The Short Stories of Jack London: Part 2

Contents

Nam-Bok, the Unveracious **7**

Negore, the Coward **18**

The Night-Born **26**

A Night's Swim in Yeddo Bay **36**

A Northland Miracle **41**

A Nose For the King **46**

O Haru **50**

An Odyssey of the North **57**

Old Baldy **79**

An Old Soldier's Story **83**

On the Makaloa Mat **87**

The One Thousand Dozen **108**

The Passing of Marcus O'Brien **120**

The Pearls of Parlay **129**

A Piece of Steak **147**

The Plague Ship **160**

Planchette **170**

Pluck and Pertinacity **200**

The Priestly Prerogative **203**

The Princess **212**

The Prodigal Father **230**

The Proud Goat of Aloysius Pankburn **243**

The Race For Number Three **256**

A Raid On the Oyster Pirates **270**

The Red One **278**

The Rejuvenation of Major Rathbone **296**

A Relic of the Pliocene **304**

Sakaicho, Hona Asi and Hakadaki **312**

Samuel **315**

The Scorn of Women **329**

The Sea Farmer **344**

The Seed of Mccoy **357**

Semper Idem **378**

The Shadow and the Flash **382**

The Sheriff of Kona **393**

Shin-Bones **403**

Shorty Dreams **419**

The Sickness of Lone Chief **429**

Siwash **444**

A Son of the Sun **453**

The Sun of the Wolf **467**

South of the Slot **478**

The Stampede to Squaw Creek. **490**

Story of a Typhoon **504**

The Story of Jees Uck **508**

The Story of Keesh **524**

The Strange Experience of a Misogynist **530**

The Strength of the Strong **546**

The Sun Dog Trail **557**

The Sunlanders **571**

The Taste of the Meat **585**

The Tears of Ah Kim **601**

The Terrible Solomons **612**

The Test: a Clondyke Wooing **623**

Thanksgiving On Slav Creek **627**

That Spot **633**

Their Alcove **640**

A Thousand Deaths **644**

To Kill a Man **667**

To Repel Boarders **677**

To the Man On the Trail **682**

Told in the Drooling Ward **689**

Too Much Gold **696**

The Town-Site of Tra-Lee **707**

Trust **725**

Two Gold Bricks **734**

Under the Deck Awnings **738**

The Unexpected **744**

The Unmasking of a Cad **759**

The Unparalleled Invasion **762**

Up The Slide **772**

War **777**

The Water Baby **781**

The Whale Tooth **789**

When Alice Told Her Soul **796**

When God Laughs **808**

When the World Was Young **816**

Where the Trail Forks **828**

Which Make Men Remember **836**

White and Yellow **843**

The White Man's Way **850**

The White Silence **859**

Whose Business is To Live **872**

A Wicked Woman **888**

The Wife of a King **895**

Winged Blackmail **906**

The Wisdom of the Trail **912**

The Wit of Porportuk **918**

Wonder of Woman **935**

Yellow Handkerchief **972**

Nam-Bok, the Unveracious

"A bidarka, is it not so? Look! a bidarka, and one man who drives clumsily with a paddle!"

Old Bask-Wah-Wan rose to her knees, trembling with weakness and eagerness, and gazed out over the sea.

"Nam-Bok was ever clumsy at the paddle," she maundered reminiscently, shading the sun from her eyes and staring across the silver-spilled water. "Nam-Bok was ever clumsy. I remember..."

But the women and children laughed loudly, and there was a gentle mockery in their laughter, and her voice dwindled till her lips moved without sound.

Koogah lifted his grizzled head from his bone-carving and followed the path of her eyes. Except when wide yaws took it off its course, a bidarka was heading in for the beach. Its occupant was paddling with more strength than dexterity, and made his approach along the zigzag line of most resistance. Koogah's head dropped to his work again, and on the ivory tusk between his knees he scratched the dorsal fin of a fish the like of which never swam in the sea.

"It is doubtless the man from the next village," he said finally, "come to consult with me about the marking of things on bone. And the man is a clumsy man. He will never know how."

"It is Nam-Bok," old Bask-Wah-Wan repeated. "Should I not know my son?" she demanded shrilly. "I say, and I say again, it is Nam-Bok."

"And so thou hast said these many summers," one of the women chided softly. "Ever when the ice passed out of the sea hast thou sat and watched through the long day, saying at each chance canoe, 'This is Nam-Bok.' Nam-Bok is dead, O Bask-Wah-Wan, and the dead do not come back. It cannot be that the dead come back."

"Nam-Bok!" the old woman cried, so loud and clear that the whole village was startled and looked at her.

She struggled to her feet and tottered down the sand. She stumbled over a baby lying in the sun, and the mother hushed its crying and hurled harsh words after the old woman, who took no notice. The children ran down the beach in advance of her, and as the man in the bidarka drew closer, nearly capsizing with one of his ill-directed strokes, the women followed. Koogah dropped his walrus tusk and went also, leaning heavily upon his staff, and after him loitered the men in twos and threes.

The bidarka turned broadside and the ripple of surf threatened to swamp it, only a naked boy ran into the water and pulled the bow high up on the sand. The man stood up and sent a questing glance along the line of villagers. A rainbow sweater, dirty and

the worse for wear, clung loosely to his broad shoulders, and a red cotton handkerchief was knotted in sailor fashion about his throat. A fisherman's tam-o'-shanter on his close-clipped head, and dungaree trousers and heavy brogans, completed his outfit.

But he was none the less a striking personage to these simple fisherfolk of the great Yukon Delta, who, all their lives, had stared out on Bering Sea and in that time seen but two white men, — the census enumerator and a lost Jesuit priest. They were a poor people, with neither gold in the ground nor valuable furs in hand, so the whites had passed them afar. Also, the Yukon, through the thousands of years, had shoaled that portion of the sea with the detritus of Alaska till vessels grounded out of sight of land. So the sodden coast, with its long inside reaches and huge mud-land archipelagoes, was avoided by the ships of men, and the fisherfolk knew not that such things were.

Koogah, the Bone-Scratcher, retreated backward in sudden haste, tripping over his staff and falling to the ground. "Nam-Bok!" he cried, as he scrambled wildly for footing. "Nam-Bok, who was blown off to sea, come back!"

The men and women shrank away, and the children scuttled off between their legs. Only Opee-Kwan was brave, as befitted the head man of the village. He strode forward and gazed long and earnestly at the new-comer.

"It is Nam-Bok," he said at last, and at the conviction in his voice the women wailed apprehensively and drew farther away.

The lips of the stranger moved indecisively, and his brown throat writhed and wrestled with unspoken words.

"La la, it is Nam-Bok," Bask-Wah-Wan croaked, peering up into his face. "Ever did I say Nam-Bok would come back."

"Ay, it is Nam-Bok come back." This time it was Nam-Bok himself who spoke, putting a leg over the side of the bidarka and standing with one foot afloat and one ashore. Again his throat writhed and wrestled as he grappled after forgotten words. And when the words came forth they were strange of sound and a spluttering of the lips accompanied the gutturals. "Greeting, O brothers," he said, "brothers of old time before I went away with the off-shore wind."

He stepped out with both feet on the sand, and Opee-Kwan waved him back.

"Thou art dead, Nam-Bok," he said.

Nam-Bok laughed. "I am fat."

"Dead men are not fat," Opee-Kwan confessed. "Thou hast fared well, but it is strange. No man may mate with the off-shore wind and come back on the heels of the years."

"I have come back," Nam-Bok answered simply.

"Mayhap thou art a shadow, then, a passing shadow of the Nam-Bok that was. Shadows come back."

"I am hungry. Shadows do not eat."

But Opee-Kwan doubted, and brushed his hand across his brow in sore puzzlement. Nam-Bok was likewise puzzled, and as he looked up and down the line found no welcome in the eyes of the fisherfolk. The men and women whispered together. The

children stole timidly back among their elders, and bristling dogs fawned up to him and sniffed suspiciously.

"I bore thee, Nam-Bok, and I gave thee suck when thou wast little," Bask-Wah-Wan whimpered, drawing closer; "and shadow though thou be, or no shadow, I will give thee to eat now."

Nam-Bok made to come to her, but a growl of fear and menace warned him back. He said something in a strange tongue which sounded like "Goddam," and added, "No shadow am I, but a man."

"Who may know concerning the things of mystery?" Opee-Kwan demanded, half of himself and half of his tribespeople. "We are, and in a breath we are not. If the man may become shadow, may not the shadow become man? Nam-Bok was, but is not. This we know, but we do not know if this be Nam-Bok or the shadow of Nam-Bok."

Nam-Bok cleared his throat and made answer. "In the old time long ago, thy father's father, Opee-Kwan, went away and came back on the heels of the years. Nor was a place by the fire denied him. It is said ..." He paused significantly, and they hung on his utterance. "It is said," he repeated, driving his point home with deliberation, "that Sipsip, his klooch, bore him two sons after he came back."

"But he had no doings with the off-shore wind," Opee-Kwan retorted. "He went away into the heart of the land, and it is in the nature of things that a man may go on and on into the land."

"And likewise the sea. But that is neither here nor there. It is said . . . that thy father's father told strange tales of the things he saw."

"Ay, strange tales he told."

"I, too, have strange tales to tell," Nam-Bok stated insidiously. And, as they wavered, "And presents likewise."

He pulled from the bidarka a shawl, marvellous of texture and color, and flung it about his mother's shoulders. The women voiced a collective sigh of admiration, and old Bask-Wah-Wan ruffled the gay material and patted it and crooned in childish joy.

"He has tales to tell," Koogah muttered. "And presents," a woman seconded.

And Opee-Kwan knew that his people were eager, and further, he was aware himself of an itching curiosity concerning those untold tales. "The fishing has been good," he said judiciously, "and we have oil in plenty. So come, Nam-Bok, let us feast."

Two of the men hoisted the bidarka on their shoulders and carried it up to the fire. Nam-Bok walked by the side of Opee-Kwan, and the villagers followed after, save those of the women who lingered a moment to lay caressing fingers on the shawl.

There was little talk while the feast went on, though many and curious were the glances stolen at the son of Bask-Wah-Wan. This embarrassed him — not because he was modest of spirit, however, but for the fact that the stench of the seal-oil had robbed him of his appetite, and that he keenly desired to conceal his feelings on the subject.

"Eat; thou art hungry," Opee-Kwan commanded, and Nam-Bok shut both his eyes and shoved his fist into the big pot of putrid fish.

“La la, be not ashamed. The seal were many this year, and strong men are ever hungry.” And Bask-Wah-Wan sopped a particularly offensive chunk of salmon into the oil and passed it fondly and dripping to her son.

In despair, when premonitory symptoms warned him that his stomach was not so strong as of old, he filled his pipe and struck up a smoke. The people fed on noisily and watched. Few of them could boast of intimate acquaintance with the precious weed, though now and again small quantities and abominable qualities were obtained in trade from the Eskimos to the northward. Koogah, sitting next to him, indicated that he was not averse to taking a draw, and between two mouthfuls, with the oil thick on his lips, sucked away at the amber stem. And thereupon Nam-Bok held his stomach with a shaky hand and declined the proffered return. Koogah could keep the pipe, he said, for he had intended so to honor him from the first. And the people licked their fingers and approved of his liberality.

Opee-Kwan rose to his feet “And now, O Nam-Bok, the feast is ended, and we would listen concerning the strange things you have seen.”

The fisherfolk applauded with their hands, and gathering about them their work, prepared to listen. The men were busy fashioning spears and carving on ivory, while the women scraped the fat from the hides of the hair seal and made them pliable or sewed muclucs with threads of sinew. Nam-Bok’s eyes roved over the scene, but there was not the charm about it that his recollection had warranted him to expect. During the years of his wandering he had looked forward to just this scene, and now that it had come he was disappointed. It was a bare and meagre life, he deemed, and not to be compared to the one to which he had become used. Still, he would open their eyes a bit, and his own eyes sparkled at the thought.

“Brothers,” he began, with the smug complacency of a man about to relate the big things he has done, “it was late summer of many summers back, with much such weather as this promises to be, when I went away. You all remember the day, when the gulls flew low, and the wind blew strong from the land, and I could not hold my bidarka against it. I tied the covering of the bidarka about me so that no water could get in, and all of the night I fought with the storm. And in the morning there was no land, — only the sea, — and the off-shore wind held me close in its arms and bore me along. Three such nights whitened into dawn and showed me no land, and the off-shore wind would not let me go.

“And when the fourth day came, I was as a madman. I could not dip my paddle for want of food; and my head went round and round, what of the thirst that was upon me. But the sea was no longer angry, and the soft south wind was blowing, and as I looked about me I saw a sight that made me think I was indeed mad.”

Nam-Bok paused to pick away a sliver of salmon lodged between his teeth, and the men and women, with idle hands and heads craned forward, waited.

“It was a canoe, a big canoe. If all the canoes I have ever seen were made into one canoe, it would not be so large.”

There were exclamations of doubt, and Koogah, whose years were many, shook his head.

"If each bidarka were as a grain of sand," Nam-Bok defiantly continued, "and if there were as many bidarkas as there be grains of sand in this beach, still would they not make so big a canoe as this I saw on the morning of the fourth day. It was a very big canoe, and it was called a schooner. I saw this thing of wonder, this great schooner, coming after me, and on it I saw men — "

"Hold, O Nam-Bok!" Opee-Kwan broke in. "What manner of men were they? — big men?"

"Nay, mere men like you and me."

"Did the big canoe come fast?"

"Ay."

"The sides were tall, the men short." Opee-Kwan stated the premises with conviction. "And did these men dip with long paddles?"

Nam-Bok grinned. "There were no paddles," he said.

Mouths remained open, and a long silence dropped down. Opee-Kwan borrowed Koogah's pipe for a couple of contemplative sucks. One of the younger women giggled nervously and drew upon herself angry eyes.

"There were no paddles?" Opee-Kwan asked softly, returning the pipe.

"The south wind was behind," Nam-Bok explained.

"But the wind-drift is slow."

"The schooner had wings — thus." He sketched a diagram of masts and sails in the sand, and the men crowded around and studied it. The wind was blowing briskly, and for more graphic elucidation he seized the corners of his mother's shawl and spread them out till it bellied like a sail. Bask-Wah-Wan scolded and struggled, but was blown down the beach for a score of feet and left breathless and stranded in a heap of driftwood. The men uttered sage grunts of comprehension, but Koogah suddenly tossed back his hoary head.

"Ho! Ho!" he laughed. "A foolish thing, this big canoe! A most foolish thing! The plaything of the wind! Wheresoever the wind goes, it goes too. No man who journeys therein may name the landing beach, for always he goes with the wind, and the wind goes everywhere, but no man knows where."

"It is so," Opee-Kwan supplemented gravely. "With the wind the going is easy, but against the wind a man striveth hard; and for that they had no paddles these men on the big canoe did not strive at all."

"Small need to strive," Nam-Bok cried angrily. "The schooner went likewise against the wind."

"And what said you made the sch — sch — schooner go?" Koogah asked, tripping craftily over the strange word.

"The wind," was the impatient response.

"Then the wind made the sch — sch — schooner go against the wind." Old Koogah dropped an open leer to Opee-Kwan, and, the laughter growing around him, continued:

"The wind blows from the south and blows the schooner south. The wind blows against the wind. The wind blows one way and the other at the same time. It is very simple. We understand, Nam-Bok. We clearly understand."

"Thou art a fool!"

"Truth falls from thy lips," Koogah answered meekly. "I was over-long in understanding, and the thing was simple."

But Nam-Bok's face was dark, and he said rapid words which they had never heard before. Bone-scratching and skin-scraping were resumed, but he shut his lips tightly on the tongue that could not be believed.

"This sch — sch — schooner," Koogah imperturbably asked; "it was made of a big tree?"

"It was made of many trees," Nam-Bok snapped shortly. "It was very big."

He lapsed into sullen silence again, and Opee-Kwan nudged Koogah, who shook his head with slow amazement and murmured, "It is very strange."

Nam-bok took the bait. "That is nothing," he said airily; "you should see the steamer. As the grain of sand is to the bidarka, as the bidarka is to the schooner, so the schooner is to the steamer. Further, the steamer is made of iron. It is all iron."

"Nay, nay, Nam-Bok," cried the head man; "how can that be? Always iron goes to the bottom. For behold, I received an iron knife in trade from the head man of the next village, and yesterday the iron knife slipped from my fingers and went down, down, into the sea. To all things there be law. Never was there one thing outside the law. This we know. And, moreover, we know that things of a kind have the one law, and that all iron has the one law. So unsay thy words, Nam-Bok, that we may yet honor thee."

"It is so," Nam-Bok persisted. "The steamer is all iron and does not sink."

"Nay, nay; this cannot be."

"With my own eyes I saw it."

"It is not in the nature of things."

"But tell me, Nam-Bok," Koogah interrupted, for fear the tale would go no farther, "tell me the manner of these men in finding their way across the sea when there is no land by which to steer."

"The sun points out the path."

"But how?"

"At midday the head man of the schooner takes a thing through which his eye looks at the sun, and then he makes the sun climb down out of the sky to the edge of the earth."

"Now this be evil medicine!" cried Opee-Kwan, aghast at the sacrilege. The men held up their hands in horror, and the women moaned. "This be evil medicine. It is not good to misdirect the great sun which drives away the night and gives us the seal, the salmon, and warm weather."

"What if it be evil medicine?" Nam-Bok demanded truculently. "I, too, have looked through the thing at the sun and made the sun climb down out of the sky."

Those who were nearest drew away from him hurriedly, and a woman covered the face of a child at her breast so that his eye might not fall upon it.

"But on the morning of the fourth day, O Nam-Bok," Koogah suggested; "on the morning of the fourth day when the sch — sch — schooner came after thee?"

"I had little strength left in me and could not run away. So I was taken on board and water was poured down my throat and good food given me. Twice, my brothers, you have seen a white man. These men were all white and as many as have I fingers and toes. And when I saw they were full of kindness, I took heart, and I resolved to bring away with me report of all that I saw. And they taught me the work they did, and gave me good food and a place to sleep.

"And day after day we went over the sea, and each day the head man drew the sun down out of the sky and made it tell where we were. And when the waves were kind, we hunted the fur seal and I marvelled much, for always did they fling the meat and the fat away and save only the skin."

Opee-Kwan's mouth was twitching violently, and he was about to make denunciation of such waste when Koogah kicked him to be still.

"After a weary time, when the sun was gone and the bite of the frost come into the air, the head man pointed the nose of the schooner south. South and east we travelled for days upon days, with never the land in sight, and we were near to the village from which hailed the men — "

"How did they know they were near?" Opee-Kwan, unable to contain himself longer, demanded. "There was no land to see."

Nam-Bok glowered on him wrathfully. "Did I not say the head man brought the sun down out of the sky?"

Koogah interposed, and Nam-Bok went on.

"As I say, when we were near to that village a great storm blew up, and in the night we were helpless and knew not where we were — "

"Thou hast just said the head man knew — "

"Oh, peace, Opee-Kwan! Thou art a fool and cannot understand. As I say, we were helpless in the night, when I heard, above the roar of the storm, the sound of the sea on the beach. And next we struck with a mighty crash and I was in the water, swimming. It was a rock-bound coast, with one patch of beach in many miles, and the law was that I should dig my hands into the sand and draw myself clear of the surf. The other men must have pounded against the rocks, for none of them came ashore but the head man, and him I knew only by the ring on his finger.

"When day came, there being nothing of the schooner, I turned my face to the land and journeyed into it that I might get food and look upon the faces of the people. And when I came to a house I was taken in and given to eat, for I had learned their speech, and the white men are ever kindly. And it was a house bigger than all the houses built by us and our fathers before us."

"It was a mighty house," Koogah said, masking his unbelief with wonder.

"And many trees went into the making of such a house," Opee-Kwan added, taking the cue.

"That is nothing." Nam-Bok shrugged his shoulders in belittling fashion. "As our houses are to that house, so that house was to the houses I was yet to see."

"And they are not big men?"

"Nay; mere men like you and me," Nam-Bok answered. "I had cut a stick that I might walk in comfort, and remembering that I was to bring report to you, my brothers, I cut a notch in the stick for each person who lived in that house. And I stayed there many days, and worked, for which they gave me money — a thing of which you know nothing, but which is very good.

"And one day I departed from that place to go farther into the land. And as I walked I met many people, and I cut smaller notches in the stick, that there might be room for all. Then I came upon a strange thing. On the ground before me was a bar of iron, as big in thickness as my arm, and a long step away was another bar of iron — "

"Then wert thou a rich man," Opee-Kwan asserted; "for iron be worth more than anything else in the world. It would have made many knives."

"Nay, it was not mine."

"It was a find, and a find be lawful."

"Not so; the white men had placed it there And further, these bars were so long that no man could carry them away — so long that as far as I could see there was no end to them."

"Nam-Bok, that is very much iron," Opee-Kwan cautioned.

"Ay, it was hard to believe with my own eyes upon it; but I could not gainsay my eyes. And as I looked I heard..." He turned abruptly upon the head man. "Opee-Kwan, thou hast heard the sea-lion bellow in his anger. Make it plain in thy mind of as many sea-lions as there be waves to the sea, and make it plain that all these sea-lions be made into one sea-lion, and as that one sea-lion would bellow so bellowed the thing I heard."

The fisherfolk cried aloud in astonishment, and Opee-Kwan's jaw lowered and remained lowered.

"And in the distance I saw a monster like unto a thousand whales. It was one-eyed, and vomited smoke, and it snorted with exceeding loudness. I was afraid and ran with shaking legs along the path between the bars. But it came with the speed of the wind, this monster, and I leaped the iron bars with its breath hot on my face. . . ."

Opee-Kwan gained control of his jaw again. "And — and then, O Nam-Bok?"

"Then it came by on the bars, and harmed me not; and when my legs could hold me up again it was gone from sight. And it is a very common thing in that country. Even the women and children are not afraid. Men make them to do work, these monsters."

"As we make our dogs do work?" Koogah asked, with sceptic twinkle in his eye.

"Ay, as we make our dogs do work."

"And how do they breed these — these things?" Opee-Kwan questioned.

"They breed not at all. Men fashion them cunningly of iron, and feed them with stone, and give them water to drink. The stone becomes fire, and the water becomes steam, and the steam of the water is the breath of their nostrils, and — "

"There, there, O Nam-Bok," Opee-Kwan interrupted. "Tell us of other wonders. We grow tired of this which we may not understand."

"You do not understand?" Nam-Bok asked despairingly.

"Nay, we do not understand," the men and women wailed back. "We cannot understand."

Nam-Bok thought of a combined harvester, and of the machines wherein visions of living men were to be seen, and of the machines from which came the voices of men, and he knew his people could never understand.

"Dare I say I rode this iron monster through the land?" he asked bitterly.

Opee-Kwan threw up his hands, palms outward, in open incredulity. "Say on; say anything. We listen."

"Then did I ride the iron monster, for which I gave money — "

"Thou saidst it was fed with stone."

"And likewise, thou fool, I said money was a thing of which you know nothing. As I say, I rode the monster through the land, and through many villages, until I came to a big village on a salt arm of the sea. And the houses shoved their roofs among the stars in the sky, and the clouds drifted by them, and everywhere was much smoke. And the roar of that village was like the roar of the sea in storm, and the people were so many that I flung away my stick and no longer remembered the notches upon it."

"Hadst thou made small notches," Koogah reproved, "thou mightst have brought report."

Nam-Bok whirled upon him in anger. "Had I made small notches! Listen, Koogah, thou scratcher of bone! If I had made small notches, neither the stick, nor twenty sticks, could have borne them — nay, not all the driftwood of all the beaches between this village and the next. And if all of you, the women and children as well, were twenty times as many, and if you had twenty hands each, and in each hand a stick and a knife, still the notches could not be cut for the people I saw, so many were they and so fast did they come and go."

"There cannot be so many people in all the world," Opee-Kwan objected, for he was stunned and his mind could not grasp such magnitude of numbers.

"What dost thou know of all the world and how large it is?" Nam-Bok demanded.

"But there cannot be so many people in one place."

"Who art thou to say what can be and what cannot be?"

"It stands to reason there cannot be so many people in one place. Their canoes would clutter the sea till there was no room. And they could empty the sea each day of its fish, and they would not all be fed."

"So it would seem," Nam-Bok made final answer; "yet it was so. With my own eyes I saw, and flung my stick away." He yawned heavily and rose to his feet. "I have paddled

far. The day has been long, and I am tired. Now I will sleep, and to-morrow we will have further talk upon the things I have seen."

Bask-Wah-Wan, hobbling fearfully in advance, proud indeed, yet awed by her wonderful son, led him to her igloo and stowed him away among the greasy, ill-smelling furs. But the men lingered by the fire, and a council was held wherein was there much whispering and low-voiced discussion.

An hour passed, and a second, and Nam-Bok slept, and the talk went on. The evening sun dipped toward the northwest, and at eleven at night was nearly due north. Then it was that the head man and the bone-scratcher separated themselves from the council and aroused Nam-Bok. He blinked up into their faces and turned on his side to sleep again. Opee-Kwan gripped him by the arm and kindly but firmly shook his senses back into him.

"Come, Nam-Bok, arise!" he commanded. "It be time."

"Another feast?" Nam-Bok cried. "Nay, I am not hungry. Go on with the eating and let me sleep."

"Time to be gone!" Koogah thundered.

But Opee-Kwan spoke more softly. "Thou wast bidarka-mate with me when we were boys," he said. "Together we first chased the seal and drew the salmon from the traps. And thou didst drag me back to life, Nam-Bok, when the sea closed over me and I was sucked down to the black rocks. Together we hungered and bore the chill of the frost, and together we crawled beneath the one fur and lay close to each other. And because of these things, and the kindness in which I stood to thee, it grieves me sore that thou shouldst return such a remarkable liar. We cannot understand, and our heads be dizzy with the things thou hast spoken. It is not good, and there has been much talk in the council. Wherefore we send thee away, that our heads may remain clear and strong and be not troubled by the unaccountable things."

"These things thou speakest of be shadows," Koogah took up the strain. "From the shadow-world thou hast brought them, and to the shadow-world thou must return them. Thy bidarka be ready, and the tribespeople wait. They may not sleep until thou art gone."

Nam-Bok was perplexed, but hearkened to the voice of the head man.

"If thou art Nam-Bok," Opee-Kwan was saying, "thou art a fearful and most wonderful liar; if thou art the shadow of Nam-Bok, then thou speakest of shadows, concerning which it is not good that living men have knowledge. This great village thou hast spoken of we deem the village of shadows. Therein flutter the souls of the dead; for the dead be many and the living few. The dead do not come back. Never have the dead come back — save thou with thy wonder-tales. It is not meet that the dead come back, and should we permit it, great trouble may be our portion."

Nam-Bok knew his people well and was aware that the voice of the council was supreme. So he allowed himself to be led down to the water's edge, where he was put aboard his bidarka and a paddle thrust into his hand. A stray wild-fowl honked somewhere to seaward, and the surf broke limply and hollowly on the sand. A dim

twilight brooded over land and water, and in the north the sun smouldered, vague and troubled, and draped about with blood-red mists. The gulls were flying low. The off-shore wind blew keen and chill, and the black-massed clouds behind it gave promise of bitter weather.

"Out of the sea thou earnest," Opee-Kwan chanted oracularly, "and back into the sea thou goest. Thus is balance achieved and all things brought to law."

Bask-Wah-Wan limped to the froth-mark and cried, "I bless thee, Nam-Bok, for that thou remembered me."

But Koogah, shoving Nam-Bok clear of the beach, tore the shawl from her shoulders and flung it into the bidarka.

"It is cold in the long nights," she wailed; "and the frost is prone to nip old bones."

"The thing is a shadow," the bone-scratcher answered, "and shadows cannot keep thee warm."

Nam-Bok stood up that his voice might carry. "O Bask-Wah-Wan, mother that bore me!" he called. "Listen to the words of Nam-Bok, thy son. There be room in his bidarka for two, and he would that thou camest with him. For his journey is to where there are fish and oil in plenty. There the frost comes not, and life is easy, and the things of iron do the work of men. Wilt thou come, O Bask-Wah-Wan?"

She debated a moment, while the bidarka drifted swiftly from her, then raised her voice to a quavering treble. "I am old, Nam-Bok, and soon I shall pass down among the shadows. But I have no wish to go before my time. I am old, Nam-Bok, and I am afraid."

A shaft of light shot across the dim-lit sea and wrapped boat and man in a splendor of red and gold. Then a hush fell upon the fisherfolk, and only was heard the moan of the off-shore wind and the cries of the gulls flying low in the air.

Negore, the Coward

HE had followed the trail of his fleeing people for eleven days, and his pursuit had been in itself a flight; for behind him he knew full well were the dreaded Russians, toiling through the swampy lowlands and over the steep divides, bent on no less than the extermination of all his people. He was travelling light. A rabbit-skin sleeping-robe, a muzzle-loading rifle, and a few pounds of sun-dried salmon constituted his outfit. He would have marvelled that a whole people-women and children and aged — could travel so swiftly, had he not known the terror that drove them on.

It was in the old days of the Russian occupancy of Alaska, when the nineteenth century had run but half its course, that Negore fled after his fleeing tribe and came upon it this summer night by the head waters of the Pee-lat. Though near the midnight hour, it was bright day as he passed through the weary camp. Many saw him, all knew him, but few and cold were the greetings he received.

"Negore, the Coward," he heard Illiha, a young woman, laugh, and Sun-ne, his sister's daughter, laughed with her.

Black anger ate at his heart; but he gave no sign, threading his way among the camp-fires until he came to one where sat an old man. A young woman was kneading with skilful fingers the tired muscles of his legs. He raised a sightless face and listened intently as Negore's foot crackled a dead twig.

"Who comes?" he queried in a thin, tremulous voice.

"Negore," said the young woman, scarcely looking up from her task.

Negore's face was expressionless. For many minutes he stood and waited. The old man's head had sunk back upon his chest. The young woman pressed and prodded the wasted muscles, resting her body on her knees, her bowed head hidden as in a cloud by her black wealth of hair. Negore watched the supple body, bending at the hips as a lynx's body might bend, pliant as a young willow stalk, and, withal, strong as only youth is strong. He looked, and was aware of a great yearning, akin in sensation to physical hunger. At last he spoke, saying:

"Is there no greeting for Negore, who has been long gone and has but now come back?"

She looked up at him with cold eyes. The old man chuckled to himself after the manner of the old.

"Thou art my woman, Oona," Negore said, his tones dominant and conveying a hint of menace.

She arose with catlike ease and suddenness to her full height, her eyes flashing, her nostrils quivering like a deer's.

"I was thy woman to be, Negore, but thou art a coward; the daughter of Old Kinoos mates not with a coward!"

She silenced him with an imperious gesture as he strove to speak.

"Old Kinoos and I came among you from a strange land. Thy people took us in by their fires and made us warm, nor asked whence or why we wandered. It was their thought that Old Kinoos had lost the sight of his eyes from age; nor did Old Kinoos say otherwise, nor did I, his daughter. Old Kinoos is a brave man, but Old Kinoos was never a boaster. And now, when I tell thee of how his blindness came to be, thou wilt know, beyond question, that the daughter of Kinoos cannot mother the children of a coward such as thou art, Negore."

Again she silenced the speech that rushed up to his tongue.

"Know, Negore, if journey be added unto journey of all thy journeyings through this land, thou wouldst not come to the unknown Sitka on the Great Salt Sea. In that place there be many Russian folk, and their rule is harsh. And from Sitka, Old Kinoos, who was Young Kinoos in those days, fled away with me, a babe in his arms, along the islands in the midst of the sea. My mother dead tells the tale of his wrong; a Russian, dead with a spear through breast and back, tells the tale of the vengeance of Kinoos.

"But wherever we fled, and however far we fled, always did we find the hated Russian folk. Kinoos was unafraid, but the sight of them was a hurt to his eyes; so we fled on and on, through the seas and years, till we came to the Great Fog Sea, Negore, of which thou hast heard, but which thou hast never seen. We lived among many peoples, and I grew to be a woman; but Kinoos, growing old, took to him no other woman, nor did I take a man.

"At last we came to Pastolik, which is where the Yukon drowns itself in the Great Fog Sea. Here we lived long, on the rim of the sea, among a people by whom the Russians were well hated. But sometimes they came, these Russians, in great ships, and made the people of Pastolik show them the way through the islands uncountable of the many-mouthed Yukon. And sometimes the men they took to show them the way never came back, till the people became angry and planned a great plan.

"So, when there came a ship, Old Kinoos stepped forward and said he would show the way. He was an old man then, and his hair was white; but he was unafraid. And he was cunning, for he took the ship to where the sea sucks in to the land and the waves beat white on the mountain called Romanoff. The sea sucked the ship in to where the waves beat white, and it ground upon the rocks and broke open its sides. Then came all the people of Pastolik, (for this was the plan), with their war-spears, and arrows, and some few guns. But first the Russians put out the eyes of Old Kinoos that he might never show the way again, and then they fought, where the waves beat white, with the people of Pastolik.

"Now the head-man of these Russians was Ivan. He it was, with his two thumbs, who drove out the eyes of Kinoos. He it was who fought his way through the white water, with two men left of all his men, and went away along the rim of the Great Fog Sea into the north. Kinoos was wise. He could see no more and was helpless as a child.

So he fled away from the sea, up the great, strange Yukon, even to Nulato, and I fled with him.

"This was the deed my father did, Kinoos, an old man. But how did the young man, Negore?"

Once again she silenced him.

"With my own eyes I saw, at Nulato, before the gates of the great fort, and but few days gone. I saw the Russian, Ivan, who thrust out my father's eyes, lay the lash of his dog-whip upon thee and beat thee like a dog. This I saw, and knew thee for a coward. But I saw thee not, that night, when all thy people-yea, even the boys not yet hunters — fell upon the Russians and slew them all."

"Not Ivan," said Negore, quietly. "Even now is he on our heels, and with him many Russians fresh up from the sea."

Oona made no effort to hide her surprise and chagrin that Ivan was not dead, but went on:

"In the day I saw thee a coward; in the night, when all men fought, even the boys not yet hunters, I saw thee not and knew thee doubly a coward."

"Thou art done? All done?" Negore asked.

She nodded her head and looked at him askance, as though astonished that he should have aught to say.

"Know then that Negore is no coward," he said; and his speech was very low and quiet. "Know that when I was yet a boy I journeyed alone down to the place where the Yukon drowns itself in the Great Fog Sea. Even to Pastolik I journeyed, and even beyond, into the north, along the rim of the sea. This I did when I was a boy, and I was no coward. Nor was I coward when I journeyed, a young man and alone, up the Yukon farther than man had ever been, so far that I came to another folk, with white faces, who live in a great fort and talk speech other than that the Russians talk. Also have I killed the great bear of the Tanana country, where no one of my people hath ever been. And I have fought with the Nuklukyets, and the Kaltags, and the Sticks in far regions, even I, and alone. These deeds, whereof no man knows, I speak for myself. Let my people speak for me of things I have done which they know. They will not say Negore is a coward."

He finished proudly, and proudly waited.

"These be things which happened before I came into the land," she said, "and I know not of them. Only do I know what I know, and I know I saw thee lashed like a dog in the day; and in the night, when the great fort flamed red and the men killed and were killed, I saw thee not. Also, thy people do call thee Negore, the Coward. It is thy name now, Negore, the Coward."

"It is not a good name," Old Kinoos chuckled.

"Thou dost not understand, Kinoos," Negore said gently. "But I shall make thee understand. Know that I was away on the hunt of the bear, with Kamo-tah, my mother's son. And Kamo-tah fought with a great bear. We had no meat for three days, and Kamo-tah was not strong of arm nor swift of foot. And the great bear crushed

him, so, till his bones cracked like dry sticks. Thus I found him, very sick and groaning upon the ground. And there was no meat, nor could I kill aught that the sick man might eat.

"So I said, 'I will go to Nulato and bring thee food, also strong men to carry thee to camp.' And Kamo-tah said, 'Go thou to Nulato and get food, but say no word of what has befallen me. And when I have eaten, and am grown well and strong, I will kill this bear. Then will I return in honor to Nulato, and no man may laugh and say Kamo-tah was undone by a bear.'

"So I gave heed to my brother's words; and when I was come to Nulato, and the Russian, Ivan, laid the lash of his dog-whip upon me, I knew I must not fight. For no man knew of Kamo-tah, sick and groaning and hungry; and did I fight with Ivan, and die, then would my brother die, too. So it was, Oona, that thou sawest me beaten like a dog.

"Then I heard the talk of the shamans and chiefs that the Russians had brought strange sicknesses upon the people, and killed our men, and stolen our women, and that the land must be made clean. As I say, I heard the talk, and I knew it for good talk, and I knew that in the night the Russians were to be killed. But there was my brother, Kamo-tah, sick and groaning and with no meat; so I could not stay and fight with the men and the boys not yet hunters.

"And I took with me meat and fish, and the lash-marks of Ivan, and I found Kamo-tah no longer groaning, but dead. Then I went back to Nulato, and, behold, there was no Nulato-only ashes where the great fort had stood, and the bodies of many men. And I saw the Russians come up the Yukon in boats, fresh from the sea, many Russians; and I saw Ivan creep forth from where he lay hid and make talk with them. And the next day I saw Ivan lead them upon the trail of the tribe. Even now are they upon the trail, and I am here, Negore, but no coward."

"This is a tale I hear," said Oona, though her voice was gentler than before. "Kamo-tah is dead and cannot speak for thee, and I know only what I know, and I must know thee of my own eyes for no coward."

Negore made an impatient gesture.

"There be ways and ways," she added. "Art thou willing to do no less than what Old Kinoos hath done?"

He nodded his head, and waited.

"As thou hast said, they seek for us even now, these Russians. Show them the way, Negore, even as Old Kinoos showed them the way, so that they come, unprepared, to where we wait for them, in a passage up the rocks. Thou knowest the place, where the wall is broken and high. Then will we destroy them, even Ivan. When they cling like flies to the wall, and top is no less near than bottom, our men shall fall upon them from above and either side, with spears, and arrows, and guns. And the women and children, from above, shall loosen the great rocks and hurl them down upon them. It will be a great day, for the Russians will be killed, the land will be made clean, and Ivan, even Ivan who thrust out my father's eyes and laid the lash of his dog-whip

upon thee, will be killed. Like a dog gone mad will he die, his breath crushed out of him beneath the rocks. And when the fighting begins, it is for thee, Negore, to crawl secretly away so that thou be not slain."

"Even so," he answered. "Negore will show them the way. And then?"

"And then I shall be thy woman, Negore's woman, the brave man's woman. And thou shalt hunt meat for me and Old Kinoos, and I shall cook thy food, and sew thee warm parkas and strong, and make thee moccasins after the way of my people, which is a better way than thy people's way. And as I say, I shall be thy woman, Negore, always thy woman. And I shall make thy life glad for thee, so that all thy days will be a song and laughter, and thou wilt know the woman Oona as unlike all other women, for she has journeyed far, and lived in strange places, and is wise in the ways of men and in the ways they may be made glad. And in thine old age will she still make thee glad, and thy memory of her in the days of thy strength will be sweet, for thou wilt know always that she was ease to thee, and peace, and rest, and that beyond all women to other men has she been woman to thee."

"Even so," said Negore, and the hunger for her ate at his heart, and his arms went out for her as a hungry man's arms might go out for food.

"When thou hast shown the way, Negore," she chided him; but her eyes were soft, and warm, and he knew she looked upon him as woman had never looked before.

"It is well", he said, turning resolutely on his heel. "I go now to make talk with the chiefs, so that they may know I am gone to show the Russians the way."

"Oh, Negore, my man! my man!" she said to herself, as she watched him go, but she said it so softly that even Old Kinoos did not hear, and his ears were over keen, what of his blindness.

Three days later, having with craft ill-concealed his hiding-place, Negore was dragged forth like a rat and brought before Ivan-"Ivan the Terrible" he was known by the men who marched at his back. Negore was armed with a miserable bone-barbed spear, and he kept his rabbit-skin robe wrapped closely about him, and though the day was warm he shivered as with an ague. He shook his head that he did not understand the speech Ivan put at him, and made that he was very weary and sick, and wished only to sit down and rest, pointing the while to his stomach in sign of his sickness, and shivering fiercely. But Ivan had with him a man from Pastolik who talked the speech of Negore, and many and vain were the questions they asked him concerning his tribe, till the man from Pastolik, who was called Karduk, said:

"It is the word of Ivan that thou shalt be lashed till thou diest if thou dost not speak. And know, strange brother, when I tell thee the word of Ivan is the law, that I am thy friend and no friend of Ivan. For I come not willingly from my country by the sea, and I desire greatly to live; wherefore I obey the will of my master-as thou wilt obey, strange brother, if thou art wise, and wouldst live."

"Nay, strange brother," Negore answered, "I know not the way my people are gone, for I was sick, and they fled so fast my legs gave out from under me, and I fell behind."

Negore waited while Karduk talked with Ivan. Then Negore saw the Russian's face go dark, and he saw the men step to either side of him, snapping the lashes of their whips. Whereupon he betrayed a great fright, and cried aloud that he was a sick man and knew nothing, but would tell what he knew. And to such purpose did he tell, that Ivan gave the word to his men to march, and on either side of Negore marched the men with the whips, that he might not run away. And when he made that he was weak of his sickness, and stumbled and walked not so fast as they walked, they laid their lashes upon him till he screamed with pain and discovered new strength. And when Karduk told him all would he well with him when they had overtaken his tribe, he asked, "And then may I rest and move not?"

Continually he asked, "And then may I rest and move not?"

And while he appeared very sick and looked about him with dull eyes, he noted the fighting strength of Ivan's men, and noted with satisfaction that Ivan did not recognize him as the man he had beaten before the gates of the fort. It was a strange following his dull eyes saw. There were Slavonian hunters, fair-skinned and mighty-muscled; short, squat Finns, with flat noses and round faces; Siberian half-breeds, whose noses were more like eagle-beaks; and lean, slant-eyed men, who bore in their veins the Mongol and Tartar blood as well as the blood of the Slav. Wild adventurers they were, forayers and destroyers from the far lands beyond the Sea of Bering, who blasted the new and unknown world with fire and sword and clutched greedily for its wealth of fur and hide. Negore looked upon them with satisfaction, and in his mind's eye he saw them crushed and lifeless at the passage up the rocks. And ever he saw, waiting for him at the passage up the rocks, the face and the form of Oona, and ever he heard her voice in his ears and felt the soft, warm glow of her eyes. But never did he forget to shiver, nor to stumble where the footing was rough, nor to cry aloud at the bite of the lash. Also, he was afraid of Karduk, for he knew him for no true man. His was a false eye, and an easy tongue — a tongue too easy, he judged, for the awkwardness of honest speech.

All that day they marched. And on the next, when Karduk asked him at command of Ivan, he said he doubted they would meet with his tribe till the morrow. But Ivan, who had once been shown the way by Old Kinoos, and had found that way to lead through the white water and a deadly fight, believed no more in anything. So when they came to a passage up the rocks, he halted his forty men, and through Karduk demanded if the way were clear.

Negore looked at it shortly and carelessly. It was a vast slide that broke the straight wall of a cliff, and was overrun with brush and creeping plants, where a score of tribes could have lain well hidden.

He shook his head. "Nay, there be nothing there," he said. "The way is clear."

Again Ivan spoke to Karduk, and Karduk said:

"Know, strange brother, if thy talk be not straight, and if thy people block the way and fall upon Ivan and his men, that thou shalt die, and at once."

"My talk is straight," Negore said. "The way is clear."

Still Ivan doubted, and ordered two of his Slavonian hunters to go up alone. Two other men he ordered to the side of Negore. They placed their guns against his breast and waited. All waited. And Negore knew, should one arrow fly, or one spear be flung, that his death would come upon him. The two Slavonian hunters toiled upward till they grew small and smaller, and when they reached the top and waved their hats that all was well, they were like black specks against the sky.

The guns were lowered from Negore's breast and Ivan gave the order for his men to go forward. Ivan was silent, lost in thought. For an hour he marched, as though puzzled, and then, through Karduk's mouth, he said to Negore:

"How didst thou know the way was clear when thou didst look so briefly upon it?"

Negore thought of the little birds he had seen perched among the rocks and upon the bushes, and smiled, it was so simple; but he shrugged his shoulders and made no answer. For he was thinking, likewise, of another passage up the rocks, to which they would soon come, and where the little birds would all be gone. And he was glad that Karduk came from the Great Fog Sea, where there were no trees or bushes, and where men learned water-craft instead of land-craft and wood-craft.

Three hours later, when the sun rode overhead, they came to another passage up the rocks, and Karduk said:

"Look with all thine eyes, strange brother, and see if the way be clear, for Ivan is not minded this time to wait while men go up before."

Negore looked, and he looked with two men by his side, their guns resting against his breast. He saw that the little birds were all gone, and once he saw the glint of sunlight on a rifle-barrel. And he thought of Oona, and of her words: "And when the fighting begins, it is for thee, Negore, to crawl secretly away so that thou be not slain."

He felt the two guns pressing on his breast. This was not the way she had planned. There would be no crawling secretly away. He would be the first to die when the fighting began. But he said, and his voice was steady, and he still feigned to see with dull eyes and to shiver from his sickness:

"The way is clear."

And they started up, Ivan and his forty men from the far lands beyond the Sea of Bering. And there was Karduk, the man from Pastolik, and Negore, with the two guns always upon him. It was a long climb, and they could not go fast; but very fast to Negore they seemed to approach the midway point where top was no less near than bottom.

A gun cracked among the rocks to the right, and Negore heard the war-yell of all his tribe, and for an instant saw the rocks and bushes bristle alive with his kinfolk. Then he felt torn asunder by a burst of flame hot through his being, and as he fell he knew the sharp pangs of life as it wrenches at the flesh to be free.

But he gripped his life with a miser's clutch and would not let it go. He still breathed the air, which bit his lungs with a painful sweetness; and dimly he saw and heard, with passing spells of blindness and deafness, the flashes of sight and sound again wherein he saw the hunters of Ivan falling to their deaths, and his own brothers fringing the carnage

and filling the air with the tumult of their cries and weapons, and, far above, the women and children loosing the great rocks that leaped like things alive and thundered down.

The sun danced above him in the sky, the huge walls reeled and swung, and still he heard and saw dimly. And when the great Ivan fell across his legs, hurled there lifeless and crushed by a down-rushing rock, he remembered the blind eyes of Old Kinoos and was glad.

Then the sounds died down, and the rocks no longer thundered past, and he saw his tribespeople creeping close and closer, spearing the wounded as they came. And near to him he heard the scuffle of a mighty Slavonian hunter, loath to die, and, half uprisen, borne back and down by the thirsty spears.

Then he saw above him the face of Oona, and felt about him the arms of Oona; and for a moment the sun steadied and stood still, and the great walls were upright and moved not.

"Thou art a brave man, Negore," he heard her say in his ear; "thou art my man, Negore."

And in that moment he lived all the life of gladness of which she had told him, and the laughter and the song, and as the sun went out of the sky above him, as in his old age, he knew the memory of her was sweet. And as even the memories dimmed and died in the darkness that fell upon him, he knew in her arms the fulfilment of all the ease and rest she had promised him. And as black night wrapped around him, his head upon her breast, he felt a great peace steal about him, and he was aware of the hush of many twilights and the mystery of silence.

The Night-Born

It was in the old Alta-Inyo Club – a warm night for San Francisco – and through the open windows, hushed and far, came the brawl of the streets. The talk had led on from the Graft Prosecution and the latest signs that the town was to be run wide open, down through all the grotesque sordidness and rottenness of manhate and man-meanness, until the name of O'Brien was mentioned – O'Brien, the promising young pugilist who had been killed in the prize-ring the night before. At once the air had seemed to freshen. O'Brien had been a clean-living young man with ideals. He neither drank, smoked, nor swore, and his had been the body of a beautiful young god. He had even carried his prayer-book to the ringside. They found it in his coat pocket in the dressing-room...afterward.

Here was Youth, clean and wholesome, unsullied – the thing of glory and wonder for men to conjure with..... after it has been lost to them and they have turned middle-aged. And so well did we conjure, that Romance came and for an hour led us far from the man-city and its snarling roar. Bardwell, in a way, started it by quoting from Thoreau; but it was old Trefethan, bald-headed and dewlapped, who took up the quotation and for the hour to come was romance incarnate. At first we wondered how many Scotches he had consumed since dinner, but very soon all that was forgotten.

"It was in 1898 — I was thirty-five then," he said. "Yes, I know you are adding it up. You're right. I'm forty-seven now; look ten years more; and the doctors say – damn the doctors anyway!"

He lifted the long glass to his lips and sipped it slowly to soothe away his irritation.

"But I was young...once. I was young twelve years ago, and I had hair on top of my head, and my stomach was lean as a runner's, and the longest day was none too long for me. I was a husky back there in '98. You remember me, Milner. You knew me then. Wasn't I a pretty good bit of all right?"

Milner nodded and agreed. Like Trefethan, he was another mining engineer who had cleaned up a fortune in the Klondike.

"You certainly were, old man," Milner said. "I'll never forget when you cleaned out those lumberjacks in the M. & M. that night that little newspaper man started the row. Slavin was in the country at the time," — this to us — "and his manager wanted to get up a match with Trefethan."

"Well, look at me now," Trefethan commanded angrily. "That's what the Goldstead did to me – God knows how many millions, but nothing left in my soul..... nor in my veins. The good red blood is gone. I am a jellyfish, a huge, gross mass of oscillating protoplasm, a – a ..."

But language failed him, and he drew solace from the long glass.

"Women looked at me then; and turned their heads to look a second time. Strange that I never married. But the girl. That's what I started to tell you about. I met her a thousand miles from anywhere, and then some. And she quoted to me those very words of Thoreau that Bardwell quoted a moment ago – the ones about the day-born gods and the night-born."

"It was after I had made my locations on Goldstead – and didn't know what a treasure-pot that that trip creek was going to prove – that I made that trip east over the Rockies, angling across to the Great Up North there the Rockies are something more than a back-bone. They are a boundary, a dividing line, a wall impregnable and unscalable. There is no intercourse across them, though, on occasion, from the early days, wandering trappers have crossed them, though more were lost by the way than ever came through. And that was precisely why I tackled the job. It was a traverse any man would be proud to make. I am prouder of it right now than anything else I have ever done.

"It is an unknown land. Great stretches of it have never been explored. There are big valleys there where the white man has never set foot, and Indian tribes as primitive as ten thousand years ...almost, for they have had some contact with the whites. Parties of them come out once in a while to trade, and that is all. Even the Hudson Bay Company failed to find them and farm them.

"And now the girl. I was coming up a stream – you'd call it a river in California – uncharted – and unnamed. It was a noble valley, now shut in by high canyon walls, and again opening out into beautiful stretches, wide and long, with pasture shoulder-high in the bottoms, meadows dotted with flowers, and with clumps of timberspruce – virgin and magnificent. The dogs were packing on their backs, and were sore-footed and played out; while I was looking for any bunch of Indians to get sleds and drivers from and go on with the first snow. It was late fall, but the way those flowers persisted surprised me. I was supposed to be in sub-arctic America, and high up among the buttresses of the Rockies, and yet there was that everlasting spread of flowers. Some day the white settlers will be in there and growing wheat down all that valley.

"And then I lifted a smoke, and heard the barking of the dogs – Indian dogs – and came into camp. There must have been five hundred of them, proper Indians at that, and I could see by the jerking-frames that the fall hunting had been good. And then I met her – Lucy. That was her name. Sign language – that was all we could talk with, till they led me to a big fly – you know, half a tent, open on the one side where a campfire burned. It was all of moose-skins, this fly – moose-skins, smoke-cured, hand-rubbed, and golden-brown. Under it everything was neat and orderly as no Indian camp ever was. The bed was laid on fresh spruce boughs. There were furs galore, and on top of all was a robe of swanskins – white swan-skins – I have never seen anything like that robe. And on top of it, sitting cross-legged, was Lucy. She was nut-brown. I have called her a girl. But she was not. She was a woman, a nut-brown woman, an Amazon, a full-blooded, full-bodied woman, and royal ripe. And her eyes were blue.

"That's what took me off my feet – her eyes – blue, not China blue, but deep blue, like the sea and sky all melted into one, and very wise. More than that, they had laughter in them – warm laughter, sun-warm and human, very human, and ...shall I say feminine? They were. They were a woman's eyes, a proper woman's eyes. You know what that means. Can I say more? Also, in those blue eyes were, at the same time, a wild unrest, a wistful yearning, and a repose, an absolute repose, a sort of all-wise and philosophical calm."

Trefethan broke off abruptly.

"You fellows think I am screwed. I'm not. This is only my fifth since dinner. I am dead sober. I am solemn. I sit here now side by side with my sacred youth. It is not I — 'old' Trefethan – that talks; it is my youth, and it is my youth that says those were the most wonderful eyes I have ever seen – so very calm, so very restless; so very wise, so very curious; so very old, so very young; so satisfied and yet yearning so wistfully. Boys, I can't describe them. When I have told you about her, you may know better for yourselves."

"She did not stand up. But she put out her hand."

"'Stranger,' she said, 'I'm real glad to see you.'

"I leave it to you – that sharp, frontier, Western tang of speech. Picture my sensations. It was a woman, a white woman, but that tang! It was amazing that it should be a white woman, here, beyond the last boundary of the world – but the tang. I tell you, it hurt. It was like the stab of a flatted note. And yet, let me tell you, that woman was a poet. You shall see."

"She dismissed the Indians. And, by Jove, they went. They took her orders and followed her blind. She was hi-yu skookam chief. She told the bucks to make a camp for me and to take care of my dogs. And they did, too. And they knew enough not to get away with as much as a moccasin-lace of my outfit. She was a regular She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed, and I want to tell you it chilled me to the marrow, sent those little thrills Marathoning up and down my spinal column, meeting a white woman out there at the head of a tribe of savages a thousand miles the other side of No Man's Land.

"'Stranger," she said, 'I reckon you're sure the first white that ever set foot in this valley. Set down an' talk a spell, and then we'll have a bite to eat. Which way might you be comin'?'

"There it was, that tang again. But from now to the end of the yarn I want you to forget it. I tell you I forgot it, sitting there on the edge of that swan-skin robe and listening and looking at the most wonderful woman that ever stepped out of the pages of Thoreau or of any other man's book.

"I stayed on there a week. It was on her invitation. She promised to fit me out with dogs and sleds and with Indians that would put me across the best pass of the Rockies in five hundred miles. Her fly was pitched apart from the others, on the high bank by the river, and a couple of Indian girls did her cooking for her and the camp work. And so we talked and talked, while the first snow fell and continued to fall and make a surface for my sleds. And this was her story.

"She was frontier-born, of poor settlers, and you know what that means – work, work, always work, work in plenty and without end.

"'I never seen the glory of the world,' she said. 'I had no time. I knew it was right out there, anywhere, all around the cabin, but there was always the bread to set, the scrubbin' and the washin' and the work that was never done. I used to be plumb sick at times, jes' to get out into it all, especially in the spring when the songs of the birds drove me most clean crazy. I wanted to run out through the long pasture grass, wetting my legs with the dew of it, and to climb the rail fence, and keep on through the timber and up and up over the divide so as to get a look around. Oh, I had all kinds of hankerings – to follow up the canyon beds and slosh around from pool to pool, making friends with the water-dogs and the speckly trout; to peep on the sly and watch the squirrels and rabbits and small furry things and see what they was doing and learn the secrets of their ways. Seemed to me, if I had time, I could crawl among the flowers, and, if I was good and quiet, catch them whispering with themselves, telling all kinds of wise things that mere humans never know.'"

Trefethan paused to see that his glass had been refilled.

"Another time she said: 'I wanted to run nights like a wild thing, just to run through the moonshine and under the stars, to run white and naked in the darkness that I knew must feel like cool velvet, and to run and run and keep on running. One evening, plumb tuckered out – it had been a dreadful hard hot day, and the bread wouldn't raise and the churning had gone wrong, and I was all irritated and jerky – well, that evening I made mention to dad of this wanting to run of mine. He looked at me curious-some and a bit scared. And then he gave me two pills to take. Said to go to bed and get a good sleep and I'd be all hunky-dory in the morning. So I never mentioned my hankerings to him, or any one any more.'

"The mountain home broke up – starved out, I imagine – and the family came to Seattle to live. There she worked in a factory – long hours, you know, and all the rest, deadly work. And after a year of that she became waitress in a cheap restaurant – hash-slinger, she called it. "She said to me once, 'Romance I guess was what I wanted. But there wan't no romance floating around in dishpans and washtubs, or in factories and hash-joints.'

"When she was eighteen she married – a man who was going up to Juneau to start a restaurant. He had a few dollars saved, and appeared prosperous. She didn't love him – she was emphatic about that, but she was all tired out, and she wanted to get away from the unending drudgery. Besides, Juneau was in Alaska, and her yearning took the form of a desire to see that wonderland. But little she saw of it. He started the restaurant, a little cheap one, and she quickly learned what he had married her for..... to save paying wages. She came pretty close to running the joint and doing all the work from waiting to dishwashing. She cooked most of the time as well. And she had four years of it.

"Can't you picture her, this wild woods creature, quick with every old primitive instinct, yearning for the free open, and mowed up in a vile little hash-joint and toiling and moiling for four mortal years?

"'There was no meaning in anything,' she said. 'What was it all about! Why was I born! Was that all the meaning of life – just to work and work and be always tired — !to go to bed tired and to wake up tired, with every day like every other day unless it was harder?' She had heard talk of immortal life from the gospel sharps, she said, but she could not reckon that what she was doin' was a likely preparation for her immortality.

"But she still had her dreams, though more rarely. She had read a few books – what, it is pretty hard to imagine, Seaside Library novels most likely; yet they had been food for fancy. 'Sometimes,' she said, 'when I was that dizzy from the heat of the cooking that if I didn't take a breath of fresh air I'd faint, I'd stick my head out of the kitchen window, and close my eyes and see most wonderful things. All of a sudden I'd be traveling down a country road, and everything clean and quiet, no dust, no dirt; just streams ripplin' down sweet meadows, and lambs playing, breezes blowing the breath of flowers, and soft sunshine over everything; and lovely cows lazying knee-deep in quiet pools, and young girls bathing in a curve of stream all white and slim and natural – and I'd know I was in Arcady. I'd read about that country once, in a book. And maybe knights, all flashing in the sun, would come riding around a bend in the road, or a lady on a milk-white mare, and in the distance I could see the towers of a castle rising, or I just knew, on the next turn, that I'd come upon some palace, all white and airy and fairy-like, with fountains playing, and flowers all over everything, and peacocks on the lawn..... and then I'd open my eyes, and the heat of the cooking range would strike on me, and I'd hear Jake sayin' — he was my husband – I'd hear Jake sayin', "Why ain't you served them beans? Think I can wait here all day!" Romance — !I reckon the nearest I ever come to it was when a drunken Armenian cook got the snakes and tried to cut my throat with a potato knife and I got my arm burned on the stove before I could lay him out with the potato stomper.

"'I wanted easy ways, and lovely things, and Romance and all that; but it just seemed I had no luck nohow and was only and expressly born for cooking and dish-washing. There was a wild crowd in Juneau them days, but I looked at the other women, and their way of life didn't excite me. I reckon I wanted to be clean. I don't know why; I just wanted to, I guess; and I reckoned I might as well die dishwashing as die their way."

Trefethan halted in his tale for a moment, completing to himself some thread of thought.

"And this is the woman I met up there in the Arctic, running a tribe of wild Indians and a few thousand square miles of hunting territory. And it happened, simply enough, though, for that matter, she might have lived and died among the pots and pans. But 'Came the whisper, came the vision.' That was all she needed, and she got it.

"'I woke up one day,' she said. 'Just happened on it in a scrap of newspaper. I remember every word of it, and I can give it to you.' And then she quoted Thoreau's Cry of the Human:

"'The young pines springing up, in the corn field from year to year are to me a refreshing fact. We talk of civilizing the Indian, but that is not the name for his improvement. By the wary independence and aloofness of his dim forest life he preserves his intercourse with his native gods and is admitted from time to time to a rare and peculiar society with nature. He has glances of starry recognition, to which our saloons are strangers. The steady illumination of his qenius, dim only because distant, is like the faint but satisfying light of the stars compared with the dazzling but ineffectual and short-lived blaze of candles. The Society Islanders had their day-born gods, but they were not supposed to be of equal antiquity with the..... night-born gods.'

"That's what she did, repeated it word for word, and I forgot the tang, for it was solemn, a declaration of religion – pagan, if you will; and clothed in the living garmenture of herself.

"'And the rest of it was torn away,' she added, a great emptiness in her voice. 'It was only a scrap of newspaper. But that Thoreau was a wise man. I wish I knew more about him.' She stopped a moment, and I swear her face was ineffably holy as she said, 'I could have made him a good wife.'

"And then she went on. 'I knew right away, as soon as I read that, what was the matter with me. I was a night-born. I, who had lived all my life with the day-born, was a night-born. That was why I had never been satisfied with cooking and dishwashing; that was why I had hankered to run naked in the moonlight. And I knew that this dirty little Juneau hash-joint was no place for me. And right there and then I said, "I quit." I packed up my few rags of clothes, and started. Jake saw me and tried to stop me.

"'What you doing?" he says.

"'Divorcin' you and me,' I says. 'I'm headin' for tall timber and where I belong."'

"'No you don't," he says, reaching for me to stop me. "The cooking has got on your head. You listen to me talk before you up and do anything brash."'

"'But I pulled a gun-a little Colt's forty-four – and says, "This does my talkin' for me."'

"'And I left."'

Trefethan emptied his glass and called for another.

"Boys, do you know what that girl did? She was twenty-two. She had spent her life over the dish-pan and she knew no more about the world than I do of the fourth dimension, or the fifth. All roads led to her desire. No; she didn't head for the dance-halls. On the Alaskan Pan-handle it is preferable to travel by water. She went down to the beach. An Indian canoe was starting for Dyea – you know the kind, carved out of a single tree, narrow and deep and sixty feet long. She gave them a couple of dollars and got on board.

"'Romance?' she told me. 'It was Romance from the jump. There were three families altogether in that canoe, and that crowded there wasn't room to turn around, with dogs and Indian babies sprawling over everything, and everybody dipping a paddle and making that canoe go.' And all around the great solemn mountains, and tangled drifts of clouds and sunshine. And oh, the silence! the great wonderful silence! And, once, the smoke of a hunter's camp, away off in the distance, trailing among the trees. It was like a picnic, a grand picnic, and I could see my dreams coming true, and I was ready for something to happen 'most any time. And it did.

"'And that first camp, on the island! And the boys spearing fish in the mouth of the creek, and the big deer one of the bucks shot just around the point. And there were flowers everywhere, and in back from the beach the grass was thick and lush and neck-high. And some of the girls went through this with me, and we climbed the hillside behind and picked berries and roots that tasted sour and were good to eat. And we came upon a big bear in the berries making his supper, and he said "Oof!" and ran away as scared as we were. And then the camp, and the camp smoke, and the smell of fresh venison cooking. It was beautiful. I was with the night-born at last, and I knew that was where I belonged. And for the first time in my life, it seemed to me, I went to bed happy that night, looking out under a corner of the canvas at the stars cut off black by a big shoulder of mountain, and listening to the night-noises, and knowing that the same thing would go on next day and forever and ever, for I wasn't going back. And I never did go back.'

"'Romance! I got it next day. We had to cross a big arm of the ocean – twelve or fifteen miles, at least; and it came on to blow when we were in the middle. That night I was along on shore, with one wolf-dog, and I was the only one left alive.'

"Picture it yourself," Trefethan broke off to say. "The canoe was wrecked and lost, and everybody pounded to death on the rocks except her. She went ashore hanging on to a dog's tail, escaping the rocks and washing up on a tiny beach, the only one in miles.

"'Lucky for me it was the mainland,' she said. 'So I headed right away back, through the woods and over the mountains and straight on anywhere. Seemed I was looking for something and knew I'd find it. I wasn't afraid. I was night-born, and the big timber couldn't kill me. And on the second day I found it. I came upon a small clearing and a tumbledown cabin. Nobody had been there for years and years. The roof had fallen in. Rotted blankets lay in the bunks, and pots and pans were on the stove. But that was not the most curious thing. Outside, along the edge of the trees, you can't guess what I found. The skeletons of eight horses, each tied to a tree. They had starved to death, I reckon, and left only little piles of bones scattered some here and there. And each horse had had a load on its back. There the loads lay, in among the bones – painted canvas sacks, and inside moosehide sacks, and inside the moosehide sacks – what do you think?'"

She stopped, reached under a comer of the bed among the spruce boughs, and pulled out a leather sack. She untied the mouth and ran out into my hand as pretty a stream

of gold as I have ever seen – coarse gold, placer gold, some large dust, but mostly nuggets, and it was so fresh and rough that it scarcely showed signs of water-wash.

"'You say you're a mining engineer,' she said, 'and you know this country. Can you name a pay-creek that has the color of that gold!'

"I couldn't! There wasn't a trace of silver. It was almost pure, and I told her so.

"'You bet,' she said. 'I sell that for nineteen dollars an ounce. You can't get over seventeen for Eldorado gold, and Minook gold don't fetch quite eighteen. Well, that was what I found among the bones – eight horse-loads of it, one hundred and fifty pounds to the load.'

"'A quarter of a million dollars!' I cried out.

"'That's what I reckoned it roughly,' she answered. 'Talk about Romance! And me a slaving the way I had all the years, when as soon as I ventured out, inside three days, this was what happened. And what became of the men that mined all that gold? Often and often I wonder about it. They left their horses, loaded and tied, and just disappeared off the face of the earth, leaving neither hide nor hair behind them. I never heard tell of them. Nobody knows anything about them. Well, being the night-born, I reckon I was their rightful heir.'

Trefethan stopped to light a cigar.

"Do you know what that girl did? She cached the gold, saving out thirty pounds, which she carried back to the coast. Then she signaled a passing canoe, made her way to Pat Healy's trading post at Dyea, outfitted, and went over Chilcoot Pass. That was in '88 – eight years before the Klondike strike, and the Yukon was a howling wilderness. She was afraid of the bucks, but she took two young squaws with her, crossed the lakes, and went down the river and to all the early camps on the Lower Yukon. She wandered several years over that country and then on in to where I met her. Liked the looks of it, she said, seeing, in her own words, 'a big bull caribou knee-deep in purple iris on the valley-bottom.' She hooked up with the Indians, doctored them, gained their confidence, and gradually took them in charge. She had only left that country once, and then, with a bunch of the young bucks, she went over Chilcoot, cleaned up her gold-cache, and brought it back with her.

"'And here I be, stranger,' she concluded her yarn, 'and here's the most precious thing I own.'

"She pulled out a little pouch of buckskin, worn on her neck like a locket, and opened it. And inside, wrapped in oiled silk, yellowed with age and worn and thumbed, was the original scrap of newspaper containing the quotation from Thoreau.

"'And are you happy ...satisfied?' I asked her. 'With a quarter of a million you wouldn't have to work down in the States. You must miss a lot.'

"'Not much,' she answered. 'I wouldn't swop places with any woman down in the States. These are my people; this is where I belong. But there are times – and in her eyes smoldered up that hungry yearning I've mentioned — 'there are times when I wish most awful bad for that Thoreau man to happen along.'

"'Why?' I asked.

"'So as I could marry him. I do get mighty lonesome at spells. I'm just a woman – a real woman. I've heard tell of the other kind of women that gallivanted off like me and did queer things – the sort that become soldiers in armies, and sailors on ships. But those women are queer themselves. They're more like men than women; they look like men and they don't have ordinary women's needs. They don't want love, nor little children in their arms and around their knees. I'm not that sort. I leave it to you, stranger. Do I look like a man?'

"She didn't. She was a woman, a beautiful, nut-brown woman, with a sturdy, health-rounded woman's body and with wonderful deep-blue woman's eyes.

"'Ain't I woman?' she demanded. 'I am. I'm 'most all woman, and then some. And the funny thing is, though I'm night-born in everything else, I'm not when it comes to mating. I reckon that kind likes its own kind best. That's the way it is with me, anyway, and has been all these years.'

"'You mean to tell me — ' I began.

"'Never,' she said, and her eyes looked into mine with the straightness of truth. 'I had one husband, only – him I call the Ox; and I reckon he's still down in Juneau running the hash-joint. Look him up, if you ever get back, and you'll find he's rightly named.'

"And look him up I did, two years afterward. He was all she said – solid and stolid, the Ox – shuffling around and waiting on the tables.

"'You need a wife to help you,' I said.

"'I had one once,' was his answer.

"'Widower?'

"'Yep. She went loco. She always said the heat of the cooking would get her, and it did. Pulled a gun on me one day and ran away with some Siwashes in a canoe. Caught a blow up the coast and all hands drowned.'"

Trefethan devoted himself to his glass and remained silent.

"But the girl?" Milner reminded him.

"You left your story just as it was getting interesting, tender. Did it?"

"It did," Trefethan replied. "As she said herself, she was savage in everything except mating, and then she wanted her own kind. She was very nice about it, but she was straight to the point. She wanted to marry me.

"'Stranger,' she said, 'I want you bad. You like this sort of life or you wouldn't be here trying to cross the Rockies in fall weather. It's a likely spot. You'll find few likelier. Why not settle down! I'll make you a good wife.'

"And then it was up to me. And she waited. I don't mind confessing that I was sorely tempted. I was half in love with her as it was. You know I have never married. And I don't mind adding, looking back over my life, that she is the only woman that ever affected me that way. But it was too preposterous, the whole thing, and I lied like a gentleman. I told her I was already married.

"'Is your wife waiting for you?' she asked.

"I said yes.

"'And she loves you?'

"I said yes.

"And that was all. She never pressed her point...except once, and then she showed a bit of fire.

"'All I've got to do,' she said, 'is to give the word, and you don't get away from here. If I give the word, you stay on...But I ain't going to give it. I wouldn't want you if you didn't want to be wanted...and if you didn't want me.'

"She went ahead and outfitted me and started me on my way.

"'It's a darned shame, stranger," she said, at parting. 'I like your looks, and I like you. If you ever change your mind, come back.'

"Now there was one thing I wanted to do, and that was to kiss her good-bye, but I didn't know how to go about it nor how she would take it — .I tell you I was half in love with her. But she settled it herself.

"'Kiss me,' she said. 'Just something to go on and remember.'

"And we kissed, there in the snow, in that valley by the Rockies, and I left her standing by the trail and went on after my dogs. I was six weeks in crossing over the pass and coming down to the first post on Great Slave Lake."

The brawl of the streets came up to us like a distant surf. A steward, moving noiselessly, brought fresh siphons. And in the silence Trefethan's voice fell like a funeral bell:

"It would have been better had I stayed. Look at me."

We saw his grizzled mustache, the bald spot on his head, the puff-sacks under his eyes, the sagging cheeks, the heavy dewlap, the general tiredness and staleness and fatness, all the collapse and ruin of a man who had once been strong but who had lived too easily and too well.

"It's not too late, old man," Bardwell said, almost in a whisper.

"By God! I wish I weren't a coward!" was Trefethan's answering cry. "I could go back to her. She's there, now. I could shape up and live many a long year...with her...up there. To remain here is to commit suicide. But I am an old man – forty-seven – look at me. The trouble is," he lifted his glass and glanced at it, "the trouble is that suicide of this sort is so easy. I am soft and tender. The thought of the long day's travel with the dogs appalls me; the thought of the keen frost in the morning and of the frozen sled-lashings frightens me — "

Automatically the glass was creeping toward his lips. With a swift surge of anger he made as if to crash it down upon the floor. Next came hesitancy and second thought. The glass moved upward to his lips and paused. He laughed harshly and bitterly, but his words were solemn:

"Well, here's to the Night-Born. She WAS a wonder."

A Night's Swim in Yeddo Bay

"YES, a mighty nice set of people are them Japs, for all their being half civilized, which I deny, and say right here that for smartness, push and energy, learning, honesty, politeness and general good-naturedness, their like can't be beat. And when it comes to comparing them to our people, for real moral goodness and purity, why, we ain't in it." And the speaker, a grizzled, old merchant seaman, drained his glass and set it down on the bar with a slam, as though inviting criticism or controversy. But none dared to oppose him. Good-humoredly glancing round on his little group of listeners, he called for another round of drinks.

"An enterprising people, they are," he went on, leaning comfortably back against the bar and striking an attitude, without which, as his old chum, Bill Nandts, said, it was impossible for him to spin a yarn.

"They're always longing to be, as they call it, Europeanized or Americanized. They're only too quick to discard their old habits and way of doing things for the newer and more improved customs and methods of ours. Why, take the simple matter of dress, for instance. From the lowest beggar in the street to the highest dignitary in the land, they all want to be European in their dress. Pretty near all that can afford it dress like us, and sometimes those who can't put themselves to pretty shifts in order to do so.

"Why, there isn't a ship that leaves Yokohama but with a fo'ks'le full of slender, dilapidated wardrobes, the rest of which the Japs have obtained by shrewd trading and sharp tricks. Of course, the curio traders that come aboard while in port get more than a fair share of the spoils; but still, the 'sam pan' or boat men do a fair trade in that line.

"God pity the sailor who finds himself down on the pier without the necessary 'ten sen' to pay the boatmen's hire out to his vessel. Unless he can find a shipmate, from whom to borrow the money, he will usually end in parting with his shirt or singlet, or some article of wearing apparel; for the rapacious 'sam pan' men just ache to dress like us, though thy can't do it on the square. They tried that game on me once, but it did not succeed.

"It was my first trip to Yokohama, and I had been ashore half the night, carrying on as only a reckless young rat knows how. I had been up in 'Bloodtown', for that is what the low white quarter is called by the natives, because of the many drunken brawls and fights that occur there. Well, it was 'do in Rome as Rome does', and, of course, I had got mixed up in a couple of rows and street fights, for I was about half seas under, and did not care a snap for anything. Just about midnight I came wandering down to

the little stone pier, or jetty, which was Yokohama's only apology for the long line of docks to be met with in every seaport. In Yokohama, as you know, all the shipping lays out to anchor or to huge buoys; the work of loading and unloading being carried on by hundreds of lighters and thousands of low class Japanese laborers. I hear, however, that the Government has now erected a splendid steel pier, which cost a couple of million.

"But to return to my yarn. Along I came, taking in the whole street in a way that reminded me of the drunken fishermen, who, with thirty-two points in the compass, steered thirty more. My hat was gone; the sailor's knot, with which I had tied the silk handkerchief round my neck, had been slipped and drawn tight against my windpipe, nearly choking me; my clothes were all dusty and awry, from where I had been rolling on the ground with two doughty 'ricksha' men and a policeman; and, in fact, I must have presented a most charming appearance as I came under the lights of the police station and custom-house.

"About a hundred paces farther on, I came to the stone steps where the 'sam pans' clustered, while their owners solicited custom, for all the world like our own cabmen and hotel runners down at the ferries when the overland passengers are due.

"I soon engaged an old codger, who seemed like those battered armors which one sees in museums and such places. He must have been at least sixty years old, and, with great height, he was as lean as a skeleton; while his whole body was nothing but a mass of wrinkles. Here and there, as the light from a brazier, charcoal fire, shone on his sunburned hide, I could see big black and white scars of all descriptions. He was the most battered old hulk one would wish to meet with, and his voice was in harmony with the rest of him. It was as thin and shrill and piping as a child's, and it made me fidget as he bowed and ducked before me.

"Following him, I climbed aboard the 'sam pan', where I made the acquaintance of the rest of his crew. It was as startling a contrast as I ever saw. It was a little lump of a boy, not much larger than a good-sized chaw of tobacco. He was a precocious little youngster, with plump, well-formed body, and the bearing and assurance of a full-grown man. I proceeded to take a seat; but, what with my condition and the shaky, old concern, I came down all in a heap, as though I intended going through the bottom of the rickety craft.

"As I lay there, sprawling, I saw the little shaver glace sharply at me, and then jabber away to the old fellow, who, in turn, stared at me and paused in the very act of shoving the 'sam pan' off. I managed to gain my feet, and, irritated at the delay and my own clumsiness, I told them rather sharply to go ahead. They refused to do so. By this time the steps were crowded by the rough watermen, who were all laughing and jeering at me.

"I began to get angry at all this, and was about to shove off myself when the youngster came up to me and said very laconically, as he held out his had, 'Pay now'. At first I did not understand, so closely were the two words run together; but after he repeated his 'pay now' several times, to the great delight of the crowd, I comprehended.

Of course, I had no objections as to when I paid; but, digging down into my pocket, I found I was broke. Then I carefully searched every pocket, and the result was the startling knowledge that I hadn't a 'sou markee' to my name.

"When this became apparent, the crowd on the steps fairly howled in their glee, as they chattered away and hurled whole strings of advice and admonitions to my triumphant 'sam pan' crew.

"The youngster, after sharply scanning me with his shrewd, black eyes, laid hold of my shirt, which was bran' new from the slop chest, and said, 'Gimme shirt'. To this request the crowd signified their approval by sundry had-clappings and with much laughter enjoyed my predicament.

"'Not by a long-shot', sez I, and, finding him obstinate, I climbed out on the pier, feeling pretty cheap.

"Well, I fooled around a long while; but not one of all the 'sam pan' men would take me out without being paid in advance. To my every appeal, they would answer, 'Gimme coat', 'Gimme shirt', and so on. I was very obstinate myself in those days and wouldn't give in.

"I remember getting up on a big block of hewn granite and delivering an impassioned harangue to the motley mob, who cheered and jeered me by turns, not understanding a word of my discourse. Bye and bye I fell off the stone on top of them, nearly mashing two or three.

"Then I wandered down to the police station, and made known my ridiculous plight to the lieutenant. He seemed a very affable, good-natured man, and he went out and addressed the 'sam pan' men in choice Japanese. But they still refused to take me unless I parted company with my coat or shirt, or some article of wearing apparel, worth ten times the necessary money.

"Well, to make a long story short, after puzzling my head a little, I decided to swim aboard. As quick as it takes to tell it, I stripped myself, and, telling the lieutenant to take care of my clothes, I started out the pier on the run, closely followed by the 'sam pan' men, who seemed to hugely enjoy the queer caper I cut. I started down the stone steps with the tread of a hero; but the tide was out, and slipping on the slimy ooze which covered them, I went heels over head, bumpety bump, all the way down to the bottom. I struck the water with a mighty splash, to the accompaniment of the hoarse shouts of the enthusiastic crowd.

"However, when I came to the surface, they all signified their willingness to take me aboard if I would return. But I was stubborn now. I waved them good-bye, and paddled away in the dark. I had no fear, for I could swim like a fish, and, as it was mid-summer, the water was quite warm. Besides, the freshening effect of the salty brine was rapidly clearing my muddled head.

"Far ahead of me our anchor light burned brightly, and, with a strong, steady stroke, I struck out. It was not much of a swim — hardly a mile — and I soon found myself alongside. Climbing silently on deck, unperceived by the anchor watch, who was no other than my old chum here, Bill Nandts, I made by way to the fo'ks'le. I took my

blankets up on the fo'ks'le head, near the catheads, and laid down, for the fo'ks'le was too stifling for a comfortable sleep.

"Before I could close my eyes, I heard a boat come alongside and hail the anchor watch. Then quite a conversation followed, and some one climbed over the side and threw something down on the deck. This Bill Nandts examined. All of a sudden, he jumped to his feet, and exclaimed, 'My God! They're Charley's'

"It was one of the harbor police boats, which had brought my clothes aboard and inquired about my safety. Of course, Bill hadn't seen me, and, after rousing the fo'ks'le to find me, he made sure that I was drowned. The Captain, aroused by the noise, came on deck. After listening to the story, he ordered a boat over the side to search for me.

"Away both boats pulled, and I could hear Bill Nandts shouting again and again, 'Charley! O Charley! Where are you?'

"After vainly hunting for me in the water, they inquired of all the ships, thinking that I might have swam aboard one of them in the dark. Before long the whole harbor was in an uproar. The hailing of the anchor watches roused the dogs, which many of the ships carried, and soon every dog in the harbor was baying vigorously. The noise was contagious and spread to the shore, where all their canine friends came in on the grand chorus. And the cocks began to crow and the chickens to cackle, as though the last day had come, while a general alarm of fire was turned in by a nervous watchman; and all Yokohama awoke, thinking the city was being burned down.

"The bay was now swarming with the 'sam pan' men, who lent their hoarse cries to swell the tumult. Lights were flashing hither and thither across the water. The police tug, having got up steam by this time, came out to see what was all the uproar was about, and but added to the general confusion. Then the Harbor Master, aroused by some over-zealous official, with a wild tale of disaster, came hurrying out in his six-oared gig. But the scene of excitement had spread so far that he could neither make head nor tail out of it.

"Suddenly he was run down and spilled into the water by the police boat, which was just then engaged in an exciting chase of a poor, bewildered fisherman, to whom, with startling intuition, they had attributed all the trouble. The frightened fisherman, now that he was saved by the accident, lost his head, and fouled the bowsprit of a Norwegian bark, near us, and capsized. Then a whole fleet of custom-house boats, thinking it was a preconcerted plan of the smugglers to land illicit goods during the excitement, came dashing across the harbor in all directions. And how they overhauled the frightened 'sam pans' and fishing craft with great fierceness, in the heroic discharge of their duty!

"And to cap the climax, the aged keepers of the two light ships, on either side of the narrow opening in the great breakwater, seeing the lights of a P. and O. steamer approaching, thought it was an invasion of the Chinese. So they hurriedly extinguished both lights, and the big passenger steamer ran aground in the darkness.

"The excitement was intense; but, after an hour's duration, it died away, and I fell asleep, hugging myself in glee at the great prank I had played.

"The next I knew I was being roughly awakened. Opening my eyes, I found the sun rising in the East. Bill Nandts was a-shaking me like mad, so happy as not to know whether to be angry with me or not. Of course, explanations followed, and it was a long time before I heard the last of it. And as for the 'sam pan' men — why, I had the freedom of the harbor. For, ever after, they refused to take money from me, though they would always set up a great jabbering and laughing whenever I hove in sight."

"Well, boys," said Bill Nandts when he concluded, "that's one on me. So come up, all hands, and drink to the health of Long Charley, the best old 'shell back' that ever sailed out of Frisco."

A Northland Miracle

John Thornton of The Call of the Wild is one of the main characters in this story.

THIS is a story of things that happened, which goes to show that there is an eternal core of goodness in the hearts of all men. Bertram Cornell was a bad man, and a failure. In a little English home overseas there had been sorrow unavailing and tears shed in vain for his earthly and spiritual welfare. He was bad, utterly bad. There could be no doubt of it. Thoughtless, careless and uncaring were mild terms with which to brand his weaknesses.

Even in his boyhood he had been strong only for evil. Kind words and pleadings had no effect on him, and he had been callous to the wet eyes of his mother and sisters and the sterner though no less kindly admonitions of his father. So it could hardly have been otherwise, when yet a very young man, that he fled hurriedly out of his home in England, carrying with him something which should have burdened his conscience had he but possessed one, and leaving behind a disgrace on his name for his people to bear. And so it was that those who had known him spoke of him in bitterness and sadness, until the memory of him was dimmed with time. Of what further evils he wrought there was never a whisper, and of his end no one ever heard. In his last hour he made recompense and wiped clean his tarnished page of life. But he did this thing in a far country, where news travels slowly and gets lost upon the way, and where men ofttimes die before they can tell how others died. But this was the way of it. Strong of body and uncaring, he had laughed at the great rough hand of the world and had always done, not what the world demanded, but whatever Bertram Cornell desired. And he had met harsh words with harsher, and stout blows with stouter. He had served as sailor on many seas, as sheepherder on the Australian ranges, as cowboy among the Dakota cattlemen, and as an enrolled private with the Mounted Police of the Northwest Territory. From this last post he had deserted on the discovery of gold in the Klondike and worked his way to the Alaskan coast. Here, because of his frontier experience, he speedily found place to fit into in a party of three other men.

This party was bound for the Klondike, but it had planned to abandon the beaten track and to go into the country over a new and untraveled route. With a pack train of many horses (cayuses from the mountains of eastern Oregon), the four men struck east into the desolate wilderness which lies beyond Mount St. Elias, and then north through the upland region in which the headwaters of the White and Tanana rivers have their source. It was an unexplored domain, marked vaguely on the maps, which was yet to feel the foot of the first white man. So vast and dismal was it that even animal life was scarce, and the tiny Indian tribes few and far between. For days, sometimes, they

rode through the silent forest of by the rims of lonely lakes and saw no living thing, heard no sound save the sighing of the wind and the sobbing of the waters. A great solemnity brooded over the land, and the quiet was so profound that they came to hush their voices and to waste few words in idle talk.

As they journeyed on they prospected for the hidden gold, groping in the chill pools of the torrents and panning dirt in the shadows of the mighty glaciers. Once they came upon a body of virgin copper, like a mountain, but they could only shrug their shoulders and pass on. Food for their horses was scarce, and quite often poisonous, and the patient animals died one by one on the strange trail their masters had led them to. Crossing a high divide, the party was overwhelmed by a sleety storm common to such elevations, and, when finally they struggled through to the warmer valley beneath, the last horse had been left behind.

But here, in the sheltered valley, John Thornton cleared back the moss and from the grassroots shook out glittering particles of yellow gold. Bertram Cornell was with him at the time, and that night the twain carried back to camp nuggets which weighed a thousand dollars in the scales. A stop was called, and at the end of a month the four men had mined a treasure far greater than they could carry. But their food supply had been steadily growing less and less, till one man could bend forward and bear it all on his back.

What with the bleak region and fall coming on, it was high time to be going along. Somewhere to the northeast they knew the Klondike lay and the country of the Yukon. How far they did not know, though they thought it could not be more than a hundred miles. So each took about five pounds of gold, or a thousand dollars, and the rest of the great treasure they cached safely against their return. And to return they intended just as soon as they could lay in more grub. Their ammunition having given out, they left their rifles with the gold, burdening themselves only with the camp equipage and the scant supply of food.

So sure were they that they would shortly reach the gold diggings, that they ate unsparingly of the provisions; so that on the tenth day they found but a few miserable pounds remaining. And still before them, in up-heaved earth-waves, range upon range, towered the great grim mountains. Then it was that doubt came, and fear settled upon the men, and Bill Hines began to ration out the food.

They no longer ate at midday, and morning and evening he divided the day's allowance into four meager portions. It was evenly shared, but it was very little — enough to keep soul and body together, but not enough to furnish the proper strength to healthy toiling men. Their faces grew wan and haggard, and day by day they covered less ground. Often the nausea of emptiness seized them, and their knees shook with weakness, and they reeled and fell. And always, when they had gasped and dragged themselves to the crest of a jagged mountain pass and eagerly looked beyond, another mountain confronted them. And always the brooding peace lay heavy over the land, and there was nothing but the loneliness and silence without end.

One by one, they threw away their blankets and spare clothes. They dropped their axes by the way, and the spare cooking utensils, and even the sacks of gold dust, until at last they staggered onward, half-naked, unburdened save for the pittance of grub that remained. This, Jan Jensen, the Dane, divided by weight into four parts so that the burden might be equally distributed. And each man, by the holy though unwritten and unspoken bonds of comradeship, held sacred that which he carried on his back. The small grub-packs were never opened except by the light of the campfire, where all could see and where just division was made.

Of bacon they possessed one three-pound chunk, which John Thornton carried in addition to a few cups of flour. This one piece they were saving for the very last, when the need would be greatest, and they resolutely refrained from touching it. But Bertram Cornell cast hungry eyes upon it and thought hungry thoughts. And in the night, while his comrades slept the sleep of exhaustion, he unstrapped John Thornton's pack and robbed it of the bacon; and all through the hours till dawn, taking care lest the unaccustomed quantity turn his stomach, he munched and chewed and swallowed it, bit by bit, till nothing at all of it was left.

On the day which followed he took good care to hide the new strength which had come to him of the night and, if anything, appeared weaker than the rest. It was a very hard day; John Thornton lagged behind and rested often; but by nightfall they had cleared another mountain and beheld the opening of a small river valley beneath, running to the eastward. To the eastward! There lay the Klondike and safety! A few more days, could they but manage to live through them, they would be among white men and grub-caches again.

But, huddled by the fire, the starving men looking greedily on, Bill Hines opened Thornton's pack to get some flour. In an instant each eye had noted the absence of the bacon. Thornton's eyes stared in horror, and Hines dropped the pack and sobbed aloud. But Jan Jensen drew his hunting knife and spoke. His voice was low and husky, almost a whisper, but each word fell slowly from his lips, and distinctly.

"My comrades, this is murder. This man has slept with us and shared with us in all fairness. When we divided all the grub by weight, each man carried on his back the lives of his comrades. And so did this man carry our lives on his back. It was a trust, a great trust, a sacred trust. He has not been true to it. Today, when he dropped behind, we thought he was weary. We were mistaken. Behold! He has eaten that which was ours, upon which our very lives were hanging. There is no other name for it than murder. For murder there is one punishment, and only one. Am I not right, my comrades?"

"Ay!" Bill Hines cried; but Bertram Cornell remained silent. He had not expected this.

Jan Jensen raised the long-bladed knife to strike, but Cornell gripped his wrist. "Let me speak," he demanded.

Thornton staggered slowly to his feet and said, "It is not right that I should die. I did not eat the bacon; nor could I have lost it. I know nothing about it. But I swear solemnly by the most high God that I have neither touched nor tasted the bacon!"

“If you were sneak enough to eat it, certainly you are sneak enough to lie about it now,” Jensen charged, fingering the knife impatiently.

“Leave him alone, I tell you,” threatened Cornell. “We don’t know that he ate it. We know nothing about it. And I warn you, I won’t stand by and see murder done. There is a chance that he is not guilty. Don’t trifle with that chance. You dare not punish him on a chance.”

The angry Dane sheathed the blade, but an hour later, when Thornton happened to speak to him, he turned his back. Bill Hines also refused to hold conversation with the wretched man, while Cornell, already ashamed for the good which had fluttered in him (the first in years), would have nothing to do with him.

The next morning Bill Hines lumped the little remaining food together and redivided it into four parts. From Thornton’s portion he subtracted the equivalent of the bacon, which same he shared among the other three piles. This he did without a word; the act was too significant to need speech.

“And let him carry his own grub,” Jensen growled. “If he wants to eat it all at once, he’s welcome to.”

What John Thornton suffered in the days which followed, only John Thornton knows. Not only did his comrades turn from him with abhorrent faces, but he was judged guilty of the blackest and most cowardly of crimes — that of treason. And further, eating less than they, he was forced to keep up with them or perish. Even then, when he had eaten his very last pinch, they had food left for two days. So he cut the leather tops from his moccasins and boiled them and ate them and during the day chewed the bark of willow-shoots till the pain of his swollen and inflamed mouth nearly drove him mad. And he dragged onward, staggering, falling, crawling, as often in delirium as not.

But the day came when the three other men fell back upon their moccasins and the green shoots of young trees. By this time they had followed the torrent down until it had become a small river, and they were counseling desperately the gathering of the drift-logs into a rickety raft. Then it was that they came unexpectedly upon an Indian village of a dozen lodges. But the Indians had never seen white men before and greeted them with a shower of arrows. “See! The river! Canoes!” Jensen cried. “We’re saved if we can make them! We must make them!”

They ran, drunkenly, toward the bank, the howling tribesmen on their heels and gaining. Suddenly, from behind a tree to one side, a skin-clad warrior stepped forth. He poised his great ivory-pointed spear for a moment, then cast it with perfect aim. Singing and hurtling through the air, it drove full into John Thornton’s hips. He wavered for a second, tripped and fell forward on his face. Hines and Jensen, running just behind him, swerved to the right and left and passed him on either side.

Then the miracle came to pass. The spirit of Goodness fluttered mightily in Bertram Cornell’s breast. Without thought, obeying the inward prompting, he sprang forward on the instant and seized the fleeing men by the arms.

“Come back!” he cried hoarsely. “Carry Thornton to the canoes! I’ll hold the Indians back until you shove clear!”

“Leave go!” the Dane screamed, fumbling for his knife. “I wouldn’t touch the dog to save my life!”

“I stole the bacon. I ate the bacon. Now will you come back?” Cornell saw the doubt in their eyes. “As I hope for mercy at the Judgment Seat, I stole it.” A flight of arrows fell about them like rain. “Hurry! I’ll hold them back!”

In a trice they were staggering toward the canoes with the wounded man between them; but Bertram Cornell faced about and stood still. Surprised by this action, the Indians hesitated and halted, while Cornell, seeing that it was gaining time, made no motion. They discharged a shower of arrows at him. The bone-barbed missiles flew about him like hail.

Half a dozen arrows entered his chest and legs, and one pinned into his neck. But he yet stood upright and still as a carved statue. The warrior who flung the spear at Thornton approached him from the side, and they closed together in each other’s arms. At this the rest of the tribesmen came down upon him in a flood of war.

As they cut and hacked, he heard Jan Jensen shouting from the water, and he knew that his comrades were safe. Then he fought the good fight, the first for a good cause in all his life, and the last. But when all was still, the Indians drew back in superstitious awe. With him lay their chief and six of their fellows.

Though he had lived without honor, thus he died, like a man, brave and repentant, and rectifying evil. Nor was his body dishonored. For that he fought greatly, and slew their own chieftain, they respected him and gave him a warrior’s burial. And because they were a simple people, who had never seen white men, they were wont to speak of him, as the seasons passed, as “the strange god who came down out of the sky to die.”

A Nose For the King

IN the morning calm of Korea, when its peace and tranquillity truly merited its ancient name, “Cho-sen,” there lived a politician by name Yi Chin Ho. He was a man of parts, and–who shall say?–perhaps in no wise worse than politicians the world over. But, unlike his brethren in other lands, Yi Chin Ho was in jail. Not that he had inadvertently diverted to himself public moneys, but that he had inadvertently diverted too much. Excess is to be deplored in all things, even in grafting, and Yi Chin Ho’s excess had brought him to most deplorable straits.

Ten thousand strings of cash he owed the government, and he lay in prison under sentence of death. There was one advantage to the situation–he had plenty of time in which to think. And he thought well. Then called he the jailer to him.

“Most worthy man, you see before you one most wretched,” he began. “Yet all will be well with me if you will but let me go free for one short hour this night. And all will be well with you, for I shall see to your advancement through the years, and you shall come at length to the directorship of all the prisons of Cho-sen.”

“How, now?” demanded the jailer. “What foolishness is this? One short hour, and you but waiting for your head to be chopped off! And I, with an aged and much-to-be-respected mother, not to say anything of a wife and several children of tender years! Out upon you for the scoundrel that you are!”

“From the Sacred City to the ends of all the Eight Coasts there is no place for me to hide,” Yi Chin Ho made reply. “I am a man of wisdom, but of what worth my wisdom here in prison? Were I free, well I know I could seek out and obtain the money wherewith to repay the government. I know of a nose that will save me from all my difficulties.”

“A nose!” cried the jailer.

“A nose,” said Yi Chin Ho. “A remarkable nose, if I may say so, a , most remarkable nose.”

The jailer threw up his hands despairingly. “Ah, what a wag you are, what a wag,” he laughed. “To think that that very admirable wit of yours must go the way of the chopping-block!”

And so saying, he turned and went away. But in the end, being a man soft of head and heart, when the night was well along he permitted Yi Chin Ho to go.

Straight he went to the Governor, catching him alone and arousing him from his sleep.

“Yi Chin Ho, or I’m no Governor!” cried the Governor. “What do you here who should be in prison waiting on the chopping-block?”

"I pray your excellency to listen to me," said Yi Chin Ho, squatting on his hams by the bedside and lighting his pipe from the fire-box. "A dead man is without value. It is true, I am as a dead man, without value to the government, to your excellency, or to myself. But if, so to say, your excellency were to give me my freedom–"

"Impossible!" cried the Governor. "Besides, you are condemned to death."

"Your excellency well knows that if I can repay the ten thousand strings of cash, the government will pardon me,', Yi Chin Ho went on. "So, as I say, if your excellency were to give me my freedom for a few days, being a man of understanding, I should then repay the government and be in position to be of service to your excellency. I should be in position to be of very great service to your excellency."

"Have you a plan whereby you hope to obtain this money?" asked I the Governor.

"I have," said Yi Chin Ho.

"Then come with it to me to-morrow night; I would now sleep," said the Governor, taking up his snore where it had been interrupted.

On the following night, having again obtained leave of absence from the jailer, Yi Chin Ho presented himself at the Governor's bedside.

"Is it you, Yi Chin Ho?" asked the Governor. "And have you the plan?"

"It is I, your excellency," answered Yi Chin Ho, "and the plan is here."

"Speak," commanded the Governor.

"The plan is here," repeated Yi Chin Ho, "here in my hand."

The Governor sat up and opened his eyes. Yi Chin Ho proffered in his hand a sheet of paper. The Governor held it to the light.

"Nothing but a nose," said he.

"A bit pinched, so, and so, your excellency," said Yi Chin Ho.

"Yes, a bit pinched here and there, as you say," said the Governor.

"Withal it is an exceeding corpulent nose, thus, and so, all in one place, at the end," proceeded Yi Chin Ho. "Your excellency would seek far and wide and many a day for that nose and find it not."

"An unusual nose," admitted the Governor.

"There is a wart upon it," said Yi Chin Ho.

"A most unusual nose," said the Governor. "Never have I seen the like. But what do you with this nose, Yi Chin Ho?"

"I seek it whereby to repay the money to the government," said Yi Chin Ho. "I seek it to be of service to your excellency, and I seek it to save my own worthless head. Further, I seek your excellency's seal upon this picture of the nose."

And the Governor laughed and affixed the seal of state, and Yi Chin Ho departed. For a month and a day he travelled the King's Road which leads to the shore of the Eastern Sea; and there, one night, at the gate of the largest mansion of a wealthy city he knocked loudly for admittance.

"None other than the master of the house will I see," said he fiercely to the frightened servants. "I travel upon the King's business."

Straightway was he led to an inner room, where the master of the house was roused from his sleep and brought blinking before him.

"You are Pak Chung Chang, head man of this city," said Yi Chin Ho in tones that were all-accusing. "I am upon the King's business."

Pak Chung Chang trembled. Well he knew the King's business was ever a terrible business. His knees smote together, and he near fell to the floor.

"The hour is late," he quavered. "Were it not well to–"

"The King's business never waits!" thundered Yi Chin Ho. "Come apart with me, and swiftly. I have an affair of moment to discuss with you.

"It is the King's affair," he added with even greater fierceness; so that Pak Chung Chang's silver pipe dropped from his nerveless fingers and clattered on the floor.

"Know then," said Yi Chin Ho, when they had gone apart, "that the King is troubled with an affliction, a very terrible affliction. In that he failed to cure, the Court physician has had nothing else than his head chopped off. From all the Eight Provinces have the physicians come to wait upon the King. Wise consultation have they held, and they have decided that for a remedy for the King's affliction nothing else is required than a nose, a certain kind of nose, a very peculiar certain kind of nose.

"Then by none other was I summoned than his excellency the prime minister himself. He put a paper into my hand. Upon this paper was the very peculiar kind of nose drawn by the physicians of the Eight Provinces, with the seal of state upon it.

"'Go,' said his excellency the prime minister. 'Seek out this nose, for the King's affliction is sore. And wheresoever you find this nose upon the face of a man, strike it off forthright and bring it in all haste to the Court, for the King must be cured. Go, and come not back until your search is rewarded.'

"And so l departed upon my quest," said Yi Chin Ho. "I have sought out the remotest corners of the kingdom; I have travelled the Eight Highways, searched the Eight Provinces, and sailed the seas of the Eight Coasts. And here I am."

With a great flourish he drew a paper from his girdle, unrolled it with many snappings and cracklings, and thrust it before the face of Pak Chung Chang. Upon the paper was the picture of the nose.

Pak Chung Chang stared upon it with bulging eyes.

"Never have I beheld such a nose," he began.

"There is a wart upon it," said Yi Chin Ho.

"Never have I beheld–" Pak Chung Chang began again.

"Bring your father before me," Yi Chin Ho interrupted sternly.

"My ancient and very-much-to-be-respected ancestor sleeps," said Pak Chung Chang.

"Why dissemble?" demanded Yi Chin Ho. "You know it is your father's nose. Bring him before me that I may strike it off and be gone. Hurry, lest I make bad report of you."

"Mercy!" cried Pak Chung Chang, falling on his knees. "It is impossible! It is impossible! You cannot strike off my father's nose. He cannot go down without his nose to

the grave. He will become a laughter and a byword, and all my days and nights will be filled with woe. O reflect! Report that you have seen no such nose in your travels. You, too, have a father."

Pak Chung Chang clasped Yi Chin Ho's knees and fell to weeping on his sandals.

"My heart softens strangely at your tears," said Yi Chin Ho. "I, too, know filial piety and regard. But–" He hesitated, then added, as though thinking aloud, "It is as much as my head is worth."

"How much is your head worth ?" asked Pak Chung Chang in a thin, small voice.

"A not remarkable head," said Yi Chin Ho. "An absurdly unremarkable head; but, such is my great foolishness, I value it at nothing less than one hundred thousand strings of cash."

"So be it," said Pak Chung Chang, rising to his feet.

"I shall need horses to carry the treasure," said Yi Chin Ho, "and men to guard it well as I journey through the mountains. There are robbers abroad in the land."

"There are robbers abroad in the land," said Pak Chung Chang, sadly. "But it shall be as you wish, so long as my ancient and very-much-to-be-respected ancestor's nose abide in its appointed place."

"Say nothing to any man of this occurrence," said Yi Chin Ho, "else will other and more loyal servants than I be sent to strike off your father's nose."

And so Yi Chin Ho departed on his way through the mountains, blithe of heart and gay of song as he listened to the jingling bells of his treasure-laden ponies.

There is little more to tell. Yi Chin Ho prospered through the years. By his efforts the jailer attained at length to the directorship of all the prisons of Cho-sen; the Governor ultimately betook himself to the Sacred City to be prime minister to the King, while Yi Chin Ho became the King's boon companion and sat at table with him to the end of a round, fat life. But Pak Chung Chang fell into a melancholy, and ever after he shook his head sadly, with tears in his eyes, whenever he regarded the expensive nose of his ancient and very-much-to-berespected ancestor.

O Haru

"'WHO is she?' What, chum, hast been sleeping? 'Tis O Haru — of all geishas, the best, the purest; of all dancers, the matchless, the gracefulest; of all women, the most divinely beautiful, the most alluring. 'Tis O Haru, the dream of the lotus, the equal of Fugi, and the glory of man. Truly hast thou squandered thy last years in America, else wouldst thou have known her, else seen her in our great festival processions, raised aloft on immense dashi and dancing to the admiring multitudes. Call thyself lucky; consider this tea house the shrine of your geisha-girl worship; thank the father that gave thee life that thou art here! Bless the illustrious Lord Sousouchi, who has thrice-blessed thee by bringing thee here! For 'tis O Haru, the spring, the glorious dancer, the heavenly beauty; peer unto none of all geishas and dancers!"

This, amid the hum of admiration and burst applause which succeeded O Haru's dance. The most illustrious, the most honorific, the Lord Sousouchi, had invited the great British nobleman to a supper with music, singers and dancers, so that he might gain an insight of Japanese pleasures. The most famous geishas, singers and players had been hired for the occasion, nor had his hand been sparing in aught that would diminish its charm and brilliancy. There were perhaps a dozen that partook of Sousouchi's hospitality and that now vied with each other in applauding O Haru.

The geishas or dancing-girls are the brightest, most intelligent and most accomplished of Japanese women. Chosen for their beauty they are educated from childhood. Not only are they trained in all the seductive graces of the dance and of personal attraction; but also in singing, music, and the intricate etiquette of serving and entertaining; nor are their minds neglected, for in wit, intelligence and repartee, they excell. In short, the whole aim of their education is to make them artistically fascinating. In class, they occupy much the same position as do our actresses, and though many are frail beauties that grace the tea house festivals, here and there will be found gems of the purest luster.

O Haru, as was the custom, now that her dance was finished, attended upon the Lord Sousouchi, and her quick wit, beauty, silvery laughter, and fascinating personality, set the guests a-throb with the pleasure of her presence. To the Occidental she could not but appeal, while to the Japanese, she was the ideal of beauty. Her figure, slender, long-waisted and narrow-hipped, was a marvel of willowy grace, rendered the more bewitching by the ease and charm of her carriage. Her bust was that of a maid's — no full suggestion of luscious charms beneath the soft fold of her kimono — rather the chaste slimness of virginity. Long, slender, beautifully curved, the neck was but a fitting pedestal for the shapely head, poised so delicately upon it. Her hair, long,

straight, and glossy black, was combed back from the clear, high forehead — a wondrous dome to the exquisite oval of the face. High above the long, narrow eyes, arched the brows, seemingly stencilled, so extreme the delicacy of their lines. The nose, while not prominent, aquiline; and the mouth, small, approached lips, full and scarlet-red. Of a clear, ivory white, her complexion pled all innocence of the customary rouge, while in the cheek lay the faintest suggestion of color — color, which could mount to the heights of passion or sink to the imperceptibility of placidity. The expression, never the same, the shifting mirror of every mood, of every thought: now responsive to vivacious, light-hearted gayety; now reflecting the deeper, sterner emotions; now portraying all the true womanly depths of her nature. Truly was she "O Haru, the dream of the lotus, the equal of Fugi and the glory of man!"

The samisens strike up: the drumming girls cease. A group of geishas, clad in robes of scarlet and yellow, dance the pretty dance of maple leaves, shivering and shaking in the autumn wind. But the eyes and souls of the company are bent on O Haru, whose ravishing beauty and inimitable wit bind them her slaves, and even the senility of the Right Honorable Lord Sousouchi vanishes before her irresistible charms. Soon she leaves them to expatiate upon her wondrous self, while she retires to dress for her next dance, her last for the evening.

A burst of music and she appears, clad in the armor and complete war-panoply of the ancient samurai — the samurai of feudal Japan, whose whole duty was embraced within the single term, loyalty; loyalty, so pure, that wife, children, kindred, all human ties, even his gods must be, if needs, sacrificed for his master the diamiõ. It was one of her masterpieces, the interpretation of Oishi, the leader of the "Loyal Rõnins," plotting the revenge of his master's death. Oishi, who, that nothing may distract him from his contemplated vengeance, divorces his wife and sends his children away.

Full well she understood her past. Of samurai blood; the daughter of diamiõ's favorite, who had gone through the fiery ordeal of the shogunate; who had seen the son of heaven come forth from his centuries of seclusion to hurl to earth the proud feudal nobility of old Japan; she was possessed, by heredity and tradition, of all the pride of her race. Fired by the wild rush of her father's blood, her slender form seemed to vibrate with intensity of Oishi's emotion, seemed to suffocate with the scorching heat of his passion. A hush of awe fell upon the company, as with martial tread and gesture she personified the oldtime hero. With superstitious reverence and bated breath they followed her in her wildly-graceful pantomime. Vanished the bright lights, the cheery tea house, the laughing geishas, as her audience followed her into the reality of old Japan. Through the depths of melancholy, grief and anguish, up the heights of stormy passion and soul-consuming thirst for vengeance, she led them — on — on — till, in a wild burst of rhythmic motion, the diamiõ is avenged and the consumation all but attained. Then the last scene, the dramatic climax, the hara-kiri. All hopes, all joys of life forgotten, Oishi follows his lord into the nether world. A flash of steel, the simulated death thrust in the abdomen, and the dance is over. No applause, glistening eyes and weeping geishas, and O Haru, with heaving breast and flashing eyes, overcome by

the excess of her feeling, forgets to make due obeisance to the Lord Sousouchi, omits the customary sayonara and retires in a tumultuous flood of tears.

Home at last. O Haru sat in the soft halo of the andon, deep-sunk in dreamy reverie. But her thoughts were far away from tea house revels and her soul wandered in strange lands, with the image of one, Toyotomi. Toyotomi the brave, the venturesome; the love her girlhood, the desire of her womanhood.

Strange had been the mingling of their lives. Both of the samurai class, his father had prospered, hers had died, and she, an orphan, had gone into the possession of Saisdashai, the master of a geisha ya. There she had passed her childhood, spent in the cultivation of all the arts and graces of the accomplished geisha; there, in the first bloom of her maturity had she met Toyotomi; there, and in many the tea house he chose to frequent, had she learned to love him.

Peculiar had been their courtship: contrary to all tradition and custom. No fathers or mothers to choose for their children, for his also had journeyed on in quest of that silent Nirvana. Saisdashai opposed, as by law he could, her marriage, for she was his by the contract, his to hire out to the tea house patrons, and well he was paid for her marvelous dancing. But Toyotomi had been hot on the chase and one day — ah well she remembered — selling all his possessions, paid Saisdashai the last yen he could claim on her, and she found herself free — free to love and marry her lover.

But Toyotomi was ambitious. Penniless, he cared not for poverty, so they plighted their troth and she was left to her dancing, while he sailed over the sea to the white barbarians, promising to come back, rich and powerful, and marry her. What his fortune had been she knew not and save for short and infrequent letters, his wanderings were sealed to her. For a decade now, had she waited for him and saving her earnings, she recked not whether he returned rich or poor. She was rich, nay, wealthy — for was she not the most popular geisha, the people's idol, the noblemen's despair? And thanks to her lover, she had not to surrender her earnings to a geisha ya master, for she was free, independent. And though dangerous had been the path of her journey, had she not trod it unswervingly? The temptations of her position had been many, and often, most powerful; aye, and many were honorable and of the greatest inducement. There was Hakachio, the rich silk merchant, who had begged and pleaded with her to marry him; and Honondo the lieutentant, and Ueuado the diamiõ's son, and even Ogushi, the staid professor of the Royal College, who had been bewitched by her charms. Yet had she saved herself for Toyotomi, her girlish sweetheart, her woman's passion. Always had the lotus been her emblem, the symbol of purity. And glory of glories, he was returning at last: to morrow his steamer came in: to morrow she would take the train and journey down to Yokohama to meet him.

The sweet tears of joy bedimming her eye and moistening her cheek, she opened the camphorwood chest beside her and drew forth a parcel wrapped in many a fold of cotton. Undoing it she held before her an obi, a girdle of beautiful silk. The symbol of woman's betrothal; Toyotomi's symbol of her betrothal. Again she opened the chest, this time drawing forth two swords, the swords of her father the samurai. With the

deep pride of race and the reverential love of her people she gazed long and earnestly upon them. How near it brought her to him, her father, whom she sometimes forgot for Toyotomi. Her father, the grim old warrior, the chivalrous captain, who had so long upheld his diamiõ's house with this long sword, and who, when all was lost had saved all with this short one, then sought oblivion through the honorable death by hara-kiri. In the heat of the lotus-time night, she slumbered before these, her most precious of relics, and in the morning, Hohna Asi, her hair-dresser, found her smiling with joy in her sleep.

O Toyotomi! Wild Toyotomi! Cruel Toyotomi! — A year had passed since his return, since their marriage; and what a year! What a marriage! What a return for her years of waiting, for her years of clinging to the lotus-flower emblem!

How handsome and noble he had looked, clad in his barbarian garments, when she met him on the pier at Yokohama. Truly she had thought that her fondest dreams were realized, that the world, in the highest sense of the word, had made a man of him. But alas! How changed! She had not understood then, had not comprehended the customs of the "foreign devils" among whom he had wandered. And he had come back with many of those fiend-begotten customs clinging to him.

Extravagance! It had affrighted her — such lavishness, such unwonted prodigality. She had known that in those far away lands, money was earned so easily; but till now she had not understood the ease with which it was spent. And Toyotomi — ah! he had learned how to spend it. To her economical soul, invested with all the saving Oriental traits of heredity, such extravagance was repulsive, crushing. Her fortune — with trusting faith and wifely obedience she had made it over to him. Ah! The crystallization of her years of labor — how he had spilled it like water! And now, in a year, nothing remained.

Many tricks had he gained in the "white devil" country and now he had become a professional wrestler. A wrestler to be proud of, and one who often made large money; but wrestler, the companion of roughs and jõrõs, the frequenter of low tea houses, and one who had abjured his native sak'e to take those expensive foreign liquors. And now she must go out and dance again, for he never brought a sen home.

O Toyotomi! So great was her love that all this was forgotten; but he was even worse. He had come back with the foreign standard of beauty, and to him she was no longer beautiful. She, the most beautiful of all geishas, the most beautiful of all Japanese women, the personified ideal of the Japanese standard, was no longer beautiful to Toyotomi, her old-time lover. He would come home drunken and surly and critcize her walk, her carriage, her narrow hips, her flat breast, slim face and slanting eyes; then rave in ecstasies of delight over the Occident beauties. Buddha! That such could be! That her Toyotomi could admire those fierce, masculine creatures, that strode, long-stepping, like men; that had great hips and humps like actual deformities. Those repulsive creaturs, with their large mouths, high noses, and eyes, deep-sunk in horrid sockets beneath fierce, heavy brows. Those creatures, so terrible, that when they looked on a Japanese baby it must burst into tears of fright. Those animals, who

were loathsome, disgustingly mouthing themselves and their men — Toyotomi called it kissing and had tried to teach her. Ach! How could it be!

And even was he worse than all that: sometimes he had beaten her, and still worse, he loved that half-caste jõrõ from yoshiwari. That girl of the Japanese mother and the English father, whom he thought so bewitching, whom he loved for her resemblance to the "white devil" beauty.

And worst of all, had he not said to day "O Haru, go thou out to night and dance, else will I not only beat but divorce thee."

"O jizo! Jizo!" she moaned. "That such could be! That such could be!

The pleasurable stillness of the lazy lotus-time afternoon, pressed heavily against O Haru, as she said her prayers to her Shinto gods. But the gods gave no sign: no rest came to her, the young, almost boyish priest gazed curiously at her as she prostrated herself in her devotions. He knew her (who did not), the wonderful dancer, whose life had seemed such a joyous span; but of late she had come to the temple often and he wondered what might burden her. He drew near, and as her prayer ceased, blessed her and spoke soothing words. She was married? Yes. And prayed for children? No. For her ancestors? Yes, as she had always done. Then for what? But she burst into tears and would not answer.

The priest paused and his sensitive, intellectual face clouded in a moment's thought — she was brighter than most who prayed their in their childish sorrows; she was in trouble, suffered. Why not? Surely she could understand a few slight glimmerings of his esoteric knowledge. His face illumined with the divine compassion of Siddãrtha Guatama. He raised her and led her before the staue of the sitting Buddha: there, in simple language, he told her of the birth, the boyhood, the manhood of Guatama, afterward the Buddha; of his grief for the sorrow of the world; of his discovery of the great truth. Self, the mere clinging to life, was the evil: self was the illusion, whereby the soul endured the pain of countless incarnations: self was to be annihilated, and when destroyed, the soul passed to Nirvana. Nirvana, the highest attainable sphere, where peace and rest and bliss unuttered soothed the soul, weary from many migrations. Thus had the divine Buddha done, thus might she do — annihilate self and gain Nirvana. Then he blessed and left her soothed, soothed, but with too faint a glimmering of his secret wisdom.

She gazed on the sweet, mysterious face of the Buddha, brooding in ineffable calm above her. O the peace, the rest, the awful placidity of his face! And gazing, she repeated the words of the priest: self, the mere clinging to life was evil. Nirvana, the highest sphere where there was naught but rest and bliss unutterable.

Thrice the priest passed by and beheld her still kneeling, still contemplating the wondrous face of the Holy One. More than one curious devotee glanced at her and thrilled on beholding the peaceful expression of holy joy which lighted her face.

The fountain in the courtyard splashed dreamily; the shadows lengthened; the somber silence of the temple deepened: O Haru prostrated herself before the great-hearted Buddha, and rose, soothed and at rest with herself and all the world. She

paused on the temple steps, and with her last few coppers, bought of the old woman all her caged sparrows. One by one, she gave them liberty, and with each breathed a prayer — a prayer to attain Nirvana.

"All hail to O Haru, the wandered, the lost one! For she has returned to her tea houses and dancing! All hail to O Haru, the lotus-flower beauty, the dreamy-bewitvhing, the ideally perfect! Blessed are we, her slaves, to behold her! Blessed are we that drink of her sweetness, her beauty! Blessed are we, happiest of mortals! For 'tis O Haru, the wonderful dancer, come once again among us, her bondmen! 'Tis O Haru, the joy and the pride of all mankind, the ruler of beasts, the conquerer of men! O Haru, the dream of rhythmical beauty, of fiery emotion, of terrible passion! O Haru, the wondrous, the queenly, the radiant; the gracefulest, sweetest and purest of dancers! Rejoice O my fellows! For she has returned, come among us! Rejoice! Rejoice! For 'tis O Haru, the spring, the glorious dancer — peer unto none of all geishas and dancers!"

The enthusiasm was boundless. The news had gone abroad that this night she was to dance, and her admirers had flocked to her as they had never before. Triumphant had been her return, but with all the sweet modesty of her nature, not unmingled with a certain sad pride, she received their homage. To accomodate the throng, the whole tea house had been thrown into a single, pavilion-like room, and even then, the crush was suffocating. She was simply superb, totally eclipsing her previous self. Never had she appeared so beautiful, so merry, so witty. In her moments of rest she kept them convulsed with her brilliant repartee and good-natured badinage. With each moment of the growing evening did she discover new graces, charms and glories. And now, in the ecstasies of worship, a hush of expectancy and awe fell upon the audience. She was to close with her favorite, Oishi, the "Loyal Rõnin."

A wild burst of samisens and the rolling of tom-toms greet her appearance: the dance begins. Again the fierce and haughty samurai blood courses like fire through her veins: again she holds all with the magic sway of her personality: again she leads them with her into the illusory realities of old Japan. She surpassed herself in the force, the vividness, the emotion of her portrayal. With bold confidence she essayed flights hitherto undreamed of, playing the gamut of their feelings with the intrepidity of inspiration. Never before had the sentiment and the dramatic of her nature been so unified, so harmoniously one.

On — on — she led them into chaos of conflicting emotions: yet distinctly grew the picture of true ancient chivalry. Ever they beheld Oishi treading the mighty heights of his true manhood; casting aside all doubts and fears, all human ties; walking of a verity with the gods. Up — up — they forgot their baser selves, were raised to the sublimities of seemingly realized ideals. The climax approaches. But hush! A throb of emotion, intuitive, anticipatory, sways with an audible sob, the anguuished beholders.

O Haru, before the hara-kiri, undergoes a transfiguration. Her face illumines with angelic glory, with a brightness, too dazzling, almost, to gaze upon, she seems a being not of the world. The samisens wail in heart-breaking sorrow: the low crescendo roll of the finale commences: she kisses her father's sword and the audience shudders ex-

pectantly. She is to follow her lord into the nether world, into the silent Nirvana. Her body sways in rhythmical undulations: her face is a-glow with heavenly rapture: she poises for the blow. Now — — the music rolls and crashes — swift, that deft, upward thrust — swift the mighty gush of blood —

And the sweet silence of the lotus-time night is rent with the sobbing agony of many voices:

"Woe! Woe! Woe! O Haru, the divine O Haru is no more!"

An Odyssey of the North

This story was London's first writing success, receiving him a cheque for $120 from The Atlantic Monthly in 1899.

THE sleds were singing their eternal lament to the creaking of the harnesses and the tinkling bells of the leaders; but the men and dogs were tired and made no sound. The trail was heavy with new-fallen snow, and they had come far, and the runners, burdened with flint-like quarters of frozen moose, clung tenaciously to the unpacked surface and held back with a stubbornness almost human. Darkness was coming on, but there was no camp to pitch that night. The snow fell gently through the pulseless air, not in flakes, but in tiny frost crystals of delicate design. It was very warm,–barely ten below zero,–and the men did not mind. Meyers and Bettles had raised their ear-flaps, while Malemute Kid had even taken off his mittens.

The dogs had been fagged out early in the afternoon, but they now began to show new vigor. Among the more astute there was a certain restlessness,–an impatience at the restraint of the traces, an indecisive quickness of movement, a sniffing of snouts and pricking of ears. These became incensed at their more phlegmatic brothers, urging them on with numerous sly nips on their hinder-quarters. Those, thus chidden, also contracted and helped spread the contagion. At last, the leader of the foremost sled uttered a sharp whine of satisfaction, crouching lower in the snow and throwing himself against the collar. The rest followed suit. There was an ingathering of back-bands, a tightening of traces; the sleds leaped forward, and the men clung to the gee-poles, violently accelerating the uplift of their feet that they might escape going under the runners. The weariness of the day fell from them, and they whooped encouragement to the dogs. The animals responded with joyous yelps. They were swinging through the gathering darkness at a rattling gallop.

"Gee! Gee!" the men cried, each in turn, as their sleds abruptly left the main-trail, heeling over on single runners like luggers on the wind.

Then came a hundred yards' dash to the lighted parchment window, which told its own story of the home cabin, the roaring Yukon stove, and the steaming pots of tea. But the home cabin had been invaded. Three-score huskies chorused defiance, and as many furry forms precipitated themselves upon the dogs which drew the first sled. The door was flung open, and a man, clad in the scarlet tunic of the Northwest Police, waded knee-deep among the furious brutes, calmly and impartially dispensing soothing justice with the butt end of a dog-whip. After that, the men shook hands; and in this wise was Malemute Kid welcomed to his own cabin by a stranger.

Stanley Prince, who should have welcomed him, and who was responsible for the Yukon stove and hot tea aforementioned, was busy with his guests. There were a dozen or so of them, as nondescript a crowd as ever served the Queen in the enforcement of her laws or the delivery of her mails. They were of many breeds, but their common life had formed of them a certain type,–a lean and wiry type, with trail-hardened muscles, and sun-browned faces, and untroubled souls which gazed frankly forth, clear-eyed and steady. They drove the dogs of the Queen, wrought fear in the hearts of her enemies, ate of her meagre fare, and were happy. They had seen life, and done deeds, and lived romances; but they did not know it.

And they were very much at home. Two of them were sprawled upon Malemute Kid's bunk, singing chansons which their French forbears sang in the days when first they entered the Northwest-land and mated with its Indian women. Bettles' bunk had suffered a similar invasion, and three or four lusty voyageurs worked their toes among its blankets as they listened to the tale of one who had served on the boat brigade with Wolseley when he fought his way to Khartoum. And when he tired, a cowboy told of courts and kings and lords and ladies he had seen when Buffalo Bill toured the capitals of Europe. In a corner, two half-breeds, ancient comrades in a lost campaign, mended harnesses and talked of the days when the Northwest flamed with insurrection and Louis Reil was king.

Rough jests and rougher jokes went up and down, and great hazards by trail and river were spoken of in the light of commonplaces, only to be recalled by virtue of some grain of humor or ludicrous happening. Prince was led away by these uncrowned heroes who had seen history made, who regarded the great and the romantic as but the ordinary and the incidental in the routine of life. He passed his precious tobacco among them with lavish disregard, and rusty chains of reminiscence were loosened, and forgotten odysseys resurrected for his especial benefit.

When conversation dropped and the travelers filled the last pipes and unlashed their tight-rolled sleeping-furs, Prince fell back upon his comrade for further information.

"Well, you know what the cowboy is," Malemute Kid answered, beginning to unlace his moccasins; "and it's not hard to guess the British blood in his bed-partner. As for the rest, they're all children of the coureurs du bois, mingled with God knows how many other bloods. The two turning in by the door are the regulation 'breeds' or bois brules. That lad with the worsted breech scarf–notice his eyebrows and the turn of his jaw–shows a Scotchman wept in his mother's smoky tepee. And that handsome-looking fellow putting the capote under his head is a French half-breed,–you heard him talking; he doesn't like the two Indians turning in next to him. You see, when the 'breeds' rose under Reil the full-bloods kept the peace, and they've not lost much love for one another since."

"But I say, what's that glum-looking fellow by the stove? 'll swear he can't talk English. He hasn't opened his mouth all night."

"You 're wrong. He knows English well enough. Did you follow his eyes when he listened? I did. But he 's neither kith nor kin to the others. When they talked their

own patois you could see he didn't understand. I 've been wondering myself what he is. Let's find out."

"Fire a couple of sticks into the stove!" Malemute Kid commanded, raising his voice and looking squarely at the man in question.

He obeyed at once.

"Had discipline knocked into him somewhere," Prince commented in a low tone. Malemute Kid nodded, took off his socks, and picked his way among the recumbent men to the stove. There he hung his damp footgear among a score or so of mates.

"When do you expect to get to Dawson?" he asked tentatively.

The man studied him a moment before replying. "They say seventy-five mile. So? Maybe two days."

The very slightest accent was perceptible, while there was no awkward hesitancy or groping for words.

"Been in the country before?"

"No."

"Northwest Territory?"

"Yes."

"Born there?"

"No."

"Well, where the devil were you born? You 're none of these." Malemute Kid swept his hand over the dog-drivers, even including the two policemen who had turned into Prince's bunk. "Where did you come from? I've seen faces like yours before, though I can't remember just where."

"I know you," he irrelevantly replied, at once turning the drift of Malemute Kid's questions.

"Where? Ever see me?"

"No; your partner, him priest, Pastilik, long time ago. Him ask me if I see you, Malemute Kid. Him give me grub. I no stop long. You hear him speak 'bout me?"

"Oh! you 're the fellow that traded the otter skins for the dogs?"

The man nodded, knocked out his pipe, and signified his disinclination for conversation by rolling up in his furs. Malemute Kid blew out the slush-lamp and crawled under the blankets with Prince.

"Well, what is he?"

"Don't know — turned me off, somehow, and then shut up like a clam. But he 's a fellow to whet your curiosity. I've heard of him. All the Coast wondered about him eight years ago. Sort of mysterious, you know. He came down out of the North, in the dead of winter, many a thousand miles from here, skirting Bering Sea and traveling as though the devil were after him. No one ever learned where he came from, but he must have come far. He was badly travel-worn when he got food from the Swedish missionary on Golovin Bay and asked the way south. We heard of this afterward. Then he abandoned the shore-line, heading right across Norton Sound. Terrible weather, snowstorms and high winds, but he pulled through where a thousand other men would

have died, missing St. Michael's and making the land at Pastilik. He'd lost all but two dogs, and was nearly gone with starvation.

"He was so anxious to go on that Father Roubeau fitted him out with grub; but he couldn't let him have any dogs, for he was only waiting my arrival to go on a trip himself. Mr. Ulysses knew too much to start on without animals, and fretted around for several days. He had on his sled a bunch of beautifully cured otter skins, sea-otters, you know, worth their weight in gold. There was also at Pastilik an old Shylock of a Russian trader, who had dogs to kill. Well, they didn't dicker very long, but when the Strange One headed south again, it was in the rear of a spanking dog-team. Mr. Shylock, by the way, had the otter skins. I saw them, and they were magnificent. We figured it up and found the dogs brought him at least five hundred apiece. And it wasn't as if the Strange One didn't know the value of sea-otter; he was an Indian of some sort, and what little he talked showed he'd been among white men.

"After the ice passed out of the Sea, word came up from Nunivak Island that he'd gone in there for grub. Then he dropped from sight, and this is the first heard of him in eight years. Now where did he come from? and what was he doing there? and why did he come from there? He's Indian, he's been nobody knows where, and he's had discipline, which is unusual for an Indian. Another mystery of the North for you to solve, Prince."

"Thanks, awfully; but I've got too many on hand as it is," he replied.

Malemute Kid was already breathing heavily; but the young mining engineer gazed straight up through the thick darkness, waiting for the strange orgasm which stirred his blood to die away. And when he did sleep, his brain worked on, and for the nonce he, too, wandered through the white unknown, struggled with the dogs on endless trails, and saw men live, and toil, and die like men.

* * *

The next morning, hours before daylight, the dog-drivers and policemen pulled out for Dawson. But the powers that saw to her Majesty's interests, and ruled the destinies of her lesser creatures, gave the mailmen little rest; for a week later they appeared at Stuart River, heavily burdened with letters for Salt Water. However, their dogs had been replaced by fresh ones; but then, they were dogs.

The men had expected some sort of a lay-over in which to rest up; besides, this Klondike was a new section of the Northland, and they had wished to see a little something of the Golden City where dust flowed like water, and dance halls rang with never ending revelry. But they dried their socks and smoked their evening pipes with much the same gusto as on their former visit, though one or two bold spirits speculated on desertion and the possibility of crossing the unexplored Rockies to the east, and thence, by the Mackenzie Valley, of gaining their old stamping-grounds in the Chippewyan Country. Two or three even decided to return to their homes by that route when their terms of service had expired, and they began to lay plans forthwith, looking forward to the hazardous undertaking in much the same way a city-bred man would to a day's holiday in the woods.

He of the Otter Skins seemed very restless, though he took little interest in the discussion, and at last he drew Malemute Kid to one side and talked for some time in low tones. Prince cast curious eyes in their direction, and the mystery deepened when they put on caps and mittens, and went outside. When they returned, Malemute Kid placed his gold-scales on the table, weighed out the matter of sixty ounces, and transferred them to the Strange One's sack. Then the chief of the dog-drivers joined the conclave, and certain business was transacted with him. The next day the gang went on up river, but He of the Otter Skins took several pounds of grub and turned his steps back toward Dawson.

* * *

"Didn't know what to make of it," said Malemute Kid in response to Prince's queries; "but the poor beggar wanted to be quit of the service for some reason or other — at least it seemed a most important one to him, though he wouldn't let on what. You see, it's just like the army; he signed for two years, and the only way to get free was to buy himself out. He couldn't desert and then stay here, and he was just wild to remain in the country. Made up his mind when he got to Dawson, he said; but no one knew him, hadn't a cent, and I was the only one he'd spoken two words with. So he talked it over with the Lieutenant-Governor, and made arrangements in case he could get the money from me — loan, you know. Said he'd pay back in the year, and if I wanted, would put me onto something rich. Never 'd seen it, but knew it was rich.

"And talk! why, when he got me outside he was ready to weep. Begged and pleaded; gotdown in the snow to me till I hauled him out of it. Palavered around like a crazy man. Swore he's worked to this very end for years and years, and couldn't bear to be disappointed now. Asked him what end, but he wouldn't say. Said they might keep him on the other half of the trail and he wouldn't get to Dawson in two years, and then it would be too late. Never saw a man take on so in my life. And when I said I 'd let him have it, had to yank him out of the snow again. Told him to consider it in the light of a grub-stake. Think he'd have it? No, sir! Swore he 'd give me all he found, make me rich beyond the dreams of avarice, and all such stuff. Now a man who puts his life and time against a grub-stake ordinarily finds it hard enough to turn over half of what he finds. Something behind all this, Prince; just you make a note of it. We'll hear of him if he stays in thecountry"–

"And if he doesn't?"

"Then my good nature gets a shock, and I'm sixty some odd ounces out."

* * *

The cold weather had come on with the long nights, and the sun had begun to play his ancient game of peekaboo along the southern snow-line ere aught was heard of Malemute Kid's grub-stake. And then, one bleak morning in early January, a heavily laden dog-train pulled into his cabin below Stuart River. He of the Otter Skins was there, and with him walked a man such as the gods have almost forgotten how to fashion. Men never talked of luck and pluck and five-hundred-dollar dirt without bringing in the name of Axel Gunderson; nor could tales of nerve or strength or daring

pass up and down the camp-fire without the summoning of his presence. And when the conversation flagged, it blazed anew at mention of the woman who shared his fortunes.

As has been noted, in the making of Axel Gunderson the gods had remembered their old-time cunning, and cast him after the manner of men who were born when the world was young. Full seven feet he towered in his picturesque costume which marked a king of Eldorado. His chest, neck, and limbs were those of a giant. To bear his three hundred pounds of bone and muscle, his snowshoes were greater by a generous yard than those of other men. Rough-hewn, with rugged brow and massive jaw and unflinching eyes of palest blue, his face told the tale of one who knew but the law of might. Of the yellow of ripe corn silk, his frost-incrusted hair swept like day across the night, and fell far down his coat of bear-skin. A vague tradition of the sea seemed to cling about him, as he swung down the narrow trail in advance of the dogs; and he brought the butt of his dog-whip against Malemute Kid's door as a Norse sea rover, on southern foray, might thunder for admittance at the castle gate. Prince bared his womanly arms and kneaded sour-dough bread, casting, as he did so, many a glance at the three guests,–three guests the like of which might never come under a man's roof in a lifetime. The Strange One, whom Malemute Kid had surnamed Ulysses, still fascinated him; but his interest chiefly gravitated between Axel Gunderson and Axel Gunderson's wife. She felt the day's journey, for she had softened in comfortable cabins during the many days since her husband mastered the wealth of frozen pay-streaks, and she was tired. She rested against his great breast like a slender flower against a wall, replying lazily to Malemute Kid's good-natured banter, and stirring Prince's blood strangely with an occasional sweep of her deep, dark eyes. For Prince was a man, and healthy, and had seen few women in many months. And she was older than he, and an Indian besides. But she was different from all native wives he had met: she had traveled,–had been in his country among others, he gathered from the conversation; and she knew most of the things the women of his own race knew, and much more that it was not in the nature of things for them to know. She could make a meal of sun-dried fish or a bed in the snow; yet she teased them with tantalizing details of many-course dinners, and caused strange internal dissensions to arise at the mention of various quondam dishes which they had well-nigh forgotten. She knew the ways of the moose, the bear, and the little blue fox, and of the wild amphibians of the Northern seas; she was skilled in the lore of the woods and the streams, and the tale writ by man and bird and beast upon the delicate snow crust was to her an open book; yet Prince caught the appreciative twinkle in her eye as she read the Rules of the Camp. These rules had been fathered by the Unquenchable Bettles at a time when his blood ran high, and were remarkable for the terse simplicity of their humor. Prince always turned them to the wall before the arrival of ladies; but who could suspect that this native wife–Well, it was too late now.

This, then, was the wife of Axel Gunderson, a woman whose name and fame had traveled with her husband's, hand in hand, through all the Northland. At table, Malemute Kid baited her with the assurance of an old friend, and Prince shook off the

shyness of first acquaintance and joined in. But she held her own in the unequal contest, while her husband, slower in wit, ventured naught but applause. And he was very proud of her; his every look and action revealed the magnitude of the place she occupied in his life. He of the Otter Skins ate in silence, forgotten in the merry battle; and long ere the others were done he pushed back from the table and went out among the dogs. Yet all too soon his fellow travelers drew on their mittens and parkas, and followed him.

There had been no snow for many days, and the sleds slipped along the hard-packed Yukon trail as easily as if it had been glare ice. Ulysses led the first sled; with the second came Prince and Axel Gunderson's wife; while Malemute Kid and the yellow-haired giant brought up the third.

"It 's only a 'hunch,' Kid," he said; "but I think it 's straight. He's never been there, but he tells a good story, and shows a map I heard of when I was in the Kootenay country, years ago. I'd like to have you go along; but he 's a strange one, and swore point-blank to throw it up if any one was brought in. But when I come back you 'll get first tip, and I'll stake you next to me, and give you a half share in the town site besides.

"No! no!" he cried, as the other strove to interrupt. "I'm running this, and before I'm done it'll need two heads. If it 's all right, why it'll be a second Cripple Creek, man; do you hear?–a second Cripple Creek! It's quartz, you know, not placer; and if we work it right we'll corral the whole thing,–millions upon millions. I've heard of the place before, and so have you. We'll build a town–thousands of workmen–good waterways–steamship lines–big carrying trade–light-draught steamers for head-reaches–survey a railroad, perhaps–sawmills–electric-light plant–do our own banking–commercial company–syndicate–Say! just you hold your hush till I get back!"

The sleds came to a halt where the trail crossed the mouth of Stuart River. An unbroken sea of frost, its wide expanse stretched away into the unknown east. The snowshoes were withdrawn from the lashings of the sleds. Axel Gunderson shook hands and stepped to the fore, his great webbed shoes sinking a fair half yard into the feathery surface and packing the snow so the dogs should not wallow. His wife fell in behind the last sled, betraying long practice in the art of handling the awkward footgear. The stillness was broken with cheery farewells; the dogs whined; and He of the Otter Skins talked with his whip to a recalcitrant wheeler.

An hour later, the train had taken on the likeness of a black pencil crawling in a long, straight line across a mighty sheet of foolscap.

One night, many weeks later, Malemute Kid and Prince fell to solving chess problems from the torn page of an ancient magazine. The Kid had just returned from his Bonanza properties, and was resting up preparatory to a long moose hunt. Prince too had been on creek and trail nearly all winter, and had grown hungry for a blissful week of cabin life.

"Interpose the black knight, and force the king. No, that won't do. See, the next move"–

"Why advance the pawn two squares? Bound to take it in transit, and with the bishop out of the way"–

"But hold on! That leaves a hole, and"–

"No; it 's protected. Go ahead! You'll see it works."

It was very interesting. Somebody knocked at the door a second time before Malemute Kid said, "Come in." The door swung open. Something staggered in. Prince caught one square look, and sprang to his feet. The horror in his eyes caused Malemute Kid to whirl about; and he too was startled, though he had seen bad things before. The thing tottered blindly toward them. Prince edged away till he reached the nail from which hung his Smith & Wesson.

"My God! what is it?" he whispered to Malemute Kid.

"Don't know. Looks like a case of freezing and no grub," replied the Kid, sliding away in the opposite direction. "Watch out! It may be mad," he warned, coming back from closing the door.

The thing advanced to the table. The bright flame of the slush-lamp caught its eye. It was amused, and gave voice to eldritch cackles which betokened mirth. Then, suddenly, he–for it was a man–swayed back, with a hitch to his skin trousers, and began to sing a chanty, such as men lift when they swing around the capstan circle and the sea snorts in their ears:

Pull! my bully boys! Pull!

D'yeh want–to know de captain ru-uns her?

Pull! my bully boys! Pull!

Jon-a-than Jones ob South Caho-li-in-a,

Pull! my bully"–

He broke off abruptly, tottered with a wolfish snarl to the meat-shelf, and before they could intercept was tearing with his teeth at a chunk of raw bacon. The struggle was fierce between him and Malemute Kid; but his mad strength left him as suddenly as it had come, and he weakly surrendered the spoil. Between them they got him upon a stool, where he sprawled with half his body across the table. A small dose of whiskey strengthened him, so that he could dip a spoon into the sugar caddy which Malemute Kid placed before him. After his appetite had been somewhat cloyed, Prince, shuddering as he did so, passed him a mug of weak beef tea.

The creature's eyes were alight with a sombre frenzy, which blazed and waned with every mouthful. There was very little skin to the face. The face, for that matter, sunken and emaciated, bore very little likeness to human countenance. Frost after frost had bitten deeply, each depositing its stratum of scab upon the half-healed scar that went before. This dry, hard surface was of a bloody-black color, serrated by grievous cracks wherein the raw red flesh peeped forth. His skin garments were dirty and in tatters, and the fur of one side was singed and burned away, showing where he had lain upon his fire.

Malemute Kid pointed to where the sun-tanned hide had been cut away, strip by strip,–the grim signature of famine.

“Who–are–you?” slowly and distinctly enunciated the Kid.

The man paid no heed.

“Where do you come from?”

“Yan-kee ship come down de ri-ib-er,” was the quavering response.

“Don’t doubt the beggar came down the river,” the Kid said, shaking him in an endeavor to start a more lucid flow of talk.

But the man shrieked at the contact, clapping a hand to his side in evident pain. He rose slowly to his feet, half leaning on the table.

“She laughed at me–so–with the hate in her eye; and she–would–not–come.”

His voice died away, and he was sinking back when Malemute Kid gripped him by the wrist, and shouted, “Who? Who would not come?”

“She, Unga. She laughed, and struck at me, so, and so. And then”–

“Yes?”

“And then”–

“And then what?”

“And then he lay very still, in the snow, a long time. He is–still in–the–snow.”

The two men looked at each other helplessly.

“Who is in the snow?”

“She, Unga. She looked at me with the hate in her eye, and then”–

“Yes, yes.”

“And then she took the knife, so; and once, twice–she was weak. I traveled very slow. And there is much gold in that place, very much gold.”

“Where is Unga?” For all Malemute Kid knew, she might be dying a mile away. He shook the man savagely, repeating again and again, “Where is Unga? Who is Unga?”

“She–is–in–the–snow.”

“Go on!” The Kid was pressing his wrist cruelly.

“So–I–would–be–in–the snow–but–I–had–debt–to–pay. It–was–heavy–I–had–a–debt–to–pay–a–debt–to–pay–I–had”–The faltering monosyllables ceased, as he fumbled in his pouch and drew forth a buckskin sack. “A–debt–to–pay–five–pounds–of–gold–grub–stake–Mal–e–mute–Kid–I”–The exhausted head dropped upon the table; nor could Malemute Kid rouse it again.

“It’s Ulysses,” he said quietly, tossing the bag of dust on the table. “Guess it’s all day with Axel Gunderson and the woman. Come on, let ‘s get him between the blankets. He’s Indian; he’ll pull through, and tell a tale besides.”

As they cut his garments from him, near his right breast could be seen two unhealed, hard-lipped knife thrusts.

* * *

“I will talk of the things which were, in my own way; but you will understand. I will begin at the beginning, and tell of myself and the woman, and, after that, of the man.”

He of the Otter Skins drew over to the stove as do men who have been deprived of fire and are afraid the Promethean gift may vanish at any moment. Malemute Kid

pricked up the slush-lamp, and placed it so its light might fall upon the face of the narrator. Prince slid his body over the edge of the bunk and joined them.

"I am Naass, a chief, and the son of a chief, born between a sunset and a rising, on the dark seas, in my father's oomiak. All of a night the men toiled at the paddles, and the women cast out the waves which threw in upon us, and we fought with the storm. The salt spray froze upon my mother's breast till her breath passed with the passing of the tide. But I,–I raised my voice with the wind and the storm, and lived.

"We dwelt in Akatan"–

"Where?" asked Malemute Kid.

"Akatan, which is in the Aleutians; Akatan, beyond Chignik, beyond Kardalak, beyond Unimak. As I say, we dwelt in Akatan, which lies in the midst of the sea on the edge of the world. We farmed the salt seas for the fish, the seal, and the otter; and our homes shouldered about one another on the rocky strip between the rim of the forest and the yellow beach where our kayaks lay. We were not many, and the world was very small. There were strange lands to the east,–islands like Akatan; so we thought all the world was islands, and did not mind. "I was different from my people. In the sands of the beach were the crooked timbers and wave-warped planks of a boat such as my people never built; and I remember on the point of the island which overlooked the ocean three ways there stood a pine tree which never grew there, smooth and straight and tall. It is said the two men came to that spot, turn about, through many days, and watched with the passing of the light. These two men came from out of the sea in the boat which lay in pieces on the beach. And they were white like you, and weak as the little children when the seal have gone away and the hunters come home empty. I know of these things from the old men and the old women, who got them from their fathers and mothers before them. These strange white men did not take kindly to our ways at first, but they grew strong, what of the fish and the oil, and fierce. And they built them each his own house, and took the pick of our women, and in time children came. Thus he was born who was to become the father of my father's father.

"As I said, I was different from my people, for I carried the strong, strange blood of this white man who came out of the sea. It is said we had other laws in the days before these men; but they were fierce and quarrelsome, and fought with our men till there were no more left who dared to fight. Then they made themselves chiefs, and took away our old laws and gave us new ones, insomuch that the man was the son of his father, and not his mother, as our way had been. They also ruled that the son, firstborn, should have all things which were his father's before him, and that the brothers and sisters should shift for themselves. And they gave us other laws. They showed us new ways in the catching of fish and the killing of bear which were thick in the woods; and they taught us to lay by bigger stores for the time of famine. And these things were good.

"But when they had become chiefs, and there were no more men to face their anger, they fought, these strange white men, each with the other. And the one whose blood I carry drove his seal spear the length of an arm through the other's body. Their children

took up the fight, and their children's children; and there was great hatred between them, and black doings, even to my time, so that in each family but one lived to pass down the blood of them that went before. Of my blood I was alone; of the other man's there was but a girl, Unga, who lived with her mother. Her father and my father did not come back from the fishing one night; but afterward they washed up to the beach on the big tides, and they held very close to each other.

"The people wondered, because of the hatred between the houses, and the old men shook their heads and said the fight would go on when children were born to her and children to me. They told me this as a boy, till I came to believe, and to look upon Unga as a foe, who was to be the mother of children which were to fight with mine. I thought of these things day by day, and when I grew to a stripling I came to ask why this should be so. And they answered, 'We do not know, but that in such way your fathers did.' And I marveled that those which were to come should fight the battles of those that were gone, and in it I could see no right. But the people said it must be, and I was only a stripling.

"And they said I must hurry, that my blood might be the older and grow strong before hers. This was easy, for I was head man, and the people looked up to me because of the deeds and the laws of my fathers, and the wealth which was mine. Any maiden would come to me, but I found none to my liking. And the old men and the mothers of maidens told me to hurry, for even then were the hunters bidding high to the mother of Unga; and should her children grow strong before mine, mine would surely die.

"Nor did I find a maiden till one night coming back from the fishing. The sunlight was lying, so, low and full in the eyes, the wind free, and the kayaks racing with the white seas. Of a sudden the kayak of Unga came driving past me, and she looked upon me, so, with her black hair flying like a cloud of night and the spray wet on her cheek. As say, the sunlight was full in the eyes, and I was a stripling; but somehow it was all clear, and I knew it to be the call of kind to kind. As she whipped ahead she looked back within the space of two strokes,–looked as only the woman Unga could look,–and again I knew it as the call of kind. The people shouted as we ripped past the lazy oomiaks and left them far behind. But she was quick at the paddle, and my heart was like the belly of a sail, and I did not gain. The wind freshened, the sea whitened, and, leaping like the seals on the windward breech, we roared down the golden pathway of the sun."

Naass was crouched half out of his stool, in the attitude of one driving a paddle, as he ran the race anew. Somewhere across the stove he beheld the tossing kayak and the flying hair of Unga. The voice of the wind was in his ears, and its salt beat fresh upon his nostrils.

"But she made the shore, and ran up the sand, laughing, to the house of her mother. And a great thought came to me that night,–a thought worthy of him that was chief over all the people of Akatan. So, when the moon was up, I went down to the house of her mother, and looked upon the goods of Yash-Noosh, which were piled by the door,–the goods of Yash-Noosh, a strong hunter who had it in mind to be the father

of the children of Unga. Other young men had piled their goods there, and taken them away again; and each young man had made a pile greater than the one before.

"And I laughed to the moon and the stars, and went to my own house where my wealth was stored. And many trips I made, till my pile was greater by the fingers of one hand than the pile of Yash-Noosh. There were fish, dried in the sun and smoked; and forty hides of the hair seal, and half as many of the fur, and each hide was tied at the mouth and big-bellied with oil; and ten skins of bear which I killed in the woods when they came out in the spring. And there were beads and blankets and scarlet cloths, such as I got in trade from the people who lived to the east, and who got them in trade from the people who lived still beyond in the east. And I looked upon the pile of Yash-Noosh and laughed; for I was head man in Akatan, and my wealth was greater than the wealth of all my young men, and my fathers had done deeds, and given laws, and put their names for all time in the mouths of the people.

"So, when the morning came, I went down to the beach, casting out of the corner of my eye at the house of the mother of Unga. My offer yet stood untouched. And the women smiled, and said sly things one to the other. I wondered, for never had such a price been offered; and that night I added more to the pile, and put beside it a kayak of well-tanned skins which never yet had swam in the sea. But in the day it was yet there, open to the laughter of all men. The mother of Unga was crafty, and I grew angry at the shame in which I stood before my people. So that night I added till it became a great pile, and I hauled up my oomiak, which was of the value of twenty kayaks. And in the morning there was no pile.

"Then made I preparation for the wedding, and the people that lived even to the east came for the food of the feast and the potlach token. Unga was older than I by the age of four suns in the way we reckoned the years. I was only a stripling; but then I was a chief, and the son of a chief, and it did not matter.

"But a ship shoved her sails above the floor of the ocean, and grew larger with the breath of the wind. From her scuppers she ran clear water, and the men were in haste and worked hard at the pumps. On the bow stood a mighty man, watching the depth of the water and giving commands with a voice of thunder. His eyes were of the pale blue of the deep waters, and his head was maned like that of a sea lion. And his hair was yellow, like the straw of a southern harvest or the manila rope-yarns which sailormen plait.

"Of late years we had seen ships from afar, but this was the first to come to the beach of Akatan. The feast was broken, and the women and children fled to the houses, while we men strung our bows and waited with spears in hand. But when the ship's forefoot smelt the beach the strange men took no notice of us, being busy with their own work. With the falling of the tide they careened the schooner and patched a great hole in her bottom. So the women crept back, and the feast went on.

"When the tide rose, the sea wanderers kedged the schooner to deep water, and then came among us. They bore presents and were friendly; so I made room for them, and out of the largeness of my heart gave them tokens such as I gave all the guests; for it

was my wedding day, and I was head man in Akatan. And he with the mane of the sea lion was there, so tall and strong that one looked to see the earth shake with the fall of his feet. He looked much and straight at Unga, with his arms folded, so, and stayed till the sun went away and the stars came out. Then he went down to his ship. After that I took Unga by the hand and led her to my own house. And there was singing and great laughter, and the women said sly things, after the manner of women at such times. But we did not care. Then the people left us alone and went home.

"The last noise had not died away, when the chief of the sea wanderers came in by the door. And he had with him black bottles, from which we drank and made merry. You see, I was only a stripling, and had lived all my days on the edge of the world. So my blood became as fire, and my heart as light as the froth that flies from the surf to the cliff. Unga sat silent among the skins in the corner, her eyes wide, for she seemed to fear. And he with the mane of the sea lion looked upon her straight and long. Then his men came in with bundles of goods, and he piled before me wealth such as was not in all Akatan. There were guns, both large and small, and powder and shot and shell, and bright axes and knives of steel, and cunning tools, and strange things the like of which I had never seen. When he showed me by sign that it was all mine, I thought him a great man to be so free; but, he showed me also that Unga was to go away with him in his ship. Do you understand?–that Unga was to go away with him in his ship. The blood of my fathers flamed hot on the sudden, and I made to drive him through with my spear. But the spirit of the bottles had stolen the life from my arm, and he took me by the neck, so, and knocked my head against the wall of the house. And I was made weak like a newborn child, and my legs would no more stand under me. Unga screamed, and she laid hold of the things of the house with her hands, till theyfell all about us as he dragged her to the door. Then he took her in his great arms, and when she tore at his yellow hair laughed with a sound like that of the big bull seal in the rut.

"I crawled to the beach and called upon my people; but they were afraid. Only Yash-Noosh was a man, and they struck him on the head with an oar, till he lay with his face in the sand anddid not move. And they raised the sails to the sound of their songs, and the ship went away on the wind.

"The people said it was good, for there would be no more war of the bloods in Akatan; but I said never a word, waiting till the time of the full moon, when I put fish and oil in my kayak, and went away to the east. I saw many islands and many people, and I, who had lived on the edge, saw that the world was very large. I talked by signs; but they had not seen a schooner nor a man with the mane of a sea lion, and they pointed always to the east. And I slept in queer places, and ate odd things, and met strange faces. Many laughed, for they thought me light of head; but sometimes old men turned my face to the light and blessed me, and the eyes of the young women grew soft as they asked me of the strange ship, and Unga, and the men of the sea.

"And in this manner, through rough seas and great storms, came to Unalaska. There were two schooners there, but neither was the one I sought. So I passed on to the east,

with the world growing ever larger, and in the Island of Unamok there was no word of the ship, nor in Kadiak, nor in Atognak. And so I came one day to a rocky land, where men dug great holes in the mountain. And there was a schooner, but not my schooner, and men loaded upon it the rocks which they dug. This thought childish, for all the world was made of rocks; but they gave me food and set me to work. When the schooner was deep in the water, the captain gave me money and told me to go; but I asked which way he went, and he pointed south. I made signs that I would go with him; and he laughed at first, but then, being short of men, took me to help work the ship. So I came to talk after their manner, and to heave on ropes, and to reef the stiff sails in sudden squalls, and to take my turn at the wheel. But it was not strange, for the blood of my fathers was the blood of the men of the sea.

"I had thought it an easy task to find him I sought, once I got among his own people; and when we raised the land one day, and passed between a gateway of the sea to a port, I looked for perhaps as many schooners as there were fingers to my hands. But the ships lay against the wharves for miles, packed like so many little fish; and when I went among them to ask for a man with the mane of a sea lion, they laughed, and answered me in the tongues of many peoples. And I found that they hailed from the uttermost parts of the earth.

"And I went into the city to look upon the face of every man. But they were like the cod when they run thick on the banks, and I could not count them. And the noise smote upon me till I could not hear, and my head was dizzy with much movement. So I went on and on, through the lands which sang in the warm sunshine; where the harvests lay rich on the plains; and where great cities were fat with men that lived like women, with false words in their mouths and their hearts black with the lust of gold. And all the while my people of Akatan hunted and fished, and were happy in the thought that the world was small.

"But the look in the eyes of Unga coming home from the fishing was with me always, and I knew I would find her when the time was met. She walked down quiet lanes in the dusk of the evening, or led me chases across the thick fields wet with the morning dew, and there was a promise in her eyes such as only the woman Unga could give.

"So I wandered through a thousand cities. Some were gentle and gave me food, and others laughed, and still others cursed; but I kept my tongue between my teeth, and went strange ways and saw strange sights. Sometimes, I, who was a chief and the son of a chief, toiled for men,–men rough of speech and hard as iron, who wrung gold from the sweat and sorrow of their fellow men. Yet no word did I get of my quest, till came back to the sea like a homing seal to the rookeries. But this was at another port, in another country which lay to the north. And there heard dim tales of the yellow-haired sea wanderer, and I learned that he was a hunter of seals, and that even then he was abroad on the ocean.

"So I shipped on a seal schooner with the lazy Siwashes, and followed his trackless trail to the north where the hunt was then warm. And we were away weary months, and spoke many of the fleet, and heard much of the wild doings of him I sought; but

never once did we raise him above the sea. We went north, even to the Pribyloffs, and killed the seals in herds on the beach, and brought their warm bodies aboard till our scuppers ran grease and blood and no man could stand upon the deck. Then were we chased by a ship of slow steam, which fired upon us with great guns. But we put on sail till the sea was over our decks and washed them clean, and lost ourselves in a fog.

"It is said, at this time, while we fled with fear at our hearts, that the yellow-haired sea wanderer put into the Pribyloffs, right to the factory, and while the part of his men held the servants of the company, the rest loaded ten thousand green skins from the salt-houses. I say it is said, but I believe; for in the voyages made on the coast with never a meeting, the northern seas rang with his wildness and daring, till the three nations which have lands there sought him with their ships. And I heard of Unga, for the captains sang loud in her praise, and she was always with him. She had learned the ways of his people, they said, and was happy. But I knew better,–knew that her heart harked back to her own people by the yellow beach of Akatan.

"So, after a long time, I went back to the port which is by a gateway of the sea, and there I learned that he had gone across the girth of the great ocean to hunt for the seal to the east of the warm land which runs south from the Russian Seas. And I, who was become a sailorman, shipped with men of his own race, and went after him in the hunt of the seal. And there were few ships off that new land; but we hung on the flank of the seal pack and harried it north through all the spring of the year. And when the cows were heavy with pup and crossed the Russian line, our men grumbled and were afraid. For there was much fog, and every day men were lost in the boats. They would not work, so the captain turned the ship back toward the way it came. But I knew the yellow-haired sea wanderer was unafraid, and would hang by the pack, even to the Russian Isles, where few men go. So I took a boat, in the black of night, when the lookout dozed on the fok'slehead, and went alone to the warm, long land. And I journeyed south to meet the men by Yeddo Bay, who are wild and unafraid. And the Yoshiwara girls were small, and bright like steel, and good to look upon; but I could not stop, for I knew that Unga rolled on the tossing floor by the rookeries of the north.

"The men by Yeddo Bay had met from the ends of the earth, and had neither gods nor homes, sailing under the flag of the Japanese. And with them I went to the rich beaches of Copper Island, where our salt-piles became high with skins. And in that silent sea we saw no man till we were ready to come away. Then, one day, the fog lifted on the edge of a heavy wind, and there jammed down upon us a schooner, with close in her wake the cloudy funnels of a Russian man-of-war. We fled away on the beam of the wind, with the schooner jamming still closer and plunging ahead three feet to our two. And upon her poop was the man with the mane of the sea lion, pressing the rails under with the canvas and laughing in his strength of life. And Unga was there,–I knew her on the moment,–but he sent her below when the cannons began to talk across the sea. As I say, with three feet to our two, till we saw the rudder lift green at every jump,–and I swinging on to the wheel and cursing, with my back to the Russian shot. For we knew he had it in mind to run before us, that he might get away

while we were caught. And they knocked our masts out of us till we dragged into the wind like a wounded gull; but he went on over the edge of the sky-line,–he and Unga.

"What could we? The fresh hides spoke for themselves. So they took us to a Russian port, and after that to a lone country, where they set us to work in the mines to dig salt. And some died, and–and some did not die."

Naass swept the blanket from his shoulders, disclosing the gnarled and twisted flesh, marked with the unmistakable striations of the knout. Prince hastily covered him, for it was not nice to look upon.

"We were there a weary time; and sometimes men got away to the south, but they always came back. So, when we who hailed from Yeddo Bay rose in the night and took the guns from the guards, we went to the north. And the land was very large, with plains, soggy with water, and great forests. And the cold came, with much snow on the ground, and no man knew the way. Weary months we journeyed through the endless forest,–I do not remember, now, for there was little food and often we lay down to die. But at last we came to the cold sea, and but three were left to look upon it. One had shipped from Yeddo as captain, and he knew in his head the lay of the great lands, and of the place where men may cross from one to the other on the ice. And he led us,–I do not know, it was so long,–till there were but two. When we came to that place we found five of the strange people which live in that country, and they had dogs and skins, and we were very poor. We fought in the snow till they died, and the captain died, and the dogs and skins were mine. Then I crossed on the ice, which was broken, and once drifted till a gale from the west put me upon the shore. And after that, Golovin Bay, Pastilik, and the priest. Then south, south, to the warm sunlands where first I wandered.

"But the sea was no longer fruitful, and those who went upon it after the seal went to little profit and great risk. The fleets scattered, and the captains and the men had no word of those I sought. So I turned away from the ocean which never rests, and went among the lands, where the trees, the houses, and the mountains sit always in one place and do not move. I journeyed far, and came to learn many things, even to the way of reading and writing from books. It was well I should do this, for it came upon me that Unga must know these things, and that some day, when the time was met–we–you understand, when the time was met.

"So I drifted, like those little fish which raise a sail to the wind, but cannot steer. But my eyes and my ears were open always, and went among men who traveled much, for I knew they had but to see those sought, to remember. At last there came a man, fresh from the mountains, with pieces of rock in which the free gold stood to the size of peas, and he had heard, he had met, he knew them. They were rich, he said, and lived in the place where they drew the gold from the ground.

"It was in a wild country, and very far away; but in time came to the camp, hidden between the mountains, where men worked night and day, out of the sight of the sun. Yet the time was not come. listened to the talk of the people. He had gone away,–they had gone away,–to England, it was said, in the matter of bringing men with much

money together to form companies. I saw the house they had lived in; more like a palace, such as one sees in the old countries. In the nighttime I crept in through a window that I might see in what manner he treated her. I went from room to room, and in such way thought kings and queens must live, it was all so very good. And they all said he treated her like a queen, and many marveled as to what breed of woman she was; for there was other blood in her veins, and she was different from the women of Akatan, and no one knew her for what she was. Ay, she was a queen; but I was a chief, and the son of a chief, and had paid for her an untold price of skin and boat and bead.

"But why so many words? I was a sailorman, and knew the way of the ships on the seas. I followed to England, and then to other countries. Sometimes I heard of them by word of mouth, sometimes I read of them in the papers; yet never once could I come by them, for they had much money, and traveled fast, while I was a poor man. Then came trouble upon them, and their wealth slipped away, one day, like a curl of smoke. The papers were full of it at the time; but after that nothing was said, and I knew they had gone back where more gold could be got from the ground. "They had dropped out of the world, being now poor; and so wandered from camp to camp, even north to the Kootenay Country, where picked up the cold scent. They had come and gone, some said this way, and some that, and still others that they had gone to the Country of the Yukon. And I went this way, and I went that, ever journeying from place to place, till it seemed I must grow weary of the world which was so large. But in the Kootenay I traveled a bad trail, and a long trail, with a 'breed' of the Northwest, who saw fit to die when the famine pinched. He had been to the Yukon by an unknown way over the mountains, and when he knew his time was near gave me the map and the secret of a place where he swore by his gods there was much gold.

"After that all the world began to flock into the north. I was a poor man; I sold myself to be a driver of dogs. The rest you know. met him and her in Dawson. She did not know me, for I was only a stripling, and her life had been large, so she had no time to remember the one who had paid for her an untold price.

"So? You bought me from my term of service. I went back to bring things about in my own way; for I had waited long, and now that had my hand upon him was in no hurry. As I say, I had it in mind to do my own way; for I read back in my life, through all I had seen and suffered, and remembered the cold and hunger of the endless forest by the Russian Seas. As you know, I led him into the east,–him and Unga,–into the east where many have gone and few returned. I led them to the spot where the bones and the curses of men lie with the gold which they may not have.

"The way was long and the trail unpacked. Our dogs were many and ate much; nor could our sleds carry till the break of spring. We must come back before the river ran free. So here and there we cached grub, that our sleds might be lightened and there be no chance of famine on the back trip. At the McQuestion there were three men, and near them we built a cache, as also did we at the Mayo, where was a hunting-camp of a dozen Pellys which had crossed the divide from the south. After that, as

we went on into the east, we saw no men; only the sleeping river, the moveless forest, and the White Silence of the North. As say, the way was long and the trail unpacked. Sometimes, in a day's toil, we made no more than eight miles, or ten, and at night we slept like dead men. And never once did they dream that I was Naass, head man of Akatan, the righter of wrongs.

"We now made smaller caches, and in the nighttime it was a small matter to go back on the trail we had broken, and change them in such way that one might deem the wolverines the thieves. Again, there be places where there is a fall to the river, and the water is unruly, and the ice makes above and is eaten away beneath. In such a spot the sled I drove broke through, and the dogs; and to him and Unga it was ill luck, but no more. And there was much grub on that sled, and the dogs the strongest. But he laughed, for he was strong of life, and gave the dogs that were left little grub till we cut them from the harnesses, one by one, and fed them to their mates. We would go home light, he said, traveling and eating from cache to cache, with neither dogs nor sleds; which was true, for our grub was very short, and the last dog died in the traces the night we came to the gold and the bones and the curses of men.

"To reach that place,–and the map spoke true,–in the heart of the great mountains, we cut ice steps against the wall of a divide. One looked for a valley beyond, but there was no valley; the snow spread away, level as the great harvest plains, and here and there about us mighty mountains shoved their white heads among the stars. And midway on that strange plain which should have been a valley, the earth and the snow fell away, straight down toward the heart of the world. Had we not been sailormen our heads would have swung round with the sight; but we stood on the dizzy edge that we might see a way to get down. And on one side, and one side only, the wall had fallen away till it was like the slope of the decks in a topsail breeze. I do not know why this thing should be so, but it was so. 'It is the mouth of hell,' he said; 'let us go down.' And we went down.

"And on the bottom there was a cabin, built by some man, of logs which he had cast down from above. It was a very old cabin; for men had died there alone at different times, and on pieces of birch bark which were there we read their last words and their curses. One had died of scurvy; another's partner had robbed him of his last grub and powder and stolen away; a third had been mauled by a bald-face grizzly; a fourth had hunted for game and starved,–and so it went, and they had been loath to leave the gold, and had died by the side of it in one way or another. And the worthless gold they had gathered yellowed the floor of the cabin like in a dream.

"But his soul was steady, and his head clear, this man I had led thus far. 'We have nothing to eat,' he said, 'and we will only look upon this gold, and see whence it comes and how much there be. Then we will go away quick, before it gets into our eyes and steals away our judgment. And in this way we may return in the end, with more grub, and possess it all.' So we looked upon the great vein, which cut the wall of the pit as a true vein should; and we measured it, and traced it from above and below, and drove the stakes of the claims and blazed the trees in token of our rights. Then, our knees

shaking with lack of food, and a sickness in our bellies, and our hearts chugging close to our mouths, we climbed the mighty wall for the last time and turned our faces to the back trip.

"The last stretch we dragged Unga between us, and we fell often, but in the end we made the cache. And lo, there was no grub. It was well done, for he thought it the wolverines, and damned them and his gods in the one breath. But Unga was brave, and smiled, and put her hand in his, till I turned away that I might hold myself. 'We will rest by the fire,' she said, 'till morning, and we will gather strength from our moccasins.' So we cut the tops of our moccasins in strips, and boiled them half of the night, that we might chew them and swallow them. And in the morning we talked of our chance. The next cache was five days' journey; we could not make it. We must find game.

"'We will go forth and hunt,' he said.

" 'Yes,' said I, 'we will go forth and hunt.'

"And he ruled that Unga stay by the fire and save her strength. And we went forth, he in quest of the moose, and I to the cache I had changed. But I ate little, so they might not see in me much strength. And in the night he fell many times as he drew into camp. And I too made to suffer great weakness, stumbling over my snowshoes as though each step might be my last. And we gathered strength from our moccasins.

"He was a great man. His soul lifted his body to the last; nor did he cry aloud, save for the sake of Unga. On the second day followed him, that I might not miss the end. And he lay down to rest often. That night he was near gone; but in the morning he swore weakly and went forth again. He was like a drunken man, and I looked many times for him to give up; but his was the strength of the strong, and his soul the soul of a giant, for he lifted his body through all the weary day. And he shot two ptarmigan, but would not eat them. He needed no fire; they meant life; but his thought was for Unga, and he turned toward camp. He no longer walked, but crawled on hand and knee through the snow. I came to him, and read death in his eyes. Even then it was not too late to eat of the ptarmigan. He cast away his rifle, and carried the birds in his mouth like a dog. I walked by his side, upright. And he looked at me during the moments he rested, and wondered that I was so strong. I could see it, though he no longer spoke; and when his lips moved, they moved without sound. As I say, he was a great man, and my heart spoke for softness; but I read back in my life, and remembered the cold and hunger of the endless forest by the Russian Seas. Besides, Unga was mine, and I had paid for her an untold price of skin and boat and bead.

"And in this manner we came through the white forest, with the silence heavy upon us like a damp sea mist. And the ghosts of the past were in the air and all about us; and I saw the yellow beach of Akatan, and the kayaks racing home from the fishing, and the houses on the rim of the forest. And the men who had made themselves chiefs were there, the lawgivers whose blood I bore, and whose blood I had wedded in Unga. Ay, and Yash-Noosh walked with me, the wet sand in his hair, and his war spear, broken

as he fell upon it, still in his hand. And I knew the time was met, and saw in the eyes of Unga the promise.

"As I say, we came thus through the forest, till the smell of the camp smoke was in our nostrils. And I bent above him, and tore the ptarmigan from his teeth. He turned on his side and rested, the wonder mounting in his eyes, and the hand which was under slipping slow toward the knife at his hip. But I took it from him, smiling close in his face. Even then he did not understand. So I made to drink from black bottles, and to build high upon the snow a pile of goods, and to live again the things which happened on the night of my marriage. I spoke no word, but he understood. Yet was he unafraid. There was a sneer to his lips, and cold anger, and he gathered new strength with the knowledge. It was not far, but the snow was deep, and he dragged himself very slow. Once, he lay so long, I turned him over and gazed into his eyes. And sometimes he looked forth, and sometimes death. And when I loosed him he struggled on again. In this way we came to the fire. Unga was at his side on the instant. His lips moved, without sound; then he pointed at me, that Unga might understand. And after that he lay in the snow, very still, for a long while. Even now is he there in the snow.

"I said no word till I had cooked the ptarmigan. Then I spoke to her, in her own tongue, which she had not heard in many years. She straightened herself, so, and her eyes were wonder-wide, and she asked who I was, and where I had learned that speech.

"'I am Naass,' I said.

" 'You?' she said. 'You?' And she crept close that she might look upon me.

"'Yes,' I answered; 'I am Naass, head man of Akatan, the last of the blood, as you are the last of the blood.'

"And she laughed. By all the things I have seen and the deeds I have done, may I never hear such a laugh again. It put the chill to my soul, sitting there in the White Silence, alone with death and this woman who laughed.

"'Come!' I said, for I thought she wandered. 'Eat of the food and let us be gone. It is a far fetch from here to Akatan.'

"But she shoved her face in his yellow mane, and laughed till it seemed the heavens must fall about our ears. I had thought she would be overjoyed at the sight of me, and eager to go back to the memory of old times; but this seemed a strange form to take.

"'Come!' I cried, taking her strong by the hand. 'The way is long and dark. Let us hurry!'

"'Where?' she asked, sitting up, and ceasing from her strange mirth.

"'To Akatan,' I answered, intent on the light to grow on her face at the thought. But it became like his, with a sneer to the lips, and cold anger.

"'Yes,' she said; 'we will go, hand in hand, to Akatan, you and I. And we will live in the dirty huts, and eat of the fish and oil, and bring forth a spawn,–a spawn to be proud of all the days of our life. We will forget the world and be happy, very happy. It is good, most good. Come! Let us hurry. Let us go back to Akatan.'

"And she ran her hand through his yellow hair, and smiled in a way which was not good. And there was no promise in her eyes.

"I sat silent, and marveled at the strangeness of woman. went back to the night when he dragged her from me, and she screamed and tore at his hair,–at his hair which now she played with and would not leave. Then I remembered the price and the long years of waiting; and gripped her close, and dragged her away as he had done. And she held back, even as on that night, and fought like a she-cat for its whelp. And when the fire was between us and the man, I loosed her, and she sat and listened. And I told her of all that lay between, of all that had happened me on strange seas, of all that I had done in strange lands; of my weary quest, and the hungry years, and the promise which had been mine from the first. Ay, I told all, even to what had passed that day between the man and me, and in the days yet young. And as spoke I saw the promise grow in her eyes, full and large like the break of dawn. And I read pity there, the tenderness of woman, the love, the heart and the soul of Unga. And I was a stripling again, for the look was the look of Unga as she ran up the beach, laughing, to the home of her mother. The stern unrest was gone, and the hunger, and the weary waiting. The time was met. I felt the call of her breast, and it seemed there I must pillow my head and forget. She opened her arms to me, and I came against her. Then, sudden, the hate flamed in her eye, her hand was at my hip. And once, twice, she passed the knife.

"'Dog!' she sneered, as she flung me into the snow. 'Swine!' And then she laughed till the silence cracked, and went back to her dead.

"As I say, once she passed the knife, and twice; but she was weak with hunger, and it was not meant that I should die. Yet was minded to stay in that place, and to close my eyes in the last long sleep with those whose lives had crossed with mine and led my feet on unknown trails. But there lay a debt upon me which would not let me rest.

"And the way was long, the cold bitter, and there was little grub. The Pellys had found no moose, and had robbed my cache. And so had the three white men; but they lay thin and dead in their cabin as passed. After that I do not remember, till I came here, and found food and fire,–much fire."

As he finished, he crouched closely, even jealously, over the stove. For a long while the slush-lamp shadows played tragedies upon the wall.

"But Unga!" cried Prince, the vision still strong upon him.

"Unga? She would not eat of the ptarmigan. She lay with her arms about his neck, her face deep in his yellow hair. I drew the fire close, that she might not feel the frost; but she crept to the other side. And I built a fire there; yet it was little good, for she would not eat. And in this manner they still lie up there in the snow."

"And you?" asked Malemute Kid.

"I do not know; but Akatan is small, and I have little wish to go back and live on the edge of the world. Yet is there small use in life. I can go to Constantine, and he will put irons upon me, and one day they will tie a piece of rope, so, and I will sleep good. Yet–no; I do not know."

"But, Kid," protested Prince, "this is murder!"

“Hush!” commanded Malemute Kid. “There be things greater than our wisdom, beyond our justice. The right and the wrong of this we cannot say, and it is not for us to judge.”

Naass drew yet closer to the fire. There was a great silence, and in each man’s eyes many pictures came and went.

Old Baldy

"I DECLARE! so the deacon's goin' to try his hand on Old Baldy, eh?" Jim Wheeler chuckled gleefully at the news, and rubbed his hands. "Wall, mebbe somethin' 'll happen," he went on, "an mebbe it won't, but I sha'n't be a mite s'prised if Old Baldy comes out a-top."

"The deacon's got a right powerful will," Sim Grimes suggested dubiously. "An' so has Baldy — powerful'st will in the country, bar none. But critters is critters and — " And Grimes was just preparing to unload his mind of certain ideas concerning man's primacy in the physical world, when the other cut him short.

"Now jest look here, Sim Grimes! Have you ever hearn tell of one man what limbered up Old Baldy when Old Baldy wa'n't so minded? There's Tucker an' Smith an' Johnson, an' Olsen, an' Ordway an' Wellman — didn't the whole caboodle try their luck at breakin' Old Baldy's sperrit, an' didn't the whole caboodle give it up? Jest tell me this, Sim Grimes — did you ever in yer born days hear on one man or passel of men gittin' Old Baldy on his feet when he took it into his head to lay down?"

"Mebbe yer right," Sim Grimes assented mildly, then his old faith in Deacon Barnes returning, "But the deacon's got a right powerful will."

"But Deacon Barnes jined a Prevention of Cruelty to Animals society, didn't he?" Grimes nodded. "An he don't b'lieve in whippin' dumb brutes?"

"Nope."

"Then how in the land of Goshen kin he make Old Baldy git up when he ain't in the mood?"

"It's more'n I kin tell," Grimes answered, at the same time starting up his horses. But before he was out of earshot he turned and called back, "But the deacon's got a powerful will!"

The farmers of Selbyville had little use for Old Baldy, and less regard; yet he was one of the finest oxen in the county, and perhaps the largest in the state. A good worker and a splendid yoke-animal, a stranger might have wondered at the celerity with which his various owners rid themselves of him, after having been inveigled into buying him. The same stranger might have worked him a week before he discovered why, and again an hour would have sufficed to unearth the secret. Old Baldy had but one fault — he was stubborn. And he manifested this stubborness in but one way. Whenever things did not exactly go to suit him, he simply lay down in his tracks, there and then, consulting neither his own nor his master's convenience. And there he would stay. Nothing could move him. Force was useless; persuasion as bad. The heavens might roll up as a scroll, or the stars fall from their seats in the sky, but there Old Baldy would stay until of his

own free will he decided to get up and move along. Never from the time yoke was first put upon him had a man succeeded in budging him against his will. it was asserted that he had caused more gray hairs to grow in the heads of the Selbyville farmers than all the mortgages of the past three generations. He always went absurdly cheap, and man after man had bought him in the fond hope of conquering him, and winning not only the approbation of his fellows, but a very good bargain. And man after man sold him for little or nothing, insanely happy at being rid of so much vexation of spirit.

"As stubborn as Old Baldy" became a figure of speech, the common property of the community. Fathers conjured obedience from their sons by its use; the schoolmaster employed it on his stiff-necked pupils; and even the minister, calling sinners to repentance, blanched the cheek of the most unregenerate with its brand. But in the language Deacon Barnes alone, it had no place. It was his wont to smile and chuckle when others made use of the phrase, till people remarked it would be a blessing if he only got the tough old ox once in his hands. And now, after Old Baldy had become thoroughly set in the iniquity of his ways, the deacon had bought him off Joe Westfield for a song. Selbyville looked forward to the struggle with great interest, and sly grins and open skepticism were the order of the day whenever the topic was mentioned. They knew the deacon had a will of iron, but they also knew Old Baldy; and their collective opinion was that the deacon, like everybody else who had tried their hand at it, was bound to get the worst of the bargain.

Deacon Barnes and Old Baldy were coming down the last furrow of the ten-acre patch back of the pasture. Five rods more of the plow and it would be ready for the harrow. Old Baldy had been behaving splendidly and the deacon was jubilant. Besides, Bob, his promising eldest-born, had just run half way across the pasture and shouted that dinner was ready and waiting.

"Comin'!" he shouted back, no more dreaming that he would fail to reach the end of the furrow than that the dinner call was the trumps of judgment. Just then Old Baldy stopped. The deacon looked surprised. Baldy sighed contently. "Get up!" he shouted, and Baldy, with a hurt expression on his bovine countenance, proceeded to lie down.

Deacon Barnes stepped around where he could look into his face, and talked nicely to him, with persuasion and pathos mixed; for he feared greatly for Old Baldy's well being. Not that he intended whipping him brutally or anything like that, but — well, he was Deacon Barnes, with the ripened will of all the male Barnes that had gone before, and he hadn't the slightest intention of being beaten by a stubborn old ox. So they just looked each other in the eyes, he talking midly and Baldy listening with complacent interest till Bob shouted a second time across the pasture that dinner was waiting.

"Look here, Baldy," the deacon said, rising to his feet; "if you want to lay there so mighty bad, 'tain't in me to stop you. Only give you fair warnin' — the sweets of life do cloy, and you kin git too much of a good thing. Layin' down in the furrer ain't what it's cracked up to be, an' you'll git a-mighty sick on it before yer done with me." Baldy

gazed at him with stolid impudence, saying as plainly as though he spoke, "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

But the deacon never lost his temper. "I'm goin' to git a bite to eat," he went on, turning away; "an' when I come back I'll give you one more chance. But mark my words, Baldy, it'll be yer last."

At the table, Deacon Barnes, instead of being at all irritated, radiated even more geniality than was his wont, and this in the face of the fact that Mrs. Barnes had a mild attack of tantrums because he had kept dinner waiting. Afterwards, when he went out on the porch, he saw Jim Wheeler had pulled up his horses where he could look over the fence at the victorious Baldy. When he passed the house he waved his hand and smiled knowingly at the deacon, and went on to spread the news that the deacon and Old Baldy were "at it."

But there was a certain unusual exhilaration in the deacon's face and step as he led off to the barn with Bob following in his footsteps. There he proceeded to load up his eldest-born with numerous iron and wooden pegs and old pieces of chain and rope. Then, with his ax in hand, he headed across the pasture to the scene of mutiny. "Come! Git up, Baldy!" he commanded. "It's high time we got this furrer finished."

Baldy regarded him passively, with half-veiled, lazy eyes. "Reckon it be more comfortable where you are, eh? B'lieve in takin' it easy, eh? All right. You can't say Deacon Barnes is a hard master." As he talked, he worked, driving pegs all about the stubborn animal. Then from the pegs he stretched ropes and chains, passing them across Baldy till that worthy was hard and fast to mother earth — so hard and fast that it would have required a steam derrick to get him to his feet. "Jest enjoy yourself, Baldy," the deacon called, as he started away. "I'll come up to-morrer after breakfast an' see how you be."

True to his word, in the morning the deacon paid his promised visit. But Baldy was yet strong in his will, and he behaved sullenly as animals well know how. He even tried to let on that it was real nice lying out there with nothing to do, and that the deacon worried him with his chatter, and had better go away. But Deacon Barnes stayed a full quarter of an hour, talking pleasantly, with a cheery, whole-souled ring to his voice which vexed Baldy greatly.

In the evening, after supper, he made another visit, Old Baldy was feeling stiff and sore from lying in one position all day with the hot sun beating down upon him. He even betrayed anxiety and interest when he heard his master's steps approaching, and there was a certain softening and appeal in his eyes. But the deacon made out he didn't see it, and after talking nicely for a few minutes went home again. In the morning Baldy received another visit. By this time he was not only sore, but hungry and thirsty as well. He was no longer indifferent to his owner's presence, and he begged so eloquently with his eyes that the deacon was touched, but he hardened his heart and went back to the house again. He had made up his mind to do what all Selbyville during a number of years had failed to accomplish, and now that he had started he was going to do it thoroughly.

When he came out again after dinner, Baldy was abject in his humility. His pleading eyes followed his master about unceasingly, and once, when the deacon turned as though to go away, he actually groaned. "Sweets do cloy, eh?" Deacon Barnes said, coming back. "Even lyin' in the furrer is vanity and vexation, eh? Well, I guess we'll finish this furrer now. What d'you say Baldy? And after that you kin have somethin' to eat an' a couple o' buckets of water. Eh? What d'you say?"

It can never be known for a fact as to whether Baldy understood his master's words or not, but he showed by his actions that he thoroughly understood when the ropes and chains were loosened and removed. "Kind o' cramped, eh?" the deacon remarked as he helped him to his feet. "Well, g'long now, le's finish this furrer."

Baldy finished that furrow, and after that there was never a furrow he commenced that he did not finish. And as for lying down — well, he manifested a new kind of stubborness. He couldn't be persuaded or bullied into lying down. No sir, he wouldn't have it. he'd finish the furrow first, and all the furrows all day long. He grew real stubborn when it came to lying down. But the deacon mind. And all Selbyville marveled, and a year afterward more than one farmer, including Jim Wheeler, was offering the deacon far more for Old Baldy than he had paid. But Deacon Barnes knew a bargain when he had got it, and he was just as stubborn in refusing to sell as Old Baldy was in refusing to lie down.

An Old Soldier's Story

A real incident which occurred in the life of the writer's father

THE times were strange then, and at the front was not the only place to have adventures. During the war, some of the most stirring scenes I took part in were right at home. You see that old Colt's revolver which hangs by my sword? I carried it through my five years in the army, and more than once it helped me out of a bad scrape.

In '63 I went home on 30 days' furlough to see my people, also to get recruits. I was quite successful, and by the time my furlough was up, had found between 25 and 30 men who were willing to enlist. There was one young man I had tried hard to get, and though he was willing, his father stubbornly refused to let him go. The only reason he had for refusing was that corn-husking was not yet over and his son Hiram was needed for the work. The only reason which finally caused him to give his consent was the bounty. They were offering a thousand dollars for every man who would join the army, and Hiram promised to turn every cent of it over to his father. So old Zack said he would agree if I would turn in and help with the husking.

My 30 days' furlough was up, but I was young and thoughtless in those days, and paid no heed to it. I knew the other recruits wished to stay till after corn-husking, and besides, felt that nothing would be done to me when I came back to my regiment with 30 stalwart lads. So I pitched in, and in two weeks all Old Zack's corn was husked and I was ready to start.

The tickets were bought, and the next morning we were ready to take the train at Rock Island for Quincy. There the men were to be sworn in and would receive their bounties, while our township would be credited with so many recruits. But in overstaying my furlough I had forgotten one thing — the provost marshal. These marshals were men who were looked down upon and despised worse than the dog-catchers. Their duty was to arrest deserters, and since their pay was $25 for every deserter captured, you can see they never let a chance slip. If they had only arrested real deserters, the people would not have dislike them so, but they were always bringing trouble upon good, honest soldiers whose only fault lay in being a little careless and staying too long at home. The provost marshal in our county was shrewd, brave as a lion, and as mean a man as one could meet in a whole day's travel. Only a short time before, Tommy Jingles had come home from my regiment and thoughtlessly over-stayed his furlough. On the third day, just as he was boarding the train at Rock Island to go back to the army, Davy McGregor captured him and sent him back under arrest. The $25 reward and the expenses were taken from poor Tommy's pay, and Tommy

with never a thought of deserting. And this was not the only instance in which Davy McGregor had behaved so meanly.

But to return to my story. It was my last night at home, and I was dreaming of war and battles. I had been thrown forward with a cloud of skirmishers. The musketry was rattling about like hail, and we were storming the first outpost, when I heard a loud rap at the door and was awake on the instant. "Come out, Simon, I want you."

It was Davy's voice, and I well know what he wanted me for. I made no answer, however, and began to silently dress. His knocking soon roused the house, and by the time I was dressed my sister came slipping into the room. I told her in whispers that to do. She went to the door and talked with Davy, but would not open it. He became suspicious, and I could hear him creeping around the house so as to have an eye on the kitchen door. You see, he was certain I was in the house, and thought I would most likely come out that way. Kissing father and mother and sister, I asked them to say good-bye to the boys, and carefully opened the front door. It was moonlight, and Davy was, as I suspected, keeping watch at the rear of the house. With my shoes in my hand, taking advantage of every shadow and scarcely daring to breathe, I crawled to the barn. I saddled father's big black stallion, and when all was ready, came out of the barn like a cannon shot.

Davy ran to the road and halted me as I came up on the dead lope, my cocked Colt's in my hand. He blocked my path, ordering me to halt and flourishing his pistols. On I came straight at him, and would surely have run him down, had he not sprung aside, blazing right and left at me as I went by. I knew he would do this, and ducked to the off-side of my horse, but not quickly enough, for a burning pain told me where his first bullet had plowed across my scalp.

On and away, with Rock Island 28 miles before me, I dashed like the wind. Davy, always well mounted, was hot after me. But our horses were evenly matched. At first he took flying shots at me as we rounded the bends, but he soon gave that up. Mile after mile flew by, and I was just beginning to feel sure of escape, when I met with an accident. Dawn was breaking as I plunged into a stretch of woods where it was yet as black as night. The road was heavy at that place, and the horse's hoofs made no sound. Suddenly, out of the darkness and from the opposite direction, leaped a horse and rider. Too late to avoid the shock, our horses struck breast on. The strange steed and rider were hurled to the ground, while I was not badly hurt. But father's stallion was strong. He shook himself, groaned, and sprang away on the gallop.

Still he had been badly hurt, and I saw that he was losing his speed. Davy slowly overhauled me. Soon he was alongside, trying to seize my rein. He had emptied his pistols, so could not shoot. Again and again I drew a bead on him with my loaded Colt's, but he was a brave man, refusing to be frightened. I did not wish to shoot him, but I think I would have done it rather than have the disgrace of deserter put upon me. You see, instead of running away, I was trying to run back to the army — a funny thing for a real deserter to do. But I did not shoot, not intending to use my revolver unless I had to.

Then we galloped, side by side, for at least 10 or 12 miles. Little by little my horse gave out and the last mile he made, Davy had to hold his horse in to keep him from running away from me. Every time he tried to catch my bridle I struck at his hand with my heavy revolver, and he soon gave that up. I felt that the stallion could not last much longer, and know I must do something to escape unearned disgrace. Now I am and always was a mild man, full of pity for dumb animals, but necessity forced me to do what I did. I played a trick I had learned out west. It is called "creasing," and is often used on wild horses. They shoot them so the bullet just grazes the top of the neck. But it does not hurt the horse. It just stuns him and in a few minutes he is as good as ever.

Quick as a flash I leaned out of the saddle, placed the muzzle of my revolver on the nape of the neck of Davy's horse, and pulled the trigger. Down he went with a crash, throwing Davy over his head. Yet Davy was on his feet instantly, and my poor horse could barely keep away from him as he ran after me on foot.

I looked at my watch. I could catch the first train, and Rock Island was only five miles away. My horse could not make those five miles and I did not know what to do. Davy gave me the idea, however. Coming around a turn in the road, I barely missed running into a farmer's wagon going to town. Not 20 feet away was another, going in the same direction. Davy stopped the first one and began to cut the traces — this was the idea. I halted the second one, which was driven by a woman, and explained as I did likewise. And she was willing for she know all about the provost marshal. We finished and mounted at the same time, with myself 20 feet in the lead. Yet fortune seemed to favor him, for his hose was a little the better of the two. But he had neglected to cut the traces quite short though, and the horse, stepping upon them, was thrown.

This gave me several hundred feet, and I was still leading by several lengths when we entered Rock Island. How we startled the city! Down the main street we thundered, while the people, who all hated the provost marshal, cheered me on. We barely missed a dozen collisions, and galloped into the depot, where the train was just ready to start. I rode through the crowd as far as I dared; the dismounted and made a dash for the steps. You can guess how the people gave room for a wild hatless solder, flourishing a huge revolver.

Persevering Davy was right behind, and I had to face about and keep him off with my pistol. It was not loaded, but he did not know that. I backed away from him, threatening to pull the trigger if he laid hand on me. The crowd began to take my part, and to hoot and jeer the provost marshal. "Hurrah for the soldier!" they cried. "Down with the provost marshal!" "Shoot him, soldier, shoot him!" "Who arrested poor Tommy Jingles?" "Davy McGregor, the black-hearted provost." "Hurrah for the boy in blue!"

So they kept it up, getting in his way and pushing and shoving him about. Then they became rough, and as I backed up the steps to the platform, they were stepping on his toes, pulling his coat-tails and twisting him about like a football. The conductor gave the signal, and with a last cheer from the crowd, the train pulled out for Quincy.

There I met my recruits later in the day. And when I brought my sturdy lads into the regiment and told all about it, the colonel said, "Well done, Simon, and at this rate I think you have well earned a second leave of absence."

On the Makaloa Mat

Unlike the women of most warm races, those of Hawaii age well and nobly. With no pretence of make-up or cunning concealment of time's inroads, the woman who sat under the hau tree might have been permitted as much as fifty years by a judge competent anywhere over the world save in Hawaii. Yet her children and her grandchildren, and Roscoe Scandwell who had been her husband for forty years, knew that she was sixty-four and would be sixty-five come the next twenty-second day of June. But she did not look it, despite the fact that she thrust reading glasses on her nose as she read her magazine and took them off when her gaze desired to wander in the direction of the half-dozen children playing on the lawn.

It was a noble situation — noble as the ancient hau tree, the size of a house, where she sat as if in a house, so spaciously and comfortably house-like was its shade furnished; noble as the lawn that stretched away landward its plush of green at an appraisement of two hundred dollars a front foot to a bungalow equally dignified, noble, and costly. Seaward, glimpsed through a fringe of hundred-foot coconut palms, was the ocean; beyond the reef a dark blue that grew indigo blue to the horizon, within the reef all the silken gamut of jade and emerald and tourmaline.

And this was but one house of the half-dozen houses belonging to Martha Scandwell. Her town-house, a few miles away in Honolulu, on Nuuanu Drive between the first and second "showers," was a palace. Hosts of guests had known the comfort and joy of her mountain house on Tantalus, and of her volcano house, her mauka (mountainward) house, and her makai (seaward) house on the big island of Hawaii. Yet this Waikiki house stressed no less than the rest in beauty, in dignity, and in expensiveness of upkeep. Two Japanese yard-boys were trimming hibiscus, a third was engaged expertly with the long hedge of night-blooming cereus that was shortly expectant of unfolding in its mysterious night-bloom. In immaculate ducks, a house Japanese brought out the tea-things, followed by a Japanese maid, pretty as a butterfly in the distinctive garb of her race, and fluttery as a butterfly to attend on her mistress. Another Japanese maid, an array of Turkish towels on her arm, crossed the lawn well to the right in the direction of the bath-houses, from which the children, in swimming suits, were beginning to emerge. Beyond, under the palms at the edge of the sea, two Chinese nursemaids, in their pretty native costume of white yee-shon and-straight-lined trousers, their black braids of hair down their backs, attended each on a baby in a perambulator.

And all these — servants, and nurses, and grandchildren — were Martha Scandwell's. So likewise was the colour of the skin of the grandchildren — the unmistakable Hawaiian colour, tinted beyond shadow of mistake by exposure to the Hawaiian sun.

One-eighth and one-sixteenth Hawaiian were they, which meant that seven-eighths or fifteen-sixteenths white blood informed that skin yet failed to obliterate the modicum of golden tawny brown of Polynesia. But in this, again, only a trained observer would have known that the frolicking children were aught but pure-blooded white. Roscoe Scandwell, grandfather, was pure white; Martha three-quarters white; the many sons and daughters of them seven-eighths white; the grandchildren graded up to fifteen-sixteenths white, or, in the cases when their seven-eighths fathers and mothers had married seven-eighths, themselves fourteen-sixteenths or seven-eighths white. On both sides the stock was good, Roscoe straight descended from the New England Puritans, Martha no less straight descended from the royal chief-stocks of Hawaii whose genealogies were chanted in meles a thousand years before written speech was acquired.

In the distance a machine stopped and deposited a woman whose utmost years might have been guessed as sixty, who walked across the lawn as lightly as a well-cared-for woman of forty, and whose actual calendar age was sixty-eight. Martha rose from her seat to greet her, in the hearty Hawaiian way, arms about, lips on lips, faces eloquent and bodies no less eloquent with sincereness and frank excessiveness of emotion. And it was "Sister Bella," and "Sister Martha," back and forth, intermingled with almost incoherent inquiries about each other, and about Uncle This and Brother That and Aunt Some One Else, until, the first tremulousness of meeting over, eyes moist with tenderness of love, they sat gazing at each other across their teacups. Apparently, they had not seen nor embraced for years. In truth, two months marked the interval of their separation. And one was sixty-four, the other sixty-eight. But the thorough comprehension resided in the fact that in each of them one-fourth of them was the sun-warm, love-warm heart of Hawaii.

The children flooded about Aunt Bella like a rising tide and were capaciously hugged and kissed ere they departed with their nurses to the swimming beach.

"I thought I'd run out to the beach for several days — the trades had stopped blowing," Martha explained.

"You've been here two weeks already," Bella smiled fondly at her younger sister. "Brother Edward told me. He met me at the steamer and insisted on running me out first of all to see Louise and Dorothy and that first grandchild of his. He's as mad as a silly hatter about it."

"Mercy!" Martha exclaimed. "Two weeks! I had not thought it that long."

"Where's Annie? — and Margaret?" Bella asked.

Martha shrugged her voluminous shoulders with voluminous and forgiving affection for her wayward, matronly daughters who left their children in her care for the afternoon.

"Margaret's at a meeting of the Out-door Circle — they're planning the planting of trees and hibiscus all along both sides of Kalakaua Avenue," she said. "And Annie's wearing out eighty dollars' worth of tyres to collect seventy-five dollars for the British Red Cross–this is their tag day, you know."

“Roscoe must be very proud,” Bella said, and observed the bright glow of pride that appeared in her sister’s eyes. “I got the news in San Francisco of Ho-o-la-a’s first dividend. Remember when I put a thousand in it at seventy-five cents for poor Abbie’s children, and said I’d sell when it went to ten dollars?”

“And everybody laughed at you, and at anybody who bought a share,” Martha nodded. “But Roscoe knew. It’s selling to-day at twenty-four.”

“I sold mine from the steamer by wireless — at twenty even,” Bella continued. “And now Abbie’s wildly dressmaking. She’s going with May and Tootsie to Paris.”

“And Carl?” Martha queried.

“Oh, he’ll finish Yale all right — ”

“Which he would have done anyway, and you know it,” Martha charged, lapsing charmingly into twentieth-century slang.

Bella affirmed her guilt of intention of paying the way of her school friend’s son through college, and added complacently:

“Just the same it was nicer to have Ho-o-la-a pay for it. In a way, you see, Roscoe is doing it, because it was his judgment I trusted to when I made the investment.” She gazed slowly about her, her eyes taking in, not merely the beauty and comfort and repose of all they rested on, but the immensity of beauty and comfort and repose represented by them, scattered in similar oases all over the islands. She sighed pleasantly and observed: “All our husbands have done well by us with what we brought them.”

“And happily . . . “ Martha agreed, then suspended her utterance with suspicious abruptness.

“And happily, all of us, except Sister Bella,” Bella forgivingly completed the thought for her.

“It was too bad, that marriage,” Martha murmured, all softness of sympathy. “You were so young. Uncle Robert should never have made you.”

“I was only nineteen,” Bella nodded. “But it was not George Castner’s fault. And look what he, out of she grave, has done for me. Uncle Robert was wise. He knew George had the far-away vision of far ahead, the energy, and the steadiness. He saw, even then, and that’s fifty years ago, the value of the Nahala water-rights which nobody else valued then. They thought he was struggling to buy the cattle range. He struggled to buy the future of the water–and how well he succeeded you know. I’m almost ashamed to think of my income sometimes. No; whatever else, the unhappiness of our marriage was not due to George. I could have lived happily with him, I know, even to this day, had he lived.” She shook her head slowly. “No; it was not his fault. Nor anybody’s. Not even mine. If it was anybody’s fault — ” The wistful fondness of her smile took the sting out of what she was about to say. “If it was anybody’s fault it was Uncle John’s.”

“Uncle John’s!” Martha cried with sharp surprise. “If it had to be one or the other, I should have said Uncle Robert. But Uncle John!”

Bella smiled with slow positiveness.

“But it was Uncle Robert who made you marry George Castner,” her sister urged.

"That is true," Bella nodded corroboration. "But it was not the matter of a husband, but of a horse. I wanted to borrow a horse from Uncle John, and Uncle John said yes. That is how it all happened."

A silence fell, pregnant and cryptic, and, while the voices of the children and the soft mandatory protests of the Asiatic maids drew nearer from the beach, Martha Scandwell felt herself vibrant and tremulous with sudden resolve of daring. She waved the children away.

"Run along, dears, run along, Grandma and Aunt Bella want to talk."

And as the shrill, sweet treble of child voices ebbed away across the lawn, Martha, with scrutiny of the heart, observed the sadness of the lines graven by secret woe for half a century in her sister's face. For nearly fifty years had she watched those lines. She steeled all the melting softness of the Hawaiian of her to break the half-century of silence.

"Bella," she said. "We never know. You never spoke. But we wondered, oh, often and often — "

"And never asked," Bella murmured gratefully.

"But I am asking now, at the last. This is our twilight. Listen to them! Sometimes it almost frightens me to think that they are grandchildren, my grandchildren — I, who only the other day, it would seem, was as heart-free, leg-free, care-free a girl as ever bestrode a horse, or swam in the big surf, or gathered opihis at low tide, or laughed at a dozen lovers. And here in our twilight let us forget everything save that I am your dear sister as you are mine."

The eyes of both were dewy moist. Bella palpably trembled to utterance.

"We thought it was George Castner," Martha went on; "and we could guess the details. He was a cold man. You were warm Hawaiian. He must have been cruel. Brother Walcott always insisted he must have beaten you — "

"No! No!" Bella broke in. "George Castner was never a brute, a beast. Almost have I wished, often, that he had been. He never laid hand on me. He never raised hand to me. He never raised his voice to me. Never — oh, can you believe it? — do, please, sister, believe it — did we have a high word nor a cross word. But that house of his, of ours, at Nahala, was grey. All the colour of it was grey and cool, and chill, while I was bright with all colours of sun, and earth, and blood, and birth. It was very cold, grey cold, with that cold grey husband of mine at Nahala. You know he was grey, Martha. Grey like those portraits of Emerson we used to see at school. His skin was grey. Sun and weather and all hours in the saddle could never tan it. And he was as grey inside as out.

"And I was only nineteen when Uncle Robert decided on the marriage. How was I to know? Uncle Robert talked to me. He pointed out how the wealth and property of Hawaii was already beginning to pass into the hands of the haoles" (whites). "The Hawaiian chiefs let their possessions slip away from them. The Hawaiian chiefesses, who married haoles, had their possessions, under the management of their haole husbands, increase prodigiously. He pointed back to the original Grandfather Roger Wilton, who

had taken Grandmother Wilton's poor mauka lands and added to them and built up about them the Kilohana Ranch — "

"Even then it was second only to the Parker Ranch," Martha interrupted proudly.

" — And he told me that had our father, before he died, been as far-seeing as grandfather, half the then Parker holdings would have been added to Kilohana, making Kilohana first. And he said that never, for ever and ever, would beef be cheaper. And he said that the big future of Hawaii would be in sugar. That was fifty years ago, and he has been more than proved right. And he said that the young haole, George Castner, saw far, and would go far, and that there were many girls of us, and that the Kilohana lands ought by rights to go to the boys, and that if I married George my future was assured in the biggest way.

"I was only nineteen. Just back from the Royal Chief School — that was before our girls went to the States for their education. You were among the first, Sister Martha, who got their education on the mainland. And what did I know of love and lovers, much less of marriage? All women married. It was their business in life. Mother and grandmother, all the way back they had married. It was my business in life to marry George Castner. Uncle Robert said so in his wisdom, and I knew he was very wise. And I went to live with my husband in the grey house at Nahala.

"You remember it. No trees, only the rolling grass lands, the high mountains behind, the sea beneath, and the wind! — the Waimea and Nahala winds, we got them both, and the kona wind as well. Yet little would I have minded them, any more than we minded them at Kilohana, or than they minded them at Mana, had not Nahala itself been so grey, and husband George so grey. We were alone. He was managing Nahala for the Glenns, who had gone back to Scotland. Eighteen hundred a year, plus beef, horses, cowboy service, and the ranch house, was what he received — "

"It was a high salary in those days," Martha said.

"And for George Castner, and the service he gave, it was very cheap," Bella defended. "I lived with him for three years. There was never a morning that he was out of his bed later than half-past four. He was the soul of devotion to his employers. Honest to a penny in his accounts, he gave them full measure and more of his time and energy. Perhaps that was what helped make our life so grey. But listen, Martha. Out of his eighteen hundred, he laid aside sixteen hundred each year. Think of it! The two of us lived on two hundred a year. Luckily he did not drink or smoke. Also, we dressed out of it as well. I made my own dresses. You can imagine them. Outside of the cowboys who chored the firewood, I did the work. I cooked, and baked, and scrubbed — "

"You who had never known anything but servants from the time you were born!" Martha pitied. "Never less than a regiment of them at Kilohana."

"Oh, but it was the bare, naked, pinching meagreness of it!" Bella cried out. "How far I was compelled to make a pound of coffee go! A broom worn down to nothing before a new one was bought! And beef! Fresh beef and jerky, morning, noon, and night! And porridge! Never since have I eaten porridge or any breakfast food."

She arose suddenly and walked a dozen steps away to gaze a moment with unseeing eyes at the colour-lavish reef while she composed herself. And she returned to her seat with the splendid, sure, gracious, high-breasted, noble-headed port of which no out-breeding can ever rob the Hawaiian woman. Very haole was Bella Castner, fair-skinned, fine-textured. Yet, as she returned, the high pose of head, the level-lidded gaze of her long brown eyes under royal arches of eyebrows, the softly set lines of her small mouth that fairly sang sweetness of kisses after sixty-eight years — all made her the very picture of a chiefess of old Hawaii full-bursting through her ampleness of haole blood. Taller she was than her sister Martha, if anything more queenly.

"You know we were notorious as poor feeders," Bella laughed lightly enough. "It was many a mile on either side from Nahala to the next roof. Belated travellers, or storm-bound ones, would, on occasion, stop with us overnight. And you know the lavishness of the big ranches, then and now. How we were the laughing-stock! 'What do we care!' George would say. 'They live to-day and now. Twenty years from now will be our turn, Bella. They will be where they are now, and they will eat out of our hand. We will be compelled to feed them, they will need to be fed, and we will feed them well; for we will be rich, Bella, so rich that I am afraid to tell you. But I know what I know, and you must have faith in me.'

"George was right. Twenty years afterward, though he did not live to see it, my income was a thousand a month. Goodness! I do not know what it is to-day. But I was only nineteen, and I would say to George: 'Now! now! We live now. We may not be alive twenty years from now. I do want a new broom. And there is a third-rate coffee that is only two cents a pound more than the awful stuff we are using. Why couldn't I fry eggs in butter — now? I should dearly love at least one new tablecloth. Our linen! I'm ashamed to put a guest between the sheets, though heaven knows they dare come seldom enough.'

"'Be patient, Bella,' he would reply. 'In a little while, in only a few years, those that scorn to sit at our table now, or sleep between our sheets, will be proud of an invitation — those of them who will not be dead. You remember how Stevens passed out last year — free-living and easy, everybody's friend but his own. The Kohala crowd had to bury him, for he left nothing but debts. Watch the others going the same pace. There's your brother Hal. He can't keep it up and live five years, and he's breaking his uncles' hearts. And there's Prince Lilolilo. Dashes by me with half a hundred mounted, able-bodied, roystering kanakas in his train who would be better at hard work and looking after their future, for he will never be king of Hawaii. He will not live to be king of Hawaii.'

"George was right. Brother Hal died. So did Prince Lilolilo. But George was not all right. He, who neither drank nor smoked, who never wasted the weight of his arms in an embrace, nor the touch of his lips a second longer than the most perfunctory of kisses, who was invariably up before cockcrow and asleep ere the kerosene lamp had a tenth emptied itself, and who never thought to die, was dead even more quickly than Brother Hal and Prince Lilolilo.

"'Be patient, Bella,' Uncle Robert would say to me. 'George Castner is a coming man. I have chosen well for you. Your hardships now are the hardships on the way to the promised land. Not always will the Hawaiians rule in Hawaii. Just as they let their wealth slip out of their hands, so will their rule slip out of their hands. Political power and the land always go together. There will be great changes, revolutions no one knows how many nor of what sort, save that in the end the haole will possess the land and the rule. And in that day you may well be first lady of Hawaii, just as surely as George Castner will be ruler of Hawaii. It is written in the books. It is ever so where the haole conflicts with the easier races. I, your Uncle Robert, who am half-Hawaiian and half-haole, know whereof I speak. Be patient, Bella, be patient.'

"'Dear Bella,' Uncle John would say; and I knew his heart was tender for me. Thank God, he never told me to be patient. He knew. He was very wise. He was warm human, and, therefore, wiser than Uncle Robert and George Castner, who sought the thing, not the spirit, who kept records in ledgers rather than numbers of heart-beats breast to breast, who added columns of figures rather than remembered embraces and endearments of look and speech and touch. 'Dear Bella,' Uncle John would say. He knew. You have heard always how he was the lover of the Princess Naomi. He was a true lover. He loved but the once. After her death they said he was eccentric. He was. He was the one lover, once and always. Remember that taboo inner room of his at Kilohana that we entered only after his death and found it his shrine to her. 'Dear Bella,' it was all he ever said to me, but I knew he knew.

"And I was nineteen, and sun-warm Hawaiian in spite of my three-quarters haole blood, and I knew nothing save my girlhood splendours at Kilohana and my Honolulu education at the Royal Chief School, and my grey husband at Nahala with his grey preachments and practices of sobriety and thrift, and those two childless uncles of mine, the one with far, cold vision, the other the broken-hearted, for-ever-dreaming lover of a dead princess.

"Think of that grey house! I, who had known the ease and the delights and the ever-laughing joys of Kilohana, and of the Parkers at old Mana, and of Puuwaawaa! You remember. We did live in feudal spaciousness in those days. Would you, can you, believe it, Martha — at Nahala the only sewing machine I had was one of those the early missionaries brought, a tiny, crazy thing that one cranked around by hand!

"Robert and John had each given Husband George five thousand dollars at my marriage. But he had asked for it to be kept secret. Only the four of us knew. And while I sewed my cheap holokus on that crazy machine, he bought land with the money — the upper Nahala lands, you know — a bit at a time, each purchase a hard-driven bargain, his face the very face of poverty. To-day the Nahala Ditch alone pays me forty thousand a year.

"But was it worth it? I starved. If only once, madly, he had crushed me in his arms! If only once he could have lingered with me five minutes from his own business or from his fidelity to his employers! Sometimes I could have screamed, or showered the eternal bowl of hot porridge into his face, or smashed the sewing machine upon the floor and

danced a hula on it, just to make him burst out and lose his temper and be human, be a brute, be a man of some sort instead of a grey, frozen demi-god."

Bella's tragic expression vanished, and she laughed outright in sheer genuineness of mirthful recollection.

"And when I was in such moods he would gravely look me over, gravely feel my pulse, examine my tongue, gravely dose me with castor oil, and gravely put me to bed early with hot stove-lids, and assure me that I'd feel better in the morning. Early to bed! Our wildest sitting up was nine o'clock. Eight o'clock was our regular bed-time. It saved kerosene. We did not eat dinner at Nahala — remember the great table at Kilohana where we did have dinner? But Husband George and I had supper. And then he would sit close to the lamp on one side the table and read old borrowed magazines for an hour, while I sat on the other side and darned his socks and underclothing. He always wore such cheap, shoddy stuff. And when he went to bed, I went to bed. No wastage of kerosene with only one to benefit by it. And he went to bed always the same way, winding up his watch, entering the day's weather in his diary, and taking off his shoes, right foot first invariably, left foot second, and placing them just so, side by side, on the floor, at the foot of the bed, on his side.

"He was the cleanest man I ever knew. He never wore the same undergarment a second time. I did the washing. He was so clean it hurt. He shaved twice a day. He used more water on his body than any kanaka. He did more work than any two haoles. And he saw the future of the Nahala water."

"And he made you wealthy, but did not make you happy," Martha observed.

Bella sighed and nodded.

"What is wealth after all, Sister Martha? My new Pierce-Arrow came down on the steamer with me. My third in two years. But oh, all the Pierce-Arrows and all the incomes in the world compared with a lover! — the one lover, the one mate, to be married to, to toil beside and suffer and joy beside, the one male man lover husband — "

Her voice trailed off, and the sisters sat in soft silence while an ancient crone, staff in hand, twisted, doubled, and shrunken under a hundred years of living, hobbled across the lawn to them. Her eyes, withered to scarcely more than peepholes, were sharp as a mongoose's, and at Bella's feet she first sank down, in pure Hawaiian mumbling and chanting a toothless mele of Bella and Bella's ancestry and adding to it an extemporized welcome back to Hawaii after her absence across the great sea to California. And while she chanted her mele, the old crone's shrewd fingers lomied or massaged Bella's silk-stockinged legs from ankle and calf to knee and thigh.

Both Bella's and Martha's eyes were luminous-moist, as the old retainer repeated the lomi and the mele to Martha, and as they talked with her in the ancient tongue and asked the immemorial questions about her health and age and great-great-grandchildren — she who had lomied them as babies in the great house at Kilohana, as her ancestresses had lomied their ancestresses back through the unnumbered generations. The brief duty visit over, Martha arose and accompanied her back to the

bungalow, putting money into her hand, commanding proud and beautiful Japanese housemaids to wait upon the dilapidated aborigine with poi, which is compounded of the roots of the water lily, with iamaka, which is raw fish, and with pounded kukui nut and limu, which latter is seawood tender to the toothless, digestible and savoury. It was the old feudal tie, the faithfulness of the commoner to the chief, the responsibility of the chief to the commoner; and Martha, three-quarters haole with the Anglo-Saxon blood of New England, was four-quarters Hawaiian in her remembrance and observance of the well-nigh vanished customs of old days.

As she came back across the lawn to the hau tree, Bella's eyes dwelt upon the moving authenticity of her and of the blood of her, and embraced her and loved her. Shorter than Bella was Martha, a trifle, but the merest trifle, less queenly of port; but beautifully and generously proportioned, mellowed rather than dismantled by years, her Polynesian chiefess figure eloquent and glorious under the satisfying lines of a half-fitting, grandly sweeping, black-silk holoku trimmed with black lace more costly than a Paris gown.

And as both sisters resumed their talk, an observer would have noted the striking resemblance of their pure, straight profiles, of their broad cheek-bones, of their wide and lofty foreheads, of their iron-grey abundance of hair, of their sweet-lipped mouths set with the carriage of decades of assured and accomplished pride, and of their lovely slender eye-rows arched over equally lovely long brown eyes. The hands of both of them, little altered or defaced by age, were wonderful in their slender, tapering finger-tips, love-lomied and love-formed while they were babies by old Hawaiian women like to the one even then eating poi and iamaka and limu in the house.

"I had a year of it," Bella resumed, "and, do you know, things were beginning to come right. I was beginning to draw to Husband George. Women are so made, I was such a woman at any rate. For he was good. He was just. All the old sterling Puritan virtues were his. I was coming to draw to him, to like him, almost, might I say, to love him. And had not Uncle John loaned me that horse, I know that I would have truly loved him and have lived ever happily with him — in a quiet sort of way, of course.

"You see, I knew nothing else, nothing different, nothing better in the way of men. I came gladly to look across the table at him while he read in the brief interval between supper and bed, gladly to listen for and to catch the beat of his horse's hoofs coming home at night from his endless riding over the ranch. And his scant praise was praise indeed, that made me tingle with happiness — yes, Sister Martha, I knew what it was to blush under his precise, just praise for the things I had done right or correctly.

"And all would have been well for the rest of our lives together, except that he had to take steamer to Honolulu. It was business. He was to be gone two weeks or longer, first, for the Glenns in ranch affairs, and next for himself, to arrange the purchase of still more of the upper Nahala lands. Do you know! he bought lots of the wilder and up-and-down lands, worthless for aught save water, and the very heart of the watershed, for as low as five and ten cents an acre. And he suggested I needed a change. I wanted to go with him to Honolulu. But, with an eye to expense, he decided Kilohana for

me. Not only would it cost him nothing for me to visit at the old home, but he saved the price of the poor food I should have eaten had I remained alone at Nahala, which meant the purchase price of more Nahala acreage. And at Kilohana Uncle John said yes, and loaned me the horse.

"Oh, it was like heaven, getting back, those first several days. It was difficult to believe at first that there was so much food in all the world. The enormous wastage of the kitchen appalled me. I saw waste everywhere, so well trained had I been by Husband George. Why, out in the servants' quarters the aged relatives and most distant hangers-on of the servants fed better than George and I ever fed. You remember our Kilohana way, same as the Parker way, a bullock killed for every meal, fresh fish by runners from the ponds of Waipio and Kiholo, the best and rarest at all times of everything . . .

"And love, our family way of loving! You know what Uncle John was. And Brother Walcott was there, and Brother Edward, and all the younger sisters save you and Sally away at school. And Aunt Elizabeth, and Aunt Janet with her husband and all her children on a visit. It was arms around, and perpetual endearings, and all that I had missed for a weary twelvemonth. I was thirsty for it. I was like a survivor from the open boat falling down on the sand and lapping the fresh bubbling springs at the roots of the palms.

"And they came, riding up from Kawaihae, where they had landed from the royal yacht, the whole glorious cavalcade of them, two by two, flower-garlanded, young and happy, gay, on Parker Ranch horses, thirty of them in the party, a hundred Parker Ranch cowboys and as many more of their own retainers — a royal progress. It was Princess Lihue's progress, of course, she flaming and passing as we all knew with the dreadful tuberculosis; but with her were her nephews, Prince Lilolilo, hailed everywhere as the next king, and his brothers, Prince Kahekili and Prince Kamalau. And with the Princess was Ella Higginsworth, who rightly claimed higher chief blood lines through the Kauai descent than belonged to the reigning family, and Dora Niles, and Emily Lowcroft, and . . . oh, why enumerate them all! Ella Higginsworth and I had been room-mates at the Royal Chief School. And there was a great resting time for an hour — no luau, for the luau awaited them at the Parkers' — but beer and stronger drinks for the men, and lemonade, and oranges, and refreshing watermelon for the women.

"And it was arms around with Ella Higginsworth and me, and the Princess, who remembered me, and all the other girls and women, and Ella spoke to the Princess, and the Princess herself invited me to the progress, joining them at Mana whence they would depart two days later. And I was mad, mad with it all — I, from a twelvemonth of imprisonment at grey Nahala. And I was nineteen yet, just turning twenty within the week.

"Oh, I had not thought of what was to happen. So occupied was I with the women that I did not see Lilolilo, except at a distance, bulking large and tall above the other men. But I had never been on a progress. I had seen them entertained at Kilohana and Mana, but I had been too young to be invited along, and after that it had been

school and marriage. I knew what it would be like — two weeks of paradise, and little enough for another twelve months at Nahala.

"And I asked Uncle John to lend me a horse, which meant three horses of course — one mounted cowboy and a pack horse to accompany me. No roads then. No automobiles. And the horse for myself! It was Hilo. You don't remember him. You were away at school then, and before you came home, the following year, he'd broken his back and his rider's neck wild-cattle-roping up Mauna Kea. You heard about it — that young American naval officer."

"Lieutenant Bowsfield," Martha nodded.

"But Hilo! I was the first woman on his back. He was a three-year-old, almost a four-year, and just broken. So black and in such a vigour of coat that the high lights on him clad him in shimmering silver. He was the biggest riding animal on the ranch, descended from the King's Sparklingdow with a range mare for dam, and roped wild only two weeks before. I never have seen so beautiful a horse. He had the round, deep-chested, big-hearted, well-coupled body of the ideal mountain pony, and his head and neck were true thoroughbred, slender, yet full, with lovely alert ears not too small to be vicious nor too large to be stubborn mulish. And his legs and feet were lovely too, unblemished, sure and firm, with long springy pasterns that made him a wonder of ease under the saddle."

"I remember hearing Prince Lilolilo tell Uncle John that you were the best woman rider in all Hawaii," Martha interrupted to say. "That was two years afterward when I was back from school and while you were still living at Nahala."

"Lilolilo said that!" Bella cried. Almost as with a blush, her long, brown eyes were illumined, as she bridged the years to her lover near half a century dead and dust. With the gentleness of modesty so innate in the women of Hawaii, she covered her spontaneous exposure of her heart with added panegyric of Hilo.

"Oh, when he ran with me up the long-grass slopes, and down the long-grass slopes, it was like hurdling in a dream, for he cleared the grass at every bound, leaping like a deer, a rabbit, or a fox-terrier — you know how they do. And cut up, and prance, and high life! He was a mount for a general, for a Napoleon or a Kitchener. And he had, not a wicked eye, but, oh, such a roguish eye, intelligent and looking as if it cherished a joke behind and wanted to laugh or to perpetrate it. And I asked Uncle John for Hilo. And Uncle John looked at me, and I looked at him; and, though he did not say it, I knew he was feeling 'Dear Bella,' and I knew, somewhere in his seeing of me, was all his vision of the Princess Naomi. And Uncle John said yes. That is how it happened.

"But he insisted that I should try Hilo out — myself, rather — at private rehearsal. He was a handful, a glorious handful. But not vicious, not malicious. He got away from me over and over again, but I never let him know. I was not afraid, and that helped me keep always a feel of him that prevented him from thinking that he was even a jump ahead of me.

"I have often wondered if Uncle John dreamed of what possibly might happen. I know I had no thought of it myself, that day I rode across and joined the Princess at

Mana. Never was there such festal time. You know the grand way the old Parkers had of entertaining. The pig-sticking and wild-cattle-shooting, the horse-breaking and the branding. The servants' quarters overflowing. Parker cowboys in from everywhere. And all the girls from Waimea up, and the girls from Waipio, and Honokaa, and Paauilo — I can see them yet, sitting in long rows on top the stone walls of the breaking pen and making leis (flower garlands) Wfor their cowboy lovers. And the nights, the perfumed nights, the chanting of the meles and the dancing of the hulas, and the big Mana grounds with lovers everywhere strolling two by two under the trees.

"And the Prince . . . " Bella paused, and for a long minute her small fine teeth, still perfect, showed deep in her underlip as she sought and won control and sent her gaze vacantly out across the far blue horizon. As she relaxed, her eyes came back to her sister.

"He was a prince, Martha. You saw him at Kilohana before . . . after you came home from seminary. He filled the eyes of any woman, yes, and of any man. Twenty-five he was, in all-glorious ripeness of man, great and princely in body as he was great and princely in spirit. No matter how wild the fun, how reckless mad the sport, he never seemed to forget that he was royal, and that all his forebears had been high chiefs even to that first one they sang in the genealogies, who had navigated his double-canoes to Tahiti and Raiatea and back again. He was gracious, sweet, kindly comradely, all friendliness — and severe, and stern, and harsh, if he were crossed too grievously. It is hard to express what I mean. He was all man, man, man, and he was all prince, with a strain of the merry boy in him, and the iron in him that would have made him a good and strong king of Hawaii had he come to the throne.

"I can see him yet, as I saw him that first day and touched his hand and talked with him . . . few words and bashful, and anything but a year-long married woman to a grey haole at grey Nahala. Half a century ago it was, that meeting — you remember how our young men then dressed in white shoes and trousers, white silk shirts, with slashed around the middle the gorgeously colourful Spanish sashes — and for half a century that picture of him has not faded in my heart. He was the centre of a group on the lawn, and I was being brought by Ella Higginsworth to be presented. The Princess Lihue had just called some teasing chaff to her which had made her halt to respond and left me halted a pace in front of her.

"His glance chanced to light on me, alone there, perturbed, embarrassed. Oh, how I see him! — his head thrown back a little, with that high, bright, imperious, and utterly care-free poise that was so usual of him. Our eyes met. His head bent forward, or straightened to me, I don't know what happened. Did he command? Did I obey? I do not know. I know only that I was good to look upon, crowned with fragrant maile, clad in Princess Naomi's wonderful holoku loaned me by Uncle John from his taboo room; and I know that I advanced alone to him across the Mana lawn, and that he stepped forth from those about him to meet me half-way. We came to each other across the grass, unattended, as if we were coming to each other across our lives.

"Was I very beautiful, Sister Martha, when I was young? I do not know. I don't know. But in that moment, with all his beauty and truly royal-manness crossing to me and penetrating to the heart of me, I felt a sudden sense of beauty in myself — how shall I say? — as if in him and from him perfection were engendered and conjured within myself.

"No word was spoken. But, oh, I know I raised my face in frank answer to the thunder and trumpets of the message unspoken, and that, had it been death for that one look and that one moment I could not have refrained from the gift of myself that must have been in my face and eyes, in the very body of me that breathed so high.

"Was I beautiful, very beautiful, Martha, when I was nineteen, just turning into twenty?"

And Martha, three-score and four, looked upon Bella, three-score and eight, and nodded genuine affirmation, and to herself added the appreciation of the instant in what she beheld — Bella's neck, still full and shapely, longer than the ordinary Hawaiian woman's neck, a pillar that carried regally her high-cheeked, high-browed, high chiefess face and head; Bella's hair, high-piled, intact, sparkling the silver of the years, ringleted still and contrasting definitely and sharply with her clean, slim, black brows and deep brown eyes. And Martha's glance, in modest overwhelming of modesty by what she saw, dropped down the splendid breast of her and generously true lines of body to the feet, silken clad, high-heeled-slippered, small, plump, with an almost Spanish arch and faultlessness of instep.

"When one is young, the one young time!" Bella laughed. "Lilolilo was a prince. I came to know his every feature and their every phase . . . afterward, in our wonder days and nights by the singing waters, by the slumber-drowsy surfs, and on the mountain ways. I knew his fine, brave eyes, with their straight, black brows, the nose of him that was assuredly a Kamehameha nose, and the last, least, lovable curve of his mouth. There is no mouth more beautiful than the Hawaiian, Martha.

"And his body. He was a king of athletes, from his wicked, wayward hair to his ankles of bronzed steel. Just the other day I heard one of the Wilder grandsons referred to as 'The Prince of Harvard.' Mercy! What would they, what could they have called my Lilolilo could they have matched him against this Wilder lad and all his team at Harvard!"

Bella ceased and breathed deeply, the while she clasped her fine small hands in her ample silken lap. But her pink fairness blushed faintly through her skin and warmed her eyes as she relived her prince-days.

"Well — you have guessed?" Bella said, with defiant shrug of shoulders and a straight gaze into her sister's eyes. "We rode out from gay Mana and continued the gay progress — down the lava trails to Kiholo to the swimming and the fishing and the feasting and the sleeping in the warm sand under the palms; and up to Puuwaawaa, and more pig-sticking, and roping and driving, and wild mutton from the upper pasture-lands; and on through Kona, now mauka (mountainward), "now down to the King's palace at Kailua, and to the swimming at Keauhou, and to Kealakekua Bay, and Napoopoo and

Honaunau. And everywhere the people turning out, in their hands gifts of flowers, and fruit, and fish, and pig, in their hearts love and song, their heads bowed in obeisance to the royal ones while their lips ejaculated exclamations of amazement or chanted meles of old and unforgotten days.

"What would you, Sister Martha? You know what we Hawaiians are. You know what we were half a hundred years ago. Lilolilo was wonderful. I was reckless. Lilolilo of himself could make any woman reckless. I was twice reckless, for I had cold, grey Nahala to spur me on. I knew. I had never a doubt. Never a hope. Divorces in those days were undreamed. The wife of George Castner could never be queen of Hawaii, even if Uncle Robert's prophesied revolutions were delayed, and if Lilolilo himself became king. But I never thought of the throne. What I wanted would have been the queendom of being Lilolilo's wife and mate. But I made no mistake. What was impossible was impossible, and I dreamed no false dream.

"It was the very atmosphere of love. And Lilolilo was a lover. I was for ever crowned with leis (wreaths) by him, and he had his runners bring me leis all the way from the rose-gardens of Mana — you remember them; fifty miles across the lava and the ranges, dewy fresh as the moment they were plucked, in their jewel-cases of banana bark; yard-long they were, the tiny pink buds like threaded beads of Neapolitan coral. And at the luaus (feasts) the for ever never-ending luaus, I must be seated on Lilolilo's Makaloa mat, the Prince's mat, his alone and taboo to any lesser mortal save by his own condescension and desire. And I must dip my fingers into his own pa wai holoi (finger-bowl) where scented flower petals floated in the warm water. Yes, and careless that all should see his extended favour, I must dip into his pa paakai for my pinches of red salt, and limu, and kukui nut and chili pepper; and into his ipu kai (fish sauce dish) of kou wood that the great Kamehameha himself had eaten from on many a similar progress. And it was the same for special delicacies that were for Lilolilo and the Princess alone — for his nelu, and the ake, and the palu, and the alaala. And his kahilis were waved over me, and his attendants were mine, and he was mine; and from my flower-crowned hair to my happy feet I was a woman loved."

Once again Bella's small teeth pressed into her underlip, as she gazed vacantly seaward and won control of herself and her memories.

"It was on, and on, through all Kona, and all Kau, from Hoopuloa and Kapua to Honuapo and Punaluu, a life-time of living compressed into two short weeks. A flower blooms but once. That was my time of bloom — Lilolilo beside me, myself on my wonderful Hilo, a queen, not of Hawaii, but of Lilolilo and Love. He said I was a bubble of colour and beauty on the black back of Leviathan; that I was a fragile dewdrop on the smoking crest of a lava flow; that I was a rainbow riding the thunder cloud . . . "

Bella paused for a moment.

"I shall tell you no more of what he said to me," she declared gravely; "save that the things he said were fire of love and essence of beauty, and that he composed hulas to

me, and sang them to me, before all, of nights under the stars as we lay on our mats at the feasting; and I on the Makaloa mat of Lilolilo.

"And it was on to Kilauea — the dream so near its ending; and of course we tossed into the pit of sea-surging lava our offerings to Pele (Fire-Goddess) of maile leis and of fish and hard poi wrapped moist in the ti leaves. And we continued down through old Puna, and feasted and danced and sang at Kohoualea and Kamaili and Opihikao, and swam in the clear, sweet-water pools of Kalapana. And in the end came to Hilo by the sea.

"It was the end. We had never spoken. It was the end recognized and unmentioned. The yacht waited. We were days late. Honolulu called, and the news was that the King had gone particularly pupule (insane), that there were Catholic and Protestant missionary plottings, and that trouble with France was brewing. As they had landed at Kawaihae two weeks before with laughter and flowers and song, so they departed from Hilo. It was a merry

parting, full of fun and frolic and a thousand last messages and reminders and jokes. The anchor was broken out to a song of farewell from Lilolilo's singing boys on the quarterdeck, while we, in the big canoes and whaleboats, saw the first breeze fill the vessel's sails and the distance begin to widen.

"Through all the confusion and excitement, Lilolilo, at the rail, who must say last farewells and quip last jokes to many, looked squarely down at me. On his head he wore my ilima lei, which I had made for him and placed there. And into the canoes, to the favoured ones, they on the yacht began tossing their many leis. I had no expectancy of hope . . . And yet I hoped, in a small wistful way that I know did not show in my face, which was as proud and merry as any there. But Lilolilo did what I knew he would do, what I had known from the first he would do. Still looking me squarely and honestly in the eyes, he took my beautiful ilima lei from his head and tore it across. I saw his lips shape, but not utter aloud, the single word pau (finish). Still looking at me, he broke both parts of the lei in two again and tossed the deliberate fragments, not to me, but down overside into the widening water. Pau. It was finished . . . "

For a long space Bella's vacant gaze rested on the sea horizon. Martha ventured no mere voice expression of the sympathy that moistened her own eyes.

"And I rode on that day, up the old bad trail along the Hamakua coast," Bella resumed, with a voice at first singularly dry and harsh. "That first day was not so hard. I was numb. I was too full with the wonder of all I had to forget to know that I had to forget it. I spent the night at Laupahoehoe. Do you know, I had expected a sleepless night. Instead, weary from the saddle, still numb, I slept the night through as if I had been dead.

"But the next day, in driving wind and drenching rain! How it blew and poured! The trail was really impassable. Again and again our horses went down. At fist the cowboy Uncle John had loaned me with the horses protested, then he followed stolidly in the rear, shaking his head, and, I know, muttering over and over that I was pupule. The pack horse was abandoned at Kukuihaele. We almost swam up Mud Lane in a

river of mud. At Waimea the cowboy had to exchange for a fresh mount. But Hilo lasted through. From daybreak till midnight I was in the saddle, till Uncle John, at Kilohana, took me off my horse, in his arms, and carried me in, and routed the women from their beds to undress me and lomi me, while he plied me with hot toddies and drugged me to sleep and forgetfulness. I know I must have babbled and raved. Uncle John must have guessed. But never to another, nor even to me, did he ever breathe a whisper. Whatever he guessed he locked away in the taboo room of Naomi.

"I do have fleeting memories of some of that day, all a broken-hearted mad rage against fate — of my hair down and whipped wet and stinging about me in the driving rain; of endless tears of weeping contributed to the general deluge, of passionate outbursts and resentments against a world all twisted and wrong, of beatings of my hands upon my saddle pommel, of asperities to my Kilohana cowboy, of spurs into the ribs of poor magnificent Hilo, with a prayer on my lips, bursting out from my heart, that the spurs would so madden him as to make him rear and fall on me and crush my body for ever out of all beauty for man, or topple me off the trail and finish me at the foot of the palis (precipices), writing pau at the end of my name as final as the unuttered pau on Lilolilo's lips when he tore across my ilima lei and dropped it in the sea. . . .

"Husband George was delayed in Honolulu. When he came back to Nahala I was there waiting for him. And solemnly he embraced me, perfunctorily kissed my lips, gravely examined my tongue, decried my looks and state of health, and sent me to bed with hot stove-lids and a dosage of castor oil. Like entering into the machinery of a clock and becoming one of the cogs or wheels, inevitably and remorselessly turning around and around, so I entered back into the grey life of Nahala. Out of bed was Husband George at half after four every morning, and out of the house and astride his horse at five. There was the eternal porridge, and the horrible cheap coffee, and the fresh beef and jerky. I cooked, and baked, and scrubbed. I ground around the crazy hand sewing machine and made my cheap holokus. Night after night, through the endless centuries of two years more, I sat across the table from him until eight o'clock, mending his cheap socks and shoddy underwear, while he read the years' old borrowed magazines he was too thrifty to subscribe to. And then it was bed-time — kerosene must be economized — and he wound his watch, entered the weather in his diary, and took off his shoes, the right shoe first, and placed them, just so, side by side, at the foot of the bed on his side.

"But there was no more of my drawing to Husband George, as had been the promise ere the Princess Lihue invited me on the progress and Uncle John loaned me the horse. You see, Sister Martha, nothing would have happened had Uncle John refused me the horse. But I had known love, and I had known Lilolilo; and what chance, after that, had Husband George to win from me heart of esteem or affection? And for two years, at Nahala, I was a dead woman who somehow walked and talked, and baked and scrubbed, and mended socks and saved kerosene. The doctors said it was the shoddy

underwear that did for him, pursuing as always the high-mountain Nahala waters in the drenching storms of midwinter.

"When he died, I was not sad. I had been sad too long already. Nor was I glad. Gladness had died at Hilo when Lilolilo dropped my ilima lei into the sea and my feet were never happy again. Lilolilo passed within a month after Husband George. I had never seen him since the parting at Hilo. La, la, suitors a many have I had since; but I was like Uncle John. Mating for me was but once. Uncle John had his Naomi room at Kilohana. I have had my Lilolilo room for fifty years in my heart. You are the first, Sister Martha, whom I have permitted to enter that room . . . "

A machine swung the circle of the drive, and from it, across the lawn, approached the husband of Martha. Erect, slender, grey-haired, of graceful military bearing, Roscoe Scandwell was a member of the "Big Five," which, by the interlocking of interests, determined the destinies of all Hawaii. Himself pure haole, New England born, he kissed Bella first, arms around, full-hearty, in the Hawaiian way. His alert eye told him that there had been a woman talk, and, despite the signs of all generousness of emotion, that all was well and placid in the twilight wisdom that was theirs.

"Elsie and the younglings are coming — just got a wireless from their steamer," he announced, after he had kissed his wife. "And they'll be spending several days with us before they go on to Maui."

"I was going to put you in the Rose Room, Sister Bella," Martha Scandwell planned aloud. "But it will be better for her and the children and the nurses and everything there, so you shall have Queen Emma's Room."

"I had it last time, and I prefer it," Bella said.

Roscoe Scandwell, himself well taught of Hawaiian love and love-ways, erect, slender, dignified, between the two nobly proportioned women, an arm around each of their sumptuous waists, proceeded with them toward the house.

WAIKIKI, HAWAII.

June 6, 1916

"One More Unfortunate"

AND this was the end of his art! He saw it all now, and his soul grew sick. The hope of his life lay dead. Clearly, vividly, the shame, the misery of it, burst upon him. He had dreamed his dream, and now must come the awakening — and what an awakening!

Again the curtain rose on the dirt, ill-lighted stage, and again, with trembling, wasted fingers, he turned the pages of the score and mechanically played the prelude. The second violin was atrocious; but its marvelous execution and phenomenal time caused him to smile a bitter smile. The trombone gave vent to excruciating agonies, and the drum persisted in bursting unexpectedly at the most inopportune places, while the piano played or not as it saw fit.

The music jarred upon him, but no less than his surroundings, now that the veil had been torn aside. The prelude finished, he had time to look about him. It was the last scene. A woman, in tawdry finery and indelicate dress, had approached the footlights, and in a strained, cracked voice, she was now attempting to sing, out of her register,

a popular song. The pit of the house was filled with workmen, sailors, longshoremen, toughs, — the scum of the metropolis. Waiters hurried from table to table, dispensing drinks and soliciting patronage. The women in the boxes cast bold looks, and their painted faces but served to hide the care and worry of their fierce struggle for existence. The air was rent with oaths, conversation and laughter, that often drowned the singer's voice, and brought into her face an anxious expression, for well she knew if the encore was not sufficiently loud, her services would be dispensed with — not at the end of the week, but at once.

A drunken sailor in the front row raved unceasingly, and his hoarse, meaningless babble kept fit accompaniment to the shrill treble of the singer. A couple of sturdy waiters toss him into the street; a fight in the back hardly attracts attention; and the woman concludes her song to the applause of one table — evidently friends — and leaves the stage to confront the irate manager.

Again the music strikes up, and the awakened enthusiast for the last time that evening leads his crazy orchestra. It was but the obscure work of some unknown composer, perhaps one like him who had dreamed his dream and awakened; but the beauty of it aroused his latent appreciation unconciously. The discords of his companions became inaudible; the vile surroundings vanished, and the musician in thought returned to his childhood and lived his life again.

Once more he trod the familiar paths of his mountain home; his brothers and sisters were around him — the home circle, complete. His father — dear kind, old man, — with his wrinkled, weather-beaten face, told stories of the Indians, the plains, the war, in his homely language and crude manner. His mother, the younger children clustering round her, heard with maternal solicitude, their little happenings of the day, joyed with their toys, sorrowed with their sorrows. But he beheld with grief, the sharp lines drawn deep about eyes and mouth, that told of hidden worries. Alas! he had not understood their import in those days of long ago. Nor was he forgotten. Many a glance of pride, not unmixed with apprehension, she cast upon as he sat with chair close drawn to kitchen table, drawing music upon paper, as had Signa of yore.

The scenes changed rapidly. Now he crept into the little village church, and the preacher's daughter, a kindly spinster, stood near him as she practiced on the organ. Now he crept away, his little heart throbbing with ecstacies of delight, and sought the stream, the little stream, that dashed so turbulently down from the snowy peaks beyond. There he listened to its song, heard the wind sighing through the pines, and with the music of all animate nature ringing in his ears, returned to his humble house and was glad. Again, deep in that beloved book of Signa, he raised his wet eyes, and ambition trod with conquering step to fame, while the future, painted with fairy touch, was revealed through the bright vistas of success, and all seemed real to his childish imagination.

Now, tossing restlessly on his bed, he rose, and in the silence of the night, standing in the shadow of the great mountains and listening to the subdued, nocturnal song of

nature, felt his genius pulse feverishly within him, and great longings and desires come over him.

What had become of that genius? Certainly the present was not genius. Where and how had he lost it? And he would not answer.

Now, his father in an idle moment made him a willow flute. What dear companions they were! — this flute and he. What shrill harmonies they produced, when of a holiday he fled the boyish sports and lost himself in the dark mazes of the forest! Now the preacher's daughter gives him his first lessons. Now he plays in the village church.

Oh, happy time! All day following the plow or working in the timber, how he looked forward to night, hurrying to the church, he played to himself and to the dark. Then those improvisations — the villagers all declared it wonderful that he could make such beautiful music; and one day, he remembered, the tourist who told him he had genius, but he was wasting it there. "The city was the place," he said.

The city! The city! How it rang in his ears and haunted him in waking and sleeping! The city! The city! Yes, he must go to the city. There he could find teachers; there could be found satisfaction of his desires; there fame and fortune awaited him.

"Music! Music!" his soul cried out, and "The city! The city!" was echoed back.

But the city was far away. The time passed by, and he still worked on, hoarding a little store of money that slowly increased. He labored on, patient and uncomplaining, looking forward and planning. But at times the yearning would come so strongly upon him that he could hardly guide the plow, and the keen, bright share would swim and dance before his eye, and even the song of the lark fell flat on his ear.

The maidens cast shy glances at him, but he had no thought of marrying — that would mean adieu to music. So he did not marry, and the country-side wonderful till it grew accustomed to him, and the maidens wedded other and more fortunate swains.

At last the fateful day arrived. He bid good-bye to his mountain home, and, full of hope, turned away to the city. But the portals of success opened not at his knocking. Unknown, a wanderer, he found himself arrayed in the lists against talent, genius and power.

He struggled on. He found teachers — he could not afford the best — and devoted himself to study. He learned more of the world he had aspired to conquer, and found the ladder to fame a colossal structure, whose very shadow awed, and against whose base was crushed the throng that struggled for a footing. To his simple, rustic soul the grandeur was overwhelming, and he was startled at the magnitude of the task before him. But not disheartened, he devoted himself to its accomplishment. Many were the rebuffs he met with, and many a pang and heartache. He struggled on, though many were they who, by wealth and influence and sometimes merit, passed him in the race.

Yet the future brightened. He fought his way into the outer circles, where his unpretentious talent soon received recognition. He had performed on the violin in public several times, and in a small way became quite in demand at musicales and theatricals. The great Padrodini had even complimented him.

But his money growing less, he economized and did not eat so often. Then, through devotion to his music, he was careless and did not take sufficient precaution against wintry weather. One day he remained in bed. A long illness followed, and his money becoming exhausted, he was turned into the street when hardly well. He was too proud to seek assistance from his grand friends.

Oh! how scene after scene flashed before him — weird nightmares, horrid phantoms of cold, and want and sickness. Oh! the misery of it all! Tramping, wearily, those long, cold streets — not a friendly eye or kindly greeting — clothes tattered and torn, and the while tormented by his feverish genius, and filled with terrible longings for his lost music. But worst of all, like an availing mother holding a dying child to her dry breasts, he felt his art growing cold within him. Was it then that it died? he thought, as he remembered the terribly lethargy he finally sank into.

At last, after a weary, weary time, it brightened. Shivering one night outside a music hall to which he had been attracted by the bright lights, he was approached by an attaché of the place. The second violin had been taken suddenly ill; could he play? Ah! it was a haven of refuge to him! How eagerly he accepted! With what joy he felt a violin again quivering in response to his trembling touch! Did his art revive then? He wondered and thought not. No; it was the mechanic, not the soul, that had performed nightly in that ill-lighted hole, year after year.

And those years had not been happy. Often, at first, had the old-time longing come upon him; yet as often had he answered, "Some day." But that some day never came. Ever, it danced before him, growing fainter and fainter, and ever his pursuit lagged by the wayside, till at last the quarry had been lost to view. To-night he had awakened. He saw and realized it all. He was old. Hope had fled. Grief and remorse clamored at his heart.

The second violin reached the end of the score and stopped. The leader played on. The drummer awakened and spasmodically drummed for a space. The piano threw in a few chords and running passages; then gave up in despair. But the leader played on. His eyes were closed. The violin gave voice to his anguish.

The hum of conversation died away and silence fell on all. The manager looked surprised. The waiters paused from their tasks. The women craned forward. The poised glass remained undrained, and pipe and cigrette went out.

Sad, quivering notes that grieved and sobbed and wept — tremulous, long-drawn strains of agony, that mourned and cried and wailed. Weeping sorrowing, lamenting, mourning, the musician played on, and the house was silent as though icy death had breathed upon them.

Tears of anguish and distress, sighs of remorse, regret, cries of pain and despair trembled on the palpitating air. A world of feeling, unutterable. All the misery of blighted hopes and withered joys. The woe of an expiring genius. A violin and a master, one. The wretchedness and affliction of a wasted life, crying out in its distress.

The music changed, growing weird and awful — tremulous strains, grewsome and terrible — thrilling notes, shrill sounds and piercing cries. Shaking, shuddering, shiv-

ering, quivering, the violin shrieked in terror and dismay. Moans, groans, screams — a vortex of emotions — dreadful, terrifying, frightful, wonderful.

A string broke, and with jangling discord the music ceased. The violin fell from the player's nerveless hand. A woman screamed and fainted in a box; others cried. Save this, the rest were silent — an appreciation more eloquent than the thunders of applause.

The musician staggered blindly out.

"He's old, and a little bit goes to his head, now," the waiters said.

The docks, just before dawn. A gloom-enshrouded form, that stands above the turbid tide and murmurs:

"The sea is still and deep;

All things within its bosom sleep;

A single step and all is o'er;

A plunge, a bubble and no more."

"A plunge, a bubble and no more."

The One Thousand Dozen

DAVID Rasmunsen was a hustler, and, like many a greater man, a man of the one idea. Wherefore, when the clarion call of the North rang on his ear, he conceived an adventure in eggs and bent all his energy to its achievement. He figured briefly and to the point, and the adventure became iridescent-hued, splendid. That eggs would sell at Dawson for five dollars a dozen was a safe working premise. Whence it was incontrovertible that one thousand dozen would bring, in the Golden Metropolis, five thousand dollars.

On the other hand, expense was to be considered, and he considered it well, for he was a careful man, keenly practical, with a hard head and a heart that imagination never warmed. At fifteen cents a dozen, the initial cost of his thousand dozen would be one hundred and fifty dollars, a mere bagatelle in face of the enormous profit. And suppose, just suppose, to be wildly extravagant for once, that transportation for himself and eggs should run up eight hundred and fifty more; he would still have four thousand clear cash and clean when the last egg was disposed of and the last dust had rippled into his sack.

"You see, Alma,"–he figured it over with his wife, the cosy dining room submerged in a sea of maps, government surveys, guidebooks, and Alaskan itineraries,–"you see, expenses don't really begin till you make Dyea–fifty dollars'll cover it with a first-class passage thrown in. Now from Dyea to Lake Linderman, Indian packers take your goods over for twelve cents a pound, twelve dollars a hundred, or one hundred and twenty dollars a thousand. Say I have fifteen hundred pounds, it'll cost one hundred and eighty dollars–call it two hundred and be safe. I am creditably informed by a Klondiker just come out that I can buy a boat for three hundred. But the same man says I'm sure to get a couple of passengers for one hundred and fifty each, which will give me the boat for nothing, and, further, they can help me manage it. And . . . that's all; I put my eggs ashore from the boat at Dawson. Now let me see how much is that?"

"Fifty dollars from San Francisco to Dyea, two hundred from Dyea to Linderman, passengers pay for the boat–two hundred and fifty all told," she summed up swiftly.

"And a hundred for my clothes and personal outfit," he went on happily; ''that leaves a margin of five hundred for emergencies. And what possible emergencies can arise?"

Alma shrugged her shoulders and elevated her brows. If that vast Northland was capable of swallowing up a man and a thousand dozen eggs, surely there was room and to spare for whatever else he might happen to possess. So she thought, but she said nothing. She knew David Rasmunsen too well to say anything.

"Doubling the time because of chance delays, I should make the trip in two months. Think of it, Alma! Four thousand in two months! Beats the paltry hundred a month I'm getting now. Why, we'll build further out where we'll have more space, gas in every room, and a view, and the rent of the cottage'll pay taxes, insurance, and water, and leave something over. And then there's always the chance of my striking it and coming out a millionnaire. Now tell me, Alma, don't you think I'm very moderate ?"

And Alma could hardly think otherwise. Besides, had not her own cousin,–though a remote and distant one to be sure, the black sheep, the harum-scarum, the ne'er-do-well,–had not he come down out of that weird North country with a hundred thousand in yellow dust, to say nothing of a half-ownership in the hole from which it came?

David Rasmunsen's grocer was surprised when he found him weighing eggs in the scales at the end of the counter, and Rasmunsen himself was more surprised when he found that a dozen eggs weighed a pound and a half–fifteen hundred pounds for his thousand dozen! There would be no weight left for his clothes, blankets, and cooking utensils, to say nothing of the grub he must necessarily consume by the way. His calculations were all thrown out, and he was just proceeding to recast them when he hit upon the idea of weighing small eggs. "For whether they be large or small, a dozen eggs is a dozen eggs," he observed sagely to himself; and a dozen small ones he found to weigh but a pound and a quarter. Thereat the city of San Francisco was overrun by anxious-eyed emissaries, and commission houses and dairy associations were startled by a sudden demand for eggs running not more than twenty ounces to the dozen.

Rasmunsen mortgaged the little cottage for a thousand dollars, arranged for his wife to make a prolonged stay among her own people, threw up his job, and started North. To keep within his schedule he compromised on a second-class passage, which, because of the rush, was worse than steerage; and in the late summer, a pale and wabbly man, he disembarked with his eggs on the Dyea beach. But it did not take him long to recover his land legs and appetite. His first interview with the Chilkoot packers straightened him up and stiffened his backbone. Forty cents a pound they demanded for the twenty-eight-mile portage, and while he caught his breath and swallowed, the price went up to forty-three. Fifteen husky Indians put the straps on his packs at forty-five, but took them off at an offer of forty-seven from a Skaguay Croesus in dirty shirt and ragged overalls who had lost his horses on the White Pass Trail and was now making a last desperate drive at the country by way of Chilkoot.

But Rasmunsen was clean grit, and at fifty cents found takers, who, two days later, set his eggs down intact at Linderman. But fifty cents a pound is a thousand dollars a ton, and his fifteen hundred pounds had exhausted his emergency fund and left him stranded at the Tantalus point where each day he saw the fresh-whipsawed boats departing for Dawson. Further, a great anxiety brooded over the camp where the boats were built. Men worked frantically, early and late, at the height of their endurance, calking, nailing, and pitching in a frenzy of haste for which adequate explanation was not far to seek. Each day the snowline crept farther down the bleak, rock-shouldered peaks, and gale followed gale, with sleet and slush and snow, and in the eddies and

quiet places young ice formed and thickened through the fleeting hours. And each morn, toil-stiffened men turned wan faces across the lake to see if the freeze-up had come. For the freeze-up heralded the death of their hope–the hope that they would be floating down the swift river ere navigation closed on the chain of lakes.

To harrow Rasmunsen's soul further, he discovered three competitors in the egg business. It was true that one, a little German, had gone broke and was himself forlornly back-tripping the last pack of the portage; but the other two had boats nearly completed and were daily supplicating the god of merchants and traders to stay the iron hand of winter for just another day. But the iron hand closed down over the land. Men were being frozen in the blizzard, which swept Chilkoot, and Rasmunsen frosted his toes ere he was aware. He found a chance to go passenger with his freight in a boat just shoving off through the rubble, but two hundred, hard cash, was required, and he had no money.

““Ay tank you yust wait one leedle w'ile,” said the Swedish boatbuilder, who had struck his Klondike right there and was wise enough to know itÄ”one leedle w'ile und I make you a tam fine skiff boat, sure Pete.”

With this unpledged word to go on, Rasmunsen hit the back trail to Crater Lake, where he fell in with two press correspondents whose tangled baggage was strewn from Stone House, over across the Pass, and as far as Happy Camp.

“Yes,” he said with consequence. “I've a thousand dozen eggs at Linderman, and my boat's just about got the last seam calked. Consider myself in luck to get it. Boats are at a premium, you know, and none to be had.”

Whereupon and almost with bodily violence the correspondents clamored to go with him, fluttered greenbacks before his eyes, and spilled yellow twenties from hand to hand. He could not hear of it, but they overpersuaded him, and he reluctantly consented to take them at three hundred apiece. Also they pressed upon him the passage money in advance. And while they wrote to their respective journals concerning the good Samaritan with the thousand dozen eggs, the good Samaritan was hurrying back to the Swede at Linderman.

“Here, you! Gimme that boat!” was his salutation, his hand jingling the correspondents' gold pieces and his eyes hungrily bent upon the finished craft.

The Swede regarded him stolidly and shook his head.

“How much is the other fellow paying? Three hundred? Well, here's four. Take it.”

He tried to press it upon him, but the man backed away.

““Ay tank not. Ay say him get der skiff boat. You yust waitÄ”

“Here's six hundred. Last call. Take it or leave it. Tell'm it's a mistake.”

The Swede wavered. ““Ay tank yes,” he finally said, and the last Rasmunsen saw of him his vocabulary was going to wreck in a vain effort to explain the mistake to the other fellows.

The German slipped and broke his ankle on the steep hogback above Deep Lake, sold out his stock for a dollar a dozen, and with the proceeds hired Indian packers to carry

him back to Dyea. But on the morning Rasmunsen shoved off with his correspondents, his two rivals followed suit.

"How many you got?" one of them, a lean little New Englander, called out.

"One thousand dozen," Rasmunsen answered proudly.

"Huh! I'll go you even stakes I beat you in with my eight hundred."

The correspondents offered to lend him the money; but Rasmunsen declined, and the Yankee closed with the remaining rival, a brawny son of the sea and sailor of ships and things, who promised to show them all a wrinkle or two when it came to cracking on. And crack on he did, with a large tarpaulin squaresail which pressed the bow half under at every jump. He was the first to run out of Linderman, but, disdaining the portage, piled his loaded boat on the rocks in the boiling rapids. Rasmunsen and the Yankee, who likewise had two passengers, portaged across on their backs and then lined their empty boats down through the bad water to Bennett.

Bennett was a twenty-five-mile lake, narrow and deep, a funnel between the mountains through which storms ever romped. Rasmunsen camped on the sand-pit at its head, where were many men and boats bound north in the teeth of the Arctic winter. He awoke in the morning to find a piping gale from the south, which caught the chill from the whited peaks and glacial valleys and blew as cold as north wind ever blew. But it was fair, and he also found the Yankee staggering past the first bold headland with all sail set. Boat after boat was getting under way, and the correspondents fell to with enthusiasm.

"We'll catch him before Cariboo Crossing," they assured Rasmunsen, as they ran up the sail and the Alma took the first icy spray over her bow.

Now Rasmunsen all his life had been prone to cowardice on water, but he clung to the kicking steering-oar with set face and determined jaw. His thousand dozen were there in the boat before his eyes, safely secured beneath the correspondents' baggage, and somehow, before his eyes, were the little cottage and the mortgage for a thousand dollars.

It was bitter cold. Now and again he hauled in the steering-sweep and put out a fresh one while his passengers chopped the ice from the blade. Wherever the spray struck, it turned instantly to frost, and the dipping boom of the spritsail was quickly fringed with icicles. The Alma strained and hammered through the big seas till the seams and butts began to spread, but in lieu of bailing the correspondents chopped ice and flung it overboard. There was no let-up. The mad race with winter was on, and the boats tore along in a desperate string.

"W-w-we can't stop to save our souls!" one of the correspondents chattered, from cold, not fright.

"That's right! Keep her down the middle, old man!" the other encouraged.

Rasmunsen replied with an idiotic grin. The iron-bound shores were in a lather of foam, and even down the middle the only hope was to keep running away from the big seas. To lower sail was to be overtaken and swamped. Time and again they passed boats pounding among the rocks, and once they saw one on the edge of the breakers

about to strike. A little craft behind them, with two men, jibed over and turned bottom up.

"Wow-watch out, old man!" cried he of the chattering teeth.

Rasmunsen grinned and tightened his aching grip on the sweep. Scores of times had the send of the sea caught the big square stern of the Alma and thrown her off from dead before it till the after leach of the spritsail fluttered hollowly, and each time, and only with all his strength, had he forced her back. His grin by then had become fixed, and it disturbed the correspondents to look at him.

They roared down past an isolated rock a hundred yards from shore. From its wave-drenched top a man shrieked wildly, for the instant cutting the storm with his voice. But the next instant the Alma was by, and the rock growing a black speck in the troubled froth.

"That settles the Yankee! Where's the sailor?" shouted one of his passengers.

Rasmunsen shot a glance over his shoulder at a black squaresail. He had seen it leap up out of the gray to windward, and for an hour, off and on, had been watching it grow. The sailor had evidently repaired damages and was making up for lost time.

"Look at him come!"

Both passengers stopped chopping ice to watch. Twenty miles of Bennett were behind them–room and to spare for the sea to toss up its mountains toward the sky. Sinking and soaring like a storm god, the sailor drove by them. The huge sail seemed to grip the boat from the crests of the waves, to tear it bodily out of the water, and fling it crashing and smothering down into the yawning troughs.

"The sea'll never catch him!"

"But he'll r-r-run her nose under!"

Even as they spoke, the black tarpaulin swooped from sight behind a big comber. The next wave rolled over the spot, and the next, but the boat did not reappear. The Alma rushed by the place. A little riffraff of oars and boxes was seen. An arm thrust up and a shaggy head broke, surface a score of yards away. For a time there was silence. As the end of the lake came in sight, the waves began to leap aboard with such steady recurrence that the correspondents no longer chopped ice but flung the water out with buckets. Even this would not do, and, after a shouted conference with Rasmunsen, they attacked the baggage. Flour, bacon, beans, blankets, cooking stove, ropes, odds and ends, everything they could get hands on, flew overboard. The boat acknowledged it at once, taking less water and rising more buoyantly.

"That'll do!" Rasmunsen called sternly, as they applied themselves to the top layer of eggs.

"The in-hell it will!" answered the shivering one, savagely. With the exception of their notes, films, and cameras, they had sacrificed their outfit. He bent over, laid hold of an egg-box, and began to worry it out from under the lashing.

"Drop it! Drop it, I say!"

Rasmunsen had managed to draw his revolver, and with the crook of his arm over the sweep head was taking aim. The correspondent stood up on the thwart, balancing back and forth, his face twisted with menace and speechless anger.

"My God!"

So cried his brother correspondent, hurling himself, face downward, into the bottom of the boat. The Alma, under the divided attention of Rasmunsen, had been caught by a great mass of water and whirled around. The after leach hollowed, the sail emptied and jibed, and the boom, sweeping with terrific force across the boat, carried the angry correspondent overboard with a broken back. Mast and sail had gone over the side as well. A drenching sea followed, as the boat lost headway, and Rasmunsen sprang to the bailing bucket.

Several boats hurtled past them in the next half-hour,Äsmall boats, boats of their own size, boats afraid, unable to do aught but run madly on. Then a ten-ton barge, at imminent risk of destruction, lowered sail to windward and lumbered down upon them.

"Keep off! Keep off!" Rasmunsen screamed.

But his low gunwale ground against the heavy craft, and the remain-ing correspondent clambered aboard. Rasmunsen was over the eggs like a cat and in the bow of the Alma, striving with numb fingers to bend the hauling-lines together.

‘'Come on! " a red-whiskered man yelled at him.

"I've a thousand dozen eggs here," he shouted back. "Gimme a tow! I'll pay you!"

"Come on! " they howled in chorus.

A big whitecap broke just beyond, washing over the barge and leaving the Alma half swamped. The men cast off, cursing him as they ran up their sail. Rasmunsen cursed back and fell to bailing. The mast and sail, like a sea anchor, still fast by the halyards, held the boat head on to wind and sea and gave him a chance to fight the water out. Three hours later, numbed, exhausted, blathering like a lunatic, but still bailing, he went ashore on an ice-strewn beach near Cariboo Crossing. Two men, a government courier and a half-breed voyageur, dragged him out of the surf, saved his cargo, and beached the Alma. They were paddling out of the country in a Peterborough, and gave him shelter for the night in their storm-bound camp. Next morning they de-parted, but he elected to stay by his eggs. And thereafter the name and fame of the man with the thousand dozen eggs began to spread through the land. Gold-seekers who made in before the freeze-up carried the news of his coming. Grizzled old-timers of Forty Mile and Circle City, sour doughs with leathern jaws and bean-calloused stomachs, called up dream memories of chickens and green things at mention of his name. Dyea and Skaguay took an interest in his being, and questioned his progress from every man who came over the passes, while Dawson–golden, omeletless Dawson–fretted and worried, and waylaid every chance arrival for word of him.

But of this, Rasmunsen knew nothing. The day after the wreck he patched up the Alma and pulled out. A cruel east wind blew in his teeth from Tagish, but he got the oars over the side and bucked manfully into it, though half the time he was drifting

backward and chopping ice from the blades. According to the custom of the country, he was driven ashore at Windy Arm; three times on Tagish saw him swamped and beached; and Lake Marsh held him at the freeze-up. The Alma was crushed in the jamming of the floes, but the eggs were intact. These he back-tripped two miles across the ice to the shore, where he built a cache, which stood for years after and was pointed out by men who knew.

Half a thousand frozen miles stretched between him and Dawson, and the waterway was closed. But Rasmunsen, with a peculiar tense look in his face, struck back up the lakes on foot. What he suffered on that lone trip, with naught but a single blanket, an axe, and a handful of beans, is not given to ordinary mortals to know. Only the Arctic adventurer may understand. Suffice that he was caught in a blizzard on Chilkoot and left two of his toes with the surgeon at Sheep Camp. Yet he stood on his feet and washed dishes in the scullery of the Pawona to the Puget Sound, and from there passed coal on a P. S. boat to San Francisco. It was a haggard, unkempt man who limped across the shining office floor to raise a second mortgage from the bank people. His hollow cheeks betrayed themselves through the scraggly beard, and his eyes seemed to have retired into deep caverns where they burned with cold fires. His hands were grained from exposure and hard work, and the nails were rimmed with tight-packed dirt and coal dust. He spoke vaguely of eggs and ice-packs, winds and tides; but when they declined to let him have more than a second thousand, his talk became incoherent, concerning itself chiefly with the price of dogs and dog-food, and such things as snowshoes and moccasins and winter trails. They let him have fifteen hundred, which was more than the cottage warranted, and breathed easier when he scrawled his signature and passed out the door.

Two weeks later he went over Chilkoot with three dog sleds of five dogs each. One team he drove, the two Indians with him driving the others. At Lake Marsh they broke out the cache and loaded up. But there was no trail. He was the first in over the ice, and to him fell the task of packing the snow and hammering away through the rough river jams. Behind him he often observed a camp-fire smoke trickling thinly up through the quiet air, and he wondered why the people did not overtake him. For he was a stranger to the land and did not understand. Nor could he understand his Indians when they tried to explain. This they conceived to be a hardship, but when they balked and refused to break camp of mornings, he drove them to their work at pistol point.

When he slipped through an ice bridge near the White Horse and froze his foot, tender yet and oversensitive from the previous freezing, the Indians looked for him to lie up. But he sacrificed a blanket, and, with his foot incased in an enormous moccasin, big as a water-bucket, continued to take his regular turn with the front sled. Here was the cruelest work, and they respected him, though on the side they rapped their foreheads with their knuckles and significantly shook their heads. One night they tried to run away, but the zip-zip of his bullets in the snow brought them back, snarling but convinced. Whereupon, being only savage Chilkat men, they put their heads together

to kill him; but he slept like a cat, and, waking or sleeping, the chance never came. Often they tried to tell him the import of the smoke wreath in the i rear, but he could not comprehend and grew suspicious of them. And when they sulked or shirked, he was quick to let drive at them between the eyes, and quick to cool their heated souls with sight of his ready revolver.

And so it went–with mutinous men, wild dogs, and a trail that broke the heart. He fought the men to stay with him, fought the dogs to keep them away from the eggs, fought the ice, the cold, and the pain of his foot, which would not heal. As fast as the young tissue renewed, it was bitten and seared by the frost, so that a running sore developed, into which he could almost shove his fist. In the mornings, when he first put his weight upon it, his head went dizzy, and he was near to fainting from the pain; but later on in the day it usually grew numb, to recommence when he crawled into his blankets and tried to sleep. Yet he, who had been a clerk and sat at a desk all his days, toiled till the Indians were exhausted, and even outworked the dogs. How hard he worked, how much he suffered, he did not know. Being a man of the one idea, now that the idea had come, it mastered him. In the foreground of his consciousness was Dawson, in the background his thousand dozen eggs, and midway between the two his ego fluttered, striving alway to draw them together to a glittering golden point. This golden point was the five thousand dollars, the consummation of the idea and the point of departure for whatever new idea might present itself. For the rest, he was a mere automaton. He was unaware of other things, seeing them as through a glass darkly, and giving them no thought. The work of his hands he did with machine-like wisdom; likewise the work of his head. So the look on his face grew very tense, till even the Indians were afraid of it, and marvelled at the strange white man who had made them slaves and forced them to toil with such foolishness.

Then came a snap on Lake Le Barge, when the cold of outer space smote the tip of the planet, and the frost ranged sixty and odd degrees below zero. Here, laboring with open mouth that he might breathe more freely, he chilled his lungs, and for the rest of the trip he was troubled with a dry, hacking cough, especially irritable in smoke of camp or under stress of undue exertion. On the Thirty Mile river he found much open water, spanned by precarious ice bridges and fringed with narrow rim ice, tricky and uncertain. The rim ice was impossible to reckon on, and he dared it without reckoning, falling back on his revolver when his drivers demurred. But on the ice bridges, covered with snow though they were, precautions could be taken. These they crossed on their snowshoes, with long poles, held crosswise in their hands, to which to cling in case of accident. Once over, the dogs were called to follow. And on such a bridge, where the absence of the centre ice was masked by the snow, one of the Indians met his end. He went through as quickly and neatly as a knife through thin cream, and the current swept him from view down under the stream ice.

That night his mate fled away through the pale moonlight, Rasmunsen futilely puncturing the silence with his revolver–a thing that he handled with more celerity than cleverness. Thirty-six hours later the Indian made a police camp on the Big Salmon.

“Um–um–um funny mans–what you call?Ätop um head all loose,” the interpreter explained to the puzzled captain. “Eh ? Yep, crazy, much crazy mans. Eggs, eggs, all a time eggs–savvy? Come bime-by.”

It was several days before Rasmunsen arrived, the three sleds lashed together, and all the dogs in a single team. It was awkward, and where the going was bad he was compelled to back-trip it sled by sled, though he managed most of the time, through herculean efforts, to bring all along on the one haul. He did not seem moved when the captain of police told him his man was hitting the high places for Dawson, and was by that time, probably, halfway between Selkirk and Stewart. Nor did he appear interested when informed that the police had broken the trail as far as Pelly; for he had attained to a fatalistic acceptance of all natural dispensations, good or ill. But when they told him that Dawson was in the bitter clutch of famine, he smiled, threw the harness on his dogs, and pulled out.

But it was at his next halt that the mystery of the smoke was explained. With the word at Big Salmon that the trail was broken to Pelly, there was no longer any need for the smoke wreath to linger in his wake; and Rasmunsen, crouching over his lonely fire, saw a motley string of sleds go by. First came the courier and the half-breed who had hauled him out from Bennett; then mail-carriers for Circle City, two sleds of them, and a mixed following of ingoing Klondikers. Dogs and men were fresh and fat, while Rasmunsen and his brutes were jaded and worn down to the skin and bone. They of the smoke wreath had travelled one day in three, resting and reserving their strength for thei dash to come when broken trail was met with; while each day he had plunged and floundered forward, breaking the spirit of his dogs and, robbing them of their mettle.

As for himself, he was unbreakable. They thanked him kindly for his efforts in their behalf, those fat, fresh men,–thanked him kindly, with broad grins and ribald laughter; and now, when he understood, he made no answer. Nor did he cherish silent bitterness. It was immaterial. The idea–the fact behind the idea–was not changed. Here he was and his thousand dozen; there was Dawson; the problem was unaltered.

At the Little Salmon, being short of dog food, the dogs got into his grub, and from there to Selkirk he lived on beans–coarse, brown beans, big beans, grossly nutritive, which griped his stomach and doubled him up at two-hour intervals. But the Factor at Selkirk had a notice on the door of the Post to the effect that no steamer had been up the Yukon for two years, and in consequence grub was beyond price. He offered to swap flour, however, at the rate of a cupful for each egg, but Ras-munsen shook his head and hit the trail. Below the Post he managed to buy frozen horse hide for the dogs, the horses having been slain by the Chilkat cattle men, and the scraps and offal preserved by the Indians. He tackled the hide himself, but the hair worked into the bean sores of his mouth, and was beyond endurance.

Here at Selkirk, he met the forerunners of the hungry exodus of Dawson, and from there on they crept over the trail, a dismal throng. “No grub!” was the song they sang.

"No grub, and had to go." "Every-body holding candles for a rise in the spring." "Flour dollar'n a half a pound, and no sellers."

"Eggs?" one of them answered. "Dollar apiece, but they ain't none." Rasmunsen made a rapid calculation. "Twelve thousand dollars," he said aloud.

"Hey?" the man asked.

"Nothing," he answered, and mushed the dogs along.

When he arrived at Stewart River, seventy miles from Dawson, five of his dogs were gone, and the remainder were falling in the traces. He, also, was in the traces, hauling with what little strength was left in him. Even then he was barely crawling along ten miles a day. His cheekbones and nose, frost-bitten again and again, were turned bloody-black and hideous. The thumb, which was separated from the fingers by the gee-pole, had likewise been nipped and gave him great pain. The monstrous moccasin still incased his foot, and strange pains were beginning to rack the leg. At Sixty Mile, the last beans, which he had been rationing for some time, were finished; yet he steadfastly refused to touch the eggs. He could not reconcile his mind to the legitimacy of it, and staggered and fell along the way to Indian River. Here a fresh-killed moose and an open-handed old-timer gave him and his dogs new strength, and at Ainslie's he felt repaid for it all when a stampede, ripe from Dawson in five hours, was sure he could get a dollar and a quarter for every egg he possessed.

He came up the steep bank by the Dawson barracks with fluttering heart and shaking knees. The dogs were so weak that he was forced to rest them, and, waiting, he leaned limply against the gee-pole. A man, an eminently decorous-looking man, came sauntering by in a great bearskin coat. He glanced at Rasmunsen curiously, then stopped and ran a speculative eye over the dogs and the three lashed sleds.

"What you got?" he asked.

"Eggs," Rasmunsen answered huskily, hardly able to pitch his voice above a whisper.

"Eggs! Whoopee! Whoopee!" He sprang up into the air, gyrated madly, and finished with half a dozen war steps. "You don't say–all of 'em?"

"All of 'em."

"Say, you must be the Egg Man." He walked around and viewed Rasmunsen from the other side. "Come, now, ain't you the Egg Man?" Rasmunsen didn't know, but supposed he was, and the man sobered down a bit.

"What d'ye expect to get for'em?" he asked cautiously.

Rasmunsen became audacious. "Dollar'n a half," he said.

"Done ! " the man came back promptly. "Gimme a dozen."

"I–I mean a dollar'n a half apiece," Rasmunsen hesitatingly explained.

"Sure. I heard you. Make it two dozen. Here's the dust." The man pulled out a healthy gold sack the size of a small sausage and knocked it negligently against the gee-pole. Rasmunsen felt a strange trembling in the pit of his stomach, a tickling of the nostrils, and an almost overwhelming desire to sit down and cry. But a curious, wide-eyed crowd was beginning to collect, and man after man was calling out for eggs. He was without scales, but the man with the bearskin coat fetched a pair and obligingly

weighed in the dust while Rasmunsen passed out the goods. Soon there was a pushing and shoving and shouldering, and a great clamor. Everybody wanted to buy and to be served first. And as the excitement grew, Rasmunsen cooled down. This would never do. There must be something behind the fact of their buying so eagerly. It would be wiser if he rested first and sized up the market. Perhaps eggs were worth two dollars apiece. Anyway, whenever he wished to sell, he was sure of a dollar and a half. "Stop!" he cried, when a couple of hundred had been sold. "No more now. I'm played out. I've got to get a cabin, and then you can come and see me."

A groan went up at this, but the man with the bearskin coat approved. Twenty-four of the frozen eggs went rattling in his capacious pockets and he didn't care whether the rest of the town ate or not. Besides, he could see Rasmunsen was on his last legs.

"There's a cabin right around the second corner from the Monte Carlo," he told himÄ"the one with the sody-bottle window. It ain't mine, but I've got charge of it. Rents for ten a day and cheap for the money. You move right in, and I'll see you later. Don't forget the sody-bottle window."

"Tra-la-loo!" he called back a moment later. "I'm goin' up the hill to eat eggs and dream of home."

On his way to the cabin, Rasmunsen recollected he was hungry and bought a small supply of provisions at the N. A. T. & T. store–also a beefsteak at the butcher shop and dried salmon for the dogs. He found the cabin without difficulty and left the dogs in the harness while he started the fire and got the coffee under way.

"A dollar'n a half apiece–one thousand dozen–eighteen thousand dollars!" He kept muttering it to himself, over and over, as he went about his work.

As he flopped the steak into the frying-pan the door opened. He turned. It was the man with the bearskin coat. He seemed to come in with determination, as though bound on some explicit errand, but as he looked at Rasmunsen an expression of perplexity came into his face.

"I say–now I sayÄ" he began, then halted.

Rasmunsen wondered if he wanted the rent.

"I say, damn it, you know, them eggs is bad."

Rasmunsen staggered. He felt as though some one had struck him an astounding blow between the eyes. The walls of the cabin reeled and tilted up. He put out his hand to steady himself and rested it on the stove. The sharp pain and the smell of the burning flesh brought him back to himself.

"I see," he said slowly, fumbling in his pocket for the sack. "You want your money back."

"It ain't the money," the man said, "but hadn't you got any eggs–good ?"

Rasmunsen shook his head. "You'd better take the money."

But the man refused and backed away. "I'll come back," he said, "when you've taken stock, and get what's comin'."

Rasmunsen rolled the chopping-block into the cabin and carried in the eggs. He went about it quite calmly. He took up the hand-axe, and, one by one, chopped the

eggs in half. These halves he examined care-fully and let fall to the floor. At first he sampled from the different cases, then deliberately emptied one case at a time. The heap on the floor grew larger. The coffee boiled over and the smoke of the burning beefsteak filled the cabin. He chopped steadfastly and monotonously till the last case was finished.

Somebody knocked at the door, knocked again, and let himself in.

"What a mess!" he remarked, as he paused and surveyed the scene.

The severed eggs were beginning to thaw in the heat of the stove, and a miserable odor was growing stronger.

"Must a-happened on the steamer," he suggested.

Rasmunsen looked at him long and blankly.

"I'm Murray, Big Jim Murray, everybody knows me," the man volunteered. "I'm just hearin' your eggs is rotten, and I'm offerin' you two hundred for the batch. They ain't good as salmon, but still they're fair scoffin's for dogs."

Rasmunsen seemed turned to stone. He did not move. "You go to hell," he said passionlessly.

"Now just consider. I pride myself it's a decent price for a mess like that, and it's better'n nothin'. Two hundred. What you say?"

''You go to hell," Rasmunsen repeated softly, "and get out of here."

Murray gaped with a great awe, then went out carefully, backward, with his eyes fixed on the other's face.

Rasmunsen followed him out and turned the dogs loose. He threw them all the salmon he had bought, and coiled a sled-lashing up in his hand. Then he reentered the cabin and drew the latch in after him. The smoke from the cindered steak made his eyes smart. He stood on the bunk, passed the lashing over the ridge-pole, and measured the swingoff with his eye. It did not seem to satisfy, for he put the stool on the bunk and climbed upon the stool. He drove a noose in the end of the lashing and slipped his head through. The other end he made fast. Then he kicked the stool out from under.

The Passing of Marcus O'Brien

"It is the judgment of this court that you vamose the camp . . . in the customary way, sir, in the customary way."

Judge Marcus O'Brien was absent-minded, and Mucluc Charley nudged him in the ribs. Marcus O'Brien cleared his throat and went on-

"Weighing the gravity of the offence, sir, and the extenuating circumstances, it is the opinion of this court, and its verdict, that you be outfitted with three days' grub. That will do, I think."

Arizona Jack cast a bleak glance out over the Yukon. It was a swollen, chocolate flood, running a mile wide and nobody knew how deep. The earth-bank on which he stood was ordinarily a dozen feet above the water, but the river was now growling at the top of the bank, devouring, instant by instant, tiny portions of the top-standing soil. These portions went into the gaping mouths of the endless army of brown swirls and vanished away. Several inches more, and Red Cow would be flooded.

"It won't do," Arizona Jack said bitterly. "Three days' grub ain't enough."

"There was Manchester," Marcus O'Brien replied gravely. "He didn't get any grub."

"And they found his remains grounded on the Lower River an' half eaten by huskies," was Arizona Jack's retort. "And his killin' was without provocation. Joe Deeves never did nothin', never warbled once, an' jes' because his stomach was out of order, Manchester ups an' plugs him. You ain't givin' me a square deal, O'Brien, I tell you that straight. Give me a week's grub, and I play even to win out. Three days' grub, an' I cash in."

"What for did you kill Ferguson?" O'Brien demanded. "I haven't any patience for these unprovoked killings. And they've got to stop. Red Cow's none so populous. It's a good camp, and there never used to be any killings. Now they're epidemic. I'm sorry for you, Jack, but you've got to be made an example of. Ferguson didn't provoke enough for a killing."

"Provoke!" Arizona Jack snorted. "I tell you, O'Brien, you don't savve. You ain't got no artistic sensibilities. What for did I kill Ferguson? What for did Ferguson sing 'Then I wisht I was a little bird'? That's what I want to know. Answer me that. What for did he sing 'little bird, little bird'? One little bird was enough. I could a-stood one little bird. But no, he must sing two little birds. I gave 'm a chanst. I went to him almighty polite and requested him kindly to discard one little bird. I pleaded with him. There was witnesses that testified to that.

"An' Ferguson was no jay-throated songster," some one spoke up from the crowd.

O'Brien betrayed indecision.

“Ain’t a man got a right to his artistic feelin’s?” Arizona Jack demanded. “I gave Ferguson warnin’. It was violatin’ my own nature to go on listening to his little birds. Why, there’s music sharps that fine-strung an’ keyed-up they’d kill for heaps less’n I did. I’m willin’ to pay for havin’ artistic feelin’s. I can take my medicine an’ lick the spoon, but three days’ grub is drawin’ it a shade fine, that’s all, an’ I hereby register my kick. Go on with the funeral.”

O’Brien was still wavering. He glanced inquiringly at Mucluc Charley.

“I should say, Judge, that three days’ grub was a mite severe,” the latter suggested; “but you’re runnin’ the show. When we elected you judge of this here trial court, we agreed to abide by your decisions, an’ we’ve done it, too, b’gosh, an’ we’re goin’ to keep on doin’ it.”

“Mebbe I’ve been a trifle harsh, Jack,” O’Brien said apologetically–“I’m that worked up over those killings; an’ I’m willing to make it a week’s grub.” He cleared his throat magisterially and looked briskly about him. “And now we might as well get along and finish up the business. The boat’s ready. You go and get the grub, Leclaire. We’ll settle for it afterward.”

Arizona Jack looked grateful, and, muttering something about “damned little birds,” stepped aboard the open boat that rubbed restlessly against the bank. It was a large skiff, built of rough pine planks that had been sawed by hand from the standing timber of Lake Linderman, a few hundred miles above, at the foot of Chilcoot. In the boat were a pair of oars and Arizona Jack’s blankets. Leclaire brought the grub, tied up in a flour-sack, and put it on board. As he did so, he whispered–“I gave you good measure, Jack. You done it with provocation.”

