I knew, Lop-Ear had shrunk away to one side and was crouching low against the bank. Naturally and involuntarily, I imitated him. Then it was that I looked to see the cause of his fear. It was Red-Eye, swaggering down the centre of the run-way and scowling fiercely with his inflamed eyes. I noticed that all the youngsters shrank away from him as we had done, while the grown-ups regarded him with wary eyes when he drew near, and stepped aside to give him the centre of the path.

As twilight came on, the open space was deserted. The Folk were seeking the safety of the caves. Lop-Ear led the way to bed. High up the bluff we climbed, higher than all the other caves, to a tiny crevice that could not be seen from the ground. Into this Lop-Ear squeezed. I followed with difficulty, so narrow was the entrance, and found myself in a small rock-chamber. It was very low — not more than a couple of feet in height, and possibly three feet by four in width and length. Here, cuddled together in each other's arms, we slept out the night.

# Chapter VI

While the more courageous of the youngsters played in and out of the large-mouthed caves, I early learned that such caves were unoccupied. No one slept in them at night. Only the crevice-mouthed caves were used, the narrower the mouth the better. This was from fear of the preying animals that made life a burden to us in those days and nights.

The first morning, after my night's sleep with Lop-Ear, I learned the advantage of the narrow-mouthed caves. It was just daylight when old Saber-Tooth, the tiger, walked into the open space. Two of the Folk were already up. They made a rush for it. Whether they were panic-stricken, or whether he was too close on their heels for them to attempt to scramble up the bluff to the crevices, I do not know; but at any rate they dashed into the wide-mouthed cave wherein Lop-Ear and I had played the afternoon before.

What happened inside there was no way of telling, but it is fair to conclude that the two Folk slipped through the connecting crevice into the other cave. This crevice was too small to allow for the passage of Saber-Tooth, and he came out the way he had gone in, unsatisfied and angry. It was evident that his night's hunting had been unsuccessful and that he had expected to make a meal off of us. He caught sight of the two Folk at the other cave-mouth and sprang for them. Of course, they darted through the passageway into the first cave. He emerged angrier than ever and snarling.

Pandemonium broke loose amongst the rest of us. All up and down the great bluff, we crowded the crevices and outside ledges, and we were all chattering and shrieking in a thousand keys. And we were all making faces — snarling faces; this was an instinct with us. We were as angry as Saber-Tooth, though our anger was allied with fear. I remember that I shrieked and made faces with the best of them. Not only did they set the example, but I felt the urge from within me to do the same things they were doing. My hair was bristling, and I was convulsed with a fierce, unreasoning rage.

For some time old Saber-Tooth continued dashing in and out of first the one cave and then the other. But the two Folk merely slipped back and forth through the connecting crevice and eluded him. In the meantime the rest of us up the bluff had proceeded to action. Every time he appeared outside we pelted him with rocks. At first we merely dropped them on him, but we soon began to whiz them down with the added force of our muscles.

This bombardment drew Saber-Tooth's attention to us and made him angrier than ever. He abandoned his pursuit of the two Folk and sprang up the bluff toward the rest of us, clawing at the crumbling rock and snarling as he clawed his upward way. At this

awful sight, the last one of us sought refuge inside our caves. I know this, because I peeped out and saw the whole bluff-side deserted, save for Saber-Tooth, who had lost his footing and was sliding and falling down.

I called out the cry of encouragement, and again the bluff was covered by the screaming horde and the stones were falling faster than ever. Saber-Tooth was frantic with rage. Time and again he assaulted the bluff. Once he even gained the first crevice-entrances before he fell back, but was unable to force his way inside. With each upward rush he made, waves of fear surged over us. At first, at such times, most of us dashed inside; but some remained outside to hammer him with stones, and soon all of us remained outside and kept up the fusillade.

Never was so masterly a creature so completely baffled. It hurt his pride terribly, thus to be outwitted by the small and tender Folk. He stood on the ground and looked up at us, snarling, lashing his tail, snapping at the stones that fell near to him. Once I whizzed down a stone, and just at the right moment he looked up. It caught him full on the end of his nose, and he went straight up in the air, all four feet of him, roaring and caterwauling, what of the hurt and surprise.

He was beaten and he knew it. Recovering his dignity, he stalked out solemnly from under the rain of stones. He stopped in the middle of the open space and looked wistfully and hungrily back at us. He hated to forego the meal, and we were just so much meat, cornered but inaccessible. This sight of him started us to laughing. We laughed derisively and uproariously, all of us. Now animals do not like mockery. To be laughed at makes them angry. And in such fashion our laughter affected Saber-Tooth. He turned with a roar and charged the bluff again. This was what we wanted. The fight had become a game, and we took huge delight in pelting him.

But this attack did not last long. He quickly recovered his common sense, and besides, our missiles were shrewd to hurt. Vividly do I recollect the vision of one bulging eye of his, swollen almost shut by one of the stones we had thrown. And vividly do I retain the picture of him as he stood on the edge of the forest whither he had finally retreated. He was looking back at us, his writhing lips lifted clear of the very roots of his huge fangs, his hair bristling and his tail lashing. He gave one last snarl and slid from view among the trees.

And then such a chattering as went up. We swarmed out of our holes, examining the marks his claws had made on the crumbling rock of the bluff, all of us talking at once. One of the two Folk who had been caught in the double cave was part-grown, half child and half youth. They had come out proudly from their refuge, and we surrounded them in an admiring crowd. Then the young fellow's mother broke through and fell upon him in a tremendous rage, boxing his ears, pulling his hair, and shrieking like a demon. She was a strapping big woman, very hairy, and the thrashing she gave him was a delight to the horde. We roared with laughter, holding on to one another or rolling on the ground in our glee.

In spite of the reign of fear under which we lived, the Folk were always great laughers. We had the sense of humor. Our merriment was Gargantuan. It was never restrained.

There was nothing half way about it. When a thing was funny we were convulsed with appreciation of it, and the simplest, crudest things were funny to us. Oh, we were great laughers, I can tell you.

The way we had treated Saber-Tooth was the way we treated all animals that invaded the village. We kept our run-ways and drinking-places to ourselves by making life miserable for the animals that trespassed or strayed upon our immediate territory. Even the fiercest hunting animals we so bedevilled that they learned to leave our places alone. We were not fighters like them; we were cunning and cowardly, and it was because of our cunning and cowardice, and our inordinate capacity for fear, that we survived in that frightfully hostile environment of the Younger World.

Lop-Ear, I figure, was a year older than I. What his past history was he had no way of telling me, but as I never saw anything of his mother I believed him to be an orphan. After all, fathers did not count in our horde. Marriage was as yet in a rude state, and couples had a way of quarrelling and separating. Modern man, what of his divorce institution, does the same thing legally. But we had no laws. Custom was all we went by, and our custom in this particular matter was rather promiscuous.

Nevertheless, as this narrative will show later on, we betrayed glimmering adumbrations of the monogamy that was later to give power to, and make mighty, such tribes as embraced it. Furthermore, even at the time I was born, there were several faithful couples that lived in the trees in the neighborhood of my mother. Living in the thick of the horde did not conduce to monogamy. It was for this reason, undoubtedly, that the faithful couples went away and lived by themselves. Through many years these couples stayed together, though when the man or woman died or was eaten the survivor invariably found a new mate.

There was one thing that greatly puzzled me during the first days of my residence in the horde. There was a nameless and incommunicable fear that rested upon all. At first it appeared to be connected wholly with direction. The horde feared the northeast. It lived in perpetual apprehension of that quarter of the compass. And every individual gazed more frequently and with greater alarm in that direction than in any other.

When Lop-Ear and I went toward the north-east to eat the stringy-rooted carrots that at that season were at their best, he became unusually timid. He was content to eat the leavings, the big tough carrots and the little ropy ones, rather than to venture a short distance farther on to where the carrots were as yet untouched. When I so ventured, he scolded me and quarrelled with me. He gave me to understand that in that direction was some horrible danger, but just what the horrible danger was his paucity of language would not permit him to say.

Many a good meal I got in this fashion, while he scolded and chattered vainly at me. I could not understand. I kept very alert, but I could see no danger. I calculated always the distance between myself and the nearest tree, and knew that to that haven of refuge I could out-foot the Tawny One, or old Saber-Tooth, did one or the other suddenly appear.



One late afternoon, in the village, a great uproar arose. The horde was animated with a single emotion, that of fear. The bluff-side swarmed with the Folk, all gazing and pointing into the northeast. I did not know what it was, but I scrambled all the way up to the safety of my own high little cave before ever I turned around to see.

And then, across the river, away into the northeast, I saw for the first time the mystery of smoke. It was the biggest animal I had ever seen. I thought it was a monster snake, up-ended, rearing its head high above the trees and swaying back and forth. And yet, somehow, I seemed to gather from the conduct of the Folk that the smoke itself was not the danger. They appeared to fear it as the token of something else. What this something else was I was unable to guess. Nor could they tell me. Yet I was soon to know, and I was to know it as a thing more terrible than the Tawny One, than old Saber-Tooth, than the snakes themselves, than which it seemed there could be no things more terrible.

## Chapter VII

Broken-Tooth was another youngster who lived by himself. His mother lived in the caves, but two more children had come after him and he had been thrust out to shift for himself. We had witnessed the performance during the several preceding days, and it had given us no little glee. Broken-Tooth did not want to go, and every time his mother left the cave he sneaked back into it. When she returned and found him there her rages were delightful. Half the horde made a practice of watching for these moments. First, from within the cave, would come her scolding and shrieking. Then we could hear sounds of the thrashing and the yelling of Broken-Tooth. About this time the two younger children joined in. And finally, like the eruption of a miniature volcano, Broken-Tooth would come flying out.

At the end of several days his leaving home was accomplished. He wailed his grief, unheeded, from the centre of the open space, for at least half an hour, and then came to live with Lop-Ear and me. Our cave was small, but with squeezing there was room for three. I have no recollection of Broken-Tooth spending more than one night with us, so the accident must have happened right away.

It came in the middle of the day. In the morning we had eaten our fill of the carrots, and then, made heedless by play, we had ventured on to the big trees just beyond. I cannot understand how Lop-Ear got over his habitual caution, but it must have been the play. We were having a great time playing tree tag. And such tag! We leaped ten or fifteen-foot gaps as a matter of course. And a twenty or twenty-five foot deliberate drop clear down to the ground was nothing to us. In fact, I am almost afraid to say the great distances we dropped. As we grew older and heavier we found we had to be more cautious in dropping, but at that age our bodies were all strings and springs and we could do anything.

Broken-Tooth displayed remarkable agility in the game. He was "It" less frequently than any of us, and in the course of the game he discovered one difficult "slip" that neither Lop-Ear nor I was able to accomplish. To be truthful, we were afraid to attempt it.

When we were "It," Broken-Tooth always ran out to the end of a lofty branch in a certain tree. From the end of the branch to the ground it must have been seventy feet, and nothing intervened to break a fall. But about twenty feet lower down, and fully fifteen feet out from the perpendicular, was the thick branch of another tree.

As we ran out the limb, Broken-Tooth, facing us, would begin teetering. This naturally impeded our progress; but there was more in the teetering than that. He teetered with his back to the jump he was to make. Just as we nearly reached him he would

let go. The teetering branch was like a spring-board. It threw him far out, backward, as he fell. And as he fell he turned around sidewise in the air so as to face the other branch into which he was falling. This branch bent far down under the impact, and sometimes there was an ominous crackling; but it never broke, and out of the leaves was always to be seen the face of Broken-Tooth grinning triumphantly up at us.

I was "It" the last time Broken-Tooth tried this. He had gained the end of the branch and begun his teetering, and I was creeping out after him, when suddenly there came a low warning cry from Lop-Ear. I looked down and saw him in the main fork of the tree crouching close against the trunk. Instinctively I crouched down upon the thick limb. Broken-Tooth stopped teetering, but the branch would not stop, and his body continued bobbing up and down with the rustling leaves.

I heard the crackle of a dry twig, and looking down saw my first Fire-Man. He was creeping stealthily along on the ground and peering up into the tree. At first I thought he was a wild animal, because he wore around his waist and over his shoulders a ragged piece of bearskin. And then I saw his hands and feet, and more clearly his features. He was very much like my kind, except that he was less hairy and that his feet were less like hands than ours. In fact, he and his people, as I was later to know, were far less hairy than we, though we, in turn, were equally less hairy than the Tree People.

It came to me instantly, as I looked at him. This was the terror of the northeast, of which the mystery of smoke was a token. Yet I was puzzled. Certainly he was nothing; of which to be afraid. Red-Eye or any of our strong men would have been more than a match for him. He was old, too, wizened with age, and the hair on his face was gray. Also, he limped badly with one leg. There was no doubt at all that we could out-run him and out-climb him. He could never catch us, that was certain.

But he carried something in his hand that I had never seen before. It was a bow and arrow. But at that time a bow and arrow had no meaning for me. How was I to know that death lurked in that bent piece of wood? But Lop-Ear knew. He had evidently seen the Fire People before and knew something of their ways. The Fire-Man peered up at him and circled around the tree. And around the main trunk above the fork Lop-Ear circled too, keeping always the trunk between himself and the Fire-Man.

The latter abruptly reversed his circling. Lop-Ear, caught unawares, also hastily reversed, but did not win the protection of the trunk until after the Fire-Man had twanged the bow.

I saw the arrow leap up, miss Lop-Ear, glance against a limb, and fall back to the ground. I danced up and down on my lofty perch with delight. It was a game! The Fire-Man was throwing things at Lop-Ear as we sometimes threw things at one another.

The game continued a little longer, but Lop-Ear did not expose himself a second time. Then the Fire-Man gave it up. I leaned far out over my horizontal limb and chattered down at him. I wanted to play. I wanted to have him try to hit me with the thing. He saw me, but ignored me, turning his attention to Broken-Tooth, who was still teetering slightly and involuntarily on the end of the branch.

The first arrow leaped upward. Broken-Tooth yelled with fright and pain. It had reached its mark. This put a new complexion on the matter. I no longer cared to play, but crouched trembling close to my limb. A second arrow and a third soared up, missing Broken-Tooth, rustling the leaves as they passed through, arching in their flight and returning to earth.

The Fire-Man stretched his bow again. He shifted his position, walking away several steps, then shifted it a second time. The bow-string twanged, the arrow leaped upward, and Broken-Tooth, uttering a terrible scream, fell off the branch. I saw him as he went down, turning over and over, all arms and legs it seemed, the shaft of the arrow projecting from his chest and appearing and disappearing with each revolution of his body.

Sheer down, screaming, seventy feet he fell, smashing to the earth with an audible thud and crunch, his body rebounding slightly and settling down again. Still he lived, for he moved and squirmed, clawing with his hands and feet. I remember the Fire-Man running forward with a stone and hammering him on the head...and then I remember no more.

Always, during my childhood, at this stage of the dream, did I wake up screaming with fright — to find, often, my mother or nurse, anxious and startled, by my bedside, passing soothing hands through my hair and telling me that they were there and that there was nothing to fear.