“Cast her off!” Arizona Jack cried.

Somebody untied the painter and threw it in. The current gripped the boat and whirled it away. The murderer did not bother with the oars, contenting himself with sitting in the stern-sheets and rolling a cigarette. Completing it, he struck a match and lighted up. Those that watched on the bank could see the tiny puffs of smoke. They remained on the bank till the boat swung out of sight around the bend half a mile below. Justice had been done.

The denizens of Red Cow imposed the law and executed sentences without the delays that mark the softness of civilization. There was no law on the Yukon save what they made for themselves. They were compelled to make it for themselves. It was in an early day that Red Cow flourished on the Yukon–1887–and the Klondike and its populous stampedes lay in the unguessed future. The men of Red Cow did not even know whether their camp was situated in Alaska or in the North-west Territory, whether they drew breath under the stars and stripes or under the British flag. No surveyor had ever happened along to give them their latitude and longitude. Red Cow was situated somewhere along the Yukon, and that was sufficient for them. So far as flags were concerned, they were beyond all jurisdiction. So far as the law was concerned, they were in No-Man’s land.

They made their own law, and it was very simple. The Yukon executed their decrees. Some two thousand miles below Red Cow the Yukon flowed into Bering Sea through a delta a hundred miles wide. Every mile of those two thousand miles was savage wilderness. It was true, where the Porcupine flowed into the Yukon inside the Arctic Circle there was a Hudson Bay Company trading post. But that was many hundreds of miles away. Also, it was rumoured that many hundreds of miles farther on there were missions. This last, however, was merely rumour; the men of Red Cow had never been there. They had entered the lone land by way of Chilcoot and the head-waters of the Yukon.

The men of Red Cow ignored all minor offences. To be drunk and disorderly and to use vulgar language were looked upon as natural and inalienable rights. The men of Red Cow were individualists, and recognized as sacred but two things, property and life. There were no women present to complicate their simple morality. There were only three log-cabins in Red Cow–the majority of the population of forty men living in tents or brush shacks; and there was no jail in which to confine malefactors, while the inhabitants were too busy digging gold or seeking gold to take a day off and build a jail. Besides, the paramount question of grub negatived such a procedure. Wherefore, when a man violated the rights of property or life, he was thrown into an open boat and started down the Yukon. The quantity of grub he received was proportioned to the gravity of the offence. Thus, a common thief might get as much as two weeks' grub; an uncommon thief might get no more than half of that. A murderer got no grub at all. A man found guilty of manslaughter would receive grub for from three days to a week. And Marcus O'Brien had been elected judge, and it was he who apportioned the grub. A man who broke the law took his chances. The Yukon swept him away, and he might or might not win to Bering Sea. A few days' grub gave him a fighting chance. No grub meant practically capital punishment, though there was a slim chance, all depending on the season of the year.

Having disposed of Arizona Jack and watched him out of sight, the population turned from the bank and went to work on its claims–all except Curly Jim, who ran the one faro layout in all the Northland and who speculated in prospect-holes on the sides. Two things happened that day that were momentous. In the late morning Marcus O'Brien struck it. He washed out a dollar, a dollar and a half, and two dollars, from three successive pans. He had found the streak. Curly Jim looked into the hole, washed a few pans himself, and offered O'Brien ten thousand dollars for all rights–five thousand in dust, and, in lieu of the other five thousand, a half interest in his faro layout. O'Brien refused the offer. He was there to make money out of the earth, he declared with heat, and not out of his fellow-men. And anyway, he didn't like faro. Besides, he appraised his strike at a whole lot more than ten thousand.

The second event of moment occurred in the afternoon, when Siskiyou Pearly ran his boat into the bank and tied up. He was fresh from the Outside, and had in his possession a four-months-old newspaper. Furthermore, he had half a dozen barrels of whisky, all consigned to Curly Jim. The men of Red Cow quit work. They sampled

the whisky–at a dollar a drink, weighed out on Curly's scales; and they discussed the news. And all would have been well, had not Curly Jim conceived a nefarious scheme, which was, namely, first to get Marcus O'Brien drunk, and next, to buy his mine from him.

The first half of the scheme worked beautifully. It began in the early evening, and by nine o'clock O'Brien had reached the singing stage. He clung with one arm around Curly Jim's neck, and even essayed the late lamented Ferguson's song about the little birds. He considered he was quite safe in this, what of the fact that the only man in camp with artistic feelings was even then speeding down the Yukon on the breast of a five-mile current.

But the second half of the scheme failed to connect. No matter how much whisky was poured down his neck, O'Brien could not be brought to realize that it was his bounden and friendly duty to sell his claim. He hesitated, it is true, and trembled now and again on the verge of giving in. Inside his muddled head, however, he was chuckling to himself. He was up to Curly Jim's game, and liked the hands that were being dealt him. The whisky was good. It came out of one special barrel, and was about a dozen times better than that in the other five barrels.

Siskiyou Pearly was dispensing drinks in the bar-room to the remainder of the population of Red Cow, while O'Brien and Curly had out their business orgy in the kitchen. But there was nothing small about O'Brien. He went into the bar-room and returned with Mucluc Charley and Percy Leclaire.

"Business 'sociates of mine, business 'sociates," he announced, with a broad wink to them and a guileless grin to Curly. "Always trust their judgment, always trust 'em. They're all right. Give 'em some fire-water, Curly, an' le's talk it over."

This was ringing in; but Curly Jim, making a swift revaluation of the claim, and remembering that the last pan he washed had turned out seven dollars, decided that it was worth the extra whisky, even if it was selling in the other room at a dollar a drink.

"I'm not likely to consider," O'Brien was hiccoughing to his two friends in the course of explaining to them the question at issue. "Who? Me?–sell for ten thousand dollars! No indeed. I'll dig the gold myself, an' then I'm goin' down to God's country–Southern California–that's the place for me to end my declinin' days–an' then I'll start . . . as I said before, then I'll start . . . what did I say I was goin' to start?"

"Ostrich farm," Mucluc Charley volunteered.

"Sure, just what I'm goin' to start." O'Brien abruptly steadied himself and looked with awe at Mucluc Charley. "How did you know? Never said so. Jes' thought I said so. You're a min' reader, Charley. Le's have another."

Curly Jim filled the glasses and had the pleasure of seeing four dollars' worth of whisky disappear, one dollar's worth of which he punished himself–O'Brien insisted that he should drink as frequently as his guests.

"Better take the money now," Leclaire argued. "Take you two years to dig it out the hole, an' all that time you might be hatchin' teeny little baby ostriches an' pulling feathers out the big ones."

O'Brien considered the proposition and nodded approval. Curly Jim looked gratefully at Leclaire and refilled the glasses.

"Hold on there!" spluttered Mucluc Charley, whose tongue was beginning to wag loosely and trip over itself. "As your father confessor–there I go–as your brother–O hell!" He paused and collected himself for another start. "As your frien'–business frien', I should say, I would suggest, rather–I would take the liberty, as it was, to mention–I mean, suggest, that there may be more ostriches . . . O hell!" He downed another glass, and went on more carefully. "What I'm drivin' at is . . . what am I drivin' at?" He smote the side of his head sharply half a dozen times with the heel of his palm to shake up his ideas. "I got it!" he cried jubilantly. "Supposen there's slathers more'n ten thousand dollars in that hole!"

O'Brien, who apparently was all ready to close the bargain, switched about.

"Great!" he cried. "Splen'd idea. Never thought of it all by myself." He took Mucluc Charley warmly by the hand. "Good frien'! Good 's'ciate!" He turned belligerently on Curly Jim. "Maybe hundred thousand dollars in that hole. You wouldn't rob your old frien', would you, Curly? Course you wouldn't. I know you–better'n yourself, better'n yourself. Le's have another: We're good frien's, all of us, I say, all of us."

And so it went, and so went the whisky, and so went Curly Jim's hopes up and down. Now Leclaire argued in favour of immediate sale, and almost won the reluctant O'Brien over, only to lose him to the more brilliant counter-argument of Mucluc Charley. And again, it was Mucluc Charley who presented convincing reasons for the sale and Percy Leclaire who held stubbornly back. A little later it was O'Brien himself who insisted on selling, while both friends, with tears and curses, strove to dissuade him. The more whiskey they downed, the more fertile of imagination they became. For one sober pro or con they found a score of drunken ones; and they convinced one another so readily that they were perpetually changing sides in the argument.

The time came when both Mucluc Charley and Leclaire were firmly set upon the sale, and they gleefully obliterated O'Brien's objections as fast as he entered them. O'Brien grew desperate. He exhausted his last argument and sat speechless. He looked pleadingly at the friends who had deserted him. He kicked Mucluc Charley's shins under the table, but that graceless hero immediately unfolded a new and most logical reason for the sale. Curly Jim got pen and ink and paper and wrote out the bill of sale. O'Brien sat with pen poised in hand.

"Le's have one more," he pleaded. "One more before I sign away a hundred thousan' dollars."

Curly Jim filled the glasses triumphantly. O'Brien downed his drink and bent forward with wobbling pen to affix his signature. Before he had made more than a blot, he suddenly started up, impelled by the impact of an idea colliding with his consciousness. He stood upon his feet and swayed back and forth before them, reflecting in

his startled eyes the thought process that was taking place behind. Then he reached his conclusion. A benevolent radiance suffused his countenance. He turned to the faro dealer, took his hand, and spoke solemnly.

"Curly, you're my frien'. There's my han'. Shake. Ol' man, I won't do it. Won't sell. Won't rob a frien'. No son-of-a-gun will ever have chance to say Marcus O'Brien robbed frien' cause frien' was drunk. You're drunk, Curly, an' I won't rob you. Jes' had thought–never thought it before–don't know what the matter 'ith me, but never thought it before. Suppose, jes' suppose, Curly, my ol' frien', jes' suppose there ain't ten thousan' in whole damn claim. You'd be robbed. No, sir; won't do it. Marcus O'Brien makes money out of the groun', not out of his frien's."

Percy Leclaire and Mucluc Charley drowned the faro dealer's objections in applause for so noble a sentiment. They fell upon O'Brien from either side, their arms lovingly about his neck, their mouths so full of words they could not hear Curly's offer to insert a clause in the document to the effect that if there weren't ten thousand in the claim he would be given back the difference between yield and purchase price. The longer they talked the more maudlin and the more noble the discussion became. All sordid motives were banished. They were a trio of philanthropists striving to save Curly Jim from himself and his own philanthropy. They insisted that he was a philanthropist. They refused to accept for a moment that there could be found one ignoble thought in all the world. They crawled and climbed and scrambled over high ethical plateaux and ranges, or drowned themselves in metaphysical seas of sentimentality.

Curly Jim sweated and fumed and poured out the whisky. He found himself with a score of arguments on his hands, not one of which had anything to do with the gold-mine he wanted to buy. The longer they talked the farther away they got from that gold-mine, and at two in the morning Curly Jim acknowledged himself beaten. One by one he led his helpless guests across the kitchen floor and thrust them outside. O'Brien came last, and the three, with arms locked for mutual aid, titubated gravely on the stoop.

"Good business man, Curly," O'Brien was saying. "Must say like your style–fine an' generous, free-handed hospital . . . hospital . . . hospitality. Credit to you. Nothin' base 'n graspin' in your make-up. As I was sayin'–"

But just then the faro dealer slammed the door.

The three laughed happily on the stoop. They laughed for a long time. Then Mucluc Charley essayed speech.

"Funny–laughed so hard–ain't what I want to say. My idea is . . . what wash it? Oh, got it! Funny how ideas slip. Elusive idea–chasin' elusive idea–great sport. Ever chase rabbits, Percy, my frien'? I had dog–great rabbit dog. Whash 'is name? Don't know name–never had no name–forget name–elusive name–chasin' elusive name–no, idea–elusive idea, but got it–what I want to say was–O hell!"

Thereafter there was silence for a long time. O'Brien slipped from their arms to a sitting posture on the stoop, where he slept gently. Mucluc Charley chased the elusive idea through all the nooks and crannies of his drowning consciousness. Leclaire hung

fascinated upon the delayed utterance. Suddenly the other's hand smote him on the back.

"Got it!" Mucluc Charley cried in stentorian tones.

The shock of the jolt broke the continuity of Leclaire's mental process.

"How much to the pan?" he demanded.

"Pan nothin' !" Mucluc Charley was angry. "Idea–got it–got leg-hold–ran it down."

Leclaire's face took on a rapt, admiring expression, and again he hung upon the other's lips.

" . . . O hell!" said Mucluc Charley.

At this moment the kitchen door opened for an instant, and Curly Jim shouted, "Go home!"

"Funny," said Mucluc Charley. "Shame idea–very shame as mine. Le's go home."

They gathered O'Brien up between them and started. Mucluc Charley began aloud the pursuit of another idea. Leclaire followed the pursuit with enthusiasm. But O'Brien did not follow it. He neither heard, nor saw, nor knew anything. He was a mere wobbling automaton, supported affectionately and precariously by his two business associates.

They took the path down by the bank of the Yukon. Home did not lie that way, but the elusive idea did. Mucluc Charley giggled over the idea that he could not catch for the edification of Leclaire. They came to where Siskiyou Pearly's boat lay moored to the bank. The rope with which it was tied ran across the path to a pine stump. They tripped over it and went down, O'Brien underneath. A faint flash of consciousness lighted his brain. He felt the impact of bodies upon his and struck out madly for a moment with his fists. Then he went to sleep again. His gentle snore arose on the air, and Mucluc Charley began to giggle.

"New idea," he volunteered, "brand new idea. Jes' caught it–no trouble at all. Came right up an' I patted it on the head. It's mine. 'Brien's drunk–beashly drunk. Shame–damn shame–learn'm lesshon. Trash Pearly's boat. Put 'Brien in Pearly's boat. Casht off–let her go down Yukon. 'Brien wake up in mornin'. Current too strong–can't row boat 'gainst current–mush walk back. Come back madder 'n hatter. You an' me headin' for tall timber. Learn 'm lesshon jes' shame, learn 'm lesshon."

Siskiyou Pearly's boat was empty, save for a pair of oars. Its gunwale rubbed against the bank alongside of O'Brien. They rolled him over into it. Mucluc Charley cast off the painter, and Leclaire shoved the boat out into the current. Then, exhausted by their labours, they lay down on the bank and slept.

Next morning all Red Cow knew of the joke that had been played on Marcus O'Brien. There were some tall bets as to what would happen to the two perpetrators when the victim arrived back. In the afternoon a lookout was set, so that they would know when he was sighted. Everybody wanted to see him come in. But he didn't come, though they sat up till midnight. Nor did he come next day, nor the next. Red Cow never saw Marcus O'Brien again, and though many conjectures were entertained, no certain clue was ever gained to dispel the mystery of his passing.

Only Marcus O'Brien knew, and he never came back to tell. He awoke next morning in torment. His stomach had been calcined by the inordinate quantity of whisky he had drunk, and was a dry and raging furnace. His head ached all over, inside and out; and, worse than that, was the pain in his face. For six hours countless thousands of mosquitoes had fed upon him, and their ungrateful poison had swollen his face tremendously. It was only by a severe exertion of will that he was able to open narrow slits in his face through which he could peer. He happened to move his hands, and they hurt. He squinted at them, but failed to recognize them, so puffed were they by the mosquito virus. He was lost, or rather, his identity was lost to him. There was nothing familiar about him, which, by association of ideas, would cause to rise in his consciousness the continuity of his existence. He was divorced utterly from his past, for there was nothing about him to resurrect in his consciousness a memory of that past. Besides, he was so sick and miserable that he lacked energy and inclination to seek after who and what he was.

It was not until he discovered a crook in a little finger, caused by an unset breakage of years before, that he knew himself to be Marcus O'Brien. On the instant his past rushed into his consciousness. When he discovered a blood-blister under a thumb-nail, which he had received the previous week, his self-identification became doubly sure, and he knew that those unfamiliar hands belonged to Marcus O'Brien, or, just as much to the point, that Marcus O'Brien belonged to the hands. His first thought was that he was ill–that he had had river fever. It hurt him so much to open his eyes that he kept them closed. A small floating branch struck the boat a sharp rap. He thought it was some one knocking on the cabin door, and said, "Come in." He waited for a while, and then said testily, "Stay out, then, damn you." But just the same he wished they would come in and tell him about his illness.

But as he lay there, the past night began to reconstruct itself in his brain. He hadn't been sick at all, was his thought; he had merely been drunk, and it was time for him to get up and go to work. Work suggested his mine, and he remembered that he had refused ten thousand dollars for it. He sat up abruptly and squeezed open his eyes. He saw himself in a boat, floating on the swollen brown flood of the Yukon. The spruce-covered shores and islands were unfamiliar. He was stunned for a time. He couldn't make it out. He could remember the last night's orgy, but there was no connection between that and his present situation.

He closed his eyes and held his aching head in his hands. What had happened? Slowly the dreadful thought arose in his mind. He fought against it, strove to drive it away, but it persisted: he had killed somebody. That alone could explain why he was in an open boat drifting down the Yukon. The law of Red Cow that he had so long administered had now been administered to him. He had killed some one and been set adrift. But whom? He racked his aching brain for the answer, but all that came was a vague memory of bodies falling upon him and of striking out at them. Who were they? Maybe he had killed more than one. He reached to his belt. The knife was missing from its sheath. He had done it with that undoubtedly. But there must have been

some reason for the killing. He opened his eyes and in a panic began to search about the boat. There was no grub, not an ounce of grub. He sat down with a groan. He had killed without provocation. The extreme rigour of the law had been visited upon him.

For half an hour he remained motionless, holding his aching head and trying to think. Then he cooled his stomach with a drink of water from overside and felt better. He stood up, and alone on the wide-stretching Yukon, with naught but the primeval wilderness to hear, he cursed strong drink. After that he tied up to a huge floating pine that was deeper sunk in the current than the boat and that consequently drifted faster. He washed his face and hands, sat down in the stern-sheets, and did some more thinking. It was late in June. It was two thousand miles to Bering Sea. The boat was averaging five miles an hour. There was no darkness in such high latitudes at that time of the year, and he could run the river every hour of the twenty-four. This would mean, daily, a hundred and twenty miles. Strike out the twenty for accidents, and there remained a hundred miles a day. In twenty days he would reach Bering Sea. And this would involve no expenditure of energy; the river did the work. He could lie down in the bottom of the boat and husband his strength.

For two days he ate nothing. Then, drifting into the Yukon Flats, he went ashore on the low-lying islands and gathered the eggs of wild geese and ducks. He had no matches, and ate the eggs raw. They were strong, but they kept him going. When he crossed the Arctic Circle, he found the Hudson Bay Company's post. The brigade had not yet arrived from the Mackenzie, and the post was completely out of grub. He was offered wild-duck eggs, but he informed them that he had a bushel of the same on the boat. He was also offered a drink of whisky, which he refused with an exhibition of violent repugnance. He got matches, however, and after that he cooked his eggs. Toward the mouth of the river head-winds delayed him, and he was twenty-four days on the egg diet. Unfortunately, while asleep he had drifted by both the missions of St. Paul and Holy Cross. And he could sincerely say, as he afterward did, that talk about missions on the Yukon was all humbug. There weren't any missions, and he was the man to know.

Once on Bering Sea he exchanged the egg diet for seal diet, and he never could make up his mind which he liked least. In the fall of the year he was rescued by a United States revenue cutter, and the following winter he made quite a hit in San Francisco as a temperance lecturer. In this field he found his vocation. "Avoid the bottle" is his slogan and battle-cry. He manages subtly to convey the impression that in his own life a great disaster was wrought by the bottle. He has even mentioned the loss of a fortune that was caused by that hell-bait of the devil, but behind that incident his listeners feel the loom of some terrible and unguessed evil for which the bottle is responsible. He has made a success in his vocation, and has grown grey and respected in the crusade against strong drink. But on the Yukon the passing of Marcus O'Brien remains tradition. It is a mystery that ranks at par with the disappearance of Sir John Franklin.

The Pearls of Parlay

I

The Kanaka helmsman put the wheel down, and the Malahini slipped into the eye of the wind and righted to an even keel. Her headsails emptied, there was a rat-tat of reef-points and quick shifting of boom-tackles, and she was heeled over and filled away on the other tack. Though it was early morning and the wind brisk, the five white men who lounged on the poop-deck were scantily clad. David Grief, and his guest, Gregory Mulhall, an Englishman, were still in pajamas, their naked feet thrust into Chinese slippers. The captain and mate were in thin undershirts and unstarched duck pants, while the supercargo still held in his hands the undershirt he was reluctant to put on. The sweat stood out on his forehead, and he seemed to thrust his bare chest thirstily into the wind that did not cool.

"Pretty muggy, for a breeze like this," he complained.

"And what's it doing around in the west? That's what I want to know," was Grief's contribution to the general plaint.

"It won't last, and it ain't been there long," said Hermann, the Holland mate. "She is been chop around all night — five minutes here, ten minutes there, one hour somewhere other quarter."

"Something makin', something makin'," Captain Warfield croaked, spreading his bushy beard with the fingers of both hands and shoving the thatch of his chin into the breeze in a vain search for coolness. "Weather's been crazy for a fortnight. Haven't had the proper trades in three weeks. Everything's mixed up. Barometer was pumping at sunset last night, and it's pumping now, though the weather sharps say it don't mean anything. All the same, I've got a prejudice against seeing it pump. Gets on my nerves, sort of, you know. She was pumping that way the time we lost the Lancaster. I was only an apprentice, but I can remember that well enough. Brand new, four-masted steel ship; first voyage; broke the old man's heart. He'd been forty years in the company. Just faded way and died the next year."

Despite the wind and the early hour, the heat was suffocating. The wind whispered coolness, but did not deliver coolness. It might have blown off the Sahara, save for the extreme humidity with which it was laden. There was no fog nor mist, nor hint of fog or mist, yet the dimness of distance produced the impression. There were no defined clouds, yet so thickly were the heavens covered by a messy cloud-pall that the sun failed to shine through.

"Ready about!" Captain Warfield ordered with slow sharpness.

The brown, breech-clouted Kanaka sailors moved languidly but quickly to head-sheets and boom-tackles.

"Hard a-lee!"

The helmsman ran the spokes over with no hint of gentling, and the Malahini darted prettily into the wind and about.

"Jove! she's a witch!" was Mulhall's appreciation. "I didn't know you South Sea traders sailed yachts."

"She was a Gloucester fisherman originally," Grief explained, "and the Gloucester boats are all yachts when it comes to build, rig, and sailing."

"But you're heading right in — why don't you make it?" came the Englishman's criticism.

"Try it, Captain Warfield," Grief suggested. "Show him what a lagoon entrance is on a strong ebb."

"Close-and-by!" the captain ordered.

"Close-and-by," the Kanaka repeated, easing half a spoke.

The Malahini laid squarely into the narrow passage which was the lagoon entrance of a large, long, and narrow oval of an atoll. The atoll was shaped as if three atolls, in the course of building, had collided and coalesced and failed to rear the partition walls. Cocoanut palms grew in spots on the circle of sand, and there were many gaps where the sand was too low to the sea for cocoanuts, and through which could be seen the protected lagoon where the water lay flat like the ruffled surface of a mirror. Many square miles of water were in the irregular lagoon, all of which surged out on the ebb through the one narrow channel. So narrow was the channel, so large the outflow of water, that the passage was more-like the rapids of a river than the mere tidal entrance to an atoll. The water boiled and whirled and swirled and drove outward in a white foam of stiff, serrated waves. Each heave and blow on her bows of the upstanding waves of the current swung the Malahini off the straight lead and wedged her as with wedges of steel toward the side of the passage. Part way in she was, when her closeness to the coral edge compelled her to go about. On the opposite tack, broadside to the current, she swept seaward with the current's speed.

"Now's the time for that new and expensive engine of yours," Grief jeered good-naturedly.

That the engine was a sore point with Captain Warfield was patent. He had begged and badgered for it, until in the end Grief had given his consent.

"It will pay for itself yet," the captain retorted. "You wait and see. It beats insurance and you know the underwriters won't stand for insurance in the Paumotus."

Grief pointed to a small cutter beating up astern of them on the same course.

"I'll wager a five-franc piece the little Nuhiva beats us in."

"Sure," Captain Warfield agreed. "She's overpowered. We're like a liner alongside of her, and we've only got forty horsepower. She's got ten horse, and she's a little skimming dish. She could skate across the froth of hell, but just the same she can't buck this current. It's running ten knots right now."

And at the rate of ten knots, buffeted and jerkily rolled, the Malahini went out to sea with the tide.

"She'll slacken in half an hour — then we'll make headway," Captain Warfield said, with an irritation explained by his next words. "He has no right to call it Parlay. It's down on the admiralty charts, and the French charts, too, as Hikihoho. Bougainville discovered it and named it from the natives."

"What's the name matter?" the supercargo demanded, taking advantage of speech to pause with arms shoved into the sleeves of the undershirt. "There it is, right under our nose, and old Parlay is there with the pearls."

"Who see them pearl?" Hermann queried, looking from one to another.

"It's well known," was the supercargo's reply. He turned to the steersman: "Tai-Hotauri, what about old Parlay's pearls?"

The Kanaka, pleased and self-conscious, took and gave a spoke.

"My brother dive for Parlay three, four month, and he make much talk about pearl. Hikihoho very good place for pearl."

"And the pearl-buyers have never got him to part with a pearl," the captain broke in.

"And they say he had a hatful for Armande when he sailed for Tahiti," the supercargo carried on the tale. "That's fifteen years ago, and he's been adding to it ever since — stored the shell as well. Everybody's seen that — hundreds of tons of it. They say the lagoon's fished clean now. Maybe that's why he's announced the auction."

"If he really sells, this will be the biggest year's output of pearls in the Paumotus," Grief said.

"I say, now, look here!" Mulhall burst forth, harried by the humid heat as much as the rest of them. "What's it all about? Who's the old beachcomber anyway? What are all these pearls? Why so secretious about it?"

"Hikihoho belongs to old Parlay," the supercargo answered. "He's got a fortune in pearls, saved up for years and years, and he sent the word out weeks ago that he'd auction them off to the buyers to-morrow. See those schooners' masts sticking up inside the lagoon?"

"Eight, so I see," said Hermann.

"What are they doing in a dinky atoll like this?" the supercargo went on. "There isn't a schooner-load of copra a year in the place. They've come for the auction. That's why we're here. That's why the little Nuhiva's bumping along astern there, though what she can buy is beyond me. Narii Herring — he's an English Jew half-caste — owns and runs her, and his only assets are his nerve, his debts, and his whiskey bills. He's a genius in such things. He owes so much that there isn't a merchant in Papeete who isn't interested in his welfare. They go out of their way to throw work in his way. They've got to, and a dandy stunt it is for Narii. Now I owe nobody. What's the result? If I fell down in a fit on the beach they'd let me lie there and die. They wouldn't lose anything. But Narii Herring? — what wouldn't they do if he fell in a fit? Their best wouldn't be too good for him. They've got too much money tied up in him to let him

lie. They'd take him into their homes and hand-nurse him like a brother. Let me tell you, honesty in paying bills ain't what it's cracked up to be."

"What's this Narii chap got to do with it?" was the Englishman's short-tempered demand. And, turning to Grief, he said, "What's all this pearl nonsense? Begin at the beginning."

"You'll have to help me out," Grief warned the others, as he began. "Old Parlay is a character. From what I've seen of him I believe he's partly and mildly insane. Anyway, here's the story: Parlay's a full-blooded Frenchman. He told me once that he came from Paris. His accent is the true Parisian. He arrived down here in the old days. Went to trading and all the rest. That's how he got in on Hikihoho. Came in trading when trading was the real thing. About a hundred miserable Paumotans lived on the island. He married the queen — native fashion. When she died, everything was his. Measles came through, and there weren't more than a dozen survivors. He fed them, and worked them, and was king. Now before the queen died she gave birth to a girl. That's Armande. When she was three he sent her to the convent at Papeete. When she was seven or eight he sent her to France. You begin to glimpse the situation. The best and most aristocratic convent in France was none too good for the only daughter of a Paumotan island king and capitalist, and you know the old country French draw no colour line. She was educated like a princess, and she accepted herself in much the same way. Also, she thought she was all-white, and never dreamed of a bar sinister.

"Now comes the tragedy. The old man had always been cranky and erratic, and he'd played the despot on Hikihoho so long that he'd got the idea in his head that there was nothing wrong with the king — or the princess either. When Armande was eighteen he sent for her. He had slews and slathers of money, as Yankee Bill would say. He'd built the big house on Hikihoho, and a whacking fine bungalow in Papeete. She was to arrive on the mail boat from New Zealand, and he sailed in his schooner to meet her at Papeete. And he might have carried the situation off, despite the hens and bull-beasts of Papeete, if it hadn't been for the hurricane. That was the year, wasn't it, when Manu-Huhi was swept and eleven hundred drowned?"

The others nodded, and Captain Warfield said: "I was in the Magpie that blow, and we went ashore, all hands and the cook, Magpie and all, a quarter of a mile into the cocoanuts at the head of Taiohae Bay — and it a supposedly hurricane-proof harbour."

"Well," Grief continued, "old Parlay got caught in the same blow, and arrived in Papeete with his hatful of pearls three weeks too late. He'd had to jack up his schooner and build half a mile of ways before he could get her back into the sea.

"And in the meantime there was Armande at Papeete. Nobody called on her. She did, French fashion, make the initial calls on the Governor and the port doctor. They saw her, but neither of their hen-wives was at home to her nor returned the call. She was out of caste, without caste, though she had never dreamed it, and that was the gentle way they broke the information to her. There was a gay young lieutenant on the French cruiser. He lost his heart to her, but not his head. You can imagine the shock to this young woman, refined, beautiful, raised like an aristocrat, pampered with the

best of old France that money could buy. And you can guess the end." He shrugged his shoulders. "There was a Japanese servant in the bungalow. He saw it. Said she did it with the proper spirit of the Samurai. Took a stiletto — no thrust, no drive, no wild rush for annihilation — took the stiletto, placed the point carefully against her heart, and with both hands, slowly and steadily, pressed home.

"Old Parlay arrived after that with his pearls. There was one single one of them, they say, worth sixty thousand francs. Peter Gee saw it, and has told me he offered that much for it. The old man went clean off for a while. They had him strait-jacketed in the Colonial Club two days — "

"His wife's uncle, an old Paumotan, cut him out of the jacket and turned him loose," the supercargo corroborated.

"And then old Parlay proceeded to eat things up," Grief went on. "Pumped three bullets into the scalawag of a lieutenant — "

"Who lay in sick bay for three months," Captain Warfield contributed.

"Flung a glass of wine in the Governor's face; fought a duel with the port doctor; beat up his native servants; wrecked the hospital; broke two ribs and the collarbone of a man nurse, and escaped; and went down to his schooner, a gun in each hand, daring the chief of police and all the gendarmes to arrest him, and sailed for Hikihoho. And they say he's never left the island since."

The supercargo nodded. "That was fifteen years ago, and he's never budged."

"And added to his pearls," said the captain. "He's a blithering old lunatic. Makes my flesh creep. He's a regular Finn."

"What's that?" Mulhall inquired.

"Bosses the weather — that's what the natives believe, at any rate. Ask Tai-Hotauri there. Hey, Tai-Hotauri ! what you think old Parlay do along weather?"

"Just the same one big weather devil," came the Kanaka's answer. "I know. He want big blow, he make big blow. He want no wind, no wind come."

"A regular old Warlock," said Mulhall.

"No good luck them pearl," Tai-Hotauri blurted out, rolling his head ominously. "He say he sell. Plenty schooner come. Then he make big hurricane, everybody finish, you see. All native men say so."

"It's hurricane season now," Captain Warfield laughed morosely. "They're not far wrong. It's making for something right now, and I'd feel better if the Malahini was a thousand miles away from here."

"He is a bit mad," Grief concluded. "I've tried to get his point of view. It's — well, it's mixed. For eighteen years he'd centred everything on Armande. Half the time he believes she's still alive, not yet come back from France. That's one of the reasons he held on to the pearls. And all the time he hates white men. He never forgets they killed her, though a great deal of the time he forgets she's dead. Hello! Where's your wind?"

The sails bellied emptily overhead, and Captain Warfield grunted his disgust. Intolerable as the heat had been, in the absence of wind it was almost overpowering. The

sweat oozed out on all their faces, and now one, and again another, drew deep breaths, involuntarily questing for more air.

"Here she comes again — an eight point haul! Boom-tackles across! jump!"

The Kanakas sprang to the captain's orders, and for five minutes the schooner laid directly into the passage and even gained on the current. Again the breeze fell flat, then puffed from the old quarter, compelling a shift back of sheets and tackles.

"Here comes the Nuhiva," Grief said. "She's got her engine on. Look at her skim."

"All ready?" the captain asked the engineer, a Portuguese half-caste, whose head and shoulders protruded from the small hatch just for'ard of the cabin, and who wiped the sweat from his face with a bunch of greasy waste.

"Sure," he replied.

"Then let her go."

The engineer disappeared into his den, and a moment later the exhaust muffler coughed and spluttered overside. But the schooner could not hold her lead. The little cutter made three feet to her two and was quickly alongside and forging ahead. Only natives were on her deck, and the man steering waved his hand in derisive greeting and farewell.

"That's Narii Herring," Grief told Mulhall. "The big fellow at the wheel — the nerviest and most conscienceless scoundrel in the Paumotus."

Five minutes later a cry of joy from their own Kanakas centred all eyes on the Nuhiva. Her engine had broken down and they were overtaking her. The Malahini's sailors sprang into the rigging and jeered as they went by; the little cutter heeled over by the wind with a bone in her teeth, going backward on the tide.

"Some engine that of ours," Grief approved, as the lagoon opened before them and the course was changed across it to the anchorage.

Captain Warfield was visibly cheered, though he merely grunted, "It'll pay for itself, never fear."

The Malahini ran well into the centre of the little fleet ere she found swinging room to anchor.

"There's Isaacs on the Dolly," Grief observed, with a hand wave of greeting. "And Peter Gee's on the Roberta. Couldn't keep him away from a pearl sale like this. And there's Francini on the Cactus. They're all here, all the buyers. Old Parlay will surely get a price."

"They haven't repaired the engine yet," Captain Warfield grumbled gleefully.

He was looking across the lagoon to where the Nuhiva's sails showed through the sparse cocoanuts.

II

The house of Parlay was a big two-story frame affair, built of California lumber, with a galvanized iron roof. So disproportionate was it to the slender ring of the atoll that it showed out upon the sand-strip and above it like some monstrous excrescence. They of the Malahini paid the courtesy visit ashore immediately after anchoring. Other captains and buyers were in the big room examining the pearls that were to be auctioned

next day. Paumotan servants, natives of Hikihoho, and relatives of the owner, moved about dispensing whiskey and absinthe. And through the curious company moved Parlay himself, cackling and sneering, the withered wreck of what had once been a tall and powerful man. His eyes were deep sunken and feverish, his cheeks fallen in and cavernous. The hair of his head seemed to have come out in patches, and his mustache and imperial had shed in the same lopsided way.

"Jove!" Mulhall muttered under his breath. "A long-legged Napoleon the Third, but burnt out, baked, and fire-crackled. And mangy! No wonder he crooks his head to one side. He's got to keep the balance."

"Goin' to have a blow," was the old man's greeting to Grief. "You must think a lot of pearls to come a day like this."

"They're worth going to inferno for," Grief laughed genially back, running his eyes over the surface of the table covered by the display.

"Other men have already made that journey for them," old Parlay cackled. "See this one!" He pointed to a large, perfect pearl the size of a small walnut that lay apart on a piece of chamois. "They offered me sixty thousand francs for it in Tahiti. They'll bid as much and more for it to-morrow, if they aren't blown away. Well, that pearl, it was found by my cousin, my cousin by marriage. He was a native, you see. Also, he was a thief. He hid it. It was mine. His cousin, who was also my cousin–we're all related here–killed him for it and fled away in a cutter to Noo-Nau. I pursued, but the chief of Noo-Nau had killed him for it before I got there. Oh, yes, there are many dead men represented on the table there. Have a drink, Captain. Your face is not familiar. You are new in the islands?"

"It's Captain Robinson of the Roberta," Grief said, introducing them.

In the meantime Mulhall had shaken hands with Peter Gee.

"I never fancied there were so many pearls in the world," Mulhall said.

"Nor have I ever seen so many together at one time," Peter Gee admitted.

"What ought they to be worth?"

"Fifty or sixty thousand pounds–and that's to us buyers. In Paris—-" He shrugged his shoulders and lifted his eyebrows at the incommunicableness of the sum.

Mulhall wiped the sweat from his eyes. All were sweating profusely and breathing hard. There was no ice in the drink that was served, and whiskey and absinthe went down lukewarm.

"Yes, yes," Parlay was cackling. "Many dead men lie on the table there. I know those pearls, all of them. You see those three! Perfectly matched, aren't they? A diver from Easter Island got them for me inside a week. Next week a shark got him; took his arm off and blood poison did the business. And that big baroque there–nothing much–if I'm offered twenty francs for it to-morrow I'll be in luck; it came out of twenty-two fathoms of water. The man was from Raratonga. He broke all diving records. He got it out of twenty-two fathoms. I saw him. And he burst his lungs at the same time, or got the 'bends,' for he died in two hours. He died screaming. They could hear him for

miles. He was the most powerful native I ever saw. Half a dozen of my divers have died of the bends. And more men will die, more men will die."

"Oh, hush your croaking, Parlay," chided one of the captains. "It ain't going to blow."

"If I was a strong man, I couldn't get up hook and get out fast enough," the old man retorted in the falsetto of age. "Not if I was a strong man with the taste for wine yet in my mouth. But not you. You'll all stay, I wouldn't advise you if I thought you'd go, You can't drive buzzards away from the carrion. Have another drink, my brave sailor-men. Well, well, what men will dare for a few little oyster drops! There they are, the beauties! Auction to-morrow, at ten sharp. Old Parlay's selling out, and the buzzards are gathering–old Parlay who was a stronger man in his day than any of them and who will see most of them dead yet."

"If he isn't a vile old beast!" the supercargo of the Malahini whispered to Peter Gee.

"What if she does blow?" said the captain of the Dolly. "Hikihoho's never been swept."

"The more reason she will be, then," Captain Warfield answered back. "I wouldn't trust her."

"Who's croaking now?" Grief reproved.

"I'd hate to lose that new engine before it paid for itself," Captain Warfield replied gloomily.

Parlay skipped with astonishing nimbleness across the crowded room to the barometer on the wall.

"Take a look, my brave sailormen!" he cried exultantly.

The man nearest read the glass. The sobering effect showed plainly on his face.

"It's dropped ten," was all he said, yet every face went anxious, and there was a look as if every man desired immediately to start for the door.

"Listen!" Parlay commanded.

In the silence the outer surf seemed to have become unusually loud. There was a great rumbling roar.

"A big sea is beginning to set," some one said; and there was a movement to the windows, where all gathered.

Through the sparse cocoanuts they gazed seaward. An orderly succession of huge smooth seas was rolling down upon the coral shore. For some minutes they gazed on the strange sight and talked in low voices, and in those few minutes it was manifest to all that the waves were increasing in size. It was uncanny, this rising sea in a dead calm, and their voices unconsciously sank lower. Old Parlay shocked them with his abrupt cackle.

"There is yet time to get away to sea, brave gentlemen. You can tow across the lagoon with your whaleboats."

"It's all right, old man," said Darling, the mate of the Cactus, a stalwart youngster of twenty-five. "The blow's to the southward and passing on. We'll not get a whiff of it."

An air of relief went through the room. Conversations were started, and the voices became louder. Several of the buyers even went back to the table to continue the examination of the pearls.

Parlay's shrill cackle rose higher.

"That's right," he encouraged. "If the world was coming to an end you'd go on buying."

"We'll buy these to-morrow just the same," Isaacs assured him.

"Then you'll be doing your buying in hell."

The chorus of incredulous laughter incensed the old man. He turned fiercely on Darling.

"Since when have children like you come to the knowledge of storms? And who is the man who has plotted the hurricane-courses of the Paumotus? What books will you find it in? I sailed the Paumotus before the oldest of you drew breath. I know. To the eastward the paths of the hurricanes are on so wide a circle they make a straight line. To the westward here they make a sharp curve. Remember your chart. How did it happen the hurricane of '91 swept Auri and Hiolau? The curve, my brave boy, the curve! In an hour, or two or three at most, will come the wind. Listen to that!"

A vast rumbling crash shook the coral foundations of the atoll. The house quivered to it. The native servants, with bottles of whiskey and absinthe in their hands, shrank together as if for protection and stared with fear through the windows at the mighty wash of the wave lapping far up the beach to the corner of a copra-shed.

Parlay looked at the barometer, giggled, and leered around at his guests. Captain War-field strode across to see.

"29:75," he read. "She's gone down five more. By God! the old devil's right. She's a-coming, and it's me, for one, for aboard."

"It's growing dark," Isaacs half whispered.

"Jove! it's like a stage," Mulhall said to Grief, looking at his watch. "Ten o'clock in the morning, and it's like twilight. Down go the lights for the tragedy. Where's the slow music!"

In answer, another rumbling crash shook the atoll and the house. Almost in a panic the company started for the door. In the dim light their sweaty faces appeared ghastly. Isaacs panted asthmatically in the suffocating heat.

"What's your haste?" Parlay chuckled and girded at his departing guests. "A last drink, brave gentlemen." No one noticed him. As they took the shell-bordered path to the beach he stuck his head out the door and called, "Don't forget, gentlemen, at ten to-morrow old Parlay sells his pearls."

III

On the beach a curious scene took place. Whaleboat after whaleboat was being hurriedly manned and shoved off. It had grown still darker. The stagnant calm continued, and the sand shook under their feet with each buffet of the sea on the outer shore. Narii Herring walked leisurely along the sand. He grinned at the very evident haste of the captains and buyers. With him were three of his Kanakas, and also Tai-Hotauri.

"Get into the boat and take an oar," Captain Warfield ordered the latter.

Tai-Hotauri came over jauntily, while Narii Herring and his three Kanakas paused and looked on from forty feet away.

"I work no more for you, skipper," Tai-Hotauri said insolently and loudly. But his face belied his words, for he was guilty of a prodigious wink. "Fire me, skipper," he huskily whispered, with a second significant wink.

Captain Warfield took the cue and proceeded to do some acting himself. He raised his fist and his voice.

"Get into that boat," he thundered, "or I'll knock seven bells out of you!"

The Kanaka drew back truculently, and Grief stepped between to placate his captain.

"I go to work on the Nuhiva," Tai-Hotauri said, rejoining the other group.

"Come back here!" the captain threatened.

"He's a free man, skipper," Narii Herring spoke up. "He's sailed with me in the past, and he's sailing again, that's all."

"Come on, we must get on board," Grief urged. "Look how dark it's getting."

Captain Warfield gave in, but as the boat shoved off he stood up in the sternsheets and shook his fist ashore.

"I'll settle with you yet, Narii," he cried. "You're the only skipper in the group that steals other men's sailors," He sat down, and in lowered voice queried: "Now what's Tai-Hotauri up to? He's on to something, but what is it?"

IV

As the boat came alongside the Malahini, Hermann's anxious face greeted them over the rail.

"Bottom out fall from barometer," he announced. "She's goin' to blow. I got starboard anchor overhaul."

"Overhaul the big one, too," Captain Warfield ordered, taking charge. "And here, some of you, hoist in this boat. Lower her down to the deck and lash her bottom up."

Men were busy at work on the decks of all the schooners. There was a great clanking of chains being overhauled, and now one craft, and now another, hove in, veered, and dropped a second anchor. Like the Malahini, those that had third anchors were preparing to drop them when the wind showed what quarter it was to blow from.

The roar of the big surf continually grew though the lagoon lay in the mirror-like calm.

There was no sign of life where Parlay's big house perched on the sand. Boat and copra-sheds and the sheds where the shell was stored were deserted.

"For two cents I'd up anchors and get out," Grief said. "I'd do it anyway if it were open sea. But those chains of atolls to the north and east have us pocketed. We've a better chance right here. What do you think, Captain Warfield?"

"I agree with you, though a lagoon is no mill-pond for riding it out. I wonder where she's going to start from? Hello! There goes one of Parlay's copra-sheds."

They could see the grass-thatched shed lift and collapse, while a froth of foam cleared the crest of the sand and ran down to the lagoon.

"Breached across!" Mulhall exclaimed. "That's something for a starter. There she comes again!"

The wreck of the shed was now flung up and left on the sand-crest, A third wave buffeted it into fragments which washed down the slope toward the lagoon.

"If she blow I would as be cooler yet," Hermann grunted. "No longer can I breathe. It is damn hot. I am dry like a stove."

He chopped open a drinking cocoanut with his heavy sheath-knife and drained the contents. The rest of them followed his example, pausing once to watch one of Parlay's shell sheds go down in ruin. The barometer now registered 29:50.

"Must be pretty close to the centre of the area of low pressure," Grief remarked cheerfully. "I was never through the eye of a hurricane before. It will be an experience for you, too, Mulhall. From the speed the barometer's dropped, it's going to be a big one."

Captain Warfield groaned, and all eyes drew to him. He was looking through the glasses down the length of the lagoon to the southeast.

"There she comes," he said quietly.

They did not need glasses to see. A flying film, strangely marked, seemed drawing over the surface of the lagoon. Abreast of it, along the atoll, travelling with equal speed, was a stiff bending of the cocoanut palms and a blur of flying leaves. The front of the wind on the water was a solid, sharply defined strip of dark-coloured, wind-vexed water. In advance of this strip, like skirmishers, were flashes of windflaws. Behind this strip, a quarter of a mile in width, was a strip of what seemed glassy calm. Next came another dark strip of wind, and behind that the lagoon was all crisping, boiling whiteness.

"What is that calm streak?" Mulhall asked.

"Calm," Warfield answered.

"But it travels as fast as the wind," was the other's objection.

"It has to, or it would be overtaken and it wouldn't be any calm. It's a double-header, I saw a big squall like that off Savaii once. A regular double-header. Smash! it hit us, then it lulled to nothing, and smashed us a second time. Stand by and hold on! Here she is on top of us. Look at the Roberta!"

The Roberta, lying nearest to the wind at slack chains, was swept off broadside like a straw. Then her chains brought her up, bow on to the wind, with an astonishing jerk. Schooner after schooner, the Malahini with them, was now sweeping away with the first gust and fetching up on taut chains. Mulhall and several of the Kanakas were taken off their feet when the Malahini jerked to her anchors.

And then there was no wind. The flying calm streak had reached them. Grief lighted a match, and the unshielded flame burned without flickering in the still air. A very dim twilight prevailed. The cloud-sky, lowering as it had been for hours, seemed now to have descended quite down upon the sea.

The Roberta tightened to her chains when the second head of the hurricane hit, as did schooner after schooner in swift succession. The sea, white with fury, boiled in tiny, spitting wavelets. The deck of the Malahini vibrated under the men's feet. The taut-stretched halyards beat a tattoo against the masts, and all the rigging, as if smote by some mighty hand, set up a wild thrumming. It was impossible to face the wind and breathe. Mulhall, crouching with the others behind the shelter of the cabin, discovered this, and his lungs were filled in an instant with so great a volume of driven air which he could not expel that he nearly strangled ere he could turn his head away.

"It's incredible," he gasped, but no one heard him.

Hermann and several Kanakas were crawling for'ard on hands and knees to let go the third anchor. Grief touched Captain Warfield and pointed to the Roberta. She was dragging down upon them. Warfield put his mouth to Grief's ear and shouted:

"We're dragging, too!"

Grief sprang to the wheel and put it hard over, veering the Mahhini to port. The third anchor took hold, and the Roberta went by, stern-first, a dozen yards away. They waved their hands to Peter Gee and Captain Robinson, who, with a number of sailors, were at work on the bow.

"He's knocking out the shackles!" Grief shouted. "Going to chance the passage! Got to! Anchors skating!"

"We're holding now!" came the answering shout. "There goes the Cactus down on the Misi. That settles them!"

The Misi had been holding, but the added windage of the Cactus was too much, and the entangled schooners slid away across the boiling white. Their men could be seen chopping and fighting to get them apart. The Roberta, cleared of her anchors, with a patch of tarpaulin set for'ard, was heading for the passage at the northwestern end of the lagoon. They saw her make it and drive out to sea. But the Misi and Cactus, unable to get clear of each other, went ashore on the atoll half a mile from the passage. The wind merely increased on itself and continued to increase. To face the full blast of it required all one's strength, and several minutes of crawling on deck against it tired a man to exhaustion. Hermann, with his Kanakas, plodded steadily, lashing and making secure, putting ever more gaskets on the sails. The wind ripped and tore their thin undershirts from their backs. They moved slowly, as if their bodies weighed tons, never releasing a hand-hold until another had been secured. Loose ends of rope stood out stiffly horizontal, and, when a whipping gave, the loose end frazzled and blew away.

Mulhall touched one and then another and pointed to the shore. The grass-sheds had disappeared, and Parlay's house rocked drunkenly, Because the wind blew lengthwise along the atoll, the house had been sheltered by the miles of cocoanut trees. But the big seas, breaking across from outside, were undermining it and hammering it to pieces. Already tilted down the slope of sand, its end was imminent. Here and there in the cocoanut trees people had lashed themselves. The trees did not sway or thresh about. Bent over rigidly from the wind, they remained in that position and vibrated monstrously. Underneath, across the sand, surged the white spume of the breakers.

A big sea was likewise making down the length of the lagoon. It had plenty of room to kick up in the ten-mile stretch from the windward rim of the atoll, and all the schooners were bucking and plunging into it. The Malahini had begun shoving her bow and fo'c'sle head under the bigger ones, and at times her waist was filled rail-high with water.

"Now's the time for your engine!" Grief bellowed; and Captain Warfield, crawling over to where the engineer lay, shouted emphatic commands.

Under the engine, going full speed ahead, the Malahini behaved better. While she continued to ship seas over her bow, she was not jerked down so fiercely by her anchors. On the other hand, she was unable to get any slack in the chains. The best her forty horsepower could do was to ease the strain.

Still the wind increased. The little Nuhiva, lying abreast of the Malahini and closer in to the beach, her engine still unrepaired and her captain ashore, was having a bad time of it. She buried herself so frequently and so deeply that they wondered each time if she could clear herself of the water. At three in the afternoon buried by a second sea before she could free herself of the preceding one, she did not come up.

Mulhall looked at Grief.

"Burst in her hatches," was the bellowed answer.

Captain Warfield pointed to the Winifred, a little schooner plunging and burying outside of them, and shouted in Grief's ear. His voice came in patches of dim words, with intervals of silence when whisked away by the roaring wind.

"Rotten little tub... Anchors hold... But how she holds together... Old as the ark—-"

An hour later Hermann pointed to her. Her for'ard bitts, foremast, and most of her bow were gone, having been jerked out of her by her anchors. She swung broadside, rolling in the trough and settling by the head, and in this plight was swept away to leeward.

Five vessels now remained, and of them the Malahini was the only one with an engine. Fearing either the Nuhiva's or the Winifdred's fate, two of them followed the Roberta's example, knocking out the chain-shackles and running for the passage. The Dolly was the first, but her tarpaulin was carried away, and she went to destruction on the lee-rim of the atoll near the Misi and the Cactus. Undeterred by this, the Moana let go and followed with the same result.

"Pretty good engine that, eh?" Captain Warfield yelled to his owner.

Grief put out his hand and shook. "She's paying for herself!" he yelled back. "The wind's shifting around to the southward, and we ought to lie easier!"

Slowly and steadily, but with ever-increasing velocity, the wind veered around to the south and the southwest, till the three schooners that were left pointed directly in toward the beach. The wreck of Parlay's house was picked up, hurled into the lagoon, and blown out upon them. Passing the Malahini, it crashed into the Papara, lying a quarter of a mile astern. There was wild work for'ard on her, and in a quarter of an hour the house went clear, but it had taken the Papara's foremast and bowsprit with it.

Inshore, on their port bow, lay the Tahaa, slim and yacht-like, but excessively oversparred. Her anchors still held, but her captain, finding no abatement in the wind, proceeded to reduce windage by chopping down his masts.

"Pretty good engine that," Grief congratulated his skipper, "It will save our sticks for us yet."

Captain Warfield shook his head dubiously.

The sea on the lagoon went swiftly down with the change of wind, but they were beginning to feel the heave and lift of the outer sea breaking across the atoll. There were not so many trees remaining. Some had been broken short off, others uprooted. One tree they saw snap off halfway up, three persons clinging to it, and whirl away by the wind into the lagoon. Two detached themselves from it and swam to the Tahaa. Not long after, just before darkness, they saw one jump overboard from that schooner's stern and strike out strongly for the Malahini through the white, spitting wavelets.

"It's Tai-Hotauri," was Grief's judgment. "Now we'll have the news."

The Kanaka caught the bobstay, climbed over the bow, and crawled aft. Time was given him to breathe, and then, behind the part shelter of the cabin, in broken snatches and largely by signs, he told his story.

"Narii... damn robber... He want steal... pearls... Kill Parlay... One man kill Parlay... No man know what man... Three Kanakas, Narii, me... Five beans... hat... Narii say one bean black... Nobody know... Kill Parlay... Narii damn liar... All beans black... Five black... Copra-shed dark... Every man get black bean... Big wind come... No chance... Everybody get up tree... No good luck them pearls... I tell you before... No good luck."

"Where's Parlay?" Grief shouted.

"Up tree... Three of his Kanakas same tree. Narii and one Kanaka'nother tree... My tree blow to hell, then I come on board."

"Where's the pearls?"

"Up tree along Parlay. Mebbe Narii get them pearl yet."

In the ear of one after another Grief passed on Tai-Hotauri's story. Captain Warfield was particularly incensed, and they could see him grinding his teeth.

Hermann went below and returned with a riding light, but the moment it was lifted above the level of the cabin wall the wind blew it out. He had better success with the binnacle lamp, which was lighted only after many collective attempts.

"A fine night of wind!" Grief yelled in Mulhall's ear. "And blowing harder all the time."

"How hard?"

"A hundred miles an hour... two hundred... I don't know... Harder than I've ever seen it."

The lagoon grew more and more troubled by the sea that swept across the atoll. Hundreds of leagues of ocean was being backed up by the hurricane, which more than overcame the lowering effect of the ebb tide. Immediately the tide began to rise the increase in the size of the seas was noticeable. Moon and wind were heaping the South Pacific on Hikihoho atoll.

Captain Warfield returned from one of his periodical trips to the engine room with the word that the engineer lay in a faint.

"Can't let that engine stop!" he concluded helplessly.

"All right!" Grief said, "Bring him on deck. I'll spell him."

The hatch to the engine room was battened down, access being gained through a narrow passage from the cabin. The heat and gas fumes were stifling. Grief took one hasty, comprehensive examination of the engine and the fittings of the tiny room, then blew out the oil-lamp. After that he worked in darkness, save for the glow from endless cigars which he went into the cabin to light. Even-tempered as he was, he soon began to give evidences of the strain of being pent in with a mechanical monster that toiled, and sobbed, and slubbered in the shouting dark. Naked to the waist, covered with grease and oil, bruised and skinned from being knocked about by the plunging, jumping vessel, his head swimming from the mixture of gas and air he was compelled to breathe, he laboured on hour after hour, in turns petting, blessing, nursing, and cursing the engine and all its parts. The ignition began to go bad. The feed grew worse. And worst of all, the cylinders began to heat. In a consultation held in the cabin the half-caste engineer begged and pleaded to stop the engine for half an hour in order to cool it and to attend to the water circulation. Captain Warfield was against any stopping. The half-caste swore that the engine would ruin itself and stop anyway and for good. Grief, with glaring eyes, greasy and battered, yelled and cursed them both down and issued commands. Mulhall, the supercargo, and Hermann were set to work in the cabin at double-straining and triple-straining the gasoline. A hole was chopped through the engine room floor, and a Kanaka heaved bilge-water over the cylinders, while Grief continued to souse running parts in oil.

"Didn't know you were a gasoline expert," Captain Warfield admired when Grief came into the cabin to catch a breath of little less impure air.

"I bathe in gasoline," he grated savagely through his teeth. "I eat it."

What other uses he might have found for it were never given, for at that moment all the men in the cabin, as well as the gasoline being strained, were smashed forward against the bulkhead as the Malahini took an abrupt, deep dive. For the space of several minutes, unable to gain their feet, they rolled back and forth and pounded and hammered from wall to wall. The schooner, swept by three big seas, creaked and groaned and quivered, and from the weight of water on her decks behaved logily. Grief crept to the engine, while Captain Warfield waited his chance to get through the companion-way and out on deck.

It was half an hour before he came back.

"Whaleboat's gone!" he reported. "Galley's gone! Everything gone except the deck and hatches! And if that engine hadn't been going we'd be gone! Keep up the good work!"

By midnight the engineer's lungs and head had been sufficiently cleared of gas fumes to let him relieve Grief, who went on deck to get his own head and lungs clear. He joined the others, who crouched behind the cabin, holding on with their hands and

made doubly secure by rope-lashings. It was a complicated huddle, for it was the only place of refuge for the Kanakas. Some of them had accepted the skipper's invitation into the cabin but had been driven out by the fumes. The Malahini was being plunged down and swept frequently, and what they breathed was air and spray and water commingled.

"Making heavy weather of it, Mulhall!" Grief shouted to his guest between immersions.

Mulhall, strangling and choking, could only nod. The scuppers could not carry off the burden of water on the schooner's deck. She rolled it out and took it in over one rail and the other; and at times, nose thrown skyward, sitting down on her heel, she avalanched it aft. It surged along the poop gangways, poured over the top of the cabin, submerging and bruising those that clung on, and went out over the stern-rail.

Mulhall saw him first, and drew Grief's attention. It was Narii Herring, crouching and holding on where the dim binnacle light shone upon him. He was quite naked, save for a belt and a bare-bladed knife thrust between it and the skin.

Captain Warfield untied his lashings and made his way over the bodies of the others. When his face became visible in the light from the binnacle it was working with anger. They could see him speak, but the wind tore the sound away. He would not put his lips to Narii's ear. Instead, he pointed over the side. Narii Herring understood. His white teeth showed in an amused and sneering smile, and he stood up, a magnificent figure of a man.

"It's murder!" Mulhall yelled to Grief.

"He'd have murdered Old Parlay!" Grief yelled back.

For the moment the poop was clear of water and the Malahini on an even keel. Narii made a bravado attempt to walk to the rail, but was flung down by the wind. Thereafter he crawled, disappearing in the darkness, though there was certitude in all of them that he had gone over the side. The Malahini dived deep, and when they emerged from the flood that swept aft, Grief got Mulhall's ear.

"Can't lose him! He's the Fish Man of Tahiti! He'll cross the lagoon and land on the other rim of the atoll if there's any atoll left!"

Five minutes afterward, in another submergence, a mess of bodies poured down on them over the top of the cabin. These they seized and held till the water cleared, when they carried them below and learned their identity. Old Parlay lay oh his back on the floor, with closed eyes and without movement. The other two were his Kanaka cousins. All three were naked and bloody. The arm of one Kanaka hung helpless and broken at his side. The other man bled freely from a hideous scalp wound.

"Narii did that?" Mulhall demanded.

Grief shook his head. "No; it's from being smashed along the deck and over the house!"

Something suddenly ceased, leaving them in dizzying uncertainty. For the moment it was hard to realize there was no wind. With the absolute abruptness of a sword slash, the wind had been chopped off. The schooner rolled and plunged, fetching up

on her anchors with a crash which for the first time they could hear. Also, for the first time they could hear the water washing about on deck. The engineer threw off the propeller and eased the engine down.

"We're in the dead centre," Grief said. "Now for the shift. It will come as hard as ever." He looked at the barometer. "29:32," he read.

Not in a moment could he tone down the voice which for hours had battled against the wind, and so loudly did he speak that in the quiet it hurt the others' ears.

"All his ribs are smashed," the supercargo said, feeling along Parlay's side. "He's still breathing, but he's a goner."

Old Parlay groaned, moved one arm impotently, and opened his eyes. In them was the light of recognition.

"My brave gentlemen," he whispered haltingly. "Don't forget... the auction... at ten o'clock... in hell."

His eyes dropped shut and the lower jaw threatened to drop, but he mastered the qualms of dissolution long enough to omit one final, loud, derisive cackle.

Above and below pandemonium broke out.

The old familiar roar of the wind was with them. The Malahini, caught broadside, was pressed down almost on her beam ends as she swung the arc compelled by her anchors. They rounded her into the wind, where she jerked to an even keel. The propeller was thrown on, and the engine took up its work again.

"Northwest!" Captain Warfield shouted to Grief when he came on deck. "Hauled eight points like a shot!"

"Narii'll never get across the lagoon now!" Grief observed.

"Then he'll blow back to our side, worse luck!"

V

After the passing of the centre the barometer began to rise. Equally rapid was the fall of the wind. When it was no more than a howling gale, the engine lifted up in the air, parted its bed-plates with a last convulsive effort of its forty horsepower, and lay down on its side. A wash of water from the bilge sizzled over it and the steam arose in clouds. The engineer wailed his dismay, but Grief glanced over the wreck affectionately and went into the cabin to swab the grease off his chest and arms with bunches of cotton waste.

The sun was up and the gentlest of summer breezes blowing when he came on deck, after sewing up the scalp of one Kanaka and setting the other's arm. The Malahini lay close in to the beach. For'ard, Hermann and the crew were heaving in and straightening out the tangle of anchors. The Papara and the Tahaa were gone, and Captain Warfield, through the glasses, was searching the opposite rim of the atoll.

"Not a stick left of them," he said. "That's what comes of not having engines. They must have dragged across before the big shift came."

Ashore, where Parlay's house had been, was no vestige of any house. For the space of three hundred yards, where the sea had breached, no tree or even stump was left. Here and there, farther along, stood an occasional palm, and there were numbers which had

been snapped off above the ground. In the crown of one surviving palm Tai-Hotauri asserted he saw something move. There were no boats left to the Malahini, and they watched him swim ashore and climb the tree.

When he came back, they helped over the rail a young native girl of Parley's household. But first she passed up to them a battered basket. In it was a litter of blind kittens–all dead save one, that feebly mewed and staggered on awkward legs.

"Hello!" said Mulhall. "Who's that?"

Along the beach they saw a man walking. He moved casually, as if out for a morning stroll. Captain Warfield gritted his teeth. It was Narii Herring.

"Hello, skipper!" Narii called, when he was abreast of them. "Can I come aboard and get some breakfast?"

Captain Warfield's face and neck began to swell and turn purple. He tried to speak, but choked.

"For two cents–for two cents—-" was all he could manage to articulate.

A Piece of Steak

WITH the last morsel of bread Tom King wiped his plate clean of the last particle of flour gravy and chewed the resulting mouthful in a slow and meditative way. When he arose from the table, he was oppressed by the feeling that he was distinctly hungry. Yet he alone had eaten. The two children in the other room had been sent early to bed in order that in sleep they might forget they had gone supperless. His wife had touched nothing, and had sat silently and watched him with solicitous eyes. She was a thin, worn woman of the working-class, though signs of an earlier prettiness were not wanting in her face. The flour for the gravy she had borrowed from the neighbor across the hall. The last two ha'pennies had gone to buy the bread.

He sat down by the window on a rickety chair that protested under his weight, and quite mechanically he put his pipe in his mouth and dipped into the side pocket of his coat. The absence of any tobacco made him aware of his action, and, with a scowl for his forgetfulness, he put the pipe away. His movements were slow, almost hulking, as though he were burdened by the heavy weight of his muscles. He was a solid-bodied, stolid-looking man, and his appearance did not suffer from being overprepossessing. His rough clothes were old and slouchy. The uppers of his shoes were too weak to carry the heavy resoling that was itself of no recent date. And his cotton shirt, a cheap, two-shilling affair, showed a frayed collar and ineradicable paint stains.

But it was Tom King's face that advertised him unmistakably for what he was. It was the face of a typical prize-fighter; of one who had put in long years of service in the squared ring and, by that means, developed and emphasized all the marks of the fighting beast. It was distinctly a lowering countenance, and, that no feature of it might escape notice, it was clean-shaven. The lips were shapeless, and constituted a mouth harsh to excess, that was like a gash in his face. The jaw was aggressive, brutal, heavy. The eyes, slow of movement and heavy-lidded, were almost expressionless under the shaggy, indrawn brows. Sheer animal that he was, the eyes were the most animal-like feature about him. They were sleepy, lion-like–the eyes of a fighting animal. The forehead slanted quickly back to the hair, which, clipped close, showed every bump of a villainous-looking head. A nose, twice broken and moulded variously by countless blows, and a cauliflower ear, permanently swollen and distorted to twice its size, completed his adornment, while the beard, fresh-shaven as it was, sprouted in the skin and gave the face a blue-black stain.

All together, it was the face of a man to be afraid of in a dark alley or lonely place. And yet Tom King was not a criminal, nor had he ever done anything criminal. Outside of brawls, common to his walk in life, he had harmed no one. Nor had he ever

been known to pick a quarrel. He was a professional, and all the fighting brutishness of him was reserved for his professional appearances. Outside the ring he was slow-going, easy-natured, and, in his younger days, when money was flush, too open-handed for his own good. He bore no grudges and had few enemies. Fighting was a business with him. In the ring he struck to hurt, struck to maim, struck to destroy; but there was no animus in it. It was a plain business proposition. Audiences assembled and paid for the spectacle of men knocking each other out. The winner took the big end of the purse. When Tom King faced the Woolloomoolloo Gouger, twenty years before, he knew that the Gouger's jaw was only four months healed after having been broken in a Newcastle bout. And he had played for that jaw and broken it again in the ninth round, not because he bore the Gouger any ill-will, but because that was the surest way to put the Gouger out and win the big end of the purse. Nor had the Gouger borne him any ill-will for it. It was the game, and both knew the game and played it.

Tom King had never been a talker, and he sat by the window, morosely silent, staring at his hands. The veins stood out on the backs of the hands, large and swollen; and the knuckles, smashed and battered and malformed, testified to the use to which they had been put. He had never heard that a man's life was the life of his arteries, but well he knew the meaning of those big, upstanding veins. His heart had pumped too much blood through them at top pressure. They no longer did the work. He had stretched the elasticity out of them, and with their distention had passed his endurance. He tired easily now. No longer could he do a fast twenty rounds, hammer and tongs, fight, fight, fight, from gong to gong, with fierce rally on top of fierce rally, beaten to the ropes and in turn beating his opponent to the ropes, and rallying fiercest and fastest of all in that last, twentieth round, with the house on its feet and yelling, himself rushing, striking, ducking, raining showers of blows upon showers of blows and receiving showers of blows in return, and all the time the heart faithfully pumping the surging blood through the adequate veins. The veins, swollen at the time, had always shrunk down again, though not quite — each time, imperceptibly at first, remaining just a trifle larger than before. He stared at them and at his battered knuckles, and, for the moment, caught a vision of the youthful excellence of those hands before the first knuckle had been smashed on the head of Benny Jones, otherwise known as the Welsh Terror.

The impression of his hunger came back on him.

"Blimey, but couldn't I go a piece of steak!" he muttered aloud, clenching his huge fists and spitting out a smothered oath.

"I tried both Burke's an' Sawley's," his wife said half apologetically.

"An' they wouldn't?" he demanded.

"Not a ha'penny. Burke said — " She faltered.

"G'wan! Wot'd he say?"

"As how 'e was thinkin' Sandel ud do ye to-night, an' as how yer score was comfortable big as it was."

Tom King grunted, but did not reply. He was busy thinking of the bull terrier he had kept in his younger days to which he had fed steaks without end. Burke would have given him credit for a thousand steaks — then. But times had changed. Tom King was getting old; and old men, fighting before second-rate clubs, couldn't expect to run bills of any size with the tradesmen.

He had got up in the morning with a longing for a piece of steak, and the longing had not abated. He had not had a fair training for this fight. It was a drought year in Australia, times were hard, and even the most irregular work was difficult to find. He had had no sparring partner, and his food had not been of the best nor always sufficient. He had done a few days' navvy work when he could get it, and he had run around the Domain in the early mornings to get his legs in shape. But it was hard, training without a partner and with a wife and two kiddies that must be fed. Credit with the tradesmen had undergone very slight expansion when he was matched with Sandel. The secretary of the Gayety Club had advanced him three pounds — the loser's end of the purse — and beyond that had refused to go. Now and again he had managed to borrow a few shillings from old pals, who would have lent more only that it was a drought year and they were hard put themselves. No — and there was no use in disguising the fact — his training had not been satisfactory. He should have had better food and no worries. Besides, when a man is forty, it is harder to get into condition than when he is twenty.

"What time is it, Lizzie?" he asked.

His wife went across the hall to inquire, and came back.

"Quarter before eight."

"They'll be startin' the first bout in a few minutes," he said. "Only a try-out. Then there's a four-round spar 'tween Dealer Wells an' Gridley, an' a ten-round go 'tween Starlight an' some sailor bloke. don't come on for over an hour."

At the end of another silent ten minutes, he rose to his feet.

"Truth is, Lizzie, I ain't had proper trainin'."

He reached for his hat and started for the door. He did not offer to kiss her — he never did on going out — but on this night she dared to kiss him, throwing her arms around him and compelling him to bend down to her face. She looked quite small against the massive bulk of the man.

"Good luck, Tom," she said. "You gotter do 'im."

"Ay, I gotter do 'im," he repeated. "That's all there is to it. I jus' gotter do 'im."

TomHe laughed with an attempt at heartiness, while she pressed more closely against him. Across her shoulders he looked around the bare room. It was all he had in the world, with the rent overdue, and her and the kiddies. And he was leaving it to go out into the night to get meat for his mate and cubs — not like a modern working-man going to his machine grind, but in the old, primitive, royal, animal way, by fighting for it. "I gotter do 'im," he repeated, this time a hint of desperation in his voice. "If it's a win, it's thirty quid — an' I can pay all that's owin', with a lump o' money left over. If it's a lose, I get naught — not even a penny for me to ride home

on the tram. The secretary's give all that's comin' from a loser's end. Good-by, old woman. I'll come straight home if it's a win."

"An' I'll be waitin' up," she called to him along the hall.

It was full two miles to the Gayety, and as he walked along he remembered how in his palmy days — he had once been the heavyweight champion of New South Wales — he would have ridden in a cab to the fight, and how, most likely, some heavy backer would have paid for the cab and ridden with him. There were Tommy Burns and that Yankee nigger, Jack Johnson — they rode about in motor-cars. And he walked! And, as any man knew, a hard two miles was not the best preliminary to a fight. He was an old un, and the world did not wag well with old uns. He was good for nothing now except navvy work, and his broken nose and swollen ear were against him even in that. He found himself wishing that he had learned a trade. It would have been better in the long run. But no one had told him, and he knew, deep down in his heart, that he would not have listened if they had. It had been so easy. Big money — sharp, glorious fights — periods of rest and loafing in between — a following of eager flatterers, the slaps on the back, the shakes of the hand, the toffs glad to buy him a drink for the privilege of five minutes' talk — and the glory of it, the yelling houses, the whirlwind finish, the referee's "King wins!" and his name in the sporting columns next day.

Those had been times! But he realized now, in his slow, ruminating way, that it was the old uns he had been putting away. He was Youth, rising; and they were Age, sinking. No wonder it had been easy — they with their swollen veins and battered knuckles and weary in the bones of them from the long battles they had already fought. He remembered the time he put out old Stowsher Bill, at Rush-Cutters Bay, in the eighteenth round, and how old Bill had cried afterward in the dressing-room like a baby. Perhaps old Bill's rent had been overdue. Perhaps he'd had at home a missus an' a couple of kiddies. And perhaps Bill, that very day of the fight, had had a hungering for a piece of steak. Bill had fought game and taken incredible punishment. He could see now, after he had gone through the mill himself, that Stowsher Bill had fought for a bigger stake, that night twenty years ago, than had young Tom King, who had fought for glory and easy money. No wonder Stowsher Bill had cried afterward in the dressing-room.

Well, a man had only so many fights in him, to begin with. It was the iron law of the game. One man might have a hundred hard fights in him, another man only twenty; each, according to the make of him and the quality of his fibre, had a definite number, and, when he had fought them, he was done. Yes, he had had more fights in him than most of them, and he had had far more than his share of the hard, gruelling fights — the kind that worked the heart and lungs to bursting, that took the elastic out of the arteries and made hard knots of muscle out of Youth's sleek suppleness, that wore out nerve and stamina and made brain and bones weary from excess of effort and endurance overwrought. Yes, he had done better than all of them. There was none of his old fighting partners left. He was the last of the old guard. He had seen them all finished, and he had had a hand in finishing some of them.

They had tried him out against the old uns, and one after another he had put them away — laughing when, like old Stowsher Bill, they cried in the dressing-room. And now he was an old un, and they tried out the youngsters on him. There was that bloke, Sandel. He had come over from New Zealand with a record behind him. But nobody in Australia knew anything about him, so they put him up against old Tom King. If Sandel made a showing, he would be given better men to fight, with bigger purses to win; so it was to be depended upon that he would put up a fierce battle. He had everything to win by it — money and glory and career; and Tom King was the grizzled old chopping-block that guarded the highway to fame and fortune. And he had nothing to win except thirty quid, to pay to the landlord and the tradesmen. And, as Tom King thus ruminated, there came to his stolid vision the form of Youth, glorious Youth, rising exultant and invincible, supple of muscle and silken of skin, with heart and lungs that had never been tired and torn and that laughed at limitation of effort. Yes, Youth was the Nemesis. It destroyed the old uns and recked not that, in so doing, it destroyed itself. It enlarged its arteries and smashed its knuckles, and was in turn destroyed by Youth. For Youth was ever youthful. It was only Age that grew old.

At Castlereagh Street he turned to the left, and three blocks along came to the Gayety. A crowd of young larrikins hanging outside the door made respectful way for him, and he heard one say to another: "That's 'im! That's Tom King!"

Inside, on the way to his dressing-room, he encountered the secretary, a keen-eyed, shrewd-faced young man, who shook his hand.

"How are you feelin', Tom?" he asked.

"Fit as a fiddle," King answered, though he knew that he lied, and that if he had a quid, he would give it right there for a good piece of steak.

When he emerged from the dressing-room, his seconds behind him, and came down the aisle to the squared ring in the centre of the hall, a burst of greeting and applause went up from the waiting crowd. He acknowledged salutations right and left, though few of the faces did he know. Most of them were the faces of kiddies unborn when he was winning his first laurels in the squared ring. He leaped lightly to the raised platform and ducked through the ropes to his corner, where he sat down on a folding stool. Jack Ball, the referee, came over and shook his hand. Ball was a broken-down pugilist who for over ten years had not entered the ring as a principal. King was glad that he had him for referee. They were both old uns. If he should rough it with Sandel a bit beyond the rules, he knew Ball could be depended upon to pass it by.

Aspiring young heavyweights, one after another, were climbing into the ring and being presented to the audience by the referee. Also, he issued their challenges for them.

"Young Pronto," Bill announced, "from North Sydney, challenges the winner for fifty pounds side bet."

The audience applauded, and applauded again as Sandel himself sprang through the ropes and sat down in his corner. Tom King looked across the ring at him curiously, for in a few minutes they would be locked together in merciless combat, each trying

with all the force of him to knock the other into unconsciousness. But little could he see, for Sandel, like himself, had trousers and sweater on over his ring costume. His face was strongly handsome, crowned with a curly mop of yellow hair, while his thick, muscular neck hinted at bodily magnificence.

Young Pronto went to one corner and then the other, shaking hands with the principals and dropping down out of the ring. The challenges went on. Ever Youth climbed through the ropes — Youth unknown, but insatiable — crying out to mankind that with strength and skill it would match issues with the winner. A few years before, in his own heyday of invincibleness, Tom King would have been amused and bored by these preliminaries. But now he sat fascinated, unable to shake the vision of Youth from his eyes. Always were these youngsters rising up in the boxing game, springing through the ropes and shouting their defiance; and always were the old uns going down before them. They climbed to success over the bodies of the old uns. And ever they came, more and more youngsters — Youth unquenchable and irresistible — and ever they put the old uns away, themselves becoming old uns and travelling the same downward path, while behind them, ever pressing on them, was Youth eternal — the new babies, grown lusty and dragging their elders down, with behind them more babies to the end of time — Youth that must have its will and that will never die.

King glanced over to the press box and nodded to Morgan, of the Sportsman, and Corbett, of the Referee. Then he held out his hands, while Sid Sullivan and Charley Bates, his seconds, slipped on his gloves and laced them tight, closely watched by one of Sandel's seconds, who first examined critically the tapes on King's knuckles. A second of his own was in Sandel's corner, performing a like office. Sandel's trousers were pulled off, and, as he stood up, his sweater was skinned off over his head. And Tom King, looking, saw Youth incarnate, deep-chested, heavy-thewed, with muscles that slipped and slid like live things under the white satin skin. The whole body was acrawl with life, and Tom King knew that it was a life that had never oozed its freshness out through the aching pores during the long fights wherein Youth paid its toll and departed not quite so young as when it entered.

The two men advanced to meet each other, and, as the gong sounded and the seconds clattered out of the ring with the folding stools, they shook hands and instantly took their fighting attitudes. And instantly, like a mechanism of steel and springs balanced on a hair trigger, Sandel was in and out and in again, landing a left to the eyes, a right to the ribs, ducking a counter, dancing lightly away and dancing menacingly back again. He was swift and clever. It was a dazzling exhibition. The house yelled its approbation. But King was not dazzled. He had fought too many fights and too many youngsters. He knew the blows for what they were — too quick and too deft to be dangerous. Evidently Sandel was going to rush things from the start. It was to be expected. It was the way of Youth, expending its splendor and excellence in wild insurgence and furious onslaught, overwhelming opposition with its own unlimited glory of strength and desire.

Sandel was in and out, here, there, and everywhere, light-footed and eager-hearted, a living wonder of white flesh and stinging muscle that wove itself into a dazzling fabric of attack, slipping and leaping like a flying shuttle from action to action through a thousand actions, all of them centred upon the destruction of Tom King, who stood between him and fortune. And Tom King patiently endured. He knew his business, and he knew Youth now that Youth was no longer his. There was nothing to do till the other lost some of his steam, was his thought, and he grinned to himself as he deliberately ducked so as to receive a heavy blow on the top of his head. It was a wicked thing to do, yet eminently fair according to the rules of the boxing game. A man was supposed to take care of his own knuckles, and, if he insisted on hitting an opponent on the top of the head, he did so at his own peril. King could have ducked lower and let the blow whiz harmlessly past, but he remembered his own early fights and how he smashed his first knuckle on the head of the Welsh Terror. He was but playing the game. That duck had accounted for one of Sandel's knuckles. Not that Sandel would mind it now. He would go on, superbly regardless, hitting as hard as ever throughout the fight. But later on, when the long ring battles had begun to tell, he would regret that knuckle and look back and remember how he smashed it on Tom King's head.

The first round was all Sandel's, and he had the house yelling with the rapidity of his whirlwind rushes. He overwhelmed King with avalanches of punches, and King did nothing. He never struck once, contenting himself with covering up, blocking and ducking and clinching to avoid punishment. He occasionally feinted, shook his head when the weight of a punch landed, and moved stolidly about, never leaping or springing or wasting an ounce of strength. Sandel must foam the froth of Youth away before discreet Age could dare to retaliate. All King's movements were slow and methodical, and his heavy-lidded, slow-moving eyes gave him the appearance of being half asleep or dazed. Yet they were eyes that saw everything, that had been trained to see everything through all his twenty years and odd in the ring. They were eyes that did not blink or waver before an impending blow, but that coolly saw and measured distance.

Seated in his corner for the minute's rest at the end of the round, he lay back with outstretched legs, his arms resting on the right angle of the ropes, his chest and abdomen heaving frankly and deeply as he gulped down the air driven by the towels of his seconds. He listened with closed eyes to the voices of the house, "Why don't yeh fight, Tom?" many were crying. "Yeh ain't afraid of 'im, are yeh?"

"Muscle-bound," he heard a man on a front seat comment. "He can't move quicker. Two to one on Sandel, in quids."

The gong struck and the two men advanced from their corners. Sandel came forward fully three-quarters of the distance, eager to begin again; but King was content to advance the shorter distance. It was in line with his policy of economy. He had not been well trained, and he had not had enough to eat, and every step counted. Besides, he had already walked two miles to the ringside. It was a repetition of the first round, with Sandel attacking like a whirlwind and with the audience indignantly demanding

why King did not fight. Beyond feinting and several slowly delivered and ineffectual blows he did nothing save block and stall and clinch. Sandel wanted to make the pace fast, while King, out of his wisdom, refused to accommodate him. He grinned with a certain wistful pathos in his ring-battered countenance, and went on cherishing his strength with the jealousy of which only Age is capable. Sandel was Youth, and he threw his strength away with the munificent abandon of Youth. To King belonged the ring generalship, the wisdom bred of long, aching fights. He watched with cool eyes and head, moving slowly and waiting for Sandel's froth to foam away. To the majority of the onlookers it seemed as though King was hopelessly outclassed, and they voiced their opinion in offers of three to one on Sandel. But there were wise ones, a few, who knew King of old time, and who covered what they considered easy money.

The third round began as usual, one-sided, with Sandel doing all the leading and delivering all the punishment. A half-minute had passed when Sandel, overconfident, left an opening. King's eyes and right arm flashed in the same instant. It was his first real blow — a hook, with the twisted arch of the arm to make it rigid, and with all the weight of the half-pivoted body behind it. It was like a sleepy-seeming lion suddenly thrusting out a lightning paw. Sandel, caught on the side of the jaw, was felled like a bullock. The audience gasped and murmured awe-stricken applause. The man was not muscle-bound, after all, and he could drive a blow like a trip-hammer.

Sandel was shaken. He rolled over and attempted to rise, but the sharp yells from his seconds to take the count restrained him. He knelt on one knee, ready to rise, and waited, while the referee stood over him, counting the seconds loudly in his ear. At the ninth he rose in fighting attitude, and Tom King, facing him, knew regret that the blow had not been an inch nearer the point of the jaw. That would have been a knockout, and he could have carried the thirty quid home to the missus and the kiddies.

The round continued to the end of its three minutes, Sandel for the first time respectful of his opponent and King slow of movement and sleepy-eyed as ever. As the round neared its close, King, warned of the fact by sight of the seconds crouching outside ready for the spring in through the ropes, worked the fight around to his own corner. And when the gong struck, he sat down immediately on the waiting stool, while Sandel had to walk all the way across the diagonal of the square to his own corner. It was a little thing, but it was the sum of little things that counted. Sandel was compelled to walk that many more steps, to give up that much energy, and to lose a part of the precious minute of rest. At the beginning of every round King loafed slowly out from his corner, forcing his opponent to advance the greater distance. The end of every round found the fight maneuvred by King into his own corner so that he could immediately sit down.

Two more rounds went by, in which King was parsimonious of effort and Sandel prodigal. The latter's attempt to force a fast pace made King uncomfortable, for a fair percentage of the multitudinous blows showered upon him went home. Yet King persisted in his dogged slowness, despite the crying of the young hotheads for him

to go in and fight. Again, in the sixth round, Sandel was careless, again Tom King's fearful right flashed out to the jaw, and again Sandel took the nine seconds count.

By the seventh round Sandel's pink of condition was gone, and he settled down to what he knew was to be the hardest fight in his experience. Tom King was an old un, but a better old un than he had ever encountered — an old un who never lost his head, who was remarkably able at defence, whose blows had the impact of a knotted club, and who had a knockout in either hand. Nevertheless, Tom King dared not hit often. He never forgot his battered knuckles, and knew that every hit must count if the knuckles were to last out the fight. As he sat in his corner, glancing across at his opponent, the thought came to him that the sum of his wisdom and Sandel's youth would constitute a world's champion heavyweight. But that was the trouble. Sandel would never become a world champion. He lacked the wisdom, and the only way for him to get it was to buy it with Youth; and when wisdom was his, Youth would have been spent in buying it.

King took every advantage he knew. He never missed an opportunity to clinch, and in effecting most of the clinches his shoulder drove stiffly into the other's ribs. In the philosophy of the ring a shoulder was as good as a punch so far as damage was concerned, and a great deal better so far as concerned expenditure of effort. Also, in the clinches King rested his weight on his opponent, and was loath to let go. This compelled the interference of the referee, who tore them apart, always assisted by Sandel, who had not yet learned to rest. He could not refrain from using those glorious flying arms and writhing muscles of his, and when the other rushed into a clinch, striking shoulder against ribs, and with head resting under Sandel's left arm, Sandel almost invariably swung his right behind his own back and into the projecting face. It was a clever stroke, much admired by the audience, but it was not dangerous, and was, therefore, just that much wasted strength. But Sandel was tireless and unaware of limitations, and King grinned and doggedly endured.

Sandel developed a fierce right to the body, which made it appear that King was taking an enormous amount of punishment, and it was only the old ringsters who appreciated the deft touch of King's left glove to the other's biceps just before the impact of the blow. It was true, the blow landed each time; but each time it was robbed of its power by that touch on the biceps. In the ninth round, three times inside a minute, King's right hooked its twisted arch to the jaw; and three times Sandel's body, heavy as it was, was levelled to the mat. Each time he took the nine seconds allowed him and rose to his feet, shaken and jarred, but still strong. He had lost much of his speed, and he wasted less effort. He was fighting grimly; but he continued to draw upon his chief asset, which was Youth. King's chief asset was experience. As his vitality had dimmed and his vigor abated, he had replaced them with cunning, with wisdom born of the long fights and with a careful shepherding of strength. Not alone had he learned never to make a superfluous movement, but he had learned how to seduce an opponent into throwing his strength away. Again and again, by feint of foot and hand and body he continued to inveigle Sandel into leaping back, ducking, or

countering. King rested, but he never permitted Sandel to rest. It was the strategy of Age.

Early in the tenth round King began stopping the other's rushes with straight lefts to the face, and Sandel, grown wary, responded by drawing the left, then by ducking it and delivering his right in a swinging hook to the side of the head. It was too high up to be vitally effective; but when first it landed, King knew the old, familiar descent of the black veil of unconsciousness across his mind. For the instant, or for the slightest fraction of an instant, rather, he ceased. In the one moment he saw his opponent ducking out of his field of vision and the background of white, watching faces; in the next moment he again saw his opponent and the background of faces. It was as if he had slept for a time and just opened his eyes again, and yet the interval of unconsciousness was so microscopically short that there had been no time for him to fall. The audience saw him totter and his knees give, and then saw him recover and tuck his chin deeper into the shelter of his left shoulder.

Several times Sandel repeated the blow, keeping King partially dazed, and then the latter worked out his defence, which was also a counter. Feinting with his left he took a half-step backward, at the same time upper cutting with the whole strength of his right. So accurately was it timed that it landed squarely on Sandel's face in the full, downward sweep of the duck, and Sandel lifted in the air and curled backward, striking the mat on his head and shoulders. Twice King achieved this, then turned loose and hammered his opponent to the ropes. He gave Sandel no chance to rest or to set himself, but smashed blow in upon blow till the house rose to its feet and the air was filled with an unbroken roar of applause. But Sandel's strength and endurance were superb, and he continued to stay on his feet. A knockout seemed certain, and a captain of police, appalled at the dreadful punishment, arose by the ringside to stop the fight. The gong struck for the end of the round and Sandel staggered to his corner, protesting to the captain that he was sound and strong. To prove it, he threw two back air-springs, and the police captain gave in.

Tom King, leaning back in his corner and breathing hard, was disappointed. If the fight had been stopped, the referee, perforce, would have rendered him the decision and the purse would have been his. Unlike Sandel, he was not fighting for glory or career, but for thirty quid. And now Sandel would recuperate in the minute of rest.

Youth will be served — this saying flashed into King's mind, and he remembered the first time he had heard it, the night when he had put away Stowsher Bill. The toff who had bought him a drink after the fight and patted him on the shoulder had used those words. Youth will be served! The toff was right. And on that night in the long ago he had been Youth. To-night Youth sat in the opposite corner. As for himself, he had been fighting for half an hour now, and he was an old man. Had he fought like Sandel, he would not have lasted fifteen minutes. But the point was that he did not recuperate. Those upstanding arteries and that sorely tried heart would not enable him to gather strength in the intervals between the rounds. And he had not had sufficient strength in him to begin with. His legs were heavy under him and beginning to cramp.

He should not have walked those two miles to the fight. And there was the steak which he had got up longing for that morning. A great and terrible hatred rose up in him for the butchers who had refused him credit. It was hard for an old man to go into a fight without enough to eat. And a piece of steak was such a little thing, a few pennies at best; yet it meant thirty quid to him.

With the gong that opened the eleventh round, Sandel rushed, making a show of freshness which he did not really possess. King knew it for what it was — a bluff as old as the game itself. He clinched to save himself, then, going free, allowed Sandel to get set. This was what King desired. He feinted with his left, drew the answering duck and swinging upward hook, then made the half-step backward, delivered the upper cut full to the face and crumpled Sandel over to the mat. After that he never let him rest, receiving punishment himself, but inflicting far more, smashing Sandel to the ropes, hooking and driving all manner of blows into him, tearing away from his clinches or punching him out of attempted clinches, and ever when Sandel would have fallen, catching him with one uplifting hand and with the other immediately smashing him into the ropes where he could not fall.

The house by this time had gone mad, and it was his house, nearly every voice yelling: "Go it, Tom!" "Get 'im! Get 'im!" "You've got 'im, Tom! You've got 'im!" It was to be a whirlwind finish, and that was what a ringside audience paid to see.

And Tom King, who for half an hour had conserved his strength, now expended it prodigally in the one great effort he knew he had in him. It was his one chance — now or not at all. His strength was waning fast, and his hope was that before the last of it ebbed out of him he would have beaten his opponent down for the count. And as he continued to strike and force, coolly estimating the weight of his blows and the quality of the damage wrought, he realized how hard a man Sandel was to knock out. Stamina and endurance were his to an extreme degree, and they were the virgin stamina and endurance of Youth. Sandel was certainly a coming man. He had it in him. Only out of such rugged fibre were successful fighters fashioned.

Sandel was reeling and staggering, but Tom King's legs were cramping and his knuckles going back on him. Yet he steeled himself to strike the fierce blows, every one of which brought anguish to his tortured hands. Though now he was receiving practically no punishment, he was weakening as rapidly as the other. His blows went home, but there was no longer the weight behind them, and each blow was the result of a severe effort of will. His legs were like lead, and they dragged visibly under him; while Sandel's backers, cheered by this symptom, began calling encouragement to their man.

King was spurred to a burst of effort. He delivered two blows in succession — a left, a trifle too high, to the solar plexus, and a right cross to the jaw. They were not heavy blows, yet so weak and dazed was Sandel that he went down and lay quivering. The referee stood over him, shouting the count of the fatal seconds in his ear. If before the tenth second was called, he did not rise, the fight was lost. The house stood in hushed silence. King rested on trembling legs. A mortal dizziness was upon him, and

before his eyes the sea of faces sagged and swayed, while to his ears, as from a remote distance, came the count of the referee. Yet he looked upon the fight as his. It was impossible that a man so punished could rise.

Only Youth could rise, and Sandel rose. At the fourth second he rolled over on his face and groped blindly for the ropes. By the seventh second he had dragged himself to his knee, where he rested, his head rolling groggily on his shoulders. As the referee cried "Nine!" Sandel stood upright, in proper stalling position, his left arm wrapped about his face, his right wrapped about his stomach. Thus were his vital points guarded, while he lurched forward toward King in the hope of effecting a clinch and gaining more time.

At the instant Sandel arose, King was at him, but the two blows he delivered were muffled on the stalled arms. The next moment Sandel was in the clinch and holding on desperately while the referee strove to drag the two men apart. King helped to force himself free. He knew the rapidity with which Youth recovered, and he knew that Sandel was his if he could prevent that recovery. One stiff punch would do it. Sandel was his, indubitably his. He had outgeneralled him, outfought him, outpointed him. Sandel reeled out of the clinch, balanced on the hair line between defeat or survival. One good blow would topple him over and down and out. And Tom King, in a flash of bitterness, remembered the piece of steak and wished that he had it then behind that necessary punch he must deliver. He nerved himself for the blow, but it was not heavy enough nor swift enough. Sandel swayed, but did not fall, staggering back to the ropes and holding on. King staggered after him, and, with a pang like that of dissolution, delivered another blow. But his body had deserted him. All that was left of him was a fighting intelligence that was dimmed and clouded from exhaustion. The blow that was aimed for the jaw struck no higher than the shoulder. He had willed the blow higher, but the tired muscles had not been able to obey. And, from the impact of the blow, Tom King himself reeled back and nearly fell. Once again he strove. This time his punch missed altogether, and, from absolute weakness, he fell against Sandel and clinched, holding on to him to save himself from sinking to the floor.

King did not attempt to free himself. He had shot his bolt. He was gone. And Youth had been served. Even in the clinch he could feel Sandel growing stronger against him. When the referee thrust them apart, there, before his eyes, he saw Youth recuperate. From instant to instant Sandel grew stronger. His punches, weak and futile at first, became stiff and accurate. Tom King's bleared eyes saw the gloved fist driving at his jaw, and he willed to guard it by interposing his arm. He saw the danger, willed the act; but the arm was too heavy. It seemed burdened with a hundredweight of lead. It would not lift itself, and he strove to lift it with his soul. Then the gloved fist landed home. He experienced a sharp snap that was like an electric spark, and, simultaneously, the veil of blackness enveloped him.

When he opened his eyes again he was in his corner, and he heard the yelling of the audience like the roar of the surf at Bondi Beach. A wet sponge was being pressed against the base of his brain, and Sid Sullivan was blowing cold water in a refreshing

spray over his face and chest. His gloves had already been removed, and Sandel, bending over him, was shaking his hand. He bore no ill-will toward the man who had put him out, and he returned the grip with a heartiness that made his battered knuckles protest. Then Sandel stepped to the centre of the ring and the audience hushed its pandemonium to hear him accept young Pronto's challenge and offer to increase the side bet to one hundred pounds. King looked on apathetically while his seconds mopped the streaming water from him, dried his face, and prepared him to leave the ring. He felt hungry. It was not the ordinary, gnawing kind, but a great faintness, a palpitation at the pit of the stomach that communicated itself to all his body. He remembered back into the fight to the moment when he had Sandel swaying and tottering on the hair-line balance of defeat. Ah, that piece of steak would have done it! He had lacked just that for the decisive blow, and he had lost. It was all because of the piece of steak.

His seconds were half-supporting him as they helped him through the ropes. He tore free from them, ducked through the ropes unaided, and leaped heavily to the floor, following on their heels as they forced a passage for him down the crowded centre aisle. Leaving the dressing-room for the street, in the entrance to the hall, some young fellow spoke to him.

"W'y didn't yuh go in an' get 'im when yuh 'ad 'im?" the young fellow asked.

"Aw, go to hell!" said Tom King, and passed down the steps to the sidewalk.

The doors of the public house at the corner were swinging wide, and he saw the lights and the smiling barmaids, heard the many voices discussing the fight and the prosperous chink of money on the bar. Somebody called to him to have a drink. He hesitated perceptibly, then refused and went on his way.

TomHe had not a copper in his pocket, and the two-mile walk home seemed very long. He was certainly getting old. Crossing the Domain, he sat down suddenly on a bench, unnerved by the thought of the missus sitting up for him, waiting to learn the outcome of the fight. That was harder than any knockout, and it seemed almost impossible to face.

He felt weak and sore, and the pain of his smashed knuckles warned him that, even if he could find a job at navvy work, it would be a week before he could grip a pick handle or a shovel. The hunger palpitation at the pit of the stomach was sickening. His wretchedness overwhelmed him, and into his eyes came an unwonted moisture. He covered his face with his hands, and, as he cried, he remembered Stowsher Bill and how he had served him that night in the long ago. Poor old Stowsher Bill! He could understand now why Bill had cried in the dressing-room.

The Plague Ship

"WHAT'S this! What's this! Do you wish to kill the man? Such treatment is too heroic. Bah! An emetic of ipecacuanha, fifteen grains of powdered calomel and as many of quinine, and then castor oil! Why my dear madam, you know absolutely nothing about medicine!" and the speaker glared indignantly at her.

She flushed, half hurt, half angry, but smothering her feeling, replied, "What do you take the case to be? Typhus?"

"No. It's merely a bilious fever, made the more severe by this d — , I beg your pardon, this infernal weather."

"Bilious fever! Ha! Ha! Ha!" They had withdrawn from the side of the sufferer, and she burst forth into merry peals of laughter.

"Yes, madam, I repeat it. Bilious fever. Bilious fever! Do you hear? Bilious! Bilious! Bilious fever!"

"My dear sir, though I do not know you, from the wondrous knowledge you display I'll call you doctor. Then doctor, let me ask you if you have ever heard of black vomit, or, if that does not come within your technical nomenclature, yellow fever?"

"What symptoms does the man evince. Madam Know-It-All?"

"Miss Know-It-All, if you please. Languor, chilliness, muscular pains, headache, fa — "

"Precursors of any febrile attack. You evidently do — "

"Face flushed, eyes suffused then congested, nostrils and lips red, tongue scarlet, temperature 105, loss — "

"Loss of appetite, hot skin, thirst, nausea, restlessness, and delirium — all the usual accompaniments of any high fever — go on Miss — Miss — "

"Miss Know-It-All. But all these militant symptoms have ceased and he is now in a state of prostration and collapse. This, the stadium, is as you know the great characteristic of yellow fever."

"Collapse! Bah! Convalescence. The man is recovering but weak, and here I find you have given him ipecacuanha, calomel, quinine and castor oil. Where's the ship's doctor? I'll have you out of here!"

"As for the ship's doctor, he's sick too, with bilious fever I suppose. And for you, who are you, pray? Don't rest under the hallucination that you are still walking your hospital, wherever it may be. I am as competent as you; nay, have a diploma as well as you: and as to this case, have had too much experience to be mistaken."

“Madam — A — A — Miss — I — I — I — I’ll see the captain at once. You’re a-a-a — don’t know your business!” And in choleric wrath he left her in pursuit of the chief officer.

The steamer Caspar had left the West Coast, with a clean bill of health and in first class order, for San Francisco. But fortune had illy favored her and from the first day her voyage had been one of trials and tribulations. She had been fearfully overloaded with both cargo and passengers. So low did she float in the water that she seemed and behaved like a log. All buoyancy was lost: she was dead, plunging through instead of rising to the great seas she had met with. In this condition she had encountered a storm, broken her propeller shaft, and been blown hundreds of miles out of her course into the Pacific. The engineers had worked night and day but could effect no permanent repair. They would manage to run the engines a few hours, then their patches would give away and they would be forced to stop twice as long to again make ineffectual repairs. They were still far out of their course and even the captain did not know when they would get back. To make it worse, they had been blown into an unfrequented portion of the ocean, far from the beaten paths, and could look to no outside source for assistance.

There were 158 first class passengers and only berths for 95. Many of the ladies were forced to sleep on lounges and settees, while the gentlemen literally floored and walled the smoking saloon when bedtime came. While it was thus rather hard on the first class passengers, it was worse on the second, and in the steerage it was frightful. Some of second class berths were directly over the screw and so close to the Chinese quarters as to be rendered almost uninhabitable by the fumes of opium and otherwise abominable stenches. In the after-lower-deck, it was more like a cattle ship. Four Chinese, half a score of Negroes, and quadruple as many white people, the majority of which were seasick, were crowded into this hole. So far down was it, that there was no ventilation save through the ports, which more often were bolted down than otherwise.

And now, in the fierce tropic heat of midsummer, to cap their misery, fever had broken forth. While many were hasty in proclaiming it the terrible yellow jack, the more clear-headed, cognizant of their horrible condition, naturally attributed it to that. The ship’s doctor, a too efficient and too poorly paid man, had been the first to come down, leaving the passengers and men to take care of themselves. Their endeavors had been spasmodic and erratic. A fifth of the crew were down and the rest were on the verge of mutiny, threatening to take to the boats. The firemen and stokers were as bad, no longer yielding subordination to their officers. The Chinese, while none were taken ill, continued to stolidly smoke their opium, turning a deaf ear to the protests of the passengers and the commands of the captain, which they knew could not be enforced. The first officer, in despair, had taken to whiskey and was now locked up in a fit of horrors, while the rest of the officers were nearly crazy in their impotency. The passengers were just beginning to awake to their danger; but as yet, save for the isolated efforts of the couple that quarreled over the diagnosis, had done nothing.

Doctor Chandler, who maintained it was bilious fever, had yet to meet his thirtieth birthday. He was returning from an expedition to Peru, on which he had been absent a year. Long retired, in fact, except for his hospital experience, he had never taken up a practice; for the same hand that educated him, had, on its demise, endowed him with an ample fortune. Possessed of a scientific worship for good sanitation — it was his hobby — to the absence of it he attributed, under various names, the sickness which had fallen on them.

Miss Appleton, while possessed of a diploma, had perhaps not as I much experience in hospitals, but of Southern origin, she had gone I through an epidemic of yellow fever in New Orleans and was familiar with all its symptoms. She was a woman not more than twenty-five, beautiful as the word goes, but owing more to a pleasant, forceful personality than to her physical charms. Traveling with her aunt, as soon as the disease had manifested itself, she deserted her to the attention of a maid and threw herself into the breach. And thus, just as she had attempted her first case, had she encountered Doctor Chandler, who had similarly awakened and who was in search of his first patient.

Several days had elapsed and things were going from bad to worse. At last, everybody had been forced to acknowledge that the disease was yellow fever, even Doctor Chandler, who had become very contrite and usually begged Miss Appleton's pardon every other time they met. Though rather rash and headstrong, he was really a good fellow at heart, and soon the twain were on the best of footings. He was generous and self-sacrificing to a fault and devoted himself night and day to the struggle. Maud Appleton easily penetrated his brusque exterior and grew to understand and like him. Still, they occasionally quarreled over methods of treatment, nor, it must be confessed, was she always in the right.

In the meanwhile, the ship's doctor, several of the stewards and cooks, and quite a number of the passengers and crew had succumbed and been given hasty sea burial. The captain had caught the contagion and lay helpless in his stateroom, leaving only the second and third officers to manage the men whom every day saw the more unruly and boisterous. Save the two doctors and the dozen or so that had volunteered as assistants, the passengers were sunk in a state of lethargic horror. At first they had been panic stricken, but that had now subsided and they had become stolidly indifferent to the course of events. They recognized no ties except those of blood, and selfishly struggled for their individual creature-comforts — few, it must be acknowledged, they obtained, for each hour the discipline grew more lax and nothing could be obtained from the stewards and waiters without liberal tipping. In short, the plague ship had become a floating hell in which brute struggled with brute for survival.

Sick and giddy. Miss Appleton had staggered from out the fetid atmosphere below-decks, and now was leaning over the rail in a vain effort to catch some refreshing breeze. The Caspar lay in the trough of the sea idly rolling to the smooth swell. She had no steerage-way; the quartermaster had deserted the wheel; the engineers had given up the struggle; and despair had settled upon the ship. The heat was suffocating, and

as Maud panted for breath she was approached by the indefatigable Doctor Chandler, who had new cause of quarrel concerning the treatment of one of her patients. But they quarreled good-naturedly now, more in pleasant badinage and sharp repartee. Amid all their misery, it had become their one source of pleasure — a contest of wit and skill, in which personality was lost in the keenness of professional zeal. Though their methods were quite diverse, he had lost as many patients as she, while in the number of recoveries she was one the better of him — the patient over which they had had their first dispute being now in the last stage of convalescence. This rankled the doctor, in a professional way, and did not in the least abate his faith in his treatment, while he ascribed her success to a phenomenonal streak of luck, which gave her the patients that would have recovered any way.

But while they enjoyed themselves in their merry dispute, affairs of moment were approaching a crisis. The crew had long before deserted their stuffy fore-castle and camped on deck beneath sails spread as awnings. Later they were joined by the stokers, oilers and firemen, who brought along their sea-bags and blankets. Here, in full view of the terrorized passengers, they played cards, fought, cursed God and man, and refused all duty. Too powerful to break, the officers were forced to send their meals to them and to pray that they would not take to the boats. For all their lawlessness, however, they maintained a crude organization and enforced their rules with terrible penalties. Whenever one fell sick, he was carried away to the fore-castle and attended upon by shifts appointed for that purpose. Only this morning, the remainder of the cooks, waiters and mess-boys had deserted and come forward to join them. As the crowd of them, carrying all the paraphernalia for an improvised camp, came marching along the deck, they had received am otherwise than cool reception.

"I say, lads, what the — — are we to do for cooks and mess-byes and grub?" queried one of the tars.

An instant sufficed for the mutineers to grasp the situation. Withj belaying pins and sheath-knives they drove the would be deserters, bag and baggage, back to their duty, incidentally breaking a few heads andj creating a momentary pandemonium. This incident had given the shifty second and third officers their cue, which they were soon to utilize with such disastrous consequence.

The mutineers quickly gave full intimation of their next procedure. They took possession of the boats; saw to it that they were seaworthy; and looting the hold, provisioned them. The passengers crowded the after-decks in a terror-stricken mass, while a few of the more clear-headed, grouped round the officers and placed themselves at their service. As the day proceeded, the panic grew: several mutineers they saw fall to the deck, overcome by the heat and the dread yellow jack. These were quickly carried away to the improvised hospital while their comrades worked the faster in completing their preparations.

Nor was this the only trouble which threatened. The three score Chinese between decks, who till now had manifested no discontent, were ripe for revolt. The contemplated desertion of the cooks and waiters had left them without food for twenty-four

hours, and the officers had been forced to lock them in. Left to their fate, their yells and curses penetrated throughout the ship and at any moment they were expected to break forth. To add to the terror, the sick and dying, actuated by some subtle impulse, had broken out in loud cries and wailing.

It was at this moment that the officers put into execution the plan they had conceived. Why not turn these two destructive forces, which threatened them, against each other? The sailors were in just the mood for a fight, and as they never lost any love for their Asiatic brethren, it would not take much to precipitate one. The second officer argued that if they left the ship, those that remained would be at the mercy of the Chinese, and, since they were bound to take to the boats, it were best to be left behind in safety by cleaning the Chinese out. And again, he thought if the conflict were severe enough, the ranks of the mutineers would be so decimated, that he could conquer them with the help of the passengers, engineers, cooks and stewards.

Maud and Doctor Chandler had concluded their quarrel with the customary assurance of good comradeship and an agreement. Each was to choose a patient that had just come down and take exclusive control, brooking no interference and applying their own method in its extremity. As chance had it, they chose a pair which had just taken to their berths: a young Californian and his sister, returning from a visit to their father, an extensive mine-owner in Peru. She selected the young man, and he, the sister. Leaving the deck, they were elbowing their way among the passengers who had been sent below by the second officer. Amid the confusion on every side, as they entered the saloon, anarchy and hell broke forth.

The hub-bub which the Chinese incessantly maintained had ceased tor a space; but now, redoubled in fury, it arose, amid the crashing of heavy bodies and the splintering of wood. They heard the rapid revolver snots of the two engineers set to guard them, followed by terrible oaths anu ^neks of agony. Then the passageways were thronged and the yel-ow devils, inflamed with blood, were upon them. At this juncture, the door of the first officer's stateroom flew open, and he sprang out, an awful sight to behold. He was evidently suffering the tortures of delirium tremens: his eyes were set and dilated; his gigantic body convulsed with nervous spasms; his mouth a mass of froth and blood. Throwing himself into the doorway, armed with nothing but a huge battle-axe (some curio of his), he held the fiends at bay. The fleeing passengers blocked the other exit while those that remained, beheld a wondrous struggle. Among the Chinese were some of the most redoubtable high-binders and hatchet-men of the coast — mercenary and trained fighters I for the societies to which they owed their allegiance. Unlike the average Chinese, they were not cowardly: murder and bloodshed was their profession.

His battle-axe described flaming circles of steel as it flew back and forth, hither and thither, on its mission of death. At first, the marauders had rushed to their certain fate; but now they drew back, leaving several of their number beneath his feet. Into the narrow passage they knew he dare not pursue for lack of space in which to wield his great weapon. Stepping to the fore, their leader prepared to finish the struggle.

It seemed as though David had come forward to face Goliah. His appearance belied his reputation as the wonderful Ah Sen, the fiercest of all hatchet-men: slender and effeminate of form, his delicate face seemed more that of a smooth-faced boy or woman, than that of a notorious desperado. Seizing the proffered knives of his men, thrice he cast one, full at his opponent. They leaped from his hand like rays of glancing light, turning half way round in mid air and burying themselves in the first officer's breast. Yet he seemed not to feel them. Again he tried; but this time, aiming at the throat, it hurtled past still intent on its mission and sank between the shoulders of one of the ladies, struggling in the press at the other door. The highbinder, evincing not the slightest irritation at his failures, changed the method of attack. Seizing a hatchet, with the speed of the lightning, it pursued the path of its predecessors. Full on the forehead, it struck the giant, who swayed, tottered, sank to his knees: like a cat. Ah Sen followed his weapon to his fate. For one second the giant was endowed with the full vigor of his strength, and in that second, Ah Sen encountered him. There was no struggle. Rising to his feet and totally disregarding the knife which entered his side, he seized the slender-necked celestial by the head with both his hands — once — twice — his body whirled in giddying orbit round his head. There was a snap of bones and rending of flesh and Ah Sen sank to the floor, his neck wrung like a chicken's. The next instant he was joined by his antagonist, who fell beside him, literally hacked to pieces by a score of knives and hatchets.

In the meantime, the officers had been busy persuading the mutineers to do the one act of mercy before they left the ship. The celerity with which the contagion spread and its malignancy, had put them in a fright, terrible to behold in strong, fearless men. They had been loth to listen, doggedly proceeding with the work of launching the boats, all bent upon their departure, but when the noise of the combat reached them and they knew that the Chinese were up, they forsook their tasks, hastily armed themselves with cutlasses distributed by the first officer, and sprang to the rescue.

Dividing into two parties, after killing a few stragglers which they caught murdering and robbing the passengers, they hemmed the remainder in the great saloon. Here, aided by the firearms of the officers, a short but sanguinary conflict ensued, ending in the complete annihilation of the Asiatics.

Exhilarated by their success; their fiercest passions aroused by the battle and blood; all the brutishness of primeval man burst forth and the sailors were in the mood for any mischief. Bloodstained and panting, they grouped about the ringleader, who, qualified with all the attributes that go to make the sea-lawyer and popular demagogue, addressed them in a short but very trite speech:

"Ho! My lads! We've blasted the heathen and saved the ship — never say die says I — we've saved the passengers too — ain't it so? (Interruptions of "Aye, aye, that we have.") and in saving their bloody necks, we save their treasures too — what say ye? (An' where do we come off? Aye, that's the ticket!) Hold your jaw, Jack Gunderson: I'm coming to that. Yes, where do we get off? The company? (Ha! Ha! Ha! The skinflints! They'll pay us — see us with Davy Jones first!) Aye, my lads, that's not true enough:

they'd see you in hell first, a-simmering like pork-chops in the galley. But here's the proposition: let the blasted passengers keep their bloomin' lives and us their treasure. What say ye, mates?" A burst of applause and cries of "A loot! A loot!" signified that it had been answered in the affirmative.

Charybdis had saved the passengers from Scylla to engulf them himself. It was not destruction, however, for quickly overcoming the officers and the remnant of their supporters, they assured the passengers of their good will and desire for suitable reward. The latter they at once I proceeded to appropriate.

The sailors fell to their work with a vengeance, and in the scenes I which followed, there was much mingling of the ludicrous and the tragic. Staterooms were ransacked, baggage of all descriptions turned upside down and inside out, and articles of wearing apparel appropri-1 ated; nor did they hesitate to personally despoil the passengers. Maud's I aunt, an old lady, yet vigorous in body, mind and invective, led two of I the tars, intent on her magnificent earrings, a merry chase. She finally sought refuge in the stateroom of the Senor Morella, an Honduras patriot, martial of aspect and afflicted with a wooden leg — a memento of his latest insurrection. He lay in his berth, dying, with his artificiall limb unstrapped but near him. Seizing this redoubtable weapon, she laid about her with such will and good purpose, as to down the robbers as fast as they stuck their heads inside. Quite a crowd ceased theiti looting to enjoy the fun. But the "old she-devil," as they delightfully termed her, held her own against all comers.

As usual, the men broke into the spirit room, and while some became good-natured and jolly, others became the more violent. Fearing injury to her aunt, Maud hurried forward to persuade her into giving up her jewels, accompanied, of course, by Chandler, as protector. He was quickly dispossessed of his gold repeater and diamond links — little incidents which he scarcely heeded, so intent was he on guarding Maud. She, however, failed in her mission, barely missing being brained by her somewhat confused and belligerent relative. Though frustrated as a peacemaker, she well succeeded in involving herself and protector in new troubles. One of the sailors, a big, hulking brute, rendered amorous by the too-frequent caress of certain plainly labeled bottles, threw his arm about her waist and drew her to him. Quick, full on the lips, he kissed her.

In that moment did the doctor become cognizant of a new sensatition — a sensation he knew to be different from any he would have felt, had it been a woman other than her. A swift shoulder-blow, and the man lay in a heap on the floor. The next instant he was on his feet, cursing and glowering malignantly at the doctor, who, in the heat of his anger, made as though to repeat the performance. To Maud, events followed like a flash: the fellow's cutlass hissed through the air; a comrade interposed another; the blow was broken but still fell upon Chandler's head; and when she beheld the rush of blood, she experienced a strangely-intense and solicitous anxiety for him.

"A breeze! A breeze! My hearties! Fair wind for Mexico!" came a cry from above. A second saw the mutineers on deck, springing into the boats which lay along side. The Caspar was deserted.

In the bloodstained cabin, amid the weeping and shrieking of women, the wailing of the fever-stricken, and the curses and groans of the dying combatants, Chandler, bathed in a baptism of blood, and Maud, flushed and fainting with what had transpired, sprang or rather tottered and fell into each other's arms. There, in that moment of horror, with all the hideousness of the present and terror of the future upon them, they confessed their newly-discovered and mutual love.

Many days had elapsed. Helpless, the Caspar drifted about with her cargo of misery and death. No help had come: none was expected, save through the safe arrival of the deserters in Mexico, which was merely problematic. In the absence of this disorderly element, the survivors had settled down to an orderly existence, systematized everything, isolated forward the fever patients, and were getting along far better than might have been expected from people in their condition. As a traveler in Yosemite loses all conception and appreciation of height and distance, so had they lost all horror of their situation. Continually facing death, they had come to fear it not; and great indeed must have been the occurrence which could have surprised them from out their placidity. They had not broken under the strain but merely accustomed themselves to it. In fact, they were progressing finely, and too much could not be attributed to the two doctors, who, while loving, still quarreled over methods.

Meanwhile, Maud and the doctor, while in no wise neglecting their other cases, devoted themselves night and day to the particular ones of the brother and sister. They had been very sick, but never, even in the worst of crises when the toss of a penny would have almost decided life or death, had the two physicians even dreamed of consulting each other. They had put into the fullest operation their favorite methods, and so strong was their professional rivalry, that they abided the result with far more anxiety than is usually the lot of the patient to receive from its physician. In fact, so extreme had the contest become, that they devoted all their spare time to the nursing, scarcely seeing each other, save to quarrel about the merits of their respective schools or to twit each other, as the case might be, on any bad signs which might have been manifested. Still it seemed as though the superiority of either was not to be thus exemplified, for neither patient had died, and both were now fairly convalescent. Never the less, each had been surprised at the zeal displayed by the other, and now, when all danger was past, all doubts vanished, their surprise grew as their zeal flagged not.

The days took their allotted course, slipping silently, imperceptibly, each into the other, while no new incidents or happenings arose to vary the monotony of their existence. In truth, the gods had smiled upon them in their distress. The Caspar encountered no storms while the fierceness of the epidemic began to abate. Perhaps, because everybody, with the miraculous exception of the two physicians, had been either killed or cured. Everything was on the mend: nothing was apprehended I except bad weather, and even in that the Caspar stood a fair show of remaining afloat. In case of storms, small sails had been prepared by which to heave to and ride them out. With the dwindled company and the great boilers, the engineers had no difficulty in maintaining the fresh water supply, while, as part of the cargo was composed of food,

little was to be feared from starvation. Slowly the summer dragged on, but quickly the sick list grew smaller, till finally, amid great rejoicing and festivity, it had become totally negated and the ship thoroughly fumigated.

But while everything was so bright, Maud found herself tormented; by strange thoughts and discovered an inconsistent vein in her nature which she had never dreamed of. Again and again she summoned herself to judgement, but always to judge in vain, for in despair, she invariably threw the case out of court. Sometimes she came to herself and was appalled at the thoughts which had risen uncalled in her mind, at the visions she unconsciously contemplated. Her life became one tangled mesh of self-analytical whys and wherefores, its and musts, pros and cons. The more she endeavored to reason with herself the more entangled and confused she became. Cold memories of some possible past mistake caused her to often shudder, to avoid the present, and to fear the future which must be shaped by the impress of that possible wrong-doing. Still she could not find the heart to blame herself: she could only not understand.

As it fared with her, so fared it with Chandler. He also found himself involved in a sea of seeming self-inconsistency. But he behaved differently from Maud — she was a woman. His masculinity and choleric disposition asserted itself, and not only did he clearly see his past mistake, but he grew enraged and waxed indignant at himself, often cursing the son of his father with such sublime abstraction from self as to be truly startling. Still, in the obscurity of his mental vision, he could see so far and no farther. If he could have seen beyond, doubtless he would not have figuratively kicked himself so often, nor would his life had been tinged with savage melancholy which now gnawed at his heart-strings so unceasingly.

With these inward ills tormenting them, their intercourse with each other was not exactly that of fond lovers; and their very cognizance of this but increased the pitch of their misery. They constantly upbraided themselves after the many such unsatisfactory meetings, as being the causes of the same — nor was this the less severe, for each unselfishly and ignorantly pocketed all the blame, deeming the other to have the person injured. Under such circumstances, he became gloomy and irritable, while she well hid hers beneath a mask of gaiety and enthusiasm in all the little social events on shipboard. Very naturally, this diversity of mood drew them the farther apart.

And so, while the collective prospects of the little community went from good to better, their individual affairs traveled with unseemly haste from bad to worse. Logically, this stretching out to the extremes must reach an end sometime, and both, intuitively recognizing this, pondered expectantly over the outcome. To make matters worse, they no longer quarreled: this new state of affairs was imintained with the stiff awkwardness of self-consciousness, from which each suffered the more acutely, never suspecting the other to be in the same dilemma. So affairs rapidly approached a crisis, and one night, when the situation had become almost absolutely unbearable to both parties, the electric search-light of a man of war, sent out in quest of them vaguely foreshadowed to each a cessation of their troubles.

The passengers were crowding the weather rail of the Caspar, devouring the lights of the vessel in the offing and feasting their eyes upon its dim, bulky loom. Amid this scene of boisterous rejoicing, Maud felt strangely out of place. It jarred upon her — this gregarious mass which clustered like bees on every hand. She became aware of a longing for solitude. Yielding to the mood, she slipped away and climbed to the deserted bridge.

Similar had been the feeling of Chandler, and similar the action. He burned from one side as she did from the other. Face to face, with the glare of the search-light shining full upon them, they met, midway on the bridge. The next instant and they were in darkness. He had taken her hand, yet they spoke not as they gazed on the dancing lights, heard the merry scream of the boatswain's whistles upon the battleship, and dimly discerned a boat as it sprang to the man of warsman stroke. Nearer and nearer it came; but it was with a strange apathy that they watched it. The next moment and it would be alongside. Seemingly, they both resolved and spoke at the same time. What each said seemed to startle the other. Surprise, doubt, assurance, gratification, happiness, in turn were mutually delineated upon their countenances. What was said they only knew, but it was with light steps and joyous faces, all wreathed in smiles, that they joined their companions of the now-to-be-abandoned plague ship.

Extract from the San Francisco Daily Herald of six weeks later: —

At the Palace Hotel, the consummation of a happy romance, strangely connected with the ill-fated Caspar, is about to be attained. Miss Maud Appleton — I an M.D. by the way — of New Orleans, and Doctor Chandler of Boston — the two that rendered such effective service in overcoming the plague on the Caspar — are to marry respectively, Mr. Charles Waldworth, Stanford '93, and his sister, the charming Miss Waldworth, of local social note. It is whispered that Mr. and Miss Waldworth, while ill with the fever, were made test cases for a professional contest between the two M.D.s, and so strenuous and successful were their efforts, that the fruition is the happy dual marriage to be celebrated shortly. But more of this anon.

Planchette

IT is my right to know," the girl said.

Her voice was firm-fibred with determination. There was no hint of pleading in it, yet it was the determination that is reached through a long period of pleading. But in her case it had been pleading, not of speech, but of personality. Her lips had been ever mute, but her face and eyes, and the very attitude of her soul, had been for a long time eloquent with questioning. This the man had known, but he had never answered; and now she was demanding by the spoken word that he answer.

"It is my right," the girl repeated.

"I know it," he answered, desperately and helplessly.

She waited, in the silence which followed, her eyes fixed upon the light that filtered down through the lofty boughs and bathed the great redwood trunks in mellow warmth. This light, subdued and colored, seemed almost a radiation from the trunks themselves, so strongly did they saturate it with their hue. The girl saw without seeing, as she heard, without hearing, the deep gurgling of the stream far below on the canyon bottom.

She looked down at the man. "Well?" she asked, with the firmness which feigns belief that obedience will be forthcoming.

She was sitting upright, her back against a fallen tree-trunk, while he lay near to her, on his side, an elbow on the ground and the hand supporting his head.

"Dear, dear Lute," he murmured.

She shivered at the sound of his voice — not from repulsion, but from struggle against the fascination of its caressing gentleness. She had come to know well the lure of the man — the wealth of easement and rest that was promised by every caressing intonation of his voice, by the mere touch of hand on hand or the faint impact of his breath on neck or cheek. The man could not express himself by word nor look nor touch without weaving into the expression, subtly and occultly, the feeling as of a hand that passed and that in passing stroked softly and soothingly. Nor was this all-pervading caress a something that cloyed with too great sweetness; nor was it sickly sentimental; nor was it maudlin with love's madness. It was vigorous, compelling, masculine. For that matter, it was largely unconscious on the man's part. He was only dimly aware of it. It was a part of him, the breath of his soul as it were, involuntary and unpremeditated.

But now, resolved and desperate, she steeled herself against him. He tried to face her, but her gray eyes looked out to him, steadily, from under cool, level brows, and he dropped his head upon her knee. Her hand strayed into his hair softly, and her face melted into solicitude and tenderness. But when he looked up again, her gray eyes were steady, her brows cool and level.

"What more can I tell you?" the man said. He raised his head and met her gaze. "I cannot marry you. I cannot marry any woman. I love you — you know that — better than my own life. I weigh you in the scales against all the dear things of living, and you outweigh everything. I would give everything to possess you, yet I may not. I cannot marry you. I can never marry you."

Her lips were compressed with the effort of control. His head was sinking back to her knee, when she checked him.

"You are already married, Chris?"

"No! no!" he cried vehemently. "I have never been married. I want to marry only you, and I cannot!"

"Then — "

"Don't!" he interrupted. "Don't ask me!"

"It is my right to know," she repeated.

"I know it," he again interrupted. "But I cannot tell you."

"You have not considered me, Chris," she went on gently.

"I know, I know," he broke in.

"You cannot have considered me. You do not know what I have to bear from my people because of you."

"I did not think they felt so very unkindly toward me," he said bitterly.

"It is true. They can scarcely tolerate you. They do not show it to you, but they almost hate you. It is I who have had to bear all this. It was not always so, though. They liked you at first as . . . as I liked you. But that was four years ago. The time passed by — a year, two years; and then they began to turn against you. They are not to be blamed. You spoke no word. They felt that you were destroying my life. It is four years, now, and you have never once mentioned marriage to them. What were they to think? What they have thought, that you were destroying my life."

As she talked, she continued to pass her fingers caressingly through his hair, sorrowful for the pain that she was inflicting.

"They did like you at first. Who can help liking you? You seem to draw affection from all living things, as the trees draw the moisture from the ground. It comes to you as it were your birthright. Aunt Mildred and Uncle Robert thought there was nobody like you. The sun rose and set in you. They thought I was the luckiest girl alive to win the love of a man like you. 'For it looks very much like it,' Uncle Robert used to say, wagging his head wickedly at me. Of course they liked you. Aunt Mildred used to sigh, and look across teasingly at Uncle, and say, 'When I think of Chris, it almost makes me wish I were younger myself.' And Uncle would answer, 'I don't blame you, my dear, not in the least.' And then the pair of them would beam upon me their congratulations that I had won the love of a man like you.

"And they knew I loved you as well. How could I hide it? — this great, wonderful thing that had entered into my life and swallowed up all my days! For four years, Chris, I have lived only for you. Every moment was yours. Waking, I loved you. Sleeping, I dreamed of you. Every act I have performed was shaped by you, by the thought of

you. Even my thoughts were moulded by you, by the invisible presence of you. I had no end, petty or great, that you were not there for me."

"I had no idea of imposing such slavery," he muttered.

"You imposed nothing. You always let me have my own way. It was you who were the obedient slave. You did for me without offending me. You forestalled my wishes without the semblance of forestalling; them, so natural and inevitable was everything you did for me. I said, without offending me. You were no dancing puppet. You made no fuss. Don't you see? You did not seem to do things at all. Somehow they were always there, just done, as a matter of course.

"The slavery was love's slavery. It was just my love for you that made you swallow up all my days. You did not force yourself into my thoughts. You crept in, always, and you were there always — how much, you will never know.

"But as time went by, Aunt Mildred and Uncle grew to dislike you. They grew afraid. What was to become of me? You were destroying my life. My music? You know how my dream of it has dimmed away. That spring, when I first met you — I was twenty, and I was about to start for Germany. I was going to study hard. That was four years ago, and I am still here in California.

"I had other lovers. You drove them away — No! no! I don't mean that. It was I that drove them away. What did I care for lovers, for anything, when you were near? But as I said, Aunt Mildred and Uncle grew afraid. There has been talk friends, busybodies, and all the rest. The time went by. You did not speak. I could only wonder, wonder. I knew you loved me. Much was said against you by Uncle at first, and then by Aunt Mildred. They were father and mother to me, you know. I could not defend you. Yet I was loyal to you. I refused to discuss you. I closed up. There was half-estrangement in my home — Uncle Robert with a face like an undertaker, and Aunt Mildred's heart breaking. But what could I do, Chris? What could I do?"

The man, his head resting on her knee again, groaned, but made no other reply.

"Aunt Mildred was mother to me, yet I went to her no more with my confidences. My childhood's book was closed. It was a sweet book, Chris. The tears come into my eyes sometimes when I think of it. But never mind that. Great happiness has been mine as well. I am glad I can talk frankly of my love for you. And the attaining of such frankness has been very sweet. I do love you, Chris. I love you . . . I cannot tell you how. You are everything to me, and more besides. You remember that Christmas tree of the children? — when we played blindman's buff? and you caught me by the arm so, with such a clutching of fingers that I cried out with the hurt? I never told you, but the arm was badly bruised. And such sweet I got of it you could never guess. There, black and blue, was the imprint of your fingers — your fingers, Chris, your fingers. It was the touch of you made visible. It was there a week, and I kissed the marks — oh, so often! I hated to see them go; I wanted to rebruise the arm and make them linger. I was jealous of the returning white that drove the bruise away. Somehow, — oh! I cannot explain, but I loved you so!"

In the silence that fell, she continued her caressing of his hair, while she idly watched a great gray squirrel, boisterous and hilarious, as it scampered back and forth in a distant vista of the redwoods. A crimson-crested woodpecker, energetically drilling a fallen trunk, caught and transferred her gaze. The man did not lift his head. Rather, he crushed his face closer against her knee, while his heaving shoulders marked the hardness with which he breathed.

"You must tell me, Chris," the girl said gently. "This mystery — it is killing me. I must know why we cannot be married. Are we always to be this way? — merely lovers, meeting often, it is true, and yet with the long absences between the meetings? Is it all the world holds for you and me, Chris? Are we never to be more to each other? Oh, it is good just to love, I know — you have made me madly happy; but one does get so hungry at times for something more! I want more and more of you, Chris. I want all of you. I want all our days to be together. I want all the companionship, the comradeship, which cannot be ours now, and which will be ours when we are married — " She caught her breath quickly. "But we are never to be married. I forgot. And you must tell me why."

The man raised his head and looked her in the eyes. It was a way he had with whomever he talked, of looking them in the eyes.

"I have considered you, Lute," he began doggedly. "I did consider you at the very first. I should never have gone on with it. I should have gone away. I knew it. And I considered you in the light of that knowledge, and yet . . . I did not go away. My God! what was I to do? I loved you. I could not go away. I could not help it. I stayed. I resolved, but I broke my resolves. I was like a drunkard. I was drunk of you. I was weak, I know. I failed. I could not go away. I tried. I went away — you will remember, though you did not know why. You know now. I went away, but I could not remain away. Knowing that we could never marry, I came back to you. I am here, now, with you. Send me away, Lute. I have not the strength to go myself."

"But why should you go away?" she asked. "Besides, I must know why, before I can send you away."

"Don't ask me."

"Tell me," she said, her voice tenderly imperative.

"Don't, Lute; don't force me," the man pleaded, and there was appeal in his eyes and voice.

"But you must tell me," she insisted. "It is justice you owe me."

The man wavered. "If I do . . ." he began. Then he ended with determination, "I should never be able to forgive myself. No, I cannot tell you. Don't try to compel me, Lute. You would be as sorry as I."

"If there is anything . . . if then are, obstacles . . . if this mystery does really prevent . . . " She was speaking slowly, with long pauses, seeking the more delicate ways of speech for the framing of her thought. "Chris, I do love you. I love you as deeply as it is possible for any woman to love, I am sure. If you were to say to me now 'Come,' I would go with you. I would follow wherever you led. I would be your page, as in the

days of old when ladies went with their knights to far lands. You are my knight, Chris, and you can do no wrong. Your will is my wish. I was once afraid of the censure of the world. Now that you have come into my life I am no longer afraid. I would laugh at the world and its censure for your sake — for my sake too. I would laugh, for I should have you, and you are more to me than the good will and approval of the world. If you say 'Come,' I will — "

"Don't! Don't!" he cried. "It is impossible! Marriage or not, I cannot even say 'Come.' I dare not. I'll show you. I'll tell you."

He sat up beside her, the action stamped with resolve. He took her hand in his and held it closely. His lips moved to the verge of speech. The mystery trembled for utterance. The air was palpitant with its presence. As if it were an irrevocable decree, the girl steeled herself to hear. But the man paused, gazing straight out before him. She felt his hand relax in hers, and she pressed it sympathetically, encouragingly. But she felt the rigidity going out of his tensed body, and she knew that spirit and flesh were relaxing together. His resolution was ebbing. He would not speak — she knew it; and she knew, likewise, with the sureness of faith, that it was because he could not.

She gazed despairingly before her, a numb feeling at her heart, as though hope and happiness had died. She watched the sun flickering down through the warm-trunked redwoods. But she watched in a mechanical, absent way. She looked at the scene as from a long way off, without interest, herself an alien, no longer an intimate part of the earth and trees and flowers she loved so well.

So far removed did she seem, that she was aware of a curiosity, strangely impersonal, in what lay around her. Through a near vista she looked at a buckeye tree in full blossom as though her eyes encountered it for the first time. Her eyes paused and dwelt upon a yellow cluster of Diogenes' lanterns that grew on the edge of an open space. It was the way of flowers always to give her quick pleasure-thrills, but no thrill was hers now. She pondered the flower slowly and thoughtfully, as a hasheesh-eater, heavy with the drug, might ponder some whim-flower that obtruded on his vision. In her ears was the voice of the stream — a hoarse-throated, sleepy old giant, muttering and mumbling his somnolent fancies. But her fancy was not in turn aroused, as was its wont; she knew the sound merely for water rushing over the rocks of the deep canyon-bottom, that and nothing more.

Her gaze wandered on beyond the Diogenes' lanterns into the open space. Knee-deep in the wild oats of the hillside grazed two horses, chestnut-sorrels the pair of them, perfectly matched, warm and golden in the sunshine, their spring-coats a sheen of high-lights shot through with color-flashes that glowed like fiery jewels. She recognized, almost with a shock, that one of them was hers, Dolly, the companion of her girlhood and womanhood, on whose neck she had sobbed her sorrows and sung her joys. A moistness welled into her eyes at the sight, and she came back from the remoteness of her mood, quick with passion and sorrow, to be part of the world again.

The man sank forward from the hips, relaxing entirely, and with a groan dropped his head on her knee. She leaned over him and pressed her lips softly and lingeringly to his hair.

"Come, let us go," she said, almost in a whisper.

She caught her breath in a half-sob, then tightened her lips as she rose. His face was white to ghastliness, so shaken was he by the struggle through which he had passed. They did not look at each other, but walked directly to the horses. She leaned against Dolly's neck while he tightened the girths. Then she gathered the reins in her hand and waited. He looked at her as he bent down, an appeal for forgiveness in his eyes; and in that moment her own eyes answered. Her foot rested in his hands, and from there she vaulted into the saddle. Without speaking, without further looking at each other, they turned the horses' heads and took the narrow trail that wound down through the sombre redwood aisles and across the open glades to the pasture-lands below. The trail became a cow-path, the cow-path became a wood-road, which later joined with a hay-road; and they rode down through the low-rolling, tawny California hills to where a set of bars let out on the county road which ran along the bottom of the valley. The girl sat her horse while the man dismounted and began taking down the bars.

"No — wait!" she cried, before he had touched the two lower bars.

She urged the mare forward a couple of strides, and then the animal lifted over the bars in a clean little jump. The man's eyes sparkled, and he clapped his hands.

"You beauty! you beauty!" the girl cried, leaning forward impulsively in the saddle and pressing her cheek to the mare's neck where it burned flame-color in the sun.

"Let's trade horses for the ride in," she suggested, when he had led his horse through and finished putting up the bars. "You've never sufficiently appreciated Dolly."

"No, no," he protested.

"You think she is too old, too sedate," Lute insisted. "She's only sixteen, and she can outrun nine colts out of ten. Only she never cuts up. She's too steady, and you don't approve of her — no, don't deny it, sir. I know. And I know also that she can outrun your vaunted Washoe Ban. There! I challenge you! And furthermore, you may ride her yourself. You know what Ban can do; so you must ride Dolly and see for yourself what she can do."

They proceeded to exchange the saddles on the horses, glad of the diversion and making the most of it.

"I'm glad I was born in California," Lute remarked, as she swung astride of Ban. "It's an outrage both to horse and woman to ride in a sidesaddle."

"You look like a young Amazon," the man said approvingly, his eyes passing tenderly over the girl as she swung the horse around.

"Are you ready?" she asked.

"All ready!"

"To the old mill," she called, as the horses sprang forward. "That's less than a mile."

"To a finish?" he demanded.

She nodded, and the horses, feeling the urge of the reins, caught the spirit of the race. The dust rose in clouds behind as they tore along the level road. They swung around the bend, horses and riders tilted at sharp angles to the ground, and more than once the riders ducked low to escape the branches of outreaching and overhanging trees. They clattered over the small plank bridges, and thundered over the larger iron ones to an ominous clanking of loose rods.

They rode side by side, saving the animals for the rush at the finish, yet putting them at a pace that drew upon vitality and staying power. Curving around a clump of white oaks, the road straightened out before them for several hundred yards, at the end of which they could see the ruined mill.

"Now for it!" the girl cried.

She urged the horse by suddenly leaning forward with her body, at the same time, for an instant, letting the rein slack and touching the neck with her bridle hand. She began to draw away from the man.

"Touch her on the neck!" she cried to him.

With this, the mare pulled alongside and began gradually to pass the girl. Chris and Lute looked at each other for a moment, the mare still drawing ahead, so that Chris was compelled slowly to turn his head. The mill was a hundred yards away.

"Shall I give him the spurs?" Lute shouted.

The man nodded, and the girl drove the spurs in sharply and quickly, calling upon the horse for its utmost, but watched her own horse forge slowly ahead of her.

"Beaten by three lengths!" Lute beamed triumphantly, as they pulled into a walk. "Confess, sir, confess! You didn't think the old mare had it in her."

Lute leaned to the side and rested her hand for a moment on Dolly's wet neck.

"Ban's a sluggard alongside of her," Chris affirmed. "Dolly's all right, if she is in her Indian Summer."

Lute nodded approval. "That's a sweet way of putting it–Indian Summer. It just describes her. But she's not lazy. She has all the fire and none of the folly. She is very wise, what of her years."

"That accounts for it," Chris demurred. "Her folly passed with her youth. Many's the lively time she's given you."

"No," Lute answered. "I never knew her really to cut up. I think the only trouble she ever gave me was when I was training her to open gates. She was afraid when they swung back upon her — the animal's fear of the trap, perhaps. But she bravely got over it. And she never was vicious. She never bolted, nor bucked, nor cut up in all her life — never, not once."

The horses went on at a walk, still breathing heavily from their run. The road wound along the bottom of the valley, now and again crossing the stream. From either side rose the drowsy purr of mowing-machines, punctuated by occasional sharp cries of the men who were gathering the hay-crop. On the western side of the valley the hills rose green and dark, but the eastern side was already burned brown and tan by the sun.

"There is summer, here is spring," Lute said. "Oh, beautiful Sonoma Valley!"

Her eyes were glistening and her face was radiant with love of the land. Her gaze wandered on across orchard patches and sweeping vineyard stretches, seeking out the purple which seemed to hang like a dim smoke in the wrinkles of the hills and in the more distant canyon gorges. Far up, among the more rugged crests, where the steep slopes were covered with manzanita, she caught a glimpse of a clear space where the wild grass had not yet lost its green.

"Have you ever heard of the secret pasture?" she asked, her eyes still fixed on the remote green.

A snort of fear brought her eyes back to the man beside her. Dolly, upreared, with distended nostrils and wild eyes, was pawing the air madly with her fore legs. Chris threw himself forward against her neck to keep her from falling backward, and at the same time touched her with the spurs to compel her to drop her fore feet to the ground in order to obey the go-ahead impulse of the spurs.

"Why, Dolly, this is most remarkable," Lute began reprovingly.

But, to her surprise, the mare threw her head down, arched her back as she went up in the air, and, returning, struck the ground stiff-legged and bunched.

"A genuine buck!" Chris called out, and the next moment the mare was rising under him in a second buck.

Lute looked on, astounded at the unprecedented conduct of her mare, and admiring her lover's horsemanship. He was quite cool, and was himself evidently enjoying the performance. Again and again, half a dozen times, Dolly arched herself into the air and struck, stiffly bunched. Then she threw her head straight up and rose on her hind legs, pivoting about and striking with her fore feet. Lute whirled into safety the horse she was riding, and as she did so caught a glimpse of Dolly's eyes, with the look in them of blind brute madness, bulging until it seemed they must burst from her head. The faint pink in the white of the eyes was gone, replaced by a white that was like dull marble and that yet flashed as from some inner fire.

A faint cry of fear, suppressed in the instant of utterance, slipped past Lute's lips. One hind leg of the mare seemed to collapse, and for a moment the whole quivering body, upreared and perpendicular, swayed back and forth, and there was uncertainty as to whether it would fall forward or backward. The man, half-slipping sidewise from the saddle, so as to fall clear if the mare toppled backward, threw his weight to the front and alongside her neck. This overcame the dangerous teetering balance, and the mare struck the ground on her feet again.

But there was no let-up. Dolly straightened out so that the line of the face was almost a continuation of the line of the stretched neck; this position enabled her to master the bit, which she did by bolting straight ahead down the road.

For the first time Lute became really frightened. She spurred Washoe Ban in pursuit, but he could not hold his own with the mad mare, and dropped gradually behind. Lute saw Dolly check and rear in the air again, and caught up just as the mare made a second bolt. As Dolly dashed around a bend, she stopped suddenly, stiff-legged. Lute saw her lover torn out of the saddle, his thigh-grip broken by the sudden jerk. Though he had

lost his seat, he had not been thrown, and as the mare dashed on Lute saw him clinging to the side of the horse, a hand in the mane and a leg across the saddle. With a quick cavort he regained his seat and proceeded to fight with the mare for control.

But Dolly swerved from the road and dashed down a grassy slope yellowed with innumerable mariposa lilies. An ancient fence at the bottom was no obstacle. She burst through as though it were filmy spider-web and disappeared in the underbrush. Lute followed unhesitatingly, putting Ban through the gap in the fence and plunging on into the thicket. She lay along his neck, closely, to escape the ripping and tearing of the trees and vines. She felt the horse drop down through leafy branches and into the cool gravel of a stream's bottom. From ahead came a splashing of water, and she caught a glimpse of Dolly, dashing up the small bank and into a clump of scrub-oaks, against the trunks of which she was trying to scrape off her rider.

Lute almost caught up amongst the trees, but was hopelessly outdistanced on the fallow field adjoining, across which the mare tore with a fine disregard for heavy ground and gopher-holes. When she turned at a sharp angle into the thicket-land beyond, Lute took the long diagonal, skirted the ticket, and reined in Ban at the other side. She had arrived first. From within the thicket she could hear a tremendous crashing of brush and branches. Then the mare burst through and into the open, falling to her knees, exhausted, on the soft earth. She arose and staggered forward, then came limply to a halt. She was in lather-sweat of fear, and stood trembling pitiably.

Chris was still on her back. His shirt was in ribbons. The backs of his hands were bruised and lacerated, while his face was streaming blood from a gash near the temple. Lute had controlled herself well, but now she was aware of a quick nausea and a trembling of weakness.

"Chris!" she said, so softly that it was almost a whisper. Then she sighed, "Thank God."

"Oh, I'm all right," he cried to her, putting into his voice all the heartiness he could command, which was not much, for he had himself been under no mean nervous strain.

He showed the reaction he was undergoing, when he swung down out of the saddle. He began with a brave muscular display as he lifted his leg over, but ended, on his feet, leaning against the limp Dolly for support. Lute flashed out of her saddle, and her arms were about him in an embrace of thankfulness.

"I know where there is a spring," she said, a moment later.

They left the horses standing untethered, and she led her lover into the cool recesses of the thicket to where crystal water bubbled from out the base of the mountain.

"What was that you said about Dolly's never cutting up?" he asked, when the blood had been stanched and his nerves and pulse-beats were normal again.

"I am stunned," Lute answered. "I cannot understand it. She never did anything like it in all her life. And all animals like you so — it's not because of that. Why, she is a child's horse. I was only a little girl when I first rode her, and to this day — "

"Well, this day she was everything but a child's horse," Chris broke in. "She was a devil. She tried to scrape me off against the trees, and to batter my brains out against

the limbs. She tried all the lowest and narrowest places she could find. You should have seen her squeeze through. And did you see those bucks?"

Lute nodded.

"Regular bucking-bronco proposition."

"But what should she know about bucking?" Lute demanded. "She was never known to buck — never."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Some forgotten instinct, perhaps, long-lapsed and come to life again."

The girl rose to her feet determinedly. "I'm going to find out," she said.

They went back to the horses, where they subjected Dolly to a rigid examination that disclosed nothing. Hoofs, legs, bit, mouth, body — everything was as it should be. The saddle and saddle-cloth were innocent of bur or sticker; the back was smooth and unbroken. They searched for sign of snake-bite and sting of fly or insect, but found nothing.

"Whatever it was, it was subjective, that much is certain," Chris said.

"Obsession," Lute suggested.

They laughed together at the idea, for both were twentieth-century products, healthy-minded and normal, with souls that delighted in the butterfly-chase of ideals but that halted before the brink where superstition begins.

"An evil spirit," Chris laughed; "but what evil have I done that I should be so punished?"

"You think too much of yourself, sir," she rejoined. "It is more likely some evil, I don't know what, that Dolly has done. You were a mere accident. I might have been on her back at the time, or Aunt Mildred, or anybody."

As she talked, she took hold of the stirrup-strap and started to shorten it.

"What are you doing?" Chris demanded.

"I'm going to ride Dolly in."

"No, you're not," he announced. "It would be bad discipline. After what has happened I am simply compelled to ride her in myself."

But it was a very weak and very sick mare he rode, stumbling and halting, afflicted with nervous jerks and recurring muscular spasms — the aftermath of the tremendous orgasm through which she had passed.

"I feel like a book of verse and a hammock, after all that has happened," Lute said, as they rode into camp.

It was a summer camp of city-tired people, pitched in a grove of towering redwoods through whose lofty boughs the sunshine trickled down, broken and subdued to soft light and cool shadow. Apart from the main camp were the kitchen and the servants' tents; and midway between was the great dining hall, walled by the living redwood columns, where fresh whispers of air were always to be found, and where no canopy was needed to keep the sun away.

"Poor Dolly, she is really sick," Lute said that evening, when they had returned from a last look at the mare. "But you weren't hurt, Chris, and that's enough for one small

woman to be thankful for. I thought I knew, but I really did not know till to-day, how much you meant to me. I could hear only the plunging and struggle in the thicket. I could not see you, nor know how it went with you."

"My thoughts were of you," Chris answered, and felt the responsive pressure of the hand that rested on his arm.

She turned her face up to his and met his lips.

"Good night," she said.

"Dear Lute, dear Lute," he caressed her with his voice as she moved away among the shadows.

"Who's going for the mail?" called a woman's voice through the trees.

Lute closed the book from which they had been reading, and sighed.

"We weren't going to ride to-day," she said.

"Let me go," Chris proposed. "You stay here. I'll be down and back in no time."

She shook her head.

"Who's going for the mail?" the voice insisted.

"Where's Martin?" Lute called, lifting; her voice in answer.

"I don't know," came the voice. "I think Robert took him along somewhere — horse-buying, or fishing, or I don't know what. There's really nobody left but Chris and you. Besides, it will give you an appetite for dinner. You've been lounging in the hammock all day. And Uncle Robert must have his newspaper."

"All right, Aunty, we're starting," Lute called back, getting out of the hammock.

A few minutes later, in riding-clothes, they were saddling the horses. They rode out on to the county road, where blazed the afternoon sun, and turned toward Glen Ellen. The little town slept in the sun, and the somnolent storekeeper and postmaster scarcely kept his eyes open long enough to make up the packet of letters and newspapers.

An hour later Lute and Chris turned aside from the road and dipped along a cow-path down the high bank to water the horses, before going into camp.

"Dolly looks as though she'd forgotten all about yesterday," Chris said, as they sat their horses knee-deep in the rushing water. "Look at her."

The mare had raised her head and cocked her ears at the rustling of a quail in the thicket. Chris leaned over and rubbed around her ears. Dolly's enjoyment was evident, and she drooped her head over against the shoulder of his own horse.

"Like a kitten," was Lute's comment.

"Yet I shall never be able wholly to trust her again," Chris said. "Not after yesterday's mad freak."

"I have a feeling myself that you are safer on Ban," Lute laughed. "It is strange. My trust in Dolly is as implicit as ever. I feel confident so far as I am concerned, but I should never care to see you on her back again. Now with Ban, my faith is still unshaken. Look at that neck! Isn't he handsome! He'll be as wise as Dolly when he is as old as she."

"I feel the same way," Chris laughed back. "Ban could never possibly betray me."

They turned their horses out of the stream. Dolly stopped to brush a fly from her knee with her nose, and Ban urged past into the narrow way of the path. The space was too restricted to make him return, save with much trouble, and Chris allowed him to go on. Lute, riding behind, dwelt with her eyes upon her lover's back, pleasuring in the lines of the bare neck and the sweep out to the muscular shoulders.

Suddenly she reined in her horse. She could do nothing but look, so brief was the duration of the happening. Beneath and above was the almost perpendicular bank. The path itself was barely wide enough for footing. Yet Washoe Ban, whirling and rearing at the same time, toppled for a moment in the air and fell backward off the path.

So unexpected and so quick was it, that the man was involved in the fall. There had been no time for him to throw himself to the path. He was falling ere he knew it, and he did the only thing possible — slipped the stirrups and threw his body into the air, to the side, and at the same time down. It was twelve feet to the rocks below. He maintained an upright position, his head up and his eyes fixed on the horse above him and falling upon him.

Chris struck like a cat, on his feet, on the instant making a leap to the side. The next instant Ban crashed down beside him. The animal struggled little, but sounded the terrible cry that horses sometimes sound when they have received mortal hurt. He had struck almost squarely on his back, and in that position he remained, his head twisted partly under, his hind legs relaxed and motionless, his fore legs futilely striking the air.

Chris looked up reassuringly.

"I am getting used to it," Lute smiled down to him. "Of course I need not ask if you are hurt. Can I do anything?"

He smiled back and went over to the fallen beast, letting go the girths of the saddle and getting the head straightened out.

"I thought so," he said, after a cursory examination. "I thought so at the time. Did you hear that sort of crunching snap?"

She shuddered.

"Well, that was the punctuation of life, the final period dropped at the end of Ban's usefulness." He started around to come up by the path. "I've been astride of Ban for the last time. Let us go home."

At the top of the bank Chris turned and looked down.

"Good-by, Washoe Ban!" he called out. "Good-by, old fellow."

The animal was struggling to lift its head. There were tears in Chris's eyes as he turned abruptly away, and tears In Lute's eyes as they met his. She was silent in her sympathy, though the pressure of her hand was firm in his as he walked beside her horse down the dusty road.

"It was done deliberately," Chris burst forth suddenly. "There was no warning. He deliberately flung himself over backward."

“There was no warning,” Lute concurred. “I was looking. I saw him. He whirled and threw himself at the same time, just as if you had done it yourself, with a tremendous jerk and backward pull on the bit.”

“It was not my hand, I swear it. I was not even thinking of him. He was going up with a fairly loose rein, as a matter of course.”

“I should have seen it, had you done it,” Lute said. “But it was all done before you had a chance to do anything. It was not your hand, not even your unconscious hand.”

“Then it was some invisible hand, reaching out from I don’t know where.”

He looked up whimsically at the sky and smiled at the conceit.

Martin stepped forward to receive Dolly, when they came into the stable end of the grove, but his face expressed no surprise at sight of Chris coming in on foot. Chris lingered behind Lute for moment.

“Can you shoot a horse?” he asked.

The groom nodded, then added, “Yes, sir,” with a second and deeper nod.

“How do you do it?”

“Draw a line from the eyes to the ears — I mean the opposite ears, sir. And where the lines cross — ”

“That will do,” Chris interrupted. “You know the watering place at: the second bend. You’ll find Ban there with a broken back.”

“Oh, here you are, sir. I have been looking for you everywhere since dinner. You are wanted immediately.”

Chris tossed his cigar away, then went over and pressed his foot on its glowing; fire.

“You haven’t told anybody about it? — Ban?” he queried.

Lute shook her head. “They’ll learn soon enough. Martin will mention it to Uncle Robert tomorrow.”

“But don’t feel too bad about it,” she said, after a moment’s pause, slipping her hand into his.

“He was my colt,” he said. “Nobody has ridden him but you. I broke him myself. I knew him from the time he was born. I knew every bit of him, every trick, every caper, and I would have staked my life that it was impossible for him to do a thing like this. There was no warning, no fighting for the bit, no previous unruliness. I have been thinking it over. He didn’t fight for the bit, for that matter. He wasn’t unruly, nor disobedient. There wasn’t time. It was an impulse, and he acted upon it like lightning. I am astounded now at the swiftness with which it took place. Inside the first second we were over the edge and falling.

“It was deliberate — deliberate suicide. And attempted murder. It was a trap. I was the victim. He had me, and he threw himself over with me. Yet he did not hate me. He loved me . . . as much as it is possible for a horse to love. I am confounded. I cannot understand it any more than you can understand Dolly’s behavior yesterday.”

“But horses go insane, Chris,” Lute said. “You know that. It’s merely coincidence that two horses in two days should have spells under you.”

"That's the only explanation," he answered, starting off with her. "But why am I wanted urgently?"

"Planchette."

"Oh, I remember. It will be a new experience to me. Somehow I missed it when it was all the rage long ago."

"So did all of us," Lute replied, "except Mrs. Grantly. It is her favorite phantom, it seems."

"A weird little thing," he remarked. "Bundle of nerves and black eyes. I'll wager she doesn't weigh ninety pounds, and most of that's magnetism."

"Positively uncanny . . . at times." Lute shivered involuntarily. "She gives me the creeps."

"Contact of the healthy with the morbid," he explained dryly. "You will notice it is the healthy that always has the creeps. The morbid never has the creeps. It gives the. That's its function. Where did you people pick her up, anyway?"

"I don't know — yes, I do, too. Aunt Mildred met her in Boston, I think — oh, I don't know. At any rate, Mrs. Grantly came to California, and of course had to visit Aunt Mildred. You know the open house we keep.

They halted where a passageway between two great redwood trunks gave entrance to the dining room. Above, through lacing boughs, could be seen the stars. Candles lighted the tree-columned space. About the table, examining the Planchette contrivance, were four persons. Chris's gaze roved over them, and he was aware of a guilty sorrow-pang as he paused for a moment on Lute's Aunt Mildred and Uncle Robert, mellow with ripe middle age and genial with the gentle buffets life had dealt them. He passed amusedly over the black-eyed, frail-bodied Mrs. Grantly, and halted on the fourth person, a portly, massive-headed man, whose gray temples belied the youthful solidity of his face.

"Who's that?" Chris whispered.

"A Mr. Barton. The train was late. That's why you didn't see him at dinner. He's only a capitalist — water-power-long-distance-electricity-transmitter, or something like that."

"Doesn't look as though he could give an ox points on imagination."

"He can't. He inherited his money. But he knows enough to hold on to it and hire other men's brains. He is very conservative."

"That is to be expected," was Chris's comment. His gaze went back to the man and woman who had been father and mother to the girl beside him. "Do you know," he said, "it came to me with a shock yesterday when you told me that they had turned against me and that I was scarcely tolerated. I met them afterwards, last evening, guiltily, in fear and trembling — and to-day, too. And yet I could see no difference from of old."

"Dear man," Lute sighed. "Hospitality is as natural to them as the act of breathing. But it isn't that, after all. It is all genuine in their dear hearts. No matter how severe the censure they put upon you when you are absent, the moment they are with you they soften and are all kindness and warmth. As soon as their eyes rest on you, affection

and love come bubbling up. You are so made. Every animal likes you. All people like you. They can't help it. You can't help it. You are universally lovable, and the best of it is that you don't know it. You don't know it now. Even as I tell it to you, you don't realize it, you won't realize it — and that very incapacity to realize it is one of the reasons why you are so loved. You are incredulous now, and you shake your head; but I know, who am your slave, as all people know, for they likewise are your slaves.

"Why, in a minute we shall go in and join them. Mark the affection, almost maternal, that will well up in Aunt Mildred's eyes. Listen to the tones of Uncle Robert's voice when he says, 'Well, Chris, my boy?' Watch Mrs. Grantly melt, literally melt, like a dewdrop in the sun.

"Take Mr. Barton, there. You have never seen him before. Why, you will invite him out to smoke a cigar with you when the rest of us have gone to bed — you, a mere nobody, and he a man of many millions, a man of power, a man obtuse and stupid like the ox; and he will follow you about, smoking; the cigar, like a little dog, your little dog, trotting at your back. He will not know he is doing it, but he will be doing it just the same. Don't I know, Chris? Oh, I have watched you, watched you, so often, and loved you for it, and loved you again for it, because you were so delightfully and blindly unaware of what you were doing."

"I'm almost bursting with vanity from listening to you," he laughed, passing his arm around her and drawing her against him.

"Yes," she whispered, "and in this very moment, when you are laughing at all that I have said, you, the feel of you, your soul, — call it what you will, it is you, — is calling for all the love that is in me."

She leaned more closely against him, and sighed as with fatigue. He breathed a kiss into her hair and held her with firm tenderness.

Aunt Mildred stirred briskly and looked up from the Planchette board.

"Come, let us begin," she said. "It will soon grow chilly. Robert, where are those children?"

"Here we are," Lute called out, disengaging herself.

"Now for a bundle of creeps," Chris whispered, as they started in.

Lute's prophecy of the manner in which her lover would be received was realized. Mrs. Grantly, unreal, unhealthy, scintillant with frigid magnetism, warmed and melted as though of truth she were dew and he sun. Mr. Barton beamed broadly upon him, and was colossally gracious. Aunt Mildred greeted him with a glow of fondness and motherly kindness, while Uncle Robert genially and heartily demanded, "Well, Chris, my boy, and what of the riding?"

But Aunt Mildred drew her shawl more closely around her and hastened them to the business in hand. On the table was a sheet of paper. On the paper, rifling on three supports, was a small triangular board. Two of the supports were easily moving casters. The third support, placed at the apex of the triangle, was a lead pencil.

"Who's first?" Uncle Robert demanded.

There was a moment's hesitancy, then Aunt Mildred placed her hand on the board, and said: "Some one has always to be the fool for the delectation of the rest."

"Brave woman," applauded her husband. "Now, Mrs. Grantly, do your worst."

"I?" that lady queried. "I do nothing. The power, or whatever you care to think it, is outside of me, as it is outside of all of you. As to what that power is, I will not dare to say. There is such a power. I have had evidences of it. And you will undoubtedly have evidences of it. Now please be quiet, everybody. Touch the board very lightly, but firmly, Mrs. Story; but do nothing of your own volition."

Aunt Mildred nodded, and stood with her hand on Planchette; while the rest formed about her in a silent and expectant circle. But nothing happened. The minutes ticked away, and Planchette remained motionless.

"Be patient," Mrs. Grantly counselled. "Do not struggle against any influences you may feel working on you. But do not do anything yourself. The influence will take care of that. You will feel impelled to do things, and such impulses will be practically irresistible."

"I wish the influence would hurry up," Aunt Mildred protested at the end of five motionless minutes.

"Just a little longer, Mrs. Story, just a little longer," Mrs. Grantly said soothingly.

Suddenly Aunt Mildred's hand began to twitch into movement. A mild concern showed in her face as she observed the movement of her hand and heard the scratching of the pencil-point at the apex of Planchette.

For another five minutes this continued, when Aunt Mildred withdrew her hand with an effort, and said, with a nervous laugh:

"I don't know whether i did it myself or not. I do know that I was growing nervous, standing there like a psychic fool with all your solemn faces turned upon me."

"Hen-scratches," was Uncle Robert's judgement, when he looked over the paper upon which she had scrawled.

"Quite illegible," was Mrs. Grantly's dictum. "It does not resemble writing at all. The influences have not got to working yet. Do you try it, Mr. Barton."

That gentleman stepped forward, ponderously willing to please, and placed his hand on the board. And for ten solid, stolid minutes he stood there, motionless, like a statue, the frozen personification of the commercial age. Uncle Robert's face began to work. He blinked, stiffened his mouth, uttered suppressed, throaty sounds, deep down; finally he snorted, lost his self-control, and broke out in a roar of laughter. All joined in this merriment, including Mrs. Grantly. Mr. Barton laughed with them, but he was vaguely nettled.

"You try it, Story," he said.

Uncle Robert, still laughing, and urged on by Lute and his wife, took the board. Suddenly his face sobered. His hand had begun to move, and the pencil could be heard scratching across the paper.

"By George!" he muttered. "That's curious. Look at it. I'm not doing it. I know I'm not doing it. look at that hand go! Just look at it!"

"Now, Robert, none of your ridiculousness," his wife warned him.

"I tell you I'm not doing it," he replied indignantly. "The force has got hold of me. Ask Mrs. Grantly. Tell her to make it stop, if you want it to stop. I can't stop it. By George! look at that flourish. I didn't do that. I never wrote a flourish in my life."

"Do try to be serious," Mrs. Grantly warned them. "An atmosphere of levity does not conduce to the best operation of Planchette."

"There, that will do, I guess," Uncle Robert said as he took his hand away. "Now let's see."

He bent over and adjusted his glasses. "It's handwriting at any rate, and that's better than the rest of you did. Here, Lute, your eyes are young."

"Oh, what flourishes!" Lute exclaimed, as she looked at the paper. "And look there, there are two different handwritings."

She began to read: "This is the first lecture. Concentrate on this sentence: 'I am a positive spirit and not negative to any condition.' Then follow with concentration on positive love. After that peace and harmony will vibrate through and around your body. Your soul — The other writing breaks right in. This is the way it goes: Bullfrog 95, Dixie 16, Golden Anchor 65, Gold Mountain 13, Jim Butler 70, Jumbo 75, North Star 42, Rescue 7, Black Butte 75, Brown Hope 16, Iron Top 3."

"Iron Top's pretty low," Mr. Barton murmured.

"Robert, you've been dabbling again!" Aunt Mildred cried accusingly.

"No, I've not," he denied. "I only read the quotations. But how the devil — I beg your pardon — they got there on that piece of paper I'd like to know."

"Your subconscious mind," Chris suggested. "You read the quotations in to-day's paper."

"No, I didn't; but last week I glanced over the column."

"A day or a year is all the same in the subconscious mind," said Mrs. Grantly. "The subconscious mind never forgets. But I am not saying that this is due to the subconscious mind. I refuse to state to what I think it is due."

"But how about that other stuff?" Uncle Robert demanded. "Sounds like what I'd think Christian Science ought to sound like."

"Or theosophy," Aunt Mildred volunteered. "Some message to a neophyte."

"Go on, read the rest," her husband commanded.

"This puts you in touch with the mightier spirits," Lute read. "You shall become one with us, and your name shall be 'Arya,' and you shall — Conqueror 20, Empire 12, Columbia Mountain 18, Midway 140 — and, and that is all. Oh, no! here's a last flourish, Arya, from Kandor — that must surely be the Mahatma."

"I'd like to have you explain that theosophy stuff on the basis of the subconscious mind, Chris," Uncle Robert challenged.

Chris shrugged his shoulders. "No explanation. You must have got a message intended for some one else."

"Lines were crossed, eh?" Uncle Robert chuckled. "Multiplex spiritual wireless telegraphy, I'd call it."

"It IS nonsense," Mrs. Grantly said. "I never knew Planchette to behave so outrageously. There are disturbing influences at work. I felt them from the first. Perhaps it is because you are all making too much fun of it. You are too hilarious."

"A certain befitting gravity should grace the occasion," Chris agreed, placing his hand on Planchette. "Let me try. And not one of you must laugh or giggle, or even think 'laugh' or 'giggle.' And if you dare to snort, even once, Uncle Robert, there is no telling what occult vengeance may be wreaked upon you."

"I'll be good," Uncle Robert rejoined. "But if I really must snort, may I silently slip away?"

Chris nodded. His hand had already begun to work. There had been no preliminary twitchings nor tentative essays at writing. At once his hand had started off, and Planchette was moving swiftly and smoothly across the paper.

"Look at him," Lute whispered to her aunt. "See how white he is."

Chris betrayed disturbance at the sound of her voice, and thereafter silence was maintained. Only could be heard the steady scratching of the pencil. Suddenly, as though it had been stung, he jerked his hand away. With a sigh and a yawn he stepped back from the table, then glanced with the curiosity of a newly awakened man at their faces.

"I think I wrote something," he said.

"I should say you did," Mrs. Grantly remarked with satisfaction, holding up the sheet of paper and glancing at it.

"Read it aloud," Uncle Robert said.

"Here it is, then. It begins with 'beware' written three times, and in much larger characters than the rest of the writing. BEWARE! BEWARE! BEWARE! Chris Dunbar, I intend to destroy you. I have already made two attempts upon your life, and failed. I shall yet succeed. So sure am I that I shall succeed that I dare to tell you. I do not need to tell you why. In your own heart you know. The wrong you are doing — And here it abruptly ends."

Mrs. Grantly laid the paper down on the table and looked at Chris, who had already become the centre of all eyes, and who was yawning as from an overpowering drowsiness.

"Quite a sanguinary turn, I should say," Uncle Robert remarked.

"I have already made two attempts upon your life," Mrs. Grantly read from the paper, which she was going over a second time.

"0n my life?" Chris demanded between yawns. "Why, my life hasn't been attempted even once. My! I am sleepy!"

"Ah, my boy, you are thinking of flesh-and-blood men," Uncle Robert laughed. "But this is a spirit. Your life has been attempted by unseen things. Most likely ghostly hands have tried to throttle you in your sleep."

"Oh, Chris!" Lute cried impulsively. "This afternoon! The hand you said must have seized your rein!"

"But I was joking," he objected.

"Nevertheless . . . " Lute left her thought unspoken.

Mrs. Grantly had become keen on the scent. "What was that about this afternoon? Was your life in danger?"

Chris's drowsiness had disappeared. "I'm becoming interested myself," he acknowledged. "We haven't said anything about it. Ban broke his back this afternoon. He threw himself off the bank, and I ran the risk of being caught underneath."

"I wonder, I wonder," Mrs. Grantly communed aloud. "There is something in this. . . . It is a warning . . . Ah! You were hurt yesterday riding Miss Story's horse! That makes the two attempts!"

She looked triumphantly at them. Planchette had been vindicated.

"Nonsense," laughed Uncle Robert, but with a slight hint of irritation in his manner. "Such things do not happen these days. This is the twentieth century, my dear madam. The thing, at the very latest, smacks of mediaevalism."

"I have had such wonderful tests with Planchette," Mrs. Grantly began, then broke off suddenly to go to the table and place her hand on the board.

"Who are you?" she asked. "What is your name?"

The board immediately began to write. By this time all heads, with the exception of Mr. Barton's, were bent over the table and following the pencil.

"It's Dick," Aunt Mildred cried, a note of the mildly hysterical in her voice.

Her husband straightened up, his face for the first time grave.

"It's Dick's signature," he said. "I'd know his fist in a thousand."

"'Dick Curtis,'" Mrs. Grantly read aloud. "Who is Dick Curtis?"

"By Jove, that's remarkable!" Mr. Barton broke in. "The handwriting in both instances is the same. Clever, I should say, really clever," he added admiringly.

"Let me see," Uncle Robert demanded, taking the paper and examining it. "Yes, it is Dick's handwriting."

"But who is Dick?" Mrs. Grantly insisted. "Who is this Dick Curtis?"

"Dick Curtis, why, he was Captain Richard Curtis," Uncle Robert answered.

"He was Lute's father," Aunt Mildred supplemented. "Lute took our name. She never saw him. He died when she was a few weeks old. He was my brother."

"Remarkable, most remarkable." Mrs. Grantly was revolving the message in her mind. "There were two attempts on Mr. Dunbar's life. The subconscious mind cannot explain that, for none of us knew of the accident to-day."

"I knew," Chris answered, "and it was I that operated Planchette. The explanation is simple."

"But the handwriting," interposed Mr. Barton. "What you wrote and what Mrs. Grantly wrote are identical."

Chris bent over and compared the handwriting.

"Besides," Mrs. Grantly cried, "Mr. Story recognizes the handwriting."

She looked at him for verification.

He nodded his head. "Yes, it is Dick's fist. I'll swear to that."

But to Lute had come a visioning;. While the rest argued pro and con and the air was filled with phrases, — ”psychic phenomena,” “self-hypnotism,” “residuum of unexplained truth,” and “spiritism,” — she was reviving mentally the girlhood pictures she had conjured of this soldier-father she had never seen. She possessed his sword, there were several old-fashioned daguerreotypes, there was much that had been said of him, stories told of him — and all this had constituted the material out of which she had builded him in her childhood fancy.

“There is the possibility of one mind unconsciously suggesting to another mind,” Mrs. Grantly was saying; but through Lute’s mind was trooping her father on his great roan war-horse. Now he was leading his men. She saw him on lonely scouts, or in the midst of the yelling, Indians at Salt Meadows, when of his command he returned with one man in ten. And in the picture she had of him, in the physical semblance she had made of him, was reflected his spiritual nature, reflected by her worshipful artistry in form and feature and expression — his bravery, his quick temper, his impulsive championship, his madness of wrath in a righteous cause, his warm generosity and swift forgiveness, and his chivalry that epitomized codes and ideals primitive as the days of knighthood. And first, last, and always, dominating all, she saw in the face of him the hot passion and quickness of deed that had earned for him the name “Fighting Dick Curtis.”

“Let me put it to the test,” she heard Mrs. Grantly saying;. “Let Miss Story try Planchette. There may be a further message.”

“No, no, I beg of you,” Aunt Mildred interposed. “It is too uncanny. It surely is wrong to tamper with the dead. Besides, I am nervous. Or, better, let me go to bed, leaving you to go on with your experiments. That will be the best way, and you can tell me in the morning.” Mingled with the “Good-nights,” were half-hearted protests from Mrs. Grantly, as Aunt Mildred withdrew.

“Robert can return,” she called back, “as soon as he has seen me to my tent.”

“It would be a shame to give it up now,” Mrs. Grantly said. “There is no telling what we are on the verge of. Won’t you try it, Miss Story?”

Lute obeyed, but when she placed her hand on the board she was conscious of a vague and nameless fear at this toying with the supernatural. She was twentieth-century, and the thing in essence, as her uncle had said, was mediaeval. Yet she could not shake off the instinctive fear that arose in her — man’s inheritance from the wild and howling ages when his hairy, apelike prototype was afraid of the dark and personified the elements into things of fear.

But as the mysterious influence seized her hand and sent it meriting across the paper, all the unusual passed out of the situation and she was unaware of more than a feeble curiosity. For she was intent on another visioning — this time of her mother, who was also unremembered in the flesh. Not sharp and vivid like that of her father, but dim and nebulous was the picture she shaped of her mother — a saint’s head in an aureole of sweetness and goodness and meekness, and withal, shot through with

a hint of reposeful determination, of will, stubborn and unobtrusive, that in life had expressed itself mainly in resignation.

Lute's hand had ceased moving, and Mrs. Grantly was already reading the message that had been written.

"It is a different handwriting," she said. "A woman's hand. 'Martha,' it is signed. Who is Martha?"

Lute was not surprised. "It is my mother," she said simply. "What does she say?"

She had not been made sleepy, as Chris had; but the keen edge of her vitality had been blunted, and she was experiencing a sweet and pleasing lassitude. And while the message was being read, in her eyes persisted the vision of her mother.

"Dear child," Mrs. Grantly read, "do not mind him. He was ever quick of speech and rash. Be no niggard with your love. Love cannot hurt you. To deny love is to sin. Obey your heart and you can do no wrong. Obey worldly considerations, obey pride, obey those that prompt you against your heart's prompting, and you do sin. Do not mind your father. He is angry now, as was his way in the earth-life; but he will come to see the wisdom of my counsel, for this, too, was his way in the earth-life. Love, my child, and love well. — Martha."

"Let me see it," Lute cried, seizing the paper and devouring the handwriting with her eyes. She was thrilling with unexpressed love for the mother she had never seen, and this written speech from the grave seemed to give more tangibility to her having ever existed, than did the vision of her.

"This IS remarkable," Mrs. Grantly was reiterating. "There was never anything like it. Think of it, my dear, both your father and mother here with us tonight."

Lute shivered. The lassitude was gone, and she was her natural self again, vibrant with the instinctive fear of things unseen. And it was offensive to her mind that, real or illusion, the presence or the memorized existences of her father and mother should he touched by these two persons who were practically strangers — Mrs. Grantly, unhealthy and morbid, and Mr. Barton, stolid and stupid with a grossness both of the flesh and the spirit. And it further seemed a trespass that these strangers should thus enter into the intimacy between her and Chris.

She could hear the steps of her uncle approaching, and the situation flashed upon her, luminous and clear. She hurriedly folded the sheet of paper and thrust it into her bosom.

"Don't say anything to him about this second message, Mrs. Grantly, please, and Mr. Barton. Nor to Aunt Mildred. It would only cause them irritation and needless anxiety."

In her mind there was also the desire to protect her lover, for she knew that the strain of his present standing with her aunt and uncle would be added to, unconsciously in their minds, by the weird message of Planchette.

"And please don't let us have any more Planchette," Lute continued hastily. "Let us forget all the nonsense that has occurred."

"'Nonsense,' my dear child?" Mrs. Grantly was indignantly protesting when Uncle Robert strode into the circle.

"Hello!" he demanded. "What's being done?"

"Too late," Lute answered lightly. "No more stock quotations for you. Planchette is adjourned, and we're just winding up the discussion of the theory of it. Do you know how late it is?"

"Well, what did you do last night after we left?"

"Oh, took a stroll," Chris answered.

Lute's eyes were quizzical as she asked with a tentativeness that was palpably assumed, "With — a — with Mr. Barton?"

"Why, yes."

"And a smoke?"

"Yes; and now what's it all about?"

Lute broke into merry laughter. "Just as I told you that you would do. Am I not a prophet? But I knew before I saw you that my forecast had come true. I have just left Mr. Barton, and I knew he had walked with you last night, for he is vowing by all his fetishes and idols that you are a perfectly splendid young man. I could see it with my eyes shut. The Chris Dunbar glamour has fallen upon him. But I have not finished the catechism by any means. Where have you been all morning?"

"Where I am going to take you this afternoon."

"You plan well without knowing my wishes."

"I knew well what your wishes are. It is to see a horse I have found."

Her voice betrayed her delight, as she cried, "Oh, good!"

"He is a beauty," Chris said.

But her face had suddenly gone grave, and apprehension brooded in her eyes.

"He's called Comanche," Chris went on. "A beauty, a regular beauty, the perfect type of the Californian cow-pony. And his lines — why, what's the matter?"

Don't let us ride any more," Lute said, "at least for a while. Really, I think I am a tiny bit tired of it, too."

He was looking at her in astonishment, and she was bravely meeting his eyes.

"I see hearses and flowers for you," he began, "and a funeral oration; I see the end of the world, and the stars falling out of the sky, and the heavens rolling up as a scroll; I see the living and the dead gathered together for the final judgement, the sheep and the goats, the lambs and the rams and all the rest of it, the white-robed saints, the sound of golden harps, and the lost souls howling as they fall into the Pit — all this I see on the day that you, Lute Story, no longer care to ride a horse. A horse, Lute! a horse!"

"For a while, at least," she pleaded.

"Ridiculous!" he cried. "What's the matter? Aren't you well? — you who are always so abominably and adorably well!"

"No, it's not that," she answered. "I know it is ridiculous, Chris, I know it, but the doubt will arise. I cannot help it. You always say I am so sanely rooted to the earth

and reality and all that, but — perhaps it's superstition, I don't know — but the whole occurrence, the messages of Planchette, the possibility of my father's hand, I know not how, reaching, out to Ban's rein and hurling him and you to death, the correspondence between my father's statement that he has twice attempted your life and the fact that in the last two days your life has twice been endangered by horses–my father was a great horseman — all this, I say, causes the doubt to arise in my mind. What if there be something in it? I am not so sure. Science may be too dogmatic in its denial of the unseen. The forces of the unseen, of the spirit, may well be too subtle, too sublimated, for science to lay hold of, and recognize, and formulate. Don't you see, Chris, that there is rationality in the very doubt? It may be a very small doubt — oh, so small; but I love you too much to run even that slight risk. Besides, I am a woman, and that should in itself fully account for my predisposition toward superstition.

"Yes, yes, I know, call it unreality. But I've heard you paradoxing upon the reality of the unreal — the reality of delusion to the mind that is sick. And so with me, if you will; it is delusion and unreal, but to me, constituted as I am, it is very real —-is real as a nightmare is real, in the throes of it, before one awakes."

"The most logical argument for illogic I have ever heard," Chris smiled. "It is a good gaming proposition, at any rate. You manage to embrace more chances in your philosophy than do I in mine. It reminds me of Sam — the gardener you had a couple of years ago. I overheard him and Martin arguing in the stable. You know what a bigoted atheist Martin is. Well, Martin had deluged Sam with floods of logic. Sam pondered awhile, and then he said, 'Foh a fack, Mis' Martin, you jis' tawk like a house afire; but you ain't got de show I has.' 'How's that?' Martin asked. 'Well, you see, Mis' Martin, you has one chance to mah two.' 'I don't see it,' Martin said. 'Mis' Martin, it's dis way. You has jis' de chance, lak you say, to become worms foh de fruitification of de cabbage garden. But I's got de chance to lif' mah voice to de glory of de Lawd as I go paddin' dem golden streets — along 'ith de chance to be jis' worms along 'ith you, Mis' Martin."'

"You refuse to take me seriously," Lute said, when she had laughed her appreciation.

"How can I take that Planchette rigmarole seriously?" he asked.

"You don't explain it — the handwriting of my father, which Uncle Robert recognized — oh, the whole thing, you don't explain it."

"I don't know all the mysteries of mind," Chris answered. "But I believe such phenomena will all yield to scientific explanation in the not distant future."

"Just the same, I have a sneaking desire to find out some more from Planchette," Lute confessed. "The board is still down in the dining room. We could try it now, you and I, and no one would know."

Chris caught her hand, crying: "Come on! It will be a lark."

Hand in hand they ran down the path to the tree-pillared room.

"The camp is deserted," Lute said, as she placed Planchette on the table. "Mrs. Grantly and Aunt Mildred are lying down, and Mr. Barton has gone off with Uncle Robert. There is nobody to disturb us." She placed her hand on the board. "Now begin."

For a few minutes nothing happened. Chris started to speak, but she hushed him to silence. The preliminary twitchings had appeared in her hand and arm. Then the pencil began to write. They read the message, word by word, as it was written:

There is wisdom greater than the wisdom of reason. Love proceeds not out of the dry-as-dust way of the mind. Love is of the heart, and is beyond all reason, and logic, and philosophy. Trust your own heart, my daughter. And if your heart bids you have faith in your lover, then laugh at the mind and its cold wisdom, and obey your heart, and have faith in your lover. — Martha.

"But that whole message is the dictate of your own heart," Chris cried. "Don't you see, Lute? The thought is your very own, and your subconscious mind has expressed it there on the paper."

"But there is one thing I don't see," she objected.

"And that?"

"Is the handwriting. Look at it. It does not resemble mine at all. It is mincing, it is old-fashioned, it is the old-fashioned feminine of a generation ago."

"But you don't mean to tell me that you really believe that this is a message from the dead?" he interrupted.

"I don't know, Chris," she wavered. "I am sure I don't know."

"It is absurd!" he cried. "These are cobwebs of fancy. When one dies, he is dead. He is dust. He goes to the worms, as Martin says. The dead? I laugh at the dead. They do not exist. They are not. I defy the powers of the grave, the men dead and dust and gone!

"And what have you to say to that?" he challenged, placing his hand on Planchette.

On the instant his hand began to write. Both were startled by the suddenness of it. The message was brief:

BEWARE! BEWARE! BEWARE!

He was distinctly sobered, but he laughed. "It is like a miracle play. Death we have, speaking to us from the grave. But Good Deeds, where art thou? And Kindred? and Joy? and Household Goods? and Friendship? and all the goodly company?"

But Lute did not share his bravado. Her fright showed itself in her face. She laid her trembling hand on his arm.

"Oh, Chris, let us stop. I am sorry we began it. Let us leave the quiet dead to their rest. It is wrong. It must be wrong. I confess I am affected by it. I cannot help it. As my body is trembling, so is my soul. This speech of the grave, this dead man reaching out from the mould of a generation to protect me from you. There is reason in it. There is the living mystery that prevents you from marrying me. Were my father alive, he would protect me from you. Dead, he still strives to protect me. His hands, his ghostly hands, are against your life!"

"Do be calm," Chris said soothingly. "Listen to me. It is all a lark. We are playing with the subjective forces of our own being, with phenomena which science has not yet explained, that is all. Psychology is so young a science. The subconscious mind has just been discovered, one might say. It is all mystery as yet; the laws of it are yet

to he formulated. This is simply unexplained phenomena. But that is no reason that we should immediately account for it by labelling it spiritism. As yet we do not know, that is all. As for Planchette — "

He abruptly ceased, for at that moment, to enforce his remark, he had placed his hand on Planchette, and at that moment his hand had been seized, as by a paroxysm, and sent dashing, willy-nilly, across the paper, writing as the hand of an angry person would write.

"No, I don't care for any more of it," Lute said, when the message was completed. "It is like witnessing a fight between you and my father in the flesh. There is the savor in it of struggle and blows."

She pointed out a sentence that read: "You cannot escape me nor the just punishment that is yours!"

"Perhaps I visualize too vividly for my own comfort, for I can see his hands at your throat. I know that he is, as you say, dead and dust, but for all that, I can see him as a man that is alive and walks the earth; I see the anger in his face, the anger and the vengeance, and I see it all directed against you."

She crumpled up the scrawled sheets of paper, and put Planchette away.

"We won't bother with it any more," Chris said. "I didn't think it would affect you so strongly. But it's all subjective, I'm sure, with possibly a bit of suggestion thrown in–that and nothing more. And the whole strain of our situation has made conditions unusually favorable for striking phenomena."

"And about our situation," Lute said, as they went slowly up the path they had run down. " What we are to do, I don't know. Are we to go on, as we have gone on? What is best? Have you thought of anything?"

He debated for a few steps. "I have thought of telling your uncle and aunt."

"What you couldn't tell me?" she asked quickly.

"No," he answered slowly; "but just as much as I have told you. I have no right to tell them more than I have told you."

This time it was she that debated. "No, don't tell them," she said finally. "They wouldn't understand. I don't understand, for that matter, but I have faith in you, and in the nature of things they are not capable of this same Implicit faith. You raise up before me a mystery that prevents our marriage, and I believe you; but they could not believe you without doubts arising as to the wrong and ill-nature of the mystery. Besides, it would but make their anxieties greater."

"I should go away, I know I should go away," he said, half under his breath. "And I can. I am no weakling. Because I have failed to remain away once, is no reason that I shall fail again."

She caught her breath with a quick gasp. "It is like a bereavement to hear you speak of going away and remaining away. I should never see you again. It is too terrible. And do not reproach yourself for weakness. It is I who am to blame. It is I who prevented you from remaining away before, I know. I wanted you so. I want you so.

“There is nothing to be done, Chris, nothing to be done but to go on with it and let it work itself out somehow. That is one thing we are sure of: it will work out somehow.”

“But it would be easier if I went away,” he suggested.

“I am happier when you are here.”

“The cruelty of circumstance,” he muttered savagely.

“Go or stay — that will be part of the working out. But I do not want you to go, Chris; you know that. And now no more about it. Talk cannot mend it. Let us never mention it again — unless . . . unless some time, some wonderful, happy time, you can come to me and say: ‘Lute, all is well with me. The mystery no longer binds me. I am free.’ Until that time let us bury it, along with Planchette and all the rest, and make the most of the little that is given us.

“And now, to show you how prepared I am to make the most of that little, I am even ready to go with you this afternoon to see the horse — though I wish you wouldn’t ride any more . . . for a few days, anyway, or for a week. What did you say was his name?”

“Comanche,” he answered. “I know you will like him.”

* * * * * * *

Chris lay on his back, his head propped by the bare jutting wall of stone, his gaze attentively directed across the canyon to the opposing tree-covered slope. There was a sound of crashing through underbrush, the ringing of steel-shod hoofs on stone, and an occasional and mossy descent of a dislodged boulder that bounded from the hill and fetched up with a final splash in the torrent that rushed over a wild chaos of rocks beneath him. Now and again he caught glimpses, framed in green foliage, of the golden brown of Lute’s corduroy riding-habit and of the bay horse that moved beneath her.

She rode out into an open space where a loose earth-slide denied lodgement to trees and grass. She halted the horse at the brink of the slide and glanced down it with a measuring eye. Forty feet beneath, the slide terminated in a small, firm-surfaced terrace, the banked accumulation of fallen earth and gravel.

“It’s a good test,” she called across the canyon. “I’m going to put him down it.”

The animal gingerly launched himself on the treacherous footing, irregularly losing and gaining his hind feet, keeping his fore legs stiff, and steadily and calmly, without panic or nervousness, extricating the fore feet as fast as they sank too deep into the sliding earth that surged along in a wave before him. When the firm footing at the bottom was reached, he strode out on the little terrace with a quickness and springiness of gait and with glintings of muscular fires that gave the lie to the calm deliberation of his movements on the slide.

“Bravo!” Chris shouted across the canyon, clapping his hands.

“The wisest-footed, clearest-headed horse I ever saw,” Lute called back, as she turned the animal to the side and dropped down a broken slope of rubble and into the trees again.

Chris followed her by the sound of her progress, and by occasional glimpses where the foliage was more open, as she zigzagged down the steep and trailless descent. She

emerged below him at the rugged rim of the torrent, dropped the horse down a three-foot wall, and halted to study the crossing.

Four feet out in the stream, a narrow ledge thrust above the surface of the water. Beyond the ledge boiled an angry pool. But to the left, from the ledge, and several feet lower, was a they bed of gravel. A giant boulder prevented direct access to the gravel bed. The only way to gain it was by first leaping to the ledge of rock. She studied it carefully, and the tightening of her bridle-arm advertised that she had made up her mind.

Chris, in his anxiety, had sat up to observe more closely what she meditated.

"Don't tackle it," he called.

"I have faith in Comanche," she called in return.

"He can't make that side-jump to the gravel," Chris warned. "He'll never keep his legs. He'll topple over into the pool. Not one horse in a thousand could do that stunt."

"And Comanche is that very horse," she answered. "Watch him."

She gave the animal his head, and he leaped cleanly and accurately to the ledge, striking with feet close together on the narrow space. On the instant he struck, Lute lightly touched his neck with the rein, impelling him to the left; and in that instant, tottering on the insecure footing, with front feet slipping over into the pool beyond, he lifted on his hind legs, with a half turn, sprang to the left, and dropped squarely down to the tiny gravel bed. An easy jump brought him across the stream, and Lute angled him up the bank and halted before her lover.

"Well?" she asked.

"I am all tense," Chris answered. "I was holding my breath."

"Buy him, by all means," Lute said, dismounting. "He is a bargain. I could dare anything on him. I never in my life had such confidence in a horse's feet."

"His owner says that he has never been known to lose his feet, that it is impossible to get him down."

"Buy him, buy him at once," she counselled, "before the man changes his mind. If you don't, I shall. Oh, such feet! I feel such confidence in them that when I am on him I don't consider he has feet at all. And he's quick as a cat, and instantly obedient. Bridle-wise is no name for it! You could guide him with silken threads. Oh, I know I'm enthusiastic, but if you don't buy him, Chris. I shall. Remember, I've second refusal."

Chris smiled agreement as he changed the saddles. Meanwhile she compared the two horses.

"Of course he doesn't match Dolly the way Ban did," she concluded regretfully; "but his coat is splendid just the same. And think of the horse that is under the coat!"

Chris gave her a hand into the saddle, and followed her up the slope to the county road. She reined in suddenly, saying:

"We won't go straight back to camp."

"You forget dinner," he wanted.

"But I remember Comanche," she retorted. "We'll ride directly over to the ranch and buy him. Dinner will keep."

“But the cook won’t,” Chris laughed. “She’s already threatened to leave, what of our late-comings.”

“Even so,” was the answer. “Aunt Mildred may have to get another cook, but at any rate we shall have got Comanche.”

They turned the horses in the other direction, and took the climb of the Nun Canyon road that led over the divide and down into the Napa Valley. But the climb was hard, the going was slow. Sometimes they topped the bed of the torrent by hundreds of feet, and again they dipped down and crossed and recrossed it twenty times in twice as many rods. They rode through the deep shade of clean-bunked maples and towering redwoods, to emerge on open stretches of mountain shoulder where the earth lay dry and cracked under the sun.

On one such shoulder they emerged, where the road stretched level before them, for a quarter of a mile. On one side rose the huge bulk of the mountain. On the other side the steep wall of the canyon fell away in impossible slopes and sheer drops to the torrent at the bottom. It was an abyss of green beauty and shady depths, pierced by vagrant shafts of the sun and mottled here and there by the sun’s broader blazes. The sound of rushing water ascended on the windless air, and there was a hum of mountain bees.

The horses broke into an easy lope. Chris rock on the outside, looking down into the great depths and pleasuring with his eyes in what he saw. Dissociating itself from the murmur of the bees, a murmur arose of falling water. It grew louder with every stride of the horses.

“Look!” he cried.

Lute leaned well out from her horse to see. Beneath them the water slid foaming down a smooth-faced rock to the lip, whence it leaped clear–a pulsating ribbon of white, a-breath with movement, ever falling and ever remaining, changing its substance but never its form, an aerial waterway as immaterial as gauze and as permanent as the hills, that spanned space and the free air from the lip of the rock to the tops of the trees far below, into whose green screen it disappeared to fall into a secret pool.

They had flashed past. The descending water became a distant murmur that merged again into the murmur of the bees and ceased. Swayed by a common impulse, they looked at each other.

“Oh, Chris, it is good to be alive . . . and to have you here by my side!”

He answered her by the warm light in his eyes.

All things tended to key them to an exquisite pitch — the movement of their bodies, at one with the moving bodies of the animals beneath them; the gently stimulated blood caressing the flesh through and through with the soft vigors of health; the warm air fanning their faces, flowing over the skin with balmy and tonic touch, permeating them and bathing them, subtly, with faint, sensuous delight; and the beauty of the world, more subtly still, flowing upon them and bathing them in the delight that is of the spirit and is personal and holy, that is inexpressible yet communicable by the flash of an eye and the dissolving of the veils of the soul.

So looked they at each other, the horses bounding beneath them, the spring of the world and the spring of their youth astir in their blood, the secret of being trembling in their eyes to the brink of disclosure, as if about to dispel, with one magic word, all the irks and riddles of existence.

The road curved before them, so that the upper reaches of the canyon could be seen, the distant bed of it towering high above their heads. They were rounding the curve, leaning toward the inside, gazing before them at the swift-growing picture. There was no sound of warning. She heard nothing, but even before the horse went down she experienced the feeling that the unison of the two leaping animals was broken. She turned her head, and so quickly that she saw Comanche fall. It was not a stumble nor a trip. He fell as though, abruptly, in midleap, he had died or been struck a stunning blow.

And in that moment she remembered Planchette; it seared her brain as a lightning-flash of all-embracing memory. Her horse was back on its haunches, the weight of her body on the reins; but her head was turned and her eyes were on the falling Comanche. He struck the road-bed squarely, with his legs loose and lifeless beneath him.

It all occurred in one of those age-long seconds that embrace an eternity of happening. There was a slight but perceptible rebound from the impact of Comanche's body with the earth. The violence with which he struck forced the air from his great lungs in an audible groan. His momentum swept him onward and over the edge. The weight of the rider on his neck turned him over head first as he pitched to the fall.

She was off her horse, she knew not how, and to the edge. Her lover was out of the saddle and clear of Comanche, though held to the animal by his right foot, which was caught in the stirrup. The slope was too steep for them to come to a stop. Earth and small stones, dislodged by their struggles, were rolling down with them and before them in a miniature avalanche. She stood very quietly, holding one hand against her heart and gazing down. But while she saw the real happening, in her eyes was also the vision of her father dealing the spectral blow that had smashed Comanche down in mid-leap and sent horse and rider hurtling over the edge.

Beneath horse and man the steep terminated in an up-and-down wall, from the base of which, in turn, a second slope ran down to a second wall. A third slope terminated in a final wall that based itself on the canyon-bed four hundred feet beneath the point where the girl stood and watched. She could see Chris vainly kicking his leg to free the foot from the trap of the stirrup. Comanche fetched up hard against an outputting point of rock. For a fraction of a second his fall was stopped, and in the slight interval the man managed to grip hold of a young shoot of manzanita. Lute saw him complete the grip with his other hand. Then Comanche's fall began again. She saw the stirrup-strap draw taut, then her lover's body and arms. The manzanita shoot yielded its roots, and horse and man plunged over the edge and out of sight.

They came into view on the next slope, together and rolling over and over, with sometimes the man under and sometimes the horse. Chris no longer struggled, and together they dashed over to the third slope. Near the edge of the final wall, Comanche

lodged on a buttock of stone. He lay quietly, and near him, still attached to him by the stirrup, face downward, lay his rider.

"If only he will lie quietly," Lute breathed aloud, her mind at work on the means of rescue.

But she saw Comanche begin to struggle again, and clear on her vision, it seemed, was the spectral arm of her father clutching the reins and dragging the animal over. Comanche floundered across the hummock, the inert body following, and together, horse and man, they plunged from sight. They did not appear again. They had fetched bottom.

Lute looked about her. She stood alone on the world. Her lover was gone. There was naught to show of his existence, save the marks of Comanche's hoofs on the road and of his body where it had slid over the brink.

"Chris!" she called once, and twice; but she called hopelessly.

Out of the depths, on the windless air, arose only the murmur of bees and of running water

"Chris!" she called yet a third time, and sank slowly down in the dust of the road.

She felt the touch of Dolly's muzzle on her arm, and she leaned her head against the mare's neck and waited. She knew not why she waited, nor for what, only there seemed nothing else but waiting left for her to do.

Pluck and Pertinacity

TO P. T. Barnum is accorded the coinage of the term "stick-to-itiveness," a strong synonym for "pertinacity." Now he who possesses pertinacity must also possess pluck, another important element in the achievement of success. A man devoid of this cannot be pertinacious; his resolution melts away in the face of obstacles which require pluck to overcome.

The following story of unyielding adherence to purpose, performed under almost unthinkable hardships and dangers, is a true one, for I was personally aware of most the facts concerned. Some of the incidents, however, were given me by a surgeon travelling into the Yukon country with a detachment of the Northwest mounted police, and still others I obtained from the white trader in charge of the Sixty-Mile Post. The story is of a man who practically achieved the impossible in his hazardous ice-journey in the dead of an Artic winter. Happily, success crowned the effort.

In the fall of 1897, the cry of famine went up from the hungry town of Dawson. Faint-hearted miners turned their backs on the golden lure. Partners, with food for but one, drew straws to ascertain which should remain and which should go. Canadian citizens and American aliens appealed to their respective governments for aid.

In October, with the last water, which was composed chiefly of running ice, a hungry exodus went down the river to Fort Yukon. Then the price of dogs went up to three hundred dollars, and dog-food to a dollar per pound. Flour was not to be had at one hundred and fifty dollars per hundredweight. In November, with the first ice, another stampeded crowd hurried up the river to civilization and safety.

This scare, which so greatly diminished the number of empty mouths, was all that saved Dawson from a bitter winter. As it was, the gold-seekers managed to pinch through; but those that fled in the height of the panic carried a terrible tale with them to salt water. After that the winter settled down and all communication ceased.

For the many faces turned south on the dismal half-thousand miles of trail, there was one that held unerringly to the north. It belonged to a Dutchman, who knew little English and spoke less. His equipment was more meagre than that of those who passed him, and he was heading away from it. He had barely enough food to last himself and dog to Dawson. He had a dog — a bulldog, the short hair of which made it the worst possible choice of a sledge animal in that frosty land.

The refugees looked at his outfit and laughed. By eloquent signs — for misery speaks a common tongue — they explained the lack of food. When that did not startle him, they painted lurid pictures of starvation and death. But he always remained

unperturbed. Then they ceased their grim mirth, and pleaded and entreated him to go back. But he invariably pressed on.

Why not? He had started to go to the Klondike, and certainly was going there. True, he had already tried the Stikine route and lost his outfit and three comrades in its treacherous waters; true, he had then gone to St. Michaels, only to get there when the Yukon had frozen and to escape on the last vessel before Bering Sea closed; true, his money was gone and he had but a few weeks' food, — all true, — but it was also true that he had left a wife and children down in the States, and he must send yellow dust of the north to them before another year had passed.

And yet again — the real stamp of the man — he had started to go to the Klondike, and he was going there. For the third time he had ventured it, this time over the dreaded Chilkoot Pass in midwinter.

After untold hardship, he arrived at the Big Salmon River, two hundred and fifty miles from the Chilkoot and an equal distance from Dawson. At that point he encountered a squad of the mounted police of the Northwest Territories. They had strict orders to allow no one to pass who did not possess a thousand pounds of provisions. As he had barely fifty pounds, he was turned back. One of the police, who understood his language, explained the terrible condition of affairs.

All others whom they had turned back had retraced their steps cheerfully. But this man was not made of such mettle. Twice nature had conspired to thwart him, when the trip was half completed, came man. However, he ostensibly started back. But that night he broke a trail through the deep snow and crossed the river, regaining the travelled trail far below the encampment.

The next heard of him was at Little Salmon River, when another detachment of police saw an exhausted man and a bulldog limping painfully down the river. They thought the upper camp had passed him on; so, without suspicion, they cordially invited him to their fire to rest and warm up, but he was afraid, and hobbled on.

The thermometer had gone down and then steadily remained at between fifty and sixty degrees below zero — equivalent to between eighty and ninety degrees of frost. The Dutchman had frozen one of his feet, but still pressed on. He passed fleeing men, young men, with frozen limbs or scurvy-rotted flesh — terrible wrecks of the country; but day by day, rigidly adhering to his object, he plodded into the north.

At Fort Selkirk he was forced to lay up, his frozen foot having become so bad that he could no longer travel. But he had been there only two days, when the surgeon from Big Salmon River arrived. He had sledded a hundred miles down the river with a government dog-team, to amputate the limbs of an unfortunate young man who had been trying to get out of the land. After that, the surgeon had gone on to Fort Selkirk, where he expected to wait till the incoming police picked him up.

He recognized the Dutchman and dressed his foot, the flesh of which had begun to slough away, leaving a raw and festered hole in the sole of the foot almost large enough to thrust one's fist into. He happened to explain, by signs, that he was awaiting the coming of the police.

That was enough for the sufferer. The police were coming. They would send him back. He cut up a blanket and made a gigantic moccasin, folding thickness upon thickness till it was the size of a water-bucket. That night, he and his bulldog headed down river to Dawson, one hundred and seventy-five miles away.

The exquisite pain the man must have endured from the cold, the toil, the lack of food, and the injured foot, can only be conjectured. And it was not as if he had comrades, for he suffered alone, and ran the dangers of the ice-journey without hope of help in case of accident.

At Stuart River he was almost gone; but his persistence and indomitability seemed limitless. The fear that the police would capture him and send him back drove him on; and he was the kind of man that did not show the meaning of the word "failure." As it was, the police, with their fine trail equipment of dogs and sleds, never did succeed in overtaking him.

At Sixty-Mile, it seemed the he must at last succumb, for the dog had finally become exhausted, as had also the supply of food. But the white trader at that point bought the dog for two hundred dollars and sufficient food to last the man into Dawson, then only fifty miles away.

Barely had he reached his goal when he was sawing wood at fifteen dollars a day, and slowly but surely curing his foot that he might go prospecting. It is no easy task to work all day in the open in such a frosty clime. But he worked steadily through the winter, while other men idled in their cabins and cursed their ill-luck and the country in general. Not only did he manage to earn subsistence, but he got himself a miner's outfit, and also sent out a snug portion of his earnings to the wife and children down in the States.

In the spring, while the majority of the gold-seekers were preparing to shake the dust of the country from their moccasins, he took part in the stampede to the French Hill benches. A little later, those that passed his claim might have seen a contented-looking man busily engaged in washing out a satisfactory amount of gold a day.

There can be no better way to conclude this narrative of unyielding adherence to purpose, than by stating that one of the first things he did was to hunt up the Sixty-Mile trader and buy back the bulldog that had been the comrade of his hardships and sufferings.

The Priestly Prerogative

This is the story of a man who did not appreciate his wife; also, of a woman who did him too great an honor when she gave herself to him. Incidentally, it concerns a Jesuit priest who had never been known to lie. He was an appurtenance, and a very necessary one, to the Yukon country; but the presence of the other two was merely accidental. They were specimens of the many strange waifs which ride the breast of a gold rush or come tailing along behind.

Edwin Bentham and Grace Bentham were waifs; they were also tailing along behind, for the Klondike rush of '97 had long since swept down the great river and subsided into the famine-stricken city of Dawson. When the Yukon shut up shop and went to sleep under a three-foot ice-sheet, this peripatetic couple found themselves at the Five Finger Rapids, with the City of Gold still a journey of many sleeps to the north.

Many cattle had been butchered at this place in the fall of the year, and the offal made a goodly heap. The three fellow-voyagers of Edwin Bentham and wife gazed upon this deposit, did a little mental arithmetic, caught a certain glimpse of a bonanza, and decided to remain. And all winter they sold sacks of bones and frozen hides to the famished dog-teams. It was a modest price they asked, a dollar a pound, just as it came. Six months later, when the sun came back and the Yukon awoke, they buckled on their heavy moneybelts and journeyed back to the Southland, where they yet live and lie mightily about the Klondike they never saw.

But Edwin Bentham–he was an indolent fellow, and had he not been possessed of a wife, would have gladly joined issued in the dog-meat speculation. As it was, she played upon his vanity, told him how great and strong he was, how a man such as he certainly was could overcome all obstacles and of a surety obtain the Golden Fleece. So he squared his jaw, sold his share in the bones and hides for a sled and one dog, and turned his snowshoes to the north. Needless to state, Grace Bentham's snowshoes never allowed his tracks to grow cold. Nay, ere their tribulations had seen three days, it was the man who followed in the rear, and the woman who broke trail in advance. Of course, if anybody hove in sight, the position was instantly reversed. Thus did his manhood remain virgin to the travelers who passed like ghosts on the silent trail. There are such men in this world.

How such a man and such a woman came to take each other for better and for worse is unimportant to this narrative. These things are familiar to us all, and those people who do them, or even question them too closely, are apt to lose a beautiful faith which is known as Eternal Fitness.

Edwin Bentham was a boy, thrust by mischance into a man's body,–a boy who could complacently pluck a butterfly, wing from wing, or cower in abject terror before a lean, nervy fellow, not half his size. He was a selfish cry-baby, hidden behind a man's mustache and stature, and glossed over with a skin-deep veneer of culture and conventionality. Yes; he was a clubman and a society man,the sort that grace social functions and utter inanities with a charm and unction which is indescribable; the sort that talk big, and cry over a toothache; the sort that put more hell into a woman's life by marrying her than can the most graceless libertine that ever browsed in forbidden pastures. We meet these men every day, but we rarely know them for what they are. Second to marrying them, the best way to get this knowledge is to eat out of the same pot and crawl under the same blanket with them for-well, say a week; no greater margin is necessary.

To see Grace Bentham, was to see a slender, girlish creature; to know her, was to know a soul which dwarfed your own, yet retained all the elements of the eternal feminine. This was the woman who urged and encouraged her husband in his Northland quest, who broke trail for him when no one was looking, and cried in secret over her weakling woman's body.

So journeyed this strangely assorted couple down to old Fort Selkirk, then through fivescore miles of dismal wilderness to Stuart River. And when the short day left them, and the man lay down in the snow and blubbered, it was the woman who lashed him to the sled, bit her lips with the pain of her aching limbs, and helped the dog haul him to Malemute Kid's cabin. Malemute Kid was not at home, but Meyers, the German trader, cooked great moose-steaks and shook up a bed of fresh pine boughs. Lake, Langham, and Parker, were excited, and not unduly so when the cause was taken into account.

'Oh, Sandy! Say, can you tell a porterhouse from a round? Come out and lend us a hand, anyway!' This appeal emanated from the cache, where Langham was vainly struggling with divers quarters of frozen moose.

'Don't you budge from those dishes!' commanded Parker.

'I say, Sandy; there's a good fellow–just run down to the Missouri Camp and borrow some cinnamon,' begged Lake.

'Oh! oh! hurry up! Why don't-' But the crash of meat and boxes, in the cache, abruptly quenched this peremptory summons.

'Come now, Sandy; it won't take a minute to go down to the Missouri-' 'You leave him alone,' interrupted Parker. 'How am I to mix the biscuits if the table isn't cleared off?'

Sandy paused in indecision, till suddenly the fact that he was Langham's 'man' dawned upon him. Then he apologetically threw down the greasy dishcloth, and went to his master's rescue.

These promising scions of wealthy progenitors had come to the Northland in search of laurels, with much money to burn, and a 'man' apiece. Luckily for their souls, the other two men were up the White River in search of a mythical quartzledge; so

Sandy had to grin under the responsibility of three healthy masters, each of whom was possessed of peculiar cookery ideas. Twice that morning had a disruption of the whole camp been imminent, only averted by immense concessions from one or the other of these knights of the chafing-dish. But at last their mutual creation, a really dainty dinner, was completed.

Then they sat down to a three-cornered game of 'cut-throat,'–a proceeding which did away with all casus belli for future hostilities, and permitted the victor to depart on a most important mission.

This fortune fell to Parker, who parted his hair in the middle, put on his mittens and bearskin cap, and stepped over to Malemute Kid's cabin. And when he returned, it was in the company of Grace Bentham and Malemute Kid,–the former very sorry her husband could not share with her their hospitality, for he had gone up to look at the Henderson Creek mines, and the latter still a trifle stiff from breaking trail down the Stuart River.

Meyers had been asked, but had declined, being deeply engrossed in an experiment of raising bread from hops.

Well, they could do without the husband; but a woman–why they had not seen one all winter, and the presence of this one promised a new era in their lives.

They were college men and gentlemen, these three young fellows, yearning for the flesh-pots they had been so long denied. Probably Grace Bentham suffered from a similar hunger; at least, it meant much to her, the first bright hour in many weeks of darkness.

But that wonderful first course, which claimed the versatile Lake for its parent, had no sooner been served than there came a loud knock at the door.

'Oh! Ah! Won't you come in, Mr. Bentham?' said Parker, who had stepped to see who the newcomer might be.

'Is my wife here?' gruffly responded that worthy.

'Why, yes. We left word with Mr. Meyers.' Parker was exerting his most dulcet tones, inwardly wondering what the deuce it all meant. 'Won't you come in? Expecting you at any moment, we reserved a place. And just in time for the first course, too.' 'Come in, Edwin, dear,' chirped Grace Bentham from her seat at the table.

Parker naturally stood aside.

'I want my wife,' reiterated Bentham hoarsely, the intonation savoring disagreeably of ownership.

Parker gasped, was within an ace of driving his fist into the face of his boorish visitor, but held himself awkwardly in check. Everybody rose. Lake lost his head and caught himself on the verge of saying, 'Must you go?' Then began the farrago of leave-taking. 'So nice of you-' 'I am awfully sorry' 'By Jove! how things did brighten-' 'Really now, you-'

'Thank you ever so much-' 'Nice trip to Dawson-' etc., etc.

In this wise the lamb was helped into her jacket and led to the slaughter. Then the door slammed, and they gazed woefully upon the deserted table.

'Damn!' Langham had suffered disadvantages in his early training, and his oaths were weak and monotonous. 'Damn!' he repeated, vaguely conscious of the incompleteness and vainly struggling for a more virile term. It is a clever woman who can fill out the many weak places in an inefficient man, by her own indomitability, re-enforce his vacillating nature, infuse her ambitious soul into his, and spur him on to great achievements. And it is indeed a very clever and tactful woman who can do all this, and do it so subtly that the man receives all the credit and believes in his inmost heart that everything is due to him and him alone.

This is what Grace Bentham proceeded to do. Arriving in Dawson with a few pounds of flour and several letters of introduction, she at once applied herself to the task of pushing her big baby to the fore. It was she who melted the stony heart and wrung credit from the rude barbarian who presided over the destiny of the P. C. Company; yet it was Edwin Bentham to whom the concession was ostensibly granted. It was she who dragged her baby up and down creeks, over benches and divides, and on a dozen wild stampedes; yet everybody remarked what an energetic fellow that Bentham was. It was she who studied maps, and catechised miners, and hammered geography and locations into his hollow head, till everybody marveled at his broad grasp of the country and knowledge of its conditions. Of course, they said the wife was a brick, and only a few wise ones appreciated and pitied the brave little woman.

She did the work; he got the credit and reward. In the Northwest Territory a married woman cannot stake or record a creek, bench, or quartz claim; so Edwin Bentham went down to the Gold Commissioner and filed on Bench Claim 23, second tier, of French Hill. And when April came they were washing out a thousand dollars a day, with many, many such days in prospect.

At the base of French Hill lay Eldorado Creek, and on a creek claim stood the cabin of Clyde Wharton. At present he was not washing out a diurnal thousand dollars; but his dumps grew, shift by shift, and there would come a time when those dumps would pass through his sluice-boxes, depositing in the riffles, in the course of half a dozen days, several hundred thousand dollars. He often sat in that cabin, smoked his pipe, and dreamed beautiful little dreams,–dreams in which neither the dumps nor the half-ton of dust in the P. C. Company's big safe, played a part.

And Grace Bentham, as she washed tin dishes in her hillside cabin, often glanced down into Eldorado Creek, and dreamed,–not of dumps nor dust, however. They met frequently, as the trail to the one claim crossed the other, and there is much to talk about in the Northland spring; but never once, by the light of an eye nor the slip of a tongue, did they speak their hearts.

This is as it was at first. But one day Edwin Bentham was brutal. All boys are thus; besides, being a French Hill king now, he began to think a great deal of himself and to forget all he owed to his wife. On this day, Wharton heard of it, and waylaid Grace Bentham, and talked wildly. This made her very happy, though she would not listen, and made him promise to not say such things again. Her hour had not come.

But the sun swept back on its northern journey, the black of midnight changed to the steely color of dawn, the snow slipped away, the water dashed again over the glacial drift, and the wash-up began. Day and night the yellow clay and scraped bedrock hurried through the swift sluices, yielding up its ransom to the strong men from the Southland.

And in that time of tumult came Grace Bentham's hour.

To all of us such hours at some time come,–that is, to us who are not too phlegmatic.

Some people are good, not from inherent love of virtue, but from sheer laziness. But those of us who know weak moments may understand.

Edwin Bentham was weighing dust over the bar of the saloon at the Forks–altogether too much of his dust went over that pine board–when his wife came down the hill and slipped into Clyde Wharton's cabin. Wharton was not expecting her, but that did not alter the case. And much subsequent misery and idle waiting might have been avoided, had not Father Roubeau seen this and turned aside from the main creek trail. 'My child,-' 'Hold on, Father Roubeau! Though I'm not of your faith, I respect you; but you can't come in between this woman and me!' 'You know what you are doing?' 'Know! Were you God Almighty, ready to fling me into eternal fire, I'd bank my will against yours in this matter.' Wharton had placed Grace on a stool and stood belligerently before her.

'You sit down on that chair and keep quiet,' he continued, addressing the Jesuit. 'I'll take my innings now. You can have yours after.'

Father Roubeau bowed courteously and obeyed. He was an easy-going man and had learned to bide his time. Wharton pulled a stool alongside the woman's, smothering her hand in his.

'Then you do care for me, and will take me away?' Her face seemed to reflect the peace of this man, against whom she might draw close for shelter.

'Dear, don't you remember what I said before? Of course I-' 'But how can you?–the wash-up?' 'Do you think that worries? Anyway, I'll give the job to Father Roubeau, here.

I can trust him to safely bank the dust with the company.' 'To think of it!–I'll never see him again.' 'A blessing!' 'And to go–O, Clyde, I can't! I can't!' 'There, there; of course you can. just let me plan it.–You see, as soon as we get a few traps together, we'll start, and-' 'Suppose he comes back?' 'I'll break every-' 'No, no! No fighting, Clyde! Promise me that.' 'All right! I'll just tell the men to throw him off the claim. They've seen how he's treated you, and haven't much love for him.'

'You mustn't do that. You mustn't hurt him.' 'What then? Let him come right in here and take you away before my eyes?' 'No-o,' she half whispered, stroking his hand softly.

'Then let me run it, and don't worry. I'll see he doesn't get hurt. Precious lot he cared whether you got hurt or not! We won't go back to Dawson. I'll send word down for a couple of the boys to outfit and pole a boat up the Yukon. We'll cross the divide

and raft down the Indian River to meet them. Then-‘ ‘And then?’ Her head was on his shoulder.

Their voices sank to softer cadences, each word a caress. The Jesuit fidgeted nervously.

‘And then?’ she repeated.

‘Why we’ll pole up, and up, and up, and portage the White Horse Rapids and the Box Canon.’ ‘Yes?’ ‘And the Sixty-Mile River; then the lakes, Chilcoot, Dyea, and Salt Water.’ ‘But, dear, I can’t pole a boat.’ ‘You little goose! I’ll get Sitka Charley; he knows all the good water and best camps, and he is the best traveler I ever met, if he is an Indian. All you’ll have to do, is to sit in the middle of the boat, and sing songs, and play Cleopatra, and fight–no, we’re in luck; too early for mosquitoes.’

‘And then, O my Antony?’ ‘And then a steamer, San Francisco, and the world! Never to come back to this cursed hole again. Think of it! The world, and ours to choose from! I’ll sell out. Why, we’re rich! The Waldworth Syndicate will give me half a million for what’s left in the ground, and I’ve got twice as much in the dumps and with the P. C.

Company. We’ll go to the Fair in Paris in 1900. We’ll go to Jerusalem, if you say so.

We’ll buy an Italian palace, and you can play Cleopatra to your heart’s content. No, you shall be Lucretia, Acte, or anybody your little heart sees fit to become. But you mustn’t, you really mustn’t-‘ ‘The wife of Caesar shall be above reproach.’ ‘Of course, but-‘ ‘But I won’t be your wife, will I, dear?’ ‘I didn’t mean that.’ ‘But you’ll love me just as much, and never even think–oh! I know you’ll be like other men; you’ll grow tired, and–and-‘

‘How can you? I-‘ ‘Promise me.’ ‘Yes, yes; I do promise.’ ‘You say it so easily, dear; but how do you know?–or I know? I have so little to give, yet it is so much, and all I have. O, Clyde! promise me you won’t?’

‘There, there! You musn’t begin to doubt already. Till death do us part, you know.’

‘Think! I once said that to–to him, and now?’ ‘And now, little sweetheart, you’re not to bother about such things any more.

Of course, I never, never will, and-‘ And for the first time, lips trembled against lips.

Father Roubeau had been watching the main trail through the window, but could stand the strain no longer.

He cleared his throat and turned around.

‘Your turn now, Father!’ Wharton’s face was flushed with the fire of his first embrace.

There was an exultant ring to his voice as he abdicated in the other’s favor. He had no doubt as to the result. Neither had Grace, for a smile played about her mouth as she faced the priest.

‘My child,’ he began, ‘my heart bleeds for you. It is a pretty dream, but it cannot be.’

'And why, Father? I have said yes.' 'You knew not what you did. You did not think of the oath you took, before your God, to that man who is your husband. It remains for me to make you realize the sanctity of such a pledge.' 'And if I do realize, and yet refuse?'

'Then God'

'Which God? My husband has a God which I care not to worship. There must be many such.' 'Child! unsay those words! Ah! you do not mean them. I understand. I, too, have had such moments.' For an instant he was back in his native France, and a wistful, sad-eyed face came as a mist between him and the woman before him.

'Then, Father, has my God forsaken me? I am not wicked above women. My misery with him has been great. Why should it be greater? Why shall I not grasp at happiness? I cannot, will not, go back to him!' 'Rather is your God forsaken. Return. Throw your burden upon Him, and the darkness shall be lifted. O my child,-' 'No; it is useless; I have made my bed and so shall I lie. I will go on. And if God punishes me, I shall bear it somehow. You do not understand. You are not a woman.' 'My mother was a woman.'

'But-' 'And Christ was born of a woman.' She did not answer. A silence fell. Wharton pulled his mustache impatiently and kept an eye on the trail. Grace leaned her elbow on the table, her face set with resolve. The smile had died away. Father Roubeau shifted his ground.

'You have children?'

'At one time I wished–but now–no. And I am thankful.' 'And a mother?' 'Yes.' 'She loves you?' 'Yes.' Her replies were whispers.

And a brother?–no matter, he is a man. But a sister?' Her head drooped a quavering 'Yes.' 'Younger? Very much?' 'Seven years.' 'And you have thought well about this matter? About them? About your mother? And your sister? She stands on the threshold of her woman's life, and this wildness of yours may mean much to her. Could you go before her, look upon her fresh young face, hold her hand in yours, or touch your cheek to hers?'

To his words, her brain formed vivid images, till she cried out, 'Don't! don't!' and shrank away as do the wolf-dogs from the lash.

'But you must face all this; and better it is to do it now.' In his eyes, which she could not see, there was a great compassion, but his face, tense and quivering, showed no relenting.

She raised her head from the table, forced back the tears, struggled for control.

'I shall go away. They will never see me, and come to forget me. I shall be to them as dead. And–and I will go with Clyde–today.' It seemed final. Wharton stepped forward, but the priest waved him back.

'You have wished for children?' A silent 'Yes.' 'And prayed for them?' 'Often.' 'And have you thought, if you should have children?' Father Roubeau's eyes rested for a moment on the man by the window.

A quick light shot across her face. Then the full import dawned upon her. She raised her hand appealingly, but he went on.

'Can you picture an innocent babe in your arms,' A boy? The world is not so hard upon a girl. Why, your very breast would turn to gall! And you could be proud and happy of your boy, as you looked on other children?-' 'O, have pity! Hush!' 'A scapegoat-'

'Don't! don't! I will go back!' She was at his feet.

'A child to grow up with no thought of evil, and one day the world to fling a tender name in his face. A child to look back and curse you from whose loins he sprang!'

'O my God! my God!' She groveled on the floor. The priest sighed and raised her to her feet.

Wharton pressed forward, but she motioned him away.

'Don't come near me, Clyde! I am going back!' The tears were coursing pitifully down her face, but she made no effort to wipe them away.

'After all this? You cannot! I will not let you!' 'Don't touch me!' She shivered and drew back.

'I will! You are mine! Do you hear? You are mine!' Then he whirled upon the priest. 'O what a fool I was to ever let you wag your silly tongue! Thank your God you are not a common man, for I'd–but the priestly prerogative must be exercised, eh? Well, you have exercised it. Now get out of my house, or I'll forget who and what you are!' Father Roubeau bowed, took her hand, and started for the door. But Wharton cut them off.

'Grace! You said you loved me?' 'I did.' 'And you do now?' 'I do.' 'Say it again.'

'I do love you, Clyde; I do.' 'There, you priest!' he cried. 'You have heard it, and with those words on her lips you would send her back to live a lie and a hell with that man?'

But Father Roubeau whisked the woman into the inner room and closed the door. 'No words!' he whispered to Wharton, as he struck a casual posture on a stool. 'Remember, for her sake,' he added.

The room echoed to a rough knock at the door; the latch raised and Edwin Bentham stepped in.

'Seen anything of my wife?' he asked as soon as salutations had been exchanged.

Two heads nodded negatively.

'I saw her tracks down from the cabin,' he continued tentatively, 'and they broke off, just opposite here, on the main trail.' His listeners looked bored.

'And I–I thought-'

'She was here!' thundered Wharton.

The priest silenced him with a look. 'Did you see her tracks leading up to this cabin, my son?' Wily Father Roubeau–he had taken good care to obliterate them as he came up the same path an hour before.

'I didn't stop to look, I-' His eyes rested suspiciously on the door to the other room, then interrogated the priest. The latter shook his head; but the doubt seemed to linger.

Father Roubeau breathed a swift, silent prayer, and rose to his feet. 'If you doubt me, why-' He made as though to open the door.

A priest could not lie. Edwin Bentham had heard this often, and believed it.

'Of course not, Father,' he interposed hurriedly. 'I was only wondering where my wife had gone, and thought maybe–I guess she's up at Mrs. Stanton's on French Gulch. Nice weather, isn't it? Heard the news? Flour's gone down to forty dollars a hundred, and they say the che-cha-quas are flocking down the river in droves.

But I must be going; so good-by.' The door slammed, and from the window they watched him take his quest up French Gulch. A few weeks later, just after the June high-water, two men shot a canoe into mid-stream and made fast to a derelict pine. This tightened the painter and jerked the frail craft along as would a tow-boat. Father Roubeau had been directed to leave the Upper Country and return to his swarthy children at Minook. The white men had come among them, and they were devoting too little time to fishing, and too much to a certain deity whose transient habitat was in countless black bottles.

Malemute Kid also had business in the Lower Country, so they journeyed together.

But one, in all the Northland, knew the man Paul Roubeau, and that man was Malemute Kid. Before him alone did the priest cast off the sacerdotal garb and stand naked. And why not? These two men knew each other. Had they not shared the last morsel of fish, the last pinch of tobacco, the last and inmost thought, on the barren stretches of Bering Sea, in the heartbreaking mazes of the Great Delta, on the terrible winter journey from Point Barrow to the Porcupine? Father Roubeau puffed heavily at his trail-worn pipe, and gazed on the reddisked sun, poised somberly on the edge of the northern horizon.

Malemute Kid wound up his watch. It was midnight.

'Cheer up, old man!' The Kid was evidently gathering up a broken thread.

'God surely will forgive such a lie. Let me give you the word of a man who strikes a true note: If She have spoken a word, remember thy lips are sealed, And the brand of the Dog is upon him by whom is the secret revealed.

If there be trouble to Herward, and a lie of the blackest can clear, Lie, while thy lips can move or a man is alive to hear.'

Father Roubeau removed his pipe and reflected. 'The man speaks true, but my soul is not vexed with that. The lie and the penance stand with God; but–but-'

'What then? Your hands are clean.' 'Not so. Kid, I have thought much, and yet the thing remains. I knew, and made her go back.' The clear note of a robin rang out from the wooden bank, a partridge drummed the call in the distance, a moose lunged noisily in the eddy; but the twain smoked on in silence.

The Princess

A FIRE burned cheerfully in the jungle camp, and beside the fire lolled a cheerful-seeming though horrible-appearing man. This was a hobo jungle, pitched in a thin strip of woods that lay between a railroad embankment and the bank of a river. But no hobo was the man. So deep-sunk was he in the social abyss that a proper hobo would not sit by the same fire with him. A gay-cat, who is an ignorant new-comer on the "Road," might sit with such as he, but only long enough to learn better. Even low down bindle-stiffs and stew-bums, after a once-over, would have passed this man by. A genuine hobo, a couple of punks, or a bunch of tender-yeared road-kids might have gone through his rags for any stray pennies or nickels and kicked him out into the darkness. Even an alki-stiff would have reckoned himself immeasurably superior.

For this man was that hybrid of tramp-land, an alki-stiff that has degenerated into a stew-bum, with so little self-respect that he will never "boil-up," and with so little pride that he will eat out of a garbage can. He was truly horrible-appearing. He might have been sixty years of age; he might have been ninety. His garments might have been discarded by a rag-picker. Beside him, an unrolled bundle showed itself as consisting of a ragged overcoat and containing an empty and smoke-blackened tomato can, an empty and battered condensed milk can, some dog-meat partly wrapped in brown paper and evidently begged from some butcher-shop, a carrot that had been run over in the street by a wagon-wheel, three greenish-cankered and decayed potatoes, and a sugar-bun with a mouthful bitten from it and rescued from the gutter, as was made patent by the gutter-filth that still encrusted it.

A prodigious growth of whiskers, greyish-dirty and untrimmed for years, sprouted from his face. This hirsute growth should have been white, but the season was summer and it had not been exposed to a rain-shower for some time. What was visible of the face looked as if at some period it had stopped a hand-grenade. The nose was so variously malformed in its healed brokenness that there was no bridge, while one nostril, the size of a pea, opened downward, and the other, the size of a robin's egg, tilted upward to the sky. One eye, of normal size, dim-brown and misty, bulged to the verge of popping out, and as if from senility wept copiously and continuously. The other eye, scarcely larger than a squirrel's and as uncannily bright, twisted up obliquely into the hairy scar of a bone-crushed eyebrow. And he had but one arm.

Yet was he cheerful. On his face, in mild degree, was depicted sensuous pleasure as he lethargically scratched his ribs with his one hand. He pawed over his food-scraps, debated, then drew a twelve-ounce druggist bottle from his inside coat-pocket. The bottle was full of a colourless liquid, the contemplation of which made his little eye

burn brighter and quickened his movements. Picking up the tomato can, he arose, went down the short path to the river, and returned with the can filled with not-nice river water. In the condensed milk can he mixed one part of water with two parts of fluid from the bottle. This colourless fluid was druggist's alcohol, and as such is known in tramp-land as "alki."

Slow footsteps, coming down the side of the railroad embankment, alarmed him ere he could drink. Placing the can carefully upon the ground between his legs, he covered it with his hat and waited anxiously whatever impended.

Out of the darkness emerged a man as filthy ragged as he. The new-comer, who might have been fifty, and might have been sixty, was grotesquely fat. He bulged everywhere. He was composed of bulges. His bulbous nose was the size and shape of a turnip. His eyelids bulged and his blue eyes bulged in competition with them. In many places the seams of his garments had parted across the bulges of body. His calves grew into his feet, for the broken elastic sides of his Congress gaiters were swelled full with the fat of him. One arm only he sported, from the shoulder of which was suspended a small and tattered bundle with the mud caked dry on the outer covering from the last place he had pitched his doss. He advanced with tentative caution, made sure of the harmlessness of the man beside the fire, and joined him.

"Hello, grandpa," the new-comer greeted, then paused to stare at the other's flaring, sky-open nostril. "Say, Whiskers, how'd ye keep the night dew out of that nose o' yourn?"

Whiskers growled an incoherence deep in his throat and spat into the fire in token that he was not pleased by the question.

"For the love of Mike," the fat man chuckled, "if you got caught out in a rainstorm without an umbrella you'd sure drown, wouldn't you?"

"Can it, Fatty, can it," Whiskers muttered wearily. "They ain't nothin' new in that line of chatter. Even the bulls hand it out to me."

"But you can still drink, I hope"; Fatty at the same time mollified and invited, with his one hand deftly pulling the slip-knots that fastened his bundle.

From within the bundle he brought to light a twelve-ounce bottle of alki. Footsteps coming down the embankment alarmed him, and he hid the bottle under his hat on the ground between his legs.

But the next comer proved to be not merely one of their own ilk, but likewise to have only one arm. So forbidding of aspect was he that greetings consisted of no more than grunts. Huge-boned, tall, gaunt to cadaverousness, his face a dirty death's head, he was as repellent a nightmare of old age as ever Dore imagined. His toothless, thin-lipped mouth was a cruel and bitter slash under a great curved nose that almost met the chin and that was like a buzzard's beak. His one hand, lean and crooked, was a talon. The beady grey eyes, unblinking and unwavering, were bitter as death, as bleak as absolute zero and as merciless. His presence was a chill, and Whiskers and Fatty instinctively drew together for protection against the unguessed threat of him. Watching his chance,

privily, Whiskers snuggled a chunk of rock several pounds in weigh close to his hand if need for action should arise. Fatty duplicated the performance.

Then both sat licking their lips, guiltily embarrassed, while the unblinking eyes of the terrible one bored into them, now into one, now into another, and then down at the rock-chunks of their preparedness.

"Huh!" sneered the terrible one, with such dreadfulness of menace as to cause Whiskers and Fatty involuntarily to close their hands down on their cave-man's weapons.

"Huh!" the other repeated, reaching his one talon into his side coat pocket with swift definiteness. "A hell of a chance you two cheap bums 'd have with me."

The talon emerged, clutching ready for action a six-pound iron quoit.

"We ain't lookin' for trouble, Slim," Fatty quavered.

"Who in hell are you to call me 'Slim'?" came the snarling answer.

"Me? I'm just Fatty, an' seein' 's I never seen you before-"

"An' I suppose that's Whiskers, there, with the gay an' festive lamp tan-going into his eyebrow an' the God-forgive-us nose joy-riding all over his mug?"

"It'll do, it'll do," Whiskers muttered uncomfortably. "One monica's as good as another, I find, at my time of life. And everybody hands it out to me anyway. And I need an umbrella when it rains to keep from getting drowned, an' all the rest of it."

"I ain't used to company-don't like it," Slim growled. "So if you guys want to stick around, mind your step, that's all, mind your step."

He fished from his pocket a cigar stump, self-evidently shot from the gutter, and prepared to put it in his mouth to chew. Then he changed his mind, glared at his companions savagely, and unrolled his bundle. Appeared in his hand a druggist's bottle of alki.

"Well," he snarled, "I suppose I gotta give you cheap skates a drink when I ain't got more'n enough for a good petrification for myself."

Almost a softening flicker of light was imminent in his withered face as he beheld the others proudly lift their hats and exhibit their own supplies.

"Here's some water for the mixin's," Whiskers said, proffering his tomato-can of river slush. "Stockyards just above," he added apologetically. "But they say-"

"Huh!" Slim snapped short, mixing the drink. "I've drunk worse'n stockyards in my time."

Yet when all was ready, cans of alki in their solitary hands, the three things that had once been men hesitated, as if of old habit, and next betrayed shame as if at self-exposure.

Whiskers was the first to brazen it.

"I've sat in at many a finer drinking," he bragged.

"With the pewter," Slim sneered.

"With the silver," Whiskers corrected.

Slim turned a scorching eye-interrogation on Fatty.

Fatty nodded.

“Beneath the salt,” said Slim.

“Above it,” came Fatty’s correction. “I was born above it, and I’ve never travelled second class. First or steerage, but no intermediate in mine.”

“Yourself?” Whiskers queried of Slim.

“In broken glass to the Queen, God bless her,” Slim answered, solemnly, without snarl or sneer.

“In the pantry?” Fatty insinuated.

Simultaneously Slim reached for his quoit, and Whiskers and Fatty for their rocks.

“Now don’t let’s get feverish,” Fatty said, dropping his own weapon. “We aren’t scum. We’re gentlemen. Let’s drink like gentlemen.”

“Let it be a real drinking,” Whiskers approved.

“Let’s get petrified,” Slim agreed. “Many a distillery’s flowed under the bridge since we were gentlemen; but let’s forget the long road we’ve travelled since, and hit our doss in the good old fashion in which every gentleman went to bed when we were young.”

“My father done it-did it,” Fatty concurred and corrected, as old recollections exploded long-sealed brain-cells of connotation and correct usage.

The other two nodded a descent from similar fathers, and elevated their tin cans of alcohol.

By the time each had finished his own bottle and from his rags fished forth a second one, their brains were well-mellowed and a-glow, although they had not got around to telling their real names. But their English had improved. They spoke it correctly, while the argo of tramp-land ceased from their lips.

“It’s my constitution,” Whiskers was explaining. “Very few men could go through what I have and live to tell the tale. And I never took any care of myself. If what the moralists and the physiologists say were true, I’d have been dead long ago. And it’s the same with you two. Look at us, at our advanced years, carousing as the young ones don’t dare, sleeping out in the open on the ground, never sheltered from frost nor rain nor storm, never afraid of pneumonia or rheumatism that would put half the young ones on their backs in hospital.”

He broke off to mix another drink, and Fatty took up the tale.

“And we’ve had our fun,” he boasted, “and speaking of sweethearts and all,” he cribbed from Kipling, “‘We’ve rogued and we’ve ranged-‘“

“‘In our time,’“ Slim completed the crib for him.

“I should say so, I should say so,” Fatty confirmed. “And been loved by princesses-at least I have.”

“Go on and tell us about it,” Whiskers urged. “The night’s young, and why shouldn’t we remember back to the roofs of kings?”

Nothing loth, Fatty cleared his throat for the recital and cast about in his mind for the best way to begin.

“It must be known that I came of good family. Percival Delaney, let us say, yes, let us say Percival Delaney, was not unknown at Oxford once upon a time-not for

scholarship, I am frank to admit; but the gay young dogs of that day, if any be yet alive, would remember him-“

“My people came over with the Conqueror,” Whiskers interrupted, extending his hand to Fatty’s in acknowledgment of the introduction.

“What name?” Fatty queried. “I did not seem quite to catch it.”

“Delarouse, Chauncey Delarouse. The name will serve as well as any.”

Both completed the handshake and glanced to Slim.

“Oh, well, while we’re about it . . . “ Fatty urged.

“Bruce Cadogan Cavendish,” Slim growled morosely. “Go on, Percival, with your princesses and the roofs of kings.”

“Oh, I was a rare young devil,” Percival obliged, “after I played ducks and drakes at home and sported out over the world. And I was some figure of a man before I lost my shape-polo, steeple-chasing, boxing. I won medals at buckjumping in Australia, and I held more than several swimming records from the quarter of a mile up. Women turned their heads to look when I went by. The women! God bless them!”

And Fatty, alias Percival Delaney, a grotesque of manhood, put his bulgy hand to his puffed lips and kissed audibly into the starry vault of the sky.

“And the Princess!” he resumed, with another kiss to the stars. “She was as fine a figure of a woman as I was a man, as high-spirited and courageous, as reckless and dare-devilish. Lord, Lord, in the water she was a mermaid, a sea-goddess. And when it came to blood, beside her I was parvenu. Her royal line traced back into the mists of antiquity.

“She was not a daughter of a fair-skinned folk. Tawny golden was she, with golden-brown eyes, and her hair that fell to her knees was blue-black and straight, with just the curly tendrilly tendency that gives to woman’s hair its charm. Oh, there were no kinks in it, any more than were there kinks in the hair of her entire genealogy. For she was Polynesian, glowing, golden, lovely and lovable, royal Polynesian.”

Again he paused to kiss his hand to the memory of her, and Slim, alias Bruce Cadogan Cavendish, took advantage to interject:

“Huh! Maybe you didn’t shine in scholarship, but at least you gleaned a vocabulary out of Oxford.”

“And in the South Seas garnered a better vocabulary from the lexicon of Love,” Percival was quick on the uptake.

“It was the island of Talofa,” he went on, “meaning love, the Isle of Love, and it was her island. Her father, the king, an old man, sat on his mats with paralysed knees and drank squareface gin all day and most of the night, out of grief, sheer grief. She, my princess, was the only issue, her brother having been lost in their double canoe in a hurricane while coming up from a voyage to Samoa. And among the Polynesians the royal women have equal right with the men to rule. In fact, they trace their genealogies always by the female line.”

To this both Chauncey Delarouse and Bruce Cadogan Cavendish nodded prompt affirmation.

"Ah," said Percival, "I perceive you both know the South Seas, wherefore, without undue expenditure of verbiage on my part, I am assured that you will appreciate the charm of my princess, the Princess Tui-nui of Talofa, the Princess of the Isle of Love."

He kissed his hand to her, sipped from his condensed milk can a man-size drink of druggist's alcohol, and to her again kissed her hand.

"But she was coy, and ever she fluttered near to me but never near enough. When my arm went out to her to girdle her, presto, she was not there. I knew, as never before, nor since, the thousand dear and delightful anguishes of love frustrated but ever resilient and beckoned on by the very goddess of love."

"Some vocabulary," Bruce Cadogan Cavendish muttered in aside to Chauncey Delarouse. But Percival Delaney was not to be deterred. He kissed his pudgy hand aloft into the night and held warmly on.

"No fond agonies of rapture deferred that were not lavished upon me by my dear Princess, herself ever a luring delight of promise flitting just beyond my reach. Every sweet lover's inferno unguessed of by Dante she led me through. Ah! Those swooning tropic nights, under our palm trees, the distant surf a langourous murmur as from some vast sea shell of mystery, when she, my Princess, all but melted to my yearning, and with her laughter, that was as silver strings by buds and blossoms smitten, all but made lunacy of my lover's ardency.

"It was by my wrestling with the champions of Talofa that I first interested her. It was by my prowess at swimming that I awoke her. And it was by a certain swimming deed that I won from her more than coquettish smiles and shy timidities of feigned retreat.

"We were squidding that day, out on the reef-you know how, undoubtedly, diving down the face of the wall of the reef, five fathoms, ten fathoms, any depth within reason, and shoving our squid-sticks into the likely holes and crannies of the coral where squid might be lairing. With the squid-stick, bluntly sharp at both ends, perhaps a foot long, and held crosswise in the hand, the trick was to gouge any lazying squid until he closed his tentacles around fist, stick and arm.-Then you had him, and came to the surface with him, and hit him in the head which is in the centre of him, and peeled him off into the waiting canoe. . . . And to think I used to do that!"

Percival Delaney paused a moment, a glimmer of awe on his rotund face, as he contemplated the mighty picture of his youth.

"Why,I've pulled out a squid with tentacles eight feet long, and done it under fifty feet of water. I could stay down four minutes. I've gone down, with a coral-rock to sink me, in a hundred and ten feet to clear a fouled anchor. And I could back-dive with a once-over and go in feet-first from eighty feet above the surface-"

"Quit it, delete it, cease it," Chauncey Delarouse admonished testily. "Tell of the Princess. That's what makes old blood leap again. Almost can I see her. Was she wonderful?"

Percival Delaney kissed unutterable affirmation.

"I have said she was a mermaid. She was. I know she swam thirty-six hours before being rescued, after her schooner was capsized in a double-squall. I have seen her do ninety feet and bring up pearl shell in each hand. She was wonderful. As a woman she was ravishing, sublime. I have said she was a sea-goddess. She was. Oh, for a Phidias or a Praxiteles to have made the wonder of her body immortal!

"And that day, out for squid on the reef, I was almost sick for her. Mad-I know I was mad for her. We would step over the side from the big canoe, and swim down, side by side, into the delicious depths of cool and colour, and she would look at me, as we swam, and with her eyes tantalize me to further madness. And at last, down, far down, I lost myself and reached for her. She eluded me like the mermaid she was, and I saw the laughter on her face as she fled. She fled deeper, and I knew I had her for I was between her and the surface; but in the muck coral sand of the bottom she made a churning with her squid stick. It was the old trick to escape a shark. And she worked it on me, rolling the water so that I could not see her. And when I came up, she was there ahead of me, clinging to the side of the canoe and laughing.

"Almost I would not be denied. But not for nothing was she a princess. She rested her hand on my arm and compelled me to listen. We should play a game, she said, enter into a competition for which should get the more squid, the biggest squid, and the smallest squid. Since the wagers were kisses, you can well imagine I went down on the first next dive with soul aflame.

"I got no squid. Never again in all my life have I dived for squid. Perhaps we were five fathoms down and exploring the face of the reefwall for lurking places of our prey, when it happened. I had found a likely lair and just proved it empty, when I felt or sensed the nearness of something inimical. I turned. There it was, alongside of me, and no mere fish-shark. Fully a dozen feet in length, with the unmistakable phosphorescent cat's eye gleaming like a drowning star, I knew it for what it was, a tiger shark.

"Not ten feet to the right, probing a coral fissure with her squid stick, was the Princess, and the tiger shark was heading directly for her. My totality of thought was precipitated to consciousness in a single all-embracing flash. The man-eater must be deflected from her, and what was I, except a mad lover who would gladly fight and die, or more gladly fight and live, for his beloved? Remember, she was the woman wonderful, and I was aflame for her.

"Knowing fully the peril of my act, I thrust the blunt-sharp end of my squid-stick into the side of the shark, much as one would attract a passing acquaintance with a thumb-nudge in the ribs. And the man-eater turned on me. You know the South Seas, and you know that the tiger shark, like the bald-face grizzly of Alaska, never gives trail. The combat, fathoms deep under the sea, was on-if by combat may be named such a one-sided struggle.

"The Princess unaware, caught her squid and rose to the surface. The man-eater rushed me. I fended him off with both hands on his nose above his thousand-toothed open mouth, so that he backed me against the sharp coral. The scars are there to this day. Whenever I tried to rise, he rushed me, and I could not remain down there

indefinitely without air. Whenever he rushed me, I fended him off with my hands on his nose. And I would have escaped unharmed, except for the slip of my right hand. Into his mouth it went to the elbow. His jaws closed, just below the elbow. You know how a shark's teeth are. Once in they cannot be released. They must go through to complete the bite, but they cannot go through heavy bone. So, from just below the elbow he stripped the bone clean to the articulation of the wrist-joint, where his teeth met and my good right hand became his for an appetizer.

"But while he was doing this, I drove the thumb of my left hand, to the hilt into his eye-orifice and popped out his eye. This did not stop him. The meat had maddened him. He pursued the gushing stump of my wrist. Half a dozen times I fended with my intact arm. Then he got the poor mangled arm again, closed down, and stripped the meat off the bone from the shoulder down to the elbow-joint, where his teeth met and he was free of his second mouthful of me. But, at the same time, with my good arm, I thumbed out his remaining eye."

Percival Delaney shrugged his shoulders, ere he resumed.

"From above, those in the canoe had beheld the entire happening and were loud in praise of my deed. To this day they still sing the song of me, and tell the tale of me. And the Princess." His pause was brief but significant. "The Princess married me. . . . Oh, well-a-day and lack-a-day, the whirligig of time and fortune, the topsyturviness of luck, the wooden shoe going up and the polished heel descending a French gunboat, a conquered island kingdom of Oceania, to-day ruled over by a peasant-born, unlettered, colonial gendarme, and . . . "

He completed the sentence and the tale by burying his face in the down-tilted mouth of the condensed milk can and by gurgling the corrosive drink down his throat in thirsty gulps.

After an appropriate pause, Chauncey Delarouse, otherwise Whiskers, took up the tale.

"Far be it from me to boast of no matter what place of birth I have descended from to sit here by this fire with such as . . . as chance along. I may say, however, that I, too, was once a considerable figure of a man. I may add that it was horses, plus parents too indulgent, that exiled me out over the world. I may still wonder to query: 'Are Dover's cliffs still white?'"

"Huh!" Bruce Cadogan Cavendish sneered. "Next you'll be asking: 'How fares the old Lord Warden?'"

"And I took every liberty, and vainly, with a constitution that was iron," Whiskers hurried on. "Here I am with my three score and ten behind me, and back on that long road have I buried many a youngster that was as rare and devilish as I, but who could not stand the pace. I knew the worst too young. And now I know the worst too old. But there was a time, alas all too short, when I knew, the best.

"I, too, kiss my hand to the Princess of my heart. She was truly a princess, Polynesian, a thousand miles and more away to the eastward and the south from Delaney's Isle of Love. The natives of all around that part of the South Seas called it the Jolly

Island. Their own name, the name of the people who dwelt thereon, translates delicately and justly into 'The Island of Tranquil Laughter.' On the chart you will find the erroneous name given to it by the old navigators to be Manatomana. The seafaring gentry the round ocean around called it the Adamless Eden. And the missionaries for a time called it God's Witness-so great had been their success at converting the inhabitants. As for me, it was, and ever shall be, Paradise.

"It was MY Paradise, for it was there my Princess lived. John Asibeli Tungi was king. He was full-blooded native, descended out of the oldest and highest chief-stock that traced back to Manua which was the primeval sea home of the race. Also was he known as John the Apostate. He lived a long life and apostasized frequently. First converted by the Catholics, he threw down the idols, broke the tabus, cleaned out the native priests, executed a few of the recalcitrant ones, and sent all his subjects to church.

"Next he fell for the traders, who developed in him a champagne thirst, and he shipped off the Catholic priests to New Zealand. The great majority of his subjects always followed his lead, and, having no religion at all, ensued the time of the Great Licentiousness, when by all South Seas missionaries his island, in sermons, was spoken of as Babylon.

"But the traders ruined his digestion with too much champagne, and after several years he fell for the Gospel according to the Methodists, sent his people to church, and cleaned up the beach and the trading crowd so spick and span that he would not permit them to smoke a pipe out of doors on Sunday, and, fined one of the chief traders one hundred gold sovereigns for washing his schooner's decks on the Sabbath morn.

"That was the time of the Blue Laws, but perhaps it was too rigorous for King John. Off he packed the Methodists, one fine day, exiled several hundred of his people to Samoa for sticking to Methodism, and, of all things, invented a religion of his own, with himself the figure-head of worship. In this he was aided and abetted by a renegade Fijian. This lasted five years. Maybe he grew tired of being God, or maybe it was because the Fijian decamped with the six thousand pounds in the royal treasury; but at any rate the Second Reformed Wesleyans got him, and his entire kingdom went Wesleyan. The pioneer Wesleyan missionary he actually made prime minister, and what he did to the trading crowd was a caution. Why, in the end, King John's kingdom was blacklisted and boycotted by the traders till the revenues diminished to zero, the people went bankrupt, and King John couldn't borrow a shilling from his most powerful chief.

"By this time he was getting old, and philosophic, and tolerant, and spiritually atavistic. He fired out the Second Reformed Wesleyans, called back the exiles from Samoa, invited in the traders, held a general love-feast, took the lid off, proclaimed religious liberty and high tariff, and as for himself went back to the worship of his ancestors, dug up the idols, reinstated a few octogenarian priests, and observed the tabus. All of which was lovely for the traders, and prosperity reigned. Of course, most of his subjects followed him back into heathen worship. Yet quite a sprinkling of Catholics,

Methodists and Wesleyans remained true to their beliefs and managed to maintain a few squalid, one-horse churches. But King John didn't mind, any more than did he the high times of the traders along the beach. Everything went, so long as the taxes were paid. Even when his wife, Queen Mamare, elected to become a Baptist, and invited in a little, weazened, sweet-spirited, club-footed Baptist missionary, King John did not object. All he insisted on was that these wandering religions should be self-supporting and not feed a pennyworth's out of the royal coffers.

"And now the threads of my recital draw together in the paragon of female exquisiteness-my Princess."

Whiskers paused, placed carefully on the ground his half-full condensed milk can with which he had been absently toying, and kissed the fingers of his one hand audibly aloft.

"She was the daughter of Queen Mamare. She was the woman wonderful. Unlike the Diana type of Polynesian, she was almost ethereal. She WAS ethereal, sublimated by purity, as shy and modest as a violet, as fragile-slender as a lily, and her eyes, luminous and shrinking tender, were as asphodels on the sward of heaven. She was all flower, and fire, and dew. Hers was the sweetness of the mountain rose, the gentleness of the dove. And she was all of good as well as all of beauty, devout in her belief in her mother's worship, which was the worship introduced by Ebenezer Naismith, the Baptist missionary. But make no mistake. She was no mere sweet spirit ripe for the bosom of Abraham. All of exquisite deliciousness of woman was she. She was woman, all woman, to the last sensitive quivering atom of her-

"And I? I was a wastrel of the beach. The wildest was not so wild as I, the keenest not so keen, of all that wild, keen trading crowd. It was esteemed I played the stiffest hand of poker. I was the only living man, white, brown, or black, who dared run the Kuni-kuni Passage in the dark. And on a black night I have done it under reefs in a gale of wind. Well, anyway, I had a bad reputation on a beach where there were no good reputations. I was reckless, dangerous, stopped at nothing in fight or frolic; and the trading captains used to bring boiler-sheeted prodigies from the vilest holes of the South Pacific to try and drink me under the table. I remember one, a calcined Scotchman from the New Hebrides. It was a great drinking. He died of it, and we laded him aboard ship, pickled in a cask of trade rum, and sent him back to his own place. A sample, a fair sample, of the antic tricks we cut up on the beach of Manatomana.

"And of all unthinkable things, what did I up and do, one day, but look upon the Princess to find her good and to fall in love with her. It was the real thing. I was as mad as a March hare, and after that I got only madder. I reformed. Think of that! Think of what a slip of a woman can do to a busy, roving man!-By the Lord Harry, it's true. I reformed. I went to church. Hear me! I became converted. I cleared my soul before God and kept my hands-I had two then-off the ribald crew of the beach when it laughed at this, my latest antic, and wanted to know what was my game.

"I tell you I reformed, and gave myself in passion and sincerity to a religious experience that has made me tolerant of all religion ever since. I discharged my best captain

for immorality. So did I my cook, and a better never boiled water in Manatomana. For the same reason I discharged my chief clerk. And for the first time in the history of trading my schooners to the westward carried Bibles in their stock. I built a little anchorite bungalow up town on a mango-lined street squarely alongside the little house occupied by Ebenezer Naismith. And I made him my pal and comrade, and found him a veritable honey pot of sweetnesses and goodnesses. And he was a man, through and through a man. And he died long after like a man, which I would like to tell you about, were the tale of it not so deservedly long.

"It was the Princess, more than the missionary, who was responsible for my expressing my faith in works, and especially in that crowning work, the New Church, Our Church, the Queen-mother's church.

"'Our poor church,' she said to me, one night after prayer-meeting. I had been converted only a fortnight. 'It is so small its congregation can never grow. And the roof leaks. And King John, my hard-hearted father, will not contribute a penny. Yet he has a big balance in the treasury. And Manatomana is not poor. Much money is made and squandered, I know. I hear the gossip of the wild ways of the beach. Less than a month ago you lost more in one night, gambling at cards, than the cost of the upkeep of our poor church for a year.'

"And I told her it was true, but that it was before I had seen the light. (I'd had an infernal run of bad luck.) I told her I had not tasted liquor since, nor turned a card. I told her that the roof would be repaired at once, by Christian carpenters selected by her from the congregation. But she was filled with the thought of a great revival that Ebenezer Naismith could preach-she was a dear saint-and she spoke of a great church, saying:

"'You are rich. You have many schooners, and traders in far islands, and I have heard of a great contract you have signed to recruit labour for the German plantations of Upolu. They say, next to Sweitzer, you are the richest trader here. I should love to see some use of all this money placed to the glory of God. It would be a noble thing to do, and I should be proud to know the man who would do it.'

"I told her that Ebenezer Naismith would preach the revival, and that I would build a church great enough in which to house it.

"'As big as the Catholic church?' she asked.

"This was the ruined cathedral, built at the time when the entire population was converted, and it was a large order; but I was afire with love, and I told her that the church I would build would be even bigger.

"'But it will take money,' I explained. 'And it takes time to make money.'

"'You have much,' she said. 'Some say you have more money than my father, the King.

"'I have more credit,' I explained. 'But you do not understand money. It takes money to have credit. So, with the money I have, and the credit I have, I will work to make more money and credit, and the church shall be built.'

“Work! I was a surprise to myself. It is an amazement, the amount of time a man finds on his hands after he’s given up carousing, and gambling, and all the time-eating diversions of the beach. And I didn’t waste a second of all my new-found time. Instead I worked it overtime. I did the work of half a dozen men. I became a driver. My captains made faster runs than ever and earned bigger bonuses, as did my supercargoes, who saw to it that my schooners did not loaf and dawdle along the way. And I saw to it that my supercargoes did see to it.

“And good! By the Lord Harry I was so good it hurt. My conscience got so expansive and fine-strung it lamed me across the shoulders to carry it around with me. Why, I even went back over my accounts and paid Sweitzer fifty quid I’d jiggered him out of in a deal in Fiji three years before. And I compounded the interest as well.

“Work! I planted sugar cane-the first commercial planting on Manatomana. I ran in cargoes of kinky-heads from Malaita, which is in the Solomons, till I had twelve hundred of the blackbirds putting in cane. And I sent a schooner clear to Hawaii to bring back a dismantled sugar mill and a German who said he knew the field-end of cane. And he did, and he charged me three hundred dollars screw a month, and I took hold of the mill-end. I installed the mill myself, with the help of several mechanics I brought up from Queensland.

“Of course there was a rival. His name was Motomoe. He was the very highest chief blood next to King John’s. He was full native, a strapping, handsome man, with a glowering way of showing his dislikes. He certainly glowered at me when I began hanging around the palace. He went back in my history and circulated the blackest tales about me. The worst of it was that most of them were true. He even made a voyage to Apia to find things out-as if he couldn’t find a plenty right there on the beach of Manatomana! And he sneered at my failing for religion, and at my going to prayer-meeting, and, most of all, at my sugar-planting. He challenged me to fight, and I kept off of him. He threatened me, and I learned in the nick of time of his plan to have me knocked on the head. You see, he wanted the Princess just as much as I did, and I wanted her more.

“She used to play the piano. So did I, once. But I never let her know after I’d heard her play the first time. And she thought her playing was wonderful, the dear, fond girl! You know the sort, the mechanical one-two-three tum-tum-tum school-girl stuff. And now I’ll tell you something funnier. Her playing WAS wonderful to me. The gates of heaven opened to me when she played. I can see myself now, worn out and dog-tired after the long day, lying on the mats of the palace veranda and gazing upon her at the piano, myself in a perfect idiocy of bliss. Why, this idea she had of her fine playing was the one flaw in her deliciousness of perfection, and I loved her for it. It kind of brought her within my human reach. Why, when she played her one-two-three, tum-tum-tum, I was in the seventh heaven of bliss. My weariness fell from me. I loved her, and my love for her was clean as flame, clean as my love for God. And do you know, into my fond lover’s fancy continually intruded the thought that God in most ways must look like her.

“-That’s right, Bruce Cadogan Cavendish, sneer as you like. But I tell you that’s love that I’ve been describing. That’s all. It’s love. It’s the realest, purest, finest thing that can happen to a man. And I know what I’m talking about. It happened to me.”

Whiskers, his beady squirrel’s eye glittering from out his ruined eyebrow like a live coal in a jungle ambush, broke off long enough to down a sedative draught from his condensed milk can and to mix another.

“The cane,” he resumed, wiping his prodigious mat of face hair with the back of his hand. “It matured in sixteen months in that climate, and I was ready, just ready and no more, with the mill for the grinding. Naturally, it did not all mature at once, but I had planted in such succession that I could grind for nine months steadily, while more was being planted and the ratoons were springing up.

“I had my troubles the first several days. If it wasn’t one thing the matter with the mill, it was another. On the fourth day, Ferguson, my engineer, had to shut down several hours in order to remedy his own troubles. I was bothered by the feeder. After having the niggers (who had been feeding the cane) pour cream of lime on the rollers to keep everything sweet, I sent them out to join the cane-cutting squads. So I was all alone at that end, just as Ferguson started up the mill, just as I discovered what was the matter with the feed-rollers, and just as Motomoe strolled up.

“He stood there, in Norfolk jacket, pigskin puttees, and all the rest of the fashionable get-up out of a bandbox, sneering at me covered with filth and grease to the eyebrows and looking like a navvy. And, the rollers now white from the lime, I’d just seen what was wrong. The rollers were not in plumb. One side crushed the cane well, but the other side was too open. I shoved my fingers in on that side. The big, toothed cogs on the rollers did not touch my fingers. And yet, suddenly, they did. With the grip of ten thousand devils, my finger-tips were caught, drawn in, and pulped to-well, just pulp. And, like a slick of cane, I had started on my way. There was no stopping me. Ten thousand horses could not have pulled me back. There was nothing to stop me. Hand, arm, shoulder, head, and chest, down to the toes of me, I was doomed to feed through.

“It did hurt. It hurt so much it did not hurt me at all. Quite detached, almost may I say, I looked on my hand being ground up, knuckle by knuckle, joint by joint, the back of the hand, the wrist, the forearm, all in order slowly and inevitably feeding in. O engineer hoist by thine own petard! O sugar-maker crushed by thine own cane-crusher!

“Motomoe sprang forward involuntarily, and the sneer was chased from his face by an expression of solicitude. Then the beauty of the situation dawned on him, and he chuckled and grinned. No, I didn’t expect anything of him. Hadn’t he tried to knock me on the head? What could he do anyway? He didn’t know anything about engines.

“I yelled at the top of my lungs to Ferguson to shut off the engine, but the roar of the machinery drowned my voice. And there I stood, up to the elbow and feeding right on in. Yes, it did hurt. There were some astonishing twinges when special nerves were shredded and dragged out by the roots. But I remember that I was surprised at the time that it did not hurt worse.

"Motomoe made a movement that attracted my attention. At the same time he growled out loud, as if he hated himself, 'I'm a fool.' What he had done was to pick up a cane-knife-you know the kind, as big as a machete and as heavy. And I was grateful to him in advance for putting me out of my misery. There wasn't any sense in slowly feeding in till my head was crushed, and already my arm was pulped half way from elbow to shoulder, and the pulping was going right on. So I was grateful, as I bent my head to the blow.

"'Get your head out of the way, you idiot!' he barked at me.

"And then I understood and obeyed. I was a big man, and he took two hacks to do it; but he hacked my arm off just outside the shoulder and dragged me back and laid me down on the cane.

"Yes, the sugar paid-enormously; and I built for the Princess the church of her saintly dream, and . . . she married me."

He partly assuaged his thirst, and uttered his final word.

"Alackaday! Shuttlecock and battle-dore. And this at, the end of it all, lined with boilerplate that even alcohol will not corrode and that only alcohol will tickle. Yet have I lived, and I kiss my hand to the dear dust of my Princess long asleep in the great mausoleum of King John that looks across the Vale of Manona to the alien flag that floats over the bungalow of the British Government House. . . "

Fatty pledged him sympathetically, and sympathetically drank out of his own small can. Bruce Cadogan Cavendish glared into the fire with implacable bitterness. He was a man who preferred to drink by himself. Across the thin lips that composed the cruel slash of his mouth played twitches of mockery that caught Fatty's eye. And Fatty, making sure first that his rock-chunk was within reach, challenged.

"Well, how about yourself, Bruce Cadogan Cavendish? It's your turn."

The other lifted bleak eyes that bored into Fatty's until he physically betrayed uncomfortableness.

"I've lived a hard life," Slim grated harshly. "What do I know about love passages?"

"No man of your build and make-up could have escaped them," Fatty wheedled.

"And what of it?" Slim snarled. "It's no reason for a gentleman to boast of amorous triumphs."

"Oh, go on, be a good fellow," Fatty urged. "The night's still young. We've still some drink left. Delarouse and I have contributed our share. It isn't often that three real ones like us get together for a telling. Surely you've got at least one adventure in love you aren't ashamed to tell about-"

Bruce Cadogan Cavendish pulled forth his iron quoit and seemed to debate whether or not he should brain the other. He sighed, and put back the quoit.

"Very well, if you will have it," he surrendered with manifest reluctance. "Like you two, I have had a remarkable constitution. And right now, speaking of armour-plate lining, I could drink the both of you down when you were at your prime. Like you two, my beginnings were far distant and different. That I am marked with the hall-mark of

gentlehood there is no discussion . . . unless either of you care to discuss the matter now . . . "

His one hand slipped into his pocket and clutched the quoit. Neither of his auditors spoke nor betrayed any awareness of his menace.

"It occurred a thousand miles to the westward of Manatomana, on the island of Tagalag," he continued abruptly, with an air of saturnine disappointment in that there had been no discussion. "But first I must tell you of how I got to Tagalag. For reasons I shall not mention, by paths of descent I shall not describe, in the crown of my manhood and the prime of my devilishness in which Oxford renegades and racing younger sons had nothing on me, I found myself master and owner of a schooner so well known that she shall remain historically nameless. I was running blackbird labour from the west South Pacific and the Coral Sea to the plantations of Hawaii and the nitrate mines of Chili-"

"It was you who cleaned out the entire population of-" Fatty exploded, ere he could check his speech.

The one hand of Bruce Cadogan Cavendish flashed pocketward and flashed back with the quoit balanced ripe for business.

"Proceed," Fatty sighed. "I . . . I have quite forgotten what I was going to say."

"Beastly funny country over that way," the narrator drawled with perfect casualness. "You've read this Sea Wolf stuff-"

"You weren't the Sea Wolf," Whiskers broke in with involuntary positiveness.

"No, sir," was the snarling answer. "The Sea Wolf's dead, isn't he? And I'm still alive, aren't I?"

"Of course, of course," Whiskers conceded. "He suffocated head-first in the mud off a wharf in Victoria a couple of years back."

"As I was saying-and I don't like interruptions," Bruce Cadogan Cavendish proceeded, "it's a beastly funny country over that way. I was at Taki-Tiki, a low island that politically belongs to the Solomons, but that geologically doesn't at all, for the Solomons are high islands. Ethnographically it belongs to Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia, because all the breeds of the South Pacific have gravitated to it by canoe-drift and intricately, degeneratively, and amazingly interbred. The scum of the scrapings of the bottom of the human pit, biologically speaking, resides in Taka-Tiki. And I know the bottom and whereof I speak.

"It was a beastly funny time of it I had, diving out shell, fishing beche-de-mer, trading hoop-iron and hatchets for copra and ivory-nuts, running niggers and all the rest of it. Why, even in Fiji the Lotu was having a hard time of it and the chiefs still eating long-pig. To the westward it was fierce-funny little black kinky-heads, man-eaters the last Jack of them, and the jackpot fat and spilling over with wealth-"

"Jack-pots?" Fatty queried. At sight of an irritable movement, he added: "You see, I never got over to the West like Delarouse and you."

"They're all head-hunters. Heads are valuable, especially a white man's head. They decorate the canoe-houses and devil-devil houses with them. Each village runs a jack-

pot, and everybody antes. Whoever brings in a white man's head takes the pot. If there aren't openers for a long time, the pot grows to tremendous proportions. Beastly funny, isn't it?

"I know. Didn't a Holland mate die on me of blackwater? And didn't I win a pot myself? It was this way. We were lying at Lango-lui at the time. I never let on, and arranged the affair with Johnny, my boat-steerer. He was a kinky-head himself from Port Moresby. He cut the dead mate's head off and sneaked ashore in the might, while I whanged away with my rifle as if I were trying to get him. He opened the pot with the mate's head, and got it, too. Of course, next day I sent in a landing boat, with two covering boats, and fetched him off with the loot."

"How big was the pot?" Whiskers asked. "I heard of a pot at Orla worth eighty quid."

"To commence with," Slim answered, "there were forty fat pigs, each worth a fathom of prime shell-money, and shell-money worth a quid a fathom. That was two hundred dollars right there. There were ninety-eight fathoms of shell-money, which is pretty close to five hundred in itself. And there were twenty-two gold sovereigns. I split it four ways: one-fourth to Johnny, one-fourth to the ship, one-fourth to me as owner, and one-fourth to me as skipper. Johnny never complained. He'd never had so much wealth all at one time in his life. Besides, I gave him a couple of the mate's old shirts. And I fancy the mate's head is still there decorating the canoe-house."

"Not exactly Christian burial of a Christian," Whiskers observed.

"But a lucrative burial," Slim retorted. "I had to feed the rest of the mate over-side to the sharks for nothing. Think of feeding an eight-hundred-dollar head along with it. It would have been criminal waste and stark lunacy.

"Well, anyway, it was all beastly funny, over there to the westward. And, without telling you the scrape I got into at Taki-Tiki, except that I sailed away with two hundred kinky-heads for Queensland labour, and for my manner of collecting them had two British ships of war combing the Pacific for me, I changed my course and ran to the westward thinking to dispose of the lot to the Spanish plantations on Bangar.

"Typhoon season. We caught it. The MERRY MIST was my schooner's name, and I had thought she was stoutly built until she hit that typhoon. I never saw such seas. They pounded that stout craft to pieces, literally so. The sticks were jerked out of her, deckhouses splintered to match-wood, rails ripped off, and, after the worst had passed, the covering boards began to go. We just managed to repair what was left of one boat and keep the schooner afloat only till the sea went down barely enough to get away. And we outfitted that boat in a hurry. The carpenter and I were the last, and we had to jump for it as he went down. There were only four of us-"

"Lost all the niggers?" Whiskers inquired.

"Some of them swam for some time," Slim replied. "But I don't fancy they made the land. We were ten days' in doing it. And we had a spanking breeze most of the way. And what do you think we had in the boat with us? Cases of square-face gin and cases of dynamite. Funny, wasn't it? Well, it got funnier later on. Oh, there was a small

beaker of water, a little salt horse, and some salt-water-soaked sea biscuit-enough to keep us alive to Tagalag.

"Now Tagalag is the disappointingest island I've ever beheld. It shows up out of the sea so as you can make its fall twenty miles off. It is a volcano cone thrust up out of deep sea, with a segment of the crater wall broken out. This gives sea entrance to the crater itself, and makes a fine sheltered harbour. And that's all. Nothing lives there. The outside and the inside of the crater are too steep. At one place, inside, is a patch of about a thousand coconut palms. And that's all, as I said, saving a few insects. No four-legged thing, even a rat, inhabits the place. And it's funny, most awful funny, with all those coconuts, not even a coconut crab. The only meat-food living was schools of mullet in the harbour-fattest, finest, biggest mullet I ever laid eyes on.

"And the four of us landed on the little beach and set up housekeeping among the coconuts with a larder full of dynamite and square-face. Why don't you laugh? It's funny, I tell you. Try it some time.-Holland gin and straight coconut diet. I've never been able to look a confectioner's window in the face since. Now I'm not strong on religion like Chauncey Delarouse there, but I have some primitive ideas; and my concept of hell is an illimitable coconut plantation, stocked with cases of square-face and populated by ship-wrecked mariners. Funny? It must make the devil scream.

"You know, straight coconut is what the agriculturists call an unbalanced ration. It certainly unbalanced our digestions. We got so that whenever hunger took an extra bite at us, we took another drink of gin. After a couple of weeks of it, Olaf, a squarehead sailor, got an idea. It came when he was full of gin, and we, being in the same fix, just watched him shove a cap and short fuse into a stick of dynamite and stroll down toward the boat.

"It dawned on me that he was going to shoot fish if there were any about; but the sun was beastly hot, and I just reclined there and hoped he'd have luck.

"About half an hour after he disappeared we heard the explosion. But he didn't come back. We waited till the cool of sunset, and down on the beach found what had become of him. The boat was there all right, grounded by the prevailing breeze, but there was no Olaf. He would never have to eat coconut again. We went back, shakier than ever, and cracked another square-face.

"The next day the cook announced that he would rather take his chance with dynamite than continue trying to exist on coconut, and that, though he didn't know anything about dynamite, he knew a sight too much about coconut. So we bit the detonator down for him, shoved in a fuse, and picked him a good fire-stick, while he jolted up with a couple more stiff ones of gin.

"It was the same programme as the day before. After a while we heard the explosion and at twilight went down to the boat, from which we scraped enough of the cook for a funeral.

"The carpenter and I stuck it out two days more, then we drew straws for it and it was his turn. We parted with harsh words; for he wanted to take a square-face along to refresh himself by the way, while I was set against running any chance of wasting

the gin. Besides, he had more than he could carry then, and he wobbled and staggered as he walked.

"Same thing, only there was a whole lot of him left for me to bury, because he'd prepared only half a stick. I managed to last it out till next day, when, after duly fortifying myself, I got sufficient courage to tackle the dynamite. I used only a third of a stick-you know, short fuse, with the end split so as to hold the head of a safety match. That's where I mended my predecessors' methods. Not using the match-head, they'd too-long fuses. Therefore, when they spotted a school of mullet; and lighted the fuse, they had to hold the dynamite till the fuse burned short before they threw it. If they threw it too soon, it wouldn't go off the instant it hit the water, while the splash of it would frighten the mullet away. Funny stuff dynamite. At any rate, I still maintain mine was the safer method.

"I picked up a school of mullet before I'd been rowing five minutes. Fine big fat ones they were, and I could smell them over the fire. When I stood up, fire-stick in one hand, dynamite stick in the other, my knees were knocking together. Maybe it was the gin, or the anxiousness, or the weakness and the hunger, and maybe it was the result of all of them, but at any rate I was all of a shake. Twice I failed to touch the fire-stick to the dynamite. Then I did, heard the match-head splutter, and let her go.

"Now I don't know what happened to the others, but I know what I did. I got turned about. Did you ever stem a strawberry and throw the strawberry away and pop the stem into your mouth? That's what I did. I threw the fire-stick into the water after the mullet and held on to the dynamite. And my arm went off with the stick when it went off. . . . "

Slim investigated the tomato-can for water to mix himself a drink, but found it empty. He stood up.

"Heigh ho," he yawned, and started down the path to the river.

In several minutes he was back. He mixed the due quantity of river slush with the alcohol, took a long, solitary drink, and stared with bitter moodiness into the fire.

"Yes, but . . . " Fatty suggested. "What happened then?"

"Oh," sad Slim. "Then the princess married me, of course."

"But you were the only person left, and there wasn't any princess . . . " Whiskers cried out abruptly, and then let his voice trail away to embarrassed silence.

Slim stared unblinkingly into the fire.

Percival Delaney and Chauncey Delarouse looked at each other. Quietly, in solemn silence, each with his one arm aided the one arm of the other in rolling and tying his bundle. And in silence, bundles slung on shoulders, they went away out of the circle of firelight. Not until they reached the top of the railroad embankment did they speak.

"No gentleman would have done it," said Whiskers.

"No gentleman would have done it," Fatty agreed.

Glen Ellen, California,

SEPTEMBER 26, 1916.

The Prodigal Father

I

Josiah Childs was ordinarily an ordinary-appearing, prosperous business man. He wore a sixty-dollar, business-man's suit, his shoes were comfortable and seemly and made from the current last, his tie, collars and cuffs were just what all prosperous business men wore, and an up-to-date, business-man's derby was his wildest adventure in head-gear. Oakland, California, is no sleepy country town, and Josiah Childs, as the leading grocer of a rushing Western metropolis of three hundred thousand, appropriately lived, acted, and dressed the part.

But on this morning, before the rush of custom began, his appearance at the store, while it did not cause a riot, was sufficiently startling to impair for half an hour the staff's working efficiency. He nodded pleasantly to the two delivery drivers loading their wagons for the first trip of the morning, and cast upward the inevitable, complacent glance at the sign that ran across the front of the building — CHILDS' CASH STORE. The lettering, not too large, was of dignified black and gold, suggestive of noble spices, aristocratic condiments, and everything of the best (which was no more than to be expected of a scale of prices ten per cent. higher than any other grocery in town). But what Josiah Childs did not see as he turned his back on the drivers and entered, was the helpless and mutual fall of surprise those two worthies perpetrated on each other's necks. They clung together for support.

"Did you catch the kicks, Bill?" one moaned.

"Did you pipe the head-piece?" Bill moaned back.

"Now if he was goin' to a masquerade ball..."

"Or attendin' a reunion of the Rough Riders..."

"Or goin' huntin' bear..."

"Or swearin' off his taxes..."

"Instead of goin' all the way to the effete East — Monkton says he's going clear to Boston..."

The two drivers held each other apart at arm's length, and fell limply together again.

For Josiah Childs' outfit was all their actions connotated. His hat was a light fawn, stiff-rimmed John B. Stetson, circled by a band of Mexican stamped leather. Over a blue flannel shirt, set off by a drooping Windsor tie, was a rough-and-ready coat of large-ribbed corduroy. Pants of the same material were thrust into high-laced shoes of the sort worn by surveyors, explorers, and linemen.

A clerk at a near counter almost petrified at sight of his employer's bizarre rig. Monkton, recently elevated to the managership, gasped, swallowed, and maintained his imperturbable attentiveness. The lady bookkeeper, glancing down from her glass eyrie on the inside balcony, took one look and buried her giggles in the day book. Josiah Childs saw most of all this, but he did not mind. He was starting on his vacation, and his head and heart were buzzing with plans and anticipations of the most adventurous vacation he had taken in ten years. Under his eyelids burned visions of East Falls, Connecticut, and of all the home scenes he had been born to and brought up in. Oakland, he was thoroughly aware, was more modern than East Falls, and the excitement caused by his garb was only to be expected. Undisturbed by the sensation he knew he was creating among his employés, he moved about, accompanied by his manager, making last suggestions, giving final instructions, and radiating fond, farewell glances at all the loved details of the business he had built out of nothing.

He had a right to be proud of Childs' Cash Store. Twelve years before he had landed in Oakland with fourteen dollars and forty-three cents. Cents did not circulate so far West, and after the fourteen dollars were gone, he continued to carry the three pennies in his pocket for a weary while. Later, when he had got a job clerking in a small grocery for eleven dollars a week, and had begun sending a small monthly postal order to one, Agatha Childs, East Falls, Connecticut, he invested the three coppers in postage stamps. Uncle Sam could not reject his own lawful coin of the realm.

Having spent all his life in cramped New England, where sharpness and shrewdness had been whetted to razor-edge on the harsh stone of meagre circumstance, he had found himself abruptly in the loose and free-and-easy West, where men thought in thousand-dollar bills and newsboys dropped dead at sight of copper cents. Josiah Childs bit like fresh acid into the new industrial and business conditions. He had vision. He saw so many ways of making money all at once, that at first his brain was in a whirl.

At the same time, being sane and conservative, he had resolutely avoided speculation. The solid and substantial called to him. Clerking at eleven dollars a week, he took note of the lost opportunities, of the openings for safe enterprise, of the countless leaks in the business. If, despite all this, the boss could make a good living, what couldn't he, Josiah Childs, do with his Connecticut training? It was like a bottle of wine to a thirsty hermit, this coming to the active, generous-spending West after thirty-five years in East Falls, the last fifteen of which had been spent in humdrum clerking in the humdrum East Falls general store. Josiah Childs' head buzzed with the easy possibilities he saw. But he did not lose his head. No detail was overlooked. He spent his spare hours in studying Oakland, its people, how they made their money, and why they spent it and where. He walked the central streets, watching the drift of the buying crowds, even counting them and compiling the statistics in various notebooks. He studied the general credit system of the trade, and the particular credit systems of the different districts. He could tell to a dot the average wage or salary earned by the householders of any locality, and he made it a point of thoroughness to know every locality from the

waterfront slums to the aristocratic Lake Merritt and Piedmont sections, from West Oakland, where dwelt the railroad employés, to the semi-farmers of Fruitvale at the opposite end of the city.

Broadway, on the main street and in the very heart of the shopping district, where no grocer had ever been insane enough to dream of establishing a business, was his ultimate selection. But that required money, while he had to start from the smallest of beginnings. His first store was on lower Filbert, where lived the nail-workers. In half a year, three other little corner groceries went out of business while he was compelled to enlarge his premises. He understood the principle of large sales at small profits, of stable qualities of goods, and of a square deal. He had glimpsed, also, the secret of advertising. Each week he set forth one article that sold at a loss to him. This was not an advertised loss, but an absolute loss. His one clerk prophesied impending bankruptcy when butter, that cost Childs thirty cents, was sold for twenty-five cents, when twenty-two-cent coffee was passed across the counter at eighteen cents. The neighbourhood housewives came for these bargains and remained to buy other articles that sold at a profit. Moreover, the whole neighbourhood came quickly to know Josiah Childs, and the busy crowd of buyers in his store was an attraction in itself.

But Josiah Childs made no mistake. He knew the ultimate foundation on which his prosperity rested. He studied the nail works until he came to know as much about them as the managing directors. Before the first whisper had stirred abroad, he sold his store, and with a modest sum of ready cash went in search of a new location. Six months later the nail works closed down, and closed down forever.

His next store was established on Adeline Street, where lived a comfortable, salaried class. Here, his shelves carried a higher-grade and a more diversified stock. By the same old method, he drew his crowd. He established a delicatessen counter. He dealt directly with the farmers, so that his butter and eggs were not only always dependable but were a shade better than those sold by the finest groceries in the city. One of his specialties was Boston baked beans, and so popular did it become that the Twin Cabin Bakery paid him better than handsomely for the privilege of taking it over. He made time to study the farmers, the very apples they grew, and certain farmers he taught how properly to make cider. As a side-line, his New England apple cider proved his greatest success, and before long, after he had invaded San Francisco, Berkeley, and Alameda, he ran it as an independent business.

But always his eyes were fixed on Broadway. Only one other intermediate move did he make, which was to as near as he could get to the Ashland Park Tract, where every purchaser of land was legally pledged to put up no home that should cost less than four thousand dollars. After that came Broadway. A strange swirl had come in the tide of the crowd. The drift was to Washington Street, where real estate promptly soared while on Broadway it was as if the bottom had fallen out. One big store after another, as the leases expired, moved to Washington.

The crowd will come back, Josiah Childs said, but he said it to himself. He knew the crowd. Oakland was growing, and he knew why it was growing. Washington Street was

too narrow to carry the increasing traffic. Along Broadway, in the physical nature of things, the electric cars, ever in greater numbers, would have to run. The realty dealers said that the crowd would never come back, while the leading merchants followed the crowd. And then it was, at a ridiculously low figure, that Josiah Childs got a long lease on a modern, Class A building on Broadway, with a buying option at a fixed price. It was the beginning of the end for Broadway, said the realty dealers, when a grocery was established in its erstwhile sacred midst. Later, when the crowd did come back, they said Josiah Childs was lucky. Also, they whispered among themselves that he had cleared at least fifty thousand on the transaction.

It was an entirely different store from his previous ones. There were no more bargains. Everything was of the superlative best, and superlative best prices were charged. He catered to the most expensive trade in town. Only those who could carelessly afford to pay ten per cent. more than anywhere else, patronised him, and so excellent was his service that they could not afford to go elsewhere. His horses and delivery wagons were more expensive and finer than any one else's in town. He paid his drivers, and clerks, and bookkeepers higher wages than any other store could dream of paying. As a result, he got more efficient men, and they rendered him and his patrons a more satisfying service. In short, to deal at Childs' Cash Store became almost the infallible index of social status.

To cap everything, came the great San Francisco earthquake and fire, which caused one hundred thousand people abruptly to come across the Bay and live in Oakland. Not least to profit from so extraordinary a boom, was Josiah Childs. And now, after twelve years' absence, he was departing on a visit to East Falls, Connecticut. In the twelve years he had not received a letter from Agatha, nor had he seen even a photograph of his and Agatha's boy.

Agatha and he had never got along together. Agatha was masterful. Agatha had a tongue. She was strong on old-fashioned morality. She was unlovely in her rectitude. Josiah never could quite make out how he had happened to marry her. She was two years his senior, and had long ranked as an old maid She had taught school, and was known by the young generation as the sternest disciplinarian in its experience. She had become set in her ways, and when she married it was merely an exchange of a number of pupils for one. Josiah had to stand the hectoring and nagging that thitherto had been distributed among many. As to how the marriage came about, his Uncle Isaac nearly hit it off one day when he said in confidence: "Josiah, when Agatha married you it was a case of marrying a struggling young man. I reckon you was overpowered. Or maybe you broke your leg and couldn't get away."

"Uncle Isaac," Josiah answered, "I didn't break my leg. I ran my dangdest, but she just plum run me down and out of breath."

"Strong in the wind, eh?" Uncle Isaac chuckled.

"We've ben married five years now," Josiah agreed, "and I've never known her to lose it."

"And never will," Uncle Isaac added.

This conversation had taken place in the last days, and so dismal an outlook proved too much for Josiah Childs. Meek he was, under Agatha's firm tuition, but he was very healthy, and his promise of life was too long for his patience. He was only thirty-three, and he came of a long-lived stock. Thirty-three more years with Agatha and Agatha's nagging was too hideous to contemplate. So, between a sunset and a rising, Josiah Childs disappeared from East Falls. And from that day, for twelve years, he had received no letter from her. Not that it was her fault. He had carefully avoided letting her have his address. His first postal money orders were sent to her from Oakland, but in the years that followed he had arranged his remittances so that they bore the scattered postmarks of most of the states west of the Rockies.

But twelve years, and the confidence born of deserved success, had softened his memories. After all, she was the mother of his boy, and it was incontestable that she had always meant well. Besides, he was not working so hard now, and he had more time to think of things besides his business. He wanted to see the boy, whom he had never seen and who had turned three before his father ever learned he was a father. Then, too, homesickness had begun to crawl in him. In a dozen years he had not seen snow, and he was always wondering if New England fruits and berries had not a finer tang than those of California. Through hazy vistas he saw the old New England life, and he wanted to see it again in the flesh before he died.

And, finally, there was duty. Agatha was his wife. He would bring her back with him to the West. He felt that he could stand it. He was a man, now, in the world of men. He ran things, instead of being run, and Agatha would quickly find it out. Nevertheless, he wanted Agatha to come to him for his own sake. So it was that he had put on his frontier rig. He would be the prodigal father, returning as penniless as when he left, and it would be up to her whether or not she killed the fatted calf. Empty of hand, and looking it, he would come back wondering if he could get his old job in the general store. Whatever followed would be Agatha's affair.

By the time he said good-bye to his staff and emerged on the sidewalk, five more of his delivery wagons were backed up and loading.

He ran his eye proudly over them, took a last fond glance at the black-and-gold letters, and signalled the electric car at the corner.

II

He ran up to East Falls from New York. In the Pullman smoker he became acquainted with several business men. The conversation, turning on the West, was quickly led by him. As president of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, he was an authority. His words carried weight, and he knew what he was talking about, whether it was Asiatic trade, the Panama Canal, or the Japanese coolie question. It was very exhilarating, this stimulus of respectful attention accorded him by these prosperous Eastern men, and before he knew it he was at East Falls.

He was the only person who alighted, and the station was deserted. Nobody was there expecting anybody. The long twilight of a January evening was beginning, and the bite of the keen air made him suddenly conscious that his clothing was saturated

with tobacco smoke. He shuddered involuntarily. Agatha did not tolerate tobacco. He half-moved to toss the fresh-lighted cigar away, then it was borne in upon him that this was the old East Falls atmosphere overpowering him, and he resolved to combat it, thrusting the cigar between his teeth and gripping it with the firmness of a dozen years of Western resolution.

A few steps brought him into the little main street. The chilly, stilted aspect of it shocked him. Everything seemed frosty and pinched, just as the cutting air did after the warm balminess of California. Only several persons, strangers to his recollection, were abroad, and they favoured him with incurious glances. They were wrapped in an uncongenial and frosty imperviousness. His first impression was surprise at his surprise. Through the wide perspective of twelve years of Western life, he had consistently and steadily discounted the size and importance of East Falls; but this was worse than all discounting. Things were more meagre than he had dreamed. The general store took his breath away. Countless myriads of times he had contrasted it with his own spacious emporium, but now he saw that in justice he had overdone it. He felt certain that it could not accommodate two of his delicatessen counters, and he knew that he could lose all of it in one of his storerooms.

He took the familiar turning to the right at the head of the street, and as he plodded along the slippery walk he decided that one of the first things he must do was to buy sealskin cap and gloves. The thought of sleighing cheered him for a moment, until, now on the outskirts of the village, he was sanitarily perturbed by the adjacency of dwelling houses and barns. Some were even connected. Cruel memories of bitter morning chores oppressed him. The thought of chapped hands and chilblains was almost terrifying, and his heart sank at sight of the double storm-windows, which he knew were solidly fastened and unraisable, while the small ventilating panes, the size of ladies' handkerchiefs, smote him with sensations of suffocation. Agatha'll like California, he thought, calling to his mind visions of roses in dazzling sunshine and the wealth of flowers that bloomed the twelve months round.

And then, quite illogically, the years were bridged and the whole leaden weight of East Falls descended upon him like a damp sea fog. He fought it from him, thrusting it off and aside by sentimental thoughts on the "honest snow," the "fine elms," the "sturdy New England spirit," and the "great homecoming." But at sight of Agatha's house he wilted. Before he knew it, with a recrudescent guilty pang, he had tossed the half-smoked cigar away and slackened his pace until his feet dragged in the old lifeless, East Falls manner. He tried to remember that he was the owner of Childs' Cash Store, accustomed to command, whose words were listened to with respect in the Employers' Association, and who wielded the gavel at the meetings of the Chamber of Commerce. He strove to conjure visions of the letters in black and gold, and of the string of delivery wagons backed up to the sidewalk. But Agatha's New England spirit was as sharp as the frost, and it travelled to him through solid house-walls and across the intervening hundred yards.

Then he became aware that despite his will he had thrown the cigar away. This brought him an awful vision. He saw himself going out in the frost to the woodshed to smoke. His memory of Agatha he found less softened by the lapse of years than it had been when three thousand miles intervened. It was unthinkable. No; he couldn't do it. He was too old, too used to smoking all over the house, to do the woodshed stunt now. And everything depended on how he began. He would put his foot down. He would smoke in the house that very night ... in the kitchen, he feebly amended. No, by George, he would smoke now. He would arrive smoking. Mentally imprecating the cold, he exposed his bare hands and lighted another cigar. His manhood seemed to flare up with the match. He would show her who was boss. Right from the drop of the hat he would show her.

Josiah Childs had been born in this house. And it was long before he was born that his father had built it. Across the low stone fence, Josiah could see the kitchen porch and door, the connected woodshed, and the several outbuildings. Fresh from the West, where everything was new and in constant flux, he was astonished at the lack of change. Everything was as it had always been. He could almost see himself, a boy, doing the chores. There, in the woodshed, how many cords of wood had he bucksawed and split! Well, thank the Lord, that was past.

The walk to the kitchen showed signs of recent snow-shovelling. That had been one of his tasks. He wondered who did it now, and suddenly remembered that his own son must be twelve. In another moment he would have knocked at the kitchen door, but the skreek of a bucksaw from the woodshed led him aside. He looked in and saw a boy hard at work. Evidently, this was his son. Impelled by the wave of warm emotion that swept over him, he all but rushed in upon the lad. He controlled himself with an effort.

"Father here?" he asked curtly, though from under the stiff brim of his John B. Stetson he studied the boy closely.

Sizable for his age, he thought. A mite spare in the ribs maybe, and that possibly due to rapid growth. But the face strong and pleasing and the eyes like Uncle Isaac's. When all was said, a darn good sample.

"No, sir," the boy answered, resting on the saw-buck.

"Where is he?"

"At sea," was the answer.

Josiah Childs felt a something very akin to relief and joy tingle through him. Agatha had married again — evidently a seafaring man. Next, came an ominous, creepy sensation. Agatha had committed bigamy. He remembered Enoch Arden, read aloud to the class by the teacher in the old schoolhouse, and began to think of himself as a hero. He would do the heroic. By George, he would. He would sneak away and get the first train for California. She would never know.

But there was Agatha's New England morality, and her New England conscience. She received a regular remittance. She knew he was alive. It was impossible that she could have done this thing. He groped wildly for a solution. Perhaps she had sold the old home, and this boy was somebody else's boy.

"What is your name?" Josiah asked.

"Johnnie," came the reply.

"Last name I mean?"

"Childs, Johnnie Childs."

"And your father's name? — first name?"

"Josiah Childs."

"And he's away at sea, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

This set Josiah wondering again.

"What kind of a man is he?"

"Oh, he's all right — a good provider, Mom says. And he is. He always sends his money home, and he works hard for it, too, Mom says. She says he always was a good worker, and he's better'n other men she ever saw. He don't smoke, or drink, or swear, or do anything he oughtn't. And he never did. He was always that way, Mom says, and she knew him all her life before ever they got married. He's a very kind man, and never hurts anybody's feelings. Mom says he's the most considerate man she ever knew."

Josiah's heart went weak. Agatha had done it after all — had taken a second husband when she knew her first was still alive. Well, he had learned charity in the West, and he could be charitable. He would go quietly away. Nobody would ever know. Though it was rather mean of her, the thought flashed through him, that she should go on cashing his remittances when she was married to so model and steady-working a seafaring husband who brought his wages home. He cudgelled his brains in an effort to remember such a man out of all the East Falls men he had known.

"What's he look like?"

"Don't know. Never saw him. He's at sea all the time. But I know how tall he is. Mom says I'm goin' to be bigger'n him, and he was five feet eleven. There's a picture of him in the album. His face is thin, and he has whiskers."

A great illumination came to Josiah. He was himself five feet eleven. He had worn whiskers, and his face had been thin in those days. And Johnnie had said his father's name was Josiah Childs. He, Josiah, was this model husband who neither smoked, swore, nor drank. He was this seafaring man whose memory had been so carefully shielded by Agatha's forgiving fiction. He warmed toward her. She must have changed mightily since he left. He glowed with penitence. Then his heart sank as he thought of trying to live up to this reputation Agatha had made for him. This boy with the trusting blue eyes would expect it of him. Well, he'd have to do it. Agatha had been almighty square with him. He hadn't thought she had it in her.

The resolve he might there and then have taken was doomed never to be, for he heard the kitchen door open to give vent to a woman's nagging, irritable voice.

"Johnnie! — you!" it cried.

How often had he heard it in the old days: "Josiah! — you!" A shiver went through him. Involuntarily, automatically, with a guilty start, he turned his hand back upward so that the cigar was hidden. He felt himself shrinking and shrivelling as she stepped

out on the stoop. It was his unchanged wife, the same shrew wrinkles, with the same sour-drooping corners to the thin-lipped mouth. But there was more sourness, an added droop, the lips were thinner, and the shrew wrinkles were deeper. She swept Josiah with a hostile, withering stare.

"Do you think your father would stop work to talk to tramps?" she demanded of the boy, who visibly quailed, even as Josiah.

"I was only answering his questions," Johnnie pleaded doggedly but hopelessly. "He wanted to know — "

"And I suppose you told him," she snapped. "What business is it of his prying around? No, and he gets nothing to eat. As for you, get to work at once. I'll teach you, idling at your chores. Your father wa'n't like that. Can't I ever make you like him?"

Johnnie bent his back, and the bucksaw resumed its protesting skreek. Agatha surveyed Josiah sourly. It was patent she did not recognise him.

"You be off," she commanded harshly. "None of your snooping around here."

Josiah felt the numbness of paralysis creeping over him. He moistened his lips and tried to say something, but found himself bereft of speech.

"You be off, I say," she rasped in her high-keyed voice, "or I'll put the constable after you."

Josiah turned obediently. He heard the door slam as he went down the walk. As in a nightmare he opened the gate he had opened ten thousand times and stepped out on the sidewalk. He felt dazed. Surely it was a dream. Very soon he would wake up with a sigh of relief. He rubbed his forehead and paused indecisively. The monotonous complaint of the bucksaw came to his ears. If that boy had any of the old Childs spirit in him, sooner or later he'd run away. Agatha was beyond the endurance of human flesh. She had not changed, unless for the worse, if such a thing were possible. That boy would surely run for it, maybe soon. Maybe now.

Josiah Childs straightened up and threw his shoulders back. The great-spirited West, with its daring and its carelessness of consequences when mere obstacles stand in the way of its desire, flamed up in him. He looked at his watch, remembered the time table, and spoke to himself, solemnly, aloud. It was an affirmation of faith:

"I don't care a hang about the law. That boy can't be crucified. I'll give her a double allowance, four times, anything, but he goes with me. She can follow on to California if she wants, but I'll draw up an agreement, in which what's what, and she'll sign it, and live up to it, by George, if she wants to stay. And she will," he added grimly. "She's got to have somebody to nag."

He opened the gate and strode back to the woodshed door. Johnnie looked up, but kept on sawing.

"What'd you like to do most of anything in the world?" Josiah demanded in a tense, low voice.

Johnnie hesitated, and almost stopped sawing. Josiah made signs for him to keep it up.

"Go to sea," Johnnie answered. "Along with my father."

Josiah felt himself trembling.

"Would you?" he asked eagerly.

"Would I!"

The look of joy on Johnnie's face decided everything.

"Come here, then. Listen. I'm your father. I'm Josiah Childs. Did you ever want to run away?"

Johnnie nodded emphatically.

"That's what I did," Josiah went on. "I ran away." He fumbled for his watch hurriedly. "We've just time to catch the train for California. I live there now. Maybe Agatha, your mother, will come along afterward. I'll tell you all about it on the train. Come on."

He gathered the half-frightened, half-trusting boy into his arms for a moment, then, hand in hand, they fled across the yard, out of the gate, and down the street. They heard the kitchen door open, and the last they heard was:

"Johnnie! — you! Why ain't you sawing? I'll attend to your case directly!"

The Proper "Girlie"

"GIRLIE" had always been a choice term of endearment with Ralph Ainslie. And it must be confessed he had applied it with great wisdom and discretion — from the little lady who swayed his destinies as a grammar school boy down to Maud. The list of the favored was quite a lengthy one, to be sure; but then a young heart and a roving love are necessarily correlative. Such is the nature of things, and who would alter it? But when the soft madness of the courtship of Maud fell upon him, the phrase had ripened to a fuller significance, and he had thought — at the time — that it would never again be transferred. In return, Maud had called him "Boyo." Never had sweeter phrases been more sweetly mated. Girlie and Boyo! Well, the two were married and —

Ainslie idly crumbled his toast and gazed across the breakfast table at Maud, blue-eyed and matronly; but the woman's face pictured on his mind's retina at the moment was dark-eyed and rebellious. No wifely sedateness in this other, nor calm strength of control; but rather the waywardness of mutable desires, rough-shod imperiousness and strange moods. A creature slight of heart for loyalty, but great of soul for love; well he knew her.

Perhaps it was the unconscious radiation of his present mental attitude, or the sum of his attitudes through many days, that made Maud lonely on her side of the table. At least, she felt depressed and isolated, as if in some way the bonds that once so tightly bound them were undergoing an extraordinary expansion. She had expected that the fervid kisses that so sweetly punctuated their engagement period would change to the staid homage of tried affection, but not that they would become only a meaningless duty, the mere mechanical performance of a function. His whole demeanor had come to lack that subtle seriousness and enthusiasm the absence of which a woman is so quick to detect.

"What's the matter, Maud?" he asked, presently, observing for the first time how wretchedly the breakfast had passed off, and actuated by a desire to make amends.

"What's the matter?" he repeated, noticing that her dreamy stare continued. "Anything wrong?"

"Ralph," with feminine irrelevance, "you never call me Girlie any more." Then, plaintively, "I'm only Maud now."

"And it's an age since I've heard you say Boyo," he retorted.

He did not appreciate the hurt flush that suffused her cheek; no more did he know how hard had been her struggle to abandon his pet name after he had ceased his Girlie. For half the tragedies of the world are worked out in the silence of women's hearts — tragedies that blundering men may never know nor understand.

Her eyes grew misty, but otherwise she made no reply. Ainslie rose and went to her side.

"Oh, Ralph, I don't know — everything's wrong, all wrong!" she sobbed on his shoulder.

The scent of her hair was like a caress, but it did not recall the erstwhile pleasant memories that it should, for he frowned unobserved while he patted her shoulder soothingly.

"I have tried so hard to be good and true — to be Ralph's wife — " she raised her head bravely and looked him in the eyes — "but everything seems wrong. Something has come over us — between us. I had pictured everything so different after we were married, and now — I don't know, I — I cannot understand."

"There, there," he murmured, his face a study in surface masculine kindliness, "I'm afraid you are sick, just a little under the weather, you know. You're not quite yourself. A touch of fever, or cold, or something. I'll send up Dr. Jermyn on my way down town.

"Perhaps," he added, with wise forethought, as he kissed her at the door, "perhaps you need a little change of air or something. I think a little run or a week or so down to your mother's will do you good."

But she shook her head.

"Now the scenes begin," he muttered to himself as he boarded his car. "To-day comes the first, then to-morrow another — and they will continue to increase, quantitatively and qualitatively, till even a man's endurance can no longer stand them. Better put an end to the trouble now than to permit it to grow. I'll write Bertha at once and settle it out of hand."

It was with this laudable intention that he seated himself at his desk and invoked the epistolary demon. A peremptory call on the telephone interrupted him. It was an important deal, and Love must ever wait on Business.

"Poor little Maud! It's not her fault," he mused, as he stowed the half-finished missive away in a drawer; "only a queer concoction of Midsummer madness and my own brute selfishness. And it's Bertha who inoculated me, too."

Half-way down the elevator he had made up his mind to drop the whole thing by returning and destroying the letter; but at the bottom Business shoved Love aside, and he hurried on to meet the directors of the projected company.

By three o'clock the bookkeeper was wondering at Ralph Ainslie's prolonged absence. At half after Mrs. Ainslie tripped past into her husband's private office. She had thought it all out, after the delightful fashion of womankind, and reached the conclusion that she knew so very little of men, after all, and that whatever had happened was the result of her own morbid brooding; so she had come there to be nice to her wronged husband and be forgiven. She opened the door of his private office softly, confronted the blank emptiness of the room, and decided to wait.

Her thoughts went back to the golden days of their first housekeeping, when she had run down to the office so often of an afternoon that Ralph declared her a precious little nuisance, and secreted caramels and chocolates in his desk to encourage another visit. With a sentimental fondness and a vague half-pain she tiptoed across the room and drew open a drawer. The upturned sheet and the superscription, "Dear Girlie," caught her eye. She glanced hurriedly at the upper right-hand corner, taking it for some old forgotten letter to herself, and noted the date with happy surprise. In her delight she did not remark the addressed envelope that was lying half-concealed beneath it. She began to read:

DEAR GIRLIE:

I sometimes think we have not fully understood each other of late. I, at least, know that I may have seemed cold at times, when, in reality, I was perplexed with other things. I have been somewhat worried and not quite myself, for all of which I intend to make full atonement. I shall explain all soon.

Believe me, Girlie, that the love I give you is the true love of my heart. I am making all arrangements so that we may —

"Just his stupid business!" she exclaimed, her dimmed eyes, sparkling joyously. "And I'm sure more business made him break it off where he did. And it's all my own letter! And he called me Girlie!"

She pressed the scented sheet softly to her lips, just as Ralph Ainslie entered the room.

"Boyo!" she cried, making a little run toward him and throwing her arms around his neck. "You dear, good fellow! And I've been behaving like a little wretch, haven't I? With you worrying so much over your business, and never once complaining! No, no," she protested, as he made an involuntary gesture of remonstrance, "it's all true, Boyo, every bit of it. And I've been, oh, such a naughty girl!"

Her moist eyes and his shirt front had approached such dangerous proximity that he was permitted to grin his perplexity above her head, unseen. Somehow, the scent of her hair tangled with his thoughts to a purpose, and recalled the golden days that he had well-nigh thrust away. Dear patient, faithful Maud, still as trusting as the first time they had laid lips to lips! And she had mistaken the broken letter for her own! The pathos of blunder softened him and helped consign the other woman to oblivion.

"There, there, Girlie. It's nobody's fault in the world but my own. I've been working too hard, and — "

"But it's my fault. I insist!" she protested.

“Then I must punish you by — ahem! — ”

“Something nice?” Then, recollecting the letter: “And what were we going to do when you finished making the arrangements?”

“Europe,” he lied, laconically. “I say, Girlie,” he added, hurriedly, catching a glimpse of the open drawer and beginning to lead the retreat to the door, “let’s not go home, but have dinner down town — ”

“And after that the theatre!” she cried. “Just like old times!”

“Just a minute, Girlie,” he said, at the elevator shaft. “I’ve forgotten something.”

He hurried back to the office, closing the door carefully behind him. Then he applied a vesta to the envelope that had Bertha Something-or-Other written across its face. He poked the ashes about in the grate and swore softly at something several times, but when he swore it was the dark-eyed woman who was in his thoughts.

The Proud Goat of Aloysius Pankburn

I

Quick eye that he had for the promise of adventure, prepared always for the unexpected to leap out at him from behind the nearest cocoanut tree, nevertheless David Grief received no warning when he laid eyes on Aloysius Pankburn. It was on the little steamer Berthe. Leaving his schooner to follow, Grief had taken passage for the short run across from Raiatea to Papeete. When he first saw Aloysius Pankburn, that somewhat fuddled gentleman was drinking a lonely cocktail at the tiny bar between decks next to the barber shop. And when Grief left the barber's hands half an hour later Aloysius Pankburn was still hanging over the bar still drinking by himself.

Now it is not good for man to drink alone, and Grief threw sharp scrutiny into his pass-ing glance. He saw a well-built young man of thirty, well-featured, well-dressed, and evidently, in the world's catalogue, a gentleman. But in the faint hint of slovenliness, in the shaking, eager hand that spilled the liquor, and in the nervous, vacillating eyes, Grief read the unmistakable marks of the chronic alcoholic.

After dinner he chanced upon Pankburn again. This time it was on deck, and the young man, clinging to the rail and peering into the distance at the dim forms of a man and woman in two steamer chairs drawn closely together, was crying, drunkenly. Grief noted that the man's arm was around the woman's waist. Aloysius Pankburn looked on and cried.

"Nothing to weep about," Grief said genially.

Pankburn looked at him, and gushed tears of profound self-pity.

"It's hard," he sobbed. "Hard. Hard. That man's my business manager. I employ him. I pay him a good screw. And that's how he earns it."

"In that case, why don't you put a stop to it?" Grief advised.

"I can't. She'd shut off my whiskey. She's my trained nurse."

"Fire her, then, and drink your head off."

"I can't. He's got all my money. If I did, he wouldn't give me sixpence to buy a drink with."

This woful possibility brought a fresh wash of tears. Grief was interested. Of all unique situations he could never have imagined such a one as this.

"They were engaged to take care of me," Pankburn was blubbering, "to keep me away from the drink. And that's the way they do it, lollygagging all about the ship

and letting me drink myself to death. It isn't right, I tell you. It isn't right. They were sent along with me for the express purpose of not letting me drink, and they let me drink to swinishness as long as I leave them alone. If I complain they threaten not to let me have another drop. What can a poor devil do? My death will be on their heads, that's all. Come on down and join me."

He released his clutch on the rail, and would have fallen had Grief not caught his arm. He seemed to undergo a transformation, to stiffen physically, to thrust his chin forward aggressively, and to glint harshly in his eyes.

"I won't let them kill me. And they'll be sorry. I've offered them fifty thousand–later on, of course. They laughed. They don't know. But I know." He fumbled in his coat pocket and drew forth an object that flashed in the faint light. "They don't know the meaning of that. But I do." He looked at Grief with abrupt suspicion. "What do you make out of it, eh? What do you make out of it?"

David Grief caught a swift vision of an alcoholic degenerate putting a very loving young couple to death with a copper spike, for a copper spike was what he held in his hand, an evident old-fashioned ship-fastening.

"My mother thinks I'm up here to get cured of the booze habit. She doesn't know. I bribed the doctor to prescribe a voyage. When we get to Papeete my manager is going to charter a schooner and away we'll sail. But they don't dream. They think it's the booze. I know. I only know. Good night, sir. I'm going to bed–unless–er–you'll join me in a night cap. One last drink, you know."

II

In the week that followed at Papeete Grief caught numerous and bizarre glimpses of Aloysius Pankburn. So did everybody else in the little island capital; for neither the beach nor Lavina's boarding house had been so scandalized in years. In midday, bareheaded, clad only in swimming trunks, Aloysius Pankburn ran down the main street from Lavina's to the water front. He put on the gloves with a fireman from the Berthe in a scheduled four-round bout at the Folies BergËres, and was knocked out in the second round. He tried insanely to drown himself in a two-foot pool of water, dived drunkenly and splendidly from fifty feet up in the rigging of the Mariposa lying at the wharf, and chartered the cutter Toerau at more than her purchase price and was only saved by his manager's refusal financially to ratify the agreement. He bought out the old blind leper at the market, and sold breadfruit, plantains, and sweet potatoes at such cut-rates that the gendarmes were called out to break the rush of bargain-hunting natives. For that matter, three times the gendarmes arrested him for riotous behaviour, and three times his manager ceased from love-making long enough to pay the fines imposed by a needy colonial administration.

Then the Mariposa sailed for San Francisco, and in the bridal suite were the manager and the trained nurse, fresh-married. Before departing, the manager had thoughtfully bestowed eight five-pound banknotes on Aloysius, with the foreseen result that Aloysius awoke several days later to find himself broke and perilously near to delirium tremens. Lavina, famed for her good heart even among the driftage of South Pacific rogues and

scamps, nursed him around and never let it filter into his returning intelligence that there was neither manager nor money to pay his board.

It was several evenings after this that David Grief, lounging under the after deck awning of the Kittiwake and idly scanning the meagre columns of the Papeete Avant-Coureur, sat suddenly up and almost rubbed his eyes. It was unbelievable, but there it was. The old South Seas Romance was not dead. He read:

WANTED–To exchange a half interest in buried treasure,
worth five million francs, for transportation for one to an
unknown island in the Pacific and facilities for carrying
away the loot. Ask for FOLLY, at Lavina's.

Grief looked at his watch. It was early yet, only eight o'clock.

"Mr. Carlsen," he called in the direction of a glowing pipe. "Get the crew for the whale-boat. I'm going ashore."

The husky voice of the Norwegian mate was raised for'ard, and half a dozen strapping Rapa Islanders ceased their singing and manned the boat.

"I came to see Folly, Mr. Folly, I imagine," David Grief told Lavina.

He noted the quick interest in her eyes as she turned her head and flung a command in native across two open rooms to the outstanding kitchen. A few minutes later a barefooted native girl padded in and shook her head.

Lavina's disappointment was evident.

"You're stopping aboard the Kittiwake, aren't you?" she said. "I'll tell him you called."

"Then it is a he?" Grief queried.

Lavina nodded.

"I hope you can do something for him, Captain Grief. I'm only a good-natured woman. I don't know. But he's a likable man, and he may be telling the truth; I don't know. You'll know. You're not a soft-hearted fool like me. Can't I mix you a cocktail?"

III

Back on board his schooner and dozing in a deck chair under a three-months-old magazine, David Grief was aroused by a sobbing, slubbering noise from overside. He opened his eyes. From the Chilian cruiser, a quarter of a mile away, came the stroke of eight bells. It was midnight. From overside came a splash and another slubbering noise. To him it seemed half amphibian, half the sounds of a man crying to himself and querulously chanting his sorrows to the general universe.

A jump took David Grief to the low rail. Beneath, centred about the slubbering noise, was an area of agitated phosphorescence. Leaning over, he locked his hand under the armpit of a man, and, with pull and heave and quick-changing grips, he drew on deck the naked form of Aloysius Pankburn.

"I didn't have a sou-markee," he complained. "I had to swim it, and I couldn't find your gangway. It was very miserable. Pardon me. If you have a towel to put about my middle, and a good stiff drink, I'll be more myself. I'm Mr. Folly, and you're the Captain Grief, I presume, who called on me when I was out. No, I'm not drunk. Nor

am I cold. This isn't shivering. Lavina allowed me only two drinks to-day. I'm on the edge of the horrors, that's all, and I was beginning to see things when I couldn't find the gangway. If you'll take me below I'll be very grateful. You are the only one that answered my advertisement."

He was shaking pitiably in the warm night, and down in the cabin, before he got his towel, Grief saw to it that a half-tumbler of whiskey was in his hand.

"Now fire ahead," Grief said, when he had got his guest into a shirt and a pair of duck trousers. "What's this advertisement of yours? I'm listening."

Pankburn looked at the whiskey bottle, but Grief shook his head.

"All right, Captain, though I tell you on whatever is left of my honour that I am not drunk–not in the least. Also, what I shall tell you is true, and I shall tell it briefly, for it is clear to me that you are a man of affairs and action. Likewise, your chemistry is good. To you alcohol has never been a million maggots gnawing at every cell of you. You've never been to hell. I am there now. I am scorching. Now listen.

"My mother is alive. She is English. I was born in Australia. I was educated at York and Yale. I am a master of arts, a doctor of philosophy, and I am no good. Furthermore, I am an alcoholic. I have been an athlete. I used to swan-dive a hundred and ten feet in the clear. I hold several amateur records. I am a fish. I learned the crawl-stroke from the first of the Cavilles. I have done thirty miles in a rough sea. I have another record. I have punished more whiskey than any man of my years. I will steal sixpence from you for the price of a drink. Finally, I will tell you the truth.

"My father was an American–an Annapolis man. He was a midshipman in the War of the Rebellion. In '66 he was a lieutenant on the Suwanee. Her captain was Paul Shirley. In '66 the Suwanee coaled at an island in the Pacific which I do not care to mention, under a protectorate which did not exist then and which shall be nameless. Ashore, behind the bar of a public house, my father saw three copper spikes–ship's spikes."

David Grief smiled quietly.

"And now I can tell you the name of the coaling station and of the protectorate that came afterward," he said.

"And of the three spikes?" Pankburn asked with equal quietness. "Go ahead, for they are in my possession now."

"Certainly. They were behind German Oscar's bar at Peenoo-Peenee. Johnny Black brought them there from off his schooner the night he died. He was just back from a long cruise to the westward, fishing beche-de-mer and sandalwood trading. All the beach knows the tale."

Pankburn shook his head.

"Go on," he urged.

"It was before my time, of course," Grief explained. "I only tell what I've heard. Next came the Ecuadoran cruiser, of all directions, in from the westward, and bound home. Her officers recognized the spikes. Johnny Black was dead. They got hold of his mate

and logbook. Away to the westward went she. Six months after, again bound home, she dropped in at Peenoo-Peenee. She had failed, and the tale leaked out."

"When the revolutionists were marching on Guayaquil," Pankburn took it up, "the federal officers, believing a defence of the city hopeless, salted down the government treasure chest, something like a million dollars gold, but all in English coinage, and put it on board the American schooner Flirt. They were going to run at daylight. The American captain skinned out in the middle of the night. Go on."

"It's an old story," Grief resumed. "There was no other vessel in the harbour. The federal leaders couldn't run. They put their backs to the wall and held the city. Rohjas Salced, making a forced march from Quito, raised the siege. The revolution was broken, and the one ancient steamer that constituted the Ecuadoran navy was sent in pursuit of the Flirt. They caught her, between the Banks Group and the New Hebrides, hove to and flying distress signals. The captain had died the day before–blackwater fever."

"And the mate?" Pankburn challenged.

"The mate had been killed a week earlier by the natives on one of the Banks, when they sent a boat in for water. There were no navigators left. The men were put to the torture. It was beyond international law. They wanted to confess, but couldn't. They told of the three spikes in the trees on the beach, but where the island was they did not know. To the westward, far to the westward, was all they knew. The tale now goes two ways. One is that they all died under the torture. The other is that the survivors were swung at the yardarm. At any rate, the Ecuadoran cruiser went home without the treasure. Johnny Black brought the three spikes to Peenoo-Peenee, and left them at German Oscar's, but how and where he found them he never told."

Pankburn looked hard at the whiskey bottle.

"Just two fingers," he whimpered.

Grief considered, and poured a meagre drink. Pankburn's eyes sparkled, and he took new lease of life.

"And this is where I come in with the missing details," he said. "Johnny Black did tell. He told my father. Wrote him from Levuka, before he came on to die at Peenoo-Peenee. My father had saved his life one rough-house night in Valparaiso. A Chink pearler, out of Thursday Island, prospecting for new grounds to the north of New Guinea, traded for the three spikes with a nigger. Johnny Black bought them for copper weight. He didn't dream any more than the Chink, but coming back he stopped for hawksbill turtle at the very beach where you say the mate of the Flirt was killed. Only he wasn't killed. The Banks Islanders held him prisoner, and he was dying of necrosis of the jawbone, caused by an arrow wound in the fight on the beach. Before he died he told the yarn to Johnny Black. Johnny Black wrote my father from Levuka. He was at the end of his rope–cancer. My father, ten years afterward, when captain of the Perry, got the spikes from German Oscar. And from my father, last will and testament, you know, came the spikes and the data. I have the island, the latitude and longitude of the beach where the three spikes were nailed in the trees. The spikes are up at Lavina's now. The latitude and longitude are in my head. Now what do you think?"

“Fishy,” was Grief’s instant judgment. “Why didn’t your father go and get it himself?”

“Didn’t need it. An uncle died and left him a fortune. He retired from the navy, ran foul of an epidemic of trained nurses in Boston, and my mother got a divorce. Also, she fell heir to an income of something like thirty thousand dollars, and went to live in New Zealand. I was divided between them, half-time New Zealand, half-time United States, until my father’s death last year. Now my mother has me altogether. He left me his money–oh, a couple of millions–but my mother has had guardians appointed on account of the drink. I’m worth all kinds of money, but I can’t touch a penny save what is doled out to me. But the old man, who had got the tip on my drinking, left me the three spikes and the data thereunto pertaining. Did it through his lawyers, unknown to my mother; said it beat life insurance, and that if I had the backbone to go and get it I could drink my back teeth awash until I died. Millions in the hands of my guardians, slathers of shekels of my mother’s that’ll be mine if she beats me to the crematory, another million waiting to be dug up, and in the meantime I’m cadging on Lavina for two drinks a day. It’s hell, isn’t it?–when you consider my thirst.”

“Where’s the island?”

“It’s a long way from here.”

“Name it.”

“Not on your life, Captain Grief. You’re making an easy half-million out of this. You will sail under my directions, and when we’re well to sea and on our way I’ll tell you and not before.”

Grief shrugged his shoulders, dismissing the subject.

“When I’ve given you another drink I’ll send the boat ashore with you,” he said.

Pankburn was taken aback. For at least five minutes he debated with himself, then licked his lips and surrendered.

“If you promise to go, I’ll tell you now.”

“Of course I’m willing to go. That’s why I asked you. Name the island.”

Pankburn looked at the bottle.

“I’ll take that drink now, Captain.”

“No you won’t. That drink was for you if you went ashore. If you are going to tell me the island, you must do it in your sober senses.”

“Francis Island, if you will have it. Bougainville named it Barbour Island.”

“Off there all by its lonely in the Little Coral Sea,” Grief said. “I know it. Lies between New Ireland and New Guinea. A rotten hole now, though it was all right when the Flirt drove in the spikes and the Chink pearler traded for them. The steamship Castor, recruiting labour for the Upolu plantations, was cut off there with all hands two years ago. I knew her captain well. The Germans sent a cruiser, shelled the bush, burned half a dozen villages, killed a couple of niggers and a lot of pigs, and–and that was all. The niggers always were bad there, but they turned really bad forty years ago. That was when they cut off a whaler. Let me see? What was her name?”

He stepped to the bookshelf, drew out the bulky “South Pacific Directory,” and ran through its pages.

“Yes. Here it is. Francis, or Barbour,” he skimmed. “Natives warlike and treacherous–Melanesian–cannibals. Whaleship Western cut off–that was her name. Shoals–points–anchorages–ah, Redscar, Owen Bay, Likikili Bay, that’s more like it; deep indentation, mangrove swamps, good holding in nine fathoms when white scar in bluff bears west-southwest.” Grief looked up. “That’s your beach, Pankburn, I’ll swear.”

“Will you go?” the other demanded eagerly.

Grief nodded.

“It sounds good to me. Now if the story had been of a hundred millions, or some such crazy sum, I wouldn’t look at it for a moment. We’ll sail to-morrow, but under one consideration. You are to be absolutely under my orders.”

His visitor nodded emphatically and joyously.

“And that means no drink.”

“That’s pretty hard,” Pankburn whined.

“It’s my terms. I’m enough of a doctor to see you don’t come to harm. And you are to work–hard work, sailor’s work. You’ll stand regular watches and everything, though you eat and sleep aft with us.”

“It’s a go.” Pankburn put out his hand to ratify the agreement. “If it doesn’t kill me,” he added.

David Grief poured a generous three-fingers into the tumbler and extended it.

“Then here’s your last drink. Take it.”

Pankburn’s hand went halfway out. With a sudden spasm of resolution, he hesitated, threw back his shoulders, and straightened up his head.

“I guess I won’t,” he began, then, feebly surrendering to the gnaw of desire, he reached hastily for the glass, as if in fear that it would be withdrawn.

IV

It is a long traverse from Papeete in the Societies to the Little Coral Sea–from 100 west longitude to 150 east longitude–as the crow flies the equivalent to a voyage across the Atlantic. But the Kittiwake did not go as the crow flies. David Grief’s numerous interests diverted her course many times. He stopped to take a look-in at uninhabited Rose Island with an eye to colonizing and planting cocoa-nuts. Next, he paid his respects to Tui Manua, of Eastern Samoa, and opened an intrigue for a share of the trade monopoly of that dying king’s three islands. From Apia he carried several relief agents and a load of trade goods to the Gilberts. He peeped in at Ontong-Java Atoll, inspected his plantations on Ysabel, and purchased lands from the salt-water chiefs of northwestern Malaita. And all along this devious way he made a man of Aloysius Pankburn.

That thirster, though he lived aft, was compelled to do the work of a common sailor. And not only did he take his wheel and lookout, and heave on sheets and tackles, but the dirtiest and most arduous tasks were appointed him. Swung aloft in a bosun’s chair, he scraped the masts and slushed down. Holystoning the deck or scrubbing it

with fresh limes made his back ache and developed the wasted, flabby muscles. When the Kittiwake lay at anchor and her copper bottom was scrubbed with cocoa-nut husks by the native crew, who dived and did it under water, Pankburn was sent down on his shift and as many times as any on the shift.

"Look at yourself," Grief said. "You are twice the man you were when you came on board. You haven't had one drink, you didn't die, and the poison is pretty well worked out of you. It's the work. It beats trained nurses and business managers. Here, if you're thirsty. Clap your lips to this."

With several deft strokes of his heavy-backed sheath-knife, Grief clipped a triangular piece of shell from the end of a husked drinking-cocoa-nut. The thin, cool liquid, slightly milky and effervescent, bubbled to the brim. With a bow, Pankburn took the natural cup, threw his head back, and held it back till the shell was empty. He drank many of these nuts each day. The black steward, a New Hebrides boy sixty years of age, and his assistant, a Lark Islander of eleven, saw to it that he was continually supplied.

Pankburn did not object to the hard work. He devoured work, never shirking and always beating the native sailors in jumping to obey a command. But his sufferings during the period of driving the alcohol out of his system were truly heroic. Even when the last shred of the poison was exuded, the desire, as an obsession, remained in his head. So it was, when, on his honour, he went ashore at Apia, that he attempted to put the public houses out of business by drinking up their stocks in trade. And so it was, at two in the morning, that David Grief found him in front of the Tivoli, out of which he had been disorderly thrown by Charley Roberts. Aloysius, as of old, was chanting his sorrows to the stars. Also, and more concretely, he was punctuating the rhythm with cobbles of coral stone, which he flung with amazing accuracy through Charley Roberts's windows.

David Grief took him away, but not till next morning did he take him in hand. It was on the deck of the Kittiwake, and there was nothing kindergarten about it. Grief struck him, with bare knuckles, punched him and punished him–gave him the worst thrashing he had ever received.

"For the good of your soul, Pankburn," was the way he emphasized his blows. "For the good of your mother. For the progeny that will come after. For the good of the world, and the universe, and the whole race of man yet to be. And now, to hammer the lesson home, we'll do it all over again. That, for the good of your soul; and that, for your mother's sake; and that, for the little children, undreamed of and unborn, whose mother you'll love for their sakes, and for love's sake, in the lease of manhood that will be yours when I am done with you. Come on and take your medicine. I'm not done with you yet. I've only begun. There are many other reasons which I shall now proceed to expound." The brown sailors and the black stewards and cook looked on and grinned. Far from them was the questioning of any of the mysterious and incomprehensible ways of white men. As for Carlsen, the mate, he was grimly in accord with the treatment his employer was administering; while Albright, the supercargo, merely played with his mustache and smiled. They were men of the sea. They lived life in the rough. And

alcohol, in themselves as well as in other men, was a problem they had learned to handle in ways not taught in doctors' schools.

"Boy! A bucket of fresh water and a towel," Grief ordered, when he had finished. "Two buckets and two towels," he added, as he surveyed his own hands.

"You're a pretty one," he said to Pankburn. "You've spoiled everything. I had the poison completely out of you. And now you are fairly reeking with it. We've got to begin all over again. Mr. Albright! You know that pile of old chain on the beach at the boat-landing. Find the owner, buy it, and fetch it on board. There must be a hundred and fifty fathoms of it. Pankburn! To-morrow morning you start in pounding the rust off of it. When you've done that, you'll sandpaper it. Then you'll paint it. And nothing else will you do till that chain is as smooth as new."

Aloysius Pankburn shook his head.

"I quit. Francis Island can go to hell for all of me. I'm done with your slave-driving. Kindly put me ashore at once. I'm a white man. You can't treat me this way."

"Mr. Carlsen, you will see that Mr. Pankburn remains on board."

"I'll have you broken for this!" Aloysius screamed. "You can't stop me."

"I can give you another licking," Grief answered. "And let me tell you one thing, you besotted whelp, I'll keep on licking you as long as my knuckles hold out or until you yearn to hammer chain rust. I've taken you in hand, and I'm going to make a man out of you if I have to kill you to do it. Now go below and change your clothes. Be ready to turn to with a hammer this afternoon. Mr. Albright, get that chain aboard pronto. Mr. Carlsen, send the boats ashore after it. Also, keep your eye on Pankburn. If he shows signs of keeling over or going into the shakes, give him a nip–a small one. He may need it after last night."

V

For the rest of the time the Kittiwake lay in Apia Aloysius Pankburn pounded chain rust. Ten hours a day he pounded. And on the long stretch across to the Gilberts he still pounded.

Then came the sandpapering. One hundred and fifty fathoms is nine hundred feet, and every link of all that length was smoothed and polished as no link ever was before. And when the last link had received its second coat of black paint, he declared himself.

"Come on with more dirty work," he told Grief. "I'll overhaul the other chains if you say so. And you needn't worry about me any more. I'm not going to take another drop. I'm going to train up. You got my proud goat when you beat me, but let me tell you, you only got it temporarily. Train! I'm going to train till I'm as hard all the way through, and clean all the way through, as that chain is. And some day, Mister David Grief, somewhere, somehow, I'm going to be in such shape that I'll lick you as you licked me. I'm going to pulp your face till your own niggers won't know you."

Grief was jubilant.

"Now you're talking like a man," he cried. "The only way you'll ever lick me is to become a man. And then, maybe–"

He paused in the hope that the other would catch the suggestion. Aloysius groped for it, and, abruptly, something akin to illumination shone in his eyes.

“And then I won’t want to, you mean?”

Grief nodded.

“And that’s the curse of it,” Aloysius lamented. “I really believe I won’t want to. I see the point. But I’m going to go right on and shape myself up just the same.”

The warm, sunburn glow in Grief’s face seemed to grow warmer. His hand went out.

“Pankburn, I love you right now for that.”

Aloysius grasped the hand, and shook his head in sad sincerity.

“Grief,” he mourned, “you’ve got my goat, you’ve got my proud goat, and you’ve got it permanently, I’m afraid.”

VI

On a sultry tropic day, when the last flicker of the far southeast trade was fading out and the seasonal change for the northwest monsoon was coming on, the Kittiwake lifted above the sea-rim the jungle-clad coast of Francis Island.

Grief, with compass bearings and binoculars, identified the volcano that marked Redscar, ran past Owen Bay, and lost the last of the breeze at the entrance to Likikili Bay. With the two whaleboats out and towing, and with Carl-sen heaving the lead, the Kittiwake sluggishly entered a deep and narrow indentation. There were no beaches. The mangroves began at the water’s edge, and behind them rose steep jungle, broken here and there by jagged peaks of rock. At the end of a mile, when the white scar on the bluff bore west-southwest, the lead vindicated the “Directory,” and the anchor rumbled down in nine fathoms.

For the rest of that day and until the afternoon of the day following they remained on the Kittiwake and waited. No canoes appeared. There were no signs of human life. Save for the occasional splash of a fish or the screaming of cockatoos, there seemed no other life. Once, however, a huge butterfly, twelve inches from tip to tip, fluttered high over their mastheads and drifted across to the opposing jungle.

“There’s no use in sending a boat in to be cut up,” Grief said.

Pankburn was incredulous, and volunteered to go in alone, to swim it if he couldn’t borrow the dingey.

“They haven’t forgotten the German cruiser,” Grief explained. “And I’ll wager that bush is alive with men right now. What do you think, Mr. Carlsen?”

That veteran adventurer of the islands was emphatic in his agreement.

In the late afternoon of the second day Grief ordered a whaleboat into the water. He took his place in the bow, a live cigarette in his mouth and a short-fused stick of dynamite in his hand, for he was bent on shooting a mess of fish. Along the thwarts half a dozen Winchesters were placed. Albright, who took the steering-sweep, had a Mauser within reach of hand. They pulled in and along the green wall of vegetation. At times they rested on the oars in the midst of a profound silence.

“Two to one the bush is swarming with them–in quids,” Albright whispered.

Pankburn listened a moment longer and took the bet. Five minutes later they sighted a school of mullet. The brown rowers held their oars. Grief touched the short fuse to his cigarette and threw the stick. So short was the fuse that the stick exploded in the instant after it struck the water. And in that same instant the bush exploded into life. There were wild yells of defiance, and black and naked bodies leaped forward like apes through the mangroves.

In the whaleboat every rifle was lifted. Then came the wait. A hundred blacks, some few armed with ancient Sniders, but the greater portion armed with tomahawks, fire-hardened spears, and bone-tipped arrows, clustered on the roots that rose out of the bay. No word was spoken. Each party watched the other across twenty feet of water. An old, one-eyed black, with a bristly face, rested a Snider on his hip, the muzzle directed at Albright, who, in turn, covered him back with the Mauser. A couple of minutes of this tableau endured. The stricken fish rose to the surface or struggled half-stunned in the clear depths.

"It's all right, boys," Grief said quietly. "Put down your guns and over the side with you. Mr. Albright, toss the tobacco to that one-eyed brute."

While the Rapa men dived for the fish, Albright threw a bundle of trade tobacco ashore. The one-eyed man nodded his head and writhed his features in an attempt at amiability. Weapons were lowered, bows unbent, and arrows put back in their quivers.

"They know tobacco," Grief announced, as they rowed back aboard. "We'll have visitors. You'll break out a case of tobacco, Mr. Albright, and a few trade-knives. There's a canoe now."

Old One-Eye, as befitted a chief and leader, paddled out alone, facing peril for the rest of the tribe. As Carlsen leaned over the rail to help the visitor up, he turned his head and remarked casually:

"They've dug up the money, Mr. Grief. The old beggar's loaded with it."

One-Eye floundered down on deck, grinning appeasingly and failing to hide the fear he had overcome but which still possessed him. He was lame of one leg, and this was accounted for by a terrible scar, inches deep, which ran down the thigh from hip to knee. No clothes he wore whatever, not even a string, but his nose, perforated in a dozen places and each perforation the setting for a carved spine of bone, bristled like a porcupine. Around his neck and hanging down on his dirty chest was a string of gold sovereigns. His ears were hung with silver half-crowns, and from the cartilage separating his nostrils depended a big English penny, tarnished and green, but unmistakable.

"Hold on, Grief," Pankburn said, with perfectly assumed carelessness. "You say they know only beads and tobacco. Very well. You follow my lead. They've found the treasure, and we've got to trade them out of it. Get the whole crew aside and lecture them that they are to be interested only in the pennies. Savve? Gold coins must be beneath contempt, and silver coins merely tolerated. Pennies are to be the only desirable things."

Pankburn took charge of the trading. For the penny in One-Eye's nose he gave ten sticks of tobacco. Since each stick cost David Grief a cent, the bargain was mani-

festly unfair. But for the half-crowns Pankburn gave only one stick each. The string of sovereigns he refused to consider. The more he refused, the more One-Eye insisted on a trade. At last, with an appearance of irritation and anger, and as a palpable concession, Pankburn gave two sticks for the string, which was composed of ten sovereigns.

"I take my hat off to you," Grief said to Pankburn that night at dinner. "The situation is patent. You've reversed the scale of value. They'll figure the pennies as priceless possessions and the sovereigns as beneath price. Result: they'll hang on to the pennies and force us to trade for sovereigns. Pankburn, I drink your health! Boy!–another cup of tea for Mr. Pankburn."

VII

Followed a golden week. From dawn till dark a row of canoes rested on their paddles two hundred feet away. This was the deadline. Rapa sailors, armed with rifles, maintained it. But one canoe at a time was permitted alongside, and but one black at a time was permitted to come over the rail. Here, under the awning, relieving one another in hourly shifts, the four white men carried on the trade. The rate of exchange was that established by Pankburn with One-Eye. Five sovereigns fetched a stick of tobacco; a hundred sovereigns, twenty sticks. Thus, a crafty-eyed cannibal would deposit on the table a thousand dollars in gold, and go back over the rail, hugely-satisfied, with forty cents' worth of tobacco in his hand.

"Hope we've got enough tobacco to hold out," Carlsen muttered dubiously, as another case was sawed in half.

Albright laughed.

"We've got fifty cases below," he said, "and as I figure it, three cases buy a hundred thousand dollars. There was only a million dollars buried, so thirty cases ought to get it. Though, of course, we've got to allow a margin for the silver and the pennies. That Ecuadoran bunch must have salted down all the coin in sight."

Very few pennies and shillings appeared, though Pankburn continually and anxiously inquired for them. Pennies were the one thing he seemed to desire, and he made his eyes flash covetously whenever one was produced. True to his theory, the savages concluded that the gold, being of slight value, must be disposed of first. A penny, worth fifty times as much as a sovereign, was something to retain and treasure. Doubtless, in their jungle-lairs, the wise old gray-beards put their heads together and agreed to raise the price on pennies when the worthless gold was all worked off. Who could tell? Mayhap the strange white men could be made to give even twenty sticks for a priceless copper.

By the end of the week the trade went slack. There was only the slightest dribble of gold. An occasional penny was reluctantly disposed of for ten sticks, while several thousand dollars in silver came in.

On the morning of the eighth day no trading was done. The gray-beards had matured their plan and were demanding twenty sticks for a penny, One-Eye delivered the new rate of exchange. The white men appeared to take it with great seriousness, for

they stood together debating in low voices. Had One-Eye understood English he would have been enlightened.

"We've got just a little over eight hundred thousand, not counting the silver," Grief said. "And that's about all there is. The bush tribes behind have most probably got the other two hundred thousand. Return in three months, and the salt-water crowd will have traded back for it; also they will be out of tobacco by that time."

"It would be a sin to buy pennies," Albright grinned. "It goes against the thrifty grain of my trader's soul."

"There's a whiff of land-breeze stirring," Grief said, looking at Pankburn. "What do you say?"

Pankburn nodded.

"Very well." Grief measured the faintness and irregularity of the wind against his cheek.

"Mr. Carlsen, heave short, and get off the gaskets. And stand by with the whaleboats to tow. This breeze is not dependable."

He picked up a part case of tobacco, containing six or seven hundred sticks, put it in One-Eye's hands, and helped that bewildered savage over the rail. As the foresail went up the mast, a wail of consternation arose from the canoes lying along the dead-line. And as the anchor broke out and the Kittiwake's head paid off in the light breeze, old One-Eye, daring the rifles levelled on him, paddled alongside and made frantic signs of his tribe's willingness to trade pennies for ten sticks.

"Boy!–a drinking nut," Pankburn called.

"It's Sydney Heads for you," Grief said. "And then what?"

"I'm coming back with you for that two hundred thousand," Pankburn answered. "In the meantime I'm going to build an island schooner. Also, I'm going to call those guardians of mine before the court to show cause why my father's money should not be turned over to me. Show cause? I'll show them cause why it should."

He swelled his biceps proudly under the thin sleeve, reached for the two black stewards, and put them above his head like a pair of dumbbells.

"Come on! Swing out on that fore-boom-tackle!" Carlsen shouted from aft, where the mainsail was being winged out.

Pankburn dropped the stewards and raced for it, beating a Rapa sailor by two jumps to the hauling part.

The Race For Number Three

"HUH! Get on to the glad rags!"

Shorty surveyed his partner with simulated disapproval, and Smoke, vainly attempting to rub the wrinkles out of the pair of trousers he had just put on, was irritated.

"They sure fit you close for a second-hand buy," Shorty went on. "What was the tax?"

"One hundred and fifty for the suit," Smoke answered. "The man was nearly my own size. I thought it was remarkably reasonable. What are you kicking about?"

"Who? Me? Oh, nothin'. I was just thinkin' it was goin' some for a meat-eater that hit Dawson in an ice-jam, with no grub, one suit of underclothes, a pair of mangy moccasins, an' overalls that looked like they'd been through the wreck of the Hesperus. Pretty gay front, pardner. Pretty gay front. Say–?"

"What do you want now?" Smoke demanded testily.

"What's her name?"

"There isn't any her, my friend. I'm to have dinner at Colonel Bowie's, if you want to know. The trouble with you, Shorty, is you're envious because I'm going into high society and you're not invited."

"Ain't you some late?" Shorty queried with concern.

"What do you mean?"

"For dinner. They'll be eatin' supper when you get there."

Smoke was about to explain with crudely elaborate sarcasm when he caught the twinkle in the other's eye. He went on dressing, with fingers that had lost their deftness, tying a Windsor tie in a bow-knot at the throat of his soft cotton shirt.

"Wisht I hadn't sent all my starched shirts to the laundry," Shorty murmured sympathetically. "I might 'a' fitted you out."

By this time Smoke was straining at a pair of shoes. The woollen socks were too thick to go into them. He looked appealingly at Shorty, who shook his head.

"Nope. If I had thin ones I wouldn't lend 'em to you. Back to the moccasins, pardner. You'd sure freeze your toes in skimpy-fangled gear like that."

"I paid fifteen dollars for them, second hand," Smoke lamented.

"I reckon they won't be a man not in moccasins."

"But there are to be women, Shorty. I'm going to sit down and eat with real live women–Mrs. Bowie, and several others, so the Colonel told me."

"Well, moccasins won't spoil their appetite none," was Shorty's comment. "Wonder what the Colonel wants with you?"

"I don't know, unless he's heard about my finding Surprise Lake. It will take a fortune to drain it, and the Guggenheims are out for investment."

"Reckon that's it. That's right, stick to the moccasins. Gee! That coat is sure wrinkled, an' it fits you a mite too swift. Just peck around at your vittles. If you eat hearty you'll bust through. An' if them women folks gets to droppin' handkerchiefs, just let 'em lay. Don't do any pickin' up. Whatever you do, don't."

As became a high-salaried expert and the representative of the great house of Guggenheim, Colonel Bowie lived in one of the most magnificent cabins in Dawson. Of squared logs, hand-hewn, it was two stories high, and of such extravagant proportions that it boasted a big living room that was used for a living room and for nothing else.

Here were big bear-skins on the rough board floor, and on the walls horns of moose and caribou. Here roared an open fireplace and a big wood-burning stove. And here Smoke met the social elect of Dawson–not the mere pick-handle millionaires, but the ultra-cream of a mining city whose population had been recruited from all the world–men like Warburton Jones, the explorer and writer; Captain Consadine of the Mounted Police; Haskell, Gold Commissioner of the Northwest Territory; and Baron Von Schroeder, an emperor's favourite with an international duelling reputation.

And here, dazzling in evening gown, he met Joy Gastell, whom hitherto he had encountered only on trail, befurred and moccasined. At dinner he found himself beside her.

"I feel like a fish out of water," he confessed. "All you folks are so real grand you know. Besides, I never dreamed such Oriental luxury existed in the Klondike. Look at Von Schroeder there. He's actually got a dinner jacket, and Consadine's got a starched shirt. I noticed he wore moccasins just the same. How do you like MY outfit?"

He moved his shoulders about as if preening himself for Joy's approval.

"It looks as if you'd grown stout since you came over the Pass," she laughed.

"Wrong. Guess again."

"It's somebody else's."

"You win. I bought it for a price from one of the clerks at the A. C. Company."

"It's a shame clerks are so narrow-shouldered," she sympathized. "And you haven't told me what you think of MY outfit."

"I can't," he said. "I'm out of breath. I've been living on trail too long. This sort of thing comes to me with a shock, you know. I'd quite forgotten that women have arms and shoulders. To-morrow morning, like my friend Shorty, I'll wake up and know it's all a dream. Now, the last time I saw you on Squaw Creek–"

"I was just a squaw," she broke in.

"I hadn't intended to say that. I was remembering that it was on Squaw Creek that I discovered you had feet."

"And I can never forget that you saved them for me," she said. "I've been wanting to see you ever since to thank you–" (He shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly). "And that's why you are here to-night."

"You asked the Colonel to invite me?"

"No! Mrs. Bowie. And I asked her to let me have you at table. And here's my chance. Everybody's talking. Listen, and don't interrupt. You know Mono Creek?"

"Yes."

"It has turned out rich–dreadfully rich. They estimate the claims as worth a million and more apiece. It was only located the other day."

"I remember the stampede."

"Well, the whole creek was staked to the sky-line, and all the feeders, too. And yet, right now, on the main creek, Number Three below Discovery is unrecorded. The creek was so far away from Dawson that the Commissioner allowed sixty days for recording after location. Every claim was recorded except Number Three below. It was staked by Cyrus Johnson. And that was all. Cyrus Johnson has disappeared. Whether he died, whether he went down river or up, nobody knows. Anyway, in six days, the time for recording will be up. Then the man who stakes it, and reaches Dawson first and records it, gets it."

"A million dollars," Smoke murmured.

"Gilchrist, who has the next claim below, has got six hundred dollars in a single pan off bedrock. He's burned one hole down. And the claim on the other side is even richer. I know."

"But why doesn't everybody know?" Smoke queried skeptically.

"They're beginning to know. They kept it secret for a long time, and it is only now that it's coming out. Good dog-teams will be at a premium in another twenty-four hours. Now, you've got to get away as decently as you can as soon as dinner is over. I've arranged it. An Indian will come with a message for you. You read it, let on that you're very much put out, make your excuses, and get away."

"I–er–I fail to follow."

"Ninny!" she exclaimed in a half-whisper. "What you must do is to get out to-night and hustle dog-teams. I know of two. There's Hanson's team, seven big Hudson Bay dogs–he's holding them at four hundred each. That's top price to-night, but it won't be to-morrow. And Sitka Charley has eight Malemutes he's asking thirty-five hundred for. To-morrow he'll laugh at an offer of five thousand. Then you've got your own team of dogs. And you'll have to buy several more teams. That's your work to-night. Get the best. It's dogs as well as men that will win this race. It's a hundred and ten miles, and you'll have to relay as frequently as you can."

"Oh, I see, you want me to go in for it," Smoke drawled.

"If you haven't the money for the dogs, I'll–" She faltered, but before she could continue, Smoke was speaking.

"I can buy the dogs. But–er–aren't you afraid this is gambling?"

"After your exploits at roulette in the Elkhorn," she retorted, "I'm not afraid that you're afraid. It's a sporting proposition, if that's what you mean. A race for a million, and with some of the stiffest dog-mushers and travellers in the country entered against you. They haven't entered yet, but by this time to-morrow they will, and dogs will be worth what the richest man can afford to pay. Big Olaf is in town. He came up from

Circle City last month. He is one of the most terrible dog-mushers in the country, and if he enters he will be your most dangerous man. Arizona Bill is another. He's been a professional freighter and mail-carrier for years. If he goes in, interest will be centered on him and Big Olaf."

"And you intend me to come along as a sort of dark horse."

"Exactly. And it will have its advantages. You will not be supposed to stand a show. After all, you know, you are still classed as a chechako. You haven't seen the four seasons go around. Nobody will take notice of you until you come into the home stretch in the lead."

"It's on the home stretch the dark horse is to show up its classy form, eh?"

She nodded, and continued earnestly: "Remember, I shall never forgive myself for the trick I played on the Squaw Creek stampede unless you win this Mono claim. And if any man can win this race against the old-timers, it's you."

It was the way she said it. He felt warm all over, and in his heart and head. He gave her a quick, searching look, involuntary and serious, and for the moment that her eyes met his steadily, ere they fell, it seemed to him that he read something of vaster import than the claim Cyrus Johnson had failed to record.

"I'll do it," he said. "I'll win it."

The glad light in her eyes seemed to promise a greater meed than all the gold in the Mono claim. He was aware of a movement of her hand in her lap next to his. Under the screen of the tablecloth he thrust his own hand across and met a firm grip of woman's fingers that sent another wave of warmth through him.

"What will Shorty say?" was the thought that flashed whimsically through his mind as he withdrew his hand. He glanced almost jealously at the faces of Von Schroeder and Jones, and wondered if they had not divined the remarkableness and deliciousness of this woman who sat beside him.

He was aroused by her voice, and realized that she had been speaking some moments.

"So you see, Arizona Bill is a white Indian," she was saying. "And Big Olaf is a bear wrestler, a king of the snows, a mighty savage. He can out-travel and out-endure an Indian, and he's never known any other life but that of the wild and the frost."

"Who's that?" Captain Consadine broke in from across the table.

"Big Olaf," she answered. "I was just telling Mr. Bellew what a traveller he is."

"You're right," the Captain's voice boomed. "Big Olaf is the greatest traveller in the Yukon. I'd back him against Old Nick himself for snow-bucking and ice-travel. He brought in the government dispatches in 1895, and he did it after two couriers were frozen on Chilkoot and the third drowned in the open water of Thirty Mile."

Smoke had travelled in a leisurely fashion up to Mono Creek, fearing to tire his dogs before the big race. Also, he had familiarized himself with every mile of the trail and located his relay camps. So many men had entered the race that the hundred and ten miles of its course was almost a continuous village. Relay camps were everywhere along the trail. Von Schroeder, who had gone in purely for the sport, had no less than eleven dog-teams–a fresh one for every ten miles. Arizona Bill had been forced to content

himself with eight teams. Big Olaf had seven, which was the complement of Smoke. In addition, over two score of other men were in the running. Not every day, even in the golden north, was a million dollars the prize for a dog race. The country had been swept of dogs. No animal of speed and endurance escaped the fine-tooth comb that had raked the creeks and camps, and the prices of dogs had doubled and quadrupled in the course of the frantic speculation.

Number Three below Discovery was ten miles up Mono Creek from its mouth. The remaining hundred miles was to be run on the frozen breast of the Yukon. On Number Three itself were fifty tents and over three hundred dogs. The old stakes, blazed and scrawled sixty days before by Cyrus Johnson, still stood, and every man had gone over the boundaries of the claim again and again, for the race with the dogs was to be preceded by a foot and obstacle race. Each man had to relocate the claim for himself, and this meant that he must place two center-stakes and four corner-stakes and cross the creek twice, before he could start for Dawson with his dogs.

Furthermore, there were to be no "sooners." Not until the stroke of midnight of Friday night was the claim open for relocation, and not until the stroke of midnight could a man plant a stake. This was the ruling of the Gold Commissioner at Dawson, and Captain Consadine had sent up a squad of mounted police to enforce it. Discussion had arisen about the difference between sun-time and police-time, but Consadine had sent forth his fiat that police-time went, and, further, that it was the watch of Lieutenant Pollock that went.

The Mono trail ran along the level creek-bed, and, less than two feet in width, was like a groove, walled on either side by the snowfall of months. The problem of how forty-odd sleds and three hundred dogs were to start in so narrow a course was in everybody's mind.

"Huh!" said Shorty. "It's goin' to be the gosh-dangdest mix-up that ever was. I can't see no way out, Smoke, except main strength an' sweat an' to plow through. If the whole creek was glare-ice they ain't room for a dozen teams abreast. I got a hunch right now they's goin' to be a heap of scrappin' before they get strung out. An' if any of it comes our way, you got to let me do the punchin'."

Smoke squared his shoulders and laughed non-committally.

"No, you don't!" his partner cried in alarm. "No matter what happens, you don't dast hit. You can't handle dogs a hundred miles with a busted knuckle, an' that's what'll happen if you land on somebody's jaw."

Smoke nodded his head. "You're right, Shorty. I couldn't risk the chance."

"An' just remember," Shorty went on, "that I got to do all the shovin' for them first ten miles, an' you got to take it easy as you can. I'll sure jerk you through to the Yukon. After that it's up to you an' the dogs. Say–what d'ye think Schroeder's scheme is? He's got his first team a quarter of a mile down the creek, an' he'll know it by a green lantern. But we got him skinned. Me for the red flare every time."

The day had been clear and cold, but a blanket of cloud formed across the face of the sky, and the night came on warm and dark, with the hint of snow impending. The

thermometer registered fifteen below zero, and in the Klondike winter fifteen below is esteemed very warm.

At a few minutes before midnight, leaving Shorty with the dogs five hundred yards down the creek, Smoke joined the racers on Number Three. There were forty-five of them waiting the start for the thousand thousand dollars Cyrus Johnson had left lying in the frozen gravel. Each man carried six stakes and a heavy wooden mallet, and was clad in a smock-like parka of heavy cotton drill.

Lieutenant Pollock, in a big bearskin coat, looked at his watch by the light of a fire. It lacked a minute of midnight. "Make ready," he said, as he raised a revolver in his right hand and watched the second hand tick arutenant Pollock, in a big bearskin coat, looked at his watch by the light of a fire. It lacked a minute of midnight. "Make ready," he said, as he raised a revolver in his right hand and watched the second hand tick around.

Forty-five hoods were thrown back from the parkas. Forty-five pairs of hands unmittened, and forty-five pairs of moccasins pressed tensely into the packed snow. Also, forty-five stakes were thrust into the snow, and the same number of mallets lifted in the air.

The shot rang out, and the mallets fell. Cyrus Johnson's right to the million had expired. To prevent confusion, Lieutenant Pollock had insisted that the lower center-stake be driven first, next the south-eastern; and so on around the four sides, including the upper center-stake on the way.

Smoke drove in his stake and was away with the leading dozen. Fires had been lighted at the corners, and by each fire stood a policeman, list in hand, checking off the names of the runners. A man was supposed to call out his name and show his face. There was to be no staking by proxy while the real racer was off and away down the creek.

At the first corner, beside Smoke's stake, Von Schroeder placed his. The mallets struck at the same instant. As they hammered, more arrived from behind and with such impetuosity as to get in one another's way and cause jostling and shoving. Squirming through the press and calling his name to the policeman, Smoke saw the Baron, struck in collision by one of the rushers, hurled clean off his feet into the snow. But Smoke did not wait. Others were still ahead of him. By the light of the vanishing fire, he was certain that he saw the back, hugely looming, of Big Olaf, and at the southwestern corner Big Olaf and he drove their stakes side by side.

It was no light work, this preliminary obstacle race. The boundaries of the claim totalled nearly a mile, and most of it was over the uneven surface of a snow-covered, niggerhead flat. All about Smoke men tripped and fell, and several times he pitched forward himself, jarringly, on hands and knees. Once, Big Olaf fell so immediately in front of him as to bring him down on top.

The upper center-stake was driven by the edge of the bank, and down the bank the racers plunged, across the frozen creek-bed, and up the other side. Here, as Smoke clambered, a hand gripped his ankle and jerked him back. In the flickering light of a

distant fire, it was impossible to see who had played the trick. But Arizona Bill, who had been treated similarly, rose to his feet and drove his fist with a crunch into the offender's face. Smoke saw and heard as he was scrambling to his feet, but before he could make another lunge for the bank a fist dropped him half-stunned into the snow. He staggered up, located the man, half-swung a hook for his jaw, then remembered Shorty's warning and refrained. The next moment, struck below the knees by a hurtling body, he went down again.

It was a foretaste of what would happen when the men reached their sleds. Men were pouring over the other bank and piling into the jam. They swarmed up the bank in bunches, and in bunches were dragged back by their impatient fellows. More blows were struck, curses rose from the panting chests of those who still had wind to spare, and Smoke, curiously visioning the face of Joy Gastell, hoped that the mallets would not be brought into play. Overthrown, trod upon, groping in the snow for his lost stakes, he at last crawled out of the crush and attacked the bank farther along. Others were doing this, and it was his luck to have many men in advance of him in the race for the northwestern corner.

Reaching the fourth corner, he tripped headlong and in the long sprawling fall lost his remaining stake. For five minutes he groped in the darkness before he found it, and all the time the panting runners were passing him. From the last corner to the creek he began overtaking men for whom the mile run had been too much. In the creek itself Bedlam had broken loose. A dozen sleds were piled up and overturned, and nearly a hundred dogs were locked in combat. Among them men struggled, tearing the tangled animals apart, or beating them apart with clubs. In the fleeting glimpse he caught of it, Smoke wondered if he had ever seen a Dore grotesquery to compare.

Leaping down the bank beyond the glutted passage, he gained the hard-footing of the sled-trail and made better time. Here, in packed harbors beside the narrow trail, sleds and men waited for runners that were still behind. From the rear came the whine and rush of dogs, and Smoke had barely time to leap aside into the deep snow. A sled tore past, and he made out the man kneeling and shouting madly. Scarcely was it by when it stopped with a crash of battle. The excited dogs of a harbored sled, resenting the passing animals, had got out of hand and sprung upon them.

Smoke plunged around and by. He could see the green lantern of Von Schroeder and, just below it, the red flare that marked his own team. Two men were guarding Schroeder's dogs, with short clubs interposed between them and the trail.

"Come on, you Smoke! Come on, you Smoke!" he could hear Shorty calling anxiously.

"Coming!" he gasped.

By the red flare, he could see the snow torn up and trampled, and from the way his partner breathed he knew a battle had been fought. He staggered to the sled, and, in a moment he was falling on it, Shorty's whip snapped as he yelled: "Mush! you devils! Mush!"

The dogs sprang into the breast-bands, and the sled jerked abruptly ahead. They were big animals–Hanson's prize team of Hudson Bays–and Smoke had selected them

for the first stage, which included the ten miles of Mono, the heavy going of the cut-off across the flat at the mouth, and the first ten miles of the Yukon stretch.

"How many are ahead?" he asked.

"You shut up an' save your wind," Shorty answered. "Hi! you brutes! Hit her up! Hit her up!"

He was running behind the sled, towing on a short rope. Smoke could not see him; nor could he see the sled on which he lay at full length. The fires had been left in the rear, and they were tearing through a wall of blackness as fast as the dogs could spring into it. This blackness was almost sticky, so nearly did it take on the seeming of substance.

Smoke felt the sled heel up on one runner as it rounded an invisible curve, and from ahead came the snarls of beasts and the oaths of men. This was known afterward as the Barnes-Slocum Jam. It was the teams of these two men which first collided, and into it, at full career, piled Smoke's seven big fighters. Scarcely more than semi-domesticated wolves, the excitement of that night on Mono Creek had sent every dog fighting mad. The Klondike dogs, driven without reins, cannot be stopped except by voice, so that there was no stopping this glut of struggle that heaped itself between the narrow rims of the creek. From behind, sled after sled hurled into the turmoil. Men who had their teams nearly extricated were overwhelmed by fresh avalanches of dogs–each animal well fed, well rested, and ripe for battle.

"It's knock down an' drag out an' plow through!" Shorty yelled in his partner's ear. "An' watch out for your knuckles! You drag dogs out an' let me do the punchin'!"

What happened in the next half hour Smoke never distinctly remembered. At the end he emerged exhausted, sobbing for breath, his jaw sore from a fist-blow, his shoulder aching from the bruise of a club, the blood running warmly down one leg from the rip of a dog's fangs, and both sleeves of his parka torn to shreds. As in a dream, while the battle still raged behind, he helped Shorty reharness the dogs. One, dying, they cut from the traces, and in the darkness they felt their way to the repair of the disrupted harness.

"Now you lie down an' get your wind back," Shorty commanded.

And through the darkness the dogs sped, with unabated strength, down Mono Creek, across the long cut-off, and to the Yukon. Here, at the junction with the main river-trail, somebody had lighted a fire, and here Shorty said good-bye. By the light of the fire, as the sled leaped behind the flying dogs, Smoke caught another of the unforgettable pictures of the Northland. It was of Shorty, swaying and sinking down limply in the snow, yelling his parting encouragement, one eye blackened and closed, knuckles bruised and broken, and one arm, ripped and fang-torn, gushing forth a steady stream of blood.

"How many ahead?" Smoke asked, as he dropped his tired Hudson Bays and sprang on the waiting sled at the first relay station.

"I counted eleven," the man called after him, for he was already away, behind the leaping dogs.

Fifteen miles they were to carry him on the next stage, which would fetch him to the mouth of White River. There were nine of them, but they composed his weakest team. The twenty-five miles between White River and Sixty Mile he had broken into two stages because of ice-jams, and here two of his heaviest, toughest teams were stationed.

He lay on the sled at full length, face-down, holding on with both hands. Whenever the dogs slacked from topmost speed he rose to his knees, and, yelling and urging, clinging precariously with one hand, threw his whip into them. Poor team that it was, he passed two sleds before White River was reached. Here, at the freeze-up, a jam had piled a barrier, allowing the open water, that formed for half a mile below, to freeze smoothly. This smooth stretch enabled the racers to make flying exchanges of sleds, and down all the course they had placed their relays below the jams.

Over the jam and out on to the smooth, Smoke tore along, calling loudly, "Billy! Billy!"

Billy heard and answered, and by the light of the many fires on the ice, Smoke saw a sled swing in from the side and come abreast. Its dogs were fresh and overhauled his. As the sleds swerved toward each other he leaped across, and Billy promptly rolled off.

"Where's Big Olaf?" Smoke cried.

"Leading!" Billy's voice answered; and the fires were left behind, and Smoke was again flying through the wall of blackness.

In the jams of that relay, where the way led across a chaos of up-ended ice-cakes, and where Smoke slipped off the forward end of the sled and with a haul-rope toiled behind the wheel-dog, he passed three sleds. Accidents had happened, and he could hear the men cutting out dogs and mending harnesses.

Among the jams of the next short relay into Sixty Mile, he passed two more teams. And that he might know adequately what had happened to them, one of his own dogs wrenched a shoulder, was unable to keep up, and was dragged in the harness. Its teammates, angered, fell upon it with their fangs, and Smoke was forced to club them off with the heavy butt of his whip. As he cut the injured animal out, he heard the whining cries of dogs behind him and the voice of a man that was familiar. It was Von Schroeder. Smoke called a warning to prevent a rear-end collision, and the Baron, hawing his animals and swinging on the gee-pole, went by a dozen feet to the side. Yet so impenetrable was the blackness that Smoke heard him pass but never saw him.

On the smooth stretch of ice beside the trading-post at Sixty Mile, Smoke overtook two more sleds. All had just changed teams, and for five minutes they ran abreast, each man on his knees and pouring whip and voice into the maddened dogs. But Smoke had studied out that portion of the trail, and now marked the tall pine on the bank that showed faintly in the light of the many fires. Below that pine was not merely darkness, but an abrupt cessation of the smooth stretch. There the trail, he knew, narrowed to a single sled-width. Leaning out ahead, he caught the haul-rope and drew his leaping sled up to the wheel-dog. He caught the animal by the hind legs and threw it. With a snarl of rage it tried to slash him with its fangs, but was dragged on by the rest of

the team. Its body proved an efficient brake, and the two other teams, still abreast, dashed ahead into the darkness for the narrow way.

Smoke heard the crash and uproar of their collision, released his wheeler, sprang to the gee-pole, and urged his team to the right into the soft snow where the straining animals wallowed to their necks. It was exhausting work, but he won by the tangled teams and gained the hard-packed trail beyond.

On the relay out of Sixty Mile, Smoke had next to his poorest team, and though the going was good, he had set it a short fifteen miles. Two more teams would bring him into Dawson and to the gold-recorder's office, and Smoke had selected his best animals for the last two stretches. Sitka Charley himself waited with the eight Malemutes that would jerk Smoke along for twenty miles, and for the finish, with a fifteen-mile run, was his own team–the team he had had all winter and which had been with him in the search for Surprise Lake.

The two men he had left entangled at Sixty Mile failed to overtake him, and, on the other hand, his team failed to overtake any of the three that still led. His animals were willing, though they lacked stamina and speed, and little urging was needed to keep them jumping into it at their best. There was nothing for Smoke to do but to lie face downward and hold on. Now and again he would plunge out of the darkness into the circle of light about a blazing fire, catch a glimpse of furred men standing by harnessed and waiting dogs, and plunge into the darkness again. Mile after mile, with only the grind and jar of the runners in his ears, he sped on. Almost automatically he kept his place as the sled bumped ahead or half lifted and heeled on the swings and swerves of the bends. First one, and then another, without apparent rhyme or reason, three faces limned themselves on his consciousness: Joy Gastell's, laughing and audacious; Shorty's, battered and exhausted by the struggle down Mono Creek; and John Bellew's, seamed and rigid, as if cast in iron, so unrelenting was its severity. And sometimes Smoke wanted to shout aloud, to chant a paean of savage exultation, as he remembered the office of The Billow and the serial story of San Francisco which he had left unfinished, along with the other fripperies of those empty days.

The grey twilight of morning was breaking as he exchanged his weary dogs for the eight fresh Malemutes. Lighter animals than Hudson Bays, they were capable of greater speed, and they ran with the supple tirelessness of true wolves. Sitka Charley called out the order of the teams ahead. Big Olaf led, Arizona Bill was second, and Von Schroeder third. These were the three best men in the country. In fact, ere Smoke had left Dawson, the popular betting had placed them in that order. While they were racing for a million, at least half a million had been staked by others on the outcome of the race. No one had bet on Smoke, who, despite his several known exploits, was still accounted a chechako with much to learn.

As daylight strengthened, Smoke caught sight of a sled ahead, and, in half an hour, his own lead-dog was leaping at its tail. Not until the man turned his head to exchange greetings, did Smoke recognize him as Arizona Bill. Von Schroeder had evidently passed him. The trail, hard-packed, ran too narrowly through the soft snow, and for another

half-hour Smoke was forced to stay in the rear. Then they topped an ice-jam and struck a smooth stretch below, where were a number of relay camps and where the snow was packed widely. On his knees, swinging his whip and yelling, Smoke drew abreast. He noted that Arizona Bill's right arm hung dead at his side, and that he was compelled to pour leather with his left hand. Awkward as it was, he had no hand left with which to hold on, and frequently he had to cease from the whip and clutch to save himself from falling off. Smoke remembered the scrimmage in the creek bed at Three Below Discovery, and understood. Shorty's advice had been sound.

"What's happened?" Smoke asked, as he began to pull ahead.

"I don't know," Arizona Bill answered. "I think I threw my shoulder out in the scrapping."

He dropped behind very slowly, though when the last relay station was in sight he was fully half a mile in the rear. Ahead, bunched together, Smoke could see Big Olaf and Von Schroeder. Again Smoke arose to his knees, and he lifted his jaded dogs into a burst of speed such as a man only can who has the proper instinct for dog-driving. He drew up close to the tail of Von Schroeder's sled, and in this order the three sleds dashed out on the smooth going below a jam, where many men and many dogs waited. Dawson was fifteen miles away.

Von Schroeder, with his ten-mile relays, had changed five miles back and would change five miles ahead. So he held on, keeping his dogs at full leap. Big Olaf and Smoke made flying changes, and their fresh teams immediately regained what had been lost to the Baron. Big Olaf led past, and Smoke followed into the narrow trail beyond.

"Still good, but not so good," Smoke paraphrased Spencer to himself.

Of Von Schroeder, now behind, he had no fear; but ahead was the greatest dog-driver in the country. To pass him seemed impossible. Again and again, many times, Smoke forced his leader to the other's sled-tail, and each time Big Olaf let out another link and drew away. Smoke contented himself with taking the pace, and hung on grimly. The race was not lost until one or the other won, and in fifteen miles many things could happen.

Three miles from Dawson something did happen. To Smoke's surprise, Big Olaf rose up and with oaths and leather proceeded to fetch out the last ounce of effort in his animals. It was a spurt that should have been reserved for the last hundred yards instead of being begun three miles from the finish. Sheer dog-killing that it was, Smoke followed. His own team was superb. No dogs on the Yukon had had harder work or were in better condition. Besides, Smoke had toiled with them, and eaten and bedded with them, and he knew each dog as an individual and how best to win in to the animal's intelligence and extract its last least shred of willingness.

They topped a small jam and struck the smooth going below. Big Olaf was barely fifty feet ahead. A sled shot out from the side and drew in toward him, and Smoke understood Big Olaf's terrific spurt. He had tried to gain a lead for the change. This

fresh team that waited to jerk him down the home stretch had been a private surprise of his. Even the men who had backed him to win had had no knowledge of it.

Smoke strove desperately to pass during the exchange of sleds. Lifting his dogs to the effort, he ate up the intervening fifty feet. With urging and pouring of leather, he went to the side and on until his lead-dog was jumping abreast of Big Olaf's wheeler. On the other side, abreast, was the relay sled. At the speed they were going, Big Olaf did not dare try the flying leap. If he missed and fell off, Smoke would be in the lead and the race would be lost.

Big Olaf tried to spurt ahead, and he lifted his dogs magnificently, but Smoke's leader still continued to jump beside Big Olaf's wheeler. For half a mile the three sleds tore and bounced along side by side. The smooth stretch was nearing its end when Big Olaf took the chance. As the flying sleds swerved toward each other, he leaped, and the instant he struck he was on his knees, with whip and voice spurting the fresh team. The smooth stretch pinched out into the narrow trail, and he jumped his dogs ahead and into it with a lead of barely a yard.

A man was not beaten until he was beaten, was Smoke's conclusion, and drive no matter how, Big Olaf failed to shake him off. No team Smoke had driven that night could have stood such a killing pace and kept up with fresh dogs–no team save this one. Nevertheless, the pace WAS killing it, and as they began to round the bluff at Klondike City, he could feel the pitch of strength going out of his animals. Almost imperceptibly they lagged behind, and foot by foot Big Olaf drew away until he led by a score of yards.

A great cheer went up from the population of Klondike City assembled on the ice. Here the Klondike entered the Yukon, and half a mile away, across the Klondike, on the north bank, stood Dawson. An outburst of madder cheering arose, and Smoke caught a glimpse of a sled shooting out to him. He recognized the splendid animals that drew it. They were Joy Gastell's. And Joy Gastell drove them. The hood of her squirrel-skin parka was tossed back, revealing the cameo-like oval of her face outlined against her heavily-massed hair. Mittens had been discarded, and with bare hands she clung to whip and sled.

"Jump!" she cried, as her leader snarled at Smoke's.

Smoke struck the sled behind her. It rocked violently from the impact of his body, but she was full up on her knees and swinging the whip.

"Hi! You! Mush on! Chook! Chook!" she was crying, and the dogs whined and yelped in eagerness of desire and effort to overtake Big Olaf.

And then, as the lead-dog caught the tail of Big Olaf's sled, and yard by yard drew up abreast, the great crowd on the Dawson bank went mad. It WAS a great crowd, for the men had dropped their tools on all the creeks and come down to see the outcome of the race, and a dead heat at the end of a hundred and ten miles justified any madness.

"When you're in the lead I'm going to drop off!" Joy cried out over her shoulder.

Smoke tried to protest.

"And watch out for the dip curve half way up the bank," she warned.

Dog by dog, separated by half a dozen feet, the two teams were running abreast. Big Olaf, with whip and voice, held his own for a minute. Then, slowly, an inch at a time, Joy's leader began to forge past.

"Get ready!" she cried to Smoke. "I'm going to leave you in a minute. Get the whip."

And as he shifted his hand to clutch the whip, they heard Big Olaf roar a warning, but too late. His lead-dog, incensed at being passed, swerved in to the attack. His fangs struck Joy's leader on the flank. The rival teams flew at one another's throats. The sleds overran the fighting brutes and capsized. Smoke struggled to his feet and tried to lift Joy up. But she thrust him from her, crying: "Go!"

On foot, already fifty feet in advance, was Big Olaf, still intent on finishing the race. Smoke obeyed, and when the two men reached the foot of the Dawson bank, he was at the other's heels. But up the bank Big Olaf lifted his body hugely, regaining a dozen feet.

Five blocks down the main street was the gold-recorder's office. The street was packed as for the witnessing of a parade. Not so easily this time did Smoke gain to his giant rival, and when he did he was unable to pass. Side by side they ran along the narrow aisle between the solid walls of fur-clad, cheering men. Now one, now the other, with great convulsive jerks, gained an inch or so, only to lose it immediately after.

If the pace had been a killing one for their dogs, the one they now set themselves was no less so. But they were racing for a million dollars and greatest honour in Yukon Country. The only outside impression that came to Smoke on that last mad stretch was one of astonishment that there should be so many people in the Klondike. He had never seen them all at once before.

He felt himself involuntarily lag, and Big Olaf sprang a full stride in the lead. To Smoke it seemed that his heart would burst, while he had lost all consciousness of his legs. He knew they were flying under him, but he did not know how he continued to make them fly, nor how he put even greater pressure of will upon them and compelled them again to carry him to his giant competitor's side.

The open door of the Recorder's office appeared ahead of them. Both men made a final, futile spurt. Neither could draw away from the other, and side by side they hit the doorway, collided violently, and fell headlong on the office floor.

They sat up, but were too exhausted to rise. Big Olaf, the sweat pouring from him, breathing with tremendous, painful gasps, pawed the air and vainly tried to speak. Then he reached out his hand with unmistakable meaning; Smoke extended his, and they shook.

"It's a dead heat," Smoke could hear the Recorder saying, but it was as if in a dream, and the voice was very thin and very far away. "And all I can say is that you both win. You'll have to divide the claim between you. You're partners."

Their two arms pumped up and down as they ratified the decision. Big Olaf nodded his head with great emphasis, and spluttered. At last he got it out.

"You damn chechako," was what he said, but in the saying of it was admiration. "I don't know how you done it, but you did."

Outside, the great crowd was noisily massed, while the office was packing and jamming. Smoke and Big Olaf essayed to rise, and each helped the other to his feet. Smoke found his legs weak under him, and staggered drunkenly. Big Olaf tottered toward him.

"I'm sorry my dogs jumped yours."

"It couldn't be helped," Smoke panted back. "I heard you yell."

"Say," Big Olaf went on with shining eyes. "That girl–one damn fine girl, eh?"

"One damn fine girl," Smoke agreed.

A Raid On the Oyster Pirates

Of the fish patrolmen under whom we served at various times, Charley Le Grant and I were agreed, I think, that Neil Partington was the best. He was neither dishonest nor cowardly; and while he demanded strict obedience when we were under his orders, at the same time our relations were those of easy comradeship, and he permitted us a freedom to which we were ordinarily unaccustomed, as the present story will show.

Neil's family lived in Oakland, which is on the Lower Bay, not more than six miles across the water from San Francisco. One day, while scouting among the Chinese shrimp-catchers of Point Pedro, he received word that his wife was very ill; and within the hour the Reindeer was bowling along for Oakland, with a stiff northwest breeze astern. We ran up the Oakland Estuary and came to anchor, and in the days that followed, while Neil was ashore, we tightened up the Reindeer's rigging, overhauled the ballast, scraped down, and put the sloop into thorough shape.

This done, time hung heavy on our hands. Neil's wife was dangerously ill, and the outlook was a week's lie-over, awaiting the crisis. Charley and I roamed the docks, wondering what we should do, and so came upon the oyster fleet lying at the Oakland City Wharf. In the main they were trim, natty boats, made for speed and bad weather, and we sat down on the stringer-piece of the dock to study them.

"A good catch, I guess," Charley said, pointing to the heaps of oysters, assorted in three sizes, which lay upon their decks.

Pedlers were backing their wagons to the edge of the wharf, and from the bargaining and chaffering that went on, I managed to learn the selling price of the oysters.

"That boat must have at least two hundred dollars' worth aboard," I calculated. "I wonder how long it took to get the load?"

"Three or four days," Charley answered. "Not bad wages for two men-twenty-five dollars a day apiece."

The boat we were discussing, the Ghost, lay directly beneath us. Two men composed its crew. One was a squat, broad-shouldered fellow with remarkably long and gorilla-like arms, while the other was tall and well proportioned, with clear blue eyes and a mat of straight black hair. So unusual and striking was this combination of hair and eyes that Charley and I remained somewhat longer than we intended.

And it was well that we did. A stout, elderly man, with the dress and carriage of a successful merchant, came up and stood beside us, looking down upon the deck of the Ghost. He appeared angry, and the longer he looked the angrier he grew.

"Those are my oysters," he said at last. "I know they are my oysters. You raided my beds last night and robbed me of them."

The tall man and the short man on the Ghost looked up.

"Hello, Taft," the short man said, with insolent familiarity. (Among the bayfarers he had gained the nickname of "The Centipede" on account of his long arms.) "Hello, Taft," he repeated, with the same touch of insolence. "Wot 'r you growling about now?"

"Those are my oysters-that's what I said. You've stolen them from my beds."

"Yer mighty wise, ain't ye?" was the Centipede's sneering reply. "S'pose you can tell your oysters wherever you see 'em?"

"Now, in my experience," broke in the tall man, "oysters is oysters wherever you find 'em, an' they're pretty much alike all the Bay over, and the world over, too, for that matter. We're not wantin' to quarrel with you, Mr. Taft, but we jes' wish you wouldn't insinuate that them oysters is yours an' that we're thieves an' robbers till you can prove the goods."

"I know they're mine; I'd stake my life on it!" Mr. Taft snorted.

"Prove it," challenged the tall man, who we afterward learned was known as "The Porpoise" because of his wonderful swimming abilities.

Mr. Taft shrugged his shoulders helplessly. Of course he could not prove the oysters to be his, no matter how certain he might be.

"I'd give a thousand dollars to have you men behind the bars!" he cried. "I'll give fifty dollars a head for your arrest and conviction, all of you!"

A roar of laughter went up from the different boats, for the rest of the pirates had been listening to the discussion.

"There's more money in oysters," the Porpoise remarked dryly.

Mr. Taft turned impatiently on his heel and walked away. From out of the corner of his eye, Charley noted the way he went. Several minutes later, when he had disappeared around a corner, Charley rose lazily to his feet. I followed him, and we sauntered off in the opposite direction to that taken by Mr. Taft.

"Come on! Lively!" Charley whispered, when we passed from the view of the oyster fleet.

Our course was changed at once, and we dodged around corners and raced up and down side-streets till Mr. Taft's generous form loomed up ahead of us.

"I'm going to interview him about that reward," Charley explained, as we rapidly over-hauled the oyster-bed owner. "Neil will be delayed here for a week, and you and I might as well be doing something in the meantime. What do you say?"

"Of course, of course," Mr. Taft said, when Charley had introduced himself and explained his errand. "Those thieves are robbing me of thousands of dollars every year, and I shall be glad to break them up at any price,-yes, sir, at any price. As I said, I'll give fifty dollars a head, and call it cheap at that. They've robbed my beds, torn down my signs, terrorized my watchmen, and last year killed one of them. Couldn't prove it. All done in the blackness of night. All I had was a dead watchman and no evidence. The detectives could do nothing. Nobody has been able to do anything with those men. We have never succeeded in arresting one of them. So I say, Mr.-What did you say your name was?"

"Le Grant," Charley answered.

"So I say, Mr. Le Grant, I am deeply obliged to you for the assistance you offer. And I shall be glad, most glad, sir, to co-operate with you in every way. My watchmen and boats are at your disposal. Come and see me at the San Francisco offices any time, or telephone at my expense. And don't be afraid of spending money. I'll foot your expenses, whatever they are, so long as they are within reason. The situation is growing desperate, and something must be done to determine whether I or that band of ruffians own those oyster beds."

"Now we'll see Neil," Charley said, when he had seen Mr. Taft upon his train to San Francisco.

Not only did Neil Partington interpose no obstacle to our adventure, but he proved to be of the greatest assistance. Charley and I knew nothing of the oyster industry, while his head was an encyclopaedia of facts concerning it. Also, within an hour or so, he was able to bring to us a Greek boy of seventeen or eighteen who knew thoroughly well the ins and outs of oyster piracy.

At this point I may as well explain that we of the fish patrol were free lances in a way. While Neil Partington, who was a patrolman proper, received a regular salary, Charley and I, being merely deputies, received only what we earned-that is to say, a certain percentage of the fines imposed on convicted violators of the fish laws. Also, any rewards that chanced our way were ours. We offered to share with Partington whatever we should get from Mr. Taft, but the patrolman would not hear of it. He was only too happy, he said, to do a good turn for us, who had done so many for him.

We held a long council of war, and mapped out the following line of action. Our faces were unfamiliar on the Lower Bay, but as the Reindeer was well known as a fish-patrol sloop, the Greek boy, whose name was Nicholas, and I were to sail some innocent-looking craft down to Asparagus Island and join the oyster pirates' fleet. Here, according to Nicholas's description of the beds and the manner of raiding, it was possible for us to catch the pirates in the act of stealing oysters, and at the same time to get them in our power. Charley was to be on the shore, with Mr. Taft's watchmen and a posse of constables, to help us at the right time.

"I know just the boat," Neil said, at the conclusion of the discussion, "a crazy old sloop that's lying over at Tiburon. You and Nicholas can go over by the ferry, charter it for a song, and sail direct for the beds."

"Good luck be with you, boys," he said at parting, two days later. "Remember, they are dangerous men, so be careful."

Nicholas and I succeeded in chartering the sloop very cheaply; and between laughs, while getting up sail, we agreed that she was even crazier and older than she had been described. She was a big, flat-bottomed, square-sterned craft, sloop-rigged, with a sprung mast, slack rigging, dilapidated sails, and rotten running-gear, clumsy to handle and uncertain in bringing about, and she smelled vilely of coal tar, with which strange stuff she had been smeared from stem to stern and from cabin-roof to centreboard.

And to cap it all, Coal Tar Maggie was printed in great white letters the whole length of either side.

It was an uneventful though laughable run from Tiburon to Asparagus Island, where we arrived in the afternoon of the following day. The oyster pirates, a fleet of a dozen sloops, were lying at anchor on what was known as the "Deserted Beds." The Coal Tar Maggie came sloshing into their midst with a light breeze astern, and they crowded on deck to see us. Nicholas and I had caught the spirit of the crazy craft, and we handled her in most lubberly fashion.

"Wot is it?" some one called.

"Name it 'n' ye kin have it!" called another.

"I swan naow, ef it ain't the old Ark itself!" mimicked the Centipede from the deck of the Ghost.

"Hey! Ahoy there, clipper ship!" another wag shouted. "Wot's yer port?"

We took no notice of the joking, but acted, after the manner of greenhorns, as though the Coal Tar Maggie required our undivided attention. I rounded her well to windward of the Ghost, and Nicholas ran for'ard to drop the anchor. To all appearances it was a bungle, the way the chain tangled and kept the anchor from reaching the bottom. And to all appearances Nicholas and I were terribly excited as we strove to clear it. At any rate, we quite deceived the pirates, who took huge delight in our predicament.

But the chain remained tangled, and amid all kinds of mocking advice we drifted down upon and fouled the Ghost, whose bowsprit poked square through our mainsail and ripped a hole in it as big as a barn door. The Centipede and the Porpoise doubled up on the cabin in paroxysms of laughter, and left us to get clear as best we could. This, with much unseaman-like performance, we succeeded in doing, and likewise in clearing the anchor-chain, of which we let out about three hundred feet. With only ten feet of water under us, this would permit the Coal Tar Maggie to swing in a circle six hundred feet in diameter, in which circle she would be able to foul at least half the fleet.

The oyster pirates lay snugly together at short hawsers, the weather being fine, and they protested loudly at our ignorance in putting out such an unwarranted length of anchor-chain. And not only did they protest, for they made us heave it in again, all but thirty feet.

Having sufficiently impressed them with our general lubberliness, Nicholas and I went below to congratulate ourselves and to cook supper. Hardly had we finished the meal and washed the dishes, when a skiff ground against the Coal Tar Maggie's side, and heavy feet trampled on deck. Then the Centipede's brutal face appeared in the companionway, and he descended into the cabin, followed by the Porpoise. Before they could seat themselves on a bunk, another skiff came alongside, and another, and another, till the whole fleet was represented by the gathering in the cabin.

"Where'd you swipe the old tub?" asked a squat and hairy man, with cruel eyes and Mexican features.

"Didn't swipe it," Nicholas answered, meeting them on their own ground and encouraging the idea that we had stolen the Coal Tar Maggie. "And if we did, what of it?"

"Well, I don't admire your taste, that's all," sneered he of the Mexican features. "I'd rot on the beach first before I'd take a tub that couldn't get out of its own way."

"How were we to know till we tried her?" Nicholas asked, so innocently as to cause a laugh. "And how do you get the oysters?" he hurried on. "We want a load of them; that's what we came for, a load of oysters."

"What d'ye want 'em for?" demanded the Porpoise.

"Oh, to give away to our friends, of course," Nicholas retorted. "That's what you do with yours, I suppose."

This started another laugh, and as our visitors grew more genial we could see that they had not the slightest suspicion of our identity or purpose.

"Didn't I see you on the dock in Oakland the other day?" the Centipede asked suddenly of me.

"Yep," I answered boldly, taking the bull by the horns. "I was watching you fellows and figuring out whether we'd go oystering or not. It's a pretty good business, I calculate, and so we're going in for it. That is," I hastened to add, "if you fellows don't mind."

"I'll tell you one thing, which ain't two things," he replied, "and that is you'll have to hump yerself an' get a better boat. We won't stand to be disgraced by any such box as this. Understand?"

"Sure," I said. "Soon as we sell some oysters we'll outfit in style."

"And if you show yerself square an' the right sort," he went on, "why, you kin run with us. But if you don't" (here his voice became stern and menacing), "why, it'll be the sickest day of yer life. Understand?"

"Sure," I said.

After that and more warning and advice of similar nature, the conversation became general, and we learned that the beds were to be raided that very night. As they got into their boats, after an hour's stay, we were invited to join them in the raid with the assurance of "the more the merrier."

"Did you notice that short, Mexican-looking chap?" Nicholas asked, when they had departed to their various sloops. "He's Barchi, of the Sporting Life Gang, and the fellow that came with him is Skilling. They're both out now on five thousand dollars' bail."

I had heard of the Sporting Life Gang before, a crowd of hoodlums and criminals that terrorized the lower quarters of Oakland, and two-thirds of which were usually to be found in state's prison for crimes that ranged from perjury and ballot-box stuffing to murder.

"They are not regular oyster pirates," Nicholas continued. "They've just come down for the lark and to make a few dollars. But we'll have to watch out for them."

We sat in the cockpit and discussed the details of our plan till eleven o'clock had passed, when we heard the rattle of an oar in a boat from the direction of the Ghost.

We hauled up our own skiff, tossed in a few sacks, and rowed over. There we found all the skiffs assembling, it being the intention to raid the beds in a body.

To my surprise, I found barely a foot of water where we had dropped anchor in ten feet. It was the big June run-out of the full moon, and as the ebb had yet an hour and a half to run, I knew that our anchorage would be dry ground before slack water.

Mr. Taft's beds were three miles away, and for a long time we rowed silently in the wake of the other boats, once in a while grounding and our oar blades constantly striking bottom. At last we came upon soft mud covered with not more than two inches of water-not enough to float the boats. But the pirates at once were over the side, and by pushing and pulling on the flat-bottomed skiffs, we moved steadily along.

The full moon was partly obscured by high-flying clouds, but the pirates went their way with the familiarity born of long practice. After half a mile of the mud, we came upon a deep channel, up which we rowed, with dead oyster shoals looming high and dry on either side. At last we reached the picking grounds. Two men, on one of the shoals, hailed us and warned us off. But the Centipede, the Porpoise, Barchi, and Skilling took the lead, and followed by the rest of us, at least thirty men in half as many boats, rowed right up to the watchmen.

"You'd better slide outa this here," Barchi said threateningly, "or we'll fill you so full of holes you wouldn't float in molasses."

The watchmen wisely retreated before so overwhelming a force, and rowed their boat along the channel toward where the shore should be. Besides, it was in the plan for them to retreat.

We hauled the noses of the boats up on the shore side of a big shoal, and all hands, with sacks, spread out and began picking. Every now and again the clouds thinned before the face of the moon, and we could see the big oysters quite distinctly. In almost no time sacks were filled and carried back to the boats, where fresh ones were obtained. Nicholas and I returned often and anxiously to the boats with our little loads, but always found some one of the pirates coming or going.

"Never mind," he said; "no hurry. As they pick farther and farther away, it will take too long to carry to the boats. Then they'll stand the full sacks on end and pick them up when the tide comes in and the skiffs will float to them."

Fully half an hour went by, and the tide had begun to flood, when this came to pass. Leaving the pirates at their work, we stole back to the boats. One by one, and noiselessly, we shoved them off and made them fast in an awkward flotilla. Just as we were shoving off the last skiff, our own, one of the men came upon us. It was Barchi. His quick eye took in the situation at a glance, and he sprang for us; but we went clear with a mighty shove, and he was left floundering in the water over his head. As soon as he got back to the shoal he raised his voice and gave the alarm.

We rowed with all our strength, but it was slow going with so many boats in tow. A pistol cracked from the shoal, a second, and a third; then a regular fusillade began. The bullets spat and spat all about us; but thick clouds had covered the moon, and in

the dim darkness it was no more than random firing. It was only by chance that we could be hit.

"Wish we had a little steam launch," I panted.

"I'd just as soon the moon stayed hidden," Nicholas panted back.

It was slow work, but every stroke carried us farther away from the shoal and nearer the shore, till at last the shooting died down, and when the moon did come out we were too far away to be in danger. Not long afterward we answered a shoreward hail, and two Whitehall boats, each pulled by three pairs of oars, darted up to us. Charley's welcome face bent over to us, and he gripped us by the hands while he cried, "Oh, you joys! You joys! Both of you!"

When the flotilla had been landed, Nicholas and I and a watchman rowed out in one of the Whitehalls, with Charley in the stern-sheets. Two other Whitehalls followed us, and as the moon now shone brightly, we easily made out the oyster pirates on their lonely shoal. As we drew closer, they fired a rattling volley from their revolvers, and we promptly retreated beyond range.

"Lot of time," Charley said. "The flood is setting in fast, and by the time it's up to their necks there won't be any fight left in them."

So we lay on our oars and waited for the tide to do its work. This was the predicament of the pirates: because of the big run-out, the tide was now rushing back like a mill-race, and it was impossible for the strongest swimmer in the world to make against it the three miles to the sloops. Between the pirates and the shore were we, precluding escape in that direction. On the other hand, the water was rising rapidly over the shoals, and it was only a question of a few hours when it would be over their heads.

It was beautifully calm, and in the brilliant white moonlight we watched them through our night glasses and told Charley of the voyage of the Coal Tar Maggie. One o'clock came, and two o'clock, and the pirates were clustering on the highest shoal, waist-deep in water.

"Now this illustrates the value of imagination," Charley was saying. "Taft has been trying for years to get them, but he went at it with bull strength and failed. Now we used our heads . . ."

Just then I heard a scarcely audible gurgle of water, and holding up my hand for silence, I turned and pointed to a ripple slowly widening out in a growing circle. It was not more than fifty feet from us. We kept perfectly quiet and waited. After a minute the water broke six feet away, and a black head and white shoulder showed in the moonlight. With a snort of surprise and of suddenly expelled breath, the head and shoulder went down.

We pulled ahead several strokes and drifted with the current. Four pairs of eyes searched the surface of the water, but never another ripple showed, and never another glimpse did we catch of the black head and white shoulder.

"It's the Porpoise," Nicholas said. "It would take broad daylight for us to catch him."

At a quarter to three the pirates gave their first sign of weakening. We heard cries for help, in the unmistakable voice of the Centipede, and this time, on rowing closer, we were not fired upon. The Centipede was in a truly perilous plight. Only the heads and shoulders of his fellow-marauders showed above the water as they braced themselves against the current, while his feet were off the bottom and they were supporting him.

"Now, lads," Charley said briskly, "we have got you, and you can't get away. If you cut up rough, we'll have to leave you alone and the water will finish you. But if you're good we'll take you aboard, one man at a time, and you'll all be saved. What do you say?"

"Ay," they chorused hoarsely between their chattering teeth.

"Then one man at a time, and the short men first."

The Centipede was the first to be pulled aboard, and he came willingly, though he objected when the constable put the handcuffs on him. Barchi was next hauled in, quite meek and resigned from his soaking. When we had ten in, our boat we drew back, and the second Whitehall was loaded. The third Whitehall received nine prisoners only-a catch of twenty-nine in all.

"You didn't get the Porpoise," the Centipede said exultantly, as though his escape materially diminished our success.

Charley laughed. "But we saw him just the same, a-snorting for shore like a puffing pig."

It was a mild and shivering band of pirates that we marched up the beach to the oyster house. In answer to Charley's knock, the door was flung open, and a pleasant wave of warm air rushed out upon us.

"You can dry your clothes here, lads, and get some hot coffee," Charley announced, as they filed in.

And there, sitting ruefully by the fire, with a steaming mug in his hand, was the Porpoise. With one accord Nicholas and I looked at Charley. He laughed gleefully.

"That comes of imagination," he said. "When you see a thing, you've got to see it all around, or what's the good of seeing it at all? I saw the beach, so I left a couple of constables behind to keep an eye on it. That's all."

The Red One

THERE it was! The abrupt liberation of sound! As he timed it with his watch, Bassett likened it to the trump of an archangel. Walls of cities, he meditated, might well fall down before so vast and compelling a summons. For the thousandth time vainly he tried to analyse the tone-quality of that enormous peal that dominated the land far into the strong-holds of the surrounding tribes. The mountain gorge which was its source rang to the rising tide of it until it brimmed over and flooded earth and sky and air. With the wantonness of a sick man's fancy, he likened it to the mighty cry of some Titan of the Elder World vexed with misery or wrath. Higher and higher it arose, challenging and demanding in such profounds of volume that it seemed intended for ears beyond the narrow confines of the solar system. There was in it, too, the clamour of protest in that there were no ears to hear and comprehend its utterance.

- Such the sick man's fancy. Still he strove to analyse the sound. Sonorous as thunder was it, mellow as a golden bell, thin and sweet as a thrummed taut cord of silver-no; it was none of these, nor a blend of these. There were no words nor semblances in his vocabulary and experience with which to describe the totality of that sound.

Time passed. Minutes merged into quarters of hours, and quarters of hours into half-hours, and still the sound persisted, ever changing from its initial vocal impulse yet never receiving fresh impulse-fading, dimming, dying as enormously as it had sprung into being. It became a confusion of troubled mutterings and babblings and colossal whisperings. Slowly it withdrew, sob by sob, into whatever great bosom had birthed it, until it whimpered deadly whispers of wrath and as equally seductive whispers of delight, striving still to be heard, to convey some cosmic secret, some understanding of infinite import and value. It dwindled to a ghost of sound that had lost its menace and promise, and became a thing that pulsed on in the sick man's consciousness for minutes after it had ceased. When he could hear it no longer, Bassett glanced at his watch. An hour had elapsed ere that archangel's trump had subsided into tonal nothingness.

Was this, then, HIS dark tower?-Bassett pondered, remembering his Browning and gazing at his skeleton-like and fever-wasted hands. And the fancy made him smile-of Childe Roland bearing a slug-horn to his lips with an arm as feeble as his was. Was it months, or years, he asked himself, since he first heard that mysterious call on the beach at Ringmanu? To save himself he could not tell. The long sickness had been most long. In conscious count of time he knew of months, many of them; but he had no way of estimating the long intervals of delirium and stupor. And how fared Captain Bateman of the blackbirder NARI? he wondered; and had Captain Bateman's drunken mate died of delirium tremens yet?

From which vain speculations, Bassett turned idly to review all that had occurred since that day on the beach of Ringmanu when he first heard the sound and plunged into the jungle after it. Sagawa had protested. He could see him yet, his queer little monkeyish face eloquent with fear, his back burdened with specimen cases, in his hands Bassett's butterfly net and naturalist's shot-gun, as he quavered, in Beche-de-mer English: "Me fella too much fright along bush. Bad fella boy, too much stop'm along bush."

Bassett smiled sadly at the recollection. The little New Hanover boy had been frightened, but had proved faithful, following him without hesitancy into the bush in the quest after the source of the wonderful sound. No fire-hollowed tree-trunk, that, throbbing war through the jungle depths, had been Bassett's conclusion. Erroneous had been his next conclusion, namely, that the source or cause could not be more distant than an hour's walk, and that he would easily be back by mid-afternoon to be picked up by the NARI'S whale-boat.

"That big fella noise no good, all the same devil-devil," Sagawa had adjudged. And Sagawa had been right. Had he not had his head hacked off within the day? Bassett shuddered. Without doubt Sagawa had been eaten as well by the "bad fella boys too much" that stopped along the bush. He could see him, as he had last seen him, stripped of the shot-gun and all the naturalist's gear of his master, lying on the narrow trail where he had been decapitated barely the moment before. Yes, within a minute the thing had happened. Within a minute, looking back, Bassett had seen him trudging patiently along under his burdens. Then Bassett's own trouble had come upon him. He looked at the cruelly healed stumps of the first and second fingers of his left hand, then rubbed them softly into the indentation in the back of his skull. Quick as had been the flash of the long handled tomahawk, he had been quick enough to duck away his head and partially to deflect the stroke with his up-flung hand. Two fingers and a hasty scalp-wound had been the price he paid for his life. With one barrel of his ten-gauge shot-gun he had blown the life out of the bushman who had so nearly got him; with the other barrel he had peppered the bushmen bending over Sagawa, and had the pleasure of knowing that the major portion of the charge had gone into the one who leaped away with Sagawa's head. Everything had occurred in a flash. Only himself, the slain bushman, and what remained of Sagawa, were in the narrow, wild-pig run of a path. From the dark jungle on either side came no rustle of movement or sound of life. And he had suffered distinct and dreadful shock. For the first time in his life he had killed a human being, and he knew nausea as he contemplated the mess of his handiwork.

Then had begun the chase. He retreated up the pig-run before his hunters, who were between him and the beach. How many there were, he could not guess. There might have been one, or a hundred, for aught he saw of them. That some of them took to the trees and travelled along through the jungle roof he was certain; but at the most he never glimpsed more than an occasional flitting of shadows. No bow-strings twanged that he could hear; but every little while, whence discharged he knew not, tiny arrows whispered past him or struck tree-boles and fluttered to the ground beside him.

They were bone-tipped and feather shafted, and the feathers, torn from the breasts of humming-birds, iridesced like jewels.

Once-and now, after the long lapse of time, he chuckled gleefully at the recollection-he had detected a shadow above him that came to instant rest as he turned his gaze upward. He could make out nothing, but, deciding to chance it, had fired at it a heavy charge of number five shot. Squalling like an infuriated cat, the shadow crashed down through tree-ferns and orchids and thudded upon the earth at his feet, and, still squalling its rage and pain, had sunk its human teeth into the ankle of his stout tramping boot. He, on the other hand, was not idle, and with his free foot had done what reduced the squalling to silence. So inured to savagery has Bassett since become, that he chuckled again with the glee of the recollection.

What a night had followed! Small wonder that he had accumulated such a virulence and variety of fevers, he thought, as he recalled that sleepless night of torment, when the throb of his wounds was as nothing compared with the myriad stings of the mosquitoes. There had been no escaping them, and he had not dared to light a fire. They had literally pumped his body full of poison, so that, with the coming of day, eyes swollen almost shut, he had stumbled blindly on, not caring much when his head should be hacked off and his carcass started on the way of Sagawa's to the cooking fire. Twenty-four hours had made a wreck of him-of mind as well as body. He had scarcely retained his wits at all, so maddened was he by the tremendous inoculation of poison he had received. Several times he fired his shot-gun with effect into the shadows that dogged him. Stinging day insects and gnats added to his torment, while his bloody wounds attracted hosts of loathsome flies that clung sluggishly to his flesh and had to be brushed off and crushed off.

Once, in that day, he heard again the wonderful sound, seemingly more distant, but rising imperiously above the nearer war-drums in the bush. Right there was where he had made his mistake. Thinking that he had passed beyond it and that, therefore, it was between him and the beach of Ringmanu, he had worked back toward it when in reality he was penetrating deeper and deeper into the mysterious heart of the unexplored island. That night, crawling in among the twisted roots of a banyan tree, he had slept from exhaustion while the mosquitoes had had their will of him.

Followed days and nights that were vague as nightmares in his memory. One clear vision he remembered was of suddenly finding himself in the midst of a bush village and watching the old men and children fleeing into the jungle. All had fled but one. From close at hand and above him, a whimpering as of some animal in pain and terror had startled him. And looking up he had seen her-a girl, or young woman rather, suspended by one arm in the cooking sun. Perhaps for days she had so hung. Her swollen, protruding tongue spoke as much. Still alive, she gazed at him with eyes of terror. Past help, he decided, as he noted the swellings of her legs which advertised that the joints had been crushed and the great bones broken. He resolved to shoot her, and there the vision terminated. He could not remember whether he had or not,

any more than could he remember how he chanced to be in that village, or how he succeeded in getting away from it.

Many pictures, unrelated, came and went in Bassett's mind as he reviewed that period of his terrible wanderings. He remembered invading another village of a dozen houses and driving all before him with his shot-gun save, for one old man, too feeble to flee, who spat at him and whined and snarled as he dug open a ground-oven and from amid the hot stones dragged forth a roasted pig that steamed its essence deliciously through its green-leaf wrappings. It was at this place that a wantonness of savagery had seized upon him. Having feasted, ready to depart with a hind-quarter of the pig in his hand, he deliberately fired the grass thatch of a house with his burning glass.

But seared deepest of all in Bassett's brain, was the dank and noisome jungle. It actually stank with evil, and it was always twilight. Rarely did a shaft of sunlight penetrate its matted roof a hundred feet overhead. And beneath that roof was an aerial ooze of vegetation, a monstrous, parasitic dripping of decadent life-forms that rooted in death and lived on death. And through all this he drifted, ever pursued by the flitting shadows of the anthropophagi, themselves ghosts of evil that dared not face him in battle but that knew that, soon or late, they would feed on him. Bassett remembered that at the time, in lucid moments, he had likened himself to a wounded bull pursued by plains' coyotes too cowardly to battle with him for the meat of him, yet certain of the inevitable end of him when they would be full gorged. As the bull's horns and stamping hoofs kept off the coyotes, so his shot-gun kept off these Solomon Islanders, these twilight shades of bushmen of the island of Guadalcanal.

Came the day of the grass lands. Abruptly, as if cloven by the sword of God in the hand of God, the jungle terminated. The edge of it, perpendicular and as black as the infamy of it, was a hundred feet up and down. And, beginning at the edge of it, grew the grass-sweet, soft, tender, pasture grass that would have delighted the eyes and beasts of any husbandman and that extended, on and on, for leagues and leagues of velvet verdure, to the backbone of the great island, the towering mountain range flung up by some ancient earth-cataclysm, serrated and gullied but not yet erased by the erosive tropic rains. But the grass! He had crawled into it a dozen yards, buried his face in it, smelled it, and broken down in a fit of involuntary weeping.

And, while he wept, the wonderful sound had pealed forth-if by PEAL, he had often thought since, an adequate description could be given of the enunciation of so vast a sound melting sweet. Sweet it was, as no sound ever heard. Vast it was, of so mighty a resonance that it might have proceeded from some brazen-throated monster. And yet it called to him across that leagues-wide savannah, and was like a benediction to his long-suffering, pain racked spirit.

He remembered how he lay there in the grass, wet-cheeked but no longer sobbing, listening to the sound and wondering that he had been able to hear it on the beach of Ringmanu. Some freak of air pressures and air currents, he reflected, had made it possible for the sound to carry so far. Such conditions might not happen again in a thousand days or ten thousand days, but the one day it had happened had been the

day he landed from the NARI for several hours' collecting. Especially had he been in quest of the famed jungle butterfly, a foot across from wing-tip to wing-tip, as velvet-dusky of lack of colour as was the gloom of the roof, of such lofty arboreal habits that it resorted only to the jungle roof and could be brought down only by a dose of shot. It was for this purpose that Sagawa had carried the ten-gauge shot-gun.

Two days and nights he had spent crawling across that belt of grass land. He had suffered much, but pursuit had ceased at the jungle-edge. And he would have died of thirst had not a heavy thunderstorm revived him on the second day.

And then had come Balatta. In the first shade, where the savannah yielded to the dense mountain jungle, he had collapsed to die. At first she had squealed with delight at sight of his helplessness, and was for beating his brain out with a stout forest branch. Perhaps it was his very utter helplessness that had appealed to her, and perhaps it was her human curiosity that made her refrain. At any rate, she had refrained, for he opened his eyes again under the impending blow, and saw her studying him intently. What especially struck her about him were his blue eyes and white skin. Coolly she had squatted on her hams, spat on his arm, and with her finger-tips scrubbed away the dirt of days and nights of muck and jungle that sullied the pristine whiteness of his skin.

And everything about her had struck him especially, although there was nothing conventional about her at all. He laughed weakly at the recollection, for she had been as innocent of garb as Eve before the fig-leaf adventure. Squat and lean at the same time, asymmetrically limbed, string-muscled as if with lengths of cordage, dirt-caked from infancy save for casual showers, she was as unbeautiful a prototype of woman as he, with a scientist's eye, had ever gazed upon. Her breasts advertised at the one time her maturity and youth; and, if by nothing else, her sex was advertised by the one article of finery with which she was adorned, namely a pig's tail, thrust though a hole in her left ear-lobe. So lately had the tail been severed, that its raw end still oozed blood that dried upon her shoulder like so much candle-droppings. And her face! A twisted and wizened complex of apish features, perforated by upturned, sky-open, Mongolian nostrils, by a mouth that sagged from a huge upper-lip and faded precipitately into a retreating chin, by peering querulous eyes that blinked as blink the eyes of denizens of monkey-cages.

Not even the water she brought him in a forest-leaf, and the ancient and half-putrid chunk of roast pig, could redeem in the slightest the grotesque hideousness of her. When he had eaten weakly for a space, he closed his eyes in order not to see her, although again and again she poked them open to peer at the blue of them. Then had come the sound. Nearer, much nearer, he knew it to be; and he knew equally well, despite the weary way he had come, that it was still many hours distant. The effect of it on her had been startling. She cringed under it, with averted face, moaning and chattering with fear. But after it had lived its full life of an hour, he closed his eyes and fell asleep with Balatta brushing the flies from him.

When he awoke it was night, and she was gone. But he was aware of renewed strength, and, by then too thoroughly inoculated by the mosquito poison to suffer further inflammation, he closed his eyes and slept an unbroken stretch till sun-up. A little later Balatta had returned, bringing with her a half-dozen women who, unbeautiful as they were, were patently not so unbeautiful as she. She evidenced by her conduct that she considered him her find, her property, and the pride she took in showing him off would have been ludicrous had his situation not been so desperate.

Later, after what had been to him a terrible journey of miles, when he collapsed in front of the devil-devil house in the shadow of the breadfruit tree, she had shown very lively ideas on the matter of retaining possession of him. Ngurn, whom Bassett was to know afterward as the devil-devil doctor, priest, or medicine man of the village, had wanted his head. Others of the grinning and chattering monkey-men, all as stark of clothes and bestial of appearance as Balatta, had wanted his body for the roasting oven. At that time he had not understood their language, if by LANGUAGE might be dignified the uncouth sounds they made to represent ideas. But Bassett had thoroughly understood the matter of debate, especially when the men pressed and prodded and felt of the flesh of him as if he were so much commodity in a butcher's stall.

Balatta had been losing the debate rapidly, when the accident happened. One of the men, curiously examining Bassett's shot-gun, managed to cock and pull a trigger. The recoil of the butt into the pit of the man's stomach had not been the most sanguinary result, for the charge of shot, at a distance of a yard, had blown the head of one of the debaters into nothingness.

Even Balatta joined the others in flight, and, ere they returned, his senses already reeling from the oncoming fever-attack, Bassett had regained possession of the gun. Whereupon, although his teeth chattered with the ague and his swimming eyes could scarcely see, he held on to his fading consciousness until he could intimidate the bushmen with the simple magics of compass, watch, burning glass, and matches. At the last, with due emphasis, of solemnity and awfulness, he had killed a young pig with his shot-gun and promptly fainted.

Bassett flexed his arm-muscles in quest of what possible strength might reside in such weakness, and dragged himself slowly and totteringly to his feet. He was shockingly emaciated; yet, during the various convalescences of the many months of his long sickness, he had never regained quite the same degree of strength as this time. What he feared was another relapse such as he had already frequently experienced. Without drugs, without even quinine, he had managed so far to live through a combination of the most pernicious and most malignant of malarial and black-water fevers. But could he continue to endure? Such was his everlasting query. For, like the genuine scientist he was, he would not be content to die until he had solved the secret of the sound.

Supported by a staff, he staggered the few steps to the devil-devil house where death and Ngurn reigned in gloom. Almost as infamously dark and evil-stinking as the jungle was the devil-devil house-in Bassett's opinion. Yet therein was usually to be found his favourite crony and gossip, Ngurn, always willing for a yarn or a discussion, the while

he sat in the ashes of death and in a slow smoke shrewdly revolved curing human heads suspended from the rafters. For, through the months' interval of consciousness of his long sickness, Bassett had mastered the psychological simplicities and lingual difficulties of the language of the tribe of Ngurn and Balatta and Vngngn-the latter the addle-headed young chief who was ruled by Ngurn, and who, whispered intrigue had it, was the son of Ngurn.

"Will the Red One speak to-day?" Bassett asked, by this time so accustomed to the old man's gruesome occupation as to take even an interest in the progress of the smoke-curing.

With the eye of an expert Ngurn examined the particular head he was at work upon.

"It will be ten days before I can say 'finish,'" he said. "Never has any man fixed heads like these."

Bassett smiled inwardly at the old fellow's reluctance to talk with him of the Red One. It had always been so. Never, by any chance, had Ngurn or any other member of the weird tribe divulged the slightest hint of any physical characteristic of the Red One. Physical the Red One must be, to emit the wonderful sound, and though it was called the Red One, Bassett could not be sure that red represented the colour of it. Red enough were the deeds and powers of it, from what abstract clues he had gleaned. Not alone, had Ngurn informed him, was the Red One more bestial powerful than the neighbour tribal gods, ever athirst for the red blood of living human sacrifices, but the neighbour gods themselves were sacrificed and tormented before him. He was the god of a dozen allied villages similar to this one, which was the central and commanding village of the federation. By virtue of the Red One many alien villages had been devastated and even wiped out, the prisoners sacrificed to the Red One. This was true to-day, and it extended back into old history carried down by word of mouth through the generations. When he, Ngurn, had been a young man, the tribes beyond the grass lands had made a war raid. In the counter raid, Ngurn and his fighting folk had made many prisoners. Of children alone over five score living had been bled white before the Red One, and many, many more men and women.

The Thunderer was another of Ngurn's names for the mysterious deity. Also at times was he called The Loud Shouter, The God-Voiced, The Bird-Throated, The One with the Throat Sweet as the Throat of the Honey-Bird, The Sun Singer, and The Star-Born.

Why The Star-Born? In vain Bassett interrogated Ngurn. According to that old devil-devil doctor, the Red One had always been, just where he was at present, for ever singing and thundering his will over men. But Ngurn's father, wrapped in decaying grass-matting and hanging even then over their heads among the smoky rafters of the devil-devil house, had held otherwise. That departed wise one had believed that the Red One came from out of the starry night, else why-so his argument had run-had the old and forgotten ones passed his name down as the Star-Born? Bassett could not but recognize something cogent in such argument. But Ngurn affirmed the long years of

his long life, wherein he had gazed upon many starry nights, yet never had he found a star on grass land or in jungle depth-and he had looked for them. True, he had beheld shooting stars (this in reply to Bassett's contention); but likewise had he beheld the phosphorescence of fungoid growths and rotten meat and fireflies on dark nights, and the flames of wood-fires and of blazing candle-nuts; yet what were flame and blaze and glow when they had flamed and blazed and glowed? Answer: memories, memories only, of things which had ceased to be, like memories of matings accomplished, of feasts forgotten, of desires that were the ghosts of desires, flaring, flaming, burning, yet unrealized in achievement of easement and satisfaction. Where was the appetite of yesterday? the roasted flesh of the wild pig the hunter's arrow failed to slay? the maid, unwed and dead ere the young man knew her?

A memory was not a star, was Ngurn's contention. How could a memory be a star? Further, after all his long life he still observed the starry night-sky unaltered. Never had he noted the absence of a single star from its accustomed place. Besides, stars were fire, and the Red One was not fire-which last involuntary betrayal told Bassett nothing.

"Will the Red One speak to-morrow?" he queried.

Ngurn shrugged his shoulders as who should say.

"And the day after?-and the day after that?" Bassett persisted.

"I would like to have the curing of your head," Ngurn changed the subject. "It is different from any other head. No devil-devil has a head like it. Besides, I would cure it well. I would take months and months. The moons would come and the moons would go, and the smoke would be very slow, and I should myself gather the materials for the curing smoke. The skin would not wrinkle. It would be as smooth as your skin now."

He stood up, and from the dim rafters, grimed with the smoking of countless heads, where day was no more than a gloom, took down a matting-wrapped parcel and began to open it.

"It is a head like yours," he said, "but it is poorly cured."

Bassett had pricked up his ears at the suggestion that it was a white man's head; for he had long since come to accept that these jungle-dwellers, in the midmost centre of the great island, had never had intercourse with white men. Certainly he had found them without the almost universal beche-de-mer English of the west South Pacific. Nor had they knowledge of tobacco, nor of gunpowder. Their few precious knives, made from lengths of hoop-iron, and their few and more precious tomahawks from cheap trade hatchets, he had surmised they had captured in war from the bushmen of the jungle beyond the grass lands, and that they, in turn, had similarly gained them from the salt-water men who fringed the coral beaches of the shore and had contact with the occasional white men.

"The folk in the out beyond do not know how to cure heads," old Ngurn explained, as he drew forth from the filthy matting and placed in Bassett's hands an indubitable white man's head.

Ancient it was beyond question; white it was as the blond hair attested. He could have sworn it once belonged to an Englishman, and to an Englishman of long before by token of the heavy gold circlets still threaded in the withered ear-lobes.

"Now your head . . . " the devil-devil doctor began on his favourite topic.

"I'll tell you what," Bassett interrupted, struck by a new idea. "When I die I'll let you have my head to cure, if, first, you take me to look upon the Red One."

"I will have your head anyway when you are dead," Ngurn rejected the proposition. He added, with the brutal frankness of the savage: "Besides, you have not long to live. You are almost a dead man now. You will grow less strong. In not many months I shall have you here turning and turning in the smoke. It is pleasant, through the long afternoons, to turn the head of one you have known as well as I know you. And I shall talk to you and tell you the many secrets you want to know. Which will not matter, for you will be dead."

"Ngurn," Bassett threatened in sudden anger. "You know the Baby Thunder in the Iron that is mine." (This was in reference to his all-potent and all-awful shotgun.) "I can kill you any time, and then you will not get my head."

"Just the same, will Vngngn, or some one else of my folk get it," Ngurn complacently assured him. "And just the same will it turn here in the and turn devil-devil house in the smoke. The quicker you slay me with your Baby Thunder, the quicker will your head turn in the smoke."

And Bassett knew he was beaten in the discussion.

What was the Red One?-Bassett asked himself a thousand times in the succeeding week, while he seemed to grow stronger. What was the source of the wonderful sound? What was this Sun Singer, this Star-Born One, this mysterious deity, as bestial-conducted as the black and kinky-headed and monkey-like human beasts who worshipped it, and whose silver-sweet, bull-mouthed singing and commanding he had heard at the taboo distance for so long?

Ngurn had he failed to bribe with the inevitable curing of his head when he was dead. Vngngn, imbecile and chief that he was, was too imbecilic, too much under the sway of Ngurn, to be considered. Remained Balatta, who, from the time she found him and poked his blue eyes open to recrudescence of her grotesque female hideousness, had continued his adorer. Woman she was, and he had long known that the only way to win from her treason of her tribe was through the woman's heart of her.

Bassett was a fastidious man. He had never recovered from the initial horror caused by Balatta's female awfulness. Back in England, even at best the charm of woman, to him, had never been robust. Yet now, resolutely, as only a man can do who is capable of martyring himself for the cause of science, he proceeded to violate all the fineness and delicacy of his nature by making love to the unthinkably disgusting bushwoman.

He shuddered, but with averted face hid his grimaces and swallowed his gorge as he put his arm around her dirt-crusted shoulders and felt the contact of her rancidoily and kinky hair with his neck and chin. But he nearly screamed when she succumbed to that caress so at the very first of the courtship and mowed and gibbered and squealed

little, queer, pig-like gurgly noises of delight. It was too much. And the next he did in the singular courtship was to take her down to the stream and give her a vigorous scrubbing.

From then on he devoted himself to her like a true swain as frequently and for as long at a time as his will could override his repugnance. But marriage, which she ardently suggested, with due observance of tribal custom, he balked at. Fortunately, taboo rule was strong in the tribe. Thus, Ngurn could never touch bone, or flesh, or hide of crocodile. This had been ordained at his birth. Vngngn was denied ever the touch of woman. Such pollution, did it chance to occur, could be purged only by the death of the offending female. It had happened once, since Bassett's arrival, when a girl of nine, running in play, stumbled and fell against the sacred chief. And the girl-child was seen no more. In whispers, Balatta told Bassett that she had been three days and nights in dying before the Red One. As for Balatta, the breadfruit was taboo to her. For which Bassett was thankful. The taboo might have been water.

For himself, he fabricated a special taboo. Only could he marry, he explained, when the Southern Cross rode highest in the sky. Knowing his astronomy, he thus gained a reprieve of nearly nine months; and he was confident that within that time he would either be dead or escaped to the coast with full knowledge of the Red One and of the source of the Red One's wonderful voice. At first he had fancied the Red One to be some colossal statue, like Memnon, rendered vocal under certain temperature conditions of sunlight. But when, after a war raid, a batch of prisoners was brought in and the sacrifice made at night, in the midst of rain, when the sun could play no part, the Red One had been more vocal than usual, Bassett discarded that hypothesis.

In company with Balatta, sometimes with men and parties of women, the freedom of the jungle was his for three quadrants of the compass. But the fourth quadrant, which contained the Red One's abiding place, was taboo. He made more thorough love to Balatta-also saw to it that she scrubbed herself more frequently. Eternal female she was, capable of any treason for the sake of love. And, though the sight of her was provocative of nausea and the contact of her provocative of despair, although he could not escape her awfulness in his dream-haunted nightmares of her, he nevertheless was aware of the cosmic verity of sex that animated her and that made her own life of less value than the happiness of her lover with whom she hoped to mate. Juliet or Balatta? Where was the intrinsic difference? The soft and tender product of ultra-civilization, or her bestial prototype of a hundred thousand years before her?-there was no difference.

Bassett was a scientist first, a humanist afterward. In the jungle-heart of Guadalcanal he put the affair to the test, as in the laboratory he would have put to the test any chemical reaction. He increased his feigned ardour for the bushwoman, at the same time increasing the imperiousness of his will of desire over her to be led to look upon the Red One face to face. It was the old story, he recognized, that the woman must pay, and it occurred when the two of them, one day, were catching the unclassified and unnamed little black fish, an inch long, half-eel and half-scaled, rotund with salmon-golden roe, that frequented the fresh water, and that were esteemed, raw and

whole, fresh or putrid, a perfect delicacy. Prone in the muck of the decaying jungle-floor, Balatta threw herself, clutching his ankles with her hands kissing his feet and making slubbery noises that chilled his backbone up and down again. She begged him to kill her rather than exact this ultimate love-payment. She told him of the penalty of breaking the taboo of the Red One-a week of torture, living, the details of which she yammered out from her face in the mire until he realized that he was yet a tyro in knowledge of the frightfulness the human was capable of wreaking on the human.

Yet did Bassett insist on having his man's will satisfied, at the woman's risk, that he might solve the mystery of the Red One's singing, though she should die long and horribly and screaming. And Balatta, being mere woman, yielded. She led him into the forbidden quadrant. An abrupt mountain, shouldering in from the north to meet a similar intrusion from the south, tormented the stream in which they had fished into a deep and gloomy gorge. After a mile along the gorge, the way plunged sharply upward until they crossed a saddle of raw limestone which attracted his geologist's eye. Still climbing, although he paused often from sheer physical weakness, they scaled forest-clad heights until they emerged on a naked mesa or tableland. Bassett recognized the stuff of its composition as black volcanic sand, and knew that a pocket magnet could have captured a full load of the sharply angular grains he trod upon.

And then holding Balatta by the hand and leading her onward, he came to it-a tremendous pit, obviously artificial, in the heart of the plateau. Old history, the South Seas Sailing Directions, scores of remembered data and connotations swift and furious, surged through his brain. It was Mendana who had discovered the islands and named them Solomon's, believing that he had found that monarch's fabled mines. They had laughed at the old navigator's child-like credulity; and yet here stood himself, Bassett, on the rim of an excavation for all the world like the diamond pits of South Africa.

But no diamond this that he gazed down upon. Rather was it a pearl, with the depth of iridescence of a pearl; but of a size all pearls of earth and time, welded into one, could not have totalled; and of a colour undreamed of in any pearl, or of anything else, for that matter, for it was the colour of the Red One. And the Red One himself Bassett knew it to be on the instant. A perfect sphere, full two hundred feet in diameter, the top of it was a hundred feet below the level of the rim. He likened the colour quality of it to lacquer. Indeed, he took it to be some sort of lacquer, applied by man, but a lacquer too marvellously clever to have been manufactured by the bush-folk. Brighter than bright cherry-red, its richness of colour was as if it were red builded upon red. It glowed and iridesced in the sunlight as if gleaming up from underlay under underlay of red.

In vain Balatta strove to dissuade him from descending. She threw herself in the dirt; but, when he continued down the trail that spiralled the pit-wall, she followed, cringing and whimpering her terror. That the red sphere had been dug out as a precious thing, was patent. Considering the paucity of members of the federated twelve villages and their primitive tools and methods, Bassett knew that the toil of a myriad generations could scarcely have made that enormous excavation.

He found the pit bottom carpeted with human bones, among which, battered and defaced, lay village gods of wood and stone. Some, covered with obscene totemic figures and designs, were carved from solid tree trunks forty or fifty feet in length. He noted the absence of the shark and turtle gods, so common among the shore villages, and was amazed at the constant recurrence of the helmet motive. What did these jungle savages of the dark heart of Guadalcanal know of helmets? Had Mendana's men-at-arms worn helmets and penetrated here centuries before? And if not, then whence had the bush-folk caught the motive?

Advancing over the litter of gods and bones, Balatta whimpering at his heels, Bassett entered the shadow of the Red One and passed on under its gigantic overhang until he touched it with his finger-tips. No lacquer that. Nor was the surface smooth as it should have been in the case of lacquer. On the contrary, it was corrugated and pitted, with here and there patches that showed signs of heat and fusing. Also, the substance of it was metal, though unlike any metal, or combination of metals, he had ever known. As for the colour itself, he decided it to be no application. It was the intrinsic colour of the metal itself.

He moved his finger-tips, which up to that had merely rested, along the surface, and felt the whole gigantic sphere quicken and live and respond. It was incredible! So light a touch on so vast a mass! Yet did it quiver under the finger-tip caress in rhythmic vibrations that became whisperings and rustlings and mutterings of sound-but of sound so different; so elusively thin that it was shimmeringly sibilant; so mellow that it was maddening sweet, piping like an elfin horn, which last was just what Bassett decided would be like a peal from some bell of the gods reaching earthward from across space.

He looked at Balatta with swift questioning; but the voice of the Red One he had evoked had flung her face downward and moaning among the bones. He returned to contemplation of the prodigy. Hollow it was, and of no metal known on earth, was his conclusion. It was right-named by the ones of old-time as the Star-Born. Only from the stars could it have come, and no thing of chance was it. It was a creation of artifice and mind. Such perfection of form, such hollowness that it certainly possessed, could not be the result of mere fortuitousness. A child of intelligences, remote and unguessable, working corporally in metals, it indubitably was. He stared at it in amaze, his brain a racing wild-fire of hypotheses to account for this far-journeyer who had adventured the night of space, threaded the stars, and now rose before him and above him, exhumed by patient anthropophagi, pitted and lacquered by its fiery bath in two atmospheres.

But was the colour a lacquer of heat upon some familiar metal? Or was it an intrinsic quality of the metal itself? He thrust in the blue-point of his pocket-knife to test the constitution of the stuff. Instantly the entire sphere burst into a mighty whispering, sharp with protest, almost twanging goldenly, if a whisper could possibly be considered to twang, rising higher, sinking deeper, the two extremes of the registry of sound threatening to complete the circle and coalesce into the bull-mouthed thundering he had so often heard beyond the taboo distance.

Forgetful of safety, of his own life itself, entranced by the wonder of the unthinkable and unguessable thing, he raised his knife to strike heavily from a long stroke, but was prevented by Balatta. She upreared on her own knees in an agony of terror, clasping his knees and supplicating him to desist. In the intensity of her desire to impress him, she put her forearm between her teeth and sank them to the bone.

He scarcely observed her act, although he yielded automatically to his gentler instincts and withheld the knife-hack. To him, human life had dwarfed to microscopic proportions before this colossal portent of higher life from within the distances of the sidereal universe. As had she been a dog, he kicked the ugly little bushwoman to her feet and compelled her to start with him on an encirclement of the base. Part way around, he encountered horrors. Even, among the others, did he recognize the sun-shrivelled remnant of the nine-years girl who had accidentally broken Chief Vngngn's personality taboo. And, among what was left of these that had passed, he encountered what was left of one who had not yet passed. Truly had the bush-folk named themselves into the name of the Red One, seeing in him their own image which they strove to placate and please with such red offerings.

Farther around, always treading the bones and images of humans and gods that constituted the floor of this ancient charnel-house of sacrifice, he came upon the device by which the Red One was made to send his call singing thunderingly across the jungle-belts and grass-lands to the far beach of Ringmanu. Simple and primitive was it as was the Red One's consummate artifice. A great king-post, half a hundred feet in length, seasoned by centuries of superstitious care, carven into dynasties of gods, each superimposed, each helmeted, each seated in the open mouth of a crocodile, was slung by ropes, twisted of climbing vegetable parasites, from the apex of a tripod of three great forest trunks, themselves carved into grinning and grotesque adumbrations of man's modern concepts of art and god. From the striker king-post, were suspended ropes of climbers to which men could apply their strength and direction. Like a battering ram, this king-post could be driven end-onward against the mighty red-iridescent sphere.

Here was where Ngurn officiated and functioned religiously for himself and the twelve tribes under him. Bassett laughed aloud, almost with madness, at the thought of this wonderful messenger, winged with intelligence across space, to fall into a bushman stronghold and be worshipped by ape-like, man-eating and head-hunting savages. It was as if God's World had fallen into the muck mire of the abyss underlying the bottom of hell; as if Jehovah's Commandments had been presented on carved stone to the monkeys of the monkey cage at the Zoo; as if the Sermon on the Mount had been preached in a roaring bedlam of lunatics.

The slow weeks passed. The nights, by election, Bassett spent on the ashen floor of the devil-devil house, beneath the ever-swinging, slow-curing heads. His reason for this was that it was taboo to the lesser sex of woman, and therefore, a refuge for him from Balatta, who grew more persecutingly and perilously loverly as the Southern Cross rode higher in the sky and marked the imminence of her nuptials. His days Bassett spent in

a hammock swung under the shade of the great breadfruit tree before the devil-devil house. There were breaks in this programme, when, in the comas of his devastating fever-attacks, he lay for days and nights in the house of heads. Ever he struggled to combat the fever, to live, to continue to live, to grow strong and stronger against the day when he would be strong enough to dare the grass-lands and the belted jungle beyond, and win to the beach, and to some labour-recruiting, black-birding ketch or schooner, and on to civilization and the men of civilization, to whom he could give news of the message from other worlds that lay, darkly worshipped by beastmen, in the black heart of Guadalcanal's midmost centre.

On the other nights, lying late under the breadfruit tree, Bassett spent long hours watching the slow setting of the western stars beyond the black wall of jungle where it had been thrust back by the clearing for the village. Possessed of more than a cursory knowledge of astronomy, he took a sick man's pleasure in speculating as to the dwellers on the unseen worlds of those incredibly remote suns, to haunt whose houses of light, life came forth, a shy visitant, from the rayless crypts of matter. He could no more apprehend limits to time than bounds to space. No subversive radium speculations had shaken his steady scientific faith in the conservation of energy and the indestructibility of matter. Always and forever must there have been stars. And surely, in that cosmic ferment, all must be comparatively alike, comparatively of the same substance, or substances, save for the freaks of the ferment. All must obey, or compose, the same laws that ran without infraction through the entire experience of man. Therefore, he argued and agreed, must worlds and life be appanages to all the suns as they were appanages to the particular of his own solar system.

Even as he lay here, under the breadfruit tree, an intelligence that stared across the starry gulfs, so must all the universe be exposed to the ceaseless scrutiny of innumerable eyes, like his, though grantedly different, with behind them, by the same token, intelligences that questioned and sought the meaning and the construction of the whole. So reasoning, he felt his soul go forth in kinship with that august company, that multitude whose gaze was forever upon the arras of infinity.

Who were they, what were they, those far distant and superior ones who had bridged the sky with their gigantic, red-iridescent, heaven-singing message? Surely, and long since, had they, too, trod the path on which man had so recently, by the calendar of the cosmos, set his feet. And to be able to send a message across the pit of space, surely they had reached those heights to which man, in tears and travail and bloody sweat, in darkness and confusion of many counsels, was so slowly struggling. And what were they on their heights? Had they won Brotherhood? Or had they learned that the law of love imposed the penalty of weakness and decay? Was strife, life? Was the rule of all the universe the pitiless rule of natural selection? And, and most immediately and poignantly, were their far conclusions, their long-won wisdoms, shut even then in the huge, metallic heart of the Red One, waiting for the first earth-man to read? Of one thing he was certain: No drop of red dew shaken from the lion-mane of some sun in

torment, was the sounding sphere. It was of design, not chance, and it contained the speech and wisdom of the stars.

What engines and elements and mastered forces, what lore and mysteries and destiny-controls, might be there! Undoubtedly, since so much could be enclosed in so little a thing as the foundation stone of a public building, this enormous sphere should contain vast histories, profounds of research achieved beyond man's wildest guesses, laws and formulae that, easily mastered, would make man's life on earth, individual and collective, spring up from its present mire to inconceivable heights of purity and power. It was Time's greatest gift to blindfold, insatiable, and sky-aspiring man. And to him, Bassett, had been vouchsafed the lordly fortune to be the first to receive this message from man's interstellar kin!

No white man, much less no outland man of the other bush-tribes, had gazed upon the Red One and lived. Such the law expounded by Ngurn to Bassett. There was such a thing as blood brotherhood. Bassett, in return, had often argued in the past. But Ngurn had stated solemnly no. Even the blood brotherhood was outside the favour of the Red One. Only a man born within the tribe could look upon the Red One and live. But now, his guilty secret known only to Balatta, whose fear of immolation before the Red One fast-sealed her lips, the situation was different. What he had to do was to recover from the abominable fevers that weakened him, and gain to civilization. Then would he lead an expedition back, and, although the entire population of Guadalcanal he destroyed, extract from the heart of the Red One the message of the world from other worlds.

But Bassett's relapses grew more frequent, his brief convalescences less and less vigorous, his periods of coma longer, until he came to know, beyond the last promptings of the optimism inherent in so tremendous a constitution as his own, that he would never live to cross the grass lands, perforate the perilous coast jungle, and reach the sea. He faded as the Southern Cross rose higher in the sky, till even Balatta knew that he would be dead ere the nuptial date determined by his taboo. Ngurn made pilgrimage personally and gathered the smoke materials for the curing of Bassett's head, and to him made proud announcement and exhibition of the artistic perfectness of his intention when Bassett should be dead. As for himself, Bassett was not shocked. Too long and too deeply had life ebbed down in him to bite him with fear of its impending extinction. He continued to persist, alternating periods of unconsciousness with periods of semi-consciousness, dreamy and unreal, in which he idly wondered whether he had ever truly beheld the Red One or whether it was a nightmare fancy of delirium.

Came the day when all mists and cob-webs dissolved, when he found his brain clear as a bell, and took just appraisement of his body's weakness. Neither hand nor foot could he lift. So little control of his body did he have, that he was scarcely aware of possessing one. Lightly indeed his flesh sat upon his soul, and his soul, in its briefness of clarity, knew by its very clarity that the black of cessation was near. He knew the end was close; knew that in all truth he had with his eyes beheld the Red One, the messenger between the worlds; knew that he would never live to carry that message

to the world-that message, for aught to the contrary, which might already have waited man's hearing in the heart of Guadalcanal for ten thousand years. And Bassett stirred with resolve, calling Ngurn to him, out under the shade of the breadfruit tree, and with the old devil-devil doctor discussing the terms and arrangements of his last life effort, his final adventure in the quick of the flesh.

"I know the law, O Ngurn," he concluded the matter. "Whoso is not of the folk may not look upon the Red One and live. I shall not live anyway. Your young men shall carry me before the face of the Red One, and I shall look upon him, and hear his voice, and thereupon die, under your hand, O Ngurn. Thus will the three things be satisfied: the law, my desire, and your quicker possession of my head for which all your preparations wait."

To which Ngurn consented, adding:

"It is better so. A sick man who cannot get well is foolish to live on for so little a while. Also is it better for the living that he should go. You have been much in the way of late. Not but what it was good for me to talk to such a wise one. But for moons of days we have held little talk. Instead, you have taken up room in the house of heads, making noises like a dying pig, or talking much and loudly in your own language which I do not understand. This has been a confusion to me, for I like to think on the great things of the light and dark as I turn the heads in the smoke. Your much noise has thus been a disturbance to the long-learning and hatching of the final wisdom that will be mine before I die. As for you, upon whom the dark has already brooded, it is well that you die now. And I promise you, in the long days to come when I turn your head in the smoke, no man of the tribe shall come in to disturb us. And I will tell you many secrets, for I am an old man and very wise, and I shall be adding wisdom to wisdom as I turn your head in the smoke."

So a litter was made, and, borne on the shoulders of half a dozen of the men, Bassett departed on the last little adventure that was to cap the total adventure, for him, of living. With a body of which he was scarcely aware, for even the pain had been exhausted out of it, and with a bright clear brain that accommodated him to a quiet ecstasy of sheer lucidness of thought, he lay back on the lurching litter and watched the fading of the passing world, beholding for the last time the breadfruit tree before the devil-devil house, the dim day beneath the matted jungle roof, the gloomy gorge between the shouldering mountains, the saddle of raw limestone, and the mesa of black volcanic sand.

Down the spiral path of the pit they bore him, encircling the sheening, glowing Red One that seemed ever imminent to iridesce from colour and light into sweet singing and thunder. And over bones and logs of immolated men and gods they bore him, past the horrors of other immolated ones that yet lived, to the three-king-post tripod and the huge king-post striker.

Here Bassett, helped by Ngurn and Balatta, weakly sat up, swaying weakly from the hips, and with clear, unfaltering, all-seeing eyes gazed upon the Red One.

“Once, O Ngurn,” he said, not taking his eyes from the sheening, vibrating surface whereon and wherein all the shades of cherry-red played unceasingly, ever a-quiver to change into sound, to become silken rustlings, silvery whisperings, golden thrummings of cords, velvet pipings of elfland, mellow distances of thunderings.

“I wait,” Ngurn prompted after a long pause, the long-handled tomahawk unassumingly ready in his hand.

“Once, O Ngurn,” Bassett repeated, “let the Red One speak so that I may see it speak as well as hear it. Then strike, thus, when I raise my hand; for, when I raise my hand, I shall drop my head forward and make place for the stroke at the base of my neck. But, O Ngurn, I, who am about to pass out of the light of day for ever, would like to pass with the wonder-voice of the Red One singing greatly in my ears.”

“And I promise you that never will a head be so well cured as yours,” Ngurn assured him, at the same time signalling the tribesmen to man the propelling ropes suspended from the king-post striker. “Your head shall be my greatest piece of work in the curing of heads.”

Bassett smiled quietly to the old one’s conceit, as the great carved log, drawn back through two-score feet of space, was released. The next moment he was lost in ecstasy at the abrupt and thunderous liberation of sound. But such thunder! Mellow it was with preciousness of all sounding metals. Archangels spoke in it; it was magnificently beautiful before all other sounds; it was invested with the intelligence of supermen of planets of other suns; it was the voice of God, seducing and commanding to be heard. And-the everlasting miracle of that interstellar metal! Bassett, with his own eyes, saw colour and colours transform into sound till the whole visible surface of the vast sphere was a-crawl and titillant and vaporous with what he could not tell was colour or was sound. In that moment the interstices of matter were his, and the interfusings and intermating transfusings of matter and force.

Time passed. At the last Bassett was brought back from his ecstasy by an impatient movement of Ngurn. He had quite forgotten the old devil-devil one. A quick flash of fancy brought a husky chuckle into Bassett’s throat. His shot-gun lay beside him in the litter. All he had to do, muzzle to head, was to press the trigger and blow his head into nothingness.

But why cheat him? was Bassett’s next thought. Head-hunting, cannibal beast of a human that was as much ape as human, nevertheless Old Ngurn had, according to his lights, played squarer than square. Ngurn was in himself a forerunner of ethics and contract, of consideration, and gentleness in man. No, Bassett decided; it would be a ghastly pity and an act of dishonour to cheat the old fellow at the last. His head was Ngurn’s, and Ngurn’s head to cure it would be.

And Bassett, raising his hand in signal, bending forward his head as agreed so as to expose cleanly the articulation to his taut spinal cord, forgot Balatta, who was merely a woman, a woman merely and only and undesired. He knew, without seeing, when the razor-edged hatchet rose in the air behind him. And for that instant, ere the end, there fell upon Bassett the shadows of the Unknown, a sense of impending marvel of

the rending of walls before the imaginable. Almost, when he knew the blow had started and just ere the edge of steel bit the flesh and nerves it seemed that he gazed upon the serene face of the Medusa, Truth-And, simultaneous with the bite of the steel on the onrush of the dark, in a flashing instant of fancy, he saw the vision of his head turning slowly, always turning, in the devil-devil house beside the breadfruit tree.

The Rejuvenation of Major Rathbone

"ALCHEMY was a magnificent dream, fascinating, impossible; but before it passed away there sprang from its loins a more marvelous child, none other than chemistry. More marvelous, because it substituted fact for fancy, and immensely widened man's realm of achievement. It has turned probability into possibility, and from the ideal it has fashioned the real. Do you follow me?"

Dover absently hunted for a match, at the same time regarding me with a heavy seriousness which instantly called to my mind Old Doc Frawley, our clinical lecturer of but a few years previous. I nodded assent, and he, having appropriately wreathed himself in smoke, went on with his discourse.

"Alchemy has taught us many things, while not a few of its visions have been realized by us in these latter days. The Elixir of Life was absurd, perpetual youth a rank negation of the very principle of life. But — "

Dover here paused with exasperating solemnity.

"But prolongation of life is too common an incident nowadays for any one to question. Not so very long ago, a 'generation' represented thirty-three years, the average duration of human existence. To-day, because of the rapid strides of medicine, sanitation, distribution, and so forth, a 'generation' is reckoned at thirty-four years. By the time of our great-grandchildren, it may have increased to forty years. Quien sabe? And again, we ourselves may see it actually doubled."

'Ah!" he cried, observing my start. "You see what I am driving at?"

"Yes," I replied. "But — "

"Never mind the 'buts,'" he burst in autocratically. "You ossified conservatives have always hung back at the coat-tails of science — "

"And as often saved it from breaking its neck," I retaliated.

"Just hold your horses a minute, and let me go on. What is life? Schopenhauer has defined it as the affirmation of the will to live, which is a philosophical absurdity, by the way, but with which we have no concern. Now, what is death? Simply the wearing out, the exhaustion, the breaking down, of the cells, tissues, nerves, bones and muscles of the human organism. Surgeons find great difficulty in knitting the broh bones of elderly people. Why? Because the bone, weakened, approaching the stage of dissolution, is no longer able to cast off the mineral deposits thrust in upon it by the natural functions of the body. And how easily such a bone is fractured! Yet, were it possible to remove

the large deposits of phosphate, carbonate of soda, and so forth, the bone would regain the spring and rebound which it possessed in its youth.

"Merely apply this process, in varying measures, to the rest of the anatomy, and you have what? Simply the retardation of the system's break-up, the circumvention of old age, the banishment of senility, and the recapture of giddy youth. If science has prolonged the life of the generation by one year, is it not equally possible that it may prolong that of the individual by many?"

To turn back the dial of life, to reverse the hour-glass of Time and run its golden sands anew — the audacity of it fascinated me. What was to prevent? If one year, why not twenty? Forty?

Pshaw! I was just beginning to smile at my credulity when Dover pulled open the drawer beside him and brought to view a metal-stoppered vial. I confess to a sharp pang of disappointment as I gazed upon the very ordinary liquid it contained — a heavy, almost colorless fluid, with none of the brilliant iridescence one would so naturally expect of such a magic compound. He shook it lovingly, almost caressingly; but there was no manifestation of its occult properties. Then he pressed open a black leather case and nodded suggestively at the hypodermic syringe on its velvet bed. The Brown-Sequard Elixir and Koch's experiments with lymph darted across my mind. I smiled with cherry doubtfulness; but he, divining my thought, made haste to say, "No, they were on the right road, but missed it."

He opened an inner door of the laboratory and called "Hector! Come, old fellow, come on!"

Hector was a superannuated Newfoundland who had for years been utterly worthless for anything save lying around in people's way, and in this he was an admirable success. Conceive my astonishment when a heavy, burly animal rushed in like a whirlwind and upset things generally till finally quelled by his master. Dover looked eloquently at me, without speaking.

"But that — that isn't Hector!" I cried, doubting against doubt.

He turned up the under side of the animal's ear, and I saw two hard-lipped slits, mementoes of his wild young fighting days, when his master and I were mere lads ourselves. I remembered the wounds perfectly.

"Sixteen years old and as lively as a puppy." Dover beamed triumphantly. "I've been experimenting on him for two months. Nobody knows as yet, but won't they open their eyes when Hector runs abroad again! The plain matter of fact is I've given new lease of life with the lymph injection — same lymph as that used by earlier investigators, only they failed to clarify their compounds while I have succeeded. What is it? An animal derivative to stay and remove the effects of senility by acting upon the stagnated life-cells of any animal organism. Take the anatomical changes in Hector here, produced by infusion of the lymph compound; in the main they may be characterized as the expulsion from the bones of mineral deposits and an infiltration of the muscular tissues. Of course there are minor considerations; but these I have also overcome, not, however, without the unfortunate demise of several of my earlier animal subjects. I could not

bring myself to work on Hector till failure had been eliminated from the problem. And now — "

He rose to his feet and paced excitedly up and down. It was some time before he took up his uncompleted thought.

"And now I am prepared to administer this rejuvenator to humans. And I propose, first of all, to work on one who is very dear to me — "

"Not — not — ?" I quavered.

Yes, Uncle Max. That's why I have called in your assistance. I have found discovery capping discovery, till now the process of rejuvenation has become so accelerated that I am afraid of myself. Besides, Uncle Max is so very old that the greatest discretion is necessary. Such crucial ^nsformations in the whole organism of an age-weakened body can only be brought about by the most drastic methods, and there is great need to be careful. As I have said, I have grown afraid of myself, and need another mind to hold me in check. Do you understand? Will you help me?"

*

I have introduced the above conversation with my friend, Dover Wallingford, to show by what means I was led into one of the strangest scientific experiences of my life. Of the utterly unheard-of things that followed, the village has not yet ceased to talk upon and wonder. And as the village is unacquainted with the real facts in the case, it has been stirred to its profoundest depths by the untoward happenings. The excitement created was tremendous; three camp-meetings ran simultaneously and with marvelous success; there has been much talk of signs and portents, and not a few otherwise normal members of the community have proclaimed the advent of the latter-day miracles, and even yet their ears are patiently alert for the Trump of Doom, and their eyes lifted that they may witness the rolling up of the heavens as a scroll. As for Major Rathbone, otherwise Dover's Uncle Max, why he is looked upon by a certain portion of the village as a second Lazarus raised from the dead, as one who has almost seen God; while another portion of the village is equally set in its belief that he has entered into a league with Lucifer, and that some day he will disappear in a whirlwind of brimstone and hell-fire.

But be this as it may, I shall here state the facts as they really are. It is not my intention, however, to go into the details of the case, exccept as to the results regarding Major Rathbone. Several contingencies have arisen, which must be seen to before we electrify the sleepy old world with the working formula of our wonderful discovery.

Then we shall convene a synod of the nations, and the rejuvenation of mankind will be placed in the hands of competent boards of experts belonging to the several governments. And we here promise that it shall be as free as the air we breathe or the water we drink. Further, in view of our purely altruistic motives, we ask that our present secrecy be respected and not be made the object of invidious reflections by the world we intend befriending.

Now to work. I at once sent for my traps and took up my residence one of the suites adjoining Dover's laboratory. Major Rathbone, dazzled by the glittering promise of

youth, yielded readily to our solicitations. To the world at large, he was lying sick unto death; but in reality he was waxing heartier and stronger with every day spent upon him. For three months we devoted ourselves to the task — a task fraught with constant danger, yet so absorbing that we hardly noted the flight of time. The color returned to the Major's pallid skin, the muscles filled out, and the wrinkles in part disappeared. He had been no mean athlete in his younger days, and having no organic weaknesses, his strength returned to him in a most miraculous manner. The snap and energy he gathered were surprising, and lusty youth so rioted in his blood that toward the last we were often hard put to restrain him. We who had started out to resuscitate a feeble old man, found upon our hands an impetuous young giant. The remarkable part of it was that his snow-white hair and beard remained unchanged. Try as we would, it resisted every effort. Further, the irascibility which had come with advancing years still remained. And this, allied with the natural stubbornness and truculency of his disposition, became a grievous burden to us.

Sometime in the early part of April, because of a red-tape tangle at the express office regarding a shipment of chemicals, both Dover and myself were forced to be away. We had given Michel, Dover's trusted man, the necessary instructions, so did not apprehend any trouble. But on our return he met us rather shame-facedly at the entrance to the grounds.

"He's gone!" he gasped. "He's gone!" he repeated again and again, in his distress. His right arm hung limp and nerveless at his side, and it required no little patience to finally come to an understanding.

"I told him it was the orders that he mustn't go out. But he bellered like a wild bull, and wanted to know whose orders. And when I told him, he said it was time I should know that he took orders from no man. And when I stood in his way he took me by the arm, so, and just squeezed tight. I'm afraid it's broken, sir. And then he called Hector and went off across the fields to the village."

"Oh, your arm's all right," Dover assured him after due examination. "Just crushed the biceps a little, be kind of stiff and sore for a couple of days, that's all." And then to me, "Come on; we've got to find him."

It was a simple matter to follow him to the village. As we came down the main street, a crowd before the post office attracted our attention, and though we arrived at the climax, we could easily divine what had gone before. A bulldog, belonging to a trio of mill-hands, had picked a quarrel with Hector; and as it had been impossible to balance the second puppyhood of Hector with a new set of teeth, it was patent that he had been at a miserable disadvantage in the fight that followed. It was evident that Major Rathbone had intervened in an endeavor to separate the animals, and that the roughs had resented this. Besides, he was such a harmless-looking old gentleman, with his snow-white hair and patriarchal aspect, that they anticipated having a little fun with him.

"Aw, g'wan," we could hear one of the burly fellows saying, at same time shoving the Major back as though he were a little boy.

He protested courteously that the dog was his; but they chose to regard him as a joke and refused to listen. The crowd was composed of a low breed of men, anyway, and they jammed in so closely to see th sport that we had hard work in cleaving a passage.

"Now, nibsy," commanded the mill-hand who had shoved Major Rathbone back, "don't yer think you'd better chase yerself home to yer mammy? This ain't no manner o' place fer leetle boys like you."

The Major was a fighter from the word go. And just then he let go. Before one could count three it was over; a swing under the first rufffian's ear, a half-jolt on the point of the second one's chin, and a shrewd block, with fake swing and swift uppercut on the jugular of the third, stretched the three brutes in the muck of the street. The crowd drew back hastily before this ancient prodigy, and we could hear more than one fervently abjuring his eyes.

As he arose from drawing the dogs apart, there was a cheery twinkle in the Major's eye which disconcerted us. We had approached him in the attitude of keepers recovering a patient: but his thorough sanity and perfect composure took us aback.

"Say," he said jovially, "there's a little place just round the corner here — best old rye — a-hem!" And he winked significantly as we linked arms like comrades and passed out through the petrified crowd.

From this moment our control was at an end. He always had be a masterful man, and from now on, he proceeded to demonstrate how capable he was of taking care of himself. His mysterious rejuvenation became, but would not remain, a nine days' wonder, for it grew and grew from day to day. Morning after morning he could be seen tramping home for breakfast across the dewy fields, with a fair-fill game-bag and Dover's shotgun. In previous years he had been a devoted horseman. One afternoon we returned from a trip to the city to find half the village hanging over the paddock fence. On closer inspection we discovered the Major breaking in one of the colts which had hitherto defied the stablemen. It was an edifying spectacle — his gray licks and venerable beard the sport of the wind as he dashed round and round on the maddened animal's back. But conquer the brute he did, till a stable boy led it away, trembling and as abject as a kitten. Another time, taking what had now become his customary afternoon ride, his indomitable spirit was fired by a party of well-mounted young fellows, and he let out with his big black stallion till he gave them his dust all the way down the principal street of the drowsy town.

In short, he took up the reins of life where he had dropped them years before. He was a fiery conservative as regards politics, and the peculiarly distasteful state of affairs then prevailing enticed him again into the arena. A crisis was approaching between the mill-owners and their workingmen, and a turbulent class of "agitators" had drifted into our midst. Not only did the Major oppose them openly, but he thrashed several of the more offensive leaders, nipped the strike in its incipiency, and in a most exciting campaign swept into the mayoralty. The closeness of the count but served to accentuate how bitter had been the struggle. And in the meantime he presided at indignant mass-

meetings, and had the whole community shouting "Cuba Libre!" and almost ready to march to her deliverance.

In truth, he rioted about the country like a young Nimrod, and administered the affairs of the town with the wisdom of a Solon. He snorted like an old war-horse at opposition, and woe to them that ventured to stand up against him. Success only stimulated him to greater activity; but, while such activity would have been commendable in a younger man, in one of his advanced years it seemed so inconsistent and inappropriate that his friends and relatives were shocked beyond measure. Dover and I could but hold our hands in helplessness and watch the antics of our hoary marvel.

His fame, or as we chose to call it, his notoriety spread till there was talk in the district of running him for Congress in the coming elections. Sensational space-writers filled columns of Sunday editions with garbled accounts of his doings and of his tremendous vitality. These "yellow-journal" interviewers would have driven us to distraction with their insistent clamor, had not the Major himself taken the matter in hand. For awhile it was his custom to occasionally throw an odd one out of the house before breakfast, and invariably, when he returned home in the evening, to attend similarly to the wants of three or four. A pest of curiosity-mongers and learned professors descended upon our quiet neighborhood. Spectacled gentlemen, usually bald-headed and always urbane, came singly, in pairs, in committees and delegations to note the facts and phenomena of this most remarkable of cases. Mystic enthusiasts, long-haired and wild-eyed, and devotees of countless occult systems haunted our front and back doors, and trampled upon the flowers till the gardener threatened to throw up his position in despair. And I veritably believe a saving of ten per cent on the coal bill could have been compassed by the burning up of unsolicited correspondence.

And to cap the whole business, when the United States declared war against Spain, Major Rathbone at once resigned his mayorship and applied to the war department for a commission. In view of his civil war record and his present superb health, it was highly probable that his request would be granted.

"It seems that before we can foist this rejuvenator upon the world, we must also discover an antidote for it — a sort of emasculator to reduce the friskiness attendant upon the return to youth, you know."

We had sat down, though in seemingly hopeless despondency, to discuss the difficulty and to try and find some way out of it.

"You see," Dover went on, "after revivifying an aged person, that person passes wholly out of our power. We can impose no checks, nor in any way can we tone down whatever excess of youthful spontaneity we may have induced. I see, now, that great care must be exercised in the administration of our lymph — the greatest of care if we should wish to avoid all manner of absurdities in the conduct of the patient. But that isn't the question at issue. What are we to do with Uncle Max? I confess, beyond gaining delay through the War Office, that I am at the end of my tether."

For the nonce Dover was so helpless that I felt not a little elarior unfolding the plan I had been considering for some time.

“You spoke of antidotes,” I began tentatively.

“Now, as we happen to know, there are antidotes and antidotes, and yet again are there antidotes, some as a remedy for this evil and for that. Should a babe drink a pint of kerosene, what antidote would you suggest?”

Dover shook his head.

“And since there is no antidote for such an emergency, do we assume that the babe must die? Not at all. We administer an emetic. But of course, an emetic is out of the question in the present case. But again, say for one suffering from uxoriousness, or for an hypochondriac, what remedy should be applied? Certainly, neither of the two I have mentioned will do. Now, for a man, melancholy-mad, what would you prescribe?”

“Change,” he replied, instantly. “Something else to withdraw him from himself and his morbid brooding to give him new interest in life, to supply him with a reason for existence.”

“Very good,” I continued, jubilantly. “You will notice that you have prescribed an antidote, it is true, but instead of a physical or medicinal one, it is intangible and abstract. Now, can you give me a similar remedy for excessive spirits or strength?”

Dover looked puzzled and waited for me to go on.

“Do you remember a certain strong man of the name of Samson? also Delilah, the fair Philistine? Have you ever noted the significance of ‘Beauty and the beast’? Do you not know that the strength of the strong has been wilted, dynasties been raised or demolished, and countless nations plunged into or rescued from civil strife, all because of the love of woman?”

“There’s your antidote,” I added modestly, as an afterthought.

“Oh!” His eyes flashed hopefully for an instant, but dismay returned as he shook his head sadly and said, “But the eligibles? There are none.”

“Do you recollect a certain romance of the Major’s when he was quite a young man, long before the war?”

“You mean Miss Deborah Furbush, your Aunt Debby?”

“Yes; my Aunt Debby. They quarreled, you know, and never made up — ”

“Nor spoke to each other since — ”

“O yes, they have. Ever since his rejuvenation he has called there regularly to pay his respects and ask for her health. Sort of gloats over her, you see. She’s been bedridden a year now; have to carry her up and down stairs, and nothing the matter except simple old age.”

“If she’s strong enough,” Dover hazarded.

“Strong enough!” I cried. “I tell you, man, it’s genuine senility — nothing in the world to guard against but a very slight valvular weak¬ness of the heart. What d’ye say? Get a couple of months’ delay on his commission, and start in on Aunt Debby at once. What say, old man? What say?

Not only had I grown excited over this solution of our difficulty, but I had at last aroused his enthusiasm. Appreciating the need for haste, we at once gutted the

laboratory of all essentials and took up our abode at my home, which, in turn, was just over the way from Aunt Debby's.

By this time we had the whole operation at the ends of our fingers, so were able to proceed with the utmost dispatch. But we were very sly about it, and Major Rathbone had not the slightest idea of what we were up to. A week from the time we began, the Furbush household was startled by Aunt Debby's rising to give her hand to the Major when he made his usual call. A fortnight later, from a coign of vantage in my windmill, we saw them strolling about the garden, and noted a certain new gallantry in the Major's carriage. And the rapidity with which Aunt Debby breasted the tide of Time was dizzying. She grew visibly younger, day by day, and the roses of youth returned to her cheek, giving her the most beautiful pink and pearl complexion imaginable.

Perhaps ten days after that, he drove up to the door and took her out driving. And how the village talked! Which was nothing to the way it gabbed, when, a month later, the Major's interest in the war abated and he declined his commission. And when the superannuated lovers walked bravely to the altar and then went off on their honeymoon, it seemed that all tongues wagged till they could wag no more.

As I have said, this lymph is a wonderful discovery.

A Relic of the Pliocene

I wash my hands of him at the start. I cannot father his tales, nor will I be responsible for them. I make these preliminary reservations, observe, as a guard upon my own integrity. I possess a certain definite position in a small way, also a wife; and for the good name of the community that honours my existence with its approval, and for the sake of her posterity and mine, I cannot take the chances I once did, nor foster probabilities with the careless improvidence of youth. So, I repeat, I wash my hands of him, this Nimrod, this mighty hunter, this homely, blue-eyed, freckle-faced Thomas Stevens.

Having been honest to myself, and to whatever prospective olive branches my wife may be pleased to tender me, I can now afford to be generous. I shall not criticize the tales told me by Thomas Stevens, and, further, I shall withhold my judgment. If it be asked why, I can only add that judgment I have none. Long have I pondered, weighed, and balanced, but never have my conclusions been twice the same–forsooth! because Thomas Stevens is a greater man than I. If he have told truths, well and good; if untruths, still well and good. For who can prove? or who disprove? I eliminate myself from the proposition, while those of little faith may do as I have done–go find the same Thomas Stevens, and discuss to his face the various matters which, if fortune serve, I shall relate. As to where he may be found? The directions are simple: anywhere between 53 north latitude and the Pole, on the one hand; and, on the other, the likeliest hunting grounds that lie between the east coast of Siberia and farthermost Labrador. That he is there, somewhere, within that clearly defined territory, I pledge the word of an honourable man whose expectations entail straight speaking and right living.

Thomas Stevens may have toyed prodigiously with truth, but when we first met (it were well to mark this point), he wandered into my camp when I thought myself a thousand miles beyond the outermost post of civilization. At the sight of his human face, the first in weary months, I could have sprung forward and folded him in my arms (and I am not by any means a demonstrative man); but to him his visit seemed the most casual thing under the sun. He just strolled into the light of my camp, passed the time of day after the custom of men on beaten trails, threw my snowshoes the one way and a couple of dogs the other, and so made room for himself by the fire. Said he'd just dropped in to borrow a pinch of soda and to see if I had any decent tobacco. He plucked forth an ancient pipe, loaded it with painstaking care, and, without as much as by your leave, whacked half the tobacco of my pouch into his. Yes, the stuff was fairly good. He sighed with the contentment of the just, and literally absorbed the

smoke from the crisping yellow flakes, and it did my smoker's heart good to behold him.

Hunter? Trapper? Prospector? He shrugged his shoulders No; just sort of knocking round a bit. Had come up from the Great Slave some time since, and was thinking of trapsing over into the Yukon country. The factor of Koshim had spoken about the discoveries on the Klondike, and he was of a mind to run over for a peep. I noticed that he spoke of the Klondike in the archaic vernacular, calling it the Reindeer River–a conceited custom that the Old Timers employ against the CHECHAQUAS and all tenderfeet in general. But he did it so naively and as such a matter of course, that there was no sting, and I forgave him. He also had it in view, he said, before he crossed the divide into the Yukon, to make a little run up Fort o' Good Hope way.

Now Fort o' Good Hope is a far journey to the north, over and beyond the Circle, in a place where the feet of few men have trod; and when a nondescript ragamuffin comes in out of the night, from nowhere in particular, to sit by one's fire and discourse on such in terms of "trapsing" and "a little run," it is fair time to rouse up and shake off the dream. Wherefore I looked about me; saw the fly and, underneath, the pine boughs spread for the sleeping furs; saw the grub sacks, the camera, the frosty breaths of the dogs circling on the edge of the light; and, above, a great streamer of the aurora, bridging the zenith from south-east to north-west. I shivered. There is a magic in the Northland night, that steals in on one like fevers from malarial marshes. You are clutched and downed before you are aware. Then I looked to the snowshoes, lying prone and crossed where he had flung them. Also I had an eye to my tobacco pouch. Half, at least, of its goodly store had vamosed. That settled it. Fancy had not tricked me after all.

Crazed with suffering, I thought, looking steadfastly at the man–one of those wild stampeders, strayed far from his bearings and wandering like a lost soul through great vastnesses and unknown deeps. Oh, well, let his moods slip on, until, mayhap, he gathers his tangled wits together. Who knows?–the mere sound of a fellow-creature's voice may bring all straight again.

So I led him on in talk, and soon I marvelled, for he talked of game and the ways thereof. He had killed the Siberian wolf of westernmost Alaska, and the chamois in the secret Rockies. He averred he knew the haunts where the last buffalo still roamed; that he had hung on the flanks of the caribou when they ran by the hundred thousand, and slept in the Great Barrens on the musk-ox's winter trail.

And I shifted my judgment accordingly (the first revision, but by no account the last), and deemed him a monumental effigy of truth. Why it was I know not, but the spirit moved me to repeat a tale told to me by a man who had dwelt in the land too long to know better. It was of the great bear that hugs the steep slopes of St Elias, never descending to the levels of the gentler inclines. Now God so constituted this creature for its hillside habitat that the legs of one side are all of a foot longer than those of the other. This is mighty convenient, as will be reality admitted. So I hunted this rare beast in my own name, told it in the first person, present tense, painted the

requisite locale, gave it the necessary garnishings and touches of verisimilitude, and looked to see the man stunned by the recital.

Not he. Had he doubted, I could have forgiven him. Had he objected, denying the dangers of such a hunt by virtue of the animal's inability to turn about and go the other way–had he done this, I say, I could have taken him by the hand for the true sportsman that he was. Not he. He sniffed, looked on me, and sniffed again; then gave my tobacco due praise, thrust one foot into my lap, and bade me examine the gear. It was a MUCLUC of the Innuit pattern, sewed together with sinew threads, and devoid of beads or furbelows. But it was the skin itself that was remarkable. In that it was all of half an inch thick, it reminded me of walrus-hide; but there the resemblance ceased, for no walrus ever bore so marvellous a growth of hair. On the side and ankles this hair was well-nigh worn away, what of friction with underbrush and snow; but around the top and down the more sheltered back it was coarse, dirty black, and very thick. I parted it with difficulty and looked beneath for the fine fur that is common with northern animals, but found it in this case to be absent. This, however, was compensated for by the length. Indeed, the tufts that had survived wear and tear measured all of seven or eight inches.

I looked up into the man's face, and he pulled his foot down and asked, "Find hide like that on your St Elias bear?"

I shook my head. "Nor on any other creature of land or sea," I answered candidly. The thickness of it, and the length of the hair, puzzled me.

"That," he said, and said without the slightest hint of impressiveness, "that came from a mammoth."

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed, for I could not forbear the protest of my unbelief. "The mammoth, my dear sir, long ago vanished from the earth. We know it once existed by the fossil remains that we have unearthed, and by a frozen carcase that the Siberian sun saw fit to melt from out the bosom of a glacier; but we also know that no living specimen exists. Our explorers–"

At this word he broke in impatiently. "Your explorers? Pish! A weakly breed. Let us hear no more of them. But tell me, O man, what you may know of the mammoth and his ways."

Beyond contradiction, this was leading to a yarn; so I baited my hook by ransacking my memory for whatever data I possessed on the subject in hand. To begin with, I emphasized that the animal was prehistoric, and marshalled all my facts in support of this. I mentioned the Siberian sand-bars that abounded with ancient mammoth bones; spoke of the large quantities of fossil ivory purchased from the Innuits by the Alaska Commercial Company; and acknowledged having myself mined six-and eight-foot tusks from the pay gravel of the Klondike creeks. "All fossils," I concluded, "found in the midst of debris deposited through countless ages."

"I remember when I was a kid," Thomas Stevens sniffed (he had a most confounded way of sniffing), "that I saw a petrified water-melon. Hence, though mistaken persons

sometimes delude themselves into thinking that they are really raising or eating them, there are no such things as extant water-melons?"

"But the question of food," I objected, ignoring his point, which was puerile and without bearing. "The soil must bring forth vegetable life in lavish abundance to support so monstrous creations. Nowhere in the North is the soil so prolific. Ergo, the mammoth cannot exist."

"I pardon your ignorance concerning many matters of this Northland, for you are a young man and have travelled little; but, at the same time, I am inclined to agree with you on one thing. The mammoth no longer exists. How do I know? I killed the last one with my own right arm."

Thus spake Nimrod, the mighty Hunter. I threw a stick of firewood at the dogs and bade them quit their unholy howling, and waited. Undoubtedly this liar of singular felicity would open his mouth and requite me for my St. Elias bear.

"It was this way," he at last began, after the appropriate silence had intervened. "I was in camp one day–"

"Where?" I interrupted.

He waved his hand vaguely in the direction of the north-east, where stretched a TERRA INCOGNITA into which vastness few men have strayed and fewer emerged. "I was in camp one day with Klooch. Klooch was as handsome a little KAMOOKS as ever whined betwixt the traces or shoved nose into a camp kettle. Her father was a full-blood Malemute from Russian Pastilik on Bering Sea, and I bred her, and with understanding, out of a clean-legged bitch of the Hudson Bay stock. I tell you, O man, she was a corker combination. And now, on this day I have in mind, she was brought to pup through a pure wild wolf of the woods–grey, and long of limb, with big lungs and no end of staying powers. Say! Was there ever the like? It was a new breed of dog I had started, and I could look forward to big things.

"As I have said, she was brought neatly to pup, and safely delivered. I was squatting on my hams over the litter–seven sturdy, blind little beggars–when from behind came a bray of trumpets and crash of brass. There was a rush, like the wind-squall that kicks the heels of the rain, and I was midway to my feet when knocked flat on my face. At the same instant I heard Klooch sigh, very much as a man does when you've planted your fist in his belly. You can stake your sack I lay quiet, but I twisted my head around and saw a huge bulk swaying above me. Then the blue sky flashed into view and I got to my feet. A hairy mountain of flesh was just disappearing in the underbrush on the edge of the open. I caught a rear-end glimpse, with a stiff tail, as big in girth as my body, standing out straight behind. The next second only a tremendous hole remained in the thicket, though I could still hear the sounds as of a tornado dying quickly away, underbrush ripping and tearing, and trees snapping and crashing.

"I cast about for my rifle. It had been lying on the ground with the muzzle against a log; but now the stock was smashed, the barrel out of line, and the working-gear in a thousand bits. Then I looked for the slut, and–and what do you suppose?"

I shook my head.

“May my soul burn in a thousand hells if there was anything left of her! Klooch, the seven sturdy, blind little beggars–gone, all gone. Where she had stretched was a slimy, bloody depression in the soft earth, all of a yard in diameter, and around the edges a few scattered hairs.”

I measured three feet on the snow, threw about it a circle, and glanced at Nimrod.

“The beast was thirty long and twenty high,” he answered, “and its tusks scaled over six times three feet. I couldn’t believe, myself, at the time, for all that it had just happened. But if my senses had played me, there was the broken gun and the hole in the brush. And there was–or, rather, there was not–Klooch and the pups. O man, it makes me hot all over now when I think of it Klooch! Another Eve! The mother of a new race! And a rampaging, ranting, old bull mammoth, like a second flood, wiping them, root and branch, off the face of the earth! Do you wonder that the blood-soaked earth cried out to high God? Or that I grabbed the hand-axe and took the trail?”

“The hand-axe?” I exclaimed, startled out of myself by the picture. “The hand-axe, and a big bull mammoth, thirty feet long, twenty feet–“

Nimrod joined me in my merriment, chuckling gleefully. “Wouldn’t it kill you?” he cried. “Wasn’t it a beaver’s dream? Many’s the time I’ve laughed about it since, but at the time it was no laughing matter, I was that danged mad, what of the gun and Klooch. Think of it, O man! A brand-new, unclassified, uncopyrighted breed, and wiped out before ever it opened its eyes or took out its intention papers! Well, so be it. Life’s full of disappointments, and rightly so. Meat is best after a famine, and a bed soft after a hard trail.

“As I was saying, I took out after the beast with the hand-axe, and hung to its heels down the valley; but when he circled back toward the head, I was left winded at the lower end. Speaking of grub, I might as well stop long enough to explain a couple of points. Up thereabouts, in the midst of the mountains, is an almighty curious formation. There is no end of little valleys, each like the other much as peas in a pod, and all neatly tucked away with straight, rocky walls rising on all sides. And at the lower ends are always small openings where the drainage or glaciers must have broken out. The only way in is through these mouths, and they are all small, and some smaller than others. As to grub–you’ve slushed around on the rain-soaked islands of the Alaskan coast down Sitka way, most likely, seeing as you’re a traveller. And you know how stuff grows there–big, and juicy, and jungly. Well, that’s the way it was with those valleys. Thick, rich soil, with ferns and grasses and such things in patches higher than your head. Rain three days out of four during the summer months; and food in them for a thousand mammoths, to say nothing of small game for man.

“But to get back. Down at the lower end of the valley I got winded and gave over. I began to speculate, for when my wind left me my dander got hotter and hotter, and I knew I’d never know peace of mind till I dined on roasted mammoth-foot. And I knew, also, that that stood for SKOOKUM MAMOOK PUKAPUK–excuse Chinook, I mean there was a big fight coming. Now the mouth of my valley was very narrow, and the walls steep. High up on one side was one of those big pivot rocks, or balancing rocks,

as some call them, weighing all of a couple of hundred tons. Just the thing. I hit back for camp, keeping an eye open so the bull couldn't slip past, and got my ammunition. It wasn't worth anything with the rifle smashed; so I opened the shells, planted the powder under the rock, and touched it off with slow fuse. Wasn't much of a charge, but the old boulder tilted up lazily and dropped down into place, with just space enough to let the creek drain nicely. Now I had him."

"But how did you have him?" I queried. "Who ever heard of a man killing a mammoth with a hand-axe? And, for that matter, with anything else?"

"O man, have I not told you I was mad?" Nimrod replied, with a slight manifestation of sensitiveness. "Mad clean through, what of Klooch and the gun. Also, was I not a hunter? And was this not new and most unusual game? A hand-axe? Pish! I did not need it. Listen, and you shall hear of a hunt, such as might have happened in the youth of the world when cavemen rounded up the kill with hand-axe of stone. Such would have served me as well. Now is it not a fact that man can outwalk the dog or horse? That he can wear them out with the intelligence of his endurance?"

I nodded.

"Well?"

The light broke in on me, and I bade him continue.

"My valley was perhaps five miles around. The mouth was closed. There was no way to get out. A timid beast was that bull mammoth, and I had him at my mercy. I got on his heels again hollered like a fiend, pelted him with cobbles, and raced him around the valley three times before I knocked off for supper. Don't you see? A race-course! A man and a mammoth! A hippodrome, with sun, moon, and stars to referee!

"It took me two months to do it, but I did it. And that's no beaver dream. Round and round I ran him, me travelling on the inner circle, eating jerked meat and salmon berries on the run, and snatching winks of sleep between. Of course, he'd get desperate at times and turn. Then I'd head for soft ground where the creek spread out, and lay anathema upon him and his ancestry, and dare him to come on. But he was too wise to bog in a mud puddle. Once he pinned me in against the walls, and I crawled back into a deep crevice and waited. Whenever he felt for me with his trunk, I'd belt him with the hand-axe till he pulled out, shrieking fit to split my ear drums, he was that mad. He knew he had me and didn't have me, and it near drove him wild. But he was no man's fool. He knew he was safe as long as I stayed in the crevice, and he made up his mind to keep me there. And he was dead right, only he hadn't figured on the commissary. There was neither grub nor water around that spot, so on the face of it he couldn't keep up the siege. He'd stand before the opening for hours, keeping an eye on me and flapping mosquitoes away with his big blanket ears. Then the thirst would come on him and he'd ramp round and roar till the earth shook, calling me every name he could lay tongue to. This was to frighten me, of course; and when he thought I was sufficiently impressed, he'd back away softly and try to make a sneak for the creek. Sometimes I'd let him get almost there–only a couple of hundred yards away it was–when out I'd pop and back he'd come, lumbering along like the old landslide he

was. After I'd done this a few times, and he'd figured it out, he changed his tactics. Grasped the time element, you see. Without a word of warning, away he'd go, tearing for the water like mad, scheming to get there and back before I ran away. Finally, after cursing me most horribly, he raised the siege and deliberately stalked off to the water-hole.

"That was the only time he penned me,–three days of it,–but after that the hippodrome never stopped. Round, and round, and round, like a six days' go-as-I-please, for he never pleased. My clothes went to rags and tatters, but I never stopped to mend, till at last I ran naked as a son of earth, with nothing but the old hand-axe in one hand and a cobble in the other. In fact, I never stopped, save for peeps of sleep in the crannies and ledges of the cliffs. As for the bull, he got perceptibly thinner and thinner–must have lost several tons at least–and as nervous as a schoolmarm on the wrong side of matrimony. When I'd come up with him and yell, or lain him with a rock at long range, he'd jump like a skittish colt and tremble all over. Then he'd pull out on the run, tail and trunk waving stiff, head over one shoulder and wicked eyes blazing, and the way he'd swear at me was something dreadful. A most immoral beast he was, a murderer, and a blasphemer.

"But towards the end he quit all this, and fell to whimpering and crying like a baby. His spirit broke and he became a quivering jelly-mountain of misery. He'd get attacks of palpitation of the heart, and stagger around like a drunken man, and fall down and bark his shins. And then he'd cry, but always on the run. O man, the gods themselves would have wept with him, and you yourself or any other man. It was pitiful, and there was so I much of it, but I only hardened my heart and hit up the pace. At last I wore him clean out, and he lay down, broken-winded, broken-hearted, hungry, and thirsty. When I found he wouldn't budge, I hamstrung him, and spent the better part of the day wading into him with the hand-axe, he a-sniffing and sobbing till I worked in far enough to shut him off. Thirty feet long he was, and twenty high, and a man could sling a hammock between his tusks and sleep comfortably. Barring the fact that I had run most of the juices out of him, he was fair eating, and his four feet, alone, roasted whole, would have lasted a man a twelvemonth. I spent the winter there myself."

"And where is this valley?" I asked

He waved his hand in the direction of the north-east, and said: "Your tobacco is very good. I carry a fair share of it in my pouch, but I shall carry the recollection of it until I die. In token of my appreciation, and in return for the moccasins on your own feet, I will present to you these muclucs. They commemorate Klooch and the seven blind little beggars. They are also souvenirs of an unparalleled event in history, namely, the destruction of the oldest breed of animal on earth, and the youngest. And their chief virtue lies in that they will never wear out."

Having effected the exchange, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, gripped my hand good-night, and wandered off through the snow. Concerning this tale, for which I have already disclaimed responsibility, I would recommend those of little faith to make a visit to the Smithsonian Institute. If they bring the requisite credentials and do not come in

vacation time, they will undoubtedly gain an audience with Professor Dolvidson. The muclucs are in his possession, and he will verify, not the manner in which they were obtained, but the material of which they are composed. When he states that they are made from the skin of the mammoth, the scientific world accepts his verdict. What more would you have?

Sakaicho, Hona Asi and Hakadaki

"JOCK, you likee come see my house? — not far — you come see my wifee — come' chopee — chopee' — allesamee good 'chow.' "

Ah! the magic of those words! ("chopee chopee!") Food! Dinner! What a relish they conveyed to me, who was as hungry a sight-seer as had ever trod the by-ways and thoroughfares of Yokohama. All morning I had wandered from tea-house to temple, through bazaar and curio-shop, "up hill and down dale," till now I was as famished as the most voracious shark that ever cut the blue waters of the tropic sea with his ominous fin, while in search of a breakfast. In fact, I felt like a veritable man-eater, and this unexpected invitation of my jin-riki-sha man was most opportune. And, of course, I accepted.

Away he sped, gradually leaving the crowded streets and entering the poorer and more squalid portion of the native quarter. At last, turning, a hundred feet or so, into a narrow alley, he stopped before an insignificant little house, which he told me, with very evident pride, was his home.

The whole side of the main, or sitting-room, facing the alley, was open, to admit the cooler air from without. To my Occidental eye it seemed a very bare little room. The floor was covered with thin, unpadded mats of rice straw, on which, beside a little table eight inches high, with a half-hemstitched silk handkerchief stretched across it, lay a woman in sound slumber. It was his wife.

As she lay there, one could see, even from a Japanese standpoint, that she was not pretty; neither was she ugly. But the stern lines of care had left their vivid impress on the face, and even as she slept she seemed troubled, and a spasm of pain or worry for a moment contracted her relaxed features.

With a light and tender caress, Sakaicho roused her. At his touch she awoke and greeted him affectionately; but when she beheld me she became suddenly abashed, and retreated across the room. Then ensued a quick conversation, in which Sakaicho probably told her that I was the American who had so graciously patronized him during the past week.

Remembering her duties as a hostess, and full of gratitude for her husband's patron, with low salaam and blushing countenance, she invited me with a quick motion of her hand to a seat on the floor. Removing my shoes at the threshold, for that is one of the strictest rules of Japanese etiquette, I settled down, tailor fashion, in the middle of the room, opposite Sakaicho.

As his wife pushed the hilbachi and tabako-bon before us, and then retired, humbly, to the background, he made me acquainted with her name, which was Hona Asi. She

was only twenty-seven, he said; but she looked at least forty. Toil and worry had stamped her naturally pretty face, and left it wrinkled and sallow.

This I noticed and pondered on, as with deft fingers I rolled the little pellets of fine-cut native tobacco, inserted them in the rectangularly-bent head of the slender pipe, and then ignited them, with a quick puff at the little coal of fire in the hilbachi. A couple of inhalations of the mild, sweet-flavored herb, emitted through the nostrils in true Japanese style, and the thimble-like bowl is emptied. Then, with a quick, sharp tap on the hilbachi, the ashes are expelled and the operation of filling and lighting repeated.

For five minutes we smoked in silence, when the hilbachi and the tabako-bon were removed, and Hona Asi placed before us two cups of weak green tea. As soon as emptied they were taken away, being replaced by a table five inches high and a foot and a half square, bravely lacquered in red and black.

According to Japanese custom, Hona Asi did not eat with us, but waited on the table as a true wife should. She removed the covering from a round wooden box, and with a wooden paddle ladled out two bowls of steaming rice, while Sakaicho uncovered the various bowls on the table and revealed a repast fit for the most fastidious epicure. The savory odors arising from different dishes whetted my appetite, and I was anxious to begin. There was bean soup, boiled fish, stewed leeks, pickles and soy, raw fish, thin sliced and eaten with radishes, kurage, a kind of jellyfish, and tea. The soup we drank like water; the rice we shoveled into our mouths like coals into a Newcastle collier; and the other dishes we both helped ourselves out of with the chopsticks, which by this time I could use quite dexterously. Several times during the meal we laid them aside long enough to sip warm saki (rice wine) from tiny lacquered cups.

By the time we concluded Hona Asi had brought from the little shop round the corner two glasses of ice cream, which she placed before us with a porcelain jar full of green plums, packed in salt. When we had done justice to this, we had resort to the inevitable hilbachi and tabako-bon, presumably to aid digestion.

As a rule, I had found the Japanese a shrewd, money-seeking race; but when, as a matter-of-course, I took out my purse to pay the reckoning, Sakaicho was insulted, while, in the background, Hona Asi threw up her hands deprecatingly, blushed, and nearly fainted with shame. They gave me to understand very emphatically that it was their treat, and I was forced to accept it, though I knew they could ill afford such extravagance.

Soon Sakaicho recovered his good humor. and I enticed him into talking of himself. In his queer broken English he told me of his youth; his struggles, and his hopes and ambitions. His boyhood had been spent as a peasant in the fields, on the sunny slopes of Fujihama; his youth and early manhood as porter and driver of hired jin-riki-shas in Tokio. With great economy he had saved from his slender earnings, till now, having removed to Yokohama, he owned his little home and two jin-riki-shas, one of which he rented out at fifteen cents a day. His wife, a true helpmeet, worked industriously at home hemstitching silk handkerchiefs; sometimes making as high as eighteen cents a

day. And all this struggle was for his boy — his only child. He was now sending him to school, and soon, when he would own and rent out several jin-riki-shas, the boy would receive instruction in the higher branches, and mayhap, some day, he would be able to send him to America to complete his education. "Who knows?"

As he told me this his eyes sparkled and his face flushed with pardonable pride, while his whole being seemed ennobled with the loftiness of his aspirations and the depth of his love and self-sacrifice.

Tired of sight-seeing, I passed the afternoon with him, waiting for the boy's return from school. At last he appeared; a sturdy, rollicking little chap of ten, who enjoyed, as his father said, fishing in the adjacent canal, though he never caught anything, and the water was not deep enough to drown him. Like his mother, the little fellow was very bashful in my presence; but, after a deal of persuasion, he condescended to shake hands with me. As he did so, I slipped a bright Mexican dollar into his sweaty little paw. Great was his delight in its possession, and he was most profuse in his thanks, salaaming low, again and again, as he cried in shrill, childish treble, "Arienti! Arienti!"

A week later, returning from a pleasant trip to Tokio and Fujihama, I missed Sakaicho from his accustomed stand, and so hired a strange jin-riki-sha man. It was my last day ashore, and, resolving to make the best of it, I hurried through the different sights I had not yet seen.

Late in the afternoon I found myself speeding out into the country for a passing glimpse of the native graveyard. Rounding a quick turn in the road, I espied a funeral cortege ahead. Hurrying my panting jin-riki-sha man forward, I soon overtook it. It was a double funeral, I perceived, by the two heavy chests of plain white wood, borne on the shoulders of several stalwart natives. A solitary mourner followed, and in the slender form and bowed head I recognized Sakaicho. But O! how changed! Aroused by my coming he slowly raised his listless head, and, with dull, apathetic glance, returned my greeting.

As we walked reverently in the rear, my strange jin-riki-sha man told me that a destructive fire had swept through Sakaicho's neighborhood, burning his house and suffocating his wife and child.

Presently the grave was reached, and priests from the buddhist temple near by chanted the requiem with solemn ceremony, while a group of idle natives curiously crowded round. With glassy eye, Sakaicho followed the movements of the priests, and, when the last clod had been thrown on, he erected a memorial stone to his loved ones. Then he turned away, to place among the mementos before his household God two little wooden tablets, marked with the name and date of birth and death of his wife and boy, while I returned in haste to my ship. And, though five thousand miles of heaving ocean now separate us, never will I forget Sakaicho and Hona Asi, nor the love they bore their son Hakadaki.

Samuel

Margaret Henan would have been a striking figure under any circumstances, but never more so than when I first chanced upon her, a sack of grain of fully a hundredweight on her shoulder, as she walked with sure though tottering stride from the cart-tail to the stable, pausing for an instant to gather strength at the foot of the steep steps that led to the grain-bin. There were four of these steps, and she went up them, a step at a time, slowly, unwaveringly, and with so dogged certitude that it never entered my mind that her strength could fail her and let that hundred-weight sack fall from the lean and withered frame that wellnigh doubled under it. For she was patently an old woman, and it was her age that made me linger by the cart and watch.

Six times she went between the cart and the stable, each time with a full sack on her back, and beyond passing the time of day with me she took no notice of my presence. Then, the cart empty, she fumbled for matches and lighted a short clay pipe, pressing down the burning surface of the tobacco with a calloused and apparently nerveless thumb. The hands were noteworthy. They were large-knuckled, sinewy and malformed by labour, rimed with callouses, the nails blunt and broken, and with here and there cuts and bruises, healed and healing, such as are common to the hands of hard-working men. On the back were huge, upstanding veins, eloquent of age and toil. Looking at them, it was hard to believe that they were the hands of the woman who had once been the belle of Island McGill. This last, of course, I learned later. At the time I knew neither her history nor her identity.

She wore heavy man's brogans. Her legs were stockingless, and I had noticed when she walked that her bare feet were thrust into the crinkly, iron-like shoes that sloshed about her lean ankles at every step. Her figure, shapeless and waistless, was garbed in a rough man's shirt and in a ragged flannel petticoat that had once been red. But it was her face, wrinkled, withered and weather-beaten, surrounded by an aureole of unkempt and straggling wisps of greyish hair, that caught and held me. Neither drifted hair nor serried wrinkles could hide the splendid dome of a forehead, high and broad without verging in the slightest on the abnormal.

The sunken cheeks and pinched nose told little of the quality of the life that flickered behind those clear blue eyes of hers. Despite the minutiae of wrinkle-work that somehow failed to weazen them, her eyes were clear as a girl's — clear, out-looking, and far-seeing, and with an open and unblinking steadfastness of gaze that was disconcerting. The remarkable thing was the distance between them. It is a lucky man or woman who has the width of an eye between, but with Margaret Henan the width between her eyes was fully that of an eye and a half. Yet so symmetrically moulded was her face

that this remarkable feature produced no uncanny effect, and, for that matter, would have escaped the casual observer's notice. The mouth, shapeless and toothless, with down-turned corners and lips dry and parchment-like, nevertheless lacked the muscular slackness so usual with age. The lips might have been those of a mummy, save for that impression of rigid firmness they gave. Not that they were atrophied. On the contrary, they seemed tense and set with a muscular and spiritual determination. There, and in the eyes, was the secret of the certitude with which she carried the heavy sacks up the steep steps, with never a false step or overbalance, and emptied them in the grain-bin.

"You are an old woman to be working like this," I ventured.

She looked at me with that strange, unblinking gaze, and she thought and spoke with the slow deliberateness that characterized everything about her, as if well aware of an eternity that was hers and in which there was no need for haste. Again I was impressed by the enormous certitude of her. In this eternity that seemed so indubitably hers, there was time and to spare for safe-footing and stable equilibrium — for certitude, in short. No more in her spiritual life than in carrying the hundredweights of grain was there a possibility of a misstep or an overbalancing. The feeling produced in me was uncanny. Here was a human soul that, save for the most glimmering of contacts, was beyond the humanness of me. And the more I learned of Margaret Henan in the weeks that followed the more mysteriously remote she became. She was as alien as a far-journeyer from some other star, and no hint could she nor all the countryside give me of what forms of living, what heats of feeling, or rules of philosophic contemplation actuated her in all that she had been and was.

"I wull be suvunty-two come Guid Friday a fortnight," she said in reply to my question.

"But you are an old woman to be doing this man's work, and a strong man's work at that," I insisted.

Again she seemed to immerse herself in that atmosphere of contemplative eternity, and so strangely did it affect me that I should not have been surprised to have awaked a century or so later and found her just beginning to enunciate her reply —

"The work hoz tull be done, an' I am beholden tull no one."

"But have you no children, no family, relations?"

"Oh, aye, a-plenty o' them, but they no see fut tull be helpun' me."

She drew out her pipe for a moment, then added, with a nod of her head toward the house, "I luv' wuth meself."

I glanced at the house, straw-thatched and commodious, at the large stable, and at the large array of fields I knew must belong with the place.

"It is a big bit of land for you to farm by yourself."

"Oh, aye, a bug but, suvunty acres. Ut kept me old mon buzzy, along wuth a son an' a hired mon, tull say naught o' extra honds un the harvest an' a maid-servant un the house."

She clambered into the cart, gathered the reins in her hands, and quizzed me with her keen, shrewd eyes.

"Belike ye hail from over the watter — Ameruky, I'm meanun'?"

"Yes, I'm a Yankee," I answered.

"Ye wull no be findun' mony Island McGill folk stoppun' un Ameruky?"

"No; I don't remember ever meeting one, in the States."

She nodded her head.

"They are home-luvun' bodies, though I wull no be sayin' they are no fair-travelled. Yet they come home ot the last, them oz are no lost ot sea or kult by fevers an' such-like un foreign parts."

"Then your sons will have gone to sea and come home again?" I queried.

"Oh, aye, all savun' Samuel oz was drownded."

At the mention of Samuel I could have sworn to a strange light in her eyes, and it seemed to me, as by some telepathic flash, that I divined in her a tremendous wistfulness, an immense yearning. It seemed to me that here was the key to her inscrutableness, the clue that if followed properly would make all her strangeness plain. It came to me that here was a contact and that for the moment I was glimpsing into the soul of her. The question was tickling on my tongue, but she forestalled me.

She tchk'd to the horse, and with a "Guid day tull you, sir," drove off.

A simple, homely people are the folk of Island McGill, and I doubt if a more sober, thrifty, and industrious folk is to be found in all the world. Meeting them abroad — and to meet them abroad one must meet them on the sea, for a hybrid sea-faring and farmer breed are they — one would never take them to be Irish. Irish they claim to be, speaking of the North of Ireland with pride and sneering at their Scottish brothers; yet Scotch they undoubtedly are, transplanted Scotch of long ago, it is true, but none the less Scotch, with a thousand traits, to say nothing of their tricks of speech and woolly utterance, which nothing less than their Scotch clannishness could have preserved to this late day.

A narrow loch, scarcely half a mile wide, separates Island McGill from the mainland of Ireland; and, once across this loch, one finds himself in an entirely different country. The Scotch impression is strong, and the people, to commence with, are Presbyterians. When it is considered that there is no public-house in all the island and that seven thousand souls dwell therein, some idea may be gained of the temperateness of the community. Wedded to old ways, public opinion and the ministers are powerful influences, while fathers and mothers are revered and obeyed as in few other places in this modern world. Courting lasts never later than ten at night, and no girl walks out with her young man without her parents' knowledge and consent.

The young men go down to the sea and sow their wild oats in the wicked ports, returning periodically, between voyages, to live the old intensive morality, to court till ten o'clock, to sit under the minister each Sunday, and to listen at home to the same stern precepts that the elders preached to them from the time they were laddies. Much they learned of women in the ends of the earth, these seafaring sons, yet a canny wisdom was theirs and they never brought wives home with them. The one solitary exception to this had been the schoolmaster, who had been guilty of bringing a wife

from half a mile the other side of the loch. For this he had never been forgiven, and he rested under a cloud for the remainder of his days. At his death the wife went back across the loch to her own people, and the blot on the escutcheon of Island McGill was erased. In the end the sailor-men married girls of their own homeland and settled down to become exemplars of all the virtues for which the island was noted.

Island McGill was without a history. She boasted none of the events that go to make history. There had never been any wearing of the green, any Fenian conspiracies, any land disturbances. There had been but one eviction, and that purely technical — a test case, and on advice of the tenant's lawyer. So Island McGill was without annals. History had passed her by. She paid her taxes, acknowledged her crowned rulers, and left the world alone; all she asked in return was that the world should leave her alone. The world was composed of two parts — Island McGill and the rest of it. And whatever was not Island McGill was outlandish and barbarian; and well she knew, for did not her seafaring sons bring home report of that world and its ungodly ways?

It was from the skipper of a Glasgow tramp, as passenger from Colombo to Rangoon, that I had first learned of the existence of Island McGill; and it was from him that I had carried the letter that gave me entrance to the house of Mrs. Ross, widow of a master mariner, with a daughter living with her and with two sons, master mariners themselves and out upon the sea. Mrs. Ross did not take in boarders, and it was Captain Ross's letter alone that had enabled me to get from her bed and board. In the evening, after my encounter with Margaret Henan, I questioned Mrs. Ross, and I knew on the instant that I had in truth stumbled upon mystery.

Like all Island McGill folk, as I was soon to discover, Mrs. Ross was at first averse to discussing Margaret Henan at all. Yet it was from her I learned that evening that Margaret Henan had once been one of the island belles. Herself the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, she had married Thomas Henan, equally well-to-do. Beyond the usual housewife's tasks she had never been accustomed to work. Unlike many of the island women, she had never lent a hand in the fields.

"But what of her children?" I asked.

"Two o' the sons, Jamie an' Timothy uz married an' be goun' tull sea. Thot bug house close tull the post office uz Jamie's. The daughters thot ha' no married be luvun' wuth them as dud marry. An' the rest be dead."

"The Samuels," Clara interpolated, with what I suspected was a giggle.

She was Mrs. Ross's daughter, a strapping young woman with handsome features and remarkably handsome black eyes.

"'Tuz naught to be smuckerun' ot," her mother reproved her.

"The Samuels?" I intervened. "I don't understand."

"Her four sons thot died."

"And were they all named Samuel?"

"Aye."

"Strange," I commented in the lagging silence.

"Very strange," Mrs. Ross affirmed, proceeding stolidly with the knitting of the woollen singlet on her knees — one of the countless under-garments that she interminably knitted for her skipper sons.

"And it was only the Samuels that died?" I queried, in further attempt.

"The others luved," was the answer. "A fine fomuly — no finer on the island. No better lods ever sailed out of Island McGill. The munuster held them up oz models tull pottern after. Nor was ever a whusper breathed again' the girls."

"But why is she left alone now in her old age?" I persisted. "Why don't her own flesh and blood look after her? Why does she live alone? Don't they ever go to see her or care for her?"

"Never a one un twenty years an' more now. She fetched ut on tull herself. She drove them from the house just oz she drove old Tom Henan, thot was her husband, tull hus death."

"Drink?" I ventured.

Mrs. Ross shook her head scornfully, as if drink was a weakness beneath the weakest of Island McGill.

A long pause followed, during which Mrs. Ross knitted stolidly on, only nodding permission when Clara's young man, mate on one of the Shire Line sailing ships, came to walk out with her. I studied the half-dozen ostrich eggs, hanging in the corner against the wall like a cluster of some monstrous fruit. On each shell were painted precipitous and impossible seas through which full-rigged ships foamed with a lack of perspective only equalled by their sharp technical perfection. On the mantelpiece stood two large pearl shells, obviously a pair, intricately carved by the patient hands of New Caledonian convicts. In the centre of the mantel was a stuffed bird-of-paradise, while about the room were scattered gorgeous shells from the southern seas, delicate sprays of coral sprouting from barnacled pi-pi shells and cased in glass, assegais from South Africa, stone axes from New Guinea, huge Alaskan tobacco-pouches beaded with heraldic totem designs, a boomerang from Australia, divers ships in glass bottles, a cannibal kai-kai bowl from the Marquesas, and fragile cabinets from China and the Indies and inlaid with mother-of-pearl and precious woods.

I gazed at this varied trove brought home by sailor sons, and pondered the mystery of Margaret Henan, who had driven her husband to his death and been forsaken by all her kin. It was not the drink. Then what was it? — some shocking cruelty? some amazing infidelity? or some fearful, old-world peasant-crime?

I broached my theories, but to all Mrs. Ross shook her head.

"Ut was no thot," she said. "Margaret was a guid wife an' a guid mother, an' I doubt she would harm a fly. She brought up her fomuly God-fearin' an' decent-minded. Her trouble was thot she took lunatic — turned eediot."

Mrs. Ross tapped significantly on her forehead to indicate a state of addlement.

"But I talked with her this afternoon," I objected, "and I found her a sensible woman — remarkably bright for one of her years."

"Aye, an' I'm grantun' all thot you say," she went on calmly. "But I am no referrun' tull thot. I am referrun' tull her wucked-headed an' vucious stubbornness. No more stubborn woman ever luv'd than Margaret Henan. Ut was all on account o' Samuel, which was the name o' her youngest an' they do say her favourut brother — hum oz died by hus own hond all through the munuster's mustake un no registerun' the new church ot Dublin. Ut was a lesson thot the name was musfortunate, but she would no take ut, an' there was talk when she called her first child Samuel — hum thot died o' the croup. An' wuth thot what does she do but call the next one Samuel, an' hum only three when he fell un tull the tub o' hot watter an' was plain cooked tull death. Ut all come, I tell you, o' her wucked-headed an' foolush stubbornness. For a Samuel she must hov; an' ut was the death of the four of her sons. After the first, dudna her own mother go down un the dirt tull her feet, a-beggun' an' pleadun' wuth her no tull name her next one Samuel? But she was no tull be turned from her purpose. Margaret Henan was always set on her ways, an' never more so thon on thot name Samuel.

"She was fair lunatuc on Samuel. Dudna her neighbours' an' all kuth an' kun savun' them thot luv'd un the house wuth her, get up an' walk out ot the christenun' of the second — hum thot was cooked? Thot they dud, an' ot the very moment the munuster asked what would the bairn's name be. 'Samuel,' says she; an' wuth thot they got up an' walked out an' left the house. An' ot the door dudna her Aunt Fannie, her mother's suster, turn an' say loud for all tull hear: 'What for wull she be wantun' tull murder the wee thing?' The munuster heard fine, an' dudna like ut, but, oz he told my Larry afterward, what could he do? Ut was the woman's wush, an' there was no law again' a mother callun' her child accordun' tull her wush.

"An' then was there no the third Samuel? An' when he was lost ot sea off the Cape, dudna she break all laws o' nature tull hov a fourth? She was forty-seven, I'm tellun' ye, an' she hod a child ot forty-seven. Thunk on ut! Ot forty-seven! Ut was fair scand'lous."

From Clara, next morning, I got the tale of Margaret Henan's favourite brother; and from here and there, in the week that followed, I pieced together the tragedy of Margaret Henan. Samuel Dundee had been the youngest of Margaret's four brothers, and, as Clara told me, she had well-nigh worshipped him. He was going to sea at the time, skipper of one of the sailing ships of the Bank Line, when he married Agnes Hewitt. She was described as a slender wisp of a girl, delicately featured and with a nervous organization of the supersensitive order. Theirs had been the first marriage in the "new" church, and after a two-weeks' honeymoon Samuel had kissed his bride good-bye and sailed in command of the Loughbank, a big four-masted barque.

And it was because of the "new" church that the minister's blunder occurred. Nor was it the blunder of the minister alone, as one of the elders later explained; for it was equally the blunder of the whole Presbytery of Coughleen, which included fifteen churches on Island McGill and the mainland. The old church, beyond repair, had been torn down and the new one built on the original foundation. Looking upon the foundation-stones as similar to a ship's keel, it never entered the minister's nor the Presbytery's head that the new church was legally any other than the old church.

"An' three couples was married the first week un the new church," Clara said. "First of all, Samuel Dundee an' Agnes Hewitt; the next day Albert Mahan an' Minnie Duncan; an' by the week-end Eddie Troy and Flo Mackintosh — all sailor-men, an' un sux weeks' time the last of them back tull their ships an' awa', an' no one o' them dreamin' of the wuckedness they'd been ot."

The Imp of the Perverse must have chuckled at the situation. All things favoured. The marriages had taken place in the first week of May, and it was not till three months later that the minister, as required by law, made his quarterly report to the civil authorities in Dublin. Promptly came back the announcement that his church had no legal existence, not being registered according to the law's demands. This was overcome by prompt registration; but the marriages were not to be so easily remedied. The three sailor husbands were away, and their wives, in short, were not their wives.

"But the munuster was no for alarmin' the bodies," said Clara. "He kept hus council an' bided hus time, waitun' for the lods tull be back from sea. Oz luck would have ut, he was away across the island tull a christenun' when Albert Mahan arrives home onexpected, hus shup just docked ot Dublin. Ut's nine o'clock ot night when the munuster, un hus sluppers an' dressun'-gown, gets the news. Up he jumps an' calls for horse an' saddle, an' awa' he goes like the wund for Albert Mahan's. Albert uz just goun' tull bed an' hoz one shoe off when the munuster arrives.

"'Come wuth me, the pair o' ye,' says he, breathless-like. 'What for, an' me dead weary an' goun' tull bed?' says Albert. 'Yull be lawful married,' says the munuster. Albert looks black an' says, 'Now, munuster, ye wull be jokun',' but tull humself, oz I've heard hum tell mony a time, he uz wonderun' thot the munuster should a-took tull whusky ot hus time o' life.

"'We be no married?' says Minnie. He shook his head. 'An' I om no Mussus Mahan?' 'No,' says he, 'ye are no Mussus Mahan. Ye are plain Muss Duncan.' 'But ye married 'us yoursel',' says she. 'I dud an' I dudna,' says he. An' wuth thot he tells them the whole upshot, an' Albert puts on hus shoe, an' they go wuth the munuster an' are married proper an' lawful, an' oz Albert Mahan says afterward mony's the time, ''Tus no every mon thot hoz two weddun' nights on Island McGill.'"

Six months later Eddie Troy came home and was promptly remarried. But Samuel Dundee was away on a three-years' voyage and his ship fell overdue. Further to complicate the situation, a baby boy, past two years old, was waiting for him in the arms of his wife. The months passed, and the wife grew thin with worrying. "Ut's no meself I'm thunkun' on," she is reported to have said many times, "but ut's the puir fatherless bairn. Uf aught happened tull Samuel where wull the bairn stond?"

Lloyd's posted the Loughbank as missing, and the owners ceased the monthly remittance of Samuel's half-pay to his wife. It was the question of the child's legitimacy that preyed on her mind, and, when all hope of Samuel's return was abandoned, she drowned herself and the child in the loch. And here enters the greater tragedy. The Loughbank was not lost. By a series of sea disasters and delays too interminable to relate, she had made one of those long, unsighted passages such as occur once or twice

in half a century. How the Imp must have held both his sides! Back from the sea came Samuel, and when they broke the news to him something else broke somewhere in his heart or head. Next morning they found him where he had tried to kill himself across the grave of his wife and child. Never in the history of Island McGill was there so fearful a death-bed. He spat in the minister's face and reviled him, and died blaspheming so terribly that those that tended on him did so with averted gaze and trembling hands.

And, in the face of all this, Margaret Henan named her first child Samuel.

How account for the woman's stubbornness? Or was it a morbid obsession that demanded a child of hers should be named Samuel? Her third child was a girl, named after herself, and the fourth was a boy again. Despite the strokes of fate that had already bereft her, and despite the loss of friends and relatives, she persisted in her resolve to name the child after her brother. She was shunned at church by those who had grown up with her. Her mother, after a final appeal, left her house with the warning that if the child were so named she would never speak to her again. And though the old lady lived thirty-odd years longer she kept her word. The minister agreed to christen the child any name but Samuel, and every other minister on Island McGill refused to christen it by the name she had chosen. There was talk on the part of Margaret Henan of going to law at the time, but in the end she carried the child to Belfast and there had it christened Samuel.

And then nothing happened. The whole island was confuted. The boy grew and prospered. The schoolmaster never ceased averring that it was the brightest lad he had ever seen. Samuel had a splendid constitution, a tremendous grip on life. To everybody's amazement he escaped the usual run of childish afflictions. Measles, whooping-cough and mumps knew him not. He was armour-clad against germs, immune to all disease. Headaches and earaches were things unknown. "Never so much oz a boil or a pumple," as one of the old bodies told me, ever marred his healthy skin. He broke school records in scholarship and athletics, and whipped every boy of his size or years on Island McGill.

It was a triumph for Margaret Henan. This paragon was hers, and it bore the cherished name. With the one exception of her mother, friends and relatives drifted back and acknowledged that they had been mistaken; though there were old crones who still abided by their opinion and who shook their heads ominously over their cups of tea. The boy was too wonderful to last. There was no escaping the curse of the name his mother had wickedly laid upon him. The young generation joined Margaret Henan in laughing at them, but the old crones continued to shake their heads.

Other children followed. Margaret Henan's fifth was a boy, whom she called Jamie, and in rapid succession followed three girls, Alice, Sara, and Nora, the boy Timothy, and two more girls, Florence and Katie. Katie was the last and eleventh, and Margaret Henan, at thirty-five, ceased from her exertions. She had done well by Island McGill and the Queen. Nine healthy children were hers. All prospered. It seemed her ill-luck had shot its bolt with the deaths of her first two. Nine lived, and one of them was named Samuel.

Jamie elected to follow the sea, though it was not so much a matter of election as compulsion, for the eldest sons on Island McGill remained on the land, while all other sons went to the salt-ploughing. Timothy followed Jamie, and by the time the latter had got his first command, a steamer in the Bay trade out of Cardiff, Timothy was mate of a big sailing ship. Samuel, however, did not take kindly to the soil. The farmer's life had no attraction for him. His brothers went to sea, not out of desire, but because it was the only way for them to gain their bread; and he, who had no need to go, envied them when, returned from far voyages, they sat by the kitchen fire, and told their bold tales of the wonderlands beyond the sea-rim.

Samuel became a teacher, much to his father's disgust, and even took extra certificates, going to Belfast for his examinations. When the old master retired, Samuel took over his school. Secretly, however, he studied navigation, and it was Margaret's delight when he sat by the kitchen fire, and, despite their master's tickets, tangled up his brothers in the theoretics of their profession. Tom Henan alone was outraged when Samuel, school teacher, gentleman, and heir to the Henan farm, shipped to sea before the mast. Margaret had an abiding faith in her son's star, and whatever he did she was sure was for the best. Like everything else connected with his glorious personality, there had never been known so swift a rise as in the case of Samuel. Barely with two years' sea experience before the mast, he was taken from the forecastle and made a provisional second mate. This occurred in a fever port on the West Coast, and the committee of skippers that examined him agreed that he knew more of the science of navigation than they had remembered or forgotten. Two years later he sailed from Liverpool, mate of the Starry Grace, with both master's and extra-master's tickets in his possession. And then it happened — the thing the old crones had been shaking their heads over for years.

It was told me by Gavin McNab, bos'n of the Starry Grace at the time, himself an Island McGill man.

"Wull do I remember ut," he said. "We was runnin' our Eastun' down, an' makun' heavy weather of ut. Oz fine a sailor-mon oz ever walked was Samuel Henan. I remember the look of hum wull thot last marnun', a-watch-un' them bug seas curlun' up astern, an' a-watchun' the old girl an' seeun' how she took them — the skupper down below an' drunkun' for days. Ut was ot seven thot Henan brought her up on tull the wund, not darun' tull run longer on thot fearful sea. Ot eight, after havun' breakfast, he turns un, an' a half hour after up comes the skupper, bleary-eyed an' shaky an' holdun' on tull the companion. Ut was fair smokun', I om tellun' ye, an' there he stood, blunkun' an' noddun' an' talkun' tull humsel'. 'Keep off,' says he ot last tull the mon ot the wheel. 'My God!' says the second mate, standun' beside hum. The skupper never looks tull hum ot all, but keeps on mutterun" an' jabberun' tull humsel'. All of a suddent-like he straightens up an' throws hus head back, an' says: 'Put your wheel over, me mon — now domn ye! Are ye deef thot ye'll no be hearun' me?'

"Ut was a drunken mon's luck, for the Starry Grace wore off afore thot God-Almighty gale wuthout shuppun' a bucket o' watter, the second mate shoutun' orders an' the

crew jumpun' like mod. An' wuth thot the skupper nods contented-like tull humself an' goes below after more whusky. Ut was plain murder o' the lives o' all of us, for ut was no the time for the buggest shup afloat tull be runnun'. Run? Never hov I seen the like! Ut was beyond all thunkun', an' me goun' tull sea, boy an' men, for forty year. I tell you ut was fair awesome.

"The face o' the second mate was white oz death, an' he stood ut alone for half an hour, when ut was too much for hum an' he went below an' called Samuel an' the third. Aye, a fine sailor-mon thot Samuel, but ut was too much for hum. He looked an' studied, and looked an' studied, but he could no see hus way. He durst na heave tull. She would ha' been sweeput o' all honds an' stucks an' everythung afore she could a-fetched up. There was naught tull do but keep on runnun'. An' uf ut worsened we were lost ony way, for soon or late that overtakun' sea was sure tull sweep us clear over poop an' all.

"Dud I say ut was a God-Almighty gale? Ut was worse nor thot. The devil himself must ha' hod a hond un the brewun' o' ut, ut was thot fearsome. I ha' looked on some sights, but I om no carun' tull look on the like o' thot again. No mon dared tull be un hus bunk. No, nor no mon on the decks. All honds of us stood on top the house an' held on an' watched. The three mates was on the poop, with two men ot the wheel, an' the only mon below was thot whusky-blighted captain snorun' drunk.

"An' then I see ut comun', a mile away, risun' above all the waves like an island un the sea — the buggest wave ever I looked upon. The three mates stood tulgether an' watched ut comun', a-prayun' like we thot she would no break un passun' us. But ut was no tull be. Ot the last, when she rose up like a mountain, curlun' above the stern an' blottun' out the sky, the mates scattered, the second an' third runnun' for the mizzen-shrouds an' climbun' up, but the first runnun' tull the wheel tull lend a hond. He was a brave men, thot Samuel Henan. He run straight un tull the face o' thot father o' all waves, no thunkun' on humself but thunkun' only o' the shup. The two men was lashed tull the wheel, but he would be ready tull hond un the case they was kult. An' then she took ut. We on the house could no see the poop for the thousand tons o' watter thot hod hut ut. Thot wave cleaned them out, took everythung along wuth ut — the two mates, climbun' up the mizzen-ruggun', Samuel Henan runnun' tull the wheel, the two men ot the wheel, aye, an' the wheel utself. We never saw aught o' them, for she broached tull what o' the wheel goun', an' two men o' us was drownded off the house, no tull mention the carpenter thot we pucked up ot the break o' the poop wuth every bone o' hus body broke tull he was like so much jelly."

And here enters the marvel of it, the miraculous wonder of that woman's heroic spirit. Margaret Henan was forty-seven when the news came home of the loss of Samuel; and it was not long after that the unbelievable rumour went around Island McGill. I say unbelievable. Island McGill would not believe. Doctor Hall pooh-pooh'd it. Everybody laughed at it as a good joke. They traced back the gossip to Sara Dack, servant to the Henans', and who alone lived with Margaret and her husband. But Sara Dack persisted in her assertion and was called a low-mouthed liar. One or two dared question Tom

Henan himself, but beyond black looks and curses for their presumption they elicited nothing from him.

The rumour died down, and the island fell to discussing in all its ramifications the loss of the Grenoble in the China seas, with all her officers and half her crew born and married on Island McGill. But the rumour would not stay down. Sara Dack was louder in her assertions, the looks Tom Henan cast about him were blacker than ever, and Dr. Hall, after a visit to the Henan house, no longer pooh-pooh'd. Then Island McGill sat up, and there was a tremendous wagging of tongues. It was unnatural and ungodly. The like had never been heard. And when, as time passed, the truth of Sara Dack's utterances was manifest, the island folk decided, like the bos'n of the Starry Grace, that only the devil could have had a hand in so untoward a happening. And the infatuated woman, so Sara Dack reported, insisted that it would be a boy. "Eleven bairns ha' I borne," she said; "sux o' them lossies an' five o' them loddies. An' sunce there be balance un all thungs, so wull there be balance wuth me. Sux o' one an' half a dozen o' the other — there uz the balance, an' oz sure oz the sun rises un the marnun', thot sure wull ut be a boy."

And boy it was, and a prodigy. Dr. Hall raved about its unblemished perfection and massive strength, and wrote a brochure on it for the Dublin Medical Society as the most interesting case of the sort in his long career. When Sara Dack gave the babe's unbelievable weight, Island McGill refused to believe and once again called her liar. But when Doctor Hall attested that he had himself weighed it and seen it tip that very notch, Island McGill held its breath and accepted whatever report Sara Dack made of the infant's progress or appetite. And once again Margaret Henan carried a babe to Belfast and had it christened Samuel.

"Oz good oz gold ut was," said Sara Dack to me.

Sara, at the time I met her, was a buxom, phlegmatic spinster of sixty, equipped with an experience so tragic and unusual that though her tongue ran on for decades its output would still be of imperishable interest to her cronies.

"Oz good oz good," said Sara Dack. "Ut never fretted. Sut ut down un the sun by the hour an' never a sound ut would make oz long oz ut was no hungered! An' thot strong! The grup o' uts honds was like a mon's. I mind me, when ut was but hours old, ut grupped me so mighty thot I fetched a scream I was thot frightened. Ut was the punk o' health. Ut slept an' ate, an' grew. Ut never bothered. Never a night's sleep ut lost tull no one, nor ever a munut's, an' thot wuth cuttin' uts teeth an' all. An' Margaret would dandle ut on her knee an' ask was there ever so fine a loddie un the three Kungdoms.

"The way ut grew! Ut was un keepun' wuth the way ut ate. Ot a year ut was the size o' a bairn of two. Ut was slow tull walk an' talk. Exceptun' for gurgly noises un uts throat an' for creepun' on all fours, ut dudna monage much un the walkun' an' talkun' line. But thot was tull be expected from the way ut grew. Ut all went tull growun' strong an' healthy. An' even old Tom Henan cheered up ot the might of ut an' said was there ever the like o' ut un the three Kungdoms. Ut was Doctor Hall thot first

suspicioned, I mind me well, though ut was luttle I dreamt what he was up tull ot the time. I seehum holdun' thungs' un fronto' luttle Sammy's eyes, an' a-makun' noises, loud an' soft, an' far an' near, un luttle Sammy's ears. An' then I see Doctor Hall go away, wrunklun' hus eyebrows an' shakun' hus head like the bairn was ailun'. But he was no ailun', oz I could swear tull, me a-seeun' hum eat an' grow. But Doctor Hall no said a word tull Margaret an' I was no for guessun' the why he was sore puzzled.

"I mind me when luttle Sammy first spoke. He was two years old an' the size of a child o five, though he could no monage the walkun' yet but went around on all fours, happy an' contented-like an' makun' no trouble oz long oz he was fed promptly, which was onusual often. I was hangun' the wash on the line ot the time when out he comes, on all fours, hus bug head waggun' tull an' fro an' blunkun' un the sun. An' then, suddent, he talked. I was thot took a-back I near died o' fright, an' fine I knew ut then, the shakun' o' Doctor Hall's head. Talked? Never a bairn on Island McGill talked so loud an' tull such purpose. There was no mustakun' ut. I stood there all tremblun' an' shakun'. Little Sammy was brayun'. I tell you, sir, he was brayun' like an ass — just like thot, — loud an' long an' cheerful tull ut seemed hus lungs ud crack.

"He was a eediot — a great, awful, monster eediot. Ut was after he talked thot Doctor Hall told Margaret, but she would no believe. Ut would all come right, she said. Ut was growun' too fast for aught else. Guv ut time, said she, an' we would see. But old Tom Henan knew, an' he never held up hus head again. He could no abide the thung, an' would no brung humsel' tull touch ut, though I om no denyun' he was fair fascinated by ut. Mony the time, I see hum watchun' of ut around a corner, lookun' ot ut tull hus eyes fair bulged wuth the horror; an' when ut brayed old Tom ud stuck hus fungers tull hus ears an' look thot miserable I could a-puttied hum.

"An' bray ut could! Ut was the only thung ut could do besides eat an' grow. Whenever ut was hungry ut brayed, an' there was no stoppun' ut save wuth food. An' always of a marnun', when first ut crawled tull the kutchen-door an' blunked out ot the sun, ut brayed. An' ut was brayun' that brought about uts end.

"I mind me well. Ut was three years old an' oz bug oz a led o' ten. Old Tom hed been goun' from bed tull worse, ploughun' up an' down the fields an' talkun' an' mutterun' tull humself. On the marnun' o' the day I mind me, he was suttun' on the bench outside the kutchen, a-futtun' the handle tull a puck-axe. Unbeknown, the monster eediot crawled tull the door an' brayed after hus fashion ot the sun. I see old Tom start up an' look. An' there was the monster eediot, waggun' uts bug head an' blunkun' an' brayun' like the great bug ass ut was. Ut was too much for Tom. Somethun' went wrong wuth hum suddent-like. He jumped tull hus feet an' fetched the puck-handle down on the monster eediot's head. An' he hut ut again an' again like ut was a mod dog an' hum afeard o' ut. An' he went straight tull the stable an' hung humsel' tull a rafter. An' I was no for stoppun' on after such-like, an' I went tull stay along wuth me suster thot was married tull John Martin an' comfortable-off."

I sat on the bench by the kitchen door and regarded Margaret Henan, while with her callous thumb she pressed down the live fire of her pipe and gazed out across

the twilight-sombred fields. It was the very bench Tom Henan had sat upon that last sanguinary day of life. And Margaret sat in the doorway where the monster, blinking at the sun, had so often wagged its head and brayed. We had been talking for an hour, she with that slow certitude of eternity that so befitted her; and, for the life of me, I could lay no finger on the motives that ran through the tangled warp and woof of her. Was she a martyr to Truth? Did she have it in her to worship at so abstract a shrine? Had she conceived Abstract Truth to be the one high goal of human endeavour on that day of long ago when she named her first-born Samuel? Or was hers the stubborn obstinacy of the ox? the fixity of purpose of the balky horse? the stolidity of the self-willed peasant-mind? Was it whim or fancy? — the one streak of lunacy in what was otherwise an eminently rational mind? Or, reverting, was hers the spirit of a Bruno? Was she convinced of the intellectual rightness of the stand she had taken? Was hers a steady, enlightened opposition to superstition? or — and a subtler thought — was she mastered by some vaster, profounder superstition, a fetish-worship of which the Alpha and the Omega was the cryptic Samuel?

"Wull ye be tellun' me," she said, "thot uf the second Samuel hod been named Larry thot he would no hov fell un the hot watter an' drownded? Atween you an' me, sir, an' ye are untellugent-lookun' tull the eye, would the name hov made ut onyways dufferent? Would the washun' no be done thot day uf he hod been Larry or Michael? Would hot watter no be hot, an' would hot watter no burn uf he hod hod ony other name but Samuel?"

I acknowledged the justice of her contention, and she went on.

"Do a wee but of a name change the plans o' God? Do the world run by hut or muss, an' be God a weak, shully-shallyun' creature thot ud alter the fate an' destiny o' thungs because the worm Margaret Henan seen fut tull name her bairn Samuel? There be my son Jamie. He wull no sign a Rooshan-Funn un hus crew because o' believun' thot Rooshan-Funns do be monajun' the wunds an' hov the makun' o' bod weather. Wull you be thunkun' so? Wull you be thunkun' thot God thot makes the wunds tull blow wull bend Hus head from on high tull lussen tull the word o' a greasy Rooshan-Funn un some dirty shup's fo'c'sle?"

I said no, certainly not; but she was not to be set aside from pressing home the point of her argument.

"Then wull you be thunkun' thot God thot directs the stars un their courses, an' tull whose mighty foot the world uz but a footstool, wull you be thunkun' thot He wull take a spite again' Margaret Henan an' send a bug wave off the Cape tull wash her son un tull eternity, all because she was for namun' hum Samuel?"

"But why Samuel?" I asked.

"An' thot I dinna know. I wantud ut so."

"But why did you want it so?"

"An' uz ut me thot would be answerun' a such-like question? Be there ony mon luvun' or dead thot can answer? Who can tell the why o' like? My Jamie was fair daft on buttermilk, he would drunk ut tull, oz he said humself, hus back teeth was awash.

But my Tumothy could no abide buttermilk. I like tull lussen tull the thunder growlun' an' roarun', an' rampajun'. My Katie could no abide the noise of ut, but must scream an' flutter an' go runnun' for the mudmost o' a feather-bed. Never yet hov I heard the answer tull the why o' like, God alone hoz thot answer. You an' me be mortal an' we canna know. Enough for us tull know what we like an' what we duslike. I like — thot uz the first word an' the last. An' behind thot like no men can go an' find the why o' ut. I like Samuel, an' I like ut well. Ut uz a sweet name, an' there be a rollun' wonder un the sound o' ut thot passes onderstandun'."

The twilight deepened, and in the silence I gazed upon that splendid dome of a forehead which time could not mar, at the width between the eyes, and at the eyes themselves — clear, out-looking, and wide-seeing. She rose to her feet with an air of dismissing me, saying —

"Ut wull be a dark walk home, an' there wull be more thon a sprunkle o' wet un the sky."

"Have you any regrets, Margaret Henan?" I asked, suddenly and without forethought.

She studied me a moment.

"Aye, thot I no ha' borne another son."

"And you would . . .?" I faltered.

"Aye, thot I would," she answered. "Ut would ha' been hus name."

I went down the dark road between the hawthorn hedges puzzling over the why of like, repeating Samuel to myself and aloud and listening to the rolling wonder in its sound that had charmed her soul and led her life in tragic places. Samuel! There was a rolling wonder in the sound. Aye, there was!

The Scorn of Women

Once Freda and Mrs. Eppingwell clashed.

Now Freda was a Greek girl and a dancer. At least she purported to be Greek; but this was doubted by many, for her classic face had over-much strength in it, and the tides of hell which rose in her eyes made at rare moments her ethnology the more dubious. To a few–men–this sight had been vouchsafed, and though long years may have passed, they have not forgotten, nor will they ever forget. She never talked of herself, so that it were well to let it go down that when in repose, expurgated, Greek she certainly was. Her furs were the most magnificent in all the country from Chilcoot to St. Michael's, and her name was common on the lips of men. But Mrs. Eppingwell was the wife of a captain; also a social constellation of the first magnitude, the path of her orbit marking the most select coterie in Dawson,–a coterie captioned by the profane as the "official clique." Sitka Charley had travelled trail with her once, when famine drew tight and a man's life was less than a cup of flour, and his judgment placed her above all women. Sitka Charley was an Indian; his criteria were primitive; but his word was flat, and his verdict a hall-mark in every camp under the circle.

These two women were man-conquering, man-subduing machines, each in her own way, and their ways were different. Mrs. Eppingwell ruled in her own house, and at the Barracks, where were younger sons galore, to say nothing of the chiefs of the police, the executive, and the judiciary. Freda ruled down in the town; but the men she ruled were the same who functioned socially at the Barracks or were fed tea and canned preserves at the hand of Mrs. Eppingwell in her hillside cabin of rough-hewn logs. Each knew the other existed; but their lives were apart as the Poles, and while they must have heard stray bits of news and were curious, they were never known to ask a question. And there would have been no trouble had not a free lance in the shape of the model-woman come into the land on the first ice, with a spanking dog-team and a cosmopolitan reputation. Loraine Lisznayi–alliterative, dramatic, and Hungarian–precipitated the strife, and because of her Mrs. Eppingwell left her hillside and invaded Freda's domain, and Freda likewise went up from the town to spread confusion and embarrassment at the Governor's ball.

All of which may be ancient history so far as the Klondike is concerned, but very few, even in Dawson, know the inner truth of the matter; nor beyond those few are there any fit to measure the wife of the captain or the Greek dancer. And that all are now permitted to understand, let honor be accorded Sitka Charley. From his lips fell the main facts in the screed herewith presented. It ill befits that Freda herself should

have waxed confidential to a mere scribbler of words, or that Mrs. Eppingwell made mention of the things which happened. They may have spoken, but it is unlikely.

II

Floyd Vanderlip was a strong man, apparently. Hard work and hard grub had no terrors for him, as his early history in the country attested. In danger he was a lion, and when he held in check half a thousand starving men, as he once did, it was remarked that no cooler eye ever took the glint of sunshine on a rifle-sight. He had but one weakness, and even that, rising from out his strength, was of a negative sort. His parts were strong, but they lacked co-ordination. Now it happened that while his centre of amativeness was pronounced, it had lain mute and passive during the years he lived on moose and salmon and chased glowing Eldorados over chill divides. But when he finally blazed the corner-post and centre-stakes on one of the richest Klondike claims, it began to quicken; and when he took his place in society, a full-fledged Bonanza King, it awoke and took charge of him. He suddenly recollected a girl in the States, and it came to him quite forcibly, not only that she might be waiting for him, but that a wife was a very pleasant acquisition for a man who lived some several degrees north of 53. So he wrote an appropriate note, enclosed a letter of credit generous enough to cover all expenses, including trousseau and chaperon, and addressed it to one Flossie. Flossie? One could imagine the rest. However, after that he built a comfortable cabin on his claim, bought another in Dawson, and broke the news to his friends.

And just here is where the lack of co-ordination came into play. The waiting was tedious, and having been long denied, the amative element could not brook further delay. Flossie was coming; but Loraine Lisznayi was here. And not only was Loraine Lisznayi here, but her cosmopolitan reputation was somewhat the worse for wear, and she was not exactly so young as when she posed in the studios of artist queens and received at her door the cards of cardinals and princes. Also, her finances were unhealthy. Having run the gamut in her time, she was now not averse to trying conclusions with a Bonanza King whose wealth was such that he could not guess it within six figures. Like a wise soldier casting about after years of service for a comfortable billet, she had come into the Northland to be married. So, one day, her eyes flashed up into Floyd Vanderlip's as he was buying table linen for Flossie in the P. C. Company's store, and the thing was settled out of hand.

When a man is free much may go unquestioned, which, should he be rash enough to cumber himself with domestic ties, society will instantly challenge. Thus it was with Floyd Vanderlip. Flossie was coming, and a low buzz went up when Loraine Lisznayi rode down the main street behind his wolf-dogs. She accompanied the lady reporter of the "Kansas City Star" when photographs were taken of his Bonanza properties, and watched the genesis of a six-column article. At that time they were dined royally in Flossie's cabin, on Flossie's table linen. Likewise there were comings and goings, and junketings, all perfectly proper, by the way, which caused the men to say sharp things and the women to be spiteful. Only Mrs. Eppingwell did not hear. The distant hum of

wagging tongues rose faintly, but she was prone to believe good of people and to close her ears to evil; so she paid no heed.

Not so with Freda. She had no cause to love men, but, by some strange alchemy of her nature, her heart went out to women,–to women whom she had less cause to love. And her heart went out to Flossie, even then travelling the Long Trail and facing into the bitter North to meet a man who might not wait for her. A shrinking, clinging sort of a girl, Freda pictured her, with weak mouth and pretty pouting lips, blow-away sun-kissed hair, and eyes full of the merry shallows and the lesser joys of life. But she also pictured Flossie, face nose-strapped and frost-rimed, stumbling wearily behind the dogs. Wherefore she smiled, dancing one night, upon Floyd Vanderlip.

Few men are so constituted that they may receive the smile of Freda unmoved; nor among them can Floyd Vanderlip be accounted. The grace he had found with the model-woman had caused him to re-measure himself, and by the favor in which he now stood with the Greek dancer he felt himself doubly a man. There were unknown qualities and depths in him, evidently, which they perceived. He did not know exactly what those qualities and depths were, but he had a hazy idea that they were there somewhere, and of them was bred a great pride in himself. A man who could force two women such as these to look upon him a second time, was certainly a most remarkable man. Some day, when he had the time, he would sit down and analyze his strength; but now, just now, he would take what the gods had given him. And a thin little thought began to lift itself, and he fell to wondering whatever under the sun he had seen in Flossie, and to regret exceedingly that he had sent for her. Of course, Freda was out of the running. His dumps were the richest on Bonanza Creek, and they were many, while he was a man of responsibility and position. But Loraine Lisznayi–she was just the woman. Her life had been large; she could do the honors of his establishment and give tone to his dollars.

But Freda smiled, and continued to smile, till he came to spend much time with her. When she, too, rode down the street behind his wolf-dogs, the model-woman found food for thought, and the next time they were together dazzled him with her princes and cardinals and personal little anecdotes of courts and kings. She also showed him dainty missives, superscribed, “My dear Loraine,” and ended “Most affectionately yours,” and signed by the given name of a real live queen on a throne. And he marvelled in his heart that the great woman should deign to waste so much as a moment upon him. But she played him cleverly, making flattering contrasts and comparisons between him and the noble phantoms she drew mainly from her fancy, till he went away dizzy with self-delight and sorrowing for the world which had been denied him so long. Freda was a more masterful woman. If she flattered, no one knew it. Should she stoop, the stoop were unobserved. If a man felt she thought well of him, so subtly was the feeling conveyed that he could not for the life of him say why or how. So she tightened her grip upon Floyd Vanderlip and rode daily behind his dogs.

And just here is where the mistake occurred. The buzz rose loudly and more definitely, coupled now with the name of the dancer, and Mrs. Eppingwell heard. She, too,

thought of Flossie lifting her moccasined feet through the endless hours, and Floyd Vanderlip was invited up the hillside to tea, and invited often. This quite took his breath away, and he became drunken with appreciation of himself. Never was man so maltreated. His soul had become a thing for which three women struggled, while a fourth was on the way to claim it. And three such women!

But Mrs. Eppingwell and the mistake she made. She spoke of the affair, tentatively, to Sitka Charley, who had sold dogs to the Greek girl. But no names were mentioned. The nearest approach to it was when Mrs. Eppingwell said, "This–er–horrid woman," and Sitka Charley, with the model-woman strong in his thoughts, had echoed, "–er–horrid woman." And he agreed with her, that it was a wicked thing for a woman to come between a man and the girl he was to marry. "A mere girl, Charley," she said, "I am sure she is. And she is coming into a strange country without a friend when she gets here. We must do something." Sitka Charley promised his help, and went away thinking what a wicked woman this Loraine Lisznayi must be, also what noble women Mrs. Eppingwell and Freda were to interest themselves in the welfare of the unknown Flossie.

Now Mrs. Eppingwell was open as the day. To Sitka Charley, who took her once past the Hills of Silence, belongs the glory of having memorialized her clear-searching eyes, her clear-ringing voice, and her utter downright frankness. Her lips had a way of stiffening to command, and she was used to coming straight to the point. Having taken Floyd Vanderlip's measurement, she did not dare this with him; but she was not afraid to go down into the town to Freda. And down she went, in the bright light of day, to the house of the dancer. She was above silly tongues, as was her husband, the captain. She wished to see this woman and to speak with her, nor was she aware of any reason why she should not. So she stood in the snow at the Greek girl's door, with the frost at sixty below, and parleyed with the waiting-maid for a full five minutes. She had also the pleasure of being turned away from that door, and of going back up the hill, wroth at heart for the indignity which had been put upon her. "Who was this woman that she should refuse to see her?" she asked herself. One would think it the other way around, and she herself but a dancing girl denied at the door of the wife of a captain. As it was, she knew, had Freda come up the hill to her,–no matter what the errand,–she would have made her welcome at her fire, and they would have sat there as two women, and talked, merely as two women. She had overstepped convention and lowered herself, but she had thought it different with the women down in the town. And she was ashamed that she had laid herself open to such dishonor, and her thoughts of Freda were unkind.

Not that Freda deserved this. Mrs. Eppingwell had descended to meet her who was without caste, while she, strong in the traditions of her own earlier status, had not permitted it. She could worship such a woman, and she would have asked no greater joy than to have had her into the cabin and sat with her, just sat with her, for an hour. But her respect for Mrs. Eppingwell, and her respect for herself, who was beyond respect, had prevented her doing that which she most desired. Though not quite recovered from

the recent visit of Mrs. McFee, the wife of the minister, who had descended upon her in a whirlwind of exhortation and brimstone, she could not imagine what had prompted the present visit. She was not aware of any particular wrong she had done, and surely this woman who waited at the door was not concerned with the welfare of her soul. Why had she come? For all the curiosity she could not help but feel, she steeled herself in the pride of those who are without pride, and trembled in the inner room like a maid on the first caress of a lover. If Mrs. Eppingwell suffered going up the hill, she too suffered, lying face downward on the bed, dry-eyed, dry-mouthed, dumb.

Mrs. Eppingwell's knowledge of human nature was great. She aimed at universality. She had found it easy to step from the civilized and contemplate things from the barbaric aspect. She could comprehend certain primal and analogous characteristics in a hungry wolf-dog or a starving man, and predicate lines of action to be pursued by either under like conditions. To her, a woman was a woman, whether garbed in purple or the rags of the gutter; Freda was a woman. She would not have been surprised had she been taken into the dancer's cabin and encountered on common ground; nor surprised had she been taken in and flaunted in prideless arrogance. But to be treated as she had been treated, was unexpected and disappointing. Ergo, she had not caught Freda's point of view. And this was good. There are some points of view which cannot be gained save through much travail and personal crucifixion, and it were well for the world that its Mrs. Eppingwells should, in certain ways, fall short of universality. One cannot understand defilement without laying hands to pitch, which is very sticky, while there be plenty willing to undertake the experiment. All of which is of small concern, beyond the fact that it gave Mrs. Eppingwell ground for grievance, and bred for her a greater love in the Greek girl's heart.

III

And in this way things went along for a month,–Mrs. Eppingwell striving to withhold the man from the Greek dancer's blandishments against the time of Flossie's coming; Flossie lessening the miles each day on the dreary trail; Freda pitting her strength against the model-woman; the model-woman straining every nerve to land the prize; and the man moving through it all like a flying shuttle, very proud of himself, whom he believed to be a second Don Juan.

It was nobody's fault except the man's that Loraine Lisznayi at last landed him. The way of a man with a maid may be too wonderful to know, but the way of a woman with a man passeth all conception; whence the prophet were indeed unwise who would dare forecast Floyd Vanderlip's course twenty-four hours in advance. Perhaps the model-woman's attraction lay in that to the eye she was a handsome animal; perhaps she fascinated him with her old-world talk of palaces and princes; leastwise she dazzled him whose life had been worked out in uncultured roughness, and he at last agreed to her suggestion of a run down the river and a marriage at Forty Mile. In token of his intention he bought dogs from Sitka Charley,–more than one sled is necessary when a woman like Loraine Lisznayi takes to the trail, and then went up the creek to give orders for the superintendence of his Bonanza mines during his absence.

He had given it out, rather vaguely, that he needed the animals for sledding lumber from the mill to his sluices, and right here is where Sitka Charley demonstrated his fitness. He agreed to furnish dogs on a given date, but no sooner had Floyd Vanderlip turned his toes up-creek, than Charley hied himself away in perturbation to Loraine Lisznayi. Did she know where Mr. Vanderlip had gone? He had agreed to supply that gentleman with a big string of dogs by a certain time; but that shameless one, the German trader Meyers, had been buying up the brutes and skimped the market. It was very necessary he should see Mr. Vanderlip, because of the shameless one he would be all of a week behindhand in filling the contract. She did know where he had gone? Up-creek? Good! He would strike out after him at once and inform him of the unhappy delay. Did he understand her to say that Mr. Vanderlip needed the dogs on Friday night? that he must have them by that time? It was too bad, but it was the fault of the shameless one who had bid up the prices. They had jumped fifty dollars per head, and should he buy on the rising market he would lose by the contract. He wondered if Mr. Vanderlip would be willing to meet the advance. She knew he would? Being Mr. Vanderlip's friend, she would even meet the difference herself? And he was to say nothing about it? She was kind to so look to his interests. Friday night, did she say? Good! The dogs would be on hand.

An hour later, Freda knew the elopement was to be pulled off on Friday night; also, that Floyd Vanderlip had gone up-creek, and her hands were tied. On Friday morning, Devereaux, the official courier, bearing despatches from the Governor, arrived over the ice. Besides the despatches, he brought news of Flossie. He had passed her camp at Sixty Mile; humans and dogs were in good condition; and she would doubtless be in on the morrow. Mrs. Eppingwell experienced a great relief on hearing this; Floyd Vanderlip was safe up-creek, and ere the Greek girl could again lay hands upon him, his bride would be on the ground. But that afternoon her big St. Bernard, valiantly defending her front stoop, was downed by a foraging party of trail-starved Malemutes. He was buried beneath the hirsute mass for about thirty seconds, when rescued by a couple of axes and as many stout men. Had he remained down two minutes, the chances were large that he would have been roughly apportioned and carried away in the respective bellies of the attacking party; but as it was, it was a mere case of neat and expeditious mangling. Sitka Charley came to repair the damages, especially a right fore-paw which had inadvertently been left a fraction of a second too long in some other dog's mouth. As he put on his mittens to go, the talk turned upon Flossie and in natural sequence passed on to the–"er horrid woman." Sitka Charley remarked incidentally that she intended jumping out down river that night with Floyd Vanderlip, and further ventured the information that accidents were very likely at that time of year.

So Mrs. Eppingwell's thoughts of Freda were unkinder than ever. She wrote a note, addressed it to the man in question, and intrusted it to a messenger who lay in wait at the mouth of Bonanza Creek. Another man, bearing a note from Freda, also waited at that strategic point. So it happened that Floyd Vanderlip, riding his sled merrily down

with the last daylight, received the notes together. He tore Freda's across. No, he would not go to see her. There were greater things afoot that night. Besides, she was out of the running. But Mrs. Eppingwell! He would observe her last wish,–or rather, the last wish it would be possible for him to observe,–and meet her at the Governor's ball to hear what she had to say. From the tone of the writing it was evidently important; perhaps–He smiled fondly, but failed to shape the thought. Confound it all, what a lucky fellow he was with the women any way! Scattering her letter to the frost, he mushed the dogs into a swinging lope and headed for his cabin. It was to be a masquerade, and he had to dig up the costume used at the Opera House a couple of months before. Also, he had to shave and to eat. Thus it was that he, alone of all interested, was unaware of Flossie's proximity.

"Have them down to the water-hole off the hospital, at midnight, sharp. Don't fail me," he said to Sitka Charley, who dropped in with the advice that only one dog was lacking to fill the bill, and that that one would be forthcoming in an hour or so. "Here's the sack. There's the scales. Weigh out your own dust and don't bother me. I've got to get ready for the ball."

Sitka Charley weighed out his pay and departed, carrying with him a letter to Loraine Lisznayi, the contents of which he correctly imagined to refer to a meeting at the water-hole of the hospital, at midnight, sharp.

IV

Twice Freda sent messengers up to the Barracks, where the dance was in full swing, and as often they came back without answers. Then she did what only Freda could do–put on her furs, masked her face, and went up herself to the Governor's ball. Now there happened to be a custom–not an original one by any means–to which the official clique had long since become addicted. It was a very wise custom, for it furnished protection to the womankind of the officials and gave greater selectness to their revels. Whenever a masquerade was given, a committee was chosen, the sole function of which was to stand by the door and peep beneath each and every mask. Most men did not clamor to be placed upon this committee, while the very ones who least desired the honor were the ones whose services were most required. The chaplain was not well enough acquainted with the faces and places of the townspeople to know whom to admit and whom to turn away. In like condition were the several other worthy gentlemen who would have asked nothing better than to so serve. To fill the coveted place, Mrs. McFee would have risked her chance of salvation, and did, one night, when a certain trio passed in under her guns and muddled things considerably before their identity was discovered. Thereafter only the fit were chosen, and very ungracefully did they respond.

On this particular night Prince was at the door. Pressure had been brought to bear, and he had not yet recovered from amaze at his having consented to undertake a task which bid fair to lose him half his friends, merely for the sake of pleasing the other half. Three or four of the men he had refused were men whom he had known on creek and trail,–good comrades, but not exactly eligible for so select an affair. He was canvassing the expediency of resigning the post there and then, when a woman tripped in under

the light. Freda! He could swear it by the furs, did he not know that poise of head so well. The last one to expect in all the world. He had given her better judgment than to thus venture the ignominy of refusal, or, if she passed, the scorn of women. He shook his head, without scrutiny; he knew her too well to be mistaken. But she pressed closer. She lifted the black silk ribbon and as quickly lowered it again. For one flashing, eternal second he looked upon her face. It was not for nothing, the saying which had arisen in the country, that Freda played with men as a child with bubbles. Not a word was spoken. Prince stepped aside, and a few moments later might have been seen resigning, with warm incoherence, the post to which he had been unfaithful.

A woman, flexible of form, slender, yet rhythmic of strength in every movement, now pausing with this group, now scanning that, urged a restless and devious course among the revellers. Men recognized the furs, and marvelled,–men who should have served upon the door committee; but they were not prone to speech. Not so with the women. They had better eyes for the lines of figure and tricks of carriage, and they knew this form to be one with which they were unfamiliar; likewise the furs. Mrs. McFee, emerging from the supper-room where all was in readiness, caught one flash of the blazing, questing eyes through the silken mask-slits, and received a start. She tried to recollect where she had seen the like, and a vivid picture was recalled of a certain proud and rebellious sinner whom she had once encountered on a fruitless errand for the Lord.

So it was that the good woman took the trail in hot and righteous wrath, a trail which brought her ultimately into the company of Mrs. Eppingwell and Floyd Vanderlip. Mrs. Eppingwell had just found the opportunity to talk with the man. She had determined, now that Flossie was so near at hand, to proceed directly to the point, and an incisive little ethical discourse was titillating on the end of her tongue, when the couple became three. She noted, and pleasurably, the faintly foreign accent of the "Beg pardon" with which the furred woman prefaced her immediate appropriation of Floyd Vanderlip; and she courteously bowed her permission for them to draw a little apart.

Then it was that Mrs. McFee's righteous hand descended, and accompanying it in its descent was a black mask torn from a startled woman. A wonderful face and brilliant eyes were exposed to the quiet curiosity of those who looked that way, and they were everybody. Floyd Vanderlip was rather confused. The situation demanded instant action on the part of a man who was not beyond his depth, while he hardly knew where he was. He stared helplessly about him. Mrs. Eppingwell was perplexed. She could not comprehend. An explanation was forthcoming, somewhere, and Mrs. McFee was equal to it.

"Mrs. Eppingwell," and her Celtic voice rose shrilly, "it is with great pleasure I make you acquainted with Freda Moloof, Miss Freda Moloof, as I understand."

Freda involuntarily turned. With her own face bared, she felt as in a dream, naked, upon her turned the clothed features and gleaming eyes of the masked circle. It seemed, almost, as though a hungry wolf-pack girdled her, ready to drag her down. It might

chance that some felt pity for her, she thought, and at the thought, hardened. She would by far prefer their scorn. Strong of heart was she, this woman, and though she had hunted the prey into the midst of the pack, Mrs. Eppingwell or no Mrs. Eppingwell, she could not forego the kill.

But here Mrs. Eppingwell did a strange thing. So this, at last, was Freda, she mused, the dancer and the destroyer of men; the woman from whose door she had been turned. And she, too, felt the imperious creature's nakedness as though it were her own. Perhaps it was this, her Saxon disinclination to meet a disadvantaged foe, perhaps, forsooth, that it might give her greater strength in the struggle for the man, and it might have been a little of both; but be that as it may, she did do this strange thing. When Mrs. McFee's thin voice, vibrant with malice, had raised, and Freda turned involuntarily, Mrs. Eppingwell also turned, removed her mask, and inclined her head in acknowledgment.

It was another flashing, eternal second, during which these two women regarded each other. The one, eyes blazing, meteoric; at bay, aggressive; suffering in advance and resenting in advance the scorn and ridicule and insult she had thrown herself open to; a beautiful, burning, bubbling lava cone of flesh and spirit. And the other, calm-eyed, cool-browed, serene; strong in her own integrity, with faith in herself, thoroughly at ease; dispassionate, imperturbable; a figure chiselled from some cold marble quarry. Whatever gulf there might exist, she recognized it not. No bridging, no descending; her attitude was that of perfect equality. She stood tranquilly on the ground of their common womanhood. And this maddened Freda. Not so, had she been of lesser breed; but her soul's plummet knew not the bottomless, and she could follow the other into the deeps of her deepest depths and read her aright. "Why do you not draw back your garment's hem?" she was fain to cry out, all in that flashing, dazzling second. "Spit upon me, revile me, and it were greater mercy than this!" She trembled. Her nostrils distended and quivered. But she drew herself in check, returned the inclination of head, and turned to the man.

"Come with me, Floyd," she said simply. "I want you now."

"What the–" he began explosively, and quit as suddenly, discreet enough to not round it off. Where the deuce had his wits gone, anyway? Was ever a man more foolishly placed? He gurgled deep down in his throat and high up in the roof of his mouth, heaved as one his big shoulders and his indecision, and glared appealingly at the two women.

"I beg pardon, just a moment, but may I speak first with Mr. Vanderlip?" Mrs. Eppingwell's voice, though flute-like and low, predicated will in its every cadence.

The man looked his gratitude. He, at least, was willing enough.

"I'm very sorry," from Freda. "There isn't time. He must come at once." The conventional phrases dropped easily from her lips, but she could not forbear to smile inwardly at their inadequacy and weakness. She would much rather have shrieked.

"But, Miss Moloof, who are you that you may possess yourself of Mr. Vanderlip and command his actions?"

Whereupon relief brightened his face, and the man beamed his approval. Trust Mrs. Eppingwell to drag him clear. Freda had met her match this time.

"I–I–" Freda hesitated, and then her feminine mind putting on its harness–"and who are you to ask this question?"

"I? I am Mrs. Eppingwell, and–"

"There!" the other broke in sharply. "You are the wife of a captain, who is therefore your husband. I am only a dancing girl. What do you with this man?"

"Such unprecedented behavior!" Mrs. McFee ruffled herself and cleared for action, but Mrs. Eppingwell shut her mouth with a look and developed a new attack.

"Since Miss Moloof appears to hold claims upon you, Mr. Vanderlip, and is in too great haste to grant me a few seconds of your time, I am forced to appeal directly to you. May I speak with you, alone, and now?"

Mrs. McFee's jaws brought together with a snap. That settled the disgraceful situation.

"Why, er–that is, certainly," the man stammered. "Of course, of course," growing more effusive at the prospect of deliverance.

Men are only gregarious vertebrates, domesticated and evolved, and the chances are large that it was because the Greek girl had in her time dealt with wilder masculine beasts of the human sort; for she turned upon the man with hell's tides aflood in her blazing eyes, much as a bespangled lady upon a lion which has suddenly imbibed the pernicious theory that he is a free agent. The beast in him fawned to the lash.

"That is to say, ah, afterward. To-morrow, Mrs. Eppingwell; yes, to-morrow. That is what I meant." He solaced himself with the fact, should he remain, that more embarrassment awaited. Also, he had an engagement which he must keep shortly, down by the water-hole off the hospital. Ye gods! he had never given Freda credit! Wasn't she magnificent!

"I'll thank you for my mask, Mrs. McFee."

That lady, for the nonce speechless, turned over the article in question.

"Good-night, Miss Moloof." Mrs. Eppingwell was royal even in defeat.

Freda reciprocated, though barely downing the impulse to clasp the other's knees and beg forgiveness,–no, not forgiveness, but something, she knew not what, but which she none the less greatly desired.

The man was for her taking his arm; but she had made her kill in the midst of the pack, and that which led kings to drag their vanquished at the chariot-tail, led her toward the door alone, Floyd Vanderlip close at heel and striving to re-establish his mental equilibrium.

V

It was bitter cold. As the trail wound, a quarter of a mile brought them to the dancer's cabin, by which time her moist breath had coated her face frostily, while his had massed his heavy mustache till conversation was painful. By the greenish light of the aurora borealis, the quicksilver showed itself frozen hard in the bulb of the thermometer which hung outside the door. A thousand dogs, in pitiful chorus, wailed

their ancient wrongs and claimed mercy from the unheeding stars. Not a breath of air was moving. For them there was no shelter from the cold, no shrewd crawling to leeward in snug nooks. The frost was everywhere, and they lay in the open, ever and anon stretching their trail-stiffened muscles and lifting the long wolf-howl.

They did not talk at first, the man and the woman. While the maid helped Freda off with her wraps, Floyd Vanderlip replenished the fire; and by the time the maid had withdrawn to an inner room, his head over the stove, he was busily thawing out his burdened upper lip. After that he rolled a cigarette and watched her lazily through the fragrant eddies. She stole a glance at the clock. It lacked half an hour of midnight. How was she to hold him? Was he angry for that which she had done? What was his mood? What mood of hers could meet his best? Not that she doubted herself. No, no. Hold him she could, if need be at pistol point, till Sitka Charley's work was done, and Devereaux's too.

There were many ways, and with her knowledge of this her contempt for the man increased. As she leaned her head on her hand, a fleeting vision of her own girlhood, with its mournful climacteric and tragic ebb, was vouchsafed her, and for the moment she was minded to read him a lesson from it. God! it must be less than human brute who could not be held by such a tale, told as she could tell it, but–bah! He was not worth it, nor worth the pain to her. The candle was positioned just right, and even as she thought of these things sacredly shameful to her, he was pleasuring in the transparent pinkiness of her ear. She noted his eye, took the cue, and turned her head till the clean profile of the face was presented. Not the least was that profile among her virtues. She could not help the lines upon which she had been builded, and they were very good; but she had long since learned those lines, and though little they needed, was not above advantaging them to the best of her ability. The candle began to flicker. She could not do anything ungracefully, but that did not prevent her improving upon nature a bit, when she reached forth and deftly snuffed the red wick from the midst of the yellow flame. Again she rested head on hand, this time regarding the man thoughtfully, and any man is pleased when thus regarded by a pretty woman.

She was in little haste to begin. If dalliance were to his liking, it was to hers. To him it was very comfortable, soothing his lungs with nicotine and gazing upon her. It was snug and warm here, while down by the water-hole began a trail which he would soon be hitting through the chilly hours. He felt he ought to be angry with Freda for the scene she had created, but somehow he didn't feel a bit wrathful. Like as not there wouldn't have been any scene if it hadn't been for that McFee woman. If he were the Governor, he would put a poll tax of a hundred ounces a quarter upon her and her kind and all gospel sharks and sky pilots. And certainly Freda had behaved very ladylike, held her own with Mrs. Eppingwell besides. Never gave the girl credit for the grit. He looked lingeringly over her, coming back now and again to the eyes, behind the deep earnestness of which he could not guess lay concealed a deeper sneer. And, Jove, wasn't she well put up! Wonder why she looked at him so? Did she want to marry him, too? Like as not; but she wasn't the only one. Her looks were in her favor,

weren't they? And young–younger than Loraine Lisznayi. She couldn't be more than twenty-three or four, twenty-five at most. And she'd never get stout. Anybody could guess that the first time. He couldn't say it of Loraine, though. She certainly had put on flesh since the day she served as model. Huh! once he got her on trail he'd take it off. Put her on the snowshoes to break ahead of the dogs. Never knew it to fail, yet. But his thought leaped ahead to the palace under the lazy Mediterranean sky–and how would it be with Loraine then? No frost, no trail, no famine now and again to cheer the monotony, and she getting older and piling it on with every sunrise. While this girl Freda–he sighed his unconscious regret that he had missed being born under the flag of the Turk, and came back to Alaska.

"Well?" Both hands of the clock pointed perpendicularly to midnight, and it was high time he was getting down to the water-hole.

"Oh!" Freda started, and she did it prettily, delighting him as his fellows have ever been delighted by their womankind. When a man is made to believe that a woman, looking upon him thoughtfully, has lost herself in meditation over him, that man needs be an extremely cold-blooded individual in order to trim his sheets, set a lookout, and steer clear.

"I was just wondering what you wanted to see me about," he explained, drawing his chair up to hers by the table.

"Floyd," she looked him steadily in the eyes, "I am tired of the whole business. I want to go away. I can't live it out here till the river breaks. If I try, I'll die. I am sure of it. I want to quit it all and go away, and I want to do it at once."

She laid her hand in mute appeal upon the back of his, which turned over and became a prison. Another one, he thought, just throwing herself at him. Guess it wouldn't hurt Loraine to cool her feet by the water-hole a little longer.

"Well?" This time from Freda, but softly and anxiously.

"I don't know what to say," he hastened to answer, adding to himself that it was coming along quicker than he had expected. "Nothing I'd like better, Freda. You know that well enough." He pressed her hand, palm to palm. She nodded. Could she wonder that she despised the breed?

"But you see, I–I'm engaged. Of course you know that. And the girl's coming into the country to marry me. Don't know what was up with me when I asked her, but it was a long while back, and I was all-fired young–"

"I want to go away, out of the land, anywhere," she went on, disregarding the obstacle he had reared up and apologized for. "I have been running over the men I know and reached the conclusion that–that–"

"I was the likeliest of the lot?"

She smiled her gratitude for his having saved her the embarrassment of confession. He drew her head against his shoulder with the free hand, and somehow the scent of her hair got into his nostrils. Then he discovered that a common pulse throbbed, throbbed, throbbed, where their palms were in contact. This phenomenon is easily comprehensible from a physiological standpoint, but to the man who makes the discovery for the first

time, it is a most wonderful thing. Floyd Vanderlip had caressed more shovel-handles than women's hands in his time, so this was an experience quite new and delightfully strange. And when Freda turned her head against his shoulder, her hair brushing his cheek till his eyes met hers, full and at close range, luminously soft, ay, and tender–why, whose fault was it that he lost his grip utterly? False to Flossie, why not to Loraine? Even if the women did keep bothering him, that was no reason he should make up his mind in a hurry. Why, he had slathers of money, and Freda was just the girl to grace it. A wife she'd make him for other men to envy. But go slow. He must be cautious.

"You don't happen to care for palaces, do you?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Well, I had a hankering after them myself, till I got to thinking, a while back, and I've about sized it up that one'd get fat living in palaces, and soft and lazy."

"Yes, it's nice for a time, but you soon grow tired of it, I imagine," she hastened to reassure him. "The world is good, but life should be many-sided. Rough and knock about for a while, and then rest up somewhere. Off to the South Seas on a yacht, then a nibble of Paris; a winter in South America and a summer in Norway; a few months in England–"

"Good society?"

"Most certainly–the best; and then, heigho! for the dogs and sleds and the Hudson Bay Country. Change, you know. A strong man like you, full of vitality and go, could not possibly stand a palace for a year. It is all very well for effeminate men, but you weren't made for such a life. You are masculine, intensely masculine."

"Think so?"

"It does not require thinking. I know. Have you ever noticed that it was easy to make women care for you?"

His dubious innocence was superb.

"It is very easy. And why? Because you are masculine. You strike the deepest chords of a woman's heart. You are something to cling to,–big-muscled, strong, and brave. In short, because you are a man."

She shot a glance at the clock. It was half after the hour. She had given a margin of thirty minutes to Sitka Charley; and it did not matter, now, when Devereaux arrived. Her work was done. She lifted her head, laughed her genuine mirth, slipped her hand clear, and rising to her feet called the maid.

"Alice, help Mr. Vanderlip on with his parka. His mittens are on the sill by the stove."

The man could not understand.

"Let me thank you for your kindness, Floyd. Your time was invaluable to me, and it was indeed good of you. The turning to the left, as you leave the cabin, leads the quickest to the water-hole. Good-night. I am going to bed."

Floyd Vanderlip employed strong words to express his perplexity and disappointment. Alice did not like to hear men swear, so dropped his parka on the floor and tossed his mittens on top of it. Then he made a break for Freda, and she ruined her

retreat to the inner room by tripping over the parka. He brought her up standing with a rude grip on the wrist. But she only laughed. She was not afraid of men. Had they not wrought their worst with her, and did she not still endure?

"Don't be rough," she said finally. "On second thought," here she looked at his detaining hand, "I've decided not to go to bed yet a while. Do sit down and be comfortable instead of ridiculous. Any questions?"

"Yes, my lady, and reckoning, too." He still kept his hold. "What do you know about the water-hole? What did you mean by–no, never mind. One question at a time."

"Oh, nothing much. Sitka Charley had an appointment there with somebody you may know, and not being anxious for a man of your known charm to be present, fell back upon me to kindly help him. That's all. They're off now, and a good half hour ago."

"Where? Down river and without me? And he an Indian!"

"There's no accounting for taste, you know, especially in a woman."

"But how do I stand in this deal? I've lost four thousand dollars' worth of dogs and a tidy bit of a woman, and nothing to show for it. Except you," he added as an afterthought, "and cheap you are at the price."

Freda shrugged her shoulders.

"You might as well get ready. I'm going out to borrow a couple of teams of dogs, and we'll start in as many hours."

"I am very sorry, but I'm going to bed."

"You'll pack if you know what's good for you. Go to bed, or not, when I get my dogs outside, so help me, onto the sled you go. Mebbe you fooled with me, but I'll just see your bluff and take you in earnest. Hear me?"

He closed on her wrist till it hurt, but on her lips a smile was growing, and she seemed to listen intently to some outside sound. There was a jingle of dog bells, and a man's voice crying "Haw!" as a sled took the turning and drew up at the cabin.

"Now will you let me go to bed?"

As Freda spoke she threw open the door. Into the warm room rushed the frost, and on the threshold, garbed in trail-worn furs, knee-deep in the swirling vapor, against a background of flaming borealis, a woman hesitated. She removed her nose-trap and stood blinking blindly in the white candlelight. Floyd Vanderlip stumbled forward.

"Floyd!" she cried, relieved and glad, and met him with a tired bound.

What could he but kiss the armful of furs? And a pretty armful it was, nestling against him wearily, but happy.

"It was good of you," spoke the armful, "to send Mr. Devereaux with fresh dogs after me, else I would not have been in till to-morrow."

The man looked blankly across at Freda, then the light breaking in upon him, "And wasn't it good of Devereaux to go?"

"Couldn't wait a bit longer, could you, dear?" Flossie snuggled closer.

"Well, I was getting sort of impatient," he confessed glibly, at the same time drawing her up till her feet left the floor, and getting outside the door.

That same night an inexplicable thing happened to the Reverend James Brown, missionary, who lived among the natives several miles down the Yukon and saw to it that the trails they trod led to the white man's paradise. He was roused from his sleep by a strange Indian, who gave into his charge not only the soul but the body of a woman, and having done this drove quickly away. This woman was heavy, and handsome, and angry, and in her wrath unclean words fell from her mouth. This shocked the worthy man, but he was yet young and her presence would have been pernicious (in the simple eyes of his flock), had she not struck out on foot for Dawson with the first gray of dawn.

The shock to Dawson came many days later, when the summer had come and the population honored a certain royal lady at Windsor by lining the Yukon's bank and watching Sitka Charley rise up with flashing paddle and drive the first canoe across the line. On this day of the races, Mrs. Eppingwell, who had learned and unlearned numerous things, saw Freda for the first time since the night of the ball. "Publicly, mind you," as Mrs. McFee expressed it, "without regard or respect for the morals of the community," she went up to the dancer and held out her hand. At first, it is remembered by those who saw, the girl shrank back, then words passed between the two, and Freda, great Freda, broke down and wept on the shoulder of the captain's wife. It was not given to Dawson to know why Mrs. Eppingwell should crave forgiveness of a Greek dancing girl, but she did it publicly, and it was unseemly.

It were well not to forget Mrs. McFee. She took a cabin passage on the first steamer going out. She also took with her a theory which she had achieved in the silent watches of the long dark nights; and it is her conviction that the Northland is unregenerate because it is so cold there. Fear of hell-fire cannot be bred in an ice-box. This may appear dogmatic, but it is Mrs. McFee's theory.

The Sea Farmer

"That wull be the doctor's launch," said Captain MacElrath.

The pilot grunted, while the skipper swept on with his glass from the launch to the strip of beach and to Kingston beyond, and then slowly across the entrance to Howth Head on the northern side.

"The tide's right, and we'll have you docked in two hours," the pilot vouchsafed, with an effort at cheeriness. "Ring's End Basin, is it?"

This time the skipper grunted.

"A dirty Dublin day."

Again the skipper grunted. He was weary with the night of wind in the Irish Channel behind him, the unbroken hours of which he had spent on the bridge. And he was weary with all the voyage behind him — two years and four months between home port and home port, eight hundred and fifty days by his log.

"Proper wunter weather," he answered, after a silence. "The town is undistinct. Ut wull be rainun' guid an' hearty for the day."

Captain MacElrath was a small man, just comfortably able to peep over the canvas dodger of the bridge. The pilot and third officer loomed above him, as did the man at the wheel, a bulky German, deserted from a warship, whom he had signed on in Rangoon. But his lack of inches made Captain MacElrath a no less able man. At least so the Company reckoned, and so would he have reckoned could he have had access to the carefully and minutely compiled record of him filed away in the office archives. But the Company had never given him a hint of its faith in him. It was not the way of the Company, for the Company went on the principle of never allowing an employee to think himself indispensable or even exceedingly useful; wherefore, while quick to censure, it never praised. What was Captain MacElrath, anyway, save a skipper, one skipper of the eighty-odd skippers that commanded the Company's eighty-odd freighters on all the highways and byways of the sea?

Beneath them, on the main deck, two Chinese stokers were carrying breakfast for'ard across the rusty iron plates that told their own grim story of weight and wash of sea. A sailor was taking down the life-line that stretched from the forecastle, past the hatches and cargo-winches, to the bridge-deck ladder.

"A rough voyage," suggested the pilot.

"Aye, she was fair smokin' ot times, but not thot I minded thot so much as the lossin' of time. I hate like onythun' tull loss time."

So saying, Captain MacElrath turned and glanced aft, aloft and alow, and the pilot, following his gaze, saw the mute but convincing explanation of that loss of time. The

smoke-stack, buff-coloured underneath, was white with salt, while the whistle-pipe glittered crystalline in the random sunlight that broke for the instant through a cloud-rift. The port lifeboat was missing, its iron davits, twisted and wrenched, testifying to the mightiness of the blow that had been struck the old Tryapsic. The starboard davits were also empty. The shattered wreck of the lifeboat they had held lay on the fiddley beside the smashed engine-room skylight, which was covered by a tarpaulin. Below, to star-board, on the bridge deck, the pilot saw the crushed mess-room door, roughly bulkheaded against the pounding seas. Abreast of it, on the smokestack guys, and being taken down by the bos'n and a sailor, hung the huge square of rope netting which had failed to break those seas of their force.

"Twice afore I mentioned thot door tull the owners," said Captain MacElrath. "But they said ut would do. There was bug seas thot time. They was uncreditable bug. And thot buggest one dud the domage. Ut fair carried away the door an' laid ut flat on the mess table an' smashed out the chief's room. He was a but sore about ut."

"It must 'a' been a big un," the pilot remarked sympathetically.

"Aye, ut was thot. Thungs was lively for a but. Ut finished the mate. He was on the brudge wuth me, an' I told hum tull take a look tull the wedges o' number one hatch. She was takin' watter freely an' I was no sure o' number one. I dudna like the look o' ut, an' I was fuggerin' maybe tull heave to tull the marn, when she took ut over abaft the brudge. My word, she was a bug one. We got a but of ut ourselves on the brudge. I dudna miss the mate ot the first, what o' routin' out Chips an' bulkheadun' thot door an' stretchun' the tarpaulin over the sky-light. Then he was nowhere to be found. The men ot the wheel said as he seen hum goin' down the lodder just afore she hut us. We looked for'ard, we looked tull hus room, aye looked tull the engine-room, an' we looked along aft on the lower deck, and there he was, on both sides the cover to the steam-pipe runnun' tull the after-wunches."

The pilot ejaculated an oath of amazement and horror.

"Aye," the skipper went on wearily, "an' on both sides the steam-pipe uz well. I tell ye he was in two pieces, splut clean uz a herrin'. The sea must a-caught hum on the upper brudge deck, carried hum clean across the fiddley, an' banged hum head-on tull the pipe cover. It sheered through hum like so much butter, down atween the eyes, an' along the middle of hum, so that one leg an' arm was fast tull the one piece of hum, an' one leg an' arm fast tull the other piece of hum. I tull ye ut was fair grewsome. We putt hum together an' rolled hum in canvas uz we pulled hum out."

The pilot swore again.

"Oh, ut wasna onythun' tull greet about," Captain MacElrath assured him. "'Twas a guid ruddance. He was no a sailor, thot mate-fellow. He was only fut for a pugsty, an' a dom puir apology for thot same."

It is said that there are three kinds of Irish — Catholic, Protestant, and North-of-Ireland — and that the North-of-Ireland Irishman is a transplanted Scotchman. Captain MacElrath was a North-of-Ireland man, and, talking for much of the world like a Scotchman, nothing aroused his ire quicker than being mistaken for a Scotchman.

Irish he stoutly was, and Irish he stoutly abided, though it was with a faint lip-lift of scorn that he mentioned mere South-of-Ireland men, or even Orange-men. Himself he was Presbyterian, while in his own community five men were all that ever mustered at a meeting in the Orange Men's Hall. His community was the Island McGill, where seven thousand of his kind lived in such amity and sobriety that in the whole island there was but one policeman and never a public-house at all.