My next dream, in the order of succession, begins always with the flight of Lop-Ear and myself through the forest. The Fire-Man and Broken-Tooth and the tree of the tragedy are gone. Lop-Ear and I, in a cautious panic, are fleeing through the trees. In my right leg is a burning pain; and from the flesh, protruding head and shaft from either side, is an arrow of the Fire-Man. Not only did the pull and strain of it pain me severely, but it bothered my movements and made it impossible for me to keep up with Lop-Ear.

At last I gave up, crouching in the secure fork of a tree. Lop-Ear went right on. I called to him — most plaintively, I remember; and he stopped and looked back. Then he returned to me, climbing into the fork and examining the arrow. He tried to pull it out, but one way the flesh resisted the barbed lead, and the other way it resisted the feathered shaft. Also, it hurt grievously, and I stopped him.

For some time we crouched there, Lop-Ear nervous and anxious to be gone, perpetually and apprehensively peering this way and that, and myself whimpering softly and sobbing. Lop-Ear was plainly in a funk, and yet his conduct in remaining by me, in spite of his fear, I take as a foreshadowing of the altruism and comradeship that have helped make man the mightiest of the animals.

Once again Lop-Ear tried to drag the arrow through the flesh, and I angrily stopped him. Then he bent down and began gnawing the shaft of the arrow with his teeth. As he did so he held the arrow firmly in both hands so that it would not play about in the wound, and at the same time I held on to him. I often meditate upon this scene — the two of us, half-grown cubs, in the childhood of the race, and the one mastering

his fear, beating down his selfish impulse of flight, in order to stand by and succor the other. And there rises up before me all that was there foreshadowed, and I see visions of Damon and Pythias, of life-saving crews and Red Cross nurses, of martyrs and leaders of forlorn hopes, of Father Damien, and of the Christ himself, and of all the men of earth, mighty of stature, whose strength may trace back to the elemental loins of Lop-Ear and Big-Tooth and other dim denizens of the Younger World.

When Lop-Ear had chewed off the head of the arrow, the shaft was withdrawn easily enough. I started to go on, but this time it was he that stopped me. My leg was bleeding profusely. Some of the smaller veins had doubtless been ruptured. Running out to the end of a branch, Lop-Ear gathered a handful of green leaves. These he stuffed into the wound. They accomplished the purpose, for the bleeding soon stopped. Then we went on together, back to the safety of the caves.

## Chapter VIII

Well do I remember that first winter after I left home. I have long dreams of sitting shivering in the cold. Lop-Ear and I sit close together, with our arms and legs about each other, blue-faced and with chattering teeth. It got particularly crisp along toward morning. In those chill early hours we slept little, huddling together in numb misery and waiting for the sunrise in order to get warm.

When we went outside there was a crackle of frost under foot. One morning we discovered ice on the surface of the quiet water in the eddy where was the drinking-place, and there was a great How-do-you-do about it. Old Marrow-Bone was the oldest member of the horde, and he had never seen anything like it before. I remember the worried, plaintive look that came into his eyes as he examined the ice. (This plaintive look always came into our eyes when we did not understand a thing, or when we felt the prod of some vague and inexpressible desire.) Red-Eye, too, when he investigated the ice, looked bleak and plaintive, and stared across the river into the northeast, as though in some way he connected the Fire People with this latest happening.

But we found ice only on that one morning, and that was the coldest winter we experienced. I have no memory of other winters when it was so cold. I have often thought that that cold winter was a fore-runner of the countless cold winters to come, as the ice-sheet from farther north crept down over the face of the land. But we never saw that ice-sheet. Many generations must have passed away before the descendants of the horde migrated south, or remained and adapted themselves to the changed conditions.

Life was hit or miss and happy-go-lucky with us. Little was ever planned, and less was executed. We ate when we were hungry, drank when we were thirsty, avoided our carnivorous enemies, took shelter in the caves at night, and for the rest just sort of played along through life.

We were very curious, easily amused, and full of tricks and pranks. There was no seriousness about us, except when we were in danger or were angry, in which cases the one was quickly forgotten and the other as quickly got over.

We were inconsecutive, illogical, and inconsequential. We had no steadfastness of purpose, and it was here that the Fire People were ahead of us. They possessed all these things of which we possessed so little. Occasionally, however, especially in the realm of the emotions, we were capable of long-cherished purpose. The faithfulness of the monogamic couples I have referred to may be explained as a matter of habit; but my long desire for the Swift One cannot be so explained, any more than can be explained the undying enmity between me and Red-Eye.

But it was our inconsequentiality and stupidity that especially distresses me when I look back upon that life in the long ago. Once I found a broken gourd which happened to lie right side up and which had been filled with the rain. The water was sweet, and I drank it. I even took the gourd down to the stream and filled it with more water, some of which I drank and some of which I poured over Lop-Ear. And then I threw the gourd away. It never entered my head to fill the gourd with water and carry it into my cave. Yet often I was thirsty at night, especially after eating wild onions and watercress, and no one ever dared leave the caves at night for a drink.

Another time I found a dry; gourd, inside of which the seeds rattled. I had fun with it for a while. But it was a play thing, nothing more. And yet, it was not long after this that the using of gourds for storing water became the general practice of the horde. But I was not the inventor. The honor was due to old Marrow-Bone, and it is fair to assume that it was the necessity of his great age that brought about the innovation.

At any rate, the first member of the horde to use gourds was Marrow-Bone. He kept a supply of drinking-water in his cave, which cave belonged to his son, the Hairless One, who permitted him to occupy a corner of it. We used to see Marrow-Bone filling his gourd at the drinking-place and carrying it carefully up to his cave. Imitation was strong in the Folk, and first one, and then another and another, procured a gourd and used it in similar fashion, until it was a general practice with all of us so to store water.

Sometimes old Marrow-Bone had sick spells and was unable to leave the cave. Then it was that the Hairless One filled the gourd for him. A little later, the Hairless One deputed the task to Long-Lip, his son. And after that, even when Marrow-Bone was well again, Long-Lip continued carrying water for him. By and by, except on unusual occasions, the men never carried any water at all, leaving the task to the women and larger children. Lop-Ear and I were independent. We carried water only for ourselves, and we often mocked the young water-carriers when they were called away from play to fill the gourds.

Progress was slow with us. We played through life, even the adults, much in the same way that children play, and we played as none of the other animals played. What little we learned, was usually in the course of play, and was due to our curiosity and keenness of appreciation. For that matter, the one big invention of the horde, during the time I lived with it, was the use of gourds. At first we stored only water in the gourds — in imitation of old Marrow-Bone.

But one day some one of the women — I do not know which one — filled a gourd with black-berries and carried it to her cave. In no time all the women were carrying berries and nuts and roots in the gourds. The idea, once started, had to go on. Another evolution of the carrying-receptacle was due to the women. Without doubt, some woman's gourd was too small, or else she had forgotten her gourd; but be that as it may, she bent two great leaves together, pinning the seams with twigs, and carried home a bigger quantity of berries than could have been contained in the largest gourd.

So far we got, and no farther, in the transportation of supplies during the years I lived with the Folk. It never entered anybody's head to weave a basket out of willow-

withes. Sometimes the men and women tied tough vines about the bundles of ferns and branches that they carried to the caves to sleep upon. Possibly in ten or twenty generations we might have worked up to the weaving of baskets. And of this, one thing is sure: if once we wove withes into baskets, the next and inevitable step would have been the weaving of cloth. Clothes would have followed, and with covering our nakedness would have come modesty.

Thus was momentum gained in the Younger World. But we were without this momentum. We were just getting started, and we could not go far in a single generation. We were without weapons, without fire, and in the raw beginnings of speech. The device of writing lay so far in the future that I am appalled when I think of it.

Even I was once on the verge of a great discovery. To show you how fortuitous was development in those days let me state that had it not been for the gluttony of Lop-Ear I might have brought about the domestication of the dog. And this was something that the Fire People who lived to the northeast had not yet achieved. They were without dogs; this I knew from observation. But let me tell you how Lop-Ear's gluttony possibly set back our social development many generations.

Well to the west of our caves was a great swamp, but to the south lay a stretch of low, rocky hills. These were little frequented for two reasons. First of all, there was no food there of the kind we ate; and next, those rocky hills were filled with the lairs of carnivorous beasts.

But Lop-Ear and I strayed over to the hills one day. We would not have strayed had we not been teasing a tiger. Please do not laugh. It was old Saber-Tooth himself. We were perfectly safe. We chanced upon him in the forest, early in the morning, and from the safety of the branches overhead we chattered down at him our dislike and hatred. And from branch to branch, and from tree to tree, we followed overhead, making an infernal row and warning all the forest-dwellers that old Saber-Tooth was coming.

We spoiled his hunting for him, anyway. And we made him good and angry. He snarled at us and lashed his tail, and sometimes he paused and stared up at us quietly for a long time, as if debating in his mind some way by which he could get hold of us. But we only laughed and pelted him with twigs and the ends of branches.

This tiger-baiting was common sport among the folk. Sometimes half the horde would follow from overhead a tiger or lion that had ventured out in the daytime. It was our revenge; for more than one member of the horde, caught unexpectedly, had gone the way of the tiger's belly or the lion's. Also, by such ordeals of helplessness and shame, we taught the hunting animals to some extent to keep out of our territory. And then it was funny. It was a great game.

And so Lop-Ear and I had chased Saber-Tooth across three miles of forest. Toward the last he put his tail between his legs and fled from our gibing like a beaten cur. We did our best to keep up with him; but when we reached the edge of the forest he was no more than a streak in the distance.

I don't know what prompted us, unless it was curiosity; but after playing around awhile, Lop-Ear and I ventured across the open ground to the edge of the rocky hills.



We did not go far. Possibly at no time were we more than a hundred yards from the trees. Coming around a sharp corner of rock (we went very carefully, because we did not know what we might encounter), we came upon three puppies playing in the sun.

They did not see us, and we watched them for some time. They were wild dogs. In the rock-wall was a horizontal fissure — evidently the lair where their mother had left them, and where they should have remained had they been obedient. But the growing life, that in Lop-Ear and me had impelled us to venture away from the forest, had driven the puppies out of the cave to frolic. I know how their mother would have punished them had she caught them.

But it was Lop-Ear and I who caught them. He looked at me, and then we made a dash for it. The puppies knew no place to run except into the lair, and we headed them off. One rushed between my legs. I squatted and grabbed him. He sank his sharp little teeth into my arm, and I dropped him in the suddenness of the hurt and surprise. The next moment he had scurried inside.

Lop-Ear, struggling with the second puppy, scowled at me and intimated by a variety of sounds the different kinds of a fool and a bungler that I was. This made me ashamed and spurred me to valor. I grabbed the remaining puppy by the tail. He got his teeth into me once, and then I got him by the nape of the neck. Lop-Ear and I sat down, and held the puppies up, and looked at them, and laughed.

They were snarling and yelping and crying. Lop-Ear started suddenly. He thought he had heard something. We looked at each other in fear, realizing the danger of our position. The one thing that made animals raging demons was tampering with their young. And these puppies that made such a racket belonged to the wild dogs. Well we knew them, running in packs, the terror of the grass-eating animals. We had watched them following the herds of cattle and bison and dragging down the calves, the aged, and the sick. We had been chased by them ourselves, more than once. I had seen one of the Folk, a woman, run down by them and caught just as she reached the shelter of the woods. Had she not been tired out by the run, she might have made it into a tree. She tried, and slipped, and fell back. They made short work of her.

We did not stare at each other longer than a moment. Keeping tight hold of our prizes, we ran for the woods. Once in the security of a tall tree, we held up the puppies and laughed again. You see, we had to have our laugh out, no matter what happened.

And then began one of the hardest tasks I ever attempted. We started to carry the puppies to our cave. Instead of using our hands for climbing, most of the time they were occupied with holding our squirming captives. Once we tried to walk on the ground, but were treed by a miserable hyena, who followed along underneath. He was a wise hyena.

Lop-Ear got an idea. He remembered how we tied up bundles of leaves to carry home for beds. Breaking off some tough vines, he tied his puppy's legs together, and then, with another piece of vine passed around his neck, slung the puppy on his back. This left him with hands and feet free to climb. He was jubilant, and did not wait for me to finish tying my puppy's legs, but started on. There was one difficulty, however.

The puppy wouldn't stay slung on Lop-Ear's back. It swung around to the side and then on in front. Its teeth were not tied, and the next thing it did was to sink its teeth into Lop-Ear's soft and unprotected stomach. He let out a scream, nearly fell, and clutched a branch violently with both hands to save himself. The vine around his neck broke, and the puppy, its four legs still tied, dropped to the ground. The hyena proceeded to dine.

Lop-Ear was disgusted and angry. He abused the hyena, and then went off alone through the trees. I had no reason that I knew for wanting to carry the puppy to the cave, except that I WANTED to; and I stayed by my task. I made the work a great deal easier by elaborating on Lop-Ear's idea. Not only did I tie the puppy's legs, but I thrust a stick through his jaws and tied them together securely.

At last I got the puppy home. I imagine I had more pertinacity than the average Folk, or else I should not have succeeded. They laughed at me when they saw me lugging the puppy up to my high little cave, but I did not mind. Success crowned my efforts, and there was the puppy. He was a plaything such as none of the Folk possessed. He learned rapidly. When I played with him and he bit me, I boxed his ears, and then he did not try again to bite for a long time.

I was quite taken up with him. He was something new, and it was a characteristic of the Folk to like new things. When I saw that he refused fruits and vegetables, I caught birds for him and squirrels and young rabbits. (We Folk were meat-eaters, as well as vegetarians, and we were adept at catching small game.) The puppy ate the meat and thrived. As well as I can estimate, I must have had him over a week. And then, coming back to the cave one day with a nestful of young-hatched pheasants, I found Lop-Ear had killed the puppy and was just beginning to eat him. I sprang for Lop-Ear, — the cave was small, — and we went at it tooth and nail.

And thus, in a fight, ended one of the earliest attempts to domesticate the dog. We pulled hair out in handfuls, and scratched and bit and gouged. Then we sulked and made up. After that we ate the puppy. Raw? Yes. We had not yet discovered fire. Our evolution into cooking animals lay in the tight-rolled scroll of the future.

## Chapter IX

Red-Eye was an atavism. He was the great discordant element in our horde. He was more primitive than any of us. He did not belong with us, yet we were still so primitive ourselves that we were incapable of a cooperative effort strong enough to kill him or cast him out. Rude as was our social organization, he was, nevertheless, too rude to live in it. He tended always to destroy the horde by his unsocial acts. He was really a reversion to an earlier type, and his place was with the Tree People rather than with us who were in the process of becoming men.

He was a monster of cruelty, which is saying a great deal in that day. He beat his wives — not that he ever had more than one wife at a time, but that he was married many times. It was impossible for any woman to live with him, and yet they did live with him, out of compulsion. There was no gainsaying him.

No man was strong enough to stand against him.

Often do I have visions of the quiet hour before the twilight. From drinking-place and carrot patch and berry swamp the Folk are trooping into the open space before the caves. They dare linger no later than this, for the dreadful darkness is approaching, in which the world is given over to the carnage of the hunting animals, while the fore-runners of man hide tremblingly in their holes.