Captain MacElrath did not like the sea, and had never liked it. He wrung his livelihood from it, and that was all the sea was, the place where he worked, as the mill, the shop, and the counting-house were the places where other men worked. Romance never sang to him her siren song, and Adventure had never shouted in his sluggish blood. He lacked imagination. The wonders of the deep were without significance to him. Tornadoes, hurricanes, waterspouts, and tidal waves were so many obstacles to the way of a ship on the sea and of a master on the bridge — they were that to him, and nothing more. He had seen, and yet not seen, the many marvels and wonders of far lands. Under his eyelids burned the brazen glories of the tropic seas, or ached the bitter gales of the North Atlantic or far South Pacific; but his memory of them was of mess-room doors stove in, of decks awash and hatches threatened, of undue coal consumption, of long passages, and of fresh paint-work spoiled by unexpected squalls of rain.

"I know my buzz'ness," was the way he often put it, and beyond his business was all that he did not know, all that he had seen with the mortal eyes of him and yet that he never dreamed existed. That he knew his business his owners were convinced, or at forty he would not have held command of the Tryapsic, three thousand tons net register, with a cargo capacity of nine thousand tons and valued at fifty-thousand pounds.

He had taken up seafaring through no love of it, but because it had been his destiny, because he had been the second son of his father instead of the first. Island McGill was only so large, and the land could support but a certain definite proportion of those that dwelt upon it. The balance, and a large balance it was, was driven to the sea to seek its bread. It had been so for generations. The eldest sons took the farms from their fathers; to the other sons remained the sea and its salt-ploughing. So it was that Donald MacElrath, farmer's son and farm-boy himself, had shifted from the soil he loved to the sea he hated and which it was his destiny to farm. And farmed it he had, for twenty years, shrewd, cool-headed, sober, industrious, and thrifty, rising from ship's boy and forecastle hand to mate and master of sailing-ships and thence into steam, second officer, first, and master, from small command to larger, and at last to the bridge of the old Tryapsic — old, to be sure, but worth her fifty thousand pounds and still able to bear up in all seas, and weather her nine thousand tons of freight.

From the bridge of the Tryapsic, the high place he had gained in the competition of men, he stared at Dublin harbour opening out, at the town obscured by the dark sky of the dreary wind-driven day, and at the tangled tracery of spars and rigging of the harbour shipping. Back from twice around the world he was, and from interminable

junketings up and down on far stretches, home-coming to the wife he had not seen in eight-and-twenty months, and to the child he had never seen and that was already walking and talking. He saw the watch below of stokers and trimmers bobbing out of the forecastle doors like rabbits from a warren and making their way aft over the rusty deck to the mustering of the port doctor. They were Chinese, with expressionless, Sphinx-like faces, and they walked in peculiar shambling fashion, dragging their feet as if the clumsy brogans were too heavy for their lean shanks.

He saw them and he did not see them, as he passed his hand beneath his visored cap and scratched reflectively his mop of sandy hair. For the scene before him was but the background in his brain for the vision of peace that was his — a vision that was his often during long nights on the bridge when the old Tryapsic wallowed on the vexed ocean floor, her decks awash, her rigging thrumming in the gale gusts or snow squalls or driving tropic rain. And the vision he saw was of farm and farm-house and straw-thatched outbuildings, of children playing in the sun, and the good wife at the door, of lowing kine, and clucking fowls, and the stamp of horses in the stable, of his father's farm next to him, with, beyond, the woodless, rolling land and the hedged fields, neat and orderly, extending to the crest of the smooth, soft hills. It was his vision and his dream, his Romance and Adventure, the goal of all his effort, the high reward for the salt-ploughing and the long, long furrows he ran up and down the whole world around in his farming of the sea.

In simple taste and homely inclination this much-travelled map was more simple and homely than the veriest yokel. Seventy-one years his father was, and had never slept a night out of his own bed in his own house on Island McGill. That was the life ideal, so Captain MacElrath considered, and he was prone to marvel that any man, not under compulsion, should leave a farm to go to sea. To this much-travelled man the whole world was as familiar as the village to the cobbler sitting in his shop. To Captain MacElrath the world was a village. In his mind's eye he saw its streets a thousand leagues long, aye, and longer; turnings that doubled earth's stormiest headlands or were the way to quiet inland ponds; cross-roads, taken one way, that led to flower-lands and summer seas, and that led the other way to bitter, ceaseless gales and the perilous bergs of the great west wind drift. And the cities, bright with lights, were as shops on these long streets — shops where business was transacted, where bunkers were replenished, cargoes taken or shifted, and orders received from the owners in London town to go elsewhere and beyond, ever along the long sea-lanes, seeking new cargoes here, carrying new cargoes there, running freights wherever shillings and pence beckoned and underwriters did not forbid. But it was all a weariness to contemplate, and, save that he wrung from it his bread, it was without profit under the sun.

The last good-bye to the wife had been at Cardiff, twenty-eight months before, when he sailed for Valparaiso with coals — nine thousand tons and down to his marks. From Valparaiso he had gone to Australia, light, a matter of six thousand miles on end with a stormy passage and running short of bunker coal. Coals again to Oregon, seven thousand miles, and nigh as many more with general cargo for Japan and China.

Thence to Java, loading sugar for Marseilles, and back along the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, and on to Baltimore, down to her marks with crome ore, buffeted by hurricanes, short again of bunker coal and calling at Bermuda to replenish. Then a time charter, Norfolk, Virginia, loading mysterious contraband coal and sailing for South Africa under orders of the mysterious German supercargo put on board by the charterers. On to Madagascar, steaming four knots by the supercargo's orders, and the suspicion forming that the Russian fleet might want the coal. Confusion and delays, long waits at sea, international complications, the whole world excited over the old Tryapsic and her cargo of contraband, and then on to Japan and the naval port of Sassebo. Back to Australia, another time charter and general merchandise picked up at Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, and carried on to Mauritius, Lourenço Marques, Durban, Algoa Bay, and Cape Town. To Ceylon for orders, and from Ceylon to Rangoon to load rice for Rio Janeiro. Thence to Buenos Aires and loading maize for the United Kingdom or the Continent, stopping at St. Vincent, to receive orders to proceed to Dublin. Two years and four months, eight hundred and fifty days by the log, steaming up and down the thousand-league-long sea-lanes and back again to Dublin town. And he was well aweary.

A little tug had laid hold of the Tryapsic, and with clang and clatter and shouted command, with engines half-ahead, slow-speed, or half-astern, the battered old sea-tramp was nudged and nosed and shouldered through the dock-gates into Ring's End Basin. Lines were flung ashore, fore and aft, and a 'midship spring got out. Already a small group of the happy shore-staying folk had clustered on the dock.

"Ring off," Captain MacElrath commanded in his slow thick voice; and the third officer worked the lever of the engine-room telegraph.

"Gangway out!" called the second officer; and when this was accomplished, "That will do."

It was the last task of all, gangway out. "That will do" was the dismissal. The voyage was ended, and the crew shambled eagerly forward across the rusty decks to where their sea-bags were packed and ready for the shore. The taste of the land was strong in the men's mouths, and strong it was in the skipper's mouth as he muttered a gruff good day to the departing pilot, and himself went down to his cabin. Up the gangway were trooping the customs officers, the surveyor, the agent's clerk, and the stevedores. Quick work disposed of these and cleared his cabin, the agent waiting to take him to the office.

"Dud ye send word tull the wife?" had been his greeting to the clerk.

"Yes, a telegram, as soon as you were reported."

"She'll likely be comin' down on the marnin' train," the skipper had soliloquized, and gone inside to change his clothes and wash.

He took a last glance about the room and at two photographs on the wall, one of the wife the other of an infant — the child he had never seen. He stepped out into the cabin, with its panelled walls of cedar and maple, and with its long table that seated ten, and at which he had eaten by himself through all the weary time. No laughter

and clatter and wordy argument of the mess-room had been his. He had eaten silently, almost morosely, his silence emulated by the noiseless Asiatic who had served him. It came to him suddenly, the overwhelming realization of the loneliness of those two years and more. All his vexations and anxieties had been his own. He had shared them with no one. His two young officers were too young and flighty, the mate too stupid. There was no consulting with them. One tenant had shared the cabin with him, that tenant his responsibility. They had dined and supped together, walked the bridge together, and together they had bedded.

"Och!" he muttered to that grim companion, "I'm quit of you, an' wull quit . . . for a wee."

Ashore he passed the last of the seamen with their bags, and, at the agent's, with the usual delays, put through his ship business. When asked out by them to drink he took milk and soda.

"I am no teetotaler," he explained; "but for the life o' me I canna bide beer or whusky."

In the early afternoon, when he finished paying off his crew, he hurried to the private office where he had been told his wife was waiting.

His eyes were for her first, though the temptation was great to have more than a hurried glimpse of the child in the chair beside her. He held her off from him after the long embrace, and looked into her face long and steadily, drinking in every feature of it and wondering that he could mark no changes of time. A warm man, his wife thought him, though had the opinion of his officers been asked it would have been: a harsh man and a bitter one.

"Wull, Annie, how is ut wi' ye?" he queried, and drew her to him again.

And again he held her away from him, this wife of ten years and of whom he knew so little. She was almost a stranger — more a stranger than his Chinese steward, and certainly far more a stranger than his own officers whom he had seen every day, day and day, for eight hundred and fifty days. Married ten years, and in that time he had been with her nine weeks — scarcely a honeymoon. Each time home had been a getting acquainted again with her. It was the fate of the men who went out to the salt-ploughing. Little they knew of their wives and less of their children. There was his chief engineer — old, near-sighted MacPherson — who told the story of returning home to be locked out of his house by his four-year kiddie that never had laid eyes on him before.

"An' thus 'ull be the loddie," the skipper said, reaching out a hesitant hand to the child's cheek.

But the boy drew away from him, sheltering against the mother's side.

"Och!" she cried, "and he doesna know his own father."

"Nor I hum. Heaven knows I could no a-picked hum out of a crowd, though he'll be havin' your nose I'm thunkun'."

"An' your own eyes, Donald. Look ut them. He's your own father, laddie. Kiss hum like the little mon ye are."

But the child drew closer to her, his expression of fear and distrust growing stronger, and when the father attempted to take him in his arms he threatened to cry.

The skipper straightened up, and to conceal the pang at his heart he drew out his watch and looked at it.

"Ut's time to go, Annie," he said. "Thot train 'ull be startun'."

He was silent on the train at first, divided between watching the wife with the child going to sleep in her arms and looking out of the window at the tilled fields and green unforested hills vague and indistinct in the driving drizzle that had set in. They had the compartment to themselves. When the boy slept she laid him out on the seat and wrapped him warmly. And when the health of relatives and friends had been inquired after, and the gossip of Island McGill narrated, along with the weather and the price of land and crops, there was little left to talk about save themselves, and Captain MacElrath took up the tale brought home for the good wife from all his world's-end wandering. But it was not a tale of marvels he told, nor of beautiful flower-lands nor mysterious Eastern cities.

"What like is Java?" she asked once.

"Full o' fever. Half the crew down wuth ut an' luttle work. Ut was quinine an' quinine the whole blessed time. Each marnun' 'twas quinine an' gin for all hands on an empty stomach. An' they who was no sick made ut out to be hovun' ut bad uz the rest."

Another time she asked about Newcastle.

"Coals an' coal-dust — thot's all. No a nice sutty. I lost two Chinks there, stokers the both of them. An' the owners paid a fine tull the Government of a hundred pounds each for them. 'We regret tull note,' they wrut me — I got the letter tull Oregon — 'We regret tull note the loss o' two Chinese members o' yer crew ot Newcastle, an' we recommend greater carefulness un the future.' Greater carefulness! And I could no a-been more careful. The Chinks hod forty-five pounds each comun' tull them in wages, an' I was no a-thunkun' they 'ud run.

"But thot's their way — 'we regret tull note,' 'we beg tull advise,' 'we recommend,' 'we canna understand' — an' the like o' thot. Domned cargo tank! An' they would thunk I could drive her like a Lucania, an' wi'out burnun' coals. There was thot propeller. I was after them a guid while for ut. The old one was iron, thuck on the edges, an' we couldna make our speed. An' the new one was bronze — nine hundred pounds ut cost, an' then wantun' their returns out o' ut, an' me wuth a bod passage an' lossin' time every day. 'We regret tull note your long passage from Voloparaiso tull Sydney wuth an average daily run o' only one hundred an' suxty-seven. We hod expected better results wuth the new propeller. You should a-made an average daily run o' two hundred and suxteen.'

"An' me on a wunter passage, blowin' a luvin' gale half the time, wuth hurricane force in atweenwhiles, an' hove to sux days, wuth engines stopped an' bunker coal runnun' short, an' me wuth a mate thot stupid he could no pass a shup's light ot night wi'out callun' me tull the brudge. I wrut an' told 'em so. An' then: 'Our nautical

adviser suggests you kept too far south,' an' 'We are lookun' for better results from thot propeller.' Nautical adviser! — shore pilot! Ut was the regular latitude for a wunter passage from Voloparaiso tull Sydney.

"An' when I come un tull Auckland short o' coal, after lettun' her druft sux days wuth the fires out tull save the coal, an' wuth only twenty tons in my bunkers, I was thunkun' o' the lossin' o' time an' the expense, an' tull save the owners I took her un an' out wi'out pilotage. Pilotage was no compulsory. An' un Yokohama, who should I meet but Captun Robinson o' the Dyapsic. We got a-talkun' about ports an' places down Australia-way, an' first thing he says: 'Speakun' o' Auckland — of course, Captun, you was never un Auckland?' 'Yus,' I says, 'I was un there very recent.' 'Oh, ho,' he says, very angry-like, 'so you was the smart Aleck thot fetched me thot letter from the owners: "We note item of fufteen pounds for pilotage ot Auckland. A shup o' ours was un tull Auckland recently an' uncurred no such charge. We beg tull advise you thot we conseeder thus pilotage an onnecessary expense which should no be uncurred un the future."'

"But dud they say a word tull me for the fufteen pounds I saved tull them? No a word. They send a letter tull Captun Robinson for no savun' them the fufteen pounds, an' tull me: 'We note item of two guineas doctor's fee at Auckland for crew. Please explain thus onusual expunditure.' Ut was two o' the Chinks. I was thunkun' they hod beri-beri, an' thot was the why o' sendun' for the doctor. I buried the two of them ot sea not a week after. But ut was: 'Please explain thus onusual expunditure,' an' tull Captun Robinson, 'We beg tull advise you thot we conseeder thus pilotage an onnecessary expense.'

"Dudna I cable them from Newcastle, tellun' them the old tank was thot foul she needed dry-dock? Seven months out o' drydock, an' the West Coast the quickest place for foulun' un the world. But freights was up, an' they hod a charter o' coals for Portland. The Arrata, one o' the Woor Line, left port the same day uz us, bound for Portland, an' the old Tryapsic makun' sux knots, seven ot the best. An' ut was ot Comox, takun' un bunker coal, I got the letter from the owners. The boss humself hod signed ut, an' ot the bottom he wrut un hus own bond: 'The Arrata beat you by four an' a half days. Am dusappointed.' Dusappointed! When I had cabled them from Newcastle. When she drydocked ot Portland, there was whuskers on her a foot long, barnacles the size o' me fust, oysters like young sauce plates. Ut took them two days afterward tull clean the dock o' shells an' muck.

"An' there was the motter o' them fire-bars ot Newcastle. The firm ashore made them heavier than the engineer's speecifications, an' then forgot tull charge for the dufference. Ot the last moment, wuth me ashore gettun' me clearance, they come wuth the bill: 'Tull error on fire-bars, sux pounds.' They'd been tull the shup an' MacPherson hod O.K.'d ut. I said ut was strange an' would no pay. 'Then you are dootun' the chief engineer,' says they. 'I'm no dootun',' says I, 'but I canna see my way tull sign. Come wuth me tull the shup. The launch wull cost ye naught an' ut 'ull brung ye back. An' we wull see what MacPherson says.'

"But they would no come. Ot Portland I got the bill un a letter. I took no notice. Ot Hong-Kong I got a letter from the owners. The bill hod been sent tull them. I wrut them from Java explainun'. At Marseilles the owners wrut me: 'Tull extra work un engine-room, sux pounds. The engineer has O.K.'d ut, an' you have no O.K.'d ut. Are you dootun' the engineer's honesty?' I wrut an' told them I was no dootun' his honesty; thot the bill was for extra weight o' fire-bars; an' thot ut was O.K. Dud they pay ut? They no dud. They must unvestigate. An' some clerk un the office took sick, an' the bill was lost. An' there was more letters. I got letters from the owners an' the firm — 'Tull error on fire-bars, sux pounds' — ot Baltimore, ot Delagoa Bay, ot Moji, ot Rangoon, ot Rio, an' ot Montevuddio. Ut uz no settled yut. I tell ye, Annie, the owners are hard tull please."

He communed with himself for a moment, and then muttered indignantly: "Tull error on fire-bars, sux pounds."

"Hov ye heard of Jamie?" his wife asked in the pause.

Captain MacElrath shook his head.

"He was washed off the poop wuth three seamen."

"Whereabouts?"

"Off the Horn. 'Twas on the Thornsby."

"They would be runnun' homeward bound?"

"Aye," she nodded. "We only got the word three days gone. His wife is greetin' like tull die."

"A good lod, Jamie," he commented, "but a stiff one ot carryun' on. I mind me when we was mates together un the Abion. An' so Jamie's gone."

Again a pause fell, to be broken by the wife.

"An' ye will no a-heard o' the Bankshire? MacDougall lost her in Magellan Straits. 'Twas only yesterday ut was in the paper."

"A cruel place, them Magellan Straits," he said. "Dudna thot domned mate-fellow nigh putt me ashore twice on the one passage through? He was a eediot, a lunatuc. I wouldna have hum on the brudge a munut. Comun' tull Narrow Reach, thuck weather, wuth snow squalls, me un the chart-room, dudna I guv hum the changed course? 'South-east-by-east,' I told hum. 'South-east-by-east, sir,' says he. Fufteen munuts after I comes on tull the brudge. 'Funny,' says thot mate-fellow, 'I'm no rememberun' ony islands un the mouth o' Narrow Reach. I took one look ot the islands an' yells, 'Putt your wheel hard a-starboard,' tull the mon ot the wheel. An' ye should a-seen the old Tryapsic turnun' the sharpest circle she ever turned. I waited for the snow tull clear, an' there was Narrow Reach, nice uz ye please, tull the east'ard an' the islands un the mouth o' False Bay tull the south'ard. 'What course was ye steerun'?' I says tull the mon ot the wheel. 'South-by-east, sir,' says he. I looked tull the mate-fellow. What could I say? I was thot wroth I could a-kult hum. Four points dufference. Five munuts more an' the old Tryapsic would a-been funushed.

"An' was ut no the same when we cleared the Straits tull the east'ard? Four hours would a-seen us guid an' clear. I was forty hours then on the brudge. I guv the mate

his course, an' the bearun' o' the Askthar Light astern. 'Don't let her bear more tull the north'ard than west-by-north,' I said tull hum, 'an' ye wull be all right.' An' I went below an' turned un. But I couldna sleep for worryun'. After forty hours on the brudge, what was four hours more? I thought. An' for them four hours wull ye be lettun' the mate loss her on ye? 'No,' I says to myself. An' wuth thot I got up, hod a wash an' a cup o' coffee, an' went tull the brudge. I took one look ot the bearun' o' Askthar Light. 'Twas nor'west-by-west, and the old Tryapsic down on the shoals. He was a eediot, thot mate-fellow. Ye could look overside an' see the duscoloration of the watter. 'Twas a close call for the old Tryapsic I'm tellun' ye. Twice un thirty hours he'd a-hod her ashore uf ut hod no been for me."

Captain MacElrath fell to gazing at the sleeping child with mild wonder in his small blue eyes, and his wife sought to divert him from his woes.

"Ye remember Jummy MacCaul?" she asked. "Ye went tull school wuth hus two boys. Old Jummy MacCaul thot hoz the farm beyond Doctor Haythorn's place."

"Oh, aye, an' what o' hum? Uz he dead?"

"No, but he was after askun' your father, when he sailed last time for Voloparaiso, uf ye'd been there afore. An' when your father says no, then Jummy says, 'An' how wull he be knowun a' tull find hus way?' An' with thot your father says: 'Verry sumple ut uz, Jummy. Supposun' you was goin' tull the mainland tull a mon who luved un Belfast. Belfast uz a bug sutty, Jummy, an' how would ye be findun' your way?' 'By way o' me tongue,' says Jummy; 'I'd be askun' the folk I met.' 'I told ye ut was sumple,' says your father. 'Ut's the very same way my Donald finds the road tull Voloparaiso. He asks every shup he meets upon the sea tull ot last he meets wuth a shup thot's been tull Voloparaiso, an' the captun o' thot shup tells hum the way.' An' Jummy scratches hus head an' says he understands an' thot ut's a very sumple motter after all."

The skipper chuckled at the joke, and his tired blue eyes were merry for the moment.

"He was a thun chap, thot mate-fellow, oz thun oz you an' me putt together," he remarked after a time, a slight twinkle in his eye of appreciation of the bull. But the twinkle quickly disappeared and the blue eyes took on a bleak and wintry look. "What dud he do ot Voloparaiso but land sux hundred fathom o' chain cable an' take never a receipt from the lighter-mon. I was gettun' my clearance ot the time. When we got tull sea, I found he hod no receipt for the cable.

"'An' ye no took a receipt for ut?' says I.

"'No,' says he. 'Wasna ut goin' direct tull the agents?'

"'How long ha' ye been goin' tull sea,' says I, 'not tull be knowin' the mate's duty uz tull deluver no cargo wuthout receipt for same? An' on the West Coast ot thot. What's tull stop the lighter-mon from stealun' a few lengths o' ut?'

"An' ut come out uz I said. Sux hundred hundred went over the side, but four hundred an' ninety-five was all the agents received. The lighter-mon swore ut was all he received from the mate — four hundred an' ninety-five fathom. I got a letter from the owners ot Portland. They no blamed the mate for ut, but me, an' me ashore ot

the time on shup's buzz'ness. I could no be in the two places ot the one time. An' the letters from the owners an' the agents uz still comun' tull me.

"Thot mate-fellow was no a proper sailor, an' no a mon tull work for owners. Dudna he want tull break me wuth the Board of Trade for bein' below my marks? He said as much tull the bos'n. An' he told me tull my face homeward bound thot I'd been half an inch under my marks. 'Twas at Portland, loadun' cargo un fresh watter an' goin' tull Comox tull load bunker coal un salt watter. I tell ye, Annie, ut takes close fuggerin', an' I was half an inch under the load-line when the bunker coal was un. But I'm no tellun' any other body but you. An' thot mate-fellow untendun' tull report me tull the Board o' Trade, only for thot he saw fut tull be sliced un two pieces on the steam-pipe cover.

"He was a fool. After loadun' ot Portland I hod tull take on suxty tons o' coal tull last me tull Comox. The charges for lighterun' was heavy, an' no room ot the coal dock. A French barque was lyin' alongside the dock an' I spoke tull the captun, askun' hum what he would charge when work for the day was done, tull haul clear for a couple o' hours an' let me un. 'Twenty dollars,' said he. Ut was savun' money on lighters tull the owner, an' I gave ut tull hum. An' thot night, after dark, I hauled un an' took on the coal. Then I started tull go out un the stream an' drop anchor — under me own steam, of course.

"We hod tull go out stern first, an' somethun' went wrong wuth the reversun' gear. Old MacPherson said he could work ut by hond, but very slow ot thot. An' I said 'All right.' We started. The pilot was on board. The tide was ebbun' stuffly, an' right abreast an' a but below was a shup lyin' wuth a lighter on each side. I saw the shup's ridun' lights, but never a light on the lighters. Ut was close quarters to shuft a bug vessel onder steam, wuth MacPherson workun' the reversun' gear by hond. We hod to come close down upon the shup afore I could go ahead an' clear o' the shups on the dock-ends. An' we struck the lighter stern-on, just uz I rung tull MacPherson half ahead.

"'What was thot?' says the pilot, when we struck the lighter.

"'I dunna know,' says I, 'an' I'm wonderun'.'

"The pilot was no keen, ye see, tull hus job. I went on tull a guid place an' dropped anchor, an' ut would all a-been well but for thot domned eediot mate.

"'We smashed thot lighter,' says he, comun' up the lodder tull the brudge — an' the pilot stondun' there wuth his ears cocked tull hear.

"'What lighter?' says I.

"'Thot lighter alongside the shup,' says the mate.

"'I dudna see no lighter,' says I, and wuth thot I steps on hus fut guid an' hard.

"After the pilot was gone I says tull the mate: 'Uf you dunna know onythun', old mon, for Heaven's sake keep your mouth shut.'

"'But ye dud smash thot lighter, dudn't ye?' says he.

"'Uf we dud,' says I, 'ut's no your buzz'ness tull be tellun' the pilot — though, mind ye, I'm no admuttun' there was ony lighter.'

"An' next marnun', just uz I'm after dressun', the steward says, 'A mon tull see ye, sir.' 'Fetch hum un,' says I. An' un he come. 'Sut down,' says I. An' he sot down.

"He was the owner of the lighter, an' when he hod told hus story, I says, 'I dudna see ony lighter.'

"'What, mon?' says he. 'No see a two-hundred-ton lighter, bug oz a house, alongside thot shup?'

"'I was goin' by the shup's lights,' says I, 'an' I dudna touch the shup, thot I know.'

"'But ye dud touch the lighter,' says he. 'Ye smashed her. There's a thousand dollars' domage done, an' I'll see ye pay for ut.'

'Look here, muster,' says I, 'when I'm shuftun' a shup ot night I follow the law, an' the law dustunctly says I must regulate me actions by the lights o' the shuppun'. Your lighter never hod no ridun' light, nor dud I look for ony lighter wuthout lights tull show ut.'

"'The mate says — ' he beguns.

"'Domn the mate,' says I. 'Dud your lighter hov a ridun' light?'

"'No, ut dud not,' says he, 'but ut was a clear night wuth the moon a-showun'.'

"'Ye seem tull know your buzz'ness,' says I. 'But let me tell ye thot I know my buzz'ness uz well, an' thot I'm no a-lookun' for lighters wuthout lights. Uf ye thunk ye hov a case, go ahead. The steward will show ye out. Guid day.'

"An' thot was the end o' ut. But ut wull show ye what a puir fellow thot mate was. I call ut a blessun' for all masters thot he was sliced un two on thot steam-pipe cover. He had a pull un the office an' thot was the why he was kept on."

"The Wekley farm wull soon be for sale, so the agents be tellun' me," his wife remarked, slyly watching what effect her announcement would have upon him.

His eyes flashed eagerly on the instant, and he straightened up as might a man about to engage in some agreeable task. It was the farm of his vision, adjoining his father's, and her own people farmed not a mile away.

"We wull be buyun' ut," he said, "though we wull be no tellun' a soul of ut ontul ut's bought an' the money paid down. I've savun' consuderable these days, though pickun's uz no what they used to be, an' we hov a tidy nest-egg laid by. I wull see the father an' hove the money ready tull hus hond, so uf I'm ot sea he can buy whenever the land offers."

He rubbed the frosted moisture from the inside of the window and peered out at the pouring rain, through which he could discern nothing.

"When I was a young men I used tull be afeard thot the owners would guv me the sack. Stull afeard I am of the sack. But once thot farm is mine I wull no be afeard ony longer. Ut's a puir job thus sea-farmun'. Me managin' un all seas an' weather an' perils o' the deep a shup worth fufty thousand pounds, wuth cargoes ot times worth fufty thousand more — a hundred thousand pounds, half a million dollars uz the Yankees say, an' me wuth all the responsubility gettun' a screw o' twenty pounds a month. What mon ashore, managin' a buz'ness worth a hundred thousand pounds wull be gettun' uz small a screw uz twenty pounds? An' wuth such masters uz a

captun serves — the owners, the underwriters, an' the Board o' Trade, all pullun' an wantun' dufferent thungs — the owners wantun' quick passages an' domn the rusk, the underwriters wantun' safe passages an' domn the delay, an' the Board o' Trade wantun' cautious passages an' caution always meanun' delay. Three dufferent masters, an' all three able an' wullun' to break ye uf ye don't serve their dufferent wushes."

He felt the train slackening speed, and peered again through the misty window. He stood up, buttoned his overcoat, turned up the collar, and awkwardly gathered the child, still asleep, in his arms.

"I wull see the father," he said, "an' hov the money ready tull hus hond so uf I'm ot sea when the land offers he wull no muss the chance tull buy. An' then the owners can guv me the sack uz soon uz they like. Ut will be all night un, an' I wull be wuth you, Annie, an' the sea can go tull hell."

Happiness was in both their faces at the prospect, and for a moment both saw the same vision of peace. Annie leaned toward him, and as the train stopped they kissed each other across the sleeping child.

The Seed of Mccoy

THE Pyrenees, her iron sides pressed low in the water by her cargo of wheat, rolled sluggishly, and made it easy for the man who was climbing aboard from out a tiny outrigger canoe. As his eyes came level with the rail, so that he could see inboard, it seemed to him that he saw a dim, almost indiscernible haze. It was more like an illusion, like a blurring film that had spread abruptly over his eyes. He felt an inclination to brush it away, and the same instant he thought that he was growing old and that it was time to send to San Francisco for a pair of spectacles.

As he came over the rail he cast a glance aloft at the tall masts, and, next, at the pumps. They were not working. There seemed nothing the matter with the big ship, and he wondered why she had hoisted the signal of distress. He thought of his happy islanders, and hoped it was not disease. Perhaps the ship was short of water or provisions. He shook hands with the captain whose gaunt face and care-worn eyes made no secret of the trouble, whatever it was. At the same moment the newcomer was aware of a faint, indefinable smell. It seemed like that of burnt bread, but different.

He glanced curiously about him. Twenty feet away a weary-faced sailor was calking the deck. As his eyes lingered on the man, he saw suddenly arise from under his hands a faint spiral of haze that curled and twisted and was gone. By now he had reached the deck. His bare feet were pervaded by a dull warmth that quickly penetrated the thick calluses. He knew now the nature of the ship's distress. His eyes roved swiftly forward, where the full crew of weary-faced sailors regarded him eagerly. The glance from his liquid brown eyes swept over them like a benediction, soothing them, rapping them about as in the mantle of a great peace. "How long has she been afire, Captain?" he asked in a voice so gentle and unperturbed that it was as the cooing of a dove.

At first the captain felt the peace and content of it stealing in upon him; then the consciousness of all that he had gone through and was going through smote him, and he was resentful. By what right did this ragged beachcomber, in dungaree trousers and a cotton shirt, suggest such a thing as peace and content to him and his overwrought, exhausted soul? The captain did not reason this; it was the unconscious process of emotion that caused his resentment.

"Fifteen days," he answered shortly. "Who are you?"

"My name is McCoy," came the answer in tones that breathed tenderness and compassion.

"I mean, are you the pilot?"

McCoy passed the benediction of his gaze over the tall, heavy-shouldered man with the haggard, unshaven face who had joined the captain.

"I am as much a pilot as anybody," was McCoy's answer. "We are all pilots here, Captain, and I know every inch of these waters."

But the captain was impatient.

"What I want is some of the authorities. I want to talk with them, and blame quick."

"Then I'll do just as well."

Again that insidious suggestion of peace, and his ship a raging furnace beneath his feet! The captain's eyebrows lifted impatiently and nervously, and his fist clenched as if he were about to strike a blow with it.

"Who in hell are you?" he demanded.

"I am the chief magistrate," was the reply in a voice that was still the softest and gentlest imaginable.

The tall, heavy-shouldered man broke out in a harsh laugh that was partly amusement, but mostly hysterical. Both he and the captain regarded McCoy with incredulity and amazement. That this barefooted beachcomber should possess such high-sounding dignity was inconceivable. His cotton shirt, unbuttoned, exposed a grizzled chest and the fact that there was no undershirt beneath.

A worn straw hat failed to hide the ragged gray hair. Halfway down his chest descended an untrimmed patriarchal beard. In any slop shop, two shillings would have outfitted him complete as he stood before them.

"Any relation to the McCoy of the Bounty?" the captain asked.

"He was my great-grandfather."

"Oh," the captain said, then bethought himself. 'my name is Davenport, and this is my first mate, Mr. Konig."

They shook hands.

"And now to business." The captain spoke quickly, the urgency of a great haste pressing his speech. "We've been on fire for over two weeks. She's ready to break all hell loose any moment. That's why I held for Pitcairn. I want to beach her, or scuttle her, and save the hull."

"Then you made a mistake, Captain, said McCoy. "You should have slacked away for Mangareva. There's a beautiful beach there, in a lagoon where the water is like a mill pond."

"But we're here, ain't we?" the first mate demanded. "That's the point. We're here, and we've got to do something."

McCoy shook his head kindly.

"You can do nothing here. There is no beach. There isn't even anchorage."

"Gammon!" said the mate. "Gammon!" he repeated loudly, as the captain signaled him to be more soft spoken. "You can't tell me that sort of stuff. Where d'ye keep your own boats, hey–your schooner, or cutter, or whatever you have? Hey? Answer me that."

McCoy smiled as gently as he spoke. His smile was a caress, an embrace that surrounded the tired mate and sought to draw him into the quietude and rest of McCoy's tranquil soul.

"We have no schooner or cutter," he replied. "And we carry our canoes to the top of the cliff."

"You've got to show me," snorted the mate. "How d'ye get around to the other islands, heh? Tell me that."

"We don't get around. As governor of Pitcairn, I sometimes go. When I was younger, I was away a great deal–sometimes on the trading schooners, but mostly on the missionary brig. But she's gone now, and we depend on passing vessels. Sometimes we have had as high as six calls in one year. At other times, a year, and even longer, has gone by without one passing ship. Yours is the first in seven months."

"And you mean to tell me–" the mate began.

But Captain Davenport interfered.

"Enough of this. We're losing time. What is to be done, Mr. McCoy?"

The old man turned his brown eyes, sweet as a woman's, shoreward, and both captain and mate followed his gaze around from the lonely rock of Pitcairn to the crew clustering forward and waiting anxiously for the announcement of a decision. 'mcCoy did not hurry. He thought smoothly and slowly, step by step, with the certitude of a mind that was never vexed or outraged by life.

"The wind is light now," he said finally. "There is a heavy current setting to the westward."

"That's what made us fetch to leeward," the captain interrupted, desiring to vindicate his seamanship.

"Yes, that is what fetched you to leeward," McCoy went on. "Well, you can't work up against this current today. And if you did, there is no beach. Your ship will be a total loss."

He paused, and captain and mate looked despair at each other.

"But I will tell you what you can do. The breeze will freshen tonight around midnight–see those tails of clouds and that thickness to windward, beyond the point there? That's where she'll come from, out of the southeast, hard. It is three hundred miles to Mangareva. Square away for it. There is a beautiful bed for your ship there."

The mate shook his head.

"Come in to the cabin, and we'll look at the chart," said the captain.

McCoy found a stifling, poisonous atmosphere in the pent cabin. Stray waftures of invisible gases bit his eyes and made them sting. The deck was hotter, almost unbearably hot to his bare feet. The sweat poured out of his body. He looked almost with apprehension about him. This malignant, internal heat was astounding. It was a marvel that the cabin did not burst into flames. He had a feeling as if of being in a huge bake oven where the heat might at any moment increase tremendously and shrivel him up like a blade of grass.

As he lifted one foot and rubbed the hot sole against the leg of his trousers, the mate laughed in a savage, snarling fashion.

"The anteroom of hell," he said. "Hell herself is right down there under your feet."

"It's hot!" McCoy cried involuntarily, mopping his face with a bandana handkerchief.

“Here’s Mangareva,” the captain said, bending over the table and pointing to a black speck in the midst of the white blankness of the chart. “And here, in between, is another island. Why not run for that?”

McCoy did not look at the chart.

“That’s Crescent Island,” he answered. “It is uninhabited, and it is only two or three feet above water. Lagoon, but no entrance. No, Mangareva is the nearest place for your purpose.”

“Mangareva it is, then,” said Captain Davenport, interrupting the mate’s growling objection. “Call the crew aft, Mr. Konig.”

The sailors obeyed, shuffling wearily along the deck and painfully endeavoring to make haste. Exhaustion was evident in every movement. The cook came out of his galley to hear, and the cabin boy hung about near him.

When Captain Davenport had explained the situation and announced his intention of running for Mangareva, an uproar broke out. Against a background of throaty rumbling arose inarticulate cries of rage, with here and there a distinct curse, or word, or phrase. A shrill Cockney voice soared and dominated for a moment, crying: “Gawd! After bein’ in ell for fifteen days–an’ now e wants us to sail this floatin’ ell to sea again?”

The captain could not control them, but McCoy’s gentle presence seemed to rebuke and calm them, and the muttering and cursing died away, until the full crew, save here and there an anxious face directed at the captain, yearned dumbly toward the green clad peaks and beetling coast of Pitcairn.

Soft as a spring zephyr was the voice of McCoy:

“Captain, I thought I heard some of them say they were starving.”

“Ay,” was the answer, “and so we are. I’ve had a sea biscuit and a spoonful of salmon in the last two days. We’re on whack. You see, when we discovered the fire, we battened down immediately to suffocate the fire. And then we found how little food there was in the pantry. But it was too late. We didn’t dare break out the lazarette. Hungry? I’m just as hungry as they are.”

He spoke to the men again, and again the throat rumbling and cursing arose, their faces convulsed and animal-like with rage. The second and third mates had joined the captain, standing behind him at the break of the poop. Their faces were set and expressionless; they seemed bored, more than anything else, by this mutiny of the crew. Captain Davenport glanced questioningly at his first mate, and that person merely shrugged his shoulders in token of his helplessness.

“You see,” the captain said to McCoy, “you can’t compel sailors to leave the safe land and go to sea on a burning vessel. She has been their floating coffin for over two weeks now. They are worked out, and starved out, and they’ve got enough of her. We’ll beat up for Pitcairn.”

But the wind was light, the Pyrenees’ bottom was foul, and she could not beat up against the strong westerly current. At the end of two hours she had lost three miles. The sailors worked eagerly, as if by main strength they could compel the PYRENEES

against the adverse elements. But steadily, port tack and starboard tack, she sagged off to the westward. The captain paced restlessly up and down, pausing occasionally to survey the vagrant smoke wisps and to trace them back to the portions of the deck from which they sprang. The carpenter was engaged constantly in attempting to locate such places, and, when he succeeded, in calking them tighter and tighter.

"Well, what do you think?" the captain finally asked McCoy, who was watching the carpenter with all a child's interest and curiosity in his eyes.

McCoy looked shoreward, where the land was disappearing in the thickening haze.

"I think it would be better to square away for Mangareva. With that breeze that is coming, you'll be there tomorrow evening."

"But what if the fire breaks out? It is liable to do it any moment."

"Have your boats ready in the falls. The same breeze will carry your boats to Mangareva if the ship burns out from under."

Captain Davenport debated for a moment, and then McCoy heard the question he had not wanted to hear, but which he knew was surely coming.

"I have no chart of Mangareva. On the general chart it is only a fly speck. I would not know where to look for the entrance into the lagoon. Will you come along and pilot her in for me?"

McCoy's serenity was unbroken.

"Yes, Captain," he said, with the same quiet unconcern with which he would have accepted an invitation to dinner; "I'll go with you to Mangareva."

Again the crew was called aft, and the captain spoke to them from the break of the poop.

"We've tried to work her up, but you see how we've lost ground. She's setting off in a two-knot current. This gentleman is the Honorable McCoy, Chief Magistrate and Governor of Pitcairn Island. He will come along with us to Mangareva. So you see the situation is not so dangerous. He would not make such an offer if he thought he was going to lose his life. Besides, whatever risk there is, if he of his own free will come on board and take it, we can do no less. What do you say for Mangareva?"

This time there was no uproar. 'mcCoy's presence, the surety and calm that seemed to radiate from him, had had its effect. They conferred with one another in low voices. There was little urging. They were virtually unanimous, and they shoved the Cockney out as their spokesman. That worthy was overwhelmed with consciousness of the heroism of himself and his mates, and with flashing eyes he cried:

"By Gawd! If 'e will, we will!"

The crew mumbled its assent and started forward.

"One moment, Captain," McCoy said, as the other was turning to give orders to the mate. "I must go ashore first."

Mr. Konig was thunderstruck, staring at McCoy as if he were a madman.

"Go ashore!" the captain cried. "What for? It will take you three hours to get there in your canoe."

McCoy measured the distance of the land away, and nodded.

“Yes, it is six now. I won’t get ashore till nine. The people cannot be assembled earlier than ten. As the breeze freshens up tonight, you can begin to work up against it, and pick me up at daylight tomorrow morning.”

“In the name of reason and common sense,” the captain burst forth, “what do you want to assemble the people for? Don’t you realize that my ship is burning beneath me?”

McCoy was as placid as a summer sea, and the other’s anger produced not the slightest ripple upon it.

“Yes, Captain,” he cooed in his dove-like voice. “I do realize that your ship is burning. That is why I am going with you to Mangareva. But I must get permission to go with you. It is our custom. It is an important matter when the governor leaves the island. The people’s interests are at stake, and so they have the right to vote their permission or refusal. But they will give it, I know that.”

“Are you sure?”

“Quite sure.”

“Then if you know they will give it, why bother with getting it? Think of the delay–a whole night.”

“It is our custom,” was the imperturbable reply. “Also, I am the governor, and I must make arrangements for the conduct of the island during my absence.”

“But it is only a twenty-four hour run to Mangareva,” the captain objected. “Suppose it took you six times that long to return to windward; that would bring you back by the end of a week.”

McCoy smiled his large, benevolent smile.

“Very few vessels come to Pitcairn, and when they do, they are usually from San Francisco or from around the Horn. I shall be fortunate if I get back in six months. I may be away a year, and I may have to go to San Francisco in order to find a vessel that will bring me back. ‘my father once left Pitcairn to be gone three months, and two years passed before he could get back. Then, too, you are short of food. If you have to take to the boats, and the weather comes up bad, you may be days in reaching land. I can bring off two canoe loads of food in the morning. Dried bananas will be best. As the breeze freshens, you beat up against it. The nearer you are, the bigger loads I can bring off. Goodby.”

He held out his hand. The captain shook it, and was reluctant to let go. He seemed to cling to it as a drowning sailor clings to a life buoy.

“How do I know you will come back in the morning?” he asked.

“Yes, that’s it!” cried the mate. “How do we know but what he’s skinning out to save his own hide?”

McCoy did not speak. He looked at them sweetly and benignantly, and it seemed to them that they received a message from his tremendous certitude of soul.

The captain released his hand, and, with a last sweeping glance that embraced the crew in its benediction, McCoy went over the rail and descended into his canoe.

The wind freshened, and the Pyrenees, despite the foulness of her bottom, won half a dozen miles away from the westerly current. At daylight, with Pitcairn three miles to windward, Captain Davenport made out two canoes coming off to him. Again McCoy clambered up the side and dropped over the rail to the hot deck. He was followed by many packages of dried bananas, each package wrapped in dry leaves.

"Now, Captain," he said, "swing the yards and drive for dear life. You see, I am no navigator," he explained a few minutes later, as he stood by the captain aft, the latter with gaze wandering from aloft to overside as he estimated the Pyrenees' speed. "You must fetch her to Mangareva. When you have picked up the land, then I will pilot her in. What do you think she is making?"

"Eleven," Captain Davenport answered, with a final glance at the water rushing past.

"Eleven. Let me see, if she keeps up that gait, we'll sight Mangareva between eight and nine o'clock tomorrow morning. I'll have her on the beach by ten or by eleven at latest. And then your troubles will be all over."

It almost seemed to the captain that the blissful moment had already arrived, such was the persuasive convincingness of McCoy.

Captain Davenport had been under the fearful strain of navigating his burning ship for over two weeks, and he was beginning to feel that he had had enough.

A heavier flaw of wind struck the back of his neck and whistled by his ears. He measured the weight of it, and looked quickly overside.

"The wind is making all the time," he announced. "The old girl's doing nearer twelve than eleven right now. If this keeps up, we'll be shortening down tonight."

All day the Pyrenees, carrying her load of living fire, tore across the foaming sea. By nightfall, royals and topgallantsails were in, and she flew on into the darkness, with great, crested seas roaring after her. The auspicious wind had had its effect, and fore and aft a visible brightening was apparent. In the second dog-watch some careless soul started a song, and by eight bells the whole crew was singing.

Captain Davenport had his blankets brought up and spread on top the house.

"I've forgotten what sleep is," he explained to McCoy. "I'm all in. But give me a call at any time you think necessary."

At three in the morning he was aroused by a gentle tugging at his arm. He sat up quickly, bracing himself against the skylight, stupid yet from his heavy sleep. The wind was thrumming its war song in the rigging, and a wild sea was buffeting the PYRENEES. Amidships she was wallowing first one rail under and then the other, flooding the waist more often than not. 'mcCoy was shouting something he could not hear. He reached out, clutched the other by the shoulder, and drew him close so that his own ear was close to the other's lips.

"It's three o'clock," came McCoy's voice, still retaining its dovelike quality, but curiously muffled, as if from a long way off. "We've run two hundred and fifty. Crescent Island is only thirty miles away, somewhere there dead ahead. There's no lights on it. If we keep running, we'll pile up, and lose ourselves as well as the ship."

"What d' ye think–heave to?"

"Yes; heave to till daylight. It will only put us back four hours."

So the Pyrenees, with her cargo of fire, was hove to, bitting the teeth of the gale and fighting and smashing the pounding seas. She was a shell, filled with a conflagration, and on the outside of the shell, clinging precariously, the little motes of men, by pull and haul, helped her in the battle.

"It is most unusual, this gale," McCoy told the captain, in the lee of the cabin. "By rights there should be no gale at this time of the year. But everything about the weather has been unusual. There has been a stoppage of the trades, and now it's howling right out of the trade quarter." He waved his hand into the darkness, as if his vision could dimly penetrate for hundreds of miles. "It is off to the westward. There is something big making off there somewhere–a hurricane or something. We're lucky to be so far to the eastward. But this is only a little blow," he added. "It can't last. I can tell you that much."

By daylight the gale had eased down to normal. But daylight revealed a new danger. It had come on thick. The sea was covered by a fog, or, rather, by a pearly mist that was fog-like in density, in so far as it obstructed vision, but that was no more than a film on the sea, for the sun shot it through and filled it with a glowing radiance.

The deck of the Pyrenees was making more smoke than on the preceding day, and the cheerfulness of officers and crew had vanished. In the lee of the galley the cabin boy could be heard whimpering. It was his first voyage, and the fear of death was at his heart. The captain wandered about like a lost soul, nervously chewing his mustache, scowling, unable to make up his mind what to do.

"What do you think?" he asked, pausing by the side of McCoy, who was making a breakfast off fried bananas and a mug of water.

McCoy finished the last banana, drained the mug, and looked slowly around. In his eyes was a smile of tenderness as he said:

"Well, Captain, we might as well drive as burn. Your decks are not going to hold out forever. They are hotter this morning. You haven't a pair of shoes I can wear? It is getting uncomfortable for my bare feet."

The Pyrenees shipped two heavy seas as she was swung off and put once more before it, and the first mate expressed a desire to have all that water down in the hold, if only it could be introduced without taking off the hatches. 'mcCoy ducked his head into the binnacle and watched the course set.

"I'd hold her up some more, Captain," he said. "She's been making drift when hove to."

"I've set it to a point higher already," was the answer. "Isn't that enough?"

"I'd make it two points, Captain. This bit of a blow kicked that westerly current ahead faster than you imagine."

Captain Davenport compromised on a point and a half, and then went aloft, accompanied by McCoy and the first mate, to keep a lookout for land. Sail had been made, so that the Pyrenees was doing ten knots. The following sea was dying down

rapidly. There was no break in the pearly fog, and by ten o'clock Captain Davenport was growing nervous. Al l hands were at their stations, ready, at the first warning of land ahead, to spring like fiends to the task of bringing the Pyrenees up on the wind. That land ahead, a surf-washed outer reef, would be perilously close when it revealed itself in such a fog.

Another hour passed. The three watchers aloft stared intently into the pearly radiance."What if we miss Mangareva?" Captain Davenport asked abruptly.

McCoy, without shifting his gaze, answered softly:

"Why, let her drive, captain. That is all we can do. All the Paumotus are before us. We can drive for a thousand miles through reefs and atolls. We are bound to fetch up somewhere."

"Then drive it is." Captain Davenport evidenced his intention of descending to the deck. "We've missed Mangareva. God knows where the next land is. I wish I'd held her up that other half-point," he confessed a moment later. "This cursed current plays the devil with a navigator."

"The old navigators called the Paumotus the Dangerous Archipelago," McCoy said, when they had regained the poop. "This very current was partly responsible for that name."

"I was talking with a sailor chap in Sydney, once," said Mr. Konig. "He'd been trading in the Paumotus. He told me insurance was eighteen per cent. Is that right?"

McCoy smiled and nodded.

"Except that they don't insure," he explained. "The owners write off twenty per cent of the cost of their schooners each year."

"My God!" Captain Davenport groaned. "That makes the life of a schooner only five years!" He shook his head sadly, murmuring, "Bad waters! Bad waters!"

Again they went into the cabin to consult the big general chart; but the poisonous vapors drove them coughing and gasping on deck.

"Here is Moerenhout Island," Captain Davenport pointed it out on the chart, which he had spread on the house. "It can't be more than a hundred miles to leeward."

"A hundred and ten." 'mcCoy shook his head doubtfully. "It might be done, but it is very difficult. I might beach her, and then again I might put her on the reef. A bad place, a very bad place."

"We'll take the chance," was Captain Davenport's decision, as he set about working out the course.

Sail was shortened early in the afternoon, to avoid running past in the night; and in the second dog-watch the crew manifested its regained cheerfulness. Land was so very near, and their troubles would be over in the morning.

But morning broke clear, with a blazing tropic sun. The southeast trade had swung around to the eastward, and was driving the PYRENEES through the water at an eight-knot clip. Captain Davenport worked up his dead reckoning, allowing generously for drift, and announced Moerenhout Island to be not more than ten miles off. The

Pyrenees sailed the ten miles; she sailed ten miles more; and the lookouts at the three mastheads saw naught but the naked, sun-washed sea.

"But the land is there, I tell you," Captain Davenport shouted to them from the poop.

McCoy smiled soothingly, but the captain glared about him like a madman, fetched his sextant, and took a chronometer sight.

"I knew I was right, he almost shouted, when he had worked up the observation. "Twenty-one, fifty-five, south; one-thirty-six, two, west. There you are. We're eight miles to windward yet. What did you make it out, Mr. Konig?"

The first mate glanced at his own figures, and said in a low voice:

"Twenty-one, fifty-five all right; but my longitude's one-thirty-six, forty-eight. That puts us considerably to leeward–"

But Captain Davenport ignored his figures with so contemptuous a silence as to make Mr. Konig grit his teeth and curse savagely under his breath.

"Keep her off," the captain ordered the man at the wheel. "Three points–steady there, as she goes!"

Then he returned to his figures and worked them over. The sweat poured from his face. He chewed his mustache, his lips, and his pencil, staring at the figures as a man might at a ghost. Suddenly, with a fierce, muscular outburst, he crumpled the scribbled paper in his fist and crushed it under foot. 'mr. Konig grinned vindictively and turned away, while Captain Davenport leaned against the cabin and for half an hour spoke no word, contenting himself with gazing to leeward with an expression of musing hopelessness on his face.

"Mr. McCoy," he broke silence abruptly. "The chart indicates a group of islands, but not how many, off there to the north'ard, or nor'-nor'westward, about forty miles–the Acteon Islands. What about them?"

"There are four, all low," McCoy answered. "First to the southeast is Matuerui–no people, no entrance to the lagoon. Then comes Tenarunga. There used to be about a dozen people there, but they may be all gone now. Anyway, there is no entrance for a ship–only a boat entrance, with a fathom of water. Vehauga and Teua-raro are the other two. No entrances, no people, very low. There is no bed for the Pyrenees in that group. She would be a total wreck."

"Listen to that!" Captain Davenport was frantic. "No people! No entrances! What in the devil are islands good for?

"Well, then, he barked suddenly, like an excited terrier, "the chart gives a whole mess of islands off to the nor'west. What about them? What one has an entrance where I can lay my ship?"

McCoy calmly considered. He did not refer to the chart. All these islands, reefs, shoals, lagoons, entrances, and distances were marked on the chart of his memory. He knew them as the city dweller knows his buildings, streets, and alleys.

"Papakena and Vanavana are off there to the westward, or west-nor'westward a hundred miles and a bit more," he said. "One is uninhabited, and I heard that the

people on the other had gone off to Cadmus Island. Anyway, neither lagoon has an entrance. Ahunui is another hundred miles on to the nor'west. No entrance, no people."

"Well, forty miles beyond them are two islands?" Captain Davenport queried, raising his head from the chart.

McCoy shook his head.

"Paros and Manuhungi–no entrances, no people. Nengo-Nengo is forty miles beyond them, in turn, and it has no people and no entrance. But there is Hao Island. It is just the place. The lagoon is thirty miles long and five miles wide. There are plenty of people. You can usually find water. And any ship in the world can go through the entrance."

He ceased and gazed solicitously at Captain Davenport, who, bending over the chart with a pair of dividers in hand, had just emitted a low groan.

"Is there any lagoon with an entrance anywhere nearer than Hao Island?" he asked.

"No, Captain; that is the nearest."

"Well, it's three hundred and forty miles." Captain Davenport was speaking very slowly, with decision. "I won't risk the responsibility of all these lives. I'll wreck her on the Acteons. And she's a good ship, too," he added regretfully, after altering the course, this time making more allowance than ever for the westerly current.

An hour later the sky was overcast. The southeast trade still held, but the ocean was a checker board of squalls.

"We'll be there by one o'clock," Captain Davenport announced confidently. "By two o'clock at the outside. 'mcCoy, you put her ashore on the one where the people are."

The sun did not appear again, nor, at one o'clock, was any land to be seen. Captain Davenport looked astern at the Pyrenees' canting wake.

"Good Lord!" he cried. "An easterly current? Look at that!"

Mr. Konig was incredulous. 'mcCoy was noncommittal, though he said that in the Paumotus there was no reason why it should not be an easterly current. A few minutes later a squall robbed the Pyrenees temporarily of all her wind, and she was left rolling heavily in the trough.

"Where's that deep lead? Over with it, you there!" Captain Davenport held the lead line and watched it sag off to the northeast. "There, look at that! Take hold of it for yourself."

McCoy and the mate tried it, and felt the line thrumming and vibrating savagely to the grip of the tidal stream.

"A four-knot current," said Mr. Konig.

"An easterly current instead of a westerly," said Captain "Davenport, glaring accusingly at McCoy, as if to cast the blame for it upon him.

"That is one of the reasons, Captain, for insurance being eighteen per cent in these waters," McCoy answered cheerfully. "You can never tell. The currents are always changing. There was a man who wrote books, I forget his name, in the yacht Casco.

He missed Takaroa by thirty miles and fetched Tikei, all because of the shifting currents. You are up to windward now, and you'd better keep off a few points."

"But how much has this current set me?" the captain demanded irately. "How am I to know how much to keep off?"

"I don't know, Captain," McCoy said with great gentleness. The wind returned, and the PYRENEES, her deck smoking and shimmering in the bright gray light, ran off dead to leeward. Then she worked back, port tack and starboard tack, crisscrossing her track, combing the sea for the Acteon Islands, which the masthead lookouts failed to sight.

Captain Davenport was beside himself. His rage took the form of sullen silence, and he spent the afternoon in pacing the poop or leaning against the weather shrouds. At nightfall, without even consulting McCoy, he squared away and headed into the northwest. Mr. Konig, surreptitiously consulting chart and binnacle, and McCoy, openly and innocently consulting the binnacle, knew that they were running for Hao Island. By midnight the squalls ceased, and the stars came out. Captain Davenport was cheered by the promise of a clear day.

"I'll get an observation in the morning," he told McCoy, "though what my latitude is, is a puzzler. But I'll use the Sumner method, and settle that. Do you know the Sumner line?"

And thereupon he explained it in detail to McCoy.

The day proved clear, the trade blew steadily out of the east, and the Pyrenees just as steadily logged her nine knots. Both the captain and mate worked out the position on a Sumner line, and agreed, and at noon agreed again, and verified the morning sights by the noon sights.

"Another twenty-four hours and we'll be there," Captain Davenport assured McCoy. :"It's a miracle the way the old girl's decks hold out. But they can't last. They can't last. Look at them smoke, more and more every day. Yet it was a tight deck to begin with, fresh-calked in Frisco. I was surprised when the fire first broke out and we battened down. Look at that!"

He broke off to gaze with dropped jaw at a spiral of smoke that coiled and twisted in the lee of the mizzenmast twenty feet above the deck.

"Now, how did that get there?" he demanded indignantly.

Beneath it there was no smoke. Crawling up from the deck, sheltered from the wind by the mast, by some freak it took form and visibility at that height. It writhed away from the mast, and for a moment overhung the captain like some threatening portent. The next moment the wind whisked it away, and the captain's jaw returned to place.

"As I was saying, when we first battened down, I was surprised. It was a tight deck, yet it leaked smoke like a sieve. And we've calked and calked ever since. There must be tremendous pressure underneath to drive so much smoke through."

That afternoon the sky became overcast again, and squally, drizzly weather set in. The wind shifted back and forth between southeast and northeast, and at midnight the Pyrenees was caught aback by a sharp squall from the southwest, from which point the wind continued to blow intermittently.

“We won’t make Hao until ten or eleven,” Captain Davenport complained at seven in the morning, when the fleeting promise of the sun had been erased by hazy cloud masses in the eastern sky. And the next moment he was plaintively demanding, “And what are the currents doing?”

Lookouts at the mastheads could report no land, and the day passed in drizzling calms and violent squalls. By nightfall a heavy sea began to make from the west. The barometer had fallen to 29.50. There was no wind, and still the ominous sea continued to increase. Soon the Pyrenees was rolling madly in the huge waves that marched in an unending procession from out of the darkness of the west. Sail was shortened as fast as both watches could work, and, when the tired crew had finished, its grumbling and complaining voices, peculiarly animal-like and menacing, could be heard in the darkness. Once the starboard watch was called aft to lash down and make secure, and the men openly advertised their sullenness and unwillingness. Every slow movement was a protest and a threat. The atmosphere was moist and sticky like mucilage, and in the absence of wind all hands seemed to pant and gasp for air. The sweat stood out on faces and bare arms, and Captain Davenport for one, his face more gaunt and care-worn than ever, and his eyes troubled and staring, was oppressed by a feeling of impending calamity.

“It’s off to the westward,” McCoy said encouragingly. “At worst, we’ll be only on the edge of it.”

But Captain Davenport refused to be comforted, and by the light of a lantern read up the chapter in his Epitome that related to the strategy of shipmasters in cyclonic storms. From somewhere amidships the silence was broken by a low whimpering from the cabin boy.

“Oh, shut up!” Captain Davenport yelled suddenly and with such force as to startle every man on board and to frighten the offender into a wild wail of terror.

“Mr. Konig,” the captain said in a voice that trembled with rage and nerves, “will you kindly step for’ard and stop that brat’s mouth with a deck mop?”

But it was McCoy who went forward, and in a few minutes had the boy comforted and asleep.

Shortly before daybreak the first breath of air began to move from out the southeast, increasing swiftly to a stiff and stiffer breeze. All hands were on deck waiting for what might be behind it. “We’re all right now, Captain,” said McCoy, standing close to his shoulder. “The hurricane is to the west’ard, and we are south of it. This breeze is the in-suck. It won’t blow any harder. You can begin to put sail on her.”

“But what’s the good? Where shall I sail? This is the second day without observations, and we should have sighted Hao Island yesterday morning. Which way does it bear, north, south, east, or what? Tell me that, and I’ll make sail in a jiffy.”

“I am no navigator, Captain,” McCoy said in his mild way.

“I used to think I was one,” was the retort, “before I got into these Paumotus.”

At midday the cry of “Breakers ahead!” was heard from the lookout. The Pyrenees was kept off, and sail after sail was loosed and sheeted home. The Pyrenees was slid-

ing through the water and fighting a current that threatened to set her down upon the breakers. Officers and men were working like mad, cook and cabin boy, Captain Davenport himself, and McCoy all lending a hand. It was a close shave. It was a low shoal, a bleak and perilous place over which the seas broke unceasingly, where no man could live, and on which not even sea birds could rest. The PYRENEES was swept within a hundred yards of it before the wind carried her clear, and at this moment the panting crew, its work done, burst out in a torrent of curses upon the head of McCoy–of McCoy who had come on board, and proposed the run to Mangareva, and lured them all away from the safety of Pitcairn Island to certain destruction in this baffling and terrible stretch of sea. But McCoy's tranquil soul was undisturbed. He smiled at them with simple and gracious benevolence, and, somehow, the exalted goodness of him seemed to penetrate to their dark and somber souls, shaming them, and from very shame stilling the curses vibrating in their throats.

"Bad waters! Bad waters!" Captain Davenport was murmuring as his ship forged clear; but he broke off abruptly to gaze at the shoal which should have been dead astern, but which was already on the PYRENEES' weather-quarter and working up rapidly to windward.

He sat down and buried his face in his hands. And the first mate saw, and McCoy saw, and the crew saw, what he had seen. South of the shoal an easterly current had set them down upon it; north of the shoal an equally swift westerly current had clutched the ship and was sweeping her away.

"I've heard of these Paumotus before," the captain groaned, lifting his blanched face from his hands. "Captain Moyendale told me about them after losing his ship on them. And I laughed at him behind his back. God forgive me, I laughed at him. What shoal is that?" he broke off, to ask McCoy.

"I don't know, Captain."

"Why don't you know?"

"Because I never saw it before, and because I have never heard of it. I do know that it is not charted. These waters have never been thoroughly surveyed."

"Then you don't know where we are?"

"No more than you do," McCoy said gently.

At four in the afternoon cocoanut trees were sighted, apparently growing out of the water. A little later the low land of an atoll was raised above the sea.

"I know where we are now, Captain." McCoy lowered the glasses from his eyes. "That's Resolution Island. We are forty miles beyond Hao Island, and the wind is in our teeth."

"Get ready to beach her then. Where's the entrance?" "There's only a canoe passage. But now that we know where we are, we can run for Barclay de Tolley. It is only one hundred and twenty miles from here, due nor'-nor'west. With this breeze we can be there by nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

Captain Davenport consulted the chart and debated with himself.

“If we wreck her here,” McCoy added, “we’d have to make the run to Barclay de Tolley in the boats just the same.”

The captain gave his orders, and once more the Pyrenees swung off for another run across the inhospitable sea.

And the middle of the next afternoon saw despair and mutiny on her smoking deck. The current had accelerated, the wind had slackened, and the Pyrenees had sagged off to the west. The lookout sighted Barclay de Tolley to the eastward, barely visible from the masthead, and vainly and for hours the PYRENEES tried to beat up to it. Ever, like a mirage, the cocoanut trees hovered on the horizon, visible only from the masthead. From the deck they were hidden by the bulge of the world.

Again Captain Davenport consulted McCoy and the chart. ‘makemo lay seventy-five miles to the southwest. Its lagoon was thirty miles long, and its entrance was excellent. When Captain Davenport gave his orders, the crew refused duty. They announced that they had had enough of hell fire under their feet. There was the land. What if the ship could not make it? They could make it in the boats. Let her burn, then. Their lives amounted to something to them. They had served faithfully the ship, now they were going to serve themselves.

They sprang to the boats, brushing the second and third mates out of the way, and proceeded to swing the boats out and to prepare to lower away. Captain Davenport and the first mate, revolvers in hand, were advancing to the break of the poop, when McCoy, who had climbed on top of the cabin, began to speak.

He spoke to the sailors, and at the first sound of his dovelike, cooing voice they paused to hear. He extended to them his own ineffable serenity and peace. His soft voice and simple thoughts flowed out to them in a magic stream, soothing them against their wills. Long forgotten things came back to them, and some remembered lullaby songs of childhood and the content and rest of the mother’s arm at the end of the day. There was no more trouble, no more danger, no more irk, in all the world. Everything was as it should be, and it was only a matter of course that they should turn their backs upon the land and put to sea once more with hell fire hot beneath their feet.

McCoy spoke simply; but it was not what he spoke. It was his personality that spoke more eloquently than any word he could utter. It was an alchemy of soul occultly subtile and profoundly deep–a mysterious emanation of the spirit, seductive, sweetly humble, and terribly imperious. It was illumination in the dark crypts of their souls, a compulsion of purity and gentleness vastly greater than that which resided in the shining, death-spitting revolvers of the officers.

The men wavered reluctantly where they stood, and those who had loosed the turns made them fast again. Then one, and then another, and then all of them, began to sidle awkwardly away.

McCoy’s face was beaming with childlike pleasure as he descended from the top of the cabin. Thee was no trouble. For that matter there had been no trouble averted. There never had been any trouble, for there was no place for such in the blissful world in which he lived.

"You hypnotized em," Mr. Konig grinned at him, speaking in a low voice.

"Those boys are good," was the answer. "Their hearts are good. They have had a hard time, and they have worked hard, and they will work hard to the end."

Mr. Konig had not time to reply. His voice was ringing out orders, the sailors were springing to obey, and the PYRENEES was paying slowly off from the wind until her bow should point in the direction of Makemo.

The wind was very light, and after sundown almost ceased. It was insufferably warm, and fore and aft men sought vainly to sleep. The deck was too hot to lie upon, and poisonous vapors, oozing through the seams, crept like evil spirits over the ship, stealing into the nostrils and windpipes of the unwary and causing fits of sneezing and coughing. The stars blinked lazily in the dim vault overhead; and the full moon, rising in the east, touched with its light the myriads of wisps and threads and spidery films of smoke that intertwined and writhed and twisted along the deck, over the rails, and up the masts and shrouds.

"Tell me," Captain Davenport said, rubbing his smarting eyes, "what happened with that BOUNTY crowd after they reached Pitcairn? The account I read said they burnt the Bounty, and that they were not discovered until many years later. But what happened in the meantime? I've always been curious to know. They were men with their necks in the rope. There were some native men, too. And then there were women. That made it look like trouble right from the jump."

"There was trouble," McCoy answered. "They were bad men. They quarreled about the women right away. One of the mutineers, Williams, lost his wife. All the women were Tahitian women. His wife fell from the cliffs when hunting sea birds. Then he took the wife of one of the native men away from him. All the native men were made very angry by this, and they killed off nearly all the mutineers. Then the mutineers that escaped killed off all the native men. The women helped. And the natives killed each other. Everybody killed everybody. They were terrible men.

"Timiti was killed by two other natives while they were combing his hair in friendship. The white men had sent them to do it. Then the white men killed them. The wife of Tullaloo killed him in a cave because she wanted a white man for husband. They were very wicked. God had hidden His face from them. At the end of two years all the native men were murdered, and all the white men except four. They were Young, John Adams, McCoy, who was my great-grandfather, and Quintal. He was a very bad man, too. Once, just because his wife did not catch enough fish for him, he bit off her ear."

"They were a bad lot!" Mr. Konig exclaimed.

"Yes, they were very bad," McCoy agreed and went on serenely cooing of the blood and lust of his iniquitous ancestry. "My great-grandfather escaped murder in order to die by his own hand. He made a still and manufactured alcohol from the roots of the ti-plant. Quintal was his chum, and they got drunk together all the time. At last McCoy got delirium tremens, tied a rock to his neck, and jumped into the sea.

"Quintal's wife, the one whose ear he bit off, also got killed by falling from the cliffs. Then Quintal went to Young and demanded his wife, and went to Adams and

demanded his wife. Adams and Young were afraid of Quintal. They knew he would kill them. So they killed him, the two of them together, with a hatchet. Then Young died. And that was about all the trouble they had."

"I should say so," Captain Davenport snorted. "There was nobody left to kill."

"You see, God had hidden His face," McCoy said.

By morning no more than a faint air was blowing from the eastward, and, unable to make appreciable southing by it, Captain Davenport hauled up full-and-by on the port track. He was afraid of that terrible westerly current which had cheated him out of so many ports of refuge. All day the calm continued, and all night, while the sailors, on a short ration of dried banana, were grumbling. Also, they were growing weak and complaining of stomach pains caused by the straight banana diet. All day the current swept the PYRENEES to the westward, while there was no wind to bear her south. In the middle of the first dogwatch, cocoanut trees were sighted due south, their tufted heads rising above the water and marking the low-lying atoll beneath.

"That is Taenga Island," McCoy said. "We need a breeze tonight, or else we'll miss Makemo."

"What's become of the southeast trade?" the captain demanded. "Why don't it blow? What's the matter?"

"It is the evaporation from the big lagoons–there are so many of them," McCoy explained. The evaporation upsets the whole system of trades. It even causes the wind to back up and blow gales from the southwest. This is the Dangerous Archipelago, Captain."

Captain Davenport faced the old man, opened his mouth, and was about to curse, but paused and refrained. 'mcCoy's presence was a rebuke to the blasphemies that stirred in his brain and trembled in his larynx. 'mcCoy's influence had been growing during the many days they had been together. Captain Davenport was an autocrat of the sea, fearing no man, never bridling his tongue, and now he found himself unable to curse in the presence of this old man with the feminine brown eyes and the voice of a dove. When he realized this, Captain Davenport experienced a distinct shock. This old man was merely the seed of McCoy, of McCoy of the BOUNTY, the mutineer fleeing from the hemp that waited him in England, the McCoy who was a power for evil in the early days of blood and lust and violent death on Pitcairn Island.

Captain Davenport was not religious, yet in that moment he felt a mad impulse to cast himself at the other's feet–and to say he knew not what. It was an emotion that so deeply stirred him, rather than a coherent thought, and he was aware in some vague way of his own unworthiness and smallness in the presence of this other man who possessed the simplicity of a child and the gentleness of a woman.

Of course he could not so humble himself before the eyes of his officers and men. And yet the anger that had prompted the blasphemy still raged in him. He suddenly smote the cabin with his clenched hand and cried:

"Look here, old man, I won't be beaten. These Paumotus have cheated and tricked me and made a fool of me. I refuse to be beaten. I am going to drive this ship, and

drive and drive and drive clear through the Paumotus to China but what I find a bed for her. If every man deserts, I'll stay by her. I'll show the Paumotus. They can't fool me. She's a good girl, and I'll stick by her as long as there's a plank to stand on. You hear me?"

"And I'll stay with you, Captain," McCoy said.

During the night, light, baffling airs blew out of the south, and the frantic captain, with his cargo of fire, watched and measured his westward drift and went off by himself at times to curse softly so that McCoy should not hear.

Daylight showed more palms growing out of the water to the south.

"That's the leeward point of Makemo," McCoy said. "Katiu is only a few miles to the west. We may make that."

But the current, sucking between the two islands, swept them to the northwest, and at one in the afternoon they saw the palms of Katiu rise above the sea and sink back into the sea again.

A few minutes later, just as the captain had discovered that a new current from the northeast had gripped the Pyrenees, the masthead lookouts raised cocoanut palms in the northwest.

"It is Raraka," said McCoy. "We won't make it without wind. The current is drawing us down to the southwest. But we must watch out. A few miles farther on a current flows north and turns in a circle to the northwest. This will sweep us away from Fakarava, and Fakarava is the place for the Pyrenees to find her bed."

"They can sweep all they da–all they well please," Captain Davenport remarked with heat. "We'll find a bed for her somewhere just the same." But the situation on the Pyrenees was reaching a culmination. The deck was so hot that it seemed an increase of a few degrees would cause it to burst into flames. In many places even the heavy-soled shoes of the men were no protection, and they were compelled to step lively to avoid scorching their feet. The smoke had increased and grown more acrid. Every man on board was suffering from inflamed eyes, and they coughed and strangled like a crew of tuberculosis patients. In the afternoon the boats were swung out and equipped. The last several packages of dried bananas were stored in them, as well as the instruments of the officers. Captain Davenport even put the chronometer into the longboat, fearing the blowing up of the deck at any moment.

All night this apprehension weighed heavily on all, and in the first morning light, with hollow eyes and ghastly faces, they stared at one another as if in surprise that the Pyrenees still held together and that they still were alive.

Walking rapidly at times, and even occasionally breaking into an undignified hop-skip-and-run, Captain Davenport inspected his ship's deck.

"It is a matter of hours now, if not of minutes," he announced on his return to the poop.

The cry of land came down from the masthead. From the deck the land was invisible, and McCoy went aloft, while the captain took advantage of the opportunity to curse some of the bitterness out of his heart. But the cursing was suddenly stopped by a

dark line on the water which he sighted to the northeast. It was not a squall, but a regular breeze–the disrupted trade wind, eight points out of its direction but resuming business once more.

"Hold her up, Captain," McCoy said as soon as he reached the poop. "That's the easterly point of Fakarava, and we'll go in through the passage full-tilt, the wind abeam, and every sail drawing."

At the end of an hour, the cocoanut trees and the low-lying land were visible from the deck. The feeling that the end of the PYRENEES' resistance was imminent weighed heavily on everybody. Captain Davenport had the three boats lowered and dropped short astern, a man in each to keep them apart. The Pyrenees closely skirted the shore, the surf-whitened atoll a bare two cable lengths away.

And a minute later the land parted, exposing a narrow passage and the lagoon beyond, a great mirror, thirty miles in length and a third as broad.

"Now, Captain."

For the last time the yards of the Pyrenees swung around as she obeyed the wheel and headed into the passage. The turns had scarcely been made, and nothing had been coiled down, when the men and mates swept back to the poop in panic terror. Nothing had happened, yet they averred that something was going to happen. They could not tell why. They merely knew that it was about to happen. 'mcCoy started forward to take up his position on the bow in order to con the vessel in; but the captain gripped his arm and whirled him around.

"Do it from here," he said. "That deck's not safe. What's the matter?" he demanded the next instant. "We're standing still."

McCoy smiled.

"You are bucking a seven-knot current, Captain," he said. "That is the way the full ebb runs out of this passage."

At the end of another hour the Pyrenees had scarcely gained her length, but the wind freshened and she began to forge ahead.

"Better get into the boats, some of you," Captain Davenport commanded.

His voice was still ringing, and the men were just beginning to move in obedience, when the amidship deck of the Pyrenees, in a mass of flame and smoke, was flung upward into the sails and rigging, part of it remaining there and the rest falling into the sea. The wind being abeam, was what had saved the men crowded aft. They made a blind rush to gain the boats, but McCoy's voice, carrying its convincing message of vast calm and endless time, stopped them.

"Take it easy," he was saying. Everything is all right. Pass that boy down somebody, please."

The man at the wheel had forsaken it in a funk, and Captain Davenport had leaped and caught the spokes in time to prevent the ship from yawing in the current and going ashore.

"Better take charge of the boats," he said to Mr. Konig. "Tow one of them short, right under the quarter. . . . When I go over, it'll be on the jump."

Mr. Konig hesitated, then went over the rail and lowered himself into the boat.

"Keep her off half a point, Captain."

Captain Davenport gave a start. He had thought he had the ship to himself.

"Ay, ay; half a point it is," he answered.

Amidships the Pyrenees was an open flaming furnace, out of which poured an immense volume of smoke which rose high above the masts and completely hid the forward part of the ship. 'mcCoy, in the shelter of the mizzen-shrouds, continued his difficult task of conning the ship through the intricate channel. The fire was working aft along the deck from the seat of explosion, while the soaring tower of canvas on the mainmast went up and vanished in a sheet of flame. Forward, though they could not see them, they knew that the head-sails were still drawing.

"If only she don't burn all her canvas off before she makes inside,:" the captain groaned.

"She'll make it," McCoy assured him with supreme confidence. "There is plenty of time. She is bound to make it. And once inside, we'll put her before it; that will keep the smoke away from us and hold back the fire from working aft."

A tongue of flame sprang up the mizzen, reached hungrily for the lowest tier of canvas, missed it, and vanished. From aloft a burning shred of rope stuff fell square on the back of Captain Davenport's neck. He acted with the celerity of one stung by a bee as he reached up and brushed the offending fire from his skin.

"How is she heading, Captain?"

"Nor'west by west."

"Keep her west-nor-west."

Captain Davenport put the wheel up and steadied her.

"West by north, Captain."

"West by north she is."

"And now west."

Slowly, point by point, as she entered the lagoon, the PYRENEES described the circle that put her before the wind; and point by point, with all the calm certitude of a thousand years of time to spare, McCoy chanted the changing course.

"Another point, Captain."

"A point it is."

Captain Davenport whirled several spokes over, suddenly reversing and coming back one to check her.

"Steady."

"Steady she is–right on it."

Despite the fact that the wind was now astern, the heat was so intense that Captain Davenport was compelled to steal sidelong glances into the binnacle, letting go the wheel now with one hand, now with the other, to rub or shield his blistering cheeks.

McCoy's beard was crinkling and shriveling and the smell of it, strong in the other's nostrils, compelled him to look toward McCoy with sudden solicitude. Captain Davenport was letting go the spokes alternately with his hands in order to rub their blistering

backs against his trousers. Every sail on the mizzenmast vanished in a rush of flame, compelling the two men to crouch and shield their faces.

"Now," said McCoy, stealing a glance ahead at the low shore, "four points up, Captain, and let her drive."

Shreds and patches of burning rope and canvas were falling about them and upon them. The tarry smoke from a smouldering piece of rope at the captain's feet set him off into a violent coughing fit, during which he still clung to the spokes.

The Pyrenees struck, her bow lifted and she ground ahead gently to a stop. A shower of burning fragments, dislodged by the shock, fell about them. The ship moved ahead again and struck a second time. She crushed the fragile coral under her keel, drove on, and struck a third time.

"Hard over," said McCoy. "Hard over?" he questioned gently, a minute later.

"She won't answer," was the reply.

"All right. She is swinging around." 'mcCoy peered over the side. "Soft, white sand. Couldn't ask better. A beautiful bed."

As the Pyrenees swung around her stern away from the wind, a fearful blast of smoke and flame poured aft. Captain Davenport deserted the wheel in blistering agony. He reached the painter of the boat that lay under the quarter, then looked for McCoy, who was standing aside to let him go down.

"You first," the captain cried, gripping him by the shoulder and almost throwing him over the rail. But the flame and smoke were too terrible, and he followed hard after McCoy, both men wriggling on the rope and sliding down into the boat together. A sailor in the bow, without waiting for orders, slashed the painter through with his sheath knife. The oars, poised in readiness, bit into the water, and the boat shot away.

"A beautiful bed, Captain," McCoy murmured, looking back.

"Ay, a beautiful bed, and all thanks to you," was the answer.

The three boats pulled away for the white beach of pounded coral, beyond which, on the edge of a cocoanut grove, could be seen a half dozen grass houses and a score or more of excited natives, gazing wide-eyed at the conflagration that had come to land.

The boats grounded and they stepped out on the white beach.

"And now," said McCoy, "I must see about getting back to Pitcairn."

Semper Idem

DOCTOR Bicknell was in a remarkably gracious mood. Through a minor accident, a slight bit of carelessness, that was all, a man who might have pulled through had died the preceding night. Though it had been only a sailorman, one of the innumerable unwashed, the steward of the receiving hospital had been on the anxious seat all the morning. It was not that the man had died that gave him discomfort, he knew the Doctor too well for that, but his distress lay in the fact that the operation had been done so well. One of the most delicate in surgery, it had been as successful as it was clever and audacious. All had then depended upon the treatment, the nurses, the steward. And the man had died. Nothing much, a bit of carelessness, yet enough to bring the professional wrath of Doctor Bicknell about his ears and to perturb the working of the staff and nurses for twenty-four hours to come.

But, as already stated, the Doctor was in a remarkably gracious mood. When informed by the steward, in fear and trembling, of the man's unexpected take-off, his lips did not so much as form one syllable of censure; nay, they were so pursed that snatches of ragtime floated softly from them, to be broken only by a pleasant query after the health of the other's eldest-born. The steward, deeming it impossible that he could have caught the gist of the case, repeated it.

"Yes, yes," Doctor Bicknell said impatiently; "I understand. But how about Semper Idem? Is he ready to leave?"

"Yes. They're helping him dress now," the steward answered, passing on to the round of his duties, content that peace still reigned within the iodine-saturated walls.

It was Semper Idem's recovery which had so fully compensated Doctor Bicknell for the loss of the sailorman. Lives were to him as nothing, the unpleasant but inevitable incidents of the profession, but cases, ah, cases were everything. People who knew him were prone to brand him a butcher, but his colleagues were at one in the belief that a bolder and yet I a more capable man never stood over the table. He was not an imaginative man. He did not possess, and hence had no tolerance for, emotion. His nature was accurate, precise, scientific. Men were to him no more than pawns, without individuality or personal value. But as cases it was different. The more broken a man was, the more precarious his grip on life, the greater his significance in the eyes of Doctor Bicknell. He would as readily forsake a poet laureate suffering from a common accident for a nameless, mangled vagrant who defied every law of life by refusing to die, as would a child forsake a Punch and Judy for a circus.

So it had been in the case of Semper Idem. The mystery of the man I had not appealed to him, nor had his silence and the veiled romance which the yellow reporters

had so sensationally and so fruitlessly explotted in divers Sunday editions. But Semper Idem's throat had been cut. That was the point. That was where his interest had centred. Cut from ear to ear, and not one surgeon in a thousand to give a snap of the fingers for his chance of recovery. But, thanks to the swift municipal ambulance service and to Doctor Bicknell, he had been dragged back into the world he had sought to leave. The Doctor's co-workers had shaken their heads when the case was brought in. Impossible, they said. Throat, windpipe, jugular, all but actually severed, and the loss of blood frightful. As it was such a foregone conclusion, Doctor Bicknell had employed methods and done things which made them, even in their professional capacities, to shudder. And lo! the man had recovered.

So, on this morning that Semper Idem was to leave the hospital, hale and hearty, Doctor Bicknell's geniality was in nowise disturbed by the steward's report, and he proceeded cheerfully to bring order out of the chaos of a child's body which had been ground and crunched beneath the wheels of an electric car.

As many will remember, the case of Semper Idem aroused a vast deal of unseemly yet highly natural curiosity. He had been found in a slum lodging, with throat cut as aforementioned, and blood dripping down upon the inmates of the room below and disturbing their festivities. He had evidently done the deed standing, with head bowed forward that he might gaze his last upon a photograph which stood on the table propped against a candle-stick. It was this attitude which had made it possible for Doctor Bicknell to save him So terrific had been the sweep of the razor that had he had his head thrown back, as he should have done to have accomplished the act properly, with his neck stretched and the elastic vascular walls distended, he would have of a certainty well nigh decapitated himself.

At the hospital, during all the time he travelled the repugnant road back to life, not a word had left his lips. Nor could anything be learned of him by the sleuths detailed by the chief of police. Nobody knew him, nor had ever seen or heard of him before. He was strictly, uniquely of the present. His clothes and surroundings were those of the lowest laborer, his hands the hands of a gentleman. But not a shred of writing was discovered, nothing, save in one particular, which would serve to indicate his past or his position in life.

And that one particular was the photograph. If it were at all a likeness, the woman who gazed frankly out upon the onlooker from the card-mount must have been a striking creature indeed. It was an amateur production, for the detectives were baffled in that no professional photographers signature or studio was appended. Across a corner of the mount, in delicate feminine tracery, was written: "Semper idem; semper fdelis." And she looked it. As many recollect, it was a face one could never forget. Clever half-tones, remarkably like, were published in all the leading papers at the time; but such procedure gave rise to nothing but the uncontrollable public curiosity and interminable copy to the space-writers.

For want of a better name, the rescued suicide was known to the hospital attendants, and to the world, as Semper Idem. And Semper Idem he remained. Reporters,

detectives, and nurses gave him up in despair. Not one word could he be persuaded to utter; yet the flitting conscious light of his eyes showed that his ears heard and his brain grasped every question put to him.

But this mystery and romance played no part in Doctor Bicknell's interest when he paused in the office to have a parting word with his patient. He, the Doctor, had performed a prodigy in the matter of this man, done what was virtually unprecedented in the annals of surgery. He did not care who or what the man was, and it was highly improbable that he should ever see him again; but, like the artist gazing upon a finished creation, he wished to look for the last time upon the work of his hand and brain.

Semper Idem still remained mute. He seemed anxious to be gone. Not a word could the Doctor extract from him, and little the Doctor cared. He examined the throat of the convalescent carefully, idling over the hideous scar with the lingering, half-caressing fondness of a parent. It was not a particularly pleasing sight. An angry line circled the throat,–for all the world as though the man had just escaped the hangman's noose, and,–disappearing below the ear on either side, had the appearance of completing the fiery periphery at the nape of the neck.

Maintaining his dogged silence, yielding to the other's examination in much the manner of a leashed lion, Semper Idem betrayed only his desire to drop from out of the public eye.

"Well, I'll not keep you," Doctor Bicknell finally said, laying a hand on the man's shoulder and stealing a last glance at his own handiwork. "But let me give you a bit of advice. Next time you try it on, hold your chin up, so. Don't snuggle it down and butcher yourself like a cow. Neatness and despatch, you know. Neatness and despatch."

Semper Idem's eyes flashed in token that he heard, and a moment later the hospital door swung to on his heel.

It was a busy day for Doctor Bicknell, and the afternoon was well along when he lighted a cigar preparatory to leaving the table upon which it seemed the sufferers almost clamored to be laid. But the last one, an old rag-picker with a broken shoulder-blade, had been disposed of, and the first fragrant smoke wreaths had begun to curl about his head, when the gong of a hurrying ambulance came through the open window from the street, followed by the inevitable entry of the stretcher with its ghastly freight.

"Lay it on the table," the Doctor directed, turning for a moment to place his cigar in safety. "What is it?"

"Suicide–throat cut," responded one of the stretcher bearers "Down on Morgan Alley. Little hope, I think, sir. He's 'most gone."

"Eh? Well, I'll give him a look, anyway." He leaned over the man at the moment when the quick made its last faint flutter and succumbed.

"It's Semper Idem come back again," the steward said.

"Ay," replied Doctor Bicknell, "and gone again. No bungling this time. Properly done, upon my life, sir, properly done. Took my advice to the letter. I'm not required here. Take it along to the morgue."

Doctor Bicknell secured his cigar and relighted it. “That,” he said between the puffs, looking at the steward, “that evens up for the one you lost last night. We’re quits now.”

The Shadow and the Flash

When I look back, I realize what a peculiar friendship it was. First, there was Lloyd Inwood, tall, slender, and finely knit, nervous and dark. And then Paul Tichlorne, tall, slender, and finely knit, nervous and blond. Each was the replica of the other in everything except color. Lloyd's eyes were black; Paul's were blue. Under stress of excitement, the blood coursed olive in the face of Lloyd, crimson in the face of Paul. But outside this matter of coloring they were as like as two peas. Both were high-strung, prone to excessive tension and endurance, and they lived at concert pitch.

But there was a trio involved in this remarkable friendship, and the third was short, and fat, and chunky, and lazy, and, loath to say, it was I. Paul and Lloyd seemed born to rivalry with each other, and I to be peacemaker between them. We grew up together, the three of us, and full often have I received the angry blows each intended for the other. They were always competing, striving to outdo each other, and when entered upon some such struggle there was no limit either to their endeavors or passions.

This intense spirit of rivalry obtained in their studies and their games. If Paul memorized one canto of "Marmion," Lloyd memorized two cantos, Paul came back with three, and Lloyd again with four, till each knew the whole poem by heart. I remember an incident that occurred at the swimming hole–an incident tragically significant of the life-struggle between them. The boys had a game of diving to the bottom of a ten-foot pool and holding on by submerged roots to see who could stay under the longest. Paul and Lloyd allowed themselves to be bantered into making the descent together. When I saw their faces, set and determined, disappear in the water as they sank swiftly down, I felt a foreboding of something dreadful. The moments sped, the ripples died away, the face of the pool grew placid and untroubled, and neither black nor golden head broke surface in quest of air. We above grew anxious. The longest record of the longest-winded boy had been exceeded, and still there was no sign. Air bubbles trickled slowly upward, showing that the breath had been expelled from their lungs, and after that the bubbles ceased to trickle upward. Each second became interminable, and, unable longer to endure the suspense, I plunged into the water.

I found them down at the bottom, clutching tight to the roots, their heads not a foot apart, their eyes wide open, each glaring fixedly at the other. They were suffering frightful torment, writhing and twisting in the pangs of voluntary suffocation; for neither would let go and acknowledge himself beaten. I tried to break Paul's hold on the root, but he resisted me fiercely. Then I lost my breath and came to the surface, badly scared. I quickly explained the situation, and half a dozen of us went down and by main strength tore them loose. By the time we got them out, both were unconscious,

and it was only after much barrel-rolling and rubbing and pounding that they finally came to their senses. They would have drowned there, had no one rescued them.

When Paul Tichlorne entered college, he let it be generally understood that he was going in for the social sciences. Lloyd Inwood, entering at the same time, elected to take the same course. But Paul had had it secretly in mind all the time to study the natural sciences, specializing on chemistry, and at the last moment he switched over. Though Lloyd had already arranged his year's work and attended the first lectures, he at once followed Paul's lead and went in for the natural sciences and especially for chemistry. Their rivalry soon became a noted thing throughout the university. Each was a spur to the other, and they went into chemistry deeper than did ever students before–so deep, in fact, that ere they took their sheepskins they could have stumped any chemistry or "cow college" professor in the institution, save "old" Moss, head of the department, and even him they puzzled and edified more than once. Lloyd's discovery of the "death bacillus" of the sea toad, and his experiments on it with potassium cyanide, sent his name and that of his university ringing round the world; nor was Paul a whit behind when he succeeded in producing laboratory colloids exhibiting amoeba-like activities, and when he cast new light upon the processes of fertilization through his startling experiments with simple sodium chlorides and magnesium solutions on low forms of marine life.

It was in their undergraduate days, however, in the midst of their profoundest plunges into the mysteries of organic chemistry, that Doris Van Benschoten entered into their lives. Lloyd met her first, but within twenty-four hours Paul saw to it that he also made her acquaintance. Of course, they fell in love with her, and she became the only thing in life worth living for. They wooed her with equal ardor and fire, and so intense became their struggle for her that half the student-body took to wagering wildly on the result. Even "old" Moss, one day, after an astounding demonstration in his private laboratory by Paul, was guilty to the extent of a month's salary of backing him to become the bridegroom of Doris Van Benschoten.

In the end she solved the problem in her own way, to everybody's satisfaction except Paul's and Lloyd's. Getting them together, she said that she really could not choose between them because she loved them both equally well; and that, unfortunately, since polyandry was not permitted in the United States she would be compelled to forego the honor and happiness of marrying either of them. Each blamed the other for this lamentable outcome, and the bitterness between them grew more bitter.

But things came to a head enough. It was at my home, after they had taken their degrees and dropped out of the world's sight, that the beginning of the end came to pass. Both were men of means, with little inclination and no necessity for professional life. My friendship and their mutual animosity were the two things that linked them in any way together. While they were very often at my place, they made it a fastidious point to avoid each other on such visits, though it was inevitable, under the circumstances, that they should come upon each other occasionally.

On the day I have in recollection, Paul Tichlorne had been mooning all morning in my study over a current scientific review. This left me free to my own affairs, and I was out among my roses when Lloyd Inwood arrived. Clipping and pruning and tacking the climbers on the porch, with my mouth full of nails, and Lloyd following me about and lending a hand now and again, we fell to discussing the mythical race of invisible people, that strange and vagrant people the traditions of which have come down to us. Lloyd warmed to the talk in his nervous, jerky fashion, and was soon interrogating the physical properties and possibilities of invisibility. A perfectly black object, he contended, would elude and defy the acutest vision.

"Color is a sensation," he was saying. "It has no objective reality. Without light, we can see neither colors nor objects themselves. All objects are black in the dark, and in the dark it is impossible to see them. If no light strikes upon them, then no light is flung back from them to the eye, and so we have no vision-evidence of their being."

"But we see black objects in daylight," I objected.

"Very true," he went on warmly. "And that is because they are not perfectly black. Were they perfectly black, absolutely black, as it were, we could not see them — ay, not in the blaze of a thousand suns could we see them! And so I say, with the right pigments, properly compounded, an absolutely black paint could be produced which would render invisible whatever it was applied to."

"It would be a remarkable discovery," I said non-committally, for the whole thing seemed too fantastic for aught but speculative purposes.

"Remarkable!" Lloyd slapped me on the shoulder. "I should say so. Why, old chap, to coat myself with such a paint would be to put the world at my feet. The secrets of kings and courts would be mine, the machinations of diplomats and politicians, the play of stock-gamblers, the plans of trusts and corporations. I could keep my hand on the inner pulse of things and become the greatest power in the world. And I — " He broke off shortly, then added, "Well, I have begun my experiments, and I don't mind telling you that I'm right in line for it."

A laugh from the doorway startled us. Paul Tichlorne was standing there, a smile of mockery on his lips.

"You forget, my dear Lloyd," he said.

"Forget what?"

"You forget," Paul went on–"ah, you forget the shadow."

I saw Lloyd's face drop, but he answered sneeringly, "I can carry a sunshade, you know." Then he turned suddenly and fiercely upon him. "Look here, Paul, you'll keep out of this if you know what's good for you."

A rupture seemed imminent, but Paul laughed good-naturedly. "I wouldn't lay fingers on your dirty pigments. Succeed beyond your most sanguine expectations, yet you will always fetch up against the shadow. You can't get away from it. Now I shall go on the very opposite tack. In the very nature of my proposition the shadow will be eliminated — "

"Transparency!" ejaculated Lloyd, instantly. "But it can't be achieved."

“Oh, no; of course not.” And Paul shrugged his shoulders and strolled off down the briar-rose path.

This was the beginning of it. Both men attacked the problem with all the tremendous energy for which they were noted, and with a rancor and bitterness that made me tremble for the success of either. Each trusted me to the utmost, and in the long weeks of experimentation that followed I was made a party to both sides, listening to their theorizings and witnessing their demonstrations. Never, by word or sign, did I convey to either the slightest hint of the other’s progress, and they respected me for the seal I put upon my lips.

Lloyd Inwood, after prolonged and unintermittent application, when the tension upon his mind and body became too great to bear, had a strange way of obtaining relief. He attended prize fights. It was at one of these brutal exhibitions, whither he had dragged me in order to tell his latest results, that his theory received striking confirmation.

“Do you see that red-whiskered man?” he asked, pointing across the ring to the fifth tier of seats on the opposite side. “And do you see the next man to him, the one in the white hat? Well, there is quite a gap between them, is there not?”

“Certainly,” I answered. “They are a seat apart. The gap is the unoccupied seat.”

He leaned over to me and spoke seriously. “Between the red-whiskered man and the white-hatted man sits Ben Wasson. You have heard me speak of him. He is the cleverest pugilist of his weight in the country. He is also a Caribbean negro, full-blooded, and the blackest in the United State;. He has on a black overcoat buttoned up. I saw him when he came in and took that seat. As soon as he sat down he disappeared. Watch closely; he may smile.”

I was for crossing over to verify Lloyd’s statement, but he restrained me. “Wait,” he said.

I waited and watched, till the red-whiskered man turned his head as though addressing the unoccupied seat; and then, in that empty space, I saw the rolling whites of a pair of eyes and the white double-crescent of two rows of teeth, and for the instant I could make out a negro’s face. But with the passing of the smile his visibility passed, and the chair seemed vacant as before.

“Were he perfectly black, you could sit alongside him and not see him,” Lloyd said; and I confess the illustration was apt enough to make me well-nigh convinced.

I visited Lloyd’s laboratory a number of times after that, and found him always deep in his search after the absolute black. His experiments covered all sorts Of pigments, such as lamp-blacks, tars, carbonized vegetable matters, soots of oils and fats, and the various carbonized animal substances.

“White light is composed of the seven primary colors,” he argued to me. “But it is itself, of itself, invisible. Only by being reflected from objects do it and the objects become visible. But only that portion of it that is reflected becomes visible. For instance, here is a blue tobacco-box. The white light strikes against it, and, with one exception, all its component colors — violet, indigo, green, yellow, orange, and red–are

absorbed. The one exception is blue. It is not absorbed, but reflected.Therefore the tobacco-box gives us a sensation of blueness. We do not see the other colors because they are absorbed. We see only the blue. For the same reason grass is green. The green waves of white light are thrown upon our eyes."

"When we paint our houses, we do not apply color to them," he said at another time. "What we do is to apply certain substances that have the property of absorbing from white light all the colors except those that we would have our houses appear. When a substance reflects all the colors to the eye, it seems to us white. When it absorbs all the colors, it is black. But, as I said before, we have as yet no perfect black. All the colors are not absorbed. The perfect black, guarding against high lights, will be utterly and absolutely invisible. Look at that, for example."

He pointed to the palette lying on his work-table. Different shades of black pigments were brushed on it. One, in particular, I could hardly see. It gave my eyes a blurring sensation, and I rubbed them and looked again.

"That," he said impressively, "is the blackest black you or any mortal man ever looked upon. But just you wait, and I'll have a black so black that no mortal man will be able to look upon it — and see it!"

On the other hand, I used to find Paul Tichlorne plunged as deeply into the study of light polarization, diffraction, and interference, single and double refraction, and all manner of strange organic compounds.

"Transparency: a state or quality of body which permits all rays of light to pass through," he defined for me. "That is what I am seeking. Lloyd blunders up against the shadow with his perfect opaqueness. But I escape it. A transparent body casts no shadow; neither does it reflect light-waves — that is, the perfectly transparent does not. So, avoiding high lights, not only will such a body cast no shadow, but, since it reflects no light, it will also be invisible."

We were standing by the window at another time. Paul was engaged in polishing a number of lenses, which were ranged along the sill. Suddenly, after a pause in the conversation, he said, "Oh! I've dropped a lens. Stick your head out, old man, and see where it went to."

Out I started to thrust my head, but a sharp blow on the forehead caused me to recoil. I rubbed my bruised brow and gazed with reproachful inquiry at Paul, who was laughing in gleeful, boyish fashion.

"Well?" he said.

"Well?" I echoed.

"Why don't you investigate?" he demanded. And investigate I did. Before thrusting out my head, my senses, automatically active, had told me there was nothing there, that nothing intervened between me and out-of-doors, that the aperture of the window opening was utterly empty. I stretched forth my hand and felt a hard object, smooth and cool and flat, which my touch, out of its experience, told me to be glass. I looked again, but could see positively nothing.

“White quartzose sand,” Paul rattled off, “sodic carbonate, slaked lime, cutlet, manganese peroxide — there you have it, the finest French plate glass, made by the great St. Gobain Company, who made the finest plate glass in the world, and this is the finest piece they ever made. It cost a king’s ransom. But look at it I You can’t see it. You don’t know it’s there till you run your head against it.

“Eh, old boy! That’s merely an object-lesson — certain elements, in themselves opaque, yet so compounded as to give a resultant body which is transparent. But that is a matter of inorganic chemistry, you say. Very true. But I dare to assert, standing here on my two feet, that in the organic I can duplicate whatever occurs in the inorganic.

“Here!” He held a test-tube between me and the light, and I noted the cloudy or muddy liquid it contained. He emptied the contents of another test-tube into it, and almost instantly it became clear and sparkling.

“Or here!” With quick, nervous movements among his array of test-tubes, he turned a white solution to a wine color, and a light yellow solution to a dark brown. He dropped a piece of litmus paper into an acid, when it changed instantly to red, and on floating it in an alkali it turned as quickly to blue.

“The litmus paper is still the litmus paper,” he enunciated in the formal manner of the lecturer. “I have not changed it into something else. Then what did I do? I merely changed the arrangement of its molecules. Where, at first, it absorbed all colors from the light but red, its molecular structure was so changed that it absorbed red and all colors except blue. And so it goes, ad infinitum. Now, what I purpose to do is this.” He paused for a space. “I purpose to seek — ay, and to find–the proper reagents, which, acting upon the living organism, will bring about molecular changes analogous to those you have just witnessed. But these reagents, which I shall find, and for that matter, upon which I already have my hands, will not turn the living body to blue or red or black, but they will turn it to transparency. All light will pass through it. It will be invisible. It will cast no shadow.”

A few weeks later I went hunting with Paul. He had been promising me for some time that I should have the pleasure of shooting over a wonderful dog–the most wonderful dog, in fact, that ever man shot over, so he averred, and continued to aver till my curiosity was aroused. But on the morning in question I was disappointed, for there was no dog in evidence.

“Don’t see him about,” Paul remarked unconcernedly, and we set off across the fields.

I could not imagine, at the time, what was ailing me, but I had a feeling of some impending and deadly illness. My nerves were all awry, and, from the astounding tricks they played me, my senses seemed to have run riot. Strange sounds disturbed me. At times I heard the swish-swish of grass being shoved aside, and once the patter of feet across a patch of stony ground.

“Did you hear anything, Paul?” I asked once.

But he shook his head, and thrust his feet steadily forward.

While climbing a fence, I heard the low, eager whine of a dog, apparently from within a couple of feet of me; but on looking about me I saw nothing.

I dropped to the ground, limp and trembling.

"Paul," I said, "we had better return to the house. I am afraid I am going to be sick."

"Nonsense, old man," he answered. "The sunshine has gone to your head like wine. You'll be all right. It's famous weather."

But, passing along a narrow path through a clump of cottonwoods, some object brushed against my legs and I stumbled and nearly fell. I looked with sudden anxiety at Paul.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Tripping over your own feet?"

I kept my tongue between my teeth and plodded on, though sore perplexed and thoroughly satisfied that some acute and mysterious malady had attacked my nerves. So far my eyes had escaped; but, when we got to the open fields again, even my vision went back on me. Strange flashes of vari-colored, rainbow light began to appear and disappear on the path before me. Still, I managed to keep myself in hand, till the vari-colored lights persisted for a space of fully twenty seconds, dancing and flashing in continuous play. Then I sat down, weak and shaky.

"It's all up with me," I gasped, covering my eyes with my hands. "It has attacked my eyes. Paul, take me home."

But Paul laughed long and loud. "What did I tell you? — the most wonderful dog, eh? Well, what do you think?"

He turned partly from me and began to whistle. I heard the patter of feet, the panting of a heated animal, and the unmistakable yelp of a dog. Then Paul stooped down and apparently fondled the empty air.

"Here! Give me your fist."

And he rubbed my hand over the cold nose and jowls of a dog. A dog it certainly was, with the shape and the smooth, short coat of a pointer.

Suffice to say, I speedily recovered my spirits and control. Paul put a collar about the animal's neck and tied his handkerchief to its tail. And then was vouchsafed us the remarkable sight of an empty collar and a waving handkerchief cavorting over the fields. It was something to see that collar and handkerchief pin a bevy of quail in a clump of locusts and remain rigid and immovable till we had flushed the birds.

Now and again the dog emitted the vari-colored light-flashes I have mentioned. The one thing, Paul explained, which he had not anticipated and which he doubted could be overcome.

"They're a large family," he said, "these sun dogs, wind dogs, rainbows, halos, and parhelia. They are produced by refraction of light from mineral and ice crystals, from mist, rain, spray, and no end of things; and I am afraid they are the penalty I must pay for transparency. I escaped Lloyd's shadow only to fetch up against the rainbow flash."

A couple of days later, before the entrance to Paul's laboratory, I encountered a terrible stench. So overpowering was it that it was easy to discover the source: a mass of putrescent matter on the doorstep which in general outlines resembled a dog.

Paul was startled when he investigated my find. It was his invisible dog, or rather, what had been his invisible dog, for it was now plainly visible. It had been playing about but a few minutes before in all health and strength. Closer examination revealed that the skull had been crushed by some heavy blow. While it was strange that the animal should have been killed, the inexplicable thing was that it should so quickly decay.

"The reagents I injected into its system were harmless," Paul explained. "Yet they were powerful, and it appears that when death comes they force practically instantaneous disintegration. Remarkable! Most remarkable! Well, the only thing is not to die. They do not harm so long as one lives. But I do wonder who smashed in that dog's head."

Light, however, was thrown upon this when a frightened housemaid brought the news that Gaffer Bedshaw had that very morning, not more than an hour back, gone violently insane, and was strapped down at home, in the huntsman's lodge, where he raved of a battle with a ferocious and gigantic beast that he had encountered in the Tichlorne pasture. He claimed that the thing, whatever it was, was invisible, that with his own eyes he had seen that it was invisible; wherefore his tearful wife and daughters shook their heads, and wherefore he but waxed the more violent, and the gardener and the coachman tightened the straps by another hole.

Nor, while Paul Tichlorne was thus successfully mastering the problem of invisibility, was Lloyd Inwood a whit behind. I went over in answer to a message of his to come and see how he was getting on. Now his laboratory occupied an isolated situation in the midst of his vast grounds. It was built in a pleasant little glade, surrounded on all sides by a dense forest growth, and was to be gained by way of a winding and erratic path. But I have travelled that path so often as to know every foot of it, and conceive my surprise when I came upon the glade and found no laboratory. The quaint shed structure with its red sandstone chimney was not. Nor did it look as if it ever had been. There were no signs of ruin, no debris, nothing.

I started to walk across what had once been its site. "This," I said to myself, "should be where the step went up to the door." Barely were the words out of my mouth when I stubbed my toe on some obstacle, pitched forward, and butted my head into something that FELT very much like a door. I reached out my hand. It was a door. I found the knob and turned it. And at once, as the door swung inward on its hinges, the whole interior of the laboratory impinged upon my vision. Greeting Lloyd, I closed the door and backed up the path a few paces. I could see nothing of the building. Returning and opening the door, at once all the furniture and every detail of the interior were visible. It was indeed startling, the sudden transition from void to light and form and color.

"What do you think of it, eh?" Lloyd asked, wringing my hand. "I slapped a couple of coats of absolute black on the outside yesterday afternoon to see how it worked. How's your head? you bumped it pretty solidly, I imagine."

“Never mind that,” he interrupted my congratulations. “I’ve something better for you to do.”

While he talked he began to strip, and when he stood naked before me he thrust a pot and brush into my hand and said, “Here, give me a coat of this.”

It was an oily, shellac-like stuff, which spread quickly and easily over the skin and dried immediately.

“Merely preliminary and precautionary,” he explained when I had finished; “but now for the real stuff.”

I picked up another pot he indicated, and glanced inside, but could see nothing.

“It’s empty,” I said.

“Stick your finger in it.”

I obeyed, and was aware of a sensation of cool moistness. On withdrawing my hand I glanced at the forefinger, the one I had immersed, but it had disappeared. I moved and knew from the alternate tension and relaxation of the muscles that I moved it, but it defied my sense of sight. To all appearances I had been shorn of a finger; nor could I get any visual impression of it till I extended it under the skylight and saw its shadow plainly blotted on the floor.

Lloyd chuckled. “Now spread it on, and keep your eyes open.”

I dipped the brush into the seemingly empty pot, and gave him a long stroke across his chest. With the passage of the brush the living flesh disappeared from beneath. I covered his right leg, and he was a one-legged man defying all laws of gravitation. And so, stroke by stroke, member by member, I painted Lloyd Inwood into nothingness. It was a creepy experience, and I was glad when naught remained in sight but his burning black eyes, poised apparently unsupported in mid-air.

“I have a refined and harmless solution for them,” he said. “A fine spray with an air-brush, and presto! I am not.”

This deftly accomplished, he said, “Now I shall move about, and do you tell me what sensations you experience.”

“In the first place, I cannot see you,” I said, and I could hear his gleeful laugh from the midst of the emptiness. “Of course,” I continued, “you cannot escape your shadow, but that was to be expected. When you pass between my eye and an object, the object disappears, but so unusual and incomprehensible is its disappearance that it seems to me as though my eyes had blurred. When you move rapidly, I experience a bewildering succession of blurs. The blurring sensation makes my eyes ache and my brain tired.”

“Have you any other warnings of my presence?” he asked.

“No, and yes,” I answered. “When you are near me I have feelings similar to those produced by dank warehouses, gloomy crypts, and deep mines. And as sailors feel the loom of the land on dark nights, so I think I feel the loom of your body. But it is all very vague and intangible.”

Long we talked that last morning in his laboratory; and when I turned to go, he put his unseen hand in mine with nervous grip, and said, “Now I shall conquer the world!” And I could not dare to tell him of Paul Tichlorne’s equal success.

At home I found a note from Paul, asking me to come up immediately, and it was high noon when I came spinning up the driveway on my wheel. Paul called me from the tennis court, and I dismounted and went over. But the court was empty. As I stood there, gaping open-mouthed, a tennis ball struck me on the arm, and as I turned about, another whizzed past my ear. For aught I could see of my assailant, they came whirling at me from out of space, and right well was I peppered with them. But when the balls already flung at me began to come back for a second whack, I realized the situation. Seizing a racquet and keeping my eyes open, I quickly saw a rainbow flash appearing and disappearing and darting over the ground. I took out after it, and when I laid the racquet upon it for a half-dozen stout blows, Paul's voice rang out:

"Enough! Enough! Oh! Ouch! Stop! You're landing on my naked skin, you know! Ow! O-w-w! I'll be good! I'll be good! I only wanted you to see my metamorphosis," he said ruefully, and I imagined he was rubbing his hurts.

A few minutes later we were playing tennis — a handicap on my part, for I could have no knowledge of his position save when all the angles between himself, the sun, and me, were in proper conjunction. Then he flashed, and only then. But the flashes were more brilliant than the rainbow–purest blue, most delicate violet, brightest yellow, and all the intermediary shades, with the scintillant brilliancy of the diamond, dazzling, blinding, iridescent.

But in the midst of our play I felt a sudden cold chill, reminding me of deep mines and gloomy crypts, such a chill as I had experienced that very morning. The next moment, close to the net, I saw a ball rebound in mid-air and empty space, and at the same instant, a score of feet away, Paul Tichlorne emitted a rainbow flash. It could not be he from whom the ball had rebounded, and with sickening dread I realized that Lloyd Inwood had come upon the scene. To make sure, I looked for his shadow, and there it was, a shapeless blotch the girth of his body, (the sun was overhead), moving along the ground. I remembered his threat, and felt sure that all the long years of rivalry were about to culminate in uncanny battle.

I cried a warning to Paul, and heard a snarl as of a wild beast, and an answering snarl. I saw the dark blotch move swiftly across the court, and a brilliant burst of vari-colored light moving with equal swiftness to meet it; and then shadow and flash came together and there was the sound of unseen blows. The net went down before my frightened eyes. I sprang toward the fighters, crying:

"For God's sake!"

But their locked bodies smote against my knees, and I was overthrown.

"You keep out of this, old man!"! heard the voice of Lloyd Inwood from out of the emptiness. And then Paul's voice crying, "Yes, we've had enough of peacemaking!"

From the sound of their voices I knew they had separated. I could not locate Paul, and so approached the shadow that represented Lloyd. But from the other side came a stunning blow on the point of my jaw, and I heard Paul scream angrily, "Now will you keep away?"

Then they came together again, the impact of their blows, their groans and gasps, and the swift flashings and shadow-movings telling plainly of the deadliness of the struggle.

I shouted for help, and Gaffer Bedshaw came running into the court. I could see, as he approached, that he was looking at me strangely, but he collided with the combatants and was hurled headlong to the ground. With despairing shriek and a cry of "O Lord, I've got 'em!" he sprang to his feet and tore madly out of the court.

I could do nothing, so I sat up, fascinated and powerless, and watched the struggle. The noonday sun beat down with dazzling brightness on the naked tennis court. And it was naked. All I could see was the blotch of shadow and the rainbow flashes, the dust rising from the invisible feet, the earth tearing up from beneath the straining foot-grips, and the wire screen bulge once or twice as their bodies hurled against it. That was all, and after a time even that ceased. There were no more flashes, and the shadow had become long and stationary; and I remembered their set boyish faces when they clung to the roots in the deep coolness of the pool.

They found me an hour afterward. Some inkling of what had happened got to the servants and they quitted the Tichlorne service in a body. Gaffer Bedshaw never recovered from the second shock he received, and is confined in a madhouse, hopelessly incurable. The secrets of their marvellous discoveries died with Paul and Lloyd, both laboratories being destroyed by grief-stricken relatives. As for myself, I no longer care for chemical research, and science is a tabooed topic in my household. I have returned to my roses. Nature's colors are good enough for me.

The Sheriff of Kona

"You cannot escape liking the climate," Cudworth said, in reply to my panegyric on the Kona coast. "I was a young fellow, just out of college, when I came here eighteen years ago. I never went back, except, of course, to visit. And I warn you, if you have some spot dear to you on earth, not to linger here too long, else you will find this dearer."

We had finished dinner, which had been served on the big lanai, the one with a northerly exposure, though exposure is indeed a misnomer in so delectable a climate.

The candles had been put out, and a slim, white-clad Japanese slipped like a ghost through the silvery moonlight, presented us with cigars, and faded away into the darkness of the bungalow. I looked through a screen of banana and lehua trees, and down across the guava scrub to the quiet sea a thousand feet beneath. For a week, ever since I had landed from the tiny coasting-steamer, I had been stopping with Cudworth, and during that time no wind had ruffled that unvexed sea. True, there had been breezes, but they were the gentlest zephyrs that ever blew through summer isles. They were not winds; they were sighs–long, balmy sighs of a world at rest.

"A lotus land," I said.

"Where each day is like every day, and every day is a paradise of days," he answered. "Nothing ever happens. It is not too hot. It is not too cold. It is always just right. Have you noticed how the land and the sea breathe turn and turn about?"

Indeed, I had noticed that delicious rhythmic, breathing. Each morning I had watched the sea-breeze begin at the shore and slowly extend seaward as it blew the mildest, softest whiff of ozone to the land. It played over the sea, just faintly darkening its surface, with here and there and everywhere long lanes of calm, shifting, changing, drifting, according to the capricious kisses of the breeze. And each evening I had watched the sea breath die away to heavenly calm, and heard the land breath softly make its way through the coffee trees and monkey-pods.

"It is a land of perpetual calm," I said. "Does it ever blow here?–ever really blow? You know what I mean."

Cudworth shook his head and pointed eastward.

"How can it blow, with a barrier like that to stop it?"

Far above towered the huge bulks of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, seeming to blot out half the starry sky. Two miles and a half above our heads they reared their own heads, white with snow that the tropic sun had failed to melt.

"Thirty miles away, right now, I'll wager, it is blowing forty miles an hour."

I smiled incredulously.

Cudworth stepped to the lanai telephone. He called up, in succession, Waimea, Kohala, and Hamakua. Snatches of his conversation told me that the wind was blowing: "Rip-snorting and back-jumping, eh? . . . How long? . . . Only a week? . . . Hello, Abe, is that you? . . . Yes, yes . . . You WILL plant coffee on the Hamakua coast . . . Hang your wind-breaks! You should see MY trees."

"Blowing a gale," he said to me, turning from hanging up the receiver. "I always have to joke Abe on his coffee. He has five hundred acres, and he's done marvels in wind-breaking, but how he keeps the roots in the ground is beyond me. Blow? It always blows on the Hamakua side. Kohala reports a schooner under double reefs beating up the channel between Hawaii and Maui, and making heavy weather of it."

"It is hard to realize," I said lamely. "Doesn't a little whiff of it ever eddy around somehow, and get down here?"

"Not a whiff. Our land-breeze is absolutely of no kin, for it begins this side of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa. You see, the land radiates its heat quicker than the sea, and so, at night, the land breathes over the sea. In the day the land becomes warmer than the sea, and the sea breathes over the land . . . Listen! Here comes the land-breath now, the mountain wind."

I could hear it coming, rustling softly through the coffee trees, stirring the monkey-pods, and sighing through the sugar-cane. On the lanai the hush still reigned. Then it came, the first feel of the mountain wind, faintly balmy, fragrant and spicy, and cool, deliciously cool, a silken coolness, a wine-like coolness–cool as only the mountain wind of Kona can be cool.

"Do you wonder that I lost my heart to Kona eighteen years ago?" he demanded. "I could never leave it now. I think I should die. It would be terrible. There was another man who loved it, even as I. I think he loved it more, for he was born here on the Kona coast. He was a great man, my best friend, my more than brother. But he left it, and he did not die."

"Love?" I queried. "A woman?"

Cudworth shook his head.

"Nor will he ever come back, though his heart will be here until he dies."

He paused and gazed down upon the beachlights of Kailua. I smoked silently and waited.

>"He was already in love . . . with his wife. Also, he had three children, and he loved them. They are in Honolulu now. The boy is going to college."

"Some rash act?" I questioned, after a time, impatiently.

He shook his head. "Neither guilty of anything criminal, nor charged with anything criminal. He was the Sheriff of Kona."

"You choose to be paradoxical," I said.

"I suppose it does sound that way," he admitted, "and that is the perfect hell of it."

He looked at me searchingly for a moment, and then abruptly took up the tale.

"He was a leper. No, he was not born with it–no one is born with it; it came upon him. This man–what does it matter? Lyte Gregory was his name. Every kamaina

knows the story. He was straight American stock, but he was built like the chieftains of old Hawaii. He stood six feet three. His stripped weight was two hundred and twenty pounds, not an ounce of which was not clean muscle or bone. He was the strongest man I have ever seen. He was an athlete and a giant. He was a god. He was my friend. And his heart and his soul were as big and as fine as his body.

"I wonder what you would do if you saw your friend, your brother, on the slippery lip of a precipice, slipping, slipping, and you were able to do nothing. That was just it. I could do nothing. I saw it coming, and I could do nothing. My God, man, what could I do? There it was, malignant and incontestable, the mark of the thing on his brow. No one else saw it. It was because I loved him so, I do believe, that I alone saw it. I could not credit the testimony of my senses. It was too incredibly horrible. Yet there it was, on his brow, on his ears. I had seen it, the slight puff of the earlobes–oh, so imperceptibly slight. I watched it for months. Then, next, hoping against hope, the darkening of the skin above both eyebrows–oh, so faint, just like the dimmest touch of sunburn. I should have thought it sunburn but that there was a shine to it, such an invisible shine, like a little highlight seen for a moment and gone the next. I tried to believe it was sunburn, only I could not. I knew better. No one noticed it but me. No one ever noticed it except Stephen Kaluna, and I did not know that till afterward. But I saw it coming, the whole damnable, unnamable awfulness of it; but I refused to think about the future. I was afraid. I could not. And of nights I cried over it.

"He was my friend. We fished sharks on Niihau together. We hunted wild cattle on Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa. We broke horses and branded steers on the Carter Ranch. We hunted goats through Haleakala. He taught me diving and surfing until I was nearly as clever as he, and he was cleverer than the average Kanaka. I have seen him dive in fifteen fathoms, and he could stay down two minutes. He was an amphibian and a mountaineer. He could climb wherever a goat dared climb. He was afraid of nothing. He was on the wrecked Luga, and he swam thirty miles in thirty-six hours in a heavy sea. He could fight his way out through breaking combers that would batter you and me to a jelly. He was a great, glorious man-god. We went through the Revolution together. We were both romantic loyalists. He was shot twice and sentenced to death. But he was too great a man for the republicans to kill. He laughed at them. Later, they gave him honour and made him Sheriff of Kona. He was a simple man, a boy that never grew up. His was no intricate brain pattern. He had no twists nor quirks in his mental processes. He went straight to the point, and his points were always simple.

"And he was sanguine. Never have I known so confident a man, nor a man so satisfied and happy. He did not ask anything from life. There was nothing left to be desired. For him life had no arrears. He had been paid in full, cash down, and in advance. What more could he possibly desire than that magnificent body, that iron constitution, that immunity from all ordinary ills, and that lowly wholesomeness of soul? Physically he was perfect. He had never been sick in his life. He did not know what a headache was. When I was so afflicted he used to look at me in wonder, and make me laugh with his clumsy attempts at sympathy. He did not understand such a thing as a headache.

He could not understand. Sanguine? No wonder. How could he be otherwise with that tremendous vitality and incredible health?

"Just to show you what faith he had in his glorious star, and, also, what sanction he had for that faith. He was a youngster at the time–I had just met him–when he went into a poker game at Wailuku. There was a big German in it, Schultz his name was, and he played a brutal, domineering game. He had had a run of luck as well, and he was quite insufferable, when Lyte Gregory dropped in and took a hand. The very first hand it was Schultz's blind. Lyte came in, as well as the others, and Schultz raised them out–all except Lyte. He did not like the German's tone, and he raised him back. Schultz raised in turn, and in turn Lyte raised Schultz. So they went, back and forth. The stakes were big. And do you know what Lyte held? A pair of kings and three little clubs. It wasn't poker. Lyte wasn't playing poker. He was playing his optimism. He didn't know what Schultz held, but he raised and raised until he made Schultz squeal, and Schultz held three aces all the time. Think of it! A man with a pair of kings compelling three aces to see before the draw!

"Well, Schultz called for two cards. Another German was dealing, Schultz's friend at that. Lyte knew then that he was up against three of a kind. Now what did he do? What would you have done? Drawn three cards and held up the kings, of course. Not Lyte. He was playing optimism. He threw the kings away, held up the three little clubs, and drew two cards. He never looked at them. He looked across at Schultz to bet, and Schultz did bet, big. Since he himself held three aces he knew he had Lyte, because he played Lyte for threes, and, necessarily, they would have to be smaller threes. Poor Schultz! He was perfectly correct under the premises. His mistake was that he thought Lyte was playing poker. They bet back and forth for five minutes, until Schultz's certainty began to ooze out. And all the time Lyte had never looked at his two cards, and Schultz knew it. I could see Schultz think, and revive, and splurge with his bets again. But the strain was too much for him."

"'Hold on, Gregory,' he said at last. 'I've got you beaten from the start. I don't want any of your money. I've got–'"

"'Never mind what you've got,' Lyte interrupted. 'You don't know what I've got. I guess I'll take a look."'

"He looked, and raised the German a hundred dollars. Then they went at it again, back and forth and back and forth, until Schultz weakened and called, and laid down his three aces. Lyte faced his five cards. They were all black. He had drawn two more clubs. Do you know, he just about broke Schultz's nerve as a poker player. He never played in the same form again. He lacked confidence after that, and was a bit wobbly."

"'But how could you do it?' I asked Lyte afterwards. 'You knew he had you beaten when he drew two cards. Besides, you never looked at your own draw."'

"'I didn't have to look,' was Lyte's answer. 'I knew they were two clubs all the time. They just had to be two clubs. Do you think I was going to let that big Dutchman beat me? It was impossible that he should beat me. It is not my way to be beaten.

I just have to win. Why, I'd have been the most surprised man in this world if they hadn't been all clubs."'

"That was Lyte's way, and maybe it will help you to appreciate his colossal optimism. As he put it he just had to succeed, to fare well, to prosper. And in that same incident, as in ten thousand others, he found his sanction. The thing was that he did succeed, did prosper. That was why he was afraid of nothing. Nothing could ever happen to him. He knew it, because nothing had ever happened to him. That time the Luga was lost and he swam thirty miles, he was in the water two whole nights and a day. And during all that terrible stretch of time he never lost hope once, never once doubted the outcome. He just knew he was going to make the land. He told me so himself, and I know it was the truth.

"Well, that is the kind of a man Lyte Gregory was. He was of a different race from ordinary, ailing mortals. He was a lordly being, untouched by common ills and misfortunes. Whatever he wanted he got. He won his wife–one of the Caruthers, a little beauty–from a dozen rivals. And she settled down and made him the finest wife in the world. He wanted a boy. He got it. He wanted a girl and another boy. He got them. And they were just right, without spot or blemish, with chests like little barrels, and with all the inheritance of his own health and strength.

"And then it happened. The mark of the beast was laid upon him. I watched it for a year. It broke my heart. But he did not know it, nor did anybody else guess it except that cursed hapa-haole, Stephen Kaluna. He knew it, but I did not know that he did. And–yes–Doc Strowbridge knew it. He was the federal physician, and he had developed the leper eye. You see, part of his business was to examine suspects and order them to the receiving station at Honolulu. And Stephen Kaluna had developed the leper eye. The disease ran strong in his family, and four or five of his relatives were already on Molokai.

"The trouble arose over Stephen Kaluna's sister. When she became suspect, and before Doc Strowbridge could get hold of her, her brother spirited her away to some hiding-place. Lyte was Sheriff of Kona, and it was his business to find her.

"We were all over at Hilo that night, in Ned Austin's. Stephen Kaluna was there when we came in, by himself, in his cups, and quarrelsome. Lyte was laughing over some joke–that huge, happy laugh of a giant boy. Kaluna spat contemptuously on the floor. Lyte noticed, so did everybody; but he ignored the fellow. Kaluna was looking for trouble. He took it as a personal grudge that Lyte was trying to apprehend his sister. In half a dozen ways he advertised his displeasure at Lyte's presence, but Lyte ignored him. I imagined Lyte was a bit sorry for him, for the hardest duty of his office was the apprehension of lepers. It is not a nice thing to go in to a man's house and tear away a father, mother, or child, who has done no wrong, and to send such a one to perpetual banishment on Molokai. Of course, it is necessary as a protection to society, and Lyte, I do believe, would have been the first to apprehend his own father did he become suspect.

"Finally, Kaluna blurted out: 'Look here, Gregory, you think you're going to find Kalaniweo, but you're not.'

"Kalaniweo was his sister. Lyte glanced at him when his name was called, but he made no answer. Kaluna was furious. He was working himself up all the time.

"'I'll tell you one thing,' he shouted. 'You'll be on Molokai yourself before ever you get Kalaniweo there. I'll tell you what you are. You've no right to be in the company of honest men. You've made a terrible fuss talking about your duty, haven't you? You've sent many lepers to Molokai, and knowing all the time you belonged there yourself.'

"I'd seen Lyte angry more than once, but never quite so angry as at that moment. Leprosy with us, you know, is not a thing to jest about. He made one leap across the floor, dragging Kaluna out of his chair with a clutch on his neck. He shook him back and forth savagely, till you could hear the half-caste's teeth rattling.

"'What do you mean?' Lyte was demanding. 'Spit it out, man, or I'll choke it out of you!'

"You know, in the West there is a certain phrase that a man must smile while uttering. So with us of the islands, only our phrase is related to leprosy. No matter what Kaluna was, he was no coward. As soon as Lyte eased the grip on his throat he answered:-

"'I'll tell you what I mean. You are a leper yourself.'

Lyte suddenly flung the half-caste sideways into a chair, letting him down easily enough. Then Lyte broke out into honest, hearty laughter. But he laughed alone, and when he discovered it he looked around at our faces. I had reached his side and was trying to get him to come away, but he took no notice of me. He was gazing, fascinated, at Kaluna, who was brushing at his own throat in a flurried, nervous way, as if to brush off the contamination of the fingers that had clutched him. The action was unreasoned, genuine.

"Lyte looked around at us, slowly passing from face to face.

"'My God, fellows! My God!' he said.

"He did not speak it. It was more a hoarse whisper of fright and horror. It was fear that fluttered in his throat, and I don't think that ever in his life before he had known fear.

"Then his colossal optimism asserted itself, and he laughed again.

"'A good joke–whoever put it up,' he said. 'The drinks are on me. I had a scare for a moment. But, fellows, don't do it again, to anybody. It's too serious. I tell you I died a thousand deaths in that moment. I thought of my wife and the kids, and . . . '

"His voice broke, and the half-caste, still throat-brushing, drew his eyes. He was puzzled and worried.

"'John,'> he said, turning toward me.

"His> jovial, rotund voice rang in my ears. But I could not answer. I was swallowing hard at that moment, and besides, I knew my face didn't look just right.

"'John,' he called again, taking a step nearer.

“He called timidly, and of all nightmares of horrors the most frightful was to hear timidity in Lyte Gregory’s voice.

“‘John, John, what does it mean?’ he went on, still more timidly. ‘It’s a joke, isn’t it? John, here’s my hand. If I were a leper would I offer you my hand? Am I a leper, John?’

“He held out his hand, and what in high heaven or hell did I care? He was my friend. I took his hand, though it cut me to the heart to see the way his face brightened.

“‘It was only a joke, Lyte,’ I said. ‘We fixed it up on you. But you’re right. It’s too serious. We won’t do it again.’

“He did not laugh this time. He smiled, as a man awakened from a bad dream and still oppressed by the substance of the dream.

“‘All right, then,’ he said. ‘Don’t do it again, and I’ll stand for the drinks. But I may as well confess that you fellows had me going south for a moment. Look at the way I’ve been sweating.’

“He sighed and wiped the sweat from his forehead as he started to step toward the bar.

“‘It is no joke,’ Kaluna said abruptly. I looked murder at him, and I felt murder, too. But I dared not speak or strike. That would have precipitated the catastrophe which I somehow had a mad hope of still averting.

“‘It is no joke,’ Kaluna repeated. ‘You are a leper, Lyte Gregory, and you’ve no right putting your hands on honest men’s flesh–on the clean flesh of honest men.’

“Then Gregory flared up.

“‘The joke has gone far enough! Quit it! Quit it, I say, Kaluna, or I’ll give you a beating!’

“‘You undergo a bacteriological examination,’ Kaluna answered, ‘and then you can beat me–to death, if you want to. Why, man, look at yourself there in the glass. You can see it. Anybody can see it. You’re developing the lion face. See where the skin is darkened there over your eyes.

“Lyte peered and peered, and I saw his hands trembling.

“‘I can see nothing,’ he said finally, then turned on the hapa-haole. ‘You have a black heart, Kaluna. And I am not ashamed to say that you have given me a scare that no man has a right to give another. I take you at your word. I am going to settle this thing now. I am going straight to Doc Strowbridge. And when I come back, watch out.’

“He never looked at us, but started for the door.

“‘You wait here, John,’ he said, waving me back from accompanying him.

“We stood around like a group of ghosts.

“‘It is the truth,’ Kaluna said. ‘You could see it for yourselves.’

“They looked at me, and I nodded. Harry Burnley lifted his glass to his lips, but lowered it untasted. He spilled half of it over the bar. His lips were trembling like a child that is about to cry. Ned Austin made a clatter in the ice-chest. He wasn’t looking for anything. I don’t think he knew what he was doing. Nobody spoke. Harry Burnley’s lips

were trembling harder than ever. Suddenly, with a most horrible, malignant expression he drove his fist into Kaluna's face. He followed it up. We made no attempt to separate them. We didn't care if he killed the half-caste. It was a terrible beating. We weren't interested. I don't even remember when Burnley ceased and let the poor devil crawl away. We were all too dazed.

"Doc Strowbridge told me about it afterward. He was working late over a report when Lyte came into his office. Lyte had already recovered his optimism, and came swinging in, a trifle angry with Kaluna to be sure, but very certain of himself. 'What could I do?' Doc asked me. 'I knew he had it. I had seen it coming on for months. I couldn't answer him. I couldn't say yes. I don't mind telling you I broke down and cried. He pleaded for the bacteriological test. "Snip out a piece, Doc," he said, over and over. "Snip out a piece of skin and make the test."

"The way Doc Strowbridge cried must have convinced Lyte. The Claudine was leaving next morning for Honolulu. We caught him when he was going aboard. You see, he was headed for Honolulu to give himself up to the Board of Health. We could do nothing with him. He had sent too many to Molokai to hang back himself. We argued for Japan. But he wouldn't hear of it. 'I've got to take my medicine, fellows,' was all he would say, and he said it over and over. He was obsessed with the idea.

"He wound up all his affairs from the Receiving Station at Honolulu, and went down to Molokai. He didn't get on well there. The resident physician wrote us that he was a shadow of his old self. You see he was grieving about his wife and the kids. He knew we were taking care of them, but it hurt him just the same. After six months or so I went down to Molokai. I sat on one side a plate-glass window, and he on the other. We looked at each other through the glass and talked through what might be called a speaking tube. But it was hopeless. He had made up his mind to remain. Four mortal hours I argued. I was exhausted at the end. My steamer was whistling for me, too.

"But we couldn't stand for it. Three months later we chartered the schooner Halcyon. She was an opium smuggler, and she sailed like a witch. Her master was a squarehead who would do anything for money, and we made a charter to China worth his while. He sailed from San Francisco, and a few days later we took out Landhouse's sloop for a cruise. She was only a five-ton yacht, but we slammed her fifty miles to windward into the north-east trade. Seasick? I never suffered so in my life. Out of sight of land we picked up the Halcyon, and Burnley and I went aboard.

"We ran down to Molokai, arriving about eleven at night. The schooner hove to and we landed through the surf in a whale-boat at Kalawao–the place, you know, where Father Damien died. That squarehead was game. With a couple of revolvers strapped on him he came right along. The three of us crossed the peninsula to Kalaupapa, something like two miles. Just imagine hunting in the dead of night for a man in a settlement of over a thousand lepers. You see, if the alarm was given, it was all off with us. It was strange ground, and pitch dark. The leper's dogs came out and bayed at us, and we stumbled around till we got lost.

"The squarehead solved it. He led the way into the first detached house. We shut the door after us and struck a light. There were six lepers. We routed them up, and I talked in native. What I wanted was a kokua. A kokua is, literally, a helper, a native who is clean that lives in the settlement and is paid by the Board of Health to nurse the lepers, dress their sores, and such things. We stayed in the house to keep track of the inmates, while the squarehead led one of them off to find a kokua. He got him, and he brought him along at the point of his revolver. But the kokua was all right. While the squarehead guarded the house, Burnley and I were guided by the kokua to Lyte's house. He was all alone.

"'I thought you fellows would come,' Lyte said. 'Don't touch me, John. How's Ned, and Charley, and all the crowd? Never mind, tell me afterward. I am ready to go now. I've had nine months of it. Where's the boat?'

"We started back for the other house to pick up the squarehead. But the alarm had got out. Lights were showing in the houses, and doors were slamming. We had agreed that there was to be no shooting unless absolutely necessary, and when we were halted we went at it with our fists and the butts of our revolvers. I found myself tangled up with a big man. I couldn't keep him off me, though twice I smashed him fairly in the face with my fist. He grappled with me, and we went down, rolling and scrambling and struggling for grips. He was getting away with me, when some one came running up with a lantern. Then I saw his face. How shall I describe the horror of it. It was not a face–only wasted or wasting features–a living ravage, noseless, lipless, with one ear swollen and distorted, hanging down to the shoulder. I was frantic. In a clinch he hugged me close to him until that ear flapped in my face. Then I guess I went insane. It was too terrible. I began striking him with my revolver. How it happened I don't know, but just as I was getting clear he fastened upon me with his teeth. The whole side of my hand was in that lipless mouth. Then I struck him with the revolver butt squarely between the eyes, and his teeth relaxed."

Cudworth held his hand to me in the moonlight, and I could see the scars. It looked as if it had been mangled by a dog.

"Weren't you afraid?" I asked.

"I was. Seven years I waited. You know, it takes that long for the disease to incubate. Here in Kona I waited, and it did not come. But there was never a day of those seven years, and never a night, that I did not look out on . . . on all this . . . " His voice broke as he swept his eyes from the moon-bathed sea beneath to the snowy summits above. "I could not bear to think of losing it, of never again beholding Kona. Seven years! I stayed clean. But that is why I am single. I was engaged. I could not dare to marry while I was in doubt. She did not understand. She went away to the States and married. I have never seen her since.

"Just at the moment I got clear of the leper policeman there was a rush and clatter of hoofs like a cavalry charge. It was the squarehead. He had been afraid of a rumpus and he had improved his time by making those blessed lepers he was guarding saddle up four horses. We were ready for him. Lyte had accounted for three kokuas, and

between us we untangled Burnley from a couple more. The whole settlement was in an uproar by that time, and as we dashed away somebody opened upon us with a Winchester. It must have been Jack McVeigh, the superintendent of Molokai.

"That was a ride! Leper horses, leper saddles, leper bridles, pitch-black darkness, whistling bullets, and a road none of the best. And the squarehead's horse was a mule, and he didn't know how to ride, either. But we made the whaleboat, and as we shoved off through the surf we could hear the horses coming down the hill from Kalaupapa.

"You're going to Shanghai. You look Lyte Gregory up. He is employed in a German firm there. Take him out to dinner. Open up wine. Give him everything of the best, but don't let him pay for anything. Send the bill to me. His wife and the kids are in Honolulu, and he needs the money for them. I know. He sends most of his salary, and lives like an anchorite. And tell him about Kona. There's where his heart is. Tell him all you can about Kona."

Shin-Bones

They have gone down to the pit with their weapons of war, and they have laid their swords under their heads.

"It was a sad thing to see the old lady revert."

Prince Akuli shot an apprehensive glance sideward to where, under the shade of a kukui tree, an old wahine (Hawaiian woman) was just settling herself to begin on some work in hand.

"Yes," he nodded half-sadly to me, "in her last years Hiwilani went back to the old ways, and to the old beliefs — in secret, of course. And, believe me, she was some collector herself. You should have seen her bones. She had them all about her bedroom, in big jars, and they constituted most all her relatives, except a half-dozen or so that Kanau beat her out of by getting to them first. The way the pair of them used to quarrel about those bones was awe-inspiring. And it gave me the creeps, when I was a boy, to go into that big, for-ever-twilight room of hers, and know that in this jar was all that remained of my maternal grand-aunt, and that in that jar was my great-grandfather, and that in all the jars were the preserved bone-remnants of the shadowy dust of the ancestors whose seed had come down and been incorporated in the living, breathing me. Hiwilani had gone quite native at the last, sleeping on mats on the hard floor — she'd fired out of the room the great, royal, canopied four-poster that had been presented to her grandmother by Lord Byron, who was the cousin of the Don Juan Byron and came here in the frigate Blonde in 1825.

"She went back to all native, at the last, and I can see her yet, biting a bite out of the raw fish ere she tossed them to her women to eat. And she made them finish her poi, or whatever else she did not finish of herself. She — "

But he broke off abruptly, and by the sensitive dilation of his nostrils and by the expression of his mobile features I saw that he had read in the air and identified the odour that offended him.

"Deuce take it!" he cried to me. "It stinks to heaven. And I shall be doomed to wear it until we're rescued."

There was no mistaking the object of his abhorrence. The ancient crone was making a dearest-loved lei (wreath) of the fruit of the hala which is the screw-pine or pandanus of the South Pacific. She was cutting the many sections or nut-envelopes of the fruit into fluted bell-shapes preparatory to stringing them on the twisted and tough inner bark of the hau tree. It certainly smelled to heaven, but, to me, a malahini, the smell was wine-woody and fruit-juicy and not unpleasant.

Prince Akuli's limousine had broken an axle a quarter of a mile away, and he and I had sought shelter from the sun in this veritable bowery of a mountain home. Humble and grass-thatched was the house, but it stood in a treasure-garden of begonias that sprayed their delicate blooms a score of feet above our heads, that were like trees, with willowy trunks of trees as thick as a man's arm. Here we refreshed ourselves with drinking-coconuts, while a cowboy rode a dozen miles to the nearest telephone and summoned a machine from town. The town itself we could see, the Lakanaii metropolis of Olokona, a smudge of smoke on the shore-line, as we looked down across the miles of cane-fields, the billow-wreathed reef-lines, and the blue haze of ocean to where the island of Oahu shimmered like a dim opal on the horizon.

Maui is the Valley Isle of Hawaii, and Kauai the Garden Isle; but Lakanaii, lying abreast of Oahu, is recognized in the present, and was known of old and always, as the Jewel Isle of the group. Not the largest, nor merely the smallest, Lakanaii is conceded by all to be the wildest, the most wildly beautiful, and, in its size, the richest of all the islands. Its sugar tonnage per acre is the highest, its mountain beef-cattle the fattest, its rainfall the most generous without ever being disastrous. It resembles Kauai in that it is the first-formed and therefore the oldest island, so that it had had time sufficient to break down its lava rock into the richest soil, and to erode the canyons between the ancient craters until they are like Grand Canyons of the Colorado, with numberless waterfalls plunging thousands of feet in the sheer or dissipating into veils of vapour, and evanescing in mid-air to descend softly and invisibly through a mirage of rainbows, like so much dew or gentle shower, upon the abyss-floors.

Yet Lakanaii is easy to describe. But how can one describe Prince Akuli? To know him is to know all Lakanaii most thoroughly. In addition, one must know thoroughly a great deal of the rest of the world. In the first place, Prince Akuli has no recognized nor legal right to be called "Prince." Furthermore, "Akuli" means the "squid." So that Prince Squid could scarcely be the dignified title of the straight descendant of the oldest and highest aliis (high chiefs) of Hawaii — an old and exclusive stock, wherein, in the ancient way of the Egyptian Pharaohs, brothers and sisters had even wed on the throne for the reason that they could not marry beneath rank, that in all their known world there was none of higher rank, and that, at every hazard, the dynasty must be perpetuated.

I have heard Prince Akuli's singing historians (inherited from his father) chanting their interminable genealogies, by which they demonstrated that he was the highest alii in all Hawaii. Beginning with Wakea, who is their Adam, and with Papa, their Eve, through as many generations as there are letters in our alphabet they trace down to Nanakaoko, the first ancestor born in Hawaii and whose wife was Kahihiokalani. Later, but always highest, their generations split from the generations of Ua, who was the founder of the two distinct lines of the Kauai and Oahu kings.

In the eleventh century A.D., by the Lakanaii historians, at the time brothers and sisters mated because none existed to excel them, their rank received a boost of new blood of rank that was next to heaven's door. One Hoikemaha, steering by the stars and

the ancient traditions, arrived in a great double-canoe from Samoa. He married a lesser alii of Lakanaii, and when his three sons were grown, returned with them to Samoa to bring back his own youngest brother. But with him he brought back Kumi, the son of Tui Manua, which latter's rank was highest in all Polynesia, and barely second to that of the demigods and gods. So the estimable seed of Kumi, eight centuries before, had entered into the aliis of Lakanaii, and been passed down by them in the undeviating line to reposit in Prince Akuli.

Him I first met, talking with an Oxford accent, in the officers' mess of the Black Watch in South Africa. This was just before that famous regiment was cut to pieces at Magersfontein. He had as much right to be in that mess as he had to his accent, for he was Oxford-educated and held the Queen's Commission. With him, as his guest, taking a look at the war, was Prince Cupid, so nicknamed, but the true prince of all Hawaii, including Lakanaii, whose real and legal title was Prince Jonah Kuhio Kalanianaole, and who might have been the living King of Hawaii Nei had it not been for the haole (white man) Revolution and Annexation — this, despite the fact that Prince Cupid's alii genealogy was lesser to the heaven-boosted genealogy of Prince Akuli. For Prince Akuli might have been King of Lakanaii, and of all Hawaii, perhaps, had not his grandfather been soundly thrashed by the first and greatest of the Kamehamehas.

This had occurred in the year 1810, in the booming days of the sandalwood trade, and in the same year that the King of Kauai came in, and was good, and ate out of Kamehameha's hand. Prince Akuli's grandfather, in that year, had received his trouncing and subjugating because he was "old school." He had not imaged island empire in terms of gunpowder and haole gunners. Kamehameha, farther-visioned, had annexed the service of haoles, including such men as Isaac Davis, mate and sole survivor of the massacred crew of the schooner Fair American, and John Young, captured boatswain of the scow Eleanor. And Isaac Davis, and John Young, and others of their waywardly adventurous ilk, with six-pounder brass carronades from the captured Iphigenia and Fair American, had destroyed the war canoes and shattered the morale of the King of Lakanaii's land-fighters, receiving duly in return from Kamehameha, according to agreement: Isaac Davis, six hundred mature and fat hogs; John Young, five hundred of the same described pork on the hoof that was split.

And so, out of all incests and lusts of the primitive cultures and beast-man's gropings toward the stature of manhood, out of all red murders, and brute battlings, and matings with the younger brothers of the demigods, world-polished, Oxford-accented, twentieth century to the tick of the second, comes Prince Akuli, Prince Squid, pure-veined Polynesian, a living bridge across the thousand centuries, comrade, friend, and fellow-traveller out of his wrecked seven-thousand-dollar limousine, marooned with me in a begonia paradise fourteen hundred feet above the sea, and his island metropolis of Olokona, to tell me of his mother, who reverted in her old age to ancientness of religious concept and ancestor worship, and collected and surrounded herself with the charnel bones of those who had been her forerunners back in the darkness of time.

"King Kalakaua started this collecting fad, over on Oahu," Prince Akuli continued. "And his queen, Kapiolani, caught the fad from him. They collected everything — old makaloa mats, old tapas, old calabashes, old double-canoes, and idols which the priests had saved from the general destruction in 1819. I haven't seen a pearl-shell fish-hook in years, but I swear that Kalakaua accumulated ten thousand of them, to say nothing of human jaw-bone fish-hooks, and feather cloaks, and capes and helmets, and stone adzes, and poi-pounders of phallic design. When he and Kapiolani made their royal progresses around the islands, their hosts had to hide away their personal relics. For to the king, in theory, belongs all property of his people; and with Kalakaua, when it came to the old things, theory and practice were one.

"From him my father, Kanau, got the collecting bee in his bonnet, and Hiwilani was likewise infected. But father was modern to his finger-tips. He believed neither in the gods of the kahunas (priests) nor of the missionaries. He didn't believe in anything except sugar stocks, horse-breeding, and that his grandfather had been a fool in not collecting a few Isaac Davises and John Youngs and brass carronades before he went to war with Kamehameha. So he collected curios in the pure collector's spirit; but my mother took it seriously. That was why she went in for bones. I remember, too, she had an ugly old stone-idol she used to yammer to and crawl around on the floor before. It's in the Deacon Museum now. I sent it there after her death, and her collection of bones to the Royal Mausoleum in Olokona.

"I don't know whether you remember her father was Kaaukuu. Well, he was, and he was a giant. When they built the Mausoleum, his bones, nicely cleaned and preserved, were dug out of their hiding-place, and placed in the Mausoleum. Hiwilani had an old retainer, Ahuna. She stole the key from Kanau one night, and made Ahuna go and steal her father's bones out of the Mausoleum. I know. And he must have been a giant. She kept him in one of her big jars. One day, when I was a tidy size of a lad, and curious to know if Kaaukuu was as big as tradition had him, I fished his intact lower jaw out of the jar, and the wrappings, and tried it on. I stuck my head right through it, and it rested around my neck and on my shoulders like a horse collar. And every tooth was in the jaw, whiter than porcelain, without a cavity, the enamel unstained and unchipped. I got the walloping of my life for that offence, although she had to call old Ahuna in to help give it to me. But the incident served me well. It won her confidence in me that I was not afraid of the bones of the dead ones, and it won for me my Oxford education. As you shall see, if that car doesn't arrive first.

"Old Ahuna was one of the real old ones with the hall-mark on him and branded into him of faithful born-slave service. He knew more about my mother's family, and my father's, than did both of them put together. And he knew, what no living other knew, the burial-place of centuries, where were hid the bones of most of her ancestors and of Kanau's. Kanau couldn't worm it out of the old fellow, who looked upon Kanau as an apostate.

"Hiwilani struggled with the old codger for years. How she ever succeeded is beyond me. Of course, on the face of it, she was faithful to the old religion. This might have

persuaded Ahuna to loosen up a little. Or she may have jolted fear into him; for she knew a lot of the line of chatter of the old Huni sorcerers, and she could make a noise like being on terms of utmost intimacy with Uli, who is the chiefest god of sorcery of all the sorcerers. She could skin the ordinary kahuna lapaau (medicine man) when it came to praying to Lonopuha and Koleamoku; read dreams and visions and signs and omens and indigestions to beat the band; make the practitioners under the medicine god, Maiola, look like thirty cents; pull off a pule hoe incantation that would make them dizzy; and she claimed to a practice of kahuna hoenoho, which is modern spiritism, second to none. I have myself seen her drink the wind, throw a fit, and prophesy. The aumakuas were brothers to her when she slipped offerings to them across the altars of the ruined heiaus with a line of prayer that was as unintelligible to me as it was hair-raising. And as for old Ahuna, she could make him get down on the floor and yammer and bite himself when she pulled the real mystery dope on him.

"Nevertheless, my private opinion is that it was the anaana stuff that got him. She snipped off a lock of his hair one day with a pair of manicure scissors. This lock of hair was what we call the maunu, meaning the bait. And she took jolly good care to let him know she had that bit of his hair. Then she tipped it off to him that she had buried it, and was deeply engaged each night in her offerings and incantations to Uli."

"That was the regular praying-to-death?" I queried in the pause of Prince Akuli's lighting his cigarette.

"Sure thing," he nodded. "And Ahuna fell for it. First he tried to locate the hiding-place of the bait of his hair. Failing that, he hired a pahiuhiu sorcerer to find it for him. But Hiwilani queered that game by threatening to the sorcerer to practice apo leo on him, which is the art of permanently depriving a person of the power of speech without otherwise injuring him.

"Then it was that Ahuna began to pine away and get more like a corpse every day. In desperation he appealed to Kanau. I happened to be present. You have heard what sort of a man my father was.

"'Pig!' he called Ahuna. 'Swine-brains! Stinking fish! Die and be done with it. You are a fool. It is all nonsense. There is nothing in anything. The drunken haole, Howard, can prove the missionaries wrong. Square-face gin proves Howard wrong. The doctors say he won't last six months. Even square-face gin lies. Life is a liar, too. And here are hard times upon us, and a slump in sugar. Glanders has got into my brood mares. I wish I could lie down and sleep for a hundred years, and wake up to find sugar up a hundred points.'

"Father was something of a philosopher himself, with a bitter wit and a trick of spitting out staccato epigrams. He clapped his hands. 'Bring me a high-ball,' he commanded; 'no, bring me two high-balls.' Then he turned on Ahuna. 'Go and let yourself die, old heathen, survival of darkness, blight of the Pit that you are. But don't die on these premises. I desire merriment and laughter, and the sweet tickling of music, and the beauty of youthful motion, not the croaking of sick toads and googly-eyed corpses about me still afoot on their shaky legs. I'll be that way soon enough if I live long

enough. And it will be my everlasting regret if I don't live long enough. Why in hell did I sink that last twenty thousand into Curtis's plantation? Howard warned me the slump was coming, but I thought it was the square-face making him lie. And Curtis has blown his brains out, and his head luna has run away with his daughter, and the sugar chemist has got typhoid, and everything's going to smash.'

"He clapped his hands for his servants, and commanded: 'Bring me my singing boys. And the hula dancers — plenty of them. And send for old Howard. Somebody's got to pay, and I'll shorten his six months of life by a month. But above all, music. Let there be music. It is stronger than drink, and quicker than opium.'

"He with his music druggery! It was his father, the old savage, who was entertained on board a French frigate, and for the first time heard an orchestra. When the little concert was over, the captain, to find which piece he liked best, asked which piece he'd like repeated. Well, when grandfather got done describing, what piece do you think it was?"

I gave up, while the Prince lighted a fresh cigarette.

"Why, it was the first one, of course. Not the real first one, but the tuning up that preceded it."

I nodded, with eyes and face mirthful of appreciation, and Prince Akuli, with another apprehensive glance at the old wahine and her half-made hala lei, returned to his tale of the bones of his ancestors.

"It was somewhere around this stage of the game that old Ahuna gave in to Hiwilani. He didn't exactly give in. He compromised. That's where I come in. If he would bring her the bones of her mother, and of her grandfather (who was the father of Kaaukuu, and who by tradition was rumoured to have been even bigger than his giant son, she would return to Ahuna the bait of his hair she was praying him to death with. He, on the other hand, stipulated that he was not to reveal to her the secret burial-place of all the alii of Lakanaii all the way back. Nevertheless, he was too old to dare the adventure alone, must be helped by some one who of necessity would come to know the secret, and I was that one. I was the highest alii, beside my father and mother, and they were no higher than I.

"So I came upon the scene, being summoned into the twilight room to confront those two dubious old ones who dealt with the dead. They were a pair — mother fat to despair of helplessness, Ahuna thin as a skeleton and as fragile. Of her one had the impression that if she lay down on her back she could not roll over without the aid of block-and-tackle; of Ahuna one's impression was that the tooth-pickedness of him would shatter to splinters if one bumped into him.

"And when they had broached the matter, there was more pilikia (trouble). My father's attitude stiffened my resolution. I refused to go on the bone-snatching expedition. I said I didn't care a whoop for the bones of all the aliis of my family and race. You see, I had just discovered Jules Verne, loaned me by old Howard, and was reading my head off. Bones? When there were North Poles, and Centres of Earths, and hairy comets to ride across space among the stars! Of course I didn't want to go

on any bone-snatching expedition. I said my father was able-bodied, and he could go, splitting equally with her whatever bones he brought back. But she said he was only a blamed collector — or words to that effect, only stronger.

"'I know him,' she assured me. 'He'd bet his mother's bones on a horse-race or an ace-full.'

"I stood with fat her when it came to modern scepticism, and I told her the whole thing was rubbish. 'Bones?' I said. 'What are bones? Even field mice, and many rats, and cockroaches have bones, though the roaches wear their bones outside their meat instead of inside. The difference between man and other animals,' I told her, 'is not bones, but brain. Why, a bullock has bigger bones than a man, and more than one fish I've eaten has more bones, while a whale beats creation when it comes to bone.'

"It was frank talk, which is our Hawaiian way, as you have long since learned. In return, equally frank, she regretted she hadn't given me away as a feeding child when I was born. Next she bewailed that she had ever borne me. From that it was only a step to anaana me. She threatened me with it, and I did the bravest thing I have ever done. Old Howard had given me a knife of many blades, and corkscrews, and screw-drivers, and all sorts of contrivances, including a tiny pair of scissors. I proceeded to pare my finger-nails.

"'There,' I said, as I put the parings into her hand. 'Just to show you what I think of it. There's bait and to spare. Go on and anaana me if you can.'

"I have said it was brave. It was. I was only fifteen, and I had lived all my days in the thick of the mystery stuff, while my scepticism, very recently acquired, was only skin-deep. I could be a sceptic out in the open in the sunshine. But I was afraid of the dark. And in that twilight room, the bones of the dead all about me in the big jars, why, the old lady had me scared stiff. As we say to-day, she had my goat. Only I was brave and didn't let on. And I put my bluff across, for my mother flung the parings into my face and burst into tears. Tears in an elderly woman weighing three hundred and twenty pounds are scarcely impressive, and I hardened the brassiness of my bluff.

"She shifted her attack, and proceeded to talk with the dead. Nay, more, she summoned them there, and, though I was all ripe to see but couldn't, Ahuna saw the father of Kaaukuu in the corner and lay down on the floor and yammered. Just the same, although I almost saw the old giant, I didn't quite see him.

"'Let him talk for himself,' I said. But Hiwilani persisted in doing the talking for him, and in laying upon me his solemn injunction that I must go with Ahuna to the burial-place and bring back the bones desired by my mother. But I argued that if the dead ones could be invoked to kill living men by wasting sicknesses, and that if the dead ones could transport themselves from their burial-crypts into the corner of her room, I couldn't see why they shouldn't leave their bones behind them, there in her room and ready to be jarred, when they said good-bye and departed for the middle world, the over world, or the under world, or wherever they abided when they weren't paying social calls.

“Whereupon mother let loose on poor old Ahuna, or let loose upon him the ghost of Kaaukuu’s father, supposed to be crouching there in the corner, who commanded Ahuna to divulge to her the burial-place. I tried to stiffen him up, telling him to let the old ghost divulge the secret himself, than whom nobody else knew it better, seeing that he had resided there upwards of a century. But Ahuna was old school. He possessed no iota of scepticism. The more Hiwilani frightened him, the more he rolled on the floor and the louder he yammered.

“But when he began to bite himself, I gave in. I felt sorry for him; but, over and beyond that, I began to admire him. He was sterling stuff, even if he was a survival of darkness. Here, with the fear of mystery cruelly upon him, believing Hiwilani’s dope implicitly, he was caught between two fidelities. She was his living alii, his alii kapo (sacred chiefess). He must be faithful to her, yet more faithful must he be to all the dead and gone aliis of her line who depended solely on him that their bones should not be disturbed.

“I gave in. But I, too, imposed stipulations. Steadfastly had my father, new school, refused to let me go to England for my education. That sugar was slumping was reason sufficient for him. Steadfastly had my mother, old school, refused, her heathen mind too dark to place any value on education, while it was shrewd enough to discern that education led to unbelief in all that was old. I wanted to study, to study science, the arts, philosophy, to study everything old Howard knew, which enabled him, on the edge of the grave, undauntedly to sneer at superstition, and to give me Jules Verne to read. He was an Oxford man before he went wild and wrong, and it was he who had set the Oxford bee buzzing in my noddle.

“In the end Ahuna and I, old school and new school leagued together, won out. Mother promised that she’d make father send me to England, even if she had to pester him into a prolonged drinking that would make his digestion go back on him. Also, Howard was to accompany me, so that I could decently bury him in England. He was a queer one, old Howard, an individual if there ever was one. Let me tell you a little story about him. It was when Kalakaua was starting on his trip around the world. You remember, when Armstrong, and Judd, and the drunken valet of a German baron accompanied him. Kalakaua made the proposition to Howard . . . “

But here the long-apprehended calamity fell upon Prince Akuli. The old wahine had finished her lei hala. Barefooted, with no adornment of femininity, clad in a shapeless shift of much-washed cotton, with age-withered face and labour-gnarled hands, she cringed before him and crooned a mele in his honour, and, still cringing, put the lei around his neck. It is true the hala smelled most freshly strong, yet was the act beautiful to me, and the old woman herself beautiful to me. My mind leapt into the Prince’s narrative so that to Ahuna I could not help likening her.

Oh, truly, to be an alii in Hawaii, even in this second decade of the twentieth century, is no light thing. The alii, utterly of the new, must be kindly and kingly to those old ones absolutely of the old. Nor did the Prince without a kingdom, his loved island long since annexed by the United States and incorporated into a territory along with

the rest of the Hawaiian Islands — nor did the Prince betray his repugnance for the odour of the hala. He bowed his head graciously; and his royal condescending words of pure Hawaiian I knew would make the old woman's heart warm until she died with remembrance of the wonderful occasion. The wry grimace he stole to me would not have been made had he felt any uncertainty of its escaping her.

"And so," Prince Akuli resumed, after the wahine had tottered away in an ecstasy, "Ahuna and I departed on our grave-robbing adventure. You know the Iron-bound Coast."

I nodded, knowing full well the spectacle of those lava leagues of weather coast, truly iron-bound so far as landing-places or anchorages were concerned, great forbidding cliff-walls thousands of feet in height, their summits wreathed in cloud and rain squall, their knees hammered by the trade-wind billows into spouting, spuming white, the air, from sea to rain-cloud, spanned by a myriad leaping waterfalls, provocative, in day or night, of countless sun and lunar rainbows. Valleys, so called, but fissures rather, slit the cyclopean walls here and there, and led away into a lofty and madly vertical back country, most of it inaccessible to the foot of man and trod only by the wild goat.

"Precious little you know of it," Prince Akuli retorted, in reply to my nod. "You've seen it only from the decks of steamers. There are valleys there, inhabited valleys, out of which there is no exit by land, and perilously accessible by canoe only on the selected days of two months in the year. When I was twenty-eight I was over there in one of them on a hunting trip. Bad weather, in the auspicious period, marooned us for three weeks. Then five of my party and myself swam for it out through the surf. Three of us made the canoes waiting for us. The other two were flung back on the sand, each with a broken arm. Save for us, the entire party remained there until the next year, ten months afterward. And one of them was Wilson, of Wilson & Wall, the Honolulu sugar factors. And he was engaged to be married.

"I've seen a goat, shot above by a hunter above, land at my feet a thousand yards underneath. Believe me, that landscape seemed to rain goats and rocks for ten minutes. One of my canoemen fell off the trail between the two little valleys of Aipio and Luno. He hit first fifteen hundred feet beneath us, and fetched up in a ledge three hundred feet farther down. We didn't bury him. We couldn't get to him, and flying machines had not yet been invented. His bones are there now, and, barring earthquake and volcano, will be there when the Trumps of Judgment sound.

"Goodness me! Only the other day, when our Promotion Committee, trying to compete with Honolulu for the tourist trade, called in the engineers to estimate what it would cost to build a scenic drive around the Iron-bound Coast, the lowest figures were a quarter of a million dollars a mile!

"And Ahuna and I, an old man and a young boy, started for that stern coast in a canoe paddled by old men! The youngest of them, the steersman, was over sixty, while the rest of them averaged seventy at the very least. There were eight of them, and we started in the night-time, so that none should see us go. Even these old ones, trusted

all their lives, knew no more than the fringe of the secret. To the fringe, only, could they take us.

"And the fringe was — I don't mind telling that much — the fringe was Ponuloo Valley. We got there the third afternoon following. The old chaps weren't strong on the paddles. It was a funny expedition, into such wild waters, with now one and now another of our ancient-mariner crew collapsing and even fainting. One of them actually died on the second morning out. We buried him overside. It was positively uncanny, the heathen ceremonies those grey ones pulled off in burying their grey brother. And I was only fifteen, alii kapo over them by blood of heathenness and right of hereditary heathen rule, with a penchant for Jules Verne and shortly to sail for England for my education! So one learns. Small wonder my father was a philosopher, in his own lifetime spanning the history of man from human sacrifice and idol worship, through the religions of man's upward striving, to the Medusa of rank atheism at the end of it all. Small wonder that, like old Ecclesiastes, he found vanity in all things and surcease in sugar stocks, singing boys, and hula dancers."

Prince Akuli debated with his soul for an interval.

"Oh, well," he sighed, "I have done some spanning of time myself." He sniffed disgustedly of the odour of the hala lei that stifled him. "It stinks of the ancient." he vouchsafed. "I? I stink of the modern. My father was right. The sweetest of all is sugar up a hundred points, or four aces in a poker game. If the Big War lasts another year, I shall clean up three-quarters of a million over a million. If peace breaks to-morrow, with the consequent slump, I could enumerate a hundred who will lose my direct bounty, and go into the old natives' homes my father and I long since endowed for them."

He clapped his hands, and the old wahine tottered toward him in an excitement of haste to serve. She cringed before him, as he drew pad and pencil from his breast pocket.

"Each month, old woman of our old race," he addressed her, "will you receive, by rural free delivery, a piece of written paper that you can exchange with any storekeeper anywhere for ten dollars gold. This shall be so for as long as you live. Behold! I write the record and the remembrance of it, here and now, with this pencil on this paper. And this is because you are of my race and service, and because you have honoured me this day with your mats to sit upon and your thrice-blessed and thrice-delicious lei hala."

He turned to me a weary and sceptical eye, saying:

"And if I die to-morrow, not alone will the lawyers contest my disposition of my property, but they will contest my benefactions and my pensions accorded, and the clarity of my mind.

"It was the right weather of the year; but even then, with our old weak ones at the paddles, we did not attempt the landing until we had assembled half the population of Ponuloo Valley down on the steep little beach. Then we counted our waves, selected the best one, and ran in on it. Of course, the canoe was swamped and the outrigger smashed, but the ones on shore dragged us up unharmed beyond the wash.

"Ahuna gave his orders. In the night-time all must remain within their houses, and the dogs be tied up and have their jaws bound so that there should be no barking. And in the night-time Ahuna and I stole out on our journey, no one knowing whether we went to the right or left or up the valley toward its head. We carried jerky, and hard poi and dried aku, and from the quantity of the food I knew we were to be gone several days. Such a trail! A Jacob's ladder to the sky, truly, for that first pali" (precipice), "almost straight up, was three thousand feet above the sea. And we did it in the dark!

"At the top, beyond the sight of the valley we had left, we slept until daylight on the hard rock in a hollow nook Ahuna knew, and that was so small that we were squeezed. And the old fellow, for fear that I might move in the heavy restlessness of lad's sleep, lay on the outside with one arm resting across me. At daybreak, I saw why. Between us and the lip of the cliff scarcely a yard intervened. I crawled to the lip and looked, watching the abyss take on immensity in the growing light and trembling from the fear of height that was upon me. At last I made out the sea, over half a mile straight beneath. And we had done this thing in the dark!

"Down in the next valley, which was a very tiny one, we found evidence of the ancient population, but there were no people. The only way was the crazy foot-paths up and down the dizzy valley walls from valley to valley. But lean and aged as Ahuna was, he seemed untirable. In the second valley dwelt an old leper in hiding. He did not know me, and when Ahuna told him who I was, he grovelled at my feet, almost clasping them, and mumbled a mele of all my line out of a lipless mouth.

"The next valley proved to be the valley. It was long and so narrow that its floor had caught not sufficient space of soil to grow taro for a single person. Also, it had no beach, the stream that threaded it leaping a pali of several hundred feet down to the sea. It was a god-forsaken place of naked, eroded lava, to which only rarely could the scant vegetation find root-hold. For miles we followed up that winding fissure through the towering walls, far into the chaos of back country that lies behind the Iron-bound Coast. How far that valley penetrated I do not know, but, from the quantity of water in the stream, I judged it far. We did not go to the valley's head. I could see Ahuna casting glances to all the peaks, and I knew he was taking bearings, known to him alone, from natural objects. When he halted at the last, it was with abrupt certainty. His bearings had crossed. He threw down the portion of food and outfit he had carried. It was the place. I looked on either hand at the hard, implacable walls, naked of vegetation, and could dream of no burial-place possible in such bare adamant.

"We ate, then stripped for work. Only did Ahuna permit me to retain my shoes. He stood beside me at the edge of a deep pool, likewise apparelled and prodigiously skinny.

"'You will dive down into the pool at this spot,' he said. 'Search the rock with your hands as you descend, and, about a fathom and a half down, you will find a hole. Enter it, head-first, but going slowly, for the lava rock is sharp and may cut your head and body.'

"'And then?' I queried. 'You will find the hole growing larger,' was his answer. 'When you have gone all of eight fathoms along the passage, come up slowly, and you will find your head in the air, above water, in the dark. Wait there then for me. The water is very cold.'

"It didn't sound good to me. I was thinking, not of the cold water and the dark, but of the bones. 'You go first,' I said. But he claimed he could not. 'You are my alii, my prince,' he said. 'It is impossible that I should go before you into the sacred burial-place of your kingly ancestors.'

"But the prospect did not please. 'Just cut out this prince stuff,' I told him. 'It isn't what it's cracked up to be. You go first, and I'll never tell on you.' 'Not alone the living must we please,' he admonished, 'but, more so, the dead must we please. Nor can we lie to the dead.'

"We argued it out, and for half an hour it was stalemate. I wouldn't, and he simply couldn't. He tried to buck me up by appealing to my pride. He chanted the heroic deeds of my ancestors; and, I remember especially, he sang to me of Mokomoku, my great-grandfather and the gigantic father of the gigantic Kaaukuu, telling how thrice in battle Mokomoku leaped among his foes, seizing by the neck a warrior in either hand and knocking their heads together until they were dead. But this was not what decided me. I really felt sorry for old Ahuna, he was so beside himself for fear the expedition would come to naught. And I was coming to a great admiration for the old fellow, not least among the reasons being the fact of his lying down to sleep between me and the cliff-lip.

"So, with true alii-authority of command, saying, 'You will immediately follow after me,' I dived in. Everything he had said was correct. I found the entrance to the subterranean passage, swam carefully through it, cutting my shoulder once on the lava-sharp roof, and emerged in the darkness and air. But before I could count thirty, he broke water beside me, rested his hand on my arm to make sure of me, and directed me to swim ahead of him for the matter of a hundred feet or so. Then we touched bottom and climbed out on the rocks. And still no light, and I remember I was glad that our altitude was too high for centipedes.

"He had brought with him a coconut calabash, tightly stoppered, of whale-oil that must have been landed on Lahaina beach thirty years before. From his mouth he took a water-tight arrangement of a matchbox composed of two empty rifle-cartridges fitted snugly together. He lighted the wicking that floated on the oil, and I looked about, and knew disappointment. No burial-chamber was it, but merely a lava tube such as occurs on all the islands.

"He put the calabash of light into my hands and started me ahead of him on the way, which he assured me was long, but not too long. It was long, at least a mile in my sober judgment, though at the time it seemed five miles; and it ascended sharply. When Ahuna, at the last, stopped me, I knew we were close to our goal. He knelt on his lean old knees on the sharp lava rock, and clasped my knees with his skinny arms. My hand that was free of the calabash lamp he placed on his head. He chanted to me,

with his old cracked, quavering voice, the line of my descent and my essential high alii-ness. And then he said:

"'Tell neither Kanau nor Hiwilani aught of what you are about to behold. There is no sacredness in Kanau. His mind is filled with sugar and the breeding of horses. I do know that he sold a feather cloak his grandfather had worn to that English collector for eight thousand dollars, and the money he lost the next day betting on the polo game between Maui and Oahu. Hiwilani, your mother, is filled with sacredness. She is too much filled with sacredness. She grows old, and weak-headed, and she traffics over-much with sorceries.'

"'No,' I made answer. 'I shall tell no one. If I did, then would I have to return to this place again. And I do not want ever to return to this place. I'll try anything once. This I shall never try twice.'

"'It is well,' he said, and arose, falling behind so that I should enter first. Also, he said: 'Your mother is old. I shall bring her, as promised, the bones of her mother and of her grandfather. These should content her until she dies; and then, if I die before her, it is you who must see to it that all the bones in her family collection are placed in the Royal Mausoleum.'

"I have given all the Islands' museums the once-over," Prince Akuli lapsed back into slang, "and I must say that the totality of the collections cannot touch what I saw in our Lakanaii burial-cave. Remember, and with reason and history, we trace back the highest and oldest genealogy in the Islands. Everything that I had ever dreamed or heard of, and much more that I had not, was there. The place was wonderful. Ahuna, sepulchrally muttering prayers and meles, moved about, lighting various whale-oil lamp-calabashes. They were all there, the Hawaiian race from the beginning of Hawaiian time. Bundles of bones and bundles of bones, all wrapped decently in tapa, until for all the world it was like the parcels-post department at a post office.

"And everything! Kahilis, which you may know developed out of the fly-flapper into symbols of royalty until they became larger than hearse-plumes with handles a fathom and a half and over two fathoms in length. And such handles! Of the wood of the kauila, inlaid with shell and ivory and bone with a cleverness that had died out among our artificers a century before. It was a centuries-old family attic. For the first time I saw things I had only heard of, such as the pahoas, fashioned of whale-teeth and suspended by braided human hair, and worn on the breast only by the highest of rank.

"There were tapes and mats of the rarest and oldest; capes and leis and helmets and cloaks, priceless all, except the too-ancient ones, of the feathers of the mamo, and of the iwi and the akakano and the o-o. I saw one of the mamo cloaks that was superior to that finest one in the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, and that they value atbetween half a million and a million dollars. Goodness me, I thought at the time, it was lucky Kanau didn't know about it.

"Such a mess of things! Carved gourds and calabashes, shell-scrapers, nets of olona fibre, a junk of ié-ié baskets, and fish-hooks of every bone and spoon of shell. Musical instruments of the forgotten days — ukukes and nose flutes, and kiokios which are

likewise played with one unstoppered nostril. Taboo poi bowls and finger bowls, left-handed adzes of the canoe gods, lava-cup lamps, stone mortars and pestles and poi-pounders. And adzes again, a myriad of them, beautiful ones, from an ounce in weight for the finer carving of idols to fifteen pounds for the felling of trees, and all with the sweetest handles I have ever beheld.

"There were the kaekeekes — you know, our ancient drums, hollowed sections of the coconut tree, covered one end with shark-skin. The first kaekeeke of all Hawaii Ahuna pointed out to me and told me the tale. It was manifestly most ancient. He was afraid to touch it for fear the age-rotted wood of it would crumble to dust, the ragged tatters of the shark-skin head of it still attached. 'This is the very oldest and father of all our kaekeekes,' Ahuna told me. 'Kila, the son of Moikeha, brought it back from far Raiatea in the South Pacific. And it was Kila's own son, Kahai, who made that same journey, and was gone ten years, and brought back with him from Tahiti the first breadfruit trees that sprouted and grew on Hawaiian soil.'

"And the bones and bones! The parcel-delivery array of them! Besides the small bundles of the long bones, there were full skeletons, tapa-wrapped, lying in one-man, and two-and three-man canoes of precious koa wood, with curved outriggers of wiliwili wood, and proper paddles to hand with the io-projection at the point simulating the continuance of the handle, as if, like a skewer, thrust through the flat length of the blade. And their war weapons were laid away by the sides of the lifeless bones that had wielded them — rusty old horse-pistols, derringers, pepper-boxes, five-barrelled fantastiques, Kentucky long riffles, muskets handled in trade by John Company and Hudson's Bay, shark-tooth swords, wooden stabbing-knives, arrows and spears bone-headed of the fish and the pig and of man, and spears and arrows wooden-headed and fire-hardened.

"Ahuna put a spear in my hand, headed and pointed finely with the long shin-bone of a man, and told me the tale of it. But first he unwrapped the long bones, arms, and legs, of two parcels, the bones, under the wrappings, neatly tied like so many faggots. 'This,' said Ahuna, exhibiting the pitiful white contents of one parcel, 'is Laulani. She was the wife of Akaiko, whose bones, now placed in your hands, much larger and male-like as you observe, held up the flesh of a large man, a three-hundred pounder seven-footer, three centuries agone. And this spear-head is made of the shin-bone of Keola, a mighty wrestler and runner of their own time and place. And he loved Laulani, and she fled with him. But in a forgotten battle on the sands of Kalini, Akaiko rushed the lines of the enemy, leading the charge that was successful, and seized upon Keola, his wife's lover, and threw him to the ground, and sawed through his neck to the death with a shark-tooth knife. Thus, in the old days as always, did man combat for woman with man. And Laulani was beautiful; that Keola should be made into a spearhead for her! She was formed like a queen, and her body was a long bowl of sweetness, and her fingers lomi'd' (massaged) 'to slimness and smallness at her mother's breast. For ten generations have we remembered her beauty. Your father's singing boys to-day sing of

her beauty in the hula that is named of her! This is Laulani, whom you hold in your hands.'

"And, Ahuna done, I could but gaze, with imagination at the one time sobered and fired. Old drunken Howard had lent me his Tennyson, and I had mooned long and often over the Idyls of the King. Here were the three, I thought — Arthur, and Launcelot, and Guinevere. This, then, I pondered, was the end of it all, of life and strife and striving and love, the weary spirits of these long-gone ones to be invoked by fat old women and mangy sorcerers, the bones of them to be esteemed of collectors and betted on horse-races and ace-fulls or to be sold for cash and invested in sugar stocks.

"For me it was illumination. I learned there in the burial-cave the great lesson. And to Ahuna I said: 'The spear headed with the long bone of Keola I shall take for my own. Never shall I sell it. I shall keep it always.'

"'And for what purpose?' he demanded. And I replied: 'That the contemplation of it may keep my hand sober and my feet on earth with the knowledge that few men are fortunate enough to have as much of a remnant of themselves as will compose a spearhead when they are three centuries dead.'

"And Ahuna bowed his head, and praised my wisdom of judgment. But at that moment the long-rotted olona-cord broke and the pitiful woman's bones of Laulani shed from my clasp and clattered on the rocky floor. One shin-bone, in some way deflected, fell under the dark shadow of a canoe-bow, and I made up my mind that it should be mine. So I hastened to help him in the picking up of the bones and the tying, so that he did not notice its absence.

"'This,' said Ahuna, introducing me to another of my ancestors, 'is your great-grandfather, Mokomoku, the father of Kaaukuu. Behold the size of his bones. He was a giant. I shall carry him, because of the long spear of Keola that will be difficult for you to carry away. And this is Lelemahoa, your grandmother, the mother of your mother, that you shall carry. And day grows short, and we must still swim up through the waters to the sun ere darkness hides the sun from the world.'

"But Ahuna, putting out the various calabashes of light by drowning the wicks in the whale-oil, did not observe me include the shinbone of Laulani with the bones of my grandmother."

The honk of the automobile, sent up from Olokona to rescue us, broke off the Prince's narrative. We said good-bye to the ancient and fresh-pensioned wahine, and departed. A half-mile on our way, Prince Akuli resumed.

"So Ahuna and I returned to Hiwilani, and to her happiness, lasting to her death the year following, two more of her ancestors abided about her in the jars of her twilight room. Also, she kept her compact and worried my father into sending me to England. I took old Howard along, and he perked up and confuted the doctors, so that it was three years before I buried him restored to the bosom of my family. Sometimes I think he was the most brilliant man I have ever known. Not until my return from England did Ahuna die, the last custodian of our alii secrets. And at his death-bed he pledged

me again never to reveal the location in that nameless valley, and never to go back myself.

"Much else I have forgotten to mention did I see there in the cave that one time. There were the bones of Kumi, the near demigod, son of Tui Manua of Samoa, who, in the long before, married into my line and heaven-boosted my genealogy. And the bones of my great-grandmother who had slept in the four-poster presented her by Lord Byron. And Ahuna hinted tradition that there was reason for that presentation, as well as for the historically known lingering of the Blonde in Olokona for so long. And I held her poor bones in my hands — bones once fleshed with sensate beauty, informed with sparkle and spirit, instinct with love and love-warmness of arms around and eyes and lips together, that had begat me in the end of the generations unborn. It was a good experience. I am modern, 'tis true. I believe in no mystery stuff of old time nor of the kahunas. And yet, I saw in that cave things which I dare not name to you, and which I, since old Ahuna died, alone of the living know. I have no children. With me my long line ceases. This is the twentieth century, and we stink of gasolene. Nevertheless these other and nameless things shall die with me. I shall never revisit the burial-place. Nor in all time to come will any man gaze upon it through living eyes unless the quakes of earth rend the mountains asunder and spew forth the secrets contained in the hearts of the mountains."

Prince Akuli ceased from speech. With welcome relief on his face, he removed the lei hala from his neck, and, with a sniff and a sigh, tossed it into concealment in the thick lantana by the side of the road.

"But the shin-bone of Laulani?" I queried softly.

He remained silent while a mile of pasture land fled by us and yielded to caneland.

"I have it now," he at last said. "And beside it is Keola, slain ere his time and made into a spear-head for love of the woman whose shin-bone abides near to him. To them, those poor pathetic bones, I owe more than to aught else. I became possessed of them in the period of my culminating adolescence. I know they changed the entire course of my life and trend of my mind. They gave to me a modesty and a humility in the world, from which my father's fortune has ever failed to seduce me.

"And often, when woman was nigh to winning to the empery of my mind over me, I sought Laulani's shin-bone. And often, when lusty manhood stung me into feeling over-proud and lusty, I consulted the spearhead remnant of Keola, one-time swift runner, and mighty wrestler and lover, and thief of the wife of a king. The contemplation of them has ever been of profound aid to me, and you might well say that I have founded my religion or practice of living upon them."

WAIKIKI, HONOLULU,
HAWAIIAN ISLANDS.
July 16, 1916.

Shorty Dreams

I

Funny you don't gamble none," Shorty said to Smoke one night in the Elkhorn. "Ain't it in your blood?"

"It is," Smoke answered. "But the statistics are in my head. I like an even break for my money."

All about them, in the huge bar-room, arose the click and rattle and rumble of a dozen games, at which fur-clad, moccasined men tried their luck. Smoke waved his hand to include them all.

"Look at them," he said. "It's cold mathematics that they will lose more than they win to-night, that the big proportion is losing right now."

"You're sure strong on figgers," Shorty murmured admiringly. "An' in the main you're right. But they's such a thing as facts. An' one fact is streaks of luck. They's times when every geezer playin' wins, as I know, for I've sat in in such games an' saw more'n one bank busted. The only way to win at gamblin' is wait for a hunch that you've got a lucky streak comin' and then to play it to the roof."

"It sounds simple," Smoke criticized. "So simple I can't see how men can lose."

"The trouble is," Shorty admitted, "that most men gets fooled on their hunches. On occasion I sure get fooled on mine. The thing is to try, an' find out."

Smoke shook his head.

"That's a statistic, too, Shorty. Most men prove wrong on their hunches."

"But don't you ever get one of them streaky feelin's that all you got to do is put your money down an' pick a winner?"

Smoke laughed.

"I'm too scared of the percentage against me. But I'll tell you what, Shorty. I'll throw a dollar on the 'high card' right now and see if it will buy us a drink."

Smoke was edging his way in to the faro table, when Shorty caught his arm.

"Hold on. I'm gettin' one of them hunches now. You put that dollar on roulette."

They went over to a roulette table near the bar.

"Wait till I give the word," Shorty counselled.

"What number?" Smoke asked.

"Pick it yourself. But wait till I say let her go."

"You don't mean to say I've got an even chance on that table?" Smoke argued.

"As good as the next geezers."

"But not as good as the bank's."

"Wait and see," Shorty urged. "Now! Let her go!"

The game-keeper had just sent the little ivory ball whirling around the smooth rim above the revolving, many-slotted wheel. Smoke, at the lower end of the table, reached over a player, and blindly tossed the dollar. It slid along the smooth, green cloth and stopped fairly in the centre of '34.'

The ball came to rest, and the game-keeper announced, "Thirty-four wins!" He swept the table, and alongside of Smoke's dollar, stacked thirty-five dollars. Smoke drew the money in, and Shorty slapped him on the shoulder.

"Now, that was the real goods of a hunch, Smoke! How'd I know it? There's no tellin'. I just knew you'd win. Why, if that dollar of yourn'd fell on any other number it'd won just the same. When the hunch is right, you just can't help winnin'."

"Suppose it had come 'double nought'?" Smoke queried, as they made their way to the bar.

"Then your dollar'd ben on 'double nought,'" was Shorty's answer. "They's no gettin' away from it. A hunch is a hunch. Here's how. Come on back to the table. I got a hunch, after pickin' you for a winner, that I can pick some few numbers myself."

"Are you playing a system?" Smoke asked, at the end of ten minutes, when his partner had dropped a hundred dollars.

Shorty shook his head indignantly, as he spread his chips out in the vicinities of '3,' '11,' and '17,' and tossed a spare chip on the 'green.'

"Hell is sure cluttered with geezers that played systems," he exposited, as the keeper raked the table.

From idly watching, Smoke became fascinated, following closely every detail of the game from the whirling of the ball to the making and the paying of the bets. He made no plays, however, merely contenting himself with looking on. Yet so interested was he, that Shorty, announcing that he had had enough, with difficulty drew Smoke away from the table. The game-keeper returned Shorty the gold sack he had deposited as a credential for playing, and with it went a slip of paper on which was scribbled, "Out . . . 350 dollars." Shorty carried the sack and the paper across the room and handed them to the weigher, who sat behind a large pair of gold-scales. Out of Shorty's sack he weighed 350 dollars, which he poured into the coffer of the house.

"That hunch of yours was another one of those statistics," Smoke jeered.

"I had to play it, didn't I, in order to find out?" Shorty retorted. "I reckon I was crowdin' some just on account of tryin' to convince you they's such a thing as hunches."

"Never mind, Shorty," Smoke laughed. "I've got a hunch right now–"

Shorty's eyes sparkled as he cried eagerly: "What is it? Kick in an' play it pronto."

"It's not that kind, Shorty. Now, what I've got is a hunch that some day I'll work out a system that will beat the spots off that table."

"System!" Shorty groaned, then surveyed his partner with a vast pity. "Smoke, listen to your side-kicker an' leave system alone. Systems is sure losers. They ain't no hunches in systems."

"That's why I like them," Smoke answered. "A system is statistical. When you get the right system you can't lose, and that's the difference between it and a hunch. You never know when the right hunch is going wrong."

"But I know a lot of systems that went wrong, an' I never seen a system win." Shorty paused and sighed. "Look here, Smoke, if you're gettin' cracked on systems this ain't no place for you, an' it's about time we hit the trail again."

II

During the several following weeks, the two partners played at cross purposes. Smoke was bent on spending his time watching the roulette game in the Elkhorn, while Shorty was equally bent on travelling trail. At last Smoke put his foot down when a stampede was proposed for two hundred miles down the Yukon.

"Look here, Shorty," he said, "I'm not going. That trip will take ten days, and before that time I hope to have my system in proper working order. I could almost win with it now. What are you dragging me around the country this way for anyway?"

"Smoke, I got to take care of you," was Shorty's reply. "You're getting nutty. I'd drag you stampedin' to Jericho or the North Pole if I could keep you away from that table."

"It's all right, Shorty. But just remember I've reached full man-grown, meat-eating size. The only dragging you'll do, will be dragging home the dust I'm going to win with that system of mine, and you'll most likely have to do it with a dog-team."

Shorty's response was a groan.

"And I don't want you to be bucking any games on your own," Smoke went on. "We're going to divide the winnings, and I'll need all our money to get started. That system's young yet, and it's liable to trip me for a few falls before I get it lined up."

III

At last, after long hours and days spent at watching the table, the night came when Smoke proclaimed he was ready, and Shorty, glum and pessimistic, with all the seeming of one attending a funeral, accompanied his partner to the Elkhorn. Smoke bought a stack of chips and stationed himself at the game-keeper's end of the table. Again and again the ball was whirled and the other players won or lost, but Smoke did not venture a chip. Shorty waxed impatient.

"Buck in, buck in," he urged. "Let's get this funeral over. What's the matter? Got cold feet?"

Smoke shook his head and waited. A dozen plays went by, and then, suddenly, he placed ten one-dollar chips on '26.' The number won, and the keeper paid Smoke three hundred and fifty dollars. A dozen plays went by, twenty plays, and thirty, when Smoke placed ten dollars on '32.' Again he received three hundred and fifty dollars.

"It's a hunch." Shorty whispered vociferously in his ear. "Ride it! Ride it!"

Half an hour went by, during which Smoke was inactive, then he placed ten dollars on '34' and won.

"A hunch!" Shorty whispered.

"Nothing of the sort," Smoke whispered back. "It's the system. Isn't she a dandy?"

“You can’t tell me,” Shorty contended. “Hunches comes in mighty funny ways. You might think it’s a system, but it ain’t. Systems is impossible. They can’t happen. It’s a sure hunch you’re playin’.”

Smoke now altered his play. He bet more frequently, with single chips, scattered here and there, and he lost more often than he won.

“Quit it,” Shorty advised. “Cash in. You’ve rung the bull’s eye three times, an’ you’re ahead a thousand. You can’t keep it up.”

At this moment the ball started whirling, and Smoke dropped ten chips on ‘26.’ The ball fell into the slot of ‘26,’ and the keeper again paid him three hundred and fifty dollars. “If you’re plum crazy an’ got the immortal cinch, bet’m the limit,” Shorty said. “Put down twenty-five next time.”

A quarter of an hour passed, during which Smoke won and lost on small scattering bets. Then, with the abruptness that characterized his big betting, he placed twenty-five dollars on the ‘double nought,’ and the keeper paid him eight hundred and seventy-five dollars.

“Wake me up, Smoke, I’m dreamin’,” Shorty moaned.

Smoke smiled, consulted his note-book, and became absorbed in calculation. He continually drew the note-book from his pocket, and from time to time jotted down figures.

A crowd had packed densely around the table, while the players themselves were attempting to cover the same numbers he covered. It was then that a change came over his play. Ten times in succession he placed ten dollars on ‘18’ and lost. At this stage he was deserted by the hardiest. He changed his number and won another three hundred and fifty dollars. Immediately the players were back with him, deserting again after a series of losing bets.

“Quit it, Smoke, quit it,” Shorty advised. “The longest string of hunches is only so long, an’ your string’s finished. No more bull’s-eyes for you.”

“I’m going to ring her once again before I cash in,” Smoke answered.

For a few minutes, with varying luck, he played scattering chips over the table, and then dropped twenty-five dollars on the ‘double nought.’

“I’ll take my slip now,” he said to the dealer, as he won.

“Oh, you don’t need to show it to me,” Shorty said, as they walked to the weigher. “I ben keepin’ track. You’re something like thirty-six hundred to the good. How near am I?”

“Thirty-six-thirty,” Smoke replied. “And now you’ve got to pack the dust home. That was the agreement.”

IV

Don’t crowd your luck,” Shorty pleaded with Smoke, the next night, in the cabin, as he evidenced preparations to return to the Elkhorn. “You played a mighty long string of hunches, but you played it out. If you go back you’ll sure drop all your winnings.”

“But I tell you it isn’t hunches, Shorty. It’s statistics. It’s a system. It can’t lose.”

"System be damned. They ain't no such a thing as system. I made seventeen straight passes at a crap table once. Was it system? Nope. It was fool luck, only I had cold feet an' didn't dast let it ride. It it'd rid, instead of me drawin' down after the third pass, I'd a won over thirty thousan' on the original two-bit piece."

"Just the same, Shorty, this is a real system."

"Huh! You got to show me."

"I did show you. Come on with me now and I'll show you again."

When they entered the Elkhorn, all eyes centred on Smoke, and those about the table made way for him as he took up his old place at the keeper's end. His play was quite unlike that of the previous night. In the course of an hour and a half he made only four bets, but each bet was for twenty-five dollars, and each bet won. He cashed in thirty-five hundred dollars, and Shorty carried the dust home to the cabin.

"Now's the time to jump the game," Shorty advised, as he sat on the edge of his bunk and took off his moccasins. "You're seven thousan' ahead. A man's a fool that'd crowd his luck harder."

"Shorty, a man would be a blithering lunatic if he didn't keep on backing a winning system like mine."

"Smoke, you're a sure bright boy. You're college-learnt. You know more'n a minute than I could know in forty thousan' years. But just the same you're dead wrong when you call your luck a system. I've ben around some, an' seen a few, an' I tell you straight an' confidential an' all-assurin', a system to beat a bankin' game ain't possible."

"But I'm showing you this one. It's a pipe."

"No, you're not, Smoke. It's a pipe-dream. I'm asleep. Bime by I'll wake up, an' build the fire, an' start breakfast."

"Well, my unbelieving friend, there's the dust. Heft it."

So saying, Smoke tossed the bulging gold-sack upon his partner's knees. It weighed thirty-five pounds, and Shorty was fully aware of the crush of its impact on his flesh.

"It's real," Smoke hammered his point home.

"Huh! I've saw some mighty real dreams in my time. In a dream all things is possible. In real life a system ain't possible. Now, I ain't never ben to college, but I'm plum justified in sizin' up this gamblin' orgy of ourn as a sure enough dream."

"Hamilton's 'Law of Parsimony,'" Smoke laughed.

"I ain't never heard of the geezer, but his dope's sure right. I'm dreamin', Smoke, an' you're just snoopin' around in my dream an' tormentin' me with system. If you love me, if you sure do love me, you'll just yell, 'Shorty! Wake up!' An' I'll wake up an' start breakfast."

V

The third night of play, as Smoke laid his first bet, the game-keeper shoved fifteen dollars back to him.

"Ten's all you can play," he said. "The limit's come down."

"Gettin' picayune," Shorty sneered.

"No one has to play at this table that don't want to," the keeper retorted. "And I'm willing to say straight out in meeting that we'd sooner your pardner didn't play at our table."

"Scared of his system, eh?" Shorty challenged, as the keeper paid over three hundred and fifty dollars.

"I ain't saying I believe in system, because I don't. There never was a system that'd beat roulette or any percentage game. But just the same I've seen some queer strings of luck, and I ain't going to let this bank go bust if I can help it."

"Cold feet."

"Gambling is just as much business, my friend, as any other business. We ain't philanthropists."

Night by night, Smoke continued to win. His method of play varied. Expert after expert, in the jam about the table, scribbled down his bets and numbers in vain attempts to work out his system. They complained of their inability to get a clew to start with, and swore that it was pure luck, though the most colossal streak of it they had ever seen.

It was Smoke's varied play that obfuscated them. Sometimes, consulting his notebook or engaging in long calculations, an hour elapsed without his staking a chip. At other times he would win three limit-bets and clean up a thousand dollars and odd in five or ten minutes. At still other times, his tactics would be to scatter single chips prodigally and amazingly over the table. This would continue for from ten to thirty minutes of play, when, abruptly, as the ball whirled through the last few of its circles, he would play the limit on column, colour, and number, and win all three. Once, to complete confusion in the minds of those that strove to divine his secret, he lost forty straight bets, each at the limit. But each night, play no matter how diversely, Shorty carried home thirty-five hundred dollars for him.

"It ain't no system," Shorty expounded at one of their bed-going discussions. "I follow you, an' follow you, but they ain't no figgerin' it out. You never play twice the same. All you do is pick winners when you want to, an' when you don't want to, you just on purpose don't."

"Maybe you're nearer right than you think, Shorty. I've just got to pick losers sometimes. It's part of the system."

"System–hell! I've talked with every gambler in town, an' the last one is agreed they ain't no such thing as system."

"Yet I'm showing them one all the time."

"Look here, Smoke." Shorty paused over the candle, in the act of blowing it out. "I'm real irritated. Maybe you think this is a candle. It ain't. An' this ain't me neither. I'm out on trail somewheres, in my blankets, lyin' on my back with my mouth open, an' dreamin' all this. That ain't you talkin', any more than this candle is a candle."

"It's funny, how I happen to be dreaming along with you then," Smoke persisted.

"No, it ain't. You're part of my dream, that's all. I've hearn many a man talk in my dreams. I want to tell you one thing, Smoke. I'm gettin' mangy an' mad. If this here dream keeps up much more I'm goin' to bite my veins an' howl."

VI

On the sixth night of play at the Elkhorn, the limit was reduced to five dollars.

"It's all right," Smoke assured the game-keeper. "I want thirty-five hundred to-night, as usual, and you only compel me to play longer. I've got to pick twice as many winners, that's all."

"Why don't you buck somebody else's table?" the keeper demanded wrathfully.

"Because I like this one." Smoke glanced over to the roaring stove only a few feet away. "Besides, there are no draughts here, and it is warm and comfortable."

On the ninth night, when Shorty had carried the dust home, he had a fit.

"I quit, Smoke, I quit," he began. "I know when I got enough. I ain't dreamin'. I'm wide awake. A system can't be, but you got one just the same. There's nothin' in the rule o' three. The almanac's clean out. The world's gone smash. There's nothin' regular an' uniform no more. The multiplication table's gone loco. Two is eight, nine is eleven, and two-times-six is eight hundred an' forty-six–an'–an' a half. Anything is everything, an' nothing's all, an' twice all is cold cream, milk-shakes, an' calico horses. You've got a system. Figgers beat the figgerin'. What ain't is, an' what isn't has to be. The sun rises in the west, the moon's a paystreak, the stars is canned corn-beef, scurvy's the blessin' of God, him that dies kicks again, rocks floats, water's gas, I ain't me, you're somebody else, an' mebbe we're twins if we ain't hashed-brown potatoes fried in verdigris. Wake me up! Somebody! Oh! Wake me up!"

VII

The next morning a visitor came to the cabin. Smoke knew him, Harvey Moran, the owner of all the games in the Tivoli. There was a note of appeal in his deep gruff voice as he plunged into his business.

"It's like this, Smoke," he began. "You've got us all guessing. I'm representing nine other game-owners and myself from all the saloons in town. We don't understand. We know that no system ever worked against roulette. All the mathematic sharps in the colleges have told us gamblers the same thing. They say that roulette itself is the system, the one and only system, and, therefore, that no system can beat it, for that would mean arithmetic has gone bug-house."

Shorty nodded his head violently.

"If a system can beat a system, then there's no such thing as system," the gambler went on. "In such a case anything could be possible–a thing could be in two different places at once, or two things could be in the same place that's only large enough for one at the same time."

"Well, you've seen me play," Smoke answered defiantly; "and if you think it's only a string of luck on my part, why worry?"

"That's the trouble. We can't help worrying. It's a system you've got, and all the time we know it can't be. I've watched you five nights now, and all I can make out is

that you favour certain numbers and keep on winning. Now the ten of us game-owners have got together, and we want to make a friendly proposition. We'll put a roulette table in a back room of the Elkhorn, pool the bank against you, and have you buck us. It will be all quiet and private. Just you and Shorty and us. What do you say?"

"I think it's the other way around," Smoke answered. "It's up to you to come and see me. I'll be playing in the bar-room of the Elkhorn to-night. You can watch me there just as well."

VIII

That night, when Smoke took up his customary place at the table, the keeper shut down the game.

"The game's closed," he said. "Boss's orders."

But the assembled game-owners were not to be balked. In a few minutes they arranged a pool, each putting in a thousand, and took over the table.

"Come on and buck us," Harvey Moran challenged, as the keeper sent the ball on its first whirl around.

"Give me the twenty-five limit," Smoke suggested.

"Sure; go to it."

Smoke immediately placed twenty-five chips on the 'double nought,' and won.

Moran wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Go on," he said. "We got ten thousand in this bank."

At the end of an hour and a half, the ten thousand was Smoke's.

"The bank's bust," the keeper announced.

"Got enough?" Smoke asked.

The game-owners looked at one another. They were awed. They, the fatted proteges of the laws of chance, were undone. They were up against one who had more intimate access to those laws, or who had invoked higher and undreamed laws.

"We quit," Moran said. "Ain't that right, Burke?"

Big Burke, who owned the games in the M. and G. Saloon, nodded.

"The impossible has happened," he said. "This Smoke here has got a system all right. If we let him go on we'll all bust. All I can see, if we're goin' to keep our tables running, is to cut down the limit to a dollar, or to ten cents, or a cent. He won't win much in a night with such stakes."

All looked at Smoke. He shrugged his shoulders.

"In that case, gentlemen, I'll have to hire a gang of men to play at all your tables. I can pay them ten dollars for a four-hour shift and make money."

"Then we'll shut down our tables," Big Burke replied. "Unless–" He hesitated and ran his eye over his fellows to see that they were with him. "Unless you're willing to talk business. What will you sell the system for?"

"Thirty thousand dollars," Smoke answered. "That's a tax of three thousand apiece."

They debated and nodded.

"And you'll tell us your system?"

"Surely."

"And you'll promise not to play roulette in Dawson ever again?"

"No, sir," Smoke said positively. "I'll promise not to play this system again."

"My God!" Moran exploded. "You haven't got other systems, have you?"

"Hold on!" Shorty cried. "I want to talk to my pardner. Come over here, Smoke, on the side."

Smoke followed into a quiet corner of the room, while hundreds of curious eyes centred on him and Shorty.

"Look here, Smoke," Shorty whispered hoarsely. "Mebbe it ain't a dream. In which case you're sellin' out almighty cheap. You've sure got the world by the slack of its pants. They's millions in it. Shake it! Shake it hard!"

"But if it's a dream?" Smoke queried softly.

"Then, for the sake of the dream an' the love of Mike, stick them gamblers up good and plenty. What's the good of dreamin' if you can't dream to the real right, dead sure, eternal finish?"

"Fortunately, this isn't a dream, Shorty."

"Then if you sell out for thirty thousan', I'll never forgive you."

"When I sell out for thirty thousand, you'll fall on my neck an' wake up to find out that you haven't been dreaming at all. This is no dream, Shorty. In about two minutes you'll see you have been wide awake all the time. Let me tell you that when I sell out it's because I've got to sell out."

Back at the table, Smoke informed the game-owners that his offer still held. They proffered him their paper to the extent of three thousand each.

"Hold out for the dust," Shorty cautioned.

"I was about to intimate that I'd take the money weighed out," Smoke said.

The owner of the Elkhorn cashed their paper, and Shorty took possession of the gold-dust.

"Now, I don't want to wake up," he chortled, as he hefted the various sacks. "Toted up, it's a seventy thousan' dream. It's be too blamed expensive to open my eyes, roll out of the blankets, an' start breakfast."

"What's your system?" Big Burke demanded. "We've paid for it, and we want it."

Smoke led the way to the table.

"Now, gentlemen, bear with me a moment. This isn't an ordinary system. It can scarcely be called legitimate, but its one great virtue is that it works. I've got my suspicious, but I'm not saying anything. You watch. Mr Keeper, be ready with the ball. Wait, I am going to pick '26.' Consider I've bet on it. Be ready, Mr Keeper–Now!"

The ball whirled around.

"You observe," Smoke went on, "that '9' was directly opposite."

The ball finished in '26.'

Big Burke swore deep in his chest, and all waited.

"For 'double nought' to win, '11' must be opposite. Try it yourself and see."

"But the system?" Moran demanded impatiently. "We know you can pick winning numbers, and we know what those numbers are; but how do you do it?"

"By observed sequences. By accident I chanced twice to notice the ball whirled when '9' was opposite. Both times '26' won. After that I saw it happen again. Then I looked for other sequences, and found them. 'Double nought' opposite fetches '32,' and '11' fetches 'double nought.' It doesn't always happen, but it USUALLY happens. You notice, I say 'usually.' As I said before, I have my suspicions, but I'm not saying anything."

Big Burke, with a sudden dawn of comprehension reached over, stopped the wheel, and examined it carefully. The heads of the nine other game-owners bent over and joined in the examination. Big Burke straightened up and cast a glance at the near-by stove.

"Hell," he said. "It wasn't any system at all. The table stood close to the fire, and the blamed wheel's warped. And we've been worked to a frazzle. No wonder he liked this table. He couldn't have bucked for sour apples at any other table."

Harvey Moran gave a great sigh of relief and wiped his forehead.

"Well, anyway," he said, "it's cheap at the price just to find out that it wasn't a system." His face began to work, and then he broke into laughter and slapped Smoke on the shoulder. "Smoke, you had us going for a while, and we patting ourselves on the back because you were letting our tables alone! Say, I've got some real fizz I'll open if all you'll come over to the Tivoli with me."

Later, back in the cabin, Shorty silently overhauled and hefted the various bulging gold-sacks. He finally piled them on the table, sat down on the edge of his bunk, and began taking off his moccasins.

"Seventy thousan'," he calculated. "It weighs three hundred and fifty pounds. And all out of a warped wheel an' a quick eye. Smoke, you eat'm raw, you eat'm alive, you work under water, you've given me the jim-jams; but just the same I know it's a dream. It's only in dreams that the good things comes true. I'm almighty unanxious to wake up. I hope I never wake up."

"Cheer up," Smoke answered. "You won't. There are a lot of philosophy sharps that think men are sleep-walkers. You're in good company."

Shorty got up, went to the table, selected the heaviest sack, and cuddled it in his arms as if it were a baby.

"I may be sleep-walkin'," he said, "but as you say, I'm sure in mighty good company."

The Sickness of Lone Chief

This is a tale that was told to me by two old men. We sat in the smoke of a mosquito-smudge, in the cool of the day, which was midnight; and ever and anon, throughout the telling, we smote lustily and with purpose at such of the winged pests as braved the smoke for a snack at our hides. To the right, beneath us, twenty feet down the crumbling bank, the Yukon gurgled lazily. To the left, on the rose-leaf rim of the low-lying hills, smouldered the sleepy sun, which saw no sleep that night nor was destined to see sleep for many nights to come.

The old men who sat with me and valorously slew mosquitoes were Lone Chief and Mutsak, erstwhile comrades in arms, and now withered repositories of tradition and ancient happening. They were the last of their generation and without honor among the younger set which had grown up on the farthest fringe of a mining civilization. Who cared for tradition in these days, when spirits could be evoked from black bottles, and black bottles could be evoked from the complaisant white men for a few hours' sweat or a mangy fur? Of what potency the fearful rites and masked mysteries of shamanism, when daily that living wonder, the steamboat, coughed and spluttered up and down the Yukon in defiance of all law, a veritable fire-breathing monster? And of what value was hereditary prestige, when he who now chopped the most wood, or best conned a stern-wheeler through the island mazes, attained the chiefest consideration of his fellows?

Of a truth, having lived too long, they had fallen on evil days, these two old men, Lone Chief and Mutsak, and in the new order they were without honor or place. So they waited drearily for death, and the while their hearts warmed to the strange white man who shared with them the torments of the mosquito-smudge and lent ready ear to their tales of old time before the steamboat came.

"So a girl was chosen for me," Lone Chief was saying. His voice, shrill and piping, ever and again dropped plummet-like into a hoarse and rattling bass, and, just as one became accustomed to it, soaring upward into the thin treble — alternate cricket chirpings and bullfrog croakings, as it were.

"So a girl was chosen for me," he was saying. "For my father, who was Kask-ta-ka, the Otter, was angered because I looked not with a needful eye upon women. He was an old man, and chief of his tribe. I was the last of his sons to be alive, and through me, only, could he look to see his blood go down among those to come after and as yet unborn. But know, O White Man, that I was very sick; and when neither the hunting nor the fishing delighted me, and by meat my belly was not made warm, how should

I look with favor upon women? or prepare for the feast of marriage? or look forward to the prattle and troubles of little children?"

"Ay," Mutsak interrupted. "For had not Lone Chief fought in the arms of a great bear till his head was cracked and blood ran from out his ears?"

Lone Chief nodded vigorously. "Mutsak speaks true. In the time that followed, my head was well, and it was not well. For though the flesh healed and the sore went away, yet was I sick inside. When I walked, my legs shook under me, and when I looked at the light, my eyes became filled with tears. And when I opened my eyes, the world outside went around and around, and when I closed my eyes, my head inside went around and around, and all the things I had ever seen went around and around inside my head. And above my eyes there was a great pain, as though something heavy rested always upon me, or like a band that is drawn tight and gives much hurt. And speech was slow to me, and I waited long for each right word to come to my tongue. And when I waited not long, all manner of words crowded in, and my tongue spoke foolishness. I was very sick, and when my father, the Otter, brought the girl Kasaan before me — "

"Who was a young girl, and strong, my sister's child," Mutsak broke in. "Strong-hipped for children was Kasaan, and straight-legged and quick of foot. She made better moccasins than any of all the young girls, and the bark-rope she braided was the stoutest. And she had a smile in her eyes, and a laugh on her lips; and her temper was not hasty, nor was she unmindful that men give the law and women ever obey."

"As I say, I was very sick," Lone Chief went on. "And when my father, the Otter, brought the girl Kasaan before me, I said rather should they make me ready for burial than for marriage. Whereat the face of my father went black with anger, and he said that I should be served according to my wish, and that I who was yet alive should be made ready for death as one already dead — "

"Which be not the way of our people, O White Man," spoke up Mutsak. "For know that these things that were done to Lone Chief it was our custom to do only to dead men. But the Otter was very angry."

"Ay," said Lone Chief. "My father, the Otter, was a man short of speech and swift of deed. And he commanded the people to gather before the lodge wherein I lay. And when they were gathered, he commanded them to mourn for his son who was dead — "

"And before the lodge they sang the death-song — O-o-o-o-o-o-a-haa-ha-a-ich-klu-kuk-ich-klu-kuk," wailed Mutsak, in so excellent an imitation that all the tendrils of my spine crawled and curved in sympathy.

"And inside the lodge," continued Lone Chief, "my mother blackened her face with soot, and flung ashes upon her head, and mourned for me as one already dead; for so had my father commanded. So Okiakuta, my mother, mourned with much noise, and beat her breasts and tore her hair; and likewise Hooniak, my sister, and Seenatah, my mother's sister; and the noise they made caused a great ache in my head, and I felt that I would surely and immediately die.

"And the elders of the tribe gathered about me where I lay and discussed the journey my soul must take. One spoke of the thick and endless forests where lost souls wandered crying, and where I, too, might chance to wander and never see the end. And another spoke of the big rivers, rapid with bad water, where evil spirits shrieked and lifted up their formless arms to drag one down by the hair. For these rivers, all said together, a canoe must be provided me. And yet another spoke of the storms, such as no live man ever saw, when the stars rained down out of the sky, and the earth gaped wide in many cracks, and all the rivers in the heart of the earth rushed out and in. Whereupon they that sat by me flung up their arms and wailed loudly; and those outside heard, and wailed more loudly. And as to them I was as dead, so was I to my own mind dead. I did not know when, or how, yet did I know that I had surely died.

"And Okiakuta, my mother, laid beside me my squirrel-skin parka. Also she laid beside me my parka of caribou hide, and my rain coat of seal gut, and my wet-weather muclucs, that my soul should be warm and dry on its long journey. Further, there was mention made of a steep hill, thick with briers and devil's-club, and she fetched heavy moccasins to make the way easy for my feet.

"And when the elders spoke of the great beasts I should have to slay, the young men laid beside me my strongest bow and straightest arrows, my throwing-stick, my spear and knife. And when the elders spoke of the darkness and silence of the great spaces my soul must wander through, my mother wailed yet more loudly and flung yet more ashes upon her head.

"And the girl, Kasaan, crept in, very timid and quiet, and dropped a little bag upon the things for my journey. And in the little bag, I knew, were the flint and steel and the well-dried tinder for the fires my soul must build. And the blankets were chosen which were to be wrapped around me. Also were the slaves selected that were to be killed that my soul might have company. There were seven of these slaves, for my father was rich and powerful, and it was fit that I, his son, should have proper burial. These slaves we had got in war from the Mukumuks, who live down the Yukon. On the morrow, Skolka, the shaman, would kill them, one by one, so that their souls should go questing with mine through the Unknown. Among other things, they would carry my canoe till we came to the big river, rapid with bad water. And there being no room, and their work being done, they would come no farther, but remain and howl forever in the dark and endless forest.

"And as I looked on my fine warm clothes, and my blankets and weapons of war, and as I thought of the seven slaves to be slain, I felt proud of my burial and knew that I must be the envy of many men. And all the while my father, the Otter, sat silent and black. And all that day and night the people sang my death-song and beat the drums, till it seemed that I had surely died a thousand times.

"But in the morning my father arose and made talk. He had been a fighting man all his days, he said, as the people knew. Also the people knew that it were a greater honor to die fighting in battle than on the soft skins by the fire. And since I was to die anyway, it were well that I should go against the Mukumuks and be slain. Thus would

I attain honor and chieftainship in the final abode of the dead, and thus would honor remain to my father, who was the Otter. Wherefore he gave command that a war party be made ready to go down the river. And that when we came upon the Mukumuks I was to go forth alone from my party, giving semblance of battle, and so be slain."

"Nay, but hear, O White Man!" cried Mutsak, unable longer to contain himself. "Skolka, the shaman, whispered long that night in the ear of the Otter, and it was his doing that Lone Chief should be sent forth to die. For the Otter being old, and Lone Chief the last of his sons, Skolka had it in mind to become chief himself over the people. And when the people had made great noise for a day and a night and Lone Chief was yet alive, Skolka was become afraid that he would not die. So it was the counsel of Skolka, with fine words of honor and deeds, that spoke through the mouth of the Otter.

"Ay," replied Lone Chief. "Well did I know it was the doing of Skolka, but I was unmindful, being very sick. I had no heart for anger, nor belly for stout words, and I cared little, one way or the other, only I cared to die and have done with it all. So, O White Man, the war party was made ready. No tried fighters were there, nor elders, crafty and wise — naught but five score of young men who had seen little fighting. And all the village gathered together above the bank of the river to see us depart. And we departed amid great rejoicing and the singing of my praises. Even thou, O White Man, wouldst rejoice at sight of a young man going forth to battle, even though doomed to die.

"So we went forth, the five score young men, and Mutsak came also, for he was likewise young and untried. And by command of my father, the Otter, my canoe was lashed on either side to the canoe of Mutsak and the canoe of Kannakut. Thus was my strength saved me from the work of the paddles, so that, for all of my sickness, I might make a brave show at the end. And thus we went down the river.

"Nor will I weary thee with the tale of the journey, which was not long. And not far above the village of the Mukumuks we came upon two of their fighting men in canoes, that fled at the sight of us. And then, according to the command of my father, my canoe was cast loose and I was left to drift down all alone. Also, according to his command, were the young men to see me die, so that they might return and tell the manner of my death. Upon this, my father, the Otter, and Skolka, the shaman, had been very clear, with stern promises of punishment in case they were not obeyed.

"I dipped my paddle and shouted words of scorn after the fleeing warriors. And the vile things I shouted made them turn their heads in anger, when they beheld that the young men held back, and that I came on alone. Whereupon, when they had made a safe distance, the two warriors drew their canoes somewhat apart and waited side by side for me to come between. And I came between, spear in hand, and singing the war-song of my people. Each flung a spear, but I bent my body, and the spears whistled over me, and I was unhurt. Then, and we were all together, we three, I cast my spear at the one to the right, and it drove into his throat and he pitched backward into the water.

"Great was my surprise thereat, for I had killed a man. I turned to the one on the left and drove strong with my paddle, to meet Death face to face; but the man's second spear, which was his last, but bit into the flesh of my shoulder. Then was I upon him, making no cast, but pressing the point into his breast and working it through him with both my hands. And while I worked, pressing with all my strength, he smote me upon my head, once and twice, with the broad of his paddle.

"Even as the point of the spear sprang out beyond his back, he smote me upon the head. There was a flash, as of bright light, and inside my head I felt something give, with a snap — just like that, with a snap. And the weight that pressed above my eyes so long was lifted, and the band that bound my brows so tight was broken. And a great gladness came upon me, and my heart sang with joy.

"This be death, I thought; wherefore I thought that death was very good. And then I saw the two empty canoes, and I knew that I was not dead, but well again. The blows of the man upon my head had made me well. I knew that I had killed, and the taste of the blood made me fierce, and I drove my paddle into the breast of the Yukon and urged my canoe toward the village of the Mukumuks. The young men behind me gave a great cry. I looked over my shoulder and saw the water foaming white from their paddles — "

"Ay, it foamed white from our paddles," said Mutsak. "For we remembered the command of the Otter, and of Skolka, that we behold with our own eyes the manner of Lone Chief's death. A young man of the Mukumuks, on his way to a salmon trap, beheld the coming of Lone Chief, and of the five score men behind him. And the young man fled in his canoe, straight for the village, that alarm might be given and preparation made. But Lone Chief hurried after him, and we hurried after Lone Chief to behold the manner of his death. Only, in the face of the village, as the young man leaped to the shore, Lone Chief rose up in his canoe and made a mighty cast. And the spear entered the body of the young man above the hips, and the young man fell upon his face.

"Whereupon Lone Chief leaped up the bank war-club in hand and a great war-cry on his lips, and dashed into the village. The first man he met was Itwilie, chief over the Mukumuks, and him Lone Chief smote upon the head with his war-club, so that he fell dead upon the ground. And for fear we might not behold the manner of his death, we too, the five score young men, leaped to the shore and followed Lone Chief into the village. Only the Mukumuks did not understand, and thought we had come to fight; so their bow-thongs sang and their arrows whistled among us. Whereat we forgot our errand, and fell upon them with our spears and clubs; and they being unprepared, there was great slaughter — "

"With my own hands I slew their shaman," proclaimed Lone Chief, his withered face a-work with memory of that old-time day. "With my own hands I slew him, who was a greater shaman than Skolka, our own shaman. And each time I faced a man, I thought, 'Now cometh Death; and each time I slew the man, and Death came not. It seemed the breath of life was strong in my nostrils and I could not die — "

"And we followed Lone Chief the length of the village and back again," continued Mutsak. "Like a pack of wolves we followed him, back and forth, and here and there, till there were no more Mukumuks left to fight. Then we gathered together five score men-slaves, and double as many women, and countless children, and we set fire and burned all the houses and lodges, and departed. And that was the last of the Mukumuks."

"And that was the last of the Mukumuks," Lone Chief repeated exultantly. "And when we came to our own village, the people were amazed at our burden of wealth and slaves, and in that I was still alive they were more amazed. And my father, the Otter, came trembling with gladness at the things I had done. For he was an old man, and I the last of his sons. And all the tried fighting men came, and the crafty and wise, till all the people were gathered together. And then I arose, and with a voice like thunder, commanded Skolka, the shaman, to stand forth — "

"Ay, O White Man," exclaimed Mutsak. "With a voice like thunder, that made the people shake at the knees and become afraid."

"And when Skolka had stood forth," Lone Chief went on, "I said that I was not minded to die. Also, I said it were not well that disappointment come to the evil spirits that wait beyond the grave. Wherefore I deemed it fit that the soul of Skolka fare forth into the Unknown, where doubtless it would howl forever in the dark and endless forest. And then I slew him, as he stood there, in the face of all the people. Even I, Lone Chief, with my own hands, slew Skolka, the shaman, in the face of all the people. And when a murmuring arose, I cried aloud — "

"With a voice like thunder," prompted Mutsak.

"Ay, with a voice like thunder I cried aloud: 'Behold, O ye people! I am Lone Chief, slayer of Skolka, the false shaman! Alone among men, have I passed down through the gateway of Death and returned again. Mine eyes have looked upon the unseen things. Mine ears have heard the unspoken words. Greater am I than Skolka, the shaman. Greater than all shamans am I. Likewise am I a greater chief than my father, the Otter. All his days did he fight with the Mukumuks, and lo, in one day have I destroyed them all. As with the breathing of a breath have I destroyed them. Wherefore, my father, the Otter, being old, and Skolka, the shaman, being dead, I shall be both chief and shaman. Henceforth shall I be both chief and shaman to you, O my people. And if any man dispute my word, let that man stand forth!'

"I waited, but no man stood forth. Then I cried: 'Hoh! I have tasted blood! Now bring meat, for I am hungry. Break open the caches, tear down the fish-racks, and let the feast be big. Let there be merriment, and songs, not of burial, but marriage. And last of all, let the girl Kasaan be brought. The girl Kasaan, who is to be the mother of the children of Lone Chief!'

"And at my words, and because that he was very old, my father, the Otter, wept like a woman, and put his arms about my knees. And from that day I was both chief and shaman. And great honor was mine, and all men yielded me obedience."

"Until the steamboat came," Mutsak prompted.

"Ay," said Lone Chief. "Until the steamboat came."

The Siege of the 'Lancashire Queen'

Possibly our most exasperating experience on the fish patrol was when Charley Le Grant and I laid a two weeks' siege to a big four-masted English ship. Before we had finished with the affair, it became a pretty mathematical problem, and it was by the merest chance that we came into possession of the instrument that brought it to a successful termination.

After our raid on the oyster pirates we had returned to Oakland, where two more weeks passed before Neil Partington's wife was out of danger and on the highroad to recovery. So it was after an absence of a month, all told, that we turned the Reindeer's nose toward Benicia. When the cat's away the mice will play, and in these four weeks the fishermen had become very bold in violating the law. When we passed Point Pedro we noticed many signs of activity among the shrimp-catchers, and, well into San Pablo Bay, we observed a widely scattered fleet of Upper Bay fishing-boats hastily pulling in their nets and getting up sail.

This was suspicious enough to warrant investigation, and the first and only boat we succeeded in boarding proved to have an illegal net. The law permitted no smaller mesh for catching shad than one that measured seven and one-half inches inside the knots, while the mesh of this particular net measured only three inches. It was a flagrant breach of the rules, and the two fishermen were forthwith put under arrest. Neil Partington took one of them with him to help manage the Reindeer, while Charley and I went on ahead with the other in the captured boat.

But the shad fleet had headed over toward the Petaluma shore in wild flight, and for the rest of the run through San Pablo Bay we saw no more fishermen at all. Our prisoner, a bronzed and bearded Greek, sat sullenly on his net while we sailed his craft. It was a new Columbia River salmon boat, evidently on its first trip, and it handled splendidly. Even when Charley praised it, our prisoner refused to speak or to notice us, and we soon gave him up as a most unsociable fellow.

We ran up the Carquinez Straits and edged into the bight at Turner's Shipyard for smoother water. Here were lying several English steel sailing ships, waiting for the wheat harvest; and here, most unexpectedly, in the precise place where we had captured Big Alec, we came upon two Italians in a skiff that was loaded with a complete "Chinese" sturgeon line. The surprise was mutual, and we were on top of them before either they or we were aware. Charley had barely time to luff into the wind and run up to them. I ran forward and tossed them a line with orders to make it fast. One of the Italians took a turn with it over a cleat, while I hastened to lower our big spritsail. This accomplished, the salmon boat dropped astern, dragging heavily on the skiff.

Charley came forward to board the prize, but when I proceeded to haul alongside by means of the line, the Italians cast it off. We at once began drifting to leeward, while they got out two pairs of oars and rowed their light craft directly into the wind. This manoeuvre for the moment disconcerted us, for in our large and heavily loaded boat we could not hope to catch them with the oars. But our prisoner came unexpectedly to our aid. His black eyes were flashing eagerly, and his face was flushed with suppressed

excitement, as he dropped the centre-board, sprang forward with a single leap, and put up the sail.

"I've always heard that Greeks don't like Italians," Charley laughed, as he ran aft to the tiller.

And never in my experience have I seen a man so anxious for the capture of another as was our prisoner in the chase that followed. His eyes fairly snapped, and his nostrils quivered and dilated in a most extraordinary way. Charley steered while he tended the sheet; and though Charley was as quick and alert as a cat, the Greek could hardly control his impatience.

The Italians were cut off from the shore, which was fully a mile away at its nearest point. Did they attempt to make it, we could haul after them with the wind abeam, and overtake them before they had covered an eighth of the distance. But they were too wise to attempt it, contenting themselves with rowing lustily to windward along the starboard side of a big ship, the Lancashire Queen. But beyond the ship lay an open stretch of fully two miles to the shore in that direction. This, also, they dared not attempt, for we were bound to catch them before they could cover it. So, when they reached the bow of the Lancashire Queen, nothing remained but to pass around and row down her port side toward the stern, which meant rowing to leeward and giving us the advantage.

We in the salmon boat, sailing close on the wind, tacked about and crossed the ship's bow. Then Charley put up the tiller and headed down the port side of the ship, the Greek letting out the sheet and grinning with delight. The Italians were already half-way down the ship's length; but the stiff breeze at our back drove us after them far faster than they could row. Closer and closer we came, and I, lying down forward, was just reaching out to grasp the skiff, when it ducked under the great stern of the Lancashire Queen.

The chase was virtually where it had begun. The Italians were rowing up the starboard side of the ship, and we were hauled close on the wind and slowly edging out from the ship as we worked to windward. Then they darted around her bow and began the row down her port side, and we tacked about, crossed her bow, and went plunging down the wind hot after them. And again, just as I was reaching for the skiff, it ducked under the ship's stern and out of danger. And so it went, around and around, the skiff each time just barely ducking into safety.

By this time the ship's crew had become aware of what was taking place, and we could see their heads in a long row as they looked at us over the bulwarks. Each time we missed the skiff at the stern, they set up a wild cheer and dashed across to the other side of the Lancashire Queen to see the chase to wind-ward. They showered us and the Italians with jokes and advice, and made our Greek so angry that at least once on each circuit he raised his fist and shook it at them in a rage. They came to look for this, and at each display greeted it with uproarious mirth.

"Wot a circus!" cried one.

“Tork about yer marine hippodromes,-if this ain’t one, I’d like to know!” affirmed another.

“Six-days-go-as-yer-please,” announced a third. “Who says the dagoes won’t win?”

On the next tack to windward the Greek offered to change places with Charley.

“Let-a me sail-a de boat,” he demanded. “I fix-a them, I catch-a them, sure.”

This was a stroke at Charley’s professional pride, for pride himself he did upon his boat-sailing abilities; but he yielded the tiller to the prisoner and took his place at the sheet. Three times again we made the circuit, and the Greek found that he could get no more speed out of the salmon boat than Charley had.

“Better give it up,” one of the sailors advised from above.

The Greek scowled ferociously and shook his fist in his customary fashion. In the meanwhile my mind had not been idle, and I had finally evolved an idea.

“Keep going, Charley, one time more,” I said.

And as we laid out on the next tack to wind-ward, I bent a piece of line to a small grappling hook I had seen lying in the bail-hole. The end of the line I made fast to the ring-bolt in the bow, and with the hook out of sight I waited for the next opportunity to use it. Once more they made their leeward pull down the port side of the Lancashire Queen, and once more we churned down after them before the wind. Nearer and nearer we drew, and I was making believe to reach for them as before. The stern of the skiff was not six feet away, and they were laughing at me derisively as they ducked under the ship’s stern. At that instant I suddenly arose and threw the grappling iron. It caught fairly and squarely on the rail of the skiff, which was jerked backward out of safety as the rope tautened and the salmon boat ploughed on.

A groan went up from the row of sailors above, which quickly changed to a cheer as one of the Italians whipped out a long sheath-knife and cut the rope. But we had drawn them out of safety, and Charley, from his place in the stern-sheets, reached over and clutched the stern of the skiff. The whole thing happened in a second of time, for the first Italian was cutting the rope and Charley was clutching the skiff when the second Italian dealt him a rap over the head with an oar, Charley released his hold and collapsed, stunned, into the bottom of the salmon boat, and the Italians bent to their oars and escaped back under the ship’s stern.

The Greek took both tiller and sheet and continued the chase around the Lancashire Queen, while I attended to Charley, on whose head a nasty lump was rapidly rising. Our sailor audience was wild with delight, and to a man encouraged the fleeing Italians. Charley sat up, with one hand on his head, and gazed about him sheepishly.

“It will never do to let them escape now,” he said, at the same time drawing his revolver.

On our next circuit, he threatened the Italians with the weapon; but they rowed on stolidly, keeping splendid stroke and utterly disregarding him.

“If you don’t stop, I’ll shoot,” Charley said menacingly.

But this had no effect, nor were they to be frightened into surrendering even when he fired several shots dangerously close to them. It was too much to expect him to

shoot unarmed men, and this they knew as well as we did; so they continued to pull doggedly round and round the ship.

"We'll run them down, then!" Charley exclaimed. "We'll wear them out and wind them!"

So the chase continued. Twenty times more we ran them around the Lancashire Queen, and at last we could see that even their iron muscles were giving out. They were nearly exhausted, and it was only a matter of a few more circuits, when the game took on a new feature. On the row to windward they always gained on us, so that they were half-way down the ship's side on the row to leeward when we were passing the bow. But this last time, as we passed the bow, we saw them escaping up the ship's gangway, which had been suddenly lowered. It was an organized move on the part of the sailors, evidently countenanced by the captain; for by the time we arrived where the gangway had been, it was being hoisted up, and the skiff, slung in the ship's davits, was likewise flying aloft out of reach.

The parley that followed with the captain was short and snappy. He absolutely forbade us to board the Lancashire Queen, and as absolutely refused to give up the two men. By this time Charley was as enraged as the Greek. Not only had he been foiled in a long and ridiculous chase, but he had been knocked senseless into the bottom of his boat by the men who had escaped him.

"Knock off my head with little apples," he declared emphatically, striking the fist of one hand into the palm of the other, "if those two men ever escape me! I'll stay here to get them if it takes the rest of my natural life, and if I don't get them, then I promise you I'll live unnaturally long or until I do get them, or my name's not Charley Le Grant!"

And then began the siege of the Lancashire Queen, a siege memorable in the annals of both fishermen and fish patrol. When the Reindeer came along, after a fruitless pursuit of the shad fleet, Charley instructed Neil Partington to send out his own salmon boat, with blankets, provisions, and a fisherman's charcoal stove. By sunset this exchange of boats was made, and we said good-by to our Greek, who perforce had to go into Benicia and be locked up for his own violation of the law. After supper, Charley and I kept alternate four-hour watches till day-light. The fishermen made no attempt to escape that night, though the ship sent out a boat for scouting purposes to find if the coast were clear.

By the next day we saw that a steady siege was in order, and we perfected our plans with an eye to our own comfort. A dock, known as the Solano Wharf, which ran out from the Benicia shore, helped us in this. It happened that the Lancashire Queen, the shore at Turner's Shipyard, and the Solano Wharf were the corners of a big equilateral triangle. From ship to shore, the side of the triangle along which the Italians had to escape, was a distance equal to that from the Solano Wharf to the shore, the side of the triangle along which we had to travel to get to the shore before the Italians. But as we could sail much faster than they could row, we could permit them to travel about half their side of the triangle before we darted out along our side. If we allowed them

to get more than half-way, they were certain to beat us to shore; while if we started before they were half-way, they were equally certain to beat us back to the ship.

We found that an imaginary line, drawn from the end of the wharf to a windmill farther along the shore, cut precisely in half the line of the triangle along which the Italians must escape to reach the land. This line made it easy for us to determine how far to let them run away before we bestirred ourselves in pursuit. Day after day we would watch them through our glasses as they rowed leisurely along toward the half-way point; and as they drew close into line with the windmill, we would leap into the boat and get up sail. At sight of our preparation, they would turn and row slowly back to the Lancashire Queen, secure in the knowledge that we could not overtake them.

To guard against calms-when our salmon boat would be useless-we also had in readiness a light rowing skiff equipped with spoon-oars. But at such times, when the wind failed us, we were forced to row out from the wharf as soon as they rowed from the ship. In the night-time, on the other hand, we were compelled to patrol the immediate vicinity of the ship; which we did, Charley and I standing four-hour watches turn and turn about. The Italians, however, preferred the daytime in which to escape, and so our long night vigils were without result.

"What makes me mad," said Charley, "is our being kept from our honest beds while those rascally lawbreakers are sleeping soundly every night. But much good may it do them," he threatened. "I'll keep them on that ship till the captain charges them board, as sure as a sturgeon's not a catfish!"

It was a tantalizing problem that confronted us. As long as we were vigilant, they could not escape; and as long as they were careful, we would be unable to catch them. Charley cudgelled his brains continually, but for once his imagination failed him. It was a problem apparently without other solution than that of patience. It was a waiting game, and whichever waited the longer was bound to win. To add to our irritation, friends of the Italians established a code of signals with them from the shore, so that we never dared relax the siege for a moment. And besides this, there were always one or two suspicious-looking fishermen hanging around the Solano Wharf and keeping watch on our actions. We could do nothing but "grin and bear it," as Charley said, while it took up all our time and prevented us from doing other work.

The days went by, and there was no change in the situation. Not that no attempts were made to change it. One night friends from the shore came out in a skiff and attempted to confuse us while the two Italians escaped. That they did not succeed was due to the lack of a little oil on the ship's davits. For we were drawn back from the pursuit of the strange boat by the creaking of the davits, and arrived at the Lancashire Queen just as the Italians were lowering their skiff. Another night, fully half a dozen skiffs rowed around us in the darkness, but we held on like a leech to the side of the ship and frustrated their plan till they grew angry and showered us with abuse. Charley laughed to himself in the bottom of the boat.

"It's a good sign, lad," he said to me. "When men begin to abuse, make sure they're losing patience; and shortly after they lose patience, they lose their heads. Mark my words, if we only hold out, they'll get careless some fine day, and then we'll get them."

But they did not grow careless, and Charley confessed that this was one of the times when all signs failed. Their patience seemed equal to ours, and the second week of the siege dragged monotonously along. Then Charley's lagging imagination quickened sufficiently to suggest a ruse. Peter Boyelen, a new patrolman and one unknown to the fisher-folk, happened to arrive in Benicia and we took him into our plan. We were as secret as possible about it, but in some unfathomable way the friends ashore got word to the beleaguered Italians to keep their eyes open.

On the night we were to put our ruse into effect, Charley and I took up our usual station in our rowing skiff alongside the Lancashire Queen. After it was thoroughly dark, Peter Boyelen came out in a crazy duck boat, the kind you can pick up and carry away under one arm. When we heard him coming along, paddling noisily, we slipped away a short distance into the darkness, and rested on our oars. Opposite the gangway, having jovially hailed the anchor-watch of the Lancashire Queen and asked the direction of the Scottish Chiefs, another wheat ship, he awkwardly capsized himself. The man who was standing the anchor-watch ran down the gangway and hauled him out of the water. This was what he wanted, to get aboard the ship; and the next thing he expected was to be taken on deck and then below to warm up and dry out. But the captain inhospitably kept him perched on the lowest gang-way step, shivering miserably and with his feet dangling in the water, till we, out of very pity, rowed in from the darkness and took him off. The jokes and gibes of the awakened crew sounded anything but sweet in our ears, and even the two Italians climbed up on the rail and laughed down at us long and maliciously.

"That's all right," Charley said in a low voice, which I only could hear. "I'm mighty glad it's not us that's laughing first. We'll save our laugh to the end, eh, lad?"

He clapped a hand on my shoulder as he finished, but it seemed to me that there was more determination than hope in his voice.

It would have been possible for us to secure the aid of United States marshals and board the English ship, backed by Government authority. But the instructions of the Fish Commission were to the effect that the patrolmen should avoid complications, and this one, did we call on the higher powers, might well end in a pretty international tangle.

The second week of the siege drew to its close, and there was no sign of change in the situation. On the morning of the fourteenth day the change came, and it came in a guise as unexpected and startling to us as it was to the men we were striving to capture.

Charley and I, after our customary night vigil by the side of the Lancashire Queen, rowed into the Solana Wharf.

"Hello!" cried Charley, in surprise. "In the name of reason and common sense, what is that? Of all unmannerly craft did you ever see the like?"

Well might he exclaim, for there, tied up to the dock, lay the strangest looking launch I had ever seen. Not that it could be called a launch, either, but it seemed to resemble a launch more than any other kind of boat. It was seventy feet long, but so narrow was it, and so bare of superstructure, that it appeared much smaller than it really was. It was built wholly of steel, and was painted black. Three smokestacks, a good distance apart and raking well aft, arose in single file amidships; while the bow, long and lean and sharp as a knife, plainly advertised that the boat was made for speed. Passing under the stern, we read Streak, painted in small white letters.

Charley and I were consumed with curiosity. In a few minutes we were on board and talking with an engineer who was watching the sunrise from the deck. He was quite willing to satisfy our curiosity, and in a few minutes we learned that the Streak had come in after dark from San Francisco; that this was what might be called the trial trip; and that she was the property of Silas Tate, a young mining millionaire of California, whose fad was high-speed yachts. There was some talk about turbine engines, direct application of steam, and the absence of pistons, rods, and cranks,-all of which was beyond me, for I was familiar only with sailing craft; but I did understand the last words of the engineer.

"Four thousand horse-power and forty-five miles an hour, though you wouldn't think it," he concluded proudly.

"Say it again, man! Say it again!" Charley exclaimed in an excited voice.

"Four thousand horse-power and forty-five miles an hour," the engineer repeated, grinning good-naturedly.

"Where's the owner?" was Charley's next question. "Is there any way I can speak to him?"

The engineer shook his head. "No, I'm afraid not. He's asleep, you see."

At that moment a young man in blue uniform came on deck farther aft and stood regarding the sunrise.

"There he is, that's him, that's Mr. Tate," said the engineer.

Charley walked aft and spoke to him, and while he talked earnestly the young man listened with an amused expression on his face. He must have inquired about the depth of water close in to the shore at Turner's Shipyard, for I could see Charley making gestures and explaining. A few minutes later he came back in high glee.

"Come on lad," he said. "On to the dock with you. We've got them!"

It was our good fortune to leave the Streak when we did, for a little later one of the spy fishermen appeared. Charley and I took up our accustomed places, on the stringer-piece, a little ahead of the Streak and over our own boat, where we could comfortably watch the Lancashire Queen. Nothing occurred till about nine o'clock, when we saw the two Italians leave the ship and pull along their side of the triangle toward the shore. Charley looked as unconcerned as could be, but before they had covered a quarter of the distance, he whispered to me:

"Forty-five miles an hour . . . nothing can save them . . . they are ours!"

Slowly the two men rowed along till they were nearly in line with the windmill. This was the point where we always jumped into our salmon boat and got up the sail, and the two men, evidently expecting it, seemed surprised when we gave no sign.

When they were directly in line with the windmill, as near to the shore as to the ship, and nearer the shore than we had ever allowed them before, they grew suspicious. We followed them through the glasses, and saw them standing up in the skiff and trying to find out what we were doing. The spy fisherman, sitting beside us on the stringer-piece was likewise puzzled. He could not understand our inactivity. The men in the skiff rowed nearer the shore, but stood up again and scanned it, as if they thought we might be in hiding there. But a man came out on the beach and waved a handkerchief to indicate that the coast was clear. That settled them. They bent to the oars to make a dash for it. Still Charley waited. Not until they had covered three-quarters of the distance from the Lancashire Queen, which left them hardly more than a quarter of a mile to gain the shore, did Charley slap me on the shoulder and cry:

"They're ours! They're ours!"

We ran the few steps to the side of the Streak and jumped aboard. Stern and bow lines were cast off in a jiffy. The Streak shot ahead and away from the wharf. The spy fisherman we had left behind on the stringer-piece pulled out a revolver and fired five shots into the air in rapid succession. The men in the skiff gave instant heed to the warning, for we could see them pulling away like mad.

But if they pulled like mad, I wonder how our progress can be described? We fairly flew. So frightful was the speed with which we displaced the water, that a wave rose up on either side our bow and foamed aft in a series of three stiff, up-standing waves, while astern a great crested billow pursued us hungrily, as though at each moment it would fall aboard and destroy us. The Streak was pulsing and vibrating and roaring like a thing alive. The wind of our progress was like a gale-a forty-five-mile gale. We could not face it and draw breath without choking and strangling. It blew the smoke straight back from the mouths of the smoke-stacks at a direct right angle to the perpendicular. In fact, we were travelling as fast as an express train. "We just streaked it," was the way Charley told it afterward, and I think his description comes nearer than any I can give.

As for the Italians in the skiff-hardly had we started, it seemed to me, when we were on top of them. Naturally, we had to slow down long before we got to them; but even then we shot past like a whirlwind and were compelled to circle back between them and the shore. They had rowed steadily, rising from the thwarts at every stroke, up to the moment we passed them, when they recognized Charley and me. That took the last bit of fight out of them. They hauled in their oars, and sullenly submitted to arrest.

"Well, Charley," Neil Partington said, as we discussed it on the wharf afterward, "I fail to see where your boasted imagination came into play this time."

But Charley was true to his hobby. “Imagination?” he demanded, pointing to the Streak. “Look at that! just look at it! If the invention of that isn’t imagination, I should like to know what is.”

“Of course,” he added, “it’s the other fellow’s imagination, but it did the work all the same.”

Siwash

"If I was a man–" Her words were in themselves indecisive, but the withering contempt which flashed from her black eyes was not lost upon the men-folk in the tent.

Tommy, the English sailor, squirmed, but chivalrous old Dick Humphries, Cornish fisherman and erstwhile American salmon capitalist, beamed upon her benevolently as ever. He bore women too large a portion of his rough heart to mind them, as he said, when they were in the doldrums, or when their limited vision would not permit them to see all around a thing. So they said nothing, these two men who had taken the half-frozen woman into their tent three days back, and who had warmed her, and fed her, and rescued her goods from the Indian packers. This latter had necessitated the payment of numerous dollars, to say nothing of a demonstration in force–Dick Humphries squinting along the sights of a Winchester while Tommy apportioned their wages among them at his own appraisement. It had been a little thing in itself, but it meant much to a woman playing a desperate single-hand in the equally desperate Klondike rush of '97. Men were occupied with their own pressing needs, nor did they approve of women playing, single-handed, the odds of the arctic winter. "If I was a man, I know what I would do." Thus reiterated Molly, she of the flashing eyes, and therein spoke the cumulative grit of five American-born generations.

In the succeeding silence, Tommy thrust a pan of biscuits into the Yukon stove and piled on fresh fuel. A reddish flood pounded along under his sun-tanned skin, and as he stooped, the skin of his neck was scarlet. Dick palmed a three-cornered sail needle through a set of broken pack straps, his good nature in nowise disturbed by the feminine cataclysm which was threatening to burst in the storm-beaten tent.

"And if you was a man?" he asked, his voice vibrant with kindness. The three-cornered needle jammed in the damp leather, and he suspended work for the moment.

"I'd be a man. I'd put the straps on my back and light out. I wouldn't lay in camp here, with the Yukon like to freeze most any day, and the goods not half over the portage. And you–you are men, and you sit here, holding your hands, afraid of a little wind and wet. I tell you straight, Yankee-men are made of different stuff. They'd be hitting the trail for Dawson if they had to wade through hell-fire. And you, you–I wish I was a man."

"I'm very glad, my dear, that you're not." Dick Humphries threw the bight of the sail twine over the point of the needle and drew it clear with a couple of deft turns and a jerk.

A snort of the gale dealt the tent a broad-handed slap as it hurtled past, and the sleet rat-tat-tatted with snappy spite against the thin canvas. The smoke, smothered

in its exit, drove back through the fire-box door, carrying with it the pungent odor of green spruce.

"Good Gawd! Why can't a woman listen to reason?" Tommy lifted his head from the denser depths and turned upon her a pair of smoke-outraged eyes.

"And why can't a man show his manhood?"

Tommy sprang to his feet with an oath which would have shocked a woman of lesser heart, ripped loose the sturdy reef-knots and flung back the flaps of the tent.

The trio peered out. It was not a heartening spectacle. A few water-soaked tents formed the miserable foreground, from which the streaming ground sloped to a foaming gorge. Down this ramped a mountain torrent. Here and there, dwarf spruce, rooting and grovelling in the shallow alluvium, marked the proximity of the timber line. Beyond, on the opposing slope, the vague outlines of a glacier loomed dead-white through the driving rain. Even as they looked, its massive front crumbled into the valley, on the breast of some subterranean vomit, and it lifted its hoarse thunder above the screeching voice of the storm. Involuntarily, Molly shrank back.

"Look, woman! Look with all your eyes! Three miles in the teeth of the gale to Crater Lake, across two glaciers, along the slippery rim-rock, knee-deep in a howling river! Look, I say, you Yankee woman! Look! There's your Yankee-men!" Tommy pointed a passionate hand in the direction of the struggling tents. "Yankees, the last mother's son of them. Are they on trail? Is there one of them with the straps to his back? And you would teach us men our work? Look, I say!"

Another tremendous section of the glacier rumbled earthward. The wind whipped in at the open doorway, bulging out the sides of the tent till it swayed like a huge bladder at its guy ropes. The smoke swirled about them, and the sleet drove sharply into their flesh. Tommy pulled the flaps together hastily, and returned to his tearful task at the fire-box. Dick Humphries threw the mended pack straps into a corner and lighted his pipe. Even Molly was for the moment persuaded.

"There's my clothes," she half-whimpered, the feminine for the moment prevailing. "They're right at the top of the cache, and they'll be ruined! I tell you, ruined!"

"There, there," Dick interposed, when the last quavering syllable had wailed itself out. "Don't let that worry you, little woman. I'm old enough to be your father's brother, and I've a daughter older than you, and I'll tog you out in fripperies when we get to Dawson if it takes my last dollar."

"When we get to Dawson!" The scorn had come back to her throat with a sudden surge. "You'll rot on the way, first. You'll drown in a mudhole. You–you–Britishers!"

The last word, explosive, intensive, had strained the limits of her vituperation. If that would not stir these men, what could? Tommy's neck ran red again, but he kept his tongue between his teeth. Dick's eyes mellowed. He had the advantage over Tommy, for he had once had a white woman for a wife.

The blood of five American-born generations is, under certain circumstances, an uncomfortable heritage; and among these circumstances might be enumerated that of being quartered with next of kin. These men were Britons. On sea and land her

ancestry and the generations thereof had thrashed them and theirs. On sea and land they would continue to do so. The traditions of her race clamored for vindication. She was but a woman of the present, but in her bubbled the whole mighty past. It was not alone Molly Travis who pulled on gum boots, mackintosh, and straps; for the phantom hands of ten thousand forbears drew tight the buckles, just so as they squared her jaw and set her eyes with determination. She, Molly Travis, intended to shame these Britishers; they, the innumerable shades, were asserting the dominance of the common race.

The men-folk did not interfere. Once Dick suggested that she take his oilskins, as her mackintosh was worth no more than paper in such a storm. But she sniffed her independence so sharply that he communed with his pipe till she tied the flaps on the outside and slushed away on the flooded trail.

"Think she'll make it?" Dick's face belied the indifference of his voice.

"Make it? If she stands the pressure till she gets to the cache, what of the cold and misery, she'll be stark, raving mad. Stand it? She'll be dumb-crazed. You know it yourself, Dick. You've wind-jammed round the Horn. You know what it is to lay out on a topsail yard in the thick of it, bucking sleet and snow and frozen canvas till you're ready to just let go and cry like a baby. Clothes? She won't be able to tell a bundle of skirts from a gold pan or a tea-kettle."

"Kind of think we were wrong in letting her go, then?"

"Not a bit of it. So help me, Dick, she'd 'a' made this tent a hell for the rest of the trip if we hadn't. Trouble with her she's got too much spirit. This'll tone it down a bit."

"Yes," Dick admitted, "she's too ambitious. But then Molly's all right. A cussed little fool to tackle a trip like this, but a plucky sight better than those pick-me-up-and-carry-me kind of women. She's the stock that carried you and me, Tommy, and you've got to make allowance for the spirit. Takes a woman to breed a man. You can't suck manhood from the dugs of a creature whose only claim to womanhood is her petticoats. Takes a she-cat, not a cow, to mother a tiger."

"And when they're unreasonable we've got to put up with it, eh?"

"The proposition. A sharp sheath-knife cuts deeper on a slip than a dull one; but that's no reason for to hack the edge off over a capstan bar."

"All right, if you say so, but when it comes to woman, I guess I'll take mine with a little less edge."

"What do you know about it?" Dick demanded.

"Some." Tommy reached over for a pair of Molly's wet stockings and stretched them across his knees to dry.

Dick, eying him querulously, went fishing in her hand satchel, then hitched up to the front of the stove with divers articles of damp clothing spread likewise to the heat.

"Thought you said you never were married?" he asked.

"Did I? No more was I–that is–yes, by Gawd! I was. And as good a woman as ever cooked grub for a man."

“Slipped her moorings?” Dick symbolized infinity with a wave of his hand.

“Ay.”

“Childbirth,” he added, after a moment’s pause.

The beans bubbled rowdily on the front lid, and he pushed the pot back to a cooler surface. After that he investigated the biscuits, tested them with a splinter of wood, and placed them aside under cover of a damp cloth. Dick, after the manner of his kind, stifled his interest and waited silently. “A different woman to Molly. Siwash.”

Dick nodded his understanding.

“Not so proud and wilful, but stick by a fellow through thick and thin. Sling a paddle with the next and starve as contentedly as Job. Go for’ard when the sloop’s nose was more often under than not, and take in sail like a man. Went prospecting once, up Teslin way, past Surprise Lake and the Little Yellow-Head. Grub gave out, and we ate the dogs. Dogs gave out, and we ate harnesses, moccasins, and furs. Never a whimper; never a pick-me-up-and-carry-me. Before we went she said look out for grub, but when it happened, never a I-told-you-so. ‘Never mind, Tommy,’ she’d say, day after day, that weak she could bare lift a snow-shoe and her feet raw with the work. ‘Never mind. I’d sooner be flat-bellied of hunger and be your woman, Tommy, than have a potlach every day and be Chief George’s klooch.’ George was chief of the Chilcoots, you know, and wanted her bad.

“Great days, those. Was a likely chap myself when I struck the coast. Jumped a whaler, the Pole Star, at Unalaska, and worked my way down to Sitka on an otter hunter. Picked up with Happy Jack there–know him?”

“Had charge of my traps for me,” Dick answered, “down on the Columbia. Pretty wild, wasn’t he, with a warm place in his heart for whiskey and women?”

“The very chap. Went trading with him for a couple of seasons–hooch, and blankets, and such stuff. Then got a sloop of my own, and not to cut him out, came down Juneau way. That’s where I met Killisnoo; I called her Tilly for short. Met her at a squaw dance down on the beach. Chief George had finished the year’s trade with the Sticks over the Passes, and was down from Dyea with half his tribe. No end of Siwashes at the dance, and I the only white. No one knew me, barring a few of the bucks I’d met over Sitka way, but I’d got most of their histories from Happy Jack.

“Everybody talking Chinook, not guessing that I could spit it better than most; and principally two girls who’d run away from Haine’s Mission up the Lynn Canal. They were trim creatures, good to the eye, and I kind of thought of casting that way; but they were fresh as fresh-caught cod. Too much edge, you see. Being a new-comer, they started to twist me, not knowing I gathered in every word of Chinook they uttered.

“I never let on, but set to dancing with Tilly, and the more we danced the more our hearts warmed to each other. ‘Looking for a woman,’ one of the girls says, and the other tosses her head and answers, ‘Small chance he’ll get one when the women are looking for men.’ And the bucks and squaws standing around began to grin and giggle and repeat what had been said. ‘Quite a pretty boy,’ says the first one. I’ll not deny I was rather smooth-faced and youngish, but I’d been a man amongst men many’s the

day, and it rankled me. 'Dancing with Chief George's girl,' pipes the second. 'First thing George'll give him the flat of a paddle and send him about his business.' Chief George had been looking pretty black up to now, but at this he laughed and slapped his knees. He was a husky beggar and would have used the paddle too.

"'Who's the girls?' I asked Tilly, as we went ripping down the centre in a reel. And as soon as she told me their names I remembered all about them from Happy Jack. Had their pedigree down fine–several things he'd told me that not even their own tribe knew. But I held my hush, and went on courting Tilly, they a-casting sharp remarks and everybody roaring. 'Bide a wee, Tommy,' I says to myself; 'bide a wee.'

"And bide I did, till the dance was ripe to break up, and Chief George had brought a paddle all ready for me. Everybody was on the lookout for mischief when we stopped; but I marched, easy as you please, slap into the thick of them. The Mission girls cut me up something clever, and for all I was angry I had to set my teeth to keep from laughing. I turned upon them suddenly.

"'Are you done?' I asked.

"You should have seen them when they heard me spitting Chinook. Then I broke loose. I told them all about themselves, and their people before them; their fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers–everybody, everything. Each mean trick they'd played; every scrape they'd got into; every shame that'd fallen them. And I burned them without fear or favor. All hands crowded round. Never had they heard a white man sling their lingo as I did. Everybody was laughing save the Mission girls. Even Chief George forgot the paddle, or at least he was swallowing too much respect to dare to use it.

"But the girls. 'Oh, don't, Tommy,' they cried, the tears running down their cheeks. 'Please don't. We'll be good. Sure, Tommy, sure.' But I knew them well, and I scorched them on every tender spot. Nor did I slack away till they came down on their knees, begging and pleading with me to keep quiet. Then I shot a glance at Chief George; but he did not know whether to have at me or not, and passed it off by laughing hollowly.

"So be. When I passed the parting with Tilly that night I gave her the word that I was going to be around for a week or so, and that I wanted to see more of her. Not thick-skinned, her kind, when it came to showing like and dislike, and she looked her pleasure for the honest girl she was. Ay, a striking lass, and I didn't wonder that Chief George was taken with her.

"Everything my way. Took the wind from his sails on the first leg. I was for getting her aboard and sailing down Wrangel way till it blew over, leaving him to whistle; but I wasn't to get her that easy. Seems she was living with an uncle of hers–guardian, the way such things go–and seems he was nigh to shuffling off with consumption or some sort of lung trouble. He was good and bad by turns, and she wouldn't leave him till it was over with. Went up to the tepee just before I left, to speculate on how long it'd be; but the old beggar had promised her to Chief George, and when he clapped eyes on me his anger brought on a hemorrhage.

"'Come and take me, Tommy,' she says when we bid good-by on the beach. 'Ay,' I answers; 'when you give the word.' And I kissed her, white-man-fashion and lover-

fashion, till she was all of a tremble like a quaking aspen, and I was so beside myself I'd half a mind to go up and give the uncle a lift over the divide.

"So I went down Wrangel way, past St. Mary's and even to the Queen Charlottes, trading, running whiskey, turning the sloop to most anything. Winter was on, stiff and crisp, and I was back to Juneau, when the word came. 'Come,' the beggar says who brought the news. 'Killisnoo say, "Come now."' 'What's the row?' I asks. 'Chief George,' says he. 'Potlach. Killisnoo, makum klooch.'

"Ay, it was bitter–the Taku howling down out of the north, the salt water freezing quick as it struck the deck, and the old sloop and I hammering into the teeth of it for a hundred miles to Dyea. Had a Douglass Islander for crew when I started, but midway up he was washed over from the bows. Jibed all over and crossed the course three times, but never a sign of him."

"Doubled up with the cold most likely," Dick suggested, putting a pause into the narrative while he hung one of Molly's skirts up to dry, "and went down like a pot of lead."

"My idea. So I finished the course alone, half-dead when I made Dyea in the dark of the evening. The tide favored, and I ran the sloop plump to the bank, in the shelter of the river. Couldn't go an inch further, for the fresh water was frozen solid. Halyards and blocks were that iced up I didn't dare lower mainsail or jib. First I broached a pint of the cargo raw, and then, leaving all standing, ready for the start, and with a blanket around me, headed across the flat to the camp. No mistaking, it was a grand layout. The Chilcats had come in a body–dogs, babies, and canoes–to say nothing of the Dog-Ears, the Little Salmons, and the Missions. Full half a thousand of them to celebrate Tilly's wedding, and never a white man in a score of miles.

"Nobody took note of me, the blanket over my head and hiding my face, and I waded knee deep through the dogs and youngsters till I was well up to the front. The show was being pulled off in a big open place among the trees, with great fires burning and the snow moccasin-packed as hard as Portland cement. Next me was Tilly, beaded and scarlet-clothed galore, and against her Chief George and his head men. The shaman was being helped out by the big medicines from the other tribes, and it shivered my spine up and down, the deviltries they cut. I caught myself wondering if the folks in Liverpool could only see me now; and I thought of yellow-haired Gussie, whose brother I licked after my first voyage, just because he was not for having a sailor-man courting his sister. And with Gussie in my eyes I looked at Tilly. A rum old world, thinks I, with man a-stepping in trails the mother little dreamed of when he lay at suck.

"So be. When the noise was loudest, walrus hides booming and priests a-singing, I says, 'Are you ready?' Gawd! Not a start, not a shot of the eyes my way, not the twitch of a muscle. 'I knew,' she answers, slow and steady as a calm spring tide. 'Where?' 'The high bank at the edge of the ice,' I whispers back. 'Jump out when I give the word.'

"Did I say there was no end of huskies? Well, there was no end. Here, there, everywhere, they were scattered about,–tame wolves and nothing less. When the strain runs

thin they breed them in the bush with the wild, and they're bitter fighters. Right at the toe of my moccasin lay a big brute, and by the heel another. I doubled the first one's tail, quick, till it snapped in my grip. As his jaws clipped together where my hand should have been, I threw the second one by the scruff straight into his mouth. 'Go!' I cried to Tilly.

"You know how they fight. In the wink of an eye there was a raging hundred of them, top and bottom, ripping and tearing each other, kids and squaws tumbling which way, and the camp gone wild. Tilly'd slipped away, so I followed. But when I looked over my shoulder at the skirt of the crowd, the devil laid me by the heart, and I dropped the blanket and went back.

"By then the dogs'd been knocked apart and the crowd was untangling itself. Nobody was in proper place, so they didn't note that Tilly'd gone. 'Hello,' I says, gripping Chief George by the hand. 'May your potlach-smoke rise often, and the Sticks bring many furs with the spring.'

"Lord love me, Dick, but he was joyed to see me,–him with the upper hand and wedding Tilly. Chance to puff big over me. The tale that I was hot after her had spread through the camps, and my presence did him proud. All hands knew me, without my blanket, and set to grinning and giggling. It was rich, but I made it richer by playing unbeknowing.

"'What's the row?' I asks. 'Who's getting married now?'

"'Chief George,' the shaman says, ducking his reverence to him.

"'Thought he had two klooches.'

"'Him takum more,–three,' with another duck.

"'Oh!' And I turned away as though it didn't interest me.

"But this wouldn't do, and everybody begins singing out, 'Killisnoo! Killisnoo!'

"'Killisnoo what?' I asked.

"'Killisnoo, klooch, Chief George,' they blathered. 'Killisnoo, klooch.'

"I jumped and looked at Chief George. He nodded his head and threw out his chest.

"She'll be no klooch of yours,' I says solemnly. 'No klooch of yours,' I repeats, while his face went black and his hand began dropping to his hunting-knife.

"'Look!' I cries, striking an attitude. 'Big Medicine. You watch my smoke.'

"I pulled off my mittens, rolled back my sleeves, and made half-a-dozen passes in the air.

"'Killisnoo!' I shouts. 'Killisnoo! Killisnoo!'

"I was making medicine, and they began to scare. Every eye was on me; no time to find out that Tilly wasn't there. Then I called Killisnoo three times again, and waited; and three times more. All for mystery and to make them nervous. Chief George couldn't guess what I was up to, and wanted to put a stop to the foolery; but the shamans said to wait, and that they'd see me and go me one better, or words to that effect. Besides, he was a superstitious cuss, and I fancy a bit afraid of the white man's magic.

"Then I called Killisnoo, long and soft like the howl of a wolf, till the women were all a-tremble and the bucks looking serious.

"'Look!' I sprang for'ard, pointing my finger into a bunch of squaws–easier to deceive women than men, you know. 'Look!' And I raised it aloft as though following the flight of a bird. Up, up, straight overhead, making to follow it with my eyes till it disappeared in the sky.

"'Killisnoo,' I said, looking at Chief George and pointing upward again. 'Killisnoo.'

"So help me, Dick, the gammon worked. Half of them, at least, saw Tilly disappear in the air. They'd drunk my whiskey at Juneau and seen stranger sights, I'll warrant. Why should I not do this thing, I, who sold bad spirits corked in bottles? Some of the women shrieked. Everybody fell to whispering in bunches. I folded my arms and held my head high, and they drew further away from me. The time was ripe to go. 'Grab him,' Chief George cries. Three or four of them came at me, but I whirled, quick, made a couple of passes like to send them after Tilly, and pointed up. Touch me? Not for the kingdoms of the earth. Chief George harangued them, but he couldn't get them to lift a leg. Then he made to take me himself; but I repeated the mummery and his grit went out through his fingers.

"'Let your shamans work wonders the like of which I have done this night,' I says. 'Let them call Killisnoo down out of the sky whither I have sent her.' But the priests knew their limits. 'May your klooches bear you sons as the spawn of the salmon,' I says, turning to go; 'and may your totem pole stand long in the land, and the smoke of your camp rise always.'

"But if the beggars could have seen me hitting the high places for the sloop as soon as I was clear of them, they'd thought my own medicine had got after me. Tilly'd kept warm by chopping the ice away, and was all ready to cast off. Gawd! how we ran before it, the Taku howling after us and the freezing seas sweeping over at every clip. With everything battened down, me a-steering and Tilly chopping ice, we held on half the night, till I plumped the sloop ashore on Porcupine Island, and we shivered it out on the beach; blankets wet, and Tilly drying the matches on her breast.

"So I think I know something about it. Seven years, Dick, man and wife, in rough sailing and smooth. And then she died, in the heart of the winter, died in childbirth, up there on the Chilcat Station. She held my hand to the last, the ice creeping up inside the door and spreading thick on the gut of the window. Outside, the lone howl of the wolf and the Silence; inside, death and the Silence. You've never heard the Silence yet, Dick, and Gawd grant you don't ever have to hear it when you sit by the side of death. Hear it? Ay, till the breath whistles like a siren, and the heart booms, booms, booms, like the surf on the shore.

"Siwash, Dick, but a woman. White, Dick, white, clear through. Towards the last she says, 'Keep my feather bed, Tommy, keep it always.' And I agreed. Then she opened her eyes, full with the pain. 'I've been a good woman to you, Tommy, and because of that I want you to promise–to promise'–the words seemed to stick in her throat–'that when you marry, the woman be white. No more Siwash, Tommy. I know. Plenty white women down to Juneau now. I know. Your people call you "squaw-man," your women turn their heads to the one side on the street, and you do not go to their cabins like

other men. Why? Your wife Siwash. Is it not so? And this is not good. Wherefore I die. Promise me. Kiss me in token of your promise.'

"I kissed her, and she dozed off, whispering, 'It is good.' At the end, that near gone my ear was at her lips, she roused for the last time. 'Remember, Tommy; remember my feather bed.' Then she died, in childbirth, up there on the Chilcat Station."

The tent heeled over and half flattened before the gale. Dick refilled his pipe, while Tommy drew the tea and set it aside against Molly's return.

And she of the flashing eyes and Yankee blood? Blinded, falling, crawling on hand and knee, the wind thrust back in her throat by the wind, she was heading for the tent. On her shoulders a bulky pack caught the full fury of the storm. She plucked feebly at the knotted flaps, but it was Tommy and Dick who cast them loose. Then she set her soul for the last effort, staggered in, and fell exhausted on the floor.

Tommy unbuckled the straps and took the pack from her. As he lifted it there was a clanging of pots and pans. Dick, pouring out a mug of whiskey, paused long enough to pass the wink across her body. Tommy winked back. His lips pursed the monosyllable, "clothes," but Dick shook his head reprovingly. "Here, little woman," he said, after she had drunk the whiskey and straightened up a bit.

"Here's some dry togs. Climb into them. We're going out to extra-peg the tent. After that, give us the call, and we'll come in and have dinner. Sing out when you're ready."

"So help me, Dick, that's knocked the edge off her for the rest of this trip," Tommy spluttered as they crouched to the lee of the tent.

"But it's the edge is her saving grace." Dick replied, ducking his head to a volley of sleet that drove around a corner of the canvas. "The edge that you and I've got, Tommy, and the edge of our mothers before us."

A Son of the Sun

I

The Willi-Waw lay in the passage between the shore-reef and the outer-reef. From the latter came the low murmur of a lazy surf, but the sheltered stretch of water, not more than a hundred yards across to the white beach of pounded coral sand, was of glass-like smoothness. Narrow as was the passage, and anchored as she was in the shoalest place that gave room to swing, the Willi-Waw's chain rode up-and-down a clean hundred feet. Its course could be traced over the bottom of living coral. Like some monstrous snake, the rusty chain's slack wandered over the ocean floor, crossing and recrossing itself several times and fetching up finally at the idle anchor. Big rock-cod, dun and mottled, played warily in and out of the coral. Other fish, grotesque of form and colour, were brazenly indifferent, even when a big fish-shark drifted sluggishly along and sent the rock-cod scuttling for their favourite crevices.

On deck, for'ard, a dozen blacks pottered clumsily at scraping the teak rail. They were as inexpert at their work as so many monkeys. In fact they looked very much like monkeys of some enlarged and prehistoric type. Their eyes had in them the querulous plaintiveness of the monkey, their faces were even less symmetrical than the monkey's, and, hairless of body, they were far more ungarmented than any monkey, for clothes they had none. Decorated they were as no monkey ever was. In holes in their ears they carried short clay pipes, rings of turtle shell, huge plugs of wood, rusty wire nails, and empty rifle cartridges. The calibre of a Winchester rifle was the smallest hole an ear bore; some of the largest holes were inches in diameter, and any single ear averaged from three to half a dozen holes. Spikes and bodkins of polished bone or petrified shell were thrust through their noses. On the chest of one hung a white door-knob, on the chest of another the handle of a china cup, on the chest of a third the brass cog-wheel of an alarm clock. They chattered in queer, falsetto voices, and, combined, did no more work than a single white sailor.

Aft, under an awning, were two white men. Each was clad in a sixpenny undershirt and wrapped about the loins with a strip of cloth. Belted about the middle of each was a revolver and tobacco pouch. The sweat stood out on their skin in myriads of globules. Here and there the globules coalesced in tiny streams that dripped to the heated deck and almost immediately evaporated. The lean, dark-eyed man wiped his fingers wet with a stinging stream from his forehead and flung it from him with a weary curse. Wearily, and without hope, he gazed seaward across the outer-reef, and at the tops of the palms along the beach.

“Eight o’clock, an’ hell don’t get hot till noon,” he complained. “Wisht to God for a breeze. Ain’t we never goin’ to get away?”

The other man, a slender German of five and twenty, with the massive forehead of a scholar and the tumble-home chin of a degenerate, did not trouble to reply. He was busy emptying powdered quinine into a cigarette paper. Rolling what was approximately fifty grains of the drug into a tight wad, he tossed it into his mouth and gulped it down without the aid of water.

“Wisht I had some whiskey,” the first man panted, after a fifteenminute interval of silence.

Another equal period elapsed ere the German enounced, relevant of nothing:

“I’m rotten with fever. I’m going to quit you, Griffiths, when we get to Sydney. No more tropics for me. I ought to known better when I signed on with you.”

“You ain’t been much of a mate,” Griffiths replied, too hot himself to speak heatedly. “When the beach at Guvutu heard Ifd shipped you, they all laughed. ‘What? Jacobsen?’ they said. ‘You can’t hide a square face of trade gin or sulphuric acid that he won’t smell out!’ You’ve certainly lived up to your reputation. I ain’t had a drink for a fortnight, what of your snoopin’ my supply.”

“If the fever was as rotten in you as me, you’d understand,” the mate whimpered.

“I ain’t kickin’,” Griffiths answered. “I only wisht God’d send me a drink, or a breeze of wind, or something. I’m ripe for my next chill to-morrow.”

The mate proffered him the quinine. Rolling a fifty-grain dose, he popped the wad into his mouth and swallowed it dry.

“God! God!” he moaned. “I dream of a land somewheres where they ain’t no quinine. Damned stuff of hell! I’ve scoffed tons of it in my time.”

Again he quested seaward for signs of wind. The usual trade-wind clouds were absent, and the sun, still low in its climb to meridian, turned all the sky to heated brass. One seemed to see as well as feel this heat, and Griffiths sought vain relief by gazing shoreward. The white beach was a searing ache to his eyeballs. The palm trees, absolutely still, outlined flatly against the unrefreshing green of the packed jungle, seemed so much cardboard scenery. The little black boys, playing naked in the dazzle of sand and sun, were an affront and a hurt to the sun-sick man. He felt a sort of relief when one, running, tripped and fell on all-fours in the tepid sea-water.

An exclamation from the blacks for’ard sent both men glancing seaward. Around the near point of land, a quarter of a mile away and skirting the reef, a long black canoe paddled into sight.

“Gooma boys from the next bight,” was the mate’s verdict.

One of the blacks came aft, treading the hot deck with the unconcern of one whose bare feet felt no heat. This, too, was a hurt to Griffiths, and he closed his eyes. But the next moment they were open wide.

“White fella marster stop along Gooma boy, the black said.

Both men were on their feet and gazing at the canoe. Aft could be seen the unmistakable sombrero of a white man. Quick alarm showed itself on the face of the mate.

"It's Grief," he said.

Griffiths satisfied himself by a long look, then ripped out a wrathful oath.

" What's he doing up here?" he demanded . . . of the mate, of the aching sea and sky, of the merciless blaze of sun, and of the whole superheated and implacable universe with which his fate was entangled.

The mate began to chuckle.

I told you you couldn't get away with it," he said.

But Griffiths was not listening.

"With all his money, coming around like a rent collector," he chanted his outrage, almost in an ecstasy of anger. "He's loaded with money, he's stuffed with money, he's busting with money. I know for a fact he sold his Yringa plantations for three hundred thousand pounds. Bell told me so himself last time we were drunk at Guvutu. Worth millions and millions, and Shylocking me for what he wouldn't light his pipe with." He whirled on the mate. "Of course you told me so. Go on and say it, and keep on saying it. Now just what was it you did tell me so?"

"I told you you didn't know him, if you thought you could clear the Solomons without paying him. That man Grief is a devil, but he's straight. I know. I told you he'd throw a thousand quid away for the fun of it, and for sixpence fight like a shark for a rusty tin. I tell you I know. Didn't he give his Balakula to the Queensland Mission when they lost their Evening Star on San Cristobal? — and the Balakula worth three thousand pounds if she was worth a penny? And didn't he beat up Strothers till he lay abed a fortnight, all because of a difference of two pound ten in the account, and because Strothers got fresh and tried to make the gouge go through?"

"God strike me blind!" Griffiths cried in impotency of rage.

The mate went on with his exposition.

"I tell you only a straight man can buck a straight man like him, and the man's never hit the Solomons that could do it. Men like you and me can't buck him. We're too rotten, too rotten all the way through. You've got plenty more than twelve hundred quid below. Pay him, and get it over with."

But Griffiths gritted his teeth and drew his thin lips tightly across them.

"I'll buck him," he muttered — more to himself and the brazen ball of sun than to the mate. He turned and half started to go below, then turned back again. "Look here, Jacobsen. He won't be here for quarter of an hour. Are you with me? Will you stand by me?"

"Of course I'll stand by you. I've drunk all your whiskey, haven't I? What are you going to do?"

"I'm not going to kill him if I can help it. But I'm not going to pay. Take that flat."

Jacobsen shrugged his shoulders in calm acquiescence to fate, and Griffiths stepped to the companionway and went below.

II

Jacobsen watched the canoe across the low reef as it came abreast and passed on to the entrance of the passage. Griffiths, with ink-marks on right thumb and forefinger, returned on deck Fifteen minutes later the canoe came alongside. The man with the sombrero stood up.

“Hello, Griffiths!” he said. “Hello, Jacobsen!” With his hand on the rail he turned to his dusky crew. “You fella boy stop along canoe altogether.”

As he swung over the rail and stepped on deck a hint of catlike litheness showed in the apparently heavy body. Like the other two, he was scantily clad. The cheap undershirt and white loin-cloth did not serve to hide the well put up body. Heavy muscled he was, but he was not lumped and hummocked by muscles. They were softly rounded, and, when they did move, slid softly and silkily under the smooth, tanned skin. Ardent suns had likewise tanned his face till it was swarthy as a Spaniard’s. The yellow mustache appeared incongruous in the midst of such swarthiness, while the clear blue of the eyes produced a feeling of shock on the beholder. It was difficult to realize that the skin of this man had once been fair.

“Where did you blow in from?” Griffiths asked, as they shook hands. “I thought you were over in the Santa Cruz.”

“I was,” the newcomer answered. “But we made a quick passage. The Wonder’s just around in the bight at Gooma, waiting for wind. Some of the bushmen reported a ketch here, and I just dropped around to see. Well, how goes it?”

“Nothing much. Copra sheds mostly empty, and not half a dozen tons of ivory nuts. The women all got rotten with fever and quit, and the men can’t chase them back into the swamps. They’re a sick crowd. I’d ask you to have a drink, but the mate finished off my last bottle. I wisht to God for a breeze of wind.”

Grief, glancing with keen carelessness from one to the other, laughed.

“I’m glad the calm held,” he said. “It enabled me to get around to see you. My supercargo dug up that little note of yours, and I brought it along.”

The mate edged politely away, leaving his skipper to face his trouble.

“I’m sorry, Grief, damned sorry,” Griffiths said, “but I ain’t got it. You’ll have to give me a little more time.”

Grief leaned up against the companionway, surprise and pain depicted on his face.

“It does beat hell,” he communed, “how men learn to lie in the Solomons. The truth’s not in them. Now take Captain Jensen. I’d sworn by his truthfulness. Why, he told me only five days ago–do you want to know what he told me?”

Griffiths licked his lips.

“Go on.”

“Why, he told me that you’d sold out–sold out everything, cleaned up, and was pulling out for the New Hebrides.”

“He’s a damned liar!” Griffiths cried hotly.

Grief nodded.

"I should say so. He even had the nerve to tell me that he'd bought two of your stations from you–Mauri and Kahula. Said he paid you seventeen hundred gold sovereigns, lock, stock and barrel, good will, trade-goods, credit, and copra."

Griffiths's eyes narrowed and glinted. The action was involuntary, and Grief noted it with a lazy sweep of his eyes.

"And Parsons, your trader at Hickimavi, told me that the Fulcrum Company had bought that station from you. Now what did he want to lie for?"

Griffiths, overwrought by sun and sickness, exploded. All his bitterness of spirit rose up in his face and twisted his mouth into a snarl.

"Look here, Grief, what's the good of playing with me that way? You know, and I know you know. Let it go at that. I have sold out, and I am getting away. And what are you going to do about it?"

Grief shrugged his shoulders, and no hint of resolve shadowed itself in his own face. His expression was as of one in a quandary.

"There's no law here," Griffiths pressed home his advantage. "Tulagi is a hundred and fifty miles away. I've got my clearance papers, and I'm on my own boat. There's nothing to stop me from sailing. You've got no right to stop me just because I owe you a little money. And by God! you can't stop me. Put that in your pipe."

The look of pained surprise on Grief's face deepened.

"You mean you're going to cheat me out of that twelve hundred, Griffiths?"

"That's just about the size of it, old man. And calling hard names won't help any. There's the wind coming. You'd better get overside before I pull out, or I'll tow your canoe under."

"Really, Griffiths, you sound almost right. I can't stop you." Grief fumbled in the pouch that hung on his revolver-belt and pulled out a crumpled official-looking paper. "But maybe this will stop you. And it's something for your pipe. Smoke up."

"What is it?"

"An admiralty warrant. Running to the New Hebrides won't save you. It can be served anywhere."

Griffiths hesitated and swallowed, when he had finished glancing at the document. With knit brows he pondered this new phase of the situation. Then, abruptly, as he looked up, his face relaxed into all frankness.

"You were cleverer than I thought, old man," he said. "You've got me hip and thigh. I ought to have known better than to try and beat you. Jacobsen told me I couldn't, and I wouldn't listen to him. But he was right, and so are you. I've got the money below. Come on down and we'll settle."

He started to go down, then stepped aside to let his visitor precede him, at the same time glancing seaward to where the dark flaw of wind was quickening the water.

"Heave short," he told the mate. "Get up sail and stand ready to break out."

As Grief sat down on the edge of the mate's bunk, close against and facing the tiny table, he noticed the butt of a revolver just projecting from under the pillow. On

the table, which hung on hinges from the for'ard bulkhead, were pen and ink, also a battered log-book.

"Oh, I don't mind being caught in a dirty trick," Griffiths was saying defiantly. "I've been in the tropics too long. I'm a sick man, a damn sick man. And the whiskey, and the sun, and the fever have made me sick in morals, too. Nothing's too mean and low for me now, and I can understand why the niggers eat each other, and take heads, and such things. I could do it myself. So I call trying to do you out of that small account a pretty mild trick. Wisht I could offer you a drink."

Grief made no reply, and the other busied himself in attempting to unlock a large and much-dented cash-box. From on deck came falsetto cries and the creak and rattle of blocks as the black crew swung up mainsail and driver. Grief watched a large cockroach crawling over the greasy paintwork. Griffiths, with an oath of irritation, carried the cash-box to the companion-steps for better light. Here, on his feet, and bending over the box, his back to his visitor, his hands shot out to the rifle that stood beside the steps, and at the same moment he whirled about.

"Now don't you move a muscle," he commanded.

Grief smiled, elevated his eyebrows quizzically, and obeyed. His left hand rested on the bunk beside him; his right hand lay on the table.

His revolver hung on his right hip in plain sight. But in his mind was recollection of the other revolver under the pillow.

"Huh!" Griffiths sneered. "You've got everybody in the Solomons hypnotized, but let me tell you you ain't got me. Now I'm going to throw you off my vessel, along with your admiralty warrant, but first you've got to do something. Lift up that log-book."

The other glanced curiously at the log-book, but did not move.

"I tell you I'm a sick man, Grief; and I'd as soon shoot you as smash a cockroach. Lift up that log-book, I say."

Sick he did look, his lean face working nervously with the rage that possessed him. Grief lifted the book and set it aside. Beneath lay a written sheet of tablet paper.

"Read it," Griffiths commanded. "Read it aloud."

Grief obeyed; but while he read, the fingers of his left hand began an infinitely slow and patient crawl toward the butt of the weapon under the pillow.

"On board the ketch Willi-Waw, Bombi Bight, Island of Anna, Solomon Islands," he read. "Know all men by these presents that I do hereby sign off and release in full, for due value received, all debts whatsoever owing to me by Harrison J. Griffiths, who has this day paid to me twelve hundred pounds sterling."

"With that receipt in my hands," Griffiths grinned, "your admiralty warrant's not worth the paper it's written on. Sign it."

"It won't do any good, Griffiths," Grief said. "A document signed under compulsion won't hold before the law."

"In that case, what objection have you to signing it then?"

"Oh, none at all, only that I might save you heaps of trouble by not signing it."

Grief's fingers had gained the revolver, and, while he talked, with his right hand he played with the pen and with his left began slowly and imperceptibly drawing the weapon to his side. As his hand finally closed upon it, second finger on trigger and forefinger laid past the cylinder and along the barrel, he wondered what luck he would have at left-handed snap-shooting.

"Don't consider me," Griffiths gibed. "And just remember Jacobsen will testify that he saw me pay the money over. Now sign, sign in full, at the bottom, David Grief, and date it."

From on deck came the jar of sheet-blocks and the rat-tat-tat of the reef-points against the canvas. In the cabin they could feel the Willi-Waw heel, swing into the wind, and right. David Grief still hesitated. From for'ard came the jerking rattle of headsail halyards through the sheaves. The little vessel heeled, and through the cabin walls came the gurgle and wash of water.

"Get a move on!" Griffiths cried. "The anchor's out."

The muzzle of the rifle, four feet away, was bearing directly on him, when Grief resolved to act. The rifle wavered as Griffiths kept his balance in the uncertain puffs of the first of the wind. Grief took advantage of the wavering, made as if to sign the paper, and at the same instant, like a cat, exploded into swift and intricate action. As he ducked low and leaped forward with his body, his left hand flashed from under the screen of the table, and so accurately-timed was the single stiff pull on the self-cocking trigger that the cartridge discharged as the muzzle came forward. Not a whit behind was Griffiths. The muzzle of his weapon dropped to meet the ducking body, and, shot at snap direction, rifle and revolver went off simultaneously.

Grief felt the sting and sear of a bullet across the skin of his shoulder, and knew that his own shot had missed. His forward rush carried him to Griffiths before another shot could be fired, both of whose arms, still holding the rifle, he locked with a low tackle about the body. He shoved the revolver muzzle, still in his left hand, deep into the other's abdomen. Under the press of his anger and the sting of his abraded skin, Grief's finger was lifting the hammer, when the wave of anger passed and he recollected himself. Down the companion-way came indignant cries from the Gooma boys in his canoe.

Everything was happening in seconds. There was apparently no pause in his actions as he gathered Griffiths in his arms and carried him up the steep steps in a sweeping rush. Out into the blinding glare of sunshine he came. A black stood grinning at the wheel, and the Willi-Waw, heeled over from the wind, was foaming along. Rapidly dropping astern was his Gooma canoe. Grief turned his head. From amidships, revolver in hand, the mate was springing toward him. With two jumps, still holding the helpless Griffiths, Grief leaped to the rail and overboard.

Both men were grappled together as they went down; but Grief, with a quick updraw of his knees to the other's chest, broke the grip and forced him down. With both feet on Griffiths's shoulder, he forced him still deeper, at the same time driving himself to the surface. Scarcely had his head broken into the sunshine when two splashes of

water, in quick succession and within a foot of his face, advertised that Jacobsen knew how to handle a revolver. There was a chance for no third shot, for Grief, filling his lungs with air, sank down. Under water he struck out, nor did he come up till he saw the canoe and the bubbling paddles overhead. As he climbed aboard, the Willi-Waw went into the wind to come about.

"Washee-washee!" Grief cried to his boys. "You fella make-um beach quick fella time!"

In all shamelessness, he turned his back on the battle and ran for cover. The Willi-Waw, compelled to deaden way in order to pick up its captain, gave Grief his chance for a lead. The canoe struck the beach full-tilt, with every paddle driving, and they leaped out and ran across the sand for the trees. But before they gained the shelter, three times the sand kicked into puffs ahead of them. Then they dove into the green safety of the jungle.

Grief watched the Willi-Waw haul up close, go out the passage, then slack its sheets as it headed south with the wind abeam. As it went out of sight past the point he could see the topsail being broken out. One of the Gooma boys, a black, nearly fifty years of age, hideously marred and scarred by skin diseases and old wounds, looked up into his face and grinned.

"My word," the boy commented, "that fella skipper too much cross along you."

Grief laughed, and led the way back across the sand to the canoe.

III

How many millions David Grief was worth no man in the Solomons knew, for his holdings and ventures were everywhere in the great South Pacific. From Samoa to New Guinea and even to the north of the Line his plantations were scattered. He possessed pearling concessions in the Paumotus. Though his name did not appear, he was in truth the German company that traded in the French Marquesas. His trading stations were in strings in all the groups, and his vessels that operated them were many. He owned atolls so remote and tiny that his smallest schooners and ketches visited the solitary agents but once a year.

In Sydney, on Castlereagh Street, his offices occupied three floors. But he was rarely in those offices. He preferred always to be on the go amongst the islands, nosing out new investments, inspecting and shaking up old ones, and rubbing shoulders with fun and adventure in a thousand strange guises. He bought the wreck of the great steamship Gavonne for a song, and in salving it achieved the impossible and cleaned up a quarter of a million. In the Louisiades he planted the first commercial rubber, and in Bora-Bora he ripped out the South Sea cotton and put the jolly islanders at the work of planting cacao. It was he who took the deserted island of Lallu-Ka, colonized it with Polynesians from the Ontong-Java Atoll, and planted four thousand acres to cocoanuts. And it was he who reconciled the warring chief-stocks of Tahiti and swung the great deal of the phosphate island of Hikihu.

His own vessels recruited his contract labour. They brought Santa Cruz boys to the New Hebrides, New Hebrides boys to the Banks, and the head-hunting cannibals of Malaita to the plantations of New Georgia. From Tonga to the Gilberts and on to the

far Louisiades his recruiters combed the islands for labour. His keels plowed all ocean stretches. He owned three steamers on regular island runs, though he rarely elected to travel in them, preferring the wilder and more primitive way of wind and sail.

At least forty years of age, he looked no more than thirty. Yet beachcombers remembered his advent among the islands a score of years before, at which time the yellow mustache was already budding silkily on his lip. Unlike other white men in the tropics, he was there because he liked it. His protective skin pigmentation was excellent. He had been born to the sun. One he was in ten thousand in the matter of sun-resistance. The invisible and high-velocity light waves failed to bore into him. Other white men were pervious. The sun drove through their skins, ripping and smashing tissues and nerves, till they became sick in mind and body, tossed most of the Decalogue overboard, descended to beastliness, drank themselves into quick graves, or survived so savagely that war vessels were sometimes sent to curb their license.

But David Grief was a true son of the sun, and he flourished in all its ways. He merely became browner with the passing of the years, though in the brown was the hint of golden tint that glows in the skin of the Polynesian. Yet his blue eyes retained their blue, his mustache its yellow, and the lines of his face were those which had persisted through the centuries in his English race. English he was in blood, yet those that thought they knew contended he was at least American born. Unlike them, he had not come out to the South Seas seeking hearth and saddle of his own. In fact, he had brought hearth and saddle with him. His advent had been in the Paumotus. He arrived on board a tiny schooner yacht, master and owner, a youth questing romance and adventure along the sun-washed path of the tropics. He also arrived in a hurricane, the giant waves of which deposited him and yacht and all in the thick of a cocoanut grove three hundred yards beyond the surf. Six months later he was rescued by a pearling cutter. But the sun had got into his blood. At Tahiti, instead of taking a steamer home, he bought a schooner, outfitted her with trade-goods and divers, and went for a cruise through the Dangerous Archipelago.

As the golden tint burned into his face it poured molten out of the ends of his fingers. His was the golden touch, but he played the game, not for the gold, but for the game's sake. It was a man's game, the rough contacts and fierce give and take of the adventurers of his own blood and of half the bloods of Europe and the rest of the world, and it was a good game; but over and beyond was his love of all the other things that go to make up a South Seas rover's life–the smell of the reef; the infinite exquisiteness of the shoals of living coral in the mirror-surfaced lagoons; the crashing sunrises of raw colours spread with lawless cunning; the palm-tufted islets set in turquoise deeps; the tonic wine of the trade-winds; the heave and send of the orderly, crested seas; the moving deck beneath his feet, the straining canvas overhead; the flower-garlanded, golden-glowing men and maids of Polynesia, half-children and half-gods; and even the howling savages of Melanesia, head-hunters and man-eaters, half-devil and all beast.

And so, favoured child of the sun, out of munificence of energy and sheer joy of living, he, the man of many millions, forbore on his far way to play the game with Harrison J. Griffiths for a paltry sum. It was his whim, his desire, his expression of self and of the sun-warmth that poured through him. It was fun, a joke, a problem, a bit of play on which life was lightly hazarded for the joy of the playing.

IV

The early morning found the Wonder laying close-hauled along the coast of Guadalcanal She moved lazily through the water under the dying breath of the land breeze. To the east, heavy masses of clouds promised a renewal of the southeast trades, accompanied by sharp puffs and rain squalls. Ahead, laying along the coast on the same course as the Wonder, and being slowly overtaken, was a small ketch. It was not the Willi-Waw, however, and Captain Ward, on the Wonder, putting down his glasses, named it the Kauri.

Grief, just on deck from below, sighed regretfully.

"If it had only been the Willi-Waw" he said.

"You do hate to be beaten," Denby, the supercargo, remarked sympathetically.

"I certainly do." Grief paused and laughed with genuine mirth. "It's my firm conviction that Griffiths is a rogue, and that he treated me quite scurvily yesterday. 'Sign,' he says, 'sign in full, at the bottom, and date it,' And Jacobsen, the little rat, stood in with him. It was rank piracy, the days of Bully Hayes all over again."

"If you weren't my employer, Mr. Grief, I'd like to give you a piece of my mind," Captain Ward broke in.

"Go on and spit it out," Grief encouraged.

"Well, then–" The captain hesitated and cleared his throat. "With all the money you've got, only a fool would take the risk you did with those two curs. What do you do it for?"

"Honestly, I don't know, Captain. I just want to, I suppose. And can you give any better reason for anything you do?"

"You'll get your bally head shot off some fine day," Captain Ward growled in answer, as he stepped to the binnacle and took the bearing of a peak which had just thrust its head through the clouds that covered Guadalcanar.

The land breeze strengthened in a last effort, and the Wonder, slipping swiftly through the water, ranged alongside the Kauri and began to go by. Greetings flew back and forth, then David Grief called out:

"Seen anything of the Willi-Waw?"

The captain, slouch-hatted and barelegged, with a rolling twist hitched the faded blue lava-lava tighter around his waist and spat tobacco juice overside.

"Sure," he answered. "Griffiths lay at Savo last night, taking on pigs and yams and filling his water-tanks. Looked like he was going for a long cruise, but he said no. Why? Did you want to see him?"

"Yes; but if you see him first don't tell him you've seen me."

The captain nodded and considered, and walked for'ard on his own deck to keep abreast of the faster vessel.

"Say!" he called. "Jacobsen told me they were coming down this afternoon to Gabera. Said they were going to lay there to-night and take on sweet potatoes."

"Gabera has the only leading lights in the Solomons," Grief said, when his schooner had drawn well ahead. "Is that right, Captain Ward?"

The captain nodded.

"And the little bight just around the point on this side, it's a rotten anchorage, isn't it?"

"No anchorage. All coral patches and shoals, and a bad surf. That's where the Molly went to pieces three years ago."

Grief stared straight before him with lustreless eyes for a full minute, as if summoning some vision to his inner sight. Then the corners of his eyes wrinkled and the ends of his yellow mustache lifted in a smile.

"We'll anchor at Gabera," he said. "And run in close to the little bight this side. I want you to drop me in a whaleboat as you go by. Also, give me six boys, and serve out rifles. I'll be back on board before morning."

The captain's face took on an expression of suspicion, which swiftly slid into one of reproach.

"Oh, just a little fun, skipper," Grief protested with the apologetic air of a schoolboy caught in mischief by an elder.

Captain Ward grunted, but Denby was all alertness.

"I'd like to go along, Mr. Grief," he said.

Grief nodded consent.

"Bring some axes and bush-knives," he said. "And, oh, by the way, a couple of bright lanterns. See they've got oil in them."

V

An hour before sunset the Wonder tore by the little bight. The wind had freshened, and a lively sea was beginning to make. The shoals toward the beach were already white with the churn of water, while those farther out as yet showed no more sign than of discoloured water. As the schooner went into the wind and backed her jib and staysail the whaleboat was swung out. Into it leaped six breech-clouted Santa Cruz boys, each armed with a rifle. Denby, carrying the lanterns, dropped into the stern-sheets. Grief, following, paused on the rail.

"Pray for a dark night, skipper," he pleaded.

"You'll get it," Captain Ward answered. "There's no moon anyway, and there won't be any sky. She'll be a bit squally, too."

The forecast sent a radiance into Grief's face, making more pronounced the golden tint of his sunburn. He leaped down beside the supercargo.

"Cast off!" Captain Ward ordered. "Draw the headsails! Put your wheel over! There! Steady! Take that course!"

The Wonder filled away and ran on around the point for Gabera, while the whaleboat, pulling six oars and steered by Grief, headed for the beach. With superb boatmanship he threaded the narrow, tortuous channel which no craft larger than a whaleboat could negotiate, until the shoals and patches showed seaward and they grounded on the quiet, rippling beach.

The next hour was filled with work. Moving about among the wild cocoanuts and jungle brush, Grief selected the trees.

"Chop this fella tree; chop that fella tree," he told his blacks. "No chop that other fella," he said, with a shake of head.

In the end, a wedge-shaped segment of jungle was cleared. Near to the beach remained one long palm. At the apex of the wedge stood another. Darkness was falling as the lanterns were lighted, carried up the two trees, and made fast.

"That outer lantern is too high." David Grief studied it critically. "Put it down about ten feet, Denby."

VI

The Willi-Waw was tearing through the water with a bone in her teeth, for the breath of the passing squall was still strong. The blacks were swinging up the big mainsail, which had been lowered on the run when the puff was at its height. Jacobsen, superintending the operation, ordered them to throw the halyards down on deck and stand by, then went for'ard on the lee-bow and joined Griffiths. Both men stared with wide-strained eyes at the blank wall of darkness through which they were flying, their ears tense for the sound of surf on the invisible shore. It was by this sound that they were for the moment steering.

The wind fell lighter, the scud of clouds thinned and broke, and in the dim glimmer of starlight loomed the jungle-clad coast. Ahead, and well on the lee-bow, appeared a jagged rock-point. Both men strained to it.

"Amboy Point," Griffiths announced. "Plenty of water close up. Take the wheel, Jacobsen, till we set a course. Get a move on!"

Running aft, barefooted and barelegged, the rainwater dripping from his scant clothing, the mate displaced the black at the wheel.

"How's she heading?" Griffiths called.

"South-a-half-west!"

"Let her come up south-by-west! Got it?"

"Right on it!"

Griffiths considered the changed relation of Amboy Point to the Willi-Waw's course.

"And a-half-west!" he cried.

"And a-half-west!" came the answer. "Right on it!"

"Steady! That'll do!"

"Steady she is!" Jacobsen turned the wheel over to the savage. "You steer good fella, savve?" he warned. "No good fella, I knock your damn black head off."

Again he went for'ard and joined the other, and again the cloud-scud thickened, the star-glimmer vanished, and the wind rose and screamed in another squall.

"Watch that mainsail!" Griffiths yelled in the mate's ear, at the same time studying the ketch's behaviour.

Over she pressed, and lee-rail under, while he measured the weight of the wind and quested its easement. The tepid sea-water, with here and there tiny globules of phosphorescence, washed about his ankles and knees. The wind screamed a higher note, and every shroud and stay sharply chorused an answer as the Willi-Waw pressed farther over and down.

"Down mainsail!" Griffiths yelled, springing to the peak-halyards, thrusting away the black who held on, and casting off the turn.

Jacobsen, at the throat-halyards, was performing the like office. The big sail rattled down, and the blacks, with shouts and yells, threw themselves on the battling canvas. The mate, finding one skulking in the darkness, flung his bunched knuckles into the creature's face and drove him to his work.

The squall held at its high pitch, and under her small canvas the Willi-Waw still foamed along. Again the two men stood for'ard and vainly watched in the horizontal drive of rain.

"We're all right," Griffiths said. "This rain won't last. We can hold this course till we pick up the lights. Anchor in thirteen fathoms. You'd better overhaul forty-five on a night like this. After that get the gaskets on the mainsail. We won't need it."

Half an hour afterward his weary eyes were rewarded by a glimpse of two lights.

"There they are, Jacobsen. I'll take the wheel. Run down the fore-staysail and stand by to let go. Make the niggers jump."

Aft, the spokes of the wheel in his hands, Griffiths held the course till the two lights came in line, when he abruptly altered and headed directly in for them. He heard the tumble and roar of the surf, but decided it was farther away–as it should be, at Gabera.

He heard the frightened cry of the mate, and was grinding the wheel down with all his might, when the Willi-Waw struck. At the same instant her mainmast crashed over the bow. Five wild minutes followed. All hands held on while the hull upheaved and smashed down on the brittle coral and the warm seas swept over them. Grinding and crunching, the Willi-Waw worked itself clear over the shoal patch and came solidly to rest in the comparatively smooth and shallow channel beyond.

Griffiths sat down on the edge of the cabin, head bowed on chest, in silent wrath and bitterness. Once he lifted his face to glare at the two white lights, one above the other and perfectly in line.

"There they are," he said. "And this isn't Gabera. Then what the hell is it?"

Though the surf still roared and across the shoal flung its spray and upper wash over them, the wind died down and the stars came out. Shoreward came the sound of oars.

"What have you had?–an earthquake?" Griffiths called out. "The bottom's all changed. I've anchored here a hundred times in thirteen fathoms. Is that you, Wilson?"

A whaleboat came alongside, and a man climbed over the rail. In the faint light Griffiths found an automatic Colt's thrust into his face, and, looking up, saw David Grief.

"No, you never anchored here before," Grief laughed. "Gabera's just around the point, where I'll be as soon as I've collected that little sum of twelve hundred pounds. We won't bother for the receipt. I've your note here, and I'll just return it."

"You did this!" Griffiths cried, springing to his feet in a sudden gust of rage. "You faked those leading lights! You've wrecked me, and by–"

"Steady! Steady!" Grief's voice was cool and menacing. "I'll trouble you for that twelve hundred, please."

To Griffiths, a vast impotence seemed to descend upon him. He was overwhelmed by a profound disgust–disgust for the sunlands and the sun-sickness, for the futility of all his endeavour, for this blue-eyed, golden-tinted, superior man who defeated him on all his ways.

"Jacobsen," he said, "will you open the cash-box and pay this–this bloodsucker–twelve hundred pounds?"

The Sun of the Wolf

MAN rarely places a proper valuation upon his womankind, at least not until deprived of them. He has no conception of the subtle atmosphere exhaled by the sex feminine, so long as he bathes in it; but let it be withdrawn, and an ever-growing void begins to manifest itself in his existence, and he becomes hungry, in a vague sort of way, for a something so indefinite that he cannot characterize it. If his comrades have no more experience than himself, they will shake their heads dubiously and dose him with strong physic. But the hunger will continue and become stronger; he will lose interest in the things of his everyday life and wax morbid; and one day, when the emptiness has become unbearable, a revelation will dawn upon him.

In the Yukon country, when this comes to pass, the man usually provisions a poling boat, if it is summer, and if winter, harnesses his dogs, and heads for the Southland. A few months later, supposing him to be possessed of a faith in the country, he returns with a wife to share with him in that faith, and incidentally in his hardships. This but serves to show the innate selfishness of man. It also brings us to the trouble of 'Scruff' Mackenzie, which occurred in the old days, before the country was stampeded and staked by a tidal-wave of the che-cha-quas, and when the Klondike's only claim to notice was its salmon fisheries.

'Scruff' Mackenzie bore the earmarks of a frontier birth and a frontier life. His face was stamped with twenty-five years of incessant struggle with Nature in her wildest moods,–the last two, the wildest and hardest of all, having been spent in groping for the gold which lies in the shadow of the Arctic Circle. When the yearning sickness came upon him, he was not surprised, for he was a practical man and had seen other men thus stricken. But he showed no sign of his malady, save that he worked harder. All summer he fought mosquitoes and washed the sure-thing bars of the Stuart River for a double grubstake. Then he floated a raft of houselogs down the Yukon to Forty Mile, and put together as comfortable a cabin as any the camp could boast of. In fact, it showed such cozy promise that many men elected to be his partner and to come and live with him. But he crushed their aspirations with rough speech, peculiar for its strength and brevity, and bought a double supply of grub from the trading-post.

As has been noted, 'Scruff' Mackenzie was a practical man. If he wanted a thing he usually got it, but in doing so, went no farther out of his way than was necessary. Though a son of toil and hardship, he was averse to a journey of six hundred miles on the ice, a second of two thousand miles on the ocean, and still a third thousand miles or so to his last stamping-grounds,–all in the mere quest of a wife. Life was too short.

So he rounded up his dogs, lashed a curious freight to his sled, and faced across the divide whose westward slopes were drained by the head-reaches of the Tanana.

He was a sturdy traveler, and his wolf-dogs could work harder and travel farther on less grub than any other team in the Yukon. Three weeks later he strode into a hunting-camp of the Upper Tanana Sticks. They marveled at his temerity; for they had a bad name and had been known to kill white men for as trifling a thing as a sharp ax or a broken rifle. But he went among them single-handed, his bearing being a delicious composite of humility, familiarity, sang-froid, and insolence. It required a deft hand and deep knowledge of the barbaric mind effectually to handle such diverse weapons; but he was a past-master in the art, knowing when to conciliate and when to threaten with Jove-like wrath.

He first made obeisance to the Chief Thling-Tinneh, presenting him with a couple of pounds of black tea and tobacco, and thereby winning his most cordial regard. Then he mingled with the men and maidens, and that night gave a potlach. The snow was beaten down in the form of an oblong, perhaps a hundred feet in length and quarter as many across. Down the center a long fire was built, while either side was carpeted with spruce boughs. The lodges were forsaken, and the fivescore or so members of the tribe gave tongue to their folk-chants in honor of their guest.

'Scruff' Mackenzie's two years had taught him the not many hundred words of their vocabulary, and he had likewise conquered their deep gutturals, their Japanese idioms, constructions, and honorific and agglutinative particles. So he made oration after their manner, satisfying their instinctive poetry-love with crude flights of eloquence and metaphorical contortions. After Thling-Tinneh and the Shaman had responded in kind, he made trifling presents to the menfolk, joined in their singing, and proved an expert in their fifty-two-stick gambling game.

And they smoked his tobacco and were pleased. But among the younger men there was a defiant attitude, a spirit of braggadocio, easily understood by the raw insinuations of the toothless squaws and the giggling of the maidens. They had known few white men, 'Sons of the Wolf,' but from those few they had learned strange lessons.

Nor had 'Scruff' Mackenzie, for all his seeming carelessness, failed to note these phenomena. In truth, rolled in his sleeping-furs, he thought it all over, thought seriously, and emptied many pipes in mapping out a campaign. One maiden only had caught his fancy,–none other than Zarinska, daughter to the chief. In features, form, and poise, answering more nearly to the white man's type of beauty, she was almost an anomaly among her tribal sisters. He would possess her, make her his wife, and name her–ah, he would name her Gertrude! Having thus decided, he rolled over on his side and dropped off to sleep, a true son of his all-conquering race, a Samson among the Philistines.

It was slow work and a stiff game; but 'Scruff' Mackenzie maneuvered cunningly, with an unconcern which served to puzzle the Sticks. He took great care to impress the men that he was a sure shot and a mighty hunter, and the camp rang with his plaudits when he brought down a moose at six hundred yards. Of a night he visited in Chief Thling-Tinneh's lodge of moose and cariboo skins, talking big and dispensing tobacco

with a lavish hand. Nor did he fail to likewise honor the Shaman; for he realized the medicine-man's influence with his people, and was anxious to make of him an ally. But that worthy was high and mighty, refused to be propitiated, and was unerringly marked down as a prospective enemy.

Though no opening presented for an interview with Zarinska, Mackenzie stole many a glance to her, giving fair warning of his intent. And well she knew, yet coquettishly surrounded herself with a ring of women whenever the men were away and he had a chance. But he was in no hurry; besides, he knew she could not help but think of him, and a few days of such thought would only better his suit.

At last, one night, when he deemed the time to be ripe, he abruptly left the chief's smoky dwelling and hastened to a neighboring lodge. As usual, she sat with squaws and maidens about her, all engaged in sewing moccasins and beadwork. They laughed at his entrance, and badinage, which linked Zarinska to him, ran high. But one after the other they were unceremoniously bundled into the outer snow, whence they hurried to spread the tale through all the camp.

His cause was well pleaded, in her tongue, for she did not know his, and at the end of two hours he rose to go.

'So Zarinska will come to the White Man's lodge? Good! I go now to have talk with thy father, for he may not be so minded. And I will give him many tokens; but he must not ask too much. If he say no? Good! Zarinska shall yet come to the White Man's lodge.'

He had already lifted the skin flap to depart, when a low exclamation brought him back to the girl's side. She brought herself to her knees on the bearskin mat, her face aglow with true Eve-light, and shyly unbuckled his heavy belt. He looked down, perplexed, suspicious, his ears alert for the slightest sound without. But her next move disarmed his doubt, and he smiled with pleasure. She took from her sewing bag a moosehide sheath, brave with bright beadwork, fantastically designed. She drew his great hunting-knife, gazed reverently along the keen edge, half tempted to try it with her thumb, and shot it into place in its new home. Then she slipped the sheath along the belt to its customary resting-place, just above the hip.

For all the world, it was like a scene of olden time,–a lady and her knight. Mackenzie drew her up full height and swept her red lips with his moustache,–the, to her, foreign caress of the Wolf. It was a meeting of the stone age and the steel; but she was none the less a woman, as her crimson cheeks and the luminous softness of her eyes attested.

There was a thrill of excitement in the air as 'Scruff' Mackenzie, a bulky bundle under his arm, threw open the flap of Thling-Tinneh's tent. Children were running about in the open, dragging dry wood to the scene of the potlach, a babble of women's voices was growing in intensity, the young men were consulting in sullen groups, while from the Shaman's lodge rose the eerie sounds of an incantation.

The chief was alone with his blear-eyed wife, but a glance sufficed to tell Mackenzie that the news was already told. So he plunged at once into the business, shifting the beaded sheath prominently to the fore as advertisement of the betrothal.

‘O Thling-Tinneh, mighty chief of the Sticks And the land of the Tanana, ruler of the salmon and the bear, the moose and the cariboo! The White Man is before thee with a great purpose. Many moons has his lodge been empty, and he is lonely. And his heart has eaten itself in silence, and grown hungry for a woman to sit beside him in his lodge, to meet him from the hunt with warm fire and good food. He has heard strange things, the patter of baby moccasins and the sound of children’s voices. And one night a vision came upon him, and he beheld the Raven, who is thy father, the great Raven, who is the father of all the Sticks. And the Raven spake to the lonely White Man, saying: “Bind thou thy moccasins upon thee, and gird thy snow-shoes on, and lash thy sled with food for many sleeps and fine tokens for the Chief Thling-Tinneh. For thou shalt turn thy face to where the midspring sun is wont to sink below the land and journey to this great chief’s hunting-grounds. There thou shalt make big presents, and Thling-Tinneh, who is my son, shall become to thee as a father. In his lodge there is a maiden into whom I breathed the breath of life for thee. This maiden shalt thou take to wife.”

‘O Chief, thus spake the great Raven; thus do I lay many presents at thy feet; thus am I come to take thy daughter!’

The old man drew his furs about him with crude consciousness of royalty, but delayed reply while a youngster crept in, delivered a quick message to appear before the council, and was gone.

‘O White Man, whom we have named Moose-Killer, also known as the Wolf, and the Son of the Wolf! We know thou comest of a mighty race; we are proud to have thee our potlach-guest; but the king-salmon does not mate with the dog-salmon, nor the Raven with the Wolf.’

‘Not so!’ cried Mackenzie. ‘The daughters of the Raven have I met in the camps of the Wolf,–the squaw of Mortimer, the squaw of Tregidgo, the squaw of Barnaby, who came two ice-runs back, and I have heard of other squaws, though my eyes beheld them not.’

‘Son, your words are true; but it were evil mating, like the water with the sand, like the snow-flake with the sun. But met you one Mason and his squaw’ No? He came ten ice-runs ago,–the first of all the Wolves. And with him there was a mighty man, straight as a willow-shoot, and tall; strong as the bald-faced grizzly, with a heart like the full summer moon; his — ’

‘Oh!’ interrupted Mackenzie, recognizing the well-known Northland figure, ‘Malemute Kid!’

‘The same,–a mighty man. But saw you aught of the squaw? She was full sister to Zarinska.’

‘Nay, Chief; but I have heard. Mason–far, far to the north, a spruce-tree, heavy with years, crushed out his life beneath. But his love was great, and he had much gold. With this, and her boy, she journeyed countless sleeps toward the winter’s noonday sun, and there she yet lives,–no biting frost, no snow, no summer’s midnight sun, no winter’s noonday night.’

A second messenger interrupted with imperative summons from the council. As Mackenzie threw him into the snow, he caught a glimpse of the swaying forms before the council-fire, heard the deep basses of the men in rhythmic chant, and knew the Shaman was fanning the anger of his people. Time pressed. He turned upon the chief.

'Come! I wish thy child. And now, see! Here are tobacco, tea, many cups of sugar, warm blankets, handkerchiefs, both good and large; and here, a true rifle, with many bullets and much powder.'

'Nay,' replied the old man, struggling against the great wealth spread before him. 'Even now are my people come together. They will not have this marriage.'

'But thou art chief.'

'Yet do my young men rage because the Wolves have taken their maidens so that they may not marry.'

'Listen, O Thling-Tinneh! Ere the night has passed into the day, the Wolf shall face his dogs to the Mountains of the East and fare forth to the Country of the Yukon. And Zarinska shall break trail for his dogs.'

'And ere the night has gained its middle, my young men may fling to the dogs the flesh of the Wolf, and his bones be scattered in the snow till the springtime lay them bare.'

It was threat and counter-threat. Mackenzie's bronzed face flushed darkly. He raised his voice. The old squaw, who till now had sat an impassive spectator, made to creep by him for the door. The song of the men broke suddenly and there was a hubbub of many voices as he whirled the old woman roughly to her couch of skins.

'Again I cry–listen, O Thling-Tinneh! The Wolf dies with teeth fast-locked, and with him there shall sleep ten of thy strongest men,-men who are needed, for the hunting is not begun, and the fishing is not many moons away. And again, of what profit should I die? I know the custom of thy people; thy share of my wealth shall be very small. Grant me thy child, and it shall all be thine. And yet again, my brothers will come, and they are many, and their maws are never filled; and the daughters of the Raven shall bear children in the lodges of the Wolf. My people are greater than thy people. It is destiny. Grant, and all this wealth is thine.'

Moccasins were crunching the snow without. Mackenzie threw his rifle to cock, and loosened the twin Colts in his belt.

'Grant, O Chief!'

'And yet will my people say no.'

'Grant, and the wealth is thine. Then shall I deal with thy people after.'

'The Wolf will have it so. I will take his tokens,–but I would warn him.'

Mackenzie passed over the goods, taking care to clog the rifle's ejector, and capping the bargain with a kaleidoscopic silk kerchief. The Shaman and half a dozen young braves entered, but he shouldered boldly among them and passed out.

'Pack!' was his laconic greeting to Zarinska as he passed her lodge and hurried to harness his dogs. A few minutes later he swept into the council at the head of the team, the woman by his side. He took his place at the upper end of the oblong, by

the side of the chief. To his left, a step to the rear, he stationed Zarinska,–her proper place. Besides, the time was ripe for mischief, and there was need to guard his back.

On either side, the men crouched to the fire, their voices lifted in a folk-chant out of the forgotten past. Full of strange, halting cadences and haunting recurrences, it was not beautiful. 'Fearful' may inadequately express it. At the lower end, under the eye of the Shaman, danced half a score of women. Stern were his reproofs of those who did not wholly abandon themselves to the ecstasy of the rite. Half hidden in their heavy masses of raven hair, all dishevelled and falling to their waists, they slowly swayed to and fro, their forms rippling to an ever-changing rhythm.

It was a weird scene; an anachronism. To the south, the nineteenth century was reeling off the few years of its last decade; here flourished man primeval, a shade removed from the prehistoric cave-dweller, forgotten fragment of the Elder World. The tawny wolf-dogs sat between their skin-clad masters or fought for room, the firelight cast backward from their red eyes and dripping fangs. The woods, in ghostly shroud, slept on unheeding. The White Silence, for the moment driven to the rimming forest, seemed ever crushing inward; the stars danced with great leaps, as is their wont in the time of the Great Cold; while the Spirits of the Pole trailed their robes of glory athwart the heavens.

'Scruff' Mackenzie dimly realized the wild grandeur of the setting as his eyes ranged down the fur-fringed sides in quest of missing faces. They rested for a moment on a newborn babe, suckling at its mother's naked breast. It was forty below,–seven and odd degrees of frost. He thought of the tender women of his own race and smiled grimly. Yet from the loins of some such tender woman had he sprung with a kingly inheritance,–an inheritance which gave to him and his dominance over the land and sea, over the animals and the peoples of all the zones. Single-handed against fivescore, girt by the Arctic winter, far from his own, he felt the prompting of his heritage, the desire to possess, the wild danger–love, the thrill of battle, the power to conquer or to die.

The singing and the dancing ceased, and the Shaman flared up in rude eloquence. Through the sinuosities of their vast mythology, he worked cunningly upon the credulity of his people. The case was strong. Opposing the creative principles as embodied in the Crow and the Raven, he stigmatized Mackenzie as the Wolf, the fighting and the destructive principle. Not only was the combat of these forces spiritual, but men fought, each to his totem. They were the children of Jelchs, the Raven, the Promethean fire-bringer; Mackenzie was the child of the Wolf, or in other words, the Devil. For them to bring a truce to this perpetual warfare, to marry their daughters to the arch-enemy, were treason and blasphemy of the highest order. No phrase was harsh nor figure vile enough in branding Mackenzie as a sneaking interloper and emissary of Satan. There was a subdued, savage roar in the deep chests of his listeners as he took the swing of his peroration.

'Aye, my brothers, Jelchs is all-powerful! Did he not bring heaven-borne fire that we might be warm? Did he not draw the sun, moon, and stars, from their holes that

we might see? Did he not teach us that we might fight the Spirits of Famine and of Frost? But now Jelchs is angry with his children, and they are grown to a handful, and he will not help. For they have forgotten him, and done evil things, and trod bad trails, and taken his enemies into their lodges to sit by their fires. And the Raven is sorrowful at the wickedness of his children; but when they shall rise up and show they have come back, he will come out of the darkness to aid them. O brothers! the Fire-Bringer has whispered messages to thy Shaman; the same shall ye hear. Let the young men take the young women to their lodges; let them fly at the throat of the Wolf; let them be undying in their enmity! Then shall their women become fruitful and they shall multiply into a mighty people! And the Raven shall lead great tribes of their fathers and their fathers' fathers from out of the North; and they shall beat back the Wolves till they are as last year's campfires; and they shall again come to rule over all the land! 'Tis the message of Jelchs, the Raven.'

This foreshadowing of the Messiah's coming brought a hoarse howl from the Sticks as they leaped to their feet. Mackenzie slipped the thumbs of his mittens and waited. There was a clamor for the 'Fox,' not to be stilled till one of the young men stepped forward to speak.

'Brothers! The Shaman has spoken wisely. The Wolves have taken our women, and our men are childless. We are grown to a handful. The Wolves have taken our warm furs and given for them evil spirits which dwell in bottles, and clothes which come not from the beaver or the lynx, but are made from the grass. And they are not warm, and our men die of strange sicknesses. I, the Fox, have taken no woman to wife; and why? Twice have the maidens which pleased me gone to the camps of the Wolf. Even now have I laid by skins of the beaver, of the moose, of the cariboo, that I might win favor in the eyes of Thling-Tinneh, that I might marry Zarinska, his daughter. Even now are her snow-shoes bound to her feet, ready to break trail for the dogs of the Wolf. Nor do I speak for myself alone. As I have done, so has the Bear. He, too, had fain been the father of her children, and many skins has he cured thereto. I speak for all the young men who know not wives. The Wolves are ever hungry. Always do they take the choice meat at the killing. To the Ravens are left the leavings.

'There is Gugkla,' he cried, brutally pointing out one of the women, who was a cripple. 'Her legs are bent like the ribs of a birch canoe. She cannot gather wood nor carry the meat of the hunters. Did the Wolves choose her?'

'Ai! ai!' vociferated his tribesmen.

'There is Moyri, whose eyes are crossed by the Evil Spirit. Even the babes are affrighted when they gaze upon her, and it is said the bald-face gives her the trail. Was she chosen?'

Again the cruel applause rang out.

'And there sits Pischet. She does not hearken to my words. Never has she heard the cry of the chit-chat, the voice of her husband, the babble of her child. She lives in the White Silence. Cared the Wolves aught for her? No! Theirs is the choice of the kill; ours is the leavings.

‘Brothers, it shall not be! No more shall the Wolves slink among our campfires. The time is come.’

A great streamer of fire, the aurora borealis, purple, green, and yellow, shot across the zenith, bridging horizon to horizon. With head thrown back and arms extended, he swayed to his climax.

‘Behold! The spirits of our fathers have arisen and great deeds are afoot this night!’

He stepped back, and another young man somewhat diffidently came forward, pushed on by his comrades. He towered a full head above them, his broad chest defiantly bared to the frost. He swung tentatively from one foot to the other. Words halted upon his tongue, and he was ill at ease. His face was horrible to look upon, for it had at one time been half torn away by some terrific blow. At last he struck his breast with his clenched fist, drawing sound as from a drum, and his voice rumbled forth as does the surf from an ocean cavern.

‘I am the Bear,–the Silver-Tip and the Son of the Silver-Tip! When my voice was yet as a girl’s, I slew the lynx, the moose, and the cariboo; when it whistled like the wolverines from under a cache, I crossed the Mountains of the South and slew three of the White Rivers; when it became as the roar of the Chinook, I met the bald-faced grizzly, but gave no trail.’

At this he paused, his hand significantly sweeping across his hideous scars.

‘I am not as the Fox. My tongue is frozen like the river. I cannot make great talk. My words are few. The Fox says great deeds are afoot this night. Good! Talk flows from his tongue like the freshets of the spring, but he is chary of deeds. This night shall I do battle with the Wolf. I shall slay him, and Zarinska shall sit by my fire. The Bear has spoken.’

Though pandemonium raged about him, ‘Scruff’ Mackenzie held his ground. Aware how useless was the rifle at close quarters, he slipped both holsters to the fore, ready for action, and drew his mittens till his hands were barely shielded by the elbow gauntlets. He knew there was no hope in attack en masse, but true to his boast, was prepared to die with teeth fast-locked. But the Bear restrained his comrades, beating back the more impetuous with his terrible fist. As the tumult began to die away, Mackenzie shot a glance in the direction of Zarinska. It was a superb picture. She was leaning forward on her snow-shoes, lips apart and nostrils quivering, like a tigress about to spring. Her great black eyes were fixed upon her tribesmen, in fear and defiance. So extreme the tension, she had forgotten to breathe. With one hand pressed spasmodically against her breast and the other as tightly gripped about the dog-whip, she was as turned to stone. Even as he looked, relief came to her. Her muscles loosened; with a heavy sigh she settled back, giving him a look of more than love–of worship.

Thling-Tinneh was trying to speak, but his people drowned his voice. Then Mackenzie strode forward. The Fox opened his mouth to a piercing yell, but so savagely did Mackenzie whirl upon him that he shrank back, his larynx all agurgle with suppressed sound. His discomfiture was greeted with roars of laughter, and served to soothe his fellows to a listening mood.

'Brothers! The White Man, whom ye have chosen to call the Wolf, came among you with fair words. He was not like the Innuit; he spoke not lies. He came as a friend, as one who would be a brother. But your men have had their say, and the time for soft words is past. First, I will tell you that the Shaman has an evil tongue and is a false prophet, that the messages he spake are not those of the Fire-Bringer. His ears are locked to the voice of the Raven, and out of his own head he weaves cunning fancies, and he has made fools of you. He has no power. When the dogs were killed and eaten, and your stomachs were heavy with untanned hide and strips of moccasins; when the old men died, and the old women died, and the babes at the dry dugs of the mothers died; when the land was dark, and ye perished as do the salmon in the fall; aye, when the famine was upon you, did the Shaman bring reward to your hunters? did the Shaman put meat in your bellies? Again I say, the Shaman is without power. Thus I spit upon his face!'

Though taken aback by the sacrilege, there was no uproar. Some of the women were even frightened, but among the men there was an uplifting, as though in preparation or anticipation of the miracle. All eyes were turned upon the two central figures. The priest realized the crucial moment, felt his power tottering, opened his mouth in denunciation, but fled backward before the truculent advance, upraised fist, and flashing eyes, of Mackenzie. He sneered and resumed.

Was I stricken dead? Did the lightning burn me? Did the stars fall from the sky and crush me? Pish! I have done with the dog. Now will I tell you of my people, who are the mightiest of all the peoples, who rule in all the lands. At first we hunt as I hunt, alone. After that we hunt in packs; and at last, like the cariboo-run, we sweep across all the land. Those whom we take into our lodges live; those who will not come die. Zarinska is a comely maiden, full and strong, fit to become the mother of Wolves. Though I die, such shall she become; for my brothers are many, and they will follow the scent of my dogs. Listen to the Law of the Wolf: Whoso taketh the life of one Wolf, the forfeit shall ten of his people pay. In many lands has the price been paid; in many lands shall it yet be paid.

'Now will I deal with the Fox and the Bear. It seems they have cast eyes upon the maiden. So? Behold, I have bought her! Thling-Tinneh leans upon the rifle; the goods of purchase are by his fire. Yet will I be fair to the young men. To the Fox, whose tongue is dry with many words, will I give of tobacco five long plugs. Thus will his mouth be wetted that he may make much noise in the council. But to the Bear, of whom I am well proud, will I give of blankets two; of flour, twenty cups; of tobacco, double that of the Fox; and if he fare with me over the Mountains of the East, then will I give him a rifle, mate to Thling-Tinneh's. If not? Good! The Wolf is weary of speech. Yet once again will he say the Law: Whoso taketh the life of one Wolf, the forfeit shall ten of his people pay.'

Mackenzie smiled as he stepped back to his old position, but at heart he was full of trouble. The night was yet dark. The girl came to his side, and he listened closely as she told of the Bear's battle-tricks with the knife.

The decision was for war. In a trice, scores of moccasins were widening the space of beaten snow by the fire. There was much chatter about the seeming defeat of the Shaman; some averred he had but withheld his power, while others conned past events and agreed with the Wolf. The Bear came to the center of the battle-ground, a long naked hunting-knife of Russian make in his hand. The Fox called attention to Mackenzie's revolvers; so he stripped his belt, buckling it about Zarinska, into whose hands he also entrusted his rifle. She shook her head that she could not shoot,–small chance had a woman to handle such precious things.

'Then, if danger come by my back, cry aloud, "My husband!" No; thus, "My husband!"'

He laughed as she repeated it, pinched her cheek, and reentered the circle. Not only in reach and stature had the Bear the advantage of him, but his blade was longer by a good two inches. 'Scruff' Mackenzie had looked into the eyes of men before, and he knew it was a man who stood against him; yet he quickened to the glint of light on the steel, to the dominant pulse of his race.

Time and again he was forced to the edge of the fire or the deep snow, and time and again, with the foot tactics of the pugilist, he worked back to the center. Not a voice was lifted in encouragement, while his antagonist was heartened with applause, suggestions, and warnings. But his teeth only shut the tighter as the knives clashed together, and he thrust or eluded with a coolness born of conscious strength. At first he felt compassion for his enemy; but this fled before the primal instinct of life, which in turn gave way to the lust of slaughter. The ten thousand years of culture fell from him, and he was a cave-dweller, doing battle for his female.

Twice he pricked the Bear, getting away unscathed; but the third time caught, and to save himself, free hands closed on fighting hands, and they came together. Then did he realize the tremendous strength of his opponent. His muscles were knotted in painful lumps, and cords and tendons threatened to snap with the strain; yet nearer and nearer came the Russian steel. He tried to break away, but only weakened himself. The fur-clad circle closed in, certain of and anxious to see the final stroke. But with wrestler's trick, swinging partly to the side, he struck at his adversary with his head. Involuntarily the Bear leaned back, disturbing his center of gravity. Simultaneous with this, Mackenzie tripped properly and threw his whole weight forward, hurling him clear through the circle into the deep snow. The Bear floundered out and came back full tilt.

'O my husband!' Zarinska's voice rang out, vibrant with danger.

To the twang of a bow-string, Mackenzie swept low to the ground, and a bone-barbed arrow passed over him into the breast of the Bear, whose momentum carried him over his crouching foe. The next instant Mackenzie was up and about. The bear lay motionless, but across the fire was the Shaman, drawing a second arrow.

Mackenzie's knife leaped short in the air. He caught the heavy blade by the point. There was a flash of light as it spanned the fire. Then the Shaman, the hilt alone appearing without his throat, swayed and pitched forward into the glowing embers.

Click! Click!–the Fox had possessed himself of Thling-Tinneh's rifle and was vainly trying to throw a shell into place. But he dropped it at the sound of Mackenzie's laughter.

'So the Fox has not learned the way of the plaything? He is yet a woman. Come! Bring it, that I may show thee!'

The Fox hesitated.

'Come, I say!'

He slouched forward like a beaten cur.

'Thus, and thus; so the thing is done.' A shell flew into place and the trigger was at cock as Mackenzie brought it to shoulder.

'The Fox has said great deeds were afoot this night, and he spoke true. There have been great deeds, yet least among them were those of the Fox. Is he still intent to take Zarinska to his lodge? Is he minded to tread the trail already broken by the Shaman and the Bear? No? Good!'

Mackenzie turned contemptuously and drew his knife from the priest's throat.

'Are any of the young men so minded? If so, the Wolf will take them by two and three till none are left. No? Good! Thling-Tinneh, I now give thee this rifle a second time. If, in the days to come, thou shouldst journey to the Country of the Yukon, know thou that there shall always be a place and much food by the fire of the Wolf. The night is now passing into the day. I go, but I may come again. And for the last time, remember the Law of the Wolf!'

He was supernatural in their sight as he rejoined Zarinska. She took her place at the head of the team, and the dogs swung into motion. A few moments later they were swallowed up by the ghostly forest. Till now Mackenzie had waited; he slipped into his snow-shoes to follow.

'Has the Wolf forgotten the five long plugs?'

Mackenzie turned upon the Fox angrily; then the humor of it struck him.

'I will give thee one short plug.'

'As the Wolf sees fit,' meekly responded the Fox, stretching out his hand.

South of the Slot

OLD San Francisco, which is the San Francisco of only the other day, the day before the Earthquake, was divided midway by the Slot. The Slot was an iron crack that ran along the center of Market street, and from the Slot arose the burr of the ceaseless, endless cable that was hitched at will to the cars it dragged up and down. In truth, there were two slots, but in the quick grammar of the West time was saved by calling them, and much more that they stood for, "The Slot." North of the Slot were the theaters, hotels, and shopping district, the banks and the staid, respectable business houses. South of the Slot were the factories, slums, laundries, machine-shops, boiler works, and the abodes of the working class.

The Slot was the metaphor that expressed the class cleavage of Society, and no man crossed this metaphor, back and forth, more successfully than Freddie Drummond. He made a practice of living in both worlds, and in both worlds he lived signally well. Freddie Drummond was a professor in the Sociology Department of the University of California, and it was as a professor of sociology that he first crossed over the Slot, lived for six months in the great labor-ghetto, and wrote "The Unskilled Laborer" — a book that was hailed everywhere as an able contribution to the literature of progress, and as a splendid reply to the literature of discontent. Politically and economically it was nothing if not orthodox. Presidents of great railway systems bought whole editions of it to give to their employees. The Manufacturers' Association alone distributed fifty thousand copies of it. In a way, it was almost as immoral as the far-famed and notorious "Message to Garcia," while in its pernicious preachment of thrift and content it ran "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch" a close second.

At first, Freddie Drummond found it monstrously difficult to get along among the working people. He was not used to their ways, and they certainly were not used to his. They were suspicious. He had no antecedents. He could talk of no previous jobs. His hands were soft. His extraordinary politeness was ominous. His first idea of the role he would play was that of a free and independent American who chose to work with his hands and no explanations given. But it wouldn't do, as he quickly discovered. At the beginning they accepted him, very provisionally, as a freak. A little later, as he began to know his way about better, he insensibly drifted into the role that would work — namely, he was a man who had seen better days, very much better days, but who was down in his luck, though, to be sure, only temporarily.

He learned many things, and generalized much and often erroneously, all of which can be found in the pages of "The Unskilled Laborer." He saved himself, however, after the sane and conservative manner of his kind, by labeling his generalizations as

"tentative." One of his first experiences was in the great Wilmax Cannery, where he was put on piece-work making small packing cases. A box factory supplied the parts, and all Freddie Drummond had to do was to fit the parts into a form and drive in the wire nails with a light hammer.

It was not skilled labor, but it was piece-work. The ordinary laborers in the cannery got a dollar and a half per day. Freddie Drummond found the other men on the same job with him jogging along and earning a dollar and seventy-five cents a day. By the third day he was able to earn the same. But he was ambitious. He did not care to jog along and, being unusually able and fit, on the fourth day earned two dollars. The next day, having keyed himself up to an exhausting high-tension, he earned two dollars and a half. His fellow workers favored him with scowls and black looks, and made remarks, slangily witty and which he did not understand, about sucking up to the boss and pace-making and holding her down when the rains set in. He was astonished at their malingering on piece-work, generalized about the inherent laziness of the unskilled laborer, and proceeded next day to hammer out three dollars' worth of boxes.

And that night, coming out of the cannery, he was interviewed by his fellow workmen, who were very angry and incoherently slangy. He failed to comprehend the motive behind their action. The action itself was strenuous. When he refused to ease down his pace and bleated about freedom of contract, independent Americanism, and the dignity of toil, they proceeded to spoil his pace-making ability. It was a fierce battle, for Drummond was a large man and an athlete, but the crowd finally jumped on his ribs, walked on his face, and stamped on his fingers, so that it was only after lying in bed for a week that he was able to get up and look for another job. All of which is duly narrated in that first book of his, in the chapter entitled "The Tyranny of Labor."

A little later, in another department of the Wilmax Cannery, lumping as a fruit-distributor among the women, he essayed to carry two boxes of fruit at a time, and was promptly reproached by the other fruit-lumpers. It was palpable malingering; but he was there, he decided, not to change conditions, but to observe. So he lumped one box thereafter, and so well did he study the art of shirking that he wrote a special chapter on it, with the last several paragraphs devoted to tentative generalizations.

In those six months he worked at many jobs and developed into a very good imitation of a genuine worker. He was a natural linguist, and he kept notebooks, making a scientific study of the workers' slang or argot, until he could talk quite intelligibly. This language also enabled him more intimately to follow their mental processes, and thereby to gather much data for a projected chapter in some future book which he planned to entitle "Synthesis of Working-Class Psychology."

Before he arose to the surface from that first plunge into the underworld he discovered that he was a good actor and demonstrated the plasticity of his nature. He was himself astonished at his own fluidity. Once having mastered the language and conquered numerous fastidious qualms, he found that he could flow into any nook of working-class life and fit it so snugly as to feel comfortably at home. As he said, in the preface to his second book, "The Toiler," he endeavored really to know the working

people, and the only possible way to achieve this was to work beside them, eat their food, sleep in their beds, be amused with their amusements, think their thoughts, and feel their feelings.

He was not a deep thinker. He had no faith in new theories. All his norms and criteria were conventional. His Thesis, on the French Revolution, was noteworthy in college annals, not merely for its painstaking and voluminous accuracy, but for the fact that it was the dryest, deadest, most formal, and most orthodox screed ever written on the subject. He was a very reserved man, and his natural inhibition was large in quantity and steel-like in quality. He had but few friends. He was too undemonstrative, too frigid. He had no vices, nor had anyone ever discovered any temptations. Tobacco he detested, beer he abhorred, and he was never known to drink anything stronger than an occasional light wine at dinner.

When a freshman he had been baptized "Ice-Box" by his warmer-blooded fellows. As a member of the faculty he was known as "Cold-Storage." He had but one grief, and that was "Freddie." He had earned it when he played full-back on the 'Varsity eleven', and his formal soul had never succeeded in living it down. "Freddie" he would ever be, except officially, and through nightmare vistas he looked into a future when his world would speak of him as "Old Freddie."

For he was very young to be a Doctor of Sociology, only twenty-seven, and he looked younger. In appearance and atmosphere he was a strapping big college man, smooth-faced and easy-mannered, clean and simple and wholesome, with a known record of being a splendid athlete and an implied vast possession of cold culture of the inhibited sort. He never talked shop out of class and committee rooms, except later on, when his books showered him with distasteful public notice and he yielded to the extent of reading occasional papers before certain literary and economic societies. He did everything right — too right; and in dress and comportment was inevitably correct. Not that he was a dandy. Far from it. He was a college man, in dress and carriage as like as a pea to the type that of late years is being so generously turned out of our institutions of higher learning. His handshake was satisfyingly strong and stiff. His blue eyes were coldly blue and convincingly sincere. His voice, firm and masculine, clean and crisp of enunciation, was pleasant to the ear. The one drawback to Freddie Drummond was his inhibition. He never unbent. In his football days, the higher the tension of the game, the cooler he grew. He was noted as a boxer, but he was regarded as an automaton, with the inhuman precision of a machine judging distance and timing blows, guarding, blocking, and stalling. He was rarely punished himself, while he rarely punished an opponent. He was too clever and too controlled to permit himself to put a pound more weight into a punch than he intended. With him it was a matter of exercise. It kept him fit.

As time went by, Freddie Drummond found himself more frequently crossing the Slot and losing himself in South of Market. His summer and winter holidays were spent there, and, whether it was a week or a week-end, he found the time spent there to be valuable and enjoyable. And there was so much material to be gathered. His third book,

“Mass and Master,” became a text-book in the American universities; and almost before he knew it, he was at work on a fourth one, “The Fallacy of the Inefficient.”

Somewhere in his make-up there was a strange twist or quirk. Perhaps it was a recoil from his environment and training, or from the tempered seed of his ancestors, who had been bookmen generation preceding generation; but at any rate, he found enjoyment in being down in the working-class world. In his own world he was “Cold-Storage,” but down below he was “Big” Bill Totts, who could drink and smoke, and slang and fight, and be an all-around favorite. Everybody liked Bill, and more than one working girl made love to him. At first he had been merely a good actor, but as time went on, simulation became second nature. He no longer played a part, and he loved sausages, sausages and bacon, than which, in his own proper sphere, there was nothing more loathsome in the way of food.

From doing the thing for the need’s sake, he came to doing the thing for the thing’s sake. He found himself regretting as the time drew near for him to go back to his lecture-room and his inhibition. And he often found himself waiting with anticipation for the dreamy time to pass when he could cross the Slot and cut loose and play the devil. He was not wicked, but as “Big” Bill Totts he did a myriad things that Freddie Drummond would never have been permitted to do. Moreover, Freddie Drummond never would have wanted to do them. That was the strangest part of his discovery. Freddie Drummond and Bill Totts were two totally different creatures. The desires and tastes and impulses of each ran counter to the other’s. Bill Totts could shirk at a job with clear conscience, while Freddie Drummond condemned shirking as vicious, criminal, and un-American, and devoted whole chapters to condemnation of the vice. Freddie Drummond did not care for dancing, but Bill Totts never missed the nights at the various dancing clubs, such as The Magnolia, The Western Star, and The Elite; while he won a massive silver cup, standing thirty inches high, for being the best-sustained character at the Butchers and Meat Workers’ annual grand masked ball. And Bill Totts liked the girls and the girls liked him, while Freddie Drummond enjoyed playing the ascetic in this particular, was open in his opposition to equal suffrage, and cynically bitter in his secret condemnation of coeducation.

Freddie Drummond changed his manners with his dress, and without effort. When he entered the obscure little room used for his transformation scenes, he carried himself just a bit too stiffly. He was too erect, his shoulders were an inch too far back, while his face was grave, almost harsh, and practically expressionless. But when he emerged in Bill Totts’s clothes he was another creature. Bill Totts did not slouch, but somehow his whole form limbered up and became graceful. The very sound of the voice was changed, and the laugh was loud and hearty, while loose speech and an occasional oath were as a matter of course on his lips. Also, Bill Totts was a trifle inclined to later hours, and at times, in saloons, to be good-naturedly bellicose with other workmen. Then, too, at Sunday picnics or when coming home from the show, either arm betrayed a practiced familiarity in stealing around girls’ waists, while he displayed a wit keen and delightful in the flirtatious badinage that was expected of a good fellow in his class.

So thoroughly was Bill Totts himself, so thoroughly a workman, a genuine denizen of South of the Slot, that he was as class-conscious as the average of his kind, and his hatred for a scab even exceeded that of the average loyal union man. During the Water Front Strike, Freddie Drummond was somehow able to stand apart from the unique combination, and, coldly critical, watch Bill Totts hilariously slug scab longshoremen. For Bill Totts was a dues-paying member of the Longshoremen Union and had a right to be indignant with the usurpers of his job. "Big" Bill Totts was so very big, and so very able, that it was "Big" Bill to the front when trouble was brewing. From acting outraged feelings, Freddie Drummond, in the role of his other self, came to experience genuine outrage, and it was only when he returned to the classic atmosphere of the university that he was able, sanely and conservatively, to generalize upon his underworld experiences and put them down on paper as a trained sociologist should. That Bill Totts lacked the perspective to raise him above class-consciousness, Freddie Drummond clearly saw. But Bill Totts could not see it. When he saw a scab taking his job away, he saw red at the same time, and little else did he see. It was Freddie Drummond, irreproachably clothed and comported, seated at his study desk or facing his class in "Sociology 17," who saw Bill Totts, and all around Bill Totts, and all around the whole scab and union-labor problem and its relation to the economic welfare of the United States in the struggle for the world market. Bill Totts really wasn't able to see beyond the next meal and the prize-fight the following night at the Gaiety Athletic Club.

It was while gathering material for "Women and Work" that Freddie received his first warning of the danger he was in. He was too successful at living in both worlds. This strange dualism he had developed was after all very unstable, and, as he sat in his study and meditated, he saw that it could not endure. It was really a transition stage, and if he persisted he saw that he would inevitably have to drop one world or the other. He could not continue in both. And as he looked at the row of volumes that graced the upper shelf of his revolving book-case, his volumes, beginning with his Thesis and ending with "Women and Work," he decided that that was the world he would hold to and stick by. Bill Totts had served his purpose, but he had become a too dangerous accomplice. Bill Totts would have to cease.

Freddie Drummond's fright was due to Mary Condon, President of the International Glove Workers' Union No. 974. He had seen her, first, from the spectators' gallery, at the annual convention of the Northwest Federation of Labor, and he had seen her through Bill Totts' eyes, and that individual had been most favorably impressed by her. She was not Freddie Drummond's sort at all. What if she were a royal-bodied woman, graceful and sinewy as a panther, with amazing black eyes that could fill with fire or laughter-love, as the mood might dictate? He detested women with a too exuberant vitality and a lack of . . . well, of inhibition. Freddie Drummond accepted the doctrine of evolution because it was quite universally accepted by college men, and he flatly believed that man had climbed up the ladder of life out of the weltering muck and mess of lower and monstrous organic things. But he was a trifle ashamed of this

genealogy, and preferred not to think of it. Wherefore, probably, he practiced his iron inhibition and preached it to others, and preferred women of his own type, who could shake free of this bestial and regrettable ancestral line and by discipline and control emphasize the wideness of the gulf that separated them from what their dim forbears had been.

Bill Totts had none of these considerations. He had liked Mary Condon from the moment his eyes first rested on her in the convention hall, and he had made it a point, then and there, to find out who she was. The next time he met her, and quite by accident, was when he was driving an express wagon for Pat Morrissey. It was in a lodging house in Mission Street, where he had been called to take a trunk into storage. The landlady's daughter had called him and led him to the little bedroom, the occupant of which, a glove-maker, had just been removed to hospital. But Bill did not know this. He stooped, up-ended the trunk, which was a large one, got it on his shoulder, and struggled to his feet with his back toward the open door. At that moment he heard a woman's voice.

"Belong to the union?" was the question asked.

"Aw, what's it to you?" he retorted. "Run along now, an' git outa my way. I wanta turn round."

The next he knew, big as he was, he was whirled half around and sent reeling backward, the trunk overbalancing him, till he fetched up with a crash against the wall. He started to swear, but at the same instant found himself looking into Mary Condon's flashing, angry eyes.

"Of course I b'long to the union," he said. "I was only kiddin' you."

"Where's your card?" she demanded in business-like tones.

"In my pocket. But I can't git it out now. This trunk's too damn heavy. Come on down to the wagon an' I'll show it to you."

"Put that trunk down," was the command.

"What for? I got a card, I'm tellin' you."

"Put it down, that's all. No scab's going to handle that trunk. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you big coward, scabbing on honest men. Why don't you join the union and be a man?"

Mary Condon's color had left her face, and it was apparent that she was in a rage.

"To think of a big man like you turning traitor to his class. I suppose you're aching to join the militia for a chance to shoot down union drivers the next strike. You may belong to the militia already, for that matter. You're the sort — "

"Hold on, now, that's too much!" Bill dropped the trunk to the floor with a bang, straightened up, and thrust his hand into his inside coat pocket. "I told you I was only kiddin'. There, look at that."

It was a union card properly enough.

"All right, take it along," Mary Condon said. "And the next time don't kid."

Her face relaxed as she noticed the ease with which he got the big trunk to his shoulder, and her eyes glowed as they glanced over the graceful massiveness of the man. But Bill did not see that. He was too busy with the trunk.

The next time he saw Mary Condon was during the Laundry Strike. The Laundry Workers, but recently organized, were green at the business, and had petitioned Mary Condon to engineer the strike. Freddie Drummond had had an inkling of what was coming, and had sent Bill Totts to join the union and investigate. Bill's job was in the wash-room, and the men had been called out first, that morning, in order to stiffen the courage of the girls; and Bill chanced to be near the door to the mangle-room when Mary Condon started to enter. The superintendent, who was both large and stout, barred her way. He wasn't going to have his girls called out, and he'd teach her a lesson to mind her own business. And as Mary tried to squeeze past him he thrust her back with a fat hand on her shoulder. She glanced around and saw Bill.

"Here you, Mr. Totts," she called. "Lend a hand. I want to get in."

Bill experienced a startle of warm surprise. She had remembered his name from his union card. The next moment the superintendent had been plucked from the doorway raving about rights under the law, and the girls were deserting their machines. During the rest of that short and successful strike, Bill constituted himself Mary Condon's henchman and messenger, and when it was over returned to the University to be Freddie Drummond and to wonder what Bill Totts could see in such a woman.

Freddie Drummond was entirely safe, but Bill had fallen in love. There was no getting away from the fact of it, and it was this fact that had given Freddie Drummond his warning. Well, he had done his work, and his adventures could cease. There was no need for him to cross the Slot again. All but the last three chapters of his latest, "Labor Tactics and Strategy," was finished, and he had sufficient material on hand adequately to supply those chapters.

Another conclusion he arrived at, was that in order to sheet-anchor himself as Freddie Drummond, closer ties and relations in his own social nook were necessary. It was time that he was married, anyway, and he was fully aware that if Freddie Drummond didn't get married, Bill Totts assuredly would, and the complications were too awful to contemplate. And so, enters Catherine Van Vorst. She was a college woman herself, and her father, the one wealthy member of the faculty, was the head of the Philosophy Department as well. It would be a wise marriage from every standpoint, Freddie Drummond concluded when the engagement was consummated and announced. In appearance cold and reserved, aristocratic and wholesomely conservative, Catherine Van Vorst, though warm in her way, possessed an inhibition equal to Drummond's.

All seemed well with him, but Freddie Drummond could not quite shake off the call of the underworld, the lure of the free and open, of the unhampered, irresponsible life South of the Slot. As the time of his marriage approached, he felt that he had indeed sowed wild oats, and he felt, moreover, what a good thing it would be if he could have but one wild fling more, play the good fellow and the wastrel one last time, ere he settled down to gray lecture-rooms and sober matrimony. And, further to tempt him,

the very last chapter of "Labor Tactics and Strategy" remained unwritten for lack of a trifle more of essential data which he had neglected to gather.

So Freddie Drummond went down for the last time as Bill Totts, got his data, and, unfortunately, encountered Mary Condon. Once more installed in his study, it was not a pleasant thing to look back upon. It made his warning doubly imperative. Bill Totts had behaved abominably. Not only had he met Mary Condon at the Central Labor Council, but he had stopped in at a chop-house with her, on the way home, and treated her to oysters. And before they parted at her door, his arms had been about her, and he had kissed her on the lips and kissed her repeatedly. And her last words in his ear, words uttered softly with a catchy sob in the throat that was nothing more nor less than a love cry, were "Bill . . . dear, dear Bill."

Freddie Drummond shuddered at the recollection. He saw the pit yawning for him. He was not by nature a polygamist, and he was appalled at the possibilities of the situation. It would have to be put an end to, and it would end in one only of two ways: either he must become wholly Bill Totts and be married to Mary Condon, or he must remain wholly Freddie Drummond and be married to Catherine Van Vorst. Otherwise, his conduct would be beneath contempt and horrible.

In the several months that followed, San Francisco was torn with labor strife. The unions and the employers' associations had locked horns with a determination that looked as if they intended to settle the matter, one way or the other, for all time. But Freddie Drummond corrected proofs, lectured classes, and did not budge. He devoted himself to Catherine Van Vorst, and day by day found more to respect and admire in her — nay, even to love in her. The Street Car Strike tempted him, but not so severely as he would have expected; and the great Meat Strike came on and left him cold. The ghost of Bill Totts had been successfully laid, and Freddie Drummond with rejuvenescent zeal tackled a brochure, long-planned, on the topic of "diminishing returns."

The wedding was two weeks off, when, one afternoon, in San Francisco, Catherine Van Vorst picked him up and whisked him away to see a Boys' Club, recently instituted by the settlement workers with whom she was interested. It was her brother's machine, but they were alone with the exception of the chauffeur. At the junction with Kearny Street, Market and Geary Streets intersect like the sides of a sharp-angled letter "V." They, in the auto, were coming down Market with the intention of negotiating the sharp apex and going up Geary. But they did not know what was coming down Geary, timed by fate to meet them at the apex. While aware from the papers that the Meat Strike was on and that it was an exceedingly bitter one, all thought of it at that moment was farthest from Freddie Drummond's mind. Was he not seated beside Catherine? And, besides, he was carefully expositing to her his views on settlement work — views that Bill Totts' adventures had played a part in formulating.

Coming down Geary Street were six meat wagons. Beside each scab driver sat a policeman. Front and rear, and along each side of this procession, marched a protecting escort of one hundred police. Behind the police rear guard, at a respectful distance,

was an orderly but vociferous mob, several blocks in length, that congested the street from sidewalk to sidewalk. The Beef Trust was making an effort to supply the hotels, and, incidentally, to begin the breaking of the strike. The St. Francis had already been supplied, at a cost of many broken windows and broken heads, and the expedition was marching to the relief of the Palace Hotel.

All unwitting, Drummond sat beside Catherine, talking settlement work, as the auto, honking methodically and dodging traffic, swung in a wide curve to get around the apex. A big coal wagon, loaded with lump coal and drawn by four huge horses, just debouching from Kearny Street as though to turn down Market, blocked their way. The driver of the wagon seemed undecided, and the chauffeur, running slow but disregarding some shouted warning from the crossing policemen, swerved the auto to the left, violating the traffic rules, in order to pass in front of the wagon.

At that moment Freddie Drummond discontinued his conversation. Nor did he resume it again, for the situation was developing with the rapidity of a transformation scene. He heard the roar of the mob at the rear, and caught a glimpse of the helmeted police and the lurching meat wagons. At the same moment, laying on his whip and standing up to his task, the coal driver rushed horses and wagon squarely in front of the advancing procession, pulled the horses up sharply, and put on the big brake. Then he made his lines fast to the brake-handle and sat down with the air of one who had stopped to stay. The auto had been brought to a stop, too, by his big panting leaders which had jammed against it.

Before the chauffeur could back clear, an old Irishman, driving a rickety express wagon and lashing his one horse to a gallop, had locked wheels with the auto. Drummond recognized both horse and wagon, for he had driven them often himself. The Irishman was Pat Morrissey. On the other side a brewery wagon was locking with the coal wagon, and an east-bound Kearny-Street car, wildly clanging its gong, the motorman shouting defiance at the crossing policeman, was dashing forward to complete the blockade. And wagon after wagon was locking and blocking and adding to the confusion. The meat wagons halted. The police were trapped. The roar at the rear increased as the mob came on to the attack, while the vanguard of the police charged the obstructing wagons.

"We're in for it," Drummond remarked coolly to Catherine.

"Yes," she nodded, with equal coolness. "What savages they are."

His admiration for her doubled on itself. She was indeed his sort. He would have been satisfied with her even if she had screamed and clung to him, but this — this was magnificent. She sat in that storm center as calmly as if it had been no more than a block of carriages at the opera.

The police were struggling to clear a passage. The driver of the coal wagon, a big man in shirt sleeves, lighted a pipe and sat smoking. He glanced down complacently at a captain of police who was raving and cursing at him, and his only acknowledgment was a shrug of the shoulders. From the rear arose the rat-tat-tat of clubs on heads and a pandemonium of cursing, yelling, and shouting. A violent accession of noise proclaimed

that the mob had broken through and was dragging a scab from a wagon. The police captain reinforced from his vanguard, and the mob at the rear was repelled. Meanwhile, window after window in the high office building on the right had been opened, and the class-conscious clerks were raining a shower of office furniture down on the heads of police and scabs. Waste-baskets, ink-bottles, paper-weights, typewriters — anything and everything that came to hand was filling the air.

A policeman, under orders from his captain, clambered to the lofty seat of the coal wagon to arrest the driver. And the driver, rising leisurely and peacefully to meet him, suddenly crumpled him in his arms and threw him down on top of the captain. The driver was a young giant, and when he climbed on top his load and poised a lump of coal in both hands, a policeman, who was just scaling the wagon from the side, let go and dropped back to earth. The captain ordered half a dozen of his men to take the wagon. The teamster, scrambling over the load from side to side, beat them down with huge lumps of coal.

The crowd on the sidewalks and the teamsters on the locked wagons roared encouragement and their own delight. The motorman, smashing helmets with his controller bar, was beaten into insensibility and dragged from his platform. The captain of police, beside himself at the repulse of his men, led the next assault on the coal wagon. A score of police were swarming up the tall-sided fortress. But the teamster multiplied himself. At times there were six or eight policemen rolling on the pavement and under the wagon. Engaged in repulsing an attack on the rear end of his fortress, the teamster turned about to see the captain just in the act of stepping on to the seat from the front end. He was still in the air and in most unstable equilibrium, when the teamster hurled a thirty-pound lump of coal. It caught the captain fairly on the chest, and he went over backward, striking on a wheeler's back, tumbling on to the ground, and jamming against the rear wheel of the auto.

Catherine thought he was dead, but he picked himself up and charged back. She reached out her gloved hand and patted the flank of the snorting, quivering horse. But Drummond did not notice the action. He had eyes for nothing save the battle of the coal wagon, while somewhere in his complicated psychology, one Bill Totts was heaving and straining in an effort to come to life. Drummond believed in law and order and the maintenance of the established, but this riotous savage within him would have none of it. Then, if ever, did Freddie Drummond call upon his iron inhibition to save him. But it is written that the house divided against itself must fall. And Freddie Drummond found that he had divided all the will and force of him with Bill Totts, and between them the entity that constituted the pair of them was being wrenched in twain.

Freddie Drummond sat in the auto, quite composed, alongside Catherine Van Vorst; but looking out of Freddie Drummond's eyes was Bill Totts, and somewhere behind those eyes, battling for the control of their mutual body, were Freddie Drummond, the sane and conservative sociologist, and Bill Totts, the class-conscious and bellicose union workingman. It was Bill Totts, looking out of those eyes, who saw the inevitable end of the battle on the coal wagon. He saw a policeman gain the top of the load, a

second, and a third. They lurched clumsily on the loose footing, but their long riot-clubs were out and winging. One blow caught the teamster on the head. A second he dodged, receiving it on the shoulder. For him the game was plainly up. He dashed in suddenly, clutched two policemen in his arms, and hurled himself a prisoner to the pavement, his hold never relaxing on his two captors.

Catherine Van Vorst was sick and faint at sight of the blood and brutal fighting. But her qualms were vanquished by the sensational and most unexpected happening that followed. The man beside her emitted an unearthly and uncultured yell and rose to his feet. She saw him spring over the front seat, leap to the broad rump of the wheeler, and from there gain the wagon. His onslaught was like a whirlwind. Before the bewildered officer on top the load could guess the errand of this conventionally clad but excited-seeming gentleman, he was the recipient of a punch that arched him back through the air to the pavement. A kick in the face led an ascending policeman to follow his example. A rush of three more gained the top and locked with Bill Totts in a gigantic clinch, during which his scalp was opened up by a club, and coat, vest, and half his starched shirt were torn from him. But the three policemen were flung wide and far, and Bill Totts, raining down lumps of coal, held the fort.

The captain led gallantly to the attack, but was bowled over by a chunk of coal that burst on his head in black baptism. The need of the police was to break the blockade in front before the mob could break in at the rear, and Bill Totts' need was to hold the wagon till the mob did break through. So the battle of the coal went on.

The crowd had recognized its champion. "Big" Bill, as usual, had come to the front, and Catherine Van Vorst was bewildered by the cries of "Bill! O you Bill!" that arose on every hand. Pat Morrissey, on his wagon seat, was jumping and screaming in an ecstasy, "Eat 'em, Bill! Eat 'em! Eat 'em alive!" From the sidewalk she heard a woman's voice cry out, "Look out, Bill — front end!" Bill took the warning and with well-directed coal cleaned the front end of the wagon of assailants. Catherine Van Vorst turned her head and saw on the curb of the sidewalk a woman with vivid coloring and flashing black eyes who was staring with all her soul at the man who had been Freddie Drummond a few minutes before.

The windows of the office building became vociferous with applause. A fresh shower of office chairs and filing cabinets descended. The mob had broken through on one side the line of wagons, and was advancing, each segregated policeman the center of a fighting group. The scabs were torn from their seats, the traces of the horses cut, and the frightened animals put in flight. Many policemen crawled under the coal wagon for safety, while the loose horses, with here and there a policeman on their backs or struggling at their heads to hold them, surged across the sidewalk opposite the jam and broke into Market Street.

Catherine Van Vorst heard the woman's voice calling in warning. She was back on the curb again, and crying out:

"Beat it, Bill! Now's your time! Beat it!"

The police for the moment had been swept away. Bill Totts leaped to the pavement and made his way to the woman on the sidewalk. Catherine Van Vorst saw her throw her arms around him and kiss him on the lips; and Catherine Van Vorst watched him curiously as he went on down the sidewalk, one arm around the woman, both talking and laughing, and he with a volubility and abandon she could never have dreamed possible.

The police were back again and clearing the jam while waiting for reinforcements and new drivers and horses. The mob had done its work and was scattering, and Catherine Van Vorst, still watching, could see the man she had known as Freddie Drummond. He towered a head above the crowd. His arm was still about the woman. And she in the motorcar, watching, saw the pair cross Market Street, cross the Slot, and disappear down Third Street into the labor ghetto.

The Stampede to Squaw Creek.

Two months after Smoke Bellew and Shorty went after moose for a grub-stake, they were back in the Elkhorn saloon at Dawson. The hunting was done, the meat hauled in and sold for two dollars and a half a pound, and between them they possessed three thousand dollars in gold dust and a good team of dogs. They had played in luck. Despite the fact that the gold-rush had driven the game a hundred miles or more into the mountains, they had, within half that distance, bagged four moose in a narrow canyon.

The mystery of the strayed animals was no greater than the luck of their killers, for within the day four famished Indian families, reporting no game in three days' journey back, camped beside them. Meat was traded for starving dogs, and after a week of feeding, Smoke and Shorty harnessed the animals and began freighting the meat to the eager Dawson market.

The problem of the two men now was to turn their gold-dust into food. The current price for flour and beans was a dollar and a half a pound, but the difficulty was to find a seller. Dawson was in the throes of famine. Hundreds of men, with money but no food, had been compelled to leave the country. Many had gone down the river on the last water, and many more, with barely enough food to last, had walked the six hundred miles over the ice to Dyea.

Smoke met Shorty in the warm saloon, and found the latter jubilant.

"Life ain't no punkins without whiskey an' sweetenin'," was Shorty's greeting, as he pulled lumps of ice from his thawing moustache and flung them rattling on the floor. "An' I sure just got eighteen pounds of that same sweetenin'. The geezer only charged three dollars a pound for it. What luck did you have?"

"I, too, have not been idle," Smoke answered with pride. "I bought fifty pounds of flour. And there's a man up on Adam Creek who says he'll let me have fifty pounds more to-morrow."

"Great! We'll sure live till the river opens. Say, Smoke, them dogs of ourn is the goods. A dog-buyer offered me two hundred apiece for the five of them. I told him nothin' doin'. They sure took on class when they got meat to get outside of; but it goes against the grain, feedin' dog-critters on grub that's worth two an' a half a pound. Come on an' have a drink. I just got to celebrate them eighteen pounds of sweetenin'."

Several minutes later, as he weighed in on the gold-scales for the drinks, he gave a start of recollection.

"I plum forgot that man I was to meet in the Tivoli. He's got some spoiled bacon he'll sell for a dollar an' a half a pound. We can feed it to the dogs an' save a dollar a day on each's board-bill. So long."

"So long," said Smoke. "I'm goin' to the cabin an' turn in."

Hardly had Shorty left the place, when a fur-clad man entered through the double storm-doors. His face lighted at sight of Smoke, who recognized him as Breck, the man whose boat they had run through the Box Canyon and White Horse Rapids.

"I heard you were in town," Breck said hurriedly, as they shook hands. "Been looking for you for half an hour. Come outside, I want to talk with you."

Smoke looked regretfully at the roaring, red-hot stove.

"Won't this do?"

"No; it's important. Come outside."

As they emerged, Smoke drew off one mitten, lighted a match, and glanced at the thermometer that hung beside the door. He remittened his naked hand hastily as if the frost had burned him. Overhead arched the flaming aurora borealis, while from all Dawson arose the mournful howling of thousands of wolf-dogs.

"What did it say?" Breck asked.

"Sixty below." Kit spat experimentally, and the spittle crackled in the air. "And the thermometer is certainly working. It's falling all the time. An hour ago it was only fifty-two. Don't tell me it's a stampede."

"It is," Breck whispered back cautiously, casting anxious eyes about in fear of some other listener. "You know Squaw Creek? — empties in on the other side of the Yukon thirty miles up?"

"Nothing doing there," was Smoke's judgment. "It was prospected years ago."

"So were all the other rich creeks. Listen! It's big. Only eight to twenty feet to bedrock. There won't be a claim that don't run to half a million. It's a dead secret. Two or three of my close friends let me in on it. I told my wife right away that I was going to find you before I started. Now, so long. My pack's hidden down the bank. In fact, when they told me, they made me promise not to pull out until Dawson was asleep. You know what it means if you're seen with a stampeding outfit. Get your partner and follow. You ought to stake fourth or fifth claim from Discovery. Don't forget — Squaw Creek. It's the third after you pass Swede Creek."

When Smoke entered the little cabin on the hillside back of Dawson, he heard a heavy familiar breathing.

"Aw, go to bed," Shorty mumbled, as Smoke shook his shoulder. "I'm not on the night shift," was his next remark, as the rousing hand became more vigorous. "Tell your troubles to the barkeeper."

"Kick into your clothes," Smoke said. "We've got to stake a couple of claims."

Shorty sat up and started to explode, but Smoke's hand covered his mouth.

"Ssh!" Smoke warned. "It's a big strike. Don't wake the neighborhood. Dawson's asleep."

"Huh! You got to show me. Nobody tells anybody about a strike, of course not. But ain't it plum amazin' the way everybody hits the trail just the same?"

"Squaw Creek," Smoke whispered. "It's right. Breck gave me the tip. Shallow bedrock. Gold from the grass-roots down. Come on. We'll sling a couple of light packs together and pull out."

Shorty's eyes closed as he lapsed back into sleep. The next moment his blankets were swept off him.

"If you don't want them, I do," Smoke explained.

Shorty followed the blankets and began to dress.

"Goin' to take the dogs?" he asked.

"No. The trail up the creek is sure to be unbroken, and we can make better time without them."

"Then I'll throw 'em a meal, which'll have to last 'em till we get back. Be sure you take some birch-bark and a candle."

Shorty opened the door, felt the bite of the cold, and shrank back to pull down his ear-flaps and mitten his hands.

Five minutes later he returned, sharply rubbing his nose.

"Smoke, I'm sure opposed to makin' this stampede. It's colder than the hinges of hell a thousand years before the first fire was lighted. Besides, it's Friday the thirteenth, an' we're goin' to trouble as the sparks fly upward."

With small stampeding-packs on their backs, they closed the door behind them and started down the hill. The display of the aurora borealis had ceased, and only the stars leaped in the great cold and by their uncertain light made traps for the feet. Shorty floundered off a turn of the trail into deep snow, and raised his voice in blessing of the date of the week and month and year.

"Can't you keep still?" Smoke chided. "Leave the almanac alone. You'll have all Dawson awake and after us."

"Huh! See the light in that cabin? An' in that one over there? An' hear that door slam? Oh, sure Dawson's asleep. Them lights? Just buryin' their dead. They ain't stampedin', betcher life they ain't."

By the time they reached the foot of the hill and were fairly in Dawson, lights were springing up in the cabins, doors were slamming, and from behind came the sound of many moccasins on the hard-packed snow. Again Shorty delivered himself.

"But it beats hell the amount of mourners there is."

They passed a man who stood by the path and was calling anxiously in a low voice: "Oh, Charley; get a move on."

"See that pack on his back, Smoke? The graveyard's sure a long ways off when the mourners got to pack their blankets."

By the time they reached the main street a hundred men were in line behind them, and while they sought in the deceptive starlight for the trail that dipped down the bank to the river, more men could be heard arriving. Shorty slipped and shot down

the thirty-foot chute into the soft snow. Smoke followed, knocking him over as he was rising to his feet.

"I found it first," he gurgled, taking off his mittens to shake the snow out of the gauntlets.

The next moment they were scrambling wildly out of the way of the hurtling bodies of those that followed. At the time of the freeze-up, a jam had occurred at this point, and cakes of ice were up-ended in snow-covered confusion. After several hard falls, Smoke drew out his candle and lighted it. Those in the rear hailed it with acclaim. In the windless air it burned easily, and he led the way more quickly.

"It's a sure stampede," Shorty decided. "Or might all them be sleep-walkers?"

"We're at the head of the procession at any rate," was Smoke's answer.

"Oh, I don't know. Mebbe that's a firefly ahead there. Mebbe they're all fireflies — that one, an' that one. Look at 'em! Believe me, they is a whole string of processions ahead."

It was a mile across the jams to the west bank of the Yukon, and candles flickered the full length of the twisting trail. Behind them, clear to the top of the bank they had descended, were more candles.

"Say, Smoke, this ain't no stampede. It's a exode-us. They must be a thousand men ahead of us an' ten thousand behind. Now, you listen to your uncle. My medicine's good. When I get a hunch it's sure right. An' we're in wrong on this stampede. Let's turn back an' hit the sleep."

"You'd better save your breath if you intend to keep up," Smoke retorted gruffly.

"Huh! My legs is short, but I slog along slack at the knees an' don't worry my muscles none, an' I can sure walk every piker here off the ice."

And Smoke knew he was right, for he had long since learned his comrade's phenomenal walking powers.

"I've been holding back to give you a chance," Smoke jeered.

"An' I'm plum troddin' on your heels. If you can't do better, let me go ahead and set pace."

Smoke quickened, and was soon at the rear of the nearest bunch of stampeders.

"Hike along, you, Smoke," the other urged. "Walk over them unburied dead. This ain't no funeral. Hit the frost like you was goin' somewheres."

Smoke counted eight men and two women in this party, and before the way across the jam-ice was won, he and Shorty had passed another party twenty strong. Within a few feet of the west bank, the trail swerved to the south, emerging from the jam upon smooth ice. The ice, however, was buried under several feet of fine snow. Through this the sled-trail ran, a narrow ribbon of packed footing barely two feet in width. On either side one sank to his knees and deeper in the snow. The stampeders they overtook were reluctant to give way, and often Smoke and Shorty had to plunge into the deep snow and by supreme efforts flounder past.

Shorty was irrepressible and pessimistic. When the stampeders resented being passed, he retorted in kind.

“What’s your hurry?” one of them asked.

“What’s yours?” he answered. “A stampede come down from Indian River yesterday afternoon an’ beat you to it. They ain’t no claims left.”

“That being so, I repeat, what’s your hurry?”

“WHO? Me? I ain’t no stampeder. I’m workin’ for the government. I’m on official business. I’m just traipsin’ along to take the census of Squaw Creek.”

To another, who hailed him with: “Where away, little one? Do you really expect to stake a claim?” Shorty answered:

“Me? I’m the discoverer of Squaw Creek. I’m just comin’ back from recordin’ so as to see no blamed chechako jumps my claim.”

The average pace of the stampeders on the smooth going was three miles and a half an hour. Smoke and Shorty were doing four and a half, though sometimes they broke into short runs and went faster.

“I’m going to travel your feet clean off, Shorty,” Smoke challenged.

“Huh! I can hike along on the stumps an’ wear the heels off your moccasins. Though it ain’t no use. I’ve been figgerin’. Creek claims is five hundred feet. Call ’em ten to the mile. They’s a thousand stampeders ahead of us, an’ that creek ain’t no hundred miles long. Somebody’s goin’ to get left, an’ it makes a noise like you an’ me.”

Before replying, Smoke let out an unexpected link that threw Shorty half a dozen feet in the rear. “If you saved your breath and kept up, we’d cut down a few of that thousand,” he chided.

“Who? Me? If you’d get outa the way I’d show you a pace what is.”

Smoke laughed, and let out another link. The whole aspect of the adventure had changed. Through his brain was running a phrase of the mad philosopher — ”the transvaluation of values.” In truth, he was less interested in staking a fortune than in beating Shorty. After all, he concluded, it wasn’t the reward of the game but the playing of it that counted. Mind, and muscle, and stamina, and soul, were challenged in a contest with this Shorty, a man who had never opened the books, and who did not know grand opera from rag-time, nor an epic from a chilblain.

“Shorty, I’ve got you skinned to death. I’ve reconstructed every cell in my body since I hit the beach at Dyea. My flesh is as stringy as whipcords, and as bitter and mean as the bite of a rattlesnake. A few months ago I’d have patted myself on the back to write such words, but I couldn’t have written them. I had to live them first, and now that I’m living them there’s no need to write them. I’m the real, bitter, stinging goods, and no scrub of a mountaineer can put anything over on me without getting it back compound. Now, you go ahead and set pace for half an hour. Do your worst, and when you’re all in I’ll go ahead and give you half an hour of the real worst.”

“Huh!” Shorty sneered genially. “An’ him not dry behind the ears yet. Get outa the way an’ let your father show you some goin’.”

Half-hour by half-hour they alternated in setting pace. Nor did they talk much. Their exertions kept them warm, though their breath froze on their faces from lips to chin. So intense was the cold that they almost continually rubbed their noses and

cheeks with their mittens. A few minutes' cessation from this allowed the flesh to grow numb, and then most vigorous rubbing was required to produce the burning prickle of returning circulation.

Often they thought they had reached the lead, but always they overtook more stampeders who had started before them. Occasionally, groups of men attempted to swing in behind to their pace, but invariably they were discouraged after a mile or two and disappeared in the darkness to the rear.

"We've been out on trail all winter," was Shorty's comment. "An' them geezers, soft from layin' around their cabins, has the nerve to think they can keep our stride. Now, if they was real sour-doughs it'd be different. If there's one thing a sour-dough can do it's sure walk."

Once, Smoke lighted a match and glanced at his watch. He never repeated it, for so quick was the bite of the frost on his bared hands that half an hour passed before they were again comfortable.

"Four o'clock," he said, as he pulled on his mittens, "and we've already passed three hundred."

"Three hundred and thirty-eight," Shorty corrected. "I been keepin' count. Get outa the way, stranger. Let somebody stampede that knows how to stampede."

The latter was addressed to a man, evidently exhausted, who could no more than stumble along and who blocked the trail. This, and one other, were the only played-out men they encountered, for they were very near to the head of the stampede. Nor did they learn till afterwards the horrors of that night. Exhausted men sat down to rest by the way and failed to get up again. Seven were frozen to death, while scores of amputations of toes, feet, and fingers were performed in the Dawson hospitals on the survivors. For the stampede to Squaw Creek occurred on the coldest night of the year. Before morning, the spirit thermometers at Dawson registered seventy degrees below zero. The men composing the stampede, with few exceptions, were new-comers in the country who did not know the way of the cold.

The other played-out man they found a few minutes later, revealed by a streamer of aurora borealis that shot like a searchlight from horizon to zenith. He was sitting on a piece of ice beside the trail.

"Hop along, sister Mary," Shorty gaily greeted him. "Keep movin'. If you sit there you'll freeze stiff."

The man made no response, and they stopped to investigate.

"Stiff as a poker," was Shorty's verdict. "If you tumbled him over he'd break."

"See if he's breathing," Smoke said, as, with bared hand, he sought through furs and woollens for the man's heart.

Shorty lifted one ear-flap and bent to the iced lips. "Nary breathe," he reported.

"Nor heart-beat," said Smoke.

He mittened his hand and beat it violently for a minute before exposing it to the frost to strike a match. It was an old man, incontestably dead. In the moment of illumination, they saw a long grey beard, massed with ice to the nose, cheeks that

were white with frost, and closed eyes with frost-rimmed lashes frozen together. Then the match went out.

"Come on," Shorty said, rubbing his ear. "We can't do nothin' for the old geezer. An' I've sure frosted my ear. Now all the blamed skin'll peel off, and it'll be sore for a week."

A few minutes later, when a flaming ribbon spilled pulsating fire over the heavens, they saw on the ice a quarter of a mile ahead two forms. Beyond, for a mile, nothing moved.

"They're leading the procession," Smoke said, as darkness fell again. "Come on, let's get them."

At the end of half an hour, not yet having overtaken the two in front, Shorty broke into a run.

"If we catch 'em we'll never pass 'em," he panted. "Lord, what a pace they're hittin'. Dollars to doughnuts they're no chechakos. They're the real sour-dough variety, you can stack on that."

Smoke was leading when they finally caught up, and he was glad to ease to a walk at their heels. Almost immediately he got the impression that the one nearer him was a woman. How this impression came, he could not tell. Hooded and furred, the dark form was as any form; yet there was a haunting sense of familiarity about it. He waited for the next flame of the aurora, and by its light saw the smallness of the moccasined feet. But he saw more — the walk, and knew it for the unmistakable walk he had once resolved never to forget.

"She's a sure goer," Shorty confided hoarsely. "I'll bet it's an Indian."

"How do you do, Miss Gastell?" Smoke addressed her.

"How do you do," she answered, with a turn of the head and a quick glance. "It's too dark to see. Who are you?"

"Smoke."

She laughed in the frost, and he was certain it was the prettiest laughter he had ever heard. "And have you married and raised all those children you were telling me about?" Before he could retort, she went on. "How many chechakos are there behind?"

"Several thousand, I imagine. We passed over three hundred. And they weren't wasting any time."

"It's the old story," she said bitterly. "The new-comers get in on the rich creeks, and the old-timers, who dared and suffered and made this country, get nothing. Old-timers made this discovery on Squaw Creek — how it leaked out is the mystery — and they sent word up to all the old-timers on Sea Lion. But it's ten miles farther than Dawson, and when they arrive they'll find the creek staked to the skyline by the Dawson chechakos. It isn't right, it isn't fair, such perversity of luck."

"It is too bad," Smoke sympathized. "But I'm hanged if I know what you're going to do about it. First come, first served, you know."

“I wish I could do something,” she flashed back at him. “I’d like to see them all freeze on the trail, or have everything terrible happen to them, so long as the Sea Lion stampede arrived first.”

“You’ve certainly got it in for us hard,” he laughed.

“It isn’t that,” she said quickly. “Man by man, I know the crowd from Sea Lion, and they are men. They starved in this country in the old days, and they worked like giants to develop it. I went through the hard times on the Koyukuk with them when I was a little girl. And I was with them in the Birch Creek famine, and in the Forty Mile famine. They are heroes, and they deserve some reward, and yet here are thousands of green softlings who haven’t earned the right to stake anything, miles and miles ahead of them. And now, if you’ll forgive my tirade, I’ll save my breath, for I don’t know when you and all the rest may try to pass dad and me.”

No further talk passed between Joy and Smoke for an hour or so, though he noticed that for a time she and her father talked in low tones.

“I know ’em now,” Shorty told Smoke. “He’s old Louis Gastell, an’ the real goods. That must be his kid. He come into this country so long ago they ain’t nobody can recollect, an’ he brought the girl with him, she only a baby. Him an’ Beetles was tradin’ partners an’ they ran the first dinkey little steamboat up the Koyukuk.”

“I don’t think we’ll try to pass them,” Smoke said. “We’re at the head of the stampede, and there are only four of us.”

Shorty agreed, and another hour of silence followed, during which they swung steadily along. At seven o’clock, the blackness was broken by a last display of the aurora borealis, which showed to the west a broad opening between snow-clad mountains.

“Squaw Creek!” Joy exclaimed.

“Goin’ some,” Shorty exulted. “We oughtn’t to been there for another half hour to the least, accordin’ to my reckonin’. I must ‘a’ been spreadin’ my legs.”

It was at this point that the Dyea trail, baffled by ice-jams, swerved abruptly across the Yukon to the east bank. And here they must leave the hard-packed, main-travelled trail, mount the jams, and follow a dim trail, but slightly packed, that hovered the west bank.

Louis Gastell, leading, slipped in the darkness on the rough ice, and sat up, holding his ankle in both his hands. He struggled to his feet and went on, but at a slower pace and with a perceptible limp. After a few minutes he abruptly halted.

“It’s no use,” he said to his daughter. “I’ve sprained a tendon. You go ahead and stake for me as well as yourself.”

“Can’t we do something?” Smoke asked solicitously.

Louis Gastell shook his head. “She can stake two claims as well as one. I’ll crawl over to the bank, start a fire, and bandage my ankle. I’ll be all right. Go on, Joy. Stake ours above the Discovery claim; it’s richer higher up.”

“Here’s some birch bark,” Smoke said, dividing his supply equally. “We’ll take care of your daughter.”

Louis Gastell laughed harshly. "Thank you just the same," he said. "But she can take care of herself. Follow her and watch her."

"Do you mind if I lead?" she asked Smoke, as she headed on. "I know this country better than you."

"Lead on," Smoke answered gallantly, "though I agree with you it's a darned shame all us chechakos are going to beat that Sea Lion bunch to it. Isn't there some way to shake them?"

She shook her head. "We can't hide our trail, and they'll follow it like sheep."

After a quarter of a mile, she turned sharply to the west. Smoke noticed that they were going through unpacked snow, but neither he nor Shorty observed that the dim trail they had been on still led south. Had they witnessed the subsequent procedure of Louis Gastell, the history of the Klondike would have been written differently; for they would have seen that old-timer, no longer limping, running with his nose to the trail like a hound, following them. Also, they would have seen him trample and widen the turn to the fresh trail they had made to the west. And, finally, they would have seen him keep on the old dim trail that still led south.

A trail did run up the creek, but so slight was it that they continually lost it in the darkness. After a quarter of an hour, Joy Gastell was willing to drop into the rear and let the two men take turns in breaking a way through the snow. This slowness of the leaders enabled the whole stampede to catch up, and when daylight came, at nine o'clock, as far back as they could see was an unbroken line of men. Joy's dark eyes sparkled at the sight.

"How long since we started up the creek?" she asked.

"Fully two hours," Smoke answered.

"And two hours back make four," she laughed. "The stampede from Sea Lion is saved."

A faint suspicion crossed Smoke's mind, and he stopped and confronted her.

"I don't understand," he said.

"You don't? Then I'll tell you. This is Norway Creek. Squaw Creek is the next to the south."

Smoke was for the moment, speechless.

"You did it on purpose?" Shorty demanded.

"I did it to give the old-timers a chance." She laughed mockingly. The men grinned at each other and finally joined her. "I'd lay you across my knee an' give you a wallopin', if women folk wasn't so scarce in this country," Shorty assured her.

"Your father didn't sprain a tendon, but waited till we were out of sight and then went on?" Smoke asked.

She nodded.

"And you were the decoy?"

Again she nodded, and this time Smoke's laughter rang out clear and true. It was the spontaneous laughter of a frankly beaten man.

"Why don't you get angry with me?" she queried ruefully. "Or — or wallop me?"

"Well, we might as well be starting back," Shorty urged. "My feet's gettin' cold standin' here."

Smoke shook his head. "That would mean four hours lost. We must be eight miles up this creek now, and from the look ahead Norway is making a long swing south. We'll follow it, then cross over the divide somehow, and tap Squaw Creek somewhere above Discovery." He looked at Joy. "Won't you come along with us? I told your father we'd look after you."

"I — " She hesitated. "I think I shall, if you don't mind." She was looking straight at him, and her face was no longer defiant and mocking. "Really, Mr. Smoke, you make me almost sorry for what I have done. But somebody had to save the old-timers."

"It strikes me that stampeding is at best a sporting proposition."

"And it strikes me you two are very game about it," she went on, then added with the shadow of a sigh: "What a pity you are not old-timers!"

For two hours more they kept to the frozen creek-bed of Norway, then turned into a narrow and rugged tributary that flowed from the south. At midday they began the ascent of the divide itself. Behind them, looking down and back, they could see the long line of stampeders breaking up. Here and there, in scores of places, thin smoke-columns advertised the making of camps.

As for themselves, the going was hard. They wallowed through snow to their waists, and were compelled to stop every few yards to breathe. Shorty was the first to call a halt.

"We been hittin' the trail for over twelve hours," he said. "Smoke, I'm plum willin' to say I'm good an' tired. An' so are you. An' I'm free to shout that I can sure hang on to this here pasear like a starvin' Indian to a hunk of bear-meat. But this poor girl here can't keep her legs no time if she don't get something in her stomach. Here's where we build a fire. What d'ye say?"

So quickly, so deftly and methodically, did they go about making a temporary camp, that Joy, watching with jealous eyes, admitted to herself that the old-timers could not do it better. Spruce boughs, with a spread blanket on top, gave a foundation for rest and cooking operations. But they kept away from the heat of the fire until noses and cheeks had been rubbed cruelly.

Smoke spat in the air, and the resultant crackle was so immediate and loud that he shook his head. "I give it up," he said. "I've never seen cold like this."

"One winter on the Koyukuk it went to eighty-six below," Joy answered. "It's at least seventy or seventy-five right now, and I know I've frosted my cheeks. They're burning like fire."

On the steep slope of the divide there was no ice, so snow, as fine and hard and crystalline as granulated sugar, was poured into the gold-pan by the bushel until enough water was melted for the coffee. Smoke fried bacon and thawed biscuits. Shorty kept the fuel supplied and tended the fire, and Joy set the simple table composed of two plates, two cups, two spoons, a tin of mixed salt and pepper, and a tin of sugar. When

it came to eating, she and Smoke shared one set between them. They ate out of the same plate and drank from the same cup.

It was nearly two in the afternoon when they cleared the crest of the divide and began dropping down a feeder of Squaw Creek. Earlier in the winter some moose-hunter had made a trail up the canyon — that is, in going up and down he had stepped always in his previous tracks. As a result, in the midst of soft snow, and veiled under later snow falls, was a line of irregular hummocks. If one's foot missed a hummock, he plunged down through unpacked snow and usually to a fall. Also, the moose-hunter had been an exceptionally long-legged individual. Joy, who was eager now that the two men should stake, and fearing that they were slackening their pace on account of her evident weariness, insisted on taking her turn in the lead. The speed and manner in which she negotiated the precarious footing called out Shorty's unqualified approval.

"Look at her!" he cried. "She's the real goods an' the red meat. Look at them moccasins swing along. No high-heels there. She uses the legs God gave her. She's the right squaw for any bear-hunter."

She flashed back a smile of acknowledgment that included Smoke. He caught a feeling of chumminess, though at the same time he was bitingly aware that it was very much of a woman who embraced him in that comradely smile.

Looking back, as they came to the bank of Squaw Creek, they could see the stampede, strung out irregularly, struggling along the descent of the divide.

They slipped down the bank to the creek bed. The stream, frozen solidly to bottom, was from twenty to thirty feet wide and ran between six-and eight-foot earth banks of alluvial wash. No recent feet had disturbed the snow that lay upon its ice, and they knew they were above the Discovery claim and the last stakes of the Sea Lion stampeders.

"Look out for springs," Joy warned, as Smoke led the way down the creek. "At seventy below you'll lose your feet if you break through."

These springs, common to most Klondike streams, never cease at the lowest temperatures. The water flows out from the banks and lies in pools which are cuddled from the cold by later surface-freezings and snow falls. Thus, a man, stepping on dry snow, might break through half an inch of ice-skin and find himself up to the knees in water. In five minutes, unless able to remove the wet gear, the loss of one's foot was the penalty.

Though only three in the afternoon, the long grey twilight of the Arctic had settled down. They watched for a blazed tree on either bank, which would show the center-stake of the last claim located. Joy, impulsively eager, was the first to find it. She darted ahead of Smoke, crying: "Somebody's been here! See the snow! Look for the blaze! There it is! See that spruce!"

She sank suddenly to her waist in the snow.

"Now I've done it," she said woefully. Then she cried: "Don't come near me! I'll wade out."

Step by step, each time breaking through the thin skin of ice concealed under the dry snow, she forced her way to solid footing. Smoke did not wait, but sprang to the bank, where dry and seasoned twigs and sticks, lodged amongst the brush by spring freshets, waited the match. By the time she reached his side, the first flames and flickers of an assured fire were rising.

"Sit down!" he commanded.

She obediently sat down in the snow. He slipped his pack from his back, and spread a blanket for her feet.

From above came the voices of the stampeders who followed them.

"Let Shorty stake," she urged.

"Go on, Shorty," Smoke said, as he attacked her moccasins, already stiff with ice. "Pace off a thousand feet and place the two center-stakes. We can fix the corner-stakes afterwards."

With his knife Smoke cut away the lacings and leather of the moccasins. So stiff were they with ice that they snapped and crackled under the hacking and sawing. The Siwash socks and heavy woollen stockings were sheaths of ice. It was as if her feet and calves were encased in corrugated iron.

"How are your feet?" he asked, as he worked.

"Pretty numb. I can't move nor feel my toes. But it will be all right. The fire is burning beautifully. Watch out you don't freeze your own hands. They must be numb now from the way you're fumbling."

He slipped his mittens on, and for nearly a minute smashed the open hands savagely against his sides. When he felt the blood-prickles, he pulled off the mittens and ripped and tore and sawed and hacked at the frozen garments. The white skin of one foot appeared, then that of the other, to be exposed to the bite of seventy below zero, which is the equivalent of one hundred and two below freezing.

Then came the rubbing with snow, carried on with an intensity of cruel fierceness, till she squirmed and shrank and moved her toes, and joyously complained of the hurt.

He half-dragged her, and she half-lifted herself, nearer to the fire. He placed her feet on the blanket close to the flesh-saving flames.

"You'll have to take care of them for a while," he said.

She could now safely remove her mittens and manipulate her own feet, with the wisdom of the initiated, being watchful that the heat of the fire was absorbed slowly. While she did this, he attacked his hands. The snow did not melt nor moisten. Its light crystals were like so much sand. Slowly the stings and pangs of circulation came back into the chilled flesh. Then he tended the fire, unstrapped the light pack from her back, and got out a complete change of foot-gear.

Shorty returned along the creek bed and climbed the bank to them. "I sure staked a full thousan' feet," he proclaimed. "Number twenty-seven an' number twenty-eight, though I'd only got the upper stake of twenty-seven, when I met the first geezer of the bunch behind. He just straight declared I wasn't goin' to stake twenty-eight. An' I told him — "

"Yes, yes," Joy cried. "What did you tell him?"

"Well, I told him straight that if he didn't back up plum five hundred feet I'd sure punch his frozen nose into ice-cream an' chocolate eclaires. He backed up, an' I've got in the center-stakes of two full an' honest five-hundred-foot creek claims. He staked next, and I guess by now the bunch has Squaw Creek located to head-waters an' down the other side. Ourn is safe. It's too dark to see now, but we can put out the corner-stakes in the mornin'."

When they awoke, they found a change had taken place during the night. So warm was it, that Shorty and Smoke, still in their mutual blankets, estimated the temperature at no more than twenty below. The cold snap had broken. On top of their blankets lay six inches of frost crystals.

"Good morning! how are your feet?" was Smoke's greeting across the ashes of the fire to where Joy Gastell, carefully shaking aside the snow, was sitting up in her sleeping-furs.

Shorty built the fire and quarried ice from the creek, while Smoke cooked breakfast. Daylight came on as they finished the meal.

"You go an' fix them corner-stakes, Smoke," Shorty said. "There's gravel under where I chopped ice for the coffee, an' I'm goin' to melt water and wash a pan of that same gravel for luck."

Smoke departed, axe in hand, to blaze the stakes. Starting from the down-stream center-stake of 'twenty-seven,' he headed at right angles across the narrow valley towards its rim. He proceeded methodically, almost automatically, for his mind was alive with recollections of the night before. He felt, somehow, that he had won to empery over the delicate lines and firm muscles of those feet and ankles he had rubbed with snow, and this empery seemed to extend to the rest and all of this woman of his kind. In dim and fiery ways a feeling of possession mastered him. It seemed that all that was necessary was for him to walk up to this Joy Gastell, take her hand in his, and say "Come."

It was in this mood that he discovered something that made him forget empery over the white feet of woman. At the valley rim he blazed no corner-stake. He did not reach the valley rim, but, instead, he found himself confronted by another stream. He lined up with his eye a blasted willow tree and a big and recognizable spruce. He returned to the stream where were the center-stakes. He followed the bed of the creek around a wide horseshoe bend through the flat and found that the two creeks were the same creek. Next, he floundered twice through the snow from valley rim to valley rim, running the first line from the lower stake of 'twenty-seven,' the second from the upper stake of 'twenty-eight,' and he found that THE UPPER STAKE OF THE LATTER WAS LOWER THAN THE LOWER STAKE OF THE FORMER. In the gray twilight and half-darkness Shorty had located their two claims on the horseshoe.

Smoke plodded back to the little camp. Shorty, at the end of washing a pan of gravel, exploded at sight of him.

"We got it!" Shorty cried, holding out the pan. "Look at it! A nasty mess of gold. Two hundred right there if it's a cent. She runs rich from the top of the wash-gravel. I've churned around placers some, but I never got butter like what's in this pan."

Smoke cast an incurious glance at the coarse gold, poured himself a cup of coffee at the fire, and sat down. Joy sensed something wrong and looked at him with eagerly solicitous eyes. Shorty, however, was disgruntled by his partner's lack of delight in the discovery.

"Why don't you kick in an' get excited?" he demanded. "We got our pile right here, unless you're stickin' up your nose at two-hundred-dollar pans."

Smoke took a swallow of coffee before replying. "Shorty, why are our two claims here like the Panama Canal?"

"What's the answer?"

"Well, the eastern entrance of the Panama Canal is west of the western entrance, that's all."

"Go on," Shorty said. "I ain't seen the joke yet."

"In short, Shorty, you staked our two claims on a big horseshoe bend."

Shorty set the gold pan down in the snow and stood up. "Go on," he repeated.

"The upper stake of 'twenty-eight' is ten feet below the lower stake of 'twenty-seven.'"

"You mean we ain't got nothin', Smoke?"

"Worse than that; we've got ten feet less than nothing."

Shorty departed down the bank on the run. Five minutes later he returned. In response to Joy's look, he nodded. Without speech, he went over to a log and sat down to gaze steadily at the snow in front of his moccasins.

"We might as well break camp and start back for Dawson," Smoke said, beginning to fold the blankets.

"I am sorry, Smoke," Joy said. "It's all my fault."

"It's all right," he answered. "All in the day's work, you know."

"But it's my fault, wholly mine," she persisted. "Dad's staked for me down near Discovery, I know. I'll give you my claim."

He shook his head.

"Shorty," she pleaded.

Shorty shook his head and began to laugh. It was a colossal laugh. Chuckles and muffled explosions yielded to hearty roars.

"It ain't hysterics," he explained. "I sure get powerful amused at times, an' this is one of them."

His gaze chanced to fall on the gold-pan. He walked over and gravely kicked it, scattering the gold over the landscape.

"It ain't ourn," he said. "It belongs to the geezer I backed up five hundred feet last night. An' what gets me is four hundred an' ninety of them feet was to the good — his good. Come on, Smoke. Let's start the hike to Dawson. Though if you're hankerin' to kill me I won't lift a finger to prevent."

Story of a Typhoon

OFF THE COAST OF JAPAN

This is the first article London wrote for publication, winning first prize in a contest for local authors run by the San Francisco Call.

It was four bells in the morning watch. We had just finished breakfast when the order came forward for the watch on deck to stand by to heave her to and all hands stand by the boats.

"Port! hard a port!" cried our sailing-master. "Clew up the topsails! Let the flying jib run down! Back the jib over to windward and run down the foresail!" And so was our schooner Sophie Sutherland hove to off the Japan coast, near Cape Jerimo, on April 10, 1893.

Then came moments of bustle and confusion. There were eighteen men to man the six boats. Some were hooking on the falls, others casting off the lashings; boat-steerers appeared with boat-compasses and water-breakers, and boat-pullers with the lunch boxes. Hunters were staggering under two or three shotguns, a rifle and heavy ammunition box, all of which were soon stowed away with their oilskins and mittens in the boats.

The sailing-master gave his last orders, and away we went, pulling three pairs of oars to gain our positions. We were in the weather boat, and so had a longer pull than the others. The first, second, and third lee boats soon had all sail set and were running off to the southward and westward with the wind beam, while the schooner was running off to leeward of them, so that in case of accident the boats would have fair wind home.

It was a glorious morning, but our boat-steerer shook his head ominously as he glanced at the rising sun and prophetically muttered: "Red sun in the morning, sailor take warning." The sun had an angry look, and a few light, fleecy "nigger-heads" in that quarter seemed abashed and frightened and soon disappeared.

Away off to the northward Cape Jerimo reared its black, forbidding head like some huge monster rising from the deep. The winter's snow, not yet entirely dissipated by the sun, covered it in patches of glistening white, over which the light wind swept on its way out to sea. Huge gulls rose slowly, fluttering their wings in the light breeze and striking their webbed feet on the surface of the water for over half a mile before they could leave it. Hardly had the patter, patter died away when a flock of sea quail rose, and with whistling wings flew away to windward, where members of a large band of whales were disporting themselves, their blowings sounding like the exhaust of steam engines. The harsh, discordant cries of a sea-parrot grated unpleasantly on the ear,

and set half a dozen alert in a small band of seals that were ahead of us. Away they went, breaching and jumping entirely out of water. A sea-gull with slow, deliberate flight and long, majestic curves circled round us, and as a reminder of home a little English sparrow perched impudently on the fo'castle head, and, cocking his head on one side, chirped merrily. The boats were soon among the seals, and the bang! bang! of the guns could be heard from down to leeward.

The wind was slowly rising, and by three o'clock as, with a dozen seals in our boat, we were deliberating whether to go on or turn back, the recall flag was run up at the schooner's mizzen–a sure sign that with the rising wind the barometer was falling and that our sailingmaster was getting anxious for the welfare of the boats.

Away we went before the wind with a single reef in our sail. With clenched teeth sat the boat-steerer, grasping the steering oar firmly with both hands, his restless eyes on the alert–a glance at the schooner ahead, as we rose on a sea, another at the mainsheet, and then one astern where the dark ripple of the wind on the water told him of a coming puff or a large white-cap that threatened to overwhelm us. The waves were holding high carnival, performing the strangest antics, as with wild glee they danced along in fierce pursuit-now up, now down, here, there, and everywhere, until some great sea of liquid green with its milk-white crest of foam rose from the ocean's throbbing bosom and drove the others from view. But only for a moment, for again under new forms they reappeared. In the sun's path they wandered, where every ripple, great or small, every little spit or spray looked like molten silver, where the water lost its dark green color and became a dazzling, silvery flood, only to vanish and become a wild waste of sullen turbulence, each dark foreboding sea rising and breaking, then rolling on again. The dash, the sparkle, the silvery light soon vanished with the sun, which became obscured by black clouds that were rolling swiftly in from the west, northwest; apt heralds of the coming storm.

We soon reached the schooner and found ourselves the last aboard. In a few minutes the seals were skinned, boats and decks washed, and we were down below by the roaring fo'castle fire, with a wash, change of clothes, and a hot, substantial supper before us. Sail had been put on the schooner, as we had a run of seventy-five miles to make to the southward before morning, so as to get in the midst of the seals, out of which we had strayed during the last two days' hunting.

We had the first watch from eight to midnight. The wind was soon blowing half a gale, and our sailing-master expected little sleep that night as he paced up and down the poop. The topsails were soon clewed up and made fast, then the flying jib run down and furled. Quite a sea was rolling by this time, occasionally breaking over the decks, flooding them and threatening to smash the boats. At six bells we were ordered to turn them over and put on storm lashings. This occupied us till eight bells, when we were relieved by the mid-watch. I was the last to go below, doing so just as the watch on deck was furling the spanker. Below all were asleep except our green hand, the "bricklayer," who was dying of consumption. The wildly dancing movements of the sea lamp cast a pale, flickering light through the fo'castle and turned to golden honey

the drops of water on the yellow oilskins. In all the corners dark shadows seemed to come and go, while up in the eyes of her, beyond the pall bits, descending from deck to deck, where they seemed to lurk like some dragon at the cavern's mouth, it was dark as Erebus. Now and again, the light seemed to penetrate for a moment as the schooner rolled heavier than usual, only to recede, leaving it darker and blacker than before. The roar of the wind through the rigging came to the ear muffled like the distant rumble of a train crossing a trestle or the surf on the beach, while the loud crash of the seas on her weather bow seemed almost to rend the beams and planking asunder as it resounded through the fo'castle. The creaking and groaning of the timbers, stanchions, and bulkheads, as the strain the vessel was undergoing was felt, served to drown the groans of the dying man as he tossed uneasily in his bunk. The working of the foremast against the deck beams caused a shower of flaky powder to fall, and sent another sound mingling with the tumultous storm. Small cascades of water streamed from the pall bits from the fo'castle head above, and, joining issue with the streams from the wet oilskins, ran along the floor and disappeared aft into the main hold.

At two bells in the middle watch-that is, in land parlance one o'clock in the morning-the order was roared out on the fo'castle: "All hands on deck and shorten sail!"

Then the sleepy sailors tumbled out of their bunk and into their clothes, oil-skins, and sea-boots and up on deck. 'Tis when that order comes on cold, blustering nights that "Jack" grimly mutters: "Who would not sell a farm and go to sea?"

It was on deck that the force of the wind could be fully appreciated, especially after leaving the stifling fo'castle. It seemed to stand up against you like a wall, making it almost impossible to move on the heaving decks or to breathe as the fierce gusts came dashing by. The schooner was hove to under jib, foresail, and mainsail. We proceeded to lower the foresail and make it fast. The night was dark, greatly impeding our labor. Still, though not a star or the moon could pierce the black masses of storm clouds that obscured the sky as they swept along before the gale, nature aided us in a measure, A soft light emanated from the movement of the ocean. Each mighty sea, all phosphorescent and glowing with the tiny lights of myriads of animalculae, threatened to overwhelm us with a deluge of fire. Higher and higher, thinner and thinner, the crest grew as it began to curve and overtop preparatory to breaking, until with a roar it fell over the bulwarks, a mass of soft glowing light and tons of water which sent the sailors sprawling in all directions and left in each nook and cranny little specks of light that glowed and trembled till the next sea washed them away, depositing new ones in their places. Sometimes several seas following each other with great rapidity and thundering down on our decks filled them full to the bulwarks, but soon they were discharged through the lee scuppers.

To reef the mainsail we were forced to run off before the gale under the single reefed jib. By the time we had finished the wind had forced up such a tremendous sea that it was impossible to heave her to. Away we flew on the wings of the storm through the muck and flying spray. A wind sheer to starboard, then another to port as the enormous seas struck the schooner astern and nearly broached her to. As day broke

we took in the jib, leaving not a sail unfurled. Since we had begun scudding she had ceased to take the seas over her bow, but amidships they broke fast and furious. It was a dry storm in the matter of rain, but the force of the wind filled the air with fine spray, which flew as high as the crosstrees and cut the face like a knife, making it impossible to see over a hundred yards ahead. The sea was a dark lead color as with long, slow, majestic roll it was heaped up by the wind into liquid mountains of foam. The wild antics of the schooner were sickening as she forged along. She would almost stop, as though climbing a mountain, then rapidly rolling to right and left as she gained the summit of a huge sea, she steadied herself and paused for a moment as though affrighted at the yawning precipice before her. Like an avalanche, she shot forward and down as the sea astern struck her with the force of a thousand battering rams, burying her bow to the catheads in the milky foam at the bottom that came on deck in all directions-forward, astern, to right and left, through the hawse-pipes and over the rail.

The wind began to drop, and by ten o'clock we were talking of heaving her to. We passed a ship, two schooners, and a four-masted barkentine under the smallest of canvas, and at eleven o'clock, running up the spanker and jib, we hove her to, and in another hour we were beating back again against the aftersea under full sail to regain the sealing ground away to the westward.

Below, a couple of men were sewing the "bricklayer's" body in canvas preparatory to the sea burial. And so with the storm passed away the "bricklayer's" soul.

The Story of Jees Uck

There have been renunciations and renunciations. But, in its essence, renunciation is ever the same. And the paradox of it is, that men and women forego the dearest thing in the world for something dearer. It was never otherwise. Thus it was when Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. The firstlings and the fat thereof were to him the dearest things in the world; yet he gave them over that he might be on good terms with God. So it was with Abraham when he prepared to offer up his son Isaac on a stone. Isaac was very dear to him; but God, in incomprehensible ways, was yet dearer. It may be that Abraham feared the Lord. But whether that be true or not it has since been determined by a few billion people that he loved the Lord and desired to serve him.

And since it has been determined that love is service, and since to renounce is to serve, then Jees Uck, who was merely a woman of a swart-skinned breed, loved with a great love. She was unversed in history, having learned to read only the signs of weather and of game; so she had never heard of Abel nor of Abraham; nor, having escaped the good sisters at Holy Cross, had she been told the story of Ruth, the Moabitess, who renounced her very God for the sake of a stranger woman from a strange land. Jees Uck had learned only one way of renouncing, and that was with a club as the dynamic factor, in much the same manner as a dog is made to renounce a stolen marrow-bone. Yet, when the time came, she proved herself capable of rising to the height of the fair-faced royal races and of renouncing in right regal fashion.

So this is the story of Jees Uck, which is also the story of Neil Bonner, and Kitty Bonner, and a couple of Neil Bonner's progeny. Jees Uck was of a swart-skinned breed, it is true, but she was not an Indian; nor was she an Eskimo; nor even an Innuit. Going backward into mouth tradition, there appears the figure of one Skolkz, a Toyaat Indian of the Yukon, who journeyed down in his youth to the Great Delta where dwell the Innuits, and where he foregathered with a woman remembered as Olillie. Now the woman Olillie had been bred from an Eskimo mother by an Innuit man. And from Skolkz and Olillie came Halie, who was one-half Toyaat Indian, one-quarter Innuit, and one-quarter Eskimo. And Halie was the grandmother of Jees Uck.

Now Halie, in whom three stocks had been bastardized, who cherished no prejudice against further admixture, mated with a Russian fur trader called Shpack, also known in his time as the Big Fat. Shpack is herein classed Russian for lack of a more adequate term; for Shpack's father, a Slavonic convict from the Lower Provinces, had escaped from the quicksilver mines into Northern Siberia, where he knew Zimba, who was a

woman of the Deer People and who became the mother of Shpack, who became the grandfather of Jees Uck.

Now had not Shpack been captured in his boyhood by the Sea People, who fringe the rim of the Arctic Sea with their misery, he would not have become the grandfather of Jees Uck and there would be no story at all. But he WAS captured by the Sea People, from whom he escaped to Kamchatka, and thence, on a Norwegian whale-ship, to the Baltic. Not long after that he turned up in St. Petersburg, and the years were not many till he went drifting east over the same weary road his father had measured with blood and groans a half-century before. But Shpack was a free man, in the employ of the great Russian Fur Company. And in that employ he fared farther and farther east, until he crossed Bering Sea into Russian America; and at Pastolik, which is hard by the Great Delta of the Yukon, became the husband of Halie, who was the grandmother of Jees Uck. Out of this union came the woman-child, Tukesan.

Shpack, under the orders of the Company, made a canoe voyage of a few hundred miles up the Yukon to the post of Nulato. With him he took Halie and the babe Tukesan. This was in 1850, and in 1850 it was that the river Indians fell upon Nulato and wiped it from the face of the earth. And that was the end of Shpack and Halie. On that terrible night Tukesan disappeared. To this day the Toyaats aver they had no hand in the trouble; but, be that as it may, the fact remains that the babe Tukesan grew up among them.

Tukesan was married successively to two Toyaat brothers, to both of whom she was barren. Because of this, other women shook their heads, and no third Toyaat man could be found to dare matrimony with the childless widow. But at this time, many hundred miles above, at Fort Yukon, was a man, Spike O'Brien. Fort Yukon was a Hudson Bay Company post, and Spike O'Brien one of the Company's servants. He was a good servant, but he achieved an opinion that the service was bad, and in the course of time vindicated that opinion by deserting. It was a year's journey, by the chain of posts, back to York Factory on Hudson's Bay. Further, being Company posts, he knew he could not evade the Company's clutches. Nothing retained but to go down the Yukon. It was true no white man had ever gone down the Yukon, and no white man knew whether the Yukon emptied into the Arctic Ocean or Bering Sea; but Spike O'Brien was a Celt, and the promise of danger was a lure he had ever followed.

A few weeks later, somewhat battered, rather famished, and about dead with river-fever, he drove the nose of his canoe into the earth bank by the village of the Toyaats and promptly fainted away. While getting his strength back, in the weeks that followed, he looked upon Tukesan and found her good. Like the father of Shpack, who lived to a ripe old age among the Siberian Deer People, Spike O'Brien might have left his aged bones with the Toyaats. But romance gripped his heart-strings and would not let him stay. As he had journeyed from York Factory to Fort Yukon, so, first among men, might he journey from Fort Yukon to the sea and win the honour of being the first man to make the North-West Passage by land. So he departed down the river, won the honour, and was unannaled and unsung. In after years he ran a sailors' boarding-house

in San Francisco, where he became esteemed a most remarkable liar by virtue of the gospel truths he told. But a child was born to Tukesan, who had been childless. And this child was Jees Uck. Her lineage has been traced at length to show that she was neither Indian, nor Eskimo, nor Innuit, nor much of anything else; also to show what waifs of the generations we are, all of us, and the strange meanderings of the seed from which we spring.

What with the vagrant blood in her and the heritage compounded of many races, Jees Uck developed a wonderful young beauty. Bizarre, perhaps, it was, and Oriental enough to puzzle any passing ethnologist. A lithe and slender grace characterized her. Beyond a quickened lilt to the imagination, the contribution of the Celt was in no wise apparent. It might possibly have put the warm blood under her skin, which made her face less swart and her body fairer; but that, in turn, might have come from Shpack, the Big Fat, who inherited the colour of his Slavonic father. And, finally, she had great, blazing black eyes–the half-caste eye, round, full-orbed, and sensuous, which marks the collision of the dark races with the light. Also, the white blood in her, combined with her knowledge that it was in her, made her, in a way, ambitious. Otherwise by upbringing and in outlook on life, she was wholly and utterly a Toyaat Indian.

One winter, when she was a young woman, Neil Bonner came into her life. But he came into her life, as he had come into the country, somewhat reluctantly. In fact, it was very much against his will, coming into the country. Between a father who clipped coupons and cultivated roses, and a mother who loved the social round, Neil Bonner had gone rather wild. He was not vicious, but a man with meat in his belly and without work in the world has to expend his energy somehow, and Neil Bonner was such a man. And he expended his energy in such a fashion and to such extent that when the inevitable climax came, his father, Neil Bonner, senior, crawled out of his roses in a panic and looked on his son with a wondering eye. Then he hied himself away to a crony of kindred pursuits, with whom he was wont to confer over coupons and roses, and between the two the destiny of young Neil Bonner was made manifest. He must go away, on probation, to live down his harmless follies in order that he might live up to their own excellent standard.

This determined upon, and young Neil a little repentant and a great deal ashamed, the rest was easy. The cronies were heavy stockholders in the P. C. Company. The P. C. Company owned fleets of river-steamers and ocean-going craft, and, in addition to farming the sea, exploited a hundred thousand square miles or so of the land that, on the maps of geographers, usually occupies the white spaces. So the P. C. Company sent young Neil Bonner north, where the white spaces are, to do its work and to learn to be good like his father. "Five years of simplicity, close to the soil and far from temptation, will make a man of him," said old Neil Bonner, and forthwith crawled back among his roses. Young Neil set his jaw, pitched his chin at the proper angle, and went to work. As an underling he did his work well and gained the commendation of his superiors. Not that he delighted in the work, but that it was the one thing that prevented him from going mad.

The first year he wished he was dead. The second year he cursed God. The third year he was divided between the two emotions, and in the confusion quarrelled with a man in authority. He had the best of the quarrel, though the man in authority had the last word,–a word that sent Neil Bonner into an exile that made his old billet appear as paradise. But he went without a whimper, for the North had succeeded in making him into a man.

Here and there, on the white spaces on the map, little circlets like the letter "o" are to be found, and, appended to these circlets, on one side or the other, are names such as "Fort Hamilton," "Yanana Station," "Twenty Mile," thus leading one to imagine that the white spaces are plentifully besprinkled with towns and villages. But it is a vain imagining. Twenty Mile, which is very like the rest of the posts, is a log building the size of a corner grocery with rooms to let up-stairs. A long-legged cache on stilts may be found in the back yard; also a couple of outhouses. The back yard is unfenced, and extends to the skyline and an unascertainable bit beyond. There are no other houses in sight, though the Toyaats sometimes pitch a winter camp a mile or two down the Yukon. And this is Twenty Mile, one tentacle of the many-tentacled P. C. Company. Here the agent, with an assistant, barters with the Indians for their furs, and does an erratic trade on a gold-dust basis with the wandering miners. Here, also, the agent and his assistant yearn all winter for the spring, and when the spring comes, camp blasphemously on the roof while the Yukon washes out the establishment. And here, also, in the fourth year of his sojourn in the land, came Neil Bonner to take charge.

He had displaced no agent; for the man that previously ran the post had made away with himself; "because of the rigours of the place," said the assistant, who still remained; though the Toyaats, by their fires, had another version. The assistant was a shrunken-shouldered, hollow-chested man, with a cadaverous face and cavernous cheeks that his sparse black beard could not hide. He coughed much, as though consumption gripped his lungs, while his eyes had that mad, fevered light common to consumptives in the last stage. Pentley was his name–Amos Pentley–and Bonner did not like him, though he felt a pity for the forlorn and hopeless devil. They did not get along together, these two men who, of all men, should have been on good terms in the face of the cold and silence and darkness of the long winter.

In the end, Bonner concluded that Amos was partly demented, and left him alone, doing all the work himself except the cooking. Even then, Amos had nothing but bitter looks and an undisguised hatred for him. This was a great loss to Bonner; for the smiling face of one of his own kind, the cheery word, the sympathy of comradeship shared with misfortune–these things meant much; and the winter was yet young when he began to realize the added reasons, with such an assistant, that the previous agent had found to impel his own hand against his life.

It was very lonely at Twenty Mile. The bleak vastness stretched away on every side to the horizon. The snow, which was really frost, flung its mantle over the land and buried everything in the silence of death. For days it was clear and cold, the thermometer steadily recording forty to fifty degrees below zero. Then a change came

over the face of things. What little moisture had oozed into the atmosphere gathered into dull grey, formless clouds; it became quite warm, the thermometer rising to twenty below; and the moisture fell out of the sky in hard frost-granules that hissed like dry sugar or driving sand when kicked underfoot. After that it became clear and cold again, until enough moisture had gathered to blanket the earth from the cold of outer space. That was all. Nothing happened. No storms, no churning waters and threshing forests, nothing but the machine-like precipitation of accumulated moisture. Possibly the most notable thing that occurred through the weary weeks was the gliding of the temperature up to the unprecedented height of fifteen below. To atone for this, outer space smote the earth with its cold till the mercury froze and the spirit thermometer remained more than seventy below for a fortnight, when it burst. There was no telling how much colder it was after that. Another occurrence, monotonous in its regularity, was the lengthening of the nights, till day became a mere blink of light between the darkness.

Neil Bonner was a social animal. The very follies for which he was doing penance had been bred of his excessive sociability. And here, in the fourth year of his exile, he found himself in company–which were to travesty the word–with a morose and speechless creature in whose sombre eyes smouldered a hatred as bitter as it was unwarranted. And Bonner, to whom speech and fellowship were as the breath of life, went about as a ghost might go, tantalized by the gregarious revelries of some former life. In the day his lips were compressed, his face stern; but in the night he clenched his hands, rolled about in his blankets, and cried aloud like a little child. And he would remember a certain man in authority and curse him through the long hours. Also, he cursed God. But God understands. He cannot find it in his heart to blame weak mortals who blaspheme in Alaska.

And here, to the post of Twenty Mile, came Jees Uck, to trade for flour and bacon, and beads, and bright scarlet cloths for her fancy work. And further, and unwittingly, she came to the post of Twenty Mile to make a lonely man more lonely, make him reach out empty arms in his sleep. For Neil Bonner was only a man. When she first came into the store, he looked at her long, as a thirsty man may look at a flowing well. And she, with the heritage bequeathed her by Spike O'Brien, imagined daringly and smiled up into his eyes, not as the swart-skinned peoples should smile at the royal races, but as a woman smiles at a man. The thing was inevitable; only, he did not see it, and fought against her as fiercely and passionately as he was drawn towards her. And she? She was Jees Uck, by upbringing wholly and utterly a Toyaat Indian woman.

She came often to the post to trade. And often she sat by the big wood stove and chatted in broken English with Neil Bonner. And he came to look for her coming; and on the days she did not come he was worried and restless. Sometimes he stopped to think, and then she was met coldly, with a resolve that perplexed and piqued her, and which, she was convinced, was not sincere. But more often he did not dare to think, and then all went well and there were smiles and laughter. And Amos Pentley, gasping like a stranded catfish, his hollow cough a-reek with the grave, looked upon it all and

grinned. He, who loved life, could not live, and it rankled his soul that others should be able to live. Wherefore he hated Bonner, who was so very much alive and into whose eyes sprang joy at the sight of Jees Uck. As for Amos, the very thought of the girl was sufficient to send his blood pounding up into a hemorrhage.

Jees Uck, whose mind was simple, who thought elementally and was unused to weighing life in its subtler quantities, read Amos Pentley like a book. She warned Bonner, openly and bluntly, in few words; but the complexities of higher existence confused the situation to him, and he laughed at her evident anxiety. To him, Amos was a poor, miserable devil, tottering desperately into the grave. And Bonner, who had suffered much, found it easy to forgive greatly.

But one morning, during a bitter snap, he got up from the breakfast-table and went into the store. Jees Uck was already there, rosy from the trail, to buy a sack of flour. A few minutes later, he was out in the snow lashing the flour on her sled. As he bent over he noticed a stiffness in his neck and felt a premonition of impending physical misfortune. And as he put the last half-hitch into the lashing and attempted to straighten up, a quick spasm seized him and he sank into the snow. Tense and quivering, head jerked back, limbs extended, back arched and mouth twisted and distorted, he appeared as though being racked limb from limb. Without cry or sound, Jees Uck was in the snow beside him; but he clutched both her wrists spasmodically, and as long as the convulsion endured she was helpless. In a few moments the spasm relaxed and he was left weak and fainting, his forehead beaded with sweat, and his lips flecked with foam.

"Quick!" he muttered, in a strange, hoarse voice. "Quick! Inside!"

He started to crawl on hands and knees, but she raised him up, and, supported by her young arm, he made faster progress. As he entered the store the spasm seized him again, and his body writhed irresistibly away from her and rolled and curled on the floor. Amos Pentley came and looked on with curious eyes.

"Oh, Amos!" she cried in an agony of apprehension and helplessness, "him die, you think?" But Amos shrugged his shoulders and continued to look on.

Bonner's body went slack, the tense muscles easing down and an expression of relief coming into his face. "Quick!" he gritted between his teeth, his mouth twisting with the on-coming of the next spasm and with his effort to control it. "Quick, Jees Uck! The medicine! Never mind! Drag me!"

She knew where the medicine-chest stood, at the rear of the room beyond the stove, and thither, by the legs, she dragged the struggling man. As the spasm passed he began, very faint and very sick, to overhaul the chest. He had seen dogs die exhibiting symptoms similar to his own, and he knew what should be done. He held up a vial of chloral hydrate, but his fingers were too weak and nerveless to draw the cork. This Jees Uck did for him, while he was plunged into another convulsion. As he came out of it he found the open bottle proffered him, and looked into the great black eyes of the woman and read what men have always read in the Mate-woman's eyes. Taking

a full dose of the stuff, he sank back until another spasm had passed. Then he raised himself limply on his elbow.

"Listen, Jees Uck!" he said very slowly, as though aware of the necessity for haste and yet afraid to hasten. "Do what I say. Stay by my side, but do not touch me. I must be very quiet, but you must not go away." His jaw began to set and his face to quiver and distort with the fore-running pangs, but he gulped and struggled to master them. "Do not got away. And do not let Amos go away. Understand! Amos must stay right here."

She nodded her head, and he passed off into the first of many convulsions, which gradually diminished in force and frequency. Jees Uck hung over him remembering his injunction and not daring to touch him. Once Amos grew restless and made as though to go into the kitchen; but a quick blaze from her eyes quelled him, and after that, save for his laboured breathing and charnel cough, he was very quiet.

Bonner slept. The blink of light that marked the day disappeared. Amos, followed about by the woman's eyes, lighted the kerosene lamps. Evening came on. Through the north window the heavens were emblazoned with an auroral display, which flamed and flared and died down into blackness. Some time after that, Neil Bonner roused. First he looked to see that Amos was still there, then smiled at Jees Uck and pulled himself up. Every muscle was stiff and sore, and he smiled ruefully, pressing and prodding himself as if to ascertain the extent of the ravage. Then his face went stern and businesslike.

"Jees Uck," he said, "take a candle. Go into the kitchen. There is food on the table–biscuits and beans and bacon; also, coffee in the pot on the stove. Bring it here on the counter. Also, bring tumblers and water and whisky, which you will find on the top shelf of the locker. Do not forget the whisky."

Having swallowed a stiff glass of the whisky, he went carefully through the medicine chest, now and again putting aside, with definite purpose, certain bottles and vials. Then he set to work on the food, attempting a crude analysis. He had not been unused to the laboratory in his college days and was possessed of sufficient imagination to achieve results with his limited materials. The condition of tetanus, which had marked his paroxysms, simplified matters, and he made but one test. The coffee yielded nothing; nor did the beans. To the biscuits he devoted the utmost care. Amos, who knew nothing of chemistry, looked on with steady curiosity. But Jees Uck, who had boundless faith in the white man's wisdom, and especially in Neil Bonner's wisdom, and who not only knew nothing but knew that she knew nothing watched his face rather than his hands.

Step by step he eliminated possibilities, until he came to the final test. He was using a thin medicine vial for a tube, and this he held between him and the light, watching the slow precipitation of a salt through the solution contained in the tube. He said nothing, but he saw what he had expected to see. And Jees Uck, her eyes riveted on his face, saw something too,–something that made her spring like a tigress upon Amos, and with splendid suppleness and strength bend his body back across her knee. Her knife was out of its sheaf and uplifted, glinting in the lamplight. Amos was snarling; but Bonner intervened ere the blade could fall.

"That's a good girl, Jees Uck. But never mind. Let him go!"

She dropped the man obediently, though with protest writ large on her face; and his body thudded to the floor. Bonner nudged him with his moccasined foot.

"Get up, Amos!" he commanded. "You've got to pack an outfit yet to-night and hit the trail."

"You don't mean to say–" Amos blurted savagely.

"I mean to say that you tried to kill me," Neil went on in cold, even tones. "I mean to say that you killed Birdsall, for all the Company believes he killed himself. You used strychnine in my case. God knows with what you fixed him. Now I can't hang you. You're too near dead as it is. But Twenty Mile is too small for the pair of us, and you've got to mush. It's two hundred miles to Holy Cross. You can make it if you're careful not to over-exert. I'll give you grub, a sled, and three dogs. You'll be as safe as if you were in jail, for you can't get out of the country. And I'll give you one chance. You're almost dead. Very well. I shall send no word to the Company until the spring. In the meantime, the thing for you to do is to die. Now MUSH!"

"You go to bed!" Jees Uck insisted, when Amos had churned away into the night towards Holy Cross. "You sick man yet, Neil."

"And you're a good girl, Jees Uck," he answered. "And here's my hand on it. But you must go home."

"You don't like me," she said simply.

He smiled, helped her on with her PARKA, and led her to the door. "Only too well, Jees Uck," he said softly; "only too well."

After that the pall of the Arctic night fell deeper and blacker on the land. Neil Bonner discovered that he had failed to put proper valuation upon even the sullen face of the murderous and death-stricken Amos. It became very lonely at Twenty Mile. "For the love of God, Prentiss, send me a man," he wrote to the agent at Fort Hamilton, three hundred miles up river. Six weeks later the Indian messenger brought back a reply. It was characteristic: "Hell. Both feet frozen. Need him myself–Prentiss."

To make matters worse, most of the Toyaats were in the back country on the flanks of a caribou herd, and Jees Uck was with them. Removing to a distance seemed to bring her closer than ever, and Neil Bonner found himself picturing her, day by day, in camp and on trail. It is not good to be alone. Often he went out of the quiet store, bare-headed and frantic, and shook his fist at the blink of day that came over the southern sky-line. And on still, cold nights he left his bed and stumbled into the frost, where he assaulted the silence at the top of his lungs, as though it were some tangible, sentiment thing that he might arouse; or he shouted at the sleeping dogs till they howled and howled again. One shaggy brute he brought into the post, playing that it was the new man sent by Prentiss. He strove to make it sleep decently under blankets at nights and to sit at table and eat as a man should; but the beast, mere domesticated wolf that it was, rebelled, and sought out dark corners and snarled and bit him in the leg, and was finally beaten and driven forth.

Then the trick of personification seized upon Neil Bonner and mastered him. All the forces of his environment metamorphosed into living, breathing entities and came to live with him. He recreated the primitive pantheon; reared an altar to the sun and burned candle fat and bacon grease thereon; and in the unfenced yard, by the long-legged cache, made a frost devil, which he was wont to make faces at and mock when the mercury oozed down into the bulb. All this in play, of course. He said it to himself that it was in play, and repeated it over and over to make sure, unaware that madness is ever prone to express itself in make-believe and play.

One midwinter day, Father Champreau, a Jesuit missionary, pulled into Twenty Mile. Bonner fell upon him and dragged him into the post, and clung to him and wept, until the priest wept with him from sheer compassion. Then Bonner became madly hilarious and made lavish entertainment, swearing valiantly that his guest should not depart. But Father Champreau was pressing to Salt Water on urgent business for his order, and pulled out next morning, with Bonner's blood threatened on his head.

And the threat was in a fair way toward realization, when the Toyaats returned from their long hunt to the winter camp. They had many furs, and there was much trading and stir at Twenty Mile. Also, Jees Uck came to buy beads and scarlet cloths and things, and Bonner began to find himself again. He fought for a week against her. Then the end came one night when she rose to leave. She had not forgotten her repulse, and the pride that drove Spike O'Brien on to complete the North-West Passage by land was her pride.

"I go now," she said; "good-night, Neil."

But he came up behind her. "Nay, it is not well," he said.

And as she turned her face toward his with a sudden joyful flash, he bent forward, slowly and gravely, as it were a sacred thing, and kissed her on the lips. The Toyaats had never taught her the meaning of a kiss upon the lips, but she understood and was glad.

With the coming of Jees Uck, at once things brightened up. She was regal in her happiness, a source of unending delight. The elemental workings of her mind and her naive little ways made an immense sum of pleasurable surprise to the over-civilized man that had stooped to catch her up. Not alone was she solace to his loneliness, but her primitiveness rejuvenated his jaded mind. It was as though, after long wandering, he had returned to pillow his head in the lap of Mother Earth. In short, in Jees Uck he found the youth of the world–the youth and the strength and the joy.

And to fill the full round of his need, and that they might not see overmuch of each other, there arrived at Twenty Mile one Sandy MacPherson, as companionable a man as ever whistled along the trail or raised a ballad by a camp-fire. A Jesuit priest had run into his camp, a couple of hundred miles up the Yukon, in the nick of time to say a last word over the body of Sandy's partner. And on departing, the priest had said, "My son, you will be lonely now." And Sandy had bowed his head brokenly. "At Twenty Mile," the priest added, "there is a lonely man. You have need of each other, my son."

So it was that Sandy became a welcome third at the post, brother to the man and woman that resided there. He took Bonner moose-hunting and wolf-trapping; and, in return, Bonner resurrected a battered and way-worn volume and made him friends with Shakespeare, till Sandy declaimed iambic pentameters to his sled-dogs whenever they waxed mutinous. And of the long evenings they played cribbage and talked and disagreed about the universe, the while Jees Uck rocked matronly in an easy-chair and darned their moccasins and socks.

Spring came. The sun shot up out of the south. The land exchanged its austere robes for the garb of a smiling wanton. Everywhere light laughed and life invited. The days stretched out their balmy length and the nights passed from blinks of darkness to no darkness at all. The river bared its bosom, and snorting steamboats challenged the wilderness. There were stir and bustle, new faces, and fresh facts. An assistant arrived at Twenty Mile, and Sandy MacPherson wandered off with a bunch of prospectors to invade the Koyokuk country. And there were newspapers and magazines and letters for Neil Bonner. And Jees Uck looked on in worriment, for she knew his kindred talked with him across the world.

Without much shock, it came to him that his father was dead. There was a sweet letter of forgiveness, dictated in his last hours. There were official letters from the Company, graciously ordering him to turn the post over to the assistant and permitting him to depart at his earliest pleasure. A long, legal affair from the lawyers informed him of interminable lists of stocks and bonds, real estate, rents, and chattels that were his by his father's will. And a dainty bit of stationery, sealed and monogramed, implored dear Neil's return to his heart-broken and loving mother.

Neil Bonner did some swift thinking, and when the Yukon Belle coughed in to the bank on her way down to Bering Sea, he departed–departed with the ancient lie of quick return young and blithe on his lips.

"I'll come back, dear Jees Uck, before the first snow flies," he promised her, between the last kisses at the gang-plank.

And not only did he promise, but, like the majority of men under the same circumstances, he really meant it. To John Thompson, the new agent, he gave orders for the extension of unlimited credit to his wife, Jees Uck. Also, with his last look from the deck of the Yukon Belle, he saw a dozen men at work rearing the logs that were to make the most comfortable house along a thousand miles of river front–the house of Jees Uck, and likewise the house of Neil Bonner–ere the first flurry of snow. For he fully and fondly meant to come back. Jees Uck was dear to him, and, further, a golden future awaited the north. With his father's money he intended to verify that future. An ambitious dream allured him. With his four years of experience, and aided by the friendly cooperation of the P. C. Company, he would return to become the Rhodes of Alaska. And he would return, fast as steam could drive, as soon as he had put into shape the affairs of his father, whom he had never known, and comforted his mother, whom he had forgotten.

There was much ado when Neil Bonner came back from the Arctic. The fires were lighted and the fleshpots slung, and he took of it all and called it good. Not only was he bronzed and creased, but he was a new man under his skin, with a grip on things and a seriousness and control. His old companions were amazed when he declined to hit up the pace in the good old way, while his father's crony rubbed hands gleefully, and became an authority upon the reclamation of wayward and idle youth.

For four years Neil Bonner's mind had lain fallow. Little that was new had been added to it, but it had undergone a process of selection. It had, so to say, been purged of the trivial and superfluous. He had lived quick years, down in the world; and, up in the wilds, time had been given him to organize the confused mass of his experiences. His superficial standards had been flung to the winds and new standards erected on deeper and broader generalizations. Concerning civilization, he had gone away with one set of values, had returned with another set of values. Aided, also, by the earth smells in his nostrils and the earth sights in his eyes, he laid hold of the inner significance of civilization, beholding with clear vision its futilities and powers. It was a simple little philosophy he evolved. Clean living was the way to grace. Duty performed was sanctification. One must live clean and do his duty in order that he might work. Work was salvation. And to work toward life abundant, and more abundant, was to be in line with the scheme of things and the will of God.

Primarily, he was of the city. And his fresh earth grip and virile conception of humanity gave him a finer sense of civilization and endeared civilization to him. Day by day the people of the city clung closer to him and the world loomed more colossal. And, day by day, Alaska grew more remote and less real. And then he met Kitty Sharon–a woman of his own flesh and blood and kind; a woman who put her hand into his hand and drew him to her, till he forgot the day and hour and the time of the year the first snow flies on the Yukon.

Jees Uck moved into her grand log-house and dreamed away three golden summer months. Then came the autumn, post-haste before the down rush of winter. The air grew thin and sharp, the days thin and short. The river ran sluggishly, and skin ice formed in the quiet eddies. All migratory life departed south, and silence fell upon the land. The first snow flurries came, and the last homing steamboat bucked desperately into the running mush ice. Then came the hard ice, solid cakes and sheets, till the Yukon ran level with its banks. And when all this ceased the river stood still and the blinking days lost themselves in the darkness.

John Thompson, the new agent, laughed; but Jees Uck had faith in the mischances of sea and river. Neil Bonner might be frozen in anywhere between Chilkoot Pass and St. Michael's, for the last travellers of the year are always caught by the ice, when they exchange boat for sled and dash on through the long hours behind the flying dogs.

But no flying dogs came up the trail, nor down the trail, to Twenty Mile. And John Thompson told Jees Uck, with a certain gladness ill concealed, that Bonner would never come back again. Also, and brutally, he suggested his own eligibility. Jees Uck laughed in his face and went back to her grand log-house. But when midwinter came,

when hope dies down and life is at its lowest ebb, Jees Uck found she had no credit at the store. This was Thompson's doing, and he rubbed his hands, and walked up and down, and came to his door and looked up at Jees Uck's house and waited. And he continued to wait. She sold her dog-team to a party of miners and paid cash for her food. And when Thompson refused to honour even her coin, Toyaat Indians made her purchases, and sledded them up to her house in the dark.

In February the first post came in over the ice, and John Thompson read in the society column of a five-months-old paper of the marriage of Neil Bonner and Kitty Sharon. Jees Uck held the door ajar and him outside while he imparted the information; and, when he had done, laughed pridefully and did not believe. In March, and all alone, she gave birth to a man-child, a brave bit of new life at which she marvelled. And at that hour, a year later, Neil Bonner sat by another bed, marvelling at another bit of new life that had fared into the world.

The snow went off the ground and the ice broke out of the Yukon. The sun journeyed north, and journeyed south again; and, the money from the being spent, Jees Uck went back to her own people. Oche Ish, a shrewd hunter, proposed to kill the meat for her and her babe, and catch the salmon, if she would marry him. And Imego and Hah Yo and Wy Nooch, husky young hunters all, made similar proposals. But she elected to live alone and seek her own meat and fish. She sewed moccasins and PARKAS and mittens–warm, serviceable things, and pleasing to the eye, withal, what of the ornamental hair-tufts and bead-work. These she sold to the miners, who were drifting faster into the land each year. And not only did she win food that was good and plentiful, but she laid money by, and one day took passage on the Yukon Belle down the river.

At St. Michael's she washed dishes in the kitchen of the post. The servants of the Company wondered at the remarkable woman with the remarkable child, though they asked no questions and she vouchsafed nothing. But just before Bering Sea closed in for the year, she bought a passage south on a strayed sealing schooner. That winter she cooked for Captain Markheim's household at Unalaska, and in the spring continued south to Sitka on a whisky sloop. Later on appeared at Metlakahtla, which is near to St. Mary's on the end of the Pan-Handle, where she worked in the cannery through the salmon season. When autumn came and the Siwash fishermen prepared to return to Puget Sound, she embarked with a couple of families in a big cedar canoe; and with them she threaded the hazardous chaos of the Alaskan and Canadian coasts, till the Straits of Juan de Fuca were passed and she led her boy by the hand up the hard pave of Seattle.

There she met Sandy MacPherson, on a windy corner, very much surprised and, when he had heard her story, very wroth–not so wroth as he might have been, had he known of Kitty Sharon; but of her Jees Uck breathed not a word, for she had never believed. Sandy, who read commonplace and sordid desertion into the circumstance, strove to dissuade her from her trip to San Francisco, where Neil Bonner was supposed to live when he was at home. And, having striven, he made her comfortable, bought

her tickets and saw her off, the while smiling in her face and muttering "dam-shame" into his beard.

With roar and rumble, through daylight and dark, swaying and lurching between the dawns, soaring into the winter snows and sinking to summer valleys, skirting depths, leaping chasms, piercing mountains, Jees Uck and her boy were hurled south. But she had no fear of the iron stallion; nor was she stunned by this masterful civilization of Neil Bonner's people. It seemed, rather, that she saw with greater clearness the wonder that a man of such godlike race had held her in his arms. The screaming medley of San Francisco, with its restless shipping, belching factories, and thundering traffic, did not confuse her; instead, she comprehended swiftly the pitiful sordidness of Twenty Mile and the skin-lodged Toyaat village. And she looked down at the boy that clutched her hand and wondered that she had borne him by such a man.

She paid the hack-driver five pieces and went up the stone steps of Neil Bonner's front door. A slant-eyed Japanese parleyed with her for a fruitless space, then led her inside and disappeared. She remained in the hall, which to her simply fancy seemed to be the guest-room–the show-place wherein were arrayed all the household treasures with the frank purpose of parade and dazzlement. The walls and ceiling were of oiled and panelled redwood. The floor was more glassy than glare-ice, and she sought standing place on one of the great skins that gave a sense of security to the polished surface. A huge fireplace–an extravagant fireplace, she deemed it–yawned in the farther wall. A flood of light, mellowed by stained glass, fell across the room, and from the far end came the white gleam of a marble figure.

This much she saw, and more, when the slant-eyed servant led the way past another room–of which she caught a fleeting glance–and into a third, both of which dimmed the brave show of the entrance hall. And to her eyes the great house seemed to hold out the promise of endless similar rooms. There was such length and breadth to them, and the ceilings were so far away! For the first time since her advent into the white man's civilization, a feeling of awe laid hold of her. Neil, her Neil, lived in this house, breathed the air of it, and lay down at night and slept! It was beautiful, all this that she saw, and it pleased her; but she felt, also, the wisdom and mastery behind. It was the concrete expression of power in terms of beauty, and it was the power that she unerringly divined.

And then came a woman, queenly tall, crowned with a glory of hair that was like a golden sun. She seemed to come toward Jees Uck as a ripple of music across still water; her sweeping garment itself a song, her body playing rhythmically beneath. Jees Uck herself was a man compeller. There were Oche Ish and Imego and Hah Yo and Wy Nooch, to say nothing of Neil Bonner and John Thompson and other white men that had looked upon her and felt her power. But she gazed upon the wide blue eyes and rose-white skin of this woman that advanced to meet her, and she measured her with woman's eyes looking through man's eyes; and as a man compeller she felt herself diminish and grow insignificant before this radiant and flashing creature.

“You wish to see my husband?” the woman asked; and Jees Uck gasped at the liquid silver of a voice that had never sounded harsh cries at snarling wolf-dogs, nor moulded itself to a guttural speech, nor toughened in storm and frost and camp smoke.

“No,” Jees Uck answered slowly and gropingly, in order that she might do justice to her English. “I come to see Neil Bonner.”

“He is my husband,” the woman laughed.

Then it was true! John Thompson had not lied that bleak February day, when she laughed pridefully and shut the door in his face. As once she had thrown Amos Pentley across her knee and ripped her knife into the air, so now she felt impelled to spring upon this woman and bear her back and down, and tear the life out of her fair body. But Jees Uck was thinking quickly and gave no sign, and Kitty Bonner little dreamed how intimately she had for an instant been related with sudden death.

Jees Uck nodded her head that she understood, and Kitty Bonner explained that Neil was expected at any moment. Then they sat down on ridiculously comfortable chairs, and Kitty sought to entertain her strange visitor, and Jees Uck strove to help her.

“You knew my husband in the North?” Kitty asked, once.

“Sure. I wash um clothes,” Jees Uck had answered, her English abruptly beginning to grow atrocious.

“And this is your boy? I have a little girl.”

Kitty caused her daughter to be brought, and while the children, after their manner, struck an acquaintance, the mothers indulged in the talk of mothers and drank tea from cups so fragile that Jees Uck feared lest hers should crumble to pieces beneath her fingers. Never had she seen such cups, so delicate and dainty. In her mind she compared them with the woman who poured the tea, and there uprose in contrast the gourds and pannikins of the Toyaat village and the clumsy mugs of Twenty Mile, to which she likened herself. And in such fashion and such terms the problem presented itself. She was beaten. There was a woman other than herself better fitted to bear and upbring Neil Bonner’s children. Just as his people exceeded her people, so did his womankind exceed her. They were the man compellers, as their men were the world compellers. She looked at the rose-white tenderness of Kitty Bonner’s skin and remembered the sun-beat on her own face. Likewise she looked from brown hand to white–the one, work-worn and hardened by whip-handle and paddle, the other as guiltless of toil and soft as a newborn babe’s. And, for all the obvious softness and apparent weakness, Jees Uck looked into the blue eyes and saw the mastery she had seen in Neil Bonner’s eyes and in the eyes of Neil Bonner’s people.

“Why, it’s Jees Uck!” Neil Bonner said, when he entered. He said it calmly, with even a ring of joyful cordiality, coming over to her and shaking both her hands, but looking into her eyes with a worry in his own that she understood.

“Hello, Neil!” she said. “You look much good.”

"Fine, fine, Jees Uck," he answered heartily, though secretly studying Kitty for some sign of what had passed between the two. Yet he knew his wife too well to expect, even though the worst had passed, such a sign.

"Well, I can't say how glad I am to see you," he went on. "What's happened? Did you strike a mine? And when did you get in?"

"Oo-a, I get in to-day," she replied, her voice instinctively seeking its guttural parts. "I no strike it, Neil. You known Cap'n Markheim, Unalaska? I cook, his house, long time. No spend money. Bime-by, plenty. Pretty good, I think, go down and see White Man's Land. Very fine, White Man's Land, very fine," she added. Her English puzzled him, for Sandy and he had sought, constantly, to better her speech, and she had proved an apt pupil. Now it seemed that she had sunk back into her race. Her face was guileless, stolidly guileless, giving no cue. Kitty's untroubled brow likewise baffled him. What had happened? How much had been said? and how much guessed?

While he wrestled with these questions and while Jees Uck wrestled with her problem–never had he looked so wonderful and great–a silence fell.

"To think that you knew my husband in Alaska!" Kitty said softly.

Knew him! Jees Uck could not forbear a glance at the boy she had borne him, and his eyes followed hers mechanically to the window where played the two children. An iron hand seemed to tighten across his forehead. His knees went weak and his heart leaped up and pounded like a fist against his breast. His boy! He had never dreamed it!

Little Kitty Bonner, fairylike in gauzy lawn, with pinkest of cheeks and bluest of dancing eyes, arms outstretched and lips puckered in invitation, was striving to kiss the boy. And the boy, lean and lithe, sunbeaten and browned, skin-clad and in hair-fringed and hair-tufted MUCLUCS that showed the wear of the sea and rough work, coolly withstood her advances, his body straight and stiff with the peculiar erectness common to children of savage people. A stranger in a strange land, unabashed and unafraid, he appeared more like an untamed animal, silent and watchful, his black eyes flashing from face to face, quiet so long as quiet endured, but prepared to spring and fight and tear and scratch for life, at the first sign of danger.

The contrast between boy and girl was striking, but not pitiful. There was too much strength in the boy for that, waif that he was of the generations of Shpack, Spike O'Brien, and Bonner. In his features, clean cut as a cameo and almost classic in their severity, there were the power and achievement of his father, and his grandfather, and the one known as the Big Fat, who was captured by the Sea people and escaped to Kamchatka.

Neil Bonner fought his emotion down, swallowed it down, and choked over it, though his face smiled with good-humour and the joy with which one meets a friend.

"Your boy, eh, Jees Uck?" he said. And then turning to Kitty: "Handsome fellow! He'll do something with those two hands of his in this our world."

Kitty nodded concurrence. "What is your name?" she asked.

The young savage flashed his quick eyes upon her and dwelt over her for a space, seeking out, as it were, the motive beneath the question.

"Neil," he answered deliberately when the scrutiny had satisfied him.

"Injun talk," Jees Uck interposed, glibly manufacturing languages on the spur of the moment. "Him Injun talk, NEE-AL all the same 'cracker.' Him baby, him like cracker; him cry for cracker. Him say, 'NEE-AL, NEE-AL,' all time him say, 'NEE-AL.' Then I say that um name. So um name all time Nee-al."

Never did sound more blessed fall upon Neil Bonner's ear than that lie from Jees Uck's lips. It was the cue, and he knew there was reason for Kitty's untroubled brow.

"And his father?" Kitty asked. "He must be a fine man."

"Oo-a, yes," was the reply. "Um father fine man. Sure!"

"Did you know him, Neil?" queried Kitty.

"Know him? Most intimately," Neil answered, and harked back to dreary Twenty Mile and the man alone in the silence with his thoughts.

And here might well end the story of Jees Uck but for the crown she put upon her renunciation. When she returned to the North to dwell in her grand log-house, John Thompson found that the P. C. Company could make a shift somehow to carry on its business without his aid. Also, the new agent and the succeeding agents received instructions that the woman Jees Uck should be given whatsoever goods and grub she desired, in whatsoever quantities she ordered, and that no charge should be placed upon the books. Further, the Company paid yearly to the woman Jees Uck a pension of five thousand dollars.

When he had attained suitable age, Father Champreau laid hands upon the boy, and the time was not long when Jees Uck received letters regularly from the Jesuit college in Maryland. Later on these letters came from Italy, and still later from France. And in the end there returned to Alaska one Father Neil, a man mighty for good in the land, who loved his mother and who ultimately went into a wider field and rose to high authority in the order.

Jees Uck was a young woman when she went back into the North, and men still looked upon her and yearned. But she lived straight, and no breath was ever raised save in commendation. She stayed for a while with the good sisters at Holy Cross, where she learned to read and write and became versed in practical medicine and surgery. After that she returned to her grand log-house and gathered about her the young girls of the Toyaat village, to show them the way of their feet in the world. It is neither Protestant nor Catholic, this school in the house built by Neil Bonner for Jees Uck, his wife; but the missionaries of all the sects look upon it with equal favour. The latchstring is always out, and tired prospectors and trail-weary men turn aside from the flowing river or frozen trail to rest there for a space and be warm by her fire. And, down in the States, Kitty Bonner is pleased at the interest her husband takes in Alaskan education and the large sums he devotes to that purpose; and, though she often smiles and chaffs, deep down and secretly she is but the prouder of him.

The Story of Keesh

KEESH lived long ago on the rim of the polar sea, was head man of his village through many and prosperous years, and died full of honors with his name on the lips of men. So long ago did he live that only the old men remember his name, his name and the tale, which they got from the old men before them, and which the old men to come will tell to their children and their children's children down to the end of time. And the winter darkness, when the north gales make their long sweep across the ice-pack, and the air is filled with flying white, and no man may venture forth, is the chosen time for the telling of how Keesh, from the poorest IGLOO in the village, rose to power and place over them all.

He was a bright boy, so the tale runs, healthy and strong, and he had seen thirteen suns, in their way of reckoning time. For each winter the sun leaves the land in darkness, and the next year a new sun returns so that they may be warm again and look upon one another's faces. The father of Keesh had been a very brave man, but he had met his death in a time of famine, when he sought to save the lives of his people by taking the life of a great polar bear. In his eagerness he came to close grapples with the bear, and his bones were crushed; but the bear had much meat on him and the people were saved. Keesh was his only son, and after that Keesh lived alone with his mother. But the people are prone to forget, and they forgot the deed of his father; and he being but a boy, and his mother only a woman, they, too, were swiftly forgotten, and ere long came to live in the meanest of all the IGLOOS.

It was at a council, one night, in the big IGLOO of Klosh-Kwan, the chief, that Keesh showed the blood that ran in his veins and the manhood that stiffened his back. With the dignity of an elder, he rose to his feet, and waited for silence amid the babble of voices.

"It is true that meat be apportioned me and mine," he said. "But it is ofttimes old and tough, this meat, and, moreover, it has an unusual quantity of bones."

The hunters, grizzled and gray, and lusty and young, were aghast. The like had never been known before. A child, that talked like a grown man, and said harsh things to their very faces!

But steadily and with seriousness, Keesh went on. "For that I know my father, Bok, was a great hunter, I speak these words. It is said that Bok brought home more meat than any of the two best hunters, that with his own hands he attended to the division of it, that with his own eyes he saw to it that the least old woman and the last old man received fair share."

“Na! Na!” the men cried. “Put the child out!” “Send him off to bed!” “He is no man that he should talk to men and graybeards!”

He waited calmly till the uproar died down.

“Thou hast a wife, Ugh-Gluk,” he said, “and for her dost thou speak. And thou, too, Massuk, a mother also, and for them dost thou speak. My mother has no one, save me; wherefore I speak. As I say, though Bok be dead because he hunted over-keenly, it is just that I, who am his son, and that Ikeega, who is my mother and was his wife, should have meat in plenty so long as there be meat in plenty in the tribe. I, Keesh, the son of Bok, have spoken.”

He sat down, his ears keenly alert to the flood of protest and indignation his words had created.

“That a boy should speak in council!” old Ugh-Gluk was mumbling.

“Shall the babes in arms tell us men the things we shall do?” Massuk demanded in a loud voice. “Am I a man that I should be made a mock by every child that cries for meat?”

The anger boiled a white heat. They ordered him to bed, threatened that he should have no meat at all, and promised him sore beatings for his presumption. Keesh’s eyes began to flash, and the blood to pound darkly under his skin. In the midst of the abuse he sprang to his feet.

“Hear me, ye men!” he cried. “Never shall I speak in the council again, never again till the men come to me and say, ‘It is well, Keesh, that thou shouldst speak, it is well and it is our wish.’ Take this now, ye men, for my last word. Bok, my father, was a great hunter. I, too, his son, shall go and hunt the meat that I eat. And be it known, now, that the division of that which I kill shall be fair. And no widow nor weak one shall cry in the night because there is no meat, when the strong men are groaning in great pain for that they have eaten overmuch. And in the days to come there shall be shame upon the strong men who have eaten overmuch. I, Keesh, have said it!”

Jeers and scornful laughter followed him out of the IGLOO, but his jaw was set and he went his way, looking neither to right nor left.

The next day he went forth along the shore-line where the ice and the land met together. Those who saw him go noted that he carried his bow, with a goodly supply of bone-barbed arrows, and that across his shoulder was his father’s big hunting-spear. And there was laughter, and much talk, at the event. It was an unprecedented occurrence. Never did boys of his tender age go forth to hunt, much less to hunt alone. Also were there shaking of heads and prophetic mutterings, and the women looked pityingly at Ikeega, and her face was grave and sad.

“He will be back ere long,” they said cheeringly.

“Let him go; it will teach him a lesson,” the hunters said. “And he will come back shortly, and he will be meek and soft of speech in the days to follow.”

But a day passed, and a second, and on the third a wild gale blew, and there was no Keesh. Ikeega tore her hair and put soot of the seal-oil on her face in token of her grief; and the women assailed the men with bitter words in that they had mistreated

the boy and sent him to his death; and the men made no answer, preparing to go in search of the body when the storm abated.

Early next morning, however, Keesh strode into the village. But he came not shamefacedly. Across his shoulders he bore a burden of fresh-killed meat. And there was importance in his step and arrogance in his speech.

"Go, ye men, with the dogs and sledges, and take my trail for the better part of a day's travel," he said. There is much meat on the ice — a she-bear and two half-grown cubs."

Ikeega was overcome with joy, but he received her demonstrations in manlike fashion, saying: "Come, Ikeega, let us eat. And after that I shall sleep, for I am weary."

And he passed into their IGLOO and ate profoundly, and after that slept for twenty running hours.

There was much doubt at first, much doubt and discussion. The killing of a polar bear is very dangerous, but thrice dangerous is it, and three times thrice, to kill a mother bear with her cubs. The men could not bring themselves to believe that the boy Keesh, single-handed, had accomplished so great a marvel. But the women spoke of the fresh-killed meat he had brought on his back, and this was an overwhelming argument against their unbelief. So they finally departed, grumbling greatly that in all probability, if the thing were so, he had neglected to cut up the carcasses. Now in the north it is very necessary that this should be done as soon as a kill is made. If not, the meat freezes so solidly as to turn the edge of the sharpest knife, and a three-hundred-pound bear, frozen stiff, is no easy thing to put upon a sled and haul over the rough ice. But arrived at the spot, they found not only the kill, which they had doubted, but that Keesh had quartered the beasts in true hunter fashion, and removed the entrails.

Thus began the mystery of Keesh, a mystery that deepened and deepened with the passing of the days. His very next trip he killed a young bear, nearly full-grown, and on the trip following, a large male bear and his mate. He was ordinarily gone from three to four days, though it was nothing unusual for him to stay away a week at a time on the ice-field. Always he declined company on these expeditions, and the people marvelled. "How does he do it?" they demanded of one another. "Never does he take a dog with him, and dogs are of such great help, too."

"Why dost thou hunt only bear?" Klosh-Kwan once ventured to ask him.

And Keesh made fitting answer. "It is well known that there is more meat on the bear," he said.

But there was also talk of witchcraft in the village. "He hunts with evil spirits," some of the people contended, "wherefore his hunting is rewarded. How else can it be, save that he hunts with evil spirits?"

"Mayhap they be not evil, but good, these spirits," others said. "It is known that his father was a mighty hunter. May not his father hunt with him so that he may attain excellence and patience and understanding? Who knows?"

None the less, his success continued, and the less skilful hunters were often kept busy hauling in his meat. And in the division of it he was just. As his father had done

before him, he saw to it that the least old woman and the last old man received a fair portion, keeping no more for himself than his needs required. And because of this, and of his merit as a hunter, he was looked upon with respect, and even awe; and there was talk of making him chief after old Klosh-Kwan. Because of the things he had done, they looked for him to appear again in the council, but he never came, and they were ashamed to ask.

"I am minded to build me an IGLOO," he said one day to Klosh-Kwan and a number of the hunters. "It shall be a large IGLOO, wherein Ikeega and I can dwell in comfort."

"Ay," they nodded gravely.

"But I have no time. My business is hunting, and it takes all my time. So it is but just that the men and women of the village who eat my meat should build me my IGLOO."

And the IGLOO was built accordingly, on a generous scale which exceeded even the dwelling of Klosh-Kwan. Keesh and his mother moved into it, and it was the first prosperity she had enjoyed since the death of Bok. Nor was material prosperity alone hers, for, because of her wonderful son and the position he had given her, she came to he looked upon as the first woman in all the village; and the women were given to visiting her, to asking her advice, and to quoting her wisdom when arguments arose among themselves or with the men.

But it was the mystery of Keesh's marvellous hunting that took chief place in all their minds. And one day Ugh-Gluk taxed him with witchcraft to his face.

"It is charged," Ugh-Gluk said ominously, "that thou dealest with evil spirits, wherefore thy hunting is rewarded."

"Is not the meat good?" Keesh made answer. "Has one in the village yet to fall sick from the eating of it? How dost thou know that witchcraft be concerned? Or dost thou guess, in the dark, merely because of the envy that consumes thee?"

And Ugh-Gluk withdrew discomfited, the women laughing at him as he walked away. But in the council one night, after long deliberation, it was determined to put spies on his track when he went forth to hunt, so that his methods might be learned. So, on his next trip, Bim and Bawn, two young men, and of hunters the craftiest, followed after him, taking care not to be seen. After five days they returned, their eyes bulging and their tongues a-tremble to tell what they had seen. The council was hastily called in Klosh-Kwan's dwelling, and Bim took up the tale.

"Brothers! As commanded, we journeyed on the trail of Keesh, and cunningly we journeyed, so that he might not know. And midway of the first day he picked up with a great he-bear. It was a very great bear."

"None greater," Bawn corroborated, and went on himself. "Yet was the bear not inclined to fight, for he turned away and made off slowly over the ice. This we saw from the rocks of the shore, and the bear came toward us, and after him came Keesh, very much unafraid. And he shouted harsh words after the bear, and waved his arms about, and made much noise. Then did the bear grow angry, and rise up on his hind legs, and growl. But Keesh walked right up to the bear."

“Ay,” Bim continued the story. “Right up to the bear Keesh walked. And the bear took after him, and Keesh ran away. But as he ran he dropped a little round ball on the ice. And the bear stopped and smelled of it, then swallowed it up. And Keesh continued to run away and drop little round balls, and the bear continued to swallow them up.”

Exclamations and cries of doubt were being made, and Ugh-Gluk expressed open unbelief.

“With our own eyes we saw it,” Bim affirmed.

And Bawn — “Ay, with our own eyes. And this continued until the bear stood suddenly upright and cried aloud in pain, and thrashed his fore paws madly about. And Keesh continued to make off over the ice to a safe distance. But the bear gave him no notice, being occupied with the misfortune the little round balls had wrought within him.”

“Ay, within him,” Bim interrupted. “For he did claw at himself, and leap about over the ice like a playful puppy, save from the way he growled and squealed it was plain it was not play but pain. Never did I see such a sight!”

“Nay, never was such a sight seen,” Bawn took up the strain. “And furthermore, it was such a large bear.”

“Witchcraft,” Ugh-Gluk suggested.

“I know not,” Bawn replied. “I tell only of what my eyes beheld. And after a while the bear grew weak and tired, for he was very heavy and he had jumped about with exceeding violence, and he went off along the shore-ice, shaking his head slowly from side to side and sitting down ever and again to squeal and cry. And Keesh followed after the bear, and we followed after Keesh, and for that day and three days more we followed. The bear grew weak, and never ceased crying from his pain.”

“It was a charm!” Ugh-Gluk exclaimed. “Surely it was a charm!”

“It may well be.”

And Bim relieved Bawn. “The bear wandered, now this way and now that, doubling back and forth and crossing his trail in circles, so that at the end he was near where Keesh had first come upon him. By this time he was quite sick, the bear, and could crawl no farther, so Keesh came up close and speared him to death.”

“And then?” Klosh-Kwan demanded.

“Then we left Keesh skinning the bear, and came running that the news of the killing might be told.”

And in the afternoon of that day the women hauled in the meat of the bear while the men sat in council assembled. When Keesh arrived a messenger was sent to him, bidding him come to the council. But he sent reply, saying that he was hungry and tired; also that his IGLOO was large and comfortable and could hold many men.

And curiosity was so strong on the men that the whole council, Klosh-Kwan to the fore, rose up and went to the IGLOO of Keesh. He was eating, but he received them with respect and seated them according to their rank. Ikeega was proud and embarrassed by turns, but Keesh was quite composed.

Klosh-Kwan recited the information brought by Bim and Bawn, and at its close said in a stern voice: "So explanation is wanted, O Keesh, of thy manner of hunting. Is there witchcraft in it?"

Keesh looked up and smiled. "Nay, O Klosh-Kwan. It is not for a boy to know aught of witches, and of witches I know nothing. I have but devised a means whereby I may kill the ice-bear with ease, that is all. It be headcraft, not witchcraft."

"And may any man?"

"Any man."

There was a long silence. The men looked in one another's faces, and Keesh went on eating.

"And . . . and . . . and wilt thou tell us, O Keesh?" Klosh-Kwan finally asked in a tremulous voice.

"Yea, I will tell thee." Keesh finished sucking a marrow-bone and rose to his feet. "It is quite simple. Behold!"

He picked up a thin strip of whalebone and showed it to them. The ends were sharp as needle-points. The strip he coiled carefully, till it disappeared in his hand. Then, suddenly releasing it, it sprang straight again. He picked up a piece of blubber.

"So," he said, "one takes a small chunk of blubber, thus, and thus makes it hollow. Then into the hollow goes the whalebone, so, tightly coiled, and another piece of blubber is fitted over the whale-bone. After that it is put outside where it freezes into a little round ball. The bear swallows the little round ball, the blubber melts, the whalebone with its sharp ends stands out straight, the bear gets sick, and when the bear is very sick, why, you kill him with a spear. It is quite simple."

And Ugh-Gluk said "Oh!" and Klosh-Kwan said "Ah!" And each said something after his own manner, and all understood.

And this is the story of Keesh, who lived long ago on the rim of the polar sea. Because he exercised headcraft and not witchcraft, he rose from the meanest IGLOO to be head man of his village, and through all the years that he lived, it is related, his tribe was prosperous, and neither widow nor weak one cried aloud in the night because there was no meat.

The Strange Experience of a Misogynist

"CONFOUND it all! But these minds of ours are curious fabrics!"

I had awakened, and remembering my dream, burst into the exclamation just recorded. It was a curious dream, seemingly without meaning, yet striking from a psychological standpoint, through the vividness of its realism and the fantastic juxtaposition of thoughts and scenes I previously experienced. The first part of it was a medley of incoherency and misty vagueness, too dim to recollect, but the conclusion was pictured in my mind's eye so perfectly, that it seemed as though the original were still before me: a little maid singing the same little song upon some metropolitan vaudeville stage. And these were the words she sang, with great seeming significance, to me in my dream:

"Reuben, Reuben, I've been thinking what a good
thing it would be,
If the women were transported, far beyond the
northern sea."

She sang it over and over again — more like a vocal fugue — ever discovering new charms of melody, new graces of expression. As she sang, strange foreboding impressions came to me, and her roguish face, enticing it is true, exasperated me.

"Begone!" I had cried. "Go to your far northern sea and leave me in peace!"

As I thus abjured her, her face became sad, compassionate; she held out her arms, beseechingly; then vanished from my dream. But in her place there was — ah! God! — the personification of one of my wildest dreams, the one woman who in all history had interested me. Grand, imperial, the mistress of kings, the friend of philosophy and art, she stood there — before me — so close I could have touched her — and just as I had always imaged her. She smiled upon me with careless abandon; then her beautiful face grew solemn and thoughtful, as, superbly tragic and with infinite pathos, she murmured, "After me, the deluge."

She too had gone: I was awake. Deeply I pondered on the incident. As an active member of our psychological society, I kept a terse record of my dreams, in fact, had made such a modest study of them that never was I at loss for the clew to their causation. But the present one baffled me. True, years ago I had seen and heard the little Quakeress in a vaudeville show: and as truly, had I, in my student days, romanticised upon that wondrous, divinely-feminine figure, whose powerful personality had left its impress so strongly on the pages of history. But I had not recollected either

in years; I had not deviated from my regular habits; I had gone to bed at my usual hour; and I could think of nothing outside my customary bill of fare which I had partaken of. In short, the little occurrence was inexplicable.

Soon, however, other sensations came over me as I acknowledged the futility of my efforts, tossed the covers back, and sprang out of bed. Something was wrong, evidently out of place — I unconsciously recognized this, but no effort of analytical reasoning could substantiate the verdict of my intuition. Bright rays of sunlight danced hither and thither; through the partially raised window, the perfume of flowers was wafted to me; the bustling life of the awakening city saluted my ears — "Ah! I have it now! Where are the sparrows?" I cried.

They were silent. No squabbling on the walks, no fierce battles on my window ledge, no chattering and scolding and noise incessant, nothing to tell me of their presence. Yet the spring was but fairly dawning and it was in the hey-day of mating time. How often, of late, had they wakened me with their mimic warfare, their martial contests, their boisterous wooing of their females! And how often had I prodigally burned a quarter-hour, watching and studying, this, the most important epoch of their lives! But they were gone: this trite demonstration of the laws of natural and sexual selection had seemingly been withdrawn from nature's bill-boards. With an unusual feeling of strangeness, I completed my dressing, only to discover new cause for thought, new whys and wherefores. I had asked to be called at six sharp, and here it was seven-thirty. It was evident that I had missed my train, so canceling the engagement with a slight manifestation of irritation, I whistled down the speaking-tube for my customary kettle of hot water. No reply. I listened: the house was as silent as a tomb: apparently, no one was stirring. Strange thoughts flashed to my mind. Visions of bloody horrors, burglars, thugs, hidden mysteries, murder, and what not, rose before me. This was a very strange, an unprecedented occurrence. I decided to investigate.

But first, a word for myself. I am a young fellow of twenty-eight or thirty; comfortably, though not more than so, endowed with the world's goods; and alone upon the face of the earth, save for some distant, very distant relatives. The further to satisfy my modest but somewhat expensive tastes, I devote an occasional hour to literary drudgery — but a drudgery which permits me to be wholly my own master, little caring whether school keeps or not. It is now some two years or more that I have resided at my present quarters, which, for various reasons, are very satisfactory. The house, a cosy, two-story suburban residence, is the possession of a nice widow-lady, who, with her three spinster daughters, manages to eke out a comfortable livelihood from a small annuity and the sums they receive from me every quarter. I am the sole lodger, in fact, boarder too, though I more often dine down town or at the club. My feminine friends unite in calling me the "crusty young bachelor" and my jovial, bohemian comrades, "the misogynist." Why I have been given these respective apellations, I can readily understand; but how I have earned them I cannot conceive. I am not a woman-hater, as you may by this time have supposed me to be, far from it. Still, I must confess, I am not a woman-lover. Yet in this case I see no reason why the absence of the positive

should imply the presence of the negative. I have never loved nor loved in vain, have never experienced anything which should condition me as I am — perhaps I was born that way. In short, while I do not like woman, I do not dislike her; but with such an object of neutral tints, I neither go out of my way to cultivate nor to avoid. "Confound it! How that quaint, little song rings in my ears!"

"If the women were transported, far beyond the
northern sea."

Mentally cursing the composer, I descended the stairs. No sign of life: the kitchen just as it was left last evening. It was evident that they were still a-bed. Filled with gloomy forebodings, I first knocked, then successively forced the doors to the three chambers. Each was deserted. The beds had all been slept in; but I noted with surprise, the presence of the garments, shoes, etc., which had been discarded on disrobing the previous evening. So accustomed was I to every dress in the household, that I ransacked the wardrobes, closets, and chests of drawers. Nothing was missing and I smiled to myself as I pictured their flight, clad in nothing but their sleeping robes. Imagine my consternation when I discovered in each bed, the night-dresses of their respective occupants. "Shameful!" I thought; but at the same time, I found myself entertaining a malicious desire to have been a witness of the event, to have beheld the three attenuated spinsters and their ebom-pointed mother, fleeing like veritable Eves — whither, I knew not.

A myriad hypotheses suggested themselves but I could entertain none of them. I had never suspected my sedate landlady nor her sober daughters of any wildness, and this very unconventional procedure took me quite a-back. Perhaps something serious had occurred? I would lock up the house and inform the chief of police.

On the front steps I found the morning paper, still as tightly rolled up as when it left the carrier's hand. "What's this? Phew!" These were the staring headlines which met my astonished eye:

A world catastrophe!!!

The scientific world astounded!!!

The femininity of the earth is no more!!!

All peoples have felt the heavy hand of horror!!!

The confutation of all religion, science and philosophy!!!

A universal wail of sorrow!!!

Special session of congress!!!

And much more which I dashed through to get to the pith of the matter. Impossible as it seemed and more like a gigantic hoax, here it is, in substance:

Some time last night, it had been generally agreed upon as midnight, in some mysterious, unaccountable way, every woman, the whole world over, had suddenly disappeared. There had been no warning: there had been no remains. It was total annihilation or total translation. Very graphic was the description of a great state ball in Berlin. A thousand couples were whirling in giddy waltz when twelve o'clock struck. A shudder, like the flapping of a great sail, was heard, and a thousand astonished men

were rooted to the floor, speechless, each clasping the empty costume of his partner of the previous moment. Thus it had happened everywhere: none were spared, not even the female babes in the cradle. Nor had the shock been less severe among the rest of the animal king¬dom. The male gender of all species remained, but the female had vanished. ("Ah," I mused, "that accounts for the sparrows.")

I hastily skimmed the account. This dreadful holocaust had put all the world aghast. Science was speechless as was also philosophy. Religion, while, on the whole, dumbfounded, among several sects there was whispering of the fulfillment of prophecy. There was no accounting for it. The immutability of natural law, the towering fabric of philosophic speculation, the dizzy atheistical negation of all supernaturalism, the adamantine division, between the knowable and the unknowable, of agnosticism; these, all these, and every system of thought and mode of action, had been overthrown, confuted by this one fell blow. A blow, so light, that the sleeper awakened not in the passing.

I could hardly trust my senses. Was I dreaming? Had the editors or the printers gone mad? Or was it nothing but a gigantic American sell? With my mind awhirl, I was just preparing for the acceptation of the latter when I suddenly paused at the gate, remembering my deserted house and the sparrows. Hardly daring to think, I hurried down the street. At the corner, I stumbled into an excited group, evidently discussing the situation.

They were local acquaintances so I did not hesitate to join them. I was amused, however, at their appearance. Their attires indicated hasty and indiscriminate dressing. Shoes were dirty, cravats missing or all awry, clothes unbrushed — in short, a general air of seediness was the most conspicuous feature. And there, I could have sworn to it, was old Dottlyboy, the precisest and neatest man of the neighborhood, without his face washed.

"Oh! It's terrible! I can hardly collect myself. What's going to become of us? The cook has gone, too, and I haven't had my breakfast. I don't see why she couldn't have stayed. O my! O my! And at my time of life too!" Thus chattered the old gentleman who lived across the way from me, mumbling and chewing his words as though his mouth were full of hot mush — he had forgotten his false teeth.

"Is it true," I asked, "that woman is no more?"

"It is true," they gasped in solemn chorus.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" I shouted. But evincing no sign of jubilancy, I looked at them, then asked "Why don't you rejoice? Come, give a hearty three times three and a tiger with me. Now — hip — hip — "

But just then I was so violently kicked from behind that other emotions claimed my attention. I whirled about with the intention of planting my deadly right in the most vulnerable portion of my assailant's anatomy, when — thwack! — old Dottlyboy's cane descended on my pericranium with periculous energy. I had a hazy impression of being suffocated in a cloud of invective, buffets, kicks and blows; of being tossed about in the

bowels of a gregarious maelstrom; and of being vomited forth, a disintegrated mass, to recline in the contumely of the gutter.

"It is a very evident fact," I murmured as I retired to the house to change my garments, "that they feel their loss deeply. I wonder what this most reminds me of — a freshman rush, a bargain counter crush, or a scrimmage on the gridiron?"

As I prepared myself anew to sally forth, I pondered deeply upon the perversity of human nature. Day after day, I had been the companion of one or more of the group, which had so viciously assailed me, in the rides to and from the city; hour after hour, I had listened to these suburbanites' complaints against womankind; yet here — and here — and here (I was feeling my bruises) are the convincing proofs of their inconsistency. Resolving to be more prudent in my demeanor and to hide my joy beneath a show of deepest melancholy, I was soon aboard a down-town car.

So ingrained was the habit, that I found myself glancing up with an air of guilty apprehension every time the car stopped to take on ladies. Each time, I resumed my paper, breathing a sigh of relief, for among them there were never any ladies. I think it was the first time I had ever come down on such a late car without injuring my personal feelings, by relinquishing my seat, in order to satisfy the highly impersonal one which conventionality demanded of me and designated as courtesy. There were no charming creatures to hang pathetically onto the straps or to gaze beseechingly at me in a usually successful endeavor to soften my marble heart.

The streets were full of people, all discussing the one topic, while in front of the great papers, thousands were grouped, awaiting with bated breaths, the advent of every bulletin. One thing surprised me greatly: without exception, every window contained cards which informed the public that men or boys were wanted. For once, labor was at a premium and jobs at a discount. It was remarkable, the airs which the laborers now put on. It had not taken them long to grasp the situation. Proud disdain and stony indifference had taken the place of their whining and begging. "What an expansion of the currency," I thought.

Especially were the employment agencies crowded — not by applicants for positions but by prospective employers. The celerity with which wages rose was startling, particularly in those branches of labor hitherto wholly carried on by women. By mid day the almost utter futility of endeavoring to obtain men, willing to cook, make beds and wash dishes, for anything less than fabulous salaries was manifest. As a result, everybody decided to patronize the restaurants. The crush, everywhere, for meals, was frightful — so terrible that I resolved to do my own cooking at home. Of course, not for long, for so many would now enter upon this lucrative business, that a few days would see everything on its original footing.

A week soon passed, during which the newspapers were filled with fierce controversies and the whole industrial system pulsating with unprecedented vigor. Never had there been such a boom before. Everything was running full blast. A reduction of the population by one-half was equal to a doubling of the currency. There was one point in this stimulus, however, which the world had evidently forgotten to reckon on.

That, while the productive facilities had all been revived, the consumptive facilities had been reduced fifty per cent. Thus, there would be extraordinary activity in trade, and, since there was a greater demand than supply of labor, wages would rise; but following the wages, there would come a rise in all prices. At first, labor, being in the ascendancy, would buy liberally of all necessaries and many of the luxuries which it had hitherto been denied; but when prices reached their proportionate ratio with wages, labor would be unable to buy a bit more than in the days before the great catastrophe. The outcome was obvious to any dabbler in the "dismal science," though neither I nor the world realized or comprehended that outcome.

One day, about two weeks after the occurrence of the wonderful event, I went down to call on Charley Eggleston, a young artist friend of mine. On the way, I dropped into my barber's for a shave. Imagine my surprise on finding a shopful of customers and an alarming dearth of barbers. While waiting his appearance, I looked over my companions and was astonished at the general picture of slouchiness which they presented. Horrors! I glanced in the mirror and beheld myself with soiled shirt, collars and cuffs, two waistcoat buttons missing, four day's growth of beard, a dirty handkerchief in my hand, the knees of my trousers bagged and the creases of the same most conspicuous by their absence, my — but why relate it all — I was as slouchy as any of them. Just then the barber arrived on the scene. I had always looked upon him as a sober, industrious man, devoted to the welfare of his family; but in he came, as drunk as a boiled owl, and ordered us all out of his shop. I remonstrated with him, though to no effect, for he informed us that he was going to close up shop. His assistants were all drunk or lost and it was impossible for him to do the work single handed.

"And besides," he concluded, "What's the good of working anyway? What can I do with my money after I've earned it?"

So he turned us out, bag and baggage, forgot to lock the door, and returned to finish his carousal.

Though Charley was a very neat fellow, careful of his appearance and a ladies' man, I knew him too well to be ashamed to visit him in my present guise. At the same time I decided to postpone contemplated visits on my lawyer and publisher. My journey, drawing me thither, I happened to pass by the publishing house. The place was closed and there was a sign informing the public that Walker & Sons had retired from business. Glancing curiously about me, I was surprised at the number of "To Let" signs on every hand. Across the street, two men were putting up the shutters to their shops and on looking down the street, I observed several others occupied in like manner. At this juncture I unexpectedly met my lawyer. He was in a hurry, but paused long enough to tell me he had given up his practice and was going out of town, and that he had placed my papers and everything relating to me in his possession, in a safe-deposit vault at my banker's. He explained his course by informing me that he had enough to live on, so there was no use in earning more. Continuing my journey, I finally arrived at Eggleston's rooms, marveling, as I did so, at the amount of drunkenness I had witnessed on the streets.

As I entered the hallway I met Charley. He was dressed so carelessly that I felt quite relieved on the score of my own appearance.

"Hello, old man!" he cried. "Haven't seen you for an age. I was just going out, but — "

"Going out!" I stood aghast. Charley Eggleston, the immaculate, the ladies' man, the dressiest man about town, going out on the street in such a guise!

Understanding my surprise, he said "O what's the difference. No one to see me anyway, you know. But come in — it was nothing pressing — and have a chat."

His apartments were just as bad: the confusion and disorder was indescribable. It was also evident that he had been neglecting his painting, and on chiding him about it, he said "What's the use? I can't go on with it. First my model and then my muse deserted me. Besides, what does it matter whether — by the way, how are you getting along with that new poem of yours? You read me the first four stanzas — have you it finished?"

"I — I — but — — " I looked at him in dismay. Those four stanzas, lonely in their solitude, still lay upon my desk — since they were not self-procreative, they had neither multiplied nor replenished my thought. "But you see, Charley, I must acknowledge that — that — — "

Here we both burst into laughter, confessed our sins, and agreed that in some unaccountable way we had lost incentive. Having become aware of our own condition, we hit upon the idea of visiting our different chums to note how they were progressing, and we promised ourselves a very enjoyable evening.

Finding it impossible to obtain a cab, we resolved to walk. What a different scene the streets presented to that of a few short weeks ago! Everybody was disconsolate and gloomy, the stores nearly all closed, and the theatres deserted. Everything seemed going the wrong way. I noticed particularly, from a study of their faces, that everybody was suffering from dyspepsia. The absence of good cooking was beginning to tell. There was no laughter nor manifestations of good nature; but wrangling and fighting had become the order of the day, due, I surmised, among other things, to the loss of their stomachs. While excessive drinking had become quite common among all classes, it was especially noticeable among the workingmen. Nor was that all. Their demeanor was greatly changed. Dissatisfaction was the prevailing expression of their faces, while they carried themselves with an air of independence and were insolent and insulting to those of the upper classes they chanced to encounter. After some strolling I became aware that the little courtesy, previously to be found on our thoroughfares, had entirely disappeared. Selfishness had become the ruling passion. As I scrutinized the faces of all I met, I was surprised at the hardness and bullishness of their expression: all the higher, nobler attributes seemed lo have been eliminated. Not only were the sidewalks thronged by the natives, but the rural population had evidently deserted the country to come to town. With an old farmer, enquiring his way, we had quite a chat. He seemed to mourn, above all, the loss of "Maria," who had worked shoulder to shoulder with him for "well-nigh thirty year." First his hired men had quit work; then his boys

had gone off to the city; and, since there was no one dependent upon him, he could not see why he was not entitled to a vacation too. So here he was, out to have a good time, spending his savings of years in pursuance thereof. But above all, in the crowds that surged about me, the most prominent feature was the woeful absence of buttons.

An hour later found us seated at the hospitable board of Trombley, "the connoiseur" (not in art, however, but in gourmandizing) his chums called him. His chef, whom he had been paying an extravagant salary, had left him; but he was an adept in cookery, conversant with all the mysteries of the chafing-dish. Many were the lamentations he made as i he served us, and many the apologies, too. At our earnest solicitation he had made some of his charming butter-cakes, and as we "fell to," with haunting recollections of our own cuisine, he watched us with an anxious air.

"There, there, man!" he suddenly exclaimed.

Charley was thunderstruck. He was in the act of helping himself to a liberal supply of honey when thus admonished. Trombley saw that our mutual surprise demanded an explanation, so he gave it.

"Do you know that that is most likely the last honey which will ever pass your lips? It cost me just exactly twenty dollars and it was the last pint in the market. Haven't you heard that the honey-bees have ceased producing?"

"Ceased producing!" in chorus.

"Yes, alas! It is true. In every hive, when the queen was found to be missing, confusion and anarchy ensued. They first turned to and ate all the honey, then separated, and are now scattered from Dan to Ber-Sheba. In the absence of authority and a guiding hand, each bee shifted for itself, and it is said that the country is almost uninhabitable, so ferocious have they become. It is certain that none can survive the winter."

The next person we visited was Prescott, an old college chum, whom we had never lost sight of and who had devoted himself to the cause of temperance. Repeated ringings of his bell having elicited no response, and hearing the sound of singing, we ventured within. Tracing the voice, we arrived at the kitchen. There, surrounded by a startling array of bottles, in a slatternly dressing-gown and singing with maudlin gravity a temperance hymn, was Prescott, terrifically drunk. He evidently did not recognize us, though our reception was a warm one, for he took pot shots at us with a Smith & Wesson, as we tumbled over each other in the haste of our exit.

On recovering our equanimity, we decided to next visit George Curtis, a bright young fellow, with a future before him we were certain. As his place was some distance away, we took the shortest cuts possible. Just as we were emerging from a very dark street we heard a voice, subdued but with great dramatic intensity, soliloquizing, " 'To be or not to be, that is the question. Whether to — '" But at that moment our footsteps aroused the person, who whirled about, pointed a pistol at us and cried "Hands up!"

We hastily complied. As the man stepped closer to rob us, Charley exclaimed "Good God! It's Haskins!"

Haskins was a well known and quite successful actor and an old-time bohemian crony of ours. The recognition was mutual and explanations followed. Haskins had always lived up to the last cent of his salary, and when the great catastrophe had burst, was playing, but penniless. His forte being in comedy and extravaganza, the chief attraction of which lay in the feminine charms displayed, he was at once thrown out of em¬ployment. Since then he had done nothing and now he was famishing. To night he had resolved to carve his way to at least a full stomach.

"Why didn't you seek work?" I asked.

"Do I look like a laborer?" was his Yankee reply.

"But good gracious! Think of the disgrace!"

"There is no disgrace," he rejoined. "My father's dead: my mother, sisters, wife, all gone. I am disgraced in no body's eyes I care for, and as for yourselves, you'll be doing as bad before the month is out.

"But business is business," he concluded. "I have resolved to become a shining light in my new profession. So hands up! It's best to get the hand in by beginning on one's friends."

And he began with such vigor that when he bid us good night, every valuable we had with us had been transferred to his possession. Several times we were thus halted before we arrived at Curtis' house. It seemed as though everybody was taking to the highway as a means of obtaining an easy livelihood. If it went on at this rate, we soon would be reduced to the condition of the Scilly Islanders, who lived comfortably by taking in each other's washing.

If Curtis were at home, he was certainly in oblivion — drunk or otherwise for our repeated knocks availed nothing. Remembering our experience with Prescott, we were very cautious this time, keeping a sharp lookout for spring-guns and man traps. We ransacked the first floor and were thoroughly overhauling the second when we discovered him. Unseen, through an open door, we gazed upon the peculiar scene presented to us. In immaculate evening dress, patent leathers, gloves, etc., complete, attired as though for a wedding, he stood before a large table, contemplatively regarding a strange assortment of articles. There was a case of champagne, one of port, another of bourbon, several bottles of absinthe, a hypodermic syringe, a complete opium-smoker's outfit, and many other drugs and paraphernalia for like purposes. George himself was terribly changed. His naturally slender face was quite attenuated and of extreme pallor; his eyes were dilated and intensely bright; while beneath them lay great, concentric circles of scarlet and black. He seemed lost in the depths of a thought which embraced the articles before him. We crept silently away and down the stairs, then returned, noisily stumbling over every third one, swearing like troopers, and making the greatest possible racket. He turned to greet us, shook hands cordially and gayly plunged into the thought which was uppermost in his mind.

"Just in time for my wedding! No (as we glanced at the general miscellany), don't think I'm starting a harem — I'm only deliberating on my choice. I'm a monogamous man, you know. But now that you fellows are here, I want you to stand up with me

— but, I had forgotten, I must first indicate my preference. Come, help me to choose. Now what do you say to this?" As he raised a bottle of bourbon aloft and sang:

"Here's to the good old whiskey, drink it down!
Here's to the good old whiskey, drink it down!
Here's to the good old whiskey,
For it makes you feel so frisky,
Drink it down! Drink it down! Drink it down!"

"Horrible!" I cried.

"Ah, perhaps you don't like it. We'll pass on to the next. Here we have absinthe, the genuine extrait d'absinthe of happy France. It is composed, I am informed, of the flowering tops of wormwood, of angelica and sweet flag root, the dittany leaves of Crete, of star-anise fruit and many other aromatics, macerated in the purest of alcohol. What a charming bride! What an exquisite, emerald light flashes forth from its translucent depths! What joys unutterable to the fond lover who satiates desire, discovers bliss in the circumambiency of such a mistress! Think of the pleas — "

"George, you must stop this! At once! Be a man!" I commanded. But he rattled gayly on.

"Truly, comrade, I agree with you. It is not wholly to my taste. Surely, a more charming bride awaits me. Perhaps this is she. Hasheesh, the simplest and most enticing of maidens — the leaves and the flowers of the hemp plant, graciously mingled in due proportion with butter-fat. How simple, but how fascinating! Yet she is but an immature child when compared with this, a glorious woman. One kiss, and she fills your veins with liquid fire, which through your being, boils and bubbles, sizzles, froths and foams, effervescing with tremendous throbs of maddening pleasure. One kiss, and she takes your hand, leads you up inaccessible heights, away from the world and its sorrows — up — up — till you walk with the immortals, sip golden nectar from chalices all-divine, till in the arms of Morpheus, sweet child of Somnus, you dream, and dream, and dream — a bliss ineffable!

"Yet," he seemed to pause and reflect, "such graces are too vigorous for me. More calm and peaceful must my mistress be. One, to lead me to that Lethean plunge through enervating, placid, drowsy joys; one, to steal away my senses with insidious stealth; one, to love me so that I loose my thought unaware, to kiss me from dull, brooding care into sweet forgetfulness. And here I find her — the soul of the poppy, the radiant spirit of mercy, the ministering angel of man. Sweet, sweet, the soft embrace of thine arms! Sweet, sweet — far more than sweet — divine the wondrous pleasure of communion with thee! Two mistresses have I wooed, and won, and lost. Wooing and winning, on thy soft bosom wilt I slumber through the lapse of ages, through countless cycles of time, through all eternity. Though virgin still, hast thou three daughters — divine fruition of an immaculate conception. Thus, as on thy chaste breast I sleep, forgetful, wilt these three graces — Morphia, Codeia, Narcotin — watch over us; thus, deep in somnolent languor, wilt they guard our dreams and lull us to soft melancholy; thus, as we journey down the shadowy slopes of time, wilt they shroud us in oblivion's

winding sheet. Come, dear maiden of the Orient, forget thy mountain home of Akkisar, and in forgetting, bring forgetfulness to me. One caress, and my troubles flee me; one kiss from thy pale-red lips, and my senses sway and leave me; one benediction, and in thy mercy I cease to be; once mine, I am no more. O ye gods! — No more — No more — No more."

His voice died slowly away. We were silent. What could we do? As we stood helplessly by, his mood changed, he was himself again.

"Dear friends, bear with me: my affliction, as you know, is great. What may seem the raving of a madman is but the dreary monody of a soul, crying out from amid the ashes of dead joys, lost hopes, vanished ideals. As you well know, I have wooed, won and lost two mistresses — why not a third? First, the fair daughter of Mnemosyne; my success, barely inchoate, was brought to a glorious dawn by my second; the third, which I wed tonight, becomes their requeiscat in pace. You remember my music; how I devoted myself to it; how well I mastered it; my successes, small though they were; the beginnings of recognition, of homage: but you will remember that there was a something lacking, a something to stir hearts of adamant; to kindle as with fire the emotions; to wring the heart-strings; to tear the gasping soul from its habitation of clay; to send it hurtling through the glories of empyreal bliss. My technique was superb — the equal of the greatest masters — but the power of soul-stirring, of soul-translation lay not there. In a dimly conscious way I understood the vacancy, the absence of the inspiration, and I awaited it, trusting faithfully in my intuitive foresight. The moment came; the time was ripe; I had mastered all save that; and that I awaited to master me. The dawn burst; an angel's hand swept with responsive touch the harmonies of my genius. As yet strangers, did my talent and my genius meet. I burst into song — and why not? — the void was filled — I loved — before high Heaven, aye, and the utter¬most depths of Hell, I loved. The world embraced me; her riches, her glory, her every treasure were cast at my feet; and sublimer still, the sublimest of all, I was loved. Then did I soar to higher and yet higher levels; my power became absolute; my genius, transcendant. But amid the dizzy thunders of a world's applause, I essayed grander and still grander flights, ever beholding with bated breath my guiding light, my polestar, my Alice. O Alice! It was all for you, all through you, all by you! Then came the marriage — but a night intervened — a few short hours before the great consummation of my life. O God! The morning never broke! — Unending night in a vale of sorrow and tears! As a fiery meteor dashing athwart the sky, for a moment dazzling the dreamer before it is gone, so flashed she across my life, and in passing, struck the grandest symphonies of my soul. But the hand is wanting, the singer dumb, the strings broken. Think of it; conjure it; give rein to the wildest flights of fantastic imagination — from out the ghastly, unknown wastes of space, of the universe, some supreme force, some hell-bound, conscious power, seized and drew my Alice from me; forsooth! To glut the idle whim or empty vagary of some celestial monster. They say that thus was lost all women: to me, there was lost but Alice: but to the world was lost incentive. Woman, the one great inciting force of man is gone. The one gauge of man's

morality, of man's ideality, of man's nobility, is gone. O mourn, ye sons of earth! Cry out in blackest despair! The past is dead: there is no future. Ye fall — down — down — down — to brutishness, to corruption, to death. Yield to your prurient desires; satiate your passions in wild debauchery; forget that ye are men. It is the panacea, the only one, to remove you from your miseries. Sin! Sin! Sin! Sin and be unexcelled by Hell itself! Heed me, ye sons of woman! The afflatus of inspiration is upon me. Steep thyselves in the ephemeral somnolency of vice. To morrow you are no more. There is no future — woman is gone. Thy tremendous civilization, thy knowledge, thy culture of ten times ten thousand years is crumbling on the verge — disintegration, primeval chaos awaits it, and you, and all. I see brute struggling with brute, and these brutes are men. Down into the oblivion of night I behold the towering fabric of man's achievements, the giddy pinnacles of his creation, the miraculous productions of his finite will, sink in a sea of blood. Evanescent are the glories of his enterprise. Loose the dogs of war! Tear the throat and rend the flesh! Kill! Maim! Destroy! Tumult, anarchy and chaos shall reign, and amid the horrors of such reign, shall vanish the modicum of man's nobility — the remnant of that which was lost with womankind. A space of internecine strife, then all is over. The earth will traverse the heavens as of yore; the sun, moon, stars and constellations will go their accustomed rounds; the universe will seem not susceptible to the change: but on the earth, man, bird, beast and insect; all sentient and insensate life; all organic structure and superstructure; will cease to be!"

We were dumbfounded, awed to quiescence. Apparently unconscious of our presence, he lighted a tiny alcohol lamp and prepared his opium and pipe. When the sickening smoke had well filled the apartment, we glided out, unwelcome guests from the marriage feast. We were moody, weighed down, not only with the horror of what had been, but with a horror of what was to be. We had seen enough so parted at the corner. The cars had ceased running and I was forced to wearily tramp home through the silent city — silent, save for the many deeds of violence and cries for help which came to my eyes and saluted my ears. Murder and robbery stalked abroad, and I was thankful when my home was reached. But I could not sleep: a weird phantasmagoria of anticipatory events haunted me as I tossed restlessly about. The impression left by Curtis was not too easily forgotten. Somewhere towards morning, the house was invaded by burglars; but I was indifferent and told them to help themselves. I began to feel, though not clearly, that in some way, both my position and the position of all men, were analogous with that of Curtis.

The sun was slipping from view in the west; the air was balmy and gracious; all nature seemed at peace: but silently, exhausted and in the extreme throes of hunger, my comrade and I trudged along the deserted road.

Hush! We heard a fall of hoofs and sprang into the bushes. Grasping our bludgeons firmly, desperation nerving us to action, we awaited the traveler's approach. Round a turn in the road he came, leading a heavily loaded horse. He was an aged man, with a fringe of white hair crowning the once oval but now fearfully emaciated face, the nose

of which too distinctly proclaimed the Semitic type. Nearer and nearer he came; but for his gray hairs I felt no veneration, no mercy.

Suddenly, just as he came opposite our place of concealment, we sprang upon him. He made as though to draw a pistol, but I struck him sharply on the head, stretching him in the dust. Then we unloaded the horse. The burden was heavy and our hearts rejoiced as with trembling fingers we drew our knives and cut the many wrappings. O the bitter disappointment! Out rolled rubies, pearls, diamonds, the choicest of gems, and gold without end. In our rage we kicked the prostrate form and trampled the treasure into the dust. Recovering consciousness, the old man scrambled to his feet and on beholding the wanton dissipation of his wealth, burst into wild lamentations, calling upon the Father of Israel to smite the Gentile and repossess him of his goods. At first, in half-insane jocosity, I joined him, shrieking that portion of the Merchant of Venice where Shylock bewails the loss of his ducats and his daughter. But the old scoundrel's howling transcended mine, so I struck him roughly on the mouth and bade him cease his racket.

We asked him if he had any food, but swearing by all the prophets that he had none, he resumed the (to him) pleasant task of tearing his hair and his soul in his anguish. However we were hungry and heeded him not. A few minutes sufficed to build a fire, kill the animal and enable us to partake of a succulent repast of roast-horse. The Jew, heart-broken, refusing to join us, busied himself in rescuing his scattered treasures. Once, in the failing light, he uttered an exclamation of joy and hurried to the fire, the better to examine a handful of gems he had just resurrected. As he bent to the flame, his eyes glowing with the fierce fire of avarice, I glanced into his hand and beheld the cause of his joy. Among twenty jewels of more than ordinary value, reposed a brilliant of superbest lustre. Paugh! It was disgusting. I struck his hand maladroitly and scattered the diamonds to the four winds. The result was unexpected and sanguinary. Uttering an unearthly cry of blended rage and sorrow, he sprang upon me, seemingly endowed with supernatural vigor; but I blanketed him before he could use his revolver. My comrade hastened to my aid and as the three of us struggled together, received a ball through the brain. A minute and all was over, however, and even after the Jew was dead, I struck him again and again with in¬human delight. But as I stood gloatingly over the corpse, a revulsion of feeling overcame me: I staggered, fell by the fire, and in thought journeyed over the past several weeks.

And what weeks they had been! Most truly had the vaticinations of Curtis been fulfilled! And why not? Though I had discovered it, alas! Too late, woman, the one incentive, was lost. The world had not been prone to realize it at first; but now, moribund, in the last stages of extinction, the truth was all-apparent.

At first, as I have described, interest lagged and man had begun to titillate his desires with liquor; but the spirit grew and things went from bad to worse. Labor, after the first kiss of prosperity, finding itself reduced to its previous state of hand-to-mouth existence, rebelled. There were no longer any ties of wives and little ones, so the men became insulting and riotous in their demands for more wages and less

hours. The toiling capitalists, discovering that they also had no families to labor for, became indifferent and replied to the strikes of their employes with lockouts. Life nor property were no longer held sacred and a reign °f pillage and slaughter ensued. To intensify the horror of such conditions, the degraded criminal classes, emerging from their slums, holes and dens, flew at the throat of the society which had so often and so bitterly given them the lash. And even the convicts in all the penitentiaries, revolted; succeeding often in gaining their liberty. The police forces became paralyzed and finally dissolved. However, for a space, the regular army (the National Guard having long since disbanded) checked the inevitable tide of events. The people, having degenerated to all the brutishness of primitive man, drank and fought with equal ferocity. In consequence, the great centers of trade, and even all cities and towns, became stagnated, and the country no longer sent it products thither.

With starvation in the metropolises, a wild stampede followed, and the country was inundated with starving, frantic hordes, by whom, the agriculturists were despoiled and destroyed. All production ceased and anarchy was inaugurated. The complex superstructure of government was shattered, and the gregarious manifestation of the genus homo descended to the tribal unit — a unit, of course, in which the tie of family played no part. The men collected about their more valiant comrades, whose great physical and mental brutality enabled them to predominate. By these bands, the world was ravaged, plundered and destroyed. Art, science, culture, religion, tottered and fell into complete dissolution. In short, the reign of Hell on Earth had been instituted.

Borne away on the crest of a human tidal wave, I had been carried into the suburban districts, where I had since eked out a miserable and perilous existence. My sufferings and terrors had been frightful. I felt myself rapidly descending to the brute, but in my chaotic environment could do nothing to stay my fall. My treatment of the old Jew to night, clearly illustrates the completeness with which all my higher attributes had been annihilated. There lay no nuance between me and a hungry lion in an African wilderness. And yet, such was the inevitable result of the loss of womankind.

Death, in its most horrible forms, had become my constant companion. And strange were the struggles of the departing spirits! Worn out by suffering and hardship, men saw mirages — not of banquets, but of women. I remember one brute, with whom I had fought over the possession of half a measure of corn, and whom I was forced to kill. As I ate hurriedly, for fear of being discovered and dispossessed, he rose to his feet, crying aloud the name of his wife. With the death-sweat on his brow and the rattle in his throat, he thought he beheld her. He tried to grasp the phantom of his distorted vision: it evaded, retreated: he advanced. Though dying, the vision gave him strength and he pursued it across the dry stubble, to throw up his arms and fall a corpse in the center of the field.

And of late, I found a similar hallucination overcoming my reason. It came upon me at the most unexpected moments and places. It darted across my line of vision; danced on the path before me; and in my dreams, overwhelmed me with caresses or soothed my weary soul with the ineffable calm of a woman's presence. In the battle

of Norfolk, where ten thousand starving men captured the last commissariat of the expiring government, it well-nigh caused my death. The victory was virtually ours, for the beseiged, in an endeavor to save themselves, had begun to cast the provisions amongst us. In the wild scramble I captured a great ham and escaped to the adjacent woods. Here I was overtaken by a marauder, who, quarreling with me over the booty, precipitated a terrible struggle. Just as I had him at my mercy and was about to give him the quietus, the apparition intervened. Dazzled, bewildered, I suspended the blow. The next I knew, I came to consciousness, grievously wounded, to discover the absence of both my antagonist and the ham. That was the first manifestation but since then they have grown more frequent. Ah! There she is now — O Laura, Laura, my lost — like a flash she is gone again. How strange it is that I should be thus haunted! — I, the "crusty bachelor," the "misogynist"! And as for Laura: before she was taken from the earth she was no more to me than any of my chums or boon companions. We liked each other — a sort of Platonic affection, I thought. But now, too late, I discover that I loved her — O Laura, my heart's desire, fill thou this aching void! Summon me, draw me to you! Release me these bonds of clay that I may escape my degradation, and with you find peace and joy! Kill — !"

Hark! Voices: the footsteps of men. A band of hungry beasts of prey are upon me. I must escape them. Seizing a leg of the butchered horse, the greatest possible treasure to me, I sprang into the bushes and fled through the night, followed by the frantic shouts of joy which heralded the discovery of my commissary.

What a dreary solitude I had ventured into! So lately seething with the hurly burly of metropolitan life, how deserted had it become! Leaving aside the mere absence of its inhabitants, the city was the shadow of its former self. Fire had so ravaged it that for blocks at a time, I walked amid nothing except chimneys, which, springing from blackened ruins, towered heavenward — ghastly indices of the wrath of God. The streets were filled with trucks, wagons, carriages, baggage — all the debris of a universal and panic-stricken flight. Everywhere, putrid corpses obstructed the way, filling the air with noisome stenches, and rendering my progress all but unendurable. Still I staggered on, in the last stages of physical and mental exhaustion. I was so weak that I had frequently to pause and rest; while my mind seemed wavering on its foundations; all things appearing to me as in a half dream. At times I mumbled and chattered aloud like a mad man: at others, I seemed to realize my condition and endeavored to rein in my fleeting senses. How or why I had wandered thither, I could not tell, for the past few days were blurred and confused to my recollection — more like a hideous nightmare than actual events.

At last I reached my home, and to my surprise found the house, untouched by fire, still standing. Upon the piazza I encountered a great dog — the first life since entering the city. How my stomach stirred at the sight! My hunter's instinct rose paramount: I had found my supper. I discovered my task to be the easier, for he had evidently narrowly escaped becoming some one else's supper. As he faced me, his hair bristling and his teeth showing, I saw that his back was broken and that he dragged his hind

quarters on the ground. I drew my knife and opened the attack. But just as I closed in, my weakness asserted itself: nearly, swooning, I grasped at the pillars for support and at this moment he darted past. Making a vain effort to intercept him, I was sent sprawling down the stairs. Crying weak tears of disappointment as I saw my supper disappear around the corner, I entered the house and laboriously ascended to my room. Falling into a chair by the window, I dozed off to sleep, attended by the beatific vision of Laura.

Hush! What was that? Clasping in my arms that radiant angel, I was awakened by a furious noise at my window. The sparrows! Impossible ! I looked about me: the night was gone, and there, on my window ledge, a miniature battle for the possession of a twittering female was going on. Beyond a slight feeling of bewilderment, I was my old self again. A second's thought convinced me of the whole truth. Seized by a mighty resolve, I snatched my hat, cane and gloves, and went down the stairs three at a time. In the lower hallway I ran against my landlady. Such unwonted conduct for a person as dignified as I, so astonished her that she did something she had never done before — asked me what the matter was and where I was going.

"'Going?'" I cried. "Why I'm off to propose to Laura." And I threw my arms about the good, old soul and kissed her square on the mouth.

The Strength of the Strong

"Parables don't lie, but liars will parable." — Lip-King.

Old Long-Beard paused in his narrative, licked his greasy fingers, and wiped them on his naked sides where his one piece of ragged bearskin failed to cover him. Crouched around him, on their hams, were three young men, his grandsons, Deer-Runner, Yellow-Head, and Afraid-of-the-Dark. In appearance they were much the same. Skins of wild animals partly covered them. They were lean and meagre of build, narrow-hipped and crooked-legged, and at the same time deep-chested, with heavy arms and enormous hands. There was much hair on their chests and shoulders, and on the outsides of their arms and legs. Their heads were matted with uncut hair, long locks of which often strayed before their eyes, beady and black and glittering like the eyes of birds. They were narrow between the eyes and broad between the cheeks, while their lower jaws were projecting and massive.

It was a night of clear starlight, and below them, stretching away remotely, lay range on range of forest-covered hills. In the distance the heavens were red from the glow of a volcano. At their backs yawned the black mouth of a cave, out of which, from time to time, blew draughty gusts of wind. Immediately in front of them blazed a fire. At one side, partly devoured, lay the carcass of a bear, with about it, at a respectable distance, several large dogs, shaggy and wolf-like. Beside each man lay his bow and arrows and a huge club. In the cave-mouth a number of rude spears leaned against the rock.

"So that was how we moved from the cave to the tree," old Long-Beard spoke up.

They laughed boisterously, like big children, at recollection of a previous story his words called up. Long-Beard laughed, too, the five-inch bodkin of bone, thrust midway through the cartilage of his nose, leaping and dancing and adding to his ferocious appearance. He did not exactly say the words recorded, but he made animal-like sounds with his mouth that meant the same thing.

"And that is the first I remember of the Sea Valley," Long-Beard went on. "We were a very foolish crowd. We did not know the secret of strength. For, behold, each family lived by itself, and took care of itself. There were thirty families, but we got no strength from one another. We were in fear of each other all the time. No one ever paid visits. In the top of our tree we built a grass house, and on the platform outside was a pile of rocks, which were for the heads of any that might chance to try to visit us. Also, we had our spears and arrows. We never walked under the trees of the other families, either. My brother did, once, under old Boo-oogh's tree, and he got his head broken and that was the end of him.

"Old Boo-oogh was very strong. It was said he could pull a grown man's head right off. I never heard of him doing it, because no man would give him a chance. Father wouldn't. One day, when father was down on the beach, Boo-oogh took after mother. She couldn't run fast, for the day before she had got her leg clawed by a bear when she was up on the mountain gathering berries. So Boo-oogh caught her and carried her up into his tree. Father never got her back. He was afraid. Old Boo-oogh made faces at him.

"But father did not mind. Strong-Arm was another strong man. He was one of the best fishermen. But one day, climbing after sea-gull eggs, he had a fall from the cliff. He was never strong after that. He coughed a great deal, and his shoulders drew near to each other. So father took Strong-Arm's wife. When he came around and coughed under our tree, father laughed at him and threw rocks at him. It was our way in those days. We did not know how to add strength together and become strong."

"Would a brother take a brother's wife?" Deer-Runner demanded.

"Yes, if he had gone to live in another tree by himself."

"But we do not do such things now," Afraid-of-the-Dark objected.

"It is because I have taught your fathers better." Long-Beard thrust his hairy paw into the bear meat and drew out a handful of suet, which he sucked with a meditative air. Again he wiped his hands on his naked sides and went on. "What I am telling you happened in the long ago, before we knew any better."

"You must have been fools not to know better," was Deer-Runner's comment, Yellow-Head grunting approval.

"So we were, but we became bigger fools, as you shall see. Still, we did learn better, and this was the way of it. We Fish-Eaters had not learned to add our strength until our strength was the strength of all of us. But the Meat-Eaters, who lived across the divide in the Big Valley, stood together, hunted together, fished together, and fought together. One day they came into our valley. Each family of us got into its own cave and tree. There were only ten Meat-Eaters, but they fought together, and we fought, each family by itself."

Long-Beard counted long and perplexedly on his fingers.

"There were sixty men of us," was what he managed to say with fingers and lips combined. "And we were very strong, only we did not know it. So we watched the ten men attack Boo-oogh's tree. He made a good fight, but he had no chance. We looked on. When some of the Meat-Eaters tried to climb the tree, Boo-oogh had to show himself in order to drop stones on their heads, whereupon the other Meat-Eaters, who were waiting for that very thing, shot him full of arrows. And that was the end of Boo-oogh.

"Next, the Meat-Eaters got One-Eye and his family in his cave. They built a fire in the mouth and smoked him out, like we smoked out the bear there to-day. Then they went after Six-Fingers, up his tree, and, while they were killing him and his grown son, the rest of us ran away. They caught some of our women, and killed two old men who

could not run fast and several children. The women they carried away with them to the Big Valley.

"After that the rest of us crept back, and, somehow, perhaps because we were in fear and felt the need for one another, we talked the thing over. It was our first council — our first real council. And in that council we formed our first tribe. For we had learned the lesson. Of the ten Meat-Eaters, each man had had the strength of ten, for the ten had fought as one man. They had added their strength together. But of the thirty families and the sixty men of us, we had had the strength of but one man, for each had fought alone.

"It was a great talk we had, and it was hard talk, for we did not have the words then as now with which to talk. The Bug made some of the words long afterward, and so did others of us make words from time to time. But in the end we agreed to add our strength together and to be as one man when the Meat-Eaters came over the divide to steal our women. And that was the tribe.

"We set two men on the divide, one for the day and one for the night, to watch if the Meat-Eaters came. These were the eyes of the tribe. Then, also, day and night, there were to be ten men awake with their clubs and spears and arrows in their hands, ready to fight. Before, when a man went after fish, or clams, or gull-eggs, he carried his weapons with him, and half the time he was getting food and half the time watching for fear some other man would get him. Now that was all changed. The men went out without their weapons and spent all their time getting food. Likewise, when the women went into the mountains after roots and berries, five of the ten men went with them to guard them. While all the time, day and night, the eyes of the tribe watched from the top of the divide.

"But troubles came. As usual, it was about the women. Men without wives wanted other men's wives, and there was much fighting between men, and now and again one got his head smashed or a spear through his body. While one of the watchers was on top of the divide, another man stole his wife, and he came down to fight. Then the other watcher was in fear that some one would take his wife, and he came down likewise. Also, there was trouble among the ten men who carried always their weapons, and they fought five against five, till some ran away down the coast and the others ran after them.

"So it was that the tribe was left without eyes or guards. We had not the strength of sixty. We had no strength at all. So we held a council and made our first laws. I was but a cub at the time, but I remember. We said that, in order to be strong, we must not fight one another, and we made a law that when a man killed another him would the tribe kill. We made another law that whoso stole another man's wife him would the tribe kill. We said that whatever man had too great strength, and by that strength hurt his brothers in the tribe, him would we kill that his strength might hurt no more. For, if we let his strength hurt, the brothers would become afraid and the tribe would fall apart, and we would be as weak as when the Meat-Eaters first came upon us and killed Boo-oogh.

"Knuckle-Bone was a strong man, a very strong man, and he knew not law. He knew only his own strength, and in the fullness thereof he went forth and took the wife of Three-Clams. Three-Clams tried to fight, but Knuckle-Bone clubbed out his brains. Yet had Knuckle-Bone forgotten that all the men of us had added our strength to keep the law among us, and him we killed, at the foot of his tree, and hung his body on a branch as a warning that the law was stronger than any man. For we were the law, all of us, and no man was greater than the law.

"Then there were other troubles, for know, O Deer-Runner, and Yellow-Head, and Afraid-of-the-Dark, that it is not easy to make a tribe. There were many things, little things, that it was a great trouble to call all the men together to have a council about. We were having councils morning, noon, and night, and in the middle of the night. We could find little time to go out and get food, because of the councils, for there was always some little thing to be settled, such as naming two new watchers to take the place of the old ones on the hill, or naming how much food should fall to the share of the men who kept their weapons always in their hands and got no food for themselves.

"We stood in need of a chief man to do these things, who would be the voice of the council, and who would account to the council for the things he did. So we named Fith-Fith the chief man. He was a strong man, too, and very cunning, and when he was angry he made noises just like that, fith-fith, like a wild-cat.

"The ten men who guarded the tribe were set to work making a wall of stones across the narrow part of the valley. The women and large children helped, as did other men, until the wall was strong. After that, all the families came down out of their caves and trees and built grass houses behind the shelter of the wall. These houses were large and much better than the caves and trees, and everybody had a better time of it because the men had added their strength together and become a tribe. Because of the wall and the guards and the watchers, there was more time to hunt and fish and pick roots and berries; there was more food, and better food, and no one went hungry. And Three-Legs, so named because his legs had been smashed when a boy and who walked with a stick — Three-Legs got the seed of the wild corn and planted it in the ground in the valley near his house. Also, he tried planting fat roots and other things he found in the mountain valleys.

"Because of the safety in the Sea Valley, which was because of the wall and the watchers and the guards, and because there was food in plenty for all without having to fight for it, many families came in from the coast valleys on both sides and from the high back mountains where they had lived more like wild animals than men. And it was not long before the Sea Valley filled up, and in it were countless families. But, before this happened, the land, which had been free to all and belonged to all, was divided up. Three-Legs began it when he planted corn. But most of us did not care about the land. We thought the marking of the boundaries with fences of stone was a foolishness. We had plenty to eat, and what more did we want? I remember that my father and I built stone fences for Three-Legs and were given corn in return.

"So only a few got all the land, and Three-Legs got most of it. Also, others that had taken land gave it to the few that held on, being paid in return with corn and fat roots, and bear-skins, and fishes which the farmers got from the fishermen in exchange for corn. And, the first thing we knew, all the land was gone.

"It was about this time that Fith-Fith died and Dog-Tooth, his son, was made chief. He demanded to be made chief anyway, because his father had been chief before him. Also, he looked upon himself as a greater chief than his father. He was a good chief at first, and worked hard, so that the council had less and less to do. Then arose a new voice in the Sea Valley. It was Twisted-Lip. We had never thought much of him, until he began to talk with the spirits of the dead. Later we called him Big-Fat, because he ate over-much, and did no work, and grew round and large. One day Big-Fat told us that the secrets of the dead were his, and that he was the voice of God. He became great friends with Dog-Tooth, who commanded that we should build Big-Fat a grass house. And Big-Fat put taboos all around this house and kept God inside.

"More and more Dog-Tooth became greater than the council, and when the council grumbled and said it would name a new chief, Big-Fat spoke with the voice of God and said no. Also, Three-Legs and the others who held the land stood behind Dog-Tooth. Moreover, the strongest man in the council was Sea-Lion, and him the land-owners gave land to secretly, along with many bearskins and baskets of corn. So Sea-Lion said that Big-Fat's voice was truly the voice of God and must be obeyed. And soon afterward Sea-Lion was named the voice of Dog-Tooth and did most of his talking for him.

"Then there was Little-Belly, a little man, so thin in the middle that he looked as if he had never had enough to eat. Inside the mouth of the river, after the sand-bar had combed the strength of the breakers, he built a big fish-trap. No man had ever seen or dreamed a fish-trap before. He worked weeks on it, with his son and his wife, while the rest of us laughed at their labours. But, when it was done, the first day he caught more fish in it than could the whole tribe in a week, whereat there was great rejoicing. There was only one other place in the river for a fish-trap, but, when my father and I and a dozen other men started to make a very large trap, the guards came from the big grass-house we had built for Dog-Tooth. And the guards poked us with their spears and told us begone, because Little-Belly was going to build a trap there himself on the word of Sea-Lion, who was the voice of Dog-Tooth.

"There was much grumbling, and my father called a council. But, when he rose to speak, him the Sea-Lion thrust through the throat with a spear and he died. And Dog-Tooth and Little-Belly, and Three-Legs and all that held land said it was good. And Big-Fat said it was the will of God. And after that all men were afraid to stand up in the council, and there was no more council.

"Another man, Pig-Jaw, began to keep goats. He had heard about it as among the Meat-Eaters, and it was not long before he had many flocks. Other men, who had no land and no fish-traps, and who else would have gone hungry, were glad to work for Pig-Jaw, caring for his goats, guarding them from wild dogs and tigers, and driving

them to the feeding pastures in the mountains. In return, Pig-Jaw gave them goat-meat to eat and goat-skins to wear, and sometimes they traded the goat-meat for fish and corn and fat roots.

"It was this time that money came to be. Sea-Lion was the man who first thought of it, and he talked it over with Dog-Tooth and Big-Fat. You see, these three were the ones that got a share of everything in the Sea Valley. One basket out of every three of corn was theirs, one fish out of every three, one goat out of every three. In return, they fed the guards and the watchers, and kept the rest for themselves. Sometimes, when a big haul of fish was made they did not know what to do with all their share. So Sea-Lion set the women to making money out of shell — little round pieces, with a hole in each one, and all made smooth and fine. These were strung on strings, and the strings were called money.

"Each string was of the value of thirty fish, or forty fish, but the women, who made a string a day, were given two fish each. The fish came out of the shares of Dog-Tooth, Big-Fat, and Sea-Lion, which they three did not eat. So all the money belonged to them. Then they told Three-Legs and the other land-owners that they would take their share of corn and roots in money, Little-Belly that they would take their share of fish in money, Pig-Jaw that they would take their share of goats and cheese in money. Thus, a man who had nothing, worked for one who had, and was paid in money. With this money he bought corn, and fish, and meat, and cheese. And Three-Legs and all owners of things paid Dog-Tooth and Sea-Lion and Big-Fat their share in money. And they paid the guards and watchers in money, and the guards and watchers bought their food with the money. And, because money was cheap, Dog-Tooth made many more men into guards. And, because money was cheap to make, a number of men began to make money out of shell themselves. But the guards stuck spears in them and shot them full of arrows, because they were trying to break up the tribe. It was bad to break up the tribe, for then the Meat-Eaters would come over the divide and kill them all.

"Big-Fat was the voice of God, but he took Broken-Rib and made him into a priest, so that he became the voice of Big-Fat and did most of his talking for him. And both had other men to be servants to them. So, also, did Little-Belly and Three-Legs and Pig-Jaw have other men to lie in the sun about their grass houses and carry messages for them and give commands. And more and more were men taken away from work, so that those that were left worked harder than ever before. It seemed that men desired to do no work and strove to seek out other ways whereby men should work for them. Crooked-Eyes found such a way. He made the first fire-brew out of corn. And thereafter he worked no more, for he talked secretly with Dog-Tooth and Big-Fat and the other masters, and it was agreed that he should be the only one to make fire-brew. But Crooked-Eyes did no work himself. Men made the brew for him, and he paid them in money. Then he sold the fire-brew for money, and all men bought. And many strings of money did he give Dog-Tooth and Sea-Lion and all of them.

"Big-Fat and Broken-Rib stood by Dog-Tooth when he took his second wife, and his third wife. They said Dog-Tooth was different from other men and second only to God that Big-Fat kept in his taboo house, and Dog-Tooth said so, too, and wanted to know who were they to grumble about how many wives he took. Dog-Tooth had a big canoe made, and, many more men he took from work, who did nothing and lay in the sun, save only when Dog-Tooth went in the canoe, when they paddled for him. And he made Tiger-Face head man over all the guards, so that Tiger-Face became his right arm, and when he did not like a man Tiger-Face killed that man for him. And Tiger-Face, also, made another man to be his right arm, and to give commands, and to kill for him.

"But this was the strange thing: as the days went by we who were left worked harder and harder, and yet did we get less and less to eat."

"But what of the goats and the corn and the fat roots and the fish-trap?" spoke up Afraid-of-the-Dark, "what of all this? Was there not more food to be gained by man's work?"

"It is so," Long-Beard agreed. "Three men on the fish-trap got more fish than the whole tribe before there was a fish-trap. But have I not said we were fools? The more food we were able to get, the less food did we have to eat."

"But was it not plain that the many men who did not work ate it all up?" Yellow-Head demanded.

Long-Beard nodded his head sadly.

"Dog-Tooth's dogs were stuffed with meat, and the men who lay in the sun and did no work were rolling in fat, and, at the same time, there were little children crying themselves to sleep with hunger biting them with every wail."

Deer-Runner was spurred by the recital of famine to tear out a chunk of bear-meat and broil it on a stick over the coals. This he devoured with smacking lips, while Long-Beard went on:

"When we grumbled Big-Fat arose, and with the voice of God said that God had chosen the wise men to own the land and the goats and the fish-trap, and the fire-brew, and that without these wise men we would all be animals, as in the days when we lived in trees.

"And there arose one who became a singer of songs for the king. Him they called the Bug, because he was small and ungainly of face and limb and excelled not in work or deed. He loved the fattest marrow bones, the choicest fish, the milk warm from the goats, the first corn that was ripe, and the snug place by the fire. And thus, becoming singer of songs to the king, he found a way to do nothing and be fat. And when the people grumbled more and more, and some threw stones at the king's grass house, the Bug sang a song of how good it was to be a Fish-Eater. In his song he told that the Fish-Eaters were the chosen of God and the finest men God had made. He sang of the Meat-Eaters as pigs and crows, and sang how fine and good it was for the Fish-Eaters to fight and die doing God's work, which was the killing of Meat-Eaters. The words of his song were like fire in us, and we clamoured to be led against the Meat-Eaters. And

we forgot that we were hungry, and why we had grumbled, and were glad to be led by Tiger-Face over the divide, where we killed many Meat-Eaters and were content.

"But things were no better in the Sea Valley. The only way to get food was to work for Three-Legs or Little-Belly or Pig-Jaw; for there was no land that a man might plant with corn for himself. And often there were more men than Three-Legs and the others had work for. So these men went hungry, and so did their wives and children and their old mothers. Tiger-Face said they could become guards if they wanted to, and many of them did, and thereafter they did no work except to poke spears in the men who did work and who grumbled at feeding so many idlers.

"And when we grumbled, ever the Bug sang new songs. He said that Three-Legs and Pig-Jaw and the rest were strong men, and that that was why they had so much. He said that we should be glad to have strong men with us, else would we perish of our own worthlessness and the Meat-Eaters. Therefore, we should be glad to let such strong men have all they could lay hands on. And Big-Fat and Pig-Jaw and Tiger-Face and all the rest said it was true.

"'All right,' said Long-Fang, 'then will I, too, be a strong man.' And he got himself corn, and began to make fire-brew and sell it for strings of money. And, when Crooked-Eyes complained, Long-Fang said that he was himself a strong man, and that if Crooked-Eyes made any more noise he would bash his brains out for him. Whereat Crooked-Eyes was afraid and went and talked with Three-Legs and Pig-Jaw. And all three went and talked to Dog-Tooth. And Dog-Tooth spoke to Sea-Lion, and Sea-Lion sent a runner with a message to Tiger-Face. And Tiger-Face sent his guards, who burned Long-Fang's house along with the fire-brew he had made. Also, they killed him and all his family. And Big-Fat said it was good, and the Bug sang another song about how good it was to observe the law, and what a fine land the Sea Valley was, and how every man who loved the Sea Valley should go forth and kill the bad Meat-Eaters. And again his song was as fire to us, and we forgot to grumble.

"It was very strange. When Little-Belly caught too many fish, so that it took a great many to sell for a little money, he threw many of the fish back into the sea, so that more money would be paid for what was left. And Three-Legs often let many large fields lie idle so as to get more money for his corn. And the women, making so much money out of shell that much money was needed to buy with, Dog-Tooth stopped the making of money. And the women had no work, so they took the places of the men. I worked on the fish-trap, getting a string of money every five days. But my sister now did my work, getting a string of money for every ten days. The women worked cheaper, and there was less food, and Tiger-Face said we should become guards. Only I could not become a guard because I was lame of one leg and Tiger-Face would not have me. And there were many like me. We were broken men and only fit to beg for work or to take care of the babies while the women worked."

Yellow-Head, too, was made hungry by the recital and broiled a piece of bear-meat on the coals.

“But why didn’t you rise up, all of you, and kill Three-Legs and Pig-Jaw and Big-Fat and the rest and get enough to eat?” Afraid-in-the-Dark demanded.

“Because we could not understand,” Long-Beard answered. “There was too much to think about, and, also, there were the guards sticking spears into us, and Big-Fat talking about God, and the Bug singing new songs. And when any man did think right, and said so, Tiger-Face and the guards got him, and he was tied out to the rocks at low tide so that the rising waters drowned him.

“It was a strange thing — the money. It was like the Bug’s songs. It seemed all right, but it wasn’t, and we were slow to understand. Dog-Tooth began to gather the money in. He put it in a big pile, in a grass house, with guards to watch it day and night. And the more money he piled in the house the dearer money became, so that a man worked a longer time for a string of money than before. Then, too, there was always talk of war with the Meat-Eaters, and Dog-Tooth and Tiger-Face filled many houses with corn, and dried fish, and smoked goat-meat, and cheese. And with the food, piled there in mountains the people had not enough to eat. But what did it matter? Whenever the people grumbled too loudly the Bug sang a new song, and Big-Fat said it was God’s word that we should kill Meat-Eaters, and Tiger-Face led us over the divide to kill and be killed. I was not good enough to be a guard and lie fat in the sun, but, when we made war, Tiger-Face was glad to take me along. And when we had eaten, all the food stored in the houses we stopped fighting and went back to work to pile up more food.”

“Then were you all crazy,” commented Deer-Runner.

“Then were we indeed all crazy,” Long-Beard agreed. “It was strange, all of it. There was Split-Nose. He said everything was wrong. He said it was true that we grew strong by adding our strength together. And he said that, when we first formed the tribe, it was right that the men whose strength hurt the tribe should be shorn of their strength — men who bashed their brothers’ heads and stole their brothers’ wives. And now, he said, the tribe was not getting stronger, but was getting weaker, because there were men with another kind of strength that were hurting the tribe — men who had the strength of the land, like Three-Legs; who had the strength of the fish-trap, like Little-Belly; who had the strength of all the goat-meat, like Pig-Jaw. The thing to do, Split-Nose said, was to shear these men of their evil strength; to make them go to work, all of them, and to let no man eat who did not work.

“And the Bug sang another song about men like Split-Nose, who wanted to go back, and live in trees.

“Yet Split-Nose said no; that he did not want to go back, but ahead; that they grew strong only as they added their strength together; and that, if the Fish-Eaters would add their strength to the Meat-Eaters, there would be no more fighting and no more watchers and no more guards, and that, with all men working, there would be so much food that each man would have to work not more than two hours a day.

“Then the Bug sang again, and he sang that Split-Nose was lazy, and he sang also the ‘Song of the Bees.’ It was a strange song, and those who listened were made mad, as from the drinking of strong fire-brew. The song was of a swarm of bees, and of a

robber wasp who had come in to live with the bees and who was stealing all their honey. The wasp was lazy and told them there was no need to work; also, he told them to make friends with the bears, who were not honey-stealers but only very good friends. And the Bug sang in crooked words, so that those who listened knew that the swarm was the Sea Valley tribe, that the bears were the Meat-Eaters, and that the lazy wasp was Split-Nose. And when the Bug sang that the bees listened to the wasp till the swarm was near to perishing, the people growled and snarled, and when the Bug sang that at last the good bees arose and stung the wasp to death, the people picked up stones from the ground and stoned Split-Nose to death till there was naught to be seen of him but the heap of stones they had flung on top of him. And there were many poor people who worked long and hard and had not enough to eat that helped throw the stones on Split-Nose.

"And, after the death of Split-Nose, there was but one other man that dared rise up and speak his mind, and that man was Hair-Face. 'Where is the strength of the strong?' he asked. 'We are the strong, all of us, and we are stronger than Dog-Tooth and Tiger-Face and Three-Legs and Pig-Jaw and all the rest who do nothing and eat much and weaken us by the hurt of their strength which is bad strength. Men who are slaves are not strong. If the man who first found the virtue and use of fire had used his strength we would have been his slaves, as we are the slaves to-day of Little-Belly, who found the virtue and use of the fish-trap; and of the men who found the virtue and use of the land, and the goats, and the fire-brew. Before, we lived in trees, my brothers, and no man was safe. But we fight no more with one another. We have added our strength together. Then let us fight no more with the Meat-Eaters. Let us add our strength and their strength together. Then will we be indeed strong. And then we will go out together, the Fish-Eaters and the Meat-Eaters, and we will kill the tigers and the lions and the wolves and the wild dogs, and we will pasture our goats on all the hill-sides and plant our corn and fat roots in all the high mountain valleys. In that day we will be so strong that all the wild animals will flee before us and perish. And nothing will withstand us, for the strength of each man will be the strength of all men in the world.'

"So said Hair-Face, and they killed him, because, they said, he was a wild man and wanted to go back and live in a tree. It was very strange. Whenever a man arose and wanted to go forward all those that stood still said he went backward and should be killed. And the poor people helped stone him, and were fools. We were all fools, except those who were fat and did no work. The fools were called wise, and the wise were stoned. Men who worked did not get enough to eat, and the men who did not work ate too much.

"And the tribe went on losing strength. The children were weak and sickly. And, because we ate not enough, strange sicknesses came among us and we died like flies. And then the Meat-Eaters came upon us. We had followed Tiger-Face too often over the divide and killed them. And now they came to repay in blood. We were too weak and sick to man the big wall. And they killed us, all of us, except some of the women,

which they took away with them. The Bug and I escaped, and I hid in the wildest places, and became a hunter of meat and went hungry no more. I stole a wife from the Meat-Eaters, and went to live in the caves of the high mountains where they could not find me. And we had three sons, and each son stole a wife from the Meat-Eaters. And the rest you know, for are you not the sons of my sons?"

"But the Bug?" queried Deer-Runner. "What became of him?"

"He went to live with the Meat-Eaters and to be a singer of songs to the king. He is an old man now, but he sings the same old songs; and, when a man rises up to go forward, he sings that that man is walking backward to live in a tree."

Long-Beard dipped into the bear-carcass and sucked with toothless gums at a fist of suet.

"Some day," he said, wiping his hands on his sides, "all the fools will be dead and then all live men will go forward. The strength of the strong will be theirs, and they will add their strength together, so that, of all the men in the world, not one will fight with another. There will be no guards nor watchers on the walls. And all the hunting animals will be killed, and, as Hair-Face said, all the hill-sides will be pastured with goats and all the high mountain valleys will be planted with corn and fat roots. And all men will be brothers, and no man will lie idle in the sun and be fed by his fellows. And all that will come to pass in the time when the fools are dead, and when there will be no more singers to stand still and sing the 'Song of the Bees.' Bees are not men."

The Sun Dog Trail

SITKA CHARLEY smoked his pipe and gazed thoughtfully at the POLICE GAZETTE illustration on the wall. For half an hour he had been steadily regarding it, and for half an hour I had been slyly watching him. Something was going on in that mind of his, and, whatever it was, I knew it was well worth knowing. He had lived life, and seen things, and performed that prodigy of prodigies, namely, the turning of his back upon his own people, and, in so far as it was possible for an Indian, becoming a white man even in his mental processes. As he phrased it himself, he had come into the warm, sat among us, by our fires, and become one of us. He had never learned to read nor write, but his vocabulary was remarkable, and more remarkable still was the completeness with which he had assumed the white man's point of view, the white man's attitude toward things.

We had struck this deserted cabin after a hard day on trail. The dogs had been fed, the supper dishes washed, the beds made, and we were now enjoying that most delicious hour that comes each day, and but once each day, on the Alaskan trail, the hour when nothing intervenes between the tired body and bed save the smoking of the evening pipe. Some former denizen of the cabin had decorated its walls with illustrations torn from magazines and newspapers, and it was these illustrations that had held Sitka Charley's attention from the moment of our arrival two hours before. He had studied them intently, ranging from one to another and back again, and I could see that there was uncertainty in his mind, and bepuzzlement.

"Well?" I finally broke the silence.

He took the pipe from his mouth and said simply, "I do not understand."

He smoked on again, and again removed the pipe, using it to point at the POLICE GAZETTE illustration.

"That picture — what does it mean? I do not understand."

I looked at the picture. A man, with a preposterously wicked face, his right hand pressed dramatically to his heart, was falling backward to the floor. Confronting him, with a face that was a composite of destroying angel and Adonis, was a man holding a smoking revolver.

"One man is killing the other man," I said, aware of a distinct bepuzzlement of my own and of failure to explain.

"Why?" asked Sitka Charley.

"I do not know," I confessed.

"That picture is all end," he said. "It has no beginning."

"It is life," I said.

"Life has beginning," he objected.

I was silenced for the moment, while his eyes wandered on to an adjoining decoration, a photographic reproduction of somebody's "Leda and the Swan."

"That picture," he said, "has no beginning. It has no end. I do not understand pictures."

"Look at that picture," I commanded, pointing to a third decoration. "It means something. Tell me what it means to you."

He studied it for several minutes.

"The little girl is sick," he said finally. "That is the doctor looking at her. They have been up all night — see, the oil is low in the lamp, the first morning light is coming in at the window. It is a great sickness; maybe she will die, that is why the doctor looks so hard. That is the mother. It is a great sickness, because the mother's head is on the table and she is crying."

"How do you know she is crying?" I interrupted. "You cannot see her face. Perhaps she is asleep."

Sitka Charley looked at me in swift surprise, then back at the picture. It was evident that he had not reasoned the impression.

"Perhaps she is asleep," he repeated. He studied it closely. "No, she is not asleep. The shoulders show that she is not asleep. I have seen the shoulders of a woman who cried. The mother is crying. It is a very great sickness."

"And now you understand the picture," I cried.

He shook his head, and asked, "The little girl — does it die?"

It was my turn for silence.

"Does it die?" he reiterated. "You are a painter-man. Maybe you know."

"No, I do not know," I confessed.

"It is not life," he delivered himself dogmatically. "In life little girl die or get well. Something happen in life. In picture nothing happen. No, I do not understand pictures."

His disappointment was patent. It was his desire to understand all things that white men understand, and here, in this matter, he failed. I felt, also, that there was challenge in his attitude. He was bent upon compelling me to show him the wisdom of pictures. Besides, he had remarkable powers of visualization. I had long since learned this. He visualized everything. He saw life in pictures, felt life in pictures, generalized life in pictures; and yet he did not understand pictures when seen through other men's eyes and expressed by those men with color and line upon canvas.

"Pictures are bits of life," I said. "We paint life as we see it. For instance, Charley, you are coming along the trail. It is night. You see a cabin. The window is lighted. You look through the window for one second, or for two seconds, you see something, and you go on your way. You saw maybe a man writing a letter. You saw something without beginning or end. Nothing happened. Yet it was a bit of life you saw. You remember it afterward. It is like a picture in your memory. The window is the frame of the picture."

I could see that he was interested, and I knew that as I spoke he had looked through the window and seen the man writing the letter.

"There is a picture you have painted that I understand," he said. "It is a true picture. It has much meaning. It is in your cabin at Dawson. It is a faro table. There are men playing. It is a large game. The limit is off."

"How do you know the limit is off?" I broke in excitedly, for here was where my work could be tried out on an unbiassed judge who knew life only, and not art, and who was a sheer master of reality. Also, I was very proud of that particular piece of work. I had named it "The Last Turn," and I believed it to be one of the best things I had ever done.

"There are no chips on the table", Sitka Charley explained. "The men are playing with markers. That means the roof is the limit. One man play yellow markers — maybe one yellow marker worth one thousand dollars, maybe two thousand dollars. One man play red markers. Maybe they are worth five hundred dollars, maybe one thousand dollars. It is a very big game. Everybody play very high, up to the roof. How do I know? You make the dealer with blood little bit warm in face." (I was delighted.) "The lookout, you make him lean forward in his chair. Why he lean forward? Why his face very much quiet? Why his eyes very much bright? Why dealer warm with blood a little bit in the face? Why all men very quiet?-the man with yellow markers? the man with white markers? the man with red markers? Why nobody talk? Because very much money. Because last turn."

"How do you know it is the last turn?" I asked.

"The king is coppered, the seven is played open," he answered. "Nobody bet on other cards. Other cards all gone. Everybody one mind. Everybody play king to lose, seven to win. Maybe bank lose twenty thousand dollars, maybe bank win. Yes, that picture I understand."

"Yet you do not know the end!" I cried triumphantly. "It is the last turn, but the cards are not yet turned. In the picture they will never be turned. Nobody will ever know who wins nor who loses."

"And the men will sit there and never talk," he said, wonder and awe growing in his face. "And the lookout will lean forward, and the blood will be warm in the face of the dealer. It is a strange thing. Always will they sit there, always; and the cards will never be turned."

"It is a picture," I said. "It is life. You have seen things like it yourself."

He looked at me and pondered, then said, very slowly: "No, as you say, there is no end to it. Nobody will ever know the end. Yet is it a true thing. I have seen it. It is life."

For a long time he smoked on in silence, weighing the pictorial wisdom of the white man and verifying it by the facts of life. He nodded his head several times, and grunted once or twice. Then he knocked the ashes from his pipe, carefully refilled it, and after a thoughtful pause, lighted it again.

"Then have I, too, seen many pictures of life," he began; "pictures not painted, but seen with the eyes. I have looked at them like through the window at the man writing the letter. I have seen many pieces of life, without beginning, without end, without understanding."

With a sudden change of position he turned his eyes full upon me and regarded me thoughtfully.

"Look you," he said; "you are a painter-man. How would you paint this which I saw, a picture without beginning, the ending of which I do not understand, a piece of life with the northern lights for a candle and Alaska for a frame."

"It is a large canvas," I murmured.

But he ignored me, for the picture he had in mind was before his eyes and he was seeing it.

"There are many names for this picture," he said. "But in the picture there are many sun-dogs, and it comes into my mind to call it 'The Sun-Dog Trail.' It was a long time ago, seven years ago, the fall of '97, when I saw the woman first time. At Lake Linderman I had one canoe, very good Peterborough canoe. I came over Chilcoot Pass with two thousand letters for Dawson. I was letter carrier. Everybody rush to Klondike at that time. Many people on trail. Many people chop down trees and make boats. Last water, snow in the air, snow on the ground, ice on the lake, on the river ice in the eddies. Every day more snow, more ice. Maybe one day, maybe three days, maybe six days, any day maybe freeze-up come, then no more water, all ice, everybody walk, Dawson six hundred miles, long time walk. Boat go very quick. Everybody want to go boat. Everybody say, 'Charley, two hundred dollars you take me in canoe,' 'Charley, three hundred dollars,' 'Charley, four hundred dollars.' I say no, all the time I say no. I am letter carrier.

"In morning I get to Lake Linderman. I walk all night and am much tired. I cook breakfast, I eat, then I sleep on the beach three hours. I wake up. It is ten o'clock. Snow is falling. There is wind, much wind that blows fair. Also, there is a woman who sits in the snow alongside. She is white woman, she is young, very pretty, maybe she is twenty years old, maybe twenty-five years old. She look at me. I look at her. She is very tired. She is no dance-woman. I see that right away. She is good woman, and she is very tired.

"'You are Sitka Charley,' she says. I get up quick and roll blankets so snow does not get inside. 'I go to Dawson,' she says. 'I go in your canoe — how much?'

"I do not want anybody in my canoe. I do not like to say no. So I say, 'One thousand dollars.' Just for fun I say it, so woman cannot come with me, much better than say no. She look at me very hard, then she says, 'When you start?' I say right away. Then she says all right, she will give me one thousand dollars.

"What can I say? I do not want the woman, yet have I given my word that for one thousand dollars she can come. I am surprised. Maybe she make fun, too, so I say, 'Let me see thousand dollars.' And that woman, that young woman, all alone on the trail, there in the snow, she take out one thousand dollars, in greenbacks, and she put them

in my hand. I look at money, I look at her. What can I say? I say, 'No, my canoe very small. There is no room for outfit.' She laugh. She says, 'I am great traveller. This is my outfit.' She kick one small pack in the snow. It is two fur robes, canvas outside, some woman's clothes inside. I pick it up. Maybe thirty-five pounds. I am surprised. She take it away from me. She says, 'Come, let us start.' She carries pack into canoe. What can I say? I put my blankets into canoe. We start.

"And that is the way I saw the woman first time. The wind was fair. I put up small sail. The canoe went very fast, it flew like a bird over the high waves. The woman was much afraid. 'What for you come Klondike much afraid?' I ask. She laugh at me, a hard laugh, but she is still much afraid. Also is she very tired. I run canoe through rapids to Lake Bennett. Water very bad, and woman cry out because she is afraid. We go down Lake Bennett, snow, ice, wind like a gale, but woman is very tired and go to sleep.

"That night we make camp at Windy Arm. Woman sit by fire and eat supper. I look at her. She is pretty. She fix hair. There is much hair, and it is brown, also sometimes it is like gold in the firelight, when she turn her head, so, and flashes come from it like golden fire. The eyes are large and brown, sometimes warm like a candle behind a curtain, sometimes very hard and bright like broken ice when sun shines upon it. When she smile — how can I say? — when she smile I know white man like to kiss her, just like that, when she smile. She never do hard work. Her hands are soft, like baby's hand. She is soft all over, like baby. She is not thin, but round like baby; her arm, her leg, her muscles, all soft and round like baby. Her waist is small, and when she stand up, when she walk, or move her head or arm, it is — I do not know the word — but it is nice to look at, like — maybe I say she is built on lines like the lines of a good canoe, just like that, and when she move she is like the movement of the good canoe sliding through still water or leaping through water when it is white and fast and angry. It is very good to see.

"Why does she come into Klondike, all alone, with plenty of money? I do not know. Next day I ask her. She laugh and says: 'Sitka Charley, that is none of your business. I give you one thousand dollars take me to Dawson. That only is your business.' Next day after that I ask her what is her name. She laugh, then she says, 'Mary Jones, that is my name.' I do not know her name, but I know all the time that Mary Jones is not her name.

"It is very cold in canoe, and because of cold sometimes she not feel good. Sometimes she feel good and she sing. Her voice is like a silver bell, and I feel good all over like when I go into church at Holy Cross Mission, and when she sing I feel strong and paddle like hell. Then she laugh and says, 'You think we get to Dawson before freeze-up, Charley?' Sometimes she sit in canoe and is thinking far away, her eyes like that, all empty. She does not see Sitka Charley, nor the ice, nor the snow. She is far away. Very often she is like that, thinking far away. Sometimes, when she is thinking far away, her face is not good to see. It looks like a face that is angry, like the face of one man when he want to kill another man.

“Last day to Dawson very bad. Shore-ice in all the eddies, mush-ice in the stream. I cannot paddle. The canoe freeze to ice. I cannot get to shore. There is much danger. All the time we go down Yukon in the ice. That night there is much noise of ice. Then ice stop, canoe stop, everything stop. ‘Let us go to shore,’ the woman says. I say no, better wait. By and by, everything start down-stream again. There is much snow. I cannot see. At eleven o’clock at night, everything stop. At one o’clock everything start again. At three o’clock everything stop. Canoe is smashed like eggshell, but is on top of ice and cannot sink. I hear dogs howling. We wait. We sleep. By and by morning come. There is no more snow. It is the freeze-up, and there is Dawson. Canoe smash and stop right at Dawson. Sitka Charley has come in with two thousand letters on very last water.

“The woman rent a cabin on the hill, and for one week I see her no more. Then, one day, she come to me. ‘Charley,’ she says, ‘how do you like to work for me? You drive dogs, make camp, travel with me.’ I say that I make too much money carrying letters. She says, ‘Charley, I will pay you more money.’ I tell her that pick-and-shovel man get fifteen dollars a day in the mines. She says, ‘That is four hundred and fifty dollars a month.’ And I say, ‘Sitka Charley is no pick-and-shovel man.’ Then she says, ‘I understand, Charley. I will give you seven hundred and fifty dollars each month.’ It is a good price, and I go to work for her. I buy for her dogs and sled. We travel up Klondike, up Bonanza and Eldorado, over to Indian River, to Sulphur Creek, to Dominion, back across divide to Gold Bottom and to Too Much Gold, and back to Dawson. All the time she look for something, I do not know what. I am puzzled. ‘What thing you look for?’ I ask. She laugh. ‘You look for gold?’ I ask. She laugh. Then she says, ‘That is none of your business, Charley.’ And after that I never ask any more.

“She has a small revolver which she carries in her belt. Sometimes, on trail, she makes practice with revolver. I laugh. ‘What for you laugh, Charley?’ she ask. ‘What for you play with that?’ I say. ‘It is no good. It is too small. It is for a child, a little plaything.’ When we get back to Dawson she ask me to buy good revolver for her. I buy a Colt’s 44. It is very heavy, but she carry it in her belt all the time.

“At Dawson comes the man. Which way he come I do not know. Only do I know he is CHECHA-QUO — what you call tenderfoot. His hands are soft, just like hers. He never do hard work. He is soft all over. At first I think maybe he is her husband. But he is too young. Also, they make two beds at night. He is maybe twenty years old. His eyes blue, his hair yellow, he has a little mustache which is yellow. His name is John Jones. Maybe he is her brother. I do not know. I ask questions no more. Only I think his name not John Jones. Other people call him Mr. Girvan. I do not think that is his name. I do not think her name is Miss Girvan, which other people call her. I think nobody know their names.

“One night I am asleep at Dawson. He wake me up. He says, ‘Get the dogs ready; we start.’ No more do I ask questions, so I get the dogs ready and we start. We go down the Yukon. It is night-time, it is November, and it is very cold — sixty-five below. She is soft. He is soft. The cold bites. They get tired. They cry under their breaths to

themselves. By and by I say better we stop and make camp. But they say that they will go on. Three times I say better to make camp and rest, but each time they say they will go on. After that I say nothing. All the time, day after day, is it that way. They are very soft. They get stiff and sore. They do not understand moccasins, and their feet hurt very much. They limp, they stagger like drunken people, they cry under their breaths; and all the time they say, 'On! on! We will go on!'

"They are like crazy people. All the time do they go on, and on. Why do they go on? I do not know. Only do they go on. What are they after? I do not know. They are not after gold. There is no stampede. Besides, they spend plenty of money. But I ask questions no more. I, too, go on and on, because I am strong on the trail and because I am greatly paid.

"We make Circle City. That for which they look is not there. I think now that we will rest, and rest the dogs. But we do not rest, not for one day do we rest. 'Come,' says the woman to the man, 'let us go on.' And we go on. We leave the Yukon. We cross the divide to the west and swing down into the Tanana Country. There are new diggings there. But that for which they look is not there, and we take the back trail to Circle City.

"It is a hard journey. December is most gone. The days are short. It is very cold. One morning it is seventy below zero. 'Better that we don't travel to-day,' I say, 'else will the frost be unwarmed in the breathing and bite all the edges of our lungs. After that we will have bad cough, and maybe next spring will come pneumonia.' But they are CHECHA-QUO. They do not understand the trail. They are like dead people they are so tired, but they say, 'Let us go on.' We go on. The frost bites their lungs, and they get the dry cough. They cough till the tears run down their cheeks. When bacon is frying they must run away from the fire and cough half an hour in the snow. They freeze their cheeks a little bit, so that the skin turns black and is very sore. Also, the man freezes his thumb till the end is like to come off, and he must wear a large thumb on his mitten to keep it warm. And sometimes, when the frost bites hard and the thumb is very cold, he must take off the mitten and put the hand between his legs next to the skin, so that the thumb may get warm again.

"We limp into Circle City, and even I, Sitka Charley, am tired. It is Christmas Eve. I dance, drink, make a good time, for to-morrow is Christmas Day and we will rest. But no. It is five o'clock in the morning — Christmas morning. I am two hours asleep. The man stand by my bed. 'Come, Charley,' he says, 'harness the dogs. We start.'

"Have I not said that I ask questions no more? They pay me seven hundred and fifty dollars each month. They are my masters. I am their man. If they say, 'Charley, come, let us start for hell,' I will harness the dogs, and snap the whip, and start for hell. So I harness the dogs, and we start down the Yukon. Where do we go? They do not say. Only do they say, 'On! on! We will go on!'

"They are very weary. They have travelled many hundreds of miles, and they do not understand the way of the trail. Besides, their cough is very bad — the dry cough that makes strong men swear and weak men cry. But they go on. Every day they go

on. Never do they rest the dogs. Always do they buy new dogs. At every camp, at every post, at every Indian village, do they cut out the tired dogs and put in fresh dogs. They have much money, money without end, and like water they spend it. They are crazy? Sometimes I think so, for there is a devil in them that drives them on and on, always on. What is it that they try to find? It is not gold. Never do they dig in the ground. I think a long time. Then I think it is a man they try to find. But what man? Never do we see the man. Yet are they like wolves on the trail of the kill. But they are funny wolves, soft wolves, baby wolves who do not understand the way of the trail. They cry aloud in their sleep at night. In their sleep they moan and groan with the pain of their weariness. And in the day, as they stagger along the trail, they cry under their breaths. They are funny wolves.

"We pass Fort Yukon. We pass Fort Hamilton. We pass Minook. January has come and nearly gone. The days are very short. At nine o'clock comes daylight. At three o'clock comes night. And it is cold. And even I, Sitka Charley, am tired. Will we go on forever this way without end? I do not know. But always do I look along the trail for that which they try to find. There are few people on the trail. Sometimes we travel one hundred miles and never see a sign of life. It is very quiet. There is no sound. Sometimes it snows, and we are like wandering ghosts. Sometimes it is clear, and at midday the sun looks at us for a moment over the hills to the south. The northern lights flame in the sky, and the sun-dogs dance, and the air is filled with frost-dust.

"I am Sitka Charley, a strong man. I was born on the trail, and all my days have I lived on the trail. And yet have these two baby wolves made me very tired. I am lean, like a starved cat, and I am glad of my bed at night, and in the morning am I greatly weary. Yet ever are we hitting the trail in the dark before daylight, and still on the trail does the dark after nightfall find us. These two baby wolves! If I am lean like a starved cat, they are lean like cats that have never eaten and have died. Their eyes are sunk deep in their heads, bright sometimes as with fever, dim and cloudy sometimes like the eyes of the dead. Their cheeks are hollow like caves in a cliff. Also are their cheeks black and raw from many freezings. Sometimes it is the woman in the morning who says, 'I cannot get up. I cannot move. Let me die.' And it is the man who stands beside her and says, 'Come, let us go on.' And they go on. And sometimes it is the man who cannot get up, and the woman says, 'Come, let us go on.' But the one thing they do, and always do, is to go on. Always do they go on.

"Sometimes, at the trading posts, the man and woman get letters. I do not know what is in the letters. But it is the scent that they follow, these letters themselves are the scent. One time an Indian gives them a letter. I talk with him privately. He says it is a man with one eye who gives him the letter, a man who travels fast down the Yukon. That is all. But I know that the baby wolves are after the man with the one eye.

"It is February, and we have travelled fifteen hundred miles. We are getting near Bering Sea, and there are storms and blizzards. The going is hard. We come to Anvig. I do not know, but I think sure they get a letter at Anvig, for they are much excited,

and they say, 'Come, hurry, let us go on.' But I say we must buy grub, and they say we must travel light and fast. Also, they say that we can get grub at Charley McKeon's cabin. Then do I know that they take the big cut-off, for it is there that Charley McKeon lives where the Black Rock stands by the trail.

"Before we start, I talk maybe two minutes with the priest at Anvig. Yes, there is a man with one eye who has gone by and who travels fast. And I know that for which they look is the man with the one eye. We leave Anvig with little grub, and travel light and fast. There are three fresh dogs bought in Anvig, and we travel very fast. The man and woman are like mad. We start earlier in the morning, we travel later at night. I look sometimes to see them die, these two baby wolves, but they will not die. They go on and on. When the dry cough take hold of them hard, they hold their hands against their stomach and double up in the snow, and cough, and cough, and cough. They cannot walk, they cannot talk. Maybe for ten minutes they cough, maybe for half an hour, and then they straighten up, the tears from the coughing frozen on their faces, and the words they say are, 'Come, let us go on.'

"Even I, Sitka Charley, am greatly weary, and I think seven hundred and fifty dollars is a cheap price for the labor I do. We take the big cut-off, and the trail is fresh. The baby wolves have their noses down to the trail, and they say, 'Hurry!' All the time do they say, 'Hurry! Faster! Faster!' It is hard on the dogs. We have not much food and we cannot give them enough to eat, and they grow weak. Also, they must work hard. The woman has true sorrow for them, and often, because of them, the tears are in her eyes. But the devil in her that drives her on will not let her stop and rest the dogs.

"And then we come upon the man with the one eye. He is in the snow by the trail, and his leg is broken. Because of the leg he has made a poor camp, and has been lying on his blankets for three days and keeping a fire going. When we find him he is swearing. He swears like hell. Never have I heard a man swear like that man. I am glad. Now that they have found that for which they look, we will have rest. But the woman says, 'Let us start. Hurry!'

"I am surprised. But the man with the one eye says, 'Never mind me. Give me your grub. You will get more grub at McKeon's cabin to-morrow. Send McKeon back for me. But do you go on.' Here is another wolf, an old wolf, and he, too, thinks but the one thought, to go on. So we give him our grub, which is not much, and we chop wood for his fire, and we take his strongest dogs and go on. We left the man with one eye there in the snow, and he died there in the snow, for McKeon never went back for him. And who that man was, and why he came to be there, I do not know. But I think he was greatly paid by the man and the woman, like me, to do their work for them.

"That day and that night we had nothing to eat, and all next day we travelled fast, and we were weak with hunger. Then we came to the Black Rock, which rose five hundred feet above the trail. It was at the end of the day. Darkness was coming, and we could not find the cabin of McKeon. We slept hungry, and in the morning looked for the cabin. It was not there, which was a strange thing, for everybody knew that McKeon lived in a cabin at Black Rock. We were near to the coast, where the wind

blows hard and there is much snow. Everywhere there were small hills of snow where the wind had piled it up. I have a thought, and I dig in one and another of the hills of snow. Soon I find the walls of the cabin, and I dig down to the door. I go inside. McKeon is dead. Maybe two or three weeks he is dead. A sickness had come upon him so that he could not leave the cabin. The wind and the snow had covered the cabin. He had eaten his grub and died. I looked for his cache, but there was no grub in it.

"'Let us go on,' said the woman. Her eyes were hungry, and her hand was upon her heart, as with the hurt of something inside. She bent back and forth like a tree in the wind as she stood there. 'Yes, let us go on,' said the man. His voice was hollow, like the KLONK of an old raven, and he was hunger-mad. His eyes were like live coals of fire, and as his body rocked to and fro, so rocked his soul inside. And I, too, said, 'Let us go on.' For that one thought, laid upon me like a lash for every mile of fifteen hundred miles, had burned itself into my soul, and I think that I, too, was mad. Besides, we could only go on, for there was no grub. And we went on, giving no thought to the man with the one eye in the snow.

"There is little travel on the big cut-off. Sometimes two or three months and nobody goes by. The snow had covered the trail, and there was no sign that men had ever come or gone that way. All day the wind blew and the snow fell, and all day we travelled, while our stomachs gnawed their desire and our bodies grew weaker with every step they took. Then the woman began to fall. Then the man. I did not fall, but my feet were heavy and I caught my toes and stumbled many times.

"That night is the end of February. I kill three ptarmigan with the woman's revolver, and we are made somewhat strong again. But the dogs have nothing to eat. They try to eat their harness, which is of leather and walrus-hide, and I must fight them off with a club and hang all the harness in a tree. And all night they howl and fight around that tree. But we do not mind. We sleep like dead people, and in the morning get up like dead people out of their graves and go on along the trail.

"That morning is the 1st of March, and on that morning I see the first sign of that after which the baby wolves are in search. It is clear weather, and cold. The sun stay longer in the sky, and there are sun-dogs flashing on either side, and the air is bright with frost-dust. The snow falls no more upon the trail, and I see the fresh sign of dogs and sled. There is one man with that outfit, and I see in the snow that he is not strong. He, too, has not enough to eat. The young wolves see the fresh sign, too, and they are much excited. 'Hurry!' they say. All the time they say, 'Hurry! Faster, Charley, faster!'

"We make hurry very slow. All the time the man and the woman fall down. When they try to ride on sled the dogs are too weak, and the dogs fall down. Besides, it is so cold that if they ride on the sled they will freeze. It is very easy for a hungry man to freeze. When the woman fall down, the man help her up. Sometimes the woman help the man up. By and by both fall down and cannot get up, and I must help them up all the time, else they will not get up and will die there in the snow. This is very hard work, for I am greatly weary, and as well I must drive the dogs, and the man and woman are very heavy with no strength in their bodies. So, by and by, I, too, fall

down in the snow, and there is no one to help me up. I must get up by myself. And always do I get up by myself, and help them up, and make the dogs go on.

"That night I get one ptarmigan, and we are very hungry. And that night the man says to me, 'What time start to-morrow, Charley?' It is like the voice of a ghost. I say, 'All the time you make start at five o'clock.' 'To-morrow,' he says, 'we will start at three o'clock.' I laugh in great bitterness, and I say, 'You are dead man.' And he says, 'To-morrow we will start at three o'clock.'

"And we start at three o'clock, for I am their man, and that which they say is to be done, I do. It is clear and cold, and there is no wind. When daylight comes we can see a long way off. And it is very quiet. We can hear no sound but the beat of our hearts, and in the silence that is a very loud sound. We are like sleep-walkers, and we walk in dreams until we fall down; and then we know we must get up, and we see the trail once more and bear the beating of our hearts. Sometimes, when I am walking in dreams this way, I have strange thoughts. Why does Sitka Charley live? I ask myself. Why does Sitka Charley work hard, and go hungry, and have all this pain? For seven hundred and fifty dollars a month, I make the answer, and I know it is a foolish answer. Also is it a true answer. And after that never again do I care for money. For that day a large wisdom came to me. There was a great light, and I saw clear, and I knew that it was not for money that a man must live, but for a happiness that no man can give, or buy, or sell, and that is beyond all value of all money in the world.

"In the morning we come upon the last-night camp of the man who is before us. It is a poor camp, the kind a man makes who is hungry and without strength. On the snow there are pieces of blanket and of canvas, and I know what has happened. His dogs have eaten their harness, and he has made new harness out of his blankets. The man and woman stare hard at what is to be seen, and as I look at them my back feels the chill as of a cold wind against the skin. Their eyes are toil-mad and hunger-mad, and burn like fire deep in their heads. Their faces are like the faces of people who have died of hunger, and their cheeks are black with the dead flesh of many freezings. 'Let us go on,' says the man. But the woman coughs and falls in the snow. It is the dry cough where the frost has bitten the lungs. For a long time she coughs, then like a woman crawling out of her grave she crawls to her feet. The tears are ice upon her cheeks, and her breath makes a noise as it comes and goes, and she says, 'Let us go on.'

"We go on. And we walk in dreams through the silence. And every time we walk is a dream and we are without pain; and every time we fall down is an awakening, and we see the snow and the mountains and the fresh trail of the man who is before us, and we know all our pain again. We come to where we can see a long way over the snow, and that for which they look is before them. A mile away there are black spots upon the snow. The black spots move. My eyes are dim, and I must stiffen my soul to see. And I see one man with dogs and a sled. The baby wolves see, too. They can no longer talk, but they whisper, 'On, on. Let us hurry!'

"And they fall down, but they go on. The man who is before us, his blanket harness breaks often, and he must stop and mend it. Our harness is good, for I have hung it in trees each night. At eleven o'clock the man is half a mile away. At one o'clock he is a quarter of a mile away. He is very weak. We see him fall down many times in the snow. One of his dogs can no longer travel, and he cuts it out of the harness. But he does not kill it. I kill it with the axe as I go by, as I kill one of my dogs which loses its legs and can travel no more.

"Now we are three hundred yards away. We go very slow. Maybe in two, three hours we go one mile. We do not walk. All the time we fall down. We stand up and stagger two steps, maybe three steps, then we fall down again. And all the time I must help up the man and woman. Sometimes they rise to their knees and fall forward, maybe four or five times before they can get to their feet again and stagger two or three steps and fall. But always do they fall forward. Standing or kneeling, always do they fall forward, gaining on the trail each time by the length of their bodies.

"Sometimes they crawl on hands and knees like animals that live in the forest. We go like snails, like snails that are dying we go so slow. And yet we go faster than the man who is before us. For he, too, falls all the time, and there is no Sitka Charley to lift him up. Now he is two hundred yards away. After a long time he is one hundred yards away.

"It is a funny sight. I want to laugh out loud, Ha! ha! just like that, it is so funny. It is a race of dead men and dead dogs. It is like in a dream when you have a nightmare and run away very fast for your life and go very slow. The man who is with me is mad. The woman is mad. I am mad. All the world is mad, and I want to laugh, it is so funny.

"The stranger-man who is before us leaves his dogs behind and goes on alone across the snow. After a long time we come to the dogs. They lie helpless in the snow, their harness of blanket and canvas on them, the sled behind them, and as we pass them they whine to us and cry like babies that are hungry.

"Then we, too, leave our dogs and go on alone across the snow. The man and the woman are nearly gone, and they moan and groan and sob, but they go on. I, too, go on. I have but one thought. It is to come up to the stranger-man. Then it is that I shall rest, and not until then shall I rest, and it seems that I must lie down and sleep for a thousand years, I am so tired.

"The stranger-man is fifty yards away, all alone in the white snow. He falls and crawls, staggers, and falls and crawls again. He is like an animal that is sore wounded and trying to run from the hunter. By and by he crawls on hands and knees. He no longer stands up. And the man and woman no longer stand up. They, too, crawl after him on hands and knees. But I stand up. Sometimes I fall, but always do I stand up again.

"It is a strange thing to see. All about is the snow and the silence, and through it crawl the man and the woman, and the stranger-man who goes before. On either side the sun are sun-dogs, so that there are three suns in the sky. The frost-dust is like the

dust of diamonds, and all the air is filled with it. Now the woman coughs, and lies still in the snow until the fit has passed, when she crawls on again. Now the man looks ahead, and he is blear-eyed as with old age and must rub his eyes so that he can see the stranger-man. And now the stranger-man looks back over his shoulder. And Sitka Charley, standing upright, maybe falls down and stands upright again.

"After a long time the stranger-man crawls no more. He stands slowly upon his feet and rocks back and forth. Also does he take off one mitten and wait with revolver in his hand, rocking back and forth as he waits. His face is skin and bones and frozen black. It is a hungry face. The eyes are deep-sunk in his head, and the lips are snarling. The man and woman, too, get upon their feet and they go toward him very slowly. And all about is the snow and the silence. And in the sky are three suns, and all the air is flashing with the dust of diamonds.

"And thus it was that I, Sitka Charley, saw the baby wolves make their kill. No word is spoken. Only does the stranger-man snarl with his hungry face. Also does he rock to and fro, his shoulders drooping, his knees bent, and his legs wide apart so that he does not fall down. The man and the woman stop maybe fifty feet away. Their legs, too, are wide apart so that they do not fall down, and their bodies rock to and fro. The stranger-man is very weak. His arm shakes, so that when he shoots at the man his bullet strikes in the snow. The man cannot take off his mitten. The stranger-man shoots at him again, and this time the bullet goes by in the air. Then the man takes the mitten in his teeth and pulls it off. But his hand is frozen and he cannot hold the revolver, and it fails in the snow. I look at the woman. Her mitten is off, and the big Colt's revolver is in her hand. Three times she shoot, quick, just like that. The hungry face of the stranger-man is still snarling as he falls forward into the snow.

"They do not look at the dead man. 'Let us go on,' they say. And we go on. But now that they have found that for which they look, they are like dead. The last strength has gone out of them. They can stand no more upon their feet. They will not crawl, but desire only to close their eyes and sleep. I see not far away a place for camp. I kick them. I have my dog-whip, and I give them the lash of it. They cry aloud, but they must crawl. And they do crawl to the place for camp. I build fire so that they will not freeze. Then I go back for sled. Also, I kill the dogs of the stranger-man so that we may have food and not die. I put the man and woman in blankets and they sleep. Sometimes I wake them and give them little bit of food. They are not awake, but they take the food. The woman sleep one day and a half. Then she wake up and go to sleep again. The man sleep two days and wake up and go to sleep again. After that we go down to the coast at St. Michaels. And when the ice goes out of Bering Sea, the man and woman go away on a steamship. But first they pay me my seven hundred and fifty dollars a month. Also, they make me a present of one thousand dollars. And that was the year that Sitka Charley gave much money to the Mission at Holy Cross."

"But why did they kill the man?" I asked.

Sitka Charley delayed reply until he had lighted his pipe. He glanced at the POLICE GAZETTE illustration and nodded his head at it familiarly. Then he said, speaking slowly and ponderingly:

"I have thought much. I do not know. It is something that happened. It is a picture I remember. It is like looking in at the window and seeing the man writing a letter. They came into my life and they went out of my life, and the picture is as I have said, without beginning, the end without understanding."

"You have painted many pictures in the telling," I said.

"Ay," he nodded his head. "But they were without beginning and without end."

"The last picture of all had an end," I said.

"Ay," he answered. "But what end?"

"It was a piece of life," I said.

"Ay," he answered. "It was a piece of life."

The Sunlanders

Mandell is an obscure village on the rim of the polar sea. It is not large, and the people are peaceable, more peaceable even than those of the adjacent tribes. There are few men in Mandell, and many women; wherefore a wholesome and necessary polygamy is in practice; the women bear children with ardor, and the birth of a man-child is hailed with acclamation. Then there is Aab-Waak, whose head rests always on one shoulder, as though at some time the neck had become very tired and refused forevermore its wonted duty.

The cause of all these things, — the peaceableness, and the polygamy, and the tired neck of Aab-Waak, — goes back among the years to the time when the schooner Search dropped anchor in Mandell Bay, and when Tyee, chief man of the tribe, conceived a scheme of sudden wealth. To this day the story of things that happened is remembered and spoken of with bated breath by the people of Mandell, who are cousins to the Hungry Folk who live in the west. Children draw closer when the tale is told, and marvel sagely to themselves at the madness of those who might have been their forebears had they not provoked the Sunlanders and come to bitter ends.

It began to happen when six men came ashore from the Search, with heavy outfits, as though they had come to stay, and quartered themselves in Neegah's igloo. Not but that they paid well in flour and sugar for the lodging, but Neegah was aggrieved because Mesahchie, his daughter, elected to cast her fortunes and seek food and blanket with Bill-Man, who was leader of the party of white men.

"She is worth a price," Neegah complained to the gathering by the council-fire, when the six white men were asleep. "She is worth a price, for we have more men than women, and the men be bidding high. The hunter Ounenk offered me a kayak, new-made, and a gun which he got in trade from the Hungry Folk. This was I offered, and behold, now she is gone and I have nothing!"

"I, too, did bid for Mesahchie," grumbled a voice, in tones not altogether joyless, and Peelo shoved his broad-cheeked, jovial face for a moment into the light.

"Thou, too," Neegah affirmed. "And there were others. Why is there such a restlessness upon the Sunlanders?" he demanded petulantly. "Why do they not stay at home? The Snow People do not wander to the lands of the Sunlanders."

"Better were it to ask why they come," cried a voice from the darkness, and Aab-Waak pushed his way to the front.

"Ay! Why they come!" clamored many voices, and Aab-Waak waved his hand for silence.

“Men do not dig in the ground for nothing,” he began. “And I have it in mind of the Whale People, who are likewise Sunlanders, and who lost their ship in the ice. You all remember the Whale People, who came to us in their broken boats, and who went away into the south with dogs and sleds when the frost arrived and snow covered the land. And you remember, while they waited for the frost, that one man of them dug in the ground, and then two men and three, and then all men of them, with great excitement and much disturbance. What they dug out of the ground we do not know, for they drove us away so we could not see. But afterward, when they were gone, we looked and found nothing. Yet there be much ground and they did not dig it all.”