There yet remain to us a few minutes before we climb to our caves. We are tired from the play of the day, and the sounds we make are subdued. Even the cubs, still greedy for fun and antics, play with restraint. The wind from the sea has died down, and the shadows are lengthening with the last of the sun's descent. And then, suddenly, from Red-Eye's cave, breaks a wild screaming and the sound of blows. He is beating his wife.

At first an awed silence comes upon us. But as the blows and screams continue we break out into an insane gibbering of helpless rage. It is plain that the men resent Red-Eye's actions, but they are too afraid of him. The blows cease, and a low groaning dies away, while we chatter among ourselves and the sad twilight creeps upon us.

We, to whom most happenings were jokes, never laughed during Red-Eye's wife-beatings. We knew too well the tragedy of them. On more than one morning, at the base of the cliff, did we find the body of his latest wife. He had tossed her there, after she had died, from his cave-mouth. He never buried his dead. The task of carrying away the bodies, that else would have polluted our abiding-place, he left to the horde. We usually flung them into the river below the last drinking-place.

Not alone did Red-Eye murder his wives, but he also murdered for his wives, in order to get them. When he wanted a new wife and selected the wife of another man, he

promptly killed that man. Two of these murders I saw myself. The whole horde knew, but could do nothing. We had not yet developed any government, to speak of, inside the horde. We had certain customs and visited our wrath upon the unlucky ones who violated those customs. Thus, for example, the individual who defiled a drinking-place would be attacked by every onlooker, while one who deliberately gave a false alarm was the recipient of much rough usage at our hands. But Red-Eye walked rough-shod over all our customs, and we so feared him that we were incapable of the collective action necessary to punish him.

It was during the sixth winter in our cave that Lop-Ear and I discovered that we were really growing up. From the first it had been a squeeze to get in through the entrance-crevice. This had had its advantages, however. It had prevented the larger Folk from taking our cave away from us. And it was a most desirable cave, the highest on the bluff, the safest, and in winter the smallest and warmest.

To show the stage of the mental development of the Folk, I may state that it would have been a simple thing for some of them to have driven us out and enlarged the crevice-opening. But they never thought of it. Lop-Ear and I did not think of it either until our increasing size compelled us to make an enlargement. This occurred when summer was well along and we were fat with better forage. We worked at the crevice in spells, when the fancy struck us.

At first we dug the crumbling rocks away with our fingers, until our nails got sore, when I accidentally stumbled upon the idea of using a piece of wood on the rock. This worked well. Also it worked woe. One morning early, we had scratched out of the wall quite a heap of fragments. I gave the heap a shove over the lip of the entrance. The next moment there came up from below a howl of rage. There was no need to look. We knew the voice only too well. The rubbish had descended upon Red-Eye.

We crouched down in the cave in consternation. A minute later he was at the entrance, peering in at us with his inflamed eyes and raging like a demon. But he was too large. He could not get in to us. Suddenly he went away. This was suspicious. By all we knew of Folk nature he should have remained and had out his rage. I crept to the entrance and peeped down. I could see him just beginning to mount the bluff again. In one hand he carried a long stick. Before I could divine his plan, he was back at the entrance and savagely jabbing the stick in at us.

His thrusts were prodigious. They could have disembowelled us. We shrank back against the side-walls, where we were almost out of range. But by industrious poking he got us now and again — cruel, scraping jabs with the end of the stick that raked off the hide and hair. When we screamed with the hurt, he roared his satisfaction and jabbed the harder.

I began to grow angry. I had a temper of my own in those days, and pretty considerable courage, too, albeit it was largely the courage of the cornered rat. I caught hold of the stick with my hands, but such was his strength that he jerked me into the crevice. He reached for me with his long arm, and his nails tore my flesh as I leaped back from the clutch and gained the comparative safety of the side-wall.

He began poking again, and caught me a painful blow on the shoulder. Beyond shivering with fright and yelling when he was hit, Lop-Ear did nothing. I looked for a stick with which to jab back, but found only the end of a branch, an inch through and a foot long. I threw this at Red-Eye. It did no damage, though he howled with a sudden increase of rage at my daring to strike back. He began jabbing furiously. I found a fragment of rock and threw it at him, striking him on the chest.

This emboldened me, and, besides, I was now as angry as he, and had lost all fear. I ripped fragment of rock from the wall. The piece must have weighed two or three pounds. With my strength I slammed it full into Red-Eye's face. It nearly finished him. He staggered backward, dropping his stick, and almost fell off the cliff.

He was a ferocious sight. His face was covered with blood, and he was snarling and gnashing his fangs like a wild boar. He wiped the blood from his eyes, caught sight of me, and roared with fury. His stick was gone, so he began ripping out chunks of crumbling rock and throwing them in at me. This supplied me with ammunition. I gave him as good as he sent, and better; for he presented a good target, while he caught only glimpses of me as I snuggled against the side-wall.

Suddenly he disappeared again. From the lip of the cave I saw him descending. All the horde had gathered outside and in awed silence was looking on. As he descended, the more timid ones scurried for their caves. I could see old Marrow-Bone tottering along as fast as he could. Red-Eye sprang out from the wall and finished the last twenty feet through the air. He landed alongside a mother who was just beginning the ascent. She screamed with fear, and the two-year-old child that was clinging to her released its grip and rolled at Red-Eye's feet. Both he and the mother reached for it, and he got it. The next moment the frail little body had whirled through the air and shattered against the wall. The mother ran to it, caught it up in her arms, and crouched over it crying.

Red-Eye started over to pick up the stick. Old Marrow-Bone had tottered into his way. Red-Eye's great hand shot out and clutched the old man by the back of the neck. I looked to see his neck broken. His body went limp as he surrendered himself to his fate. Red-Eye hesitated a moment, and Marrow-Bone, shivering terribly, bowed his head and covered his face with his crossed arms. Then Red-Eye slammed him face-downward to the ground. Old Marrow-Bone did not struggle. He lay there crying with the fear of death. I saw the Hairless One, out in the open space, beating his chest and bristling, but afraid to come forward. And then, in obedience to some whim of his erratic spirit, Red-Eye let the old man alone and passed on and recovered the stick.

He returned to the wall and began to climb up. Lop-Ear, who was shivering and peeping alongside of me, scrambled back into the cave. It was plain that Red-Eye was bent upon murder. I was desperate and angry and fairly cool. Running back and forth along the neighboring ledges, I gathered a heap of rocks at the cave-entrance. Red-Eye was now several yards beneath me, concealed for the moment by an out-jut of the cliff. As he climbed, his head came into view, and I banged a rock down. It missed, striking

the wall and shattering; but the flying dust and grit filled his eyes and he drew back out of view.

A chuckling and chattering arose from the horde, that played the part of audience. At last there was one of the Folk who dared to face Red-Eye. As their approval and acclamation arose on the air, Red-Eye snarled down at them, and on the instant they were subdued to silence. Encouraged by this evidence of his power, he thrust his head into view, and by scowling and snarling and gnashing his fangs tried to intimidate me. He scowled horribly, contracting the scalp strongly over the brows and bringing the hair down from the top of the head until each hair stood apart and pointed straight forward.

The sight chilled me, but I mastered my fear, and, with a stone poised in my hand, threatened him back. He still tried to advance. I drove the stone down at him and made a sheer miss. The next shot was a success. The stone struck him on the neck. He slipped back out of sight, but as he disappeared I could see him clutching for a grip on the wall with one hand, and with the other clutching at his throat. The stick fell clattering to the ground.

I could not see him any more, though I could hear him choking and strangling and coughing. The audience kept a death-like silence. I crouched on the lip of the entrance and waited. The strangling and coughing died down, and I could hear him now and again clearing his throat. A little later he began to climb down. He went very quietly, pausing every moment or so to stretch his neck or to feel it with his hand.

At the sight of him descending, the whole horde, with wild screams and yells, stampeded for the woods. Old Marrow-Bone, hobbling and tottering, followed behind. Red-Eye took no notice of the flight. When he reached the ground he skirted the base of the bluff and climbed up and into his own cave. He did not look around once.

I stared at Lop-Ear, and he stared back. We understood each other. Immediately, and with great caution and quietness, we began climbing up the cliff. When we reached the top we looked back. The abiding-place was deserted, Red-Eye remained in his cave, and the horde had disappeared in the depths of the forest.

We turned and ran. We dashed across the open spaces and down the slopes unmindful of possible snakes in the grass, until we reached the woods. Up into the trees we went, and on and on, swinging our arboreal flight until we had put miles between us and the caves. And then, and not till then, in the security of a great fork, we paused, looked at each other, and began to laugh. We held on to each other, arms and legs, our eyes streaming tears, our sides aching, and laughed and laughed and laughed.

## Chapter X

After we had had out our laugh, Lop-Ear and I curved back in our flight and got breakfast in the blueberry swamp. It was the same swamp to which I had made my first journeys in the world, years before, accompanied by my mother. I had seen little of her in the intervening time. Usually, when she visited the horde at the caves, I was away in the forest. I had once or twice caught glimpses of the Chatterer in the open space, and had had the pleasure of making faces at him and angering him from the mouth of my cave. Beyond such amenities I had left my family severely alone. I was not much interested in it, and anyway I was doing very well by myself.

After eating our fill of berries, with two nestfuls of partly hatched quail-eggs for dessert, Lop-Ear and I wandered circumspectly into the woods toward the river. Here was where stood my old home-tree, out of which I had been thrown by the Chatterer. It was still occupied. There had been increase in the family. Clinging tight to my mother was a little baby. Also, there was a girl, partly grown, who cautiously regarded us from one of the lower branches. She was evidently my sister, or half-sister, rather.

My mother recognized me, but she warned me away when I started to climb into the tree. Lop-Ear, who was more cautious by far than I, beat a retreat, nor could I persuade him to return. Later in the day, however, my sister came down to the ground, and there and in neighboring trees we romped and played all afternoon. And then came trouble. She was my sister, but that did not prevent her from treating me abominably, for she had inherited all the viciousness of the Chatterer. She turned upon me suddenly, in a petty rage, and scratched me, tore my hair, and sank her sharp little teeth deep into my forearm. I lost my temper. I did not injure her, but it was undoubtedly the soundest spanking she had received up to that time.

How she yelled and squalled. The Chatterer, who had been away all day and who was only then returning, heard the noise and rushed for the spot. My mother also rushed, but he got there first. Lop-Ear and I did not wait his coming. We were off and away, and the Chatterer gave us the chase of our lives through the trees.

After the chase was over, and Lop-Ear and I had had out our laugh, we discovered that twilight was falling. Here was night with all its terrors upon us, and to return to the caves was out of the question. Red-Eye made that impossible. We took refuge in a tree that stood apart from other trees, and high up in a fork we passed the night. It was a miserable night. For the first few hours it rained heavily, then it turned cold and a chill wind blew upon us. Soaked through, with shivering bodies and chattering teeth, we huddled in each other's arms. We missed the snug, dry cave that so quickly warmed with the heat of our bodies.

Morning found us wretched and resolved. We would not spend another such night. Remembering the tree-shelters of our elders, we set to work to make one for ourselves. We built the framework of a rough nest, and on higher forks overhead even got in several ridge-poles for the roof. Then the sun came out, and under its benign influence we forgot the hardships of the night and went off in search of breakfast. After that, to show the inconsequentiality of life in those days, we fell to playing. It must have taken us all of a month, working intermittently, to make our tree-house; and then, when it was completed, we never used it again.

But I run ahead of my story. When we fell to playing, after breakfast, on the second day away from the caves, Lop-Ear led me a chase through the trees and down to the river. We came out upon it where a large slough entered from the blueberry swamp. The mouth of this slough was wide, while the slough itself was practically without a current. In the dead water, just inside its mouth, lay a tangled mass of tree trunks. Some of these, what of the wear and tear of freshets and of being stranded long summers on sand-bars, were seasoned and dry and without branches. They floated high in the water, and bobbed up and down or rolled over when we put our weight upon them.

Here and there between the trunks were water-cracks, and through them we could see schools of small fish, like minnows, darting back and forth. Lop-Ear and I became fishermen at once. Lying flat on the logs, keeping perfectly quiet, waiting till the minnows came close, we would make swift passes with our hands. Our prizes we ate on the spot, wriggling and moist. We did not notice the lack of salt.

The mouth of the slough became our favorite playground. Here we spent many hours each day, catching fish and playing on the logs, and here, one day, we learned our first lessons in navigation. The log on which Lop-Ear was lying got adrift. He was curled up on his side, asleep. A light fan of air slowly drifted the log away from the shore, and when I noticed his predicament the distance was already too great for him to leap.

At first the episode seemed merely funny to me. But when one of the vagrant impulses of fear, common in that age of perpetual insecurity, moved within me, I was struck with my own loneliness. I was made suddenly aware of Lop-Ear's remoteness out there on that alien element a few feet away. I called loudly to him a warning cry. He awoke frightened, and shifted his weight rashly on the log. It turned over, sousing him under. Three times again it soused him under as he tried to climb out upon it. Then he succeeded, crouching upon it and chattering with fear.

I could do nothing. Nor could he. Swimming was something of which we knew nothing. We were already too far removed from the lower life-forms to have the instinct for swimming, and we had not yet become sufficiently man-like to undertake it as the working out of a problem. I roamed disconsolately up and down the bank, keeping as close to him in his involuntary travels as I could, while he wailed and cried till it was a wonder that he did not bring down upon us every hunting animal within a mile.

The hours passed. The sun climbed overhead and began its descent to the west. The light wind died down and left Lop-Ear on his log floating around a hundred



feet away. And then, somehow, I know not how, Lop-Ear made the great discovery. He began paddling with his hands. At first his progress was slow and erratic. Then he straightened out and began laboriously to paddle nearer and nearer. I could not understand. I sat down and watched and waited until he gained the shore.

But he had learned something, which was more than I had done. Later in the afternoon, he deliberately launched out from shore on the log. Still later he persuaded me to join him, and I, too, learned the trick of paddling. For the next several days we could not tear ourselves away from the slough. So absorbed were we in our new game that we almost neglected to eat. We even roosted in a nearby tree at night. And we forgot that Red-Eye existed.

We were always trying new logs, and we learned that the smaller the log the faster we could make it go. Also, we learned that the smaller the log the more liable it was to roll over and give us a ducking. Still another thing about small logs we learned. One day we paddled our individual logs alongside each other. And then, quite by accident, in the course of play, we discovered that when each, with one hand and foot, held on to the other's log, the logs were steadied and did not turn over. Lying side by side in this position, our outside hands and feet were left free for paddling. Our final discovery was that this arrangement enabled us to use still smaller logs and thereby gain greater speed. And there our discoveries ended. We had invented the most primitive catamaran, and we did not have sense enough to know it. It never entered our heads to lash the logs together with tough vines or stringy roots. We were content to hold the logs together with our hands and feet.

It was not until we got over our first enthusiasm for navigation and had begun to return to our tree-shelter to sleep at night, that we found the Swift One. I saw her first, gathering young acorns from the branches of a large oak near our tree. She was very timid. At first, she kept very still; but when she saw that she was discovered she dropped to the ground and dashed wildly away. We caught occasional glimpses of her from day to day, and came to look for her when we travelled back and forth between our tree and the mouth of the slough.

And then, one day, she did not run away. She waited our coming, and made soft peace-sounds. We could not get very near, however. When we seemed to approach too close, she darted suddenly away and from a safe distance uttered the soft sounds again. This continued for some days. It took a long while to get acquainted with her, but finally it was accomplished and she joined us sometimes in our play.

I liked her from the first. She was of most pleasing appearance. She was very mild. Her eyes were the mildest I had ever seen. In this she was quite unlike the rest of the girls and women of the Folk, who were born viragos. She never made harsh, angry cries, and it seemed to be her nature to flee away from trouble rather than to remain and fight.

The mildness I have mentioned seemed to emanate from her whole being. Her bodily as well as facial appearance was the cause of this. Her eyes were larger than most of her kind, and they were not so deep-set, while the lashes were longer and more regular.

Nor was her nose so thick and squat. It had quite a bridge, and the nostrils opened downward. Her incisors were not large, nor was her upper lip long and down-hanging, nor her lower lip protruding. She was not very hairy, except on the outsides of arms and legs and across the shoulders; and while she was thin-hipped, her calves were not twisted and gnarly.

I have often wondered, looking back upon her from the twentieth century through the medium of my dreams, and it has always occurred to me that possibly she may have been related to the Fire People. Her father, or mother, might well have come from that higher stock. While such things were not common, still they did occur, and I have seen the proof of them with my own eyes, even to the extent of members of the horde turning renegade and going to live with the Tree People.

All of which is neither here nor there. The Swift One was radically different from any of the females of the horde, and I had a liking for her from the first. Her mildness and gentleness attracted me. She was never rough, and she never fought. She always ran away, and right here may be noted the significance of the naming of her. She was a better climber than Lop-Ear or I. When we played tag we could never catch her except by accident, while she could catch us at will. She was remarkably swift in all her movements, and she had a genius for judging distances that was equalled only by her daring. Excessively timid in all other matters, she was without fear when it came to climbing or running through the trees, and Lop-Ear and I were awkward and lumbering and cowardly in comparison.

She was an orphan. We never saw her with any one, and there was no telling how long she had lived alone in the world. She must have learned early in her helpless childhood that safety lay only in flight. She was very wise and very discreet. It became a sort of game with Lop-Ear and me to try to find where she lived. It was certain that she had a tree-shelter somewhere, and not very far away; but trail her as we would, we could never find it. She was willing enough to join with us at play in the day-time, but the secret of her abiding-place she guarded jealously.

# Chapter XI

It must be remembered that the description I have just given of the Swift One is not the description that would have been given by Big-Tooth, my other self of my dreams, my prehistoric ancestor. It is by the medium of my dreams that I, the modern man, look through the eyes of Big-Tooth and see.

And so it is with much that I narrate of the events of that far-off time. There is a duality about my impressions that is too confusing to inflict upon my readers. I shall merely pause here in my narrative to indicate this duality, this perplexing mixing of personality. It is I, the modern, who look back across the centuries and weigh and analyze the emotions and motives of Big-Tooth, my other self. He did not bother to weigh and analyze. He was simplicity itself. He just lived events, without ever pondering why he lived them in his particular and often erratic way.

As I, my real self, grew older, I entered more and more into the substance of my dreams. One may dream, and even in the midst of the dream be aware that he is dreaming, and if the dream be bad, comfort himself with the thought that it is only a dream. This is a common experience with all of us. And so it was that I, the modern, often entered into my dreaming, and in the consequent strange dual personality was both actor and spectator. And right often have I, the modern, been perturbed and vexed by the foolishness, illogic, obtuseness, and general all-round stupendous stupidity of myself, the primitive.

And one thing more, before I end this digression. Have you ever dreamed that you dreamed? Dogs dream, horses dream, all animals dream. In Big-Tooth's day the half-men dreamed, and when the dreams were bad they howled in their sleep. Now I, the modern, have lain down with Big-Tooth and dreamed his dreams.

This is getting almost beyond the grip of the intellect, I know; but I do know that I have done this thing. And let me tell you that the flying and crawling dreams of Big-Tooth were as vivid to him as the falling-through-space dream is to you.

For Big-Tooth also had an other-self, and when he slept that other-self dreamed back into the past, back to the winged reptiles and the clash and the onset of dragons, and beyond that to the scurrying, rodent-like life of the tiny mammals, and far remoter still, to the shore-slime of the primeval sea. I cannot, I dare not, say more. It is all too vague and complicated and awful. I can only hint of those vast and terrific vistas through which I have peered hazily at the progression of life, not upward from the ape to man, but upward from the worm.

And now to return to my tale. I, Big-Tooth, knew not the Swift One as a creature of finer facial and bodily symmetry, with long-lashed eyes and a bridge to her nose

and down-opening nostrils that made toward beauty. I knew her only as the mild-eyed young female who made soft sounds and did not fight. I liked to play with her, I knew not why, to seek food in her company, and to go bird-nesting with her. And I must confess she taught me things about tree-climbing. She was very wise, very strong, and no clinging skirts impeded her movements.

It was about this time that a slight defection arose on the part of Lop-Ear. He got into the habit of wandering off in the direction of the tree where my mother lived. He had taken a liking to my vicious sister, and the Chatterer had come to tolerate him. Also, there were several other young people, progeny of the monogamic couples that lived in the neighborhood, and Lop-Ear played with these young people.

I could never get the Swift One to join with them. Whenever I visited them she dropped behind and disappeared. I remember once making a strong effort to persuade her. But she cast backward, anxious glances, then retreated, calling to me from a tree. So it was that I did not make a practice of accompanying Lop-Ear when he went to visit his new friends. The Swift One and I were good comrades, but, try as I would, I could never find her tree-shelter. Undoubtedly, had nothing happened, we would have soon mated, for our liking was mutual; but the something did happen.

One morning, the Swift One not having put in an appearance, Lop-Ear and I were down at the mouth of the slough playing on the logs. We had scarcely got out on the water, when we were startled by a roar of rage. It was Red-Eye. He was crouching on the edge of the timber jam and glowering his hatred at us. We were badly frightened, for here was no narrow-mouthed cave for refuge. But the twenty feet of water that intervened gave us temporary safety, and we plucked up courage.

Red-Eye stood up erect and began beating his hairy chest with his fist. Our two logs were side by side, and we sat on them and laughed at him. At first our laughter was half-hearted, tinged with fear, but as we became convinced of his impotence we waxed uproarious. He raged and raged at us, and ground his teeth in helpless fury. And in our fancied security we mocked and mocked him. We were ever short-sighted, we Folk.

Red-Eye abruptly ceased his breast-beating and tooth-grinding, and ran across the timber-jam to the shore. And just as abruptly our merriment gave way to consternation. It was not Red-Eye's way to forego revenge so easily. We waited in fear and trembling for whatever was to happen. It never struck us to paddle away. He came back with great leaps across the jam, one huge hand filled with round, water-washed pebbles. I am glad that he was unable to find larger missiles, say stones weighing two or three pounds, for we were no more than a score of feet away, and he surely would have killed us.

As it was, we were in no small danger. Zip! A tiny pebble whirled past with the force almost of a bullet. Lop-Ear and I began paddling frantically. Whiz-zip-bang! Lop-Ear screamed with sudden anguish. The pebble had struck him between the shoulders. Then I got one and yelled. The only thing that saved us was the exhausting of Red-

Eye's ammunition. He dashed back to the gravel-bed for more, while Lop-Ear and I paddled away.

Gradually we drew out of range, though Red-Eye continued making trips for more ammunition and the pebbles continued to whiz about us. Out in the centre of the slough there was a slight current, and in our excitement we failed to notice that it was drifting us into the river. We paddled, and Red-Eye kept as close as he could to us by following along the shore. Then he discovered larger rocks. Such ammunition increased his range. One fragment, fully five pounds in weight, crashed on the log alongside of me, and such was its impact that it drove a score of splinters, like fiery needles, into my leg. Had it struck me it would have killed me.

And then the river current caught us. So wildly were we paddling that Red-Eye was the first to notice it, and our first warning was his yell of triumph. Where the edge of the current struck the slough-water was a series of eddies or small whirlpools. These caught our clumsy logs and whirled them end for end, back and forth and around. We quit paddling and devoted our whole energy to holding the logs together alongside each other. In the meanwhile Red-Eye continued to bombard us, the rock fragments falling about us, splashing water on us, and menacing our lives. At the same time he gloated over us, wildly and vociferously.

It happened that there was a sharp turn in the river at the point where the slough entered, and the whole main current of the river was deflected to the other bank. And toward that bank, which was the north bank, we drifted rapidly, at the same time going down-stream. This quickly took us out of range of Red-Eye, and the last we saw of him was far out on a point of land, where he was jumping up and down and chanting a paean of victory.

Beyond holding the two logs together, Lop-Ear and I did nothing. We were resigned to our fate, and we remained resigned until we aroused to the fact that we were drifting along the north shore not a hundred feet away. We began to paddle for it. Here the main force of the current was flung back toward the south shore, and the result of our paddling was that we crossed the current where it was swiftest and narrowest. Before we were aware, we were out of it and in a quiet eddy.

Our logs drifted slowly and at last grounded gently on the bank. Lop-Ear and I crept ashore. The logs drifted on out of the eddy and swept away down the stream. We looked at each other, but we did not laugh. We were in a strange land, and it did not enter our minds that we could return to our own land in the same manner that we had come.

We had learned how to cross a river, though we did not know it. And this was something that no one else of the Folk had ever done. We were the first of the Folk to set foot on the north bank of the river, and, for that matter, I believe the last. That they would have done so in the time to come is undoubted; but the migration of the Fire People, and the consequent migration of the survivors of the Folk, set back our evolution for centuries.

Indeed, there is no telling how disastrous was to be the outcome of the Fire People's migration. Personally, I am prone to believe that it brought about the destruction of the Folk; that we, a branch of lower life budding toward the human, were nipped short off and perished down by the roaring surf where the river entered the sea. Of course, in such an eventuality, I remain to be accounted for; but I outrun my story, and such accounting will be made before I am done.

## Chapter XII

I have no idea how long Lop-Ear and I wandered in the land north of the river. We were like mariners wrecked on a desert isle, so far as concerned the likelihood of our getting home again. We turned our backs upon the river, and for weeks and months adventured in that wilderness where there were no Folk. It is very difficult for me to reconstruct our journeying, and impossible to do it from day to day. Most of it is hazy and indistinct, though here and there I have vivid recollections of things that happened.

Especially do I remember the hunger we endured on the mountains between Long Lake and Far Lake, and the calf we caught sleeping in the thicket. Also, there are the Tree People who dwelt in the forest between Long Lake and the mountains. It was they who chased us into the mountains and compelled us to travel on to Far Lake.

First, after we left the river, we worked toward the west till we came to a small stream that flowed through marshlands. Here we turned away toward the north, skirt-ing the marshes and after several days arriving at what I have called Long Lake. We spent some time around its upper end, where we found food in plenty; and then, one day, in the forest, we ran foul of the Tree People. These creatures were ferocious apes, nothing more. And yet they were not so different from us. They were more hairy, it is true; their legs were a trifle more twisted and gnarly, their eyes a bit smaller, their necks a bit thicker and shorter, and their nostrils slightly more like orifices in a sunken surface; but they had no hair on their faces and on the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet, and they made sounds similar to ours with somewhat similar meanings. After all, the Tree People and the Folk were not so unlike.

I found him first, a little withered, dried-up old fellow, wrinkled-faced and bleary-eyed and tottery. He was legitimate prey. In our world there was no sympathy between the kinds, and he was not our kind. He was a Tree-Man, and he was very old. He was sitting at the foot of a tree — evidently his tree, for we could see the tattered nest in the branches, in which he slept at night.

I pointed him out to Lop-Ear, and we made a rush for him. He started to climb, but was too slow. I caught him by the leg and dragged him back. Then we had fun. We pinched him, pulled his hair, tweaked his ears, and poked twigs into him, and all the while we laughed with streaming eyes. His futile anger was most absurd. He was a comical sight, striving to fan into flame the cold ashes of his youth, to resurrect his strength dead and gone through the oozing of the years — making woeful faces in place of the ferocious ones he intended, grinding his worn teeth together, beating his meagre chest with feeble fists.

Also, he had a cough, and he gasped and hacked and spluttered prodigiously. Every time he tried to climb the tree we pulled him back, until at last he surrendered to his weakness and did no more than sit and weep. And Lop-Ear and I sat with him, our arms around each other, and laughed at his wretchedness.

From weeping he went to whining, and from whining to wailing, until at last he achieved a scream. This alarmed us, but the more we tried to make him cease, the louder he screamed. And then, from not far away in the forest, came a "Goek! Goek!" to our ears. To this there were answering cries, several of them, and from very far off we could hear a big, bass "Goek! Goek! Goek!" Also, the "Whoo-whoo!" call was rising in the forest all around us.

Then came the chase. It seemed it never would end. They raced us through the trees, the whole tribe of them, and nearly caught us. We were forced to take to the ground, and here we had the advantage, for they were truly the Tree People, and while they out-climbed us we out-footed them on the ground. We broke away toward the north, the tribe howling on our track. Across the open spaces we gained, and in the brush they caught up with us, and more than once it was nip and tuck. And as the chase continued, we realized that we were not their kind, either, and that the bonds between us were anything but sympathetic.

They ran us for hours. The forest seemed interminable. We kept to the glades as much as possible, but they always ended in more thick forest. Sometimes we thought we had escaped, and sat down to rest; but always, before we could recover our breath, we would hear the hateful "Whoo-whoo!" cries and the terrible "Goek! Goek! Goek!" This latter sometimes terminated in a savage "Ha ha ha ha haaaaa!!!"

And in this fashion were we hunted through the forest by the exasperated Tree People. At last, by mid-afternoon, the slopes began rising higher and higher and the trees were becoming smaller. Then we came out on the grassy flanks of the mountains. Here was where we could make time, and here the Tree People gave up and returned to their forest.

The mountains were bleak and inhospitable, and three times that afternoon we tried to regain the woods. But the Tree People were lying in wait, and they drove us back. Lop-Ear and I slept that night in a dwarf tree, no larger than a bush. Here was no security, and we would have been easy prey for any hunting animal that chanced along.

In the morning, what of our new-gained respect for the Tree People, we faced into the mountains. That we had no definite plan, or even idea, I am confident. We were merely driven on by the danger we had escaped. Of our wanderings through the mountains I have only misty memories. We were in that bleak region many days, and we suffered much, especially from fear, it was all so new and strange. Also, we suffered from the cold, and later from hunger.

It — was a desolate land of rocks and foaming streams and clattering cataracts. We climbed and descended mighty canyons and gorges; and ever, from every view point, there spread out before us, in all directions, range upon range, the unceasing



mountains. We slept at night in holes and crevices, and on one cold night we perched on top a slender pinnacle of rock that was almost like a tree.