“Ay, Aab-Waak! Ay!” cried the people in admiration.

“Wherefore I have it in mind,” he concluded, “that one Sunlander tells another, and that these Sunlanders have been so told and are come to dig in the ground.”

“But how can it be that Bill-Man speaks our tongue?” demanded a little weazened old hunter, — ”Bill-Man, upon whom never before our eyes have rested?”

“Bill-Man has been other times in the Snow Lands,” Aab-Waak answered, “else would he not speak the speech of the Bear People, which is like the speech of the Hungry Folk, which is very like the speech of the Mandells. For there have been many Sunlanders among the Bear People, few among the Hungry Folk, and none at all among the Mandells, save the Whale People and those who sleep now in the igloo of Neegah.”

“Their sugar is very good,” Neegah commented, “and their flour.”

“They have great wealth,” Ounenk added. “Yesterday I was to their ship, and beheld most cunning tools of iron, and knives, and guns, and flour, and sugar, and strange foods without end.”

“It is so, brothers!” Tyee stood up and exulted inwardly at the respect and silence his people accorded him. “They be very rich, these Sunlanders. Also, they be fools. For behold! They come among us boldly, blindly, and without thought for all of their great wealth. Even now they snore, and we are many and unafraid.”

“Mayhap they, too, are unafraid, being great fighters,” the weazened little old hunter objected.

But Tyee scowled upon him. “Nay, it would not seem so. They live to the south, under the path of the sun, and are soft as their dogs are soft. You remember the dog of the Whale People? Our dogs ate him the second day, for he was soft and could not fight. The sun is warm and life easy in the Sun Lands, and the men are as women, and the women as children.”

Heads nodded in approval, and the women craned their necks to listen.

“It is said they are good to their women, who do little work,” tittered Likeeta, a broad-hipped, healthy young woman, daughter to Tyee himself.

“Thou wouldst follow the feet of Mesahchie, eh?” he cried angrily. Then he turned swiftly to the tribesmen. “Look you, brothers, this is the way of the Sunlanders! They have eyes for our women, and take them one by one. As Mesahchie has gone, cheating Neegah of her price, so will Likeeta go, so will they all go, and we be cheated. I have

talked with a hunter from the Bear People, and I know. There be Hungry Folk among us; let them speak if my words be true."

The six hunters of the Hungry Folk attested the truth and fell each to telling his neighbor of the Sunlanders and their ways. There were mutterings from the younger men, who had wives to seek, and from the older men, who had daughters to fetch prices, and a low hum of rage rose higher and clearer.

"They are very rich, and have cunning tools of iron, and knives, and guns without end," Tyee suggested craftily, his dream of sudden wealth beginning to take shape.

"I shall take the gun of Bill-Man for myself," Aab-Waak suddenly proclaimed.

"Nay, it shall be mine!" shouted Neegah; "for there is the price of Mesahchie to be reckoned."

"Peace! O brothers!" Tyee swept the assembly with his hands. "Let the women and children go to their igloos. This is the talk of men; let it be for the ears of men."

"There be guns in plenty for all," he said when the women had unwillingly withdrawn. "I doubt not there will be two guns for each man, without thought of the flour and sugar and other things. And it is easy. The six Sunlanders in Neegah's igloo will we kill to-night while they sleep. To-morrow will we go in peace to the ship to trade, and there, when the time favors, kill all their brothers. And to-morrow night there shall be feasting and merriment and division of wealth. And the least man shall possess more than did ever the greatest before. Is it wise, that which I have spoken, brothers?"

A low growl of approval answered him, and preparation for the attack was begun. The six Hungry Folk, as became members of a wealthier tribe, were armed with rifles and plenteously supplied with ammunition. But it was only here and there that a Mandell possessed a gun, many of which were broken, and there was a general slackness of powder and shells. This poverty of war weapons, however, was relieved by myriads of bone-headed arrows and casting-spears for work at a distance, and for close quarters steel knives of Russian and Yankee make.

"Let there be no noise," Tyee finally instructed; "but be there many on every side of the igloo, and close, so that the Sunlanders may not break through. Then do you, Neegah, with six of the young men behind, crawl in to where they sleep. Take no guns, which be prone to go off at unexpected times, but put the strength of your arms into the knives."

"And be it understood that no harm befall Mesahchie, who is worth a price," Neegah whispered hoarsely.

Flat upon the ground, the small army concentred on the igloo, and behind, deliciously expectant, crouched many women and children, come out to witness the murder. The brief August night was passing, and in the gray of dawn could be dimly discerned the creeping forms of Neegah and the young men. Without pause, on hands and knees, they entered the long passageway and disappeared. Tyee rose up and rubbed his hands. All was going well. Head after head in the big circle lifted and waited. Each man pictured the scene according to his nature — the sleeping men, the plunge of the knives, and the sudden death in the dark.

A loud hail, in the voice of a Sunlander, rent the silence, and a shot rang out. Then an uproar broke loose inside the igloo. Without premeditation, the circle swept forward into the passageway. On the inside, half a dozen repeating rifles began to chatter, and the Mandells, jammed in the confined space, were powerless. Those at the front strove madly to retreat from the fire-spitting guns in their very faces, and those in the rear pressed as madly forward to the attack. The bullets from the big 45:90's drove through half a dozen men at a shot, and the passageway, gorged with surging, helpless men, became a shambles. The rifles, pumped without aim into the mass, withered it away like a machine gun, and against that steady stream of death no man could advance.

"Never was there the like!" panted one of the Hungry Folk. "I did but look in, and the dead were piled like seals on the ice after a killing!"

"Did I not say, mayhap, they were fighters?" cackled the weazened old hunter.

"It was to be expected," Aab-Waak answered stoutly. "We fought in a trap of our making."

"O ye fools!" Tyee chided. "Ye sons of fools! It was not planned, this thing ye have done. To Neegah and the six young men only was it given to go inside. My cunning is superior to the cunning of the Sunlanders, but ye take away its edge, and rob me of its strength, and make it worse than no cunning at all!"

No one made reply, and all eyes centred on the igloo, which loomed vague and monstrous against the clear northeast sky. Through a hole in the roof the smoke from the rifles curled slowly upward in the pulseless air, and now and again a wounded man crawled painfully through the gray.

"Let each ask of his neighbor for Neegah and the six young men," Tyee commanded.

And after a time the answer came back, "Neegah and the six young men are not."

"And many more are not!" wailed a woman to the rear.

"The more wealth for those who are left," Tyee grimly consoled. Then, turning to Aab-Waak, he said: "Go thou, and gather together many sealskins filled with oil. Let the hunters empty them on the outside wood of the igloo and of the passage. And let them put fire to it ere the Sunlanders make holes in the igloo for their guns."

Even as he spoke a hole appeared in the dirt plastered between the logs, a rifle muzzle protruded, and one of the Hungry Folk clapped hand to his side and leaped in the air. A second shot, through the lungs, brought him to the ground. Tyee and the rest scattered to either side, out of direct range, and Aab-Waak hastened the men forward with the skins of oil. Avoiding the loopholes, which were making on every side of the igloo, they emptied the skins on the dry drift-logs brought down by the Mandell River from the tree-lands to the south. Ounenk ran forward with a blazing brand, and the flames leaped upward. Many minutes passed, without sign, and they held their weapons ready as the fire gained headway.

Tyee rubbed his hands gleefully as the dry structure burned and crackled. "Now we have them, brothers! In the trap!"

"And no one may gainsay me the gun of Bill-Man," Aab-Waak announced.

"Save Bill-Man," squeaked the old hunter. "For behold, he cometh now!"

Covered with a singed and blackened blanket, the big white man leaped out of the blazing entrance, and on his heels, likewise shielded, came Mesahchie, and the five other Sunlanders. The Hungry Folk tried to check the rush with an ill-directed volley, while the Mandells hurled in a cloud of spears and arrows. But the Sunlanders cast their flaming blankets from them as they ran, and it was seen that each bore on his shoulders a small pack of ammunition. Of all their possessions, they had chosen to save that. Running swiftly and with purpose, they broke the circle and headed directly for the great cliff, which towered blackly in the brightening day a half-mile to the rear of the village.

But Tyee knelt on one knee and lined the sights of his rifle on the rearmost Sunlander. A great shout went up when he pulled the trigger and the man fell forward, struggled partly up, and fell again. Without regard for the rain of arrows, another Sunlander ran back, bent over him, and lifted him across his shoulders. But the Mandell spearmen were crowding up into closer range, and a strong cast transfixed the wounded man. He cried out and became swiftly limp as his comrade lowered him to the ground. In the meanwhile, Bill-Man and the three others had made a stand and were driving a leaden hail into the advancing spearmen. The fifth Sunlander bent over his stricken fellow, felt the heart, and then coolly cut the straps of the pack and stood up with the ammunition and extra gun.

"Now is he a fool!" cried Tyee, leaping high, as he ran forward, to clear the squirming body of one of the Hungry Folk.

His own rifle was clogged so that he could not use it, and he called out for some one to spear the Sunlander, who had turned and was running for safety under the protecting fire. The little old hunter poised his spear on the throwing-stick, swept his arm back as he ran, and delivered the cast.

"By the body of the Wolf, say I, it was a good throw!" Tyee praised, as the fleeing man pitched forward, the spear standing upright between his shoulders and swaying slowly forward and back.

The little weazened old man coughed and sat down. A streak of red showed on his lips and welled into a thick stream. He coughed again, and a strange whistling came and went with his breath.

"They, too, are unafraid, being great fighters," he wheezed, pawing aimlessly with his hands. "And behold! Bill-Man comes now!"

Tyee glanced up. Four Mandells and one of the Hungry Folk had rushed upon the fallen man and were spearing him from his knees back to the earth. In the twinkling of an eye, Tyee saw four of them cut down by the bullets of the Sunlanders. The fifth, as yet unhurt, seized the two rifles, but as he stood up to make off he was whirled almost completely around by the impact of a bullet in the arm, steadied by a second, and overthrown by the shock of a third. A moment later and Bill-Man was on the spot, cutting the pack-straps and picking up the guns.

This Tyee saw, and his own people falling as they straggled forward, and he was aware of a quick doubt, and resolved to lie where he was and see more. For some

unaccountable reason, Mesahchie was running back to Bill-Man; but before she could reach him, Tyee saw Peelo run out and throw arms about her. He essayed to sling her across his shoulder, but she grappled with him, tearing and scratching at his face. Then she tripped him, and the pair fell heavily. When they regained their feet, Peelo had shifted his grip so that one arm was passed under her chin, the wrist pressing into her throat and strangling her. He buried his face in her breast, taking the blows of her hands on his thick mat of hair, and began slowly to force her off the field. Then it was, retreating with the weapons of his fallen comrades, that Bill-Man came upon them. As Mesahchie saw him, she twirled the victim around and held him steady. Bill-Man swung the rifle in his right hand, and hardly easing his stride, delivered the blow. Tyee saw Peelo drive to the earth as smote by a falling star, and the Sunlander and Neegah's daughter fleeing side by side.

A bunch of Mandells, led by one of the Hungry Folk, made a futile rush which melted away into the earth before the scorching fire.

Tyee caught his breath and murmured, "Like the young frost in the morning sun."

"As I say, they are great fighters," the old hunter whispered weakly, far gone in hemorrhage. "I know. I have heard. They be sea-robbers and hunters of seals; and they shoot quick and true, for it is their way of life and the work of their hands."

"Like the young frost in the morning sun," Tyee repeated, crouching for shelter behind the dying man and peering at intervals about him.

It was no longer a fight, for no Mandell man dared venture forward, and as it was, they were too close to the Sunlanders to go back. Three tried it, scattering and scurrying like rabbits; but one came down with a broken leg, another was shot through the body, and the third, twisting and dodging, fell on the edge of the village. So the tribesmen crouched in the hollow places and burrowed into the dirt in the open, while the Sunlanders' bullets searched the plain.

"Move not," Tyee pleaded, as Aab-Waak came worming over the ground to him. "Move not, good Aab-Waak, else you bring death upon us."

"Death sits upon many," Aab-Waak laughed; "wherefore, as you say, there will be much wealth in division. My father breathes fast and short behind the big rock yon, and beyond, twisted like in a knot, lieth my brother. But their share shall be my share, and it is well."

"As you say, good Aab-Waak, and as I have said; but before division must come that which we may divide, and the Sunlanders be not yet dead."

A bullet glanced from a rock before them, and singing shrilly, rose low over their heads on its second flight. Tyee ducked and shivered, but Aab-Waak grinned and sought vainly to follow it with his eyes.

"So swiftly they go, one may not see them," he observed.

"But many be dead of us," Tyee went on.

"And many be left," was the reply. "And they hug close to the earth, for they have become wise in the fashion of righting. Further, they are angered. Moreover, when we

have killed the Sunlanders on the ship, there will remain but four on the land. These may take long to kill, but in the end it will happen."

"How may we go down to the ship when we cannot go this way or that?" Tyee questioned.

"It is a bad place where lie Bill-Man and his brothers," Aab-Waak explained. "We may come upon them from every side, which is not good. So they aim to get their backs against the cliff and wait until their brothers of the ship come to give them aid."

"Never shall they come from the ship, their brothers! I have said it."

Tyee was gathering courage again, and when the Sunlanders verified the prediction by retreating to the cliff, he was light-hearted as ever.

"There be only three of us!" complained one of the Hungry Folk as they came together for council.

"Therefore, instead of two, shall you have four guns each," was Tyee's rejoinder.

"We did good fighting."

"Ay; and if it should happen that two of you be left, then will you have six guns each. Therefore, fight well."

"And if there be none of them left?" Aab-Waak whispered slyly.

"Then will we have the guns, you and I," Tyee whispered back.

However, to propitiate the Hungry Folk, he made one of them leader of the ship expedition. This party comprised fully two-thirds of the tribesmen, and departed for the coast, a dozen miles away, laden with skins and things to trade. The remaining men were disposed in a large half-circle about the breastwork which Bill-Man and his Sunlanders had begun to throw up. Tyee was quick to note the virtues of things, and at once set his men to digging shallow trenches.

"The time will go before they are aware," he explained to Aab-Waak; "and their minds being busy, they will not think overmuch of the dead that are, nor gather trouble to themselves. And in the dark of night they may creep closer, so that when the Sunlanders look forth in the morning light they will find us very near."

In the midday heat the men ceased from their work and made a meal of dried fish and seal oil which the women brought up. There was some clamor for the food of the Sunlanders in the igloo of Neegah, but Tyee refused to divide it until the return of the ship party. Speculations upon the outcome became rife, but in the midst of it a dull boom drifted up over the land from the sea. The keen-eyed ones made out a dense cloud of smoke, which quickly disappeared, and which they averred was directly over the ship of the Sunlanders. Tyee was of the opinion that it was a big gun. Aab-Waak did not know, but thought it might be a signal of some sort. Anyway, he said, it was time something happened.

Five or six hours afterward a solitary man was descried coming across the wide flat from the sea, and the women and children poured out upon him in a body. It was Ounenk, naked, winded, and wounded. The blood still trickled down his face from a gash on the forehead. His left arm, frightfully mangled, hung helpless at his side. But

most significant of all, there was a wild gleam in his eyes which betokened the women knew not what.

"Where be Peshack?" an old squaw queried sharply.

"And Olitlie?" "And Polak?" "And Mah-Kook?" the voices took up the cry.

But he said nothing, brushing his way through the clamorous mass and directing his staggering steps toward Tyee. The old squaw raised the wail, and one by one the women joined her as they swung in behind. The men crawled out of their trenches and ran back to gather about Tyee, and it was noticed that the Sunlanders climbed upon their barricade to see.

Ounenk halted, swept the blood from his eyes, and looked about. He strove to speak, but his dry lips were glued together. Likeeta fetched him water, and he grunted and drank again.

"Was it a fight?" Tyee demanded finally, — "a good fight?"

"Ho! ho! ho!" So suddenly and so fiercely did Ounenk laugh that every voice hushed. "Never was there such a fight! So I say, I, Ounenk, fighter beforetime of beasts and men. And ere I forget, let me speak fat words and wise. By fighting will the Sunlanders teach us Mandell Folk how to fight. And if we fight long enough, we shall be great fighters, even as the Sunlanders, or else we shall be — dead. Ho! ho! ho! It was a fight!"

"Where be thy brothers?" Tyee shook him till he shrieked from the pain of his hurts.

Ounenk sobered. "My brothers? They are not."

"And Pome-Lee?" cried one of the two Hungry Folk; "Pome-Lee, the son of my mother?"

"Pome-Lee is not," Ounenk answered in a monotonous voice.

"And the Sunlanders?" from Aab-Waak.

"The Sunlanders are not."

"Then the ship of the Sunlanders, and the wealth and guns and things?" Tyee demanded.

"Neither the ship of the Sunlanders, nor the wealth and guns and things," was the unvarying response. "All are not. Nothing is. I only am."

"And thou art a fool."

"It may be so," Ounenk answered, unruffled.

"I have seen that which would well make me a fool."

Tyee held his tongue, and all waited till it should please Ounenk to tell the story in his own way.

"We took no guns, O Tyee," he at last began; "no guns, my brothers — only knives and hunting bows and spears. And in twos and threes, in our kayaks, we came to the ship. They were glad to see us, the Sunlanders, and we spread our skins and they brought out their articles of trade, and everything was well. And Pome-Lee waited — waited till the sun was well overhead and they sat at meat, when he gave the cry and we fell upon them. Never was there such a fight, and never such fighters. Half did we kill in the quickness of surprise, but the half that was left became as devils, and they multiplied themselves, and everywhere they fought like devils. Three put their backs

against the mast of the ship, and we ringed them with our dead before they died. And some got guns and shot with both eyes wide open, and very quick and sure. And one got a big gun, from which at one time he shot many small bullets. And so, behold!"

Ounenk pointed to his ear, neatly pierced by a buckshot.

"But I, Ounenk, drove my spear through his back from behind. And in such fashion, one way and another, did we kill them all — all save the head man. And him we were about, many of us, and he was alone, when he made a great cry and broke through us, five or six dragging upon him, and ran down inside the ship. And then, when the wealth of the ship was ours, and only the head man down below whom we would kill presently, why then there was a sound as of all the guns in the world — a mighty sound! And like a bird I rose up in the air, and the living Mandell Folk, and the dead Sunlanders, the little kayaks, the big ship, the guns, the wealth — everything rose up in the air. So I say, I, Ounenk, who tell the tale, am the only one left."

A great silence fell upon the assemblage. Tyee looked at Aab-Waak with awe-struck eyes, but forbore to speak. Even the women were too stunned to wail the dead.

Ounenk looked about him with pride. "I, only, am left," he repeated.

But at that instant a rifle cracked from Bill-Man's barricade, and there was a sharp spat and thud on the chest of Ounenk. He swayed backward and came forward again, a look of startled surprise on his face. He gasped, and his lips writhed in a grim smile. There was a shrinking together of the shoulders and a bending of the knees. He shook himself, as might a drowsing man, and straightened up. But the shrinking and bending began again, and he sank down slowly, quite slowly, to the ground.

It was a clean mile from the pit of the Sunlanders, and death had spanned it. A great cry of rage went up, and in it there was much of blood-vengeance, much of the unreasoned ferocity of the brute. Tyee and Aab-Waak tried to hold the Mandell Folk back, were thrust aside, and could only turn and watch the mad charge. But no shots came from the Sunlanders, and ere half the distance was covered, many, affrighted by the mysterious silence of the pit, halted and waited. The wilder spirits bore on, and when they had cut the remaining distance in half, the pit still showed no sign of life. At two hundred yards they slowed down and bunched; at one hundred, they stopped, a score of them, suspicious, and conferred together.

Then a wreath of smoke crowned the barricade, and they scattered like a handful of pebbles thrown at random. Four went down, and four more, and they continued swiftly to fall, one and two at a time, till but one remained, and he in full flight with death singing about his ears. It was Nok, a young hunter, long-legged and tall, and he ran as never before. He skimmed across the naked open like a bird, and soared and sailed and curved from side to side. The rifles in the pit rang out in solid volley; they flut-flut-flut-flutted in ragged sequence; and still Nok rose and dipped and rose again unharmed. There was a lull in the firing, as though the Sunlanders had given over, and Nok curved less and less in his flight till he darted straight forward at every leap. And then, as he leaped cleanly and well, one lone rifle barked from the pit, and he doubled

up in mid-air, struck the ground in a ball, and like a ball bounced from the impact, and came down in a broken heap.

“Who so swift as the swift-winged lead?” Aab-Waak pondered.

Tyee grunted and turned away. The incident was closed and there was more pressing matter at hand. One Hungry Man and forty fighters, some of them hurt, remained; and there were four Sunlanders yet to reckon with.

“We will keep them in their hole by the cliff,” he said, “and when famine has gripped them hard we will slay them like children.”

“But of what matter to fight?” queried Oloof, one of the younger men. “The wealth of the Sunlanders is not; only remains that in the igloo of Neegah, a paltry quantity — ”

He broke off hastily as the air by his ear split sharply to the passage of a bullet.

Tyee laughed scornfully. “Let that be thy answer. What else may we do with this mad breed of Sunlanders which will not die?”

“What a thing is foolishness!” Oloof protested, his ears furtively alert for the coming of other bullets. “It is not right that they should fight so, these Sunlanders. Why will they not die easily? They are fools not to know that they are dead men, and they give us much trouble.”

“We fought before for great wealth; we fight now that we may live,” Aab-Waak summed up succinctly.

That night there was a clash in the trenches, and shots exchanged. And in the morning the igloo of Neegah was found empty of the Sunlanders’ possessions. These they themselves had taken, for the signs of their trail were visible to the sun. Oloof climbed to the brow of the cliff to hurl great stones down into the pit, but the cliff overhung, and he hurled down abuse and insult instead, and promised bitter torture to them in the end. Bill-Man mocked him back in the tongue of the Bear Folk, and Tyee, lifting his head from a trench to see, had his shoulder scratched deeply by a bullet.

And in the dreary days that followed, and in the wild nights when they pushed the trenches closer, there was much discussion as to the wisdom of letting the Sunlanders go. But of this they were afraid, and the women raised a cry always at the thought This much they had seen of the Sunlanders; they cared to see no more. All the time the whistle and blub-blub of bullets filled the air, and all the time the death-list grew. In the golden sunrise came the faint, far crack of a rifle, and a stricken woman would throw up her hands on the distant edge of the village; in the noonday heat, men in the trenches heard the shrill sing-song and knew their deaths; or in the gray afterglow of evening, the dirt kicked up in puffs by the winking fires. And through the nights the long “Wah-hoo-ha-a wah-hoo-ha-a!” of mourning women held dolorous sway.

As Tyee had promised, in the end famine gripped the Sunlanders. And once, when an early fall gale blew, one of them crawled through the darkness past the trenches and stole many dried fish.

But he could not get back with them, and the sun found him vainly hiding in the village. So he fought the great fight by himself, and in a narrow ring of Mandell Folk

shot four with his revolver, and ere they could lay hands on him for the torture, turned it on himself and died.

This threw a gloom upon the people. Oloof put the question, “If one man die so hard, how hard will die the three who yet are left?”

Then Mesahchie stood up on the barricade and called in by name three dogs which had wandered close, — meat and life, — which set back the day of reckoning and put despair in the hearts of the Mandell Folk. And on the head of Mesahchie were showered the curses of a generation.

The days dragged by. The sun hurried south, the nights grew long and longer, and there was a touch of frost in the air. And still the Sunlanders held the pit. Hearts were breaking under the unending strain, and Tyee thought hard and deep. Then he sent forth word that all the skins and hides of all the tribe be collected. These he had made into huge cylindrical bales, and behind each bale he placed a man.

When the word was given the brief day was almost spent, and it was slow work and tedious, rolling the big bales forward foot by foot The bullets of the Sunlanders blub-blubbed and thudded against them, but could not go through, and the men howled their delight But the dark was at hand, and Tyee, secure of success, called the bales back to the trenches.

In the morning, in the face of an unearthly silence from the pit, the real advance began. At first with large intervals between, the bales slowly converged as the circle drew in. At a hundred yards they were quite close together, so that Tyee’s order to halt was passed along in whispers. The pit showed no sign of life. They watched long and sharply, but nothing stirred. The advance was taken up and the manoeuvre repeated at fifty yards. Still no sign nor sound. Tyee shook his head, and even Aab-Waak was dubious. But the order was given to go on, and go on they did, till bale touched bale and a solid rampart of skin and hide bowed out from the cliff about the pit and back to the cliff again.

Tyee looked back and saw the women and children clustering blackly in the deserted trenches. He looked ahead at the silent pit. The men were wriggling nervously, and he ordered every second bale forward. This double line advanced till bale touched bale as before. Then Aab-Waak, of his own will, pushed one bale forward alone. When it touched the barricade, he waited a long while. After that he tossed unresponsive rocks over into the pit, and finally, with great care, stood up and peered in. A carpet of empty cartridges, a few white-picked dog bones, and a soggy place where water dripped from a crevice, met his eyes. That was all. The Sunlanders were gone.

There were murmurings of witchcraft, vague complaints, dark looks which foreshadowed to Tyee dread things which yet might come to pass, and he breathed easier when Aab-Waak took up the trail along the base of the cliff.

“The cave!” Tyee cried. “They foresaw my wisdom of the skin-bales and fled away into the cave!”

The cliff was honey-combed with a labyrinth of subterranean passages which found vent in an opening midway between the pit and where the trench tapped the wall.

Thither, and with many exclamations, the tribesmen followed Aab-Waak, and, arrived, they saw plainly where the Sunlanders had climbed to the mouth, twenty and odd feet above.

"Now the thing is done," Tyee said, rubbing his hands. "Let word go forth that rejoicing be made, for they are in the trap now, these Sunlanders, in the trap. The young men shall climb up, and the mouth of the cave be filled with stones, so that Bill-Man and his brothers and Mesahchie shall by famine be pinched to shadows and die cursing in the silence and dark."

Cries of delight and relief greeted this, and Howgah, the last of the Hungry Folk, swarmed up the steep slant and drew himself, crouching, upon the lip of the opening. But as he crouched, a muffled report rushed forth, and as he clung desperately to the slippery edge, a second. His grip loosed with reluctant weakness, and he pitched down at the feet of Tyee, quivered for a moment like some monstrous jelly, and was still.

"How should I know they were great fighters and unafraid?" Tyee demanded, spurred to defence by recollection of the dark looks and vague complaints.

"We were many and happy," one of the men stated baldly. Another fingered his spear with a prurient hand.

But Oloof cried them cease. "Give ear, my brothers! There be another way! As a boy I chanced upon it playing along the steep. It is hidden by the rocks, and there is no reason that a man should go there; wherefore it is secret, and no man knows. It is very small, and you crawl on your belly a long way, and then you are in the cave. To-night we will so crawl, without noise, on our bellies, and come upon the Sunlanders from behind. And to-morrow we will be at peace, and never again will we quarrel with the Sunlanders in the years to come."

"Never again!" chorussed the weary men. "Never again!" And Tyee joined with them.

That night, with the memory of their dead in their hearts, and in their hands stones and spears and knives, the horde of women and children collected about the known mouth of the cave. Down the twenty and odd precarious feet to the ground no Sunlander could hope to pass and live. In the village remained only the wounded men, while every able man — and there were thirty of them — followed Oloof to the secret opening. A hundred feet of broken ledges and insecurely heaped rocks were between it and the earth, and because of the rocks, which might be displaced by the touch of hand or foot, but one man climbed at a time. Oloof went up first, called softly for the next to come on, and disappeared inside. A man followed, a second, and a third, and so on, till only Tyee remained. He received the call of the last man, but a quick doubt assailed him and he stayed to ponder. Half an hour later he swung up to the opening and peered in. He could feel the narrowness of the passage, and the darkness before him took on solidity. The fear of the walled-in earth chilled him and he could not venture. All the men who had died, from Neegah the first of the Mandells, to Howgah the last of the Hungry Folk, came and sat with him, but he chose the terror of their company rather than face the horror which he felt to lurk in the thick blackness. He had been sitting long when something soft and cold fluttered lightly on his cheek, and

he knew the first winter's snow was falling. The dim dawn came, and after that the bright day, when he heard a low guttural sobbing, which came and went at intervals along the passage and which drew closer each time and more distinct He slipped over the edge, dropped his feet to the first ledge, and waited.

That which sobbed made slow progress, but at last, after many halts, it reached him, and he was sure no Sunlander made the noise. So he reached a hand inside, and where there should have been a head felt the shoulders of a man uplifted on bent arms. The head he found later, not erect, but hanging straight down so that the crown rested on the floor of the passage.

"Is it you, Tyee?" the head said. "For it is I, Aab-Waak, who am helpless and broken as a rough-flung spear. My head is in the dirt, and I may not climb down unaided."

Tyee clambered in, dragged him up with his back against the wall, but the head hung down on the chest and sobbed and wailed.

"Ai-oo-o, ai-oo-o!" it went "Oloof forgot, for Mesahchie likewise knew the secret and showed the Sunlanders, else they would not have waited at the end of the narrow way. Wherefore, I am a broken man, and helpless — ai-oo-o, ai-oo-o!"

"And did they die, the cursed Sunlanders, at the end of the narrow way?" Tyee demanded.

"How should I know they waited?" Aab-Waak gurgled. "For my brothers had gone before, many of them, and there was no sound of struggle. How should I know why there should be no sound of struggle? And ere I knew, two hands were about my neck so that I could not cry out and warn my brothers yet to come. And then there were two hands more on my head, and two more on my feet. In this fashion the three Sunlanders had me. And while the hands held my head in the one place, the hands on my feet swung my body around, and as we wring the neck of a duck in the marsh, so my week was wrung.

"But it was not given that I should die," he went on, a remnant of pride yet glimmering. "I, only, am left. Oloof and the rest lie on their backs in a row, and their faces turn this way and that, and the faces of some be underneath where the backs of their heads should be. It is not good to look upon; for when life returned to me I saw them all by the light of a torch which the Sunlanders left, and I had been laid with them in the row."

"So? So?" Tyee mused, too stunned for speech.

He started suddenly, and shivered, for the voice of Bill-Man shot out at him from the passage.

"It is well," it said. "I look for the man who crawls with the broken neck, and lo, do I find Tyee. Throw down thy gun, Tyee, so that I may hear it strike among the rocks."

Tyee obeyed passively, and Bill-Man crawled forward into the light. Tyee looked at him curiously. He was gaunt and worn and dirty, and his eyes burned like twin coals in their cavernous sockets.

"I am hungry, Tyee," he said. "Very hungry."

"And I am dirt at thy feet," Tyee responded.

“Thy word is my law. Further, I commanded my people not to withstand thee. I counselled — ”

But Bill-Man had turned and was calling back into the passage. “Hey! Charley! Jim! Fetch the woman along and come on!”

“We go now to eat,” he said, when his comrades and Mesahchie had joined him.

Tyee rubbed his hands deprecatingly. “We have little, but it is thine.”

“After that we go south on the snow,” Bill-Man continued.

“May you go without hardship and the trail be easy.”

“It is a long way. We will need dogs and food — much!”

“Thine the pick of our dogs and the food they may carry.”

Bill-Man slipped over the edge of the opening and prepared to descend. “But we come again, Tyee. We come again, and our days shall be long in the land.”

And so they departed into the trackless south, Bill-Man, his brothers, and Mesahchie. And when the next year came, the Search Number Two rode at anchor in Mandell Bay. The few Mandell men, who survived because their wounds had prevented their crawling into the cave, went to work at the best of the Sunlanders and dug in the ground. They hunt and fish no more, but receive a daily wage, with which they buy flour, sugar, calico, and such things which the Search Number Two brings on her yearly trip from the Sunlands.

And this mine is worked in secret, as many Northland mines have been worked; and no white man outside the Company, which is Bill-Man, Jim, and Charley, knows the whereabouts of Mandell on the rim of the polar sea. Aab-Waak still carries his head on one shoulder, is become an oracle, and preaches peace to the younger generation, for which he receives a pension from the Company. Tyee is foreman of the mine. But he has achieved a new theory concerning the Sunlanders.

“They that live under the path of the sun are not soft,” he says, smoking his pipe and watching the day-shift take itself off and the night-shift go on. “For the sun enters into their blood and burns them with a great fire till they are filled with lusts and passions. They burn always, so that they may not know when they are beaten. Further, there is an unrest in them, which is a devil, and they are flung out over the earth to toil and suffer and fight without end. I know. I am Tyee.”

The Taste of the Meat

I.

In the beginning he was Christopher Bellew. By the time he was at college he had become Chris Bellew. Later, in the Bohemian crowd of San Francisco, he was called Kit Bellew. And in the end he was known by no other name than Smoke Bellew. And this history of the evolution of his name is the history of his evolution. Nor would it have happened had he not had a fond mother and an iron uncle, and had he not received a letter from Gillet Bellamy.

"I have just seen a copy of the Billow," Gillet wrote from Paris. "Of course O'Hara will succeed with it. But he's missing some plays." (Here followed details in the improvement of the budding society weekly.) "Go down and see him. Let him think they're your own suggestions. Don't let him know they're from me. If he does, he'll make me Paris correspondent, which I can't afford, because I'm getting real money for my stuff from the big magazines. Above all, don't forget to make him fire that dub who's doing the musical and art criticism. Another thing, San Francisco has always had a literature of her own. But she hasn't any now. Tell him to kick around and get some gink to turn out a live serial, and to put into it the real romance and glamour and colour of San Francisco."

And down to the office of the Billow went Kit Bellew faithfully to instruct. O'Hara listened. O'Hara debated. O'Hara agreed. O'Hara fired the dub who wrote criticism. Further, O'Hara had a way with him–the very way that was feared by Gillet in distant Paris. When O'Hara wanted anything, no friend could deny him. He was sweetly and compellingly irresistible. Before Kit Bellew could escape from the office he had become an associate editor, had agreed to write weekly columns of criticism till some decent pen was found, and had pledged himself to write a weekly instalment of ten thousand words on the San Francisco serial–and all this without pay. The Billow wasn't paying yet, O'Hara explained; and just as convincingly had he exposited that there was only one man in San Francisco capable of writing the serial, and that man Kit Bellew.

"Oh, Lord, I'm the gink!" Kit had groaned to himself afterwards on the narrow stairway.

And thereat had begun his servitude to O'Hara and the insatiable columns of the Billow. Week after week he held down an office chair, stood off creditors, wrangled with printers, and turned out twenty-five thousand words of all sorts weekly. Nor did his labours lighten. The Billow was ambitious. It went in for illustration. The processes were expensive. It never had any money to pay Kit Bellew, and by the same token it was unable to pay for any additions to the office staff.

“This is what comes of being a good fellow,” Kit grumbled one day.

“Thank God for good fellows then,” O’Hara cried, with tears in his eyes as he gripped Kit’s hand. “You’re all that’s saved me, Kit. But for you I’d have gone bust. Just a little longer, old man, and things will be easier.”

“Never,” was Kit’s plaint. “I see my fate clearly. I shall be here always.”

A little later he thought he saw his way out. Watching his chance, in O’Hara’s presence, he fell over a chair. A few minutes afterwards he bumped into the corner of the desk, and, with fumbling fingers, capsized a paste pot.

“Out late?” O’Hara queried.

Kit brushed his eyes with his hands and peered about him anxiously before replying.

“No, it’s not that. It’s my eyes. They seem to be going back on me, that’s all.”

For several days he continued to fall over and bump into the office furniture. But O’Hara’s heart was not softened.

“I tell you what, Kit,” he said one day, “you’ve got to see an oculist. There’s Doctor Hassdapple. He’s a crackerjack. And it won’t cost you anything. We can get it for advertizing. I’ll see him myself.”

And, true to his word, he dispatched Kit to the oculist.

“There’s nothing the matter with your eyes,” was the doctor’s verdict, after a lengthy examination. “In fact, your eyes are magnificent–a pair in a million.”

“Don’t tell O’Hara,” Kit pleaded. “And give me a pair of black glasses.”

The result of this was that O’Hara sympathized and talked glowingly of the time when the Billow would be on its feet.

Luckily for Kit Bellew, he had his own income. Small it was, compared with some, yet it was large enough to enable him to belong to several clubs and maintain a studio in the Latin Quarter. In point of fact, since his associate editorship, his expenses had decreased prodigiously. He had no time to spend money. He never saw the studio any more, nor entertained the local Bohemians with his famous chafing-dish suppers. Yet he was always broke, for the Billow, in perennial distress, absorbed his cash as well as his brains. There were the illustrators who periodically refused to illustrate, the printers who periodically refused to print, and the office boy who frequently refused to officiate. At such times O’Hara looked at Kit, and Kit did the rest.

When the steamship Excelsior arrived from Alaska, bringing the news of the Klondike strike that set the country mad, Kit made a purely frivolous proposition.

“Look here, O’Hara,” he said. “This gold rush is going to be big-the days of ‘49 over again. Suppose I cover it for the Billow? I’ll pay my own expenses.”

O’Hara shook his head.

“Can’t spare you from the office, Kit. Then there’s that serial. Besides, I saw Jackson not an hour ago. He’s starting for the Klondike to-morrow, and he’s agreed to send a weekly letter and photos. I wouldn’t let him get away till he promised. And the beauty of it is, that it doesn’t cost us anything.”

The next Kit heard of the Klondike was when he dropped into the club that afternoon, and, in an alcove off the library, encountered his uncle.

"Hello, avuncular relative," Kit greeted, sliding into a leather chair and spreading out his legs. "Won't you join me?"

He ordered a cocktail, but the uncle contented himself with the thin native claret he invariably drank. He glanced with irritated disapproval at the cocktail, and on to his nephew's face. Kit saw a lecture gathering.

"I've only a minute," he announced hastily. "I've got to run and take in that Keith exhibition at Ellery's and do half a column on it."

"What's the matter with you?" the other demanded. "You're pale. You're a wreck."

Kit's only answer was a groan.

"I'll have the pleasure of burying you, I can see that."

Kit shook his head sadly.

"No destroying worm, thank you. Cremation for mine."

John Bellew came of the old hard and hardy stock that had crossed the plains by ox-team in the fifties, and in him was this same hardness and the hardness of a childhood spent in the conquering of a new land.

"You're not living right, Christopher. I'm ashamed of you."

"Primrose path, eh?" Kit chuckled.

The older man shrugged his shoulders.

"Shake not your gory locks at me, avuncular. I wish it were the primrose path. But that's all cut out. I have no time."

"Then what in-?"

"Overwork."

John Bellew laughed harshly and incredulously.

"Honest?"

Again came the laughter.

"Men are the products of their environment," Kit proclaimed, pointing at the other's glass. "Your mirth is thin and bitter as your drink."

"Overwork!" was the sneer. "You never earned a cent in your life."

"You bet I have–only I never got it. I'm earning five hundred a week right now, and doing four men's work."

"Pictures that won't sell? Or–er–fancy work of some sort? Can you swim?"

"I used to."

"Sit a horse?"

"I have essayed that adventure."

John Bellew snorted his disgust.

"I'm glad your father didn't live to see you in all the glory of your gracelessness," he said. "Your father was a man, every inch of him. Do you get it? A Man. I think he'd have whaled all this musical and artistic tomfoolery out of you."

"Alas! these degenerate days," Kit sighed.

"I could understand it, and tolerate it," the other went on savagely, "if you succeeded at it. You've never earned a cent in your life, nor done a tap of man's work."

"Etchings, and pictures, and fans," Kit contributed unsoothingly.

"You're a dabbler and a failure. What pictures have you painted? Dinky water-colours and nightmare posters. You've never had one exhibited, even here in San Francisco-"

"Ah, you forget. There is one in the jinks room of this very club."

"A gross cartoon. Music? Your dear fool of a mother spent hundreds on lessons. You've dabbled and failed. You've never even earned a five-dollar piece by accompanying some one at a concert. Your songs?–rag-time rot that's never printed and that's sung only by a pack of fake Bohemians."

"I had a book published once–those sonnets, you remember," Kit interposed meekly.

"What did it cost you?"

"Only a couple of hundred."

"Any other achievements?"

"I had a forest play acted at the summer jinks."

"What did you get for it?"

"Glory."

"And you used to swim, and you have essayed to sit a horse!" John Bellew set his glass down with unnecessary violence. "What earthly good are you anyway? You were well put up, yet even at university you didn't play football. You didn't row. You didn't-"

"I boxed and fenced–some."

"When did you last box?"

"Not since; but I was considered an excellent judge of time and distance, only I was–er-"

"Go on."

"Considered desultory."

"Lazy, you mean."

"I always imagined it was an euphemism."

"My father, sir, your grandfather, old Isaac Bellew, killed a man with a blow of his fist when he was sixty-nine years old."

"The man?"

"No, your–you graceless scamp! But you'll never kill a mosquito at sixty-nine."

"The times have changed, oh, my avuncular. They send men to state prisons for homicide now."

"Your father rode one hundred and eighty-five miles, without sleeping, and killed three horses."

"Had he lived to-day, he'd have snored over the course in a Pullman."

The older man was on the verge of choking with wrath, but swallowed it down and managed to articulate:

"How old are you?"

"I have reason to believe-"

"I know. Twenty-seven. You finished college at twenty-two. You've dabbled and played and frilled for five years. Before God and man, of what use are you? When I

was your age I had one suit of underclothes. I was riding with the cattle in Colusa. I was hard as rocks, and I could sleep on a rock. I lived on jerked beef and bear-meat. I am a better man physically right now than you are. You weigh about one hundred and sixty-five. I can throw you right now, or thrash you with my fists."

"It doesn't take a physical prodigy to mop up cocktails or pink tea," Kit murmured deprecatingly. "Don't you see, my avuncular, the times have changed. Besides, I wasn't brought up right. My dear fool of a mother-"

John Bellew started angrily.

"-As you described her, was too good to me; kept me in cotton wool and all the rest. Now, if when I was a youngster I had taken some of those intensely masculine vacations you go in for–I wonder why you didn't invite me sometimes? You took Hal and Robbie all over the Sierras and on that Mexico trip."

"I guess you were too Lord Fauntleroyish."

"Your fault, avuncular, and my dear–er–mother's. How was I to know the hard? I was only a chee-ild. What was there left but etchings and pictures and fans? Was it my fault that I never had to sweat?"

The older man looked at his nephew with unconcealed disgust. He had no patience with levity from the lips of softness.

"Well, I'm going to take another one of those what-you-call masculine vacations. Suppose I asked you to come along?"

"Rather belated, I must say. Where is it?"

"Hal and Robert are going in to Klondike, and I'm going to see them across the Pass and down to the Lakes, then return-"

He got no further, for the young man had sprung forward and gripped his hand.

"My preserver!"

John Bellew was immediately suspicious. He had not dreamed the invitation would be accepted.

"You don't mean it," he said.

"When do we start?"

"It will be a hard trip. You'll be in the way."

"No, I won't. I'll work. I've learned to work since I went on the Billow."

"Each man has to take a year's supplies in with him. There'll be such a jam the Indian packers won't be able to handle it. Hal and Robert will have to pack their outfits across themselves. That's what I'm going along for–to help them pack. It you come you'll have to do the same."

"Watch me."

"You can't pack," was the objection.

"When do we start?"

"To-morrow."

"You needn't take it to yourself that your lecture on the hard has done it," Kit said, at parting. "I just had to get away, somewhere, anywhere, from O'Hara."

"Who is O'Hara? A Jap?"

"No; he's an Irishman, and a slave-driver, and my best friend. He's the editor and proprietor and all-around big squeeze of the Billow. What he says goes. He can make ghosts walk."

That night Kit Bellew wrote a note to O'Hara.

"It's only a several weeks' vacation," he explained. "You'll have to get some gink to dope out instalments for that serial. Sorry, old man, but my health demands it. I'll kick in twice as hard when I get back."

II.

Kit Bellew landed through the madness of the Dyea beach, congested with thousand-pound outfits of thousands of men. This immense mass of luggage and food, flung ashore in mountains by the steamers, was beginning slowly to dribble up the Dyea valley and across Chilcoot. It was a portage of twenty-eight miles, and could be accomplished only on the backs of men. Despite the fact that the Indian packers had jumped the freight from eight cents a pound to forty, they were swamped with the work, and it was plain that winter would catch the major portion of the outfits on the wrong side of the divide.

Tenderest of the tender-feet was Kit. Like many hundreds of others he carried a big revolver swung on a cartridge-belt. Of this, his uncle, filled with memories of old lawless days, was likewise guilty. But Kit Bellew was romantic. He was fascinated by the froth and sparkle of the gold rush, and viewed its life and movement with an artist's eye. He did not take it seriously. As he said on the steamer, it was not his funeral. He was merely on a vacation, and intended to peep over the top of the pass for a 'look see' and then to return.

Leaving his party on the sand to wait for the putting ashore of the freight, he strolled up the beach toward the old trading post. He did not swagger, though he noticed that many of the be-revolvered individuals did. A strapping, six-foot Indian passed him, carrying an unusually large pack. Kit swung in behind, admiring the splendid calves of the man, and the grace and ease with which he moved along under his burden. The Indian dropped his pack on the scales in front of the post, and Kit joined the group of admiring gold-rushers who surrounded him. The pack weighed one hundred and twenty pounds, which fact was uttered back and forth in tones of awe. It was going some, Kit decided, and he wondered if he could lift such a weight, much less walk off with it.

"Going to Lake Linderman with it, old man?" he asked.

The Indian, swelling with pride, grunted an affirmative.

"How much you make that one pack?"

"Fifty dollar."

Here Kit slid out of the conversation. A young woman, standing in the doorway, had caught his eye. Unlike other women landing from the steamers, she was neither short-skirted nor bloomer-clad. She was dressed as any woman travelling anywhere would be dressed. What struck him was the justness of her being there, a feeling that somehow she belonged. Moreover, she was young and pretty. The bright beauty and

colour of her oval face held him, and he looked over-long–looked till she resented, and her own eyes, long-lashed and dark, met his in cool survey.

From his face they travelled in evident amusement down to the big revolver at his thigh. Then her eyes came back to his, and in them was amused contempt. It struck him like a blow. She turned to the man beside her and indicated Kit. The man glanced him over with the same amused contempt.

"Chechaquo," the girl said.

The man, who looked like a tramp in his cheap overalls and dilapidated woollen jacket, grinned dryly, and Kit felt withered though he knew not why. But anyway she was an unusually pretty girl, he decided, as the two moved off. He noted the way of her walk, and recorded the judgment that he would recognize it after the lapse of a thousand years.

"Did you see that man with the girl?" Kit's neighbour asked him excitedly. "Know who he is?"

Kit shook his head.

"Cariboo Charley. He was just pointed out to me. He struck it big on Klondike. Old timer. Been on the Yukon a dozen years. He's just come out."

"What's chechaquo mean?" Kit asked.

"You're one; I'm one," was the answer.

"Maybe I am, but you've got to search me. What does it mean?"

"Tender-foot."

On his way back to the beach Kit turned the phrase over and over. It rankled to be called tender-foot by a slender chit of a woman.

Going into a corner among the heaps of freight, his mind still filled with the vision of the Indian with the redoubtable pack, Kit essayed to learn his own strength. He picked out a sack of flour which he knew weighed an even hundred pounds. He stepped astride of it, reached down, and strove to get it on his shoulder. His first conclusion was that one hundred pounds was the real heavy. His next was that his back was weak. His third was an oath, and it occurred at the end of five futile minutes, when he collapsed on top of the burden with which he was wrestling. He mopped his forehead, and across a heap of grub-sacks saw John Bellew gazing at him, wintry amusement in his eyes.

"God!" proclaimed that apostle of the hard. "Out of our loins has come a race of weaklings. When I was sixteen I toyed with things like that."

"You forget, avuncular," Kit retorted, "that I wasn't raised on bear-meat."

"And I'll toy with it when I'm sixty."

"You've got to show me."

John Bellew did. He was forty-eight, but he bent over the sack, applied a tentative, shifting grip that balanced it, and, with a quick heave, stood erect, the somersaulted sack of flour on his shoulder.

"Knack, my boy, knack–and a spine."

Kit took off his hat reverently.

"You're a wonder, avuncular, a shining wonder. D'ye think I can learn the knack?"

John Bellew shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll be hitting the back trail before we get started."

"Never you fear," Kit groaned. "There's O'Hara, the roaring lion, down there. I'm not going back till I have to."

III.

Kit's first pack was a success. Up to Finnegan's Crossing they had managed to get Indians to carry the twenty-five hundred-pound outfit. From that point their own backs must do the work. They planned to move forward at the rate of a mile a day. It looked easy–on paper. Since John Bellew was to stay in camp and do the cooking, he would be unable to make more than an occasional pack; so, to each of the three young men fell the task of carrying eight hundred pounds one mile each day. If they made fifty-pound packs, it meant a daily walk of sixteen miles loaded and of fifteen miles light–"Because we don't back-trip the last time," Kit explained the pleasant discovery; eighty-pound packs meant nineteen miles travel each day; and hundred-pound packs meant only fifteen miles.

"I don't like walking," said Kit. "Therefore I shall carry one hundred pounds." He caught the grin of incredulity on his uncle's face, and added hastily: "Of course I shall work up to it. A fellow's got to learn the ropes and tricks. I'll start with fifty."

He did, and ambled gaily along the trail. He dropped the sack at the next camp-site and ambled back. It was easier than he had thought. But two miles had rubbed off the velvet of his strength and exposed the underlying softness. His second pack was sixty-five pounds. It was more difficult, and he no longer ambled. Several times, following the custom of all packers, he sat down on the ground, resting the pack behind him on a rock or stump. With the third pack he became bold. He fastened the straps to a ninety-fivepound sack of beans and started. At the end of a hundred yards he felt that he must collapse. He sat down and mopped his face.

"Short hauls and short rests," he muttered. "That's the trick."

Sometimes he did not make a hundred yards, and each time he struggled to his feet for another short haul the pack became undeniably heavier. He panted for breath, and the sweat streamed from him. Before he had covered a quarter of a mile he stripped off his woollen shirt and hung it on a tree. A little later he discarded his hat. At the end of half a mile he decided he was finished. He had never exerted himself so in his life, and he knew that he was finished. As he sat and panted, his gaze fell upon the big revolver and the heavy cartridge-belt.

"Ten pounds of junk," he sneered, as he unbuckled it.

He did not bother to hang it on a tree, but flung it into the underbush. And as the steady tide of packers flowed by him, up trail and down, he noted that the other tender-feet were beginning to shed their shooting irons.

His short hauls decreased. At times a hundred feet was all he could stagger, and then the ominous pounding of his heart against his eardrums and the sickening totteriness of his knees compelled him to rest. And his rests grew longer. But his mind was busy. It was a twenty-eight mile portage, which represented as many days, and this, by all

accounts, was the easiest part of it. "Wait till you get to Chilcoot," others told him as they rested and talked, "where you climb with hands and feet."

"They ain't going to be no Chilcoot," was his answer. "Not for me. Long before that I'll be at peace in my little couch beneath the moss."

A slip, and a violent wrenching effort at recovery, frightened him. He felt that everything inside him had been torn asunder.

"If ever I fall down with this on my back I'm a goner," he told another packer.

"That's nothing," came the answer. "Wait till you hit the Canyon. You'll have to cross a raging torrent on a sixty-foot pine tree. No guide ropes, nothing, and the water boiling at the sag of the log to your knees. If you fall with a pack on your back, there's no getting out of the straps. You just stay there and drown."

"Sounds good to me," he retorted; and out of the depths of his exhaustion he almost half meant it.

"They drown three or four a day there," the man assured him. "I helped fish a German out there. He had four thousand in greenbacks on him."

"Cheerful, I must say," said Kit, battling his way to his feet and tottering on.

He and the sack of beans became a perambulating tragedy. It reminded him of the old man of the sea who sat on Sinbad's neck. And this was one of those intensely masculine vacations, he meditated. Compared with it, the servitude to O'Hara was sweet. Again and again he was nearly seduced by the thought of abandoning the sack of beans in the brush and of sneaking around the camp to the beach and catching a steamer for civilization.

But he didn't. Somewhere in him was the strain of the hard, and he repeated over and over to himself that what other men could do, he could. It became a nightmare chant, and he gibbered it to those that passed him on the trail. At other times, resting, he watched and envied the stolid, mule-footed Indians that plodded by under heavier packs. They never seemed to rest, but went on and on with a steadiness and certitude that was to him appalling.

He sat and cursed–he had no breath for it when under way–and fought the temptation to sneak back to San Francisco. Before the mile pack was ended he ceased cursing and took to crying. The tears were tears of exhaustion and of disgust with self. If ever a man was a wreck, he was. As the end of the pack came in sight, he strained himself in desperation, gained the camp-site, and pitched forward on his face, the beans on his back. It did not kill him, but he lay for fifteen minutes before he could summon sufficient shreds of strength to release himself from the straps. Then he became deathly sick, and was so found by Robbie, who had similar troubles of his own. It was this sickness of Robbie that braced him up.

"What other men can do, we can do," Kit told him, though down in his heart he wondered whether or not he was bluffing.

IV.

"And I am twenty-seven years old and a man," he privately assured himself many times in the days that followed. There was need for it. At the end of a week, though

he had succeeded in moving his eight hundred pounds forward a mile a day, he had lost fifteen pounds of his own weight. His face was lean and haggard. All resilience had gone out of his body and mind. He no longer walked, but plodded. And on the back-trips, travelling light, his feet dragged almost as much as when he was loaded.

He had become a work animal. He fell asleep over his food, and his sleep was heavy and beastly, save when he was aroused, screaming with agony, by the cramps in his legs. Every part of him ached. He tramped on raw blisters, yet this was even easier than the fearful bruising his feet received on the water-rounded rocks of the Dyea Flats, across which the trail led for two miles. These two miles represented thirty-eight miles of travelling. He washed his face once a day. His nails, torn and broken and afflicted with hangnails, were never cleaned. His shoulders and chest, galled by the pack-straps, made him think, and for the first time with understanding, of the horses he had seen on city streets.

One ordeal that nearly destroyed him at first had been the food. The extraordinary amount of work demanded extraordinary stoking, and his stomach was unaccustomed to great quantities of bacon and of the coarse, highly poisonous brown beans. As a result, his stomach went back on him, and for several days the pain and irritation of it and of starvation nearly broke him down. And then came the day of joy when he could eat like a ravenous animal, and, wolf-eyed, ask for more.

When they had moved the outfit across the foot-logs at the mouth of the Canyon, they made a change in their plans. Word had come across the Pass that at Lake Linderman the last available trees for building boats were being cut. The two cousins, with tools, whipsaw, blankets, and grub on their backs, went on, leaving Kit and his uncle to hustle along the outfit. John Bellew now shared the cooking with Kit, and both packed shoulder to shoulder. Time was flying, and on the peaks the first snow was falling. To be caught on the wrong side of the Pass meant a delay of nearly a year. The older man put his iron back under a hundred pounds. Kit was shocked, but he gritted his teeth and fastened his own straps to a hundred pounds. It hurt, but he had learned the knack, and his body, purged of all softness and fat, was beginning to harden up with lean and bitter muscle. Also, he observed and devised. He took note of the head-straps worn by the Indians, and manufactured one for himself, which he used in addition to the shoulder-straps. It made things easier, so that he began the practice of piling any light, cumbersome piece of luggage on top. Thus, he was soon able to bend along with a hundred pounds in the straps, fifteen or twenty more lying loosely on top the pack and against his neck, an axe or a pair of oars in one hand, and in the other the nested cooking-pails of the camp.

But work as they would, the toil increased. The trail grew more rugged; their packs grew heavier; and each day saw the snow-line dropping down the mountains, while freight jumped to sixty cents. No word came from the cousins beyond, so they knew they must be at work chopping down the standing trees, and whipsawing them into boat-planks. John Bellew grew anxious. Capturing a bunch of Indians back-tripping from Lake Linderman, he persuaded them to put their straps on the outfit. They

charged thirty cents a pound to carry it to the summit of Chilcoot, and it nearly broke him. As it was, some four hundred pounds of clothes-bags and camp outfit was not handled. He remained behind to move it along, dispatching Kit with the Indians. At the summit Kit was to remain, slowly moving his ton until overtaken by the four hundred pounds with which his uncle guaranteed to catch him.

V.

Kit plodded along the trail with his Indian packers. In recognition of the fact that it was to be a long pack, straight to the top of Chilcoot, his own load was only eighty pounds. The Indians plodded under their loads, but it was a quicker gait than he had practised. Yet he felt no apprehension, and by now had come to deem himself almost the equal of an Indian.

At the end of a quarter of a mile he desired to rest. But the Indians kept on. He stayed with them, and kept his place in the line. At the half mile he was convinced that he was incapable of another step, yet he gritted his teeth, kept his place, and at the end of the mile was amazed that he was still alive. Then, in some strange way, came the thing called second wind, and the next mile was almost easier than the first. The third mile nearly killed him, and, though half delirious with pain and fatigue, he never whimpered. And then, when he felt he must surely faint, came the rest. Instead of sitting in the straps, as was the custom of the white packers, the Indians slipped out of the shoulder-and headstraps and lay at ease, talking and smoking. A full half hour passed before they made another start. To Kit's surprise he found himself a fresh man, and 'long hauls and long rests' became his newest motto.

The pitch of Chilcoot was all he had heard of it, and many were the occasions when he climbed with hands as well as feet. But when he reached the crest of the divide in the thick of a driving snowsquall, it was in the company of his Indians, and his secret pride was that he had come through with them and never squealed and never lagged. To be almost as good as an Indian was a new ambition to cherish.

When he had paid off the Indians and seen them depart, a stormy darkness was falling, and he was left alone, a thousand feet above timber line, on the back-bone of a mountain. Wet to the waist, famished and exhausted, he would have given a year's income for a fire and a cup of coffee. Instead, he ate half a dozen cold flapjacks and crawled into the folds of the partly unrolled tent. As he dozed off he had time only for one fleeting thought, and he grinned with vicious pleasure at the picture of John Bellew in the days to follow, masculinely back-tripping his four hundred pounds up Chilcoot. As for himself, even though burdened with two thousand pounds, he was bound down the hill.

In the morning, stiff from his labours and numb with the frost, he rolled out of the canvas, ate a couple of pounds of uncooked bacon, buckled the straps on a hundred pounds, and went down the rocky way. Several hundred yards beneath, the trail led across a small glacier and down to Crater Lake. Other men packed across the glacier. All that day he dropped his packs at the glacier's upper edge, and, by virtue of the shortness of the pack, he put his straps on one hundred and fifty pounds each load.

His astonishment at being able to do it never abated. For two dollars he bought from an Indian three leathery sea-biscuits, and out of these, and a huge quantity of raw bacon, made several meals. Unwashed, unwarmed, his clothing wet with sweat, he slept another night in the canvas.

In the early morning he spread a tarpaulin on the ice, loaded it with three-quarters of a ton, and started to pull. Where the pitch of the glacier accelerated, his load likewise accelerated, overran him, scooped him in on top, and ran away with him.

A hundred packers, bending under their loads, stopped to watch him. He yelled frantic warnings, and those in his path stumbled and staggered clear. Below, on the lower edge of the glacier, was pitched a small tent, which seemed leaping toward him, so rapidly did it grow larger. He left the beaten track where the packers' trail swerved to the left, and struck a patch of fresh snow. This arose about him in frosty smoke, while it reduced his speed. He saw the tent the instant he struck it, carrying away the corner guys, bursting in the front flaps, and fetching up inside, still on top of the tarpaulin and in the midst of his grub-sacks. The tent rocked drunkenly, and in the frosty vapour he found himself face to face with a startled young woman who was sitting up in her blankets–the very one who had called him chechaquo at Dyea.

"Did you see my smoke?" he queried cheerfully.

She regarded him with disapproval.

"Talk about your magic carpets!" he went on.

"Do you mind removing that sack from my foot?" she said coldly.

He looked, and lifted his weight quickly.

"It wasn't a sack. It was my elbow. Pardon me."

The information did not perturb her, and her coolness was a challenge.

"It was a mercy you did not overturn the stove," she said.

He followed her glance and saw a sheet-iron stove and a coffee-pot, attended by a young squaw. He sniffed the coffee and looked back to the girl.

"I'm a chechaquo," he said.

Her bored expression told him that he was stating the obvious. But he was unabashed.

"I've shed my shooting-irons," he added.

Then she recognized him, and her eyes lighted.

"I never thought you'd get this far," she informed him.

Again, and greedily, he sniffed the air.

"As I live, coffee!" He turned and directly addressed her. "I'll give you my little finger–cut it right off now; I'll do anything; I'll be your slave for a year and a day or any other odd time, if you'll give me a cup out of that pot."

And over the coffee he gave his name and learned hers–Joy Gastell. Also, he learned that she was an old-timer in the country. She had been born in a trading post on the Great Slave, and as a child had crossed the Rockies with her father and come down to the Yukon. She was going in, she said, with her father, who had been delayed

by business in Seattle, and who had then been wrecked on the ill-fated Chanter and carried back to Puget Sound by the rescuing steamer.

In view of the fact that she was still in her blankets, he did not make it a long conversation, and, heroically declining a second cup of coffee, he removed himself and his quarter of a ton of baggage from her tent. Further, he took several conclusions away with him: she had a fetching name and fetching eyes; could not be more than twenty, or twenty-one or-two; her father must be French; she had a will of her own and temperament to burn; and she had been educated elsewhere than on the frontier.

VI.

Over the ice-scoured rocks, and above the timber-line, the trail ran around Crater Lake and gained the rocky defile that led toward Happy Camp and the first scrub pines. To pack his heavy outfit around would take days of heart-breaking toil. On the lake was a canvas boat employed in freighting. Two trips with it, in two hours, would see him and his ton across. But he was broke, and the ferryman charged forty dollars a ton.

"You've got a gold-mine, my friend, in that dinky boat," Kit said to the ferryman. "Do you want another gold-mine?"

"Show me," was the answer.

"I'll sell it to you for the price of ferrying my outfit. It's an idea, not patented, and you can jump the deal as soon as I tell you it. Are you game?"

The ferryman said he was, and Kit liked his looks.

"Very well. You see that glacier. Take a pick-axe and wade into it. In a day you can have a decent groove from top to bottom. See the point? The Chilcoot and Crater Lake Consolidated Chute Corporation, Limited. You can charge fifty cents a hundred, get a hundred tons a day, and have no work to do but collect the coin."

Two hours later, Kit's ton was across the lake, and he had gained three days on himself. And when John Bellew overtook him, he was well along toward Deep Lake, another volcanic pit filled with glacial water.

VII.

The last pack, from Long Lake to Linderman, was three miles, and the trail, if trail it could be called, rose up over a thousand-foot hogback, dropped down a scramble of slippery rocks, and crossed a wide stretch of swamp. John Bellew remonstrated when he saw Kit arise with a hundred pounds in the straps and pick up a fifty-pound sack of flour and place it on top of the pack against the back of his neck.

"Come on, you chunk of the hard," Kit retorted. "Kick in on your bear-meat fodder and your one suit of underclothes."

But John Bellew shook his head.

"I'm afraid I'm getting old, Christopher."

"You're only forty-eight. Do you realize that my grandfather, sir, your father, old Isaac Bellew, killed a man with his fist when he was sixty-nine years old?"

John Bellew grinned and swallowed his medicine.

"Avuncular, I want to tell you something important. I was raised a Lord Fauntleroy, but I can outpack you, outwalk you, put you on your back, or lick you with my fists right now."

John Bellew thrust out his hand and spoke solemnly.

"Christopher, my boy, I believe you can do it. I believe you can do it with that pack on your back at the same time. You've made good, boy, though it's too unthinkable to believe."

Kit made the round trip of the last pack four times a day, which is to say that he daily covered twenty-four miles of mountain climbing, twelve miles of it under one hundred and fifty pounds. He was proud, hard, and tired, but in splendid physical condition. He ate and slept as he had never eaten and slept in his life, and as the end of the work came in sight, he was almost half sorry.

One problem bothered him. He had learned that he could fall with a hundredweight on his back and survive; but he was confident, if he fell with that additional fifty pounds across the back of his neck, that it would break it clean. Each trail through the swamp was quickly churned bottomless by the thousands of packers, who were compelled continually to make new trails. It was while pioneering such a new trail, that he solved the problem of the extra fifty.

The soft, lush surface gave way under him; he floundered, and pitched forward on his face. The fifty pounds crushed his face in the mud and went clear without snapping his neck. With the remaining hundred pounds on his back, he arose on hands and knees. But he got no farther. One arm sank to the shoulder, pillowing his cheek in the slush. As he drew this arm clear, the other sank to the shoulder. In this position it was impossible to slip the straps, and the hundredweight on his back would not let him rise. On hands and knees, sinking first one arm and then the other, he made an effort to crawl to where the small sack of flour had fallen. But he exhausted himself without advancing, and so churned and broke the grass surface, that a tiny pool of water began to form in perilous proximity to his mouth and nose.

He tried to throw himself on his back with the pack underneath, but this resulted in sinking both arms to the shoulders and gave him a foretaste of drowning. With exquisite patience, he slowly withdrew one sucking arm and then the other and rested them flat on the surface for the support of his chin. Then he began to call for help. After a time he heard the sound of feet sucking through the mud as some one advanced from behind.

"Lend a hand, friend," he said. "Throw out a life-line or something."

It was a woman's voice that answered, and he recognized it.

"If you'll unbuckle the straps I can get up."

The hundred pounds rolled into the mud with a soggy noise, and he slowly gained his feet.

"A pretty predicament," Miss Gastell laughed, at sight of his mudcovered face.

"Not at all," he replied airily. "My favourite physical exercise stunt. Try it some time. It's great for the pectoral muscles and the spine."

He wiped his face, flinging the slush from his hand with a snappy jerk.

"Oh!" she cried in recognition. "It's Mr–ah–Mr Smoke Bellew."

"I thank you gravely for your timely rescue and for that name," he answered. "I have been doubly baptized. Henceforth I shall insist always on being called Smoke Bellew. It is a strong name, and not without significance."

He paused, and then voice and expression became suddenly fierce.

"Do you know what I'm going to do?" he demanded. "I'm going back to the States. I am going to get married. I am going to raise a large family of children. And then, as the evening shadows fall, I shall gather those children about me and relate the sufferings and hardships I endured on the Chilcoot Trail. And if they don't cry–I repeat, if they don't cry, I'll lambaste the stuffing out of them."

VIII.

The arctic winter came down apace. Snow that had come to stay lay six inches on the ground, and the ice was forming in quiet ponds, despite the fierce gales that blew. It was in the late afternoon, during a lull in such a gale, that Kit and John Bellew helped the cousins load the boat and watched it disappear down the lake in a snow-squall.

"And now a night's sleep and an early start in the morning," said John Bellew. "If we aren't storm-bound at the summit we'll make Dyea to-morrow night, and if we have luck in catching a steamer we'll be in San Francisco in a week."

"Enjoyed your vacation?" Kit asked absently.

Their camp for that last night at Linderman was a melancholy remnant. Everything of use, including the tent, had been taken by the cousins. A tattered tarpaulin, stretched as a wind-break, partially sheltered them from the driving snow. Supper they cooked on an open fire in a couple of battered and discarded camp utensils. All that was left them were their blankets, and food for several meals.

From the moment of the departure of the boat, Kit had become absent and restless. His uncle noticed his condition, and attributed it to the fact that the end of the hard toil had come. Only once during supper did Kit speak.

"Avuncular," he said, relevant of nothing, "after this, I wish you'd call me Smoke. I've made some smoke on this trail, haven't I?"

A few minutes later he wandered away in the direction of the village of tents that sheltered the gold-rushers who were still packing or building their boats. He was gone several hours, and when he returned and slipped into his blankets John Bellew was asleep.

In the darkness of a gale-driven morning, Kit crawled out, built a fire in his stocking feet, by which he thawed out his frozen shoes, then boiled coffee and fried bacon. It was a chilly, miserable meal. As soon as finished, they strapped their blankets. As John Bellew turned to lead the way toward the Chilcoot Trail, Kit held out his hand.

"Good-bye, avuncular," he said.

John Bellew looked at him and swore in his surprise.

"Don't forget my name's Smoke," Kit chided.

“But what are you going to do?”

Kit waved his hand in a general direction northward over the stormlashed lake.

“What’s the good of turning back after getting this far?” he asked. “Besides, I’ve got my taste of meat, and I like it. I’m going on.”

“You’re broke,” protested John Bellew. “You have no outfit.”

“I’ve got a job. Behold your nephew, Christopher Smoke Bellew! He’s got a job at a hundred and fifty per month and grub. He’s going down to Dawson with a couple of dudes and another gentleman’s man–camp-cook, boatman, and general all-around hustler. And O’Hara and the Billow can go to hell. Good-bye.”

But John Bellew was dazed, and could only mutter:

“I don’t understand.”

“They say the baldface grizzlies are thick in the Yukon Basin,” Kit explained. “Well, I’ve got only one suit of underclothes, and I’m going after the bear-meat, that’s all.”

The Tears of Ah Kim

There was a great noise and racket, but no scandal, in Honolulu's Chinatown. Those within hearing distance merely shrugged their shoulders and smiled tolerantly at the disturbance as an affair of accustomed usualness. "What is it?" asked Chin Mo, down with a sharp pleurisy, of his wife, who had paused for a second at the open window to listen.

"Only Ah Kim," was her reply. "His mother is beating him again."

The fracas was taking place in the garden, behind the living rooms that were at the back of the store that fronted on the street with the proud sign above: AH KIM COMPANY, GENERAL MERCHANDISE. The garden was a miniature domain, twenty feet square, that somehow cunningly seduced the eye into a sense and seeming of illimitable vastness. There were forests of dwarf pines and oaks, centuries old yet two or three feet in height, and imported at enormous care and expense. A tiny bridge, a pace across, arched over a miniature river that flowed with rapids and cataracts from a miniature lake stocked with myriad-finned, orange-miracled goldfish that in proportion to the lake and landscape were whales. On every side the many windows of the several-storied shack-buildings looked down. In the centre of the garden, on the narrow gravelled walk close beside the lake Ah Kim was noisily receiving his beating.

No Chinese lad of tender and beatable years was Ah Kim. His was the store of Ah Kim Company, and his was the achievement of building it up through the long years from the shoestring of savings of a contract coolie labourer to a bank account in four figures and a credit that was gilt edged. An even half-century of summers and winters had passed over his head, and, in the passing, fattened him comfortably and snugly. Short of stature, his full front was as rotund as a water-melon seed. His face was moon-faced. His garb was dignified and silken, and his black-silk skull-cap with the red button atop, now, alas! fallen on the ground, was the skull-cap worn by the successful and dignified merchants of his race.

But his appearance, in this moment of the present, was anything but dignified. Dodging and ducking under a rain of blows from a bamboo cane, he was crouched over in a half-doubled posture. When he was rapped on the knuckles and elbows, with which he shielded his face and head, his winces were genuine and involuntary. From the many surrounding windows the neighbourhood looked down with placid enjoyment.

And she who wielded the stick so shrewdly from long practice! Seventy-four years old, she looked every minute of her time. Her thin legs were encased in straight-lined pants of linen stiff-textured and shiny-black. Her scraggly grey hair was drawn unrelentingly and flatly back from a narrow, unrelenting forehead. Eyebrows she had none, having

long since shed them. Her eyes, of pin-hole tininess, were blackest black. She was shockingly cadaverous. Her shrivelled forearm, exposed by the loose sleeve, possessed no more of muscle than several taut bowstrings stretched across meagre bone under yellow, parchment-like skin. Along this mummy arm jade bracelets shot up and down and clashed with every blow.

"Ah!" she cried out, rhythmically accenting her blows in series of three to each shrill observation. "I forbade you to talk to Li Faa. To-day you stopped on the street with her. Not an hour ago. Half an hour by the clock you talked.–What is that?"

"It was the thrice-accursed telephone," Ah Kim muttered, while she suspended the stick to catch what he said. "Mrs. Chang Lucy told you. I know she did. I saw her see me. I shall have the telephone taken out. It is of the devil."

"It is a device of all the devils," Mrs. Tai Fu agreed, taking a fresh grip on the stick. "Yet shall the telephone remain. I like to talk with Mrs. Chang Lucy over the telephone."

"She has the eyes of ten thousand cats," quoth Ah Kim, ducking and receiving the stick stinging on his knuckles. "And the tongues of ten thousand toads," he supplemented ere his next duck.

"She is an impudent-faced and evil-mannered hussy," Mrs. Tai Fu accented.

"Mrs. Chang Lucy was ever that," Ah Kim murmured like the dutiful son he was.

"I speak of Li Faa," his mother corrected with stick emphasis. "She is only half Chinese, as you know. Her mother was a shameless kanaka. She wears skirts like the degraded haole women–also corsets, as I have seen for myself. Where are her children? Yet has she buried two husbands."

"The one was drowned, the other kicked by a horse," Ah Kim qualified.

"A year of her, unworthy son of a noble father, and you would gladly be going out to get drowned or be kicked by a horse."

Subdued chucklings and laughter from the window audience applauded her point.

"You buried two husbands yourself, revered mother," Ah Kim was stung to retort.

"I had the good taste not to marry a third. Besides, my two husbands died honourably in their beds. They were not kicked by horses nor drowned at sea. What business is it of our neighbours that you should inform them I have had two husbands, or ten, or none? You have made a scandal of me, before all our neighbours, and for that I shall now give you a real beating."

Ah Kim endured the staccato rain of blows, and said when his mother paused, breathless and weary:

"Always have I insisted and pleaded, honourable mother, that you beat me in the house, with the windows and doors closed tight, and not in the open street or the garden open behind the house.

"You have called this unthinkable Li Faa the Silvery Moon Blossom," Mrs. Tai Fu rejoined, quite illogically and femininely, but with utmost success in so far as she deflected her son from continuance of the thrust he had so swiftly driven home.

"Mrs. Chang Lucy told you," he charged.

"I was told over the telephone," his mother evaded. "I do not know all voices that speak to me over that contrivance of all the devils."

Strangely, Ah Kim made no effort to run away from his mother, which he could easily have done. She, on the other hand, found fresh cause for more stick blows.

"Ah! Stubborn one! Why do you not cry? Mule that shameth its ancestors! Never have I made you cry. From the time you were a little boy I have never made you cry. Answer me! Why do you not cry?"

Weak and breathless from her exertions, she dropped the stick and panted and shook as if with a nervous palsy.

"I do not know, except that it is my way," Ah Kim replied, gazing solicitously at his mother. "I shall bring you a chair now, and you will sit down and rest and feel better."

But she flung away from him with a snort and tottered agedly across the garden into the house. Meanwhile recovering his skull-cap and smoothing his disordered attire, Ah Kim rubbed his hurts and gazed after her with eyes of devotion. He even smiled, and almost might it appear that he had enjoyed the beating.

Ah Kim had been so beaten ever since he was a boy, when he lived on the high banks of the eleventh cataract of the Yangtse river. Here his father had been born and toiled all his days from young manhood as a towing coolie. When he died, Ah Kim, in his own young manhood, took up the same honourable profession. Farther back than all remembered annals of the family, had the males of it been towing coolies. At the time of Christ his direct ancestors had been doing the same thing, meeting the precisely similarly modelled junks below the white water at the foot of the canyon, bending the half-mile of rope to each junk, and, according to size, tailing on from a hundred to two hundred coolies of them and by sheer, two-legged man-power, bowed forward and down till their hands touched the ground and their faces were sometimes within a foot of it, dragging the junk up through the white water to the head of the canyon.

Apparently, down all the intervening centuries, the payment of the trade had not picked up. His father, his father's father, and himself, Ah Kim, had received the same invariable remuneration–per junk one-fourteenth of a cent, at the rate he had since learned money was valued in Hawaii. On long lucky summer days when the waters were easy, the junks many, the hours of daylight sixteen, sixteen hours of such heroic toil would earn over a cent. But in a whole year a towing coolie did not earn more than a dollar and a half. People could and did live on such an income. There were women servants who received a yearly wage of a dollar. The net-makers of Ti Wi earned between a dollar and two dollars a year. They lived on such wages, or, at least, they did not die on them. But for the towing coolies there were pickings, which were what made the profession honourable and the guild a close and hereditary corporation or labour union. One junk in five that was dragged up through the rapids or lowered down was wrecked. One junk in every ten was a total loss. The coolies of the towing guild knew the freaks and whims of the currents, and grappled, and raked, and netted

a wet harvest from the river. They of the guild were looked up to by lesser coolies, for they could afford to drink brick tea and eat number four rice every day.

And Ah Kim had been contented and proud, until, one bitter spring day of driving sleet and hail, he dragged ashore a drowning Cantonese sailor. It was this wanderer, thawing out by his fire, who first named the magic name Hawaii to him. He had himself never been to that labourer's paradise, said the sailor; but many Chinese had gone there from Canton, and he had heard the talk of their letters written back. In Hawaii was never frost nor famine. The very pigs, never fed, were ever fat of the generous offal disdained by man. A Cantonese or Yangtse family could live on the waste of an Hawaii coolie. And wages! In gold dollars, ten a month, or, in trade dollars, two a month, was what the contract Chinese coolie received from the white-devil sugar kings. In a year the coolie received the prodigious sum of two hundred and forty trade dollars–more than a hundred times what a coolie, toiling ten times as hard, received on the eleventh cataract of the Yangtse. In short, all things considered, an Hawaii coolie was one hundred times better off, and, when the amount of labour was estimated, a thousand times better off. In addition was the wonderful climate.

When Ah Kim was twenty-four, despite his mother's pleadings and beatings, he resigned from the ancient and honourable guild of the eleventh cataract towing coolies, left his mother to go into a boss coolie's household as a servant for a dollar a year, and an annual dress to cost not less than thirty cents, and himself departed down the Yangtse to the great sea. Many were his adventures and severe his toils and hardships ere, as a salt-sea junk-sailor, he won to Canton. When he was twenty-six he signed five years of his life and labour away to the Hawaii sugar kings and departed, one of eight hundred contract coolies, for that far island land, on a festering steamer run by a crazy captain and drunken officers and rejected of Lloyds.

Honourable, among labourers, had Ah Kim's rating been as a towing coolie. In Hawaii, receiving a hundred times more pay, he found himself looked down upon as the lowest of the low–a plantation coolie, than which could be nothing lower. But a coolie whose ancestors had towed junks up the eleventh cataract of the Yangtse since before the birth of Christ inevitably inherits one character in large degree, namely, the character of patience. This patience was Ah Kim's. At the end of five years, his compulsory servitude over, thin as ever in body, in bank account he lacked just ten trade dollars of possessing a thousand trade dollars.

On this sum he could have gone back to the Yangtse and retired for life a really wealthy man. He would have possessed a larger sum, had he not, on occasion, conservatively played che fa and fan tan, and had he not, for a twelve-month, toiled among the centipedes and scorpions of the stifling cane-fields in the semi-dream of a continuous opium debauch. Why he had not toiled the whole five years under the spell of opium was the expensiveness of the habit. He had had no moral scruples. The drug had cost too much.

But Ah Kim did not return to China. He had observed the business life of Hawaii and developed a vaulting ambition. For six months, in order to learn business and

English at the bottom, he clerked in the plantation store. At the end of this time he knew more about that particular store than did ever plantation manager know about any plantation store. When he resigned his position he was receiving forty gold a month, or eighty trade, and he was beginning to put on flesh. Also, his attitude toward mere contract coolies had become distinctively aristocratic. The manager offered to raise him to sixty fold, which, by the year, would constitute a fabulous fourteen hundred and forty trade, or seven hundred times his annual earning on the Yangtse as a two-legged horse at one-fourteenth of a gold cent per junk.

Instead of accepting, Ah Kim departed to Honolulu, and in the big general merchandise store of Fong & Chow Fong began at the bottom for fifteen gold per month. He worked a year and a half, and resigned when he was thirty-three, despite the seventy-five gold per month his Chinese employers were paying him. Then it was that he put up his own sign: AH KIM COMPANY, GENERAL MERCHANDISE. Also, better fed, there was about his less meagre figure a foreshadowing of the melon-seed rotundity that was to attach to him in future years.

With the years he prospered increasingly, so that, when he was thirty-six, the promise of his figure was fulfilling rapidly, and, himself a member of the exclusive and powerful Hai Gum Tong, and of the Chinese Merchants' Association, he was accustomed to sitting as host at dinners that cost him as much as thirty years of towing on the eleventh cataract would have earned him. Two things he missed: a wife, and his mother to lay the stick on him as of yore.

When he was thirty-seven he consulted his bank balance. It stood him three thousand gold. For twenty-five hundred down and an easy mortgage he could buy the three-story shack-building, and the ground in fee simple on which it stood. But to do this, left only five hundred for a wife. Fu Yee Po had a marriageable, properly small-footed daughter whom he was willing to import from China, and sell to him for eight hundred gold, plus the costs of importation. Further, Fu Yee Po was even willing to take five hundred down and the remainder on note at 6 per cent.

Ah Kim, thirty-seven years of age, fat and a bachelor, really did want a wife, especially a small-footed wife; for, China born and reared, the immemorial small-footed female had been deeply impressed into his fantasy of woman. But more, even more and far more than a small-footed wife, did he want his mother and his mother's delectable beatings. So he declined Fu Yee Po's easy terms, and at much less cost imported his own mother from servant in a boss coolie's house at a yearly wage of a dollar and a thirty-cent dress to be mistress of his Honolulu three-story shack building with two household servants, three clerks, and a porter of all work under her, to say nothing of ten thousand dollars' worth of dress goods on the shelves that ranged from the cheapest cotton crepes to the most expensive hand-embroidered silks. For be it known that even in that early day Ah Kim's emporium was beginning to cater to the tourist trade from the States.

For thirteen years Ah Kim had lived tolerably happily with his mother, and by her been methodically beaten for causes just or unjust, real or fancied; and at the end of

it all he knew as strongly as ever the ache of his heart and head for a wife, and of his loins for sons to live after him, and carry on the dynasty of Ah Kim Company. Such the dream that has ever vexed men, from those early ones who first usurped a hunting right, monopolized a sandbar for a fish-trap, or stormed a village and put the males thereof to the sword. Kings, millionaires, and Chinese merchants of Honolulu have this in common, despite that they may praise God for having made them differently and in self-likable images.

And the ideal of woman that Ah Kim at fifty ached for had changed from his ideal at thirty-seven. No small-footed wife did he want now, but a free, natural, out-stepping normal-footed woman that, somehow, appeared to him in his day dreams and haunted his night visions in the form of Li Faa, the Silvery Moon Blossom. What if she were twice widowed, the daughter of a kanaka mother, the wearer of white-devil skirts and corsets and high-heeled slippers! He wanted her. It seemed it was written that she should be joint ancestor with him of the line that would continue the ownership and management through the generations, of Ah Kim Company, General Merchandise.

"I will have no half-pake daughter-in-law," his mother often reiterated to Ah Kim, pake being the Hawaiian word for Chinese. "All pake must my daughter-in-law be, even as you, my son, and as I, your mother. And she must wear trousers, my son, as all the women of our family before her. No woman, in she-devil skirts and corsets, can pay due reverence to our ancestors. Corsets and reverence do not go together. Such a one is this shameless Li Faa. She is impudent and independent, and will be neither obedient to her husband nor her husband's mother. This brazen-faced Li Faa would believe herself the source of life and the first ancestor, recognizing no ancestors before her. She laughs at our joss-sticks, and paper prayers, and family gods, as I have been well told–"

"Mrs. Chang Lucy," Ah Kim groaned.

"Not alone Mrs. Chang Lucy, O son. I have inquired. At least a dozen have heard her say of our joss house that it is all monkey foolishness. The words are hers–she, who eats raw fish, raw squid, and baked dog. Ours is the foolishness of monkeys. Yet would she marry you, a monkey, because of your store that is a palace and of the wealth that makes you a great man. And she would put shame on me, and on your father before you long honourably dead."

And there was no discussing the matter. As things were, Ah Kim knew his mother was right. Not for nothing had Li Faa been born forty years before of a Chinese father, renegade to all tradition, and of a kanaka mother whose immediate forebears had broken the taboos, cast down their own Polynesian gods, and weak-heartedly listened to the preaching about the remote and unimageable god of the Christian missionaries. Li Faa, educated, who could read and write English and Hawaiian and a fair measure of Chinese, claimed to believe in nothing, although in her secret heart she feared the kahunas (Hawaiian witch-doctors), who she was certain could charm away ill luck or pray one to death. Li Faa would never come into Ah Kim's house, as he thoroughly knew, and kow-tow to his mother and be slave to her in the immemorial Chinese way.

Li Faa, from the Chinese angle, was a new woman, a feminist, who rode horseback astride, disported immodestly garbed at Waikiki on the surf-boards, and at more than one luau (feast) had been known to dance the hula with the worst and in excess of the worst, to the scandalous delight of all.

Ah Kim himself, a generation younger than his mother, had been bitten by the acid of modernity. The old order held, in so far as he still felt in his subtlest crypts of being the dusty hand of the past resting on him, residing in him; yet he subscribed to heavy policies of fire and life insurance, acted as treasurer for the local Chinese revolutionises that were for turning the Celestial Empire into a republic, contributed to the funds of the Hawaii-born Chinese baseball nine that excelled the Yankee nines at their own game, talked theosophy with Katso Suguri, the Japanese Buddhist and silk importer, fell for police graft, played and paid his insidious share in the democratic politics of annexed Hawaii, and was thinking of buying an automobile. Ah Kim never dared bare himself to himself and thrash out and winnow out how much of the old he had ceased to believe in. His mother was of the old, yet he revered her and was happy under her bamboo stick. Li Faa, the Silvery Moon Blossom, was of the new, yet he could never be quite completely happy without her.

For he loved Li Faa. Moon-faced, rotund as a water-melon seed, canny business man, wise with half a century of living–nevertheless Ah Kim became an artist when he thought of her. He thought of her in poems of names, as woman transmuted into flower-terms of beauty and philosophic abstractions of achievement and easement. She was, to him, and alone to him of all men in the world, his Plum Blossom, his Tranquillity of Woman, his Flower of Serenity, his Moon Lily, and his Perfect Rest. And as he murmured these love endearments of namings, it seemed to him that in them were the ripplings of running waters, the tinklings of silver wind-bells, and the scents of the oleander and the jasmine. She was his poem of woman, a lyric delight, a three-dimensions of flesh and spirit delicious, a fate and a good fortune written, ere the first man and woman were, by the gods whose whim had been to make all men and women for sorrow and for joy.

But his mother put into his hand the ink-brush and placed under it, on the table, the writing tablet.

"Paint," said she, "the ideograph of TO MARRY."

He obeyed, scarcely wondering, with the deft artistry of his race and training painting the symbolic hieroglyphic.

"Resolve it," commanded his mother.

Ah Kim looked at her, curious, willing to please, unaware of the drift of her intent.

"Of what is it composed?" she persisted. "What are the three originals, the sum of which is it: to marry, marriage, the coming together and wedding of a man and a woman? Paint them, paint them apart, the three originals, unrelated, so that we may know how the wise men of old wisely built up the ideograph of to marry."

And Ah Kim, obeying and painting, saw that what he had painted were three picture-signs–the picture-signs of a hand, an ear, and a woman.

“Name them,” said his mother; and he named them.

“It is true,” said she. “It is a great tale. It is the stuff of the painted pictures of marriage. Such marriage was in the beginning; such shall it always be in my house. The hand of the man takes the woman’s ear, and by it leads her away to his house, where she is to be obedient to him and to his mother. I was taken by the ear, so, by your long honourably dead father. I have looked at your hand. It is not like his hand. Also have I looked at the ear of Li Faa. Never will you lead her by the ear. She has not that kind of an ear. I shall live a long time yet, and I will be mistress in my son’s house, after our ancient way, until I die.”

“But she is my revered ancestress,” Ah Kim explained to Li Faa.

He was timidly unhappy; for Li Faa, having ascertained that Mrs. Tai Fu was at the temple of the Chinese AEsculapius making a food offering of dried duck and prayers for her declining health, had taken advantage of the opportunity to call upon him in his store.

Li Faa pursed her insolent, unpainted lips into the form of a half-opened rosebud, and replied:

“That will do for China. I do not know China. This is Hawaii, and in Hawaii the customs of all foreigners change.”

“She is nevertheless my ancestress,” Ah Kim protested, “the mother who gave me birth, whether I am in China or Hawaii, O Silvery Moon Blossom that I want for wife.”

“I have had two husbands,” Li Faa stated placidly. “One was a pake, one was a Portuguese. I learned much from both. Also am I educated. I have been to High School, and I have played the piano in public. And I learned from my two husbands much. The pake makes the best husband. Never again will I marry anything but a pake. But he must not take me by the ear–“

“How do you know of that?” he broke in suspiciously.

“Mrs. Chang Lucy,” was the reply. “Mrs. Chang Lucy tells me everything that your mother tells her, and your mother tells her much. So let me tell you that mine is not that kind of an ear.”

“Which is what my honoured mother has told me,” Ah Kim groaned.

“Which is what your honoured mother told Mrs. Chang Lucy, which is what Mrs. Chang Lucy told me,” Li Faa completed equably. “And I now tell you, O Third Husband To Be, that the man is not born who will lead me by the ear. It is not the way in Hawaii. I will go only hand in hand with my man, side by side, fifty-fifty as is the haole slang just now. My Portuguese husband thought different. He tried to beat me. I landed him three times in the police court and each time he worked out his sentence on the reef. After that he got drowned.”

“My mother has been my mother for fifty years,” Ah Kim declared stoutly.

“And for fifty years has she beaten you,” Li Faa giggled. “How my father used to laugh at Yap Ten Shin! Like you, Yap Ten Shin had been born in China, and had brought the China customs with him. His old father was for ever beating him with a stick. He loved his father. But his father beat him harder than ever when he became

a missionary pake. Every time he went to the missionary services, his father beat him. And every time the missionary heard of it he was harsh in his language to Yap Ten Shin for allowing his father to beat him. And my father laughed and laughed, for my father was a very liberal pake, who had changed his customs quicker than most foreigners. And all the trouble was because Yap Ten Shin had a loving heart. He loved his honourable father. He loved the God of Love of the Christian missionary. But in the end, in me, he found the greatest love of all, which is the love of woman. In me he forgot his love for his father and his love for the loving Christ.

"And he offered my father six hundred gold, for me–the price was small because my feet were not small. But I was half kanaka. I said that I was not a slave-woman, and that I would be sold to no man. My high-school teacher was a haole old maid who said love of woman was so beyond price that it must never be sold. Perhaps that is why she was an old maid. She was not beautiful. She could not give herself away. My kanaka mother said it was not the kanaka way to sell their daughters for a money price. They gave their daughters for love, and she would listen to reason if Yap Ten Shin provided luaus in quantity and quality. My pake father, as I have told you, was liberal. He asked me if I wanted Yap Ten Shin for my husband. And I said yes; and freely, of myself, I went to him. He it was who was kicked by a horse; but he was a very good husband before he was kicked by the horse.

"As for you, Ah Kim, you shall always be honourable and lovable for me, and some day, when it is not necessary for you to take me by the ear, I shall marry you and come here and be with you always, and you will be the happiest pake in all Hawaii; for I have had two husbands, and gone to high school, and am most wise in making a husband happy. But that will be when your mother has ceased to beat you. Mrs. Chang Lucy tells me that she beats you very hard."

"She does," Ah Kim affirmed. "Behold! He thrust back his loose sleeves, exposing to the elbow his smooth and cherubic forearms. They were mantled with black and blue marks that advertised the weight and number of blows so shielded from his head and face.

"But she has never made me cry," Ah Kim disclaimed hastily. "Never, from the time I was a little boy, has she made me cry."

"So Mrs. Chang Lucy says," Li Faa observed. "She says that your honourable mother often complains to her that she has never made you cry."

A sibilant warning from one of his clerks was too late. Having regained the house by way of the back alley, Mrs. Tai Fu emerged right upon them from out of the living apartments. Never had Ah Kim seen his mother's eyes so blazing furious. She ignored Li Faa, as she screamed at him:

"Now will I make you cry. As never before shall I beat you until you do cry."

"Then let us go into the back rooms, honourable mother," Ah Kim suggested. "We will close the windows and the doors, and there may you beat me."

"No. Here shall you be beaten before all the world and this shameless woman who would, with her own hand, take you by the ear and call such sacrilege marriage! Stay, shameless woman."

"I am going to stay anyway," said Li Faa. She favoured the clerks with a truculent stare. "And I'd like to see anything less than the police put me out of here."

"You will never be my daughter-in-law," Mrs. Tai Fu snapped.

Li Faa nodded her head in agreement.

"But just the same," she added, "shall your son be my third husband."

"You mean when I am dead?" the old mother screamed.

"The sun rises each morning," Li Faa said enigmatically. "All my life have I seen it rise–"

"You are forty, and you wear corsets."

"But I do not dye my hair–that will come later," Li Faa calmly retorted. "As to my age, you are right. I shall be forty-one next Kamehameha Day. For forty years I have seen the sun rise. My father was an old man. Before he died he told me that he had observed no difference in the rising of the sun since when he was a little boy. The world is round. Confucius did not know that, but you will find it in all the geography books. The world is round. Ever it turns over on itself, over and over and around and around. And the times and seasons of weather and life turn with it. What is, has been before. What has been, will be again. The time of the breadfruit and the mango ever recurs, and man and woman repeat themselves. The robins nest, and in the springtime the plovers come from the north. Every spring is followed by another spring. The coconut palm rises into the air, ripens its fruit, and departs. But always are there more coconut palms. This is not all my own smart talk. Much of it my father told me. Proceed, honourable Mrs. Tai Fu, and beat your son who is my Third Husband To Be. But I shall laugh. I warn you I shall laugh."

Ah Kim dropped down on his knees so as to give his mother every advantage. And while she rained blows upon him with the bamboo stick, Li Faa smiled and giggled, and finally burst into laughter.

"Harder, O honourable Mrs. Tai Fu!" Li Faa urged between paroxysms of mirth.

Mrs. Tai Fu did her best, which was notably weak, until she observed what made her drop the stick by her side in amazement. Ah Kim was crying. Down both cheeks great round tears were coursing. Li Faa was amazed. So were the gaping clerks. Most amazed of all was Ah Kim, yet he could not help himself; and, although no further blows fell, he cried steadily on.

"But why did you cry?" Li Faa demanded often of Ah Kim. "It was so perfectly foolish a thing to do. She was not even hurting you."

"Wait until we are married," was Ah Kim's invariable reply, "and then, O Moon Lily, will I tell you."

Two years later, one afternoon, more like a water-melon seed in configuration than ever, Ah Kim returned home from a meeting of the Chinese Protective Association, to find his mother dead on her couch. Narrower and more unrelenting than ever were the

forehead and the brushed-back hair. But on her face was a withered smile. The gods had been kind. She had passed without pain.

He telephoned first of all to Li Faa's number but did not find her until he called up Mrs. Chang Lucy. The news given, the marriage was dated ahead with ten times the brevity of the old-line Chinese custom. And if there be anything analogous to a bridesmaid in a Chinese wedding, Mrs. Chang Lucy was just that.

"Why," Li Faa asked Ah Kim when alone with him on their wedding night, "why did you cry when your mother beat you that day in the store? You were so foolish. She was not even hurting you."

"That is why I cried," answered Ah Kim.

Li Faa looked up at him without understanding.

"I cried," he explained, "because I suddenly knew that my mother was nearing her end. There was no weight, no hurt, in her blows. I cried because I knew SHE NO LONGER HAD STRENGTH ENOUGH TO HURT ME. That is why I cried, my Flower of Serenity, my Perfect Rest. That is the only reason why I cried."

WAIKIKI, HONOLULU.

June 16, 1916.

The Terrible Solomons

There is no gainsaying that the Solomons are a hard-bitten bunch of islands. On the other hand, there are worse places in the world. But to the new chum who has no constitutional understanding of men and life in the rough, the Solomons may indeed prove terrible.

It is true that fever and dysentery are perpetually on the walk-about, that loathsome skin diseases abound, that the air is saturated with a poison that bites into every pore, cut, or abrasion and plants malignant ulcers, and that many strong men who escape dying there return as wrecks to their own countries. It is also true that the natives of the Solomons are a wild lot, with a hearty appetite for human flesh and a fad for collecting human heads. Their highest instinct of sportsmanship is to catch a man with his back turned and to smite him a cunning blow with a tomahawk that severs the spinal column at the base of the brain. It is equally true that on some islands, such as Malaita, the profit and loss account of social intercourse is calculated in homicides. Heads are a medium of exchange, and white heads are extremely valuable. Very often a dozen villages make a jack-pot, which they fatten moon by moon, against the time when some brave warrior presents a white man's head, fresh and gory, and claims the pot.

All the foregoing is quite true, and yet there are white men who have lived in the Solomons a score of years and who feel homesick when they go away from them. A man needs only to be careful–and lucky–to live a long time in the Solomons; but he must also be of the right sort. He must have the hallmark of the inevitable white man stamped upon his soul. He must be inevitable. He must have a certain grand carelessness of odds, a certain colossal self-satisfaction, and a racial egotism that convinces him that one white is better than a thousand niggers every day in the week, and that on Sunday he is able to clean out two thousand niggers. For such are the things that have made the white man inevitable. Oh, and one other thing–the white man who wishes to be inevitable, must not merely despise the lesser breeds and think a lot of himself; he must also fail to be too long on imagination. He must not understand too well the instincts, customs, and mental processes of the blacks, the yellows, and the browns; for it is not in such fashion that the white race has tramped its royal road around the world.

Bertie Arkwright was not inevitable. He was too sensitive, too finely strung, and he possessed too much imagination. The world was too much with him. He projected himself too quiveringly into his environment. Therefore, the last place in the world for him to come was the Solomons. He did not come, expecting to stay. A five weeks' stop-over between steamers, he decided, would satisfy the call of the primitive he

felt thrumming the strings of his being. At least, so he told the lady tourists on the Makembo, though in different terms; and they worshipped him as a hero, for they were lady tourists and they would know only the safety of the steamer's deck as she threaded her way through the Solomons.

There was another man on board, of whom the ladies took no notice. He was a little shriveled wisp of a man, with a withered skin the color of mahogany. His name on the passenger list does not matter, but his other name, Captain Malu, was a name for niggers to conjure with, and to scare naughty pickaninnies to righteousness from New Hanover to the New Hebrides. He had farmed savages and savagery, and from fever and hardship, the crack of Sniders and the lash of the overseers, had wrested five millions of money in the form of beche-de-mer, sandalwood, pearl-shell and turtle-shell, ivory nuts and copra, grasslands, trading stations, and plantations. Captain Malu's little finger, which was broken, had more inevitableness in it than Bertie Arkwright's whole carcass. But then, the lady tourists had nothing by which to judge save appearances, and Bertie certainly was a fine-looking man.

Bertie talked with Captain Malu in the smoking room, confiding to him his intention of seeing life red and bleeding in the Solomons. Captain Malu agreed that the intention was ambitious and honorable. It was not until several days later that he became interested in Bertie, when that young adventurer insisted on showing him an automatic 44-caliber pistol. Bertie explained the mechanism and demonstrated by slipping a loaded magazine up the hollow butt.

"It is so simple," he said. He shot the outer barrel back along the inner one. "That loads it and cocks it, you see. And then all I have to do is pull the trigger, eight times, as fast as I can quiver my finger. See that safety clutch. That's what I like about it. It is safe. It is positively fool-proof." He slipped out the magazine. "You see how safe it is."

As he held it in his hand, the muzzle came in line with Captain Malu's stomach. Captain Malu's blue eyes looked at it unswervingly.

"Would you mind pointing it in some other direction?" he asked.

"It's perfectly safe," Bertie assured him. "I withdrew the magazine. It's not loaded now, you know."

"A gun is always loaded."

"But this one isn't."

"Turn it away just the same."

Captain Malu's voice was flat and metallic and low, but his eyes never left the muzzle until the line of it was drawn past him and away from him.

"I'll bet a fiver it isn't loaded," Bertie proposed warmly.

The other shook his head.

"Then I'll show you."

Bertie started to put the muzzle to his own temple with the evident intention of pulling the trigger.

“Just a second,” Captain Malu said quietly, reaching out his hand. “Let me look at it.”

He pointed it seaward and pulled the trigger. A heavy explosion followed, instantaneous with the sharp click of the mechanism that flipped a hot and smoking cartridge sidewise along the deck.

Bertie’s jaw dropped in amazement.

“I slipped the barrel back once, didn’t I?” he explained. It was silly of me, I must say.”

He giggled flabbily, and sat down in a steamer chair. The blood had ebbed from his face, exposing dark circles under his eyes. His hands were trembling and unable to guide the shaking cigarette to his lips. The world was too much with him, and he saw himself with dripping brains prone upon the deck

“Really,” he said, “. . . really.”

“It’s a pretty weapon,” said Captain Malu, returning the automatic to him.

The Commissioner was on board the Makembo, returning from Sydney, and by his permission a stop was made at Ugi to land a missionary. And at Ugi lay the ketch Arla, Captain Hansen, skipper. Now the Arla was one of many vessels owned by Captain Malu, and it was at his suggestion and by his invitation that Bertie went aboard the Arla as guest for a four days’ recruiting cruise on the coast of Malaita. Thereafter the Arla would drop him at Reminge Plantation (also owned by Captain Malu), where Bertie could remain for a week, and then be sent over to Tulagi, the seat of government, where he would become the Commissioner’s guest. Captain Malu was responsible for two other suggestions, which given, he disappears from this narrative. One was to Captain Hansen, the other to Mr. Harriwell, manager of Reminge Plantation. Both suggestions were similar in tenor, namely, to give Mr. Bertram Arkwright an insight into the rawness and redness of life in the Solomons. Also, it is whispered that Captain Malu mentioned that a case of Scotch would be coincidental with any particularly gorgeous insight Mr. Arkwright might receive. . . . .

“Yes, Swartz always was too pig-headed. You see, he took four of his boat’s crew to Tulagi to be flogged–officially, you know–then started back with them in the whaleboat. It was pretty squally, and the boat capsized just outside. Swartz was the only one drowned. Of course, it was an accident.”

“Was it? Really?” Bertie asked, only half-interested, staring hard at the black man at the wheel.

Ugi had dropped astern, and the Arla was sliding along through a summer sea toward the wooded ranges of Malaita. The helmsman who so attracted Bertie’s eyes sported a ten penny nail, stuck skewerwise through his nose. About his neck was a string of pants buttons. Thrust through holes in his ears were a can opener, the broken handle of a toothbrush, a clay pipe, the brass wheel of an alarm clock, and several Winchester rifle cartridges.

On his chest, suspended from around his neck hung the half of a china plate. Some forty similarly appareled blacks lay about the deck, fifteen of which were boat's crew, the remainder being fresh labor recruits.

"Of course it was an accident," spoke up the Arla's mate, Jacobs, a slender, dark-eyed man who looked more a professor than a sailor. "Johnny Bedip nearly had the same kind of accident. He was bringing back several from a flogging, when they capsized him. But he knew how to swim as well as they, and two of them were drowned. He used a boat stretcher and a revolver. Of course it was an accident."

"Quite common, them accidents," remarked the skipper. "You see that man at the wheel, Mr. Arkwright? He's a man eater. Six months ago, he and the rest of the boat's crew drowned the then captain of the Arla. They did it on deck, sir, right aft there by the mizzen-traveler."

"The deck was in a shocking state," said the mate.

"Do I understand–?" Bertie began.

"Yes, just that," said Captain Hansen. "It was an accidental drowning."

"But on deck–?"

"Just so. I don't mind telling you, in confidence, of course, that they used an axe."

"This present crew of yours?"

Captain Hansen nodded.

"The other skipper always was too careless," explained the mate. He but just turned his back, when they let him have it."

"We haven't any show down here," was the skipper's complaint. "The government protects a nigger against a white every time. You can't shoot first. You've got to give the nigger first shot, or else the government calls it murder and you go to Fiji. That's why there's so many drowning accidents."

Dinner was called, and Bertie and the skipper went below, leaving the mate to watch on deck.

"Keep an eye out for that black devil, Auiki," was the skipper's parting caution. "I haven't liked his looks for several days."

"Right O," said the mate.

Dinner was part way along, and the skipper was in the middle of his story of the cutting out of the Scottish Chiefs.

"Yes," he was saying, "she was the finest vessel on the coast. But when she missed stays, and before ever she hit the reef, the canoes started for her. There were five white men, a crew of twenty Santa Cruz boys and Samoans, and only the supercargo escaped. Besides, there were sixty recruits. They were all kai-kai'd. Kai-kai?–oh, I beg your pardon. I mean they were eaten. Then there was the James Edwards, a dandy-rigged–"

But at that moment there was a sharp oath from the mate on deck and a chorus of savage cries. A revolver went off three times, and then was heard a loud splash. Captain Hansen had sprung up the companionway on the instant, and Bertie's eyes had been fascinated by a glimpse of him drawing his revolver as he sprang.

Bertie went up more circumspectly, hesitating before he put his head above the companionway slide. But nothing happened. The mate was shaking with excitement, his revolver in his hand. Once he startled, and half-jumped around, as if danger threatened his back.

"One of the natives fell overboard," he was saying, in a queer tense voice. "He couldn't swim."

"Who was it?" the skipper demanded.

"Auiki," was the answer.

"But I say, you know, I heard shots," Bertie said, in trembling eagerness, for he scented adventure, and adventure that was happily over with.

The mate whirled upon him, snarling:

"It"s a damned lie. There ain't been a shot fired. The nigger fell overboard."

Captain Hansen regarded Bertie with unblinking, lack-luster eyes.

"I–I thought–" Bertie was beginning.

"Shots?" said Captain Hansen, dreamily. "Shots? Did you hear any shots, Mr. Jacobs?"

"Not a shot," replied Mr. Jacobs.

The skipper looked at his guest triumphantly, and said:

"Evidently an accident. Let us go down, Mr. Arkwright, and finish dinner."

Bertie slept that night in the captain's cabin, a tiny stateroom off the main cabin. The for'ard bulkhead was decorated with a stand of rifles. Over the bunk were three more rifles. Under the bunk was a big drawer, which, when he pulled it out, he found filled with ammunition, dynamite, and several boxes of detonators. He elected to take the settee on the opposite side. Lying conspicuously on the small table, was the Arla's log. Bertie did not know that it had been especially prepared for the occasion by Captain Malu, and he read therein how on September 21, two boat's crew had fallen overboard and been drowned. Bertie read between the lines and knew better. He read how the Arla's whale boat had been bushwhacked at Su'u and had lost three men; of how the skipper discovered the cook stewing human flesh on the galley fire–flesh purchased by the boat's crew ashore in Fui; of how an accidental discharge of dynamite, while signaling, had killed another boat's crew; of night attacks; ports fled from between the dawns; attacks by bushmen in mangrove swamps and by fleets of salt-water men in the larger passages. One item that occurred with monotonous frequency was death by dysentery. He noticed with alarm that two white men had so died–guests, like himself, on the Arla.

"I say, you know," Bertie said next day to Captain Hansen. "I've been glancing through your log."

The skipper displayed quick vexation that the log had been left lying about.

"And all that dysentery, you know, that's all rot, just like the accidental drownings," Bertie continued. "What does dysentery really stand for?"

The skipper openly admired his guest's acumen, stiffened himself to make indignant denial, then gracefully surrendered.

"You see, it's like this, Mr. Arkwright. These islands have got a bad enough name as it is. It's getting harder every day to sign on white men. Suppose a man is killed. The company has to pay through the nose for another man to take the job. But if the man merely dies of sickness, it's all right. The new chums don't mind disease. What they draw the line at is being murdered. I thought the skipper of the Arla had died of dysentery when I took his billet. Then it was too late. I'd signed the contract."

"Besides," said Mr. Jacobs, "there's altogether too many accidental drownings anyway. It don't look right. It's the fault of the government. A white man hasn't a chance to defend himself from the niggers."

"Yes, look at the Princess and that Yankee mate," the skipper took up the tale. "She carried five white men besides a government agent. The captain, the agent, and the supercargo were ashore in the two boats. They were killed to the last man. The mate and boson, with about fifteen of the crew–Samoans and Tongans–were on board. A crowd of niggers came off from shore. First thing the mate knew, the boson and the crew were killed in the first rush. The mate grabbed three cartridge belts and two Winchesters and skinned up to the cross-trees. He was the sole survivor, and you can't blame him for being mad. He pumped one rifle till it got so hot he couldn't hold it, then he pumped the other. The deck was black with niggers. He cleaned them out. He dropped them as they went over the rail, and he dropped them as fast as they picked up their paddles. Then they jumped into the water and started to swim for it, and being mad, he got half a dozen more. And what did he get for it?"

"Seven years in Fiji," snapped the mate.

"The government said he wasn't justified in shooting after they'd taken to the water," the skipper explained.

"And that's why they die of dysentery nowadays," the mate added.

"Just fancy," said Bertie, as he felt a longing for the cruise to be over.

Later on in the day he interviewed the black who had been pointed out to him as a cannibal. This fellow's name was Sumasai. He had spent three years on a Queensland plantation. He had been to Samoa, and Fiji, and Sydney; and as a boat's crew had been on recruiting schooners through New Britain, New Ireland, New Guinea, and the Admiralties. Also, he was a wag, and he had taken a line on his skipper's conduct. Yes, he had eaten many men. How many? He could not remember the tally. Yes, white men, too; they were very good, unless they were sick. He had once eaten a sick one.

"My word!" he cried, at the recollection. "Me sick plenty along him. 'my belly walk about too much."

Bertie shuddered, and asked about heads. Yes, Sumasai had several hidden ashore, in good condition, sun-dried, and smoke-cured. One was of the captain of a schooner. It had long whiskers. He would sell it for two quid. Black men's heads he would sell for one quid. He had some pickaninny heads, in poor condition, that he would let go for ten bob.

Five minutes afterward, Bertie found himself sitting on the companionway-slide alongside a black with a horrible skin disease. He sheered off, and on inquiry was told

that it was leprosy. He hurried below and washed himself with antiseptic soap. He took many antiseptic washes in the course of the day, for every native on board was afflicted with malignant ulcers of one sort or another.

As the Arla drew in to an anchorage in the midst of mangrove swamps, a double row of barbed wire was stretched around above her rail. That looked like business, and when Bertie saw the shore canoes alongside, armed with spears, bows and arrows, and Sniders, he wished more earnestly than ever that the cruise was over.

That evening the natives were slow in leaving the ship at sundown. A number of them checked the mate when he ordered them ashore. "Never mind, I'll fix them," said Captain Hansen, diving below.

When he cam back, he showed Bertie a stick of dynamite attached to a fish hook. Now it happens that a paper-wrapped bottle of chlorodyne with a piece of harmless fuse projecting can fool anybody. It fooled Bertie, and it fooled the natives. When Captain Hansen lighted the fuse and hooked the fish hook into the tail end of a native's loin cloth, that native was smitten with so an ardent a desire for the shore that he forgot to shed the loin cloth. He started for'ard, the fuse sizzling and spluttering at his rear, the natives in his path taking headers over the barbed wire at every jump. Bertie was horror-stricken. So was Captain Hansen. He had forgotten his twenty-five recruits, on each of which he had paid thirty shillings advance. They went over the side along with the shore-dwelling folk and followed by him who trailed the sizzling chlorodyne bottle.

Bertie did not see the bottle go off; but the mate opportunely discharging a stick of real dynamite aft where it would harm nobody, Bertie would have sworn in any admiralty court to a nigger blown to flinders. The flight of the twenty-five recruits had actually cost the Arla forty pounds, and, since they had taken to the bush, there was no hope of recovering them. The skipper and his mate proceeded to drown their sorrow in cold tea.

The cold tea was in whiskey bottles, so Bertie did not know it was cold tea they were mopping up. All he knew was that the two men got very drunk and argued eloquently and at length as to whether the exploded nigger should be reported as a case of dysentery or as an accidental drowning. When they snored off to sleep, he was the only white man left, and he kept a perilous watch till dawn, in fear of an attack from shore and an uprising of the crew.

Three more days the Arla spent on the coast, and three more nights the skipper and the mate drank overfondly of cold tea, leaving Bertie to keep the watch. They knew he could be depended upon, while he was equally certain that if he lived, he would report their drunken conduct to Captain Malu. Then the Arla dropped anchor at Reminge Plantation, on Guadalcanar, and Bertie landed on the beach with a sigh of relief and shook hands with the manager. 'Mr. Harriwell was ready for him.

"Now you mustn't be alarmed if some of our fellows seem downcast," Mr. Harriwell said, having drawn him aside in confidence. "There's been talk of an outbreak, and two or three suspicious signs I'm willing to admit, but personally I think it's all poppycock."

“How–how many blacks have you on the plantation?” Bertie asked, with a sinking heart.

“We’re working four hundred just now,” replied Mr. Harriwell, cheerfully; but the three of us, with you, of course, and the skipper and mate of the Arla, can handle them all right.”

Bertie turned to meet one McTavish, the storekeeper, who scarcely acknowledged the introduction, such was his eagerness to present his resignation.

“It being that I’m a married man, Mr. Harriwell, I can’t very well afford to remain on longer. Trouble is working up, as plain as the nose on your face. The niggers are going to break out, and there’ll be another Hohono horror here.”

“What’s a Hohono horror?” Bertie asked, after the storekeeper had been persuaded to remain until the end of the month.

“Oh, he means Hohono Plantation, on Ysabel,” said the manager. “The niggers killed the five white men ashore, captured the schooner, killed the captain and mate, and escaped in a body to Malaita. But I always said they were careless on Hohono. They won’t catch us napping here. Come along, Mr. Arkwright, and see our view from the veranda.”

Bertie was too busy wondering how he could get away to Tulagi to the Commissioner’s house, to see much of the view. He was still wondering, when a rifle exploded very near to him, behind his back. At the same moment his arm was nearly dislocated, so eagerly did Mr. Harriwell drag him indoors.

“I say, old man, that was a close shave,” said the manager, pawing him over to see if he had been hit. “I can’t tell you how sorry I am. But it was broad daylight, and I never dreamed.”

Bertie was beginning to turn pale.

“They got the other manager that way,” McTavish vouchsafed. “And a dashed fine chap he was. Blew his brains out all over the veranda. You noticed that dark stain there between the steps and the door?”

Bertie was ripe for the cocktail which Mr. Harriwell pitched in and compounded for him; but before he could drink it, a man in riding trousers and puttees entered.

“What’s the matter now?” the manager asked, after one look at the newcomer’s face. “Is the river up again?”

“River be blowed–it’s the niggers. Stepped out of the cane grass, not a dozen feet away, and whopped at me. It was a Snider, and he shot from the hip. Now what I want to know is where’d he get that Snider?–Oh, I beg pardon. Glad to know you, Mr. Arkwright.”

“Mr. Brown is my assistant,” explained Mr. Harriwell. “And now let’s have that drink.”

“But where’d he get that Snider?” Mr. Brown insisted. “I always objected to keeping those guns on the premises.”

“They’re still there,” Mr. Harriwell said, with a show of heat.

Mr. Brown smiled incredulously.

"Come along and see," said the manager.

Bertie joined the procession into the office, where Mr. Harriwell pointed triumphantly at a big packing case in a dusty corner.

"Well, then where did the beggar get that Snider?" harped Mr. Brown.

But just then McTavish lifted the packing case. The manager started, then tore off the lid. The case was empty. They gazed at one another in horrified silence. Harriwell drooped wearily.

Then McVeigh cursed.

"What I contended all along–the house-boys are not to be trusted."

"It does look serious," Harriwell admitted, "but we'll come through it all right. What the sanguinary niggers need is a shaking up. Will you gentlemen please bring your rifles to dinner, and will you, Mr. Brown, kindly prepare forty or fifty sticks of dynamite. 'make the fuses good and short. We'll give them a lesson. And now, gentlemen, dinner is served."

One thing that Bertie detested was rice and curry, so it happened that he alone partook of an inviting omelet. He had quite finished his plate, when Harriwell helped himself to the omelet. One mouthful he tasted, then spat out vociferously.

"That's the second time," McTavish announced ominously.

Harriwell was still hawking and spitting.

"Second time, what?" Bertie quavered.

"Poison," was the answer. "That cook will be hanged yet."

"That's the way the bookkeeper went out at Cape March," Brown spoke up. "Died horribly. They said on the Jessie that they heard him screaming three miles away."

"I'll put the cook in irons," sputtered Harriwell. "Fortunately we discovered it in time."

Bertie sat paralyzed. There was no color in his face. He attempted to speak, but only an inarticulate gurgle resulted. All eyed him anxiously.

"Don't say it, don't say it," McTavish cried in a tense voice.

"Yes, I ate it, plenty of it, a whole plateful!" Bertie cried explosively, like a diver suddenly regaining breath.

The awful silence continued half a minute longer, and he read his fate in their eyes.

"Maybe it wasn't poison after all," said Harriwell, dismally.

"Call in the cook," said Brown.

In came the cook, a grinning black boy, nose-spiked and ear-plugged.

"Here, you, Wi-wi, what name that?" Harriwell bellowed, pointing accusingly at the omelet.

Wi-wi was very naturally frightened and embarrassed.

"Him good fella kai-kai," he murmured apologetically.

"Make him eat it," suggested McTavish. "That's a proper test."

Harriwell filled a spoon with the stuff and jumped for the cook, who fled in panic.

"That settles it," was Brown's solemn pronouncement. "He won't eat it."

“Mr. Brown, will you please go and put the irons on him?” Harriwell turned cheerfully to Bertie. “It’s all right, old man, the Commissioner will deal with him, and if you die, depend upon it, he will be hanged.”

“Don’t think the government’ll do it,” objected McTavish.

“But gentlemen, gentlemen,” Bertie cried. “In the meantime think of me.”

Harriwell shrugged his shoulders pityingly.

“Sorry, old man, but it’s a native poison, and there are no known antidotes for native poisons. Try and compose yourself and if–“

Two sharp reports of a rifle from without, interrupted the discourse, and Brown, entering, reloaded his rifle and sat down to table.

“The cook’s dead,” he said. “Fever. A rather sudden attack.”

“I was just telling Mr. Arkwright that there are no antidotes for native poisons–“

“Except gin,” said Brown.

Harriwell called himself an absent-minded idiot and rushed for the gin bottle.

“Neat, man, neat,” he warned Bertie, who gulped down a tumbler two-thirds full of the raw spirits, and coughed and choked from the angry bite of it till the tears ran down his cheeks.

Harriwell took his pulse and temperature, made a show of looking out for him, and doubted that the omelet had been poisoned. Brown and McTavish also doubted; but Bertie discerned an insincere ring in their voices. His appetite had left him, and he took his own pulse stealthily under the table. There was no question but what it was increasing, but he failed to ascribe it to the gin he had taken. ‘mcTavish, rifle in hand, went out on the veranda to reconnoiter.

“They’re massing up at the cook-house,” was his report. “And they’ve no end of Sniders. ‘my idea is to sneak around on the other side and take them in flank. Strike the first blow, you know. Will you come along, Brown?”

Harriwell ate on steadily, while Bertie discovered that his pulse had leaped up five beats. Nevertheless, he could not help jumping when the rifles began to go off. Above the scattering of Sniders could be heard the pumping of Brown’s and McTavish’s Winchesters–all against a background of demoniacal screeching and yelling.

“They’ve got them on the run,” Harriwell remarked, as voices and gunshots faded away in the distance.

Scarcely were Brown and McTavish back at the table when the latter reconnoitered.

“They’ve got dynamite,” he said.

“Then let’s charge them with dynamite,” Harriwell proposed.

Thrusting half a dozen sticks each into their pockets and equipping themselves with lighted cigars, they started for the door. And just then it happened. They blamed McTavish for it afterward, and he admitted that the charge had been a trifle excessive. But at any rate it went off under the house, which lifted up cornerwise and settled back on its foundations. Half the china on the table was shattered, while the eight-day clock stopped. Yelling for vengeance, the three men rushed out into the night, and the bombardment began.

When they returned, there was no Bertie. He had dragged himself away to the office, barricaded himself in, and sunk upon the floor in a gin-soaked nightmare, wherein he died a thousand deaths while the valorous fight went on around him. In the morning, sick and headachey from the gin, he crawled out to find the sun still in the sky and God presumable in heaven, for his hosts were alive and uninjured.

Harriwell pressed him to stay on longer, but Bertie insisted on sailing immediately on the Arla for Tulagi, where, until the following steamer day, he stuck close by the Commissioner's house. There were lady tourists on the outgoing steamer, and Bertie was again a hero, while Captain Malu, as usual, passed unnoticed. But Captain Malu sent back from Sydney two cases of the best Scotch whiskey on the market, for he was not able to make up his mind as to whether it was Captain Hansen or Mr Harriwell who had given Bertie Arkwright the more gorgeous insight into life in the Solomons.

The Test: a Clondyke Wooing

THE air throbbed with the confused uproar of many sounds — swinging, waltz-time music; the clicking of chips; the sharp clattering of the roulette ball; the clear-cut decisions of the game keepers; noisy gaiety and laughter; and above, under, all about, the deep hum of conversation. Candles and kerosene lamps looked down upon the scene. The floor was alive with the flying feet of the be-moccasined dancers, while at the tables clustered the gamblers, intent on the golden chase. In groups, the men of the creeks and camps and trails, talked of past deeds and planned new enterprises. Unkempt; clad in mackinaw, furs and muclucs; with the worn, tired faces of those who are brothers of toil and hardship; they unbent their stiffened tongues and talked and lived the old times over once again, ere, with the dogs, they faced the trail on the morrow. The long bar was crowded by those who sought to ease their thirst, or found temporary oblivion from the heavy labor of their meager lives.

The music struck up a lively "two-step"; but it was too cultivated for the dancers, only one couple taking the floor. A moment they became the cynosure of all eyes; conversation lulled, then rose again to a drowsy hum — they had been recognized — Lucille, and Jack Harrington, the Mastadon King. A fine pair they were to look at — Lucille, as pretty and charming a woman as ever graced a mining camp; Jack Harrington, strong and handsome, the owner of the richest claim on Mastadon. She — well she was Lucille, and for her past, such things are forgiven and forgotten in Dawson. And he was, as everybody said, a jolly good fellow, who had greater luck and could play a violin better than any man in the country.

They talked as they danced — talked of many things; of royalties and Gold Commissioners, the price of dogs and grub, of mines and miners; for they did not know each other and this was all they had in common. But given two healthy beings with time on their hands for mutual intercourse, you can safely trust to Chance for the finding of something in common — nay, something uncommonly in common. Ere the music ceased, the germ was sown.

"So you play the violin," she said. "O, teach me how! Above all, I love it. Won't you teach me?"

And this is how it began.

Three weeks later:

Past midnight, the dancing and gambling at its height, as Lucille and Jack enter, finishing a conversation begun the cold northern lights.

"And you are sure?" he asks.

"O Jack, I do love you for yourself, and I don't care whether you're broke or can count your ounces by the thousand. I know my feelings."

It slips trippingly from your tongue and feelings are easily mistaken. Can you prove it?"

"Prove it? How can I? I wish it were so, but it can't be done."

"O yes it can."

"Can?"

"Come."

Then did a comet flash athwart the Dawson sky. Limits were removed and the tables crowded by the miners, intent on seeing the high play. The last turn at the faro table, and he plays the queen to win and "coppers" the deuce for an even thousand apiece, with another thousand on the high card. The deuce follows the queen and the three bets are lost. The onlookers are breathless with admiration. In fifteen minutes the whole town knows that "Lucky" Jack Harrington has broken loose, and comes to see. The test has begun.

Ever, as he ventures the markers he repeats his question, and as often she reiterates her reply. At the end of an hour he is fifteen thousand to the bad; still the play is not fast enough for him. He sends for the chairman of the committee, appointed by the miners to aid several score of unfortunates, who had lost their all in the "great fire." Laconic the conversation:

"There's ten thousand behind the bar for you, on one consideration."

"And that — "

"Is that you weigh it out and take it away at once."

"Done."

Father B — — is summoned and the scene repeated; this time twenty-five thousand for the hospital. And the town voices one conclusion: either "Lucky" Jack Harrington is drunk or has gone clean daft.

"I've sold my mine and this is the last of it," he says to Lucille as he scatters a final handful of dust under the feet of the dancers. "What do you think of me now?"

"Jack! Jack! the test is hard! I had thought we could do so much, that we could have gone away and forgotten all this — I hate it so! But you should know that I cannot change. I would do anything, endure anything for your sake. Thank God! you've done your worst and I'm not altered."

"Would you cleave unto me and follow me to the ends of the earth, in misery, toil and hardship?"

"Why jangle words? Can a woman do more? I have told you: you have tried me. Is there aught under the sun a woman won't do when she truly loves?"

"But would you?"

"If you will have it so, yes. Like the squaw, it is my duty to follow my lord and master — aye, and my pleasure."

Old Sol, attended by twin sun dogs, has just cleared the southern horizon at meridian, and pauses for a peep at the Northern Eldorado. Before he can slip behind the

mountain over which he rose, he catches a glimpse of a scene, which all Dawson has turned out to behold. Two heavily laden sleds and an Indian dog driver, wait where the throng is densest, before the Opera House. A passage is forced through the onlookers and he is joined by Jack and Lucille.

Cold, the morning; dreary, the scene; crude, the environment: but withal, magnificent, the picture. Filled with scintillating frost particles, the air is a sparkling, silvery sheen, a fairy gossamer. The mighty Yukon, the towering peaks, the far-reaching forest; monotonously white and sphinx-like in their brooding calm, sleep on the bosom of the awful Artic silence. In garments of leather and fur, toil-worn and hardy, their eyes slumbering with latent action and power, the gold-seekers group like heroes of the Elder World. And there, in their midst, a veritable King of the Northland — "Lucky" Jack Harrington. From his wolverine cap to his Innuit muclucs, he stood a MAN amongst MEN. And she, in buckskin and furs and beaded moccasins, with her rosy cheeks and laughing eyes, was truly a dainty, Artic princess.

The air is filled with goodbyes and good wishes. The whips snap spitefully; the wolf-dogs lunge in the traces with the quick, impatient whine of their wild progenitors; and the steel-shod sleds crunch into the river trail. Some one in the crowd sings

"And Ruth clave unto her — "

And Dawson wondered over "Lucky" Jack Harrington's latest freak, and would be wondering yet, had it not forgot it all that night in a wild stampede to Swede Creek.

For a month, now, entirely isolated on the head waters of the Clondyke, had they lived in a rough cabin of Jack's building. Meager had been their fare — bacon, beans and flour, with an occasional moose steak. Meager had been their lives, shorn of all but the barest necessaries. And for a woman, bright, accomplished, and who has known so much better, to settle down to the coarse, dreary round of housekeeping in such a camp, windowless and cheerless, with its tin plates and pine bough bed and guttering slush-lamp, it was indeed hard. Lucille stood it, however, because she was with the man of her choosing; though little did she see of him, for he was in the forest or over the mountains from morning till night.

But she was a woman in whom the emotions were important factors of her existence, and when they mounted the throne of her reason they ruled with a rod of steel. Finely strung, sensitive, delicate, with the sensuous soul of the artist, loving the rhythmic pulse of harmony and responding to its loftiest flights; small wonder she took pleasure in the violin during his constant absences. And small wonder in the long evenings when he could be induced to play, that she sat as one entranced. Nor was it the instinctive delight of the untutored animal that bade her best. She was more like a thirsty soul, wandered afar in the desert and harking back to the founts and springs of its childhood.

But of her love for the music, Jack thought strange things, and a certain, unconscious jealousy, grained and distorted his conclusions. So, on this night of nights, he played as one possessed. He excelled himself, venturing difficult flights, half in bitterness, half in pleasure born of the consciousness that he was soon to know. Clever at improvisation,

he at last essayed one, that soared to heights and sank to depths, hitherto unattainable. And in the voluptuous harmony he enticed and lost, not only her, but himself.

The tremulous, long-drawn strains, saddened to a minor of gentle runs and soft, melancholy cords. For a space, the air thrilled with the pathos of the theme; then the finale begun. The adagio changed to allegretto, to allegro, from allegro to velocissimo. Shaking, shuddering, shivering, quivering, the violin shrieked its passion, bursting into one final vortex of emotions.

A string broke: a jangling discord died away: they looked at each other across the beloved instrument. Without, a wolf-dog howled mournfully: the slush-lamp guttered gloomily. All else was silent. Into her eyes he gazed as though he would lay bare her soul.

"For myself, or the music?" he asked. And with one fierce stroke the violin crashed into fragments.

An early April morning — there is a low hum of life, a subdued murmur of running waters, a vague feeling of preparation, in the air. Spring, that bursts into an instant miracle of bloom and life and action, has crept in insidiously and unawares. Yesterday, the ghastly silence of winter weighed upon us; to-day we have a strange sensation of unrest, an unconscious expectancy; and to-morrow there is a crashing and rending of fetters, and the full-grown Spring breaks upon us like a marvelous vision.

All Dawson awoke and drank the exhilarating tonic of the air; felt the premonition of things to come; and wandered up and down the main street through the very joy of living. And not among the least, was its interest in the dog-teams, ready to commence their long journey to "salt water," to the Outside. Again the hearty grip and good luck blessing; again the whips snapped, the dogs howled, and the sleds churned into the river trail; and for the last time, Jack and Lucille turned their backs on the Golden City.

As usual, Dawson was excited, and several of her most respected citizens so far forgot themselves as to baptize the departing travelers with rice — rice, worth a dollar a pound and only purchasable in small quantities.

A few comments were made.

"'Lucky' Jack Harrington stands pat," quoth one of the gambling fraternity.

"Why shouldn't he?" said another. "He's a good hand at the game. Who'd have thought he owned a mile of Dominion all the time, and it as rich as Eldorado?"

"They say he bought it up for a song when it wasn't worth the recording fee."

"I say, boys, he may have an Eldorado in Dominion, but we know he's got a Bonanza in Lucille."

"Bet you the ice breaks before he makes Chilkoot!"

"Even it don't!"

"Who'll give me odds?"

"Two to one it does!"

And herewith, all Dawson fell to gambling on the race "Lucky" Jack Harrington was running with the Spring.

Thanksgiving On Slav Creek

SHE woke up with a start. Her husband was speaking in a low voice, insistently.

"Come," he added. "Get up. Get up, Nella. Quick. Get up."

"But I don't want to get up," she objected, striving vainly to lapse back into the comfortable drowse.

"But I say you must. And don't make any noise, but come along. Hurry! Oh, do hurry! Our fortune's made if you will only hurry!"

Nella Tichborne was now wide awake, what with the suppressed excitement in his whispers, and she thrust her feet out with a shiver upon the cold cabin floor.

"What is it?" she asked, petulantly. "What is it?"

"'Ssh!" he sibilated. "Don't make a noise. Mum's the word. Dress at once."

"But what is it?"

"Be quiet, if you love me, and dress."

"Now, George, I won't move an inch until you tell me." She capped the ultimatum by sitting back on the edge of the bunk.

The man groaned. "Oh, the time, the precious time, you're losing! Didn't I tell you our fortune was made? Do hurry! It's a tip. Nobody knows. A secret. There's a stampede on. 'Ssh! Put on warm clothes. It's the coldest yet. The frost is sixty-five below. I'm going to call Ikeesh. She would like to be in on it, I know. And oh, Nella — "

"Yes?"

"Do be quick."

He stepped across to the other end of the cabin where a blanket partitioned the room into two, and called Ikeesh. The Indian woman was already awake. Her husband was up on his Bonanza claim, though this was her cabin, in which she was entertaining George Tichborne and Nella.

"What um matter, Tichborne?" she asked. "Um Nella sick?"

"No, no. Stampede. Rich creek. Plenty gold. Hurry up and dress."

"What um time?"

"Twelve o'clock. Midnight. Don't make any noise."

Five minutes later the cabin door opened and they passed out.

"'Ssh!" he cautioned.

"Oh, George! Have you got the fryin-pan?"

"Yes."

"And the gold-pan? And the axe?"

"Yes, yes, Nella. And did you remember the baking-powder?"

They crunched rapidly through the snow, down the hill into sleeping Dawson. Light stampeding packs were on their backs, containing a fur robe each, and the barest necessaries for a camp in the polar frost. But Dawson was not sleeping, after all. Cabin windows were flashing into light, and ever and anon the mumble of voices drifted to them through the darkness. The dogs were beginning to howl and the doors to slam. By the time they reached the Barracks the whole town was aroar behind them. Here the trail dropped abruptly over the bank and crossed the packed ice of the Yukon to the farther shore.

George Tichborne swore softly and to himself; but aloud: "It's leaked out somehow, and everybody's in it. Sure to be a big stampede now. But hurry up; they're all behind us, and we'll make it yet!"

"George!" A frightened wail punctured the still air and died away as Nella slipped on the icy footing and shot down the twenty-foot embankment into the pit of darkness beneath.

"Nella! Nella! Where are you?" He was falling over the great ice-blocks and groping his way to her as best he could. "Are you hurt? Where are you?"

"All right! Coming!" she answered, cheerily. "Only the snow's all down my back and melting. Brrr!"

Hardly were the trio reunited when two black forms plumped into their midst from above. These were followed by others, some arriving decorously, but the majority scorning conventional locomotion and peregrinating along on every other portion of their anatomies but their feet. They also had stampeding packs on their backs and a great haste in their hearts.

"Where's the trail?" the cry went up. And thereat all fell to seeking for the path across the river.

At last George Tichborne found it, and, with Nella and Ikeesh, led the way. But in the darkness they lost it repeatedly, slipping, stumbling, and falling over the wildly piled ice. Finally, in desparation, he lighted a candle, and as there was not a breath of wind, the way was easier. Nella looked back at the fifty spampeders behind and laughed half-hysterically. Her husband gritted his teeth and plunged savagely on.

"At least we're at the head of the bunch, the very first," he whispered to her, as they swung south on the smoother trail which ran along under the shadow of the bluffs.

But just then a flaming ribbon rose athwart the sky, spilling pulsating fire over the face of the night. The trail ahead lighted up, and as far as they could see it was cumbered with shadowy forms, all toiling in the one direction. And now those behind began to pass them, one by one, straining mightily with the endeavor.

"Oh, Nella! Hurry!" He seized her hand and strove to drag her along. "It's the one chance we've been waiting for so long. Think of it if we fail!"

"Oh! Oh!" She gasped and tottered. "We will never make it! No, never!"

There was a sharp pain in her side, and she was dizzy with the unwonted speed. Ikeesh grunted encouragement and took her other hand. But none the less the vague forms from the rear continued steadily to overtake and pass them.

Hours which were as centuries passed. The night seemed without end to Nella. Gradually her conciousness seemed to leave her, her whole soul narrowing down to the one mechanical function of walking. Ever lifting, ever falling, and ever lifting anon, her limbs seemed to have become great pendulums of time. And before and behind glimmered two eternities, ever lifting, ever falling, she pulsed in vast rhythmical movement. She was no longer Nella Tichborne, a woman, but a rhythm — that was all, a rhythm. Sometimes the voices of Ikeesh and her husband came to her faintly; but in her semiconscious condition she really did not hear. To-morow there would be no record of the sounds; for rhythm is not receptive to sound. The stars paled and dimmed, but she did heed; the aurora-borealis shrouded its fires, and the darkness which is of the dawn fell upon the earth, but she did not know.

But ere the darkness fell, Ikeesh drew up to Tichborne and pointed to the loom of the mountains above the west shore of the river.

"Um Swede Creek?" she asked, laconically, pointing whither the trail led.

"No." he replied. "Slav Creek."

"Um no Slav Creek. Slav Creek — " She turned and pointed into the darkness five degrees to the south. "Um Slav Creek."

He came suddenly to a stop. Nella persisted in walking on, heedless of his outcries, till he ran after her and forced her to stop. She was obedient, but as a rhythm she no longer existed. The two eternities, which it was her task to hold apart, had rushed together, and she was not. She wandered off to the old home down in the States, and sat under the great trees, and joyed in the warm sunshine — the old home, the old mortgaged home, which had driven them poleward after the yellow gold! The old home which it was their one aim to redeem! But she forgot all this, and laughed, and babbled, and poured the sunshine back and forth from hand to hand. How warm it was! Was there ever the like?

Tichborne conferred with Ikeesh. She stolidly reiterated that Slav Creek lay farther to the south that he believed.

"Somebody went astray in the dark," he exulted, "and the rest followed his trail like sheep. Come on! Come on! We'll be in at the finish yet, and ahead of no end of those that passed us!"

He cut across a five-mile flat into the southwest, and two hours later, with gray dawn creeping over the landscape, entered the wood-hidden mouth of Slav Creek. The fresh signs of the stampede were so many and so various that he knew Ikeesh had spoken true, though he feared that the mistake had occurred too late in the night to have led enough on the wild-goose chase up Swede Creek.

"Oh, Nella," he called to his wife, stumbling blindly at his heels, "it's all right. We are sure to get a claim. Day has come. Look about you. This is Slav Creek, and behold, the day is Thanksgiving day!"

She turned a blank face upon him. "Yes, the mortgage shall be lifted, principal and interest, I promise you — George and I both promise you. Even now, to-morrow, do we go north to lift the mortgage."

Tichborne glanced helplessly st Ikeesh.

"Um much tired," she commented, dryly. "But um be all right bime-by. Bime-by make camp, um be all right."

They hastened on for five miles more, when they came to the first white-blazed trees and fresh-planted stakes of the newly located claims. Hour after hour they travelled up the frozen bed of the creek, and still, stake to stake, the claims stretched in an unbroken line. Even the man and the Indian woman grew weary and panted. Ikeesh kept a jealousy eye on Nella's face, and now and again, when it turned white, rubbed with snow the tip of the nose and stretched skin of the cheek-bones. They passed many men — the successful ones — rolled in their furs by the side of the trail, or cooking and warming themselves over crackling fires of dry spruce. At eleven o'clock the sun rose in the southeast; but though there was no warmth in its rays, it gave a cheerier aspect to things.

"How much farther do the stakes run?" Tichborne asked of a man limping down the trail.

"I staked 179," the man answered, stopping to pound the aching muscles of his legs. "But there were about ten more behind me; so I guess they've run it up to 189."

"And this is 107," Tichborne calculated aloud. "Five-hundred-foot claims — ten to the mile — about eight miles yet, eh?"

"Reckon you've about hit it on the head," the other assured him. "But you'd better hurry. Half the stampede went wrong up Swede Creek — that's the next one to this — but they're onto themselves now, and crossing the divide and tapping Slav Creek in the hundred-and-eighties.

"But they're having a terrible time," he shouted back as he went on his way. "I met the first one that succeeded in crossing over. He said the trail was lined with people tee-totally played out, and that he knew himself of five frozen to death on the divide."

Frozen to death! The phrase served to rouse Nella from her maze of memory visions. Her glimmering senses came back to her, and she opened her eyes with a start. The interminable night was gone — spent where or how she could not say — and day broke upon her with a blinding flash. She looked about. Everything was strange and unreal. Both her companions were limping pitifully, and she was aware of a great dull pain in her own limbs. Her husband turned his head, and she saw his face and beard a mass of bristling ice. Ikeesh's mouth was likewise matted with frost, and her brows and lashes long and white. And Nella felt the weight on her own lashes, and the difficulty of drawing them apart from each other whenever she closed her eyes. The doubly excessive demand of the toil and the frost had burned up all the fuel of her body, and she felt cold and faint with hunger. This latter she found worse than the agony of the overused muscles; for a quivering nausea came upon her, and her knees trembled and knocked together with weakness.

Occasionally Tichborne made excursions to one side or the other in search of the claimstakes, which were not always posted in the creekbed. At such times Nellas dropped down to rest, but Ikeesh dragged her afoot again, and shook her, and struck

her harsh blows upon her body. For Ikeesh knew the way of the cold, and that a five-minute rest without fire meant death. So Nella had lapses and cruel awakenings till the whole thing seemed a hideous nightmare. Sometimes the trees became gibbering shades, and Slav Creek turned to an Inferno, with her husband as Virgil, and leading her from circle to circle of the damned. But at other times, when she was dimly conscious, the memory of the old home was strong upon her, and the mortgage nerved her on.

A long, long time afterward — ages afterward, it seemed — she heard George cry aloud joyfully, and looking at him as though from a great distance, she saw him slashing the bark from a standing tree, and writing on the white surface with a lead-pencil. At last! She sank down into the snow, but Ikeesh struck her a stinging blow across the mouth. Nella came back angrily to her feet, but Ikeesh pushed her away and set her to work gathering dry wood.

Again came a long lapse, during which she toiled mechanically and unknowing; and when she next found herself she was in the furs by a big fire, and Ikeesh was stirring a batter of flour and water and boiling coffee. To her surprise, Nella felt much better after the rest, and was able to look about her. George ran up with a gold-pan of gravel which he had got from the creek bottom through an air-hole, and warmed his hands by the fire. When he had panned it out he brought the prospect over to her. The streak of black sand on the bottom was specked with yellow grains of glistening gold, and there were several small nuggets besides. He leaped up and down and about like a boy, for all his weary body.

"We've struck it at last, Nella!" he cried. "The home is safe! If that is a surface indication, what must it be on bed-rock?"

"Tell you what — "

They turned their heads, startled. A man had crawled up to the fire unobserved in their excitement.

"Tell you what," he glowed, "it's the richest creek in Alaska and the Northwest. Sure! He sat down uninvited, and tried to unfasten his ice-bound moccasins. "Say, I broke through the ice up here a piece and wet my feet. I kind of think they're freezing."

Ikeesh stopped from her cooking, and Tichborne lending a hand, they cut off the newcomer's moccasins and socks and rubbed his white feet till the glow of life returned.

"Tell you what," the sufferer went on, unconcernedly, while they worked over him, "judging from indications, you people are located on the richest run of the creek. Sure! But I got in on it; you betcher life I did! Got lost on Swede Creek, too, and hit across the divide. Say! No end of frozen men on the trail. But I got in on it, tell you what!"

"A true Thanksgiving, Nella."

George Tichborne passed her a tin plate of flapjacks swimming in bacon grease and a great mug of piping black coffee. She seized his hand impulsively and pressed it, and her eyes grew luminously soft. . . .

"Tell you what — " she heard the newcomer begin; but a vision of the old home, warm in the sunshine, came into her eyes, and she dropped off to sleep without hearing "what."

That Spot

I DON'T think much of Stephen Mackaye any more, though I used to swear by him. I know that in those days I loved him more than my own brother. If ever I meet Stephen Mackaye again, I shall not be responsible for my actions. It passes beyond me that a man with whom I shared food and blanket, and with whom I mushed over the Chilcoot Trail, should turn out the way he did. I always sized Steve up as a square man, a kindly comrade, without an iota of anything vindictive or malicious in his nature. I shall never trust my judgment in men again. Why, I nursed that man through typhoid fever; we starved together on the headwaters of the Stewart; and he saved my life on the Little Salmon. And now, after the years we were together, all I can say of Stephen Mackaye is that he is the meanest man I ever knew.

We started for the Klondike in the fall rush of 1897, and we started too late to get over Chilcoot Pass before the freeze-up. We packed our outfit on our backs part way over, when the snow began to fly, and then we had to buy dogs in order to sled it the rest of the way. That was how we came to get that Spot. Dogs were high, and we paid one hundred and ten dollars for him. He looked worth it. I say looked, because he was one of the finest-appearing dogs I ever saw. He weighed sixty pounds, and he had all the lines of a good sled animal. We never could make out his breed. He wasn't husky, nor Malemute, nor Hudson Bay; he looked like all of them and he didn't look like any of them; and on top of it all he had some of the white man's dog in him, for on one side, in the thick of the mixed yellow-brown-red-and-dirty-white that was his prevailing color, there was a spot of coal-black as big as a water-bucket. That was why we called him Spot.

He was a good looker all right. When he was in condition his muscles stood out in bunches all over him. And he was the strongest-looking brute I ever saw in Alaska, also the most intelligent-looking. To run your eyes over him, you'd think he could outpull three dogs of his own weight. Maybe he could, but I never saw it. His intelligence didn't run that way. He could steal and forage to perfection; he had an instinct that was positively grewsome for divining when work was to be done and for making a sneak accordingly; and for getting lost and not staying lost he was nothing short of inspired. But when it came to work, the way that intelligence dribbled out of him and left him a mere clot of wobbling, stupid jelly would make your heart bleed.

There are times when I think it wasn't stupidity. Maybe, like some men I know, he was too wise to work. I shouldn't wonder if he put it all over us with that intelligence of his. Maybe he figured it all out and decided that a licking now and again and no work was a whole lot better than work all the time and no licking. He was intelligent

enough for such a computation. I tell you, I've sat and looked into that dog's eyes till the shivers ran up and down my spine and the marrow crawled like yeast, what of the intelligence I saw shining out. I can't express myself about that intelligence. It is beyond mere words. I saw it, that's all. At times it was like gazing into a human soul, to look into his eyes; and what I saw there frightened me and started all sorts of ideas in my own mind of reincarnation and all the rest. I tell you I sensed something big in that brute's eyes; there was a message there, but I wasn't big enough myself to catch it. Whatever it was (I know I'm making a fool of myself) — whatever it was, it baffled me. I can't give an inkling of what I saw in that brute's eyes; it wasn't light, it wasn't color; it was something that moved, away back, when the eyes themselves weren't moving. And I guess I didn't see it move, either; I only sensed that it moved. It was an expression, — that's what it was, — and I got an impression of it. No; it was different from a mere expression; it was more than that. I don't know what it was, but it gave me a feeling of kinship just the same. Oh, no, not sentimental kinship. It was, rather, a kinship of equality. Those eyes never pleaded like a deer's eyes. They challenged. No, it wasn't defiance. It was just a calm assumption of equality. And I don't think it was deliberate. My belief is that it was unconscious on his part. It was there because it was there, and it couldn't help shining out. No, I don't mean shine. It didn't shine; it moved. I know I'm talking rot, but if you'd looked into that animal's eyes the way I have, you'd understand Steve was affected the same way I was. Why, I tried to kill that Spot once — he was no good for anything; and I fell down on it. I led him out into the brush, and he came along slow and unwilling. He knew what was going on. I stopped in a likely place, put my foot on the rope, and pulled my big Colt's. And that dog sat down and looked at me. I tell you he didn't plead. He just looked. And I saw all kinds of incomprehensible things moving, yes, moving, in those eyes of his. I didn't really see them move; I thought I saw them, for, as I said before, I guess I only sensed them. And I want to tell you right now that it got beyond me. It was like killing a man, a conscious, brave man who looked calmly into your gun as much as to say, "Who's afraid?" Then, too, the message seemed so near that, instead of pulling the trigger quick, I stopped to see if I could catch the message. There it was, right before me, glimmering all around in those eyes of his. And then it was too late. I got scared. I was trembly all over, and my stomach generated a nervous palpitation that made me seasick. I just sat down and looked at that dog, and he looked at me, till I thought I was going crazy. Do you want to know what I did? I threw down the gun and ran back to camp with the fear of God in my heart. Steve laughed at me. But I notice that Steve led Spot into the woods, a week later, for the same purpose, and that Steve came back alone, and a little later Spot drifted back, too.

At any rate, Spot wouldn't work. We paid a hundred and ten dollars for him from the bottom of our sack, and he wouldn't work. He wouldn't even tighten the traces. Steve spoke to him the first time we put him in harness, and he sort of shivered, that was all. Not an ounce on the traces. He just stood still and wobbled, like so much jelly. Steve touched him with the whip. He yelped, but not an ounce. Steve touched him

again, a bit harder, and he howled — the regular long wolf howl. Then Steve got mad and gave him half a dozen, and I came on the run from the tent.

I told Steve he was brutal with the animal, and we had some words — the first we'd ever had. He threw the whip down in the snow and walked away mad. I picked it up and went to it. That Spot trembled and wobbled and cowered before ever I swung the lash, and with the first bite of it he howled like a lost soul. Next he lay down in the snow. I started the rest of the dogs, and they dragged him along while I threw the whip into him. He rolled over on his back and bumped along, his four legs waving in the air, himself howling as though he was going through a sausage machine. Steve came back and laughed at me, and I apologized for what I'd said.

There was no getting any work out of that Spot; and to make up for it, he was the biggest pig-glutton of a dog I ever saw. On top of that, he was the cleverest thief. There was no circumventing him. Many a breakfast we went without our bacon because Spot had been there first. And it was because of him that we nearly starved to death up the Stewart. He figured out the way to break into our meat-cache, and what he didn't eat, the rest of the team did. But he was impartial. He stole from everybody. He was a restless dog, always very busy snooping around or going somewhere. And there was never a camp within five miles that he didn't raid. The worst of it was that they always came back on us to pay his board bill, which was just, being the law of the land; but it was mighty hard on us, especially that first winter on the Chilcoot, when we were busted, paying for whole hams and sides of bacon that we never ate. He could fight, too, that Spot. He could do everything but work. He never pulled a pound, but he was the boss of the whole team. The way he made those dogs stand around was an education. He bullied them, and there was always one or more of them fresh-marked with his fangs. But he was more than a bully. He wasn't afraid of anything that walked on four legs; and I've seen him march, single-handed, into a strange team, without any provocation whatever, and put the kibosh on the whole outfit. Did I say he could eat? I caught him eating the whip once. That's straight. He started in at the lash, and when I caught him he was down to the handle, and still going.

But he was a good looker. At the end of the first week we sold him for seventy-five dollars to the Mounted Police. They had experienced dog-drivers, and we knew that by the time he'd covered the six hundred I miles to Dawson he'd be a good sled-dog. I say we knew, for we were just getting acquainted with that Spot. A little later we were not brash enough to know anything where he was concerned. A week later we woke up in the morning to the dangdest dog-fight we'd ever heard. It was that Spot come back and knocking the team into shape. We ate a pretty depressing breakfast, I can tell you; but cheered up two hours afterward when we sold him to an official courier, bound in to Dawson with government despatches. That Spot was only three days in coming back, and, as usual, celebrated his arrival with a rough-house.

We spent the winter and spring, after our own outfit was across the pass, freighting other people's outfits; and we made a fat stake. Also, we made money out of Spot. If we sold him once, we sold him twenty times. He always came back, and no one asked

for their money. We didn't want the money. We'd have paid handsomely for any one to take him off our hands for keeps. We had to get rid of him, and we couldn't give him away, for that would have been suspicious. But he was such a fine looker that we never had any difficulty in selling him. "Unbroke," we'd say, and they'd pay any old price for him. We sold him as low as twenty-five dollars, and once we got a hundred and fifty for him. That particular party returned him in person, refused to take his money back, and the way he abused us was something awful. He said it was cheap at the price to tell us what he thought of us; and we felt he was so justified that we never talked back. But to this day I've never quite regained all the old self-respect that was mine before that man talked to me.

When the ice cleared out of the lakes and river, we put our outfit in a Lake Bennett boat and started for Dawson. We had a good team of dogs, and of course we piled them on top the outfit. That Spot was along — there was no losing him; and a dozen times, the first day, he knocked one or another of the dogs overboard in the course of fighting with them. It was close quarters, and he didn't like being crowded.

"What that dog needs is space," Steve said the second day. "Let's maroon him."

We did, running the boat in at Caribou Crossing for him to jump ashore. Two of the other dogs, good dogs, followed him; and we lost two whole days trying to find them. We never saw those two dogs again; but the quietness and relief we enjoyed made us decide, like the man who refused his hundred and fifty, that it was cheap at the price. For the first time in months Steve and I laughed and whistled and sang. We were as happy as clams. The dark days were over. The nightmare had been lifted. That Spot was gone.

Three weeks later, one morning, Steve and I were standing on the river-bank at Dawson. A small boat was just arriving from Lake Bennett. I saw Steve give a start, and heard him say something that was not nice and that was not under his breath. Then I looked; and there, in the bow of the boat, with ears pricked up, sat Spot. Steve and I sneaked immediately, like beaten curs, like cowards, like absconders from justice. It was this last that the lieutenant of police thought when he saw us sneaking. He surmised that there were law-officers in the boat who were after us. He didn't wait to find out, but kept us in sight, and in the M. & M. saloon got us in a corner. We had a merry time explaining, for we refused to go back to the boat and meet Spot; and finally he held us under guard of another policeman while he went to the boat. After we got clear of him, we started for the cabin, and when we arrived, there was that Spot sitting on the stoop waiting for us. Now how did he know we lived there? There were forty thousand people in Dawson that summer, and how did he savve our cabin out of all the cabins? How did he know we were in Dawson, anyway? I leave it to you. But don't forget what I have said about his intelligence and that immortal something I have seen glimmering in his eyes.

There was no getting rid of him any more. There were too many people in Dawson who had bought him up on Chilcoot, and the story got around. Half a dozen times we put him on board steamboats going down the Yukon; but he merely went ashore at the

first landing and trotted back up the bank. We couldn't sell him, we couldn't kill him (both Steve and I had tried), and nobody else was able to kill him. He bore a charmed life. I've seen him go down in a dog-fight on the main street with fifty dogs on top of him, and when they were separated, he'd appear on all his four legs, unharmed, while two of the dogs that had been on top of him would be lying dead.

I saw him steal a chunk of moose-meat from Major Dinwiddie's cache so heavy that he could just keep one jump ahead of Mrs. Dinwiddie's squaw cook, who was after him with an axe. As he went up the hill, after the squaw gave up, Major Dinwiddie himself came out and pumped his Winchester into the landscape. He emptied his magazine twice, and never touched that Spot. Then a policeman came along and arrested him for discharging firearms inside the city limits. Major Dinwiddie paid his fine, and Steve and I paid him for the moose-meat at the rate of a dollar a pound, bones and all. That was what he paid for it. Meat was high that year.

I am only telling what I saw with my own eyes. And now I'll tell you something, also. I saw that Spot fall through a water-hole. The ice was three and a half feet thick, and the current sucked him under like a straw. Three hundred yards below was the big water-hole used by the hospital. Spot crawled out of the hospital water-hole, licked off the water, bit out the ice that had formed between his toes, trotted up the bank, and whipped a big Newfoundland belonging to the Gold Commissioner.

In the fall of 1898, Steve and I poled up the Yukon on the last water, bound for Stewart River. We took the dogs along, all except Spot. We figured we'd been feeding him long enough. He'd cost us more time and trouble and money and grub than we'd got by selling him on the Chilcoot — especially grub. So Steve and I tied him down in the cabin and pulled our freight. We camped that night at the mouth of Indian River, and Steve and I were pretty facetious over having shaken him. Steve was a funny cuss, and I was just sitting up in the blankets and laughing when a tornado hit camp. The way that Spot walked into those dogs and gave them what-for was hair-raising. Now how did he get loose? It's up to you. I haven't any theory. And how did he get across the Klondike River? That's another lacer. And anyway, how did he know we had gone up the Yukon? You see, we went by water, and he couldn't smell our tracks. Steve and I began to get superstitious about that dog. He got on our nerves, too; and, between you and me, we were just a mite afraid of him.

The freeze-up came on when we were at the mouth of Henderson Creek, and we traded him off for two sacks of flour to an outfit that was bound up White River after copper. Now that whole outfit was lost. Never trace nor hide nor hair of men, dogs, sleds, or anything was ever found. They dropped clean out of sight. It became one of the mysteries of the country. Steve and I plugged away up the Stewart, and six weeks afterward that Spot crawled into camp. He was a perambulating skeleton, and could just drag along; but he got there. And what I want to know is who told him we were up the Stewart? We could have gone a thousand other places. How did he know? You tell me, and I'll tell you.

No losing him. At the Mayo he started a row with an Indian dog. The buck who owned the dog took a swing at Spot with an axe, missed him, and killed his own dog. Talk about magic and turning bullets aside — I, for one, consider it a blamed sight harder to turn an axe aside with a big buck at the other end of it. And I saw him do it with my own eyes. That buck didn't want to kill his own dog. You've got to show me.

I told you about Spot breaking into our meat-cache. It was nearly the death of us. There wasn't any more meat to be killed, and meat was all we had to live on. The moose had gone back several hundred miles and the Indians with them. There we were. Spring was on, and we had to wait for the river to break. We got pretty thin before we decided to eat the dogs, and we decided to eat Spot first. Do you know what that dog did? He sneaked. Now how did he know our minds were made up to eat him? We sat up nights laying for him, but he never came back, and we ate the other dogs. We ate the whole team.

And now for the sequel. You know what it is when a big river breaks up and a few billion tons of ice go out, jamming and milling and grinding. Just in the thick of it, when the Stewart went out, rumbling and roaring, we sighted Spot out in the middle. He'd got caught as he was trying to cross up above somewhere. Steve and I yelled and shouted and ran up and down the bank, tossing our hats in the air. Sometimes we'd stop and hug each other, we were that boisterous, for we saw Spot's finish. He didn't have a chance in a million. He didn't have any chance at all. After the ice-run, we got into a canoe and paddled down to the Yukon, and down the Yukon to Dawson, stopping to feed up for a week at the cabins at the mouth of Henderson Creek. And as we came in to the bank at Dawson, there sat that Spot, waiting for us, his ears pricked up, his tail wagging, his mouth smiling, extending a hearty welcome to us. Now how did he get out of that ice? How did he know we were coming to Dawson, to the very hour and minute, to be out there on the bank waiting for us?

The more I think of that Spot, the more I am convinced that there are things in this world that go beyond science. On no scientific grounds can that Spot be explained. It's psychic phenomena, or mysticism, or something of that sort, I guess, with a lot of Theosophy thrown in. The Klondike is a good country. I might have been there yet, and become a millionnaire, if it hadn't been for Spot. He got on my nerves. I stood him for two years all together, and then I guess my stamina broke. It was the summer of 1899 when I pulled out. I didn't say anything to Steve. I just sneaked. But I fixed it up all right. I wrote Steve a note, and enclosed a package of "rough-on-rats," telling him what to do with it. I was worn down to skin and bone by that Spot, and I was that nervous that I'd jump and look around when there wasn't anybody within hailing distance. But it was astonishing the way I recuperated when I got quit of him. I got back twenty pounds before I arrived in San Francisco, and by the time I'd crossed the ferry to Oakland I was my old self again, so that even my wife looked in vain for any change in me.

Steve wrote to me once, and his letter seemed irritated. He took it kind of hard because I'd left him with Spot. Also, he said he'd used the "rough-on-rats," per directions, and that there was nothing doing. A year went by. I was back in the office and prospering in all ways — even getting a bit fat. And then Steve arrived. He didn't look me up. I read his name in the steamer list, and wondered why. But I didn't wonder long. I got up one morning and found that Spot chained to the gate-post and holding up the milkman. Steve went north to Seattle, I learned, that very morning. I didn't put on any more weight. My wife made me buy him a collar and tag, and within an hour he showed his gratitude by killing her pet Persian cat. There is no getting rid of that Spot. He will be with me until I die, for he'll never die. My appetite is not so good since he arrived, and my wife says I am looking peaked. Last night that Spot got into Mr. Harvey's hen-house (Harvey is my next door neighbor) and killed nineteen of his fancy-bred chickens. I shall have to pay for them. My neighbors on the other side quarrelled with my wife and then moved out. Spot was the cause of it. And that is why I am disappointed in Stephen Mackaye. I had no idea he was so mean a man.

Their Alcove

HE crumpled each dainty note with a steadfastness of purpose that surprised him. He had not thought it would be so easy. In fact, he felt a sort of passive elation as he laid them carefully upon the hearth, side by side and in intermingled tiers. He began to take a curious pleasure in the task, and his habitual neatness asserted itself till the pile began to assume architectural proportions. How like a pedestal, he mused. He regarded it critically. One little missive — her latest and last — protested with the lusty strength of youth at such untimely incineration. It bulged forth distressingly, ruining the lines of the parallelogram. A few gentle pokes and it subsided among its fellows.

How like a shrine, an altar, it was; and he, apostate to the gentle Hymen, officiating as high priest. The fancy pleased him; there was a hint of poesy about it. After all, this was the better way. He was glad she had been so sensible about it. Paugh! this giddy return of trinkets and tokens! What right had she to her letters, or he to his? A senseless custom at best. And how readily she had acquiesced when he mentioned it! He confessed to a momentary pang at this; he had expected some show of sentiment, of womanly weakness; but no, she had merely nodded her head and smiled. Why, it was very plain that she had grown tired. Of course, she had not said as much to him, but it was clear, even clearer now that it was over. And it was to be admitted he had behaved splendidly; even she must acknowledge that. If aught were said it was he who must bear it. How the fellows would cod him! And at teas and numerous other feminine functions sly whispers and little giggles and significant nods — well, he was a man, and he could bear it.

He was glad that he had done this, for in no way could there be reproach, while there was much to admire about his conduct. In after-years it would endear him to her, and her memory of him could not but be sweet. Certainly she would marry, and perhaps the thought of all this would come to her some day and she would know what she had lost. He would take up his work with new vigor, and with the ripening years his name would be respected, admired and often on the lips of men; and then he would go to her and they should be friends, merely friends; she would see all that was best in him — those sterling qualities he knew she did now now appreciate — and she would perhaps feel sorrow that things had not been different. The thought of the regret that would be hers when she saw into what manner of man time and his efforts had wrought him bore to him a sweet satisfaction. But as in his reverie he saw himself in the days to come, when time should have white-lined his hair and brought him fame, looking down upon her and speaking calmly, he knew that he would not have had his life shaped

otherwise. Yet, withal, it was sweet to feel that perhaps the years that would give to her another for husband would leave with her also regret.

He made little journeys between the fireplace and various portions of the room. How vacant the wall seemed! He must get something to replace it, he thought, as he knelt before the alter he had reared and placed up it a photograph — her photograph. And before it he laid a glove, once white, but now soiled with much carriage in coat breast-pocket. How foolish he had been! Then he added a lock of hair, nut-brown and curly, to the sacrifice; and beside it a withered bunch of violets. Why, once he would have staked his hopes of heaven on those fragile tokens; and now — and now he touched a vesta to the altar's base, humming as he did so, "Love like ours can never die."

He drew up his lounging-chair and settled back comfortably. He felt a boyish curiousness as to the behavior of the different articles, and which would succumb first to the destroyer. The tiny flame mounted and spread till a diminutive conflagration roared at his feet. The violets burst into brilliant evanescence, their stems lingering like fine-spun filaments of steel, tense and quivering with heat. The glove glowed somberly against the bright background of flaming paper; while the photograph, like the tower of a lordly castle, sent aloft black columns of smoke, then tottered, swayed for a moment indecisively, and crashed into the fiery embers beneath. Slowly the glow of life went out of the sunken pyre as light leaves a drying eye; soon the little nothings — yesterday they were everythings — that to him had been pledges upon the future for his happiness were only a dead heap of black and gray ash shivering on the hearth.

It was all over. He was free now, free as the wind. A short month past he would have deemed it impossible to break the gyves so easily. Yet emancipation — he would have called it banishment then — had come without effort, without that strange orgasm of the blood, that fiery tumult of the emotions one would so naturally expect.

Over the charred fetters he could sit there and think of her calmly; there was not an extra beat to his pulse; he was perfectly normal. Well, it showed on the face of how transitory had been the fancy.

Yes, it was fancy; mere fancy — that was the word. It could not have been genuine love, else the separation of their paths of life could have brought to him but one emotion — a sense of agonizing loss. But he felt no loss; he was as easy in mind now that she had gone out of his life as he had been in the old days before she had made entry into it. And now he was free; free to go back to the old life, the old ways. It was early yet. The several little arrangements attendant on departure had been seen to, and the train was not scheduled till midnight. He would dine down town and look up some of the fellows for old sake's sake.

Free, free as the wind! There was an exhilaration to the phrase. It obtruded itself among his thoughts like some pleasant refrain. He had never been in sympathy with the simple little word, he thought, as he came down the steps, never understood its strength before. And she? No doubt she was pleased at the termination, and could already look back pleasantly upon the episode. That was all it was, an episode. And she would marry, as a matter of course, and be happy ever after.

He wondered what the husband might be like, and tried to pick him from all the eligibles he could think of. But he could conjure no harmonious union; now their tastes ran counter, now their temperaments; perhaps the lucky fellow still lay in the lap of the future. Yes, lucky fellow! There was no denying she was a nice girl; and yet "nice" did not rightfully convey the sense of her choiceness. It told but half the tale. Certainly there was room for improvement in the vernacular.

He followed his many-mirrored fancy though endless turnings, and before he knew it came to himself at the entrance of the "Grotto." He pulled out his watch. It was absurd to eat at such an hour, but he was hungry and went in. He fell to planning for his new life; but the waiter, pausing for his order, reminded him of the day they had dined there — the day when the volunteers marched through the streets and the city went dizzy with enthusiastic patriotism. He realized the trend of his mind with a start. He must put her away. That was past and done with. It was an episode. He must concern himself with the days to come, and in them she had no place. But a woman's laughter floated across from the other side and wove itself into his fancy as her laughter. How happy they had been that day! What silly nonsense they had prattled in the burlesque seriousness; and then how they had laughed at the graver things, the austerities of life! What a thoroughly wholesome creature she was, meeting mood with mood in a way which was not given to man women!

He remembered a thousand and one little incidents — trivial events, so unimportant at the time, but now fair mile-stones to look back upon. It began to dawn upon him how large a place she had filled in his life. For the time he had lived his days in here, and now — to-morrow? The future loomed before him like a blank wall. He had no wish to contemplate it. There were the fellows — but the fellows would not understand. The old equality could never be the same. He felt so much broader, stronger than they. She had led his feet in paths they little dreamed of, and, through her, life had taken upon itself a significance which they might never come to know. The secret of woman! He had caught glimmerings of it, he knew there was yet more for him to learn; but they — they were deep in outer darkness. Could he go back to them, and forget all this? What would he do to-morrow, and the next day, and the next? The emptiness of the immediate future pressed against him. He must remodel his life, look about him, get some new interest into it.

After all, he did not care to eat. It was too early. He strayed up the street in an absent fashion. A sudden distaste for the fellows came upon him. He would not look them up. He wished it were train-time, and knew already the promised dullness of the night. He felt strangely solitary among the shop-people hurrying home from their work. Any other evening he would have gone to her. What was she doing now? The vision of the tea-table came to him vividly, and with it her sweet face and her mother's, and the paneled roses which hung opposite his accustomed seat just over her head. He remembered the smallest details; even the napkin-rings were in his mind as perfectly as had he designed them himself. And there were to be no more such evenings! Well, he was a man; she would see that he could stand it. He glanced up to the library

clock. Yes, it was just tea-time. Now, he was not sentimental; he drew back from such nonsense and thanked his gods frequently that he had escaped such affectation of exquisite feeling. It was only that he was going away, and the familiar atmosphere of the books appealed to him. He entered the library. At this hour, save for the noiseless attendants and certain weird creatures that infest such places, it was deserted. He passed by the shelves, whose transient occupants came and went unceasingly. In the upper galleries they rarely left their peaceful abode, and were consulted at infrequent periods by musty antiquarians and eager, hungry-looking collectors of worthless facts and figures. In those alcoves pale-faced students were wont to study, and, it must be confessed, sometimes to doze over the weary text.

Turn after turn he ascended the spiral staircase, fine-ribbed, of steel, like a gigantic cork-screw. At last he came to "their" alcove, and drew a stool to its farthest recess. The lights had not yet been turned on and the day was growing dim. Yes, "their" alcove! He remembered the days when he had coached her there through the Elizabethan period, and the time they lost themselves among the metaphysical subtleties of "Alastor." "Their" alcove — why, all the habitues of the library acknowledged their ownership; and he smiled at the recollection of the young student they had found there one day, and his embarrassment, conscious of having trespassed, and his apologetic manner has he glided away. And their post-office, too! And parcels delivery! He nodded knowingly at a short, fat volume sandwiched between two ponderous tomes on an upper shelf. Come to think of it, the letter, the last letter, must be there yet. He had left it there that morning before — before it all happened. Of course, she would never come for it now. Should he take it? He had his own ideas on such things, but this was an unlooked-for contingency. Was it his or hers? Should it lie there until resurrected on some problematic cleaning-day by an attendant, who perhaps would remember the romance of the alcove when it was "theirs?" He debated the question with great seriousness. No, he was not sentimental.

Somebody paused on the gallery — a woman — then entered. He felt irritated at the intrusion. He barely noticed her. She would go away soon, he hoped, and leave him alone. She reached hesitatingly toward the short, fat volume. This was desecration, he thought; and how had others come to know the secret of "their" alcove? She turned in his direction, kissing the letter as she did so. In the failing light he noticed in her sweet eyes a moistness he had never seen before. He cried her name softly and sprang toward her.

The soft-footed attendant forgot to turn on the light before "their" alcove. Later, when a long-haired, elderly gentleman asked for Mechan's Mirror of Alchemy he informed him that it was out. The "Mirror of Alchemy" was the short, fat volume.

A Thousand Deaths

I HAD been in the water about an hour, and cold, exhausted, with a terrible cramp in my right calf, it seemed as though my hour had come. Fruitlessly struggling against the strong ebb tide, I had beheld the maddening procession of the water-front lights slip by, but now I gave up attempting to breast the stream and contended myself with the bitter thoughts of a wasted career, now drawing to a close.

It had been my luck to come of good, English stock, but of parents whose account with the bankers far exceeded their knowledge of child-nature and the rearing of children. While born with a silver spoon in my mouth, the blessed atmosphere of the home circle was to me unknown. My father, a very learned man and a celebrated antiquarian, gave no thought to his family, being constantly lost in the abstractions of his study; while my mother, noted far more for her good looks than her good sense, sated herself with the adulation of the society in which she was perpetually plunged. I went through the regular school and college routine of a boy of the English bourgeoisie, and as the years brought me increasing strength and passions, my parents suddenly became aware that I was possessed of an immortal soul, and endeavoured to draw the curb. But it was too late; I perpetrated the wildest and most audacious folly, and was disowned by my people, ostracised by the society I had so long outraged, and with the thousand pounds my father gave me, with the declaration that he would neither see me again nor give me more, I took a first-class passage to Australia.

Since then my life had been one long peregrination–from the Orient to the Occident, from the Arctic to the Antarctic–to find myself at last, an able seaman at thirty, in the full vigour of my manhood, drowning in San Francisco bay because of a disastrously successful attempt to desert my ship.

My right leg was drawn up by the cramp, and I was suffering the keenest agony. A slight breeze stirred up a choppy sea, which washed into my mouth and down my throat, nor could I prevent it. Though I still contrived to keep afloat, it was merely mechanical, for I was rapidly becoming unconscious. I have a dim recollection of drifting past the sea-wall, and of catching a glimpse of an upriver steamer's starboard light; then everything became a blank.

I heard the low hum of insect life, and felt the balmy air of a spring morning fanning my cheek. Gradually it assumed a rhythmic flow, to whose soft pulsations my body seemed to respond. I floated on the gentle bosom of a summer's sea, rising and falling with dreamy pleasure on each crooning wave. But the pulsations grew stronger; the humming, louder; the waves, larger, fiercer–I was dashed about on a stormy sea. A great agony fastened upon me. Brilliant, intermittent sparks of light flashed athwart

my inner consciousness; in my ears there was the sound of many waters; then a sudden snapping of an intangible something, and I awoke.

The scene, of which I was protagonist, was a curious one. A glance sufficed to inform me that I lay on the cabin floor of some gentleman's yacht, in a most uncomfortable posture. On either side, grasping my arms and working them up and down like pump handles, were two peculiarly clad, dark-skinned creatures. Though conversant with most aboriginal types, I could not conjecture their nationality. Some attachment had been fastened about my head, which connected my respiratory organs with the machine I shall next describe. My nostrils, however, had been closed, forcing me to breathe through my mouth. Foreshortened by the obliquity of my line of vision, I beheld two tubes, similar to small hosing but of different composition, which emerged from my mouth and went off at an acute angle from each other. The first came to an abrupt termination and lay on the floor beside me; the second traversed the floor in numerous coils, connecting with the apparatus I have promised to describe.

In the days before my life had become tangential, I had dabbled not a little in science, and, conversant with the appurtenances and general paraphernalia of the laboratory, I appreciated the machine I now beheld. It was composed chiefly of glass, the construction being of that crude sort which is employed for experimentative purposes. A vessel of water was surrounded by an air chamber, to which was fixed a vertical tube, surmounted by a globe. In the centre of this was a vacuum gauge. The water in the tube moved upwards and downwards, creating alternate inhalations and exhalations, which were in turn communicated to me through the hose. With this, and the aid of the men who pumped my arms, so vigorously, had the process of breathing been artificially carried on, my chest rising and falling and my lungs expanding and contracting, till nature could be persuaded to again take up her wonted labour.

As I opened my eyes the appliance about my head, nostrils and mouth was removed. Draining a stiff three fingers of brandy, I staggered to my feet to thank my preserver, and confronted–my father. But long years of fellowship with danger had taught me self-control, and I waited to see if he would recognise me. Not so; he saw in me no more than a runaway sailor and treated me accordingly.

Leaving me to the care of the blackies, he fell to revising the notes he had made on my resuscitation. As I ate of the handsome fare served up to me, confusion began on deck, and from the chanteys of the sailors and the rattling of blocks and tackles I surmised that we were getting under way. What a lark! Off on a cruise with my recluse father into the wide Pacific! Little did I realise, as I laughed to myself, which side the joke was to be on. Aye, had I known, I would have plunged overboard and welcomed the dirty fo'c'sle from which I had just escaped.

I was not allowed on deck till we had sunk the Farallones and the last pilot boat. I appreciated this forethought on the part of my father and made it a point to thank him heartily, in my bluff seaman's manner. I could not suspect that he had his own ends in view, in thus keeping my presence secret to all save the crew. He told me briefly of my rescue by his sailors, assuring me that the obligation was on his side, as

my appearance had been most opportune. He had constructed the apparatus for the vindication of a theory concerning certain biological phenomena, and had been waiting for an opportunity to use it.

"You have proved it beyond all doubt," he said; then added with a sigh, "But only in the small matter of drowning." But, to take a reef in my yarn–he offered me an advance of two pounds on my previous wages to sail with him, and this I considered handsome, for he really did not need me. Contrary to my expectations, I did not join the sailor' mess, for'ard, being assigned to a comfortable stateroom and eating at the captain's table. He had perceived that I was no common sailor, and I resolved to take this chance for reinstating myself in his good graces. I wove a fictitious past to account for my education and present position, and did my best to come in touch with him. I was not long in disclosing a predilection for scientific pursuits, nor he in appreciating my aptitude. I became his assistant, with a corresponding increase in wages, and before long, as he grew confidential and expounded his theories, I was as enthusiastic as himself.

The days flew quickly by, for I was deeply interested in my new studies, passing my waking hours in his well-stocked library, or listening to his plans and aiding him in his laboratory work. But we were forced to forego many enticing experiments, a rolling ship not being exactly the proper place for delicate or intricate work. He promised me, however, many delightful hours in the magnificent laboratory for which we were bound. He had taken possession of an uncharted South Sea island, as he said, and turned it into a scientific paradise.

We had not been on the island long, before I discovered to horrible mare's nest I had fallen into. But before I describe the strange things which came to pass, I must briefly outline the causes which culminated in as startling an experience as ever fell to the lot of man.

Late in life, my father had abandoned the musty charms of antiquity and succumbed to the more fascinating ones embraced under the general head of biology. Having been thoroughly grounded during his youth in the fundamentals, he rapidly explored all the higher branches as far as the scientific world had gone, and found himself on the no man's land of the unknowable. It was his intention to pre-empt some of this unclaimed territory, and it was at this stage of his investigations that we had been thrown together. Having a good brain, though I say it myself, I had mastered his speculations and methods of reasoning, becoming almost as mad as himself. But I should not say this. The marvellous results we afterwards obtained can only go to prove his sanity. I can but say that he was the most abnormal specimen of cold-blooded cruelty I have ever seen.

After having penetrated the dual mysteries of physiology and psychology, his thought had led him to the verge of a great field, for which, the better to explore, he began studies in higher organic chemistry, pathology, toxicology and other sciences and sub-sciences rendered kindred as accessories to his speculative hypotheses. Starting from the proposition that the direct cause of the temporary and permanent

arrest of vitality was due to the coagulation of certain elements and compounds in the protoplasm, he had isolated and subjected these various substances to innumerable experiments. Since the temporary arrest of vitality in an organism brought coma, and a permanent arrest death, he held that by artificial means this coagulation of the protoplasm could be retarded, prevented, and even overcome in the extreme states of solidification. Or, to do away with the technical nomenclature, he argued that death, when not violent and in which none of the organs had suffered injury, was merely suspended vitality; and that, in such instances, life could be induced to resume its functions by the use of proper methods. This, then, was his idea: To discover the method–and by practical experimentation prove the possibility–of renewing vitality in a structure from which life had seemingly fled. Of course, he recognised the futility of such endeavour after decomposition had set in; he must have organisms which but the moment, the hour, or the day before, had been quick with life. With me, in a crude way, he had proved this theory. I was really drowned, really dead, when picked from the water of San Francisco bay–but the vital spark had been renewed by means of his aerotherapeutical apparatus, as he called it.

Now to his dark purpose concerning me. He first showed me how completely I was in his power. He had sent the yacht away for a year, retaining only his two blackies, who were utterly devoted to him. He then made an exhaustive review of his theory and outlined the method of proof he had adopted, concluding with the startling announcement that I was to be his subject.

I had faced death and weighed my chances in many a desperate venture, but never in one of this nature. I can swear I am no coward, yet this proposition of journeying back and forth across the borderland of death put the yellow fear upon me. I asked for time, which he granted, at the same time assuring me that but the one course was open–I must submit. Escape from the Island was out of the question; escape by suicide was not to be entertained, though really preferable to what it seemed I must undergo; my only hope was to destroy my captors. But this latter was frustrated through the precautions taken by my father. I was subjected to a constant surveillance, even in my sleep being guarded by one or the other of the blacks.

Having pleaded in vain, I announced and proved that I was his son. It was my last card, and I had played all my hopes upon it. But he was inexorable; he was not a father but a scientific machine. I wonder yet have it ever came to pass that he married my mother or begat me, for there was not the slightest grain of emotion in his make-up. Reason was all in all to him, nor could he understand such things as love or sympathy in others, except as petty weaknesses which should be overcome. So he informed me that in the beginning he had given me life, and who had better right to take it away than he? Such, he said, was not his desire, however; he merely wished to borrow it occasionally, promising to return it punctually at the appointed time. Of course, there was a liability of mishaps, but I could do no more than take the chances, since the affairs of men were full of such.

The better to insure success, he wished me to be in the best possible condition, so I was dieted and trained like a great athlete before a decisive contest. What could I do? If I had to undergo the peril, it were best to be in good shape. In my intervals of relaxation he allowed me to assist in the arranging of the apparatus and in the various subsidiary experiments. The interest I took in all such operations can be imagined. I mastered the work as thoroughly as he, and often had the pleasure of seeing some of my suggestions or alterations put into effect. After such events I would smile grimly, conscious of officiating at my own funeral.

He began by inaugurating a series of experiments in toxicology. When all was ready, I was killed by a stiff dose of strychnine and allowed to lie dead for some twenty hours. During that period my body was dead, absolutely dead. All respiration and circulation ceased; but the frightful part of it was, that while the protoplasmic coagulation proceeded, I retained consciousness and was enabled to study it in all its ghastly details.

The apparatus to bring me back to life was an air-tight chamber, fitted to receive my body. The mechanism was simple — a few valves, a rotary shaft and crank, and an electric motor. When in operation, the interior atmosphere was alternately condenses and rarefied, thus communicating to my lungs an artificial respiration without the agency of the hosing previously used. Though my body was inert, and, for all I knew, in the first stages of decomposition, I was cognizant of everything that transpired. I knew when they placed me in the chamber, and though all my senses were quiescent, I was aware of hypodermic injections of a compound to react upon the coagulatory process. Then the chamber was closed and the machinery started. My anxiety was terrible; but the circulation became gradually restored, the different organs began to carry on their respective functions, and in an hour's time I was eating a hearty dinner.

It cannot be said that I participated in this series, nor in the subsequent ones, with much verve; but after two ineffectual attempts of escape, I began to take quite an interest. Besides, I was becoming accustomed. My father was beside himself at his success, and as the months rolled by his speculations took wilder and yet wilder flights. We ranged through the three great classes of poisons, the neurotics, the gaseous and the irritants, but carefully avoided some of the mineral irritants and passed the whole group of corrosives. During the poison regime I became quite accustomed to dying, and had but one mishap to shake my growing confidence. Scarifying a number of lesser blood vessels in my arm, he introduced a minute quantity of that most frightful of poisons, the arrow poison, or curare. I lost consciousness at the start, quickly followed by the cessation of respiration and circulation, and so far had the solidification of the protoplasm advanced, that he gave up all hope. But at the last moment he applied a discovery he had been working upon, receiving such encouragement as to redouble his efforts.

In a glass vacuum, similar but not exactly like a Crookes' tube, was placed a magnetic field. When penetrated by polarised light, it gave no phenomena of phosphorescence nor the rectilinear projection of atoms, but emitted non-luminous rays, similar to the X ray. While the X ray could reveal opaque objects hidden in dense mediums,

this was possessed of far subtler penetration. By this he photographed my body, and found on the negative an infinite number of blurred shadows, due to the chemical and electric motions still going on. This was an infallible proof that the rigor mortis in which I lay was not genuine; that is, those mysterious forces, those delicate bonds which held my soul to my body, were still in action. The resultants of all other poisons were unapparent, save those of mercurial compounds, which usually left me languid for several days.

Another series of delightful experiments was with electricity. We verified Tesla's assertion that high currents were utterly harmless by passing 100,000 volts through my body. As this didnot affect me, the current was reduced to 2,500, and I was quickly electrocuted. This time he ventured so far as to allow me to remain dead, or in a state of suspended vitality, for three days. It took four hours to bring me back.

Once, he superinduced lockjaw; but the agony of dying was so great that I positively refused to undergo similar experiments. The easiest deaths were by asphyxiation, such as drowning, strangling, and suffocation by gas; while those by morphine, opium, cocaine and chloroform, were not at all hard.

Another time, after being suffocated, he kept me in cold storage for three months, not permitting me to freeze or decay. This was without my knowledge, and I was in a great fright on discovering the lapse of time. I became afraid of what he might do with me when I lay dead, my alarm being increased by the predilection he was beginning to betray towards vivisection. The last time I was resurrected, I discovered that he had been tampering with my breast. Though he had carefully dressed and sewed the incisions up, they were so severe that I had to take to my bed for some time. It was during this convalescence that I evolved the plan by which I ultimately escaped.

While feigning unbounded enthusiasm in the work, I asked and received a vacation from my moribund occupation. During this period I devoted myself to laboratory work, while he was too deep in the vivisection of the many animals captured by the blacks to take notice of my work.

It was on these two propositions that I constructed my theory: First, electrolysis, or the decomposition of water into its constituent gases by means of electricity; and, second, by the hypothetical existence of a force, the converse of gravitation, which Astor has named "apergy". Terrestrial attraction, for instance, merely draws objects together but does not combine them; hence, apergy is merely repulsion. Now, atomic or molecular attraction not only draws objects together but integrates them; and it was the converse of this, or a disintegrative force, which I wished to not only discover and produce, but to direct at will. Thus, the molecules of hydrogen and oxygen reacting on each other, separate and create new molecules, containing both elements and forming water. Electrolysis causes these molecules to split up and resume their original condition, producing the two gases separately. The force I wished to find must not only do this with two, but with all elements, no matter in what compounds they exist. If I could then entice my father within its radius, he would be instantly disintegrated and sent flying to the four quarters, a mass of isolated elements.

It must not be understood that this force, which I finally came to control, annihilated matter; it merely annihilated form. Nor, as I soon discovered, had it any effect on inorganic structure; but to all organic form it was absolutely fatal. This partiality puzzled me at first, though had I stopped to think deeper I would have seen through it. Since the number of atoms in organic molecules is far greater than in the most complex mineral molecules, organic compounds are characterised by their instability and the ease with which they are split up by physical forces and chemical reagents.

By two powerful batteries, connected with magnets constructed specially for this purpose, two tremendous forces were projected. Considered apart from each other, they were perfectly harmless; but they accomplished their purpose by focusing at an invisible point in mid-air. After practically demonstrating its success, besides narrowly escaping being blown into nothingness, I laid my trap. Concealing the magnets, so that their force made the whole space of my chamber doorway a field of death, and placing by my couch a button by which I could throw on the current from the storage batteries, I climbed into bed.

The blackies still guarded my sleeping quarters, one relieving the other at midnight. I turned on the current as soon as the first man arrived. Hardly had I begun to doze, when I was aroused by a sharp, metallic tinkle. There, on the mid-threshold, lay the collar of Dan, my father's St. Bernard. My keeper ran to pick it up. He disappeared like a gust of wind, his clothes falling to the floor in a heap. There was a slight wiff of ozone in the air, but since the principal gaseous components of his body were hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen, which are equally colourless and odourless, there was no other manifestation of his departure. Yet when I shut off the current and removed the garments, I found a deposit of carbon in the form of animal charcoal; also other powders, the isolated, solid elements of his organism, such as sulphur, potassium and iron. Resetting the trap, I crawled back to bed. At midnight I got up and removed the remains of the second black, and then slept peacefully till morning.

I was awakened by the strident voice of my father, who was calling to me from across the laboratory. I laughed to myself. There had been no one to call him and he had overslept. I could hear him as he approached my room with the intention of rousing me, and so I sat up in bed, the better to observe his translation–perhaps apotheosis were a better term. He paused a moment at the threshold, then took the fatal step. Puff! It was like the wind sighing among the pines. He was gone. His clothes fell in a fantastic heap on the floor. Besides ozone, I noticed the faint, garlic-like odour of phosphorus. A little pile of elementary solids lay among his garments. That was all. The wide world lay before me. My captors were no more.

To Build a Fire (Early Version)

First published in Youth's Companion, 1902

For land travel or seafaring, the world over, a companion is usually considered desirable. In the Klondike, as Tom Vincent found out, such a companion is absolutely essential. But he found it out, not by precept, but through bitter experience.

“Never travel alone,” is a precept of the north. He had heard it many times and laughed; for he was a strapping young fellow, big-boned and big-muscled, with faith in himself and in the strength of his head and hands.

It was on a bleak January day when the experience came that taught him respect for the frost, and for the wisdom of the men who had battled with it.

He had left Calumet Camp on the Yukon with a light pack on his back, to go up Paul Creek to the divide between it and Cherry Creek, where his party was prospecting and hunting moose.

The frost was sixty-degrees below zero, and be had thirty miles of lonely trail to cover, but he did not mind. In fact, be enjoyed it, swinging along through the silence, his blood pounding warmly through veins, and his mind carefree and happy. For he and his comrades were certain they had struck “pay” up there on the Cherry Creek Divide; and, further, he was returning to them from Dawson with cheery home letters from the States.

At seven o’clock, when he turned the heels of his moccasins toward Calumet Camp, it was still black night. And when day broke at half past nine he had made the four-mile cut-off across the flats and was six miles up Paul Creek. The trail, which had seen little travel, followed the bed of the creek, and there was no possibility of his getting lost. He had gone to Dawson by way of Cherry Creek and Indian River, so Paul Creek was new and strange. By half past eleven he was at the forks, which bad been described to him, and he knew he had covered fifteen miles, half the distance. He knew that in the nature of things the trail was bound to grow worse from there on, and thought that, considering the good time he had made, he merited lunch. Casting off his pack and taking a seat on a fallen tree, he unmittened his right hand, reached inside his shirt next to the skin, and fished out a couple of biscuits sandwiched with sliced bacon and wrapped in a handkerchief–the only way they could be carried without freezing solid.

He had barely chewed the first mouthful when his numbing fingers warned him to put his mitten on again. This he did, not without surprise at the bitter swiftness with which the frost bit in. Undoubtedly it was the coldest snap he had ever experienced, he thought.

He spat upon the snow,–a favorite northland trick,–and the sharp crackle of the instantly congealed spittle startled him. The spirit thermometer at Calumet had registered sixty below when he left, but he was certain it had grown much colder, how much colder he could not imagine.

Half of the first biscuit was yet untouched, but he could feel himself beginning to chill–a thing most unusual for him. This would never do, he decided, and slipping the packstraps across his shoulders, he leaped to his feet and ran briskly up the trail.

A few minutes of this made him warm again, and he settled down to a steady stride, munching the biscuits as be went along. The moisture that exhaled with his breath crusted his lips and mustache with pendent ice and formed a miniature glacier on his chin. Now and again sensation forsook his nose and cheeks, and he rubbed them till they burned with the returning blood.

Most men wore nose-straps; his partners did, but he had scorned such "feminine contraptions," and till now had never felt the need of them. Now he did feel the need, for he was rubbing constantly.

Nevertheless he was aware of a thrill of joy, of exultation. He was doing something, achieving something, mastering the elements. Once he laughed aloud in sheer strength of life, and with his clenched fist defied the frost. He was its master. What he did he did in spite of it. It could not stop him. He was going on to the Cherry Creek Divide.

Strong as were the elements, he was stronger. At such times animals crawled away into their holes and remained in hiding. But he did not hide. He was out in it, facing it, fighting it. He was a man, a master of things.

In such fashion, rejoicing proudly, he tramped on. After an hour he rounded a bend, where the creek ran close to the mountainside, and came upon one of the most insignificant-appearing but most formidable dangers in northern travel.

The creek itself was frozen solid to its rocky bottom, but from the mountain came the outflow of several springs. These springs never froze, and the only effect of the severest cold snaps was to lessen their discharge. Protected from the frost by the blanket of snow, the water of these springs seeped down into the creek and, on top of the creek ice, formed shallow pools.

The surface of these pools, in turn, took on a skin of ice which grew thicker and thicker, until the water overran, and so formed a second ice-skinned pool above the first.

Thus at the bottom was the solid creek ice, then probably six to eight inches of water, then the thin ice-skin, then another six inches of water and another ice-skin. And on top of this last skin was about an inch of recent snow to make the trap complete.

To Tom Vincent's eye the unbroken snow surface gave no warning of the lurking danger. As the crust was thicker at the edge, he was well toward the middle before he broke through.

In itself it was a very insignificant mishap,–a man does not drown in twelve inches of water,–but in its consequences as serious an accident as could possibly befall him.

At the instant he broke through he felt the cold water strike his feet and ankles, and with half a dozen lunges he made the bank. He was quite cool and collected. The thing to do, and the only thing to do, was to build a fire. For another precept of the north runs: Travel with wet socks down to twenty below zero; after that build a fire. And it was three times twenty below and colder, and he knew it.

He knew, further, that great care must be exercised; that with failure at the first attempt, the chance was made greater for failure at the second attempt. In short, he knew that there must be no failure. The moment before a strong, exulting man, boastful of his mastery of the elements, he was now fighting for his life against those same elements–such was the difference caused by the injection of a quart of water into a northland traveller's calculations.

In a clump of pines on the rim of the bank the spring high-water had lodged many twigs and small branches. Thoroughly dried by the summer sun, they now waited the match.

It is impossible to build a fire with heavy Alaskan mittens on one's hands, so Vincent bared his, gathered a sufficient number of twigs, and knocking the snow from them, knelt down to kindle his fire. From an inside pocket he drew out his matches and a strip of thin birch bark. The matches were of the Klondike kind, sulphur matches, one hundred in a bunch.

He noticed how quickly his fingers had chilled as he separated one match from the bunch and scratched it on his trousers. The birch bark, like the dryest of paper, burst into bright flame. This be carefully fed with the smallest twigs and finest debris, cherishing the flame with the utmost care. It did not do to hurry things, as he well knew, and although his fingers were now quite stiff, he did not hurry.

After the first quick, biting sensation of cold, his feet had ached with a heavy, dull ache and were rapidly growing numb. But the fire, although a very young one, was now a success; he knew that a little snow, briskly rubbed, would speedily cure his feet.

But at the moment he was adding the first thick twigs to the fire a grievous thing happened. The pine boughs above his head were burdened with a four months snowfall, and so finely adjusted were the burdens that his slight movement in collecting the twigs had been sufficient to disturb the balance.

The snow from the topmost bough was the first to fall, striking and dislodging the snow on the boughs beneath. And all this snow, accumulating as it fell, smote Tom Vincent's head and shoulders and blotted out his fire.

He still kept his presence of mind, for be knew how great his danger was. He started at once to rebuild the fire, but his fingers were now so numb that he could not bend them, and he was forced to pick up each twig and splinter between the tips of the fingers of either hand.

When he came to the match he encountered great difficulty in separating one from the bunch. This he succeeded in managing, however, and also, by great effort, in clutching the match between his thumb and forefinger. But in scratching it, he dropped it in the snow and could not pick it up again.

He stood up, desperate. He could not feel even his weight on his feet, although the ankles were aching painfully. Putting on his mittens, he stepped to one side, so that the snow would not fall upon the new fire he was to build, and beat his hands violently against a tree-trunk.

This enabled him to separate and strike a second match and to set fire to the remaining fragment of birch bark. But his body had now begun to chill and he was shivering, so that when be tried to add the first twigs his hand shook and the tiny flame was quenched.

The frost had beaten him. His hands were worthless. But he had the foresight to drop the bunch of matches into his wide-mouthed outside pocket before he slipped on

his mittens in despair , and started to run up the trail. One cannot run the frost out of wet feet at sixty below and colder, however, as he quickly discovered.

He came round a sharp turn of the creek to where he could look ahead for a mile. But there was no help, no sign of help, only the white trees and the white hills, and the quiet cold and the brazen silence! If only he had a comrade whose feet were not freezing, he thought, only such a comrade to start the fire that could save him!

Then his eyes chanced upon another high-water lodgment of twigs and branches. If he could strike a match, all might yet be well. With stiff fingers which he could not bend, he got out a bunch of matches, but found it impossible to separate them.

He sat down and awkwardly shuffled the bunch about on his knees, until he got it resting on his palm with the sulphur ends projecting, somewhat in the manner the blade of a hunting-knife would project when clutched in the fist.

But his fingers stood straight out. They could not clutch. This he overcame by pressing the wrist of the other hand against them, and so forcing them down upon the bunch. Time and again, holding thus by both bands, he scratched the bunch on his leg and finally ignited it. But the flame burned into the flesh of his hand, and he involuntarily relaxed his hold. The bunch fell into the snow, and while he tried vainly to pick it up, sizzled and went out.

Again he ran, by this time badly frightened. His feet were utterly devoid of sensation. He stubbed his toes once on a buried log, but beyond pitching him into the snow and wrenching his back, it gave him no feelings.

He recollected being told of a camp of moose-hunters somewhere above the forks of Paul Creek. He must be somewhere near it, he thought, and if he could find it be yet might be saved. Five minutes later he came upon it, lone and deserted, with drifted snow sprinkled inside the pine-bough shelter in which the hunters had slept. He sank down, sobbing. All was over, and in an hour at best, in that terrific temperature, he would be an icy corpse.

But the love of life was strong in him, and he sprang again to his feet. He was thinking quickly. What if the matches did burn his hands? Burned hands were better than dead hands. No hands at all were better than death. He floundered along the trail until be came upon another high-water lodgment. There were twigs and branches, leaves and grasses, all dry and waiting the fire.

Again he sat down and shuffled the bunch of matches on his knees, got it into place on his palm, with the wrist of his other hand forced the nerveless fingers down against the bunch, and with the wrist kept them there. At the second scratch the bunch caught fire, and he knew that if he could stand the pain he was saved. He choked with the sulphur fumes, and the blue flame licked the flesh of his hands.

At first he could not feel it, but it burned quickly in through the frosted surface. The odor of the burning flesh–his flesh–was strong in his nostrils. He writhed about in his torment, yet held on. He set his teeth and swayed back and forth, until the clear white flame of the burning match shot up, and he had applied that flame to the leaves and grasses.

An anxious five minutes followed, but the fire gained steadily. Then he set to work to save himself. Heroic measures were necessary, such was his extremity, and he took them.

Alternately rubbing his hands with snow and thrusting them into the flames, and now and again beating them against the hard trees, he restored their circulation sufficiently for them to be of use to him. With his hunting-knife he slashed the straps from his pack, unrolled his blanket, and got out dry socks and footgear.

Then he cut away his moccasins and bared his feet. But while he had taken liberties with his hands, he kept his feet fairly away from the fire and rubbed them with snow. He rubbed till his bands grew numb, when he would cover his feet with the blanket, warm his hands by the fire, and return to the rubbing.

For three hours he worked, till the worst effects of the freezing had been counteracted. All that night he stayed by the fire, and it was late the next day when he limped pitifully into the camp on the Cherry Creek Divide.

In a month's time he was able to be about on his feet, although the toes were destined always after that to be very sensitive to frost. But the scars on his hands he knows he will carry to the grave. And–"Never travel alone!" he now lays down the precept of the North.

To Build a Fire (Later Version)

Day had broken cold and gray, exceedingly cold and gray, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail and climbed the high earth bank, where a dim and little-traveled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun or hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep above the skyline and dip immediately from view.

The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations where the ice jams of the freeze-up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hairline that curved and twisted from around the spruce-covered island to the south, and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island. This dark hairline was the trail — the main trail — that led south five hundred miles to the Chilkoot Pass, Dyea, and salt water; and that led north seventy miles to Dawson, and still on to the north a thousand miles to Nulato, and finally to St. Michael on the Bering Sea, a thousand miles and half a thousand more.

But all this — the mysterious, far-reaching hairline trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all — made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a newcomer in the land, a cheechako, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty-odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold, and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, earflaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go on, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below, spittle crackled on the snow, but this spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below — how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim on the left fork of Henderson Creek, where the boys were already. They had come over across the divide from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibilities of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon. He would be into camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready. As for lunch, he pressed his hand against the protruding bundle under his jacket. It was also under his shirt, wrapped up in a handkerchief and lying against the naked skin. It was the only way to keep the biscuits from freezing. He smiled agreeably to himself as he thought of those biscuits, each cut open and sopped in bacon grease, and each enclosing a generous slice of fried bacon.

He plunged in among the big spruce trees. The trail was faint. A foot of snow had fallen since the last sled had passed over, and he was glad he was without a sled, traveling light. In fact, he carried nothing but the lunch wrapped in the handkerchief. He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded, as he rubbed his numb nose and cheekbones with his mittened hand. He was a warm-whiskered man, but the hair on his face did not protect the high cheekbones and the eager nose that thrust itself aggressively into the frosty air.

At the man's heels trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf dog, gray-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for traveling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than

sixty below, than seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. The dog did not know anything about thermometers. Possibly in its brain there was no sharp consciousness of a condition of very cold such as was in the man's brain. But the brute had its instinct. It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink along at the man's heels, and that made it question eagerly every unwonted movement of the man, as if expecting him to go into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire. The dog had learned fire, and it wanted fire, or else to burrow under the snow and cuddle its warmth away from the air.

The frozen moisture of its breathing had settled on its fur in a fine powder of frost, and especially were its jowls, muzzle, and eyelashes whitened by its crystaled breath. The man's red beard and moustache were likewise frosted, but more solidly, the deposit taking the form of ice and increasing with every warm, moist breath he exhaled. Also, the man was chewing tobacco, and the muzzle of ice held his lips so rigidly that he was unable to clear his chin when he expelled the juice. The result was that a crystal beard of the color and solidity of amber was increasing its length on his chin. If he fell down it would shatter itself, like glass, into brittle fragments. But he did not mind the appendage. It was the penalty all tobacco chewers paid in that country, and he had been out before in two cold snaps. They had not been so cold as this, he knew, but by the spirit thermometer at Sixty Mile he knew they had been registered at fifty below and at fifty-five.

He held on through the level stretch of woods for several miles, crossed a wide flat, and dropped down a bank to the frozen bed of a small stream. This was Henderson Creek, and he knew he was ten miles from the forks. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He was making four miles an hour, and he calculated that he would arrive at the forks at half past twelve. He decided to celebrate that event by eating his lunch there.

The dog dropped in again at his heels, with a tail drooping discouragement, as the man swung along the creek bed. The furrow of the old sled trail was plainly visible, but a dozen inches of snow covered the marks of the last runners. In a month no man had come up or down that silent creek. The man held steadily on. He was not much given to thinking, and just then particularly, he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to; and, had there been, speech would have been impossible because of the ice muzzle on his mouth. So he continued monotonously to chew tobacco and to increase the length of his amber beard.

Once in a while the thought reiterated itself that it was very cold and that he had never experienced such cold. As he walked along he rubbed his cheekbones and nose with the back of his mittened hand. He did this automatically, now and again changing hands. But rub as he would, the instant he stopped his cheekbones went numb, and the following instant the end of his nose went numb. He was sure to frost his cheeks; he knew that, and experienced a pang of regret that he had not devised a nose strap

of the sort Bud wore in the cold snaps. Such a strap passed across the cheeks, as well, and saved them. But it didn't matter much, after all. What were frosted cheeks? A bit painful, that was all; they were never serious.

Empty as the man's mind was of thought, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and bends and timber jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he shied abruptly, like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several paces back along the trail. The creek, he knew, was frozen clear to the bottom — no creek could contain water in that arctic winter — but he knew also that there were springs that bubbled out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top of the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there were alternate layers of water and ice skin, so that when one broke through he kept on breaking through for a while, sometimes wetting himself to the waist.

That was why he had shied in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow-hidden ice skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and under its protection to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins. He stood and studied the creek bed and its banks, and decided that the flow of water came from the right. He reflected awhile, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then skirted to the left, stepping gingerly and testing the footing for each step. Once clear of the danger, he took a fresh chew of tobacco and swung along at his four-mile gait.

In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken, candied appearance that advertised the danger. Once again, however, he had a close call; and once, suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface. Suddenly it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice. It made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of instinct. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. It did not know this. It merely obeyed the mysterious prompting that arose from the deep crypts5 of its being. But the man knew, having achieved a judgment on the subject, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped tear out the ice particles. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and was astonished at the swift numbness that smote6 them. It certainly was cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest.

At twelve o'clock the day was at its brightest. Yet the sun was too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon. The bulge of the earth intervened between it and Henderson Creek, where the man walked under a clear sky at noon and cast no shadow. At half past twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the forks of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He unbuttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action consumed no more than a quarter of a minute, yet in that brief moment the numbness laid hold of the exposed fingers. He did not put the mitten on, but instead struck the fingers a dozen sharp smashes against his leg. Then he sat down on a snow-covered log to eat. The sting that followed upon the striking of his fingers against his leg ceased so quickly that he was startled. He had had no chance to take a bite of biscuit. He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating. He tried to take a mouthful, but the ice muzzle prevented. He had forgotten to build a fire and thaw out. He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted the numbness creeping into the exposed fingers. Also, he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether the toes were warm or numb. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numb.

He pulled the mitten on hurriedly and stood up. He was a bit frightened. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned into the feet. It certainly was cold, was his thought. That man from Sulfur Creek had spoken the truth when telling how cold it sometimes got in the country. And he had laughed at him at the time! That showed one must not be too sure of things. There was no mistake about it, it was cold. He strode up and down, stamping his feet and threshing his arms, until reassured by the returning warmth. Then he got out matches and proceeded to make a fire. From the undergrowth, where high water of the previous spring had lodged a supply of seasoned twigs, he got his firewood. Working carefully from a small beginning, he soon had a roaring fire, over which he thawed the ice from his face and in the protection of which he ate his biscuits. For the moment the cold of space was outwitted. The dog took satisfaction in the fire, stretching out close enough for warmth and far enough away to escape being singed.

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his mittens, settled the earflaps of his cap firmly about his ears, and took the creek trail up the left fork. The dog was disappointed and yearned back toward the fire. This man did not know cold. Possibly all the generations of his ancestry had been ignorant of cold, of real cold, of cold one hundred and seven degrees below freezing point. But the dog knew; all its ancestry knew, and it had inherited the knowledge. And it knew that it was not good to walk abroad in such fearful cold. It was the time to lie snug in a hole in the snow and wait for a curtain of cloud to be drawn across the face of outer space whence this cold came. On the other hand, there was no keen intimacy between the dog and the man. The one was the toil slave of the other, and the only caresses it had ever received were the caresses of the whiplash and

of harsh and menacing throat sounds that threatened the whiplash. So the dog made no effort to communicate its apprehension to the man. It was not concerned in the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire. But the man whistled, and spoke to it with the sound of whiplashes, and the dog swung in at the man's heels and followed after.

The man took a chew of tobacco and proceeded to start a new amber beard. Also, his moist breath quickly powdered with white his moustache, eyebrows, and lashes. There did not seem to be so many springs on the left fork of the Henderson, and for half an hour the man saw no signs of any. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He wet himself halfway to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his footgear. This was imperative at that low temperature — he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high-water deposit of dry firewood — sticks and twigs, principally, but also larger portions of seasoned branches and fine, dry, last year's grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and prevented the young flame from drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation, he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs.

He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy-five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire — that is, if his feet are wet. If his feet are dry, and he fails, he can run along the trail for a half a mile and restore his circulation. But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below. No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder.

All this the man knew. The old-timer on Sulfur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and now he was appreciating the advice. Already all sensation had gone out of his feet. To build the fire, he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His pace of four miles an hour had kept his heart pumping blood to the surface of his body and to all the extremities. But the instant he stopped, the action of the pump eased down. The cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being on that unprotected tip, received the full force of the blow. The blood of his body recoiled before it. The blood was alive, like the dog, and like the dog it wanted to hide away and cover itself up from the fearful cold. So long

as he walked four miles an hour, he pumped that blood, willy-nilly, to the surface; but now it ebbed away and sank down into the recesses of his body. The extremities were the first to feel its absence. His wet feet froze the faster, and his exposed fingers numbed the faster, though they had not yet begun to freeze. Nose and cheeks were already freezing, while the skin of all his body chilled as it lost its blood.

But he was safe. Toes and nose and cheeks would be only touched by the frost, for the fire was beginning to burn with strength. He was feeding it twigs the size of his finger. In another minute he would be able to feed it with branches the size of his wrist, and then he could remove his wet footgear, and, while it dried, he could keep his naked feet warm by the fire, rubbing them at first, of course, with snow. The fire was a success. He was safe. He remembered the advice of the old-timer on Sulfur Creek, and smiled. The old-timer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below. Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself. Those old-timers were rather womanish, some of them, he thought. All a man had to do was to keep his head and he was all right. Any man who was a man could travel alone. But it was surprising, the rapidity with which his cheeks and nose were freezing. And he had not thought his fingers could go lifeless in so short a time. Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig, and they seemed remote from his body and from him. When he touched a twig, he had to look and see whether or not he had hold of it. The wires were pretty well down between him and his finger ends.

All of which counted for little. There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to untie his moccasins. They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron half-way to the knees; and the mocassin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted as by some conflagration. For a moment he tugged with his numbed fingers, then, realizing the folly of it, he drew his sheath-knife.

But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the brush and drop them directly on the fire. Now the tree under which he had done this carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully freighted. Each time he had pulled a twig he had communicated a slight agitation to the tree — an imperceptible agitation, so far as he was concerned, but an agitation sufficient to bring about the disaster. High up in the tree one bough capsized its load of snow. This fell on the boughs beneath, capsizing them. This process continued, spreading out and involving the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire, and the fire was blotted out! Where it had burned was a mantle of fresh and disordered snow.

The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own sentence of death. For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very calm. Perhaps the old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right. If he had only had a

trail-mate he would have been in no danger now. The trail-mate could have built the fire. Well, it was up to him to build the fire over again, and this second time there must be no failure. Even if he succeeded, he would most likely lose some toes. His feet must be badly frozen by now, and there would be some time before the second fire was ready.

Such were his thoughts, but he did not sit and think them. He was busy all the time they were passing through his mind, he made a new foundation for a fire, this time in the open; where no treacherous tree could blot it out. Next, he gathered dry grasses and tiny twigs from the high-water flotsam. He could not bring his fingers together to pull them out, but he was able to gather them by the handful. In this way he got many rotten twigs and bits of green moss that were undesirable, but it was the best he could do. He worked methodically, even collecting an armful of the larger branches to be used later when the fire gathered strength. And all the while the dog sat and watched him, a certain yearning wistfulness in its eyes, for it looked upon him as the fire-provider, and the fire was slow in coming.

When all was ready, the man reached in his pocket for a second piece of birch-bark. He knew the bark was there, and, though he could not feel it with his fingers, he could hear its crisp rustling as he fumbled for it. Try as he would, he could not clutch hold of it. And all the time, in his consciousness, was the knowledge that each instant his feet were freezing. This thought tended to put him in a panic, but he fought against it and kept calm. He pulled on his mittens with his teeth, and threshed his arms back and forth, beating his hands with all his might against his sides. He did this sitting down, and he stood up to do it; and all the while the dog sat in the snow, its wolf-brush of a tail curled around warmly over its forefeet, its sharp wolf-ears pricked forward intently as it watched the man. And the man as he beat and threshed with his arms and hands, felt a great surge of envy as he regarded the creature that was warm and secure in its natural covering.

After a time he was aware of the first far-away signals of sensation in his beaten fingers. The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating, but which the man hailed with satisfaction. He stripped the mitten from his right hand and fetched forth the birch-bark. The exposed fingers were quickly going numb again. Next he brought out his bunch of sulphur matches. But the tremendous cold had already driven the life out of his fingers. In his effort to separate one match from the others, the whole bunch fell in the snow. He tried to pick it out of the snow, but failed. The dead fingers could neither touch nor clutch. He was very careful. He drove the thought of his freezing feet; and nose, and cheeks, out of his mind, devoting his whole soul to the matches. He watched, using the sense of vision in place of that of touch, and when he saw his fingers on each side the bunch, he closed them — that is, he willed to close them, for the wires were drawn, and the fingers did not obey. He pulled the mitten on the right hand, and beat it fiercely against his knee. Then, with both mittened hands, he scooped the bunch of matches, along with much snow, into his lap. Yet he was no better off.

After some manipulation he managed to get the bunch between the heels of his mittened hands. In this fashion he carried it to his mouth. The ice crackled and snapped when by a violent effort he opened his mouth. He drew the lower jaw in, curled the upper lip out of the way, and scraped the bunch with his upper teeth in order to separate a match. He succeeded in getting one, which he dropped on his lap. He was no better off. He could not pick it up. Then he devised a way. He picked it up in his teeth and scratched it on his leg. Twenty times he scratched before he succeeded in lighting it. As it flamed he held it with his teeth to the birch-bark. But the burning brimstone went up his nostrils and into his lungs, causing him to cough spasmodically. The match fell into the snow and went out.

The old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right, he thought in the moment of controlled despair that ensued: after fifty below, a man should travel with a partner. He beat his hands, but failed in exciting any sensation. Suddenly he bared both hands, removing the mittens with his teeth. He caught the whole bunch between the heels of his hands. His arm-muscles not being frozen enabled him to press the hand-heels tightly against the matches. Then he scratched the bunch along his leg. It flared into flame, seventy sulphur matches at once! There was no wind to blow them out. He kept his head to one side to escape the strangling fumes, and held the blazing bunch to the birch-bark. As he so held it, he became aware of sensation in his hand. His flesh was burning. He could smell it. Deep down below the surface he could feel it. The sensation developed into pain that grew acute. And still he endured it, holding the flame of the matches clumsily to the bark that would not light readily because his own burning hands were in the way, absorbing most of the flame.

At last, when he could endure no more, he jerked his hands apart. The blazing matches fell sizzling into the snow, but the birch-bark was alight. He began laying dry grasses and the tiniest twigs on the flame. He could not pick and choose, for he had to lift the fuel between the heels of his hands. Small pieces of rotten wood and green moss clung to the twigs, and he bit them off as well as he could with his teeth. He cherished the flame carefully and awkwardly. It meant life, and it must not perish. The withdrawal of blood from the surface of his body now made him begin to shiver, and he grew more awkward. A large piece of green moss fell squarely on the little fire. He tried to poke it out with his fingers, but his shivering frame made him poke too far, and he disrupted the nucleus of the little fire, the burning grasses and tiny twigs separating and scattering. He tried to poke them together again, but in spite of the tenseness of the effort, his shivering got away with him, and the twigs were hopelessly scattered. Each twig gushed a puff of smoke and went out. The fire-provider had failed. As he looked apathetically about him, his eyes chanced on the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him, in the snow, making restless, hunching movements, slightly lifting one forefoot and then the other, shifting its weight back and forth on them with wistful eagerness.

The sight of the dog put a wild idea into his head. He remembered the tale of the man, caught in a blizzard, who killed a steer and crawled inside the carcass, and so was

saved. He would kill the dog and bury his hands in the warm body until the numbness went out of them. Then he could build another fire. He spoke to the dog, calling it to him; but in his voice was a strange note of fear that frightened the animal, who had never known the man to speak in such way before. Something was the matter, and its suspicious nature sensed danger, — it knew not what danger but somewhere, somehow, in its brain arose an apprehension of the man. It flattened its ears down at the sound of the man's voice, and its restless, hunching movements and the liftings and shiftings of its forefeet became more pronounced but it would not come to the man. He got on his hands and knees and crawled toward the dog. This unusual posture again excited suspicion, and the animal sidled mincingly away.

The man sat up in the snow for a moment and struggled for calmness. Then he pulled on his mittens, by means of his teeth, and got upon his feet. He glanced down at first in order to assure himself that he was really standing up, for the absence of sensation in his feet left him unrelated to the earth. His erect position in itself started to drive the webs of suspicion from the dog's mind; and when he spoke peremptorily, with the sound of whip-lashes in his voice, the dog rendered its customary allegiance and came to him. As it came within reaching distance, the man lost his control. His arms flashed out to the dog, and he experienced genuine surprise when he discovered that his hands could not clutch, that there was neither bend nor feeling in the lingers. He had forgotten for the moment that they were frozen and that they were freezing more and more. All this happened quickly, and before the animal could get away, he encircled its body with his arms. He sat down in the snow, and in this fashion held the dog, while it snarled and whined and struggled.

But it was all he could do, hold its body encircled in his arms and sit there. He realized that he could not kill the dog. There was no way to do it. With his helpless hands he could neither draw nor hold his sheath-knife nor throttle the animal. He released it, and it plunged wildly away, with tail between its legs, and still snarling. It halted forty feet away and surveyed him curiously, with ears sharply pricked forward. The man looked down at his hands in order to locate them, and found them hanging on the ends of his arms. It struck him as curious that one should have to use his eyes in order to find out where his hands were. He began threshing his arms back and forth, beating the mittened hands against his sides. He did this for five minutes, violently, and his heart pumped enough blood up to the surface to put a stop to his shivering. But no sensation was aroused in the hands. He had an impression that they hung like weights on the ends of his arms, but when he tried to run the impression down, he could not find it.

A certain fear of death, dull and oppressive, came to him. This fear quickly became poignant as he realized that it was no longer a mere matter of freezing his fingers and toes, or of losing his hands and feet, but that it was a matter of life and death with the chances against him. This threw him into a panic, and he turned and ran up the creek-bed along the old, dim trail. The dog joined in behind and kept up with him. He ran blindly, without intention, in fear such as he had never known in his life. Slowly,

as he ploughed and floundered through the snow, he began to see things again — the banks of the creek, the old timber-jams, the leafless aspens, and the sky. The running made him feel better. He did not shiver. Maybe, if he ran on, his feet would thaw out; and, anyway, if he ran far enough, he would reach camp and the boys. Without doubt he would lose some fingers and toes and some of his face; but the boys would take care of him, and save the rest of him when he got there. And at the same time there was another thought in his mind that said he would never get to the camp and the boys; that it was too many miles away, that the freezing had too great a start on him, and that he would soon be stiff and dead. This thought he kept in the background and refused to consider. Sometimes it pushed itself forward and demanded to be heard, but he thrust it back and strove to think of other things.

It struck him as curious that he could run at all on feet so frozen that he could not feel them when they struck the earth and took the weight of his body. He seemed to himself to skim along above the surface and to have no connection with the earth. Somewhere he had once seen a winged Mercury, and he wondered if Mercury felt as he felt when skimming over the earth.

His theory of running until he reached camp and the boys had one flaw in it: he lacked the endurance. Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. When he tried to rise, he failed. He must sit and rest, he decided, and next time he would merely walk and keep on going. As he sat and regained his breath, he noted that he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He was not shivering, and it even seemed that a warm glow had come to his chest and trunk. And yet, when he touched his nose or cheeks, there was no sensation. Running would not thaw them out. Nor would it thaw out his hands and feet. Then the thought came to him that the frozen portions of his body must be extending. He tried to keep this thought down, to forget it, to think of something else; he was aware of the panicky feeling that it caused, and he was afraid of the panic. But the thought asserted itself, and persisted, until it produced a vision of his body totally frozen. This was too much, and he made another wild run along the trail. Once he slowed down to a walk, but the thought of the freezing extending itself made him run again.

And all the time the dog ran with him, at his heels. When he fell down a second time, it curled its tail over its forefeet and sat in front of him facing him curiously eager and intent. The warmth and security of the animal angered him, and he cursed it till it flattened down its ears appeasingly. This time the shivering came more quickly upon the man. He was losing in his battle with the frost. It was creeping into his body from all sides. The thought of it drove him on, but he ran no more than a hundred feet, when he staggered and pitched headlong. It was his last panic. When he had recovered his breath and control, he sat up and entertained in his mind the conception of meeting death with dignity. However, the conception did not come to him in such terms. His idea of it was that he had been making a fool of himself, running around like a chicken with its head cut off — such was the simile that occurred to him. Well, he was bound to freeze anyway, and he might as well take it decently. With this new-found peace of

mind came the first glimmerings of drowsiness. A good idea, he thought, to sleep off to death. It was like taking an anæsthetic. Freezing was not so bad as people thought. There were lots worse ways to die.

He pictured the boys finding his body next day. Suddenly he found himself with them, coming along the trail and looking for himself. And, still with them, he came around a turn in the trail and found himself lying in the snow. He did not belong with himself any more, for even then he was out of himself, standing with the boys and looking at himself in the snow. It certainly was cold, was his thought. When he got back to the States he could tell the folks what real cold was. He drifted on from this to a vision of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek. He could see him quite clearly, warm and comfortable, and smoking a pipe.

"You were right, old hoss; you were right," the man mumbled to the old-timer of Sulphur Creek.

Then the man drowsed off into what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known. The dog sat facing him and waiting. The brief day drew to a close in a long, slow twilight. There were no signs of a fire to be made, and, besides, never in the dog's experience had it known a man to sit like that in the snow and make no fire. As the twilight drew on, its eager yearning for the fire mastered it, and with a great lifting and shifting of forefeet, it whined softly, then flattened its ears down in anticipation of being chidden by the man. But the man remained silent. Later, the dog whined loudly. And still later it crept close to the man and caught the scent of death. This made the animal bristle and back away. A little longer it delayed, howling under the stars that leaped and danced and shone brightly in the cold sky. Then it turned and trotted up the trail in the direction of the camp it knew, where were the other food-providers and fire-providers.

To Kill a Man

Though dim night-lights burned, she moved familiarly through the big rooms and wide halls, seeking vainly the half-finished book of verse she had mislaid and only now remembered. When she turned on the lights in the drawing-room, she disclosed herself clad in a sweeping negligee gown of soft rose-colored stuff, throat and shoulders smothered in lace. Her rings were still on her fingers, her massed yellow hair had not yet been taken down. She was delicately, gracefully beautiful, with slender, oval face, red lips, a faint color in the cheeks, and blue eyes of the chameleon sort that at will stare wide with the innocence of childhood, go hard and gray and brilliantly cold, or flame up in hot wilfulness and mastery.

She turned the lights off and passed out and down the hall toward the morning room. At the entrance she paused and listened. From farther on had come, not a noise, but an impression of movement. She could have sworn she had not heard anything, yet something had been different. The atmosphere of night quietude had been disturbed. She wondered what servant could be prowling about. Not the butler, who was nosion. torious for retiring early save on special occasion. Nor could it be her maid, whom she had permitted to go that evening.

Passing on to the dining-room, she found the door closed. Why she opened it and went on in, she did not know, except for the feeling that the disturbing factor, whatever it might be, was there. The room was in darkness, and she felt her way to the button and pressed. As the blaze of light flashed on, she stepped back and cried out. It was a mere "Oh!" and it was not loud.

Facing her, alongside the button, flat against the wall, was a man. In his hand, pointed toward her, was a revolver. She noticed, even in the shock of seeing him, that the weapon was black and exceedingly long-barreled. She knew black and exceedingly long it for what it was, a Colt's. He was a medium-sized man, roughly clad, brown-eyed, and swarthy with sunburn. He seemed very cool. There was no wabble to the revolver and it was directed toward her stomach, not from an outstretched arm, but from the hip, against which the forearm rested.

"Oh," she said. "I beg your pardon. You startled me. What do you want?"

"I reckon I want to get out," he answered, with a humorous twitch to the lips. "I've kind of lost my way in this here shebang, and if you'll kindly show me the door I'll cause no trouble and sure vamoose."

"But what are you doing here?" she demanded, her voice touched with the sharpness of one used to authority.

“Plain robbing, Miss, that’s all. I came snooping around to see what I could gather up. I thought you wan’t to home, seein’ as I saw you pull out with your old man in an auto. I reckon that must a ben your pa, and you’re Miss Setliffe.”

Mrs. Setliffe saw his mistake, appreciated the naive compliment, and decided not to undeceive him.

“How do you know I am Miss Setliffe?” she asked.

“This is old Setliffe’s house, ain’t it?”

She nodded.

“I didn’t know he had a daughter, but I reckon you must be her. And now, if it ain’t botherin’ you too much, I’d sure be obliged if you’d show me the way out.”

“But why should I? You are a robber, a burglar.”

“If I wan’t an ornery shorthorn at the business, I’d be accumulatin’ them rings on your fingers instead of being polite,” he retorted.

“I come to make a raise outa old Setliffe, and not to be robbing women-folks. If you get outa the way, I reckon I can find my own way out.”

Mrs. Setliffe was a keen woman, and she felt that from such a man there was little to fear. That he was not a typical criminal, she was certain. From his speech she knew he was not of the cities, and she seemed to sense the wider, homelier air of large spaces.

“Suppose I screamed?” she queried curiously. “Suppose I made an outcry for help? You couldn’t shoot me? ...a woman?”

She noted the fleeting bafflement in his brown eyes. He answered slowly and thoughtfully, as if working out a difficult problem. “I reckon, then, I’d have to choke you and maul you some bad.”

“A woman?”

“I’d sure have to,” he answered, and she saw his mouth set grimly.

“You’re only a soft woman, but you see, Miss, I can’t afford to go to jail. No, Miss, I sure can’t. There’s a friend of mine waitin’ for me out West. He’s in a hole, and I’ve got to help him out.” The mouth shaped even more grimly. “I guess I could choke you without hurting you much to speak of.”

Her eyes took on a baby stare of innocent incredulity as she watched him.

“I never met a burglar before,” she assured him, “and I can’t begin to tell you how interested I am.”

“I’m not a burglar, Miss. Not a real one,” he hastened to add as she looked her amused unbelief. “It looks like it, me being here in your house. But it’s the first time I ever tackled such a job. I needed the money bad. Besides, I kind of look on it like collecting what’s coming to me.”

“I don’t understand,” she smiled encouragingly. “You came here to rob, and to rob is to take what is not yours.”

“Yes, and no, in this here particular case. But I reckon I’d better be going now.”

He started for the door of the dining-room, but she interposed, and a very beautiful obstacle she made of herself. His left hand went out as if to grip her, then hesitated. He was patently awed by her soft womanhood.

"There!" she cried triumphantly. "I knew you wouldn't."

The man was embarrassed.

"I ain't never manhandled a woman yet," he explained, "and it don't come easy. But I sure will, if you set to screaming."

"Won't you stay a few minutes and talk?" she urged. "I'm so interested. I should like to hear you explain how burglary is collecting what is coming to you."

He looked at her admiringly.

"I always thought women-folks were scairt of robbers," he confessed. "But you don't seem none."

She laughed gaily.

"There are robbers and robbers, you know. I am not afraid of you, because I am confident you are not the sort of creature that would harm a woman. Come, talk with me a while. Nobody will disturb us. I am all alone. My – father caught the night train to New York. The servants are all asleep. I should like to give you something to eat – women always prepare midnight suppers for the burglars they catch, at least they do in the magazine stories. But I don't know where to find the food. Perhaps you will have something to drink?"

He hesitated, and did not reply; but she could see the admiration for her growing in his eyes.

"You're not afraid?" she queried. "I won't poison you, I promise. I'll drink with you to show you it is all right."

"You sure are a surprise package of all right," he declared, for the first time lowering the weapon and letting it hang at his side. "No one don't need to tell me ever again that women-folks in cities is afraid. You ain't much – just a little soft pretty thing. But you've sure got the spunk. And you're trustful on top of it. There ain't many women, or men either. who'd treat a man with a gun the way you're treating me."

She smiled her pleasure in the compliment, and her face, was very earnest as she said:

"That is because I like your appearance. You are too decent-looking a man to be a robber. You oughtn't to do such things. If you are in bad luck you should go to work. Come, put away that nasty revolver and let us talk it over. The thing for you to do is to work."

"Not in this burg," he commented bitterly. "I've walked two inches off the bottom of my legs trying to find a job. Honest, I was a fine large man once...before I started looking for a job."

The merry laughter with which she greeted his sally obviously pleased him, and she was quick to note and take advantage of it. She moved directly away from the door and toward the sideboard.

"Come, you must tell me all about it while I get that drink for you. What will it be? Whisky?"

"Yes, ma'am," he said, as he followed her, though he still carried the big revolver at his side, and though he glanced reluctantly at the unguarded open door.

She filled a glass for him at the sideboard.

"I promised to drink with you," she said hesitatingly. "But I don't like whisky. I ...I prefer sherry."

She lifted the sherry bottle tentatively for his consent.

"Sure," he answered, with a nod. "Whisky's a man's drink. I never like to see women at it. Wine's more their stuff."

She raised her glass to his, her eyes meltingly sympathetic.

"Here's to finding you a good position — "

But she broke off at sight of the expression of surprised disgust on his face. The glass, barely touched, was removed from his wry lips.

"What is the matter!" she asked anxiously. "Don't you like it? Have I made a mistake?"

"It's sure funny whisky. Tastes like it got burned and smoked in the making."

"Oh! How silly of me! I gave you Scotch. Of course you are accustomed to rye. Let me change it."

She was almost solicitiously maternal, as she replaced the glass with another and sought and found the proper bottle.

"Better?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am. No smoke in it. It's sure the real good stuff. I ain't had a drink in a week. Kind of slick, that; oily, you know; not made in a chemical factory."

"You are a drinking man?" It was half a question, half a challenge.

"No, ma'am, not to speak of. I HAVE rared up and ripsnorted at spells, but most unfrequent. But there is times when a good stiff jolt lands on the right spot kerchunk, and this is sure one of them. And now, thanking you for your kindness, ma'am, I'll just be a pulling along."

But Mrs. Setliffe did not want to lose her burglar. She was too poised a woman to possess much romance, but there was a thrill about the present situation that delighted her. Besides, she knew there was no danger. The man, despite his jaw and the steady brown eyes, was eminently tractable. Also, farther back in her consciousness glimmered the thought of an audience of admiring friends. It was too bad not to have that audience.

"You haven't explained how burglary, in your case, is merely collecting what is your own," she said. "Come, sit down, and tell me about it here at the table."

She maneuvered for her own seat, and placed him across the corner from her. His alertness had not deserted him, as she noted, and his eyes roved sharply about, returning always with smoldering admiration to hers, but never resting long. And she noted likewise that while she spoke he was intent on listening for other sounds than those of her voice. Nor had he relinquished the revolver, which lay at the corner of the table between them, the butt close to his right hand.

But he was in a new habitat which he did not know. This man from the West, cunning in woodcraft and plainscraft, with eyes and ears open, tense and suspicious, did not know that under the table, close to her foot, was the push button of an electric

bell. He had never heard of such a contrivance, and his keenness and wariness went for naught.

"It's like this, Miss," he began, in response to her urging. "Old Setliffe done me up in a little deal once. It was raw, but it worked. Anything will work full and legal when it's got few hundred million behind it. I'm not squealin', and I ain't taking a slam at your pa. He don't know me from Adam, and I reckon he don't know he done me outa anything. He's too big, thinking and dealing in millions, to ever hear of a small potato like me. He's an operator. He's got all kinds of experts thinking and planning and working for him, some of them, I hear, getting more cash salary than the President of the United States. I'm only one of thousands that have been done up by your pa, that's all.

"You see, ma'am, I had a little hole in the ground – a dinky, hydraulic, one-horse outfit of a mine. And when the Setliffe crowd shook down Idaho, and reorganized the smelter trust, and roped in the rest of the landscape, and put through the big hydraulic scheme at Twin Pines, why I sure got squeezed. I never had a run for my money. I was scratched off the card before the first heat. And so, to-night, being broke and my friend needing me bad, I just dropped around to make a raise outa your pa. Seeing as I needed it, it kinda was coming to me."

"Granting all that you say is so," she said, "nevertheless it does not make house-breaking any the less house-breaking. You couldn't make such a defense in a court of law."

"I know that," he confessed meekly. "What's right ain't always legal. And that's why I am so uncomfortable a-settin' here and talking with you. Not that I ain't enjoying your company – I sure do enjoy it – but I just can't afford to be caught. I know what they'd do to me in this here city. There was a young fellow that got fifty years only last week for holding a man up on the street for two dollars and eighty-five cents. I read about it in the paper. When times is hard and they ain't no work, men get desperate. And then the other men who've got something to be robbed of get desperate, too, and they just sure soak it to the other fellows. If I got caught, I reckon I wouldn't get a mite less than ten years. That's why I'm hankering to be on my way."

"No; wait." She lifted a detaining hand, at the same time removing her foot from the bell, which she had been pressing intermittently. "You haven't told me your name yet."

He hesitated.

"Call me Dave."

"Then ...Dave," she laughed with pretty confusion. "Something must be done for you. You are a young man, and you are just at the beginning of a bad start. If you begin by attempting to collect what you think is coming to you, later on you will be collecting what you are perfectly sure isn't coming to you. And you know what the end will be. Instead of this, we must find something honorable for you to do."

“I need the money, and I need it now,” he replied doggedly. “It’s not for myself, but for that friend I told you about. He’s in a peck of trouble, and he’s got to get his lift now or not at all.”

“I can find you a position,” she said quickly. “And – yes, the very thing — !I’ll lend you the money you want to send to your friend. This you can pay back out of your salary.”

“About three hundred would do,” he said slowly. “Three hundred would pull him through. I’d work my fingers off for a year for that, and my keep, and a few cents to buy Bull Durham with.”

“Ah! You smoke! I never thought of it.”

Her hand went out over the revolver toward his hand, as she pointed to the tell-tale yellow stain on his fingers. At the same time her eyes measured the nearness of her own hand and of his to the weapon. She ached to grip it in one swift movement. She was sure she could do it, and yet she was not sure; and so it was that she refrained as she withdrew her hand.

“Won’t you smoke?” she invited.

“I’m ‘most dying to.”

“Then do so. I don’t mind. I really like it – cigarettes, I mean.”

With his left band he dipped into his side pocket, brought out a loose wheat-straw paper and shifted it to his right hand close by the revolver. Again he dipped, transferring to the paper a pinch of brown, flaky tobacco. Then he proceeded, both hands just over the revolver, to roll the cigarette.

“From the way you hover close to that nasty weapon, you seem to be afraid of me,” she challenged.

“Not exactly afraid of you, ma’am, but, under the circumstances, just a mite timid.”

“But I’ve not been afraid of you.”

“You’ve got nothing to lose.”

“My life,” she retorted.

“That’s right,” he acknowledged promptly, “and you ain’t been scairt of me. Mebbe I am over anxious.”

“I wouldn’t cause you any harm.”

Even as she spoke, her slipper felt for the bell and pressed it. At the same time her eyes were earnest with a plea of honesty.

“You are a judge of men. I know it. And of women. Surely, when I am trying to persuade you from a criminal life and to get you honest work to do ....?”

He was immediately contrite.

“I sure beg your pardon, ma’am,” he said. “I reckon my nervousness ain’t complimentary.”

As he spoke, he drew his right hand from the table, and after lighting the cigarette, dropped it by his side.

"Thank you for your confidence," she breathed softly, resolutely keeping her eyes from measuring the distance to the revolver, and keeping her foot pressed firmly on the bell.

"About that three hundred," he began. "I can telegraph it West to-night. And I'll agree to work a year for it and my keep."

"You will earn more than that. I can promise seventy-five dollars a month at the least. Do you know horses?"

His face lighted up and his eyes sparkled.

"Then go to work for me – or for my father, rather, though I engage all the servants. I need a second coachman — "

"And wear a uniform?" he interrupted sharply, the sneer of the free-born West in his voice and on his lips.

She smiled tolerantly.

"Evidently that won't do. Let me think. Yes. Can you break and handle colts?"

He nodded.

"We have a stock farm, and there's room for just such a man as you. Will you take it?"

"Will I, ma'am?" His voice was rich with gratitude and enthusiasm. "Show me to it. I'll dig right in to-morrow. And I can sure promise you one thing, ma'am. You'll never be sorry for lending Hughie Luke a hand in his trouble — "

"I thought you said to call you Dave," she chided forgivingly.

"I did, ma'am. I did. And I sure beg your pardon. It was just plain bluff. My real name is Hughie Luke. And if you'll give me the address of that stock farm of yours, and the railroad fare, I head for it first thing in the morning."

Throughout the conversation she had never relaxed her attempts on the bell. She had pressed it in every alarming way – three shorts and a long, two and a long, and five. She had tried long series of shorts, and, once, she had held the button down for a solid three minutes. And she had been divided between objurgation of the stupid, heavy-sleeping butler and doubt if the bell were in order.

"I am so glad," she said; "so glad that you are willing. There won't be much to arrange. But you will first have to trust me while I go upstairs for my purse."

She saw the doubt flicker momentarily in his eyes, and added hastily, "But you see I am trusting you with the three hundred dollars."

"I believe you, ma'am," he came back gallantly. "Though I just can't help this nervousness."

"Shall I go and get it?"

But before she could receive consent, a slight muffled jar from the distance came to her ear. She knew it for the swing-door of the butler's pantry. But so slight was it – more a faint vibration than a sound – that she would not have heard had not her ears been keyed and listening for it. Yet the man had heard. He was startled in his composed way.

"What was that?" he demanded.

For answer, her left hand flashed out to the revolver and brought it back. She had had the start of him, and she needed it, for the next instant his hand leaped up from his side, clutching emptiness where the revolver had been.

"Sit down!" she commanded sharply, in a voice new to him. "Don't move. Keep your hands on the table."

She had taken a lesson from him. Instead of holding the heavy weapon extended, the butt of it and her forearm rested on the table, the muzzle pointed, not at his head, but his chest. And he, looking coolly and obeying her commands, knew there was no chance of the kick-up of the recoil producing a miss. Also, he saw that the revolver did not wabble, nor the hand shake, and he was thoroughly conversant with the size of hole the soft-nosed bullets could make. He had eyes, not for her, but for the hammer, which had risen under the pressure of her forefinger on the trigger.

"I reckon I'd best warn you that that there trigger-pull is filed dreadful fine. Don't press too hard, or I'll have a hole in me the size of a walnut."

She slacked the hammer partly down.

"That's better," he commented. "You'd best put it down all the way. You see how easy it works. If you want to, a quick light pull will jiffy her up and back and make a pretty mess all over your nice floor."

A door opened behind him, and he heard somebody enter the room. But he did not turn his bead. He was looking at her, and he found it the face of another woman – hard, cold, pitiless yet brilliant in its beauty. The eyes, too, were hard, though blazing with a cold light.

"Thomas," she commanded, "go to the telephone and call the police. Why were you so long in answering?"

"I came as soon as I heard the bell, madam," was the answer.

The robber never took his eyes from hers, nor did she from his, but at mention of the bell she noticed that his eyes were puzzled for the moment.

"Beg your pardon," said the butler from behind, "but wouldn't it be better for me to get a weapon and arouse the servants?"

"No; ring for the police. I can hold this man. Go and do it – quickly."

The butler slippered out of the room, and the man and the woman sat on, gazing into each other's eyes. To her it was an experience keen with enjoyment, and in her mind was the gossip of her crowd, and she saw notes in the society weeklies of the beautiful young Mrs. Setliffe capturing an armed robber single-handed. It would create a sensation, she was sure.

"When you get that sentence you mentioned," she said coldly, "you will have time to meditate upon what a fool you have been, taking other persons' property and threatening women with revolvers. You will have time to learn your lesson thoroughly. Now tell the truth. You haven't any friend in trouble. All that you told me was lies."

He did not reply. Though his eyes were upon her, they seemed blank. In truth, for the instant she was veiled to him, and what he saw was the wide sunwashed spaces

of the West, where men and women were bigger than the rotten denizens, as he had encountered them, of the thrice rotten cities of the East.

"Go on. Why don't you speak? Why don't you lie some more? Why don't you beg to be let off?"

"I might," he answered, licking his dry lips. "I might ask to be let off if ..."

"If what?" she demanded peremptorily, as he paused.

"I was trying to think of a word you reminded me of. As I was saying, I might if you was a decent woman."

Her face paled.

"Be careful," she warned.

"You don't dast kill me," he sneered. "The world's a pretty low down place to have a thing like you prowling around in it, but it ain't so plumb low down, I reckon, as to let you put a hole in me. You're sure bad, but the trouble with you is that you're weak in your badness. It ain't much to kill a man, but you ain't got it in you. There's where you lose out."

"Be careful of what you say," she repeated. "Or else, I warn you, it will go hard with you. It can be seen to whether your sentence is light or heavy."

"Something's the matter with God," he remarked irrelevantly, "to be letting you around loose. It's clean beyond me what he's up to, playing such-like tricks on poor humanity. Now if I was God — "

His further opinion was interrupted by the entrance of the butler.

"Something is wrong with the telephone, madam," he announced. "The wires are crossed or something, because I can't get Central."

"Go and call one of the servants," she ordered. "Send him out for an officer, and then return here."

Again the pair was left alone.

"Will you kindly answer one question, ma'am?" the man said. "That servant fellow said something about a bell. I watched you like a cat, and you sure rung no bell."

"It was under the table, you poor fool. I pressed it with my foot."

"Thank you, ma'am. I reckoned I'd seen your kind before, and now I sure know I have. I spoke to you true and trusting, and all the time you was lying like hell to me."

She laughed mockingly.

"Go on. Say what you wish. It is very interesting."

"You made eyes at me, looking soft and kind, playing up all the time the fact that you wore skirts instead of pants – and all the time with your foot on the bell under the table. Well, there's some consolation. I'd sooner be poor Hughie Luke, doing his ten years, than be in your skin. Ma'am, hell is full of women like you."

There was silence for a space, in which the man, never taking his eyes from her, studying her, was making up his mind.

"Go on," she urged. "Say something."

"Yes, ma'am, I'll say something. I'll sure say something. Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to get right up from this chair and walk out that door. I'd take

the gun from you, only you might turn foolish and let it go off. You can have the gun. It's a good one. As I was saying, I am going right out that door. And you ain't going to pull that gun off either. It takes guts to shoot a man, and you sure ain't got them. Now get ready and see if you can pull that trigger. I ain't going to harm you. I'm going out that door, and I'm starting."

Keeping his eyes fixed on her, he pushed back the chair and slowly stood erect. The hammer rose halfway. She watched it. So did he.

"Pull harder," he advised. "It ain't half up yet. Go on and pull it and kill a man. That's what I said, kill a man, spatter his brains out on the floor, or slap a hole into him the size of your. fist. That's what killing a man means."

The hammer lowered jerkily but gently. The man turned his back and walked slowly to the door. She swung the revolver around so that it bore on his back. Twice again the hammer came up halfway and was reluctantly eased down.

At the door the man turned for a moment before passing on. A sneer was on his lips. He spoke to her in a low voice, almost drawling, but in it was the quintessence of all loathing, as he called her a name unspeakable and vile.

To Repel Boarders

"No; honest, now, Bob, I'm sure I was born too late. The twentieth century's no place for me. If I'd had my way — "

"You'd have been born in the sixteenth," I broke in, laughing, "with Drake and Hawkins and Raleigh and the rest of the sea-kings."

"You're right!" Paul affirmed. He rolled over upon his back on the little after-deck, with a long sigh of dissatisfaction.

It was a little past midnight, and, with the wind nearly astern, we were running down Lower San Francisco Bay to Bay Farm Island. Paul Fairfax and I went to the same school, lived next door to each other, and "chummed it" together. By saving money, by earning more, and by each of us foregoing a bicycle on his birthday, we had collected the purchase price of the Mist, a beamy twenty-eight-footer, sloop-rigged, with baby topsail and centerboard. Paul's father was a yachtsman himself, and he had conducted the business for us, poking around, overhauling, sticking his penknife into the timbers, and testing the planks with the greatest care. In fact, it was on his schooner, the Whim, that Paul and I had picked up what we knew about boat-sailing, and now that the Mist was ours, we were hard at work adding to our knowledge.

The Mist, being broad of beam, was comfortable and roomy. A man could stand upright in the cabin, and what with the stove, cooking utensils, and bunks, we were good for trips in her of a week at a time. And we were just starting out on the first of such trips, and it was because it was the first trip that we were sailing by night. Early in the evening we had beaten out from Oakland, and we were now off the mouth of Alameda Creek, a large salt-water estuary which fills and empties San Leandro Bay.

"Men lived in those days," Paul said, so suddenly as to startle me from my own thoughts. "In the days of the sea-kings, I mean," he explained.

I said "Oh!" sympathetically, and began to whistle "Captain Kidd."

"Now, I've my ideas about things," Paul went on. "They talk about romance and adventure and all that, but I say romance and adventure are dead. We're too civilized. We don't have adventures in the twentieth century. We go to the circus — "

"But — " I strove to interrupt, though he would not listen to me.

"You look here, Bob," he said. "In all the time you and I've gone together what adventures have we had? True, we were out in the hills once, and didn't get back till late at night, and we were good and hungry, but we weren't even lost. We knew where we were all the time. It was only a case of walk. What I mean is, we've never had to fight for our lives. Understand? We've never had a pistol fired at us, or a cannon, or a sword waving over our heads, or — or anything. . . .

"You'd better slack away three or four feet of that main-sheet," he said in a hopeless sort of way, as though it did not matter much anyway. "The wind's still veering around.

"Why, in the old times the sea was one constant glorious adventure," he continued. "A boy left school and became a midshipman, and in a few weeks was cruising after Spanish galleons or locking yard-arms with a French privateer, or — lots of things."

"Well — there are adventures today," I objected.

But Paul went on as though I had not spoken:

"And today we go from school to high school, and from high school to college, and then we go into the office or become doctors and things, and the only adventures we know about are the ones we read in books. Why, just as sure as I'm sitting here on the stern of the sloop Mist, just so sure am I that we wouldn't know what to do if a real adventure came along. Now, would we?"

"Oh, I don't know," I answered non-committally.

"Well, you wouldn't be a coward, would you?" he demanded.

I was sure I wouldn't and said so.

"But you don't have to be a coward to lose your head, do you?"

I agreed that brave men might get excited.

"Well, then," Paul summed up, with a note of regret in his voice, "the chances are that we'd spoil the adventure. So it's a shame, and that's all I can say about it."

"The adventure hasn't come yet," I answered, not caring to see him down in the mouth over nothing. You see, Paul was a peculiar fellow in some things, and I knew him pretty well. He read a good deal, and had a quick imagination, and once in a while he'd get into moods like this one. So I said, "The adventure hasn't come yet, so there's no use worrying about its being spoiled. For all we know, it might turn out splendidly."

Paul didn't say anything for some time, and I was thinking he was out of the mood, when he spoke up suddenly:

"Just imagine, Bob Kellogg, as we're sailing along now, just as we are, and never mind what for, that a boat should bear down upon us with armed men in it, what would you do to repel boarders? Think you could rise to it?"

"What would you do?" I asked pointedly. "Remember, we haven't even a single shotgun aboard."

"You would surrender, then?" he demanded angrily. "But suppose they were going to kill you?"

"I'm not saying what I'd do," I answered stiffly, beginning to get a little angry myself. "I'm asking what you'd do, without weapons of any sort?"

"I'd find something," he replied — rather shortly, I thought.

I began to chuckle. "Then the adventure wouldn't be spoiled, would it? And you've been talking rubbish."

Paul struck a match, looked at his watch, and remarked that it was nearly one o'clock — a way he had when the argument went against him. Besides, this was the nearest we ever came to quarreling now, though our share of squabbles had fallen to

us in the earlier days of our friendship. I had just seen a little white light ahead when Paul spoke again.

"Anchor-light," he said. "Funny place for people to drop the hook. It may be a scow-schooner with a dinky astern, so you'd better go wide."

I eased the Mist several points, and, the wind puffing up, we went plowing along at a pretty fair speed, passing the light so wide that we could not make out what manner of craft it marked. Suddenly the Mist slacked up in a slow and easy way, as though running upon soft mud. We were both startled. The wind was blowing stronger than ever, and yet we were almost at a standstill.

"Mud-flat out here? Never heard of such a thing!"

So Paul exclaimed with a snort of unbelief, and, seizing an oar, shoved it down over the side. And straight down it went till the water wet his hand. There was no bottom! Then we were dumbfounded. The wind was whistling by, and still the Mist was moving ahead at a snail's pace. There seemed something dead about her, and it was all I could do at the tiller to keep her from swinging up into the wind.

"Listen!" I laid my hand on Paul's arm. We could hear the sound of rowlocks, and saw the little white light bobbing up and down and now very close to us. "There's your armed boat," I whispered in fun. "Beat the crew to quarters and stand by to repel boarders!"

We both laughed, and were still laughing when a wild scream of rage came out of the darkness, and the approaching boat shot under our stern. By the light of the lantern it carried we could see the two men in it distinctly. They were foreign-looking fellows with sun-bronzed faces, and with knitted tam-o'-shanters perched seaman fashion on their heads. Bright-colored woolen sashes were around their waists, and long sea-boots covered their legs. I remember yet the cold chill which passed along my backbone as I noted the tiny gold ear-rings in the ears of one. For all the world they were like pirates stepped out of the pages of romance. And, to make the picture complete, their faces were distorted with anger, and each flourished a long knife. They were both shouting, in high-pitched voices, some foreign jargon we could not understand.

One of them, the smaller of the two, and if anything the more vicious-looking, put his hands on the rail of the Mist and started to come aboard. Quick as a flash Paul placed the end of the oar against the man's chest and shoved him back into his boat. He fell in a heap, but scrambled to his feet, waving the knife and shrieking:

"You break-a my net-a! You break-a my net-a!"

And he held forth in the jargon again, his companion joining him, and both preparing to make another dash to come aboard the Mist.

"They're Italian fishermen," I cried, the facts of the case breaking in upon me. "We've run over their smelt-net, and it's slipped along the keel and fouled our rudder. We're anchored to it."

"Yes, and they're murderous chaps, too," Paul said, sparring at them with the oar to make them keep their distance.

"Say, you fellows!" he called to them. "Give us a chance and we'll get it clear for you! We didn't know your net was there. We didn't mean to do it, you know!"

"You won't lose anything!" I added. "We'll pay the damages!"

But they could not understand what we were saying, or did not care to understand.

"You break-a my net-a! You break-a my net-a!" the smaller man, the one with the ear-rings, screamed back, making furious gestures. "I fix-a you! You-a see, I fix-a you!"

This time, when Paul thrust him back, he seized the oar in his hands, and his companion jumped aboard. I put my back against the tiller, and no sooner had he landed, and before he had caught his balance, than I met him with another oar, and he fell heavily backward into the boat. It was getting serious, and when he arose and caught my oar, and I realized his strength, I confess that I felt a goodly tinge of fear. But though he was stronger than I, instead of dragging me overboard when he wrenched on the oar, he merely pulled his boat in closer; and when I shoved, the boat was forced away. Besides, the knife, still in his right hand, made him awkward and somewhat counterbalanced the advantage his superior strength gave him. Paul and his enemy were in the same situation — a sort of deadlock, which continued for several seconds, but which could not last. Several times I shouted that we would pay for whatever damage their net had suffered, but my words seemed to be without effect.

Then my man began to tuck the oar under his arm, and to come up along it, slowly, hand over hand. The small man did the same with Paul. Moment by moment they came closer and closer, and we knew that the end was only a question of time.

"Hard up, Bob!" Paul called softly to me.

I gave him a quick glance, and caught an instant's glimpse of what I took to be a very pale face and a very set jaw.

"Oh, Bob," he pleaded, "hard up your helm! Hard up your helm, Bob!"

And his meaning dawned upon me. Still holding to my end of the oar, I shoved the tiller over with my back, and even bent my body to keep it over. As it was the Mist was nearly dead before the wind, and this maneuver was bound to force her to jibe her main-sail from one side to the other. I could tell by the "feel" when the wind spilled out of the canvas and the boom tilted up. Paul's man had now gained a footing on the little deck, and my man was just scrambling up.

"Look out!" I shouted to Paul. "Here she comes!"

Both he and I let go the oars and tumbled into the cockpit. The next instant the big boom and the heavy blocks swept over our heads, the main-sheet whipping past like a great coiling snake and the Mist heeling over with a violent jar. Both men had jumped for it, but in some way he little man either got his knife-hand jammed or fell upon it, for the first sight we caught of him, he was standing in his boat, his bleeding fingers clasped close between his knees and his face all twisted with pain and helpless rage.

"Now's our chance!" Paul whispered. "Over with you!"

And on either side of the rudder we lowered ourselves into the water, pressing the net down with our feet, till, with a jerk, it went clear. Then it was up and in, Paul at

the main-sheet and I at the tiller, the Mist plunging ahead with freedom in her motion, and the little white light astern growing small and smaller.

"Now that you've had your adventure, do you feel any better?" I remember asking when we had changed our clothes and were sitting dry and comfortable again in the cockpit.

"Well, if I don't have the nightmare for a week to come" — Paul paused and puckered his brows in judicial fashion — "it will be because I can't sleep, that's one thing sure!"

To the Man On the Trail

"Dump it in."

"But I say, Kid, isn't that going it a little too strong? Whiskey and alcohol's bad enough; but when it comes to brandy and pepper-sauce and" —

"Dump it in. Who's making this punch, anyway?" And Malemute Kid smiled benignantly through the clouds of steam. "By the time you've been in this country as long as I have, my son, and lived on rabbit-tracks and salmon-belly, you'll learn that Christmas comes only once per annum. And a Christmas without punch is sinking a hole to bedrock with nary a pay-streak."

"Stack up on that fer a high card," approved Big Jim Belden, who had come down from his claim on Mazy May to spend Christmas, and who, as every one knew, had been living the two months past on straight moose-meat. "Hain't fergot the hooch we-uns made on the Tanana, hev yeh?"

"Well, I guess yes. Boys, it would have done your hearts good to see that whole tribe fighting drunk — and all because of a glorious ferment of sugar and sour dough. That was before your time," Malemute Kid said as he turned to Stanley Prince, a young mining expert who had been in two years. "No white women in the country then, and Mason wanted to get married. Ruth's father was chief of the Tananas, and objected, like the rest of the tribe. Stiff? Why, I used my last pound of sugar; finest work in that line I ever did in my life. You should have seen the chase, down the river and across the portage."

"But the squaw?" asked Louis Savoy, the tall French-Canadian, becoming interested; for he had heard of this wild deed, when at Forty Mile the preceding winter.

Then Malemute Kid, who was a born raconteur, told the unvarnished tale of the Northland Lochinvar. More than one rough adventurer of the North felt his heartstrings draw closer, and experienced vague yearnings for the sunnier pastures of the Southland, where life promised something more than a barren struggle with cold and death.

"We struck the Yukon just behind the first ice-run," he concluded, "and the tribe only a quarter of an hour behind. But that saved us; for the second run broke the jam above and shut them out. When they finally got into Nuklukyeto, the whole Post was ready for them. And as to the foregathering, ask Father Roubeau here: he performed the ceremony."

The Jesuit took the pipe from his lips, but could only express his gratification with patriarchal smiles, while Protestant and Catholic vigorously applauded.

"By gar!" ejaculated Louis Savoy, who seemed overcome by the romance of it. "La petite squaw; mon Mason brav. By gar!" Then, as the first tin cups of punch went

round, Bettles the Unquenchable sprang to his feet and struck up his favorite drinking song:

"There's Henry Ward Beecher
And Sunday-school teachers,
All drink of the sassafras root;
But you bet all the same,
If it had its right name,
It's the juice of the forbidden fruit."

"O the juice of the forbidden fruit,"

roared out the Bacchanalian chorus, —

"O the juice of the forbidden fruit;
But you bet all the same,
If it had its right name,
It's the juice of the forbidden fruit."

Malemute Kid's frightful concoction did its work; the men of the camps and trails unbent in its genial glow, and jest and song and tales of past adventure went round the board. Aliens from a dozen lands, they toasted each and all. It was the Englishman, Prince, who pledged "Uncle Sam, the precocious infant of the New World;" the Yankee, Bettles, who drank to "The Queen, God bless her;" and together, Savoy and Meyers, the German trader, clanged their cups to Alsace and Lorraine.

Then Malemute Kid arose, cup in hand, and glanced at the greased-paper window, where the frost stood full three inches thick. "A health to the man on trail this night; may his grub hold out; may his dogs keep their legs; may his matches never miss fire."

Crack! Crack! — they heard the familiar music of the dogwhip, the whining howl of the Malemutes, and the crunch of a sled as it drew up to the cabin. Conversation languished while they waited the issue.

"An old-timer; cares for his dogs and then himself," whispered Malemute Kid to Prince, as they listened to the snapping jaws and the wolfish snarls and yelps of pain which proclaimed to their practiced ears that the stranger was beating back their dogs while he fed his own.

Then came the expected knock, sharp and confident, and the stranger entered. Dazzled by the light, he hesitated a moment at the door, giving to all a chance for scrutiny. He was a striking personage, and a most picturesque one, in his Arctic dress of wool and fur. Standing six foot two or three, with proportionate breadth of shoulders and depth of chest, his smooth-shaven face nipped by the cold to a gleaming pink, his long lashes and eyebrows white with ice, and the ear and neck flaps of his great wolf skin cap loosely raised, he seemed, of a verity, the Frost King, just stepped in out of the night. Clasped outside his mackinaw jacket, a beaded belt held two large Colt's revolvers and a hunting-knife, while he carried, in addition to the inevitable dog whip, a smokeless rifle of the largest bore and latest pattern. As he came forward, for all his step was firm and elastic, they could see that fatigue bore heavily upon him.

An awkward silence had fallen, but his hearty "What cheer, my lads?" put them quickly at ease, and the next instant Malemute Kid and he had gripped hands. Though they had never met, each had heard of the other, and the recognition was mutual. A sweeping introduction and a mug of punch were forced upon him before he could explain his errand.

"How long since that basket-sled, with three men and eight dogs, passed?" he asked.

"An even two days ahead. Are you after them?"

"Yes; my team. Run them off under my very nose, the cusses. I've gained two days on them already, — pick them up on the next run."

"Reckon they'll show spunk?" asked Belden, in order to keep up the conversation, for Malemute Kid already had the coffee-pot on and was busily frying bacon and moose-meat.

The stranger significantly tapped his revolvers.

"When 'd yeh leave Dawson?"

"Twelve o'clock."

"Last night?" — as a matter of course.

"To-day."

A murmur of surprise passed round the circle. And well it might; for it was just midnight, and seventy-five miles of rough river trail was not to be sneered at for a twelve hours' run.

The talk soon became impersonal, however, harking back to the trails of childhood. As the young stranger ate of the rude fare, Malemute Kid attentively studied his face. Nor was he long in deciding that it was fair, honest, and open, and that he liked it. Still youthful, the lines had been firmly traced by toil and hardship. Though genial in conversation, and mild when at rest, the blue eyes gave promise of the hard steel-glitter which comes when called into action, especially against odds. The heavy jaw and square-cut chin demonstrated rugged pertinacity and indomitability. Nor, though the attributes of the lion were there, was there wanting the certain softness, the hint of womanliness, which bespoke the emotional nature.

"So thet's how me an' the ol' woman got spliced," said Belden, concluding the exciting tale of his courtship." 'Here we be, dad, 'sez she. 'An' may yeh be damned,' sez he to her, an' then to me,'Jim, yeh — yeh git outen them good duds o' yourn; I want a right peart slice o' thet forty acre ploughed 'fore dinner.' An' then he turns on her an' sez, 'An' yeh, Sal; yeh sail inter them dishes.' An' then he sort o' sniffled an' kissed her. An' I was thet happy, — but he seen me an' roars out, 'Yeh, Jim!' An' yeh bet I dusted fer the barn."

"Any kids waiting for you back in the States?" asked the stranger.

"Nope; Sal died 'fore any come. Thet's why I'm here." Belden abstractedly began to light his pipe, which had failed to go out, and then brightened up with, "How 'bout yerself, stranger, — married man?"

For reply, he opened his watch, slipped it from the thong which served for a chain, and passed it over. Belden pricked up the slush-lamp, surveyed the inside of the case

critically, and swearing admiringly to himself, handed it over to Louis Savoy. With numerous “By gars!” he finally surrendered it to Prince, and they noticed that his hands trembled and his eyes took on a peculiar softness. And so it passed from horny hand to horny hand — the pasted photograph of a woman, the clinging kind that such men fancy, with a babe at the breast. Those who had not yet seen the wonder were keen with curiosity; those who had, became silent and retrospective. They could face the pinch of famine, the grip of scurvy, or the quick death by field or flood; but the pictured semblance of a stranger woman and child made women and children of them all.

“Never have seen the youngster yet, — he ‘s a boy, she says, and two years old,” said the stranger as he received the treasure back. A lingering moment he gazed upon it, then snapped the case and turned away, but not quick enough to hide the restrained rush of tears.

Malemute Kid led him to a bunk and bade him turn in.

“Call me at four, sharp. Don’t fail me,” were his last words, and a moment later he was breathing in the heaviness of exhausted sleep.

“By Jove! he’s a plucky chap,” commented Prince. “Three hours’ sleep after seventy-five miles with the dogs, and then the trail again. Who is he, Kid?”

“Jack Westondale. Been in going on three years, with nothing but the name of working like a horse, and any amount of bad luck to his credit. I never knew him, but Sitka Charley told me about him.”

“It seems hard that a man with a sweet young wife like his should be putting in his years in this God-forsaken hole, where every year counts two on the outside.”

“The trouble with him is clean grit and stubbornness. He ‘s cleaned up twice with a stake, but lost it both times.”

Here the conversation was broken off by an uproar from Bettles, for the effect had begun to wear away. And soon the bleak years of monotonous grub and deadening toil were being forgotten in rough merriment. Malemute Kid alone seemed unable to lose himself, and cast many an anxious look at his watch. Once he put on his mittens and beaver-skin cap, and leaving the cabin, fell to rummaging about in the cache.

Nor could he wait the hour designated; for he was fifteen minutes ahead of time in rousing his guest. The young giant had stiffened badly, and brisk rubbing was necessary to bring him to his feet. He tottered painfully out of the cabin, to find his dogs harnessed and everything ready for the start. The company wished him good luck and a short chase, while Father Roubeau, hurriedly blessing him, led the stampede for the cabin; and small wonder, for it is not good to face seventy-four degrees below zero with naked ears and hands.

Malemute Kid saw him to the main trail, and there, gripping his hand heartily, gave him advice.

“You’ll find a hundred pounds of salmon-eggs on the sled,” he said. “The dogs will go as far on that as with one hundred and fifty of fish, and you can’t get dog-food at Pelly, as you probably expected.” The stranger started, and his eyes flashed, but he

did not interrupt. “You can’t get an ounce of food for dog or man till you reach Five Fingers, and that ‘s a stiff two hundred miles. Watch out for open water on the Thirty Mile River, and be sure you take the big cut-off above Le Barge.”

“How did you know it? Surely the news can’t be ahead of me already?”

“I don’t know it; and what’s more, I don’t want to know it. But you never owned that team you’re chasing. Sitka Charley sold it to them last spring. But he sized you up to me as square once, and believe him. I’ve seen your face; I like it. And I’ve seen — why, damn you, hit the high places for salt water and that wife of yours, and” — Here the Kid unmittened and jerked out his sack.

“No; I don’t need it,” and the tears froze on his cheeks as he convulsively gripped Malemute Kid’s hand.

“Then don’t spare the dogs; cut them out of the traces as fast as they drop; buy them, and think they ‘re cheap at ten dollars a pound. You can get them at Five Fingers, Little Salmon, and the Hootalinqua. And watch out for wet feet,” was his parting advice. “Keep a-traveling up to twenty-five, but if it gets below that, build a fire and change your socks.”

Fifteen minutes had barely elapsed when the jingle of bells announced new arrivals. The door opened, and a mounted policeman of the Northwest Territory entered, followed by two half-breed dog-drivers. Like Westondale, they were heavily armed and showed signs of fatigue. The half-breeds had been born to the trail, and bore it easily; but the young policeman was badly exhausted. Still, the dogged obstinacy of his race held him to the pace he had set, and would hold him till he dropped in his tracks.

“When did Westondale pull out?” he asked. “He stopped here, didn’t he?” This was supererogatory, for the tracks told their own tale too well.

Malemute Kid had caught Belden’s eye, and he, scenting the wind, replied evasively, “A right part while back.”

“Come, my man; speak up,” the policeman admonished.

“Yeh seem to want him right smart. Hez he ben gittin’ cantankerous down Dawson way?”

“Held up Harry McFarland’s for forty thousand; exchanged it at the P. C. store for a check on Seattle; and who’s to stop the cashing of it if we don’t overtake him? When did he pull out?”

Every eye suppressed its excitement, for Malemute Kid had given the cue, and the young officer encountered wooden faces on every hand.

Striding over to Prince, he put the question to him. Though it hurt him, gazing into the frank, earnest face of his fellow countryman, he replied inconsequentially on the state of the trail.

Then he espied Father Roubeau, who could not lie. “A quarter of an hour ago,” the priest answered; “but he had four hours’ rest for himself and dogs.”

“Fifteen minutes’ start, and he’s fresh! My God!” The poor fellow staggered back, half fainting from exhaustion and disappointment, murmuring something about the run from Dawson in ten hours and the dogs being played out.

Malemute Kid forced a mug of punch upon him; then he turned for the door, ordering the dog-drivers to follow. But the warmth and promise of rest were too tempting, and they objected strenuously. The Kid was conversant with their French patois, and followed it anxiously.

They swore that the dogs were gone up; that Siwash and Babette would have to be shot before the first mile was covered; that the rest were almost as bad; and that it would be better for all hands to rest up.

"Lend me five dogs?" he asked, turning to Malemute Kid.

But the Kid shook his head.

"I'll sign a check on Captain Constantine for five thousand, — here's my papers, — I'm authorized to draw at my own discretion."

Again the silent refusal.

"Then I'll requisition them in the name of the Queen."

Smiling incredulously, the Kid glanced at his well-stocked arsenal, and the Englishman, realizing his impotency, turned for the door. But the dog-drivers still objecting, he whirled upon them fiercely, calling them women and curs. The swart face of the older half-breed flushed angrily, as he drew himself up and promised in good, round terms that he would travel his leader off his legs, and would then be delighted to plant him in the snow.

The young officer — and it required his whole will — walked steadily to the door, exhibiting a freshness he did not possess. But they all knew and appreciated his proud effort; nor could he veil the twinges of agony that shot across his face. Covered with frost, the dogs were curled up in the snow, and it was almost impossible to get them to their feet. The poor brutes whined under the stinging lash, for the dog-drivers were angry and cruel; nor till Babette, the leader, was cut from the traces, could they break out the sled and get under way.

"A dirty scoundrel and a liar!" "By gar! him no good!" "A thief!" "Worse than an Indian!" It was evident that they were angry — first, at the way they had been deceived; and second, at the outraged ethics of the Northland, where honesty, above all, was man's prime jewel. "An' we gave the cuss a hand, after knowin' what he'd did." All eyes were turned accusingly upon Malemute Kid, who rose from the corner where he had been making Babette comfortable, and silently emptied the bowl for a final round of punch.

"It's a cold night, boys, — a bitter cold night," was the irrelevant commencement of his defense. "You've all traveled trail, and know what that stands for. Don't jump a dog when he's down. You've only heard one side. A whiter man than Jack Westondale never ate from the same pot nor stretched blanket with you or me. Last fall he gave his whole clean-up, forty thousand, to Joe Castrell, to buy in on Dominion. To-day he'd be a millionaire. But while he stayed behind at Circle City, taking care of his partner with the scurvy, what does Castrell do? Goes into McFarland's, jumps the limit, and drops the whole sack. Found him dead in the snow the next day. And poor Jack laying his plans to go out this winter to his wife and the boy he's never seen. You'll notice he

took exactly what his partner lost, — forty thousand. Well, he's gone out; and what are you going to do about it?"

The Kid glanced round the circle of his judges, noted the softening of their faces, then raised his mug aloft. "So a health to the man on trail this night; may his grub hold out; may his dogs keep their legs; may his matches never miss fire. God prosper him; good luck go with him; and — "

"Confusion to the Mounted Police!" interpolated Bettles, to the crash of the empty cups.

Told in the Drooling Ward

Me? I'm not a drooler. I'm the assistant. I don't know what Miss Jones or Miss Kelsey could do without me. There are fifty-five low-grade droolers in this ward, and how could they ever all be fed if I wasn't around? I like to feed droolers. They don't make trouble. They can't. Something's wrong with most of their legs and arms, and they can't talk. They're very low-grade. I can walk, and talk, and do things. You must be careful with the droolers and not feed them too fast. Then they choke. Miss Jones says I'm an expert. When a new nurse comes I show her how to do it. It's funny watching a new nurse try to feed them. She goes at it so slow and careful that supper time would be around before she finished shoving down their breakfast. Then I show her, because I'm an expert. Dr. Dalrymple says I am, and he ought to know. A drooler can eat twice as fast if you know how to make him.

My name's Tom. I'm twenty-eight years old. Everybody knows me in the institution. This is an institution, you know. It belongs to the State of California and is run by politics. I know. I've been here a long time. Everybody trusts me. I run errands all over the place, when I'm not busy with the droolers. I like droolers. It makes me think how lucky I am that I ain't a drooler.

I like it here in the Home. I don't like the outside. I know. I've been around a bit, and run away, and adopted. Me for the Home, and for the drooling ward best of all. I don't look like a drooler, do I? You can tell the difference soon as you look at me. I'm an assistant, expert assistant. That's going some for a feeb. Feeb? Oh, that's feeble-minded. I thought you knew. We're all feebs in here.

But I'm a high-grade feeb. Dr. Dalrymple says I'm too smart to be in the Home, but I never let on. It's a pretty good place. And don't throw fits like lots of the feebs. You see that house up there through the trees. The high-grade epilecs all live in it by themselves. They're stuck up because they ain't just ordinary feebs. They call it the club house, and they say they're just as good as anybody outside, only they're sick. I don't like them much. They laugh at me, when they ain't busy throwing fits. But I don't care. I never have to be scared about falling down and busting my head. Sometimes they run around in circles trying to find a place to sit down quick, only they don't. Low-grade epilecs are disgusting, and high-grade epilecs put on airs. I'm glad I ain't an epilec. There ain't anything to them. They just talk big, that's all.

Miss Kelsey says I talk too much. But I talk sense, and that's more than the other feebs do. Dr. Dalrymple says I have the gift of language. I know it. You ought to hear me talk when I'm by myself, or when I've got a drooler to listen. Sometimes I think

I'd like to be a politician, only it's too much trouble. They're all great talkers; that's how they hold their jobs.

Nobody's crazy in this institution. They're just feeble in their minds. Let me tell you something funny. There's about a dozen high-grade girls that set the tables in the big dining room. Sometimes when they're done ahead of time, they all sit down in chairs in a circle and talk. I sneak up to the door and listen, and I nearly die to keep from laughing. Do you want to know what they talk? It's like this. They don't say a word for a long time. And then one says, "Thank God I'm not feeble-minded." And all the rest nod their heads and look pleased. And then nobody says anything for a time. After which the next girl in the circle says, "Thank God I'm not feeble-minded," and they nod their heads all over again. And it goes on around the circle, and they never say anything else. Now they're real feebs, ain't they? I leave it to you. I'm not that kind of a feeb, thank God.

Sometimes I don't think I'm a feeb at all. I play in the band and read music. We're all supposed to be feebs in the band except the leader. He's crazy. We know it, but we never talk about it except amongst ourselves. His job is politics, too, and we don't want him to lose it. I play the drum. They can't get along without me in this institution. I was sick once, so I know. It's a wonder the drooling ward didn't break down while I was in hospital.

I could get out of here if I wanted to. I'm not so feeble as some might think. But I don't let on. I have too good a time. Besides, everything would run down if I went away. I'm afraid some time they'll find out I'm not a feeb and send me out into the world to earn my own living. I know the world, and I don't like it. The Home is fine enough for me.

You see how I grin sometimes. I can't help that. But I can put it on a lot. I'm not bad, though. I look at myself in the glass. My mouth is funny, I know that, and it lops down, and my teeth are bad. You can tell a feeb anywhere by looking at his mouth and teeth. But that doesn't prove I'm a feeb. It's just because I'm lucky that I look like one.

I know a lot. If I told you all I know, you'd be surprised. But when I don't want to know, or when they want me to do something don't want to do, I just let my mouth lop down and laugh and make foolish noises. I watch the foolish noises made by the low-grades, and I can fool anybody. And I know a lot of foolish noises. Miss Kelsey called me a fool the other day. She was very angry, and that was where I fooled her.

Miss Kelsey asked me once why I don't write a book about feebs. I was telling her what was the matter with little Albert. He's a drooler, you know, and I can always tell the way he twists his left eye what's the matter with him. So I was explaining it to Miss Kelsey, and, because she didn't know, it made her mad. But some day, mebbe, I'll write that book. Only it's so much trouble. Besides, I'd sooner talk.

Do you know what a micro is? It's the kind with the little heads no bigger than your fist. They're usually droolers, and they live a long time. The hydros don't drool. They have the big heads, and they're smarter. But they never grow up. They always die. I

never look at one without thinking he's going to die. Sometimes, when I'm feeling lazy, or the nurse is mad at me, I wish I was a drooler with nothing to do and somebody to feed me. But I guess I'd sooner talk and be what I am.

Only yesterday Doctor Dalrymple said to me, "Tom," he said, "just don't know what I'd do without you." And he ought to know, seeing as he's had the bossing of a thousand feebs for going on two years. Dr. Whatcomb was before him. They get appointed, you know. It's politics. I've seen a whole lot of doctors here in my time. I was here before any of them. I've been in this institution twenty-five years. No, I've got no complaints. The institution couldn't be run better.

It's a snap to be a high-grade feeb. Just look at Doctor Dalrymple. He has troubles. He holds his job by politics. You bet we high-graders talk politics. We know all about it, and it's bad. An institution like this oughtn't to be run on politics. Look at Doctor Dalrymple. He's been here two years and learned a lot. Then politics will come along and throw him out and send a new doctor who don't know anything about feebs.

I've been acquainted with just thousands of nurses in my time. Some of them are nice. But they come and go. Most of the women get married. Sometimes I think I'd like to get married. I spoke to Dr. Whatcomb about it once, but he told me he was very sorry, because feebs ain't allowed to get married. I've been in love. She was a nurse. won't tell you her name. She had blue eyes, and yellow hair, and a kind voice, and she liked me. She told me so. And she always told me to be a good boy. And I was, too, until afterward, and then I ran away. You see, she went off and got married, and she didn't tell me about it.

I guess being married ain't what it's cracked up to be. Dr. Anglin and his wife used to fight. I've seen them. And once I heard her call him a feeb. Now nobody has a right to call anybody a feeb that ain't. Dr. Anglin got awful mad when she called him that. But he didn't last long. Politics drove him out, and Doctor Mandeville came. He didn't have a wife. I heard him talking one time with the engineer. The engineer and his wife fought like cats and dogs, and that day Doctor Mandeville told him he was damn glad he wasn't tied to no petticoats. A petticoat is a skirt. I knew what he meant, if I was a feeb. But never let on. You hear lots when you don't let on.

I've seen a lot in my time. Once I was adopted, and went away on the railroad over forty miles to live with a man named Peter Bopp and his wife. They had a ranch. Doctor Anglin said I was strong and bright, and I said I was, too. That was because I wanted to be adopted. And Peter Bopp said he'd give me a good home, and the lawyers fixed up the papers.

But I soon made up my mind that a ranch was no place for me. Mrs. Bopp was scared to death of me and wouldn't let me sleep in the house. They fixed up the woodshed and made me sleep there. I had to get up at four o'clock and feed the horses, and milk cows, and carry the milk to the neighbours. They called it chores, but it kept me going all day. I chopped wood, and cleaned chicken houses, and weeded vegetables, and did most everything on the place. I never had any fun. I hadn't no time.

Let me tell you one thing. I'd sooner feed mush and milk to feebs than milk cows with the frost on the ground. Mrs. Bopp was scared to let me play with her children. And I was scared, too. They used to make faces at me when nobody was looking, and call me "Looney." Everybody called me Looney Tom. And the other boys in the neighbourhood threw rocks at me. You never see anything like that in the Home here. The feebs are better behaved.

Mrs. Bopp used to pinch me and pull my hair when she thought was too slow, and I only made foolish noises and went slower. She said I'd be the death of her some day. I left the boards off the old well in the pasture, and the pretty new calf fell in and got drowned. Then Peter Bopp said he was going to give me a licking. He did, too. He took a strap halter and went at me. It was awful. I'd never had a licking in my life. They don't do such things in the Home, which is why I say the Home is the place for me.

I know the law, and I knew he had no right to lick me with a strap halter. That was being cruel, and the guardianship papers said he mustn't be cruel. I didn't say anything. I just waited, which shows you what kind of a feeb I am. I waited a long time, and got slower, and made more foolish noises; but he wouldn't send me back to the Home, which was what I wanted. But one day, it was the first of the month, Mrs. Brown gave me three dollars, which was for her milk bill with Peter Bopp. That was in the morning. When I brought the milk in the evening I was to bring back the receipt. But I didn't. I just walked down to the station, bought a ticket like any one, and rode on the train back to the Home. That's the kind of a feeb I am.

Doctor Anglin was gone then, and Doctor Mandeville had his place. I walked right into his office. He didn't know me. "Hello," he said, "this ain't visiting day." "I ain't a visitor," I said. "I'm Tom. I belong here." Then he whistled and showed he was surprised. I told him all about it, and showed him the marks of the strap halter, and he got madder and madder all the time and said he'd attend to Mr. Peter Bopp's case.

And mebbe you think some of them little droolers weren't glad to see me.

I walked right into the ward. There was a new nurse feeding little Albert. "Hold on," I said. "That ain't the way. Don't you see how he's twisting that left eye? Let me show you." Mebbe she thought was a new doctor, for she just gave me the spoon, and I guess I filled little Albert up with the most comfortable meal he'd had since I went away. Droolers ain't bad when you understand them. I heard Miss Jones tell Miss Kelsey once that I had an amazing gift in handling droolers.

Some day, mebbe, I'm going to talk with Doctor Dalrymple and get him to give me a declaration that I ain't a feeb. Then I'll get him to make me a real assistant in the drooling ward, with forty dollars a month and my board. And then I'll marry Miss Jones and live right on here. And if she won't have me, I'll marry Miss Kelsey or some other nurse. There's lots of them that want to get married. And I won't care if my wife gets mad and calls me a feeb. What's the good? And I guess when one's learned to put up with droolers a wife won't be much worse.

I didn't tell you about when I ran away. I hadn't no idea of such a thing, and it was Charley and Joe who put me up to it. They're high-grade epilecs, you know. I'd been up to Doctor Wilson's office with a message, and was going back to the drooling ward, when I saw Charley and Joe hiding around the corner of the gymnasium and making motions to me. I went over to them.

"Hello," Joe said. "How's droolers?"

"Fine," I said. "Had any fits lately?"

That made them mad, and I was going on, when Joe said, "We're running away. Come on."

"What for?" I said.