And then, at last, one hot midday, dizzy with hunger, we gained the divide. From this high backbone of earth, to the north, across the diminishing, down-falling ranges, we caught a glimpse of a far lake. The sun shone upon it, and about it were open, level grass-lands, while to the eastward we saw the dark line of a wide-stretching forest.

We were two days in gaining the lake, and we were weak with hunger; but on its shore, sleeping snugly in a thicket, we found a part-grown calf. It gave us much trouble, for we knew no other way to kill than with our hands. When we had gorged our fill, we carried the remainder of the meat to the eastward forest and hid it in a tree. We never returned to that tree, for the shore of the stream that drained Far Lake was packed thick with salmon that had come up from the sea to spawn.

Westward from the lake stretched the grass-lands, and here were multitudes of bison and wild cattle. Also were there many packs of wild dogs, and as there were no trees it was not a safe place for us. We followed north along the stream for days. Then, and for what reason I do not know, we abruptly left the stream and swung to the east, and then to the southeast, through a great forest. I shall not bore you with our journey. I but indicate it to show how we finally arrived at the Fire People's country.

We came out upon the river, but we did not know it for our river. We had been lost so long that we had come to accept the condition of being lost as habitual. As I look back I see clearly how our lives and destinies are shaped by the merest chance. We did not know it was our river — there was no way of telling; and if we had never crossed it we would most probably have never returned to the horde; and I, the modern, the thousand centuries yet to be born, would never have been born.

And yet Lop-Ear and I wanted greatly to return. We had experienced homesickness on our journey, the yearning for our own kind and land; and often had I had recollections of the Swift One, the young female who made soft sounds, whom it was good to be with, and who lived by herself nobody knew where. My recollections of her were accompanied by sensations of hunger, and these I felt when I was not hungry and when I had just eaten.

But to come back to the river. Food was plentiful, principally berries and succulent roots, and on the river bank we played and lingered for days. And then the idea came to Lop-Ear. It was a visible process, the coming of the idea. I saw it. The expression in his eyes became plaintive and querulous, and he was greatly perturbed. Then his eyes went muddy, as if he had lost his grip on the inchoate thought. This was followed by the plaintive, querulous expression as the idea persisted and he clutched it anew. He looked at me, and at the river and the far shore. He tried to speak, but had no sounds with which to express the idea. The result was a gibberish that made me laugh. This angered him, and he grabbed me suddenly and threw me on my back. Of course we fought, and in the end I chased him up a tree, where he secured a long branch and poked me every time I tried to get at him.

And the idea had gone glimmering. I did not know, and he had forgotten. But the next morning it awoke in him again. Perhaps it was the homing instinct in him asserting itself that made the idea persist. At any rate it was there, and clearer than before. He led me down to the water, where a log had grounded in an eddy. I thought he was minded to play, as we had played in the mouth of the slough. Nor did I change my mind as I watched him tow up a second log from farther down the shore.

It was not until we were on the logs, side by side and holding them together, and had paddled out into the current, that I learned his intention. He paused to point at the far shore, and resumed his paddling, at the same time uttering loud and encouraging cries. I understood, and we paddled energetically. The swift current caught us, flung us toward the south shore, but before we could make a landing flung us back toward the north shore.

Here arose dissension. Seeing the north shore so near, I began to paddle for it. Lop-Ear tried to paddle for the south shore. The logs swung around in circles, and we got nowhere, and all the time the forest was flashing past as we drifted down the stream. We could not fight. We knew better than to let go the grips of hands and feet that held the logs together. But we chattered and abused each other with our tongues until the current flung us toward the south bank again. That was now the nearest goal, and together and amicably we paddled for it. We landed in an eddy, and climbed directly into the trees to reconnoitre.

## Chapter XIII

It was not until the night of our first day on the south bank of the river that we discovered the Fire People. What must have been a band of wandering hunters went into camp not far from the tree in which Lop-Ear and I had elected to roost for the night. The voices of the Fire People at first alarmed us, but later, when darkness had come, we were attracted by the fire. We crept cautiously and silently from tree to tree till we got a good view of the scene.

In an open space among the trees, near to the river, the fire was burning. About it were half a dozen Fire-Men. Lop-Ear clutched me suddenly, and I could feel him tremble. I looked more closely, and saw the wizened little old hunter who had shot Broken-Tooth out of the tree years before. When he got up and walked about, throwing fresh wood upon the fire, I saw that he limped with his crippled leg. Whatever it was, it was a permanent injury. He seemed more dried up and wizened than ever, and the hair on his face was quite gray.

The other hunters were young men. I noted, lying near them on the ground, their bows and arrows, and I knew the weapons for what they were. The Fire-Men wore animal skins around their waists and across their shoulders. Their arms and legs, however, were bare, and they wore no footgear. As I have said before, they were not quite so hairy as we of the Folk. They did not have large heads, and between them and the Folk there was very little difference in the degree of the slant of the head back from the eyes.

They were less stooped than we, less springy in their movements. Their backbones and hips and knee-joints seemed more rigid. Their arms were not so long as ours either, and I did not notice that they ever balanced themselves when they walked, by touching the ground on either side with their hands. Also, their muscles were more rounded and symmetrical than ours, and their faces were more pleasing. Their nose orifices opened downward; likewise the bridges of their noses were more developed, did not look so squat nor crushed as ours. Their lips were less flabby and pendent, and their eye-teeth did not look so much like fangs. However, they were quite as thin-hipped as we, and did not weigh much more. Take it all in all, they were less different from us than were we from the Tree People. Certainly, all three kinds were related, and not so remotely related at that.

The fire around which they sat was especially attractive. Lop-Ear and I sat for hours, watching the flames and smoke. It was most fascinating when fresh fuel was thrown on and showers of sparks went flying upward. I wanted to come closer and look

at the fire, but there was no way. We were crouching in the forks of a tree on the edge of the open space, and we did not dare run the risk of being discovered.

The Fire-Men squatted around the fire and slept with their heads bowed forward on their knees. They did not sleep soundly. Their ears twitched in their sleep, and they were restless. Every little while one or another got up and threw more wood upon the fire. About the circle of light in the forest, in the darkness beyond, roamed hunting animals. Lop-Ear and I could tell them by their sounds. There were wild dogs and a hyena, and for a time there was a great yelping and snarling that awakened on the instant the whole circle of sleeping Fire-Men.

Once a lion and a lioness stood beneath our tree and gazed out with bristling hair and blinking eyes. The lion licked his chops and was nervous with eagerness, as if he wanted to go forward and make a meal. But the lioness was more cautious. It was she that discovered us, and the pair stood and looked up at us, silently, with twitching, scenting nostrils. Then they growled, looked once again at the fire, and turned away into the forest.

For a much longer time Lop-Ear and I remained and watched. Now and again we could hear the crashing of heavy bodies in the thickets and underbrush, and from the darkness of the other side, across the circle, we could see eyes gleaming in the firelight. In the distance we heard a lion roar, and from far off came the scream of some stricken animal, splashing and floundering in a drinking-place. Also, from the river, came a great grunting of rhinoceroses.

In the morning, after having had our sleep, we crept back to the fire. It was still smouldering, and the Fire-Men were gone. We made a circle through the forest to make sure, and then we ran to the fire. I wanted to see what it was like, and between thumb and finger I picked up a glowing coal. My cry of pain and fear, as I dropped it, stampeded Lop-Ear into the trees, and his flight frightened me after him.

The next time we came back more cautiously, and we avoided the glowing coals. We fell to imitating the Fire-Men. We squatted down by the fire, and with heads bent forward on our knees, made believe to sleep. Then we mimicked their speech, talking to each other in their fashion and making a great gibberish. I remembered seeing the wizened old hunter poke the fire with a stick. I poked the fire with a stick, turning up masses of live coals and clouds of white ashes. This was great sport, and soon we were coated white with the ashes.

It was inevitable that we should imitate the Fire-Men in replenishing the fire. We tried it first with small pieces of wood. It was a success. The wood flamed up and crackled, and we danced and gibbered with delight. Then we began to throw on larger pieces of wood. We put on more and more, until we had a mighty fire. We dashed excitedly back and forth, dragging dead limbs and branches from out the forest. The flames soared higher and higher, and the smoke-column out-towered the trees. There was a tremendous snapping and crackling and roaring. It was the most monumental work we had ever effected with our hands, and we were proud of it. We, too, were Fire-Men, we thought, as we danced there, white gnomes in the conflagration.

The dried grass and underbrush caught fire, but we did not notice it. Suddenly a great tree on the edge of the open space burst into flames.

We looked at it with startled eyes. The heat of it drove us back. Another tree caught, and another, and then half a dozen. We were frightened. The monster had broken loose. We crouched down in fear, while the fire ate around the circle and hemmed us in. Into Lop-Ear's eyes came the plaintive look that always accompanied incomprehension, and I know that in my eyes must have been the same look. We huddled, with our arms around each other, until the heat began to reach us and the odor of burning hair was in our nostrils. Then we made a dash of it, and fled away westward through the forest, looking back and laughing as we ran.

By the middle of the day we came to a neck of land, made, as we afterward discovered, by a great curve of the river that almost completed a circle. Right across the neck lay bunched several low and partly wooded hills. Over these we climbed, looking backward at the forest which had become a sea of flame that swept eastward before a rising wind. We continued to the west, following the river bank, and before we knew it we were in the midst of the abiding-place of the Fire People.

This abiding-place was a splendid strategic selection. It was a peninsula, protected on three sides by the curving river. On only one side was it accessible by land. This was the narrow neck of the peninsula, and here the several low hills were a natural obstacle. Practically isolated from the rest of the world, the Fire People must have here lived and prospered for a long time. In fact, I think it was their prosperity that was responsible for the subsequent migration that worked such calamity upon the Folk. The Fire People must have increased in numbers until they pressed uncomfortably against the bounds of their habitat. They were expanding, and in the course of their expanding they drove the Folk before them, and settled down themselves in the caves and occupied the territory that we had occupied.

But Lop-Ear and I little dreamed of all this when we found ourselves in the Fire People's stronghold. We had but one idea, and that was to get away, though we could not forbear humoring our curiosity by peeping out upon the village. For the first time we saw the women and children of the Fire People. The latter ran for the most part naked, though the former wore skins of wild animals.

The Fire People, like ourselves, lived in caves. The open space in front of the caves sloped down to the river, and in the open space burned many small fires. But whether or not the Fire People cooked their food, I do not know. Lop-Ear and I did not see them cook. Yet it is my opinion that they surely must have performed some sort of rude cookery. Like us, they carried water in gourds from the river. There was much coming and going, and loud cries made by the women and children. The latter played about and cut up antics quite in the same way as did the children of the Folk, and they more nearly resembled the children of the Folk than did the grown Fire People resemble the grown Folk.

Lop-Ear and I did not linger long. We saw some of the part-grown boys shooting with bow and arrow, and we sneaked back into the thicker forest and made our way

to the river. And there we found a catamaran, a real catamaran, one evidently made by some Fire-Man. The two logs were small and straight, and were lashed together by means of tough roots and crosspieces of wood.

This time the idea occurred simultaneously to us. We were trying to escape out of the Fire People's territory. What better way than by crossing the river on these logs? We climbed on board and shoved off. A sudden something gripped the catamaran and flung it downstream violently against the bank. The abrupt stoppage almost whipped us off into the water. The catamaran was tied to a tree by a rope of twisted roots. This we untied before shoving off again.

By the time we had paddled well out into the current, we had drifted so far downstream that we were in full view of the Fire People's abiding-place. So occupied were we with our paddling, our eyes fixed upon the other bank, that we knew nothing until aroused by a yell from the shore. We looked around. There were the Fire People, many of them, looking at us and pointing at us, and more were crawling out of the caves. We sat up to watch, and forgot all about paddling. There was a great hullabaloo on the shore. Some of the Fire-Men discharged their bows at us, and a few of the arrows fell near us, but the range was too great.

It was a great day for Lop-Ear and me. To the east the conflagration we had started was filling half the sky with smoke. And here we were, perfectly safe in the middle of the river, encircling the Fire People's stronghold. We sat and laughed at them as we dashed by, swinging south, and southeast to east, and even to northeast, and then east again, southeast and south and on around to the west, a great double curve where the river nearly tied a knot in itself.

As we swept on to the west, the Fire People far behind, a familiar scene flashed upon our eyes.

It was the great drinking-place, where we had wandered once or twice to watch the circus of the animals when they came down to drink. Beyond it, we knew, was the carrot patch, and beyond that the caves and the abiding-place of the horde. We began to paddle for the bank that slid swiftly past, and before we knew it we were down upon the drinking-places used by the horde. There were the women and children, the water carriers, a number of them, filling their gourds. At sight of us they stampeded madly up the run-ways, leaving behind them a trail of gourds they had dropped.

We landed, and of course we neglected to tie up the catamaran, which floated off down the river. Right cautiously we crept up a run-way. The Folk had all disappeared into their holes, though here and there we could see a face peering out at us. There was no sign of Red-Eye. We were home again. And that night we slept in our own little cave high up on the cliff, though first we had to evict a couple of pugnacious youngsters who had taken possession.

## Chapter XIV

The months came and went. The drama and tragedy of the future were yet to come upon the stage, and in the meantime we pounded nuts and lived. It — was a good year, I remember, for nuts. We used to fill gourds with nuts and carry them to the pounding-places. We placed them in depressions in the rock, and, with a piece of rock in our hands, we cracked them and ate them as we cracked.

It was the fall of the year when Lop-Ear and I returned from our long adventure-journey, and the winter that followed was mild. I made frequent trips to the neighborhood of my old home-tree, and frequently I searched the whole territory that lay between the blueberry swamp and the mouth of the slough where Lop-Ear and I had learned navigation, but no clew could I get of the Swift One. She had disappeared. And I wanted her. I was impelled by that hunger which I have mentioned, and which was akin to physical hunger, albeit it came often upon me when my stomach was full. But all my search was vain.

Life was not monotonous at the caves, however. There was Red-Eye to be considered. Lop-Ear and I never knew a moment's peace except when we were in our own little cave. In spite of the enlargement of the entrance we had made, it was still a tight squeeze for us to get in. And though from time to time we continued to enlarge, it was still too small for Red-Eye's monstrous body. But he never stormed our cave again. He had learned the lesson well, and he carried on his neck a bulging lump to show where I had hit him with the rock. This lump never went away, and it was prominent enough to be seen at a distance. I often took great delight in watching that evidence of my handiwork; and sometimes, when I was myself assuredly safe, the sight of it caused me to laugh.

While the other Folk would not have come to our rescue had Red-Eye proceeded to tear Lop-Ear and me to pieces before their eyes, nevertheless they sympathized with us. Possibly it was not sympathy but the way they expressed their hatred for Red-Eye; at any rate they always warned us of his approach. Whether in the forest, at the drinking-places, or in the open space before the caves, they were always quick to warn us. Thus we had the advantage of many eyes in our feud with Red-Eye, the atavism.