"We're going up over the top of the mountain," Joe said.

"And find a gold mine," said Charley. "We don't have fits any more. We're cured."

"All right," I said. And we sneaked around back of the gymnasium and in among the trees. Mebbe we walked along about ten minutes, when I stopped.

"What's the matter?" said Joe.

"Wait," I said. "I got to go back."

"What for?" said Joe.

And I said, "To get little Albert."

And they said I couldn't, and got mad. But I didn't care. I knew they'd wait. You see, I've been here twenty-five years, and I know the back trails that lead up the mountain, and Charley and Joe didn't know those trails. That's why they wanted me to come.

So I went back and got little Albert. He can't walk, or talk, or do anything except drool, and I had to carry him in my arms. We went on past the last hayfield, which was as far as I'd ever gone. Then the woods and brush got so thick, and me not finding any more trail, we followed the cow-path down to a big creek and crawled through the fence which showed where the Home land stopped.

We climbed up the big hill on the other side of the creek. It was all big trees, and no brush, but it was so steep and slippery with dead leaves we could hardly walk. By and by we came to a real bad place. It was forty feet across, and if you slipped you'd fall a thousand feet, or mebbe a hundred. Anyway, you wouldn't fall–just slide. I went across first, carrying little Albert. Joe came next. But Charley got scared right in the middle and sat down.

"I'm going to have a fit," he said.

"No, you're not," said Joe. "Because if you was you wouldn't 'a' sat down. You take all your fits standing."

"This is a different kind of a fit," said Charley, beginning to cry.

He shook and shook, but just because he wanted to he couldn't scare up the least kind of a fit.

Joe got mad and used awful language. But that didn't help none. So I talked soft and kind to Charley. That's the way to handle feebs. If you get mad, they get worse. I

know. I'm that way myself. That's why I was almost the death of Mrs. Bopp. She got mad.

It was getting along in the afternoon, and I knew we had to be on our way, so I said to Joe:

"Here, stop your cussing and hold Albert. I'll go back and get him."

And I did, too; but he was so scared and dizzy he crawled along on hands and knees while I helped him. When I got him across and took Albert back in my arms, I heard somebody laugh and looked down. And there was a man and woman on horseback looking up at us. He had a gun on his saddle, and it was her who was laughing.

"Who in hell's that?" said Joe, getting scared. "Somebody to catch us?"

"Shut up your cussing," I said to him. "That is the man who owns this ranch and writes books."

"How do you do, Mr. Endicott," I said down to him.

"Hello," he said. "What are you doing here?"

"We're running away," I said.

And he said, "Good luck. But be sure and get back before dark."

"But this is a real running away," I said.

And then both he and his wife laughed.

"All right," he said. "Good luck just the same. But watch out the bears and mountain lions don't get you when it gets dark."

Then they rode away laughing, pleasant like; but I wished he hadn't said that about the bears and mountain lions.

After we got around the hill, I found a trail, and we went much faster. Charley didn't have any more signs of fits, and began laughing and talking about gold mines. The trouble was with little Albert. He was almost as big as me. You see, all the time I'd been calling him little Albert, he'd been growing up. He was so heavy I couldn't keep up with Joe and Charley. I was all out of breath. So I told them they'd have to take turns in carrying him, which they said they wouldn't. Then I said I'd leave them and they'd get lost, and the mountain lions and bears would eat them. Charley looked like he was going to have a fit right there, and Joe said, "Give him to me." And after that we carried him in turn.

We kept right on up that mountain. I don't think there was any gold mine, but we might 'a' got to the top and found it, if we hadn't lost the trail, and if it hadn't got dark, and if little Albert hadn't tired us all out carrying him. Lots of feebs are scared of the dark, and Joe said he was going to have a fit right there. Only he didn't. I never saw such an unlucky boy. He never could throw a fit when he wanted to. Some of the feebs can throw fits as quick as a wink.

By and by it got real black, and we were hungry, and we didn't have no fire. You see, they don't let feebs carry matches, and all we could do was just shiver. And we'd never thought about being hungry. You see, feebs always have their food ready for them, and that's why it's better to be a feeb than earning your living in the world.

And worse than everything was the quiet. There was only one thing worse, and it was the noises. There was all kinds of noises every once in a while, with quiet spells in between. I reckon they were rabbits, but they made noises in the brush like wild animals–you know, rustle rustle, thump, bump, crackle crackle, just like that. First Charley got a fit, a real one, and Joe threw a terrible one. I don't mind fits in the Home with everybody around. But out in the woods on a dark night is different. You listen to me, and never go hunting gold mines with epilecs, even if they are high-grade.

I never had such an awful night. When Joe and Charley weren't throwing fits they were making believe, and in the darkness the shivers from the cold which I couldn't see seemed like fits, too. And I shivered so hard I thought I was getting fits myself. And little Albert, with nothing to eat, just drooled and drooled. I never seen him as bad as that before. Why, he twisted that left eye of his until it ought to have dropped out. I couldn't see it, but I could tell from the movements he made. And Joe just lay and cussed and cussed, and Charley cried and wished he was back in the Home.

We didn't die, and next morning we went right back the way we'd come. And little Albert got awful heavy. Doctor Wilson was mad as could be, and said I was the worst feeb in the institution, along with Joe and Charley. But Miss Striker, who was a nurse in the drooling ward then, just put her arms around me and cried, she was that happy I'd got back. I thought right there that mebbe I'd marry her. But only a month afterward she got married to the plumber that came up from the city to fix the gutter-pipes of the new hospital. And little Albert never twisted his eye for two days, it was that tired.

Next time I run away I'm going right over that mountain. But I ain't going to take epilecs along. They ain't never cured, and when they get scared or excited they throw fits to beat the band. But I'll take little Albert. Somehow I can't get along without him. And, anyway, I ain't going to run away. The drooling ward's a better snap than gold mines, and I hear there's a new nurse coming. Besides, little Albert's bigger than I am now, and I could never carry him over a mountain. And he's growing bigger every day. It's astonishing.

Too Much Gold

This being a story–and a truer one than it may appear–of a mining country, it is quite to be expected that it will be a hard-luck story. But that depends on the point of view. Hard luck is a mild way of terming it so far as Kink Mitchell and Hootchinoo Bill are concerned; and that they have a decided opinion on the subject is a matter of common knowledge in the Yukon country.

It was in the fall of 1896 that the two partners came down to the east bank of the Yukon, and drew a Peterborough canoe from a moss-covered cache. They were not particularly pleasant-looking objects. A summer's prospecting, filled to repletion with hardship and rather empty of grub, had left their clothes in tatters and themselves worn and cadaverous. A nimbus of mosquitoes buzzed about each man's head. Their faces were coated with blue clay. Each carried a lump of this damp clay, and, whenever it dried and fell from their faces, more was daubed on in its place. There was a querulous plaint in their voices, an irritability of movement and gesture, that told of broken sleep and a losing struggle with the little winged pests.

"Them skeeters'll be the death of me yet," Kink Mitchell whimpered, as the canoe felt the current on her nose, and leaped out from the bank

"Cheer up, cheer up. We're about done," Hootchinoo Bill answered, with an attempted heartiness in his funereal tones that was ghastly. "We'll be in Forty Mile in forty minutes, and then–cursed little devil!"

One hand left his paddle and landed on the back of his neck with a sharp slap. He put a fresh daub of clay on the injured part, swearing sulphurously the while. Kink Mitchell was not in the least amused. He merely improved the opportunity by putting a thicker coating of clay on his own neck.

They crossed the Yukon to its west bank, shot down-stream with easy stroke, and at the end of forty minutes swung in close to the left around the tail of an island. Forty Mile spread itself suddenly before them. Both men straightened their backs and gazed at the sight. They gazed long and carefully, drifting with the current, in their faces an expression of mingled surprise and consternation slowly gathering. Not a thread of smoke was rising from the hundreds of log-cabins. There was no sound of axes biting sharply into wood, of hammering and sawing. Neither dogs nor men loitered before the big store. No steamboats lay at the bank, no canoes, nor scows, nor poling-boats. The river was as bare of craft as the town was of life.

"Kind of looks like Gabriel's tooted his little horn, and you an' me has turned up missing," remarked Hootchinoo Bill.

His remark was casual, as though there was nothing unusual about the occurrence. Kink Mitchell's reply was just as casual as though he, too, were unaware of any strange perturbation of spirit.

"Looks as they was all Baptists, then, and took the boats to go by water," was his contribution.

"My ol' dad was a Baptist," Hootchinoo Bill supplemented. "An' he always did hold it was forty thousand miles nearer that way."

This was the end of their levity. They ran the canoe in and climbed the high earth bank. A feeling of awe descended upon them as they walked the deserted streets. The sunlight streamed placidly over the town. A gentle wind tapped the halyards against the flagpole before the closed doors of the Caledonia Dance Hall. Mosquitoes buzzed, robins sang, and moose birds tripped hungrily among the cabins; but there was no human life nor sign of human life.

"I'm just dyin' for a drink," Hootchinoo Bill said and unconsciously his voice sank to a hoarse whisper.

His partner nodded his head, loth to hear his own voice break the stillness. They trudged on in uneasy silence till surprised by an open door. Above this door, and stretching the width of the building, a rude sign announced the same as the "Monte Carlo." But beside the door, hat over eyes, chair tilted back, a man sat sunning himself. He was an old man. Beard and hair were long and white and patriarchal.

"If it ain't ol' Jim Cummings, turned up like us, too late for Resurrection!" said Kink Mitchell.

"Most like he didn't hear Gabriel tootin'," was Hootchinoo Bill's suggestion.

"Hello, Jim! Wake up!" he shouted.

The old man unlimbered lamely, blinking his eyes and murmuring automatically: "What'll ye have, gents? What'll ye have?"

They followed him inside and ranged up against the long bar where of yore a half-dozen nimble bar-keepers found little time to loaf. The great room, ordinarily aroar with life, was still and gloomy as a tomb. There was no rattling of chips, no whirring of ivory balls. Roulette and faro tables were like gravestones under their canvas covers. No women's voices drifted merrily from the dance-room behind. Ol' Jim Cummings wiped a glass with palsied hands, and Kink Mitchell scrawled his initials on the dust-covered bar.

"Where's the girls?" Hootchinoo Bill shouted, with affected geniality.

"Gone," was the ancient bar-keeper's reply, in a voice thin and aged as himself, and as unsteady as his hand.

"Where's Bidwell and Barlow?"

"Gone."

"And Sweetwater Charley?"

"Gone."

"And his sister?"

"Gone too."

"Your daughter Sally, then, and her little kid?"

"Gone, all gone." The old man shook his head sadly, rummaging in an absent way among the dusty bottles.

"Great Sardanapolis! Where?" Kink Mitchell exploded, unable longer to restrain himself. "You don't say you've had the plague?"

"Why, ain't you heerd?" The old man chuckled quietly. "They-all's gone to Dawson."

"What-like is that?" Bill demanded. "A creek? or a bar? or a place?"

"Ain't never heered of Dawson, eh?" The old man chuckled exasperatingly. "Why, Dawson's a town, a city, bigger'n Forty Mile. Yes, sir, bigger'n Forty Mile."

"I've ben in this land seven year," Bill announced emphatically, "an' I make free to say I never heard tell of the burg before. Hold on! Let's have some more of that whisky. Your information's flabbergasted me, that it has. Now just whereabouts is this Dawson-place you was a-mentionin'?"

"On the big flat jest below the mouth of Klondike," ol' Jim answered. "But where has you-all ben this summer?"

"Never you mind where we-all's ben," was Kink Mitchell's testy reply. "We-all's ben where the skeeters is that thick you've got to throw a stick into the air so as to see the sun and tell the time of day. Ain't I right, Bill?"

"Right you are," said Bill. "But speakin' of this Dawson-place how like did it happen to be, Jim?"

"Ounce to the pan on a creek called Bonanza, an' they ain't got to bed-rock yet."

"Who struck it?"

"Carmack."

At mention of the discoverer's name the partners stared at each other disgustedly. Then they winked with great solemnity.

"Siwash George," sniffed Hootchinoo Bill.

"That squaw-man," sneered Kink Mitchell.

"I wouldn't put on my moccasins to stampede after anything he'd ever find," said Bill.

"Same here," announced his partner. "A cuss that's too plumb lazy to fish his own salmon. That's why he took up with the Indians. S'pose that black brother-in-law of his,–lemme see, Skookum Jim, eh?–s'pose he's in on it?"

The old bar-keeper nodded. "Sure, an' what's more, all Forty Mile, exceptin' me an' a few cripples."

"And drunks," added Kink Mitchell.

"No-sir-ee!" the old man shouted emphatically.

"I bet you the drinks Honkins ain't in on it!" Hootchinoo Bill cried with certitude.

Ol' Jim's face lighted up. "I takes you, Bill, an' you loses."

"However did that ol' soak budge out of Forty Mile?" Mitchell demanded.

"The ties him down an' throws him in the bottom of a polin'-boat," ol' Jim explained. "Come right in here, they did, an' takes him out of that there chair there in the corner, an' three more drunks they finds under the pianny. I tell you-alls the whole camp hits

up the Yukon for Dawson jes' like Sam Scratch was after them,–wimmen, children, babes in arms, the whole shebang. Bidwell comes to me an' sez, sez he, 'Jim, I wants you to keep tab on the Monte Carlo. I'm goin'.'

"'Where's Barlow?' sez I. 'Gone,' sez he, 'an' I'm a-followin' with a load of whisky.' An' with that, never waitin' for me to decline, he makes a run for his boat an' away he goes, polin' up river like mad. So here I be, an' these is the first drinks I've passed out in three days."

The partners looked at each other.

"Gosh darn my buttoms!" said Hootchinoo Bill. "Seems likes you and me, Kink, is the kind of folks always caught out with forks when it rains soup."

"Wouldn't it take the saleratus out your dough, now?" said Kink Mitchell. "A stampede of tin-horns, drunks, an' loafers."

"An' squaw-men," added Bill. "Not a genooine miner in the whole caboodle."

"Genooine miners like you an' me, Kink," he went on academically, "is all out an' sweatin' hard over Birch Creek way. Not a genooine miner in this whole crazy Dawson outfit, and I say right here, not a step do I budge for any Carmack strike. I've got to see the colour of the dust first."

"Same here," Mitchell agreed. "Let's have another drink."

Having wet this resolution, they beached the canoe, transferred its contents to their cabin, and cooked dinner. But as the afternoon wore along they grew restive. They were men used to the silence of the great wilderness, but this gravelike silence of a town worried them. They caught themselves listening for familiar sounds–"waitin' for something to make a noise which ain't goin' to make a noise," as Bill put it. They strolled through the deserted streets to the Monte Carlo for more drinks, and wandered along the river bank to the steamer landing, where only water gurgled as the eddy filled and emptied, and an occasional salmon leapt flashing into the sun.

They sat down in the shade in front of the store and talked with the consumptive storekeeper, whose liability to hemorrhage accounted for his presence. Bill and Kink told him how they intended loafing in their cabin and resting up after the hard summer's work. They told him, with a certain insistence, that was half appeal for belief, half challenge for contradiction, how much they were going to enjoy their idleness. But the storekeeper was uninterested. He switched the conversation back to the strike on Klondike, and they could not keep him away from it. He could think of nothing else, talk of nothing else, till Hootchinoo Bill rose up in anger and disgust.

"Gosh darn Dawson, say I!" he cried.

"Same here," said Kink Mitchell, with a brightening face. "One'd think something was doin' up there, 'stead of bein' a mere stampede of greenhorns an' tinhorns."

But a boat came into view from downstream. It was long and slim. It hugged the bank closely, and its three occupants, standing upright, propelled it against the stiff current by means of long poles.

“Circle City outfit,” said the storekeeper. “I was lookin’ for ’em along by afternoon. Forty Mile had the start of them by a hundred and seventy miles. But gee! they ain’t losin’ any time!”

‘We’ll just sit here quiet-like and watch ’em string by,” Bill said complacently.

As he spoke, another boat appeared in sight, followed after a brief interval by two others. By this time the first boat was abreast of the men on the bank. Its occupants did not cease poling while greetings were exchanged, and, though its progress was slow, a half-hour saw it out of sight up river.

Still they came from below, boat after boat, in endless procession. The uneasiness of Bill and Kink increased. They stole speculative, tentative glances at each other, and when their eyes met looked away in embarrassment. Finally, however, their eyes met and neither looked away.

Kink opened his mouth to speak, but words failed him and his mouth remained open while he continued to gaze at his partner.

“Just what I was thinken’, Kink,” said Bill.

They grinned sheepishly at each other, and by tacit consent started to walk away. Their pace quickened, and by the time they arrived at their cabin they were on the run.

“Can’t lose no time with all that multitude a-rushin’ by,” Kink spluttered, as he jabbed the sour-dough can into the beanpot with one hand and with the other gathered in the frying-pan and coffee-pot.

“Should say not,” gasped Bill, his head and shoulders buried in a clothes-sack wherein were stored winter socks and underwear. “I say, Kink, don’t forget the saleratus on the corner shelf back of the stove.”

Half-an-hour later they were launching the canoe and loading up, while the store-keeper made jocular remarks about poor, weak mortals and the contagiousness of “stampedin’ fever.” But when Bill and Kink thrust their long poles to bottom and started the canoe against the current, he called after them:-

“Well, so-long and good luck! And don’t forget to blaze a stake or two for me!”

They nodded their heads vigorously and felt sorry for the poor wretch who remained perforce behind.

* * * * *

Kink and Bill were sweating hard. According to the revised Northland Scripture, the stampede is to the swift, the blazing of stakes to the strong, and the Crown in royalties, gathers to itself the fulness thereof. Kink and Bill were both swift and strong. They took the soggy trail at a long, swinging gait that broke the hearts of a couple of tender-feet who tried to keep up with them. Behind, strung out between them and Dawson (where the boats were discarded and land travel began), was the vanguard of the Circle City outfit. In the race from Forty Mile the partners had passed every boat, winning from the leading boat by a length in the Dawson eddy, and leaving its occupants sadly behind the moment their feet struck the trail.

“Huh! couldn’t see us for smoke,” Hootchinoo Bill chuckled, flirting the stinging sweat from his brow and glancing swiftly back along the way they had come.

Three men emerged from where the trail broke through the trees. Two followed close at their heels, and then a man and a woman shot into view.

“Come on, you Kink! Hit her up! Hit her up!”

Bill quickened his pace. Mitchell glanced back in more leisurely fashion.

“I declare if they ain’t lopin’!”

“And here’s one that’s loped himself out,” said Bill, pointing to the side of the trail.

A man was lying on his back panting in the culminating stages of violent exhaustion. His face was ghastly, his eyes bloodshot and glazed, for all the world like a dying man.

“CHECHAQUO!” Kink Mitchell grunted, and it was the grunt of the old “sour dough” for the green-horn, for the man who outfitted with “self-risin’“ flour and used baking-powder in his biscuits.

The partners, true to the old-timer custom, had intended to stake down-stream from the strike, but when they saw claim 81 BELOW blazed on a tree,–which meant fully eight miles below Discovery,–they changed their minds. The eight miles were covered in less than two hours. It was a killing pace, over so rough trail, and they passed scores of exhausted men that had fallen by the wayside.

At Discovery little was to be learned of the upper creek. Cormack’s Indian brother-in-law, Skookum Jim, had a hazy notion that the creek was staked as high as the 30’s; but when Kink and Bill looked at the corner-stakes of 79 ABOVE, they threw their stampeding packs off their backs and sat down to smoke. All their efforts had been vain. Bonanza was staked from mouth to source,–“out of sight and across the next divide.” Bill complained that night as they fried their bacon and boiled their coffee over Cormack’s fire at Discovery.

“Try that pup,” Carmack suggested next morning.

“That pup” was a broad creek that flowed into Bonanza at 7 ABOVE. The partners received his advice with the magnificent contempt of the sour dough for a squaw-man, and, instead, spent the day on Adam’s Creek, another and more likely-looking tributary of Bonanza. But it was the old story over again–staked to the sky-line.

For threes days Carmack repeated his advice, and for three days they received it contemptuously. But on the fourth day, there being nowhere else to go, they went up “that pup.” They knew that it was practically unstaked, but they had no intention of staking. The trip was made more for the purpose of giving vent to their ill-humour than for anything else. They had become quite cynical, sceptical. They jeered and scoffed at everything, and insulted every chechaquo they met along the way.

At No. 23 the stakes ceased. The remainder of the creek was open for location.

“Moose pasture,” sneered Kink Mitchell.

But Bill gravely paced off five hundred feet up the creek and blazed the corner-stakes. He had picked up the bottom of a candle-box, and on the smooth side he wrote the notice for his centre-stake:-

THIS MOOSE PASTURE IS RESERVED FOR THE

SWEDES AND CHECHAQUOS.

- BILL RADER.

Kink read it over with approval, saying:-

“As them’s my sentiments, I reckon I might as well subscribe.”

So the name of Charles Mitchell was added to the notice; and many an old sour dough’s face relaxed that day at sight of the handiwork of a kindred spirit.

“How’s the pup?” Carmack inquired when they strolled back into camp.

“To hell with pups!” was Hootchinoo Bill’s reply. “Me and Kink’s goin’ a-lookin’ for Too Much Gold when we get rested up.”

Too Much Gold was the fabled creek of which all sour doughs dreamed, whereof it was said the gold was so thick that, in order to wash it, gravel must first be shovelled into the sluice-boxes. But the several days’ rest, preliminary to the quest for Too Much Gold, brought a slight change in their plan, inasmuch as it brought one Ans Handerson, a Swede.

Ans Handerson had been working for wages all summer at Miller Creek over on the Sixty Mile, and, the summer done, had strayed up Bonanza like many another waif helplessly adrift on the gold tides that swept willy-nilly across the land. He was tall and lanky. His arms were long, like prehistoric man’s, and his hands were like soup-plates, twisted and gnarled, and big-knuckled from toil. He was slow of utterance and movement, and his eyes, pale blue as his hair was pale yellow, seemed filled with an immortal dreaming, the stuff of which no man knew, and himself least of all. Perhaps this appearance of immortal dreaming was due to a supreme and vacuous innocence. At any rate, this was the valuation men of ordinary clay put upon him, and there was nothing extraordinary about the composition of Hootchinoo Bill and Kink Mitchell.

The partners had spent a day of visiting and gossip, and in the evening met in the temporary quarters of the Monte Carlo–a large tent were stampeders rested their weary bones and bad whisky sold at a dollar a drink. Since the only money in circulation was dust, and since the house took the “down-weight” on the scales, a drink cost something more than a dollar. Bill and Kink were not drinking, principally for the reason that their one and common sack was not strong enough to stand many excursions to the scales.

“Say, Bill, I’ve got a chechaquo on the string for a sack of flour,” Mitchell announced jubilantly.

Bill looked interested and pleased. Grub as scarce, and they were not over-plentifully supplied for the quest after Too Much Gold.

“Flour’s worth a dollar a pound,” he answered. “How like do you calculate to get your finger on it?”

“Trade ‘m a half-interest in that claim of ourn,” Kink answered.

“What claim?” Bill was surprised. Then he remembered the reservation he had staked off for the Swedes, and said, “Oh!”

“I wouldn’t be so clost about it, though,” he added. “Give ‘m the whole thing while you’re about it, in a right free-handed way.”

Bill shook his head. "If I did, he'd get clean scairt and prance off. I'm lettin' on as how the ground is believed to be valuable, an' that we're lettin' go half just because we're monstrous short on grub. After the dicker we can make him a present of the whole shebang."

"If somebody ain't disregarded our notice," Bill objected, though he was plainly pleased at the prospect of exchanging the claim for a sack of flour.

"She ain't jumped," Kink assured him. "It's No. 24, and it stands. The chechaquos took it serious, and they begun stakin' where you left off. Staked clean over the divide, too. I was gassin' with one of them which has just got in with cramps in his legs."

It was then, and for the first time, that they heard the slow and groping utterance of Ans Handerson.

"Ay like the looks," he was saying to the bar-keeper. "Ay tank Ay gat a claim."

The partners winked at each other, and a few minutes later a surprised and grateful Swede was drinking bad whisky with two hard-hearted strangers. But he was as hard-headed as they were hard-hearted. The sack made frequent journeys to the scales, followed solicitously each time by Kink Mitchell's eyes, and still Ans Handerson did not loosen up. In his pale blue eyes, as in summer seas, immortal dreams swam up and burned, but the swimming and the burning were due to the tales of gold and prospect pans he heard, rather than to the whisky he slid so easily down his throat.

The partners were in despair, though they appeared boisterous and jovial of speech and action.

"Don't mind me, my friend," Hootchinoo Bill hiccoughed, his hand upon Ans Handerson's shoulder. "Have another drink. We're just celebratin' Kink's birthday here. This is my pardner, Kink, Kink Mitchell. An' what might your name be?"

This learned, his hand descended resoundingly on Kink's back, and Kink simulated clumsy self-consciousness in that he was for the time being the centre of the rejoicing, while Ans Handerson looked pleased and asked them to have a drink with him. It was the first and last time he treated, until the play changed and his canny soul was roused to unwonted prodigality. But he paid for the liquor from a fairly healthy-looking sack. "Not less 'n eight hundred in it," calculated the lynx-eyed Kink; and on the strength of it he took the first opportunity of a privy conversation with Bidwell, proprietor of the bad whisky and the tent.

"Here's my sack, Bidwell," Kink said, with the intimacy and surety of one old-timer to another. "Just weigh fifty dollars into it for a day or so more or less, and we'll be yours truly, Bill an' me."

Thereafter the journeys of the sack to the scales were more frequent, and the celebration of Kink's natal day waxed hilarious. He even essayed to sing the old-timer's classic, "The Juice of the Forbidden Fruit," but broke down and drowned his embarrassment in another round of drinks. Even Bidwell honoured him with a round or two on the house; and he and Bill were decently drunk by the time Ans Handerson's eyelids began to droop and his tongue gave promise of loosening.

Bill grew affectionate, then confidential. He told his troubles and hard luck to the bar-keeper and the world in general, and to Ans Handerson in particular. He required no histrionic powers to act the part. The bad whisky attended to that. He worked himself into a great sorrow for himself and Bill, and his tears were sincere when he told how he and his partner were thinking of selling a half-interest in good ground just because they were short of grub. Even Kink listened and believed.

Ans Handerson's eyes were shining unholily as he asked, "How much you tank you take?"

Bill and Kink did not hear him, and he was compelled to repeat his query. They appeared reluctant. He grew keener. And he swayed back and forward, holding on to the bar and listened with all his ears while they conferred together on one side, and wrangled as to whether they should or not, and disagreed in stage whispers over the price they should set.

"Two hundred and–hic!–fifty," Bill finally announced, "but we reckon as we won't sell."

"Which is monstrous wise if I might chip in my little say," seconded Bidwell.

"Yes, indeedy," added Kink. "We ain't in no charity business a-disgorgin' free an' generous to Swedes an' white men."

"Ay tank we haf another drink," hiccoughed Ans Handerson, craftily changing the subject against a more propitious time.

And thereafter, to bring about that propitious time, his own sack began to see-saw between his hip pocket and the scales. Bill and Kink were coy, but they finally yielded to his blandishments. Whereupon he grew shy and drew Bidwell to one side. He staggered exceedingly, and held on to Bidwell for support as he asked-

"They ban all right, them men, you tank so?"

"Sure," Bidwell answered heartily. "Known 'em for years. Old sour doughs. When they sell a claim, they sell a claim. They ain't no air-dealers."

"Ay tank Ay buy," Ans Handerson announced, tottering back to the two men.

But by now he was dreaming deeply, and he proclaimed he would have the whole claim or nothing. This was the cause of great pain to Hootchinoo Bill. He orated grandly against the "hawgishness" of chechaquos and Swedes, albeit he dozed between periods, his voice dying away to a gurgle, and his head sinking forward on his breast. But whenever roused by a nudge from Kink or Bidwell, he never failed to explode another volley of abuse and insult.

Ans Handerson was calm under it all. Each insult added to the value of the claim. Such unamiable reluctance to sell advertised but one thing to him, and he was aware of a great relief when Hootchinoo Bill sank snoring to the floor, and he was free to turn his attention to his less intractable partner.

Kink Mitchell was persuadable, though a poor mathematician. He wept dolefully, but was willing to sell a half-interest for two hundred and fifty dollars or the whole claim for seven hundred and fifty. Ans Handerson and Bidwell laboured to clear away his erroneous ideas concerning fractions, but their labour was vain. He spilled tears

and regrets all over the bar and on their shoulders, which tears, however, did not wash away his opinion, that if one half was worth two hundred and fifty, two halves were worth three times as much.

In the end,–and even Bidwell retained no more than hazy recollections of how the night terminated,–a bill of sale was drawn up, wherein Bill Rader and Charles Mitchell yielded up all right and title to the claim known as 24 ELDORADO, the same being the name the creek had received from some optimistic chechaquo.

When Kink had signed, it took the united efforts of the three to arouse Bill. Pen in hand, he swayed long over the document; and, each time he rocked back and forth, in Ans Handerson's eyes flashed and faded a wondrous golden vision. When the precious signature was at last appended and the dust paid over, he breathed a great sigh, and sank to sleep under a table, where he dreamed immortally until morning.

But the day was chill and grey. He felt bad. His first act, unconscious and automatic, was to feel for his sack. Its lightness startled him. Then, slowly, memories of the night thronged into his brain. Rough voices disturbed him. He opened his eyes and peered out from under the table. A couple of early risers, or, rather, men who had been out on trail all night, were vociferating their opinions concerning the utter and loathsome worthlessness of Eldorado Creek. He grew frightened, felt in his pocket, and found the deed to 24 ELDORADO.

Ten minutes later Hootchinoo Bill and Kink Mitchell were roused from their blankets by a wild-eyed Swede that strove to force upon them an ink-scrawled and very blotty piece of paper.

"Ay tank Ay take my money back," he gibbered. "Ay tank Ay take my money back."

Tears were in his eyes and throat. They ran down his cheeks as he knelt before them and pleaded and implored. But Bill and Kink did not laugh. They might have been harder hearted.

"First time I ever hear a man squeal over a minin' deal," Bill said. "An' I make free to say 'tis too onusual for me to savvy."

"Same here," Kink Mitchell remarked. "Minin' deals is like horse-tradin'."

They were honest in their wonderment. They could not conceive of themselves raising a wail over a business transaction, so they could not understand it in another man.

"The poor, ornery chechaquo," murmured Hootchinoo Bill, as they watched the sorrowing Swede disappear up the trail.

"But this ain't Too Much Gold," Kink Mitchell said cheerfully.

And ere the day was out they purchased flour and bacon at exorbitant prices with Ans Handerson's dust and crossed over the divide in the direction of the creeks that lie between Klondike and Indian River.

Three months later they came back over the divide in the midst of a snow-storm and dropped down the trail to 24 ELDORADO. It merely chanced that the trail led them that way. They were not looking for the claim. Nor could they see much through the driving white till they set foot upon the claim itself. And then the air lightened,

and they beheld a dump, capped by a windlass that a man was turning. They saw him draw a bucket of gravel from the hole and tilt it on the edge of the dump. Likewise they saw another, man, strangely familiar, filling a pan with the fresh gravel. His hands were large; his hair wets pale yellow. But before they reached him, he turned with the pan and fled toward a cabin. He wore no hat, and the snow falling down his neck accounted for his haste. Bill and Kink ran after him, and came upon him in the cabin, kneeling by the stove and washing the pan of gravel in a tub of water.

He was too deeply engaged to notice more than that somebody had entered the cabin. They stood at his shoulder and looked on. He imparted to the pan a deft circular motion, pausing once or twice to rake out the larger particles of gravel with his fingers. The water was muddy, and, with the pan buried in it, they could see nothing of its contents. Suddenly he lifted the pan clear and sent the water out of it with a flirt. A mass of yellow, like butter in a churn, showed across the bottom.

Hootchinoo Bill swallowed. Never in his life had he dreamed of so rich a test-pan.

"Kind of thick, my friend," he said huskily. "How much might you reckon that-all to be?"

Ans Handerson did not look up as he replied, "Ay tank fafty ounces."

"You must be scrumptious rich, then, eh?"

Still Ans Handerson kept his head down, absorbed in putting in the fine touches which wash out the last particles of dross, though he answered, "Ay tank Ay ban wort' five hundred t'ousand dollar."

"Gosh!" said Hootchinoo Bill, and he said it reverently.

"Yes, Bill, gosh!" said Kink Mitchell; and they went out softly and closed the door.

The Town-Site of Tra-Lee

SMOKE and Shorty encountered each other, going in opposite directions, at the corner where stood the Elkhorn saloon. The former's face wore a pleased expression, and he was walking briskly. Shorty, on the other hand, was slouching along in a depressed and indeterminate fashion.

"Whither away?" Smoke challenged gaily.

"Danged if I know," came the disconsolate answer. "Wisht I did. They ain't nothin' to take me anywheres. I've set two hours in the deadest game of draw–nothing excitin', no hands, an' broke even. Played a rubber of cribbage with Skiff Mitchell for the drinks, an' now I'm that languid for somethin' doin' that I'm perambulatin' the streets on the chance of seein' a dogfight, or a argument, or somethin'."

"I've got something better on hand," Smoke answered. "That's why I was looking for you. Come on along."

"Now?"

"Sure."

"Where to?"

"Across the river to make a call on old Dwight Sanderson."

"Never heard of him," Shorty said dejectedly. "An' never heard of no one living across the river anyway. What's he want to live there for? Ain't he got no sense?"

"He's got something to sell," Smoke laughed.

"Dogs? A gold-mine? Tobacco? Rubber boots?"

Smoke shook his head to each question. "Come along on and find out, because I'm going to buy it from him on a spec, and if you want you can come in half."

"Don't tell me it's eggs!" Shorty cried, his face twisted into an expression of facetious and sarcastic alarm.

"Come on along," Smoke told him. "And I'll give you ten guesses while we're crossing the ice."

They dipped down the high bank at the foot of the street and came out upon the ice-covered Yukon. Three-quarters of a mile away, directly opposite, the other bank of the stream uprose in precipitous bluffs hundreds of feet in height. Toward these bluffs, winding and twisting in and out among broken and upthrown blocks of ice, ran a slightly traveled trail. Shorty trudged at Smoke's heels, beguiling the time with guesses at what Dwight Sanderson had to sell.

"Reindeer? Copper-mine or brick-yard? That's one guess. Bear-skins, or any kind of skins? Lottery tickets? A potato-ranch?"

"Getting near it," Smoke encouraged. "And better than that."

"Two potato-ranches? A cheese-factory? A moss-farm?"

"That's not so bad, Shorty. It's not a thousand miles away."

"A quarry?"

"That's as near as the moss-farm and the potato-ranch."

"Hold on. Let me think. I got one guess comin'." Ten silent minutes passed. "Say, Smoke, I ain't goin' to use that last guess. When this thing you're buyin' sounds like a potato-ranch, a moss-farm, and a stone-quarry, I quit. An' I don't go in on the deal till I see it an' size it up. What is it?"

"Well, you'll see the cards on the table soon enough. Kindly cast your eyes up there. Do you see the smoke from that cabin? That's where Dwight Sanderson lives. He's holding down a town-site location."

"What else is he holdin' down?"

"That's all," Smoke laughed. "Except rheumatism. I hear he's been suffering from it."

"Say!" Shorty's hand flashed out and with an abrupt shoulder grip brought his comrade to a halt. "You ain't telling me you're buyin' a town-site at this fallin'-off place?"

"That's your tenth guess, and you win. Come on."

"But wait a moment," Shorty pleaded. "Look at it–nothin' but bluffs an' slides, all up-and-down. Where could the town stand?"

"Search me."

"Then you ain't buyin' it for a town?"

"But Dwight Sanderson's selling it for a town," Smoke baffled. "Come on. We've got to climb this slide."

The slide was steep, and a narrow trail zigzagged up it on a formidable Jacob's ladder. Shorty moaned and groaned over the sharp corners and the steep pitches.

"Think of a town-site here. They ain't a flat space big enough for a postage-stamp. An' it's the wrong side of the river. All the freightin' goes the other way. Look at Dawson there. Room to spread for forty thousand more people. Say, Smoke. You're a meat-eater. I know that. An' I know you ain't buyin' it for a town. Then what in Heaven's name are you buyin' it for?"

"To sell, of course."

"But other folks ain't as crazy as old man Sanderson an' you."

"Maybe not in the same way, Shorty. Now I'm going to take this town-site, break it up in parcels, and sell it to a lot of sane people who live over in Dawson."

"Huh! All Dawson's still laughing at you an' me an' them eggs. You want to make 'em laugh some more, hey?"

"I certainly do."

"But it's too danged expensive, Smoke. I helped you make 'em laugh on the eggs, an' my share of the laugh cost me nearly nine thousan' dollars."

"All right. You don't have to come in on this. The profits will be all mine, but you've got to help me just the same."

"Oh, I'll help all right. An' they can laugh at me some more. But nary a ounce do I drop this time.

"What's old Sanderson holdin' it at? A couple of hundred?"

"Ten thousand. I ought to get it for five."

"Wisht I was a minister," Shorty breathed fervently.

"What for?"

"So I could preach the gosh-dangdest, eloquentest sermon on a text you may have hearn–to wit: a fool an' his money."

"Come in," they heard Dwight Sanderson yell irritably, when they knocked at his door, and they entered to find him squatted by a stone fireplace and pounding coffee wrapped in a piece of flour-sacking.

"What d'ye want?" he demanded harshly, emptying the pounded coffee into the coffee-pot that stood on the coals near the front of the fireplace.

"To talk business," Smoke answered. "You've a town-site located here, I understand. What do you want for it?"

"Ten thousand dollars," came the answer. "And now that I've told you, you can laugh, and get out. There's the door. Good-by."

"But I don't want to laugh. I know plenty of funnier things to do than to climb up this cliff of yours. I want to buy your town-site."

"You do, eh? Well, I'm glad to hear sense." Sanderson came over and sat down facing his visitors, his hands resting on the table and his eyes cocking apprehensively toward the coffee-pot. "I've told you my price, and I ain't ashamed to tell you again–ten thousand. And you can laugh or buy, it's all one to me."

To show his indifference he drummed with his knobby knuckles on the table and stared at the coffee-pot. A minute later he began to hum a monotonous "Tra-la-loo, tra-la-lee, tra-la-lee, tra-la-loo."

"Now look here, Mr. Sanderson," said Smoke. "This town-site isn't worth ten thousand. If it was worth that much it would be worth a hundred thousand just as easily. If it isn't worth a hundred thousand–and you know it isn't–then it isn't worth ten cents."

Sanderson drummed with his knuckles and hummed, "Tra-la-loo, tra-la-lee," until the coffee-pot boiled over. Settling it with a part cup of cold water, and placing it to one side of the warm hearth, he resumed his seat. "How much will you offer?" he asked of Smoke.

"Five thousand."

Shorty groaned.

Again came an interval of drumming and of tra-loo-ing and tra-lee-ing.

"You ain't no fool," Sanderson announced to Smoke. "You said if it wasn't worth a hundred thousand it wasn't worth ten cents. Yet you offer five thousand for it. Then it IS worth a hundred thousand."

"You can't make twenty cents out of it," Smoke replied heatedly. "Not if you stayed here till you rot."

"I'll make it out of you."

"No, you won't."

"Then I reckon I'll stay an' rot," Sanderson answered with an air of finality.

He took no further notice of his guests, and went about his culinary tasks as if he were alone. When he had warmed over a pot of beans and a slab of sour-dough bread, he set the table for one and proceeded to eat.

"No, thank you," Shorty murmured. "We ain't a bit hungry. We et just before we come."

"Let's see your papers," Smoke said at last. Sanderson fumbled under the head of his bunk and tossed out a package of documents. "It's all tight and right," he said. "That long one there, with the big seals, come all the way from Ottawa. Nothing territorial about that. The national Canadian government cinches me in the possession of this town-site."

"How many lots you sold in the two years you've had it?" Shorty queried.

"None of your business," Sanderson answered sourly. There ain't no law against a man living alone on his town-site if he wants to."

"I'll give you five thousand," Smoke said. Sanderson shook his head.

"I don't know which is the craziest," Shorty lamented. "Come outside a minute, Smoke. I want to whisper to you."

Reluctantly Smoke yielded to his partner's persuasions.

"Ain't it never entered your head," Shorty said, as they stood in the snow outside the door, "that they's miles an' miles of cliffs on both sides of this fool town-site that don't belong to nobody an' that you can have for the locatin' and stakin'?"

"They won't do," Smoke answered.

"Why won't they?"

"It makes you wonder, with all those miles and miles, why I'm buying this particular spot, doesn't it?"

"It sure does," Shorty agreed.

"And that's the very point," Smoke went on triumphantly. "If it makes you wonder, it will make others wonder. And when they wonder they'll come a-running. By your own wondering you prove it's sound psychology. Now, Shorty, listen to me; I'm going to hand Dawson a package that will knock the spots out of the egg-laugh. Come on inside."

"Hello," said Sanderson, as they re-entered. "I thought I'd seen the last of you."

"Now what is your lowest figure?" Smoke asked.

"Twenty thousand."

"I'll give you ten thousand."

"All right, I'll sell at that figure. It's all I wanted in the first place. But when will you pay the dust over?"

"To-morrow, at the Northwest Bank. But there are two other things I want for that ten thousand. In the first place, when you receive your money you pull down the river to Forty Mile and stay there the rest of the winter."

"That's easy. What else?"

"I'm going to pay you twenty-five thousand, and you rebate me fifteen of it."

"I'm agreeable." Sanderson turned to Shorty. "Folks said I was a fool when I come over here an' town-sited," he jeered. "Well, I'm a ten thousand dollar fool, ain't I?"

"The Klondike's sure full of fools," was all Shorty could retort, "an' when they's so many of 'em some has to be lucky, don't they?"

Next morning the legal transfer of Dwight Sanderson's town-site was made–"henceforth to be known as the town-site of Tra-Lee," Smoke incorporated in the deed. Also, at the Northwest Bank, twenty-five thousand of Smoke's gold was weighed out by the cashier, while half a dozen casual onlookers noted the weighing, the amount, and the recipient.

In a mining-camp all men are suspicious. Any untoward act of any man is likely to be the cue to a secret gold strike, whether the untoward act be no more than a hunting trip for moose or a stroll after dark to observe the aurora borealis. And when it became known that so prominent a figure as Smoke Bellew had paid twenty-five thousand dollars to old Dwight Sanderson, Dawson wanted to know what he had paid it for. What had Dwight Sanderson, starving on his abandoned town-site, ever owned that was worth twenty-five thousand? In lieu of an answer, Dawson was justified in keeping Smoke in feverish contemplation.

By mid-afternoon it was common knowledge that several score of men had made up light stampeding-packs and cached them in the convenient saloons along Main Street. Wherever Smoke moved, he was the observed of many eyes. And as proof that he was taken seriously, not one man of the many of his acquaintance had the effrontery to ask him about his deal with Dwight Sanderson. On the other hand, no one mentioned eggs to Smoke. Shorty was under similar surveillance and delicacy of friendliness.

"Makes me feel like I'd killed somebody, or had smallpox, the way they watch me an' seem afraid to speak," Shorty confessed, when he chanced to meet Smoke in front of the Elkhorn. "Look at Bill Saltman there acrost the way–just dyin' to look, an' keepin' his eyes down the street all the time. Wouldn't think he'd knowed you an' me existed, to look at him. But I bet you the drinks, Smoke, if you an' me flop around the corner quick, like we was goin' somewheres, an' then turn back from around the next corner, that we run into him a-hikin' hell-bent."

They tried the trick, and, doubling back around the second corner, encountered Saltman swinging a long trail-stride in pursuit.

"Hello, Bill," Smoke greeted. "Which way?"

"Hello. Just a-strollin'," Saltman answered, "just a-strollin'. Weather's fine, ain't it?"

"Huh!" Shorty jeered. "If you call that strollin', what might you walk real fast at?"

When Shorty fed the dogs that evening, he was keenly conscious that from the encircling darkness a dozen pairs of eyes were boring in upon him. And when he stick-tied the dogs, instead of letting them forage free through the night, he knew that he had administered another jolt to the nervousness of Dawson.

According to program, Smoke ate supper downtown and then proceeded to enjoy himself. Wherever he appeared, he was the center of interest, and he purposely made

the rounds. Saloons filled up after his entrance and emptied following upon his departure. If he bought a stack of chips at a sleepy roulette-table, inside five minutes a dozen players were around him. He avenged himself, in a small way, on Lucille Arral, by getting up and sauntering out of the Opera House just as she came on to sing her most popular song. In three minutes two-thirds of her audience had vanished after him.

At one in the morning he walked along an unusually populous Main Street and took the turning that led up the hill to his cabin. And when he paused on the ascent, he could hear behind him the crunch of moccasins in the snow.

For an hour the cabin was in darkness, then he lighted a candle, and, after a delay sufficient for a man to dress in, he and Shorty opened the door and began harnessing the dogs. As the light from the cabin flared out upon them and their work, a soft whistle went up from not far away. This whistle was repeated down the hill.

"Listen to it," Smoke chuckled. "They've relayed on us and are passing the word down to town. I'll bet you there are forty men right now rolling out of their blankets and climbing into their pants."

"Ain't folks fools," Shorty giggled back. "Say, Smoke, they ain't nothin' in hard graft. A geezer that'd work his hands these days is a–well, a geezer. The world's sure bustin' full an' dribblin' over the edges with fools a-honin' to be separated from their dust. An' before we start down the hill I want to announce, if you're still agreeable, that I come in half on this deal."

The sled was lightly loaded with a sleeping-and a grub-outfit. A small coil of steel cable protruded inconspicuously from underneath a grub-sack, while a crowbar lay half hidden along the bottom of the sled next to the lashings.

Shorty fondled the cable with a swift-passing mitten, and gave a last affectionate touch to the crowbar. "Huh!" he whispered. "I'd sure do some tall thinking myself if I seen them objects on a sled on a dark night."

They drove the dogs down the hill with cautious silence, and when, emerged on the flat, they turned the team north along Main Street toward the sawmill and directly away from the business part of town, they observed even greater caution. They had seen no one, yet when this change of direction was initiated, out of the dim starlit darkness behind arose a whistle. Past the sawmill and the hospital, at lively speed, they went for a quarter of a mile. Then they turned about and headed back over the ground they had just covered. At the end of the first hundred yards they barely missed colliding with five men racing along at a quick dog-trot. All were slightly stooped to the weight of stampeding-packs. One of them stopped Smoke's lead-dog, and the rest clustered around.

"Seen a sled goin' the other way?" was asked.

"Nope," Smoke answered. "Is that you, Bill?"

"Well, I'll be danged!" Bill Saltman ejaculated in honest surprise. "If it ain't Smoke!"

"What are you doing out this time of night?" Smoke inquired. "Strolling?"

Before Bill Saltman could make reply, two running men joined the group. These were followed by several more, while the crunch of feet on the snow heralded the imminent arrival of many others.

"Who are your friends?" Smoke asked. "Where's the stampede?"

Saltman, lighting his pipe, which was impossible for him to enjoy with lungs panting from the run, did not reply. The ruse of the match was too obviously for the purpose of seeing the sled to be misunderstood, and Smoke noted every pair of eyes focus on the coil of cable and the crowbar. Then the match went out.

"Just heard a rumor, that's all, just a rumor," Saltman mumbled with ponderous secretiveness.

"You might let Shorty and me in on it," Smoke urged.

Somebody snickered sarcastically in the background.

"Where are YOU bound?" Saltman demanded.

"And who are you?" Smoke countered. "Committee of safety?"

"Just interested, just interested," Saltman said.

"You bet your sweet life we're interested," another voice spoke up out of the darkness.

"Say," Shorty put in, "I wonder who's feelin' the foolishest?"

Everybody laughed nervously.

"Come on, Shorty; we'll be getting along," Smoke said, mushing the dogs.

The crowd formed in behind and followed.

"Say, ain't you-all made a mistake?" Shorty gibed. "When we met you you was goin', an' now you're comin' without bein' anywheres. Have you lost your tag?"

"You go to the devil," was Saltman's courtesy. "We go and come just as we danged feel like. We don't travel with tags."

And the sled, with Smoke in the lead and Shorty at the pole, went on down Main Street escorted by three score men, each of whom, on his back, bore a stampeding-pack. It was three in the morning, and only the all-night rounders saw the procession and were able to tell Dawson about it next day.

Half an hour later, the hill was climbed and the dogs unharnessed at the cabin door, the sixty stampeders grimly attendant.

"Good-night, fellows," Smoke called, as he closed the door.

In five minutes the candle was put out, but before half an hour had passed Smoke and Shorty emerged softly, and without lights began harnessing the dogs.

"Hello, Smoke!" Saltman said, stepping near enough for them to see the loom of his form.

"Can't shake you, Bill, I see," Smoke replied cheerfully. "Where're your friends?"

"Gone to have a drink. They left me to keep an eye on you, and keep it I will. What's in the wind anyway, Smoke? You can't shake us, so you might as well let us in. We're all your friends. You know that."

"There are times when you can let your friends in," Smoke evaded, "and times when you can't. And, Bill, this is one of the times when we can't. You'd better go to bed. Good-night."

"Ain't goin' to be no good-night, Smoke. You don't know us. We're woodticks."

Smoke sighed. "Well, Bill, if you WILL have your will, I guess you'll have to have it. Come on, Shorty, we can't fool around any longer."

Saltman emitted a shrill whistle as the sled started, and swung in behind. From down the hill and across the flat came the answering whistles of the relays. Shorty was at the gee-pole, and Smoke and Saltman walked side by side.

"Look here, Bill," Smoke said. "I'll make you a proposition. Do you want to come in alone on this?"

Saltman did not hesitate. "An' throw the gang down? No, sir. We'll all come in."

"You first, then," Smoke exclaimed, lurching into a clinch and tipping the other into deep snow beside the trail.

Shorty hawed the dogs and swung the team to the south on the trail that led among the scattered cabins on the rolling slopes to the rear of Dawson. Smoke and Saltman, locked together, rolled in the snow. Smoke considered himself in gilt-edged condition, but Saltman outweighed him by fifty pounds of clean, trail-hardened muscle and repeatedly mastered him. Time and time again he got Smoke on his back, and Smoke lay complacently and rested. But each time Saltman attempted to get off him and get away, Smoke reached out a detaining, tripping hand that brought about a new clinch and wrestle.

"You can go some," Saltman acknowledged, panting at the end of ten minutes, as he sat astride Smoke's chest. "But I down you every time."

"And I hold you every time," Smoke panted back. "That's what I'm here for, just to hold you. Where do you think Shorty's getting to all this time?"

Saltman made a wild effort to go clear, and all but succeeded. Smoke gripped his ankle and threw him in a headlong tumble. From down the hill came anxious questioning whistles. Saltman sat up and whistled a shrill answer, and was grappled by Smoke, who rolled him face upward and sat astride his chest, his knees resting on Saltman's biceps, his hands on Saltman's shoulders and holding him down. And in this position the stampeders found them. Smoke laughed and got up.

"Well, good-night, fellows," he said, and started down the hill, with sixty exasperated and grimly determined stampeders at his heels.

He turned north past the sawmill and the hospital and took the river trail along the precipitous bluffs at the base of Moosehide Mountain. Circling the Indian village, he held on to the mouth of Moose Creek, then turned and faced his pursuers.

"You make me tired," he said, with a good imitation of a snarl.

"Hope we ain't a-forcin' you," Saltman murmured politely.

"Oh, no, not at all," Smoke snarled with an even better imitation, as he passed among them on the back-trail to Dawson. Twice he attempted to cross the trailless icejams of the river, still resolutely followed, and both times he gave up and returned to the Dawson shore. Straight down Main Street he trudged, crossing the ice of Klondike River to Klondike City and again retracing to Dawson. At eight o'clock, as gray dawn

began to show, he led his weary gang to Slavovitch's restaurant, where tables were at a premium for breakfast.

"Good-night fellows," he said, as he paid his reckoning.

And again he said good-night, as he took the climb of the hill. In the clear light of day they did not follow him, contenting themselves with watching him up the hill to his cabin.

For two days Smoke lingered about town, continually under vigilant espionage. Shorty, with the sled and dogs, had disappeared. Neither travelers up and down the Yukon, nor from Bonanza, Eldorado, nor the Klondike, had seen him. Remained only Smoke, who, soon or late, was certain to try to connect with his missing partner; and upon Smoke everybody's attention was centered. On the second night he did not leave his cabin, putting out the lamp at nine in the evening and setting the alarm for two next morning. The watch outside heard the alarm go off, so that when, half an hour later, he emerged from the cabin, he found waiting for him a band, not of sixty men, but of at least three hundred. A flaming aurora borealis lighted the scene, and, thus hugely escorted, he walked down to town and entered the Elkhorn. The place was immediately packed and jammed by an anxious and irritated multitude that bought drinks, and for four weary hours watched Smoke play cribbage with his old friend Breck. Shortly after six in the morning, with an expression on his face of commingled hatred and gloom, seeing no one, recognizing no one, Smoke left the Elkhorn and went up Main Street, behind him the three hundred, formed in disorderly ranks, chanting: "Hay-foot! Straw-foot! Hep! Hep! Hep!"

"Good-night, fellows," he said bitterly, at the edge of the Yukon bank where the winter trail dipped down. "I'm going to get breakfast and then go to bed."

The three hundred shouted that they were with him, and followed him out upon the frozen river on the direct path he took for Tra-Lee. At seven in the morning he led his stampeding cohort up the zigzag trail, across the face of the slide, that led to Dwight Sanderson's cabin. The light of a candle showed through the parchment-paper window, and smoke curled from the chimney. Shorty threw open the door.

"Come on in, Smoke," he greeted. "Breakfast's ready. Who-all are your friends?"

Smoke turned about on the threshold. "Well, good-night, you fellows. Hope you enjoyed your pasear!"

"Hold on a moment, Smoke," Bill Saltman cried, his voice keen with disappointment. "Want to talk with you a moment."

"Fire away," Smoke answered genially.

"What'd you pay old Sanderson twenty-five thousan' for? Will you answer that?"

"Bill, you give me a pain," was Smoke's reply. "I came over here for a country residence, so to say, and here are you and a gang trying to cross-examine me when I'm looking for peace an' quietness an' breakfast. What's a country residence good for, except for peace and quietness?"

"You ain't answered the question," Bill Saltman came back with rigid logic.

"And I'm not going to, Bill. That affair is peculiarly a personal affair between Dwight Sanderson and me. Any other question?"

"How about that crowbar an' steel cable then, what you had on your sled the other night?"

"It's none of your blessed and ruddy business, Bill. Though if Shorty here wants to tell you about it, he can."

"Sure!" Shorty cried, springing eagerly into the breach. His mouth opened, then he faltered and turned to his partner. "Smoke, confidentially, just between you an' me, I don't think it IS any of their darn business. Come on in. The life's gettin' boiled outa that coffee."

The door closed and the three hundred sagged into forlorn and grumbling groups.

"Say, Saltman," one man said, "I thought you was goin' to lead us to it."

"Not on your life," Saltman answered crustily. "I said Smoke would lead us to it."

"An' this is it?"

"You know as much about it as me, an' we all know Smoke's got something salted down somewheres. Or else for what did he pay Sanderson the twenty-five thousand? Not for this mangy town-site, that's sure an' certain."

A chorus of cries affirmed Saltman's judgment.

"Well, what are we goin' to do now?" someone queried dolefully.

"Me for one for breakfast," Wild Water Charley said cheerfully. "You led us up a blind alley this time, Bill."

"I tell you I didn't," Saltman objected. "Smoke led us. An' just the same, what about them twenty-five thousand?"

At half-past eight, when daylight had grown strong, Shorty carefully opened the door and peered out. "Shucks," he exclaimed. "They-all's hiked back to Dawson. I thought they was goin' to camp here."

"Don't worry; they'll come sneaking back," Smoke reassured him. "If I don't miss my guess you'll see half Dawson over here before we're done with it. Now jump in and lend me a hand. We've got work to do."

"Aw, for Heaven's sake put me on," Shorty complained, when, at the end of an hour, he surveyed the result of their toil–a windlass in the corner of the cabin, with an endless rope that ran around double logrollers.

Smoke turned it with a minimum of effort, and the rope slipped and creaked. "Now, Shorty, you go outside and tell me what it sounds like."

Shorty, listening at the closed door, heard all the sounds of a windlass hoisting a load, and caught himself unconsciously attempting to estimate the depth of shaft out of which this load was being hoisted. Next came a pause, and in his mind's eye he saw the bucket swinging short to the windlass. Then he heard the quick lower-away and the dull sound as of the bucket coming to abrupt rest on the edge of the shaft. He threw open the door, beaming.

"I got you," he cried. "I almost fell for it myself. What next?"

The next was the dragging into the cabin of a dozen sled-loads of rock. And through an exceedingly busy day there were many other nexts.

"Now you run the dogs over to Dawson this evening," Smoke instructed, when supper was finished. "Leave them with Breck. He'll take care of them. They'll be watching what you do, so get Breck to go to the A. C. Company and buy up all the blasting-powder–there's only several hundred pounds in stock. And have Breck order half a dozen hard-rock drills from the blacksmith. Breck's a quartz-man, and he'll give the blacksmith a rough idea of what he wants made. And give Breck these location descriptions, so that he can record them at the gold commissioner's to-morrow. And finally, at ten o'clock, you be on Main Street listening. Mind you, I don't want them to be too loud. Dawson must just hear them and no more than hear them. I'll let off three, of different quantities, and you note which is more nearly the right thing."

At ten that night Shorty, strolling down Main Street, aware of many curious eyes, his ears keyed tensely, heard a faint and distant explosion. Thirty seconds later there was a second, sufficiently loud to attract the attention of others on the street. Then came a third, so violent that it rattled the windows and brought the inhabitants into the street.

"Shook 'em up beautiful," Shorty proclaimed breathlessly, an hour afterward, when he arrived at the cabin on Tra-Lee. He gripped Smoke's hand. "You should a-saw 'em. Ever kick over a ant-hole? Dawson's just like that. Main Street was crawlin' an' hummin' when I pulled my freight. You won't see Tra-Lee to-morrow for folks. An' if they ain't some a-sneakin' acrost right now I don't know minin' nature, that's all."

Smoke grinned, stepped to the fake windlass, and gave it a couple of creaking turns. Shorty pulled out the moss-chinking from between the logs so as to make peep-holes on every side of the cabin. Then he blew out the candle.

"Now," he whispered at the end of half an hour.

Smoke turned the windlass slowly, paused after several minutes, caught up a galvanized bucket filled with earth and struck it with slide and scrape and grind against the heap of rocks they had hauled in. Then he lighted a cigarette, shielding the flame of the match in his hands.

"They's three of 'em," Shorty whispered. "You oughta saw 'em. Say, when you made that bucket-dump noise they was fair quiverin'. They's one at the window now tryin' to peek in."

Smoke glowed his cigarette, and glanced at his watch.

"We've got to do this thing regularly," he breathed. "We'll haul up a bucket every fifteen minutes. And in the meantime–"

Through triple thicknesses of sacking, he struck a cold-chisel on the face of a rock.

"Beautiful, beautiful," Shorty moaned with delight. He crept over noiselessly from the peep-hole. "They've got their heads together, an' I can almost see 'em talkin'."

And from then until four in the morning, at fifteen-minute intervals, the seeming of a bucket was hoisted on the windlass that creaked and ran around on itself and hoisted nothing. Then their visitors departed, and Smoke and Shorty went to bed.

After daylight, Shorty examined the moccasin-marks. "Big Bill Saltman was one of them," he concluded. "Look at the size of it."

Smoke looked out over the river. "Get ready for visitors. There are two crossing the ice now."

"Huh! Wait till Breck files that string of claims at nine o'clock. There'll be two thousand crossing over."

"And every mother's son of them yammering 'mother-lode,'" Smoke laughed. "'The source of the Klondike placers found at last.'"

Shorty, who had clambered to the top of a steep shoulder of rock, gazed with the eye of a connoisseur at the strip they had staked.

"It sure looks like a true fissure vein," he said. "A expert could almost trace the lines of it under the snow. It'd fool anybody. The slide fills the front of it an' see them outcrops? Look like the real thing, only they ain't."

When the two men, crossing the river, climbed the zigzag trail up the slide, they found a closed cabin. Bill Saltman, who led the way, went softly to the door, listened, then beckoned Wild Water Charley up to him. From inside came the creak and whine of a windlass bearing a heavy load. They waited at the final pause, then heard the lower-away and the impact of a bucket on rock. Four times, in the next hour, they heard the thing repeated. Then Wild Water knocked on the door. From inside came low furtive noises, then silences, and more furtive noises, and at the end of five minutes Smoke, breathing heavily, opened the door an inch and peered out. They saw on his face and shirt powdered rock-fragments. His greeting was suspiciously genial.

"Wait a minute," he added, "and I'll be with you."

Pulling on his mittens, he slipped through the door and confronted the visitors outside in the snow. Their quick eyes noted his shirt, across the shoulders, discolored and powdery, and the knees of his overalls that showed signs of dirt brushed hastily but not quite thoroughly away.

"Rather early for a call," he observed. "What brings you across the river? Going hunting?"

"We're on, Smoke," Wild Water said confidentially. "An' you'd just as well come through. You've got something here."

"If you're looking for eggs–" Smoke began.

"Aw, forget it. We mean business."

"You mean you want to buy lots, eh?" Smoke rattled on swiftly. "There's some dandy building sites here. But, you see, we can't sell yet. We haven't had the town surveyed. Come around next week, Wild Water, and for peace and quietness, I'll show you something swell, if you're anxious to live over here. Next week, sure, it will be surveyed. Good-by. Sorry I can't ask you inside, but Shorty–well, you know him. He's peculiar. He says he came over for peace and quietness, and he's asleep now. I wouldn't wake him for the world."

As Smoke talked he shook their hands warmly in farewell. Still talking and shaking their hands, he stepped inside and closed the door.

They looked at each other and nodded significantly.

"See the knees of his pants?" Saltman whispered hoarsely.

"Sure. An' his shoulders. He's been bumpin' an' crawlin' around in a shaft." As Wild Water talked, his eyes wandered up the snow-covered ravine until they were halted by something that brought a whistle to his lips. "Just cast your eyes up there, Bill. See where I'm pointing? If that ain't a prospect-hole! An' follow it out to both sides–you can see where they tramped in the snow. If it ain't rim-rock on both sides I don't know what rim-rock is. It's a fissure vein, all right."

"An' look at the size of it!" Saltman cried. "They've got something here, you bet."

"An' run your eyes down the slide there–see them bluffs standin' out an' slopin' in. The whole slide's in the mouth of the vein as well."

"And just keep a-lookin' on, out on the ice there, on the trail," Saltman directed. "Looks like most of Dawson, don't it?"

Wild Water took one glance and saw the trail black with men clear to the far Dawson bank, down which the same unbroken string of men was pouring.

"Well, I'm goin' to get a look-in at that prospect-hole before they get here," he said, turning and starting swiftly up the ravine.

But the cabin door opened, and the two occupants stepped out.

"Hey!" Smoke called. "Where are you going?"

"To pick out a lot," Wild Water called back. "Look at the river. All Dawson's stampeding to buy lots, an' we're going to beat 'em to it for the choice. That's right, ain't it, Bill?"

"Sure thing," Saltman corroborated. "This has the makin's of a Jim-dandy suburb, an' it sure looks like it'll be some popular."

"Well, we're not selling lots over in that section where you're heading," Smoke answered. "Over to the right there, and back on top of the bluffs are the lots. This section, running from the river and over the tops, is reserved. So come on back."

"That's the spot we've gone and selected," Saltman argued.

"But there's nothing doing, I tell you," Smoke said sharply.

"Any objections to our strolling, then?" Saltman persisted.

"Decidedly. Your strolling is getting monotonous. Come on back out of that."

"I just reckon we'll stroll anyways," Saltman replied stubbornly. "Come on, Wild Water."

"I warn you, you are trespassing," was Smoke's final word.

"Nope, just strollin'," Saltman gaily retorted, turning his back and starting on.

"Hey! Stop in your tracks, Bill, or I'll sure bore you!" Shorty thundered, drawing and leveling two Colt's forty-fours. "Step another step in your steps an' I let eleven holes through your danged ornery carcass. Get that?"

Saltman stopped, perplexed.

"He sure got me," Shorty mumbled to Smoke. "But if he goes on I'm up against it hard. I can't shoot. What'll I do?"

"Look here, Shorty, listen to reason," Saltman begged.

"Come here to me an' we'll talk reason," was Shorty's retort.

And they were still talking reason when the head of the stampede emerged from the zigzag trail and came upon them.

"You can't call a man a trespasser when he's on a town-site lookin' to buy lots," Wild Water was arguing, and Shorty was objecting: "But they's private property in town-sites, an' that there strip is private property, that's all. I tell you again, it ain't for sale."

"Now we've got to swing this thing on the jump," Smoke muttered to Shorty. "If they ever get out of hand–"

"You've sure got your nerve, if you think you can hold them," Shorty muttered back. "They's two thousan' of 'em an' more a-comin'. They'll break this line any minute."

The line ran along the near rim of the ravine, and Shorty had formed it by halting the first arrivals when they got that far in their invasion. In the crowd were half a dozen Northwest policemen and a lieutenant. With the latter Smoke conferred in undertones.

"They're still piling out of Dawson," he said, "and before long there will be five thousand here. The danger is if they start jumping claims. When you figure there are only five claims, it means a thousand men to a claim, and four thousand out of the five will try to jump the nearest claim. It can't be done, and if it ever starts, there'll be more dead men here than in the whole history of Alaska. Besides, those five claims were recorded this morning and can't be jumped. In short, claim-jumping mustn't start."

"Right-o," said the lieutenant. "I'll get my men together and station them. We can't have any trouble here, and we won't have. But you'd better get up and talk to them."

"There must be some mistake, fellows," Smoke began in a loud voice. "We're not ready to sell lots. The streets are not surveyed yet. But next week we shall have the grand opening sale."

He was interrupted by an outburst of impatience and indignation.

"We don't want lots," a young miner cried out. "We don't want what's on top of the ground. We've come for what's under the ground."

"We don't know what we've got under the ground," Smoke answered. "But we do know we've got a fine town-site on top of it."

"Sure," Shorty added. "Grand for scenery an' solitude. Folks lovin' solitude come a-flockin' here by thousands. Most popular solitude on the Yukon."

Again the impatient cries arose, and Saltman, who had been talking with the later comers, came to the front.

"We're here to stake claims," he opened. "We know what you've did–filed a string of five quartz claims on end, and there they are over there running across the town-site on the line of the slide and the canyon. Only you misplayed. Two of them entries is fake. Who is Seth Bierce? No one ever heard of him. You filed a claim this mornin' in his name. An' you filed a claim in the name of Harry Maxwell. Now Harry Maxwell ain't in the country. He's down in Seattle. Went out last fall. Them two claims is open to relocation."

"Suppose I have his power of attorney?" Smoke queried.

"You ain't," Saltman answered. "An' if you have you got to show it. Anyway, here's where we relocate. Come on, fellows."

Saltman, stepping across the dead-line, had turned to encourage a following, when the police lieutenant's voice rang out and stopped the forward surge of the great mass.

"Hold on there! You can't do that, you know!"

"Can't, eh?" said Bill Saltman. "The law says a fake location can be relocated, don't it?"

"Thet's right, Bill! Stay with it!" the crowd cheered from the safe side of the line.

"It's the law, ain't it?" Saltman demanded truculently of the lieutenant.

"It may be the law," came the steady answer. "But I can't and won't allow a mob of five thousand men to attempt to jump two claims. It would be a dangerous riot, and we're here to see there is no riot. Here, now, on this spot, the Northwest police constitute the law. The next man who crosses that line will be shot. You, Bill Saltman, step back across it."

Saltman obeyed reluctantly. But an ominous restlessness became apparent in the mass of men, irregularly packed and scattered as it was over a landscape that was mostly up-and-down.

"Heavens," the lieutenant whispered to Smoke. "Look at them like flies on the edge of the cliff there. Any disorder in that mass would force hundreds of them over."

Smoke shuddered and got up. "I'm willing to play fair, fellows. If you insist on town lots, I'll sell them to you, one hundred apiece, and you can raffle locations when the survey is made." With raised hand he stilled the movement of disgust. "Don't move, anybody. If you do, there'll be hundreds of you shoved over the bluff. The situation is dangerous."

"Just the same, you can't hog it," a voice went up. "We don't want lots. We want to relocate."

"But there are only two disputed claims," Smoke argued. "When they're relocated where will the rest of you be?"

He mopped his forehead with his shirt-sleeve, and another voice cried out:

"Let us all in, share and share alike!"

Nor did those who roared their approbation dream that the suggestion had been made by a man primed to make it when he saw Smoke mop his forehead.

"Take your feet out of the trough an' pool the town-site," the man went on. "Pool the mineral rights with the town-site, too."

"But there isn't anything in the mineral rights, I tell you," Smoke objected.

"Then pool them with the rest. We'll take our chances on it."

"Fellows, you're forcing me," Smoke said. "I wish you'd stayed on your side of the river."

But wavering indecision was so manifest that with a mighty roar the crowd swept him on to agreement. Saltman and others in the front rank demurred.

"Bill Saltman, here, and Wild Water don't want you all in," Smoke informed the crowd. "Who's hogging it now?"

And thereat Saltman and Wild Water became profoundly unpopular.

"Now how are we going to do it?" Smoke asked. "Shorty and I ought to keep control. We discovered this town-site."

"That's right!" many cried. "A square deal!" "It's only fair!"

"Three-fifths to us," Smoke suggested, "and you fellows come in for two-fifths. And you've got to pay for your shares."

"Ten cents on the dollar!" was a cry. "And non-assessable!"

"And the president of the company to come around personally and pay you your dividends on a silver platter," Smoke sneered. "No, sir. You fellows have got to be reasonable. Ten cents on the dollar will help start things. You buy two-fifths of the stock, hundred dollars par, at ten dollars. That's the best I can do. And if you don't like it, just start jumping the claims. I can't stand more than a two-fifths gouge."

"No big capitalization!" a voice called, and it was this voice that crystallized the collective mind of the crowd into consent.

"There's about five thousand of you, which will make five thousand shares," Smoke worked the problem aloud. "And five thousand is two-fifths of twelve thousand, five hundred. Therefore The Tra-Lee Town-Site Company is capitalized for one million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, there being twelve thousand, five hundred shares, hundred par, you fellows buying five thousand of them at ten dollars apiece. And I don't care a whoop whether you accept it or not. And I call you all to witness that you're forcing me against my will."

With the assurance of the crowd that they had caught him with the goods on him, in the shape of the two fake locations, a committee was formed and the rough organization of the Tra-Lee Town-Site Company effected. Scorning the proposal of delivering the shares next day in Dawson, and scorning it because of the objection that the portion of Dawson that had not engaged in the stampede would ring in for shares, the committee, by a fire on the ice at the foot of the slide, issued a receipt to each stampeder in return for ten dollars in dust duly weighed on two dozen gold-scales which were obtained from Dawson.

By twilight the work was accomplished and Tra-Lee was deserted, save for Smoke and Shorty, who ate supper in the cabin and chuckled at the list of shareholders, four thousand eight hundred and seventy-four strong, and at the gold-sacks, which they knew contained approximately forty-eight thousand seven hundred and forty dollars.

"But you ain't swung it yet," Shorty objected.

"He'll be here," Smoke asserted with conviction. "He's a born gambler, and when Breck whispers the tip to him not even heart disease would stop him."

Within the hour came a knock at the door, and Wild Water entered, followed by Bill Saltman. Their eyes swept the cabin eagerly, coming to rest on the windlass elaborately concealed by blankets.

"But suppose I did want to vote twelve hundred shares," Wild Water was arguing half an hour later. "With the other five thousand sold to-day it'd make only sixty-two

hundred shares. That'd leave you and Shorty with sixty-three hundred. You'd still control."

"But what d' you want with all that of a town-site?" Shorty queried.

"You can answer that better 'n me," Wild Water replied. "An' between you an' me," his gaze drifted over the blanket-draped windlass, "it's a pretty good-looking town-site."

"But Bill wants some," Smoke said grudgingly, "and we simply won't part with more than five hundred shares."

"How much you got to invest?" Wild Water asked Saltman.

"Oh, say five thousand. It was all I could scare up."

"Wild Water," Smoke went on, in the same grudging, complaining voice, "if I didn't know you so well, I wouldn't sell you a single besotted share. And, anyway, Shorty and I won't part with more than five hundred, and they'll cost you fifty dollars apiece. That's the last word, and if you don't like it, good-night. Bill can take a hundred and you can have the other four hundred."

Next day Dawson began its laugh. It started early in the morning, just after daylight, when Smoke went to the bulletin-board outside the A. C. Company store and tacked up a notice. Men gathered and were reading and snickering over his shoulder ere he had driven the last tack. Soon the bulletin-board was crowded by hundreds who could not get near enough to read. Then a reader was appointed by acclamation, and thereafter, throughout the day, many men were acclaimed to read in loud voice the notice Smoke Bellew had nailed up. And there were numbers of men who stood in the snow and heard it read several times in order to memorize the succulent items that appeared in the following order:

The Tra-Lee Town-Site Company keeps its accounts on the wall. This is its first account and its last.

Any shareholder who objects to donating ten dollars to the Dawson General Hospital may obtain his ten dollars on personal application to Wild Water Charley, or, failing that, will absolutely obtain it on application to Smoke Bellew.

MONEYS RECEIVED AND DISBURSED

From 4874 shares at $10.00........................$48,740.00 To Dwight Sanderson for Town-Site of Tra-Lee...........10,000.00 To incidental expenses, to wit: powder, drills,

windlass, gold commissioner's office, etc..........1,000.00

To Dawson General Hospital........................37,740.00

- ———

Total................................$48,740.00

From Bill Saltman, for 100 shares privately

purchased at $50.00.........................$ 5,000.00

From Wild Water Charley, for 400 shares privately

purchased at $50.00..........................20,000.00

To Bill Saltman, in recognition of services as

volunteer stampede promoter.....................5,000.00

To Dawson General Hospital.........................3,000.00 To Smoke Bellew and Jack Short, balance in full on

egg deal and morally owing.....................17,000.00

- ———

Total................................$25,000.00

Shares remaining to account for 7126. These shares, held by Smoke Bellew and Jack Short, value nil, may be obtained gratis, for the asking, by any and all residents of Dawson desiring change of domicile to the peace and solitude of the town of Tra-Lee.

(Note: Peace and solitude always and perpetually guaranteed in town of Tra-Lee)

(Signed) SMOKE BELLEW, President.

(Signed) JACK SHORT, Secretary.

Trust

All lines had been cast off, and the Seattle No. 4 was pulling slowly out from the shore. Her decks were piled high with freight and baggage, and swarmed with a heterogeneous company of Indians, dogs, and dog-mushers, prospectors, traders, and homeward-bound gold-seekers. A goodly portion of Dawson was lined up on the bank, saying good-bye. As the gang-plank came in and the steamer nosed into the stream, the clamour of farewell became deafening. Also, in that eleventh moment, everybody began to remember final farewell messages and to shout them back and forth across the widening stretch of water. Louis Bondell, curling his yellow moustache with one hand and languidly waving the other hand to his friends on shore, suddenly remembered something and sprang to the rail.

"Oh, Fred!" he bawled. "Oh, Fred!

The "Fred" desired thrust a strapping pair of shoulders through the forefront of the crowd on the bank and tried to catch Louis Bondell's message. The latter grew red in the face with vain vociferation. Still the water widened between steamboat and shore.

"Hey, you, Captain Scott!" he yelled at the pilot-house. "Stop the boat!"

The gongs clanged, and the big stern wheel reversed, then stopped. All hands on steamboat and on bank took advantage of this respite to exchange final, new, and imperative farewells. More futile than ever was Louis Bondell's effort to make himself heard. The Seattle No. 4 lost way and drifted down-stream, and Captain Scott had to go ahead and reverse a second time. His head disappeared inside the pilot-house, coming into view a moment later behind a big megaphone.

Now Captain Scott had a remarkable voice, and the "Shut up!" he launched at the crowd on deck and on shore could have been heard at the top of Moosehide Mountain and as far as Klondike City. This official remonstrance from the pilot-house spread a film of silence over the tumult.

"Now, what do you want to say?" Captain Scott demanded.

"Tell Fred Churchill–he's on the bank there–tell him to go to Macdonald. It's in his safe–a small gripsack of mine. Tell him to get it and bring it out when he comes."

In the silence Captain Scott bellowed the message ashore through the megaphone

"You, Fred Churchill, go to Macdonald–in his safe–small gripsack–belongs to Louis Bondell–important! Bring it out when you come! Got it!"

Churchill waved his hand in token that he had got it. In truth, had Macdonald, half a mile away, opened his window, he'd have got it, too. The tumult of farewell rose again, the gongs clanged, and the Seattle No. 4 went ahead, swung out into the

stream, turned on her heel, and headed down the Yukon, Bondell and Churchill waving farewell and mutual affection to the last.

That was in midsummer. In the fall of the year, the W. H. Willis started up the Yukon with two hundred homeward-bound pilgrims on board. Among them was Churchill. In his state-room, in the middle of a clothes-bag, was Louis Bondell's grip. It was a small, stout leather affair, and its weight of forty pounds always made Churchill nervous when he wandered too far from it. The man in the adjoining state-room had a treasure of gold-dust hidden similarly in a clothes-bag, and the pair of them ultimately arranged to stand watch and watch. While one went down to eat, the other kept an eye on the two state-room doors. When Churchill wanted to take a hand at whist, the other man mounted guard, and when the other man wanted to relax his soul, Churchill read four-months' old newspapers on a camp stool between the two doors.

There were signs of an early winter, and the question that was discussed from dawn till dark, and far into the dark, was whether they would get out before the freeze-up or be compelled to abandon the steamboat and tramp out over the ice. There were irritating delays. Twice the engines broke down and had to be tinkered up, and each time there were snow flurries to warn them of the imminence of winter. Nine times the W. H. Willis essayed to ascend the Five-Finger Rapids with her impaired machinery, and when she succeeded, she was four days behind her very liberal schedule. The question that then arose was whether or not the steamboat Flora would wait for her above the Box Canon. The stretch of water between the head of the Box Canon and the foot of the White Horse Rapids was unnavigable for steamboats, and passengers were transhipped at that point, walking around the rapids from one steamboat to the other. There were no telephones in the country, hence no way of informing the waiting Flora that the Willis was four days late, but coming.

When the W. H. Willis pulled into White Horse, it was learned that the Flora had waited three days over the limit, and had departed only a few hours before. Also, it was learned that she would tie up at Tagish Post till nine o'clock, Sunday morning. It was then four o'clock, Saturday afternoon. The pilgrims called a meeting. On board was a large Peterborough canoe, consigned to the police post at the head of Lake Bennett. They agreed to be responsible for it and to deliver it. Next, they called for volunteers. Two men were needed to make a race for the Flora. A score of men volunteered on the instant. Among them was Churchill, such being his nature that he volunteered before he thought of Bondell's gripsack. When this thought came to him, he began to hope that he would not be selected; but a man who had made a name as captain of a college football eleven, as a president of an athletic club, as a dog-musher and a stampeder in the Yukon, and, moreover, who possessed such shoulders as he, had no right to avoid the honour. It was thrust upon him and upon a gigantic German, Nick Antonsen.

While a crowd of the pilgrims, the canoe on their shoulders, started on a trot over the portage, Churchill ran to his state-room. He turned the contents of the clothes-bag on the floor and caught up the grip, with the intention of entrusting it to the man next door. Then the thought smote him that it was not his grip, and that he had no

right to let it out of his possession. So he dashed ashore with it and ran up the portage changing it often from one hand to the other, and wondering if it really did not weigh more than forty pounds.

It was half-past four in the afternoon when the two men started. The current of the Thirty Mile River was so strong that rarely could they use the paddles. It was out on one bank with a tow-line over the shoulders, stumbling over the rocks, forcing a way through the underbrush, slipping at times and falling into the water, wading often up to the knees and waist; and then, when an insurmountable bluff was encountered, it was into the canoe, out paddles, and a wild and losing dash across the current to the other bank, in paddles, over the side, and out tow-line again. It was exhausting work. Antonsen toiled like the giant he was, uncomplaining, persistent, but driven to his utmost by the powerful body and indomitable brain of Churchill. They never paused for rest. It was go, go, and keep on going. A crisp wind blew down the river, freezing their hands and making it imperative, from time to time, to beat the blood back into the numbed fingers.

As night came on, they were compelled to trust to luck. They fell repeatedly on the untravelled banks and tore their clothing to sheds in the underbrush they could not see. Both men were badly scratched and bleeding. A dozen times, in their wild dashes from bank to bank, they struck snags and were capsized. The first time this happened, Churchill dived and groped in three feet of water for the gripsack. He lost half an hour in recovering it, and after that it was carried securely lashed to the canoe. As long as the canoe floated it was safe. Antonsen jeered at the grip, and toward morning began to curse it; but Churchill vouchsafed no explanations.

Their delays and mischances were endless. On one swift bend, around which poured a healthy young rapid, they lost two hours, making a score of attempts and capsizing twice. At this point, on both banks, were precipitous bluffs, rising out of deep water, and along which they could neither tow nor pole, while they could not gain with the paddles against the current. At each attempt they strained to the utmost with the paddles, and each time, with heads nigh to bursting from the effort, they were played out and swept back. They succeeded finally by an accident. In the swiftest current, near the end of another failure, a freak of the current sheered the canoe out of Churchill's control and flung it against the bluff. Churchill made a blind leap at the bluff and landed in a crevice. Holding on with one hand, he held the swamped canoe with the other till Antonsen dragged himself out of the water. Then they pulled the canoe out and rested. A fresh start at this crucial point took them by. They landed on the bank above and plunged immediately ashore and into the brush with the tow-line.

Daylight found them far below Tagish Post. At nine o'clock Sunday morning they could hear the Flora whistling her departure. And when, at ten o'clock, they dragged themselves in to the Post, they could barely see the Flora's smoke far to the southward. It was a pair of worn-out tatterdemalions that Captain Jones of the Mounted Police welcomed and fed, and he afterward averred that they possessed two of the most tremendous appetites he had ever observed. They lay down and slept in their wet rags

by the stove. At the end of two hours Churchill got up, carried Bondell's grip, which he had used for a pillow, down to the canoe, kicked Antonsen awake, and started in pursuit of the Flora.

"There's no telling what might happen–machinery break down, or something," was his reply to Captain Jones's expostulations. "I'm going to catch that steamer and send her back for the boys."

Tagish Lake was white with a fall gale that blew in their teeth. Big, swinging seas rushed upon the canoe, compelling one man to bale and leaving one man to paddle. Headway could not be made. They ran along the shallow shore and went overboard, one man ahead on the tow-line, the other shoving on the canoe. They fought the gale up to their waists in the icy water, often up to their necks, often over their heads and buried by the big, crested waves. There was no rest, never a moment's pause from the cheerless, heart-breaking battle. That night, at the head of Tagish Lake, in the thick of a driving snow-squall, they overhauled the Flora. Antonsen fell on board, lay where he had fallen, and snored. Churchill looked like a wild man. His clothes barely clung to him. His face was iced up and swollen from the protracted effort of twenty-four hours, while his hands were so swollen that he could not close the fingers. As for his feet, it was an agony to stand upon them.

The captain of the Flora was loth to go back to White Horse. Churchill was persistent and imperative; the captain was stubborn. He pointed out finally that nothing was to be gained by going back, because the only ocean steamer at Dyea, the Athenian, was to sail on Tuesday morning, and that he could not make the back trip to White Horse and bring up the stranded pilgrims in time to make the connection.

"What time does the Athenian sail?" Churchill demanded.

"Seven o'clock, Tuesday morning."

"All right," Churchill said, at the same time kicking a tattoo on the ribs of the snoring Antonsen. "You go back to White Home. We'll go ahead and hold the Athenian."

Antonsen, stupid with sleep, not yet clothed in his waking mind, was bundled into the canoe, and did not realize what had happened till he was drenched with the icy spray of a big sea, and heard Churchill snarling at him through the darkness:-

"Paddle, can't you! Do you want to be swamped?"

Daylight found them at Caribou Crossing, the wind dying down, and Antonsen too far gone to dip a paddle. Churchill grounded the canoe on a quiet beach, where they slept. He took the precaution of twisting his arm under the weight of his head. Every few minutes the pain of the pent circulation aroused him, whereupon he would look at his watch and twist the other arm under his head. At the end of two hours he fought with Antonsen to rouse him. Then they started. Lake Bennett, thirty miles in length, was like a millpond; but, half way across, a gale from the south smote them and turned the water white. Hour after hour they repeated the struggle on Tagish, over the side, pulling and shoving on the canoe, up to their waists and necks, and over their heads, in the icy water; toward the last the good-natured giant played completely out. Churchill drove him mercilessly; but when he pitched forward and bade fair to drown in

three feet of water, the other dragged him into the canoe. After that, Churchill fought on alone, arriving at the police post at the head of Bennett in the early afternoon. He tried to help Antonsen out of the canoe, but failed. He listened to the exhausted man's heavy breathing, and envied him when he thought of what he himself had yet to undergo. Antonsen could lie there and sleep; but he, behind time, must go on over mighty Chilcoot and down to the sea. The real struggle lay before him, and he almost regretted the strength that resided in his frame because of the torment it could inflict upon that frame.

Churchill pulled the canoe up on the beach, seized Bondell's grip, and started on a limping dog-trot for the police post.

"There's a canoe down there, consigned to you from Dawson," he hurled at the officer who answered his knock. "And there's a man in it pretty near dead. Nothing serious; only played out. Take care of him. I've got to rush. Good-bye. Want to catch the Athenian."

A mile portage connected Lake Bennett and Lake Linderman, and his last words he flung back after him as he resumed the trot. It was a very painful trot, but he clenched his teeth and kept on, forgetting his pain most of the time in the fervent heat with which he regarded the gripsack. It was a severe handicap. He swung it from one hand to the other, and back again. He tucked it under his arm. He threw one hand over the opposite shoulder, and the bag bumped and pounded on his back as he ran along. He could scarcely hold it in his bruised and swollen fingers, and several times he dropped it. Once, in changing from one hand to the other, it escaped his clutch and fell in front of him, tripped him up, and threw him violently to the ground.

At the far end of the portage he bought an old set of pack-straps for a dollar, and in them he swung the grip. Also, he chartered a launch to run him the six miles to the upper end of Lake Linderman, where he arrived at four in the afternoon. The Athenian was to sail from Dyea next morning at seven. Dyea was twenty-eight miles away, and between towered Chilcoot. He sat down to adjust his foot-gear for the long climb, and woke up. He had dozed the instant he sat down, though he had not slept thirty seconds. He was afraid his next doze might be longer, so he finished fixing his foot-gear standing up. Even then he was overpowered for a fleeting moment. He experienced the flash of unconsciousness; becoming aware of it, in mid-air, as his relaxed body was sinking to the ground and as he caught himself together, he stiffened his muscles with a spasmodic wrench, and escaped the fall. The sudden jerk back to consciousness left him sick and trembling. He beat his head with the heel of his hand, knocking wakefulness into the numbed brain.

Jack Burns's pack-train was starting back light for Crater Lake, and Churchill was invited to a mule. Burns wanted to put the gripsack on another animal, but Churchill held on to it, carrying it on his saddle-pommel. But he dozed, and the grip persisted in dropping off the pommel, one side or the other, each time wakening him with a sickening start. Then, in the early darkness, Churchill's mule brushed him against a projecting branch that laid his cheek open. To cap it, the mule blundered off the trail

and fell, throwing rider and gripsack out upon the rocks. After that, Churchill walked, or stumbled rather, over the apology for a trail, leading the mule. Stray and awful odours, drifting from each side of the trail, told of the horses that had died in the rush for gold. But he did not mind. He was too sleepy. By the time Long Lake was reached, however, he had recovered from his sleepiness; and at Deep Lake he resigned the gripsack to Burns. But thereafter, by the light of the dim stars, he kept his eyes on Burns. There were not going to be any accidents with that bag.

At Crater Lake, the pack-train went into camp, and Churchill, slinging the grip on his back, started the steep climb for the summit. For the first time, on that precipitous wall, he realized how tired he was. He crept and crawled like a crab, burdened by the weight of his limbs. A distinct and painful effort of will was required each time he lifted a foot. An hallucination came to him that he was shod with lead, like a deep-sea diver, and it was all he could do to resist the desire to reach down and feel the lead. As for Bondell's gripsack, it was inconceivable that forty pounds could weigh so much. It pressed him down like a mountain, and he looked back with unbelief to the year before, when he had climbed that same pass with a hundred and fifty pounds on his back. If those loads had weighed a hundred and fifty pounds, then Bondell's grip weighed five hundred.

The first rise of the divide from Crater Lake was across a small glacier. Here was a well-defined trail. But above the glacier, which was also above timber-line, was naught but a chaos of naked rock and enormous boulders. There was no way of seeing the trail in the darkness, and he blundered on, paying thrice the ordinary exertion for all that he accomplished. He won the summit in the thick of howling wind and driving snow, providentially stumbling upon a small, deserted tent, into which he crawled. There he found and bolted some ancient fried potatoes and half a dozen raw eggs.

When the snow ceased and the wind eased down, he began the almost impossible descent. There was no trail, and he stumbled and blundered, often finding himself, at the last moment, on the edge of rocky walls and steep slopes the depth of which he had no way of judging. Part way down, the stars clouded over again, and in the consequent obscurity he slipped and rolled and slid for a hundred feet, landing bruised and bleeding on the bottom of a large shallow hole. From all about him arose the stench of dead horses. The hole was handy to the trail, and the packers had made a practice of tumbling into it their broken and dying animals. The stench overpowered him, making him deadly sick, and as in a nightmare he scrambled out. Half-way up, he recollected Bondell's gripsack. It had fallen into the hole with him; the pack-strap had evidently broken, and he had forgotten it. Back he went into the pestilential charnel-pit, where he crawled around on hands and knees and groped for half an hour. Altogether he encountered and counted seventeen dead horses (and one horse still alive that he shot with his revolver) before he found Bondell's grip. Looking back upon a life that had not been without valour and achievement, he unhesitatingly declared to himself that this return after the grip was the most heroic act he had ever performed. So heroic was it that he was twice on the verge of fainting before he crawled out of the hole.

By the time he had descended to the Scales, the steep pitch of Chilcoot was past, and the way became easier. Not that it was an easy way, however, in the best of places; but it became a really possible trail, along which he could have made good time if he had not been worn out, if he had had light with which to pick his steps, and if it had not been for Bondell's gripsack. To him, in his exhausted condition, it was the last straw. Having barely strength to carry himself along, the additional weight of the grip was sufficient to throw him nearly every time he tripped or stumbled. And when he escaped tripping, branches reached out in the darkness, hooked the grip between his shoulders, and held him back.

His mind was made up that if he missed the Athenian it would be the fault of the gripsack. In fact, only two things remained in his consciousness–Bondell's grip and the steamer. He knew only those two things, and they became identified, in a way, with some stern mission upon which he had journeyed and toiled for centuries. He walked and struggled on as in a dream. As part of the dream was his arrival at Sheep Camp. He stumbled into a saloon, slid his shoulders out of the straps, and started to deposit the grip at his feet. But it slipped from his fingers and struck the floor with a heavy thud that was not unnoticed by two men who were just leaving. Churchill drank a glass of whisky, told the barkeeper to call him in ten minutes, and sat down, his feet on the grip, his head on his knees.

So badly did his misused body stiffen, that when he was called it required another ten minutes and a second glass of whisky to unbend his joints and limber up the muscles.

"Hey not that way!" the barkeeper shouted, and then went after him and started him through the darkness toward Canyon City. Some little husk of inner consciousness told Churchill that the direction was right, and, still as in a dream, he took the canon trail. He did not know what warned him, but after what seemed several centuries of travelling, he sensed danger and drew his revolver. Still in the dream, he saw two men step out and heard them halt him. His revolver went off four times, and he saw the flashes and heard the explosions of their revolvers. Also, he was aware that he had been hit in the thigh. He saw one man go down, and, as the other came for him, he smashed him a straight blow with the heavy revolver full in the face. Then he turned and ran. He came from the dream shortly afterward, to find himself plunging down the trail at a limping lope. His first thought was for the gripsack. It was still on his back. He was convinced that what had happened was a dream till he felt for his revolver and found it gone. Next he became aware of a sharp stinging of his thigh, and after investigating, he found his hand warm with blood. It was a superficial wound, but it was incontestable. He became wider awake, and kept up the lumbering run to Canyon City.

He found a man, with a team of horses and a wagon, who got out of bed and harnessed up for twenty dollars. Churchill crawled in on the wagon-bed and slept, the gripsack still on his back. It was a rough ride, over water-washed boulders down the Dyea Valley; but he roused only when the wagon hit the highest places. Any altitude

of his body above the wagon-bed of less than a foot did not faze him. The last mile was smooth going, and he slept soundly.

He came to in the grey dawn, the driver shaking him savagely and howling into his ear that the Athenian was gone. Churchill looked blankly at the deserted harbour.

"There's a smoke over at Skaguay," the man said.

Churchill's eyes were too swollen to see that far, but he said: "It's she. Get me a boat."

The driver was obliging and found a skiff, and a man to row it for ten dollars, payment in advance. Churchill paid, and was helped into the skiff. It was beyond him to get in by himself. It was six miles to Skaguay, and he had a blissful thought of sleeping those six miles. But the man did not know how to row, and Churchill took the oars and toiled for a few more centuries. He never knew six longer and more excruciating miles. A snappy little breeze blew up the inlet and held him back. He had a gone feeling at the pit of the stomach, and suffered from faintness and numbness. At his command, the man took the baler and threw salt water into his face.

The Athenian's anchor was up-and-down when they came alongside, and Churchill was at the end of his last remnant of strength.

"Stop her! Stop her!" he shouted hoarsely.

"Important message! Stop her!"

Then he dropped his chin on his chest and slept. When half a dozen men started to carry him up the gang-plank, he awoke, reached for the grip, and clung to it like a drowning man.

On deck he became a centre of horror and curiosity. The clothing in which he had left White Horse was represented by a few rags, and he was as frayed as his clothing. He had travelled for fifty-five hours at the top notch of endurance. He had slept six hours in that time, and he was twenty pounds lighter than when he started. Face and hands and body were scratched and bruised, and he could scarcely see. He tried to stand up, but failed, sprawling out on the deck, hanging on to the gripsack, and delivering his message.

"Now, put me to bed," he finished; "I'll eat when I wake up."

They did him honour, carrying him down in his rags and dirt and depositing him and Bondell's grip in the bridal chamber, which was the biggest and most luxurious state-room in the ship. Twice he slept the clock around, and he had bathed and shaved and eaten and was leaning over the rail smoking a cigar when the two hundred pilgrims from White Horse came alongside.

By the time the Athenian arrived in Seattle, Churchill had fully recuperated, and he went ashore with Bondell's grip in his hand. He felt proud of that grip. To him it stood for achievement and integrity and trust. "I've delivered the goods," was the way he expressed these various high terms to himself. It was early in the evening, and he went straight to Bondell's home. Louis Bondell was glad to see him, shaking hands with both hands at the same time and dragging him into the house.

“Oh, thanks, old man; it was good of you to bring it out,” Bondell said when he received the gripsack.

He tossed it carelessly upon a couch, and Churchill noted with an appreciative eye the rebound of its weight from the springs. Bondell was volleying him with questions.

“How did you make out? How’re the boys? What became of Bill Smithers? Is Del Bishop still with Pierce? Did he sell my dogs? How did Sulphur Bottom show up? You’re looking fine. What steamer did you come out on?”

To all of which Churchill gave answer, till half an hour had gone by and the first lull in the conversation had arrived.

“Hadn’t you better take a look at it?” he suggested, nodding his head at the gripsack

“Oh, it’s all right,” Bondell answered. “Did Mitchell’s dump turn out as much as he expected?”

“I think you’d better look at it,” Churchill insisted. “When I deliver a thing, I want to be satisfied that it’s all right. There’s always the chance that somebody might have got into it when I was asleep, or something.”

“It’s nothing important, old man,” Bondell answered, with a laugh.

“Nothing important,” Churchill echoed in a faint, small voice. Then he spoke with decision: “Louis, what’s in that bag? I want to know.”

Louis looked at him curiously, then left the room and returned with a bunch of keys. He inserted his hand and drew out a heavy Colt’s revolver. Next came out a few boxes of ammunition for the revolver and several boxes of Winchester cartridges.

Churchill took the gripsack and looked into it. Then he turned it upside down and shook it gently.

“The gun’s all rusted,” Bondell said. “Must have been out in the rain.”

“Yes,” Churchill answered. “Too bad it got wet. I guess I was a bit careless.”

He got up and went outside. Ten minutes later Louis Bondell went out and found him on the steps, sitting down, elbows on knees and chin on hands, gazing steadfastly out into the darkness.

Two Gold Bricks

THE heavy portiers were rudely thrust aside and a young man of twenty-two or thereabout flung, himself into the apartment to the evident astonishment of its inmate, who paused long enough in the act of lighting a cigarette to burn his fingers with the paper-lighter. “Ye gods! preserve us from the faddist!” he cried, dramatically elevating his arms heavenward as though invoking the protection of his divine friends, and then collapsing into the comfortable embrace of the nearest easy-chair.

His audience, having recovered his equanimity at the expense of a muffed curse upon all stage-struck friends, shoved the smoking stand at him. For a space they yielded to the soothing caress of the weed, then proceeded to an elucidation.

“Well, Ollie, old man, out with it. What’s the rub?” interrogated he of the burned fingers. Has your tailor taken to dunning on a wheel? Have your auburn lovelocks come into demand? or are they trying to enlist your sympathies in that artistic crusade among the unaesthetical denizens of Mott and Mulberry streets.”

“No. It’s not so bad as that; but what do you think they’ve been up to?”

“What? which? who? the aesthetics or the nonaesthetics?”

“I mean the crowd.”

“Oh, Archie and his friends. What have they been doing? Nothing serious I hope; and yet, they always were a serious crowd.”

It’s not serious. Oh, no; and still it concerns a very serious subject. Ha! ha! ha! you’d never guess! He! he! he! you’d — Ho! ho! ho!”

“Confound you and your paradoxes! Not serious — concerns a serious subject; a serious crowd, a foll’s laughter — fine material for an epigram. By Jove, if I don’t think it up.”

“Mercy, Oh, Damon, I pray you. A truce to your epigrams. I plead an arrest of judgment till I explain.”

“Proceed, I may be lenient.”

“You know I intended going down to Cape Weola for canvas-back and had made arrangements to start today. I packed up, expressed my traps, and said goodby all around, only to find the hunting-party had fallen through. Finding my pleasure nipped in the bud and because I had nothing to do, I became virtuous and made a long-delayed call upon that long-suffering maiden aunt of mine, in Brooklyn. Nice old girl! I tried not to be bored, and made the acquaintance of her two Persian cats, to say nothing of an angular female, who called and spent the afternoon in discussing equal suffrage and all that rot. What with that and the tea, I returned with a very bad headache and a very good intention of going early to bed.

"However, I thought I would drop in and see Archie — nice brother, archie — and entice him into making a call upon the long-suffering maiden aunt aforesaid. Archie was out, and tired of waiting I made myself comfortable in his boudoir — it's a real boudoir, you know — and fell asleep. I've no idea how long I was there, but suddenly I was awakened by the popping of corks and by conversation in his studio. 'Archie and a lot of his cronies,' I thought. 'Evidently they don't know I'm here.'

"They were as serious as usual. That melancholy rascal! Le Blanche, whose 'Bridge of Sighs,' and 'The Requital' you'll remember at the exhibition, was there, as was also Schomberg, his twin brother of personified misery. They were discussing the death of Willis '89 — used to chum with Archie and that crowd. The conversation turned to monuments, headstones, and epitaphs, and became quite interesting, I can assure you.

"That idiot, Fessler, opened the ball by deploring the conventional inconsistency with which our moderns remember the dead by the inscriptions they place on their headstones; and Schomberg quoted Shakespeare, revised; 'The good that men do lives' — etc., while Le Blanche favored them with the following from Byron, which I happened to know:

"'When some proud son of man returns to earth,
Unknown to glory but upheld by birth,
The Sculptor's art exhausts the pomp of woe,
And storied urns record who sests [sic] below;
When all is done, upon the tomb is seen,
Not what he was, but what he should have been.'"

"Finally, that band of morbid-minded pessimists took up funeral sermons and unmercifully berated our pious divines for their hypocrisy in the perpetration of the same. They decided that the custom was all wrong and a blot upon our cultured civilization. In the first place, they decided it was impossible to obtain anything but flattery when a man was paid to preach the sermon; in the second place, that it should be delivered by one who was conversant with the whole life of the deceased; and in the third place that, if he were an enemy he could not be induced to officiate, if a friend he would be certain to flatter. They at last reached the conclusion that all funeral sermons were snares and deceits, and since the only one who could properly officiate and tell the brutal, naked truth, would be the person being buried, it were better to abolish the wicked and immoral custom.

"Here the subject would have been dropped but for that brother of mine, who thought it would be 'so original, you know, for a man to make his own funeral oration.' Then he was ably supplemented by Moore, who enthusiastically cried out 'Why not?'

"It dawned upon them all — why not — the phonograph. Then and there they organized into a 'Voice from the Beyond,' or 'Every Man His Own Minister,' society. They gave it some Greek name and this is my free rendition of it. They elected their officers, swore ironclad oaths to tell all the mean little things and mean big things they had done during their lifetime, and promised to criticize unsparingly each other's faults and vices. After a voluntary assessment had been levied to procure a phonograph and

the necessary paraphernalia they adjourned. They expect to have all their sermons in by this day week, and Archie is to take charge of them. He is to put them in that little safe you'll remember stands in a corner of his studio.

"While the crowd was departing I slipped Out by another door, and here lam."

"Like the girl that you are, come to tell me the secret while yet warm. But, Ollie, it seems to me as though there is more in it than you have told. I have a scheme."

"A scheme?"

"Yes, we will give an entertainment in your parlors. You know we have been running too big a margin, and I, for one, am rather short. This quarter's was all gone before I received it, and what I shall do till next quarter is an enigma. You are in just as bad a fix, too, so we'll give an entertainment."

"An entertainment?"

"Yes, and clear a cool ten hundred apiece."

"Whew! Ten hundred! Why I could square up and go on swimmingly! But, Damon, how are you going to do it?"

"Give an entertainment."

"Now don't talk in riddles. Come, explain."

And Damon explained while Ollie went into ecstasies of delight. Late that night, Ollie departed, and during the next ten days many were the consultations he held with Damon regarding the scheme.

Ten nights later, Ollie's parlors are all ablaze and perhaps threescore and ten male guests are assembled, for this is the night of the entertainment. Damon and Ollie are all bustling and important, and why not? Is not Professor Armstrong engaged this evening at a hundred dollars? Has not one of Edison's assistants come all the way from New Jersey with expenses paid and another hundred? And is there not the phonograph specialist? to say nothing of Crooke's tubes, electrical apparatus, kinetoscopes, and phonographs? Indeed, is it not to be a veritable treat to those lovers of popular science that have received invitations?

By nine, Ollie introduces Professor Armstrong, who took up Roentgen's discovery and applied it in many curious and instructive experiments. The kinetoscope man then engrossed their attention with thrilling scenes of life, and was followed by Edison's assistant, who presented illustrated demonstrations of several of the "wizard's" marvelous inventions.

In the meanwhile Damon drew Ollie aside and asked: "Is Archie's crowd all here?"

"Yes, all except Staunton. He has received the telegram and by this time is speeding across Connecticut."

"Good! But I'm sorry we had to get rid of him. Won't he be angry when he finds it out?"

"Won't he though."

To conclude the very enjoyable evening in experimental science, the phonograph specialist was introduced. After a few introductory remarks,in which, incidentally, the possibility of the voice of the dead coming back, was mentioned, he proceeded to

arrange his apparatus. Taking one from a number of cylinders and inserting it in the phonograph, he applied the electric current and the delicate machinery was in motion.

A voice — Staunton's voice — in solemn tones, was heard, preaching a funeral sermon. The members of the "Voice from the Beyond" society looked inquiringly at each other, then in turn, perplexed, indignant, and amused. Staunton's rich, deep voice ground out of the machine, sternly moralizing in a manner demoralizing to the audience. How he criticized his own vices and trivialities! He had been weighed by himself in the balance and found wanting. Then he turned on his friends and upbraided them unsparingly for their follies. It was rich! Titters and suppressed giggles turned into continued roars of laughter, and when the phonograph ceased, after a bestowal of fatherly advice and solemn benedictions all round and a requiescat in pace, the audience went fairly wild.

The specialist was inserting another cylinder and the members of the "Voice from the Beyond" society were doing some hard thinking. There were hasty reviews of sermons preached recently into phonographic receivers, and many imparted secrets — secrets to be made known only after death — were remembered. They became alarmed. They knew not whose turn was next and they were all convinced that it was a scurvy trick.

Again the phonograph was started; but when Archie's voice was heard, soaring in the eloquent lights of his funeral oration, the members of the "Voice from the Beyond" society sprang to the little platform, stopped the machinery, and took possession of the cylinders. Ollie postulated; Damon feigned indignation. Finally, amid much confusion and many questions, Damon dismissed the audience, which soon departed, with the exception of the "Voice from the Beyond" society, which remained to talk it over and to take summary vengeance.

Ollie was cool, determined, dramatic — he would have made a model villain. He demanded two hundred and fifty dollars for the return of each of the cylinders. They refused. Why should they pay? Were they not in possession of the cylinders? Then Ollie talked vaguely of duplicate cylinders, which might find their way into the nickle-in-the-slot [sic] machines; of funeral orations going abroad from every street and public place in New York; of the possibility of disposing of these same duplicates among friends of the late deceased; and ominously hinted of many things decidedly worse.

"I say, Damon, we've squared up the Doldrums' racket, with interest, haven't we?"

"Didn't we though. By the way, Ollie, how much is ten times two hundred and fifty, minus five hundred, divided by two?"

"Ten hundred! By Jove! You're a brick, Damon, in planning."

"So are you, Ollie, in execution."

"Then we're both bricks, good gold bricks, worth ten hundred apiece."

Under the Deck Awnings

"Can any man – a gentleman, I mean – call a woman a pig?"

The little man flung this challenge forth to the whole group, then leaned back in his deck chair, sipping lemonade with an air commingled of certitude and watchful belligerence. Nobody made answer. They were used to the little man and his sudden passions and high elevations.

"I repeat, it was in my presence that he said a certain lady, whom none of you knows, was a pig. He did not say swine. He grossly said that she was a pig. And I hold that no man who is a man could possibly make such a remark about any woman."

Dr. Dawson puffed stolidly at his black pipe. Matthews, with knees hunched up and clasped by his arms, was absorbed in the flight of a gunie. Sweet, finishing his Scotch and soda, was questing about with his eyes for a deck steward.

"I ask you, Mr. Treloar, can any man call any woman a pig?"

Treloar, who happened to be sitting next to him, was startled by the abruptness of the attack, and wondered what grounds he had ever given the little man to believe that he could call a woman a pig.

"I should say," he began his hesitant answer, "that it – er – depends on the – er – the lady."

The little man was aghast.

"You mean ...?" he quavered.

"That I have seen female humans who were as bad as pigs – and worse."

There was a long pained silence. The little man seemed withered by the coarse brutality of the reply. In his face was unutterable hurt and woe.

"You have told of a man who made a not nice remark and you have classified him," Treloar said in cold, even tones. "I shall now tell you about a woman – I beg your pardon – a lady, and when I have finished I shall ask you to classify her. Miss Caruthers I shall call her, principally for the reason that it is not her name. It was on a P. & 0. boat, and it occurred neither more nor less than several years ago.

"Miss Caruthers was charming. No; that is not the word. She was amazing. She was a young woman, and a lady. Her father was a certain high official whose name, if I mentioned it, would be immediately recognized by all of you. She was with her mother and two maids at the time, going out to join the old gentleman wherever you like to wish in the East.

"She, and pardon me for repeating, was amazing. It is the one adequate word. Even the most minor adjectives applicable to her are bound to be sheer superlatives. There was nothing she could not do better than any woman and than most men. Sing, play

– bah — !as some rhetorician once said of old Nap, competition fled from her. Swim! She could have made a fortune and a name as a public performer. She was one of those rare women who can strip off all the frills of dress, and in simple swimming suit be more satisfying beautiful. Dress! She was an artist.

"But her swimming. Physically, she was the perfect woman – you know what I mean, not in the gross, muscular way of acrobats, but in all the delicacy of line and fragility of frame and texture. And combined with this, strength. How she could do it was the marvel. You know the wonder of a woman's arm – the fore arm, I mean; the sweet fading away from rounded biceps and hint of muscle, down through small elbow and firm soft swell to the wrist, small, unthinkably small and round and strong. This was hers. And yet, to see her swimming the sharp quick English overhand stroke, and getting somewhere with it, too, was – well, I understand anatomy and athletics and such things, and yet it was a mystery to me how she could do it.

"She could stay under water for two minutes. I have timed her. No man on board, except Dennitson, could capture as many coins as she with a single dive. On the forward main-deck was a big canvas tank with six feet of sea-water. We used to toss small coins into it. I have seen her dive from the bridge deck – no mean feat in itself – into that six-feet of water, and fetch up no less than forty-seven coins, scattered willy-nilly over the whole bottom of the tank. Dennitson, a quiet young Englishman, never exceeded her in this, though he made it a point always to tie her score.

"She was a sea-woman, true. But she was a land-woman, a horsewoman – a — she was the universal woman. To see her, all softness of soft dress, surrounded by half a dozen eager men, languidly careless of them all or flashing brightness and wit on them and at them and through them, one would fancy she was good for nothing else in the world. At such moments I have compelled myself to remember her score of forty-seven coins from the bottom of the swimming tank. But that was she, the everlasting, wonder of a woman who did all things well.

"She fascinated every betrousered human around her. She had me – and I don't mind confessing it – she bad me to heel along with the rest. Young puppies and old gray dogs who ought to have known better – oh, they all came up and crawled around her skirts and whined and fawned when she whistled. They were all guilty, from young Ardmore, a pink cherub of nineteen outward bound for some clerkship in the Consular Service, to old Captain Bentley, grizzled and sea-worn, and as emotional, to look at, as a Chinese joss. There was a nice middle-aged chap, Perkins, I believe, who forgot his wife was on board until Miss Caruthers sent him to the right about and back where he belonged.

"Men were wax in her hands. She melted them, or softly molded them, or incinerated them, as she pleased. There wasn't a steward, even, grand and remote as she was, who, at her bidding, would have hesitated to souse the Old Man himself with a plate of soup. You have all seen such women – a sort of world's desire to all men. As a man-conqueror she was supreme. She was a whip-lash, a sting and a flame, an electric spark.

Oh, believe me, at times there were flashes of will that scorched through her beauty and seduction and smote a victim into blank and shivering idiocy and fear.

"And don't fail to mark, in the light of what is to come, that she was a prideful woman. Pride of race, pride of caste, pride of sex, pride of power – she had it all, a pride strange and wilful and terrible.

"She ran the ship, she ran the voyage, she ran everything, and she ran Dennitson. That he had outdistanced the pack even the least wise of us admitted. That she liked him, and that this feeling was growing, there was not a doubt. I am certain that she looked on him with kinder eyes than she had ever looked with on man before. We still worshiped, and were always hanging about waiting to be whistled up, though we knew that Dennitson was laps and laps ahead of us. What might have happened we shall never know, for we came to Colombo and something else happened.

"You know Colombo, and how the native boys dive for coins in the shark-infested bay. Of course, it is only among the ground sharks and fish sharks that they venture. It is almost uncanny the way they know sharks and can sense the presence of a real killer – a tiger shark, for instance, or a gray nurse strayed up from Australian waters. Let such a shark appear, and, long before the passengers can guess, every mother's son of them is out of the water in a wild scramble for safety.

"It was after tiffin, and Miss Caruthers was holding her usual court under the deck-awnings. Old Captain Bentley had just been whistled up, and had granted her what he never granted before...nor since – permission for the boys to come up on the promenade deck. You see, Miss Caruthers was a swimmer, and she was interested. She took up a collection of all our small change, and herself tossed it overside, singly and in handfuls, arranging the terms of the contests, chiding a miss, giving extra rewards to clever wins, in short, managing the whole exhibition.

"She was especially keen on their jumping. You know, jumping feet-first from a height, it is very difficult to hold the body perpendicularly while in the air. The center of gravity of the male body is high, and the tendency is to overtopple. But the little beggars employed a method which she declared was new to her and which she desired to learn. Leaping from the davits of the boat-deck above, they plunged downward, their faces and shoulders bowed forward, looking at the water. And only at the last moment did they abruptly straighten up and enter the water erect and true.

"It was a pretty sight. Their diving was not so good, though there was one of them who was excellent at it, as he was in all the other stunts. Some white man must have taught him, for he made the proper swan dive and did it as beautifully as I have ever seen it. You know, headfirst into the water, from a great height, the problem is to enter the water at the perfect angle. Miss the angle and it means at the least a twisted back and injury for life. Also, it has meant death for many a bungler. But this boy could do it – seventy feet I know he cleared in one dive from the rigging – clenched hands on chest, head thrown back, sailing more like a bird, upward and out, and out and down, body flat on the air so that if it struck the surface in that position it would be split in half like a herring. But the moment before the water is reached, the head

drops forward, the hands go out and lock the arms in an arch in advance of the head, and the body curves gracefully downward and enters the water just right.

"This the boy did, again and again, to the delight of all of us, but particularly of Miss Caruthers. He could not have been a moment over twelve or thirteen, yet he was by far the cleverest of the gang. He was the favorite of his crowd, and its leader. Though there were a number older than he, they acknowledged his chieftaincy. He was a beautiful boy, a lithe young god in breathing bronze, eyes wide apart, intelligent and daring, a bubble, a mote, a beautiful flash and sparkle of life. You have seen. wonderful glorious creatures – animals, anything, a leopard, a horse-restless, eager, too much alive ever to be still, silken of muscle, each slightest movement a benediction of grace, every action wild, untrammeled, and over all spilling out that intense vitality, that sheen and luster of living light. The boy had it. Life poured out of him almost in an effulgence. His skin glowed with it. It burned in his eyes. I swear I could almost hear it crackle from him. Looking at him, it was as if a whiff of ozone came to one's nostrils – so fresh and young was he, so resplendent with health, so wildly wild.

"This was the boy. And it was he who gave the alarm in the midst of the sport. The boys made a dash of it for the gangway platform, swimming the fastest strokes they knew, pellmell, floundering and splashing, fright in their faces, clambering out with jumps and surges, any way to get out, lending one another a hand to safety, till all were strung along the gangway and peering down into the water.

" 'What is the matter?' asked Miss Caruthers.

" 'A shark, I fancy,' Captain Bentley answered. 'Lucky little beggars that he didn't get one of them.'

" 'Are they afraid of sharks?' she asked.

" 'Aren't you?' he asked back.

She shuddered, looked overside at the water, and made a moue.

" 'Not for the world would I venture where a shark might be,' she said, and shuddered again. 'They are horrible! Horrible!'

"The boys came up on the promenade deck, clustering close to the rail and worshiping Miss Caruthers who had flung them such a wealth of backsheesh. The performance being over, Captain Bentley motioned to them to clear out. But she stopped him.

" 'One moment, please, Captain. I have always understood that the natives are not afraid of sharks.'

"She beckoned the boy of the swan dive nearer to her, and signed to him to dive over again. He shook his head, and along with all his crew behind him laughed as if it were a good joke.

" 'Shark,' he volunteered, pointing to the water.

" 'No,' she said. 'There is no shark.'

"But he nodded his head positively, and the boys behind him nodded with equal positiveness.

" 'No, no, no,' she cried. And then to us, 'Who'll lend me a half-crown and a sovereign!'

“Immediately the half dozen of us were presenting her with crowns and sovereigns, and she accepted the two coins from young Ardmore.

“She held up the half-crown for the boys to see. But there was no eager rush to the rail preparatory to leaping. They stood there grinning sheepishly. She offered the coin to each one individually, and each, as his turn came, rubbed his foot against his calf, shook his head, and grinned. Then she tossed the half-crown overboard. With wistful, regretful faces they watched its silver flight through the air, but not one moved to follow it.

“ ‘Don’t do it with the sovereign,’ Dennitson said to her in a low voice.

“She took no notice, but held up the gold coin before the eyes of the boy of the swan dive.

“ ‘Don’t,’ said Captain Bentley. ‘I wouldn’t throw a sick cat overside with a shark around.’

“But she laughed, bent on her purpose, and continued to dazzle the boy.

“ ‘Don’t tempt him,’ Dennitson urged. ‘It is a fortune to him, and he might go over after it.’

“ ‘Wouldn’t YOU?’ she flared at him. ‘If I threw it?’

This last more softly.

Dennitson shook his head.

“ ‘Your price is high,’ she said. ‘For how many sovereigns would you go?’

“ ‘There are not enough coined to get me overside,’ was his answer.

“She debated a moment, the boy forgotten in her tilt with Dennitson.

“ ‘For me?’ she said very softly.

“ ‘To save your life – yes. But not otherwise.’

“She turned back to the boy. Again she held the coin before his eyes, dazzling him with the vastness of its value. Then she made as to toss it out, and, involuntarily, he made a half-movement toward the rail, but was checked by sharp cries of reproof from his companions. There was anger in their voices as well.

“ ‘I know it is only fooling,’ Dennitson said. ‘Carry it as far as you like, but for heaven’s sake don’t throw it.’

“Whether it was that strange wilfulness of hers, or whether she doubted the boy could be persuaded, there is no telling. It was unexpected to all of us. Out from the shade of the awning the coin flashed golden in the blaze of sunshine and fell toward the sea in a glittering arch. Before a hand could stay him, the boy was over the rail and curving beautifully downward after the coin. Both were in the air at the same time. It was a pretty sight. The sovereign cut the water sharply, and at the very spot, almost at the same instant, with scarcely a splash, the boy entered.

“From the quicker-eyed black boys watching, came an exclamation. We were all at the railing. Don’t tell me it is necessary for a shark to turn on its back. That one did not. In the clear water, from the height we were above it, we saw everything. The shark was a big brute, and with one drive he cut the boy squarely in half.

"There was a murmur or something from among us – who made it I did not know; it might have been I. And then there was silence. Miss Caruthers was the first to speak. Her face was deathly white.

" 'I never dreamed,' she said, and laughed a short, hysterical laugh.

All her pride was at work to give her control. She turned weakly toward Dennitson, and then, on from one to another of us. In her eyes was a terrible sickness, and her lips were trembling. We were brutes – oh, I know it, now that I look back upon it. But we did nothing.

" 'Mr. Dennitson,' she said, 'Tom, won't you take me below!'

"He never changed the direction of his gaze, which was the bleakest I have ever seen in a man's face, nor did he move an eyelid. He took a cigarette from his case and lighted it. Captain Bentley made a nasty sound in his throat and spat overboard. That was all; that and the silence.

"She turned away and started to walk firmly down the deck. Twenty feet away, she swayed and thrust a hand against the wall to save herself. And so she went on, supporting herself against the cabins and walking very slowly." Treloar ceased. He turned his head and favored the little man with a look of cold inquiry.

"Well," he said finally. "Classify her."

The little man gulped and swallowed.

"I have nothing to say," he said. "I have nothing whatever to say."

The Unexpected

IT is a simple matter to see the obvious, to do the expected. The tendency of the individual life is to be static rather than dynamic, and this tendency is made into a propulsion by civilization, where the obvious only is seen, and the unexpected rarely happens. When the unexpected does happen, however, and when it is of sufficiently grave import, the unfit perish. They do not see what is not obvious, are unable to do the unexpected, are incapable of adjusting their well-grooved lives to other and strange grooves. In short, when they come to the end of their own groove, they die.

On the other hand, there are those that make toward survival, the fit individuals who escape from the rule of the obvious and the expected and adjust their lives to no matter what strange grooves they may stray into, or into which they may be forced. Such an individual was Edith Whittlesey. She was born in a rural district of England, where life proceeds by rule of thumb and the unexpected is so very unexpected that when it happens it is looked upon as an immorality. She went into service early, and while yet a young woman, by rule-of-thumb progression, she became a lady's maid.

The effect of civilization is to impose human law upon environment until it becomes machine-like in its regularity. The objectionable is eliminated, the inevitable is foreseen. One is not even made wet by the rain nor cold by the frost; while death, instead of stalking about grewsome and accidental, becomes a prearranged pageant, moving along a well-oiled groove to the family vault, where the hinges are kept from rusting and the dust from the air is swept continually away.

Such was the environment of Edith Whittlesey. Nothing happened. It could scarcely be called a happening, when, at the age of twenty-five, she accompanied her mistress on a bit of travel to the United States. The groove merely changed its direction. It was still the same groove and well oiled. It was a groove that bridged the Atlantic with uneventfulness, so that the ship was not a ship in the midst of the sea, but a capacious, many-corridored hotel that moved swiftly and placidly, crushing the waves into submission with its colossal bulk until the sea was a mill-pond, monotonous with quietude. And at the other side the groove continued on over the land-a well-disposed, respectable groove that supplied hotels at every stopping-place, and hotels on wheels between the stopping-places.

In Chicago, while her mistress saw one side of social life, Edith Whittlesey saw another side; and when she left her lady's service and became Edith Nelson, she betrayed, perhaps faintly, her ability to grapple with the unexpected and to master it. Hans Nelson, immigrant, Swede by birth and carpenter by occupation, had in him that Teutonic unrest that drives the race ever westward on its great adventure. He

was a large-muscled, stolid sort of a man, in whom little imagination was coupled with immense initiative, and who possessed, withal, loyalty and affection as sturdy as his own strength.

"When I have worked hard and saved me some money, I will go to Colorado," he had told Edith on the day after their wedding. A year later they were in Colorado, where Hans Nelson saw his first mining and caught the mining-fever himself. His prospecting led him through the Dakotas, Idaho, and eastern Oregon, and on into the mountains of British Columbia. In camp and on trail, Edith Nelson was always with him, sharing his luck, his hardship, and his toil. The short step of the house-reared woman she exchanged for the long stride of the mountaineer. She learned to look upon danger clear-eyed and with understanding, losing forever that panic fear which is bred of ignorance and which afflicts the city-reared, making them as silly as silly horses, so that they await fate in frozen horror instead of grappling with it, or stampede in blind self-destroying terror which clutters the way with their crushed carcasses.

Edith Nelson met the unexpected at every turn of the trail, and she trained her vision so that she saw in the landscape, not the obvious, but the concealed. She, who had never cooked in her life, learned to make bread without the mediation of hops, yeast, or baking-powder, and to bake bread, top and bottom, in a frying-pan before an open fire. And when the last cup of flour was gone and the last rind of bacon, she was able to rise to the occasion, and of moccasins and the softer-tanned bits of leather in the outfit to make a grub-stake substitute that somehow held a man's soul in his body and enabled him to stagger on. She learned to pack a horse as well as a man,-a task to break the heart and the pride of any city-dweller, and she knew how to throw the hitch best suited for any particular kind of pack. Also, she could build a fire of wet wood in a downpour of rain and not lose her temper. In short, in all its guises she mastered the unexpected. But the Great Unexpected was yet to come into her life and put its test upon her.

The gold-seeking tide was flooding northward into Alaska, and it was inevitable that Hans Nelson and his wife should he caught up by the stream and swept toward the Klondike. The fall of 1897 found them at Dyea, but without the money to carry an outfit across Chilcoot Pass and float it down to Dawson. So Hans Nelson worked at his trade that winter and helped rear the mushroom outfitting-town of Skaguay.

He was on the edge of things, and throughout the winter he heard all Alaska calling to him. Latuya Bay called loudest, so that the summer of 1898 found him and his wife threading the mazes of the broken coast-line in seventy-foot Siwash canoes. With them were Indians, also three other men. The Indians landed them and their supplies in a lonely bight of land a hundred miles or so beyond Latuya Bay, and returned to Skaguay; but the three other men remained, for they were members of the organized party. Each had put an equal share of capital into the outfitting, and the profits were to he divided equally. In that Edith Nelson undertook to cook for the outfit, a man's share was to be her portion.

First, spruce trees were cut down and a three-room cabin constructed. To keep this cabin was Edith Nelson's task. The task of the men was to search for gold, which they did; and to find gold, which they likewise did. It was not a startling find, merely a low-pay placer where long hours of severe toil earned each man between fifteen and twenty dollars a day. The brief Alaskan summer protracted itself beyond its usual length, and they took advantage of the opportunity, delaying their return to Skaguay to the last moment. And then it was too late. Arrangements had been made to accompany the several dozen local Indians on their fall trading trip down the coast. The Siwashes had waited on the white people until the eleventh hour, and then departed. There was no course left the party but to wait for chance transportation. In the meantime the claim was cleaned up and firewood stocked in.

The Indian summer had dreamed on and on, and then, suddenly, with the sharpness of bugles, winter came. It came in a single night, and the miners awoke to howling wind, driving snow, and freezing water. Storm followed storm, and between the storms there was the silence, broken only by the boom of the surf on the desolate shore, where the salt spray rimmed the beach with frozen white.

All went well in the cabin. Their gold-dust had weighed up something like eight thousand dollars, and they could not but be contented. The men made snowshoes, hunted fresh meat for the larder, and in the long evenings played endless games of whist and pedro. Now that the mining had ceased, Edith Nelson turned over the fire-building and the dish-washing to the men, while she darned their socks and mended their clothes.

There was no grumbling, no bickering, nor petty quarrelling in the little cabin, and they often congratulated one another on the general happiness of the party. Hans Nelson was stolid and easy-going, while Edith had long before won his unbounded admiration by her capacity for getting on with people. Harkey, a long, lank Texan, was unusually friendly for one with a saturnine disposition, and, as long as his theory that gold grew was not challenged, was quite companionable. The fourth member of the party, Michael Dennin, contributed his Irish wit to the gayety of the cabin. He was a large, powerful man, prone to sudden rushes of anger over little things, and of unfailing good-humor under the stress and strain of big things. The fifth and last member, Dutchy, was the willing butt of the party. He even went out of his way to raise a laugh at his own expense in order to keep things cheerful. His deliberate aim in life seemed to be that of a maker of laughter. No serious quarrel had ever vexed the serenity of the party; and, now that each had sixteen hundred dollars to show for a short summer's work, there reigned the well-fed, contented spirit of prosperity.

And then the unexpected happened. They had just sat down to the breakfast table. Though it was already eight o'clock (late breakfasts had followed naturally upon cessation of the steady work at mining) a candle in the neck of a bottle lighted the meal. Edith and Hans sat at each end of the table. On one side, with their backs to the door, sat Harkey and Dutchy. The place on the other side was vacant. Dennin had not yet come in.

Hans Nelson looked at the empty chair, shook his head slowly, and, with a ponderous attempt at humor, said: "Always is he first at the grub. It is very strange. Maybe he is sick."

"Where is Michael?" Edith asked.

"Got up a little ahead of us and went outside," Harkey answered.

Dutchy's face beamed mischievously. He pretended knowledge of Dennin's absence, and affected a mysterious air, while they clamored for information. Edith, after a peep into the men's bunk-room, returned to the table. Hans looked at her, and she shook her head.

"He was never late at meal-time before," she remarked.

"I cannot understand," said Hans. "Always has he the great appetite like the horse."

"It is too bad," Dutchy said, with a sad shake of his head.

They were beginning to make merry over their comrade's absence.

"It is a great pity!" Dutchy volunteered.

"What?" they demanded in chorus.

"Poor Michael," was the mournful reply.

"Well, what's wrong with Michael?" Harkey asked.

"He is not hungry no more," wailed Dutchy. "He has lost der appetite. He do not like der grub."

"Not from the way he pitches into it up to his ears," remarked Harkey.

"He does dot shust to be politeful to Mrs. Nelson," was Dutchy's quick retort. "I know, I know, and it is too pad. Why is he not here? Pecause he haf gone out. Why haf he gone out? For der defelopment of der appetite. How does he defelop der appetite? He walks barefoots in der snow. Ach! don't I know? It is der way der rich peoples chases after der appetite when it is no more and is running away. Michael haf sixteen hundred dollars. He is rich peoples. He haf no appetite. Derefore, pecause, he is chasing der appetite. Shust you open der door und you will see his barefoots in der snow. No, you will not see der appetite. Dot is shust his trouble. When he sees der appetite he will catch it und come to preak-fast."

They burst into loud laughter at Dutchy's nonsense. The sound had scarcely died away when the door opened and Dennin came in. All turned to look at him. He was carrying a shot-gun. Even as they looked, he lifted it to his shoulder and fired twice. At the first shot Dutchy sank upon the table, overturning his mug of coffee, his yellow mop of hair dabbling in his plate of mush. His forehead, which pressed upon the near edge of the plate, tilted the plate up against his hair at an angle of forty-five degrees. Harkey was in the air, in his spring to his feet, at the second shot, and he pitched face down upon the floor, his "My God!" gurgling and dying in his throat.

It was the unexpected. Hans and Edith were stunned. They sat at the table with bodies tense, their eyes fixed in a fascinated gaze upon the murderer. Dimly they saw him through the smoke of the powder, and in the silence nothing was to be heard save the drip-drip of Dutchy's spilled coffee on the floor. Dennin threw open the breech of

the shot-gun, ejecting the empty shells. Holding the gun with one hand, he reached with the other into his pocket for fresh shells.

He was thrusting the shells into the gun when Edith Nelson was aroused to action. It was patent that he intended to kill Hans and her. For a space of possibly three seconds of time she had been dazed and paralysed by the horrible and inconceivable form in which the unexpected had made its appearance. Then she rose to it and grappled with it. She grappled with it concretely, making a cat-like leap for the murderer and gripping his neck-cloth with both her hands. The impact of her body sent him stumbling backward several steps. He tried to shake her loose and still retain his hold on the gun. This was awkward, for her firm-fleshed body had become a cat's. She threw herself to one side, and with her grip at his throat nearly jerked him to the floor. He straightened himself and whirled swiftly. Still faithful to her hold, her body followed the circle of his whirl so that her feet left the floor, and she swung through the air fastened to his throat by her hands. The whirl culminated in a collision with a chair, and the man and woman crashed to the floor in a wild struggling fall that extended itself across half the length of the room.

Hans Nelson was half a second behind his wife in rising to the unexpected. His nerve processed and mental processes were slower than hers. His was the grosser organism, and it had taken him half a second longer to perceive, and determine, and proceed to do. She had already flown at Dennin and gripped his throat, when Hans sprang to his feet. But her coolness was not his. He was in a blind fury, a Berserker rage. At the instant he sprang from his chair his mouth opened and there issued forth a sound that was half roar, half bellow. The whirl of the two bodies had already started, and still roaring, or bellowing, he pursued this whirl down the room, overtaking it when it fell to the floor.

Hans hurled himself upon the prostrate man, striking madly with his fists. They were sledge-like blows, and when Edith felt Dennin's body relax she loosed her grip and rolled clear. She lay on the floor, panting and watching. The fury of blows continued to rain down. Dennin did not seem to mind the blows. He did not even move. Then it dawned upon her that he was unconscious. She cried out to Hans to stop. She cried out again. But he paid no heed to her voice. She caught him by the arm, but her clinging to it merely impeded his effort.

It was no reasoned impulse that stirred her to do what she then did. Nor was it a sense of pity, nor obedience to the "Thou shalt not" of religion. Rather was it some sense of law, an ethic of her race and early environment, that compelled her to interpose her body between her husband and the helpless murderer. It was not until Hans knew he was striking his wife that he ceased. He allowed himself to be shoved away by her in much the same way that a ferocious but obedient dog allows itself to be shoved away by its master. The analogy went even farther. Deep in his throat, in an animal-like way, Hans's rage still rumbled, and several times he made as though to spring back upon his prey and was only prevented by the woman's swiftly interposed body.

Back and farther back Edith shoved her husband. She had never seen him in such a condition, and she was more frightened of him than she had been of Dennin in the thick of the struggle. She could not believe that this raging beast was her Hans, and with a shock she became suddenly aware of a shrinking, instinctive fear that he might snap her hand in his teeth like any wild animal. For some seconds, unwilling to hurt her, yet dogged in his desire to return to the attack, Hans dodged back and forth. But she resolutely dodged with him, until the first glimmerings of reason returned and he gave over.

Both crawled to their feet. Hans staggered back against the wall, where he leaned, his face working, in his throat the deep and continuous rumble that died away with the seconds and at last ceased. The time for the reaction had come. Edith stood in the middle of the floor, wringing her hands, panting and gasping, her whole body trembling violently.

Hans looked at nothing, but Edith's eyes wandered wildly from detail to detail of what had taken place. Dennin lay without movement. The overturned chair, hurled onward in the mad whirl, lay near him. Partly under him lay the shot-gun, still broken open at the breech. Spilling out of his right hand were the two cartridges which he had failed to put into the gun and which he had clutched until consciousness left him. Harkey lay on the floor, face downward, where he had fallen; while Dutchy rested forward on the table, his yellow mop of hair buried in his mush-plate, the plate itself still tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees. This tilted plate fascinated her. Why did it not fall down? It was ridiculous. It was not in the nature of things for a mush-plate to up-end itself on the table, even if a man or so had been killed.

She glanced back at Dennin, but her eyes returned to the tilted plate. It was so ridiculous! She felt a hysterical impulse to laugh. Then she noticed the silence, and forgot the plate in a desire for something to happen. The monotonous drip of the coffee from the table to the floor merely emphasized the silence. Why did not Hans do something? say something? She looked at him and was about to speak, when she discovered that her tongue refused its wonted duty. There was a peculiar ache in her throat, and her mouth was dry and furry. She could only look at Hans, who, in turn, looked at her.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a sharp, metallic clang. She screamed, jerking her eyes back to the table. The plate had fallen down. Hans sighed as though awakening from sleep. The clang of the plate had aroused them to life in a new world. The cabin epitomized the new world in which they must thenceforth live and move. The old cabin was gone forever. The horizon of life was totally new and unfamiliar. The unexpected had swept its wizardry over the face of things, changing the perspective, juggling values, and shuffling the real and the unreal into perplexing confusion.

"My God, Hans!" was Edith's first speech.

He did not answer, but stared at her with horror. Slowly his eyes wandered over the room, for the first time taking in its details. Then he put on his cap and started for the door.

"Where are you going?" Edith demanded, in an agony of apprehension.

His hand was on the door-knob, and he half turned as he answered, "To dig some graves."

"Don't leave me, Hans, with — " her eyes swept the room — "with this."

"The graves must be dug sometime," he said.

"But you do not know how many," she objected desperately. She noted his indecision, and added, "Besides, I'll go with you and help."

Hans stepped back to the table and mechanically snuffed the candle. Then between them they made the examination. Both Harkey and Dutchy were dead — frightfully dead, because of the close range of the shot-gun. Hans refused to go near Dennin, and Edith was forced to conduct this portion of the investigation by herself.

"He isn't dead," she called to Hans.

He walked over and looked down at the murderer.

"What did you say?" Edith demanded, having caught the rumble of inarticulate speech in her husband's throat.

"I said it was a damn shame that he isn't dead," came the reply.

Edith was bending over the body.

"Leave him alone," Hans commanded harshly, in a strange voice.

She looked at him in sudden alarm. He had picked up the shot-gun dropped by Dennin and was thrusting in the shells.

"What are you going to do?" she cried, rising swiftly from her bending position.

Hans did not answer, but she saw the shot-gun going to his shoulder. She grasped the muzzle with her hand and threw it up.

"Leave me alone!" he cried hoarsely.

He tried to jerk the weapon away from her, but she came in closer and clung to him.

"Hans! Hans! Wake up!" she cried. "Don't be crazy!"

"He killed Dutchy and Harkey!" was her husband's reply; "and I am going to kill him."

"But that is wrong," she objected. "There is the law."

He sneered his incredulity of the law's potency in such a region, but he merely iterated, dispassionately, doggedly, "He killed Dutchy and Harkey."

Long she argued it with him, but the argument was one-sided, for he contented himself with repeating again and again, "He killed Dutchy and Harkey." But she could not escape from her childhood training nor from the blood that was in her. The heritage of law was hers, and right conduct, to her, was the fulfilment of the law. She could see no other righteous course to pursue. Hans's taking the law in his own hands was no more justifiable than Dennin's deed. Two wrongs did not make a right, she contended, and there was only one way to punish Dennin, and that was the legal way arranged by society. At last Hans gave in to her.

"All right," he said. "Have it your own way. And to-morrow or next day look to see him kill you and me."

She shook her head and held out her hand for the shot-gun. He started to hand it to her, then hesitated.

"Better let me shoot him," he pleaded.

Again she shook her head, and again he started to pass her the gun, when the door opened, and an Indian, without knocking, came in. A blast of wind and flurry of snow came in with him. They turned and faced him, Hans still holding the shot-gun. The intruder took in the scene without a quiver. His eyes embraced the dead and wounded in a sweeping glance. No surprise showed in his face, not even curiosity. Harkey lay at his feet, but he took no notice of him. So far as he was concerned, Harkey's body did not exist.

"Much wind," the Indian remarked by way of salutation. "All well? Very well?"

Hans, still grasping the gun, felt sure that the Indian attributed to him the mangled corpses. He glanced appealingly at his wife.

"Good morning, Negook," she said, her voice betraying her effort. "No, not very well. Much trouble."

"Good-by, I go now, much hurry", the Indian said, and without semblance of haste, with great deliberation stepping clear of a red pool on the floor, he opened the door and went out.

The man and woman looked at each other.

"He thinks we did it," Hans gasped, "that I did it."

Edith was silent for a space. Then she said, briefly, in a businesslike way:

"Never mind what he thinks. That will come after. At present we have two graves to dig. But first of all, we've got to tie up Dennin so he can't escape."

Hans refused to touch Dennin, but Edith lashed him securely, hand and foot. Then she and Hans went out into the snow. The ground was frozen. It was impervious to a blow of the pick. They first gathered wood, then scraped the snow away and on the frozen surface built a fire. When the fire had burned for an hour, several inches of dirt had thawed. This they shovelled out, and then built a fresh fire. Their descent into the earth progressed at the rate of two or three inches an hour.

It was hard and bitter work. The flurrying snow did not permit the fire to burn any too well, while the wind cut through their clothes and chilled their bodies. They held but little conversation. The wind interfered with speech. Beyond wondering at what could have been Dennin's motive, they remained silent, oppressed by the horror of the tragedy. At one o'clock, looking toward the cabin, Hans announced that he was hungry.

"No, not now, Hans," Edith answered. "I couldn't go back alone into that cabin the way it is, and cook a meal."

At two o'clock Hans volunteered to go with her; but she held him to his work, and four o'clock found the two graves completed. They were shallow, not more than two feet deep, but they would serve the purpose. Night had fallen. Hans got the sled, and the two dead men were dragged through the darkness and storm to their frozen sepulchre. The funeral procession was anything but a pageant. The sled sank deep into the drifted

snow and pulled hard. The man and the woman had eaten nothing since the previous day, and were weak from hunger and exhaustion. They had not the strength to resist the wind, and at times its buffets hurled them off their feet. On several occasions the sled was overturned, and they were compelled to reload it with its sombre freight. The last hundred feet to the graves was up a steep slope, and this they took on all fours, like sled-dogs, making legs of their arms and thrusting their hands into the snow. Even so, they were twice dragged backward by the weight of the sled, and slid and fell down the hill, the living and the dead, the haul-ropes and the sled, in ghastly entanglement.

"To-morrow I will put up head-boards with their names," Hans said, when the graves were filled in.

Edith was sobbing. A few broken sentences had been all she was capable of in the way of a funeral service, and now her husband was compelled to half-carry her back to the cabin.

Dennin was conscious. He had rolled over and over on the floor in vain efforts to free himself. He watched Hans and Edith with glittering eyes, but made no attempt to speak. Hans still refused to touch the murderer, and sullenly watched Edith drag him across the floor to the men's bunk-room. But try as she would, she could not lift him from the floor into his bunk.

"Better let me shoot him, and we'll have no more trouble," Hans said in final appeal.

Edith shook her head and bent again to her task. To her surprise the body rose easily, and she knew Hans had relented and was helping her. Then came the cleansing of the kitchen. But the floor still shrieked the tragedy, until Hans planed the surface of the stained wood away and with the shavings made a fire in the stove.

The days came and went. There was much of darkness and silence, broken only by the storms and the thunder on the beach of the freezing surf. Hans was obedient to Edith's slightest order. All his splendid initiative had vanished. She had elected to deal with Dennin in her way, and so he left the whole matter in her hands.

The murderer was a constant menace. At all times there was the chance that he might free himself from his bonds, and they were compelled to guard him day and night. The man or the woman sat always beside him, holding the loaded shot-gun. At first, Edith tried eight-hour watches, but the continuous strain was too great, and afterwards she and Hans relieved each other every four hours. As they had to sleep, and as the watches extended through the night, their whole waking time was expended in guarding Dennin. They had barely time left over for the preparation of meals and the getting of firewood.

Since Negook's inopportune visit, the Indians had avoided the cabin. Edith sent Hans to their cabins to get them to take Dennin down the coast in a canoe to the nearest white settlement or trading post, but the errand was fruitless. Then Edith went herself and interviewed Negook. He was head man of the little village, keenly aware of his responsibility, and he elucidated his policy thoroughly in few words.

"It is white man's trouble", he said, "not Siwash trouble. My people help you, then will it be Siwash trouble too. When white man's trouble and Siwash trouble come

together and make a trouble, it is a great trouble, beyond understanding and without end. Trouble no good. My people do no wrong. What for they help you and have trouble?"

So Edith Nelson went back to the terrible cabin with its endless alternating four-hour watches. Sometimes, when it was her turn and she sat by the prisoner, the loaded shot-gun in her lap, her eyes would close and she would doze. Always she aroused with a start, snatching up the gun and swiftly looking at him. These were distinct nervous shocks, and their effect was not good on her. Such was her fear of the man, that even though she were wide awake, if he moved under the bedclothes she could not repress the start and the quick reach for the gun.

She was preparing herself for a nervous break-down, and she knew it. First came a fluttering of the eyeballs, so that she was compelled to close her eyes for relief. A little later the eyelids were afflicted by a nervous twitching that she could not control. To add to the strain, she could not forget the tragedy. She remained as close to the horror as on the first morning when the unexpected stalked into the cabin and took possession. In her daily ministrations upon the prisoner she was forced to grit her teeth and steel herself, body and spirit.

Hans was affected differently. He became obsessed by the idea that it was his duty to kill Dennin; and whenever he waited upon the bound man or watched by him, Edith was troubled by the fear that Hans would add another red entry to the cabin's record. Always he cursed Dennin savagely and handled him roughly. Hans tried to conceal his homicidal mania, and he would say to his wife: "By and by you will want me to kill him, and then I will not kill him. It would make me sick." But more than once, stealing into the room, when it was her watch off, she would catch the two men glaring ferociously at each other, wild animals the pair of them, in Hans's face the lust to kill, in Dennin's the fierceness and savagery of the cornered rat. "Hans!" she would cry, "wake up!" and he would come to a recollection of himself, startled and shamefaced and unrepentant.

So Hans became another factor in the problem the unexpected had given Edith Nelson to solve. At first it had been merely a question of right conduct in dealing with Dennin, and right conduct, as she conceived it, lay in keeping him a prisoner until he could be turned over for trial before a proper tribunal. But now entered Hans, and she saw that his sanity and his salvation were involved. Nor was she long in discovering that her own strength and endurance had become part of the problem. She was breaking down under the strain. Her left arm had developed involuntary jerkings and twitchings. She spilled her food from her spoon, and could place no reliance in her afflicted arm. She judged it to be a form of St. Vitus's dance, and she feared the extent to which its ravages might go. What if she broke down? And the vision she had of the possible future, when the cabin might contain only Dennin and Hans, was an added horror.

After the third day, Dennin had begun to talk. His first question had been, "What are you going to do with me?" And this question he repeated daily and many times a day. And always Edith replied that he would assuredly be dealt with according to law. In turn, she put a daily question to him,-"Why did you do it?" To this he never

replied. Also, he received the question with out-bursts of anger, raging and straining at the rawhide that bound him and threatening her with what he would do when he got loose, which he said he was sure to do sooner or later. At such times she cocked both triggers of the gun, prepared to meet him with leaden death if he should burst loose, herself trembling and palpitating and dizzy from the tension and shock.

But in time Dennin grew more tractable. It seemed to her that he was growing weary of his unchanging recumbent position. He began to beg and plead to be released. He made wild promises. He would do them no harm. He would himself go down the coast and give himself up to the officers of the law. He would give them his share of the gold. He would go away into the heart of the wilderness, and never again appear in civilization. He would take his own life if she would only free him. His pleadings usually culminated in involuntary raving, until it seemed to her that he was passing into a fit; but always she shook her head and denied him the freedom for which he worked himself into a passion.

But the weeks went by, and he continued to grow more tractable. And through it all the weariness was asserting itself more and more. "I am so tired, so tired," he would murmur, rolling his head back and forth on the pillow like a peevish child. At a little later period he began to make impassioned pleas for death, to beg her to kill him, to beg Hans to put him our of his misery so that he might at least rest comfortably.

The situation was fast becoming impossible. Edith's nervousness was increasing, and she knew her break-down might come any time. She could not even get her proper rest, for she was haunted by the fear that Hans would yield to his mania and kill Dennin while she slept. Though January had already come, months would have to elapse before any trading schooner was even likely to put into the bay. Also, they had not expected to winter in the cabin, and the food was running low; nor could Hans add to the supply by hunting. They were chained to the cabin by the necessity of guarding their prisoner.

Something must be done, and she knew it. She forced herself to go back into a reconsideration of the problem. She could not shake off the legacy of her race, the law that was of her blood and that had been trained into her. She knew that whatever she did she must do according to the law, and in the long hours of watching, the shot-gun on her knees, the murderer restless beside her and the storms thundering without, she made original sociological researches and worked out for herself the evolution of the law. It came to her that the law was nothing more than the judgment and the will of any group of people. It mattered not how large was the group of people. There were little groups, she reasoned, like Switzerland, and there were big groups like the United States. Also, she reasoned, it did not matter how small was the group of people. There might be only ten thousand people in a country, yet their collective judgment and will would be the law of that country. Why, then, could not one thousand people constitute such a group? she asked herself. And if one thousand, why not one hundred? Why not fifty? Why not five? Why not — two?

She was frightened at her own conclusion, and she talked it over with Hans. At first he could not comprehend, and then, when he did, he added convincing evidence. He spoke of miners' meetings, where all the men of a locality came together and made the law and executed the law. There might be only ten or fifteen men altogether, he said, but the will of the majority became the law for the whole ten or fifteen, and whoever violated that will was punished.

Edith saw her way clear at last. Dennin must hang. Hans agreed with her. Between them they constituted the majority of this particular group. It was the group-will that Dennin should be hanged. In the execution of this will Edith strove earnestly to observe the customary forms, but the group was so small that Hans and she had to serve as witnesses, as jury, and as judges-also as executioners. She formally charged Michael Dennin with the murder of Dutchy and Harkey, and the prisoner lay in his bunk and listened to the testimony, first of Hans, and then of Edith. He refused to plead guilty or not guilty, and remained silent when she asked him if he had anything to say in his own defence. She and Hans, without leaving their seats, brought in the jury's verdict of guilty. Then, as judge, she imposed the sentence. Her voice shook, her eyelids twitched, her left arm jerked, but she carried it out.

"Michael Dennin, in three days' time you are to be hanged by the neck until you are dead."

Such was the sentence. The man breathed an unconscious sigh of relief, then laughed defiantly, and said, "Thin I'm thinkin' the damn bunk won't be achin' me back anny more, an' that's a consolation."

With the passing of the sentence a feeling of relief seemed to communicate itself to all of them. Especially was it noticeable in Dennin. All sullenness and defiance disappeared, and he talked sociably with his captors, and even with flashes of his old-time wit. Also, he found great satisfaction in Edith's reading to him from the Bible. She read from the New Testament, and he took keen interest in the prodigal son and the thief on the cross.

On the day preceding that set for the execution, when Edith asked her usual question, "Why did you do it?" Dennin answered, "'Tis very simple. I was thinkin' — "

But she hushed him abruptly, asked him to wait, and hurried to Hans's bedside. It was his watch off, and he came out of his sleep, rubbing his eyes and grumbling.

"Go," she told him, "and bring up Negook and one other Indian. Michael's going to confess. Make them come. Take the rifle along and bring them up at the point of it if you have to."

Half an hour later Negook and his uncle, Hadikwan, were ushered into the death chamber. They came unwillingly, Hans with his rifle herding them along.

"Negook," Edith said, "there is to be no trouble for you and your people. Only is it for you to sit and do nothing but listen and understand."

Thus did Michael Dennin, under sentence of death, make public confession of his crime. As he talked, Edith wrote his story down, while the Indians listened, and Hans guarded the door for fear the witnesses might bolt.

He had not been home to the old country for fifteen years, Dennin explained, and it had always been his intention to return with plenty of money and make his old mother comfortable for the rest of her days.

"An' how was I to be doin' it on sixteen hundred?" he demanded. "What I was after wantin' was all the goold, the whole eight thousan'. Thin I cud go back in style. What ud be aisier, thinks I to myself, than to kill all iv yez, report it at Skaguay for an Indian-killin', an' thin pull out for Ireland? An' so I started in to kill all iv yez, but, as Harkey was fond of sayin', I cut out too large a chunk an' fell down on the swallowin' iv it. An' that's me confession. I did me duty to the devil, an' now, God willin', I'll do me duty to God."

"Negook and Hadikwan, you have heard the white man's words," Edith said to the Indians. "His words are here on this paper, and it is for you to make a sign, thus, on the paper, so that white men to come after will know that you have heard."

The two Siwashes put crosses opposite their signatures, received a summons to appear on the morrow with all their tribe for a further witnessing of things, and were allowed to go.

Dennin's hands were released long enough for him to sign the document. Then a silence fell in the room. Hans was restless, and Edith felt uncomfortable. Dennin lay on his back, staring straight up at the moss-chinked roof.

"An' now I'll do me duty to God," he murmured. He turned his head toward Edith. "Read to me," he said, "from the book;" then added, with a glint of playfulness, "Mayhap 'twill help me to forget the bunk."

The day of the execution broke clear and cold. The thermometer was down to twenty-five below zero, and a chill wind was blowing which drove the frost through clothes and flesh to the bones. For the first time in many weeks Dennin stood upon his feet. His muscles had remained inactive so long, and he was so out of practice in maintaining an erect position, that he could scarcely stand.

He reeled back and forth, staggered, and clutched hold of Edith with his bound hands for support.

"Sure, an' it's dizzy I am," he laughed weakly.

A moment later he said, "An' it's glad I am that it's over with. That damn bunk would iv been the death iv me, I know."

When Edith put his fur cap on his head and proceeded to pull the flaps down over his ears, he laughed and said:

"What are you doin' that for?"

"It's freezing cold outside", she answered.

"An' in tin minutes' time what'll matter a frozen ear or so to poor Michael Dennin?" he asked.

She had nerved herself for the last culminating ordeal, and his remark was like a blow to her self-possession. So far, everything had seemed phantom-like, as in a dream, but the brutal truth of what he had said shocked her eyes wide open to the reality of what was taking place. Nor was her distress unnoticed by the Irishman.

"I'm sorry to be troublin' you with me foolish spache," he said regretfully. "I mint nothin' by it. 'Tis a great day for Michael Dennin, an' he's as gay as a lark."

He broke out in a merry whistle, which quickly became lugubrious and ceased.

"I'm wishin' there was a priest," he said wistfully; then added swiftly, "But Michael Dennin's too old a campaigner to miss the luxuries when he hits the trail."

He was so very weak and unused to walking that when the door opened and he passed outside, the wind nearly carried him off his feet. Edith and Hans walked on either side of him and supported him, the while he cracked jokes and tried to keep them cheerful, breaking off, once, long enough to arrange the forwarding of his share of the gold to his mother in Ireland.

They climbed a slight hill and came out into an open space among the trees. Here, circled solemnly about a barrel that stood on end in the snow, were Negook and Hadikwan, and all the Siwashes down to the babies and the dogs, come to see the way of the white man's law. Near by was an open grave which Hans had burned into the frozen earth.

Dennin cast a practical eye over the preparations, noting the grave, the barrel, the thickness of the rope, and the diameter of the limb over which the rope was passed.

"Sure, an' I couldn't iv done better meself, Hans, if it'd been for you."

He laughed loudly at his own sally, but Hans's face was frozen into a sullen ghastliness that nothing less than the trump of doom could have broken. Also, Hans was feeling very sick. He had not realized the enormousness of the task of putting a fellow-man out of the world. Edith, on the other hand, had realized; but the realization did not make the task any easier. She was filled with doubt as to whether she could hold herself together long enough to finish it. She felt incessant impulses to scream, to shriek, to collapse into the snow, to put her hands over her eyes and turn and run blindly away, into the forest, anywhere, away. It was only by a supreme effort of soul that she was able to keep upright and go on and do what she had to do. And in the midst of it all she was grateful to Dennin for the way he helped her.

"Lind me a hand," he said to Hans, with whose assistance he managed to mount the barrel.

He bent over so that Edith could adjust the rope about his neck. Then he stood upright while Hans drew the rope taut across the overhead branch.

"Michael Dennin, have you anything to say?" Edith asked in a clear voice that shook in spite of her.

Dennin shuffled his feet on the barrel, looked down bashfully like a man making his maiden speech, and cleared his throat.

"I'm glad it's over with," he said. "You've treated me like a Christian, an' I'm thankin' you hearty for your kindness."

"Then may God receive you, a repentant sinner," she said.

"Ay," he answered, his deep voice as a response to her thin one, "may God receive me, a repentant sinner."

"Good-by, Michael," she cried, and her voice sounded desperate.

She threw her weight against the barrel, but it did not overturn.

"Hans! Quick! Help me!" she cried faintly.

She could feel her last strength going, and the barrel resisted her. Hans hurried to her, and the barrel went out from under Michael Dennin.

She turned her back, thrusting her fingers into her ears. Then she began to laugh, harshly, sharply, metallically; and Hans was shocked as he had not been shocked through the whole tragedy. Edith Nelson's break-down had come. Even in her hysteria she knew it, and she was glad that she had been able to hold up under the strain until everything had been accomplished. She reeled toward Hans.

"Take me to the cabin, Hans," she managed to articulate.

"And let me rest," she added. "Just let me rest, and rest, and rest."

With Hans's arm around her, supporting her weight and directing her helpless steps, she went off across the snow. But the Indians remained solemnly to watch the working of the white man's law that compelled a man to dance upon the air.

The Unmasking of a Cad

THERE are gentlemen and gentlemen, and yet again are there gentlemen. Somewhere in this rather incoherent category Percy Hilborn held a footing. Like many another, he possessed a certain veneer of good manners and conventional conduct, which passed for the real thing among those who knew him best. Now those who knew him best knew him least — a paradox, but none the less a truth. This veneer was as impenetrable as ten-inch armour-plate to such friends, whom, because of shekels or position, he wished to retain. But to those who knew him not, whether from caprice or definite purpose, he was not at all adverse to showing another side of his nature, which, to say the least, was the ungentlemanly side.

The reason for this might have been found in the fact that acquired characteristics do not receive the stamp of heredity in one generation — his father was a self-made man, and had taught himself rigidly to conventionalise; and it might have been found in the fact that his mother had impressed upon his youthful mind the code of polite procedure in a way which made it appear an unpleasant duty — a mask, highly distasteful, but which must perforce be donned under certain conditions. Be this as it may, Percy Hilborn was a cad, a plain, unadulterated cad — but nobody knew it.

He was accounted of good family, made an excellent appearance, and was considered one of the most delightful of the younger set. Moreover, he was engaged, engaged to a very nice young girl, whose refinement was something more than skin-deep. Maud Brammane was sweetly womanly and all that, but there was also about her a certain broad wholesomeness, a thorough normality, which added to the not slight charms nature had invested her with. She had learned not to carp unmercifully at a pecadillo on the one hand, and forgive a great wrong on the other; and she had also learned to discriminate between petty infractions and gross enormities. She also held ideals. "A gentleman," she once said to him, "is above all a man; and he is cast in such a mold that he never, no matter where he finds himself or what may arise, forgets his manhood." Upon this there had really been a perceptible straightening of his back and thrusting forward of his breast-bone, as he took it upon himself as a choice exponent of this particular breed of men.

At another time she had said, "I cannot understand, nor can I have any regard for a person that would wittingly wound or hurt the sensibilities of another whose only offense is their inoffensiveness." And he echoed the sentiment so nobly that she thought him a very superior young man indeed. There was her brother Hallam, she went on. He was more a gentleman of the old school, of which one hears so much and sees so little. Why, she remembered on the visit she had made during the previous winter,

the uniform courtesy he extended, from the guest at his board down to his humblest working man. Yes, he was a brother well to be proud of. He was coming north soon, she said, and she was sure they would get along well together. There was so much alike in them, so much they would find in common. Percy Hilborn exhibited the proper show of interest in his future brother-in-law, and was equally sure they would get along splendidly.

"I tell you, Hay, I sometimes think she's altogether too good for me," he said one night to the friend of his bosom, as they entered one of the choicest cafes in town. That last cocktail had given to his tongue the necessary lucidity, and for the nonce his elementary frankness asserted itself. The various contradictory segments of his nature were in just the mood to vindicate their existence.

Because it was one of those enticing summer nights, when to remain indoors was to experience a foretaste of the tomb, the cafe was crowded. Half the city seemed to have come abroad, and thereby gained an uncompromisable appetite. The lynx-eyed ushers were hard put to discover accommodation for the throng, and theatres were not out yet.

"Yes," Percy Hilborn added complacently, "I do think I'm a lucky dog. And she's not one of those foolishly good kind, either — sensible, practical, everyday sort of girl."

Hay smiled with some cheery cynicism. He could well afford to look quizzically down from his freedom upon the pre-benedictal condition of his friend. "Aw, go on!" he said. "They all get that way, they do. Just a little soft something, a wisp of hair, a pair of eyes, and a bunch of millinery, and away they go, clean daft. Can't understand it myself. Why, look at me! Don't catch me in any such nonsense. A year from now you'll be coming around telling me what a fool you were, and how much you envy me. Maybe you think I don't know — sort of spring sickness, that's what it is."

And thereupon Percy Hilborn proceeded to descant fluently upon the preeminent advisability of a young man taking such a step, upon the sanity of his conduct, and last, but not least, the felicity of his choice and the infinite virtues of Maud Brammane.

And in the midst of this descantation, an usher seated another gentleman and lady — strangers — at their table. Hay heaved a sigh of relief at the interruption. But Percy Hilborn glowered blackly at the offending usher. The question of the right or wrong of it never entered his head. It simply did not suit him to have his conversation thus broken in upon. Such intrusion was not to be tolerated. As has been noted before, his elementary frankness, natural self, was at the surface, and he at once made up his mind to get rid of these people who had been innocently quartered upon his privacy.

The usher had gone away, so he transferred his scowl to them. But they took little heed, being busy with their own affairs; in fact, it might be said they did not even notice him, much less his black looks. But his boorishness was not to be conquered so easily as that. He could not very well ask them to get up and go away; but he could talk, and within him there was a devil to act as prompter.

He chose an objectionable subject, and proceeded to embellish it with the necessary slang and rough expressions. Oh, no! he did not swear or do anything of that sort.

He simply exceeded the bounds of good taste. But he raised his voice pointedly to advertise his intention, though he refrained from looking in their direction.

At first his victims were unheeding, but in the end they could not fail to comprehend. Nor did he mince words, now that his caddishness had come to the top. Though the lady was greatly perturbed she gave no hint of it, preferring rather to raise her voice a little and talk with greater vivacity to her escort. And that gentleman followed her cue, not being particularly desirous for a brawl in a public place. Their order had come, and they hurried through it. The theatre crowd was arriving by then, and they could not move to another table. So they talked fast, and asked for their check before they were half through.

Percy Hilborn glanced exultantly at Hay. His victims were preparing to leave. Yet apparently there was no unseemly haste in their manner of departure, no pained surprise in their eyes nor indignant flush to their cheeks. A look of placid contentment shone in their faces, as if their experience at the table had been of the pleasantest. They simply ignored the boorishness of the young man who was actually driving them away. They were victorious in their defeat.

But at this moment, just as they had risen to go, and just as triumph was perching upon Percy Hilborn's helm, in came another theatre party. Miss Brammane, and her sister and mother, and several mutual friends, went to make up the group which approached their table. Greetings began to pass all around. Percy Hilborn felt a sudden sinking sickness come upon him. Miss Brammane was speaking. What was she saying? No! Impossible!

But this is what Miss Brammane was saying: "Hallman, this is Mr. Hilborn — Percy, you know, and — "

And therein was the mingling of all the materials for a very pretty tableau.

The Unparalleled Invasion

It was in the year 1976 that the trouble between the world and China reached its culmination. It was because of this that the celebration of the Second Centennial of American Liberty was deferred. Many other plans of the nations of the earth were twisted and tangled and postponed for the same reason. The world awoke rather abruptly to its danger; but for over seventy years, unperceived, affairs had been shaping toward this very end.

The year 1904 logically marks the beginning of the development that, seventy years later, was to bring consternation to the whole world. The Japanese-Russian War took place in 1904, and the historians of the time gravely noted it down that that event marked the entrance of Japan into the comity of nations. What it really did mark was the awakening of China. This awakening, long expected, had finally been given up. The Western nations had tried to arouse China, and they had failed. Out of their native optimism and race-egotism they had therefore concluded that the task was impossible, that China would never awaken.

What they had failed to take into account was this: that between them and China was no common psychological speech. Their thought-processes were radically dissimilar. There was no intimate vocabulary. The Western mind penetrated the Chinese mind but a short distance when it found itself in a fathomless maze. The Chinese mind penetrated the Western mind an equally short distance when it fetched up against a blank, incomprehensible wall. It was all a matter of language. There was no way to communicate Western ideas to the Chinese mind. China remained asleep. The material achievement and progress of the West was a closed book to her; nor could the West open the book. Back and deep down on the tie-ribs of consciousness, in the mind, say, of the English-speaking race, was a capacity to thrill to short, Saxon words; back and deep down on the tie-ribs of consciousness of the Chinese mind was a capacity to thrill to its own hieroglyphics; but the Chinese mind could not thrill to short, Saxon words; nor could the English-speaking mind thrill to hieroglyphics. The fabrics of their minds were woven from totally different stuffs. They were mental aliens. And so it was that Western material achievement and progress made no dent on the rounded sleep of China.

Came Japan and her victory over Russia in 1904. Now the Japanese race was the freak and paradox among Eastern peoples. In some strange way Japan was receptive to all the West had to offer. Japan swiftly assimilated the Western ideas, and digested them, and so capably applied them that she suddenly burst forth, full-panoplied, a

world-power. There is no explaining this peculiar openness of Japan to the alien culture of the West. As well might be explained any biological sport in the animal kingdom.

Having decisively thrashed the great Russian Empire, Japan promptly set about dreaming a colossal dream of empire for herself. Korea she had made into a granary and a colony; treaty privileges and vulpine diplomacy gave her the monopoly of Manchuria. But Japan was not satisfied. She turned her eyes upon China. There lay a vast territory, and in that territory were the hugest deposits in the world of iron and coal — the backbone of industrial civilization. Given natural resources, the other great factor in industry is labour. In that territory was a population of 400,000,000 souls — one quarter of the then total population of the earth. Furthermore, the Chinese were excellent workers, while their fatalistic philosophy (or religion) and their stolid nervous organization constituted them splendid soldiers — if they were properly managed. Needless to say, Japan was prepared to furnish that management.

But best of all, from the standpoint of Japan, the Chinese was a kindred race. The baffling enigma of the Chinese character to the West was no baffling enigma to the Japanese. The Japanese understood as we could never school ourselves or hope to understand. Their mental processes were the same. The Japanese thought with the same thought-symbols as did the Chinese, and they thought in the same peculiar grooves. Into the Chinese mind the Japanese went on where we were balked by the obstacle of incomprehension. They took the turning which we could not perceive, twisted around the obstacle, and were out of sight in the ramifications of the Chinese mind where we could not follow. They were brothers. Long ago one had borrowed the other's written language, and, untold generations before that, they had diverged from the common Mongol stock. There had been changes, differentiations brought about by diverse conditions and infusions of other blood; but down at the bottom of their beings, twisted into the fibres of them, was a heritage in common, a sameness in kind that time had not obliterated.

And so Japan took upon herself the management of China. In the years immediately following the war with Russia, her agents swarmed over the Chinese Empire. A thousand miles beyond the last mission station toiled her engineers and spies, clad as coolies, under the guise of itinerant merchants or proselytizing Buddhist priests, noting down the horse-power of every waterfall, the likely sites for factories, the heights of mountains and passes, the strategic advantages and weaknesses, the wealth of the farming valleys, the number of bullocks in a district or the number of labourers that could be collected by forced levies. Never was there such a census, and it could have been taken by no other people than the dogged, patient, patriotic Japanese.

But in a short time secrecy was thrown to the winds. Japan's officers reorganized the Chinese army; her drill sergeants made the mediaeval warriors over into twentieth century soldiers, accustomed to all the modern machinery of war and with a higher average of marksmanship than the soldiers of any Western nation. The engineers of Japan deepened and widened the intricate system of canals, built factories and foundries, netted the empire with telegraphs and telephones, and inaugurated the era

of railroad-building. It was these same protagonists of machine-civilization that discovered the great oil deposits of Chunsan, the iron mountains of Whang-Sing, the copper ranges of Chinchi, and they sank the gas wells of Wow-Wee, that most marvellous reservoir of natural gas in all the world.

In China's councils of empire were the Japanese emissaries. In the ears of the statesmen whispered the Japanese statesmen. The political reconstruction of the Empire was due to them. They evicted the scholar class, which was violently reactionary, and put into office progressive officials. And in every town and city of the Empire newspapers were started. Of course, Japanese editors ran the policy of these papers, which policy they got direct from Tokio. It was these papers that educated and made progressive the great mass of the population.

China was at last awake. Where the West had failed, Japan succeeded. She had transmuted Western culture and achievement into terms that were intelligible to the Chinese understanding. Japan herself, when she so suddenly awakened, had astounded the world. But at the time she was only forty millions strong. China's awakening, with her four hundred millions and the scientific advance of the world, was frightfully astounding. She was the colossus of the nations, and swiftly her voice was heard in no uncertain tones in the affairs and councils of the nations. Japan egged her on, and the proud Western peoples listened with respectful ears.

China's swift and remarkable rise was due, perhaps more than to anything else, to the superlative quality of her labour. The Chinese was the perfect type of industry. He had always been that. For sheer ability to work no worker in the world could compare with him. Work was the breath of his nostrils. It was to him what wandering and fighting in far lands and spiritual adventure had been to other peoples. Liberty, to him, epitomized itself in access to the means of toil. To till the soil and labour interminably was all he asked of life and the powers that be. And the awakening of China had given its vast population not merely free and unlimited access to the means of toil, but access to the highest and most scientific machine-means of toil.

China rejuvenescent! It was but a step to China rampant. She discovered a new pride in herself and a will of her own. She began to chafe under the guidance of Japan, but she did not chafe long. On Japan's advice, in the beginning, she had expelled from the Empire all Western missionaries, engineers, drill sergeants, merchants, and teachers. She now began to expel the similar representatives of Japan. The latter's advisory statesmen were showered with honours and decorations, and sent home. The West had awakened Japan, and, as Japan had then requited the West, Japan was not requited by China. Japan was thanked for her kindly aid and flung out bag and baggage by her gigantic protégé. The Western nations chuckled. Japan's rainbow dream had gone glimmering. She grew angry. China laughed at her. The blood and the swords of the Samurai would out, and Japan rashly went to war. This occurred in 1922, and in seven bloody months Manchuria, Korea, and Formosa were taken away from her and she was hurled back, bankrupt, to stifle in her tiny, crowded islands. Exit Japan from

the world drama. Thereafter she devoted herself to art, and her task became to please the world greatly with her creations of wonder and beauty.

Contrary to expectation, China did not prove warlike. She had no Napoleonic dream, and was content to devote herself to the arts of peace. After a time of disquiet, the idea was accepted that China was to be feared, not in war, but in commerce. It will be seen that the real danger was not apprehended. China went on consummating her machine-civilization. Instead of a large standing army, she developed an immensely larger and splendidly efficient militia. Her navy was so small that it was the laughing stock of the world; nor did she attempt to strengthen her navy. The treaty ports of the world were never entered by her visiting battleships.

The real danger lay in the fecundity of her loins, and it was in 1970 that the first cry of alarm was raised. For some time all territories adjacent to China had been grumbling at Chinese immigration; but now it suddenly came home to the world that China's population was 500,000,000. She had increased by a hundred millions since her awakening. Burchaldter called attention to the fact that there were more Chinese in existence than white-skinned people. He performed a simple sum in arithmetic. He added together the populations of the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, England, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, European Russia, and all Scandinavia. The result was 495,000,000. And the population of China overtopped this tremendous total by 5,000,000. Burchaldter's figures went round the world, and the world shivered.

For many centuries China's population had been constant. Her territory had been saturated with population; that is to say, her territory, with the primitive method of production, had supported the maximum limit of population. But when she awoke and inaugurated the machine-civilization, her productive power had been enormously increased. Thus, on the same territory, she was able to support a far larger population. At once the birth rate began to rise and the death rate to fall. Before, when population pressed against the means of subsistence, the excess population had been swept away by famine. But now, thanks to the machine-civilization, China's means of subsistence had been enormously extended, and there were no famines; her population followed on the heels of the increase in the means of subsistence.

During this time of transition and development of power, China had entertained no dreams of conquest. The Chinese was not an imperial race. It was industrious, thrifty, and peace-loving. War was looked upon as an unpleasant but necessary task that at times must be performed. And so, while the Western races had squabbled and fought, and world-adventured against one another, China had calmly gone on working at her machines and growing. Now she was spilling over the boundaries of her Empire — that was all, just spilling over into the adjacent territories with all the certainty and terrifying slow momentum of a glacier.

Following upon the alarm raised by Burchaldter's figures, in 1970 France made a long-threatened stand. French Indo-China had been overrun, filled up, by Chinese immigrants. France called a halt. The Chinese wave flowed on. France assembled a

force of a hundred thousand on the boundary between her unfortunate colony and China, and China sent down an army of militia-soldiers a million strong. Behind came the wives and sons and daughters and relatives, with their personal household luggage, in a second army. The French force was brushed aside like a fly. The Chinese militia-soldiers, along with their families, over five millions all told, coolly took possession of French Indo-China and settled down to stay for a few thousand years.

Outraged France was in arms. She hurled fleet after fleet against the coast of China, and nearly bankrupted herself by the effort. China had no navy. She withdrew like a turtle into her shell. For a year the French fleets blockaded the coast and bombarded exposed towns and villages. China did not mind. She did not depend upon the rest of the world for anything. She calmly kept out of range of the French guns and went on working. France wept and wailed, wrung her impotent hands and appealed to the dumfounded nations. Then she landed a punitive expedition to march to Peking. It was two hundred and fifty thousand strong, and it was the flower of France. It landed without opposition and marched into the interior. And that was the last ever seen of it. The line of communication was snapped on the second day. Not a survivor came back to tell what had happened. It had been swallowed up in China's cavernous maw, that was all.

In the five years that followed, China's expansion, in all land directions, went on apace. Siam was made part of the Empire, and, in spite of all that England could do, Burma and the Malay Peninsula were overrun; while all along the long south boundary of Siberia, Russia was pressed severely by China's advancing hordes. The process was simple. First came the Chinese immigration (or, rather, it was already there, having come there slowly and insidiously during the previous years). Next came the clash of arms and the brushing away of all opposition by a monster army of militia-soldiers, followed by their families and household baggage. And finally came their settling down as colonists in the conquered territory. Never was there so strange and effective a method of world conquest.

Napal and Bhutan were overrun, and the whole northern boundary of India pressed against by this fearful tide of life. To the west, Bokhara, and, even to the south and west, Afghanistan, were swallowed up. Persia, Turkestan, and all Central Asia felt the pressure of the flood. It was at this time that Burchaldter revised his figures. He had been mistaken. China's population must be seven hundred millions, eight hundred millions, nobody knew how many millions, but at any rate it would soon be a billion. There were two Chinese for every white-skinned human in the world, Burchaldter announced, and the world trembled. China's increase must have begun immediately, in 1904. It was remembered that since that date there had not been a single famine. At 5,000,000 a year increase, her total increase in the intervening seventy years must be 350,000,000. But who was to know? It might be more. Who was to know anything of this strange new menace of the twentieth century — China, old China, rejuvenescent, fruitful, and militant!

The Convention of 1975 was called at Philadelphia. All the Western nations, and some few of the Eastern, were represented. Nothing was accomplished. There was talk of all countries putting bounties on children to increase the birth rate, but it was laughed to scorn by the arithmeticians, who pointed out that China was too far in the lead in that direction. No feasible way of coping with China was suggested. China was appealed to and threatened by the United Powers, and that was all the Convention of Philadelphia came to; and the Convention and the Powers were laughed at by China. Li Tang Fwung, the power behind the Dragon Throne, deigned to reply.

"What does China care for the comity of nations?" said Li Tang Fwung. "We are the most ancient, honourable, and royal of races. We have our own destiny to accomplish. It is unpleasant that our destiny does not tally with the destiny of the rest of the world, but what would you? You have talked windily about the royal races and the heritage of the earth, and we can only reply that that remains to be seen. You cannot invade us. Never mind about your navies. Don't shout. We know our navy is small. You see we use it for police purposes. We do not care for the sea. Our strength is in our population, which will soon be a billion. Thanks to you, we are equipped with all modern war-machinery. Send your navies. We will not notice them. Send your punitive expeditions, but first remember France. To land half a million soldiers on our shores would strain the resources of any of you. And our thousand millions would swallow them down in a mouthful. Send a million; send five millions, and we will swallow them down just as readily. Pouf! A mere nothing, a meagre morsel. Destroy, as you have threatened, you United States, the ten million coolies we have forced upon your shores — why, the amount scarcely equals half of our excess birth rate for a year."

So spoke Li Tang Fwung. The world was nonplussed, helpless, terrified. Truly had he spoken. There was no combating China's amazing birth rate. If her population was a billion, and was increasing twenty millions a year, in twenty-five years it would be a billion and a half — equal to the total population of the world in 1904. And nothing could be done. There was no way to dam up the over-spilling monstrous flood of life. War was futile. China laughed at a blockade of her coasts. She welcomed invasion. In her capacious maw was room for all the hosts of earth that could be hurled at her. And in the meantime her flood of yellow life poured out and on over Asia. China laughed and read in their magazines the learned lucubrations of the distracted Western scholars.

But there was one scholar China failed to reckon on — Jacobus Laningdale. Not that he was a scholar, except in the widest sense. Primarily, Jacobus Laningdale was a scientist, and, up to that time, a very obscure scientist, a professor employed in the laboratories of the Health Office of New York City. Jacobus Laningdale's head was very like any other head, but in that head was evolved an idea. Also, in that head was the wisdom to keep that idea secret. He did not write an article for the magazines. Instead, he asked for a vacation. On September 19, 1975, he arrived in Washington. It was evening, but he proceeded straight to the White House, for he had already arranged an audience with the President. He was closeted with President Moyer for

three hours. What passed between them was not learned by the rest of the world until long after; in fact, at that time the world was not interested in Jacobus Laningdale. Next day the President called in his Cabinet. Jacobus Laningdale was present. The proceedings were kept secret. But that very afternoon Rufus Cowdery, Secretary of State, left Washington, and early the following morning sailed for England. The secret that he carried began to spread, but it spread only among the heads of Governments. Possibly half-a-dozen men in a nation were entrusted with the idea that had formed in Jacobus Laningdale's head. Following the spread of the secret, sprang up great activity in all the dockyards, arsenals, and navy-yards. The people of France and Austria became suspicious, but so sincere were their Governments' calls for confidence that they acquiesced in the unknown project that was afoot.

This was the time of the Great Truce. All countries pledged themselves solemnly not to go to war with any other country. The first definite action was the gradual mobilization of the armies of Russia, Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. Then began the eastward movement. All railroads into Asia were glutted with troop trains. China was the objective, that was all that was known. A little later began the great sea movement. Expeditions of warships were launched from all countries. Fleet followed fleet, and all proceeded to the coast of China. The nations cleaned out their navy-yards. They sent their revenue cutters and dispatch boots and lighthouse tenders, and they sent their last antiquated cruisers and battleships. Not content with this, they impressed the merchant marine. The statistics show that 58,640 merchant steamers, equipped with searchlights and rapid-fire guns, were despatched by the various nations to China.

And China smiled and waited. On her land side, along her boundaries, were millions of the warriors of Europe. She mobilized five times as many millions of her militia and awaited the invasion. On her sea coasts she did the same. But China was puzzled. After all this enormous preparation, there was no invasion. She could not understand. Along the great Siberian frontier all was quiet. Along her coasts the towns and villages were not even shelled. Never, in the history of the world, had there been so mighty a gathering of war fleets. The fleets of all the world were there, and day and night millions of tons of battleships ploughed the brine of her coasts, and nothing happened. Nothing was attempted. Did they think to make her emerge from her shell? China smiled. Did they think to tire her out, or starve her out? China smiled again.

But on May 1, 1976, had the reader been in the imperial city of Peking, with its then population of eleven millions, he would have witnessed a curious sight. He would have seen the streets filled with the chattering yellow populace, every queued head tilted back, every slant eye turned skyward. And high up in the blue he would have beheld a tiny dot of black, which, because of its orderly evolutions, he would have identified as an airship. From this airship, as it curved its flight back and forth over the city, fell missiles — strange, harmless missiles, tubes of fragile glass that shattered into thousands of fragments on the streets and house-tops. But there was nothing deadly about these tubes of glass. Nothing happened. There were no explosions. It is true,

three Chinese were killed by the tubes dropping on their heads from so enormous a height; but what were three Chinese against an excess birth rate of twenty millions? One tube struck perpendicularly in a fish-pond in a garden and was not broken. It was dragged ashore by the master of the house. He did not dare to open it, but, accompanied by his friends, and surrounded by an ever-increasing crowd, he carried the mysterious tube to the magistrate of the district. The latter was a brave man. With all eyes upon him, he shattered the tube with a blow from his brass-bowled pipe. Nothing happened. Of those who were very near, one or two thought they saw some mosquitoes fly out. That was all. The crowd set up a great laugh and dispersed.

As Peking was bombarded by glass tubes, so was all China. The tiny airships, dispatched from the warships, contained but two men each, and over all cities, towns, and villages they wheeled and curved, one man directing the ship, the other man throwing over the glass tubes.

Had the reader again been in Peking, six weeks later, he would have looked in vain for the eleven million inhabitants. Some few of them he would have found, a few hundred thousand, perhaps, their carcasses festering in the houses and in the deserted streets, and piled high on the abandoned death-waggons. But for the rest he would have had to seek along the highways and byways of the Empire. And not all would he have found fleeing from plague-stricken Peking, for behind them, by hundreds of thousands of unburied corpses by the wayside, he could have marked their flight. And as it was with Peking, so it was with all the cities, towns, and villages of the Empire. The plague smote them all. Nor was it one plague, nor two plagues; it was a score of plagues. Every virulent form of infectious death stalked through the land. Too late the Chinese government apprehended the meaning of the colossal preparations, the marshalling of the world-hosts, the flights of the tin airships, and the rain of the tubes of glass. The proclamations of the government were vain. They could not stop the eleven million plague-stricken wretches, fleeing from the one city of Peking to spread disease through all the land. The physicians and health officers died at their posts; and death, the all-conqueror, rode over the decrees of the Emperor and Li Tang Fwung. It rode over them as well, for Li Tang Fwung died in the second week, and the Emperor, hidden away in the Summer Palace, died in the fourth week.

Had there been one plague, China might have coped with it. But from a score of plagues no creature was immune. The man who escaped smallpox went down before scarlet fever. The man who was immune to yellow fever was carried away by cholera; and if he were immune to that, too, the Black Death, which was the bubonic plague, swept him away. For it was these bacteria, and germs, and microbes, and bacilli, cultured in the laboratories of the West, that had come down upon China in the rain of glass.

All organization vanished. The government crumbled away. Decrees and proclamations were useless when the men who made them and signed them one moment were dead the next. Nor could the maddened millions, spurred on to flight by death, pause to heed anything. They fled from the cities to infect the country, and wherever they

fled they carried the plagues with them. The hot summer was on — Jacobus Laningdale had selected the time shrewdly — and the plague festered everywhere. Much is conjectured of what occurred, and much has been learned from the stories of the few survivors. The wretched creatures stormed across the Empire in many-millioned flight. The vast armies China had collected on her frontiers melted away. The farms were ravaged for food, and no more crops were planted, while the crops already in were left unattended and never came to harvest. The most remarkable thing, perhaps, was the flights. Many millions engaged in them, charging to the bounds of the Empire to be met and turned back by the gigantic armies of the West. The slaughter of the mad hosts on the boundaries was stupendous. Time and again the guarding line was drawn back twenty or thirty miles to escape the contagion of the multitudinous dead.

Once the plague broke through and seized upon the German and Austrian soldiers who were guarding the borders of Turkestan. Preparations had been made for such a happening, and though sixty thousand soldiers of Europe were carried off, the international corps of physicians isolated the contagion and dammed it back. It was during this struggle that it was suggested that a new plague-germ had originated, that in some way or other a sort of hybridization between plague-germs had taken place, producing a new and frightfully virulent germ. First suspected by Vomberg, who became infected with it and died, it was later isolated and studied by Stevens, Hazenfelt, Norman, and Landers.

Such was the unparalleled invasion of China. For that billion of people there was no hope. Pent in their vast and festering charnel-house, all organization and cohesion lost, they could do naught but die. They could not escape. As they were flung back from their land frontiers, so were they flung back from the sea. Seventy-five thousand vessels patrolled the coasts. By day their smoking funnels dimmed the sea-rim, and by night their flashing searchlights ploughed the dark and harrowed it for the tiniest escaping junk. The attempts of the immense fleets of junks were pitiful. Not one ever got by the guarding sea-hounds. Modern war-machinery held back the disorganized mass of China, while the plagues did the work.

But old War was made a thing of laughter. Naught remained to him but patrol duty. China had laughed at war, and war she was getting, but it was ultra-modern war, twentieth century war, the war of the scientist and the laboratory, the war of Jacobus Laningdale. Hundred-ton guns were toys compared with the micro-organic projectiles hurled from the laboratories, the messengers of death, the destroying angels that stalked through the empire of a billion souls.

During all the summer and fall of 1976 China was an inferno. There was no eluding the microscopic projectiles that sought out the remotest hiding-places. The hundreds of millions of dead remained unburied and the germs multiplied themselves, and, toward the last, millions died daily of starvation. Besides, starvation weakened the victims and destroyed their natural defences against the plagues. Cannibalism, murder, and madness reigned. And so perished China.

Not until the following February, in the coldest weather, were the first expeditions made. These expeditions were small, composed of scientists and bodies of troops; but they entered China from every side. In spite of the most elaborate precautions against infection, numbers of soldiers and a few of the physicians were stricken. But the exploration went bravely on. They found China devastated, a howling wilderness through which wandered bands of wild dogs and desperate bandits who had survived. All survivors were put to death wherever found. And then began the great task, the sanitation of China. Five years and hundreds of millions of treasure were consumed, and then the world moved in — not in zones, as was the idea of Baron Albrecht, but heterogeneously, according to the democratic American programme. It was a vast and happy intermingling of nationalities that settled down in China in 1982 and the years that followed — a tremendous and successful experiment in cross-fertilization. We know to-day the splendid mechanical, intellectual, and art output that followed.

It was in 1987, the Great Truce having been dissolved, that the ancient quarrel between France and Germany over Alsace-Lorraine recrudesced. The war-cloud grew dark and threatening in April, and on April 17 the Convention of Copenhagen was called. The representatives of the nations of the world, being present, all nations solemnly pledged themselves never to use against one another the laboratory methods of warfare they had employed in the invasion of China.

Up The Slide

WHEN Clay Dilham left the tent to get a sled-load of fire-wood, he expected to be back in half an hour. So he told Swanson, who was cooking the dinner. Swanson and he belonged to different outfits, located about twenty miles apart on the Stuart River; but they had become traveling partners on a trip down the Yukon to Dawson to get the mail.

Swanson had laughed when Clay said he would be back in half an hour. It stood to reason, Swanson said, that good, dry fire-wood could not be found so close to Dawson; that whatever fire-wood there was originally had long since been gathered in; that fire-wood would not be selling at forty dollars a cord if any man could go out and get a sled-load and be back in the time Clay expected to make it.

Then it was Clay's turn to laugh as he sprang on the sled and mushed the dogs onto the river-trail. For, coming up from the Siwash village the previous day, he had noticed a small dead pine in an out-of-the-way place which had defied discovery by eyes less sharp than his. And his eyes were both young and sharp, for his seventeenth birthday was just cleared.

A swift ten minutes over the ice brought him to the place, and figuring ten minutes to get the tree and ten minutes to return made him certain that Swanson's dinner would not wait.

Just below Dawson, and rising out of the Yukon itself, towered the great Moosehide Mountain, so named by Lieutenant Schwatka long ere the Klondike became famous. On the river side the mountain was scarred and gullied and gored; and it was up one of these gores or gullies that Clay had seen the tree.

Halting his dogs beneath, on the river ice, he looked up, and after some searching rediscovered it. Being dead, its weather-beaten gray so blended with the gray of rock that a thousand men could pass by and never notice it. Taking root in a cranny, it had grown up, exhausted its bit of soil, and perished. Beneath it the wall fell sheer away for a hundred feet to the river. All one had to do was to sink an ax into the dry trunk a dozen times and it would fall to the ice, and most probably smash conveniently to pieces. This Clay had figured on when confidently limiting the trip to half an hour.

He studied the cliff thoroughly before attempting it. So far as he was concerned, the longest way round was the shortest way to the tree. Twenty feet of nearly perpendicular climbing would bring him to where a slide sloped more gently in. By making a long zigzag across the face of this slide and back again, he would arrive at the pine.

Fastening his ax across his shoulders so that it would not interfere with his movements, he clawed up the broken rock, hand and foot, like a cat, till the twenty feet were cleared, and he could draw breath on the edge of the slide.

The slide was steep and its snow-covered surface slippery. Further, the heel-less, walrus-hide soles of his muclucs were polished by much ice travel, and by his second step he realized how little he could depend upon them for clinging purposes. A slip at that point meant a plunge over the edge and a twenty-foot fall to the ice. A hundred feet farther along, and a slip would mean a fifty-foot fall.

He thrust his mittened hand through the snow to the earth to steady himself, and went on. But he was forced to exercise such care that the first zigzag consumed five minutes. Then, returning across the face of the slide toward the pine, he met with a new difficulty. The slope steepened considerably, so that little snow collected, while bent flat beneath this thin covering were long, dry last-year's grasses.

The surface they presented was glassy as that of his muclucs, and when both surfaces came together his feet shot out and he fell on his face, sliding downward, and convulsively clutching for something to stay himself.

This he succeeded in doing, though he lay quiet for a couple of minutes to get back his nerve. He would have taken off his muclucs and gone at it in his socks, only the cold was thirty below zero, and at such temperature his feet would quickly freeze. So he went on, and after ten minutes of risky work made the safe and solid rock where stood the pine.

A few strokes of the ax felled it into the chasm, and peeping over the edge, he indulged in a laugh at the startled dogs. They were on the verge of bolting when he called aloud to them, soothingly, and they were reassured.

Then he turned about for the back trip. Going down, he knew, was even more dangerous than coming up, but how dangerous he did not realize till he had slipped half a dozen times, and each time saved himself by what appeared to him a miracle, Time and again he ventured upon the slide, and time and again he was balked when he came to the grasses.

He sat down and looked at the treacherous snow-covered slope. It was manifestly impossible for him to make it with a whole body, and he did not wish to arrive at the bottom shattered like the pine-tree.

But while he sat inactive the frost was stealing in on him, and the quick chilling of his body warned him that he could not delay. He must be doing something to keep his blood circulating. If he could not get down by going down, there only remained to him to get down by going up. It was a Herculean task, but it was the only way out of the predicament.

From where he was he could not see the top of the cliff, but he reasoned that the gully in which lay the slide must give inward more and more as it approached the top. From what little he could see, the gully displayed this tendency; and he noticed, also, that the slide extended for many hundreds of feet upward, and that where it ended the rock was well broken up and favorable for climbing. Here and there, at several wide

intervals, small masses of rock projected through the snow of the slide itself, giving sufficient stability to the enterprise to encourage him.

So, instead of taking the zigzag which led downward, he made a new one leading upward and crossing the slide at an angle of thirty degrees. The grasses gave him much trouble, and made him long for soft-tanned moosehide moccasins which could make his feet cling like a second pair of hands.

He soon found that thrusting his mittened hands through the snow and clutching the grass-roots was uncertain and unsafe. His mittens were too thick for him to be sure of his grip, so he took them off. But this brought with it new trouble. When he held on to a bunch of roots the snow, coming in contact with his bare warm hand, was melted, so that his hands and the wristbands of his woolen shirt were dripping with water. This the frost was quick to attack, and his fingers were numbed and made worthless.

Then he was forced to seek good footing where he could stand erect unsupported, to put on his mittens, and to thrash his hands against his sides until the heat came back into them.

This constant numbing of his fingers made his progress very slow; but the zigzag came to an end, finally, where the side of the slide was buttressed by perpendicular rock, and he turned back and upward again. As he climbed higher and higher, he found that the slide was wedge-shaped, its rocky buttresses pinching it away as it neared its upper end. Each step increased the depth which seemed to yawn for him.

While beating his hands against his sides he turned and looked down the long slippery slope, and figured, in case he slipped, that he would be flying with the speed of an express-train ere he took the final plunge into the icy bed of the Yukon.

He passed the first outcropping rock, and the second, and at the end of an hour found himself above the third and fully five hundred feet above the river. And here, with the end nearly two hundred feet above him, the pitch of the slide was increasing.

Each step became more difficult and perilous, and he was faint from exertion and from lack of Swanson's dinner. Three or four times he slipped slightly and recovered himself; but, growing careless from exhaustion and the long tension on his nerves, he tried to continue with too great haste, and was rewarded by a double slip of each foot, which tore loose and started him down the slope.

On account of the steepness there was little snow; but what little there was, was displaced by his body, so that he became the nucleus of a young avalanche. He clawed desparately with his hands, but there was little to cling to, and he sped downward faster and faster.

The first and second outcroppings were below him, but he knew that the first was almost out of line, and pinned his hope on the second. Yet the first was just enough in line to catch one of his feet and to whirl him over and head downward on his back.

The shock of this was severe in itself, and the fine snow enveloped him in a blinding, maddening cloud; but he was thinking quickly and clearly of what would happen if he brought up head first against the second outcropping. He twisted himself over on

his stomach, thrust both hands out to one side, and pressed them heavily against the flying surface.

This had the effect of a brake, drawing his head and shoulders to the side. In this position he rolled over and over a couple of times, and then, with a quick jerk at the right moment, he got his body the rest of the way round.

And none too soon, for the next moment his feet drove into the outcropping, his legs doubled up, and the wind was driven from his stomach with the abruptness of the stop.

There was much snow down his neck and up his sleeves. At once and with unconcern he shook this out, only to discoverm when he looked up to where he must climb again, that he had lost his nerve. He was shaking as if with a palsy, and sick and faint from a frightful nausea.

Fully ten minutes passed by ere he could master these sensations and summon sufficient strength for the weary climb. His legs hurt him and he was limping, and he was conscious of a sore place in his back, where he had fallen on the ax.

In an hour he had regained the point of his tumble, and was contemplating the slide, which so suddenly steepened. It was plain to him that he could not go up with hands and feet alone, and he was beginning to lose his nerve again when he remembered the ax.

Reaching upward the distance of a step, he brushed away the snow, and in the frozen gravel and crumbled rock of the slide chopped a shallow resting-place for his foot. Then he came up a step, reached forward, and repeated the manoever, And so, step by step, foot-hole by foot-hole, a tiny speck of toiling life poised like a fly on the mighty face of Moosehide Mountain, he fought his upward way.

Twilight was beginning to fall when he gained the ehad of the slide and drew himself into the rocky bottom of the gully. At this point the shoulder of the mountain began to bend back toward the crest, and in addition to its being less steep, the rocks afforded better hand-hold and foot-hold. The worst was over, and the best yet to come!

The gully opened out into a miniature basin, in which a floor of soil had been deposited, out of which, in turn, a tiny grove of pines had sprung. The trees were all dead, dry and seasoned, having long since exhausted the thin skin of earth.

Clay ran his experienced eye over the timber, and estimated that it would chop up into fifty cords at least. Beyond, the gully closed in and became barren rock again. On every hand was barren rock, so the wonder was small that the trees had escaped the eyes of men. They were only to be discovered as he had discovered them — by climbimg after them.

He continued the ascent, and the white moon greeted him when he came out upon the crest of Moosehide Mountain. At his feet, a thousand feet below, sparkled the lights of Dawson.

But the descent on that side was precipitate and dangerous in the uncertain moonshine, and he elected to go down the mountain by its gentler northern flank. In a couple of hours he reached the Yukon at the Siwash village, and took the river-trail

back to where he had left the dogs. There he found Swanson, with a fire going, waiting for him to come down.

And though Swanson had a hearty laugh at his expense, nevertheless, a week or so later, in Dawson, there were fifty cords of wood sold at forty dollars a cord, and it was he and Swanson who sold them.

War

He was a young man, not more than twenty-four or five, and he might have sat his horse with the careless grace of his youth had he not been so catlike and tense. His black eyes roved everywhere, catching the movements of twigs and branches where small birds hopped, questing ever onward through the changing vistas of trees and brush, and returning always to the clumps of undergrowth on either side. And as he watched, so did he listen, though he rode on in silence, save for the boom of heavy guns from far to the west. This had been sounding monotonously in his ears for hours, and only its cessation could have aroused his notice. For he had business closer to hand. Across his saddle-bow was balanced a carbine.

So tensely was he strung, that a bunch of quail, exploding into flight from under his horse's nose, startled him to such an extent that automatically, instantly, he had reined in and fetched the carbine halfway to his shoulder. He grinned sheepishly, recovered himself, and rode on. So tense was he, so bent upon the work he had to do, that the sweat stung his eyes unwiped, and unheeded rolled down his nose and spattered his saddle pommel. The band of his cavalryman's hat was fresh-stained with sweat. The roan horse under him was likewise wet. It was high noon of a breathless day of heat. Even the birds and squirrels did not dare the sun, but sheltered in shady hiding places among the trees.

Man and horse were littered with leaves and dusted with yellow pollen, for the open was ventured no more than was compulsory. They kept to the brush and trees, and invariably the man halted and peered out before crossing a dry glade or naked stretch of upland pasturage. He worked always to the north, though his way was devious, and it was from the north that he seemed most to apprehend that for which he was looking. He was no coward, but his courage was only that of the average civilized man, and he was looking to live, not die.

Up a small hillside he followed a cowpath through such dense scrub that he was forced to dismount and lead his horse. But when the path swung around to the west, he abandoned it and headed to the north again along the oak-covered top of the ridge.

The ridge ended in a steep descent-so steep that he zigzagged back and forth across the face of the slope, sliding and stumbling among the dead leaves and matted vines and keeping a watchful eye on the horse above that threatened to fall down upon him. The sweat ran from him, and the pollen-dust, settling pungently in mouth and nostrils, increased his thirst. Try as he would, nevertheless the descent was noisy, and frequently he stopped, panting in the dry heat an d listening for any warning from beneath.

At the bottom he came out on a flat, so densely forested that he could not make out its extent. Here the character of the woods changed, and he was able to remount. Instead of the twisted hillside oaks, tall straight trees, big-trunked and prosperous, rose from the damp fat soil. Only here and there were thickets, easily avoided, while he encountered winding, park-like glades where the cattle had pastured in the days before war had run them off.

His progress was more rapid now, as he came down into the valley, and at the end of half an hour he halted at an ancient rail fence on the edge of a clearing. He did not like the openness of it, yet his path lay across to the fringe of trees that marked the banks of the stream. It was a mere quarter of a mile across that open, but the thought of venturing out in it was repugnant. A rifle, a score of them, a thousand, might lurk in that fringe by the stream.

Twice he essayed to start, and twice he paused. He was appalled by his own loneliness. The pulse of war that beat from the West suggested the companionship of battling thousands; here was naught but silence, and himself, and possible death-dealing bullets from a myriad ambushes. And yet his task was to find what he feared to find. He must on, and on, till somewhere, some time, he encountered another man, or other men, from the other side, scouting, as he was scouting, to make report, as he must make report, of having come in touch.

Changing his mind, he skirted inside the woods for a distance, and again peeped forth. This time, in the middle of the clearing, he saw a small farmhouse. There were no signs of life. No smoke curled from the chimney, not a barnyard fowl clucked and strutted. The kitchen door stood open, and he gazed so long and hard into the black aperture that it seemed almost that a farmer's wife must emerge at any moment.

He licked the pollen and dust from his dry lips, stiffened himself, mind and body, and rode out into the blazing sunshine. Nothing stirred. He went on past the house, and approached the wall of trees and bushes by the river's bank. One thought persisted maddeningly. It was of the crash into his body of a high-velocity bullet. It made him feel very fragile and defenseless, and he crouched lower in the saddle.

Tethering his horse in the edge of the wood, he continued a hundred yards on foot till he came to the stream. Twenty feet wide it was, without perceptible current, cool and inviting, and he was very thirsty. But he waited inside his screen of leafage, his eyes fixed on the screen on the opposite side. To make the wait endurable, he sat down, his carbine resting on his knees. The minutes passed, and slowly his tenseness relaxed. At last he decided there was no danger; but just as he prepared to part the bushes and bend down to the water, a movement among the opposite bushes caught his eye.

It might be a bird. But he waited. Again there was an agitation of the bushes, and then, so suddenly that it almost startled a cry from him, the bushes parted and a face peered out. It was a face covered with several weeks' growth of ginger-colored beard. The eyes were blue and wide apart, with laughter-wrinkles in the comers that showed despite the tired and anxious expression of the whole face.

All this he could see with microscopic clearness, for the distance was no more than twenty feet. And all this he saw in such brief time, that he saw it as he lifted his carbine to his shoulder. He glanced along the sights, and knew that he was gazing upon a man who was as good as dead. It was impossible to miss at such point blank range.

But he did not shoot. Slowly he lowered the carbine and watched. A hand, clutching a water-bottle, became visible and the ginger beard bent downward to fill the bottle. He could hear the gurgle of the water. Then arm and bottle and ginger beard disappeared behind the closing bushes. A long time he waited, when, with thirst unslaked, he crept back to his horse, rode slowly across the sun-washed clearing, and passed into the shelter of the woods beyond.

II

Another day, hot and breathless. A deserted farmhouse, large, with many outbuildings and an orchard, standing in a clearing. From the Woods, on a roan horse, carbine across pommel, rode the young man with the quick black eyes. He breathed with relief as he gained the house. That a fight had taken place here earlier in the season was evident. Clips and empty cartridges, tarnished with verdigris, lay on the ground, which, while wet, had been torn up by the hoofs of horses. Hard by the kitchen garden were graves, tagged and numbered. From the oak tree by the kitchen door, in tattered, weatherbeaten garments, hung the bodies of two men. The faces, shriveled and defaced, bore no likeness to the faces of men. The roan horse snorted beneath them, and the rider caressed and soothed it and tied it farther away.

Entering the house, he found the interior a wreck. He trod on empty cartridges as he walked from room to room to reconnoiter from the windows. Men had camped and slept everywhere, and on the floor of one room he came upon stains unmistakable where the wounded had been laid down.

Again outside, he led the horse around behind the barn and invaded the orchard. A dozen trees were burdened with ripe apples. He filled his pockets, eating while he picked. Then a thought came to him, and he glanced at the sun, calculating the time of his return to camp. He pulled off his shirt, tying the sleeves and making a bag. This he proceeded to fill with apples.

As he was about to mount his horse, the animal suddenly pricked up its ears. The man, too, listened, and heard, faintly, the thud of hoofs on soft earth. He crept to the corner of the barn and peered out. A dozen mounted men, strung out loosely, approaching from the opposite side of the clearing, were only a matter of a hundred yards or so away. They rode on to the house. Some dismounted, while others remained in the saddle as an earnest that their stay would be short. They seemed to be holding a council, for he could hear them talking excitedly in the detested tongue of the alien invader. The time passed, but they seemed unable to reach a decision. He put the carbine away in its boot, mounted, and waited impatiently, balancing the shirt of apples on the pommel.

He heard footsteps approaching, and drove his spurs so fiercely into the roan as to force a surprised groan from the animal as it leaped forward. At the comer of the barn

he saw the intruder, a mere boy of nineteen or twenty for all of his uniform jump back to escape being run down. At the same moment the roan swerved and its rider caught a glimpse of the aroused men by the house. Some were springing from their horses, and he could see the rifles going to their shoulders. He passed the kitchen door and the dried corpses swinging in the shade, compelling his foes to run around the front of the house. A rifle cracked, and a second, but he was going fast, leaning forward, low in the saddle, one hand clutching the shirt of apples, the other guiding the horse.

The top bar of the fence was four feet high, but he knew his roan and leaped it at full career to the accompaniment of several scattered shots. Eight hundred yards straight away were the woods, and the roan was covering the distance with mighty strides. Every man was now firing. pumping their guns so rapidly that he no longer heard individual shots. A bullet went through his hat, but he was unaware, though he did know when another tore through the apples on the pommel. And he winced and ducked even lower when a third bullet, fired low, struck a stone between his horse's legs and ricochetted off through the air, buzzing and humming like some incredible insect.

The shots died down as the magazines were emptied, until, quickly, there was no more shooting. The young man was elated. Through that astonishing fusillade he had come unscathed. He glanced back. Yes, they had emptied their magazines. He could see several reloading. Others were running back behind the house for their horses. As he looked, two already mounted, came back into view around the comer, riding hard. And at the same moment, he saw the man with the unmistakable ginger beard kneel down on the ground, level his gun, and coolly take his time for the long shot.

The young man threw his spurs into the horse, crouched very low, and swerved in his flight in order to distract the other's aim. And still the shot did not come. With each jump of the horse, the woods sprang nearer. They were only two hundred yards away and still the shot was delayed.

And then he heard it, the last thing he was to hear, for he was dead ere he hit the ground in the long crashing fall from the saddle. And they, watching at the house, saw him fall, saw his body bounce when it struck the earth, and saw the burst of red-cheeked apples that rolled about him. They laughed at the unexpected eruption of apples, and clapped their hands in applause of the long shot by the man with the ginger beard.

The Water Baby

I lent a weary ear to old Kohokumu's interminable chanting of the deeds and adventures of Maui, the Promethean demigod of Polynesia who fished up dry land from ocean depths with hooks made fast to heaven, who lifted up the sky whereunder previously men had gone on all fours, not having space to stand erect, and who made the sun with its sixteen snared legs stand still and agree thereafter to traverse the sky more slowly — the sun being evidently a trade-unionist and believing in the six-hour day, while Maui stood for the open shop and the twelve-hour day.

"Now this," said Kohokumu, "is from Queen Liliuokalani's own family mele:

" 'Maui became restless and fought the sun

With a noose that he laid.

And winter won the sun,

And summer was won by Maui. . . .' "

Born in the Islands myself, I know the Hawaiian myths better than this old fisherman, although I possessed not his memorization that enabled him to recite them endless hours.

"And you believe all this?" I demanded in the sweet Hawaiian tongue.

"It was a long time ago," he pondered. "I never saw Maui with my own eyes. But all our old men from all the way back tell us these things, as I, an old man, tell them to my sons and grandsons, who will tell them to their sons and grandsons all the way ahead to come."

"You believe," I persisted, "that whopper of Maui roping the sun like a wild steer, and that other whopper of heaving up the sky from off the earth?"

"I am of little worth, and am not wise, O Lakana," my fisherman made answer. "Yet have I read the Hawaiian bible the missionaries translated to us, and there have I read that your Big Man of the Beginning made the earth and sky and sun and moon and stars, and all manner of animals from horses to cockroaches and from centipedes and mosquitoes to sea lice and jellyfish, and man and woman and everything, and all in six days. Why, Maui didn't do anything like that much. He didn't make anything. He just put things in order, that was all, and it took him a long, long time to make the improvements. And anyway, it is much easier and more reasonable to believe the little whopper than the big whopper."

And what could I reply? He had me on the matter of reasonableness. Besides, my head ached. And the funny thing, as admitted to myself, was that evolution teaches in no uncertain voice that man did run on all fours ere he came to walk upright, that astronomy states flatly that the speed of the revolution of the earth on its axis has

diminished steadily, thus increasing the length of day, and that the seismologists accept that all the islands of Hawaii were elevated from the ocean floor by volcanic action.

Fortunately, I saw a bamboo pole, floating on the surface several hundred feet away, suddenly up-end and start a very devil's dance. This was a diversion from the profitless discussion, and Kohokumu and I dipped our paddles and raced the little outrigger canoe to the dancing pole. Kohokumu caught the line that was fast to the butt of the pole and underhanded it in until a two-foot ukikiki, battling fiercely to the end, flashed its wet silver in the sun and began beating a tattoo on the inside bottom of the canoe. Kohokumu picked up a squirming, slimy squid, with his teeth bit a chunk of live bait out of it, attached the bait to the hook, and dropped line and sinker overside. The stick floated flat on the surface of the water, and the canoe drifted slowly away. With a survey of the crescent composed of a score of such sticks all lying flat, Kohokumu wiped his hands on his naked sides and lifted the wearisome and centuries-old chant of Kuali:

" 'Oh, the great fishhook of Maui!
Manai-i-ka-lani — "made fast to the heavens"!
An earth-twisted cord ties the hook,
Engulfed from lofty Kauiki!
Its bait the red-billed Alae,
The bird to Hina sacred!
It sinks far down to Hawaii,
Struggling and in pain dying!
Caught is the land beneath the water,
Floated up, up to the surface,
But Hina hid a wing of the bird
And broke the land beneath the water!
Below was the bait snatched away
And eaten at once by the fishes,
The Ulua of the deep muddy places!' "

His aged voice was hoarse and scratchy from the drinking of too much swipes at a funeral the night before, nothing of which contributed to make me less irritable. My head ached. The sun glare on the water made my eyes ache, while I was suffering more than half a touch of mal de mer from the antic conduct of the outrigger on the blobby sea. The air was stagnant. In the lee of Waihee, between the white beach and the reef, no whisper of breeze eased the still sultriness. I really think was too miserable to summon the resolution to give up the fishing and go in to shore.

Lying back with closed eyes, I lost count of time. I even forgot that Kohokumu was chanting till reminded of it by his ceasing. An exclamation made me bare my eyes to the stab of the sun. He was gazing down through the water glass.

"It's a big one," he said, passing me the device and slipping overside feetfirst into the water.

He went under without splash and ripple, turned over, and swam down. I followed his progress through the water glass, which is merely an oblong box a couple of feet long, open at the top, the bottom sealed water-tight with a sheet of ordinary glass.

Now Kohokumu was a bore, and I was squeamishly out of sorts with him for his volubleness, but I could not help admiring him as watched him go down. Past seventy years of age, lean as a spear, and shriveled like a mummy, he was doing what few young athletes of my race would do or could do. It was forty feet to bottom. There, partly exposed but mostly hidden under the bulge of a coral lump, I could discern his objective. His keen eyes had caught the projecting tentacle of a squid. Even as he swam, the tentacle was lazily withdrawn, so that there was no sign of the creature. But the brief exposure of the portion of one tentacle had advertised its owner as a squid of size.

The pressure at a depth of forty feet is no joke for a young man, yet it did not seem to inconvenience this oldster. I am certain it never crossed his mind to be inconvenienced. Unarmed, bare of body save for a brief malo or loin cloth, he was undeterred by the formidable creature that constituted his prey. I saw him steady himself with his right hand on the coral lump, and thrust his left arm into the hole to the shoulder. Half a minute elapsed, during which time he seemed to be groping and rooting around with his left hand. Then tentacle after tentacle, myriad-suckered and wildly waving, emerged. Laying hold of his arm, they writhed and coiled about his flesh like so many snakes. With a heave and a jerk appeared the entire squid, a proper devilfish or octopus.

But the old man was in no hurry for his natural element, the air above the water. There, forty feet beneath, wrapped about by an octopus that measured nine feet across from tentacle tip to tentacle tip and that could well drown the stoutest swimmer, he cooly and casually did the one thing that gave to him his empery over the monster. He shoved his lean, hawklike face into the very center of the slimy, squirming mass, and with his several ancient fangs bit into the heart and the life of the matter. This accomplished, he came upward slowly, as a swimmer should who is changing atmospheres from the depths. Alongside the canoe, still in the water and peeling off the grisly clinging thing, the incorrigible old sinner burst into the pule of triumph which had been chanted by countless squid-catching generations before him:

"O Kanaloa of the taboo nights!

Stand upright on the solid floor!

Stand upon the floor where lies the squid!

Stand up to take the squid of the deep sea!

Rise up, O Kanaloa!

Stir up! Stir up! Let the squid awake!

Let the squid that lies flat awake! Let the squid that lies spread out. . . ."“

I closed my eyes and ears, not offering to lend him a hand, secure in the knowledge that he could climb back unaided into the unstable craft without the slightest risk of upsetting it.

"A very fine squid," he crooned. "It is a wahine squid. shall now sing to you the song of the cowrie shell, the red cowrie shell that we used as a bait for the squid — "

"You were disgraceful last night at the funeral," I headed him off. "I heard all about it. You made much noise. You sang till everybody was deaf. You insulted the son of the widow. You drank swipes like a pig. Swipes are not good for your extreme age. Some day you will wake up dead. You ought to be a wreck to-day — "

"Ha!" he chuckled. "And you, who drank no swipes, who was a babe unborn when I was already an old man, who went to bed last night with the sun and the chickens — this day you are a wreck. Explain me that. My ears are as thirsty to listen as was my throat thirsty last night. And here to-day, behold, I am, as that Englishman who came here in his yacht used to say, I am in fine form, in devilish fine form."

"I give you up," I retorted, shrugging my shoulders. "Only one thing is clear, and that is that the devil doesn't want you. Report of your singing has gone before you."

"No," he pondered the idea carefully. "It is not that. The devil will be glad for my coming, for I have some very fine songs for him, and scandals and old gossips of the high aliis that will make him scratch his sides. So let me explain to you the secret of my birth. The Sea is my mother. I was born in a double canoe, during a Kona gale, in the channel of Kahoolawe. From her, the Sea, my mother, I received my strength. Whenever I return to her arms, as for a breast clasp, as have returned this day, I grow strong again and immediately. She, to me, is the milk giver, the life source — "

"Shades of Antaeus!" thought I.

"Some day," old Kohokumu rambled on, "when I am really old, shall be reported of men as drowned in the sea. This will be an idle thought of men. In truth, I shall have returned into the arms of my mother, there to rest under the heart of her breast until the second birth of me, when I shall emerge into the sun a flashing youth of splendor like Maui himself when he was golden young."

"A queer religion," I commented.

"When I was younger I muddled my poor head over queerer religions," old Kohokumu retorted. "But listen, O Young Wise One, to my elderly wisdom. This I know: as I grow old I seek less for the truth from without me, and find more of the truth from within me. Why have thought this thought of my return to my mother and of my rebirth from my mother into the sun? You do not know. I do not know, save that, without whisper of man's voice or printed word, without prompting from otherwhere, this thought has arisen from within me, from the deeps of me that are as deep as the sea. I am not a god. I do not make things. Therefore I have not made this thought. I do not know its father or its mother. It is of old time before me, and therefore it is true. Man does not make truth. Man, if he be not blind, only recognizes truth when he sees it. Is this thought that I have thought a dream?"

"Perhaps it is you that are a dream," I laughed. "And that and sky and sea and the iron-hard land are dreams, all dreams."

"I have often thought that," he assured me soberly. "It may well be so. Last night I dreamed I was a lark bird, a beautiful singing lark of the sky like the larks on the

upland pastures of Haleakala. And I flew up, up toward the sun, singing, singing, as old Kohokumu never sang. I tell you now that I dreamed I was a lark bird singing in the sky. But may not I, the real I, be the lark bird? And may not the telling of it be the dream that I, the lark bird, am dreaming now? Who are you to tell me aye or no? Dare you tell me I am not a lark bird asleep and dreaming that I am old Kohokumu?"

I shrugged my shoulders, and he continued triumphantly.

"And how do you know but what you are old Maui himself asleep and dreaming that you are John Lakana talking with me in a canoe? And may you not awake, old Maui yourself, and scratch your sides and say that you had a funny dream in which you dreamed you were a haole?"

"I don't know," I admitted. "Besides, you wouldn't believe me."

"There is much more in dreams than we know," he assured me with great solemnity. "Dreams go deep, all the way down, maybe to before the beginning. May not old Maui have only dreamed he pulled Hawaii up from the bottom of the sea? Then would this Hawaii land be a dream, and you and I and the squid there only parts of Maui's dream? And the lark bird, too?"

He sighed and let his head sink on his breast.

"And I worry my old head about the secrets undiscoverable," he resumed, "until I grow tired and want to forget, and so I drink swipes, and go fishing, and sing old songs, and dream I am a lark bird singing in the sky. I like that best of all, and often I dream it when I have drunk much swipes — "

In great dejection of mood he peered down into the lagoon through the water glass.

"There will be no more bites for a while," he announced. "The fish sharks are prowling around, and we shall have to wait until they are gone. And so that the time shall not be heavy, I will sing you the canoe-hauling song to Lono. You remember:

" 'Give to me the trunk of the tree, O Lono!

Give me the tree's main root, O Lono!

Give me the ear of the tree, O Lono! — ' "

"For the love of mercy, don't sing!" I cut him short. "I've got a headache, and your singing hurts. You may be in devilish fine form to-day, but your throat is rotten. I'd rather you talked about dreams, or told me whoppers."

"It is too bad that you are sick, and you so young," he conceded cheerily. "And I shall not sing any more. I shall tell you something you do not know and have never heard; something that is no dream and no whopper, but is what I know to have happened. Not very long ago there lived here, on the beach beside this very lagoon, a young boy whose name was Keikiwai, which, as you know, means Water Baby. He was truly a water baby. His gods were the sea and fish gods, and he was born with knowledge of the language of fishes, which the fishes did not know until the sharks found it out one day when they heard him talk it.

"It happened this way. The word had been brought, and the commands, by swift runners, that the king was making a progress around the island, and that on the next day a luau was to be served him by the dwellers here of Waihee. It was always a

hardship, when the king made a progress, for the few dwellers in small places to fill his many stomachs with food. For he came always with his wife and her women, with his priests and sorcerers, his dancers and flute players and hula singers, and fighting men and servants, and his high chiefs with their wives, and sorcerers and fighting men and servants.

"Sometimes, in small places like Waihee, the path of his journey was marked afterward by leanness and famine. But a king must be fed, and it is not good to anger a king. So, like warning in advance of disaster, Waihee heard of his coming, and all food-getters of field and pond and mountain and sea were busied with getting food for the feast. And behold, everything was got, from the choicest of royal taro to sugar-cane joints for the roasting, from opihis to limu, from fowl to wild pig and poi-fed puppies — everything save one thing. The fishermen failed to get lobsters.

"Now be it known that the king's favorite food was lobster. He esteemed it above all kao-kao (food), and his runners had made special mention of it. And there were no lobsters, and it is not good to anger a king in the belly of him. Too many sharks had come inside the reef. That was the trouble. A young girl and an old man had been eaten by them. And of the young men who dared dive for lobsters, one was eaten, and one lost an arm, and another lost one hand and one foot.

"But there was Keikiwai, the Water Baby, only eleven years old, but half fish himself and talking the language of fishes. To his father the head men came, begging him to send the Water Baby to get lobsters to fill the king's belly and divert his anger.

"Now this, what happened, was known and observed. For the fishermen and their women, and the taro growers and the bird catchers, and the head men, and all Waihee, came down and stood back from the edge of the rock where the Water Baby stood and looked down at the lobsters far beneath on the bottom.

"And a shark, looking up with its cat's eyes, observed him, and sent out the shark call of 'fresh meat' to assemble all the sharks in the lagoon. For the sharks work thus together, which is why they are strong. And the sharks answered the call till there were forty of them, long ones and short ones and lean ones and round ones, forty of them by count; and they talked to one another, saying: 'Look at that titbit of a child, that morsel delicious of human-flesh sweetness without the salt of the sea in it, of which salt we have too much, savory and good to eat, melting to delight under our hearts as our bellies embrace it and extract from it its sweet.'

"Much more they said, saying: 'He has come for the lobsters. When he dives in he is for one of us. Not like the old man we ate yesterday, tough to dryness with age, nor like the young men whose members were too hard-muscled, but tender, so tender that he will melt in our gullets ere our bellies receive him. When he dives in, we will all rush for him, and the lucky one of us will get him, and, gulp, he will be gone, one bite and one swallow, into the belly of the luckiest one of us.'

"And Keikiwai, the Water Baby, heard the conspiracy, knowing the shark language; and he addressed a prayer, in the shark language, to the shark god Moku-halii, and the sharks heard and waved their tails to one another and winked their cat's eyes in

token that they understood his talk. And then he said: 'I shall now dive for a lobster for the king. And no hurt shall befall me, because the shark with the shortest tail is my friend and will protect me.'

"And, so saying, he picked up a chunk of lava rock and tossed it into the water, with a big splash, twenty feet to one side. The forty sharks rushed for the splash, while he dived, and by the time they discovered they had missed him, he had gone to the bottom and come back and climbed out, within his hand a fat lobster, a wahine lobster, full of eggs, for the king.

"'Ha!' said the sharks, very angry. 'There is among us a traitor. The titbit of a child, the morsel of sweetness, has spoken, and has exposed the one among us who has saved him. Let us now measure the length of our tails!'

"Which they did, in a long row, side by side, the shorter-tailed ones cheating and stretching to gain length on themselves, the longer-tailed ones cheating and stretching in order not to be out-cheated and out-stretched. They were very angry with the one with the shortest tail, and him they rushed upon from every side and devoured till nothing was left of him.

"Again they listened while they waited for the Water Baby to dive in. And again the Water Baby made his prayer in the shark language to Moku-halii, and said: 'The shark with the shortest tail is my friend and will protect me.' And again the Water Baby tossed in a chunk of lava, this time twenty feet away off to the other side. The sharks rushed for the splash, and in their haste ran into one another, and splashed with their tails till the water was all foam and they could see nothing, each thinking some other was swallowing the titbit. And the Water Baby came up and climbed out with another fat lobster for the king.

"And the thirty-nine sharks measured tails, devouring the one with the shortest tail, so that there were only thirty-eight sharks. And the Water Baby continued to do what I have said, and the sharks to do what I have told you, while for each shark that was eaten by his brothers there was another fat lobster laid on the rock for the king. Of course, there was much quarreling and argument among the sharks when it came to measuring tails; but in the end it worked out in rightness and justice, for, when only two sharks were left, they were the two biggest of the original forty.

"And the Water Baby again claimed the shark with the shortest tail was his friend, fooled the two sharks with another lava chunk, and brought up another lobster. The two sharks each claimed the other had the shorter tail, and each fought to eat the other, and the one with the longer tail won — "

"Hold, O Kohokumu!" I interrupted. "Remember that that shark had already — " "I know just what you are going to say," he snatched his recital back from me. "And you are right. It took him so long to eat the thirty-ninth shark, for inside the thirty-ninth shark were already the nineteen other sharks he had eaten, and inside the fortieth shark were already the nineteen other sharks he had eaten, and he did not have the appetite he had started with. But do not forget he was a very big shark to begin with.

"It took him so long to eat the other shark, and the nineteen sharks inside the other shark, that he was still eating when darkness fell and the people of Waihee went away home with all the lobsters for the king. And didn't they find the last shark on the beach next morning dead and burst wide open with all he had eaten?"

Kohokumu fetched a full stop and held my eyes with his own shrewd ones.

"Hold, O Lakana!" he checked the speech that rushed to my tongue. "I know what next you would say. You would say that with my own eyes I did not see this, and therefore that I do not know what have been telling you. But I do know, and I can prove it. My father's father knew the grandson of the Water Baby's father's uncle. Also, there, on the rocky point to which I point my finger now, is where the Water Baby stood and dived. I have dived for lobsters there myself. It is a great place for lobsters. Also, and often, have I seen sharks there. And there, on the bottom, as I should know, for I have seen and counted them, are the thirty-nine lava rocks thrown in by the Water Baby as I have described."

"But — " I began.

"Ha!" he baffled me. "Look! While we have talked the fish have begun again to bite."

He pointed to three of the bamboo poles erect and devil-dancing in token that fish were hooked and struggling on the lines beneath. As he bent to his paddle, he muttered, for my benefit:

"Of course I know. The thirty-nine lava rocks are still there. You can count them any day for yourself. Of course I know, and I know for a fact."

The Whale Tooth

It was in the early days in Fiji, when John Starhurst arose in the mission house at Rewa Village and announced his intention of carrying the gospel throughout all Viti Levu. Now Viti Levu means the "Great Land," it being the largest island in a group composed of many large islands, to say nothing of hundreds of small ones. Here and there on the coasts, living by most precarious tenure, was a sprinkling of missionaries, traders, bêche-de-mer fishers, and whaleship deserters. The smoke of the hot ovens arose under their windows, and the bodies of the slain were dragged by their doors on the way to the feasting.

The Lotu, or the Worship, was progressing slowly, and, often, in crablike fashion. Chiefs, who announced themselves Christians and were welcomed into the body of the chapel, had a distressing habit of backsliding in order to partake of the flesh of some favorite enemy. Eat or be eaten had been the law of the land; and eat or be eaten promised to remain the law of the land for a long time to come. There were chiefs, such as Tanoa, Tuiveikoso, and Tuikilakila, who had literally eaten hundreds of their fellow men. But among these gluttons Ra Undreundre ranked highest. Ra Undreundre lived at Takiraki. He kept a register of his gustatory exploits. A row of stones outside his house marked the bodies he had eaten. This row was two hundred and thirty paces long, and the stones in it numbered eight hundred and seventy-two. Each stone represented a body. The row of stones might have been longer, had not Ra Undreundre unfortunately received a spear in the small of his back in a bush skirmish on Somo Somo and been served up on the table of Naungavuli, whose mediocre string of stones numbered only forty-eight.

The hard-worked, fever-stricken missionaries stuck doggedly to their task, at times despairing, and looking forward for some special manifestation, some outburst of Pentecostal fire that would bring a glorious harvest of souls. But cannibal Fiji had remained obdurate. The frizzle-headed man-eaters were loath to leave their fleshpots so long as the harvest of human carcases was plentiful. Sometimes, when the harvest was too plentiful, they imposed on the missionaries by letting the word slip out that on such a day there would be a killing and a barbecue. Promptly the missionaries would buy the lives of the victims with stick tobacco, fathoms of calico, and quarts of trade beads. Natheless the chiefs drove a handsome trade in thus disposing of their surplus live meat. Also, they could always go out and catch more.

It was at this juncture that John Starhurst proclaimed that he would carry the Gospel from coast to coast of the Great Land, and that he would begin by penetrating

the mountain fastnesses of the headwaters of the Rewa River. His words were received with consternation.

The native teachers wept softly. His two fellow missionaries strove to dissuade him. The King of Rewa warned him that the mountain dwellers would surely kai-kai him–kai-kai meaning "to eat"–and that he, the King of Rewa, having become Lotu, would be put to the necessity of going to war with the mountain dwellers. That he could not conquer them he was perfectly aware. That they might come down the river and sack Rewa Village he was likewise perfectly aware. But what was he to do? If John Starhurst persisted in going out and being eaten, there would be a war that would cost hundreds of lives.

Later in the day a deputation of Rewa chiefs waited upon John Starhurst. He heard them patiently, and argued patiently with them, though he abated not a whit from his purpose. To his fellow missionaries he explained that he was not bent upon martyrdom; that the call had come for him to carry the Gospel into Viti Levu, and that he was merely obeying the Lord's wish.

To the traders who came and objected most strenuously of all, he said: "Your objections are valueless. They consist merely of the damage that may be done your businesses. You are interested in making money, but I am interested in saving souls. The heathen of this dark land must be saved."

John Starhurst was not a fanatic. He would have been the first man to deny the imputation. He was eminently sane and practical.

He was sure that his mission would result in good, and he had private visions of igniting the Pentecostal spark in the souls of the mountaineers and of inaugurating a revival that would sweep down out of the mountains and across the length and breadth of the Great Land from sea to sea and to the isles in the midst of the sea. There were no wild lights in his mild gray eyes, but only calm resolution and an unfaltering trust in the Higher Power that was guiding him.

One man only he found who approved of his project, and that was Ra Vatu, who secretly encouraged him and offered to lend him guides to the first foothills. John Starhurst, in turn, was greatly pleased by Ra Vatu's conduct. From an incorrigible heathen, with a heart as black as his practices, Ra Vatu was beginning to emanate light. He even spoke of becoming Lotu. True, three years before he had expressed a similar intention, and would have entered the church had not John Starhurst entered objection to his bringing his four wives along with him. Ra Vatu had had economic and ethical objections to monogamy. Besides, the missionary's hair-splitting objection had offended him; and, to prove that he was a free agent and a man of honor, he had swung his huge war club over Starhurst's head. Starhurst had escaped by rushing in under the club and holding on to him until help arrived. But all that was now forgiven and forgotten. Ra Vatu was coming into the church, not merely as a converted heathen, but as a converted polygamist as well. He was only waiting, he assured Starhurst, until his oldest wife, who was very sick, should die.

John Starhurst journeyed up the sluggish Rewa in one of Ra Vatu's canoes. This canoe was to carry him for two days, when, the head of navigation reached, it would return. Far in the distance, lifted into the sky, could be seen the great smoky mountains that marked the backbone of the Great Land. All day John Starhurst gazed at them with eager yearning.

Sometimes he prayed silently. At other times he was joined in prayer by Narau, a native teacher, who for seven years had been Lotu, ever since the day he had been saved from the hot oven by Dr. James Ellery Brown at the trifling expense of one hundred sticks of tobacco, two cotton blankets, and a large bottle of painkiller. At the last moment, after twenty hours of solitary supplication and prayer, Narau's ears had heard the call to go forth with John Starhurst on the mission to the mountains.

"Master, I will surely go with thee," he had announced.

John Starhurst had hailed him with sober delight. Truly, the Lord was with him thus to spur on so broken-spirited a creature as Narau.

"I am indeed without spirit, the weakest of the Lord's vessels," Narau explained, the first day in the canoe.

"You should have faith, stronger faith," the missionary chided him.

Another canoe journeyed up the Rewa that day. But it journeyed an hour astern, and it took care not to be seen. This canoe was also the property of Ra Vatu. In it was Erirola, Ra Vatu's first cousin and trusted henchman; and in the small basket that never left his hand was a whale tooth. It was a magnificent tooth, fully six inches long, beautifully proportioned, the ivory turned yellow and purple with age. This tooth was likewise the property of Ra Vatu; and in Fiji, when such a tooth goes forth, things usually happen. For this is the virtue of the whale tooth: Whoever accepts it cannot refuse the request that may accompany it or follow it. The request may be anything from a human life to a tribal alliance, and no Fijian is so dead to honor as to deny the request when once the tooth has been accepted. Sometimes the request hangs fire, or the fulfilment is delayed, with untoward consequences.

High up the Rewa, at the village of a chief, Mongondro by name, John Starhurst rested at the end of the second day of the journey. In the morning, attended by Narau, he expected to start on foot for the smoky mountains that were now green and velvety with nearness. Mongondro was a sweet-tempered, mild-mannered little old chief, short-sighted and afflicted with elephantiasis, and no longer inclined toward the turbulence of war. He received the missionary with warm hospitality, gave him food from his own table, and even discussed religious matters with him. Mongondro was of an inquiring bent of mind, and pleased John Starhurst greatly by asking him to account for the existence and beginning of things. When the missionary had finished his summary of the Creation according to Genesis, he saw that Mongondro was deeply affected. The little old chief smoked silently for some time. Then he took the pipe from his mouth and shook his head sadly.

"It cannot be," he said. "I, Mongondro, in my youth, was a good workman with the adze. Yet three months did it take me to make a canoe–a small canoe, a very small canoe. And you say that all this land and water was made by one man–"

"Nay, was made by one God, the only true God," the missinary interrupted.

"It is the same thing," Mongondro went on, "that all the land and all the water, the trees, the fish, and bush and mountains, the sun, the moon, and the stars, were made in six days! No, no. I tell you that in my youth I was an able man, yet did it require me three months for one small canoe. It is a story to frighten children with; but no man can believe it."

"I am a man," the missionary said.

"True, you are a man. But it is not given to my dark understanding to know what you believe."

"I tell you, I do believe that everything was made in six days."

"So you say, so you say," the old cannibal murmured soothingly.

It was not until after John Starhurst and Narau had gone off to bed that Erirola crept into the chief's house, and, after diplomatic speech, handed the whale tooth to Mongondro.

The old chief held the tooth in his hands for a long time. It was a beautiful tooth, and he yearned for it. Also, he divined the request that must accompany it. "No, no; whale teeth were beautiful," and his mouth watered for it, but he passed it back to Erirola with many apologies.

In the early dawn John Starhurst was afoot, striding along the bush trail in his big leather boots, at his heels the faithful Narau, himself at the heels of a naked guide lent him by Mongondro to show the way to the next village, which was reached by midday. Here a new guide showed the way. A mile in the rear plodded Erirola, the whale tooth in the basket slung on his shoulder. For two days more he brought up the missionary's rear, offering the tooth to the village chiefs. But village after village refused the tooth. It followed so quickly the missionary's advent that they divined the request that would be made, and would have none of it.

They were getting deep into the mountains, and Erirola took a secret trail, cut in ahead of the missionary, and reached the stronghold of the Buli of Gatoka. Now the Buli was unaware of John Starhurst's imminent arrival. Also, the tooth was beautiful–an extraordinary specimen, while the coloring of it was of the rarest order. The tooth was presented publicly. The Buli of Gatoka, seated on his best mat, surrounded by his chief men, three busy fly-brushers at his back, deigned to receive from the hand of his herald the whale tooth presented by Ra Vatu and carried into the mountains by his cousin, Erirola. A clapping of hands went up at the acceptance of the present, the assembled headman, heralds, and fly-brushers crying aloud in chorus:

"A! woi! woi! woi! A! woi! woi! woi! A tabua levu! woi! woi! A mudua, mudua, mudua!'

"Soon will come a man, a white man," Erirola began, after the proper pause. "He is a missionary man, and he will come today. Ra Vatu is pleased to desire his boots. He

wishes to present them to his good friend, Mongondro, and it is in his mind to send them with the feet along in them, for Mongondro is an old man and his teeth are not good. Be sure, O Buli, that the feet go along in the boots. As for the rest of him, it may stop here."

The delight in the whale tooth faded out of the Buli's eyes, and he glanced about him dubiously. Yet had he already accepted the tooth.

"A little thing like a missionary does not matter," Erirola prompted.

"No, a little thing like a missionary does not matter," the Buli answered, himself again. "Mongondro shall have the boots. Go, you young men, some three or four of you, and meet the missionary on the trail. Be sure you bring back the boots as well."

"It is too late," said Erirola. "Listen! He comes now."

Breaking through the thicket of brush, John Starhurst, with Narau close on his heels, strode upon the scene. The famous boots, having filled in wading the stream, squirted fine jets of water at every step. Starhurst looked about him with flashing eyes. Upborne by an unwavering trust, untouched by doubt or fear, he exulted in all he saw. He knew that since the beginning of time he was the first white man ever to tread the mountain stronghold of Gatoka.

The grass houses clung to the steep mountain side or overhung the rushing Rewa. On either side towered a mighty precipice. At the best, three hours of sunlight penetrated that narrow gorge. No cocoanuts nor bananas were to be seen, though dense, tropic vegetation overran everything, dripping in airy festoons from the sheer lips of the precipices and running riot in all the crannied ledges. At the far end of the gorge the Rewa leaped eight hundred feet in a single span, while the atmosphere of the rock fortress pulsed to the rhythmic thunder of the fall.

From the Buli's house, John Starhurst saw emerging the Buli and his followers.

"I bring you good tidings," was the missionary's greeting.

"Who has sent you?" the Buli rejoined quietly.

"God."

"It is a new name in Viti Levu," the Buli grinned. "Of what islands, villages, or passes may he be chief?"

"He is the chief over all islands, all villages, all passes," John Starhurst answered solemnly. "He is the Lord over heaven and earth, and I am come to bring His word to you."

"Has he sent whale teeth?" was the insolent query.

"No, but more precious than whale teeth is the–"

"It is the custom, between chiefs, to send whale teeth," the Buli interrupted.

"Your chief is either a niggard, or you are a fool, to come empty-handed into the mountains. Behold, a more generous than you is before you."

So saying, he showed the whale tooth he had received from Erirola.

Narau groaned.

"It is the whale tooth of Ra Vatu," he whispered to Starhurst. "I know it well. Now are we undone."

"A gracious thing," the missionary answered, passing his hand through his long beard and adjusting his glasses. "Ra Vatu has arranged that we should be well received."

But Narau groaned again, and backed away from the heels he had dogged so faithfully.

"Ra Vatu is soon to become Lotu," Starhurst explained, "and I have come bringing the Lotu to you."

"I want none of your Lotu," said the Buli, proudly. "And it is in my mind that you will be clubbed this day."

The Buli nodded to one of his big mountaineers, who stepped forward, swinging a club. Narau bolted into the nearest house, seeking to hide among the woman and mats; but John Starhurst sprang in under the club and threw his arms around his executioner's neck. From this point of vantage he proceeded to argue. He was arguing for his life, and he knew it; but he was neither excited nor afraid.

"It would be an evil thing for you to kill me," he told the man. "I have done you no wrong, nor have I done the Buli wrong."

So well did he cling to the neck of the one man that they dared not strike with their clubs. And he continued to cling and to dispute for his life with those who clamored for his death.

"I am John Starhurst," he went on calmly. "I have labored in Fiji for three years, and I have done it for no profit. I am here among you for good. Why should any man kill me? To kill me will not profit any man."

The Buli stole a look at the whale tooth. He was well paid for the deed.

The missionary was surrounded by a mass of naked savages, all struggling to get at him. The death song, which is the song of the oven, was raised, and his expostulations could no longer be heard. But so cunningly did he twine and wreathe his body about his captor's that the death blow could not be struck. Erirola smiled, and the Buli grew angry.

"Away with you!" he cried. "A nice story to go back to the coast–a dozen of you and one missionary, without weapons, weak as a woman, overcoming all of you."

"Wait, O Buli," John Starhurst called out from the thick of the scuffle, "and I will overcome even you. For my weapons are Truth and Right, and no man can withstand them."

"Come to me, then," the Buli answered, "for my weapon is only a poor miserable club, and, as you say, it cannot withstand you."

The group separated from him, and John Starhurst stood alone, facing the Buli, who was leaning on an enormous, knotted warclub.

"Come to me, missionary man, and overcome me," the Buli challenged.

"Even so will I come to you and overcome you," John Starhurst made answer, first wiping his spectacles and settling them properly, then beginning his advance.

The Buli raised the club and waited.

"In the first place, my death will profit you nothing," began the argument.

"I leave the answer to my club," was the Buli's reply.

And to every point he made the same reply, at the same time watching the missionary closely in order to forestall that cunning run-in under the lifted club. Then, and for the first time, John Starhurst knew that his death was at hand. He made no attempt to run in. Bareheaded, he stood in the sun and prayed aloud–the mysterious figure of the inevitable white man, who, with Bible, bullet, or rum bottle, has confronted the amazed savage in his every stronghold. Even so stood John Starhurst in the rock fortress of the Buli of Gatoka.

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do," he prayed. "O Lord! Have mercy upon Fiji. Have compasssion for Fiji. O Jehovah, hear us for His sake, Thy Son, whom Thou didst give that through Him all men might also become Thy children. From Thee we came, and our mind is that to Thee we may return. The land is dark, O Lord, the land is dark. But Thou art mighty to save. Reach out Thy hand, O Lord, and save Fiji, poor cannibal Fiji."

The Buli grew impatient.

"Now will I answer thee," he muttered, at the same time swinging his club with both hands.

Narau, hiding among the women and the mats, heard the impact of the blow and shuddered. Then the death song arose, and he knew his beloved missionary's body was being dragged to the oven as he heard the words:

"Drag me gently. Drag me gently."

"For I am the champion of my land."

"Give thanks! Give thanks! Give thanks!"

Next, a single voice arose out of the din, asking:

"Where is the brave man?"

A hundred voices bellowed the answer:

"Gone to be dragged into the oven and cooked."

"Where is the coward?" the single voice demanded.

"Gone to report!" the hundred voices bellowed back. "Gone to report! Gone to report!"

Narau groaned in anguish of spirit. The words of the old song were true. He was the coward, and nothing remained to him but to go and report.

When Alice Told Her Soul

This, of Alice Akana, is an affair of Hawaii, not of this day, but of days recent enough, when Abel Ah Yo preached his famous revival in Honolulu and persuaded Alice Akana to tell her soul. But what Alice told concerned itself with the earlier history of the then surviving generation.

For Alice Akana was fifty years old, had begun life early, and, early and late, lived it spaciously. What she knew went back into the roots and foundations of families, businesses, and plantations. She was the one living repository of accurate information that lawyers sought out, whether the information they required related to land-boundaries and land gifts, or to marriages, births, bequests, or scandals. Rarely, because of the tight tongue she kept behind her teeth, did she give them what they asked; and when she did was when only equity was served and no one was hurt.

For Alice had lived, from early in her girlhood, a life of flowers, and song, and wine, and dance; and, in her later years, had herself been mistress of these revels by office of mistress of the hula house. In such atmosphere, where mandates of God and man and caution are inhibited, and where woozled tongues will wag, she acquired her historical knowledge of things never otherwise whispered and rarely guessed. And her tight tongue had served her well, so that, while the old-timers knew she must know, none ever heard her gossip of the times of Kalakaua's boathouse, nor of the high times of officers of visiting warships, nor of the diplomats and ministers and councils of the countries of the world.

So, at fifty, loaded with historical dynamite sufficient, if it were ever exploded, to shake the social and commercial life of the Islands, still tight of tongue, Alice Akana was mistress of the hula house, manageress of the dancing girls who hula'd for royalty, for luaus (feasts), house-parties, poi suppers, and curious tourists. And, at fifty, she was not merely buxom, but short and fat in the Polynesian peasant way, with a constitution and lack of organic weakness that promised incalculable years. But it was at fifty that she strayed, quite by chance of time and curiosity, into Abel Ah Yo's revival meeting.

Now Abel Ah Yo, in his theology and word wizardry, was as much mixed a personage as Billy Sunday. In his genealogy he was much more mixed, for he was compounded of one-fourth Portuguese, one-fourth Scotch, one-fourth Hawaiian, and one-fourth Chinese. The Pentecostal fire he flamed forth was hotter and more variegated than could any one of the four races of him alone have flamed forth. For in him were gathered together the cannyness and the cunning, the wit and the wisdom, the subtlety and the rawness, the passion and the philosophy, the agonizing spirit-groping and he legs up to the knees in the dung of reality, of the four radically different breeds that con-

tributed to the sum of him. His, also, was the clever self-deceivement of the entire clever compound.

When it came to word wizardry, he had Billy Sunday, master of slang and argot of one language, skinned by miles. For in Abel Ah Yo were the five verbs, and nouns, and adjectives, and metaphors of four living languages. Intermixed and living promiscuously and vitally together, he possessed in these languages a reservoir of expression in which a myriad Billy Sundays could drown. Of no race, a mongrel par excellence, a heterogeneous scrabble, the genius of the admixture was superlatively Abel Ah Yo's. Like a chameleon, he titubated and scintillated grandly between the diverse parts of him, stunning by frontal attack and surprising and confouding by flanking sweeps the mental homogeneity of the more simply constituted souls who came in to his revival to sit under him and flame to his flaming.

Abel Ah Yo believed in himself and his mixedness, as he believed in the mixedness of his weird concept that God looked as much like him as like any man, being no mere tribal god, but a world god that must look equally like all races of all the world, even if it led to piebaldness. And the concept worked. Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Hawaiian, Porto Rican, Russian, English, French–members of all races–knelt without friction, side by side, to his revision of deity.

Himself in his tender youth an apostate to the Church of England, Abel Ah Yo had for years suffered the lively sense of being a Judas sinner. Essentially religious, he had foresworn the Lord. Like Judas therefore he was. Judas was damned. Wherefore he, Abel Ah Yo, was damned; and he did not want to be damned. So, quite after the manner of humans, he squirmed and twisted to escape damnation. The day came when he solved his escape. The doctrine that Judas was damned, he concluded, was a misinterpretation of God, who, above all things, stood for justice. Judas had been God's servant, specially selected to perform a particularly nasty job. Therefore Judas, ever faithful, a betrayer only by divine command, was a saint. Ergo, he, Abel Ah Yo, was a saint by very virtue of his apostasy to a particular sect, and he could have access with clear grace any time to God.

This theory became one of the major tenets of his preaching, and was especially efficacious in cleansing the consciences of the back-sliders from all other faiths who else, in the secrecy of their subconscious selves, were being crushed by the weight of the Judas sin. To Abel Ah Yo, God's plan was as clear as if he, Abel Ah Yo, had planned it himself. All would be saved in the end, although some took longer than others, and would win only to backseats. Man's place in the ever-fluxing chaos of the world was definite and pre-ordained–if by no other token, then by denial that there was any ever-fluxing chaos. This was a mere bugbear of mankind's addled fancy; and, by stinging audacities of thought and speech, by vivid slang that bit home by sheerest intimacy into his listeners' mental processes, he drove the bugbear from their brains, showed them the loving clarity of God's design, and, thereby, induced in them spiritual serenity and calm.

What chance had Alice Akana, herself pure and homogeneous Hawaiian, against his subtle, democratic-tinged, four-race-engendered, slang-munitioned attack? He knew, by contact, almost as much as she about the waywardness of living and sinning–having been singing boy on the passenger-ships between Hawaii and California, and, after that, bar boy, afloat and ashore, from the Barbary Coast to Heinie's Tavern. In point of fact, he had left his job of Number One Bar Boy at the University Club to embark on his great preachment revival.

So, when Alice Akana strayed in to scoff, she remained to pray to Abel Ah Yo's god, who struck her hard-headed mind as the most sensible god of which she had ever heard. She gave money into Abel Ah Yo's collection plate, closed up the hula house, and dismissed the hula dancers to more devious ways of earning a livelihood, shed her bright colours and raiments and flower garlands, and bought a Bible.

It was a time of religious excitement in the purlieus of Honolulu. The thing was a democratic movement of the people toward God. Place and caste were invited, but never came. The stupid lowly, and the humble lowly, only, went down on its knees at the penitent form, admitted its pathological weight and hurt of sin, eliminated and purged all its bafflements, and walked forth again upright under the sun, child-like and pure, upborne by Abel Ah Yo's god's arm around it. In short, Abel Ah Yo's revival was a clearing house for sin and sickness of spirit, wherein sinners were relieved of their burdens and made light and bright and spiritually healthy again.

But Alice was not happy. She had not been cleared. She bought and dispersed Bibles, contributed more money to the plate, contralto'd gloriously in all the hymns, but would not tell her soul. In vain Abel Ah Yo wrestled with her. She would not go down on her knees at the penitent form and voice the things of tarnish within her–the ill things of good friends of the old days. "You cannot serve two masters," Abel Ah Yo told her. "Hell is full of those who have tried. Single of heart and pure of heart must you make your peace with God. Not until you tell your soul to God right out in meeting will you be ready for redemption. In the meantime you will suffer the canker of the sin you carry about within you."

Scientifically, though he did not know it and though he continually jeered at science, Abel Ah Yo was right. Not could she be again as a child and become radiantly clad in God's grace, until she had eliminated from her soul, by telling, all the sophistications that had been hers, including those she shared with others. In the Protestant way, she must bare her soul in public, as in the Catholic way it was done in the privacy of the confessional. The result of such baring would be unity, tranquillity, happiness, cleansing, redemption, and immortal life.

"Choose!" Abel Ah Yo thundered. "Loyalty to God, or loyalty to man." And Alice could not choose. Too long had she kept her tongue locked with the honour of man. "I will tell all my soul about myself," she contended. "God knows I am tired of my soul and should like to have it clean and shining once again as when I was a little girl at Kaneohe–"

"But all the corruption of your soul has been with other souls," was Abel Ah Yo's invariable reply. "When you have a burden, lay it down. You cannot bear a burden and be quit of it at the same time."

"I will pray to God each day, and many times each day," she urged. "I will approach God with humility, with sighs and with tears. I will contribute often to the plate, and I will buy Bibles, Bibles, Bibles without end."

"And God will not smile upon you," God's mouthpiece retorted. "And you will remain weary and heavy-laden. For you will not have told all your sin, and not until you have told all will you be rid of any."

"This rebirth is difficult," Alice sighed.

"Rebirth is even more difficult than birth." Abel Ah Yo did anything but comfort her. "'Not until you become as a little child . . . '"

"If ever I tell my soul, it will be a big telling," she confided.

"The bigger the reason to tell it then."

And so the situation remained at deadlock, Abel Ah Yo demanding absolute allegiance to God, and Alice Akana flirting on the fringes of paradise.

"You bet it will be a big telling, if Alice ever begins," the beach-combing and disreputable kamaainas (old-timers) gleefully told one another over their Palm Tree gin.

In the clubs the possibility of her telling was of more moment. The younger generation of men announced that they had applied for front seats at the telling, while many of the older generation of men joked hollowly about the conversion of Alice. Further, Alice found herself abruptly popular with friends who had forgotten her existence for twenty years.

One afternoon, as Alice, Bible in hand, was taking the electric street car at Hotel and Fort, Cyrus Hodge, sugar factor and magnate, ordered his chauffeur to stop beside her. Willy nilly, in excess of friendliness, he had her into his limousine beside him and went three-quarters of an hour out of his way and time personally to conduct her to her destination.

"Good for sore eyes to see you," he burbled. "How the years fly! You're looking fine. The secret of youth is yours."

Alice smiled and complimented in return in the royal Polynesian way of friendliness.

"My, my," Cyrus Hodge reminisced. "I was such a boy in those days!"

"SOME boy," she laughed acquiescence.

"But knowing no more than the foolishness of a boy in those long-ago days."

"Remember the night your hack-driver got drunk and left you–"

"S-s-sh!" he cautioned. "That Jap driver is a high-school graduate and knows more English than either of us. Also, I think he is a spy for his Government. So why should we tell him anything? Besides, I was so very young. You remember . . . "

"Your cheeks were like the peaches we used to grow before the Mediterranean fruit fly got into them," Alice agreed. "I don't think you shaved more than once a week then. You were a pretty boy. Don't you remember the hula we composed in your honour, the–"

"S-s-sh!" he hushed her. "All that's buried and forgotten. May it remain forgotten."

And she was aware that in his eyes was no longer any of the ingenuousness of youth she remembered. Instead, his eyes were keen and speculative, searching into her for some assurance that she would not resurrect his particular portion of that buried past.

"Religion is a good thing for us as we get along into middle age," another old friend told her. He was building a magnificent house on Pacific Heights, but had recently married a second time, and was even then on his way to the steamer to welcome home his two daughters just graduated from Vassar. "We need religion in our old age, Alice. It softens, makes us more tolerant and forgiving of the weaknesses of others–especially the weaknesses of youth of–of others, when they played high and low and didn't know what they were doing."

He waited anxiously.

"Yes," she said. "We are all born to sin and it is hard to grow out of sin. But I grow, I grow."

"Don't forget, Alice, in those other days I always played square. You and I never had a falling out."

"Not even the night you gave that luau when you were twenty-one and insisted on breaking the glassware after every toast. But of course you paid for it."

"Handsomely," he asserted almost pleadingly.

"Handsomely," she agreed. "I replaced more than double the quantity with what you paid me, so that at the next luau I catered one hundred and twenty plates without having to rent or borrow a dish or glass. Lord Mainweather gave that luau–you remember him."

"I was pig-sticking with him at Mana," the other nodded. "We were at a two weeks' house-party there. But say, Alice, as you know, I think this religion stuff is all right and better than all right. But don't let it carry you off your feet. And don't get to telling your soul on me. What would my daughters think of that broken glassware!"

"I always did have an aloha" (warm regard) "for you, Alice," a member of the Senate, fat and bald-headed, assured her.

And another, a lawyer and a grandfather: "We were always friends, Alice. And remember, any legal advice or handling of business you may require, I'll do for you gladly, and without fees, for the sake of our old-time friendship."

Came a banker to her late Christmas Eve, with formidable, legal-looking envelopes in his hand which he presented to her.

"Quite by chance," he explained, "when my people were looking up land-records in Iapio Valley, I found a mortgage of two thousand on your holdings there–that rice land leased to Ah Chin. And my mind drifted back to the past when we were all young together, and wild–a bit wild, to be sure. And my heart warmed with the memory of you, and, so, just as an aloha, here's the whole thing cleared off for you."

Nor was Alice forgotten by her own people. Her house became a Mecca for native men and women, usually performing pilgrimage privily after darkness fell, with presents always in their hands–squid fresh from the reef, opihis and limu, baskets of alligator

pears, roasting corn of the earliest from windward Cahu, mangoes and star-apples, taro pink and royal of the finest selection, sucking pigs, banana poi, breadfruit, and crabs caught the very day from Pearl Harbour. Mary Mendana, wife of the Portuguese Consul, remembered her with a five-dollar box of candy and a mandarin coat that would have fetched three-quarters of a hundred dollars at a fire sale. And Elvira Miyahara Makaena Yin Wap, the wife of Yin Wap the wealthy Chinese importer, brought personally to Alice two entire bolts of pina cloth from the Philippines and a dozen pairs of silk stockings.

The time passed, and Abel Ah Yo struggled with Alice for a properly penitent heart, and Alice struggled with herself for her soul, while half of Honolulu wickedly or apprehensively hung on the outcome. Carnival week was over, polo and the races had come and gone, and the celebration of Fourth of July was ripening, ere Abel Ah Yo beat down by brutal psychology the citadel of her reluctance. It was then that he gave his famous exhortation which might be summed up as Abel Ah Yo's definition of eternity. Of course, like Billy Sunday on certain occasions, Abel Ah Yo had cribbed the definition. But no one in the Islands knew it, and his rating as a revivalist uprose a hundred per cent.

So successful was his preaching that night, that he reconverted many of his converts, who fell and moaned about the penitent form and crowded for room amongst scores of new converts burnt by the pentecostal fire, including half a company of negro soldiers from the garrisoned Twenty-Fifth Infantry, a dozen troopers from the Fourth Cavalry on its way to the Philippines, as many drunken man-of-war's men, divers ladies from Iwilei, and half the riff-raff of the beach.

Abel Ah Yo, subtly sympathetic himself by virtue of his racial admixture, knowing human nature like a book and Alice Akana even more so, knew just what he was doing when he arose that memorable night and exposited God, hell, and eternity in terms of Alice Akana's comprehension. For, quite by chance, he had discovered her cardinal weakness. First of all, like all Polynesians, an ardent lover of nature, he found that earthquake and volcanic eruption were the things of which Alice lived in terror. She had been, in the past, on the Big Island, through cataclysms that had slacken grass houses down upon her while she slept, and she had beheld Madame Pele (the Fire or Volcano Goddess) fling red-fluxing lava down the long slopes of Mauna Loa, destroying fish-ponds on the sea-brim and licking up droves of beef cattle, villages, and humans on her fiery way.

The night before, a slight earthquake had shaken Honolulu and given Alice Akana insomnia. And the morning papers had stated that Mauna Kea had broken into eruption, while the lava was rising rapidly in the great pit of Kilauea. So, at the meeting, her mind vexed between the terrors of this world and the delights of the eternal world to come, Alice sat down in a front seat in a very definite state of the "jumps."

And Abel Ah Yo arose and put his finger on the sorest part of her soul. Sketching the nature of God in the stereotyped way, but making the stereotyped alive again with his gift of tongues in Pidgin-English and Pidgin-Hawaiian, Abel Ah Yo described the

day when the Lord, even His infinite patience at an end, would tell Peter to close his day book and ledgers, command Gabriel to summon all souls to Judgment, and cry out with a voice of thunder: “Welakahao!”

This anthromorphic deity of Abel Ah Yo thundering the modern Hawaiian-English slang of welakahao at the end of the world, is a fair sample of the revivalist’s speech-tools of discourse. Welakahao means literally “hot iron.” It was coined in the Honolulu Iron-works by the hundreds of Hawaiian men there employed, who meant by it “to hustle,” “to get a move on,” the iron being hot meaning that the time had come to strike.

“And the Lord cried ‘Welakahao,’ and the Day of Judgment began and was over wiki-wiki” (quickly) “just like that; for Peter was a better bookkeeper than any on the Waterhouse Trust Company Limited, and, further, Peter’s books were true.”

Swiftly Abel Ah Yo divided the sheep from the goats, and hastened the latter down into hell.

“And now,” he demanded, perforce his language on these pages being properly Englished, “what is hell like? Oh, my friends, let me describe to you, in a little way, what I have beheld with my own eves on earth of the possibilities of hell. I was a young man, a boy, and I was at Hilo. Morning began with earthquakes. Throughout the day the mighty land continued to shake and tremble, till strong men became seasick, and women clung to trees to escape falling, and cattle were thrown down off their feet. I beheld myself a young calf so thrown. A night of terror indescribable followed. The land was in motion like a canoe in a Kona gale. There was an infant crushed to death by its fond mother stepping upon it whilst fleeing her falling house.

“The heavens were on fire above us. We read our Bibles by the light of the heavens, and the print was fine, even for young eyes. Those missionary Bibles were always too small of print. Forty miles away from us, the heart of hell burst from the lofty mountains and gushed red-blood of fire-melted rock toward the sea. With the heavens in vast conflagration and the earth hulaing beneath our feet, was a scene too awful and too majestic to be enjoyed. We could think only of the thin bubble-skin of earth between us and the everlasting lake of fire and brimstone, and of God to whom we prayed to save us. There were earnest and devout souls who there and then promised their pastors to give not their shaved tithes, but five-tenths of their all to the church, if only the Lord would let them live to contribute.

“Oh, my friends, God saved us. But first he showed us a foretaste of that hell that will yawn for us on the last day, when he cries ‘Welakahao!’ in a voice of thunder. When the iron is hot! Think of it! When the iron is hot for sinners!

“By the third day, things being much quieter, my friend the preacher and I, being calm in the hand of God, journeyed up Mauna Loa and gazed into the awful pit of Kilauea. We gazed down into the fathomless abyss to the lake of fire far below, roaring and dashing its fiery spray into billows and fountaining hundreds of feet into the air like Fourth of July fireworks you have all seen, and all the while we were suffocating and made dizzy by the immense volumes of smoke and brimstone ascending.

"And I say unto you, no pious person could gaze down upon that scene without recognizing fully the Bible picture of the Pit of Hell. Believe me, the writers of the New Testament had nothing on us. As for me, my eyes were fixed upon the exhibition before me, and I stood mute and trembling under a sense never before so fully realized of the power, the majesty, and terror of Almighty God–the resources of His wrath, and the untold horrors of the finally impenitent who do not tell their souls and make their peace with the Creator. {1}

"But oh, my friends, think you our guides, our native attendants, deep-sunk in heathenism, were affected by such a scene? No. The devil's hand was upon them. Utterly regardless and unimpressed, they were only careful about their supper, chatted about their raw fish, and stretched themselves upon their mats to sleep. Children of the devil they were, insensible to the beauties, the sublimities, and the awful terror of God's works. But you are not heathen I now address. What is a heathen? He is one who betrays a stupid insensibility to every elevated idea and to every elevated emotion. If you wish to awaken his attention, do not bid him to look down into the Pit of Hell. But present him with a calabash of poi, a raw fish, or invite him to some low, grovelling, and sensuous sport. Oh, my friends, how lost are they to all that elevates the immortal soul! But the preacher and I, sad and sick at heart for them, gazed down into hell. Oh, my friends, it WAS hell, the hell of the Scriptures, the hell of eternal torment for the undeserving . . . "

Alice Akana was in an ecstasy or hysteria of terror. She was mumbling incoherently: "O Lord, I will give nine-tenths of my all. I will give all. I will give even the two bolts of pina cloth, the mandarin coat, and the entire dozen silk stockings . . . "

By the time she could lend ear again, Abel Ah Yo was launching out on his famous definition of eternity.

"Eternity is a long time, my friends. God lives, and, therefore, God lives inside eternity. And God is very old. The fires of hell are as old and as everlasting as God. How else could there be everlasting torment for those sinners cast down by God into the Pit on the Last Day to burn for ever and for ever through all eternity? Oh, my friends, your minds are small–too small to grasp eternity. Yet is it given to me, by God's grace, to convey to you an understanding of a tiny bit of eternity.

"The grains of sand on the beach of Waikiki are as many as the stars, and more. No man may count them. Did he have a million lives in which to count them, he would have to ask for more time. Now let us consider a little, dinky, old minah bird with one broken wing that cannot fly. At Waikiki the minah bird that cannot fly takes one grain of sand in its beak and hops, hops, all day lone and for many days, all the day to Pearl Harbour and drops that one grain of sand into the harbour. Then it hops, hops, all day and for many days, all the way back to Waikiki for another grain of sand. And again it hops, hops all the way back to Pearl Harbour. And it continues to do this through the years and centuries, and the thousands and thousands of centuries, until, at last, there remains not one grain of sand at Waikiki and Pearl Harbour is filled up

with land and growing coconuts and pine-apples. And then, oh my friends, even then, IT WOULD NOT YET BE SUNRISE IN HELL!

Here, at the smashing impact of so abrupt a climax, unable to withstand the sheer simplicity and objectivity of such artful measurement of a trifle of eternity, Alice Akana's mind broke down and blew up. She uprose, reeled blindly, and stumbled to her knees at the penitent form. Abel Ah Yo had not finished his preaching, but it was his gift to know crowd psychology, and to feel the heat of the pentecostal conflagration that scorched his audience. He called for a rousing revival hymn from his singers, and stepped down to wade among the hallelujah-shouting negro soldiers to Alice Akana. And, ere the excitement began to ebb, nine-tenths of his congregation and all his converts were down on knees and praying and shouting aloud an immensity of contriteness and sin.

Word came, via telephone, almost simultaneously to the Pacific and University Clubs, that at last Alice was telling her soul in meeting; and, by private machine and taxi-cab, for the first time Abel Ah Yo's revival was invaded by those of caste and place. The first comers beheld the curious sight of Hawaiian, Chinese, and all variegated racial mixtures of the smelting-pot of Hawaii, men and women, fading out and slinking away through the exits of Abel Ah Yo's tabernacle. But those who were sneaking out were mostly men, while those who remained were avid-faced as they hung on Alice's utterance.

Never was a more fearful and damning community narrative enunciated in the entire Pacific, north and south, than that enunciated by Alice Akana; the penitent Phryne of Honolulu.

"Huh!" the first comers heard her saying, having already disposed of most of the venial sins of the lesser ones of her memory. "You think this man, Stephen Makekau, is the son of Moses Makekau and Minnie Ah Ling, and has a legal right to the two hundred and eight dollars he draws down each month from Parke Richards Limited, for the lease of the fish-pond to Bill Kong at Amana. Not so. Stephen Makekau is not the son of Moses. He is the son of Aaron Kama and Tillie Naone. He was given as a present, as a feeding child, to Moses and Minnie, by Aaron and Tillie. I know. Moses and Minnie and Aaron and Tillie are dead. Yet I know and can prove it. Old Mrs. Poepoe is still alive. I was present when Stephen was born, and in the night-time, when he was two months old, I myself carried him as a present to Moses and Minnie, and old Mrs. Poepoe carried the lantern. This secret has been one of my sins. It has kept me from God. Now I am free of it. Young Archie Makekau, who collects bills for the Gas Company and plays baseball in the afternoons, and drinks too much gin, should get that two hundred and eight dollars the first of each month from Parke Richards Limited. He will blow it in on gin and a Ford automobile. Stephen is a good man. Archie is no good. Also he is a liar, and he has served two sentences on the reef, and was in reform school before that. Yet God demands the truth, and Archie will get the money and make a bad use of it."

And in such fashion Alice rambled on through the experiences of her long and full-packed life. And women forgot they were in the tabernacle, and men too, and faces darkened with passion as they learned for the first time the long-buried secrets of their other halves.

"The lawyers' offices will be crowded to-morrow morning," MacIlwaine, chief of detectives, paused long enough from storing away useful information to lean and mutter in Colonel Stilton's ear.

Colonel Stilton grinned affirmation, although the chief of detectives could not fail to note the ghastliness of the grin.

"There is a banker in Honolulu. You all know his name. He is 'way up, swell society because of his wife. He owns much stock in General Plantations and Inter-Island."

MacIlwaine recognized the growing portrait and forbore to chuckle.

"His name is Colonel Stilton. Last Christmas Eve he came to my house with big aloha" (love) "and gave me mortgages on my land in Iapio Valley, all cancelled, for two thousand dollars' worth. Now why did he have such big cash aloha for me? I will tell you . . . "

And tell she did, throwing the searchlight on ancient business transactions and political deals which from their inception had lurked in the dark.

"This," Alice concluded the episode, "has long been a sin upon my conscience, and kept my heart from God.

"And Harold Miles was that time President of the Senate, and next week he bought three town lots at Pearl Harbour, and painted his Honolulu house, and paid up his back dues in his clubs. Also the Ramsay home at Honokiki was left by will to the people if the Government would keep it up. But if the Government, after two years, did not begin to keep it up, then would it go to the Ramsay heirs, whom old Ramsay hated like poison. Well, it went to the heirs all right. Their lawyer was Charley Middleton, and he had me help fix it with the Government men. And their names were . . . " Six names, from both branches of the Legislature, Alice recited, and added: "Maybe they all painted their houses after that. For the first time have I spoken. My heart is much lighter and softer. It has been coated with an armour of house-paint against the Lord. And there is Harry Werther. He was in the Senate that time. Everybody said bad things about him, and he was never re-elected. Yet his house was not painted. He was honest. To this day his house is not painted, as everybody knows.

"There is Jim Lokendamper. He has a bad heart. I heard him, only last week, right here before you all, tell his soul. He did not tell all his soul, and he lied to God. I am not lying to God. It is a big telling, but I am telling everything. Now Azalea Akau, sitting right over there, is his wife. But Lizzie Lokendamper is his married wife. A long time ago he had the great aloha for Azalea. You think her uncle, who went to California and died, left her by will that two thousand five hundred dollars she got. Her uncle did not. I know. Her uncle cried broke in California, and Jim Lokendamper sent eighty dollars to California to bury him. Jim Lokendamper had a piece of land in Kohala he got from his mother's aunt. Lizzie, his married wife, did not know this. So

he sold it to the Kohala Ditch Company and wave the twenty-five hundred to Azalea Akau–"

Here, Lizzie, the married wife, upstood like a fury long-thwarted, and, in lieu of her husband, already fled, flung herself tooth and nail on Azalea.

"Wait, Lizzie Lokendamper!" Alice cried out. "I have much weight of you on my heart and some house-paint too . . . "

And when she had finished her disclosure of how Lizzie had painted her house, Azalea was up and raging.

"Wait, Azalea Akau. I shall now lighten my heart about you. And it is not house-paint. Jim always paid that. It is your new bath-tub and modern plumbing that is heavy on me . . . "

Worse, much worse, about many and sundry, did Alice Akana have to say, cutting high in business, financial, and social life, as well as low. None was too high nor too low to escape; and not until two in the morning, before an entranced audience that packed the tabernacle to the doors, did she complete her recital of the personal and detailed iniquities she knew of the community in which she had lived intimately all her days. Just as she was finishing, she remembered more.

"Huh!" she sniffed. "I gave last week one lot worth eight hundred dollars cash market price to Abel Ah Yo to pay running expenses and add up in Peter's books in heaven. Where did I get that lot? You all think Mr. Fleming Jason is a good man. He is more crooked than the entrance was to Pearl Lochs before the United States Government straightened the channel. He has liver disease now; but his sickness is a judgment of God, and he will die crooked. Mr. Fleming Jason gave me that lot twenty-two years ago, when its cash market price was thirty-five dollars. Because his aloha for me was big? No. He never had aloha inside of him except for dollars.

"You listen. Mr. Fleming Jason put a great sin upon me. When Frank Lomiloli was at my house, full of gin, for which gin Mr. Fleming Jason paid me in advance five times over, I got Frank Lomiloli to sign his name to the sale paper of his town land for one hundred dollars. It was worth six hundred then. It is worth twenty thousand now. Maybe you want to know where that town land is. I will tell you and remove it off my heart. It is on King Street, where is now the Come Again Saloon, the Japanese Taxicab Company garage, the Smith & Wilson plumbing shop, and the Ambrosia lee Cream Parlours, with the two more stories big Addison Lodging House overhead. And it is all wood, and always has been well painted. Yesterday they started painting it attain. But that paint will not stand between me and God. There are no more paint pots between me and my path to heaven."

The morning and evening papers of the day following held an unholy hush on the greatest news story of years; but Honolulu was half a-giggle and half aghast at the whispered reports, not always basely exaggerated, that circulated wherever two Honoluluans chanced to meet.

"Our mistake," said Colonel Chilton, at the club, "was that we did not, at the very first, appoint a committee of safety to keep track of Alice's soul."

Bob Cristy, one of the younger islanders, burst into laughter, so pointed and so loud that the meaning of it was demanded.

"Oh, nothing much," was his reply. "But I heard, on my way here, that old John Ward had just been run in for drunken and disorderly conduct and for resisting an officer. Now Abel Ah Yo fine-toothcombs the police court. He loves nothing better than soul-snatching a chronic drunkard."

Colonel Chilton looked at Lask Finneston, and both looked at Gary Wilkinson. He returned to them a similar look.

"The old beachcomber!" Lask Finneston cried. "The drunken old reprobate! I'd forgotten he was alive. Wonderful constitution. Never drew a sober breath except when he was shipwrecked, and, when I remember him, into every deviltry afloat. He must be going on eighty."

"He isn't far away from it," Bob Cristy nodded. "Still beach-combs, drinks when he gets the price, and keeps all his senses, though he's not spry and has to use glasses when he reads. And his memory is perfect. Now if Abel Ah Yo catches him . . . "

Gary Wilkinson cleared his throat preliminary to speech.

"Now there's a grand old man," he said. "A left-over from a forgotten age. Few of his type remain. A pioneer. A true kamaaina" (old-timer). "Helpless and in the hands of the police in his old age! We should do something for him in recognition of his yeoman work in Hawaii. His old home, I happen to know, is Sag Harbour. He hasn't seen it for over half a century. Now why shouldn't he be surprised to-morrow morning by having his fine paid, and by being presented with return tickets to Sag Harbour, and, say, expenses for a year's trip? I move a committee. I appoint Colonel Chilton, Lask Finneston, and . . . and myself. As for chairman, who more appropriate than Lask Finneston, who knew the old gentleman so well in the early days? Since there is no objection, I hereby appoint Lask Finneston chairman of the committee for the purpose of raising and donating money to pay the police-court fine and the expenses of a year's travel for that noble pioneer, John Ward, in recognition of a lifetime of devotion of energy to the upbuilding of Hawaii."

There was no dissent.

"The committee will now go into secret session," said Lask Finneston, arising and indicating the way to the library.

When God Laughs

"The gods, the gods are stronger; time
Falls down before them, all men's knees
Bow, all men's prayers and sorrows climb
Like incense toward them; yea, for these
Are gods, Felise."

CARQUINEZ had relaxed finally. He stole a glance at the rattling windows, looked upward at the beamed roof, and listened for a moment to the savage roar of the southeaster as it caught the bungalow in its bellowing jaws. Then he held his glass between him and the fire and laughed for joy through the golden wine.

"It is beautiful," he said. "It is sweetly sweet. It is a woman's wine and it was made for gray-robed saints to drink."

"We grow it on our own warm hills," I said, with pardonable California pride. "You rode up yesterday through the vines from which it was made."

It was worth while to get Carquinez to loosen up. Nor was he ever really himself until he felt the mellow warmth of the vine singing in his blood He was an artist, it is true, always an artist; but somehow, sober the high pitch and lilt went out of his thought-processes and he was prone to be as deadly dull as a British Sunday — not dull as other men are dull, but dull when measured by the sprightly wight that Monte Carquinez was when he was really himself.

From all this it must not be inferred that Carquinez, who is my dear friend and dearer comrade, was a sot. Far from it. He rarely erred. As I have said, he was an artist. He knew when he had enough, and enough, with him, was equilibrium — the equilibrium that is yours and mine when we are sober.

His was a wise and instinctive temperateness that savored of the Greek. Yet he was far from Greek. "I am Aztec, I am Inca, I am Spaniard, " I have heard him say. And in truth he looked it, a compound of strange and ancient races, what of his swarthy skin and the asymmetry and primitiveness of his features. His eyes, under massively arched brows, were wide apart and black with the blackness that is barbaric, while before them was perpetually falling down a great black mop of hair through which he gazed like a roguish satyr from a thicket. He invariably wore a soft flannel shirt under his velvet-corduroy jacket, and his necktie was red. This latter stood for the red flag (he had once lived with the socialists of Paris), and it symbolized the blood and brotherhood of man. Also, he had never been known to wear anything on his head save a leather-banded sombrero. It was even rumored that he had been born with this particular piece of headgear. And in my experience it was provocative of

nothing short of sheer delight to see that Mexican sombrero hailing a cab in Piccadilly or storm-tossed in the crush for the New York Elevated.

As I have said, Carquinez was made quick by wine — "as the clay was made quick when God breathed the breath of life into it," was his way of saying it. I confess that he was blasphemously intimate with God; and I must add that there was no blasphemy in him. He was at all times honest, and, because he was compounded of paradoxes, greatly misunderstood by those who did not know him. He could be as elementally raw at times as a screaming savage; and at other times as delicate as a maid, as subtle as a Spaniard. And — well, was he not Aztec? Inca? Spaniard?

And now I must ask pardon for the space I have given him. (He is my friend, and I love him.) The house was shaking to the storm, as he drew closer to the fire and laughed at it through his wine. He looked at me, and by the added lustre of his eye, and by the alertness of it, I knew that at last he was pitched in his proper key.

"And so you think you've won out against the gods ?" he demanded.

"Why the gods?"

"Whose will but theirs has put satiety upon man?" he cried.

"And whence the will in me to escape satiety?" I asked triumphantly.

"Again the gods," he laughed. "It is their game we play. They deal and shuffle all the cards . . . and take the stakes. Think not that you have escaped by fleeing from the mad cities. You with your vine-clad hills, your sunsets and your sunrises, your homely fare and simple round of living!

"I've watched you ever since I came. You have not won. You have surrendered. You have made terms with the enemy. You have made confession that you are tired. You have flown the white flag of fatigue. You have nailed up a notice to the effect that life is ebbing down in you. You have run away from life. You have played a trick, shabby trick. You have balked at the game. You refuse to play. You have thrown your cards under the table and run away to hide, here amongst your hills."

He tossed his straight hair back from his flashing eyes, and scarcely interrupted to roll a long, brown, Mexican cigarette.

"But the gods know. It is an old trick. All the generations of man have tried it . . . and lost. The gods know how to deal with such as you. To pursue is to possess, and to possess is to be sated. And so you, in your wisdom, have refused any longer to pursue. You have elected surcease. Very well. You will become sated with surcease. You say you have escaped satiety! You have merely bartered it for senility. And senility is another name for satiety. It is satiety's masquerade. Bah!"

"But look at me!" I cried.

Carquinez was ever a demon for haling one's soul out and making rags and tatters of it.

He looked me witheringly up and down.

"You see no signs," I challenged.

"Decay is insidious," he retorted. "You are rotten ripe."

I laughed and forgave him for his very deviltry. But he refused to be forgiven.

“Do I not know?” he asked. “The gods always win. I have watched men play for years what seemed a winning game. In the end they lost.”

“Don’t you ever make mistakes ?” I asked.

He blew many meditative rings of smoke before replying.

“Yes, I was nearly fooled, once. Let me tell you. There was Marvin Fiske. You remember him? And his Dantesque face and poet’s soul singing his chant of the flesh, the very priest of Love? And there was Ethel Baird, whom also you must remember.”

“A warm saint,” I said.

“That is she! Holy as Love, and sweeter! Just a woman, made for love; and yet — how shall I say? — drenched through with holiness as your own air here is with the perfume of flowers. Well, they married. They played a hand with the gods — ”

“And they won, they gloriously won! “ I broke in.

Carquinez looked at me pityingly, and his voice was like a funeral bell.

“They lost. They supremely, colossally lost.”

“But the world believes otherwise,” I ventured coldly.

“The world conjectures. The world sees only the face of things. But I know. Has it ever entered your mind to wonder why she took the veil, buried herself in that dolorous convent of the living dead?”

“Because she loved him so, and when he died . . .”

Speech was frozen on my lips by Carquinez’s sneer.

“A pat answer,” he said, “machine-made like a piece of cotton-drill. The world’s judgment! And much the world knows about it. Like you, she fled from life. She was beaten. She flung out the white flag of fatigue. And no beleaguered city ever flew that flag in such bitterness and tears.

“Now I shall tell you the whole tale, and you must believe me, for I know. They had pondered the problem of satiety. They loved Love. They knew to the uttermost farthing the value of Love. They loved him so well that they were fain to keep him always, warm and athrill in their hearts. They welcomed his coming; they feared to have him depart.

“Love was desire, they held, a delicious pain. He was ever seeking easement, and when he found that for which he sought, he died. Love denied was Love alive; Love granted was Love deceased. Do you follow me? They saw it was not the way of life to be hungry for what it has. To eat and still be hungry — man has never accomplished that feat. The problem of satiety. That is it. To have and to keep the sharp famine-edge of appetite at the groaning board. This was their problem, for they loved Love. Often did they discuss it, with all Love’s sweet ardors brimming in their eyes; his ruddy blood spraying their cheeks; his voice playing in and out with their voices, now hiding as a tremolo in their throats, and again shading a tone with that ineffable tenderness which he alone can utter.

“How do I know all this? I saw — much. More I learned from her diary. This I found in it, from Fiona Macleod: ‘For, truly, that wandering voice, that twilight-whisper, that breath so dewy-sweet, that flame-winged lute-player whom none sees but for

a moment, in a rainbow-shimmer of joy, or a sudden lightning-flare of passion, this exquisite mystery we call Amor, comes, to some rapt visionaries at least, not with a song upon the lips that all may hear, or with blithe viol of public music, but as one wrought by ecstasy, dumbly eloquent with desire.'

"How to keep the flame-winged lute-player with his dumb eloquence of desire? To feast him was to lose him. Their love for each other was a great love. Their granaries were overflowing with plenitude; yet they wanted to keep the sharp famine-edge of their love undulled.

"Nor were they lean little fledglings theorizing on the threshold of Love. They were robust and realized souls. They had loved before, with others, in the days before they met; and in those days they had throttled Love with caresses, and killed him with kisses, and buried him in the pit of satiety.

"They were not cold wraiths, this man and woman. They were warm human. They had no Saxon soberness in their blood. The color of it was sunset-red. They glowed with it. Temperamentally theirs was the French joy in the flesh. They were idealists, but their idealism was Gallic. It was not tempered by the chill and sombre fluid that for the English serves as blood. There was no stoicism about them. They were Americans, descended out of the English, and yet the refraining and self-denying of the English spirit-groping were not theirs.