Once he nearly got me. It was early in the morning, and the Folk were not yet up. The surprise was complete. I was cut off from the way up the cliff to my cave. Before I knew it I had dashed into the double-cave, — the cave where Lop-Ear had first eluded me long years before, and where old Saber-Tooth had come to discomfiture when he pursued the two Folk. By the time I had got through the connecting passage between

the two caves, I discovered that Red-Eye was not following me. The next moment he charged into the cave from the outside. I slipped back through the passage, and he charged out and around and in upon me again. I merely repeated my performance of slipping through the passage.

He kept me there half a day before he gave up. After that, when Lop-Ear and I were reasonably sure of gaining the double-cave, we did not retreat up the cliff to our own cave when Red-Eye came upon the scene. All we did was to keep an eye on him and see that he did not cut across our line of retreat.

It was during this winter that Red-Eye killed his latest wife with abuse and repeated beatings. I have called him an atavism, but in this he was worse than an atavism, for the males of the lower animals do not maltreat and murder their mates. In this I take it that Red-Eye, in spite of his tremendous atavistic tendencies, foreshadowed the coming of man, for it is the males of the human species only that murder their mates.

As was to be expected, with the doing away of one wife Red-Eye proceeded to get another. He decided upon the Singing One. She was the granddaughter of old Marrow-Bone, and the daughter of the Hairless One. She was a young thing, greatly given to singing at the mouth of her cave in the twilight, and she had but recently mated with Crooked-Leg. He was a quiet individual, molesting no one and not given to bickering with his fellows. He was no fighter anyway. He was small and lean, and not so active on his legs as the rest of us.

Red-Eye never committed a more outrageous deed. It was in the quiet at the end of the day, when we began to congregate in the open space before climbing into our caves. Suddenly the Singing One dashed up a run-way from a drinking-place, pursued by Red-Eye. She ran to her husband. Poor little Crooked-Leg was terribly scared. But he was a hero. He knew that death was upon him, yet he did not run away. He stood up, and chattered, bristled, and showed his teeth.

Red-Eye roared with rage. It was an offence to him that any of the Folk should dare to withstand him. His hand shot out and clutched Crooked-Leg by the neck. The latter sank his teeth into Red-Eye's arm; but the next moment, with a broken neck, Crooked-Leg was floundering and squirming on the ground. The Singing One screeched and gibbered. Red-Eye seized her by the hair of her head and dragged her toward his cave. He handled her roughly when the climb began, and he dragged and hauled her up into the cave.

We were very angry, insanely, vociferously angry. Beating our chests, bristling, and gnashing our teeth, we gathered together in our rage. We felt the prod of gregarious instinct, the drawing together as though for united action, the impulse toward cooperation. In dim ways this need for united action was impressed upon us. But there was no way to achieve it because there was no way to express it. We did not turn to, all of us, and destroy Red-Eye, because we lacked a vocabulary. We were vaguely thinking thoughts for which there were no thought-symbols. These thought-symbols were yet to be slowly and painfully invented.



We tried to freight sound with the vague thoughts that flitted like shadows through our consciousness. The Hairless One began to chatter loudly. By his noises he expressed anger against Red-Eye and desire to hurt Red-Eye. Thus far he got, and thus far we understood. But when he tried to express the cooperative impulse that stirred within him, his noises became gibberish. Then Big-Face, with brow-bristling and chest-pounding, began to chatter. One after another of us joined in the orgy of rage, until even old Marrow-Bone was mumbling and spluttering with his cracked voice and withered lips. Some one seized a stick and began pounding a log. In a moment he had struck a rhythm. Unconsciously, our yells and exclamations yielded to this rhythm. It had a soothing effect upon us; and before we knew it, our rage forgotten, we were in the full swing of a hee-hee council.

These hee-hee councils splendidly illustrate the inconsecutiveness and inconsequentiality of the Folk. Here were we, drawn together by mutual rage and the impulse toward cooperation, led off into forgetfulness by the establishment of a rude rhythm. We were sociable and gregarious, and these singing and laughing councils satisfied us. In ways the hee-hee council was an adumbration of the councils of primitive man, and of the great national assemblies and international conventions of latter-day man. But we Folk of the Younger World lacked speech, and whenever we were so drawn together we precipitated babel, out of which arose a unanimity of rhythm that contained within itself the essentials of art yet to come. It was art nascent.

There was nothing long-continued about these rhythms that we struck. A rhythm was soon lost, and pandemonium reigned until we could find the rhythm again or start a new one. Sometimes half a dozen rhythms would be swinging simultaneously, each rhythm backed by a group that strove ardently to drown out the other rhythms.

In the intervals of pandemonium, each chattered, cut up, hooted, screeched, and danced, himself sufficient unto himself, filled with his own ideas and volitions to the exclusion of all others, a veritable centre of the universe, divorced for the time being from any unanimity with the other universe-centres leaping and yelling around him. Then would come the rhythm — a clapping of hands; the beating of a stick upon a log; the example of one that leaped with repetitions; or the chanting of one that uttered, explosively and regularly, with inflection that rose and fell, “A-bang, a-bang! A-bang, a-bang!” One after another of the self-centred Folk would yield to it, and soon all would be dancing or chanting in chorus. “Ha-ah, ha-ah, ha-ah-ha!” was one of our favorite choruses, and another was, “Eh-wah, eh-wah, eh-wah-hah!”

And so, with mad antics, leaping, reeling, and over-balancing, we danced and sang in the sombre twilight of the primeval world, inducing forgetfulness, achieving unanimity, and working ourselves up into sensuous frenzy. And so it was that our rage against Red-Eye was soothed away by art, and we screamed the wild choruses of the hee-hee council until the night warned us of its terrors, and we crept away to our holes in the rocks, calling softly to one another, while the stars came out and darkness settled down.

We were afraid only of the dark. We had no germs of religion, no conceptions of an unseen world. We knew only the real world, and the things we feared were the real things, the concrete dangers, the flesh-and-blood animals that preyed. It was they that made us afraid of the dark, for darkness was the time of the hunting animals. It was then that they came out of their lairs and pounced upon one from the dark wherein they lurked invisible.

Possibly it was out of this fear of the real denizens of the dark that the fear of the unreal denizens was later to develop and to culminate in a whole and mighty unseen world. As imagination grew it is likely that the fear of death increased until the Folk that were to come projected this fear into the dark and peopled it with spirits. I think the Fire People had already begun to be afraid of the dark in this fashion; but the reasons we Folk had for breaking up our hee-hee councils and fleeing to our holes were old Saber-Tooth, the lions and the jackals, the wild dogs and the wolves, and all the hungry, meat-eating breeds.

# Chapter XV

Lop-Ear got married. It was the second winter after our adventure-journey, and it was most unexpected. He gave me no warning. The first I knew was one twilight when I climbed the cliff to our cave. I squeezed into the entrance and there I stopped. There was no room for me. Lop-Ear and his mate were in possession, and she was none other than my sister, the daughter of my step-father, the Chatterer.

I tried to force my way in. There was space only for two, and that space was already occupied. Also, they had me at a disadvantage, and, what of the scratching and hair-pulling I received, I was glad to retreat. I slept that night, and for many nights, in the connecting passage of the double-cave. From my experience it seemed reasonably safe. As the two Folk had dodged old Saber-Tooth, and as I had dodged Red-Eye, so it seemed to me that I could dodge the hunting animals by going back and forth between the two caves.

I had forgotten the wild dogs. They were small enough to go through any passage that I could squeeze through. One night they nosed me out. Had they entered both caves at the same time they would have got me. As it was, followed by some of them through the passage, I dashed out the mouth of the other cave. Outside were the rest of the wild dogs. They sprang for me as I sprang for the cliff-wall and began to climb. One of them, a lean and hungry brute, caught me in mid-leap. His teeth sank into my thigh-muscles, and he nearly dragged me back. He held on, but I made no effort to dislodge him, devoting my whole effort to climbing out of reach of the rest of the brutes.

Not until I was safe from them did I turn my attention to that live agony on my thigh. And then, a dozen feet above the snapping pack that leaped and scrambled against the wall and fell back, I got the dog by the throat and slowly throttled him. I was a long time doing it. He clawed and ripped my hair and hide with his hind-paws, and ever he jerked and lunged with his weight to drag me from the wall.

At last his teeth opened and released my torn flesh. I carried his body up the cliff with me, and perched out the night in the entrance of my old cave, wherein were Lop-Ear and my sister. But first I had to endure a storm of abuse from the aroused horde for being the cause of the disturbance. I had my revenge. From time to time, as the noise of the pack below eased down, I dropped a rock and started it up again. Whereupon, from all around, the abuse of the exasperated Folk began afresh. In the morning I shared the dog with Lop-Ear and his wife, and for several days the three of us were neither vegetarians nor fruitarians.

Lop-Ear's marriage was not a happy one, and the consolation about it is that it did not last very long. Neither he nor I was happy during that period. I was lonely. I suffered the inconvenience of being cast out of my safe little cave, and somehow I did not make it up with any other of the young males. I suppose my long-continued chumming with Lop-Ear had become a habit.

I might have married, it is true; and most likely I should have married had it not been for the dearth of females in the horde. This dearth, it is fair to assume, was caused by the exorbitance of Red-Eye, and it illustrates the menace he was to the existence of the horde. Then there was the Swift One, whom I had not forgotten.

At any rate, during the period of Lop-Ear's marriage I knocked about from pillar to post, in danger every night that I slept, and never comfortable. One of the Folk died, and his widow was taken into the cave of another one of the Folk. I took possession of the abandoned cave, but it was wide-mouthed, and after Red-Eye nearly trapped me in it one day, I returned to sleeping in the passage of the double-cave. During the summer, however, I used to stay away from the caves for weeks, sleeping in a tree-shelter I made near the mouth of the slough.

I have said that Lop-Ear was not happy. My sister was the daughter of the Chatterer, and she made Lop-Ear's life miserable for him. In no other cave was there so much squabbling and bickering. If Red-Eye was a Bluebeard, Lop-Ear was hen-pecked; and I imagine that Red-Eye was too shrewd ever to covet Lop-Ear's wife.

Fortunately for Lop-Ear, she died. An unusual thing happened that summer. Late, almost at the end of it, a second crop of the stringy-rooted carrots sprang up. These unexpected second-crop roots were young and juicy and tender, and for some time the carrot-patch was the favorite feeding-place of the horde. One morning, early, several score of us were there making our breakfast. On one side of me was the Hairless One. Beyond him were his father and son, old Marrow-Bone and Long-Lip. On the other side of me were my sister and Lop-Ear, she being next to me.

There was no warning. On the sudden, both the Hairless One and my sister sprang and screamed. At the same instant I heard the thud of the arrows that transfixed them. The next instant they were down on the ground, floundering and gasping, and the rest of us were stampeding for the trees. An arrow drove past me and entered the ground, its feathered shaft vibrating and oscillating from the impact of its arrested flight. I remember clearly how I swerved as I ran, to go past it, and that I gave it a needlessly wide berth. I must have shied at it as a horse shies at an object it fears.

Lop-Ear took a smashing fall as he ran beside me. An arrow had driven through the calf of his leg and tripped him. He tried to run, but was tripped and thrown by it a second time. He sat up, crouching, trembling with fear, and called to me pleadingly. I dashed back. He showed me the arrow. I caught hold of it to pull it out, but the consequent hurt made him seize my hand and stop me. A flying arrow passed between us. Another struck a rock, splintered, and fell to the ground. This was too much. I pulled, suddenly, with all my might. Lop-Ear screamed as the arrow came out, and struck at me angrily. But the next moment we were in full flight again.

I looked back. Old Marrow-Bone, deserted and far behind, was tottering silently along in his handicapped race with death. Sometimes he almost fell, and once he did fall; but no more arrows were coming. He scrambled weakly to his feet. Age burdened him heavily, but he did not want to die. The three Fire-Men, who were now running forward from their forest ambush, could easily have got him, but they did not try. Perhaps he was too old and tough. But they did want the Hairless One and my sister, for as I looked back from the trees I could see the Fire-Men beating in their heads with rocks. One of the Fire-Men was the wizened old hunter who limped.

We went on through the trees toward the caves — an excited and disorderly mob that drove before it to their holes all the small life of the forest, and that set the blue-jays screaming impudently. Now that there was no immediate danger, Long-Lip waited for his grand-father, Marrow-Bone; and with the gap of a generation between them, the old fellow and the youth brought up our rear.

And so it was that Lop-Ear became a bachelor once more. That night I slept with him in the old cave, and our old life of chumming began again. The loss of his mate seemed to cause him no grief. At least he showed no signs of it, nor of need for her. It was the wound in his leg that seemed to bother him, and it was all of a week before he got back again to his old spryness.

Marrow-Bone was the only old member in the horde. Sometimes, on looking back upon him, when the vision of him is most clear, I note a striking resemblance between him and the father of my father's gardener. The gardener's father was very old, very wrinkled and withered; and for all the world, when he peered through his tiny, bleary eyes and mumbled with his toothless gums, he looked and acted like old Marrow-Bone. This resemblance, as a child, used to frighten me. I always ran when I saw the old man tottering along on his two canes. Old Marrow-Bone even had a bit of sparse and straggly white beard that seemed identical with the whiskers of the old man.

As I have said, Marrow-Bone was the only old member of the horde. He was an exception. The Folk never lived to old age. Middle age was fairly rare. Death by violence was the common way of death. They died as my father had died, as Broken-Tooth had died, as my sister and the Hairless One had just died — abruptly and brutally, in the full possession of their faculties, in the full swing and rush of life. Natural death? To die violently was the natural way of dying in those days.

No one died of old age among the Folk. I never knew of a case. Even Marrow-Bone did not die that way, and he was the only one in my generation who had the chance. A bad rippling, any serious accidental or temporary impairment of the faculties, meant swift death. As a rule, these deaths were not witnessed.

Members of the horde simply dropped out of sight. They left the caves in the morning, and they never came back. They disappeared — into the ravenous maws of the hunting creatures.

This inroad of the Fire People on the carrot-patch was the beginning of the end, though we did not know it. The hunters of the Fire People began to appear more frequently as the time went by. They came in twos and threes, creeping silently through

the forest, with their flying arrows able to annihilate distance and bring down prey from the top of the loftiest tree without themselves climbing into it. The bow and arrow was like an enormous extension of their leaping and striking muscles, so that, virtually, they could leap and kill at a hundred feet and more. This made them far more terrible than Saber-Tooth himself. And then they were very wise. They had speech that enabled them more effectively to reason, and in addition they understood cooperation.

We Folk came to be very circumspect when we were in the forest. We were more alert and vigilant and timid. No longer were the trees a protection to be relied upon. No longer could we perch on a branch and laugh down at our carnivorous enemies on the ground. The Fire People were carnivorous, with claws and fangs a hundred feet long, the most terrible of all the hunting animals that ranged the primeval world.

One morning, before the Folk had dispersed to the forest, there was a panic among the water-carriers and those who had gone down to the river to drink. The whole horde fled to the caves. It was our habit, at such times, to flee first and investigate afterward. We waited in the mouths of our caves and watched. After some time a Fire-Man stepped cautiously into the open space. It was the little wizened old hunter. He stood for a long time and watched us, looking our caves and the cliff-wall up and down. He descended one of the run-ways to a drinking-place, returning a few minutes later by another run-way. Again he stood and watched us carefully, for a long time. Then he turned on his heel and limped into the forest, leaving us calling querulously and plaintively to one another from the cave-mouths.

## Chapter XVI

I found her down in the old neighborhood near the blueberry swamp, where my mother lived and where Lop-Ear and I had built our first tree-shelter. It was unexpected. As I came under the tree I heard the familiar soft sound and looked up. There she was, the Swift One, sitting on a limb and swinging her legs back and forth as she looked at me.

I stood still for some time. The sight of her had made me very happy. And then an unrest and a pain began to creep in on this happiness. I started to climb the tree after her, and she retreated slowly out the limb. Just as I reached for her, she sprang through the air and landed in the branches of the next tree. From amid the rustling leaves she peeped out at me and made soft sounds. I leaped straight for her, and after an exciting chase the situation was duplicated, for there she was, making soft sounds and peeping out from the leaves of a third tree.

It was borne in upon me that somehow it was different now from the old days before Lop-Ear and I had gone on our adventure-journey. I wanted her, and I knew that I wanted her. And she knew it, too. That was why she would not let me come near her. I forgot that she was truly the Swift One, and that in the art of climbing she had been my teacher. I pursued her from tree to tree, and ever she eluded me, peeping back at me with kindly eyes, making soft sounds, and dancing and leaping and teetering before me just out of reach. The more she eluded me, the more I wanted to catch her, and the lengthening shadows of the afternoon bore witness to the futility of my effort.

As I pursued her, or sometimes rested in an adjoining tree and watched her, I noticed the change in her. She was larger, heavier, more grown-up. Her lines were rounder, her muscles fuller, and there was about her that indefinite something of maturity that was new to her and that incited me on. Three years she had been gone — three years at the very least, and the change in her was marked. I say three years; it is as near as I can measure the time. A fourth year may have elapsed, which I have confused with the happenings of the other three years. The more I think of it, the more confident I am that it must be four years that she was away.

Where she went, why she went, and what happened to her during that time, I do not know. There was no way for her to tell me, any more than there was a way for Lop-Ear and me to tell the Folk what we had seen when we were away. Like us, the chance is she had gone off on an adventure-journey, and by herself. On the other hand, it is possible that Red-Eye may have been the cause of her going. It is quite certain that he must have come upon her from time to time, wandering in the woods; and if he had pursued her there is no question but that it would have been sufficient to drive

her away. From subsequent events, I am led to believe that she must have travelled far to the south, across a range of mountains and down to the banks of a strange river, away from any of her kind. Many Tree People lived down there, and I think it must have been they who finally drove her back to the horde and to me. My reasons for this I shall explain later.

The shadows grew longer, and I pursued more ardently than ever, and still I could not catch her. She made believe that she was trying desperately to escape me, and all the time she managed to keep just beyond reach. I forgot everything — time, the oncoming of night, and my meat-eating enemies. I was insane with love of her, and with — anger, too, because she would not let me come up with her. It was strange how this anger against her seemed to be part of my desire for her.

As I have said, I forgot everything. In racing across an open space I ran full tilt upon a colony of snakes. They did not deter me. I was mad. They struck at me, but I ducked and dodged and ran on. Then there was a python that ordinarily would have sent me screeching to a tree-top. He did run me into a tree; but the Swift One was going out of sight, and I sprang back to the ground and went on. It was a close shave. Then there was my old enemy, the hyena. From my conduct he was sure something was going to happen, and he followed me for an hour. Once we exasperated a band of wild pigs, and they took after us. The Swift One dared a wide leap between trees that was too much for me. I had to take to the ground. There were the pigs. I didn't care. I struck the earth within a yard of the nearest one. They flanked me as I ran, and chased me into two different trees out of the line of my pursuit of the Swift One. I ventured the ground again, doubled back, and crossed a wide open space, with the whole band grunting, bristling, and tusk-gnashing at my heels.

If I had tripped or stumbled in that open space, there would have been no chance for me. But I didn't. And I didn't care whether I did or not. I was in such mood that I would have faced old Saber-Tooth himself, or a score of arrow-shooting Fire People. Such was the madness of love...with me. With the Swift One it was different. She was very wise. She did not take any real risks, and I remember, on looking back across the centuries to that wild love-chase, that when the pigs delayed me she did not run away very fast, but waited, rather, for me to take up the pursuit again. Also, she directed her retreat before me, going always in the direction she wanted to go.

At last came the dark. She led me around the mossy shoulder of a canyon wall that out-jutted among the trees. After that we penetrated a dense mass of underbrush that scraped and ripped me in passing. But she never ruffled a hair. She knew the way. In the midst of the thicket was a large oak. I was very close to her when she climbed it; and in the forks, in the nest-shelter I had sought so long and vainly, I caught her.

The hyena had taken our trail again, and he now sat down on the ground and made hungry noises. But we did not mind, and we laughed at him when he snarled and went away through the thicket. It was the spring-time, and the night noises were many and varied. As was the custom at that time of the year, there was much fighting among the animals. From the nest we could hear the squealing and neighing of wild horses, the



trumpeting of elephants, and the roaring of lions. But the moon came out, and the air was warm, and we laughed and were unafraid.

I remember, next morning, that we came upon two ruffled cock-birds that fought so ardently that I went right up to them and caught them by their necks. Thus did the Swift One and I get our wedding breakfast. They were delicious. It was easy to catch birds in the spring of the year. There was one night that year when two elk fought in the moonlight, while the Swift One and I watched from the trees; and we saw a lion and lioness crawl up to them unheeded, and kill them as they fought.

There is no telling how long we might have lived in the Swift One's tree-shelter. But one day, while we were away, the tree was struck by lightning. Great limbs were riven, and the nest was demolished. I started to rebuild, but the Swift One would have nothing to do with it. As I was to learn, she was greatly afraid of lightning, and I could not persuade her back into the tree. So it came about, our honeymoon over, that we went to the caves to live. As Lop-Ear had evicted me from the cave when he got married, I now evicted him; and the Swift One and I settled down in it, while he slept at night in the connecting passage of the double cave.

And with our coming to live with the horde came trouble. Red-Eye had had I don't know how many wives since the Singing One. She had gone the way of the rest. At present he had a little, soft, spiritless thing that whimpered and wept all the time, whether he beat her or not; and her passing was a question of very little time. Before she passed, even, Red-Eye set his eyes on the Swift One; and when she passed, the persecution of the Swift One began.

Well for her that she was the Swift One, that she had that amazing aptitude for swift flight through the trees. She needed all her wisdom and daring in order to keep out of the clutches of Red-Eye. I could not help her. He was so powerful a monster that he could have torn me limb from limb. As it was, to my death I carried an injured shoulder that ached and went lame in rainy weather and that was a mark of his handiwork.

The Swift One was sick at the time I received this injury. It must have been a touch of the malaria from which we sometimes suffered; but whatever it was, it made her dull and heavy. She did not have the accustomed spring to her muscles, and was indeed in poor shape for flight when Red-Eye cornered her near the lair of the wild dogs, several miles south from the caves. Usually, she would have circled around him, beaten him in the straight-away, and gained the protection of our small-mouthed cave. But she could not circle him. She was too dull and slow. Each time he headed her off, until she gave over the attempt and devoted her energies wholly to keeping out of his clutches.

Had she not been sick it would have been child's play for her to elude him; but as it was, it required all her caution and cunning. It was to her advantage that she could travel on thinner branches than he, and make wider leaps. Also, she was an unerring judge of distance, and she had an instinct for knowing the strength of twigs, branches, and rotten limbs.

It was an interminable chase. Round and round and back and forth for long stretches through the forest they dashed. There was great excitement among the other Folk.

They set up a wild chattering, that was loudest when Red-Eye was at a distance, and that hushed when the chase led him near. They were impotent onlookers. The females screeched and gibbered, and the males beat their chests in helpless rage. Big Face was especially angry, and though he hushed his racket when Red-Eye drew near, he did not hush it to the extent the others did.

As for me, I played no brave part. I know I was anything but a hero. Besides, of what use would it have been for me to encounter Red-Eye? He was the mighty monster, the abysmal brute, and there was no hope for me in a conflict of strength. He would have killed me, and the situation would have remained unchanged. He would have caught the Swift One before she could have gained the cave. As it was, I could only look on in helpless fury, and dodge out of the way and cease my raging when he came too near.

The hours passed. It was late afternoon. And still the chase went on. Red-Eye was bent upon exhausting the Swift One. He deliberately ran her down. After a long time she began to tire and could no longer maintain her headlong flight. Then it was that she began going far out on the thinnest branches, where he could not follow. Thus she might have got a breathing spell, but Red-Eye was fiendish. Unable to follow her, he dislodged her by shaking her off. With all his strength and weight, he would shake the branch back and forth until he snapped her off as one would snap a fly from a whip-lash. The first time, she saved herself by falling into branches lower down. Another time, though they did not save her from the ground, they broke her fall. Still another time, so fiercely did he snap her from the branch, she was flung clear across a gap into another tree. It was remarkable, the way she gripped and saved herself. Only when driven to it did she seek the temporary safety of the thin branches. But she was so tired that she could not otherwise avoid him, and time after time she was compelled to take to the thin branches.

Still the chase went on, and still the Folk screeched, beat their chests, and gnashed their teeth. Then came the end. It was almost twilight. Trembling, panting, struggling for breath, the Swift One clung pitiably to a high thin branch. It was thirty feet to the ground, and nothing intervened. Red-Eye swung back and forth on the branch farther down. It became a pendulum, swinging wider and wider with every lunge of his weight. Then he reversed suddenly, just before the downward swing was completed. Her grips were torn loose, and, screaming, she was hurled toward the ground.

But she righted herself in mid-air and descended feet first. Ordinarily, from such a height, the spring in her legs would have eased the shock of impact with the ground. But she was exhausted. She could not exercise this spring. Her legs gave under her, having only partly met the shock, and she crashed on over on her side. This, as it turned out, did not injure her, but it did knock the breath from her lungs. She lay helpless and struggling for air.

Red-Eye rushed upon her and seized her. With his gnarly fingers twisted into the hair of her head, he stood up and roared in triumph and defiance at the awed Folk that watched from the trees. Then it was that I went mad. Caution was thrown to the winds; forgotten was the will to live of my flesh. Even as Red-Eye roared, from

behind I dashed upon him. So unexpected was my charge that I knocked him off his feet. I twined my arms and legs around him and strove to hold him down. This would have been impossible to accomplish had he not held tightly with one hand to the Swift One's hair.

Encouraged by my conduct, Big-Face became a sudden ally. He charged in, sank his teeth in Red-Eye's arm, and ripped and tore at his face. This was the time for the rest of the Folk to have joined in. It was the chance to do for Red-Eye for all time. But they remained afraid in the trees.

It was inevitable that Red-Eye should win in the struggle against the two of us. The reason he did not finish us off immediately was that the Swift One clogged his movements. She had regained her breath and was beginning to resist. He would not release his clutch on her hair, and this handicapped him. He got a grip on my arm. It was the beginning of the end for me. He began to draw me toward him into a position where he could sink his teeth into my throat. His mouth was open, and he was grinning. And yet, though he had just begun to exert his strength, in that moment he wrenched my shoulder so that I suffered from it for the remainder of my life.

And in that moment something happened. There was no warning. A great body smashed down upon the four of us locked together. We were driven violently apart and rolled over and over, and in the suddenness of surprise we released our holds on one another. At the moment of the shock, Big-Face screamed terribly. I did not know what had happened, though I smelled tiger and caught a glimpse of striped fur as I sprang for a tree.

It was old Saber-Tooth. Aroused in his lair by the noise we had made, he had crept upon us unnoticed. The Swift One gained the next tree to mine, and I immediately joined her. I put my arms around her and held her close to me while she whimpered and cried softly. From the ground came a snarling, and crunching of bones. It was Saber-Tooth making his supper off of what had been Big-Face. From beyond, with inflamed rims and eyes, Red-Eye peered down. Here was a monster mightier than he. The Swift One and I turned and went away quietly through the trees toward the cave, while the Folk gathered overhead and showered down abuse and twigs and branches upon their ancient enemy. He lashed his tail and snarled, but went on eating.

And in such fashion were we saved. It was a mere accident — the sheerest accident. Else would I have died, there in Red-Eye's clutch, and there would have been no bridging of time to the tune of a thousand centuries down to a progeny that reads newspapers and rides on electric cars — ay, and that writes narratives of bygone happenings even as this is written.

## Chapter XVII

It was in the early fall of the following year that it happened. After his failure to get the Swift One, Red-Eye had taken another wife; and, strange to relate, she was still alive. Stranger still, they had a baby several months old — Red-Eye's first child. His previous wives had never lived long enough to bear him children. The year had gone well for all of us. The weather had been exceptionally mild and food plentiful. I remember especially the turnips of that year. The nut crop was also very heavy, and the wild plums were larger and sweeter than usual.

In short, it was a golden year. And then it happened. It was in the early morning, and we were surprised in our caves. In the chill gray light we awoke from sleep, most of us, to encounter death. The Swift One and I were aroused by a pandemonium of screeching and gibbering. Our cave was the highest of all on the cliff, and we crept to the mouth and peered down. The open space was filled with the Fire People. Their cries and yells were added to the clamor, but they had order and plan, while we Folk had none. Each one of us fought and acted for himself, and no one of us knew the extent of the calamity that was befalling us.

By the time we got to stone-throwing, the Fire People had massed thick at the base of the cliff. Our first volley must have mashed some heads, for when they swerved back from the cliff three of their number were left upon the ground. These were struggling and floundering, and one was trying to crawl away. But we fixed them. By this time we males were roaring with rage, and we rained rocks upon the three men that were down. Several of the Fire-Men returned to drag them into safety, but our rocks drove the rescuers back.

The Fire People became enraged. Also, they became cautious. In spite of their angry yells, they kept at a distance and sent flights of arrows against us. This put an end to the rock-throwing. By the time half a dozen of us had been killed and a score injured, the rest of us retreated inside our caves. I was not out of range in my lofty cave, but the distance was great enough to spoil effective shooting, and the Fire People did not waste many arrows on me. Furthermore, I was curious. I wanted to see. While the Swift One remained well inside the cave, trembling with fear and making low wailing sounds because I would not come in, I crouched at the entrance and watched.

The fighting had now become intermittent. It was a sort of deadlock. We were in the caves, and the question with the Fire People was how to get us out. They did not dare come in after us, and in general we would not expose ourselves to their arrows. Occasionally, when one of them drew in close to the base of the cliff, one or another of the Folk would smash a rock down. In return, he would be transfixed by half a

dozen arrows. This ruse worked well for some time, but finally the Folk no longer were inveigled into showing themselves. The deadlock was complete.

Behind the Fire People I could see the little wizened old hunter directing it all. They obeyed him, and went here and there at his commands. Some of them went into the forest and returned with loads of dry wood, leaves, and grass. All the Fire People drew in closer. While most of them stood by with bows and arrows, ready to shoot any of the Folk that exposed themselves, several of the Fire-Men heaped the dry grass and wood at the mouths of the lower tier of caves. Out of these heaps they conjured the monster we feared — FIRE. At first, wisps of smoke arose and curled up the cliff. Then I could see the red-tongued flames darting in and out through the wood like tiny snakes. The smoke grew thicker and thicker, at times shrouding the whole face of the cliff. But I was high up and it did not bother me much, though it stung my eyes and I rubbed them with my knuckles.

Old Marrow-Bone was the first to be smoked out. A light fan of air drifted the smoke away at the time so that I saw clearly. He broke out through the smoke, stepping on a burning coal and screaming with the sudden hurt of it, and essayed to climb up the cliff. The arrows showered about him. He came to a pause on a ledge, clutching a knob of rock for support, gasping and sneezing and shaking his head. He swayed back and forth. The feathered ends of a dozen arrows were sticking out of him. He was an old man, and he did not want to die. He swayed wider and wider, his knees giving under him, and as he swayed he wailed most plaintively. His hand released its grip and he lurched outward to the fall. His old bones must have been sadly broken. He groaned and strove feebly to rise, but a Fire-Man rushed in upon him and brained him with a club.

And as it happened with Marrow-Bone, so it happened with many of the Folk. Unable to endure the smoke-suffocation, they rushed out to fall beneath the arrows. Some of the women and children remained in the caves to strangle to death, but the majority met death outside.

When the Fire-Men had in this fashion cleared the first tier of caves, they began making arrangements to duplicate the operation on the second tier of caves. It was while they were climbing up with their grass and wood, that Red-Eye, followed by his wife, with the baby holding to her tightly, made a successful flight up the cliff. The Fire-Men must have concluded that in the interval between the smoking-out operations we would remain in our caves; so that they were unprepared, and their arrows did not begin to fly till Red-Eye and his wife were well up the wall. When he reached the top, he turned about and glared down at them, roaring and beating his chest. They arched their arrows at him, and though he was untouched he fled on.

I watched a third tier smoked out, and a fourth. A few of the Folk escaped up the cliff, but most of them were shot off the face of it as they strove to climb. I remember Long-Lip. He got as far as my ledge, crying piteously, an arrow clear through his chest, the feathered shaft sticking out behind, the bone head sticking out before, shot through the back as he climbed. He sank down on my ledge bleeding profusely at the mouth.

It was about this time that the upper tiers seemed to empty themselves spontaneously. Nearly all the Folk not yet smoked out stampeded up the cliff at the same time. This was the saving of many. The Fire People could not shoot arrows fast enough. They filled the air with arrows, and scores of the stricken Folk came tumbling down; but still there were a few who reached the top and got away.

The impulse of flight was now stronger in me than curiosity. The arrows had ceased flying. The last of the Folk seemed gone, though there may have been a few still hiding in the upper caves. The Swift One and I started to make a scramble for the cliff-top. At sight of us a great cry went up from the Fire People. This was not caused by me, but by the Swift One. They were chattering excitedly and pointing her out to one another. They did not try to shoot her. Not an arrow was discharged. They began calling softly and coaxingly. I stopped and looked down. She was afraid, and whimpered and urged me on. So we went up over the top and plunged into the trees.

This event has often caused me to wonder and speculate. If she were really of their kind, she must have been lost from them at a time when she was too young to remember, else would she not have been afraid of them. On the other hand, it may well have been that while she was their kind she had never been lost from them; that she had been born in the wild forest far from their haunts, her father maybe a renegade Fire-Man, her mother maybe one of my own kind, one of the Folk. But who shall say? These things are beyond me, and the Swift One knew no more about them than did I.

We lived through a day of terror. Most of the survivors fled toward the blueberry swamp and took refuge in the forest in that neighborhood. And all day hunting parties of the Fire People ranged the forest, killing us wherever they found us. It must have been a deliberately executed plan. Increasing beyond the limits of their own territory, they had decided on making a conquest of ours. Sorry the conquest! We had no chance against them. It was slaughter, indiscriminate slaughter, for they spared none, killing old and young, effectively ridding the land of our presence.

It was like the end of the world to us. We fled to the trees as a last refuge, only to be surrounded and killed, family by family. We saw much of this during that day, and besides, I wanted to see. The Swift One and I never remained long in one tree, and so escaped being surrounded. But there seemed no place to go. The Fire-Men were everywhere, bent on their task of extermination. Every way we turned we encountered them, and because of this we saw much of their handiwork.

I did not see what became of my mother, but I did see the Chatterer shot down out of the old home-tree. And I am afraid that at the sight I did a bit of joyous teetering. Before I leave this portion of my narrative, I must tell of Red-Eye. He was caught with his wife in a tree down by the blueberry swamp. The Swift One and I stopped long enough in our flight to see. The Fire-Men were too intent upon their work to notice us, and, furthermore, we were well screened by the thicket in which we crouched.

Fully a score of the hunters were under the tree, discharging arrows into it. They always picked up their arrows when they fell back to earth. I could not see Red-Eye, but I could hear him howling from somewhere in the tree.

After a short interval his howling grew muffled. He must have crawled into a hollow in the trunk. But his wife did not win this shelter. An arrow brought her to the ground. She was severely hurt, for she made no effort to get away. She crouched in a sheltering way over her baby (which clung tightly to her), and made pleading signs and sounds to the Fire-Men. They gathered about her and laughed at her — even as Lop-Ear and I had laughed at the old Tree-Man. And even as we had poked him with twigs and sticks, so did the Fire-Men with Red-Eye's wife. They poked her with the ends of their bows, and prodded her in the ribs. But she was poor fun. She would not fight. Nor, for that matter, would she get angry. She continued to crouch over her baby and to plead. One of the Fire-Men stepped close to her. In his hand was a club. She saw and understood, but she made only the pleading sounds until the blow fell.

Red-Eye, in the hollow of the trunk, was safe from their arrows. They stood together and debated for a while, then one of them climbed into the tree. What happened up there I could not tell, but I heard him yell and saw the excitement of those that remained beneath. After several minutes his body crashed down to the ground. He did not move. They looked at him and raised his head, but it fell back limply when they let go. Red-Eye had accounted for himself.

They were very angry. There was an opening into the trunk close to the ground. They gathered wood and grass and built a fire. The Swift One and I, our arms around each other, waited and watched in the thicket. Sometimes they threw upon the fire green branches with many leaves, whereupon the smoke became very thick.

We saw them suddenly swerve back from the tree. They were not quick enough. Red-Eye's flying body landed in the midst of them.

He was in a frightful rage, smashing about with his long arms right and left. He pulled the face off one of them, literally pulled it off with those gnarly fingers of his and those tremendous muscles. He bit another through the neck. The Fire-Men fell back with wild fierce yells, then rushed upon him. He managed to get hold of a club and began crushing heads like eggshells. He was too much for them, and they were compelled to fall back again. This was his chance, and he turned his back upon them and ran for it, still howling wrathfully. A few arrows sped after him, but he plunged into a thicket and was gone.

The Swift One and I crept quietly away, only to run foul of another party of Fire-Men. They chased us into the blueberry swamp, but we knew the tree-paths across the farther morasses where they could not follow on the ground, and so we escaped. We came out on the other side into a narrow strip of forest that separated the blueberry swamp from the great swamp that extended westward. Here we met Lop-Ear. How he had escaped I cannot imagine, unless he had not slept the preceding night at the caves.

Here, in the strip of forest, we might have built tree-shelters and settled down; but the Fire People were performing their work of extermination thoroughly. In the afternoon, Hair-Face and his wife fled out from among the trees to the east, passed us, and were gone. They fled silently and swiftly, with alarm in their faces. In the direction from which they had come we heard the cries and yells of the hunters, and

the screeching of some one of the Folk. The Fire People had found their way across the swamp.

The Swift One, Lop-Ear, and I followed on the heels of Hair-Face and his wife. When we came to the edge of the great swamp, we stopped. We did not know its paths. It was outside our territory, and it had been always avoided by the Folk. None had ever gone into it — at least, to return. In our minds it represented mystery and fear, the terrible unknown. As I say, we stopped at the edge of it. We were afraid. The cries of the Fire-Men were drawing nearer. We looked at one another. Hair-Face ran out on the quaking morass and gained the firmer footing of a grass-hummock a dozen yards away. His wife did not follow. She tried to, but shrank back from the treacherous surface and cowered down.

The Swift One did not wait for me, nor did she pause till she had passed beyond Hair-Face a hundred yards and gained a much larger hummock. By the time Lop-Ear and I had caught up with her, the Fire-Men appeared among the trees. Hair-Face's wife, driven by them into panic terror, dashed after us. But she ran blindly, without caution, and broke through the crust. We turned and watched, and saw them shoot her with arrows as she sank down in the mud. The arrows began falling about us. Hair-Face had now joined us, and the four of us plunged on, we knew not whither, deeper and deeper into the swamp.



## Chapter XVIII

Of our wanderings in the great swamp I have no clear knowledge. When I strive to remember, I have a riot of unrelated impressions and a loss of time-value. I have no idea of how long we were in that vast everglade, but it must have been for weeks. My memories of what occurred invariably take the form of nightmare. For untold ages, oppressed by protean fear, I am aware of wandering, endlessly wandering, through a dank and soggy wilderness, where poisonous snakes struck at us, and animals roared around us, and the mud quaked under us and sucked at our heels.

I know that we were turned from our course countless times by streams and lakes and slimy seas. Then there were storms and risings of the water over great areas of the low-lying lands; and there were periods of hunger and misery when we were kept prisoners in the trees for days and days by these transient floods.

Very strong upon me is one picture. Large trees are about us, and from their branches hang gray filaments of moss, while great creepers, like monstrous serpents, curl around the trunks and writhe in tangles through the air. And all about is the mud, soft mud, that bubbles forth gases, and that heaves and sighs with internal agitations. And in the midst of all this are a dozen of us. We are lean and wretched, and our bones show through our tight-stretched skins. We do not sing and chatter and laugh. We play no pranks. For once our volatile and exuberant spirits are hopelessly subdued. We make plaintive, querulous noises, look at one another, and cluster close together. It is like the meeting of the handful of survivors after the day of the end of the world.

This event is without connection with the other events in the swamp. How we ever managed to cross it, I do not know, but at last we came out where a low range of hills ran down to the bank of the river. It was our river emerging like ourselves from the great swamp. On the south bank, where the river had broken its way through the hills, we found many sand-stone caves. Beyond, toward the west, the ocean boomed on the bar that lay across the river's mouth. And here, in the caves, we settled down in our abiding-place by the sea.

There were not many of us. From time to time, as the days went by, more of the Folk appeared. They dragged themselves from the swamp singly, and in twos and threes, more dead than alive, mere perambulating skeletons, until at last there were thirty of us. Then no more came from the swamp, and Red-Eye was not among us. It was noticeable that no children had survived the frightful journey.

I shall not tell in detail of the years we lived by the sea. It was not a happy abiding-place. The air was raw and chill, and we suffered continually from coughing and colds. We could not survive in such an environment. True, we had children; but they had

little hold on life and died early, while we died faster than new ones were born. Our number steadily diminished.

Then the radical change in our diet was not good for us. We got few vegetables and fruits, and became fish-eaters. There were mussels and abalones and clams and rock-oysters, and great ocean-crabs that were thrown upon the beaches in stormy weather. Also, we found several kinds of seaweed that were good to eat. But the change in diet caused us stomach troubles, and none of us ever waxed fat. We were all lean and dyspeptic-looking. It was in getting the big abalones that Lop-Ear was lost. One of them closed upon his fingers at low-tide, and then the flood-tide came in and drowned him. We found his body the next day, and it was a lesson to us. Not another one of us was ever caught in the closing shell of an abalone.

The Swift One and I managed to bring up one child, a boy — at least we managed to bring him along for several years. But I am quite confident he could never have survived that terrible climate. And then, one day, the Fire People appeared again. They had come down the river, not on a catamaran, but in a rude dug-out. There were three of them that paddled in it, and one of them was the little wizened old hunter. They landed on our beach, and he limped across the sand and examined our caves.

They went away in a few minutes, but the Swift One was badly scared. We were all frightened, but none of us to the extent that she was. She whimpered and cried and was restless all that night. In the morning she took the child in her arms, and by sharp cries, gestures, and example, started me on our second long flight. There were eight of the Folk (all that was left of the horde) that remained behind in the caves. There was no hope for them. Without doubt, even if the Fire People did not return, they must soon have perished. It was a bad climate down there by the sea. The Folk were not constituted for the coast-dwelling life.

We travelled south, for days skirting the great swamp but never venturing into it. Once we broke back to the westward, crossing a range of mountains and coming down to the coast. But it was no place for us. There were no trees — only bleak headlands, a thundering surf, and strong winds that seemed never to cease from blowing. We turned back across the mountains, travelling east and south, until we came in touch with the great swamp again.

Soon we gained the southern extremity of the swamp, and we continued our course south and east. It was a pleasant land. The air was warm, and we were again in the forest. Later on we crossed a low-lying range of hills and found ourselves in an even better forest country. The farther we penetrated from the coast the warmer we found it, and we went on and on until we came to a large river that seemed familiar to the Swift One. It was where she must have come during the four years' absence from the horde. This river we crossed on logs, landing on side at the large bluff. High up on the bluff we found our new home most difficult of access and quite hidden from any eye beneath.

There is little more of my tale to tell. Here the Swift One and I lived and reared our family. And here my memories end. We never made another migration. I never dream

beyond our high, inaccessible cave. And here must have been born the child that inherited the stuff of my dreams, that had moulded into its being all the impressions of my life — or of the life of Big-Tooth, rather, who is my other-self, and not my real self, but who is so real to me that often I am unable to tell what age I am living in.

I often wonder about this line of descent. I, the modern, am incontestably a man; yet I, Big-Tooth, the primitive, am not a man. Somewhere, and by straight line of descent, these two parties to my dual personality were connected. Were the Folk, before their destruction, in the process of becoming men? And did I and mine carry through this process? On the other hand, may not some descendant of mine have gone in to the Fire People and become one of them? I do not know. There is no way of learning. One thing only is certain, and that is that Big-Tooth did stamp into the cerebral constitution of one of his progeny all the impressions of his life, and stamped them in so indelibly that the hosts of intervening generations have failed to obliterate them.

There is one other thing of which I must speak before I close. It is a dream that I dream often, and in point of time the real event must have occurred during the period of my living in the high, inaccessible cave. I remember that I wandered far in the forest toward the east. There I came upon a tribe of Tree People. I crouched in a thicket and watched them at play. They were holding a laughing council, jumping up and down and screeching rude choruses.

Suddenly they hushed their noise and ceased their capering. They shrank down in fear, and quested anxiously about with their eyes for a way of retreat. Then Red-Eye walked in among them. They cowered away from him. All were frightened. But he made no attempt to hurt them. He was one of them. At his heels, on stringy bended legs, supporting herself with knuckles to the ground on either side, walked an old female of the Tree People, his latest wife. He sat down in the midst of the circle. I can see him now, as I write this, scowling, his eyes inflamed, as he peers about him at the circle of the Tree People. And as he peers he crooks one monstrous leg and with his gnarly toes scratches himself on the stomach. He is Red-Eye, the atavism.

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