"They were all this that I have said, and they were made for joy, only they achieved a concept. A curse on concepts! They played with logic, and this was their logic. — But first let me tell you of a talk we had one night. It was of Gautier's Madeline de Maupin. You remember the maid? She kissed once, and once only, and kisses she would have no more. Not that she found kisses were not sweet, but that she feared with repetition they would cloy. Satiety again! She tried to play without stakes against the gods. Now this is contrary to a rule of the game the gods themselves have made. Only the rules are not posted over the table. Mortals must play in order to learn the rules.

"Well, to the logic. The man and the woman argued thus: Why kiss once only? If to kiss once were wise, was it not wiser to kiss not at all? Thus could they keep Love alive. Fasting, he would knock forever at their hearts.

"Perhaps it was out of their heredity that they achieved this unholy concept. The breed will out, and sometimes most fantastically. Thus in them did cursed Albion array herself a scheming wanton, a bold, cold-calculating, and artful hussy. After all, I do not know. But this I know: it was out of their inordinate desire for joy that they forewent joy.

"As he said (I read it long afterward in one of his letters to her): 'To hold you in my arms, close, and yet not close. To yearn for you, and never to have you, and so always to have you.' And she: 'For you to be always just beyond my reach. To be ever attaining you, and yet never attaining you, and for this to last forever, always fresh and new, and always with the first flush upon us.'

“That is not the way they said it. On my lips their love-philosophy is mangled. And who am I to delve into their soul-stuff ? I am a frog, on the dank edge of a great darkness, gazing goggle-eyed at the mystery and wonder of their flaming souls.

“And they were right, as far as they went. Everything is good . . . as long as it is unpossessed. Satiety and possession are Death’s horses; they run in span.

“‘And time could only tutor us to eke
Our rapture’s warmth with custom’s afterglow.’

“They got that from a sonnet of Alfred Austin’s. It was called ‘Love’s Wisdom.’ It was the one kiss of Madeline de Maupin. How did it run?

“‘Kiss we and part; no further can we go;
And better death than we from high to low
Should dwindle, or decline from strong to weak.’

“But they were wiser. They would not kiss and part. They would not kiss at all, and thus they planned to stay at Love’s topmost peak. They married. You were in England at the time. And never was there such a marriage. They kept their secret to themselves. I did not know, then. Their rapture’s warmth did not cool. Their love burned with increasing brightness. Never was there anything like it. The time passed, the months, the years, and ever the flame-winged lute-player grew more resplendent.

“Everybody marvelled. They became the wonderful lovers, and they were greatly envied. Sometimes women pitied her because she was childless; it is the form the envy of such creatures takes.

“And I did not know their secret. I pondered and I marvelled. As first I had expected, subconsciously I imagine, the passing of their love. Then I became aware that it was Time that passed and Love that remained. Then I became curious. What was their secret? What were the magic fetters with which they bound Love to them ? How did they hold the graceless elf? What elixir of eternal love had they drunk together as had Tristram and Iseult of old time? And whose hand had brewed the fairy drink?

“As I say, I was curious, and I watched them. They were love-mad. They lived in an unending revel of Love. They made a pomp and ceremonial of it. They saturated themselves in the art and poetry of Love. No, they were not neurotics. They were sane and healthy, and they were artists. But they had accomplished the impossible. They had achieved deathless desire.

“And I? I saw much of them and their everlasting miracle of Love. I puzzled and wondered, and then one day — ”

Carquinez broke off abruptly and asked, “Have you ever read, ‘Love’s Waiting Time’?”

I shook my head.

“Page wrote it — Curtis Hidden Page, I think. Well, it was that bit of verse that gave me the clew. One day, in the window-seat near the big piano — you remember how she could play? She used to laugh, sometimes, and doubt whether it was for them I came, or for the music. She called me a ‘music-sot,’ once, a ‘sound-debauchee.’ What a voice he had! When he sang I believed in immortality, my regard for the gods grew

almost patronizing, and I devised ways and means whereby I surely could outwit them and their tricks.

"It was a spectacle for God, that man and woman, years married, and singing love-songs with a freshness virginal as new-born Love himself, with a ripeness and wealth of ardor that young lovers can never know. Young lovers were pale and anaemic beside that long-married pair. To see them, all fire and flame and tenderness, at a trembling distance, lavishing caresses of eye and voice with every action, through every silence — their love driving them toward each other, and they withholding like fluttering moths, each to the other a candle-flame, and revolving each about the other in the mad gyrations of an amazing orbit-flight! It seemed, in obedience to some great law of physics, more potent than gravitation and more subtle, that they must corporeally melt each into each there before my very eyes. Small wonder they were called the wonderful lovers.

"I have wandered. Now to the clew. One day in the window-seat I found a book of verse. It opened of itself, betraying long habit, to 'Love's Waiting Time.' The page was thumbed and limp with overhandling, and there I read: —

"'So sweet it is to stand but just apart,
To know each other better, and to keep
The soft, delicious sense of two that touch . . .
O love, not yet! . . . Sweet, let us keep our love
Wrapped round with sacred mystery awhile,
Waiting the secret of the coming years,
That come not yet, not yet . . . sometime . . . not yet . . .
Oh, yet a little while our love may grow!
When it has blossomed it will haply die.
Feed it with lipless kisses, let it sleep,
Bedded in dead denial yet some while . . .
Oh, yet a little while, a little while.'

"I folded the book on my thumb and sat there silent and without moving for a long time. I was stunned by the clearness of vision the verse had imparted to me. It was illumination. It was like a bolt of God's lightning in the Pit. They would keep Love, the fickle sprite, the forerunner of young life — young life that is imperative to be born!

"I conned the lines over in my mind — 'Not yet, sometime' — 'O Love, not yet' — 'Feed it with lipless kisses, let it sleep.' And I laughed aloud, ha! ha! I saw with white vision their blameless souls. They were children. They did not understand. They played with Nature's fire and bedded with a naked sword. They laughed at the gods. They would stop the cosmic sap. They had invented a system, and brought it to the gaming-table of life, and expected to win out. 'Beware!' I cried. 'The gods are behind the table. They make new rules for every system that is devised. You have no chance to win.'

"But I did not so cry to them. I waited. They would learn that their system was worthless and throw it away. They would be content with whatever happiness the gods gave them and not strive to wrest more away.

"I watched. I said nothing. The months continued to come and go, and still the famine-edge of their love grew the sharper. Never did they dull it with a permitted love-clasp. They ground and whetted it on self-denial, and sharper and sharper it grew. This went on until even I doubted. Did the gods sleep? I wondered. Or were they dead? I laughed to myself. The man and the woman had made a miracle. They had outwitted God. They had shamed the flesh, and blackened the face of the good Earth Mother. They had played with her fire and not been burned. They were immune. They were themselves gods, knowing good from evil and tasting not. 'Was this the way gods came to be?' I asked myself. 'I am a frog,' I said. 'But for my mud-ridded eyes I should have been blinded by the brightness of this wonder I have witnessed. I have puffed myself up with my wisdom and passed judgment upon gods.'

"Yet even in this, my latest wisdom, I was wrong. They were not gods. They were man and woman — soft clay that sighed and thrilled shot through with desire, thumbed with strange weaknesses which the gods have not."

Carquinez broke from his narrative to roll another cigarette and to laugh harshly. It was not a pretty laugh; it was like the mockery of a devil, and it rose over and rode the roar of the storm that came muffled to our ears from the crashing outside world.

"I am a frog," he said apologetically. "How were they to understand? They were artists, not biologists. They knew the clay of the studio, but they did not know the clay of which they themselves were made. But this I will say — they played high. Never was there such a game before, and I doubt me if there will ever be such a game again.

"Never was lovers' ecstasy like theirs. They had not killed Love with kisses. They had quickened him with denial. And by denial they drove him on till he was all aburst with desire. And the flame-winged luteplayer fanned them with his warm wings till they were all but swooning. It was the very delirium of Love, and it continued undiminished and increasing through the weeks and months.

"They longed and yearned, with all the fond pangs and sweet delicious agonies, with an intensity never felt by lovers before nor since.

"And then one day the drowsy gods ceased nodding. They aroused and looked at the man and woman who had made a mock of them. And the man and woman looked into each other's eyes one morning and knew that something was gone. It was the flame-winged one. He had fled, silently, in the night, from their anchorites' board.

"They looked into each other's eyes and knew that they did not care. Desire was dead. Do you understand? Desire was dead. And they had never kissed. Not once had they kissed. Love was gone. They would never yearn and burn again. For them there was nothing left — no more tremblings and flutterings and delicious anguishes, no more throbbing and pulsing, and sighing and song. Desire was dead. It had died in the night, on a couch cold and unattended; nor had they witnessed its passing. They learned it for the first time in each other's eyes.

"The gods may not be kind, but they are often merciful. They had twirled the little ivory ball and swept the stakes from the table. All that remained was the man and woman gazing into each other's cold eyes. And then he died. That was the mercy. Within the week Marvin Fiske was dead — you remember the accident. And in her diary, written at this time, I long afterward read Mitchell Kennerly's: —

"'There was not a single hour we might have kissed and did not kiss.'"

"Oh, the irony of it!" I cried out.

And Carquinez, in the firelight a veritable Mephistopheles in velvet jacket, fixed me with his black eyes.

"And they won, you said? The world's judgment! I have told you, and I know. They won as you are winning, here in your hills."

"But you," I demanded hotly; "you with your orgies of sound and sense, with your mad cities and madder frolics — bethink you that you win?"

He shook his head slowly. "Because you, with your sober bucolic regime, lose, is no reason that I should win. We never win. Sometimes we think we win. That is a little pleasantry of the gods."

When the World Was Young

He was a very quiet, self-possessed sort of man, sitting a moment on top of the wall to sound the damp darkness for warnings of the dangers it might conceal. But the plummet of his hearing brought nothing to him save the moaning of wind through invisible trees and the rustling of leaves on swaying branches. A heavy fog drifted and drove before the wind, and though he could not see this fog, the wet of it blew upon his face, and the wall on which he sat was wet.

Without noise he had climbed to the top of the wall from the outside, and without noise he dropped to the ground on the inside. From his pocket he drew an electric night-stick, but he did not use it. Dark as the way was, he was not anxious for light. Carrying the night-stick in his hand, his finger on the button, he advanced through the darkness. The ground was velvety and springy to his feet, being carpeted with dead pine-needles and leaves and mold which evidently bad been undisturbed for years. Leaves and branches brushed against his body, but so dark was it that he could not avoid them. Soon he walked with his hand stretched out gropingly before him, and more than once the hand fetched up against the solid trunks of massive trees. All about him he knew were these trees; he sensed the loom of them everywhere; and he experienced a strange feeling of microscopic smallness in the midst of great bulks leaning toward him to crush him. Beyond, he knew, was the house, and he expected to find some trail or winding path that would lead easily to it.

Once, he found himself trapped. On every side he groped against trees and branches, or blundered into thickets of underbrush, until there seemed no way out. Then he turned on his light, circumspectly, directing its rays to the ground at his feet. Slowly and carefully he moved it about him, the white brightness showing in sharp detail all the obstacles to his progress. He saw, an opening between huge-trunked trees, and advanced through it, putting out the light and treading on dry footing as yet protected from the drip of the fog by the dense foliage overhead. His sense of direction was good, and he knew he was going toward the house.

And then the thing happened – the thing unthinkable and unexpected. His descending foot came down upon something that was soft and alive, and that arose with a snort under the weight of his body. He sprang clear, and crouched for another spring, anywhere, tense and expectant, keyed for the onslaught of the unknown. He waited a moment, wondering what manner of animal it was that had arisen from under his foot and that now made no sound nor movement and that must be crouching and waiting just as tensely and expectantly as he. The strain became unbearable. Holding the night-stick before him, he pressed the button, saw, and screamed aloud in terror. He

was prepared for anything, from a frightened calf or fawn to a belligerent lion, but he was not prepared for what he saw. In that instant his tiny searchlight, sharp and white, had shown him what a thousand years would not en. able him to forget – a man, huge and blond, yellow-haired and yellow-bearded, naked except for soft-tanned moccasins and what seemed a goat-skin about his middle. Arms and legs were bare, as were his shoulders and most of his chest. The skin was smooth and hairless, but browned by sun and wind, while under it heavy muscles were knotted like fat snakes. Still, this alone, unexpected as it well was, was not what had made the man scream out. What had caused his terror was the unspeakable ferocity of the face, the wild-animal glare of the blue eyes scarcely dazzled by the light, the pine-needles matted and clinging in the beard and hair, and the whole formidable body crouched and in the act of springing at him. Practically in the instant he saw all this, and while his scream still rang, the thing leaped, he flung his night-stick full at it, and threw himself to the ground. He felt its feet and shins strike against his ribs, and he bounded up and away while the thing itself hurled onward in a heavy crashing fall into the underbrush.

As the noise of the fall ceased, the man stopped and on hands and knees waited. He could hear the thing moving about, searching for him, and he was afraid to advertise his location by attempting further flight. He knew that inevitably he would crackle the underbrush and be pursued. Once he drew out his revolver, then changed his mind. He had recovered his composure and hoped to get away without noise. Several times he heard the thing beating up the thickets for him, and there were moments when it, too, remained still and listened. This gave an idea to the man. One of his hands was resting on a chunk of dead wood. Carefully, first feeling about him in the darkness to know that the full swing of his arm was clear, he raised the chunk of wood and threw it. It was not a large piece, and it went far, landing noisily in a bush. He heard the thing bound into the bush, and at the same time himself crawled steadily away. And on hands and knees, slowly and cautiously, he crawled on, till his knees were wet on the soggy mold, When he listened he heard naught but the moaning wind and the drip-drip of the fog from the branches. Never abating his caution, he stood erect and went on to the stone wall, over which he climbed and dropped down to the road outside.

Feeling his way in a clump of bushes, he drew out a bicycle and prepared to mount. He was in the act of driving the gear around with his foot for the purpose of getting the opposite pedal in position, when he heard the thud of a heavy body that landed lightly and evidently on its feet. He did not wait for more, but ran, with hands on the handles of his bicycle, until he was able to vault astride the saddle, catch the pedals, and start a spurt. Behind he could hear the quick thud-thud of feet on the dust of the road, but he drew away from it and lost it. Unfortunately, he had started away from the direction of town and was heading higher up into the hills. He knew that on this particular road there were no cross roads. The only way back was past that terror, and he could not steel himself to face it. At the end of half an hour, finding himself on an ever increasing grade, he dismounted. For still greater safety, leaving the wheel by

the roadside, he climbed through a fence into what he decided was a hillside pasture, spread a newspaper on the ground, and sat down.

"Gosh!" he said aloud, mopping the sweat and fog from his face.

And "Gosh!" he said once again, while rolling a cigarette and as he pondered the problem of getting back.

But he made no attempt to go back. He was resolved not to face that road in the dark, and with head bowed on knees, he dozed, waiting for daylight.

How long afterward he did not know, he was awakened by the yapping bark of a young coyote. As he looked about and located it on the brow of the hill behind him, he noted the change that had come over the face of the night. The fog was gone; the stars and moon were out; even the wind had died down. It had transformed into a balmy California summer night. He tried to doze again, but the yap of the coyote disturbed him. Half asleep, he heard a wild and eery chant. Looking about him, he noticed that the coyote had ceased its noise and was running away along the crest of the hill, and behind it, in full pursuit, no longer chanting, ran the naked creature he had encountered in the garden. It was a young coyote, and it was being overtaken when the chase passed from view. The man trembled as with a chill as he started to his feet, clambered over the fence, and mounted his wheel. But it was his chance and he knew it. The terror was no longer between him and Mill Valley.

He sped at a breakneck rate down the hill, but in the turn at the bottom, in the deep shadows, he encountered a chuck-hole and pitched headlong over the handle bar.

"It's sure not my night," he muttered, as he examined the broken fork of the machine.

Shouldering the useless wheel, he trudged on. In time he came to the stone wall, and, half disbelieving his experience, he sought in the road for tracks, and found them – moccasin tracks, large ones, deep-bitten into the dust at the toes. It was while bending over them, examining, that again he heard the eery chant. He had seen the thing pursue the coyote, and he knew he had no chance on a straight run. He did not attempt it, contenting himself with hiding in the shadows on the off side of the road.

And again he saw the thing that was like a naked man, running swiftly and lightly and singing as it ran. Opposite him it paused, and his heart stood still. But instead of coming toward his hiding-place, it leaped into the air, caught the branch of a roadside tree, and swung swiftly upward, from limb to limb, like an ape. It swung across the wall, and a dozen feet above the top, into the branches of another tree, and dropped out of sight to the ground. The man waited a few wondering minutes, then started on.

II

Dave Slotter leaned belligerently against the desk that barred the way to the private office of James Ward, senior partner of the firm of Ward, Knowles & Co. Dave was angry. Every one in the outer office had looked him over suspiciously, and the man who faced him was excessively suspicious.

"You just tell Mr. Ward it's important," he urged.

"I tell you he is dictating and cannot be disturbed," was the answer. "Come to-morrow."

"To-morrow will be too late. You just trot along and tell Mr. Ward it's a matter of life and death."

The secretary hesitated and Dave seized the advantage.

"You just tell him I was across the bay in Mill Valley last night, and that I want to put him wise to something."

"What name?" was the query.

"Never mind the name. He don't know me."

When Dave was shown into the private office, he was still in the belligerent frame of mind, but when he saw a large fair man whirl in a revolving chair from dictating to a stenographer to face him, Dave's demeanor abruptly changed. He did not know why it changed, and he was secretly angry with himself.

"You are Mr. Ward?" Dave asked with a fatuousness that still further irritated him. He had never intended it at all.

"Yes," came the answer.

"And who are you?"

"Harry Bancroft," Dave lied. "You don't know me, and my name don't matter."

"You sent in word that you were in Mill Valley last night?"

"You live there, don't you?" Dave countered, looking suspiciously at the stenographer.

"Yes. What do you mean to see me about? I am very busy."

"I'd like to see you alone, sir."

Mr. Ward gave him a quick, penetrating look, hesitated, then made up his mind.

"That will do for a few minutes, Miss Potter."

The girl arose, gathered her notes together, and passed out. Dave looked at Mr. James Ward wonderingly, until that gentleman broke his train of inchoate thought.

"Well?"

"I was over in Mill Valley last night," Dave began confusedly.

"I've heard that before. What do you want?"

And Dave proceeded in the face of a growing conviction that was unbelievable. "I was at your house, or in the grounds, I mean."

"What were you doing there?"

"I came to break in," Dave answered in all frankness.

"I heard you lived all alone with a Chinaman for cook, and it looked good to me. Only I didn't break in. Something happened that prevented. That's why I'm here. I come to warn you. I found a wild man loose in your grounds – a regular devil. He could pull a guy like me to pieces. He gave me the run of my life. He don't wear any clothes to speak of, he climbs trees like a monkey, and he runs like a deer. I saw him chasing a coyote, and the last I saw of it, by God, he was gaining on it."

Dave paused and looked for the effect that would follow his words. But no effect came. James Ward was quietly curious, and that was all.

"Very remarkable, very remarkable," he murmured. "A wild man, you say. Why have you come to tell me?"

“To warn you of your danger. I’m something of a hard proposition myself, but I don’t believe in killing people ...that is, unnecessarily. I realized that you was in danger. I thought I’d warn you. Honest, that’s the game. Of course, if you wanted to give me anything for my trouble, I’d take it. That was in my mind, too. But I don’t care whether you give me anything or not. I’ve warned you any way, and done my duty.” Mr. Ward meditated and drummed on the surface of his desk. Dave noticed they were large, powerful hands, withal well-cared for despite their dark sunburn. Also, he noted what had already caught his eye before – a tiny strip of flesh-colored courtplaster on the forehead over one eve. And still the thought that forced itself into his mind was unbelievable.

Mr. Ward took a wallet from his inside coat pocket, drew out a greenback, and passed it to Dave, who noted as he pocketed it that it was for twenty dollars.

“Thank you,” said Mr. Ward, indicating that the interview was at an end.

“I shall have the matter investigated. A wild man running loose IS dangerous.”

But so quiet a man was Mr. Ward, that Dave’s courage returned. Besides, a new theory had suggested itself. The wild man was evidently Mr. Ward’s brother, a lunatic privately confined. Dave had heard of such things. Perhaps Mr. Ward wanted it kept quiet. That was why he had given him the twenty dollars.

“Say,” Dave began, “now I come to think of it that wild man looked a lot like you — ”

That was as far as Dave got, for at that moment he witnessed a transformation and found himself gazing into the same unspeakably ferocious blue eyes of the night before, at the same clutching talon-like hands, and at the same formidable bulk in the act of springing upon him. But this time Dave had no night-stick to throw, and he was caught by the biceps of both arms in a grip so terrific that it made him groan with pain. He saw the large white teeth exposed, for all the world as a dog’s about to bite. Mr. Ward’s beard brushed his face as the teeth went in for the grip on his throat. But the bite was not given. Instead, Dave felt the other’s body stiffen as with an iron restraint, and then he was flung aside, without effort but with such force that only the wall stopped his momentum and dropped him gasping to the floor.

“What do you mean by coming here and trying to blackmail me?” Mr. Ward was snarling at him. “Here, give me back that money.”

Dave passed the bill back without a word.

“I thought you came here with good intentions. I know you now. Let me see and hear no more of you, or I’ll put you in prison where you belong. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” Dave gasped.

“Then go.”

And Dave went, without further word, both his biceps aching intolerably from the bruise of that tremendous grip. As his hand rested on the door knob, he was stopped.

“You were lucky,” Mr. Ward was saying, and Dave noted that his face and eyes were cruel and gloating and proud.

"You were lucky. Had I wanted, I could have torn your muscles out of your arms and thrown them in the waste basket there."

"Yes, sir," said Dave; and absolute conviction vibrated in his voice.

He opened the door and passed out. The secretary looked at him interrogatively.

"Gosh!" was all Dave vouchsafed, and with this utterance passed out of the offices and the story.

III

James G. Ward was forty years of age, a successful business man, and very unhappy. For forty years he had vainly tried to solve a problem that was really himself and that with increasing years became more and more a woeful affliction. In himself he was two men, and, chronologically speaking, these men were several thousand years or so apart. He had studied the question of dual personality probably more profoundly than any half dozen of the leading specialists in that intricate and mysterious psychological field. In himself he was a different case from any that had been recorded. Even the most fanciful flights of the fiction-writers had not quite hit upon him. He was not a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, nor was he like the unfortunate young man in Kipling's "Greatest Story in the World." His two personalities were so mixed that they were practically aware of themselves and of each other all the time.

His other self he had located as a savage and a barbarian living under the primitive conditions of several thousand years before. But which self was he, and which was the other, he could never tell. For he was both selves, and both selves all the time. Very rarely indeed did it happen that one self did not know what the other was doing. Another thing was that he had no visions nor memories of the past in which that early self had lived. That early self lived in the present; but while it lived in the present, it was under the compulsion to live the way of life that must have been in that distant past.

In his childhood he had been a problem to his father and mother, and to the family doctors, though never had they come within a thousand miles of hitting upon the clue to his erratic, conduct. Thus, they could not understand his excessive somnolence in the forenoon, nor his excessive activity at night. When they found him wandering along the hallways at night, or climbing over giddy roofs, or running in the hills, they decided he was a somnambulist. In reality he was wide-eyed awake and merely under the nightroaming compulsion of his early self. Questioned by an obtuse medico, he once told the truth and suffered the ignominy of having the revelation contemptuously labeled and dismissed as "dreams."

The point was, that as twilight and evening came on he became wakeful. The four walls of a room were an irk and a restraint. He heard a thousand voices whispering to him through the darkness. The night called to him, for he was, for that period of the twenty-four hours, essentially a night-prowler. But nobody understood, and never again did he attempt to explain. They classified him as a sleep-walker and took precautions accordingly – precautions that very often were futile. As his childhood advanced, he grew more cunning, so that the major portion of all his nights were

spent in the open at realizing his other self. As a result, he slept in the forenoons. Morning studies and schools were impossible, and it was discovered that only in the afternoons, under private teachers, could he be taught anything. Thus was his modern self educated and developed.

But a problem, as a child, he ever remained. He was known as a little demon, of insensate cruelty and viciousness. The family medicos privately adjudged him a mental monstrosity and degenerate. Such few boy companions as he had, hailed him as a wonder, though they were all afraid of him. He could outclimb, outswim, outrun, outdevil any of them; while none dared fight with him. He was too terribly strong, madly furious.

When nine years of age he ran away to the hills, where he flourished, night-prowling, for seven weeks before he was discovered and brought home. The marvel was how he had managed to subsist and keep in condition during that time. They did not know, and he never told them, of the rabbits he had killed, of the quail, young and old, he had captured and devoured, of the farmers' chicken-roosts he had raided, nor of the cave-lair he had made and carpeted with dry leaves and grasses and in which he had slept in warmth and comfort through the forenoons of many days.

At college he was notorious for his sleepiness and stupidity during the morning lectures and for his brilliance in the afternoon. By collateral reading and by borrowing the notebook of his fellow students he managed to scrape through the detestable morning courses, while his afternoon courses were triumphs. In football he proved a giant and a terror, and, in almost every form of track athletics, save for strange Berserker rages that were sometimes displayed, he could be depended upon to win. But his fellows were afraid to box with him, and he signalized his last wrestling bout by sinking his teeth into the shoulder of his opponent.

After college, his father, in despair, sent him among the cow-punchers of a Wyoming ranch. Three months later the doughty cowmen confessed he was too much for them and telegraphed his father to come and take the wild man away. Also, when the father arrived to take him away, the cowmen allowed that they would vastly prefer chumming with howling cannibals, gibbering lunatics, cavorting gorillas, grizzly bears, and man-eating tigers than with this particular Young college product with hair parted in the middle.

There was one exception to the lack of memory of the life of his early self, and that was language. By some quirk of atavism, a certain portion of that early self's language had come down to him as a racial memory. In moments of happiness, exaltation, or battle, he was prone to burst out in wild barbaric songs or chants. It was by this means that he located in time and space that strayed half of him who should have been dead and dust for thousands of years. He sang, once, and deliberately, several of the ancient chants in the presence of Professor Wertz, who gave courses in old Saxon and who was a philogist of repute and passion. At the first one, the professor pricked up his ears and demanded to know what mongrel tongue or hog-German it was. When the second chant was rendered, the professor was highly excited. James Ward then concluded the

performance by giving a song that always irresistibly rushed to his lips when he was engaged in fierce struggling or fighting. Then it was that Professor Wertz proclaimed it no hog-German, but early German, or early Teuton, of a date that must far precede anything that had ever been discovered and handed down by the scholars. So early was it that it was beyond him; yet it was filled with haunting reminiscences of word-forms he knew and which his trained intuition told him were true and real. He demanded the source of the songs, and asked to borrow the precious book that contained them. Also, he demanded to know why young Ward had always posed as being profoundly ignorant of the German language. And Ward could neither explain his ignorance nor lend the book. Whereupon, after pleadings and entreaties that extended through weeks, Professor Wert took a dislike to the young man, believed him a liar, and classified him as a man of monstrous selfishness for not giving him a glimpse of this wonderful screed that was older than the oldest any philologist had ever known or dreamed.

But little good did it do this much-mixed young man to know that half of him was late American and the other half early Teuton. Nevertheless, the late American in him was no weakling, and he (if he were a he and had a shred of existence outside of these two) compelled an adjustment or compromise between his one self that was a nightprowling savage that kept his other self sleepy of mornings, and that other self that was cultured and refined and that wanted to be normal and live and love and prosecute business like other people. The afternoons and early evenings he gave to the one, the nights to the other; the forenoons and parts of the nights were devoted to sleep for the twain. But in the mornings he slept in bed like a civilized man. In the night time he slept like a wild animal, as he had slept Dave Slotter stepped on him in the woods.

Persuading his father to advance the capital, he went into business and keen and successful business he made of it, devoting his afternoons whole-souled to it, while his partner devoted the mornings. The early evenings he spent socially, but, as the hour grew to nine or ten, an irresistible restlessness overcame him and he disappeared from the haunts of men until the next afternoon. Friends and acquaintances thought that he spent much of his time in sport. And they were right, though they never would have dreamed of the nature of the sport, even if they had seen him running coyotes in night-chases over the hills of Mill Valley. Neither were the schooner captains believed when they reported seeing, on cold winter mornings, a man swimming in the tide-rips of Raccoon Straits or in the swift currents between Goat island and Angel Island miles from shore.

In the bungalow at Mill Valley he lived alone, save for Lee Sing, the Chinese cook and factotum, who knew much about the strangeness of his master, who was paid well for saying nothing, and who never did say anything. After the satisfaction of his nights, a morning's sleep, and a breakfast of Lee Sing's, James Ward crossed the bay to San Francisco on a midday ferryboat and went to the club and on to his office, as normal and conventional a man of business as could be found in the city. But as the evening lengthened, the night called to him. There came a quickening of all his perceptions

and a restlessness. His hearing was suddenly acute; the myriad night-noises told him a luring and familiar story; and, if alone, he would begin to pace up and down the narrow room like any caged animal from the wild.

Once, he ventured to fall in love. He never permitted himself that diversion again. He was afraid. And for many a day the young lady, scared at least out of a portion of her young ladyhood, bore on her arms and shoulders and wrists divers black-and-blue bruises – tokens of caresses which he had bestowed in all fond gentleness but too late at night. There was the mistake. Had he ventured love-making in the afternoon, all would have been well, for it would have been as the quiet gentleman that he would have made love – but at night it was the uncouth, wife-stealing savage of the dark German forests. Out of his wisdom, he decided that afternoon love-making could be prosecuted successfully; but out of the same wisdom he was convinced that marriage as would prove a ghastly failure. He found it appalling to imagine being married and encountering his wife after dark.

So he had eschewed all love-making, regulated his dual life, cleaned up a million in business, fought shy of match-making mamas and bright-eyed and eager young ladies of various ages, met Lilian Gersdale and made it a rigid observance never to see her later than eight o'clock in the evening, run of nights after his coyotes, and slept in forest lairs – and through it all had kept his secret safe save Lee Sing ...and now, Dave Slotter. It was the latter's discovery of both his selves that frightened him. In spite of the counter fright he had given the burglar, the latter might talk. And even if he did not, sooner or later he would be found out by some one else.

Thus it was that James Ward made a fresh and heroic effort to control the Teutonic barbarian that was half of him. So well did he make it a point to see Lilian in the afternoons, that the time came when she accepted him for better or worse, and when he prayed privily and fervently that it was not for worse. During this period no prize-fighter ever trained more harshly and faithfully for a contest than he trained to subdue the wild savage in him. Among other things, he strove to exhaust himself during the day, so that sleep would render him deaf to the call of the night. He took a vacation from the office and went on long hunting trips, following the deer through the most inaccessible and rugged country he could find – and always in the daytime. Night found him indoors and tired. At home he installed a score of exercise machines, and where other men might go through a particular movement ten times, he went hundreds. Also, as a compromise, he built a sleeping porch on the second story. Here he at least breathed the blessed night air. Double screens prevented him from escaping into the woods, and each night Lee Sing locked him in and each morning let him out.

The time came, in the month of August, when he engaged additional servants to assist Lee Sing and dared a house party in his Mill Valley bungalow. Lilian, her mother and brother, and half a dozen mutual friends, were the guests. For two days and nights all went well. And on the third night, playing bridge till eleven o'clock, he had reason to be proud of himself. His restlessness fully hid, but as luck would have it, Lilian Gersdale was his opponent on his right. She was a frail delicate flower of a woman, and

in his night-mood her very frailty incensed him. Not that he loved her less, but that he felt almost irresistibly impelled to reach out and paw and maul her. Especially was this true when she was engaged in playing a winning hand against him.

He had one of the deer-hounds brought in and, when it seemed he must fly to pieces with the tension, a caressing hand laid on the animal brought him relief. These contacts with the hairy coat gave him instant easement and enabled him to play out the evening. Nor did anyone guess the while terrible struggle their host was making, the while he laughed so carelessly and played so keenly and deliberately.

When they separated for the night, he saw to it that he parted from Lilian in the presence or the others. Once on his sleeping porch and safely locked in, he doubled and tripled and even quadrupled his exercises until, exhausted, he lay down on the couch to woo sleep and to ponder two problems that especially troubled him. One was this matter of exercise. It was a paradox. The more he exercised in this excessive fashion, the stronger he became. While it was true that he thus quite tired out his night-running Teutonic self, it seemed that he was merely setting back the fatal day when his strength would be too much for him and overpower him, and then it would be a strength more terrible than he had yet known. The other problem was that of his marriage and of the stratagems he must employ in order to avoid his wife after dark. And thus, fruitlessly pondering, he fell asleep.

Now, where the huge grizzly bear came from that night was long a mystery, while the people of the Springs Brothers' Circus, showing at Sausalito, searched long and vainly for "Big Ben, the Biggest Grizzly in Captivity." But Big Ben escaped, and, out of the mazes of half a thousand bungalows and country estates, selected the grounds of James J. Ward for visitation. The self first Mr. Ward knew was when he found him on his feet, quivering and tense, a surge of battle in his breast and on his lips the old war-chant. From without came a wild baying and bellowing of the hounds. And sharp as a knife-thrust through the pandemonium came the agony of a stricken dog – his dog, he knew.

Not stopping for slippers, pajama-clad, he burst through the door Lee Sing had so carefully locked, and sped down the stairs and out into the night. As his naked feet struck the graveled driveway, he stopped abruptly, reached under the steps to a hiding-place he knew well, and pulled forth a huge knotty club – his old companion on many a mad night adventure on the hills. The frantic hullabaloo of the dogs was coming nearer, and, swinging the club, he sprang straight into the thickets to meet it.

The aroused household assembled on the wide veranda. Somebody turned on the electric lights, but they could see nothing but one another's frightened faces. Beyond the brightly illuminated driveway the trees formed a wall of impenetrable blackness. Yet somewhere in that blackness a terrible struggle was going on. There was an infernal outcry of animals, a great snarling and growling, the sound of blows being struck and a smashing and crashing of underbrush by heavy bodies.

The tide of battle swept out from among the trees and upon the driveway just beneath the onlookers. Then they saw. Mrs. Gersdale cried out and clung fainting to

her son. Lilian, clutching the railing so spasmodically that a bruising hurt was left in her finger-ends for days, gazed horror-stricken at a yellow-haired, wild-eyed giant whom she recognized as the man who was to be her husband. He was swinging a great club, and fighting furiously and calmly with a shaggy monster that was bigger than any bear she had ever seen. One rip of the beast's claws had dragged away Ward's pajama-coat and streaked his flesh with blood.

While most of Lilian Gersdale's fright was for the man beloved, there was a large portion of it due to the man himself. Never had she dreamed so formidable and magnificent a savage lurked under the starched shirt and conventional garb of her betrothed. And never had she had any conception of how a man battled. Such a battle was certainly not modern; nor was she there beholding a modern man, though she did not know it. For this was not Mr. James J. Ward, the San Francisco business man, but one, unnamed and unknown, a crude, rude savage creature who, by some freak of chance, lived again after thrice a thousand years.

The hounds, ever maintaining their mad uproar, circled about the fight, or dashed in and out, distracting the bear. When the animal turned to meet such flanking assaults, the man leaped in and the club came down. Angered afresh by every such blow, the bear would rush, and the man, leaping and skipping, avoiding the dogs, went backwards or circled to one side or the other. Whereupon the dogs, taking advantage of the opening, would again spring in and draw the animal's wrath to them.

The end came suddenly. Whirling, the grizzly caught a hound with a wide sweeping cuff that sent the brute, its ribs caved in and its back broken, hurtling twenty feet. Then the human brute went mad. A foaming rage flecked the lips that parted with a wild inarticulate cry, as it sprang in, swung the club mightily in both hands, and brought it down full on the head of the uprearing grizzly. Not even the skull of a grizzly could withstand the crushing force of such a blow, and the animal went down to meet the worrying of the hounds. And through their scurrying leaped the man, squarely upon the body, where, in the white electric light, resting on his club, he chanted a triumph in an unknown tongue – a song so ancient that Professor Wertz would have given ten years of his life for it.

His guests rushed to possess him and acclaim him, but James Ward, suddenly looking out of the eyes of the early Teuton, saw the fair frail Twentieth Century girl he loved, and felt something snap in his brain. He staggered weakly toward her, dropped the club, and nearly fell. Something had gone wrong with him. Inside his brain was an intolerable agony. It seemed as if the soul of him were flying asunder. Following the excited gaze of the others, he glanced back and saw the carcass of the bear. The sight filled him with fear. He uttered a cry and would have fled, had they not restrained him and led him into the bungalow.

. . . .

James J. Ward is still at the head of the firm of Ward, Knowles & Co. But he no longer lives in the country; nor does he run of nights after the coyotes under the moon. The early Teuton in him died the night of the Mill Valley fight with the bear.

James J. Ward is now wholly James J. Ward, and he shares no part of his being with any vagabond anachronism from the younger world. And so wholly is James J. Ward modern, that he knows in all its bitter fullness the curse of civilized fear. He is now afraid of the dark, and night in the forest is to him a thing of abysmal terror. His city house is of the spick and span order, and he evinces a great interest in burglarproof devices. His home is a tangle of electric wires, and after bed-time a guest can scarcely breathe without setting off an alarm. Also, he had invented a combination keyless door-lock that travelers may carry in their vest pockets and apply immediately and successfully under all circumstances. But his wife does not deem him a coward. She knows better. And, like any hero, he is content to rest on his laurels. His bravery is never questioned by those friends who are aware of the Mill Valley episode.

Where the Trail Forks

"Must I, then, must I, then, now leave this town-And you, my love, stay here?"–Schwabian Folk-song.

The singer, clean-faced and cheery-eyed, bent over and added water to a pot of simmering beans, and then, rising, a stick of firewood in hand, drove back the circling dogs from the grub-box and cooking-gear. He was blue of eye, and his long hair was golden, and it was a pleasure to look upon his lusty freshness. A new moon was thrusting a dim horn above the white line of close-packed snow-capped pines which ringed the camp and segregated it from all the world. Overhead, so clear it was and cold, the stars danced with quick, pulsating movements. To the southeast an evanescent greenish glow heralded the opening revels of the aurora borealis. Two men, in the immediate foreground, lay upon the bearskin which was their bed. Between the skin and naked snow was a six-inch layer of pine boughs. The blankets were rolled back. For shelter, there was a fly at their backs,–a sheet of canvas stretched between two trees and angling at forty-five degrees. This caught the radiating heat from the fire and flung it down upon the skin. Another man sat on a sled, drawn close to the blaze, mending moccasins. To the right, a heap of frozen gravel and a rude windlass denoted where they toiled each day in dismal groping for the pay-streak. To the left, four pairs of snowshoes stood erect, showing the mode of travel which obtained when the stamped snow of the camp was left behind.

That Schwabian folk-song sounded strangely pathetic under the cold northern stars, and did not do the men good who lounged about the fire after the toil of the day. It put a dull ache into their hearts, and a yearning which was akin to belly-hunger, and sent their souls questing southward across the divides to the sun-lands.

"For the love of God, Sigmund, shut up!" expostulated one of the men. His hands were clenched painfully, but he hid them from sight in the folds of the bearskin upon which he lay.

"And what for, Dave Wertz?" Sigmund demanded. "Why shall I not sing when the heart is glad?"

"Because you've got no call to, that's why. Look about you, man, and think of the grub we've been defiling our bodies with for the last twelvemonth, and the way we've lived and worked like beasts!"

Thus abjured, Sigmund, the golden-haired, surveyed it all, and the frost-rimmed wolf-dogs and the vapor breaths of the men. "And why shall not the heart be glad?" he laughed. "It is good; it is all good. As for the grub–" He doubled up his arm and caressed the swelling biceps. "And if we have lived and worked like beasts, have we not

been paid like kings? Twenty dollars to the pan the streak is running, and we know it to be eight feet thick. It is another Klondike–and we know it–Jim Hawes there, by your elbow, knows it and complains not. And there's Hitchcock! He sews moccasins like an old woman, and waits against the time. Only you can't wait and work until the wash-up in the spring. Then we shall all be rich, rich as kings, only you cannot wait. You want to go back to the States. So do I, and I was born there, but I can wait, when each day the gold in the pan shows up yellow as butter in the churning. But you want your good time, and, like a child, you cry for it now. Bah! Why shall I not sing:

"In a year, in a year, when the grapes are ripe, I shall stay no more away. Then if you still are true, my love, It will be our wedding day. In a year, in a year, when my time is past, Then I'll live in your love for aye. Then if you still are true, my love, It will be our wedding day."

The dogs, bristling and growling, drew in closer to the firelight. There was a monotonous crunch-crunch of webbed shoes, and between each crunch the dragging forward of the heel of the shoe like the sound of sifting sugar. Sigmund broke off from his song to hurl oaths and firewood at the animals. Then the light was parted by a fur-clad figure, and an Indian girl slipped out of the webs, threw back the hood of her squirrel-skin parka, and stood in their midst. Sigmund and the men on the bearskin greeted her as "Sipsu," with the customary "Hello," but Hitchcock made room on the sled that she might sit beside him.

"And how goes it, Sipsu?" he asked, talking, after her fashion, in broken English and bastard Chinook. "Is the hunger still mighty in the camp? and has the witch doctor yet found the cause wherefore game is scarce and no moose in the land?"

"Yes; even so. There is little game, and we prepare to eat the dogs. Also has the witch doctor found the cause of all this evil, and to-morrow will he make sacrifice and cleanse the camp."

"And what does the sacrifice chance to be?–a new-born babe or some poor devil of a squaw, old and shaky, who is a care to the tribe and better out of the way?"

"It chanced not that wise; for the need was great, and he chose none other than the chief's daughter; none other than I, Sipsu."

"Hell!" The word rose slowly to Hitchcock's lips, and brimmed over full and deep, in a way which bespoke wonder and consideration.

"Wherefore we stand by a forking of the trail, you and I," she went on calmly, "and I have come that we may look once more upon each other, and once more only."

She was born of primitive stock, and primitive had been her traditions and her days; so she regarded life stoically, and human sacrifice as part of the natural order. The powers which ruled the day-light and the dark, the flood and the frost, the bursting of the bud and the withering of the leaf, were angry and in need of propitiation. This they exacted in many ways,–death in the bad water, through the treacherous ice-crust, by the grip of the grizzly, or a wasting sickness which fell upon a man in his own lodge till he coughed, and the life of his lungs went out through his mouth and nostrils. Likewise did the powers receive sacrifice. It was all one. And the witch doctor was versed in the

thoughts of the powers and chose unerringly. It was very natural. Death came by many ways, yet was it all one after all,–a manifestation of the all-powerful and inscrutable.

But Hitchcock came of a later world-breed. His traditions were less concrete and without reverence, and he said, “Not so, Sipsu. You are young, and yet in the full joy of life. The witch doctor is a fool, and his choice is evil. This thing shall not be.”

She smiled and answered, “Life is not kind, and for many reasons. First, it made of us twain the one white and the other red, which is bad. Then it crossed our trails, and now it parts them again; and we can do nothing. Once before, when the gods were angry, did your brothers come to the camp. They were three, big men and white, and they said the thing shall not be. But they died quickly, and the thing was.”

Hitchcock nodded that he heard, half-turned, and lifted his voice. “Look here, you fellows! There’s a lot of foolery going on over to the camp, and they’re getting ready to murder Sipsu. What d’ye say?”

Wertz looked at Hawes, and Hawes looked back, but neither spoke. Sigmund dropped his head, and petted the shepherd dog between his knees. He had brought Shep in with him from the outside, and thought a great deal of the animal. In fact, a certain girl, who was much in his thoughts, and whose picture in the little locket on his breast often inspired him to sing, had given him the dog and her blessing when they kissed good-by and he started on his Northland quest.

“What d’ye say?” Hitchcock repeated.

“Mebbe it’s not so serious,” Hawes answered with deliberation. “Most likely it’s only a girl’s story.”

“That isn’t the point!” Hitchcock felt a hot flush of anger sweep over him at their evident reluctance. “The question is, if it is so, are we going to stand it? What are we going to do?”

“I don’t see any call to interfere,” spoke up Wertz. “If it is so, it is so, and that’s all there is about it. It’s a way these people have of doing. It’s their religion, and it’s no concern of ours. Our concern is to get the dust and then get out of this God-forsaken land. ‘T isn’t fit for naught else but beasts? And what are these black devils but beasts? Besides, it’d be damn poor policy.”

“That’s what I say,” chimed in Hawes. “Here we are, four of us, three hundred miles from the Yukon or a white face. And what can we do against half-a-hundred Indians? If we quarrel with them, we have to vamose; if we fight, we are wiped out. Further, we’ve struck pay, and, by God! I, for one, am going to stick by it!”

“Ditto here,” supplemented Wertz.

Hitchcock turned impatiently to Sigmund, who was softly singing,-

“In a year, in a year, when the grapes are ripe, I shall stay no more away.”

“Well, it’s this way, Hitchcock,” he finally said, “I’m in the same boat with the rest. If three-score bucks have made up their mind to kill the girl, why, we can’t help it. One rush, and we’d be wiped off the landscape. And what good’d that be? They’d still have the girl. There’s no use in going against the customs of a people except you’re in force.”

"But we are in force!" Hitchcock broke in. "Four whites are a match for a hundred times as many reds. And think of the girl!"

Sigmund stroked the dog meditatively. "But I do think of the girl. And her eyes are blue like summer skies, and laughing like summer seas, and her hair is yellow, like mine, and braided in ropes the size of a big man's arms. She's waiting for me, out there, in a better land. And she's waited long, and now my pile's in sight I'm not going to throw it away."

"And shamed I would be to look into the girl's blue eyes and remember the black ones of the girl whose blood was on my hands," Hitchcock sneered; for he was born to honor and championship, and to do the thing for the thing's sake, nor stop to weigh or measure.

Sigmund shook his head. "You can't make me mad, Hitchcock, nor do mad things because of your madness. It's a cold business proposition and a question of facts. I didn't come to this country for my health, and, further, it's impossible for us to raise a hand. If it is so, it is too bad for the girl, that's all. It's a way of her people, and it just happens we're on the spot this one time. They've done the same for a thousand-thousand years, and they're going to do it now, and they'll go on doing it for all time to come. Besides, they're not our kind. Nor's the girl. No, I take my stand with Wertz and Hawes, and–"

But the dogs snarled and drew in, and he broke off, listening to the crunch-crunch of many snowshoes. Indian after Indian stalked into the firelight, tall and grim, fur-clad and silent, their shadows dancing grotesquely on the snow. One, the witch doctor, spoke gutturally to Sipsu. His face was daubed with savage paint blotches, and over his shoulders was drawn a wolfskin, the gleaming teeth and cruel snout surmounting his head. No other word was spoken. The prospectors held the peace. Sipsu arose and slipped into her snowshoes.

"Good-by, O my man," she said to Hitchcock. But the man who had sat beside her on the sled gave no sign, nor lifted his head as they filed away into the white forest.

Unlike many men, his faculty of adaptation, while large, had never suggested the expediency of an alliance with the women of the Northland. His broad cosmopolitanism had never impelled toward covenanting in marriage with the daughters of the soil. If it had, his philosophy of life would not have stood between. But it simply had not. Sipsu? He had pleasured in camp-fire chats with her, not as a man who knew himself to be man and she woman, but as a man might with a child, and as a man of his make certainly would if for no other reason than to vary the tedium of a bleak existence. That was all. But there was a certain chivalric thrill of warm blood in him, despite his Yankee ancestry and New England upbringing, and he was so made that the commercial aspect of life often seemed meaningless and bore contradiction to his deeper impulses.

So he sat silent, with head bowed forward, an organic force, greater than himself, as great as his race, at work within him. Wertz and Hawes looked askance at him from time to time, a faint but perceptible trepidation in their manner. Sigmund also felt this. Hitchcock was strong, and his strength had been impressed upon them in the

course of many an event in their precarious life. So they stood in a certain definite awe and curiosity as to what his conduct would be when he moved to action.

But his silence was long, and the fire nigh out, when Wertz stretched his arms and yawned, and thought he'd go to bed. Then Hitchcock stood up his full height.

"May God damn your souls to the deepest hells, you chicken-hearted cowards! I'm done with you!" He said it calmly enough, but his strength spoke in every syllable, and every intonation was advertisement of intention. "Come on," he continued, "whack up, and in whatever way suits you best. I own a quarter-interest in the claims; our contracts show that. There're twenty-five or thirty ounces in the sack from the test pans. Fetch out the scales. We'll divide that now. And you, Sigmund, measure me my quarter-share of the grub and set it apart. Four of the dogs are mine, and I want four more. I'll trade you my share in the camp outfit and mining-gear for the dogs. And I'll throw in my six or seven ounces and the spare 45-90 with the ammunition. What d'ye say?"

The three men drew apart and conferred. When they returned, Sigmund acted as spokesman. "We'll whack up fair with you, Hitchcock. In everything you'll get your quarter-share, neither more nor less; and you can take it or leave it. But we want the dogs as bad as you do, so you get four, and that's all. If you don't want to take your share of the outfit and gear, why, that's your lookout. If you want it, you can have it; if you don't, leave it."

"The letter of the law," Hitchcock sneered. "But go ahead. I'm willing. And hurry up. I can't get out of this camp and away from its vermin any too quick."

The division was effected without further comment. He lashed his meagre belongings upon one of the sleds, rounded in his four dogs, and harnessed up. His portion of outfit and gear he did not touch, though he threw onto the sled half a dozen dog harnesses, and challenged them with his eyes to interfere. But they shrugged their shoulders and watched him disappear in the forest.

A man crawled upon his belly through the snow. On every hand loomed the moose-hide lodges of the camp. Here and there a miserable dog howled or snarled abuse upon his neighbor. Once, one of them approached the creeping man, but the man became motionless. The dog came closer and sniffed, and came yet closer, till its nose touched the strange object which had not been there when darkness fell. Then Hitchcock, for it was Hitchcock, upreared suddenly, shooting an unmittened hand out to the brute's shaggy throat. And the dog knew its death in that clutch, and when the man moved on, was left broken-necked under the stars. In this manner Hitchcock made the chief's lodge. For long he lay in the snow without, listening to the voices of the occupants and striving to locate Sipsu. Evidently there were many in the tent, and from the sounds they were in high excitement. At last he heard the girl's voice, and crawled around so that only the moose-hide divided them. Then burrowing in the snow, he slowly wormed his head and shoulders underneath. When the warm inner air smote his face, he stopped and waited, his legs and the greater part of his body still on the outside. He could see nothing, nor did he dare lift his head. On one side of him was a skin bale.

He could smell it, though he carefully felt to be certain. On the other side his face barely touched a furry garment which he knew clothed a body. This must be Sipsu. Though he wished she would speak again, he resolved to risk it.

He could hear the chief and the witch doctor talking high, and in a far corner some hungry child whimpering to sleep. Squirming over on his side, he carefully raised his head, still just touching the furry garment. He listened to the breathing. It was a woman's breathing; he would chance it.

He pressed against her side softly but firmly, and felt her start at the contact. Again he waited, till a questioning hand slipped down upon his head and paused among the curls. The next instant the hand turned his face gently upward, and he was gazing into Sipsu's eyes.

She was quite collected. Changing her position casually, she threw an elbow well over on the skin bale, rested her body upon it, and arranged her parka. In this way he was completely concealed. Then, and still most casually, she reclined across him, so that he could breathe between her arm and breast, and when she lowered her head her ear pressed lightly against his lips.

"When the time suits, go thou," he whispered, "out of the lodge and across the snow, down the wind to the bunch of jackpine in the curve of the creek. There wilt thou find my dogs and my sled, packed for the trail. This night we go down to the Yukon; and since we go fast, lay thou hands upon what dogs come nigh thee, by the scruff of the neck, and drag them to the sled in the curve of the creek."

Sipsu shook her head in dissent; but her eyes glistened with gladness, and she was proud that this man had shown toward her such favor. But she, like the women of all her race, was born to obey the will masculine, and when Hitchcock repeated "Go!" he did it with authority, and though she made no answer he knew that his will was law.

"And never mind harness for the dogs," he added, preparing to go. "I shall wait. But waste no time. The day chaseth the night alway, nor does it linger for man's pleasure."

Half an hour later, stamping his feet and swinging his arms by the sled, he saw her coming, a surly dog in either hand. At the approach of these his own animals waxed truculent, and he favored them with the butt of his whip till they quieted. He had approached the camp up the wind, and sound was the thing to be most feared in making his presence known.

"Put them into the sled," he ordered when she had got the harness on the two dogs. "I want my leaders to the fore."

But when she had done this, the displaced animals pitched upon the aliens. Though Hitchcock plunged among them with clubbed rifle, a riot of sound went up and across the sleeping camp.

"Now we shall have dogs, and in plenty," he remarked grimly, slipping an axe from the sled lashings. "Do thou harness whichever I fling thee, and betweenwhiles protect the team."

He stepped a space in advance and waited between two pines. The dogs of the camp were disturbing the night with their jangle, and he watched for their coming. A

dark spot, growing rapidly, took form upon the dim white expanse of snow. It was a forerunner of the pack, leaping cleanly, and, after the wolf fashion, singing direction to its brothers. Hitchcock stood in the shadow. As it sprang past, he reached out, gripped its forelegs in mid-career, and sent it whirling earthward. Then he struck it a well-judged blow beneath the ear, and flung it to Sipsu. And while she clapped on the harness, he, with his axe, held the passage between the trees, till a shaggy flood of white teeth and glistening eyes surged and crested just beyond reach. Sipsu worked rapidly. When she had finished, he leaped forward, seized and stunned a second, and flung it to her. This he repeated thrice again, and when the sled team stood snarling in a string of ten, he called, "Enough!"

But at this instant a young buck, the forerunner of the tribe, and swift of limb, wading through the dogs and cuffing right and left, attempted the passage. The butt of Hitchcock's rifle drove him to his knees, whence he toppled over sideways. The witch doctor, running lustily, saw the blow fall.

Hitchcock called to Sipsu to pull out. At her shrill "Chook!" the maddened brutes shot straight ahead, and the sled, bounding mightily, just missed unseating her. The powers were evidently angry with the witch doctor, for at this moment they plunged him upon the trail. The lead-dog fouled his snowshoes and tripped him up, and the nine succeeding dogs trod him under foot and the sled bumped over him. But he was quick to his feet, and the night might have turned out differently had not Sipsu struck backward with the long dog-whip and smitten him a blinding blow across the eyes. Hitchcock, hurrying to overtake her, collided against him as he swayed with pain in the middle of the trail. Thus it was, when this primitive theologian got back to the chief's lodge, that his wisdom had been increased in so far as concerns the efficacy of the white man's fist. So, when he orated then and there in the council, he was wroth against all white men.

"Tumble out, you loafers! Tumble out! Grub'll be ready before you get into your footgear!"

Dave Wertz threw off the bearskin, sat up, and yawned.

Hawes stretched, discovered a lame muscle in his arm, and rubbed it sleepily. "Wonder where Hitchcock bunked last night?" he queried, reaching for his moccasins. They were stiff, and he walked gingerly in his socks to the fire to thaw them out. "It's a blessing he's gone," he added, "though he was a mighty good worker."

"Yep. Too masterful. That was his trouble. Too bad for Sipsu. Think he cared for her much?"

"Don't think so. Just principle. That's all. He thought it wasn't right–and, of course, it wasn't,–but that was no reason for us to interfere and get hustled over the divide before our time."

"Principle is principle, and it's good in its place, but it's best left to home when you go to Alaska. Eh?" Wertz had joined his mate, and both were working pliability into their frozen moccasins. "Think we ought to have taken a hand?"

Sigmund shook his head. He was very busy. A scud of chocolate-colored foam was rising in the coffee-pot, and the bacon needed turning. Also, he was thinking about the girl with laughing eyes like summer seas, and he was humming softly.

His mates chuckled to each other and ceased talking. Though it was past seven, daybreak was still three hours distant. The aurora borealis had passed out of the sky, and the camp was an oasis of light in the midst of deep darkness. And in this light the forms of the three men were sharply defined. Emboldened by the silence, Sigmund raised his voice and opened the last stanza of the old song:-

“In a year, in a year, when the grapes are ripe–“

Then the night was split with a rattling volley of rifle-shots. Hawes sighed, made an effort to straighten himself, and collapsed. Wertz went over on an elbow with drooping head. He choked a little, and a dark stream flowed from his mouth. And Sigmund, the Golden-Haired, his throat a-gurgle with the song, threw up his arms and pitched across the fire.

The witch doctor’s eyes were well blackened, and his temper none of the best; for he quarrelled with the chief over the possession of Wertz’s rifle, and took more than his share of the part-sack of beans. Also he appropriated the bearskin, and caused grumbling among the tribesmen. And finally, he tried to kill Sigmund’s dog, which the girl had given him, but the dog ran away, while he fell into the shaft and dislocated his shoulder on the bucket. When the camp was well looted they went back to their own lodges, and there was a great rejoicing among the women. Further, a band of moose strayed over the south divide and fell before the hunters, so the witch doctor attained yet greater honor, and the people whispered among themselves that he spoke in council with the gods.

But later, when all were gone, the shepherd dog crept back to the deserted camp, and all the night long and a day it wailed the dead. After that it disappeared, though the years were not many before the Indian hunters noted a change in the breed of timber wolves, and there were dashes of bright color and variegated markings such as no wolf bore before.

Which Make Men Remember

Fortune La Pearle crushed his way through the snow, sobbing, straining, cursing his luck, Alaska, Nome, the cards, and the man who had felt his knife. The hot blood was freezing on his hands, and the scene yet bright in his eyes,–the man, clutching the table and sinking slowly to the floor; the rolling counters and the scattered deck; the swift shiver throughout the room, and the pause; the game-keepers no longer calling, and the clatter of the chips dying away; the startled faces; the infinite instant of silence; and then the great blood-roar and the tide of vengeance which lapped his heels and turned the town mad behind him.

"All hell's broke loose," he sneered, turning aside in the darkness and heading for the beach. Lights were flashing from open doors, and tent, cabin, and dance-hall let slip their denizens upon the chase. The clamor of men and howling of dogs smote his ears and quickened his feet. He ran on and on. The sounds grew dim, and the pursuit dissipated itself in vain rage and aimless groping. But a flitting shadow clung to him. Head thrust over shoulder, he caught glimpses of it, now taking vague shape on an open expanse of snow, how merging into the deeper shadows of some darkened cabin or beach-listed craft.

Fortune La Pearle swore like a woman, weakly, with the hint of tears that comes of exhaustion, and plunged deeper into the maze of heaped ice, tents, and prospect holes. He stumbled over taut hawsers and piles of dunnage, tripped on crazy guy-ropes and insanely planted pegs, and fell again and again upon frozen dumps and mounds of hoarded driftwood. At times, when he deemed he had drawn clear, his head dizzy with the painful pounding of his heart and the suffocating intake of his breath, he slackened down; and ever the shadow leaped out of the gloom and forced him on in heart-breaking flight. A swift intuition lashed upon him, leaving in its trail the cold chill of superstition. The persistence of the shadow he invested with his gambler's symbolism. Silent, inexorable, not to be shaken off, he took it as the fate which waited at the last turn when chips were cashed in and gains and losses counted up. Fortune La Pearle believed in those rare, illuminating moments, when the intelligence flung from it time and space, to rise naked through eternity and read the facts of life from the open book of chance. That this was such a moment he had no doubt; and when he turned inland and sped across the snow-covered tundra he was not startled because the shadow took upon it greater definiteness and drew in closer. Oppressed with his own impotence, he halted in the midst of the white waste and whirled about. His right hand slipped from its mitten, and a revolver, at level, glistened in the pale light of the stars.

“Don’t shoot. I haven’t a gun.”

The shadow had assumed tangible shape, and at the sound of its human voice a trepidation affected Fortune La Pearle’s knees, and his stomach was stricken with the qualms of sudden relief.

Perhaps things fell out differently because Uri Bram had no gun that night when he sat on the hard benches of the El Dorado and saw murder done. To that fact also might be attributed the trip on the Long Trail which he took subsequently with a most unlikely comrade. But be it as it may, he repeated a second time, “Don’t shoot. Can’t you see I haven’t a gun?”

“Then what the flaming hell did you take after me for?” demanded the gambler, lowering his revolver.

Uri Bram shrugged his shoulders. “It don’t matter much, anyhow. I want you to come with me.”

“Where?”

“To my shack, over on the edge of the camp.”

But Fortune La Pearle drove the heel of his moccasin into the snow and attested by his various deities to the madness of Uri Bram. “Who are you,” he perorated, “and what am I, that I should put my neck into the rope at your bidding?”

“I am Uri Bram,” the other said simply, “and my shack is over there on the edge of camp. I don’t know who you are, but you’ve thrust the soul from a living man’s body,–there’s the blood red on your sleeve,–and, like a second Cain, the hand of all mankind is against you, and there is no place you may lay your head. Now, I have a shack–“

“For the love of your mother, hold your say, man,” interrupted Fortune La Pearle, “or I’ll make you a second Abel for the joy of it. So help me, I will! With a thousand men to lay me by the heels, looking high and low, what do I want with your shack? I want to get out of here–away! away! away! Cursed swine! I’ve half a mind to go back and run amuck, and settle for a few of them, the pigs! One gorgeous, glorious fight, and end the whole damn business! It’s a skin game, that’s what life is, and I’m sick of it!”

He stopped, appalled, crushed by his great desolation, and Uri Bram seized the moment. He was not given to speech, this man, and that which followed was the longest in his life, save one long afterward in another place.

“That’s why I told you about my shack. I can stow you there so they’ll never find you, and I’ve got grub in plenty. Elsewise you can’t get away. No dogs, no nothing, the sea closed, St. Michael the nearest post, runners to carry the news before you, the same over the portage to Anvik–not a chance in the world for you! Now wait with me till it blows over. They’ll forget all about you in a month or less, what of stampeding to York and what not, and you can hit the trail under their noses and they won’t bother. I’ve got my own ideas of justice. When I ran after you, out of the El Dorado and along the beach, it wasn’t to catch you or give you up. My ideas are my own, and that’s not one of them.”

He ceased as the murderer drew a prayer-book from his pocket. With the aurora borealis glimmering yellow in the northeast, heads bared to the frost and naked hands grasping the sacred book, Fortune La Pearle swore him to the words he had spoken–an oath which Uri Bram never intended breaking, and never broke.

At the door of the shack the gambler hesitated for an instant, marvelling at the strangeness of this man who had befriended him, and doubting. But by the candlelight he found the cabin comfortable and without occupants, and he was quickly rolling a cigarette while the other man made coffee. His muscles relaxed in the warmth and he lay back with half-assumed indolence, intently studying Uri's face through the curling wisps of smoke. It was a powerful face, but its strength was of that peculiar sort which stands girt in and unrelated. The seams were deep-graven, more like scars, while the stern features were in no way softened by hints of sympathy or humor. Under prominent bushy brows the eyes shone cold and gray. The cheekbones, high and forbidding, were undermined by deep hollows. The chin and jaw displayed a steadiness of purpose which the narrow forehead advertised as single, and, if needs be, pitiless. Everything was harsh, the nose, the lips, the voice, the lines about the mouth. It was the face of one who communed much with himself, unused to seeking counsel from the world; the face of one who wrestled oft of nights with angels, and rose to face the day with shut lips that no man might know. He was narrow but deep; and Fortune, his own humanity broad and shallow, could make nothing of him. Did Uri sing when merry and sigh when sad, he could have understood; but as it was, the cryptic features were undecipherable; he could not measure the soul they concealed.

"Lend a hand, Mister Man," Uri ordered when the cups had been emptied. "We've got to fix up for visitors."

Fortune purred his name for the other's benefit, and assisted understandingly. The bunk was built against a side and end of the cabin. It was a rude affair, the bottom being composed of drift-wood logs overlaid with moss. At the foot the rough ends of these timbers projected in an uneven row. From the side next the wall Uri ripped back the moss and removed three of the logs. The jagged ends he sawed off and replaced so that the projecting row remained unbroken. Fortune carried in sacks of flour from the cache and piled them on the floor beneath the aperture. On these Uri laid a pair of long sea-bags, and over all spread several thicknesses of moss and blankets. Upon this Fortune could lie, with the sleeping furs stretching over him from one side of the bunk to the other, and all men could look upon it and declare it empty.

In the weeks which followed, several domiciliary visits were paid, not a shack or tent in Nome escaping, but Fortune lay in his cranny undisturbed. In fact, little attention was given to Uri Bram's cabin; for it was the last place under the sun to expect to find the murderer of John Randolph. Except during such interruptions, Fortune lolled about the cabin, playing long games of solitaire and smoking endless cigarettes. Though his volatile nature loved geniality and play of words and laughter, he quickly accommodated himself to Uri's taciturnity. Beyond the actions and plans of his pursuers, the state of the trails, and the price of dogs, they never talked; and these things were only

discussed at rare intervals and briefly. But Fortune fell to working out a system, and hour after hour, and day after day, he shuffled and dealt, shuffled and dealt, noted the combinations of the cards in long columns, and shuffled and dealt again. Toward the end even this absorption failed him, and, head bowed upon the table, he visioned the lively all-night houses of Nome, where the gamekeepers and lookouts worked in shifts and the clattering roulette ball never slept. At such times his loneliness and bankruptcy stunned him till he sat for hours in the same unblinking, unchanging position. At other times, his long-pent bitterness found voice in passionate outbursts; for he had rubbed the world the wrong way and did not like the feel of it.

"Life's a skin-game," he was fond of repeating, and on this one note he rang the changes. "I never had half a chance," he complained. "I was faked in my birth and flim-flammed with my mother's milk. The dice were loaded when she tossed the box, and I was born to prove the loss. But that was no reason she should blame me for it, and look on me as a cold deck; but she did–ay, she did. Why didn't she give me a show? Why didn't the world? Why did I go broke in Seattle? Why did I take the steerage, and live like a hog to Nome? Why did I go to the El Dorado? I was heading for Big Pete's and only went for matches. Why didn't I have matches? Why did I want to smoke? Don't you see? All worked out, every bit of it, all parts fitting snug. Before I was born, like as not. I'll put the sack I never hope to get on it, before I was born. That's why! That's why John Randolph passed the word and his checks in at the same time. Damn him! It served him well right! Why didn't he keep his tongue between his teeth and give me a chance? He knew I was next to broke. Why didn't I hold my hand? Oh, why? Why? Why?"

And Fortune La Pearle would roll upon the floor, vainly interrogating the scheme of things. At such outbreaks Uri said no word, gave no sign, save that his grey eyes seemed to turn dull and muddy, as though from lack of interest. There was nothing in common between these two men, and this fact Fortune grasped sufficiently to wonder sometimes why Uri had stood by him.

But the time of waiting came to an end. Even a community's blood lust cannot stand before its gold lust. The murder of John Randolph had already passed into the annals of the camp, and there it rested. Had the murderer appeared, the men of Nome would certainly have stopped stampeding long enough to see justice done, whereas the whereabouts of Fortune La Pearle was no longer an insistent problem. There was gold in the creek beds and ruby beaches, and when the sea opened, the men with healthy sacks would sail away to where the good things of life were sold absurdly cheap.

So, one night, Fortune helped Uri Bram harness the dogs and lash the sled, and the twain took the winter trail south on the ice. But it was not all south; for they left the sea east from St. Michael's, crossed the divide, and struck the Yukon at Anvik, many hundred miles from its mouth. Then on, into the northeast, past Koyokuk, Tanana, and Minook, till they rounded the Great Curve at Fort Yukon, crossed and recrossed the Arctic Circle, and headed south through the Flats. It was a weary journey, and Fortune would have wondered why the man went with him, had not Uri told him that

he owned claims and had men working at Eagle. Eagle lay on the edge of the line; a few miles farther on, the British flag waved over the barracks at Fort Cudahy. Then came Dawson, Pelly, the Five Fingers, Windy Arm, Caribou Crossing, Linderman, the Chilcoot and Dyea.

On the morning after passing Eagle, they rose early. This was their last camp, and they were now to part. Fortune's heart was light. There was a promise of spring in the land, and the days were growing longer. The way was passing into Canadian territory. Liberty was at hand, the sun was returning, and each day saw him nearer to the Great Outside. The world was big, and he could once again paint his future in royal red. He whistled about the breakfast and hummed snatches of light song while Uri put the dogs in harness and packed up. But when all was ready, Fortune's feet itching to be off, Uri pulled an unused back-log to the fire and sat down.

"Ever hear of the Dead Horse Trail?"

He glanced up meditatively and Fortune shook his head, inwardly chafing at the delay.

"Sometimes there are meetings under circumstances which make men remember," Uri continued, speaking in a low voice and very slowly, "and I met a man under such circumstances on the Dead Horse Trail. Freighting an outfit over the White Pass in '97 broke many a man's heart, for there was a world of reason when they gave that trail its name. The horses died like mosquitoes in the first frost, and from Skaguay to Bennett they rotted in heaps. They died at the Rocks, they were poisoned at the Summit, and they starved at the Lakes; they fell off the trail, what there was of it, or they went through it; in the river they drowned under their loads, or were smashed to pieces against the boulders; they snapped their legs in the crevices and broke their backs falling backwards with their packs; in the sloughs they sank from sight or smothered in the slime, and they were disembowelled in the bogs where the corduroy logs turned end up in the mud; men shot them, worked them to death, and when they were gone, went back to the beach and bought more. Some did not bother to shoot them,–stripping the saddles off and the shoes and leaving them where they fell. Their hearts turned to stone–those which did not break–and they became beasts, the men on Dead Horse Trail.

"It was there I met a man with the heart of a Christ and the patience. And he was honest. When he rested at midday he took the packs from the horses so that they, too, might rest. He paid $50 a hundred-weight for their fodder, and more. He used his own bed to blanket their backs when they rubbed raw. Other men let the saddles eat holes the size of water-buckets. Other men, when the shoes gave out, let them wear their hoofs down to the bleeding stumps. He spent his last dollar for horseshoe nails. I know this because we slept in the one bed and ate from the one pot, and became blood brothers where men lost their grip of things and died blaspheming God. He was never too tired to ease a strap or tighten a cinch, and often there were tears in his eyes when he looked on all that waste of misery. At a passage in the rocks, where the brutes upreared hindlegged and stretched their forelegs upward like cats to clear the wall, the

way was piled with carcasses where they had toppled back. And here he stood, in the stench of hell, with a cheery word and a hand on the rump at the right time, till the string passed by. And when one bogged he blocked the trail till it was clear again; nor did the man live who crowded him at such time.

"At the end of the trail a man who had killed fifty horses wanted to buy, but we looked at him and at our own,–mountain cayuses from eastern Oregon. Five thousand he offered, and we were broke, but we remembered the poison grass of the Summit and the passage in the Rocks, and the man who was my brother spoke no word, but divided the cayuses into two bunches,–his in the one and mine in the other,–and he looked at me and we understood each other. So he drove mine to the one side and I drove his to the other, and we took with us our rifles and shot them to the last one, while the man who had killed fifty horses cursed us till his throat cracked. But that man, with whom I welded blood-brothership on the Dead Horse Trail–"

"Why, that man was John Randolph," Fortune, sneering the while, completed the climax for him.

Uri nodded, and said, "I am glad you understand."

"I am ready," Fortune answered, the old weary bitterness strong in his face again. "Go ahead, but hurry."

Uri Bram rose to his feet.

"I have had faith in God all the days of my life. I believe He loves justice. I believe He is looking down upon us now, choosing between us. I believe He waits to work His will through my own right arm. And such is my belief, that we will take equal chance and let Him speak His own judgment."

Fortune's heart leaped at the words. He did not know much concerning Uri's God, but he believed in Chance, and Chance had been coming his way ever since the night he ran down the beach and across the snow. "But there is only one gun," he objected.

"We will fire turn about," Uri replied, at the same time throwing out the cylinder of the other man's Colt and examining it.

"And the cards to decide! One hand of seven up!"

Fortune's blood was warming to the game, and he drew the deck from his pocket as Uri nodded. Surely Chance would not desert him now! He thought of the returning sun as he cut for deal, and he thrilled when he found the deal was his. He shuffled and dealt, and Uri cut him the Jack of Spades. They laid down their hands. Uri's was bare of trumps, while he held ace, deuce. The outside seemed very near to him as they stepped off the fifty paces.

"If God withholds His hand and you drop me, the dogs and outfit are yours. You'll find a bill of sale, already made out, in my pocket," Uri explained, facing the path of the bullet, straight and broad-breasted.

Fortune shook a vision of the sun shining on the ocean from his eyes and took aim. He was very careful. Twice he lowered as the spring breeze shook the pines. But the third time he dropped on one knee, gripped the revolver steadily in both hands, and fired. Uri whirled half about, threw up his arms, swayed wildly for a moment, and sank

into the snow. But Fortune knew he had fired too far to one side, else the man would not have whirled.

When Uri, mastering the flesh and struggling to his feet, beckoned for the weapon, Fortune was minded to fire again. But he thrust the idea from him. Chance had been very good to him already, he felt, and if he tricked now he would have to pay for it afterward. No, he would play fair. Besides Uri was hard hit and could not possibly hold the heavy Colt long enough to draw a bead.

"And where is your God now?" he taunted, as he gave the wounded man the revolver.

And Uri answered: "God has not yet spoken. Prepare that He may speak."

Fortune faced him, but twisted his chest sideways in order to present less surface. Uri tottered about drunkenly, but waited, too, for the moment's calm between the catspaws. The revolver was very heavy, and he doubted, like Fortune, because of its weight. But he held it, arm extended, above his head, and then let it slowly drop forward and down. At the instant Fortune's left breast and the sight flashed into line with his eye, he pulled the trigger. Fortune did not whirl, but gay San Francisco dimmed and faded, and as the sun-bright snow turned black and blacker, he breathed his last malediction on the Chance he had misplayed.

White and Yellow

San Francisco Bay is so large that often its storms are more disastrous to ocean-going craft than is the ocean itself in its violent moments. The waters of the bay contain all manner of fish, wherefore its surface is ploughed by the keels of all manner of fishing boats manned by all manner of fishermen. To protect the fish from this motley floating population many wise laws have been passed, and there is a fish patrol to see that these laws are enforced. Exciting times are the lot of the fish patrol: in its history more than one dead patrolman has marked defeat, and more often dead fishermen across their illegal nets have marked success.

Wildest among the fisher-folk may be accounted the Chinese shrimp-catchers. It is the habit of the shrimp to crawl along the bottom in vast armies till it reaches fresh water, when it turns about and crawls back again to the salt. And where the tide ebbs and flows, the Chinese sink great bag-nets to the bottom, with gaping mouths, into which the shrimp crawls and from which it is transferred to the boiling-pot. This in itself would not be bad, were it not for the small mesh of the nets, so small that the tiniest fishes, little new-hatched things not a quarter of an inch long, cannot pass through. The beautiful beaches of Points Pedro and Pablo, where are the shrimp-catchers' villages, are made fearful by the stench from myriads of decaying fish, and against this wasteful destruction it has ever been the duty of the fish patrol to act.

When I was a youngster of sixteen, a good sloop-sailor and all-round bay-waterman, my sloop, the Reindeer, was chartered by the Fish Commission, and I became for the time being a deputy patrolman. After a deal of work among the Greek fishermen of the Upper Bay and rivers, where knives flashed at the beginning of trouble and men permitted themselves to be made prisoners only after a revolver was thrust in their faces, we hailed with delight an expedition to the Lower Bay against the Chinese shrimp-catchers.

There were six of us, in two boats, and to avoid suspicion we ran down after dark and dropped anchor under a projecting bluff of land known as Point Pinole. As the east paled with the first light of dawn we got under way again, and hauled close on the land breeze as we slanted across the bay toward Point Pedro. The morning mists curled and clung to the water so that we could see nothing, but we busied ourselves driving the chill from our bodies with hot coffee. Also we had to devote ourselves to the miserable task of bailing, for in some incomprehensible way the Reindeer had sprung a generous leak. Half the night had been spent in overhauling the ballast and exploring the seams, but the labor had been without avail. The water still poured in, and perforce we doubled up in the cockpit and tossed it out again.

After coffee, three of the men withdrew to the other boat, a Columbia River salmon boat, leaving three of us in the Reindeer. Then the two craft proceeded in company till the sun showed over the eastern sky-line. Its fiery rays dispelled the clinging vapors, and there, before our eyes, like a picture, lay the shrimp fleet, spread out in a great half-moon, the tips of the crescent fully three miles apart, and each junk moored fast to the buoy of a shrimp-net. But there was no stir, no sign of life.

The situation dawned upon us. While waiting for slack water, in which to lift their heavy nets from the bed of the bay, the Chinese had all gone to sleep below. We were elated, and our plan of battle was swiftly formed.

"Throw each of your two men on to a junk," whispered Le Grant to me from the salmon boat. "And you make fast to a third yourself. We'll do the same, and there's no reason in the world why we shouldn't capture six junks at the least."

Then we separated. I put the Reindeer about on the other tack, ran up under the lee of a junk, shivered the mainsail into the wind and lost headway, and forged past the stern of the junk so slowly and so near that one of the patrolmen stepped lightly aboard. Then I kept off, filled the mainsail, and bore away for a second junk.

Up to this time there had been no noise, but from the first junk captured by the salmon boat an uproar now broke forth. There was shrill Oriental yelling, a pistol shot, and more yelling.

"It's all up. They're warning the others," said George, the remaining patrolman, as he stood beside me in the cockpit.

By this time we were in the thick of the fleet, and the alarm was spreading with incredible swiftness. The decks were beginning to swarm with half-awakened and half-naked Chinese. Cries and yells of warning and anger were flying over the quiet water, and somewhere a conch shell was being blown with great success. To the right of us I saw the captain of a junk chop away his mooring line with an axe and spring to help his crew at the hoisting of the huge, outlandish lug-sail. But to the left the first heads were popping up from below on another junk, and I rounded up the Reindeer alongside long enough for George to spring aboard.

The whole fleet was now under way. In addition to the sails they had gotten out long sweeps, and the bay was being ploughed in every direction by the fleeing junks. I was now alone in the Reindeer, seeking feverishly to capture a third prize. The first junk I took after was a clean miss, for it trimmed its sheets and shot away surprisingly into the wind. By fully half a point it outpointed the Reindeer, and I began to feel respect for the clumsy craft. Realizing the hopelessness of the pursuit, I filled away, threw out the main-sheet, and drove down before the wind upon the junks to leeward, where I had them at a disadvantage.

The one I had selected wavered indecisively before me, and, as I swung wide to make the boarding gentle, filled suddenly and darted away, the smart Mongols shouting a wild rhythm as they bent to the sweeps. But I had been ready for this. I luffed suddenly. Putting the tiller hard down, and holding it down with my body, I brought the main-sheet in, hand over hand, on the run, so as to retain all possible striking force. The

two starboard sweeps of the junk were crumpled up, and then the two boats came together with a crash. The Reindeer's bowsprit, like a monstrous hand, reached over and ripped out the junk's chunky mast and towering sail.

This was met by a curdling yell of rage. A big Chinaman, remarkably evil-looking, with his head swathed in a yellow silk handkerchief and face badly pock-marked, planted a pike-pole on the Reindeer's bow and began to shove the entangled boats apart. Pausing long enough to let go the jib halyards, and just as the Reindeer cleared and began to drift astern, I leaped aboard the junk with a line and made fast. He of the yellow handkerchief and pock-marked face came toward me threateningly, but I put my hand into my hip pocket, and he hesitated. I was unarmed, but the Chinese have learned to be fastidiously careful of American hip pockets, and it was upon this that I depended to keep him and his savage crew at a distance.

I ordered him to drop the anchor at the junk's bow, to which he replied, "No sabbe." The crew responded in like fashion, and though I made my meaning plain by signs, they refused to understand. Realizing the inexpediency of discussing the matter, I went forward myself, overran the line, and let the anchor go.

"Now get aboard, four of you," I said in a loud voice, indicating with my fingers that four of them were to go with me and the fifth was to remain by the junk. The Yellow Handkerchief hesitated; but I repeated the order fiercely (much more fiercely than I felt), at the same time sending my hand to my hip. Again the Yellow Handkerchief was overawed, and with surly looks he led three of his men aboard the Reindeer. I cast off at once, and, leaving the jib down, steered a course for George's junk. Here it was easier, for there were two of us, and George had a pistol to fall back on if it came to the worst. And here, as with my junk, four Chinese were transferred to the sloop and one left behind to take care of things.

Four more were added to our passenger list from the third junk. By this time the salmon boat had collected its twelve prisoners and came alongside, badly overloaded. To make matters worse, as it was a small boat, the patrolmen were so jammed in with their prisoners that they would have little chance in case of trouble.

"You'll have to help us out," said Le Grant.

I looked over my prisoners, who had crowded into the cabin and on top of it. "I can take three," I answered.

"Make it four," he suggested, "and I'll take Bill with me." (Bill was the third patrolman.) "We haven't elbow room here, and in case of a scuffle one white to every two of them will be just about the right proportion."

The exchange was made, and the salmon boat got up its spritsail and headed down the bay toward the marshes off San Rafael. I ran up the jib and followed with the Reindeer. San Rafael, where we were to turn our catch over to the authorities, communicated with the bay by way of a long and tortuous slough, or marshland creek, which could be navigated only when the tide was in. Slack water had come, and, as the ebb was commencing, there was need for hurry if we cared to escape waiting half a day for the next tide.

But the land breeze had begun to die away with the rising sun, and now came only in failing puffs. The salmon boat got out its oars and soon left us far astern. Some of the Chinese stood in the forward part of the cockpit, near the cabin doors, and once, as I leaned over the cockpit rail to flatten down the jib-sheet a bit, I felt some one brush against my hip pocket. I made no sign, but out of the corner of my eye I saw that the Yellow Handkerchief had discovered the emptiness of the pocket which had hitherto overawed him.

To make matters serious, during all the excitement of boarding the junks the Reindeer had not been bailed, and the water was beginning to slush over the cockpit floor. The shrimp-catchers pointed at it and looked to me questioningly.

"Yes," I said. "Bime by, allee same dlown, velly quick, you no bail now. Sabbe?"

No, they did not "sabbe," or at least they shook their heads to that effect, though they chattered most comprehendingly to one another in their own lingo. I pulled up three or four of the bottom boards, got a couple of buckets from a locker, and by unmistakable sign-language invited them to fall to. But they laughed, and some crowded into the cabin and some climbed up on top.

Their laughter was not good laughter. There was a hint of menace in it, a maliciousness which their black looks verified. The Yellow Handkerchief, since his discovery of my empty pocket, had become most insolent in his bearing, and he wormed about among the other prisoners, talking to them with great earnestness.

Swallowing my chagrin, I stepped down into the cockpit and began throwing out the water. But hardly had I begun, when the boom swung overhead, the mainsail filled with a jerk, and the Reindeer heeled over. The day wind was springing up. George was the veriest of landlubbers, so I was forced to give over bailing and take the tiller. The wind was blowing directly off Point Pedro and the high mountains behind, and because of this was squally and uncertain, half the time bellying the canvas out and the other half flapping it idly.

George was about the most all-round helpless man I had ever met. Among his other disabilities, he was a consumptive, and I knew that if he attempted to bail, it might bring on a hemorrhage. Yet the rising water warned me that something must be done. Again I ordered the shrimp-catchers to lend a hand with the buckets. They laughed defiantly, and those inside the cabin, the water up to their ankles, shouted back and forth with those on top.

"You'd better get out your gun and make them bail," I said to George.

But he shook his head and showed all too plainly that he was afraid. The Chinese could see the funk he was in as well as I could, and their insolence became insufferable. Those in the cabin broke into the food lockers, and those above scrambled down and joined them in a feast on our crackers and canned goods.

"What do we care?" George said weakly.

I was fuming with helpless anger. "If they get out of hand, it will be too late to care. The best thing you can do is to get them in check right now."

The water was rising higher and higher, and the gusts, forerunners of a steady breeze, were growing stiffer and stiffer. And between the gusts, the prisoners, having gotten away with a week's grub, took to crowding first to one side and then to the other till the Reindeer rocked like a cockle-shell. Yellow Handkerchief approached me, and, pointing out his village on the Point Pedro beach, gave me to understand that if I turned the Reindeer in that direction and put them ashore, they, in turn, would go to bailing. By now the water in the cabin was up to the bunks, and the bed-clothes were sopping. It was a foot deep on the cockpit floor. Nevertheless I refused, and I could see by George's face that he was disappointed.

"If you don't show some nerve, they'll rush us and throw us overboard," I said to him. "Better give me your revolver, if you want to be safe."

"The safest thing to do," he chattered cravenly, "is to put them ashore. I, for one, don't want to be drowned for the sake of a handful of dirty Chinamen."

"And I, for another, don't care to give in to a handful of dirty Chinamen to escape drowning," I answered hotly.

"You'll sink the Reindeer under us all at this rate," he whined. "And what good that'll do I can't see."

"Every man to his taste," I retorted.

He made no reply, but I could see he was trembling pitifully. Between the threatening Chinese and the rising water he was beside himself with fright; and, more than the Chinese and the water, I feared him and what his fright might impel him to do. I could see him casting longing glances at the small skiff towing astern, so in the next calm I hauled the skiff alongside. As I did so his eyes brightened with hope; but before he could guess my intention, I stove the frail bottom through with a hand-axe, and the skiff filled to its gunwales.

"It's sink or float together," I said. "And if you'll give me your revolver, I'll have the Reindeer bailed out in a jiffy."

"They're too many for us," he whimpered. "We can't fight them all."

I turned my back on him in disgust. The salmon boat had long since passed from sight behind a little archipelago known as the Marin Islands, so no help could be looked for from that quarter. Yellow Handkerchief came up to me in a familiar manner, the water in the cockpit slushing against his legs. I did not like his looks. I felt that beneath the pleasant smile he was trying to put on his face there was an ill purpose. I ordered him back, and so sharply that he obeyed.

"Now keep your distance," I commanded, "and don't you come closer!"

"Wha' fo'?" he demanded indignantly. "I t'ink-um talkee talkee heap good."

"Talkee talkee," I answered bitterly, for I knew now that he had understood all that passed between George and me. "What for talkee talkee? You no sabbe talkee talkee."

He grinned in a sickly fashion. "Yep, I sabbe velly much. I honest Chinaman."

"All right," I answered. "You sabbe talkee talkee, then you bail water plenty plenty. After that we talkee talkee."

He shook his head, at the same time pointing over his shoulder to his comrades. “No can do. Velly bad Chinamen, heap velly bad. I t’ink-um-“

“Stand back!” I shouted, for I had noticed his hand disappear beneath his blouse and his body prepare for a spring.

Disconcerted, he went back into the cabin, to hold a council, apparently, from the way the jabbering broke forth. The Reindeer was very deep in the water, and her movements had grown quite loggy. In a rough sea she would have inevitably swamped; but the wind, when it did blow, was off the land, and scarcely a ripple disturbed the surface of the bay.

“I think you’d better head for the beach,” George said abruptly, in a manner that told me his fear had forced him to make up his mind to some course of action.

“I think not,” I answered shortly.

“I command you,” he said in a bullying tone.

“I was commanded to bring these prisoners into San Rafael,” was my reply.

Our voices were raised, and the sound of the altercation brought the Chinese out of the cabin.

“Now will you head for the beach?”

This from George, and I found myself looking into the muzzle of his revolver-of the revolver he dared to use on me, but was too cowardly to use on the prisoners.

My brain seemed smitten with a dazzling brightness. The whole situation, in all its bearings, was focussed sharply before me-the shame of losing the prisoners, the worthlessness and cowardice of George, the meeting with Le Grant and the other patrol men and the lame explanation; and then there was the fight I had fought so hard, victory wrenched from me just as I thought I had it within my grasp. And out of the tail of my eye I could see the Chinese crowding together by the cabin doors and leering triumphantly. It would never do.

I threw my hand up and my head down. The first act elevated the muzzle, and the second removed my head from the path of the bullet which went whistling past. One hand closed on George’s wrist, the other on the revolver. Yellow Handkerchief and his gang sprang toward me. It was now or never. Putting all my strength into a sudden effort, I swung George’s body forward to meet them. Then I pulled back with equal suddenness, ripping the revolver out of his fingers and jerking him off his feet. He fell against Yellow Handkerchief’s knees, who stumbled over him, and the pair wallowed in the bailing hole where the cockpit floor was torn open. The next instant I was covering them with my revolver, and the wild shrimp-catchers were cowering and cringing away.

But I swiftly discovered that there was all the difference in the world between shooting men who are attacking and men who are doing nothing more than simply refusing to obey. For obey they would not when I ordered them into the bailing hole. I threatened them with the revolver, but they sat stolidly in the flooded cabin and on the roof and would not move.

Fifteen minutes passed, the Reindeer sinking deeper and deeper, her mainsail flapping in the calm. But from off the Point Pedro shore I saw a dark line form on the

water and travel toward us. It was the steady breeze I had been expecting so long. I called to the Chinese and pointed it out. They hailed it with exclamations. Then I pointed to the sail and to the water in the Reindeer, and indicated by signs that when the wind reached the sail, what of the water aboard we would capsize. But they jeered defiantly, for they knew it was in my power to luff the helm and let go the main-sheet, so as to spill the wind and escape damage.

But my mind was made up. I hauled in the main-sheet a foot or two, took a turn with it, and bracing my feet, put my back against the tiller. This left me one hand for the sheet and one for the revolver. The dark line drew nearer, and I could see them looking from me to it and back again with an apprehension they could not successfully conceal. My brain and will and endurance were pitted against theirs, and the problem was which could stand the strain of imminent death the longer and not give in.

Then the wind struck us. The main-sheet tautened with a brisk rattling of the blocks, the boom uplifted, the sail bellied out, and the Reindeer heeled over-over, and over, till the lee-rail went under, the cabin windows went under, and the bay began to pour in over the cockpit rail. So violently had she heeled over, that the men in the cabin had been thrown on top of one another into the lee bunk, where they squirmed and twisted and were washed about, those underneath being perilously near to drowning.

The wind freshened a bit, and the Reindeer went over farther than ever. For the moment I thought she was gone, and I knew that another puff like that and she surely would go. While I pressed her under and debated whether I should give up or not, the Chinese cried for mercy. I think it was the sweetest sound I have ever heard. And then, and not until then, did I luff up and ease out the main-sheet. The Reindeer righted very slowly, and when she was on an even keel was so much awash that I doubted if she could be saved.

But the Chinese scrambled madly into the cockpit and fell to bailing with buckets, pots, pans, and everything they could lay hands on. It was a beautiful sight to see that water flying over the side! And when the Reindeer was high and proud on the water once more, we dashed away with the breeze on our quarter, and at the last possible moment crossed the mud flats and entered the slough.

The spirit of the Chinese was broken, and so docile did they become that ere we made San Rafael they were out with the tow-rope, Yellow Handkerchief at the head of the line. As for George, it was his last trip with the fish patrol. He did not care for that sort of thing, he explained, and he thought a clerkship ashore was good enough for him. And we thought so too.

The White Man's Way

"TO cook by your fire and to sleep under your roof for the night," I had announced on entering old Ebbits's cabin; and he had looked at me blear-eyed and vacuous, while Zilla had favored me with a sour face and a contemptuous grunt. Zilla was his wife, and no more bitter-tongued, implacable old squaw dwelt on the Yukon. Nor would I have stopped there had my dogs been less tired or had the rest of the village been inhabited. But this cabin alone had I found occupied, and in this cabin, perforce, I took my shelter.

Old Ebbits now and again pulled his tangled wits together, and hints and sparkles of intelligence came and went in his eyes. Several times during the preparation of my supper he even essayed hospitable inquiries about my health, the condition and number of my dogs, and the distance I had travelled that day. And each time Zilla had looked sourer than ever and grunted more contemptuously.

Yet I confess that there was no particular call for cheerfulness on their part. There they crouched by the fire, the pair of them, at the end of their days, old and withered and helpless, racked by rheumatism, bitten by hunger, and tantalized by the frying-odors of my abundance of meat. They rocked back and forth in a slow and hopeless way, and regularly, once every five minutes, Ebbits emitted a low groan. It was not so much a groan of pain, as of pain-weariness. He was oppressed by the weight and the torment of this thing called life, and still more was he oppressed by the fear of death. His was that eternal tragedy of the aged, with whom the joy of life has departed and the instinct for death has not come.

When my moose-meat spluttered rowdily in the frying-pan, I noticed old Ebbits's nostrils twitch and distend as he caught the food-scent. He ceased rocking for a space and forgot to groan, while a look of intelligence seemed to come into his face.

Zilla, on the other hand, rocked more rapidly, and for the first time, in sharp little yelps, voiced her pain. It came to me that their behavior was like that of hungry dogs, and in the fitness of things I should not have been astonished had Zilla suddenly developed a tail and thumped it on the floor in right doggish fashion. Ebbits drooled a little and stopped his rocking very frequently to lean forward and thrust his tremulous nose nearer to the source of gustatory excitement.

When I passed them each a plate of the fried meat, they ate greedily, making loud mouth-noises — champings of worn teeth and sucking intakes of the breath, accompanied by a continuous spluttering and mumbling. After that, when I gave them each a mug of scalding tea, the noises ceased. Easement and content came into their faces. Zilla relaxed her sour mouth long enough to sigh her satisfaction. Neither rocked

any more, and they seemed to have fallen into placid meditation. Then a dampness came into Ebbits's eyes, and I knew that the sorrow of self-pity was his. The search required to find their pipes told plainly that they had been without tobacco a long time, and the old man's eagerness for the narcotic rendered him helpless, so that I was compelled to light his pipe for him.

"Why are you all alone in the village?" I asked. "Is everybody dead? Has there been a great sickness? Are you alone left of the living?"

Old Ebbits shook his head, saying: "Nay, there has been no great sickness. The village has gone away to hunt meat. We be too old, our legs are not strong, nor can our backs carry the burdens of camp and trail. Wherefore we remain here and wonder when the young men will return with meat."

"What if the young men do return with meat?" Zilla demanded harshly.

"They may return with much meat," he quavered hopefully.

"Even so, with much meat," she continued, more harshly than before. "But of what worth to you and me? A few bones to gnaw in our toothless old age. But the back-fat, the kidneys, and the tongues — these shall go into other mouths than thine and mine, old man."

Ebbits nodded his head and wept silently.

"There be no one to hunt meat for us," she cried, turning fiercely upon me.

There was accusation in her manner, and I shrugged my shoulders in token that I was not guilty of the unknown crime imputed to me.

"Know, O White Man, that it is because of thy kind, because of all white men, that my man and I have no meat in our old age and sit without tobacco in the cold."

"Nay," Ebbits said gravely, with a stricter sense of justice. "Wrong has been done us, it be true; but the white men did not mean the wrong."

"Where be Moklan?" she demanded. "Where be thy strong son, Moklan, and the fish he was ever willing to bring that you might eat?"

The old man shook his head.

"And where be Bidarshik, thy strong son? Ever was he a mighty hunter, and ever did he bring thee the good back-fat and the sweet dried tongues of the moose and the caribou. I see no back-fat and no sweet dried tongues. Your stomach is full with emptiness through the days, and it is for a man of a very miserable and lying people to give you to eat."

"Nay," old Ebbits interposed in kindliness, "the white man's is not a lying people. The white man speaks true. Always does the white man speak true." He paused, casting about him for words wherewith to temper the severity of what he was about to say. "But the white man speaks true in different ways. To-day he speaks true one way, to-morrow he speaks true another way, and there is no understanding him nor his way."

"To-day speak true one way, to-morrow speak true another way, which is to lie," was Zilla's dictum.

"There is no understanding the white man," Ebbits went on doggedly.

The meat, and the tea, and the tobacco seemed to have brought him back to life, and he gripped tighter hold of the idea behind his age-bleared eyes. He straightened up somewhat. His voice lost its querulous and whimpering note, and became strong and positive. He turned upon me with dignity, and addressed me as equal addresses equal.

"The white man's eyes are not shut," he began. "The white man sees all things, and thinks greatly, and is very wise. But the white man of one day is not the white man of next day, and there is no understanding him. He does not do things always in the same way. And what way his next way is to be, one cannot know. Always does the Indian do the one thing in the one way. Always does the moose come down from the high mountains when the winter is here. Always does the salmon come in the spring when the ice has gone out of the river. Always does everything do all things in the same way, and the Indian knows and understands. But the white man does not do all things in the same way, and the Indian does not know nor understand.

"Tobacco be very good. It be food to the hungry man. It makes the strong man stronger, and the angry man to forget that he is angry. Also is tobacco of value. It is of very great value. The Indian gives one large salmon for one leaf of tobacco, and he chews the tobacco for a long time. It is the juice of the tobacco that is good. When it runs down his throat it makes him feel good inside. But the white man! When his mouth is full with the juice, what does he do? That juice, that juice of great value, he spits it out in the snow and it is lost. Does the white man like tobacco? I do not know. But if he likes tobacco, why does he spit out its value and lose it in the snow? It is a great foolishness and without understanding."

He ceased, puffed at the pipe, found that it was out, and passed it over to Zilla, who took the sneer at the white man off her lips in order to pucker them about the pipe-stem. Ebbits seemed sinking back into his senility with the tale untold, and I demanded:

"What of thy sons, Moklan and Bidarshik? And why is it that you and your old woman are without meat at the end of your years?"

He roused himself as from sleep, and straightened up with an effort.

"It is not good to steal," he said. "When the dog takes your meat you beat the dog with a club. Such is the law. It is the law the man gave to the dog, and the dog must live to the law, else will it suffer the pain of the club. When man takes your meat, or your canoe, or your wife, you kill that man. That is the law, and it is a good law. It is not good to steal, wherefore it is the law that the man who steals must die. Whoso breaks the law must suffer hurt. It is a great hurt to die."

"But if you kill the man, why do you not kill the dog?" I asked.

Old Ebbits looked at me in childlike wonder, while Zilla sneered openly at the absurdity of my question.

"It is the way of the white man," Ebbits mumbled with an air of resignation.

"It is the foolishness of the white man," snapped Zilla.

"Then let old Ebbits teach the white man wisdom," I said softly.

"The dog is not killed, because it must pull the sled of the man. No man pulls another man's sled, wherefore the man is killed."

"Oh," I murmured.

"That is the law," old Ebbits went on. "Now listen, O White Man, and I will tell you of a great foolishness. There is an Indian. His name is Mobits. From white man he steals two pounds of flour. What does the white man do? Does he beat Mobits? No. Does he kill Mobits? No. What does he do to Mobits? I will tell you, O White Man. He has a house. He puts Mobits in that house. The roof is good. The walls are thick. He makes a fire that Mobits may be warm. He gives Mobits plenty grub to eat. It is good grub. Never in his all days does Mobits eat so good grub. There is bacon, and bread, and beans without end. Mobits have very good time.

"There is a big lock on door so that Mobits does not run away. This also is a great foolishness. Mobits will not run away. All the time is there plenty grub in that place, and warm blankets, and a big fire. Very foolish to run away. Mobits is not foolish. Three months Mobits stop in that place. He steal two pounds of flour. For that, white man take plenty good care of him. Mobits eat many pounds of flour, many pounds of sugar, of bacon, of beans without end. Also, Mobits drink much tea. After three months white man open door and tell Mobits he must go. Mobits does not want to go. He is like dog that is fed long time in one place. He want to stay in that place, and the white man must drive Mobits away. So Mobits come back to this village, and he is very fat. That is the white man's way, and there is no understanding it. It is a foolishness, a great foolishness."

"But thy sons?" I insisted. "Thy very strong sons and thine old-age hunger?"

"There was Moklan," Ebbits began.

"A strong man," interrupted the mother. "He could dip paddle all of a day and night and never stop for the need of rest. He was wise in the way of the salmon and in the way of the water. He was very wise."

"There was Moklan," Ebbits repeated, ignoring the interruption. "In the spring, he went down the Yukon with the young men to trade at Cambell Fort. There is a post there, filled with the goods of the white man, and a trader whose name is Jones. Likewise is there a white man's medicine man, what you call missionary. Also is there bad water at Cambell Fort, where the Yukon goes slim like a maiden, and the water is fast, and the currents rush this way and that and come together, and there are whirls and sucks, and always are the currents changing and the face of the water changing, so at any two times it is never the same. Moklan is my son, wherefore he is brave man — "

"Was not my father brave man?" Zilla demanded.

"Thy father was brave man," Ebbits acknowledged, with the air of one who will keep peace in the house at any cost. "Moklan is thy son and mine, wherefore he is brave. Mayhap, because of thy very brave father, Moklan is too brave. It is like when too much water is put in the pot it spills over. So too much bravery is put into Moklan, and the bravery spills over.

"The young men are much afraid of the bad water at Cambell Fort. But Moklan is not afraid. He laughs strong, Ho! ho! and he goes forth into the bad water. But where the currents come together he canoe is turned over. A whirl takes Moklan by the legs, and he goes around and around, and down and down, and is seen no more."

"Ai! ai!" wailed Zilla. "Crafty and wise was he, and my first-born!"

"I am the father of Moklan," Ebbits said, having patiently given the woman space for her noise. "I get into canoe and journey down to Cambell Fort to collect the debt!"

"Debt!" interrupted. "What debt?"

"The debt of Jones, who is chief trader," came the answer. "Such is the law of travel in a strange country."

I shook my head in token of my ignorance, and Ebbits looked compassion at me, while Zilla snorted her customary contempt.

"Look you, O White Man," he said. "In thy camp is a dog that bites. When the dog bites a man, you give that man a present because you are sorry and because it is thy dog. You make payment. Is it not so? Also, if you have in thy country bad hunting, or bad water, you must make payment. It is just. It is the law. Did not my father's brother go over into the Tanana Country and get killed by a bear? And did not the Tanana tribe pay my father many blankets and fine furs? It was just. It was bad hunting, and the Tanana people made payment for the bad hunting.

"So I, Ebbits, journeyed down to Cambell Fort to collect the debt. Jones, who is chief trader, looked at me, and he laughed. He made great laughter, and would not give payment. I went to the medicine-man, what you call missionary, and had large talk about the bad water and the payment that should be mine. And the missionary made talk about other things. He talk about where Moklan has gone, now he is dead. There be large fires in that place, and if missionary make true talk, I know that Moklan will be cold no more. Also the missionary talk about where I shall go when I am dead. And he say bad things. He say that I am blind. Which is a lie. He say that I am in great darkness. Which is a lie. And I say that the day come and the night come for everybody just the same, and that in my village it is no more dark than at Cambell Fort. Also, I say that darkness and light and where we go when we die be different things from the matter of payment of just debt for bad water. Then the missionary make large anger, and call me bad names of darkness, and tell me to go away. And so I come back from Cambell Fort, and no payment has been made, and Moklan is dead, and in my old age I am without fish and meat."

"Because of the white man," said Zilla.

"Because of the white man," Ebbits concurred. "And other things because of the white man. There was Bidarshik. One way did the white man deal with him; and yet another way for the same thing did the white man deal with Yamikan. And first must I tell you of Yamikan, who was a young man of this village and who chanced to kill a white man. It is not good to kill a man of another people. Always is there great trouble. It was not the fault of Yamikan that he killed the white man. Yamikan spoke always soft words and ran away from wrath as a dog from a stick. But this white man drank

much whiskey, and in the night-time came to Yamikan's house and made much fight. Yamikan cannot run away, and the white man tries to kill him. Yamikan does not like to die, so he kills the white man.

"Then is all the village in great trouble. We are much afraid that we must make large payment to the white man's people, and we hide our blankets, and our furs, and all our wealth, so that it will seem that we are poor people and can make only small payment. After long time white men come. They are soldier white men, and they take Yamikan away with them. His mother make great noise and throw ashes in her hair, for she knows Yamikan is dead. And all the village knows that Yamikan is dead, and is glad that no payment is asked.

"That is in the spring when the ice has gone out of the river. One year go by, two years go by. It is spring-time again, and the ice has gone out of the river. And then Yamikan, who is dead, comes back to us, and he is not dead, but very fat, and we know that he has slept warm and had plenty grub to eat. He has much fine clothes and is all the same white man, and he has gathered large wisdom so that he is very quick head man in the village.

"And he has strange things to tell of the way of the white man, for he has seen much of the white man and done a great travel into the white man's country. First place, soldier white men take him down the river long way. All the way do they take him down the river to the end, where it runs into a lake which is larger than all the land and large as the sky. I do not know the Yukon is so big river, but Yamikan has seen with his own eyes. I do not think there is a lake larger than all the land and large as the sky, but Yamikan has seen. Also, he has told me that the waters of this lake be salt, which is a strange thing and beyond understanding.

"But the White Man knows all these marvels for himself, so I shall not weary him with the telling of them. Only will I tell him what happened to Yamikan. The white man give Yamikan much fine grub. All the time does Yamikan eat, and all the time is there plenty more grub. The white man lives under the sun, so said Yamikan, where there be much warmth, and animals have only hair and no fur, and the green things grow large and strong and become flour, and beans, and potatoes. And under the sun there is never famine. Always is there plenty grub. I do not know. Yamikan has said.

"And here is a strange thing that befell Yamikan. Never did the white man hurt him. Only did they give him warm bed at night and plenty fine grub. They take him across the salt lake which is big as the sky. He is on white man's fire-boat, what you call steamboat, only he is on boat maybe twenty times bigger than steamboat on Yukon. Also, it is made of iron, this boat, and yet does it not sink. This I do not understand, but Yamikan has said, 'I have journeyed far on the iron boat; behold! I am still alive.' It is a white man's soldier-boat with many soldier men upon it.

"After many sleeps of travel, a long, long time, Yamikan comes to a land where there is no snow. I cannot believe this. It is not in the nature of things that when winter comes there shall be no snow. But Yamikan has seen. Also have I asked the white men, and they have said yes, there is no snow in that country. But I cannot believe, and

now I ask you if snow never come in that country. Also, I would hear the name of that country. I have heard the name before, but I would hear it again, if it be the same - thus will I know if I have heard lies or true talk."

Old Ebbits regarded me with a wistful face. He would have the truth at any cost, though it was his desire to retain his faith in the marvel he had never seen.

"Yes," I answered, "it is true talk that you have heard. There is no snow in that country, and its name is California."

"Cal-ee-forn-ee-yeh," he mumbled twice and thrice, listening intently to the sound of the syllables as they fell from his lips. He nodded his head in confirmation. "Yes, it is the same country of which Yamikan made talk."

I recognized the adventure of Yamikan as one likely to occur in the early days when Alaska first passed into the possession of the United States. Such a murder case, occurring before the instalment of territorial law and officials, might well have been taken down to the United States for trial before a Federal court.

"When Yamikan is in this country where there is no snow," old Ebbits continued, "he is taken to large house where many men make much talk. Long time men talk. Also many questions do they ask Yamikan. By and by they tell Yamikan he have no more trouble. Yamikan does not understand, for never has he had any trouble. All the time have they given him warm place to sleep and plenty grub.

"But after that they give him much better grub, and they give him money, and they take him many places in white man's country, and he see many strange things which are beyond the understanding of Ebbits, who is an old man and has not journeyed far. After two years, Yamikan comes back to this village, and he is head man, and very wise until he dies.

"But before he dies, many times does he sit by my fire and make talk of the strange things he has seen. And Bidarshik, who is my son, sits by the fire and listens; and his eyes are very wide and large because of the things he hears. One night, after Yamikan has gone home, Bidarshik stands up, so, very tall, and he strikes his chest with his fist, and says, 'When I am a man, I shall journey in far places, even to the land where there is no snow, and see things for myself.'"

"Always did Bidarshik journey in far places," Zilla interrupted proudly.

"It be true," Ebbits assented gravely. "And always did he return to sit by the fire and hunger for yet other and unknown far places."

"And always did he remember the salt lake as big as the sky and the country under the sun where there is no snow," quoth Zilla.

"And always did he say, 'When I have the full strength of a man, I will go and see for myself if the talk of Yamikan be true talk,'" said Ebbits.

"But there was no way to go to the white man's country," said Zilla.

"Did he not go down to the salt lake that is big as the sky?" Ebbits demanded.

"And there was no way for him across the salt lake," said Zilla.

"Save in the white man's fire-boat which is of iron and is bigger than twenty steamboats on the Yukon," said Ebbits. He scowled at Zilla, whose withered lips were again

writhing into speech, and compelled her to silence. "But the white man would not let him cross the salt lake in the fire-boat, and he returned to sit by the fire and hunger for the country under the sun where there is no snow.'"

"Yet on the salt lake had he seen the fire-boat of iron that did not sink," cried out Zilla the irrepressible.

"Ay," said Ebbits, "and he saw that Yamikan had made true talk of the things he had seen. But there was no way for Bidarshik to journey to the white man's land under the sun, and he grew sick and weary like an old man and moved not away from the fire. No longer did he go forth to kill meat - "

"And no longer did he eat the meat placed before him," Zilla broke in. "He would shake his head and say, 'Only do I care to eat the grub of the white man and grow fat after the manner of Yamikan.'"

"And he did not eat the meat," Ebbits went on. "And the sickness of Bidarshik grew into a great sickness until I thought he would die. It was not a sickness of the body, but of the head. It was a sickness of desire. I, Ebbits, who am his father, make a great think. I have no more sons and I do not want Bidarshik to die. It is a head-sickness, and there is but one way to make it well. Bidarshik must journey across the lake as large as the sky to the land where there is no snow, else will he die. I make a very great think, and then I see the way for Bidarshik to go.

"So, one night when he sits by the fire, very sick, his head hanging down, I say, 'My son, I have learned the way for you to go to the white man's land.' He looks at me, and his face is glad. 'Go,' I say, 'even as Yamikan went.' But Bidarshik is sick and does not understand. 'Go forth,' I say, 'and find a white man, and, even as Yamikan, do you kill that white man. Then will the soldier white men come and get you, and even as they took Yamikan will they take you across the salt lake to the white man's land. And then, even as Yamikan, will you return very fat, your eyes full of the things you have seen, your head filled with wisdom.'

"And Bidarshik stands up very quick, and his hand is reaching out for his gun. 'Where do you go?' I ask. 'To kill the white man,' he says. And I see that my words have been good in the ears of Bidarshik and that he will grow well again. Also do I know that my words have been wise.

"There is a white man come to this village. He does not seek after gold in the ground, nor after furs in the forest. All the time does he seek after bugs and flies. He does not eat the bugs and flies, then why does he seek after them? I do not know. Only do I know that he is a funny white man. Also does he seek after the eggs of birds. He does not eat the eggs. All that is inside he takes out, and only does he keep the shell. Eggshell is not good to eat. Nor does he eat the eggshells, but puts them away in soft boxes where they will not break. He catch many small birds. But he does not eat the birds. He takes only the skins and puts them away in boxes. Also does he like bones. Bones are not good to eat. And this strange white man likes best the bones of long time ago which he digs out of the ground.

"But he is not a fierce white man, and I know he will die very easy; so I say to Bidarshik, 'My son, there is the white man for you to kill.' And Bidarshik says that my words be wise. So he goes to a place he knows where are many bones in the ground. He digs up very many of these bones and brings them to the strange white man's camp. The white man is made very glad. His face shines like the sun, and he smiles with much gladness as he looks at the bones. He bends his head over, so, to look well at the bones, and then Bidarshik strikes him hard on the head, with axe, once, so, and the strange white man kicks and is dead.

"'Now,' I say to Bidarshik, 'will the white soldier men come and take you away to the land under the sun, where you will eat much and grow fat.' Bidarshik is happy. Already has his sickness gone from him, and he sits by the fire and waits for the coming of the white soldier men.

"How was I to know the way of the white man is never twice the same?" the old man demanded, whirling upon me fiercely. "How was I to know that what the white man does yesterday he will not do to- day, and that what he does to-day he will not do to-morrow?" Ebbits shook his head sadly. "There is no understanding the white man. Yesterday he takes Yamikan to the land under the sun and makes him fat with much grub. To-day he takes Bidarshik and - what does he do with Bidarshik? Let me tell you what he does with Bidarshik.

"I, Ebbits, his father, will tell you. He takes Bidarshik to Cambell Fort, and he ties a rope around his neck, so, and, when his feet are no more on the ground, he dies."

"Ai! ai!" wailed Zilla. "And never does he cross the lake large as the sky, nor see the land under the sun where there is no snow."

"Wherefore," old Ebbits said with grave dignity, "there be no one to hunt meat for me in my old age, and I sit hungry by my fire and tell my story to the White Man who has given me grub, and strong tea, and tobacco for my pipe."

"Because of the lying and very miserable white people," Zilla proclaimed shrilly.

"Nay," answered the old man with gentle positiveness. "Because of the way of the white man, which is without understanding and never twice the same."

The White Silence

Carmen won't last more than a couple of days. "Mason spat out a chunk of ice and surveyed the poor animal ruefully, then put her foot in his mouth and proceeded to bite out the ice which clustered cruelly between the toes.

"I never saw a dog with a highfalutin' name that ever was worth a rap," he said, as he concluded his task and shoved her aside. "They just fade away and die under the responsibility. Did ye ever see one go wrong with a sensible name like Cassiar, Siwash, or Husky? No, sir! Take a look at Shookum here, he's — ; "

Snap! The lean brute flashed up, the white teeth just missing Mason's throat.

"Ye will, will ye?" A shrewd clout behind the ear with the butt of the dogwhip stretched the animal in the snow, quivering softly, a yellow slaver dripping from its fangs.

"As I was saying, just look at Shookum, here — he 's got the spirit. Bet ye he eats Carmen before the week's out."

"I'll bank another proposition against that," replied Malemute Kid, reversing the frozen bread placed before the fire to thaw. "We'll eat Shookum before the trip is over. What d' ye say, Ruth?"

The Indian woman settled the coffee with a piece of ice, glanced from Malemute Kid to her husband, then at the dogs, but vouchsafed no reply. It was such a palpable truism that none was necessary. Two hundred miles of unbroken trail in prospect, with a scant six days' grub for themselves and none for the dogs, could admit no other alternative. The two men and the woman grouped about the fire and began their meagre meal. The dogs lay in their harnesses, for it was a midday halt, and watched each mouthful enviously.

"No more lunches after to-day," said Malemute Kid. "And we've got to keep a close eye on the dogs, — they're getting vicious. They'd just as soon pull a fellow down as not, if they get a chance."

"And I was president of an Epworth once, and taught in the Sunday school." Having irrelevantly delivered himself of this, Mason fell into a dreamy contemplation of his steaming moccasins, but was aroused by Ruth filling his cup. "Thank God, we've got slathers of tea! I've seen it growing, down in Tennessee. What wouldn't I give for a hot corn pone just now! Never mind, Ruth; you won't starve much longer, nor wear moccasins either."

The woman threw off her gloom at this, and in her eyes welled up a great love for her white lord, — the first white man she had ever seen, — the first man whom she had known to treat a woman as something better than a mere animal or beast of burden.

"Yes, Ruth," continued her husband, having recourse to the macaronic jargon in which it was alone possible for them to understand each other; "wait till we clean up and pull for the Outside. We'll take the White Man's canoe and go to the Salt Water. Yes, bad water, rough water, — great mountains dance up and down all the time. And so big, so far, so far away, — you travel ten sleep, twenty sleep, forty sleep" (he graphically enumerated the days on his fingers), "all the time water, bad water. Then you come to great village, plenty people, just the same mosquitoes next summer. Wigwams oh, so high, — ten, twenty pines. Hi-yu skookum!"

He paused impotently, cast an appealing glance at Malemute Kid, then laboriously placed the twenty pines, end on end, by sign language. Malemute Kid smiled with cheery cynicism; but Ruth's eyes were wide with wonder, and with pleasure; for she half believed he was joking, and such condescension pleased her poor woman's heart.

"And then you step into a — a box, and pouf! up you go." He tossed his empty cup in the air by way of illustration, and as he deftly caught it, cried: "And biff! down you come. Oh, great medicine-men! You go Fort Yukon, I go Arctic City, — twenty-five sleep, — big string, all the time, — I catch him string, — I say, 'Hello, Ruth! How are ye?' — and you say, 'Is that my good husband?' — and I say 'Yes,' — and you say, 'No can bake good bread, no more soda,' — then say, 'Look in cache, under flour; good-by.' You look and catch plenty soda. All the time you Fort Yukon, me Arctic City. Hi-yu medicine-man!"

Ruth smiled so ingenuously at the fairy story, that both men burst into laughter. A row among the dogs cut short the wonders of the Outside, and by the time the snarling combatants were separated, she had lashed the sleds and all was ready for the trail.

"Mush! Baldy! Hi! Mush on!" Mason worked his whip smartly, and as the dogs whined low in the traces, broke out the sled with the gee-pole. Ruth followed with the second team, leaving Malemute Kid, who had helped her start, to bring up the rear. Strongman, brute that he was, capable of felling an ox at a blow, he could not bear to beat the poor animals, but humored them as a dog-driver rarely does, — nay, almost wept with them in their misery.

"Come, mush on there, you poor sore-footed brutes!" he murmured, after several ineffectual attempts to start the load. But his patience was at last rewarded, and though whimpering with pain, they hastened to join their fellows.

No more conversation; the toil of the trail will not permit such extravagance. And of all deadening labors, that of the Northland trail is the worst. Happy is the man who can weather a day's travel at the price of silence, and that on a beaten track.

And of all heart-breaking labors, that of breaking trail is the worst. At every step the great webbed shoe sinks till the snow is level with the knee. Then up, straight up, the deviation of a fraction of an inch being a certain precursor of disaster, the snowshoe must be lifted till the surface is cleared; then forward, down, and the other foot is raised perpendicularly for the matter of half a yard. He who tries this for the first time, if haply he avoids bringing his shoes in dangerous propinquity and measures not his length on the treacherous footing, will give up exhausted at the end of a hundred

yards; he who can keep out of the way of the dogs for a whole day may well crawl into his sleeping-bag with a clear conscience and a pride which passeth all understanding; and he who travels twenty sleeps on the Long Trail is a man whom the gods may envy.

The afternoon wore on, and with the awe, born of the White Silence, the voiceless travelers bent to their work. Nature has many tricks wherewith she convinces man of his finity, — the ceaseless flow of the tides, the fury of the storm, the shock of the earthquake, the long roll of heaven's artillery, — but the most tremendous, the most stupefying of all, is the passive phase of the White Silence. All movement ceases, the sky clears, the heavens are as brass; the slightest whisper seems sacrilege, and man becomes timid, affrighted at the sound of his own voice. Sole speck of life journeying across the ghostly wastes of a dead world, he trembles at his audacity, realizes that his is a maggot's life, nothing more. Strange thoughts arise unsummoned, and the mystery of all things strives for utterance. And the fear of death, of God, of the universe, comes over him, — the hope of the Resurrection and the Life, the yearning for immortality, the vain striving of the imprisoned essence, — it is then, if ever, man walks alone with God.

So wore the day away. The river took a great bend, and Mason headed his team for the cut-off across the narrow neck of land. But the dogs balked at the high bank. Again and again, though Ruth and Malemute Kid were shoving on the sled, they slipped back. Then came the concerted effort. The miserable creatures, weak from hunger, exerted their last strength. Up — up — the sled poised on the top of the bank; but the leader swung the string of dogs behind him to the right, fouling Mason's snowshoes. The result was grievous. Mason was whipped off his feet; one of the dogs fell in the traces; and the sled toppled back, dragging everything to the bottom again.

Slash! the whip fell among the dogs savagely, especially upon the one which had fallen.

"Don't, Mason," entreated Malemute Kid; "the poor devil 's on its last legs. Wait and we 'll put my team on."

Mason deliberately withheld the whip till the last word had fallen, then out flashed the long lash, completely curling about the offending creature's body. Carmen — for it was Carmen — cowered in the snow, cried piteously, then rolled over on her side.

It was a tragic moment, a pitiful incident of the trail, — a dying dog, two comrades in anger. Ruth glanced solicitously from man to man. But Malemute Kid restrained himself, though there was a world of reproach in his eyes, and bending over the dog, cut the traces. No word was spoken. The teams were double-spanned and the difficulty overcome; the sleds were under way again, the dying dog dragging herself along in the rear. As long as an animal can travel, it is not shot, and this last chance is accorded it, — the crawling into camp, if it can, in the hope of a moose being killed.

Already penitent for his angry action, but too stubborn to make amends, Mason toiled on at the head of the cavalcade, little dreaming that danger hovered in the air. The timber clustered thick in the sheltered bottom, and through this they threaded their way. Fifty feet or more from the trail towered a lofty pine. For generations it had

stood there, and for generations destiny had had this one end in view, — perhaps the same had been decreed of Mason.

He stooped to fasten the loosened thong of his moccasin. The sleds came to a halt and the dogs lay down in the snow without a whimper. The stillness was weird; not a breath rustled the frost-encrusted forest; the cold and silence of outer space had chilled the heart and smote the trembling lips of nature. A sigh pulsed through the air, — they did not seem to actually hear it, but rather felt it, like the premonition of movement in a motionless void. Then the great tree, burdened with its weight of years and snow, played its last part in the tragedy of life. He heard the warning crash and attempted to spring up, but almost erect, caught the blow squarely on the shoulder.

The sudden danger, the quick death, — how often had Malemute Kid faced it! The pine needles were still quivering as he gave his commands and sprang into action. Nor did the Indian girl faint or raise her voice in idle wailing, as might many of her white sisters. At his order, she threw her weight on the end of a quickly extemporized handspike, easing the pressure and listening to her husband's groans, while Malemute Kid attacked the tree with his axe. The steel rang merrily as it bit into the frozen trunk, each stroke being accompanied by a forced, audible respiration, the "Huh!" "Huh!" of the woodsman. At last the Kid laid the pitiable thing that was once a man in the snow. But worse than his comrade's pain was the dumb anguish in the woman's face, the blended look of hopeful, hopeless query. Little was said; those of the Northland are early taught the futility of words and the inestimable value of deeds. With the temperature at sixty-five below zero, a man cannot lie many minutes in the snow and live. So the sled-lashings were cut, and the sufferer, rolled in furs, laid on a couch of boughs. Before him roared a fire, built of the very wood which wrought the mishap. Behind and partially over him was stretched the primitive fly, — a piece of canvas, which caught the radiating heat and threw it back and down upon him, — a trick which men may know who study physics at the fount.

And men who have shared their bed with death know when the call is sounded. Mason was terribly crushed. The most cursory examination revealed it. His right arm, leg, and back, were broken; his limbs were paralyzed from the hips; and the likelihood of internal injuries was large. An occasional moan was his only sign of life.

No hope; nothing to be done. The pitiless night crept slowly by, — Ruth's portion, the despairing stoicism of her race, and Malemute Kid adding new lines to his face of bronze. In fact, Mason suffered least of all, for he spent his time in Eastern Tennessee, in the Great Smoky Mountains, living over the scenes of his childhood. And most pathetic was the melody of his long-forgotten Southern vernacular, as he raved of swimming-holes and coon-hunts and watermelon raids. It was as Greek to Ruth, but the Kid understood and felt, — felt as only one can feel who has been shut out for years from all that civilization means.

Morning brought consciousness to the stricken man, and Malemute Kid bent closer to catch his whispers.

"You remember when we foregathered on the Tanana, four years come next ice-run? I didn't care so much for her then. It was more like she was pretty, and there was a smack of excitement about it, think. But d' ye know, I've come to think a heap of her. She's been a good wife to me, always at my shoulder in the pinch. And when it comes to trading, you know there isn't her equal. D'ye recollect the time she shot the Moosehorn Rapids to pull you and me off that rock, the bullets whipping the water like hailstones? — and the time of the famine at Nuklukyeto? — or when she raced the ice-run to bring the news? Yes, she's been a good wife to me, better'n that other one. Didn't know I 'd been there? Never told you, eh? Well, I tried it once, down in the States. That's why I'm here. Been raised together, too. I came away to give her a chance for divorce. She got it.

"But that's got nothing to do with Ruth. I had thought of cleaning up and pulling for the Outside next year, — her and I, — but it's too late. Don't send her back to her people, Kid. It's beastly hard for a woman to go back. Think of it! — nearly four years on our bacon and beans and flour and dried fruit, and then to go back to her fish and cariboo. It's not good for her to have tried our ways, to come to know they're better'n her people's, and then return to them. Take care of her, Kid, — why don't you, — but no, you always fought shy of them, — and you never told me why you came to this country. Be kind to her, and send her back to the States as soon as you can. But fix it so as she can come back, — liable to get homesick, you know.

"And the youngster — it's drawn us closer, Kid. I only hope it is a boy. Think of it! — flesh of my flesh, Kid. He mustn't stop in this country. And if it's a girl, why she can't. Sell my furs; they'll fetch at least five thousand, and I've got as much more with the company. And handle my interests with yours. I think that bench claim will show up. See that he gets a good schooling; and Kid, above all, don't let him come back. This country was not made for white men. "I'm a gone man, Kid. Three or four sleeps at the best. You've got to go on. You must go on! Remember, it's my wife, it's my boy, — O God! I hope it's a boy! You can't stay by me, — and charge you, a dying man, to pull on."

"Give me three days," pleaded Malemute Kid. "You may change for the better; something may turn up."

"No."

"Just three days."

"You must pull on."

"Two days."

"It's my wife and my boy, Kid. You would not ask it."

"One day."

"No, no! I charge" —

"Only one day. We can shave it through on the grub, and might knock over a moose."

"No, — all right; one day, but not a minute more. And Kid, don't — don't leave me to face it alone. Just a shot, one pull on the trigger. You understand. Think of it! Think of it! Flesh of my flesh, and I'll never live to see him!

"Send Ruth here. I want to say good-by and tell her that she must think of the boy and not wait till I'm dead. She might refuse to go with you if I didn't. Good-by, old man; good-by.

"Kid! I say — a — sink a hole above the pup, next to the slide. I panned out forty cents on my shovel there.

"And Kid!" he stooped lower to catch the last faint words, the dying man's surrender of his pride. "I'm sorry — for — you know — Carmen."

Leaving the girl crying softly over her man, Malemute Kid slipped into his parka and snowshoes, tucked his rifle under his arm, and crept away into the forest. He was no tyro in the stern sorrows of the Northland, but never had he faced so stiff a problem as this. In the abstract, it was a plain, mathematical proposition, — three possible lives as against one doomed one. But now he hesitated. For five years, shoulder to shoulder, on the rivers and trails, in the camps and mines, facing death by field and flood and famine, had they knitted the bonds of their comradeship. So close was the tie, that he had often been conscious of a vague jealousy of Ruth, from the first time she had come between. And now it must be severed by his own hand.

Though he prayed for a moose, just one moose, all game seemed to have deserted the land, and nightfall found the exhausted man crawling into camp, light-handed, heavy-hearted. An uproar from the dogs and shrill cries from Ruth hastened him.

Bursting into the camp, he saw the girl in the midst of the snarling pack, laying about her with an axe. The dogs had broken the iron rule of their masters and were rushing the grub. He joined the issue with his rifle reversed, and the hoary game of natural selection was played out with all the ruthlessness of its primeval environment. Rifle and axe went up and down, hit or missed with monotonous regularity; lithe bodies flashed, with wild eyes and dripping fangs; and man and beast fought for supremacy to the bitterest conclusion. Then the beaten brutes crept to the edge of the firelight, licking their wounds, voicing their misery to the stars.

The whole stock of dried salmon had been devoured, and perhaps five pounds of flour remained to tide them over two hundred miles of wilderness. Ruth returned to her husband, while Malemute Kid cut up the warm body of one of the dogs, the skull of which had been crushed by the axe. Every portion was carefully put away, save the hide and offal, which were cast to his fellows of the moment before.

Morning brought fresh trouble. The animals were turning on each other. Carmen, who still clung to her slender thread of life, was downed by the pack. The lash fell among them unheeded. They cringed and cried under the blows, but refused to scatter till the last wretched bit had disappeared, — bones, hide, hair, everything.

Malemute Kid went about his work, listening to Mason, who was back in Tennessee, delivering tangled discourses and wild exhortations to his brethren of other days.

Taking advantage of neighboring pines, he worked rapidly, and Ruth watched him make a cache similar to those sometimes used by hunters to preserve their meat from the wolverines and dogs. One after the other, he bent the tops of two small pines toward each other and nearly to the ground, making them fast with thongs of moosehide. Then

he beat the dogs into submission and harnessed them to two of the sleds, loading the same with everything but the furs which enveloped Mason. These he wrapped and lashed tightly about him, fastening either end of the robes to the bent pines. A single stroke of his hunting knife would release them and send the body high in the air.

Ruth had received her husband's last wishes and made no struggle. Poor girl, she had learned the lesson of obedience well. From a child, she had bowed, and seen all women bow, to the lords of creation, and it did not seem in the nature of things for woman to resist. The Kid permitted her one outburst of grief, as she kissed her husband — her won people had no such custom — then led her to the foremost sled and helped her into her snowshoes. Blindly, instinctively, she took the gee pole and whip, and "mushed" the dogs out on the trail. Then he returned to Mason, who had fallen into a come, and long after she was out of sight crouched by the fire, waiting, hoping, praying for his comrade to die.

It is not pleasant to be alone with painful thoughts in the White Silence. The silence of gloom is merciful, shrouding one as with protection and breathing a thousand intangible sympathies; but the bright White Silence, clear and cold, under steely skies, is pitiless.

An hour passed — two hours — but the man would not die. At high noon the sun, without raising its rim above the southern horizon, threw a suggestion of fire athwart the heavens, then quickly drew it back. Malemute Kid roused and dragged himself to his comrade's side. He cast one glance about him. The White Silence seemed to sneer, and a great fear came upon him. There was a sharp report; mason swung into his aerial sepulcher, and Malemute Kid lashed the dogs into a wild gallop as he fled across the snow.

Who Believes in Ghosts!

"A REMARKABLY good one — for you; but I know of one that beats — "

"No, no, Damon. I know you always have a story to cap the last one; but I meant this in all honesty, and if you doubt its truth, at least believe my sincerity in telling it."

"George! You don't mean to tell me that you really believe in ghosts? Why, the very idea is absurd, and to connect credence in such a thing with you is — is — " and Van Buster, otherwise known as Damon, paused for lack of an expletive, and finally exploded in "Preposterous!"

"But I do believe in it, and in my faith I am not alone, for on my side I can array the greatest lights of every age from the days of Chaldean necromancy down to the cold, scientific 'to day.' Pause and reflect, O Damon and Pythias, too, for I can see the skeptical twinkle in your eye. Remember that in every time, in every land, and in every people, there have been and there are many who did believe in the soul's return after death. Can you, with this great mass of evidence staring you in the face, say that it is all the creation of diseased brains and abnormal imaginations?" And as Damon and Pythias both affirmed his accusation, he concluded with a pious hope that some day they would be forced to change their minds by a proof very unpleasantly applied.

"Come, come, Pythias! What have you to say in our mutual defense? Show our credulous friend the firm foundation on which we stand. Bring all your mighty logic to bear, and sophistry, too, for it is a very bad case. Show him that this psychic force is but the creation of man's too fertile imagination; prove to him that these earth-bound spirits, astral forms and disembodied entities are but chimeras!"

"Ah, Damon," he lazily drawled, "I care not to waste my stupendous knowledge and laborious research on such petty subjects. If I were challenged into controversy on the land, tariff or finance question, I fain would reply; but this seems too much like the nursery babble on the bogie man. Earth-bound spirits forsooth! All I can say to dear George is that he is an ass, and until he can introduce me to some astral form, I dismiss the subject."

In no wise put out by the sarcasm of his friends, George said: "I feel like singing that old doggerel —

'Just go down to Derby town,

And see the same as I.'

For I have seen many, and what I consider authentic, proofs of the existence and activity of this force. I know that all argument is useless when I have opposed to me, two such master minds; yet so far have they sank into intellectual stagnation, that they know not, and know not that they know not.

We all view the world through colored glasses; but their glasses are so very, very green, that one almost feels — "

"And you must confess that yours are rather smoky," interrupted Damon. "But come, George, we'll not quarrel over such a subject. You know the position I always assume when dealing with the unknown. I neither affirm nor deny, and I can but say that plausibility, if not possibility, is with your belief. In justice to you, to myself and to the world, all I can say is that I do not know, but would like to know. And I coincide with Pythias in asking you to bring us personally in contact with these disembodied souls."

"There's the old Birchall mansion," drawled Pythias; "perhaps we can gain an introduction there. They say it's haunted."

"The very place!" cried Damon. "Do you think the ghost that walks the gloomy corridors at midnight's dread hour, etc., would condescend to become visible for the edification of two such miserable, unbelieving mortals as we are? Here's a grand opportunity — it's only ten, and we can be there by eleven. Pythias and I will arm ourselves with a couple of dozen candles, half a dozen ounces of Durham, and 'Trilby' to read aloud turn about, — the last to affect and prepare our imaginations. What say you, Pythias, to the lark?"

"I am always agreeable," he replied. "I've got the time to spare now from my grind. I'm through the ex'es, you know. But I move to amend by striking out 'Trilby' and inserting chess. Also that we bring a bunch of fire-crackers to let off when the ghost makes his appearance. It might be a Chinese devil, you know. And of course you'll

accompany us, George? No? Then you had better find a companion and keep guard outside in case of accidents, and to see that we do not run away."

"That's easily arranged," answered George. "I can get Fred. He will just be going out now to hunt cats."

"Hunt cats!" from Damon and Pythias.

"Yes, hunt cats. You see he's deep in Gray's Anatomy now, and is hard run for subjects. Why, he even did away with his sister's big Maltese, and so proud was he when he had articulated it, that he had the cheek to show it to her, telling her it was the skeleton of a rabbit."

"The brute!"

"The cat?"

"No, Fred. How poor Dora must have mourned for her lost tabby."

"He ought to be thrashed."

"No, dissected, the articulated and presented to his bereaved relatives as the missing link. They would no more recognize him than did Dora her cat."

"If cats had souls I would be afraid to venture out at night if I were he. Have they got souls, George?"

"I don't know; but don't let's waste any more time, if we intend carrying this project outt. We must all meet by eleven sharp, in front of the house."

They agreed. So paying their reckoning, they left the restaurant — George to hunt up Fred, and Damon and Pythias to invest their spare cash in candles, fire-crackers and Durham.

By eleven, the four friends had assembled in fron of the Birchall mansion. They were all high-spirited, and when they came to part, George addressed them as follows:

"O Damon, the agnostic, and Pythias, the skeptic, heed well my last words. Ye venture within a place purported by the vulgar to be haunted. The truth of this as yet remains to be proven; but remember that this power, which you will have to contend with, will not be resisted as those earthly forces of which you have knowledge. It is mysterious, imponderable and powerful; it is invisible, yet oftentimes visible; and it can exert itself in innumerable ways. Opening locked doors, putting out lights, dropping bricks, and strange sounds, cries, curses and moans, are but the lower demonstrations of this phenomena. Also, as we have in this life men inclined to good and evil, so have we, in the life to come, spirits, both good and bad. Woe betide you if you are thrown in contact with evil spirits. You may be lifted up bodily and dashed to the floor or against the walls like a football; you may see grewsome sights even beyond the conception of mortal; and so great a terror may be brought upon you, that your minds may lose their balance and leave you gibbering idiots or violently insane. And again, these evil spirits have the power to deprive you of one, two or all your senses, if they wish. They can burst your ear-drums; sear your eyes; destroy your voice; sadly impair your sense of taste and smell, and paralyze the body in any or every nerve. And even as in the days of Christ, they may make their habitation within bodies, and you will be tormented with evil spirits, and then — the asylum and padded cells stares you in

the face. I have no advice to give you in dealing with this mysterious subject, for I am ignorant; but my parting words are, 'keep cool; may you prosper in your undertaking, and beware!'"

They then separated — Damon and Pythias in quest of ghosts, and George and Fred in quest of cats.

The first couple strode up to the front door; but finding it locked, and that the spirits did not respond after they had duly exercised the great, old fashioned knocker, they tried the windows on the long portico. These were also locked. After quite a scramble, they scaled the portico and found a second story window open. As soon as they gained an entrance they lighted a couple of candles and proceeded to explore.

Everything was old fashioned, dusty and musty; they had expected this. Commencing on the third floor, they thoroughly overhauled everything — opening the closets, pulling aside the rotten tapestries, looking for trapdoors and even sounding the walls. These actions, however, are accounted for by the fact that both had recently read "Emile Gaborian." Emulating Monsieur Lecoq, they even descended to the basement; but this was such a complex affair that they gave it up in despair.

Returning to the second floor with a couple of stools and a box they had found, they proceeded to make themselves comfortable in the cleanest room they could find. Though half a dozen candles illuminated the apartment, it still seemed dreary and desloate, and dampened their high spirits "to just the pitch," as Damon said, "for a good game of chess."

By the time an hour and a half had elapsed, they concluded their first game, and a magnificent game it had been. Pythias opened his watch and remarked, "Half past twelve and no ghost."

"The reason is the room is so smoky that the poor ghosts can't become visible," replied Damon. "Throw open the window and let some of it out."

This task accomplished, they arranged the board for another game. Just as Damon stretched forth his hand to advance the white king's pawn, he suddenly stopped with a startled expression on his face, as also did Pythias. Silently, and with questioning look, they glanced at each other, and their mutual, yet incomprehensible consternation, was apparent.

Again did he essay to advance the pawn, and again did he stop, and again did they gaze, startled, into each other's faces. The silence seemed so palpable that it pressed against them like a leaden weight. The tension on their nerves was terrible, and each strove to break it, but in vain. Then they thought of the warning George had given them. Was it possible? Could it be true? Had they been deprived of the power of speech by this conscious, psychic force, which neither believed in? As in a nightmare, they longed to cry out; to break the horrible, paralyzing influence. Pythias was deathly pale. while the prespiration formed in great drops on Damon's forehead, and trickling down the bridge of his nose, fell in a minute cataract upon his clean, white tie and glossy shirt front.

For an age it seemed to them, but not more thana couple of minutes they sat staring agonized at each other. At last their intuition warned them that affairs were approaching a crisis. They knew the strain could not last much longer.

Suddenly, weird and shrill, there rose on the still night air, and was wafted in through the open window, the cry of a cat; then there was a scramble as over the fence, the sound of rocks striking against boards, and the cat's triumphant cry was changed to a yowl of pain and terror which quickly turned to a choking gurgle, and they heard the enthusiastic voice of Fred sry, "Number one!"

As a diver rising from depths of ocean feels the wondrous pleasure when he drives the vitiated air from his lungs and breathes anew the essence of life, so felt they — but for a moment. The spell was not broken. Then their consternation returned, multiplied a thousand fold. Both felt a hysterical desire to laugh, so ludicrous appeared the situation. But by the mysterious power, even this was denied, and their faces were distorted in an idiotic gibber, This so horrified them that they quickly brought their wills to bear, and their faces resumed the expression of bewilderment.

Simultaneously a light dawned upon them. They had the power of motion left. The movement of their lips had demostrated this. They half rose, as though to flee, when the cowardice of it shamed them, and they resumed their seats. Pythias touched a bunch of fire-crackers to the candle and threw them in the middle of the room.

The crackers sputtered and whizzed, snapped and banged, filling the room with a dense cloud of smoke, which hung over them like a pall, weirdly oppressive in the terrifying silence that followed.

Then a strange sensation came over Damon. All fear of the supernatural seemed to leave him, being replaced by a wild, fierce all-absorbing desire to begin the game. In a vague sort of way, he realized that he was undergoing a reincarnation. He felt himself to be rapidly evolving into some one else, or some one else was rapidly evolving into him. His own personality disappeared and as in a dream, he found another and more powerful personality had been projected into, or had overcome — swallowed up his own. To himself he seemed to have become old and feeble, as he bent under a weight of years; yet, he felt the burden to be strangely light, as though upheld by the burning, enthusiastic excitement, which boiled and bubbled and thrilled within him. He felt as though his destiny lay in the board before him; as though his life, his soul, his all, hung in the balance of the game he was to play.

Then implacable hatred and horrid desire for revenge quickened to life within him. A thousand wrongs seemed to rise before him with vivid brightness; a thousand devils seemed urging him on to the consummation of his desire. How he hated that thing — that man who was Satan incarnate, who opposed him across the chessboard. He cast a defiant glance at him, and with the swiftness of a soaring eagle, his hatred increased as he looked on the treacherous, smiling face and into the half-veiled, deceitful eyes. It was not Pythias; he was gone — why and where he did not even wonder.

As these strange things had happened to Damon, so happened they to Pythias. He despised the opponent who faced him. He felt endowed with all the cunning and low

trickery of the world. The other was within his power; he knew that and was glad, as he smiled into his face with exasperating elation. The exultation to overthrow, to cast him down, rose paramount. He also desired to begin.

The game commenced. Damon boldy opened by offering the gambit. Pythias responded, but played on the defensive. Damon's attack was brilliant and rapid; but he was met by combinations so bold and novel, that by the twenty-seventh move it was broken up and Pythias still retained the gambit pawn.

Exerting himself anew, Damon, by a most sound and enduring method of attack, so placed Pythias that he had either to lose his queen or suffer mate in four moves. But by startling series of daring moves, Pythias extricated himself with the loss of two pawns and a knight.

Elated by success, Damon attacked wildly, but was repulsed by the more cautious play of his opponent, who, by creating a diversion on the right flank, and by delicate maneuvering recovered himself, and once more grappled his adversary on equal ground. And so the game, one of the greatest the world had ever seen, proceeded. It was a mighty duel in which the participants forgot that the world still moved on, and when the first gray of dawn appeared at the window, it found Damon in a serious prdicament.

He would be forced to double his rooks to avoid checkmate — he saw that. Then his opponent would check his queen under cover, and capture his red bishop. Checkmate would then be inevitable. Suddenly, however, a light broke upon the situation. A brilliant move was apparent to him. By a series of moves which he would inaugurate, he could force his adversary's queen and turn the tables.

Fate intervened. The shrill cry of a cat rose on the air and distracted his concentration. The contemplated move was lost to him, and the threatened mate so veiled the position to his reason, that he doubled his rooks, and inevitable mate in six moves confronted him.

His brain reeled; all the wrongs of a life-time hideously clamored for vengeance; all the deceits, the lies, the betrayals of his opponent, rose to his brain in startling brightness. He cursed the smiling fiend opposite him, and staggered to his feet. Murder raged like a burning demon through his thoughts, and springing upon Pythias with an awful cry, he buried both hands in his throat. He threw him, back down, upon the chess board, and not with the rage of a fiend, but with a wonderfully sublime joy, choked him till his face grew black and agonized.

It would have gone very bad for Pythias had not a rush of feet been heard on the stairs, a couple of policemen dashed in, and with Fred and George, tore them apart.

Then Damon came, bewidered, to his senses, and helped to restore his chum.

"It was the old Birchall-Duinsmore murder, nearly enacted over again," said the sergeant, as they stood on the corner talking it over. "Duinsmore, his nephew, had been his life's curse. From boyhood he had always brought him trouble. As a man, he broke Birchall's heart a dozen different ways, and at last, by cunning, thievish financering, he robbed him of all he had, except the mansion. One night, he prevailed upon the old man to stake it on a game of chess. It was all that stood between him and

the potter's field, and when he lost it, he became demented, and throttled his nephew across the very board on which had been played the decisive game."

"Good chess players?"

"It has been said that they were about the best the world has ever seen."

Whose Business is To Live

STANTON DAVIES and Jim Wemple ceased from their talk to listen to an increase of uproar in the street. A volley of stones thrummed and boomed the wire mosquito nettings that protected the windows. It was a hot night, and the sweat of the heat stood on their faces as they listened. Arose the incoherent clamor of the mob, punctuated by individual cries in Mexican-Spanish. Least terrible among the obscene threats were: "Death to the Gringos!" "Kill the American pigs!" "Drown the American dogs in the sea!"

Stanton Davies and Jim Wemple shrugged their shoulders patiently to each other, and resumed their conversation, talking louder in order to make themselves heard above the uproar.

"The question is how," Wemple said. "It's forty-seven miles to Panuco, by river — "

"And the land's impossible, with Zaragoza's and Villa's men on the loot and maybe fraternizing," Davies agreed.

Wemple nodded and continued: "And she's at the East Coast Magnolia, two miles beyond, if she isn't back at the hunting camp. We've got to get her — "

"We've played pretty square in this matter, Wemple," Davies said. "And we might as well speak up and acknowledge what each of us knows the other knows. You want her. I want her."

Wemple lighted a cigarette and nodded.

"And now's the time when it's up to us to make a show as if we didn't want her and that all we want is just to save her and get her down here."

"And a truce until we do save her — I get you," Wemple affirmed.

"A truce until we get her safe and sound back here in Tampico, or aboard a battleship. After that . . . ?"

Both men shrugged shoulders and beamed on each other as their hands met in ratification.

Fresh volleys of stones thrummed against the wire-screened windows; a boy's voice rose shrilly above the clamor, proclaiming death to the Gringos; and the house reverberated to the heavy crash of some battering ram against the street-door downstairs. Both men, snatching up automatic rifles, ran down to where their fire could command the threatened door.

"If they break in we've got to let them have it," Wemple said.

Davies nodded quiet agreement, then inconsistently burst out with a lurid string of oaths.

“To think of it!” he explained his wrath. “One out of three of those curs outside has worked for you or me — lean-bellied, bare-footed, poverty-stricken, glad for ten centavos a day if they could only get work. And we’ve given them steady jobs and a hundred and fifty centavos a day, and here they are yelling for our blood.”

“Only the half breeds;” Davies corrected.

“You know what I mean,” Wemple replied. “The only peons we’ve lost are those that have been run off or shot.”

The attack on the door ceasing, they returned upstairs. Half a dozen scattered shots from farther along the street seemed to draw away the mob, for the neighborhood became comparatively quiet.

A whistle came to them through the open windows, and a man’s voice calling:

“Wemple! Open the door! It’s Habert! Want to talk to you!”

Wemple went down, returning in several minutes with a tidily-paunched, well-built, gray-haired American of fifty. He shook hands with Davies and flung himself into a chair, breathing heavily. He did not relinquish his clutch on the Colt’s 44 automatic pistol, although he immediately addressed himself to the task of fishing a filled clip of cartridges from the pocket of his linen coat. He had arrived hatless and breathless, and the blood from a stone-cut on the cheek oozed down his face. He, too, in a fit of anger, springing to his feet when he had changed clips in his pistol, burst out with mouth-filling profanity.

“They had an American flag in the dirt, stamping and spitting on it. And they told me to spit on it.”

Wemple and Davies regarded him with silent interrogation.

“Oh, I know what you’re wondering!” he flared out. “Would I a-spit on it in the pinch? That’s what’s eating you. I’ll answer. Straight out, brass tacks, I WOULD. Put that in your pipe and smoke it.”

He paused to help himself to a cigar from the box on the table and to light it with a steady and defiant hand.

“Hell ! — I guess this neck of the woods knows Anthony Habert, and you can bank on it that it’s never located his yellow streak. Sure, in the pinch, I’d spit on Old Glory. What the hell d’ye think I’m going on the streets for a night like this? Didn’t I skin out of the Southern Hotel half an hour ago, where there are forty buck Americans, not counting their women, and all armed? That was safety. What d’ye think I came here for? — to rescue you?”

His indignation lumped his throat into silence, and he seemed shaken as with an apoplexy.

“Spit it out,” Davies commanded dryly.

“I’ll tell you,’ Habert exploded. “It’s Billy Boy. Fifty miles up country and twenty-thousand throat-cutting federals and rebels between him and me. D’ye know what that boy’d do, if he was here in Tampico and I was fifty miles up the Panuco? Well, I know. And I’m going to do the same — go and get him.”

“We’re figuring on going up,” Wemple assured him.

"And that's why I headed here — Miss Drexel, of course?"

Both men acquiesced and smiled. It was a time when men dared speak of matters which at other times tabooed speech.

"Then the thing's to get started," Habert exclaimed, looking at his watch. "It's midnight now. We've got to get to the river and get a boat — "

But the clamor of the returning mob came through the windows in answer.

Davies was about to speak, when the telephone rang, and Wemple sprang to the instrument.

"It's Carson," he interjected, as he listened. "They haven't cut the wires across the river yet. — Hello, Carson. Was it a break or a cut? . . . Bully for you. . . . Yes, move the mules across to the potrero beyond Tamcochin . . . . Who's at the water station? . . . Can you still 'phone him? . . . Tell him to keep the tanks full, and to shut off the main to Arico. Also, to hang on till the last minute, and keep a horse saddled to cut and run for it. Last thing before he runs, he must jerk out the 'phone . . . . Yes, yes, yes. Sure. No breeds. Leave full-blooded Indians in charge. Gabriel is a good hombre. Heaven knows, once we're chased out, when we'll get back . . . . You can't pinch down Jaramillo under twenty-five hundred barrels. We've got storage for ten days. Gabriel'll have to handle it. Keep it moving, if we have to run it into the river — "

"Ask him if he has a launch," Habert broke in.

"He hasn't," was Wemple's answer. "The federals commandeered the last one at noon."

"Say, Carson, how are you going to make your get-away?" Wemple queried.

The man to whom he talked was across the Panuco, on the south side, at the tank farm.

"Says there isn't any get-away," Wemple vouchsafed to the other two. "The federals are all over the shop, and he can't understand why they haven't raided him hours ago."

". . . Who? Campos? That skunk! . . . all right . . . Don't be worried if you don't hear from me. I'm going up river with Davies and Habert . . . . Use your judgment, and if you get a safe chance at Campos, pot him . . . . Oh, a hot time over here. They're battering our doors now. Yes, by all means . . . Good-by, old man."

Wemple lighted a cigarette and wiped his forehead.

"You know Campos, Jose H. Campos," he volunteered. "The dirty cur's stuck Carson up for twenty thousand pesos. We had to pay, or he'd have compelled half our peons to enlist or set the wells on fire. And you know, Davies, what we've done for him in past years. Gratitude? Simple decency? Great Scott!"

It was the night of April twenty-first. On the morning of the twenty-first the American marines and bluejackets had landed at Vera Cruz and seized the custom house and the city. Immediately the news was telegraphed, the vengeful Mexican mob had taken possession of the streets of Tampico and expressed its disapproval of the action of the United States by tearing down American flags and crying death to the Americans.

There was nothing save its own spinelessness to deter the mob from carrying out its threat. Had it battered down the doors of the Southern Hotel, or of other hotels,

or of residences such as Wemple's, a fight would have started in which the thousands of federal soldiers in Tampico would have joined their civilian compatriots in the laudable task of decreasing the Gringo population of that particular portion of Mexico. There should have been American warships to act as deterrents; but through some inexplicable excess of delicacy, or strategy, or heaven knows what, the United States, when it gave its orders to take Vera Cruz, had very carefully withdrawn its warships from Tampico to the open Gulf a dozen miles away. This order had come to Admiral Mayo by wireless from Washington, and thrice he had demanded the order to be repeated, ere, with tears in his eyes, he had turned his back on his countrymen and countrywomen and steamed to sea.

"Of all asinine things, to leave us in the lurch this way!" Habert was denouncing the powers that be of his country. "Mayo'd never have done it. Mark my words, he had to take program from Washington. And here we are, and our dear ones scattered for fifty miles back up country . . . . Say, if I lose Billy Boy I'll never dare go home to face the wife. — Come on. Let the three of us make a start. We can throw the fear of God into any gang on the streets."

"Come on over and take a squint," Davies invited from where he stood, somewhat back from the window, looking down into the street.

It was gorged with rioters, all haranguing, cursing, crying out death, and urging one another to smash the doors, but each hanging back from the death he knew waited behind those doors for the first of the rush.

"We can't break through a bunch like that, Habert," was Davies' comment.

"And if we die under their feet we'll be of little use to Billy Boy or anybody else up the Panuco," Wemple added. "And if — "

A new movement of the mob caused him to break off. It was splitting before a slow and silent advance of a file of white-clad men.

"Bluejackets — Mayo's come back for us after all," Habert muttered.

"Then we can get a navy launch," Davies said.

The bedlam of the mob died away, and, in silence, the sailors reached the street door and knocked for admittance. All three went down to open it, and to discover that the callers were not Americans but two German lieutenants and half a dozen German marines. At sight of the Americans, the rage of the mob rose again, and was quelled by the grounding of the rifle butts of the marines.

"No, thank you;" the senior lieutenant, in passable English, declined the invitation to enter. He unconcernedly kept his cigar alive at such times that the mob drowned his voice. "We are on the way back to our ship. Our commander conferred with the English and Dutch commanders; but they declined to cooperate, so our commander has undertaken the entire responsibility. We have been the round of the hotels. They are to hold their own until daybreak, when we'll take them off. We have given them rockets such as these. — Take them. If your house is entered, hold your own and send up a rocket from the roof. We can be here in force, in forty-five minutes. Steam is up

in all our launches, launch crews and marines for shore duty are in the launches, and at the first rocket we shall start."

"Since you are going aboard now, we should like to go with you," Davies said, after having rendered due thanks.

The surprise and distaste on both lieutenants' faces was patent.

"Oh, no," Davies laughed. "We don't want refuge. We have friends fifty miles up river, and we want to get to the river in order to go up after them."

The pleasure on the officers' faces was immediate as they looked a silent conference at each other.

"Since our commander has undertaken grave responsibility on a night like this, may we do less than take minor responsibility?" queried the elder.

To this the younger heartily agreed. In a trice, upstairs and down again, equipped with extra ammunition, extra pistols, and a pocket-bulging supply of cigars, cigarettes and matches, the three Americans were ready. Wemple called last instructions up the stairway to imaginary occupants being left behind, ascertained that the spring lock was on, and slammed the door.

The officers led, followed by the Americans, the rear brought up by the six marines; and the spitting, howling mob, not daring to cast a stone, gave way before them.

As they came alongside the gangway of the cruiser, they saw launches and barges lying in strings to the boat-booms, filled with men, waiting for the rocket signal from the beleaguered hotels. A gun thundered from close at hand, up river, followed by the thunder of numerous guns and the reports of many rifles fired very rapidly.

"Now what's the Topila whanging away at?" Habert complained, then joined the others in gazing at the picture.

A searchlight, evidently emanating from the Mexican gunboat, was stabbing the darkness to the middle of the river, where it played upon the water. And across the water, the center of the moving circle of light, flashed a long, lean speedboat. A shell burst in the air a hundred feet astern of it. Somewhere, outside the light, other shells were bursting in the water; for they saw the boat rocked by the waves from the explosions. They could guess the whizzing of the rifle bullets.

But for only several minutes the spectacle lasted. Such was the speed of the boat that it gained shelter behind the German, when the Mexican gunboat was compelled to cease fire. The speedboat slowed down, turned in a wide and heeling circle, and ranged up alongside the launch at the gangway.

The lights from the gangway showed but one occupant, a tow-headed, greasy-faced, blond youth of twenty, very lean, very calm, very much satisfied with himself.

"If it ain't Peter Tonsburg!" Habert ejaculated, reaching out a hand to shake. "Howdy, Peter, howdy. And where in hell are you hell-bent for, surging by the Topila in such scandalous fashion?"

Peter, a Texas-born Swede of immigrant parents, filled with the old Texas traditions, greasily shook hands with Wemple and Davies as well, saying "Howdy," as only the Texan born can say it.

“Me,” he answered Habert. “I ain’t hell-bent nowhere exceptin’ to get away from the shell-fire. She’s a caution, that Topila. Huh! but I limbered ’em up some. I was goin’ every inch of twenty-five. They was like amateurs blazin’ away at canvasback.”

“Which Chill is it?” Wemple asked.

“Chill II,” Peter answered. “It’s all that’s left. Chill I a Greaser — you know ‘m — Campos — commandeered this noon. I was runnin’ Chill III when they caught me at sundown. Made me come in under their guns at the East Coast outfit, and fired me out on my neck.

“Now the boss’d gone over in this one to Tampico in the early evening, and just about ten minutes ago I spots it landin’ with a sousy bunch of Federals at the East Coast, and swipes it back according. Where’s the boss? He ain’t hurt, is he? Because I’m going after him.”

“No, you’re not, Peter,” Davies said. “Mr. Frisbie is safe at the Southern Hotel, all except a five-inch scalp wound from a brick that’s got him down with a splitting headache. He’s safe, so you’re going with us, going to take us, I mean, up beyond Panuco town.”

“Huh? — I can see myself,” Peter retorted, wiping his greasy nose on a wad of greasy cotton waste. “I got some cold. Besides, this night-drivin’ ain’t good for my complexion.”

“My boy’s up there,” Habert said.

“Well, he’s bigger’n I am, and I reckon he can take care of himself.”

“And there’s a woman there — Miss Drexel,” Davies said quietly.

“Who? Miss Drexel? Why didn’t you say so at first?” Peter demanded grievedly. He sighed and added, “Well, climb in an’ make a start. Better get your Dutch friends to donate me about twenty gallons of gasoline if you want to get anywhere.”

“Won’t do you no good to lay low,” Peter Tonsburg remarked, as, at full speed, headed up river, the Topila’s searchlight stabbed them. “High or low, if one of them shells hits in the vicinity — good night!”

Immediately thereafter the Topila erupted. The roar of the Chill’s exhaust nearly drowned the roar of the guns, but the fragile hull of the craft was shaken and rocked by the bursting shells. An occasional bullet thudded into or pinged off the Chill, and, despite Peter’s warning that, high or low, they were bound to get it if it came to them, every man on board, including Peter, crouched, with chest contracted by drawn-in shoulders, in an instinctive and purely unconscious effort to lessen the area of body he presented as a target or receptacle for flying fragments of steel.

The Topila was a federal gunboat. To complicate the affair, the constitutionalists, gathered on the north shore in the siege of Tampico, opened up on the speedboat with many rifles and a machine gun.

“Lord, I’m glad they’re Mexicans, and not Americans,” Habert observed, after five mad minutes in which no damage had been received. “Mexicans are born with guns in their hands, and they never learn to use them.”

Nor was the Chill or any man aboard damaged when at last she rounded the bend of river that shielded her from the searchlight.

"I'll have you in Panuco town in less'n three hours, . . . if we don't hit a log," Peter leaned back and shouted in Wemple's ear. "And if we do hit driftwood, I'll have you in the swim quicker than that."

Chill II tore her way through the darkness, steered by the tow-headed youth who knew every foot of the river and who guided his course by the loom of the banks in the dim starlight. A smart breeze, kicking up spiteful wavelets on the wider reaches, splashed them with sheeted water as well as fine-flung spray. And, in the face of the warmth of the tropic night, the wind, added to the speed of the boat, chilled them through their wet clothes.

"Now I know why she was named the Chill," Habert observed betwixt chattering teeth.

But conversation languished during the nearly three hours of drive through the darkness. Once, by the exhaust, they knew that they passed an unlighted launch bound down stream. And once, a glare of light, near the south bank, as they passed through the Toreno field, aroused brief debate as to whether it was the Toreno wells, or the bungalow on Merrick's banana plantation that flared so fiercely.

At the end of an hour, Peter slowed down and ran in to the bank.

"I got a cache of gasoline here — ten gallons," he explained, "and it's just as well to know it's here for the back trip." Without leaving the boat, fishing arm-deep into the brush, he announced, "All hunky-dory." He proceeded to oil the engine. "Huh!" he soliloquized for their benefit. "I was just readin' a magazine yarn last night. 'Whose Business Is to Die,' was its title. An' all I got to say is, 'The hell it is.' A man's business is to live. Maybe you thought it was our business to die when the Topila was pepperin' us. But you was wrong. We're alive, ain't we? We beat her to it. That's the game. Nobody's got any business to die. I ain't never goin' to die, if I've got any say about it."

He turned over the crank, and the roar and rush of the Chill put an end to speech.

There was no need for Wemple or Davies to speak further in the affair closest to their hearts. Their truce to love-making had been made as binding as it was brief, and each rival honored the other with a firm belief that he would commit no infraction of the truce. Afterward was another matter. In the meantime they were one in the effort to get Beth Drexel back to the safety of riotous Tampico or of a war vessel.

It was four o'clock when they passed by Panuco Town. Shouts and songs told them that the federal detachment holding the place was celebrating its indignation at the landing of American bluejackets in Vera Cruz. Sentinels challenged the Chill from the shore and shot at random at the noise of her in the darkness.

A mile beyond, where a lighted river steamer with steam up lay at the north bank, they ran in at the Apshodel wells. The steamer was small, and the nearly two hundred Americans — men, women, and children — crowded her capacity. Blasphemous greetings of pure joy and geniality were exchanged between the men, and Habert learned

that the steamboat was waiting for his Billy Boy, who, astride a horse, was rounding up isolated drilling gangs who had not yet learned that the United States had seized Vera Cruz and that all Mexico was boiling.

Habert climbed out to wait and to go down on the steamer, while the three that remained on the Chill, having learned that Miss Drexel was not with the refugees, headed for the Dutch Company on the south shore. This was the big gusher, pinched down from one hundred and eighty-five thousand daily barrels to the quantity the company was able to handle. Mexico had no quarrel with Holland, so that the superintendent, while up, with night guards out to prevent drunken soldiers from firing his vast lakes of oil, was quite unemotional. Yes, the last he had heard was that Miss Drexel and her brother were back at the hunting lodge. No; he had not sent any warnings, and he doubted that anybody else had. Not till ten o'clock the previous evening had he learned of the landing at Vera Cruz. The Mexicans had turned nasty as soon as they heard of it, and they had killed Miles Forman at the Empire Wells, run off his labor, and looted the camp. Horses? No; he didn't have horse or mule on the place. The federals had commandeered the last animal weeks back. It was his belief, however, that there were a couple of plugs at the lodge, too worthless even for the Mexicans to take.

"It's a hike," Davies said cheerfully.

"Six miles of it," Wemple agreed, equally cheerfully. "Let's beat it."

A shot from the river, where they had left Peter in the boat, started them on the run for the bank. A scattering of shots, as from two rifles, followed. And while the Dutch superintendent, in execrable Spanish, shouted affirmations of Dutch neutrality into the menacing dark, across the gunwale of Chill II they found the body of the tow-headed youth whose business it had been not to die.

For the first hour, talking little, Davies and Wemple stumbled along the apology for a road that led through the jungle to the lodge. They did discuss the glares of several fires to the east along the south bank of Panuco River, and hoped fervently that they were dwellings and not wells.

"Two billion dollars worth of oil right here in the Ebaño field alone," Davies grumbled.

"And a drunken Mexican, whose whole carcass and immortal soul aren't worth ten pesos including hair, hide, and tallow, can start the bonfire with a lighted wad of cotton waste," was Wemple's contribution. "And if ever she starts, she'll gut the field of its last barrel."

Dawn, at five, enabled them to accelerate their pace; and six o'clock found them routing out the occupants of the lodge.

"Dress for rough travel, and don't stop for any frills," Wemple called around the corner of Miss Drexel's screened sleeping porch.

"Not a wash, nothing;" Davies supplemented grimly, as he shook hands with Charley Drexel, who yawned and slippered up to them in pajamas. "Where are those horses, Charley? Still alive?"

Wemple finished giving orders to the sleepy peons to remain and care for the place, occupying their spare time with hiding the more valuable things, and was calling around the corner to Miss Drexel the news of the capture of Vera Cruz, when Davies returned with the information that the horses consisted of a pair of moth-eaten skates that could be depended upon to lie down and die in the first half mile.

Beth Drexel emerged, first protesting that under no circumstances would she be guilty of riding the creatures, and, next, her brunette skin and dark eyes still flushed warm with sleep, greeting the two rescuers.

"It would be just as well if you washed your face, Stanton," she told Davies; and, to Wemple: "You're just as bad, Jim. You are a pair of dirty boys."

"And so will you be," Wemple assured her, "before you get back to Tampico. Are you ready?"

"As soon as Juanita packs my hand bag."

"Heavens, Beth, don't waste time!" exclaimed Wemple. "Jump in and grab up what you want."

"Make a start — make a start," chanted Davies. "Hustle! Hustle! — Charley, get the rifle you like best and take it along. Get a couple for us."

"Is it as serious as that?" Miss Drexel queried.

Both men nodded.

"The Mexicans are tearing loose," Davies explained. "How they missed this place I don't know." A movement in the adjoining room startled him. "Who's that?" he cried.

"Why, Mrs. Morgan," Miss Drexel answered.

"Good heavens, Wemple, I'd forgotten her," groaned Davies. "How will we ever get her anywhere?"

"Let Beth walk, and relay the lady on the nags."

"She weighs a hundred and eighty," Miss Drexel laughed. "Oh, hurry, Martha! We're waiting on you to start!"

Muffled speech came through the partition, and then emerged a very short, stout, much-flustered woman of middle age.

"I simply can't walk, and you boys needn't demand it of me," was her plaint. "It's no use. I couldn't walk half a mile to save my life, and it's six of the worst miles to the river."

They regarded her in despair.

"Then you'll ride," said Davies. "Come on, Charley. We'll get a saddle on each of the nags."

Along the road through the tropic jungle, Miss Drexel and Juanita, her Indian maid, led the way. Her brother, carrying the three rifles, brought up the rear, while in the middle Davies and Wemple struggled with Mrs. Morgan and the two decrepit steeds. One, a flea-bitten roan, groaned continually from the moment Mrs. Morgan's burden was put upon him till she was shifted to the other horse. And this other, a mangy sorrel, invariably lay down at the end of a quarter of a mile of Mrs. Morgan.

Miss Drexel laughed and joked and encouraged; and Wemple, in brutal fashion, compelled Mrs. Morgan to walk every third quarter of a mile. At the end of an hour the sorrel refused positively to get up, and, so, was abandoned. Thereafter, Mrs. Morgan rode the roan alternate quarters of miles, and between times walked — if walk may describe her stumbling progress on two preposterously tiny feet with a man supporting her on either side.

A mile from the river, the road became more civilized, running along the side of a thousand acres of banana plantation.

"Parslow's," young Drexel said. "He'll lose a year's crop now on account of this mix-up."

"Oh, look what I've found!" Miss Drexel called from the lead.

"First machine that ever tackled this road," was young Drexel's judgment, as they halted to stare at the tire-tracks.

"But look at the tracks," his sister urged. "The machine must have come right out of the bananas and climbed the bank."

"Some machine to climb a bank like that," was Davies' comment. "What it did do was to go down the bank — take a scout after it, Charley, while Wemple and I get Mrs. Morgan off her fractious mount. No machine ever built could travel far through those bananas."

The flea-bitten roan, on its four legs up-standing, continued bravely to stand until the lady was removed, whereupon, with a long sigh, it sank down on the ground. Mrs. Morgan likewise sighed, sat down, and regarded her tiny feet mournfully.

"Go on, boys," she said. "Maybe you can find something at the river and send back for me."

But their indignant rejection of the plan never attained speech, for, at that instant, from the green sea of banana trees beneath them, came the sudden purr of an engine. A minute later the splutter of an exhaust told them the silencer had been taken off. The huge-fronded banana trees were violently agitated as by the threshing of a hidden Titan. They could identify the changing of gears and the reversing and going ahead, until, at the end of five minutes, a long low, black car burst from the wall of greenery and charged the soft earth bank, but the earth was too soft, and when, two-thirds of the way up, beaten, Charley Drexel braked the car to a standstill, the earth crumbled from under the tires, and he ran it down and back, the way he had come, until half-buried in the bananas.

"'A Merry Oldsmobile!'" Miss Drexel quoted from the popular song, clapping her hands. "Now, Martha, your troubles are over."

"Six-cylinder, and sounds as if it hadn't been out of the shop a week, or may I never ride in a machine again," Wemple remarked, looking to Davies for confirmation.

Davies nodded.

"It's Allison's," he said. "Campos tried to shake him down for a private loan, and — well, you know Allison. He told Campos to go to. And Campos, in revenge, commandeered his new car. That was two days ago, before we lifted a hand at Vera Cruz.

Allison told me yesterday the last he'd heard of the car it was on a steamboat bound up river. And here's where they ditched it — but let's get a hustle on and get her into the running."

Three attempts they made, with young Drexel at the wheel; but the soft earth and the pitch of the grade baffled.

"She's got the power all right," young Drexel protested. "But she can't bite into that mush."

So far, they had spread on the ground the robes found in the car. The men now added their coats, and Wemple, for additional traction, unsaddled the roan, and spread the cinches, stirrup leathers, saddle blanket, and bridle in the way of the wheels. The car took the treacherous slope in a rush, with churning wheels biting into the woven fabrics; and, with no more than a hint of hesitation, it cleared the crest and swung into the road.

"Isn't she the spunky devil!" Drexel exulted. "Say, she could climb the side of a house if she could get traction."

"Better put on that silencer again, if you don't want to play tag with every soldier in the district," Wemple ordered, as they helped Mrs. Morgan in.

The road to the Dutch gusher compelled them to go through the outskirts of Panuco town. Indian and half breed women gazed stolidly at the strange vehicle, while the children and barking dogs clamorously advertised its progress. Once, passing long lines of tethered federal horses, they were challenged by a sentry; but at Wemple's "Throw on the juice!" the car took the rutted road at fifty miles an hour. A shot whistled after them. But it was not the shot that made Mrs. Morgan scream. The cause was a series of hog-wallows masked with mud, which nearly tore the steering wheel from Drexel's hands before he could reduce speed.

"Wonder it didn't break an axle," Davies growled. "Go on and take it easy, Charley. We're past any interference."

They swung into the Dutch camp and into the beginning of their real troubles. The refugee steamboat had departed down river from the Asphodel camp; Chill II had disappeared, the superintendent knew not how, along with the body of Peter Tonsburg; and the superintendent was dubious of their remaining.

"I've got to consider the owners," he told them. "This is the biggest well in Mexico, and you know it — a hundred and eighty-five thousand barrels daily flow. I've no right to risk it. We have no trouble with the Mexicans. It's you Americans. If you stay here, I'll have to protect you. And I can't protect you, anyway. We'll all lose our lives and they'll destroy the well in the bargain. And if they fire it, it means the entire Ebaño oil field. The strata's too broken. We're flowing twenty thousand barrels now, and we can't pinch down any further. As it is, the oil's coming up outside the pipe. And we can't have a fight. We've got to keep the oil moving."

The men nodded. It was cold-blooded logic; but there was no fault to it.

The harassed expression eased on the superintendent's face, and he almost beamed on them for agreeing with him.

"You've got a good machine there," he continued. "The ferry's at the bank at Panuco, and once you're across, the rebels aren't so thick on the north shore. Why, you can beat the steamboat back to Tampico by hours. And it hasn't rained for days. The road won't be at all bad."

"Which is all very good," Davies observed to Wemple as they approached Panuco, "except for the fact that the road on the other side was never built for automobiles, much less for a long-bodied one like this. I wish it were the Four instead of the Six."

"And it would bother you with a Four to negotiate that hill at Aliso where the road switchbacks above the river."

"And we're going to do it with a Six or lose a perfectly good Six in trying," Beth Drexel laughed to them.

Avoiding the cavalry camp, they entered Panuco with all the speed the ruts permitted, swinging dizzy corners to the squawking of chickens and barking of dogs. To gain the ferry, they had to pass down one side of the great plaza which was the heart of the city. Peon soldiers, drowsing in the sun or clustering around the cantinas, stared stupidly at them as they flashed past. Then a drunken major shouted a challenge from the doorway of a cantina and began vociferating orders, and as they left the plaza behind they could hear rising the familiar mob-cry "Kill the Gringos!"

"If any shooting begins, you women get down in the bottom of the car," Davies commanded. "And there's the ferry all right. Be careful, Charley."

The machine plunged directly down the bank through a cut so deep that it was more like a chute, struck the gangplank with a terrific bump, and seemed fairly to leap on board. The ferry was scarcely longer than the machine, and Drexel, visibly shaken by the closeness of the shave, managed to stop only when six inches remained between the front wheels and overboard.

It was a cable ferry, operated by gasoline, and, while Wemple cast off the mooring lines, Davies was making swift acquaintance with the engine. The third turn-over started it, and he threw it into gear with the windlass that began winding up the cable from the river's bottom.

By the time they were in midstream a score of horsemen rode out on the bank they had just left and opened a scattering fire. The party crowded in the shelter of the car and listened to the occasional ricochet of a bullet. Once, only, the car was struck.

"Here! — what are you up to?" Wemple demanded suddenly of Drexel, who had exposed himself to fish a rifle out of the car.

"Going to show the skunks what shooting is," was his answer.

"No, you don t," Wemple said. "We're not here to fight, but to get this party to Tampico." He remembered Peter Tonsburg's remark. "Whose business is to live, Charley — that's our business. Anybody can get killed. It's too easy these days."

Still under fire, they moored at the north shore, and when Davies had tossed overboard the igniter from the ferry engine and commandeered ten gallons of its surplus gasoline, they took the steep, soft road up the bank in a rush.

“Look at her climb,” Drexel uttered gleefully. “That Aliso hill won’t bother us at all. She’ll put a crimp in it, that’s what she’ll do.”

“It isn’t the hill, it’s the sharp turn of the zig-zag that’s liable to put a crimp in her,” Davies answered. “That road was never laid out for autos, and no auto has ever been over it. They steamboated this one up.”

But trouble came before Aliso was reached. Where the road dipped abruptly into a small jag of hollow that was almost V-shaped, it arose out and became a hundred yards of deep sand. In order to have speed left for the sand after he cleared the stiff up-grade of the V, Drexel was compelled to hit the trough of the V with speed. Wemple clutched Miss Drexel as she was on the verge of being bounced out. Mrs. Morgan, too solid for such airiness, screamed from the pain of the bump; and even the imperturbable Juanita fell to crossing herself and uttering prayers with exceeding rapidity.

The car cleared the crest and encountered the sand, going slower from moment to moment, slewing and writing and squirming from side to side. The men leaped out and began shoving. Miss Drexel urged Juanita out and followed. But the car came to a standstill, and Drexel, looking back and pointing, showed the first sign of being beaten. Two things he pointed to: a constitutional soldier on horseback a quarter of a mile in the rear; and a portion of the narrow road that had fallen out bodily on the far slope of the V.

“Can’t get at this sand unless we go back and try over, and we ditch the car if we try to back up that.”

The ditch was a huge natural sump-hole, the stagnant surface of which was a-crawl with slime twenty feet beneath.

Davies and Wemple sprang to take the boy’s place.

“You can’t do it,” he urged. “You can get the back wheels past, but right there you hit that little curve, and if you make it your front wheel will be off the bank. If you don’t make it, your back wheel’ll be off.”

Both men studied it carefully, then looked at each other.

“We’ve got to,” said Davies.

“And we’re going to,” Wemple said, shoving his rival aside in comradely fashion and taking the post of danger at the wheel. “You’re just as good as I at the wheel, Davies,” he explained. “But you’re a better shot. dour job’s cut out to go back and hold off any Greasers that show up.”

Davies took a rifle and strolled back with so ominous an air that the lone cavalryman put spurs to his horse and fled. Mrs. Morgan was helped out and sent plodding and tottering unaided on her way to the end of the sand stretch. Miss Drexel and Juanita joined Charley in spreading the coats and robes on the sand and in gathering and spreading small branches, brush, and armfuls of a dry, brittle shrub. But all three ceased from their exertions to watch Wemple as he shot the car backward down the V and up. The car seemed first to stand on one end, then on the other, and to reel drunkenly and to threaten to turn over into the sump-hole when its right front wheel

fell into the air where the road had ceased to be. But the hind wheels bit and climbed the grade and out.

Without pause, gathering speed down the perilous slope, Wemple came ahead and up, gaining fifty feet of sand over the previous failure. More of the alluvial soil of the road had dropped out at the bad place; but he took the V in reverse, overhung the front wheel as before, and from the top came ahead again. Four times he did this, gaining each time, but each time knocking a bigger hole where the road fell out, until Miss Drexel begged him not to try again.

He pointed to a squad of horsemen coming at a gallop along the road a mile in the rear, and took the V once again in reverse.

"If only we had more stuff," Drexel groaned to his sister, as he threw down a meager, hard-gathered armful of the dry and brittle shrub, and as Wemple once more, with rush and roar, shot down the V.

For an instant it seemed that the great car would turn over into the sump, but the next instant it was past. It struck the bottom of the hollow a mighty wallop, and bounced and upended to the steep pitch of the climb. Miss Drexel, seized by inspiration or desperation, with a quick movement stripped off her short, corduroy tramping-skirt, and, looking very lithe and boyish in slender-cut pongee bloomers, ran along the sand and dropped the skirt for a foothold for the slowly revolving wheels. Almost, but not quite, did the car stop, then, gathering way, with the others running alongside and shoving, it emerged on the hard road.

While they tossed the robes and coats and Miss Drexel's skirt into the bottom of the car and got Mrs. Morgan on board, Davies overtook them.

"Down on the bottom! — all of you!" he shouted, as he gained the running board and the machine sprang away. A scattering of shots came from the rear.

"Whose business is to live! — hunch down!" Davies yelled in Wemple's ear, accompanying the instruction with an open-handed blow on the shoulder.

"Live yourself," Wemple grumbled as he obediently hunched. "Get your head down. You're exposing yourself."

The pursuit lasted but a little while, and died away in an occasional distant shot.

"They've quit," Davies announced. "It never entered their stupid heads that they could have caught us on Aliso Hill."

"It can't be done," was Charley Drexel's quick judgment of youth, as the machine stopped and they surveyed the acute-angled turn on the stiff up-grade of Aliso. Beneath was the swift-running river.

"Get out everybody!" Wemple commanded. "Up-side, all of you, if you don't want the car to turn over on you. Spread traction wherever she needs it."

"Shoot her ahead, or back — she can't stop," Davies said quietly, from the outer edge of the road, where he had taken position. "The earth's crumbling away from under the tires every second she stands still."

"Get out from under, or she'll be on top of you," Wemple ordered, as he went ahead several yards.

But again, after the car rested a minute, the light, dry earth began to crack and crumble away from under the tires, rolling in a miniature avalanche down the steep declivity into the water. And not until Wemple had backed fifty yards down the narrow road did he find solid resting for the car. He came ahead on foot and examined the acute angle formed by the two zig-zags. Together with Davies he planned what was to be done.

"When you come you've got to come a-humping," Davies advised. "If you stop anywhere for more than seconds, it's good night, and the walking won't be fine."

"She's full of fight, and she can do it. See that hard formation right there on the inside wall. It couldn't have come at a better spot. If I don't make her hind wheels climb half way up it, we'll start walking about a second thereafter."

"She's a two-fisted piece of machinery," Davies encouraged. "I know her kind. If she can't do it, no machine can that was ever made. Am I right, Beth?"

"She's a regular, spunky she-devil," Miss Drexel laughed agreement. "And so are the pair of you — er — of the male persuasion, I mean."

Miss Drexel had never seemed so fascinating to either of them as she was then, in the excitement quite unconscious of her abbreviated costume, her brown hair flying, her eyes sparkling, her lips smiling. Each man caught the other in that moment's pause to look, and each man sighed to the other and looked frankly into each other's eyes ere he turned to the work at hand.

Wemple came up with his usual rush, but it was a gauged rush; and Davies took the post of danger, the outside running board, where his weight would help the broad tires to bite a little deeper into the treacherous surface. If the road-edge crumbled away it was inevitable that he would be caught under the car as it rolled over and down to the river.

It was ahead and reverse, ahead and reverse, with only the briefest of pauses in which to shift the gears. Wemple backed up the hard formation on the inside bank till the car seemed standing on end, rushed ahead till the earth of the outer edge broke under the front tires and splashed in the water. Davies, now off, and again on the running board when needed, accompanied the car in its jerky and erratic progress, tossing robes and coats under the tires, calling instructions to Drexel similarly occupied on the other side, and warning Miss Drexel out of the way.

"Oh, you Merry Olds, you Merry Olds, you Merry Olds," Wemple muttered aloud, as if in prayer, as he wrestled the car about the narrow area, gaining sometimes inches in pivoting it, sometimes fetching back up the inner wall precisely at the spot previously attained, and, once, having the car, with the surface of the roadbed under it, slide bodily and sidewise, two feet down the road.

The clapping of Miss Drexel's hands was the first warning Davies received that the feat was accomplished, and, swinging on to the running board, he found the car backing in the straight-away up the next zigzag and Wemple still chanting ecstatically, "Oh, you Merry Olds, you Merry Olds!"

There were no more grades nor zig-zags between them and Tampico, but, so narrow was the primitive road, two miles farther were backed before space was found in which to turn around. One thing of importance did lie between them and Tampico — namely the investing lines of the constitutionalists. But here, at noon, fortune favored in the form of three American soldiers of fortune, operators of machine guns, who had fought the entire campaign with Villa from the beginning of the advance from the Texan border. Under a white flag, Wemple drove the car across the zone of debate into the federal lines, where good fortune, in the guise of an ubiquitous German naval officer, again received them.

"I think you are nearly the only Americans left in Tampico," he told them. "About all the rest are lying out in the Gulf on the different warships. But at the Southern Hotel there are several, and the situation seems quieter."

As they got out at the Southern, Davies laid this hand on the car and murmured, "Good old girl!" Wemple followed suit. And Miss Drexel, engaging both men's eyes and about to say something, was guilty of a sudden moisture in her own eyes that made her turn to the car with a caressing hand and repeat, "Good old girl!"

A Wicked Woman

IT was because she had broken with Billy that Loretta had come visiting to Santa Clara. Billy could not understand. His sister had reported that he had walked the floor and cried all night. Loretta had not slept all night either, while she had wept most of the night. Daisy knew this, because it was in her arms that the weeping had been done. And Daisy's husband, Captain Kitt, knew, too. The tears of Loretta, and the comforting by Daisy, had lost him some sleep.

Now Captain Kitt did not like to lose sleep. Neither did he want Loretta to marry Billy–nor anybody else. It was Captain Kitt's belief that Daisy needed the help of her younger sister in the household. But he did not say this aloud. Instead, he always insisted that Loretta was too young to think of marriage. So it was Captain Kitt's idea that Loretta should be packed off on a visit to Mrs. Hemingway. There wouldn't be any Billy there.

Before Loretta had been at Santa Clara a week, she was convinced that Captain Kitt's idea was a good one. In the first place, though Billy wouldn't believe it, she did not want to marry Billy. And in the second place, though Captain Kitt wouldn't believe it, she did not want to leave Daisy. By the time Loretta had been at Santa Clara two weeks, she was absolutely certain that she did not want to marry Billy. But she was not so sure about not wanting to leave Daisy. Not that she loved Daisy less, but that she–had doubts.

The day of Loretta's arrival, a nebulous plan began shaping itself in Mrs. Hemingway's brain. The second day she remarked to Jack Hemingway, her husband, that Loretta was so innocent a young thing that were it not for her sweet guilelessness she would be positively stupid. In proof of which, Mrs. Hemingway told her husband several things that made him chuckle. By the third day Mrs. Hemingway's plan had taken recognizable form. Then it was that she composed a letter. On the envelope she wrote: "Mr. Edward Bashford, Athenian Club, San Francisco."

"Dear Ned," the letter began. She had once been violently loved by him for three weeks in her pre-marital days. But she had covenanted herself to Jack Hemingway, who had prior claims, and her heart as well; and Ned Bashford had philosophically not broken his heart over it. He merely added the experience to a large fund of similarly collected data out of which he manufactured philosophy. Artistically and temperamentally he was a Greek–a tired Greek. He was fond of quoting from Nietzsche, in token that he, too, had passed through the long sickness that follows upon the ardent search for truth; that he too had emerged too experienced, too shrewd, too profound, ever again to be afflicted by the madness of youths in their love of truth. "'To worship

appearance,'" he often quoted; "'to believe in forms, in tones, in words, in the whole Olympus of appearance!' "This particular excerpt he always concluded with, " 'Those Greeks were superficial–out of profundity!'"

He was a fairly young Greek, jaded and worn. Women were faithless and unveracious, he held–at such times that he had relapses and descended to pessimism from his wonted high philosophical calm. He did not believe in the truth of women; but, faithful to his German master, he did not strip from them the airy gauzes that veiled their untruth. He was content to accept them as appearances and to make the best of it. He was superficial–out of profundity.

"Jack says to be sure to say to you, 'good swimming,' " Mrs. Hemingway wrote in her letter; "and also 'to bring your fishing duds along.'" Mrs. Hemingway wrote other things in the letter. She told him that at last she was prepared to exhibit to him an absolutely true, unsullied, and innocent woman. "A more guileless, immaculate bud of womanhood never blushed on the planet," was one of the several ways in which she phrased the inducement. And to her husband she said triumphantly, "If I don't marry Ned off this time–" leaving unstated the terrible alternative that she lacked either vocabulary to express or imagination to conceive.

Contrary to all her forebodings, Loretta found that she was not unhappy at Santa Clara. True, Billy wrote to her every day, but his letters were less distressing than his presence. Also, the ordeal of being away from Daisy was not so severe as she had expected. For the first time in her life she was not lost in eclipse in the blaze of Daisy's brilliant and mature personality. Under such favorable circumstances Loretta came rapidly to the front, while Mrs. Hemingway modestly and shamelessly retreated into the background.

Loretta began to discover that she was not a pale orb shining by reflection. Quite unconsciously she became a small centre of things. When she was at the piano, there was some one to turn the pages for her and to express preferences for certain songs. When she dropped her handkerchief, there was some one to pick it up. And there was some one to accompany her in ramblings and flower gatherings. Also, she learned to cast flies in still pools and below savage riffles, and how not to entangle silk lines and gut-leaders with the shrubbery.

Jack Hemingway did not care to teach beginners, and fished much by himself, or not at all, thus giving Ned Bashford ample time in which to consider Loretta as an appearance. As such, she was all that his philosophy demanded. Her blue eyes had the direct gaze of a boy, and out of his profundity he delighted in them and forbore to shudder at the duplicity his philosophy bade him to believe lurked in their depths. She had the grace of a slender flower, the fragility of color and line of fine china, in all of which he pleasured greatly, without thought of the Life Force palpitating beneath and in spite of Bernard Shaw–in whom he believed.

Loretta bourgeoned. She swiftly developed personality. She discovered a will of her own and wishes of her own that were not everlastingly entwined with the will and the wishes of Daisy. She was petted by Jack Hemingway, spoiled by Alice Hemingway, and

devotedly attended by Ned Bashford. They encouraged her whims and laughed at her follies, while she developed the pretty little tyrannies that are latent in all pretty and delicate women. Her environment acted as a soporific upon her ancient desire always to live with Daisy. This desire no longer prodded her as in the days of her companionship with Billy. The more she saw of Billy, the more certain she had been that she could not live away from Daisy. The more she saw of Ned Bashford, the more she forgot her pressing need of Daisy.

Ned Bashford likewise did some forgetting. He confused superficiality with profundity, and entangled appearance with reality until he accounted them one. Loretta was different from other women. There was no masquerade about her. She was real. He said as much to Mrs. Hemingway, and more, who agreed with him and at the same time caught her husband's eyelid drooping down for the moment in an unmistakable wink..

It was at this time that Loretta received a letter from Billy that was somewhat different from his others. In the main, like all his letters, it was pathological. It was a long recital of symptoms and sufferings, his nervousness, his sleeplessness, and the state of his heart. Then followed reproaches, such as he had never made before. They were sharp enough to make her weep, and true enough to put tragedy into her face. This tragedy she carried down to the breakfast table. It made Jack and Mrs. Hemingway speculative, and it worried Ned. They glanced to him for explanation, but he shook his head.

"I'll find out to-night," Mrs. Hemingway said to her husband.

But Ned caught Loretta in the afternoon in the big living-room. She tried to turn away. He caught her hands, and she faced him with wet lashes and trembling lips. He looked at her, silently and kindly. The lashes grew wetter.

"There, there, don't cry, little one," he said soothingly.

He put his arm protectingly around her shoulder. And to his shoulder, like atired child, she turned her face. He thrilled in ways unusual for a Greek who has recovered from the long sickness.

"Oh, Ned," she sobbed on his shoulder, "if you only knew how wicked I am!"

He smiled indulgently, and breathed in a great breath freighted with the fragrance of her hair. He thought of his world-experience of women, and drew another long breath. There seemed to emanate from her the perfect sweetness of a child–"the aura of a white soul," was the way he phrased it to himself.

Then he noticed that her sobs were increasing.

"What's the matter, little one?" he asked pettingly and almost paternally. "Has Jack been bullying you? Or has your dearly beloved sister failed to write?"

She did not answer, and he felt that he really must kiss her hair, that he could not be responsible if the situation continued much longer.

"Tell me," he said gently, "and we'll see what I can do."

"I can't. You will despise me.–Oh, Ned, I am so ashamed!"

He laughed incredulously, and lightly touched her hair with his lips–so lightly that she did not know.

"Dear little one, let us forget all about it, whatever it is. I want to tell you how I love–"

She uttered a sharp cry that was all delight, and then moaned–

"Too late!"

"Too late?" he echoed in surprise.

"Oh, why did I? Why did I?" she was moaning.

He was aware of a swift chill at his heart.

"What?" he asked.

"Oh, I . . . he. . . Billy.

"I am such a wicked woman, Ned. I know you will never speak to me again."

"This–er–this Billy," he began haltingly. "He is your brother?"

"No . . . he . . . I didn't know. I was so young. I could not help it. Oh, I shall go mad! I shall go mad!"

It was then that Loretta felt his shoulder and the encircling arm become limp. He drew away from her gently, and gently he deposited her in a big chair, where she buried her face and sobbed afresh. He twisted his mustache fiercely, then drew up another chair and sat down.

"I–I do not understand," he said.

"I am so unhappy," she wailed.

"Why unhappy?"

"Because . . . he . . . he wants me to marry him."

His face cleared on the instant, and he placed a hand soothingly on hers.

"That should not make any girl unhappy," he remarked sagely. "Bcause you don't love him is no reason–of course, you don't love him?"

Loretta shook her head and shoulders in a vigorous negative.

"What?"

Bashford wanted to make sure.

"No," she asserted explosively. "I don't love Billy! I don't want to love Billy!"

"Because you don't love him," Bashford resumed with confidence, "is no reason that you should be unhappy just because he has proposed to you."

She sobbed again, and from the midst of her sobs she cried:–

"That's the trouble. I wish I did love him. Oh, I wish I were dead!"

"Now, my dear child, you are worrying yourself over trifles." His other hand crossed over after its mate and rested on hers. "Women do it every day. Because you have changed your mind or did not know your mind, because you have–to use an unnecessarily harsh word–jilted a man–"

"Jilted!" She had raised her head and was looking at him with tear-dimmed eyes. "Oh, Ned, if that were all!"

"All?" he asked in a hollow voice, while his hands slowly retreated hers. He was about to speak further, then remained silent.

"But I don't want to marry him," Loretta broke forth protestingly.

"Then I shouldn't," he counselled.

"But I ought to marry him."

"Ought to marry him?"

She nodded.

"That is a strong word."

"I know it is," she acquiesced, while she strove to control her trembling lips. Then she spoke more calmly. "I am a wicked woman, a terribly wicked woman. No one knows how wicked I am–except Billy."

There was a pause. Ned Bashford's face was grave, and he looked queerly at Loretta.

"He–Billy knows?" he asked finally.

A reluctant nod and flaming cheeks was the reply.

He debated with himself for a while, seeming, like a diver, to be preparing himself for the plunge.

"Tell me about it." He spoke very firmly. "You must tell me all of it."

"And will you–ever–forgive me?" she asked in a faint, small voice. He hesitated, drew a long breath, and made the plunge.

"Yes," he said desperately. "I'll forgive you. Go ahead."

"There was no one to tell me," she began. "We were with each other so much. I did not know anything of the world–then."

She paused to meditate. Bashford was biting his lip impatiently.

"If I had only known–"

She paused again.

"Yes, go on," he urged.

"We were together almost every evening."

"Billy?" he demanded, with a savageness that startled her.

"Yes, of course, Billy. We were with each other so much. . . . If I had only known. . . . There was no one to tell me. . . . I was so young–"'

Her lips parted as though to speak further, and she regarded him anxiously.

"The scoundrel!"

With the explosion Ned Bashford was on his feet, no longer a tired Greek, but a violently angry young man.

"Billy is not a scoundrel; he is a good man," Loretta defended with a firmness that surprised Bashford.

"I suppose you'll be telling me next that it was all your fault," he said sarcastically.

She nodded.

"What?" he shouted.

"It was all my fault," she said steadily. "I should never have let him, I was to blame."

Bashford ceased from his pacing up and down, and when he spoke his voice was resigned.

"All right," he said. "I don't blame you in the least, Loretta. And you have been very honest. But Billy is right, and you are wrong. You must get married."

"To Billy?" she asked, in a dim, far-away voice.

"Yes, to Billy. I'll see to it. Where does he live? I'll make him."

"But I don't want to marry Billy ! " she cried out in alarm. "Oh, Ned, you won't do that?"

"I shall," he answered sternly. ''You must. And Billy must. Do you understand?"

Loretta buried her face in the cushioned chair back, and broke into a passionate storm of sobs.

All that Bashford could make out at first, as he listened, was: "But I don't want to leave Daisy! I don't want to leave Daisy!"

He paced grimly back and forth, then stopped curiously to listen.

"How was I to know?–Boo-hoo," Loretta was crying. "He didn't tell me. Nobody else ever kissed me. I never dreamed a kiss could be so terrible. . .until, boo-hoo. . .until he wrote to me. I only got the letter this morning."

His face brightened. It seemed as though light was dawning on him.

"Is that what you're crying about?"

"N-no."

His heart sank.

"Then what are you crying about?" he asked in a hopeless voice.

"Because you said I had to marry Billy. And I don't want to marry Billy. I don't want to leave Daisy. I don't know what I want. I want. I wish I were dead."

He nerved himself for another effort.

"Now look here, Loretta, be sensible. What is this about kisses? You haven't told me everything."

"I–I don't want to tell you everything."

She looked at him beseechingly in the silence that fell.

"Must I ?" she quavered finally.

"You must," he said imperatively. 'You must tell me everything."

"Well, then . . . must I?"

"You must."

"He. . . I . . . we . . ." she began flounderingly. Then blurted out, "I let him, and he kissed me."

"Go on," Bashford commanded desperately.

''That's all," she answered.

"All?" There was a vast incredulity in his voice.

"All?" In her voice was an interrogation no less vast.

"I mean–er–nothing worse?" He was overwhelmingly aware of his own awkwardness.

"Worse?" She was frankly puzzled. "As though there could be! Billy said–

"When did he say it?" Bashford demanded abruptly.

"In his letter I got this morning. Billy said that my . . . our . . . our kisses were terrible if we didn't get married." Bashford's head was swimming.

"What else did Billy say?" he asked.

"He said that when a woman allowed a man to kiss her, she always married him–that it was terrible if she didn't. It was the custom, he said; and I say it is a bad, wicked custom, and I don't like it. I know I'm terrible," she added defiantly, ''but I can't help it."

Bashford absent-mindedly brought out a cigarette.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" he asked, as he struck a match.

Then he came to himself.

"I beg your pardon," he cried, flinging away match and cigarette. "I don't want to smoke. I didn't mean that at all. What I mean is–"

He bent over Loretta, caught her hands in his, then sat on the arm of the chair and softly put one arm around her.

"Loretta, I am a fool. I mean it. And I mean something more. I want you to be my wife."

He waited anxiously in the pause that followed.

"You might answer me," he urged

"I will . . . if–"

"Yes, go on. If what?"

"If I don't have to marry Billy."

"You can't marry both of us," he almost shouted.

"And it isn't the custom . . . what . . . what Billy said?"

"No, it isn't the custom. Now, Loretta, will you marry me?"

"Don't be angry with me," she pouted demurely.

He gathered her into his arms and kissed her.

"I wish it were the custom," she said in a faint voice, from the midst of the embrace, "because then I'd have to marry you, Ned . . . dear. . .wouldn't I?"

The Wife of a King

ONCE when the northland was very young, the social and civic virtues were remarkably alike for their paucity and their simplicity. When the burden of domestic duties grew grievous, and the fireside mood expanded to a constant protest against its bleak loneliness, the adventurers from the Southland, in lieu of better, paid the stipulated prices and took unto themselves native wives. It was a foretaste of Paradise to the women, for it must be confessed that the white rovers gave far better care and treatment of them than did their Indian copartners. Of course, the white men themselves were satisfied with such deals, as were also the Indian men for that matter. Having sold their daughters and sisters for cotton blankets and obsolete rifles and traded their warm furs for flimsy calico and bad whisky, the sons of the soil promptly and cheerfully succumbed to quick consumption and other swift diseases correlated with the blessings of a superior civilization.

It was in these days of Arcadian simplicity that Cal Galbraith journeyed through the land and fell sick on the Lower River. It was a refreshing advent in the lives of the good Sisters of the Holy Cross, who gave him shelter and medicine; though they little dreamed of the hot elixir infused into his veins by the touch of their soft hands and their gentle ministrations. Cal Galbraith, became troubled with strange thoughts which clamored for attention till he laid eyes on the Mission girl, Madeline. Yet he gave no sign, biding his time patiently. He strengthened with the coming spring, and when the sun rode the heavens in a golden circle, and the joy and throb of life was in all the land, he gathered his still weak body together and departed.

Now, Madeline, the Mission girl, was an orphan. Her white father had failed to give a bald-faced grizzly the trail one day, and had died quickly. Then her Indian mother, having no man to fill the winter cache, had tried the hazardous experiment of waiting till the salmon-run on fifty pounds of flour and half as many of bacon. After that, the baby, Chook-ra, went to live with the good Sisters, and to be thenceforth known by another name.

But Madeline still had kinsfolk, the nearest being a dissolute uncle who outraged his vitals with inordinate quantities of the white man's whisky. He strove daily to walk with the gods, and incidentally, his feet sought shorter trails to the grave. When sober he suffered exquisite torture. He had no conscience. To this ancient vagabond Cal Galbraith duly presented himself, and they consumed many words and much tobacco in the conversation that followed. Promises were also made; and in the end the old heathen took a few pounds of dried salmon and his birch-bark canoe, and paddled away to the Mission of the Holy Cross.

It is not given the world to know what promises he made and what lies he toldthe Sisters never gossip; but when he returned, upon his swarthy chest there was a brass crucifix, and in his canoe his niece Madeline. That night there was a grand wedding and a potlach; so that for two days to follow there was no fishing done by the village. But in the morning Madeline shook the dust of the Lower River from her moccasins, and with her husband, in a poling-boat, went to live on the Upper River in a place known as the Lower Country. And in the years which followed she was a good wife, sharing her husband's hardships and cooking his food. And she kept him in straight trails, till he learned to save his dust and to work mightily. In the end, he struck it rich and built a cabin in Circle City; and his happiness was such that men who came to visit him in his home-circle became restless at the sight of it and envied him greatly.

But the Northland began to mature and social amenities to make their appearance.

Hitherto, the Southland had sent forth its sons; but it now belched forth a new exodus-this time of its daughters. Sisters and wives they were not; but they did not fail to put new ideas in the heads of the men, and to elevate the tone of things in ways peculiarly their own. No more did the squaws gather at the dances, go roaring down the center in the good, old Virginia reels, or make merry with jolly 'Dan Tucker.' They fell back on their natural stoicism and uncomplainingly watched the rule of their white sisters from their cabins.

Then another exodus came over the mountains from the prolific Southland.

This time it was of women that became mighty in the land. Their word was law; their law was steel. They frowned upon the Indian wives, while the other women became mild and walked humbly. There were cowards who became ashamed of their ancient covenants with the daughters of the soil, who looked with a new distaste upon their dark-skinned children; but there were also others–men–who remained true and proud of their aboriginal vows. When it became the fashion to divorce the native wives. Cal Galbraith retained his manhood, and in so doing felt the heavy hand of the women who had come last, knew least, but who ruled the land.

One day, the Upper Country, which lies far above Circle City, was pronounced rich. Dog-teams carried the news to Salt Water; golden argosies freighted the lure across the North Pacific; wires and cables sang with the tidings; and the world heard for the first time of the Klondike River and the Yukon Country. Cal Galbraith had lived the years quietly. He had been a good husband to Madeline, and she had blessed him. But somehow discontent fell upon him; he felt vague yearnings for his own kind, for the life he had been shut out from–a general sort of desire, which men sometimes feel, to break out and taste the prime of living. Besides, there drifted down the river wild rumors of the wonderful El Dorado, glowing descriptions of the city of logs and tents, and ludicrous accounts of the che-cha-quas who had rushed in and were stampeding the whole country.

Circle City was dead. The world had moved on up river and become a new and most marvelous world.

Cal Galbraith grew restless on the edge of things, and wished to see with his own eyes.

So, after the wash-up, he weighed in a couple of hundred pounds of dust on the Company's big scales, and took a draft for the same on Dawson. Then he put Tom Dixon in charge of his mines, kissed Madeline good-by, promised to be back before the first mush-ice ran, and took passage on an up-river steamer.

Madeline waited, waited through all the three months of daylight. She fed the dogs, gave much of her time to Young Cal, watched the short summer fade away and the sun begin its long journey to the south. And she prayed much in the manner of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. The fall came, and with it there was mush-ice on the Yukon, and Circle City kings returning to the winter's work at their mines, but no Cal Galbraith. Tom Dixon received a letter, however, for his men sledded up her winter's supply of dry pine. The Company received a letter for its dogteams filled her cache with their best provisions, and she was told that her credit was limitless.

Through all the ages man has been held the chief instigator of the woes of woman; but in this case the men held their tongues and swore harshly at one of their number who was away, while the women failed utterly to emulate them. So, without needless delay, Madeline heard strange tales of Cal Galbraith's doings; also, of a certain Greek dancer who played with men as children did with bubbles. Now Madeline was an Indian woman, and further, she had no woman friend to whom to go for wise counsel. She prayed and planned by turns, and that night, being quick of resolve and action, she harnessed the dogs, and with Young Cal securely lashed to the sled, stole away.

Though the Yukon still ran free, the eddy-ice was growing, and each day saw the river dwindling to a slushy thread. Save him who has done the like, no man may know what she endured in traveling a hundred miles on the rim-ice; nor may they understand the toil and hardship of breaking the two hundred miles of packed ice which remained after the river froze for good. But Madeline was an Indian woman, so she did these things, and one night there came a knock at Malemute Kid's door. Thereat he fed a team of starving dogs, put a healthy youngster to bed, and turned his attention to an exhausted woman. He removed her icebound moccasins while he listened to her tale, and stuck the point of his knife into her feet that he might see how far they were frozen.

Despite his tremendous virility, Malemute Kid was possessed of a softer, womanly element, which could win the confidence of a snarling wolf-dog or draw confessions from the most wintry heart. Nor did he seek them. Hearts opened to him as spontaneously as flowers to the sun. Even the priest, Father Roubeau, had been known to confess to him, while the men and women of the Northland were ever knocking at his door–a door from which the latch-string hung always out. To Madeline, he could do no wrong, make no mistake. She had known him from the time she first cast her lot among the people of her father's race; and to her half-barbaric mind it seemed that in him was centered the wisdom of the ages, that between his vision and the future there could be no intervening veil.

There were false ideals in the land. The social strictures of Dawson were not synonymous with those of the previous era, and the swift maturity of the Northland involved much wrong. Malemute Kid was aware of this, and he had Cal Galbraith's measure accurately.

He knew a hasty word was the father of much evil; besides, he was minded to teach a great lesson and bring shame upon the man. So Stanley Prince, the young mining expert, was called into the conference the following night as was also Lucky Jack Harrington and his violin. That same night, Bettles, who owed a great debt to Malemute Kid, harnessed up Cal Galbraith's dogs, lashed Cal Galbraith, Junior, to the sled, and slipped away in the dark for Stuart River.

II 'So; one–two–three, one–two–three. Now reverse! No, no! Start up again, Jack. See–this way.' Prince executed the movement as one should who has led the cotillion.

'Now; one–two–three, one–two–three. Reverse! Ah! that's better. Try it again. I say, you know, you mustn't look at your feet. One–two–three, one–twothree. Shorter steps! You are not hanging to the gee-pole just now. Try it over.

There! that's the way. One–two–three, one–two–three.' Round and round went Prince and Madeline in an interminable waltz. The table and stools had been shoved over against the wall to increase the room. Malemute Kid sat on the bunk, chin to knees, greatly interested. Jack Harrington sat beside him, scraping away on his violin and following the dancers.

It was a unique situation, the undertaking of these three men with the woman.

The most pathetic part, perhaps, was the businesslike way in which they went about it.

No athlete was ever trained more rigidly for a coming contest, nor wolf-dog for the harness, than was she. But they had good material, for Madeline, unlike most women of her race, in her childhood had escaped the carrying of heavy burdens and the toil of the trail. Besides, she was a clean-limbed, willowy creature, possessed of much grace which had not hitherto been realized. It was this grace which the men strove to bring out and knock into shape.

'Trouble with her she learned to dance all wrong,' Prince remarked to the bunk after having deposited his breathless pupil on the table. 'She's quick at picking up; yet I could do better had she never danced a step. But say, Kid, I can't understand this.' Prince imitated a peculiar movement of the shoulders and head–a weakness Madeline suffered from in walking.

'Lucky for her she was raised in the Mission,' Malemute Kid answered. 'Packing, you know,–the head-strap. Other Indian women have it bad, but she didn't do any packing till after she married, and then only at first. Saw hard lines with that husband of hers. They went through the Forty-Mile famine together.' 'But can we break it?' 'Don't know.

Perhaps long walks with her trainers will make the riffle. Anyway, they'll take it out some, won't they, Madeline?' The girl nodded assent. If Malemute Kid, who knew all things, said so, why it was so. That was all there was about it.

She had come over to them, anxious to begin again. Harrington surveyed her in quest of her points much in the same manner men usually do horses. It certainly was not disappointing, for he asked with sudden interest, 'What did that beggarly uncle of yours get anyway?' 'One rifle, one blanket, twenty bottles of hooch. Rifle broke.' She said this last scornfully, as though disgusted at how low her maiden-value had been rated.

She spoke fair English, with many peculiarities of her husband's speech, but there was still perceptible the Indian accent, the traditional groping after strange gutturals. Even this her instructors had taken in hand, and with no small success, too.

At the next intermission, Prince discovered a new predicament.

'I say, Kid,' he said, 'we're wrong, all wrong. She can't learn in moccasins.

Put her feet into slippers, and then onto that waxed floor–phew!' Madeline raised a foot and regarded her shapeless house-moccasins dubiously. In previous winters, both at Circle City and Forty-Mile, she had danced many a night away with similar footgear, and there had been nothing the matter.

But now–well, if there was anything wrong it was for Malemute Kid to know, not her.

But Malemute Kid did know, and he had a good eye for measures; so he put on his cap and mittens and went down the hill to pay Mrs. Eppingwell a call. Her husband, Clove Eppingwell, was prominent in the community as one of the great Government officials.

The Kid had noted her slender little foot one night, at the Governor's Ball. And as he also knew her to be as sensible as she was pretty, it was no task to ask of her a certain small favor.

On his return, Madeline withdrew for a moment to the inner room. When she reappeared Prince was startled.

'By Jove!' he gasped. 'Who'd a' thought it! The little witch! Why my sister-' 'Is an English girl,' interrupted Malemute Kid, 'with an English foot. This girl comes of a small-footed race. Moccasins just broadened her feet healthily, while she did not misshape them by running with the dogs in her childhood.' But this explanation failed utterly to allay Prince's admiration. Harrington's commercial instinct was touched, and as he looked upon the exquisitely turned foot and ankle, there ran through his mind the sordid list–'One rifle, one blanket, twenty bottles of hooch.' Madeline was the wife of a king, a king whose yellow treasure could buy outright a score of fashion's puppets; yet in all her life her feet had known no gear save red-tanned moosehide. At first she had looked in awe at the tiny white-satin slippers; but she had quickly understood the admiration which shone, manlike, in the eyes of the men. Her face flushed with pride. For the moment she was drunken with her woman's loveliness; then she murmured, with increased scorn, 'And one rifle, broke!' So the training went on. Every day Malemute Kid led the girl out on long walks devoted to the correction of her carriage and the shortening of her stride.

There was little likelihood of her identity being discovered, for Cal Galbraith and the rest of the Old-Timers were like lost children among the many strangers who had rushed into the land. Besides, the frost of the North has a bitter tongue, and the tender women of the South, to shield their cheeks from its biting caresses, were prone to the use of canvas masks. With faces obscured and bodies lost in squirrel-skin parkas, a mother and daughter, meeting on trail, would pass as strangers.

The coaching progressed rapidly. At first it had been slow, but later a sudden acceleration had manifested itself. This began from the moment Madeline tried on the white-satin slippers, and in so doing found herself. The pride of her renegade father, apart from any natural self-esteem she might possess, at that instant received its birth. Hitherto, she had deemed herself a woman of an alien breed, of inferior stock, purchased by her lord's favor. Her husband had seemed to her a god, who had lifted her, through no essential virtues on her part, to his own godlike level. But she had never forgotten, even when Young Cal was born, that she was not of his people. As he had been a god, so had his womenkind been goddesses. She might have contrasted herself with them, but she had never compared.

It might have been that familiarity bred contempt; however, be that as it may, she had ultimately come to understand these roving white men, and to weigh them.

True, her mind was dark to deliberate analysis, but she yet possessed her woman's clarity of vision in such matters. On the night of the slippers she had measured the bold, open admiration of her three man-friends; and for the first time comparison had suggested itself. It was only a foot and an ankle, but–but comparison could not, in the nature of things, cease at that point. She judged herself by their standards till the divinity of her white sisters was shattered. After all, they were only women, and why should she not exalt herself to their midst? In doing these things she learned where she lacked and with the knowledge of her weakness came her strength. And so mightily did she strive that her three trainers often marveled late into the night over the eternal mystery of woman.

In this way Thanksgiving Night drew near. At irregular intervals Bettles sent word down from Stuart River regarding the welfare of Young Cal. The time of their return was approaching. More than once a casual caller, hearing dance-music and the rhythmic pulse of feet, entered, only to find Harrington scraping away and the other two beating time or arguing noisily over a mooted step. Madeline was never in evidence, having precipitately fled to the inner room.

On one of these nights Cal Galbraith dropped in. Encouraging news had just come down from Stuart River, and Madeline had surpassed herself–not in walk alone, and carriage and grace, but in womanly roguishness. They had indulged in sharp repartee and she had defended herself brilliantly; and then, yielding to the intoxication of the moment, and of her own power, she had bullied, and mastered, and wheedled, and patronized them with most astonishing success. And instinctively, involuntarily, they had bowed, not to her beauty, her wisdom, her wit, but to that indefinable something in woman to which man yields yet cannot name.

The room was dizzy with sheer delight as she and Prince whirled through the last dance of the evening. Harrington was throwing in inconceivable flourishes, while Malemute Kid, utterly abandoned, had seized the broom and was executing mad gyrations on his own account.

At this instant the door shook with a heavy rap-rap, and their quick glances noted the lifting of the latch. But they had survived similar situations before. Harrington never broke a note. Madeline shot through the waiting door to the inner room. The broom went hurtling under the bunk, and by the time Cal Galbraith and Louis Savoy got their heads in, Malemute Kid and Prince were in each other's arms, wildly schottisching down the room.

As a rule, Indian women do not make a practice of fainting on provocation, but Madeline came as near to it as she ever had in her life. For an hour she crouched on the floor, listening to the heavy voices of the men rumbling up and down in mimic thunder. Like familiar chords of childhood melodies, every intonation, every trick of her husband's voice swept in upon her, fluttering her heart and weakening her knees till she lay half-fainting against the door. It was well she could neither see nor hear when he took his departure.

'When do you expect to go back to Circle City?' Malemute Kid asked simply.

'Haven't thought much about it,' he replied. 'Don't think till after the ice breaks.'
'And Madeline?'

He flushed at the question, and there was a quick droop to his eyes. Malemute Kid could have despised him for that, had he known men less. As it was, his gorge rose against the wives and daughters who had come into the land, and not satisfied with usurping the place of the native women, had put unclean thoughts in the heads of the men and made them ashamed.

'I guess she's all right,' the Circle City King answered hastily, and in an apologetic manner. 'Tom Dixon's got charge of my interests, you know, and he sees to it that she has everything she wants.' Malemute Kid laid hand upon his arm and hushed him suddenly. They had stepped without. Overhead, the aurora, a gorgeous wanton, flaunted miracles of color; beneath lay the sleeping town. Far below, a solitary dog gave tongue.

The King again began to speak, but the Kid pressed his hand for silence. The sound multiplied. Dog after dog took up the strain till the full-throated chorus swayed the night.

To him who hears for the first time this weird song, is told the first and greatest secret of the Northland; to him who has heard it often, it is the solemn knell of lost endeavor. It is the plaint of tortured souls, for in it is invested the heritage of the North, the suffering of countless generations–the warning and the requiem to the world's estrays.

Cal Galbraith shivered slightly as it died away in half-caught sobs. The Kid read his thoughts openly, and wandered back with him through all the weary days of famine and disease; and with him was also the patient Madeline, sharing his pains and perils,

never doubting, never complaining. His mind's retina vibrated to a score of pictures, stern, clear-cut, and the hand of the past drew back with heavy fingers on his heart. It was the psychological moment. Malemute Kid was halftempted to play his reserve card and win the game; but the lesson was too mild as yet, and he let it pass. The next instant they had gripped hands, and the King's beaded moccasins were drawing protests from the outraged snow as he crunched down the hill.

Madeline in collapse was another woman to the mischievous creature of an hour before, whose laughter had been so infectious and whose heightened color and flashing eyes had made her teachers for the while forget. Weak and nerveless, she sat in the chair just as she had been dropped there by Prince and Harrington.

Malemute Kid frowned. This would never do. When the time of meeting her husband came to hand, she must carry things off with high-handed imperiousness. It was very necessary she should do it after the manner of white women, else the victory would be no victory at all. So he talked to her, sternly, without mincing of words, and initiated her into the weaknesses of his own sex, till she came to understand what simpletons men were after all, and why the word of their women was law.

A few days before Thanksgiving Night, Malemute Kid made another call on Mrs. Eppingwell. She promptly overhauled her feminine fripperies, paid a protracted visit to the dry-goods department of the P. C. Company, and returned with the Kid to make Madeline's acquaintance. After that came a period such as the cabin had never seen before, and what with cutting, and fitting, and basting, and stitching, and numerous other wonderful and unknowable things, the male conspirators were more often banished the premises than not. At such times the Opera House opened its double storm-doors to them.

So often did they put their heads together, and so deeply did they drink to curious toasts, that the loungers scented unknown creeks of incalculable richness, and it is known that several checha-quas and at least one Old-Timer kept their stampeding packs stored behind the bar, ready to hit the trail at a moment's notice.

Mrs. Eppingwell was a woman of capacity; so, when she turned Madeline over to her trainers on Thanksgiving Night she was so transformed that they were almost afraid of her. Prince wrapped a Hudson Bay blanket about her with a mock reverence more real than feigned, while Malemute Kid, whose arm she had taken, found it a severe trial to resume his wonted mentorship. Harrington, with the list of purchases still running through his head, dragged along in the rear, nor opened his mouth once all the way down into the town. When they came to the back door of the Opera House they took the blanket from Madeline's shoulders and spread it on the snow. Slipping out of Prince's moccasins, she stepped upon it in new satin slippers. The masquerade was at its height. She hesitated, but they jerked open the door and shoved her in. Then they ran around to come in by the front entrance.

III 'Where is Freda?' the Old-Timers questioned, while the che-cha-quas were equally energetic in asking who Freda was. The ballroom buzzed with her name.

It was on everybody's lips. Grizzled 'sour-dough boys,' day-laborers at the mines but proud of their degree, either patronized the spruce-looking tenderfeet and lied eloquently-the 'sour-dough boys' being specially created to toy with truth–or gave them savage looks of indignation because of their ignorance. Perhaps forty kings of the Upper and Lower Countries were on the floor, each deeming himself hot on the trail and sturdily backing his judgment with the yellow dust of the realm. An assistant was sent to the man at the scales, upon whom had fallen the burden of weighing up the sacks, while several of the gamblers, with the rules of chance at their finger-ends, made up alluring books on the field and favorites.

Which was Freda? Time and again the 'Greek Dancer' was thought to have been discovered, but each discovery brought panic to the betting ring and a frantic registering of new wagers by those who wished to hedge. Malemute Kid took an interest in the hunt, his advent being hailed uproariously by the revelers, who knew him to a man. The Kid had a good eye for the trick of a step, and ear for the lilt of a voice, and his private choice was a marvelous creature who scintillated as the 'Aurora Borealis.' But the Greek dancer was too subtle for even his penetration. The majority of the gold-hunters seemed to have centered their verdict on the 'Russian Princess,' who was the most graceful in the room, and hence could be no other than Freda Moloof.

During a quadrille a roar of satisfaction went up. She was discovered. At previous balls, in the figure, 'all hands round,' Freda had displayed an inimitable step and variation peculiarly her own. As the figure was called, the 'Russian Princess' gave the unique rhythm to limb and body. A chorus of I-told-you-so's shook the squared roof-beams, when lo! it was noticed that 'Aurora Borealis' and another masque, the 'Spirit of the Pole,' were performing the same trick equally well. And when two twin 'Sun-Dogs' and a 'Frost Queen' followed suit, a second assistant was dispatched to the aid of the man at the scales.

Bettles came off trail in the midst of the excitement, descending upon them in a hurricane of frost. His rimed brows turned to cataracts as he whirled about; his mustache, still frozen, seemed gemmed with diamonds and turned the light in varicolored rays; while the flying feet slipped on the chunks of ice which rattled from his moccasins and German socks. A Northland dance is quite an informal affair, the men of the creeks and trails having lost whatever fastidiousness they might have at one time possessed; and only in the high official circles are conventions at all observed. Here, caste carried no significance. Millionaires and paupers, dog-drivers and mounted policemen joined hands with 'ladies in the center,' and swept around the circle performing most remarkable capers. Primitive in their pleasure, boisterous and rough, they displayed no rudeness, but rather a crude chivalry more genuine than the most polished courtesy.

In his quest for the 'Greek Dancer,' Cal Galbraith managed to get into the same set with the 'Russian Princess,' toward whom popular suspicion had turned.

But by the time he had guided her through one dance, he was willing not only to stake his millions that she was not Freda, but that he had had his arm about her waist before. When or where he could not tell, but the puzzling sense of familiarity

so wrought upon him that he turned his attention to the discovery of her identity. Malemute Kid might have aided him instead of occasionally taking the Princess for a few turns and talking earnestly to her in low tones. But it was Jack Harrington who paid the 'Russian Princess' the most assiduous court. Once he drew Cal Galbraith aside and hazarded wild guesses as to who she was, and explained to him that he was going in to win. That rankled the Circle City King, for man is not by nature monogamic, and he forgot both Madeline and Freda in the new quest.

It was soon noised about that the 'Russian Princess' was not Freda Moloof. Interest deepened. Here was a fresh enigma. They knew Freda though they could not find her, but here was somebody they had found and did not know. Even the women could not place her, and they knew every good dancer in the camp. Many took her for one of the official clique, indulging in a silly escapade. Not a few asserted she would disappear before the unmasking. Others were equally positive that she was the woman-reporter of the Kansas City Star, come to write them up at ninety dollars per column. And the men at the scales worked busily.

At one o'clock every couple took to the floor. The unmasking began amid laughter and delight, like that of carefree children. There was no end of Oh's and Ah's as mask after mask was lifted. The scintillating 'Aurora Borealis' became the brawny negress whose income from washing the community's clothes ran at about five hundred a month. The twin 'Sun-Dogs' discovered mustaches on their upper lips, and were recognized as brother Fraction-Kings of El Dorado. In one of the most prominent sets, and the slowest in uncovering, was Cal Galbraith with the 'Spirit of the Pole.' Opposite him was Jack Harrington and the 'Russian Princess.' The rest had discovered themselves, yet the 'Greek Dancer' was still missing. All eyes were upon the group. Cal Galbraith, in response to their cries, lifted his partner's mask. Freda's wonderful face and brilliant eyes flashed out upon them. A roar went up, to be squelched suddenly in the new and absorbing mystery of the 'Russian Princess.' Her face was still hidden, and Jack Harrington was struggling with her. The dancers tittered on the tiptoes of expectancy. He crushed her dainty costume roughly, and then–and then the revelers exploded. The joke was on them. They had danced all night with a tabooed native woman.

But those that knew, and they were many, ceased abruptly, and a hush fell upon the room.

Cal Galbraith crossed over with great strides, angrily, and spoke to Madeline in polyglot Chinook. But she retained her composure, apparently oblivious to the fact that she was the cynosure of all eyes, and answered him in English. She showed neither fright nor anger, and Malemute Kid chuckled at her well-bred equanimity. The King felt baffled, defeated; his common Siwash wife had passed beyond him.

'Come!' he said finally. 'Come on home.' 'I beg pardon,' she replied; 'I have agreed to go to supper with Mr. Harrington. Besides, there's no end of dances promised.'

Harrington extended his arm to lead her away. He evinced not the slightest disinclination toward showing his back, but Malemute Kid had by this time edged in closer. The Circle City King was stunned. Twice his hand dropped to his belt, and

twice the Kid gathered himself to spring; but the retreating couple passed through the supper-room door where canned oysters were spread at five dollars the plate.

The crowd sighed audibly, broke up into couples, and followed them. Freda pouted and went in with Cal Galbraith; but she had a good heart and a sure tongue, and she spoiled his oysters for him. What she said is of no importance, but his face went red and white at intervals, and he swore repeatedly and savagely at himself.

The supper-room was filled with a pandemonium of voices, which ceased suddenly as Cal Galbraith stepped over to his wife's table. Since the unmasking considerable weights of dust had been placed as to the outcome. Everybody watched with breathless interest.

Harrington's blue eyes were steady, but under the overhanging tablecloth a Smith & Wesson balanced on his knee. Madeline looked up, casually, with little interest.

'May–may I have the next round dance with you?' the King stuttered.

The wife of the King glanced at her card and inclined her head.

Winged Blackmail

Peter Winn lay back comfortably in a library chair, with closed eyes, deep in the cogitation of a scheme of campaign destined in the near future to make a certain coterie of hostile financiers sit up. The central idea had come to him the night before, and he was now reveling in the planning of the remoter, minor details. By obtaining control of a certain up-country bank, two general stores, and several logging camps, he could come into control of a certain dinky jerkwater line which shall here be nameless, but which, in his hands, would prove the key to a vastly larger situation involving more main-line mileage almost than there were spikes in the aforesaid dinky jerkwater. It was so simple that he had almost laughed aloud when it came to him. No wonder those astute and ancient enemies of his had passed it by.

The library door opened, and a slender, middle-aged man, weak-eyed and eye glassed, entered. In his hands was an envelope and an open letter. As Peter Winn's secretary it was his task to weed out, sort, and classify his employer's mail.

"This came in the morning post," he ventured apologetically and with the hint of a titter. "Of course it doesn't amount to anything, but I thought you would like to see it."

"Read it," Peter Winn commanded, without opening his eyes.

The secretary cleared his throat.

"It is dated July seventeenth, but is without address. Postmark San Francisco. It is also quite illiterate. The spelling is atrocious. Here it is:

Mr. Peter Winn, SIR: I send you respectfully by express a pigeon worth good money. She's a loo-loo — "

"What is a loo-loo?" Peter Winn interrupted.

The secretary tittered.

"I'm sure I don't know, except that it must be a superlative of some sort. The letter continues:

Please freight it with a couple of thousand-dollar bills and let it go. If you do I wont never annoy you no more. If you dont you will be sorry.

"That is all. It is unsigned. I thought it would amuse you."

"Has the pigeon come?" Peter Winn demanded.

"I'm sure I never thought to enquire."

"Then do so."

In five minutes the secretary was back.

"Yes, sir. It came this morning."

"Then bring it in."

The secretary was inclined to take the affair as a practical joke, but Peter Winn, after an examination of the pigeon, thought otherwise.

"Look at it," he said, stroking and handling it. "See the length of the body and that elongated neck. A proper carrier. I doubt if I've ever seen a finer specimen. Powerfully winged and muscled. As our unknown correspondent remarked, she is a loo-loo. It's a temptation to keep her."

The secretary tittered.

"Why not? Surely you will not let it go back to the writer of that letter."

Peter Winn shook his head.

"I'll answer. No man can threaten me, even anonymously or in foolery."

On a slip of paper he wrote the succinct message, "Go to hell," signed it, and placed it in the carrying apparatus with which the bird had been thoughtfully supplied.

"Now we'll let her loose. Where's my son? I'd like him to see the flight."

"He's down in the workshop. He slept there last night, and had his breakfast sent down this morning."

"He'll break his neck yet," Peter Winn remarked, half-fiercely, half-proudly, as he led the way to the veranda.

Standing at the head of the broad steps, he tossed the pretty creature outward and upward. She caught herself with a quick beat of wings, fluttered about undecidedly for a space, then rose in the air.

Again, high up, there seemed indecision; then, apparently getting her bearings, she headed east, over the oak-trees that dotted the park-like grounds.

"Beautiful, beautiful," Peter Winn murmured. "I almost wish I had her back."

But Peter Winn was a very busy man, with such large plans in his head and with so many reins in his hands that he quickly forgot the incident. Three nights later the left wing of his country house was blown up. It was not a heavy explosion, and nobody was hurt, though the wing itself was ruined. Most of the windows of the rest of the house were broken, and there was a deal of general damage. By the first ferry boat of the morning half a dozen San Francisco detectives arrived, and several hours later the secretary, in high excitement, erupted on Peter Winn.

"It's come!" the secretary gasped, the sweat beading his forehead and his eyes bulging behind their glasses.

"What has come?" Peter demanded. "It – the – the loo-loo bird."

Then the financier understood.

"Have you gone over the mail yet?"

"I was just going over it, sir."

"Then continue, and see if you can find another letter from our mysterious friend, the pigeon fancier."

The letter came to light. It read:

Mr. Peter Winn, HONORABLE SIR: Now dont be a fool. If youd came through, your shack would not have blew up – I beg to inform you respectfully, am sending same pigeon. Take good care of same, thank you. Put five one thousand dollar bills on

her and let her go. Dont feed her. Dont try to follow bird. She is wise to the way now and makes better time. If you dont come through, watch out.

Peter Winn was genuinely angry. This time he indited no message for the pigeon to carry. Instead, he called in the detectives, and, under their advice, weighted the pigeon heavily with shot. Her previous flight having been eastward toward the bay, the fastest motor-boat in Tiburon was commissioned to take up the chase if it led out over the water.

But too much shot had been put on the carrier, and she was exhausted before the shore was reached. Then the mistake was made of putting too little shot on her, and she rose high in the air, got her bearings and started eastward across San Francisco Bay. She flew straight over Angel Island, and here the motor-boat lost her, for it had to go around the island.

That night, armed guards patrolled the grounds. But there was no explosion. Yet, in the early morning Peter Winn learned by telephone that his sister's home in Alameda had been burned to the ground.

Two days later the pigeon was back again, coming this time by freight in what had seemed a barrel of potatoes. Also came another letter:

Mr. Peter Winn, RESPECTABLE SIR: It was me that fixed yr sisters house. You have raised hell, aint you. Send ten thousand now. Going up all the time. Dont put any more handicap weights on that bird. You sure cant follow her, and its cruelty to animals.

Peter Winn was ready to acknowledge himself beaten. The detectives were powerless, and Peter did not know where next the man would strike – perhaps at the lives of those near and dear to him. He even telephoned to San Francisco for ten thousand dollars in bills of large denomination. But Peter had a son, Peter Winn, Junior, with the same firm-set jaw as his fathers,, and the same knitted, brooding determination in his eyes. He was only twenty-six, but he was all man, a secret terror and delight to the financier, who alternated between pride in his son's aeroplane feats and fear for an untimely and terrible end.

"Hold on, father, don't send that money," said Peter Winn, Junior. "Number Eight is ready, and I know I've at last got that reefing down fine. It will work, and it will revolutionize flying. Speed – that's what's needed, and so are the large sustaining surfaces for getting started and for altitude. I've got them both. Once I'm up I reef down. There it is. The smaller the sustaining surface, the higher the speed. That was the law discovered by Langley. And I've applied it. I can rise when the air is calm and full of holes, and I can rise when its boiling, and by my control of my plane areas I can come pretty close to making any speed I want. Especially with that new Sangster-Endholm engine."

"You'll come pretty close to breaking your neck one of these days," was his father's encouraging remark.

"Dad, I'll tell you what I'll come pretty close to-ninety miles an hour – Yes, and a hundred. Now listen! I was going to make a trial tomorrow. But it won't take two

hours to start today. I'll tackle it this afternoon. Keep that money. Give me the pigeon and I'll follow her to her loft where ever it is. Hold on, let me talk to the mechanics."

He called up the workshop, and in crisp, terse sentences gave his orders in a way that went to the older man's heart. Truly, his one son was a chip off the old block, and Peter Winn had no meek notions concerning the intrinsic value of said old block.

Timed to the minute, the young man, two hours later, was ready for the start. In a holster at his hip, for instant use, cocked and with the safety on, was a large-caliber automatic pistol. With a final inspection and overhauling he took his seat in the aeroplane. He started the engine, and with a wild burr of gas explosions the beautiful fabric darted down the launching ways and lifted into the air. Circling, as he rose, to the west, he wheeled about and jockeyed and maneuvered for the real start of the race.

This start depended on the pigeon. Peter Winn held it. Nor was it weighted with shot this time. Instead, half a yard of bright ribbon was firmly attached to its leg – this the more easily to enable its flight being followed. Peter Winn released it, and it arose easily enough despite the slight drag of the ribbon. There was no uncertainty about its movements. This was the third time it had made particular homing passage, and it knew the course.

At an altitude of several hundred feet it straightened out and went due cast. The aeroplane swerved into a straight course from its last curve and followed. The race was on. Peter Winn, looking up, saw that the pigeon was outdistancing the machine. Then he saw something else. The aeroplane suddenly and instantly became smaller. It had reefed. Its high-speed plane-design was now revealed. Instead of the generous spread of surface with which it had taken the air, it was now a lean and hawklike monoplane balanced on long and exceedingly narrow wings.

. . . .

When young Winn reefed down so suddenly, he received a surprise. It was his first trial of the new device, and while he was prepared for increased speed he was not prepared for such an astonishing increase. It was better than he dreamed, and, before he knew it, he was hard upon the pigeon. That little creature, frightened by this, the most monstrous hawk it had ever seen, immediately darted upward, after the manner of pigeons that strive always to rise above a hawk.

In great curves the monoplane followed upward, higher and higher into the blue. It was difficult, from underneath to see the pigeon. and young Winn dared not lose it from his sight. He even shook out his reefs in order to rise more quickly. Up, up they went, until the pigeon, true to its instinct, dropped and struck at what it to be the back of its pursuing enemy. Once was enough, for, evidently finding no life in the smooth cloth surface of the machine, it ceased soaring and straightened out on its eastward course.

A carrier pigeon on a passage can achieve a high rate of speed, and Winn reefed again. And again, to his satisfaction, be found that he was beating the pigeon. But this time he quickly shook out a portion of his reefed sustaining surface and slowed down in time. From then on he knew he had the chase safely in hand, and from then

on a chant rose to his lips which he continued to sing at intervals, and unconsciously, for the rest of the passage. It was: "Going some; going some; what did I tell you — going some."

Even so, it was not all plain sailing. The air is an unstable medium at best, and quite without warning, at an acute angle, he entered an aerial tide which he recognized as the gulf stream of wind that poured through the drafty-mouthed Golden Gate. His right wing caught it first – a sudden, sharp puff that lifted and tilted the monoplane and threatened to capsize it. But he rode with a sensitive "loose curb," and quickly, but not too quickly, he shifted the angles of his wing-tips, depressed the front horizontal rudder, and swung over the rear vertical rudder to meet the tilting thrust of the wind. As the machine came back to an even keel, and he knew that he was now wholly in the invisible stream, he readjusted the wing-tips, rapidly away from him during the several moments of his discomfiture.

The pigeon drove straight on for the Alameda County shore, and it was near this shore that Winn had another experience. He fell into an air-hole. He had fallen into air-holes before, in previous flights, but this was a far larger one than he had ever encountered. With his eyes strained on the ribbon attached to the pigeon, by that fluttering bit of color he marked his fall. Down he went, at the pit of his stomach that old sink sensation which he had known as a boy he first negotiated quick-starting elevators. But Winn, among other secrets of aviation, had learned that to go up it was sometimes necessary first to go down. The air had refused to hold him. Instead of struggling futilely and perilously against this lack of sustension, he yielded to it. With steady head and hand, he depressed the forward horizontal rudder – just recklessly enough and not a fraction more – and the monoplane dived head foremost and sharply down the void. It was falling with the keenness of a knife-blade. Every instant the speed accelerated frightfully. Thus he accumulated the momentum that would save him. But few instants were required, when, abruptly shifting the double horizontal rudders forward and astern, he shot upward on the tense and straining plane and out of the pit.

At an altitude of five hundred feet, the pigeon drove on over the town of Berkeley and lifted its flight to the Contra Costa hills. Young Winn noted the campus and buildings of the University of California – his university – as he rose after the pigeon.

Once more, on these Contra Costa hills, he early came to grief. The pigeon was now flying low, and where a grove of eucalyptus presented a solid front to the wind, the bird was suddenly sent fluttering wildly upward for a distance of a hundred feet. Winn knew what it meant. It had been caught in an air-surf that beat upward hundreds of feet where the fresh west wind smote the upstanding wall of the grove. He reefed hastily to the uttermost, and at the same time depressed the angle of his flight to meet that upward surge. Nevertheless, the monoplane was tossed fully three hundred feet before the danger was left astern.

Two or more ranges of hills the pigeon crossed, and then Winn saw it dropping down to a landing where a small cabin stood in a hillside clearing. He blessed that

clearing. Not only was it good for alighting, but, on account of the steepness of the slope, it was just the thing for rising again into the air.

A man, reading a newspaper, had just started up at the sight of the returning pigeon, when be heard the burr of Winn's engine and saw the huge monoplane, with all surfaces set, drop down upon him, stop suddenly on an air-cushion manufactured on the spur of the moment by a shift of the horizontal rudders, glide a few yards, strike ground, and come to rest not a score of feet away from him. But when he saw a young man, calmly sitting in the machine and leveling a pistol at him, the man turned to run. Before he could make the comer of the cabin, a bullet through the leg brought him down in a sprawling fall.

"What do you want!" he demanded sullenly, as the other stood over him.

"I want to take you for a ride in my new machine," Winn answered. "Believe me, she is a loo-loo."

The man did not argue long, for this strange visitor had most convincing ways. Under Winn's instructions, covered all the time by the pistol, the man improvised a tourniquet and applied it to his wounded leg. Winn helped him to a seat in the machine, then went to the pigeon-loft and took possession of the bird with the ribbon still fast to its leg.

A very tractable prisoner, the man proved. Once up in the air, he sat close, in an ecstasy of fear. An adept at winged blackmail, he had no aptitude for wings himself, and when he gazed down at the flying land and water far beneath him, he did not feel moved to attack his captor, now defenseless, both hands occupied with flight.

Instead, the only way the man felt moved was to sit closer.

. . . .

Peter Winn, Senior, scanning the heavens with powerful glasses, saw the monoplane leap into view and grow large over the rugged backbone of Angel Island. Several minutes later he cried out to the waiting detectives that the machine carried a passenger. Dropping swiftly and piling up an abrupt air-cushion, the monoplane landed.

"That reefing device is a winner!" young Winn cried, as he climbed out. "Did you see me at the start? I almost ran over the pigeon. Going some, dad! Going some! What did I tell you? Going some!"

"But who is that with you?" his father demanded.

The young man looked back at his prisoner and remembered.

"Why, that's the pigeon-fancier," he said. "I guess the officers can take care of him."

Peter Winn gripped his son's hand in grim silence, and fondled the pigeon which his son had passed to him. Again he fondled the pretty creature. Then he spoke.

"Exhibit A, for the People," he said.

The Wisdom of the Trail

Sitka Charley had achieved the impossible. Other Indians might have known as much of the wisdom of the trail as did he; but he alone knew the white man's wisdom, the honor of the trail, and the law. But these things had not come to him in a day. The aboriginal mind is slow to generalize, and many facts, repeated often, are required to compass an understanding. Sitka Charley, from boyhood, had been thrown continually with white men, and as a man he had elected to cast his fortunes with them, expatriating himself, once and for all, from his own people. Even then, respecting, almost venerating their power, and pondering over it, he had yet to divine its secret essence–the honor and the law. And it was only by the cumulative evidence of years that he had finally come to understand. Being an alien, when he did know he knew it better than the white man himself; being an Indian, he had achieved the impossible. And of these things had been bred a certain contempt for his own people,–a contempt which he had made it a custom to conceal, but which now burst forth in a polyglot whirlwind of curses upon the heads of Kah-Chucte and Gowhee. They cringed before him like a brace of snarling wolf-dogs, too cowardly to spring, too wolfish to cover their fangs. They were not handsome creatures. Neither was Sitka Charley. All three were frightful-looking. There was no flesh to their faces; their cheek bones were massed with hideous scabs which had cracked and frozen alternately under the intense frost; while their eyes burned luridly with the light which is born of desperation and hunger. Men so situated, beyond the pale of the honor and the law, are not to be trusted. Sitka Charley knew this; and this was why he had forced them to abandon their rifles with the rest of the camp outfit ten days before. His rifle and Captain Eppingwell's were the only ones that remained.

"Come, get a fire started," he commanded, drawing out the precious match box with its attendant strips of dry birch bark.

The two Indians fell sullenly to the task of gathering dead branches and underwood. They were weak, and paused often, catching themselves, in the act of stooping, with giddy motions, or staggering to the centre of operations with their knees shaking like castanets. After each trip they rested for a moment, as though sick and deadly weary. At times their eyes took on the patient stoicism of dumb suffering; and again the ego seemed almost bursting forth with its wild cry, "I, I, I want to exist!"–the dominant note of the whole living universe.

A light breath of air blew from the south, nipping the exposed portions of their bodies and driving the frost, in needles of fire, through fur and flesh to the bones. So, when the fire had grown lusty and thawed a damp circle in the snow about it,

Sitka Charley forced his reluctant comrades to lend a hand in pitching a fly. It was a primitive affair,–merely a blanket, stretched parallel with the fire and to windward of it, at an angle of perhaps forty-five degrees. This shut out the chill wind, and threw the heat backward and down upon those who were to huddle in its shelter. Then a layer of green spruce boughs was spread, that their bodies might not come in contact with the snow. When this task was completed, Kah-Chucte and Gowhee proceeded to take care of their feet. Their ice-bound moccasins were sadly worn by much travel, and the sharp ice of the river jams had cut them to rags. Their Siwash socks were similarly conditioned, and when these had been thawed and removed, the dead-white tips of the toes, in the various stages of mortification, told their simple tale of the trail.

Leaving the two to the drying of their foot-gear, Sitka Charley turned back over the course he had come. He, too, had a mighty longing to sit by the fire and tend his complaining flesh, but the honor and the law forbade. He toiled painfully over the frozen field, each step a protest, every muscle in revolt. Several times, where the open water between the jams had recently crusted, he was forced to miserably accelerate his movements as the fragile footing swayed and threatened beneath him. In such places death was quick and easy; but it was not his desire to endure no more.

His deepening anxiety vanished as two Indians dragged into view round a bend in the river. They staggered and panted like men under heavy burdens; yet the packs on their backs were a matter of but few pounds. He questioned them eagerly, and their replies seemed to relieve him. He hurried on. Next came two white men, supporting between them a woman. They also behaved as though drunken, and their limbs shook with weakness. But the woman leaned lightly upon them, choosing to carry herself forward with her own strength. At sight of her, a flash of joy cast its fleeting light across Sitka Charley's face. He cherished a very great regard for Mrs. Eppingwell. He had seen many white women, but this was the first to travel the trail with him. When Captain Eppingwell proposed the hazardous undertaking and made him an offer for his services, he had shaken his head gravely; for it was an unknown journey through the dismal vastnesses of the Northland, and he knew it to be of the kind that try to the uttermost the souls of men. But when he learned that the Captain's wife was to accompany them, he had refused flatly to have anything further to do with it. Had it been a woman of his own race he would have harbored no objections; but these women of the Southland–no, no, they were too soft, too tender, for such enterprises.

Sitka Charley did not know this kind of woman. Five minutes before, he did not even dream of taking charge of the expedition; but when she came to him with her wonderful smile and her straight clean English, and talked to the point, without pleading or persuading, he had incontinently yielded. Had there been a softness and appeal to mercy in the eyes, a tremble to the voice, a taking advantage of sex, he would have stiffened to steel; instead her clear-searching eyes and clear-ringing voice, her utter frankness and tacit assumption of equality, had robbed him of his reason. He felt, then, that this was a new breed of woman; and ere they had been trail-mates for many days, he knew why the sons of such women mastered the land and the sea, and why the sons

of his own womankind could not prevail against them. Tender and soft! Day after day he watched her, muscle-weary, exhausted, indomitable, and the words beat in upon him in a perennial refrain. Tender and soft! He knew her feet had been born to easy paths and sunny lands, strangers to the moccasined pain of the North, unkissed by the chill lips of the frost, and he watched and marveled at them twinkling ever through the weary day.

She had always a smile and a word of cheer, from which not even the meanest packer was excluded. As the way grew darker she seemed to stiffen and gather greater strength, and when Kah-Chucte and Gowhee, who had bragged that they knew every landmark of the way as a child did the skin-bales of the tepee, acknowledged that they knew not where they were, it was she who raised a forgiving voice amid the curses of the men. She had sung to them that night, till they felt the weariness fall from them and were ready to face the future with fresh hope. And when the food failed and each scant stint was measured jealously, she it was who rebelled against the machinations of her husband and Sitka Charley, and demanded and received a share neither greater nor less than that of the others.

Sitka Charley was proud to know this woman. A new richness, a greater breadth, had come into his life with her presence. Hitherto he had been his own mentor, had turned to right or left at no man's beck; he had moulded himself according to his own dictates, nourished his manhood regardless of all save his own opinion. For the first time he had felt a call from without for the best that was in him. Just a glance of appreciation from the clear-searching eyes, a word of thanks from the clear-ringing voice, just a slight wreathing of the lips in the wonderful smile, and he walked with the gods for hours to come. It was a new stimulant to his manhood; for the first time he thrilled with a conscious pride in his wisdom of the trail; and between the twain they ever lifted the sinking hearts of their comrades.

* * *

The faces of the two men and the woman brightened as they saw him, for after all he was the staff they leaned upon. But Sitka Charley, rigid as was his wont, concealing pain and pleasure impartially beneath an iron exterior, asked them the welfare of the rest, told the distance to the fire, and continued on the back-trip. Next he met a single Indian, unburdened, limping, lips compressed, and eyes set with the pain of a foot in which the quick fought a losing battle with the dead. All possible care had been taken of him, but in the last extremity the weak and unfortunate must perish, and Sitka Charley deemed his days to be few. The man could not keep up for long, so he gave him rough cheering words. After that came two more Indians, to whom he had allotted the task of helping along Joe, the third white man of the party. They had deserted him. Sitka Charley saw at a glance the lurking spring in their bodies, and knew they had at last cast off his mastery. So he was not taken unawares when he ordered them back in quest of their abandoned charge, and saw the gleam of the hunting-knives that they drew from the sheaths. A pitiful spectacle, three weak men lifting their puny strength in the face of the mighty vastness; but the two recoiled under the fierce rifle-blows of

the one, and returned like beaten dogs to the leash. Two hours later, with Joe reeling between them and Sitka Charley bringing up the rear, they came to the fire, where the remainder of the expedition crouched in the shelter of the fly.

"A few words, my comrades, before we sleep," Sitka Charley said, after they had devoured their slim rations of unleavened bread. He was speaking to the Indians, in their own tongue, having already given the import to the whites. "A few words, my comrades, for your own good, that ye may yet perchance live. I shall give you the law; on his own head be the death of him that breaks it. We have passed the Hills of Silence, and we now travel the head-reaches of the Stuart. It may be one sleep, it may be several, it may be many sleeps, but in time we shall come among the Men of the Yukon, who have much grub. It were well that we look to the law. To-day,Kah-Chucte and Gowhee, whom commanded to break trail, forgot they were men, and like frightened children ran away. True, they forgot; so let us forget. But hereafter let them remember. If it should happen they do not"–He touched his rifle carelessly, grimly. "To-morrow they shall carry the flour and see that the white man Joe lies not down by the trail. The cups of flour are counted; should so much as an ounce be wanting at nightfall–Do ye understand? To-day there were others that forgot. Moose-Head and Three-Salmon left the white man Joe to lie in the snow. Let them forget no more. With the light of day shall they go forth and break trail. Ye have heard the law. Look well, lest ye break it."

* * *

Sitka Charley found it beyond him to keep the line close up. From Moose-Head and Three-Salmon, who broke trail in advance, to Kah-Chucte, Gowhee, and Joe, it straggled out over a mile. Each staggered, fell, or rested, as he saw fit. The line of march was a progression through a chain of irregular halts. Each drew upon the last remnant of his strength and stumbled onward till it was expended, but in some miraculous way there was always another last remnant. Each time a man fell, it was with the firm belief that he would rise no more; yet he did rise, and again, and again. The flesh yielded, the will conquered; but each triumph was a tragedy. The Indian with the frozen foot, no longer erect, crawled forward on hand and knee. He rarely rested, for he knew the penalty exacted by the frost. Even Mrs. Eppingwell's lips were at last set in a stony smile, and her eyes, seeing, saw not. Often, she stopped, pressing a mittened hand to her heart, gasping and dizzy.

Joe, the white man, had passed beyond the stage of suffering. He no longer begged to be let alone, prayed to die; but was soothed and content under the anodyne of delirium. Kah-Chucte and Gowhee dragged him on roughly, venting upon him many a savage glance or blow. To them it was the acme of injustice. Their hearts were bitter with hate, heavy with fear. Why should they cumber their strength with his weakness? To do so, meant death; not to do so–and they remembered the law of Sitka Charley, and the rifle.

Joe fell with greater frequency as the daylight waned, and so hard was he to raise that they dropped farther and farther behind. Sometimes all three pitched into the snow, so weak had the Indians become. Yet on their backs was life, and strength, and

warmth. Within the flour-sacks were all the potentialities of existence. They could not but think of this, and it was not strange, that which came to pass. They had fallen by the side of a great timber-jam where a thousand cords of firewood waited the match. Near by was an air hole through the ice. Kah-Chucte looked on the wood and the water, as did Gowhee; then they looked on each other. Never a word was spoken. Gowhee struck a fire; Kah-Chucte filled a tin cup with water and heated it; Joe babbled of things in another land, in a tongue they did not understand. They mixed flour with the warm water till it was a thin paste, and of this they drank many cups. They did not offer any to Joe; but he did not mind. He did not mind anything, not even his moccasins, which scorched and smoked among the coals.

A crystal mist of snow fell about them, softly, caressingly, wrapping them in clinging robes of white. And their feet would have yet trod many trails had not destiny brushed the clouds aside and cleared the air. Nay, ten minutes' delay would have been salvation. Sitka Charley, looking back, saw the pillared smoke of their fire, and guessed. And he looked ahead at those who were faithful, and at Mrs. Eppingwell.

* * *

"So, my good comrades, ye have again forgotten that you were men? Good. Very good. There will be fewer bellies to feed."

Sitka Charley retied the flour as he spoke, strapping the pack to the one on his own back. He kicked Joe till the pain broke through the poor devil's bliss and brought him doddering to his feet. Then he shoved him out upon the trail and started him on his way. The two Indians attempted to slip off.

"Hold, Gowhee! And thou, too, Kah-Chucte! Hath the flour given such strength to thy legs that they may outrun the swift-winged lead? Think not to cheat the law. Be men for the last time, and be content that ye die full-stomached. Come, step up, back to the timber, shoulder to shoulder. Come!"

The two men obeyed, quietly, without fear; for it is the future which presses upon the man, not the present.

"Thou, Gowhee, hast a wife and children and a deer-skin lodge in the Chippewyan. What is thy will in the matter?"

"Give thou her of the goods which are mine by the word of the Captain–the blankets, the beads, the tobacco, the box which makes strange sounds after the manner of the white men. Say that I did die on the trail, but say not how."

"And thou, Kah-Chucte, who hast nor wife nor child?"

"Mine is a sister, the wife of the Factor at Koshim. He beats her, and she is not happy. Give thou her the goods which are mine by the contract, and tell her it were well she go back to her own people. Shouldst thou meet the man, and be so minded, it were a good deed that he should die. He beats her, and she is afraid."

"Are ye content to die by the law?"

"We are."

"Then good-by, my good comrades. May ye sit by the well-filled pot, in warm lodges, ere the day is done." As he spoke, he raised his rifle, and many echoes broke the silence.

Hardly had they died away, when other rifles spoke in the distance. Sitka Charley started. There had been more than one shot, yet there was but one other rifle in the party. He gave a fleeting glance at the men who lay so quietly, smiled viciously at the wisdom of the trail, and hurried on to meet the Men of the Yukon.

The Wit of Porportuk

El-Soo had been a Mission girl. Her mother had died when she was very small, and Sister Alberta had plucked El-Soo as a brand from the burning, one summer day, and carried her away to Holy Cross Mission and dedicated her to God. El-Soo was a full-blooded Indian, yet she exceeded all the half-breed and quarter-breed girls. Never had the good sisters dealt with a girl so adaptable and at the same time so spirited.

El-Soo was quick, and deft, and intelligent; but above all she was fire, the living flame of life, a blaze of personality that was compounded of will, sweetness, and daring. Her father was a chief, and his blood ran in her veins. Obedience, on the part of El-Soo, was a matter of terms and arrangement. She had a passion for equity, and perhaps it was because of this that she excelled in mathematics.

But she excelled in other things. She learned to read and write English as no girl had ever learned in the Mission. She led the girls in singing, and into song she carried her sense of equity. She was an artist, and the fire of her flowed toward creation. Had she from birth enjoyed a more favorable environment, she would have made literature or music.

Instead, she was El-Soo, daughter of Klakee-Nah, a chief, and she lived in the Holy Cross Mission where were no artists, but only pure-souled Sisters who were interested in cleanliness and righteousness and the welfare of the spirit in the land of immortality that lay beyond the skies.

The years passed. She was eight years old when she entered the Mission; she was sixteen, and the Sisters were corresponding with their superiors in the Order concerning the sending of El-Soo to the United States to complete her education, when a man of her own tribe arrived at Holy Cross and had talk with her. El-Soo was somewhat appalled by him. He was dirty. He was a Caliban-like creature, primitively ugly, with a mop of hair that had never been combed. He looked at her disapprovingly and refused to sit down.

"Thy brother is dead," he said, shortly.

El-Soo was not particularly shocked. She remembered little of her brother. "Thy father is an old man, and alone," the messenger went on. "His house is large and empty, and he would hear thy voice and look upon thee."

Him she remembered–Klakee-Nah, the head-man of the village, the friend of the missionaries and the traders, a large man thewed like a giant, with kindly eyes and masterful ways, and striding with a consciousness of crude royalty in his carriage.

"Tell him that I will come," was El-Soo's answer.

Much to the despair of the Sisters, the brand plucked from the burning went back to the burning. All pleading with El-Soo was vain. There was much argument, expostulation, and weeping. Sister Alberta even revealed to her the project of sending her to the United States. El-Soo stared wide-eyed into the golden vista thus opened up to her, and shook her head. In her eyes persisted another vista. It was the mighty curve of the Yukon at Tana-naw Station, with the St. George Mission on one side, and the trading post on the other, and midway between the Indian village and a certain large log house where lived an old man tended upon by slaves.

All dwellers on the Yukon bank for twice a thousand miles knew the large log house, the old man and the tending slaves; and well did the Sisters know the house, its unending revelry, its feasting and its fun. So there was weeping at Holy Cross when El-Soo departed.

There was a great cleaning up in the large house when El-Soo arrived. Klakee-Nah, himself masterful, protested at this masterful conduct of his young daughter; but in the end, dreaming barbarically of magnificence, he went forth and borrowed a thousand dollars from old Porportuk, than whom there was no richer Indian on the Yukon. Also, Klakee-Nah ran up a heavy bill at the trading post. El-Soo re-created the large house. She invested it with new splendor, while Klakee-Nah maintained its ancient traditions of hospitality and revelry.

All this was unusual for a Yukon Indian, but Klakee-Nah was an unusual Indian. Not alone did he like to render inordinate hospitality, but, what of being a chief and of acquiring much money, he was able to do it. In the primitive trading days he had been a power over his people, and he had dealt profitably with the white trading companies. Later on, with Porportuk, he had made a gold-strike on the Koyokuk River. Klakee-Nah was by training and nature an aristocrat. Porportuk was bourgeois, and Porportuk bought him out of the gold-mine. Porportuk was content to plod and accumulate. Klakee-Nah went back to his large house and proceeded to spend. Porportuk was known as the richest Indian in Alaska. Klakee-Nah was known as the whitest. Porportuk was a money-lender and a usurer. Klakee-Nah was an anachronism–a mediaeval ruin, a fighter and a feaster, happy with wine and song.

El-Soo adapted herself to the large house and its ways as readily as she had adapted herself to Holy Cross Mission and its ways. She did not try to reform her father and direct his footsteps toward God. It is true, she reproved him when he drank overmuch and profoundly, but that was for the sake of his health and the direction of his footsteps on solid earth.

The latchstring to the large house was always out. What with the coming and the going, it was never still. The rafters of the great living-room shook with the roar of wassail and of song. At table sat men from all the world and chiefs from distant tribes–Englishmen and Colonials, lean Yankee traders and rotund officials of the great companies, cowboys from the Western ranges, sailors from the sea, hunters and dog-mushers of a score of nationalities.

El-Soo drew breath in a cosmopolitan atmosphere. She could speak English as well as she could her native tongue, and she sang English songs and ballads. The passing Indian ceremonials she knew, and the perishing traditions. The tribal dress of the daughter of a chief she knew how to wear upon occasion. But for the most part she dressed as white women dress. Not for nothing was her needlework at the Mission and her innate artistry. She carried her clothes like a white woman, and she made clothes that could be so carried.

In her way she was as unusual as her father, and the position she occupied was as unique as his. She was the one Indian woman who was the social equal with the several white women at Tana-naw Station. She was the one Indian woman to whom white men honorably made proposals of marriage. And she was the one Indian woman whom no white man ever insulted.

For El-Soo was beautiful–not as white women are beautiful, not as Indian women arebeautiful. It was the flame of her, that did not depend upon feature, that was her beauty. So far as mere line and feature went, she was the classic Indian type. The black hair and the fine bronze were hers, and the black eyes, brilliant and bold, keen as sword-light, proud; and hers the delicate eagle nose with the thin, quivering nostrils, the high cheek-bones that were not broad apart, and the thin lips that were not too thin. But over all and through all poured the flame of her–the unanalyzable something that was fire and that was the soul of her, that lay mellow-warm or blazed in her eyes, that sprayed the cheeks of her, that distended the nostrils, that curled the lip, or, when the lip was in repose, that was still there in the lip, the lip palpitant with its presence.

And El-Soo had wit–rarely sharp to hurt, yet quick to search out forgivable weakness. The laughter of her mind played like lambent flame over all about her, and from all about her arose answering laughter. Yet she was never the centre of things. This she would not permit. The large house, and all of which it was significant, was her father's; and through it, to the last, moved his heroic figure–host, master of the revels, and giver of the law. It is true, as the strength oozed from him, that she caught up responsibilities from his failing hands. But in appearance he still ruled, dozing oft-times at the board, a bacchanalian ruin, yet in all seeming the ruler of the feast.

And through the large house moved the figure of Porportuk, ominous, with shaking head, coldly disapproving, paying for it all. Not that he really paid, for he compounded interest in weird ways, and year by year absorbed the properties of Klakee-Nah. Porportuk once took it upon himself to chide El-Soo upon the wasteful way of life in the large house–it was when he had about absorbed the last of Klakee-Nah's wealth–but he never ventured so to chide again. El-Soo, like her father, was an aristocrat, as disdainful of money as he, and with an equal sense of honor as finely strung.

Porportuk continued grudgingly to advance money, and ever the money flowed in golden foam away. Upon one thing El-Soo was resolved–her father should die as he had lived. There should be for him no passing from high to low, no diminution of the revels, no lessening of the lavish hospitality. When there was famine, as of old, the Indians came groaning to the large house and went away content. When there was

famine and no money, money was borrowed from Porportuk, and the Indians still went away content. El-Soo might well have repeated, after the aristocrats of another time and place, that after her came the deluge. In her case the deluge was old Porportuk. With every advance of money, he looked upon her with a more possessive eye, and felt bourgeoning within him ancient fires.

But El-Soo had no eyes for him. Nor had she eyes for the white men who wanted to marry her at the Mission with ring and priest and book. For at Tana-naw Station was a young man, Akoon, of her own blood, and tribe, and village. He was strong and beautiful to her eyes, a great hunter, and, in that he had wandered far and much, very poor; he had been to all the unknown wastes and places; he had journeyed to Sitka and to the United States; he had crossed the continent to Hudson Bay and back again, and as seal-hunter on a ship he had sailed to Siberia and for Japan.

When he returned from the gold-strike in Klondike he came, as was his wont, to the large house to make report to old Klakee-Nah of all the world that he had seen; and there he first saw El-Soo, three years back from the Mission. Thereat, Akoon wandered no more. He refused a wage of twenty dollars a day as pilot on the big steamboats. He hunted some and fished some, but never far from Tana-naw Station, and he was at the large house often and long. And El-Soo measured him against many men and found him good. He sang songs to her, and was ardent and glowed until all Tana-naw Station knew he loved her. And Porportuk but grinned and advanced more money for the upkeep of the large house.

Then came the death table of Klakee-Nah. He sat at feast, with death in his throat, that he could not drown with wine. And laughter and joke and song went around, and Akoon told a story that made the rafters echo. There were no tears or sighs at that table. It was no more than fit that Klakee-Nah should die as he had lived, and none knew this better than El-Soo, with her artist sympathy. The old roystering crowd was there, and, as of old, three frost-bitten sailors were there, fresh from the long traverse from the Arctic, survivors of a ship's company of seventy-four. At Klakee-Nah's back were four old men, all that were left him of the slaves of his youth. With rheumy eyes they saw to his needs, with palsied hands filling his glass or striking him on the back between the shoulders when death stirred and he coughed and gasped.

It was a wild night, and as the hours passed and the fun laughed and roared along, death stirred more restlessly in Klakee-Nah's throat. Then it was that he sent for Porportuk. And Porportuk came in from the outside frost to look with disapproving eyes upon the meat and wine on the table for which he had paid. But as he looked down the length of flushed faces to the far end and saw the face of El-Soo, the light in his eyes flared up, and for a moment the disapproval vanished.

Place was made for him at Klakee-Nah's side, and a glass placed before him. Klakee-Nah, with his own hands, filled the glass with fervent spirits. "Drink!" he cried. "Is it not good?"

And Porportuk's eyes watered as he nodded his head and smacked his lips.

"When, in your own house, have you had such drink?" Klakee-Nah demanded.

"I will not deny that the drink is good to this old throat of mine," Porportuk made answer, and hesitated for the speech to complete the thought.

"But it costs overmuch," Klakee-Nah roared, completing it for him.

Porportuk winced at the laughter that went down the table. His eyes burned malevolently. "We were boys together, of the same age," he said. "In your throat is death. I am still alive and strong."

An ominous murmur arose from the company. Klakee-Nah coughed and strangled, and the old slaves smote him between the shoulders. He emerged gasping, and waved his hand to still the threatening rumble.

"You have grudged the very fire in your house because the wood cost overmuch!" he cried. "You have grudged life. To live cost overmuch, and you have refused to pay the price. Your life has been like a cabin where the fire is out and there are no blankets on the floor." He signalled to a slave to fill his glass, which he held aloft. "But I have lived. And I have been warm with life as you have never been warm. It is true, you shall live long. But the longest nights are the cold nights when a man shivers and lies awake. My nights have been short, but I have slept warm."

He drained the glass. The shaking hand of a slave failed to catch it as it crashed to the floor. Klakee-Nah sank back, panting, watching the upturned glasses at the lips of the drinkers, his own lips slightly smiling to the applause. At a sign, two slaves attempted to help him sit upright again. But they were weak, his frame was mighty, and the four old men tottered and shook as they helped him forward.

"But manner of life is neither here nor there," he went on. "We have other business, Porportuk, you and I, to-night. Debts are mischances, and I am in mischance with you. What of my debt, and how great is it?"

Porportuk searched in his pouch and brought forth a memorandum. He sipped at his glass and began. "There is the note of August, 1889, for three hundred dollars. The interest has never been paid. And the note of the next year for five hundred dollars. This note was included in the note of two months later for a thousand dollars. Then there is the note–"

"Never mind the many notes!" Klakee-Nah cried out impatiently. "They make my head go around and all the things inside my head. The whole! The round whole! How much is it?"

Porportuk referred to his memorandum. "Fifteen thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven dollars and seventy-five cents," he read with careful precision.

"Make it sixteen thousand, make it sixteen thousand," Klakee-Nah said grandly. "Odd numbers were ever a worry. And now–and it is for this that I have sent for you–make me out a new note for sixteen thousand, which I shall sign. I have no thought of the interest. Make it as large as you will, and make it payable in the next world, when I shall meet you by the fire of the Great Father of all Indians. Then the note will be paid. This I promise you. It is the word of Klakee-Nah."

Porportuk looked perplexed, and loudly the laughter arose and shook the room. Klakee-Nah raised his hands. "Nay," he cried. "It is not a joke. I but speak in fairness. It was for this I sent for you, Porportuk. Make out the note."

"I have no dealings with the next world," Porportuk made answer slowly.

"Have you no thought to meet me before the Great Father!" Klakee-Nah demanded. Then he added, "I shall surely be there."

"I have no dealings with the next world," Porportuk repeated sourly.

The dying man regarded him with frank amazement.

"I know naught of the next world," Porportuk explained. "I do business in this world."

Klakee-Nah's face cleared. "This comes of sleeping cold of nights," he laughed. He pondered for a space, then said, "It is in this world that you must be paid. There remains to me this house. Take it, and burn the debt in the candle there."

"It is an old house and not worth the money," Porportuk made answer.

"There are my mines on the Twisted Salmon."

"They have never paid to work," was the reply.

"There is my share in the steamer Koyokuk. I am half owner."

"She is at the bottom of the Yukon."

Klakee-Nah started. "True, I forgot. It was last spring when the ice went out." He mused for a time, while the glasses remained untasted, and all the company waited upon his utterance.

"Then it would seem I owe you a sum of money which I cannot pay . . . in this world?" Porportuk nodded and glanced down the table.

"Then it would seem that you, Porportuk, are a poor business man," Klakee-Nah said slyly. And boldly Porportuk made answer, "No; there is security yet untouched."

"What!" cried Klakee-Nah. "Have I still property? Name it, and it is yours, and the debt is no more."

"There it is." Porportuk pointed at El-Soo.

Klakee-Nah could not understand. He peered down the table, brushed his eyes, and peered again.

"Your daughter, El-Soo–her will I take and the debt be no more. I will burn the debt there in the candle."

Klakee-Nah's great chest began to heave. "Ho! ho!–a joke–Ho! ho! ho!" he laughed Homerically. "And with your cold bed and daughters old enough to be the mother of El-Soo! Ho! ho! ho!" He began to cough and strangle, and the old slaves smote him on the back. "Ho! ho!" he began again, and went off into another paroxysm.

Porportuk waited patiently, sipping from his glass and studying the double row of faces down the board. "It is no joke," he said finally. "My speech is well meant."

Klakee-Nah sobered and looked at him, then reached for his glass, but could not touch it. A slave passed it to him, and glass and liquor he flung into the face of Porportuk.

"Turn him out!" Klakee-Nah thundered to the waiting table that strained like a pack of hounds in leash. "And roll him in the snow!"

As the mad riot swept past him and out of doors, he signalled to the slaves, and the four tottering old men supported him on his feet as he met the returning revellers, upright, glass in hand, pledging them a toast to the short night when a man sleeps warm.

It did not take long to settle the estate of Klakee-Nah. Tommy, the little Englishman, clerk at the trading post, was called in by El-Soo to help. There was nothing but debts, notes overdue, mortgaged properties, and properties mortgaged but worthless. Notes and mortgages were held by Porportuk. Tommy called him a robber many times as he pondered the compounding of the interest.

"Is it a debt, Tommy?" El-Soo asked.

"It is a robbery," Tommy answered.

"Nevertheless, it is a debt," she persisted.

The winter wore away, and the early spring, and still the claims of Porportuk remained unpaid. He saw El-Soo often and explained to her at length, as he had explained to her father, the way the debt could be cancelled. Also, he brought with him old medicine-men, who elaborated to her the everlasting damnation of her father if the debt were not paid. One day, after such an elaboration, El-Soo made final announcement to Porportuk.

"I shall tell you two things," she said. "First, I shall not be your wife. Will you remember that? Second, you shall be paid the last cent of the sixteen thousand dollars–"

"Fifteen thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven dollars and seventy-five cents," Porportuk corrected.

"My father said sixteen thousand," was her reply. "You shall be paid."

"How?"

"I know not how, but I shall find out how. Now go, and bother me no more. If you do"–she hesitated to find fitting penalty–"if you do, I shall have you rolled in the snow again as soon as the first snow flies."

This was still in the early spring, and a little later El-Soo surprised the country. Word went up and down the Yukon from Chilcoot to the Delta, and was carried from camp to camp to the farthermost camps, that in June, when the first salmon ran, El-Soo, daughter of Klakee-Nah, would sell herself at public auction to satisfy the claims of Porportuk. Vain were the attempts to dissuade her. The missionary at St. George wrestled with her, but she replied:–

"Only the debts to God are settled in the next world. The debts of men are of this world, and in this world are they settled."

Akoon wrestled with her, but she replied: "I do love thee, Akoon; but honor is greater than love, and who am I that I should blacken my father?" Sister Alberta journeyed all the way up from Holy Cross on the first steamer, and to no better end.

"My father wanders in the thick and endless forests," said El-Soo. "And there will he wander, with the lost souls crying, till the debt be paid. Then, and not until then, may he go on to the house of the Great Father."

"And you believe this?" Sister Alberta asked.

"I do not know," El-Soo made answer. "It was my father's belief."

Sister Alberta shrugged her shoulders incredulously.

"Who knows but that the things we believe come true?" El-Soo went on. "Why not? The next world to you may be heaven and harps . . . because you have believed heaven and harps; to my father the next world may be a large house where he will sit always at table feasting with God."

"And you?" Sister Alberta asked. "What is your next world?"

El-Soo hesitated but for a moment. "I should like a little of both," she said. "I should like to see your face as well as the face of my father."

The day of the auction came. Tana-naw Station was populous. As was their custom, the tribes had gathered to await the salmon-run, and in the meantime spent the time in dancing and frolicking, trading and gossiping. Then there was the ordinary sprinkling of white adventurers, traders, and prospectors, and, in addition, a large number of white men who had come because of curiosity or interest in the affair.

It had been a backward spring, and the salmon were late in running. This delay but keyed up the interest. Then, on the day of the auction, the situation was made tense by Akoon. He arose and made public and solemn announcement that whosoever bought El-Soo would forthwith and immediately die. He flourished the Winchester in his hand to indicate the manner of the taking-off. El-Soo was angered thereat; but he refused to speak with her, and went to the trading post to lay in extra ammunition.

The first salmon was caught at ten o'clock in the evening, and at midnight the auction began. It took place on top of the high bank alongside the Yukon. The sun was due north just below the horizon, and the sky was lurid red. A great crowd gathered about the table and the two chairs that stood near the edge of the bank. To the fore were many white men and several chiefs. And most prominently to the fore, rifle in hand, stood Akoon. Tommy, at El-Soo's request, served as auctioneer, but she made the opening speech and described the goods about to be sold. She was in native costume, in the dress of a chief's daughter, splendid and barbaric, and she stood on a chair, that she might be seen to advantage.

"Who will buy a wife?" she asked. "Look at me. I am twenty years old and a maid. I will be a good wife to the man who buys me. If he is a white man, I shall dress in the fashion of white women; if he is an Indian, I shall dress as"–she hesitated a moment–"a squaw. I can make my own clothes, and sew, and wash, and mend. I was taught for eight years to do these things at Holy Cross Mission. I can read and write English, and I know how to play the organ. Also I can do arithmetic and some algebra–a little. I shall be sold to the highest bidder, and to him I will make out a bill of sale of myself. I forgot to say that I can sing very well, and that I have never been sick in my life. I weigh one hundred and thirty-two pounds; my father is dead and I have no relatives. Who wants me?"

She looked over the crowd with flaming audacity and stepped down. At Tommy's request she stood upon the chair again, while he mounted the second chair and started the bidding.

Surrounding El-Soo stood the four old slaves of her father. They were age-twisted and palsied, faithful to their meat, a generation out of the past that watched unmoved the antics of younger life. In the front of the crowd were several Eldorado and Bonanza kings from the Upper Yukon, and beside them, on crutches, swollen with scurvy, were two broken prospectors. From the midst of the crowd, thrust out by its own vividness, appeared the face of a wild-eyed squaw from the remote regions of the Upper Tana-naw; a strayed Sitkan from the coast stood side by side with a Stick from Lake Le Barge, and, beyond, a half-dozen French-Canadian voyageurs, grouped by themselves. From afar came the faint cries of myriads of wild-fowl on the nesting-grounds. Swallows were skimming up overhead from the placid surface of the Yukon, and robins were singing. The oblique rays of the hidden sun shot through the smoke, high-dissipated from forest fires a thousand miles away, and turned the heavens to sombre red, while the earth shone red in the reflected glow. This red glow shone in the faces of all, and made everything seem unearthly and unreal.

The bidding began slowly. The Sitkan, who was a stranger in the land and who had arrived only half an hour before, offered one hundred dollars in a confident voice, and was surprised when Akoon turned threateningly upon him with the rifle. The bidding dragged. An Indian from the Tozikakat, a pilot, bid one hundred and fifty, and after some time a gambler, who had been ordered out of the Upper Country, raised the bid to two hundred. El-Soo was saddened; her pride was hurt; but the only effect was that she flamed more audaciously upon the crowd.

There was a disturbance among the onlookers as Porportuk forced his way to the front. "Five hundred dollars!" he bid in a loud voice, then looked about him proudly to note the effect.

He was minded to use his great wealth as a bludgeon with which to stun all competition at the start. But one of the voyageurs, looking on El-Soo with sparkling eyes, raised the bid a hundred.

"Seven hundred!" Porportuk returned promptly.

And with equal promptness came the "Eight hundred," of the voyageur.

Then Porportuk swung his club again. "Twelve hundred!" he shouted.

With a look of poignant disappointment, the voyageur succumbed. There was no further bidding. Tommy worked hard, but could not elicit a bid.

El-Soo spoke to Porportuk. "It were good, Porportuk, for you to weigh well your bid. Have you forgotten the thing I told you–that I would never marry you!"

"It is a public auction," he retorted. "I shall buy you with a bill of sale. I have offered twelve hundred dollars. You come cheap."

"Too damned cheap!" Tommy cried. "What if I am auctioneer? That does not prevent me from bidding. I'll make it thirteen hundred."

"Fourteen hundred," from Porportuk.

"I'll buy you in to be my–my sister," Tommy whispered to El-Soo, then called aloud, "Fifteen hundred!"

At two thousand, one of the Eldorado kings took a hand, and Tommy dropped out.

A third time Porportuk swung the club of his wealth, making a clean raise of five hundred dollars. But the Eldorado king's pride was touched. No man could club him. And he swung back another five hundred.

El-Soo stood at three thousand. Porportuk made it thirty-five hundred, and gasped when the Eldorado king raised it a thousand dollars. Porportuk again raised it five hundred, and again gasped when the king raised a thousand more.

Porportuk became angry. His pride was touched; his strength was challenged, and with him strength took the form of wealth. He would not be ashamed for weakness before the world. El-Soo became incidental. The savings and scrimpings from the cold nights of all his years were ripe to be squandered. El-Soo stood at six thousand. He made it seven thousand. And then, in thousand-dollar bids, as fast as they could be uttered, her price went up. At fourteen thousand the two men stopped for breath.

Then the unexpected happened. A still heavier club was swung. In the pause that ensued, the gambler, who had scented a speculation and formed a syndicate with several of his fellows, bid sixteen thousand dollars.

"Seventeen thousand," Porportuk said weakly.

"Eighteen thousand," said the king.

Porportuk gathered his strength. "Twenty thousand."

The syndicate dropped out. The Eldorado king raised a thousand, and Porportuk raised back; and as they bid, Akoon turned from one to the other, half menacingly, half curiously, as though to see what manner of man it was that he would have to kill. When the king prepared to make his next bid, Akoon having pressed closer, the king first loosed the revolver at his hip, then said:–

"Twenty-three thousand."

"Twenty-four thousand," said Porportuk. He grinned viciously, for the certitude of his bidding had at last shaken the king. The latter moved over close to El-Soo. He studied her carefully, for a long while.

"And five hundred," he said at last.

"Twenty-five thousand," came Porportuk's raise.

The king looked for a long space, and shook his head. He looked again, and said reluctantly, "And five hundred."

"Twenty-six thousand," Porportuk snapped.

The king shook his head and refused to meet Tommy's pleading eye. In the meantime Akoon had edged close to Porportuk. El-Soo's quick eye noted this, and, while Tommy wrestled with the Eldorado king for another bid, she bent, and spoke in a low voice in the ear of a slave. And while Tommy's "Going–going–going–" dominated the air, the slave went up to Akoon and spoke in a low voice in his ear. Akoon made no sign that he had heard, though El-Soo watched him anxiously.

"Gone!" Tommy's voice rang out. "To Porportuk, for twenty-six thousand dollars."

Porportuk glanced uneasily at Akoon. All eyes were centred upon Akoon, but he did nothing.

"Let the scales be brought," said El-Soo.

"I shall make payment at my house," said Porportuk.

"Let the scales be brought," El-Soo repeated. "Payment shall be made here where all can see."

So the gold-scales were brought from the trading post, while Porportuk went away and came back with a man at his heels, on whose shoulders was a weight of gold-dust in moose-hide sacks. Also, at Porportuk's back, walked another man with a rifle, who had eyes only for Akoon.

"Here are the notes and mortgages," said Porportuk, "for fifteen thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven dollars and seventy-five cents."

El-Soo received them into her hands and said to Tommy, "Let them be reckoned as sixteen thousand."

"There remains ten thousand dollars to be paid in gold," Tommy said. Porportuk nodded, and untied the mouths of the sacks. El-Soo, standing at the edge of the bank, tore the papers to shreds and sent them fluttering out over the Yukon. The weighing began, but halted.

"Of course, at seventeen dollars," Porportuk had said to Tommy, as he adjusted the scales.

"At sixteen dollars," El-Soo said sharply.

"It is the custom of all the land to reckon gold at seventeen dollars for each ounce," Porportuk replied. "And this is a business transaction."

El-Soo laughed. "It is a new custom," she said. "It began this spring. Last year, and the years before, it was sixteen dollars an ounce. When my father's debt was made, it was sixteen dollars. When he spent at the store the money he got from you, for one ounce he was given sixteen dollars' worth of flour, not seventeen. Wherefore, shall you pay for me at sixteen, and not at seventeen." Porportuk grunted and allowed the weighing to proceed.

"Weigh it in three piles, Tommy," she said. "A thousand dollars here, three thousand here, and here six thousand."

It was slow work, and, while the weighing went on, Akoon was closely watched by all.

"He but waits till the money is paid," one said; and the word went around and was accepted, and they waited for what Akoon should do when the money was paid. And Porportuk's man with the rifle waited and watched Akoon.

The weighing was finished, and the gold-dust lay on the table in three dark-yellow heaps. "There is a debt of my father to the Company for three thousand dollars," said El-Soo. "Take it, Tommy, for the Company. And here are four old men, Tommy. You know them. And here is one thousand dollars. Take it, and see that the old men are never hungry and never without tobacco."

Tommy scooped the gold into separate sacks. Six thousand dollars remained on the table. El-Soo thrust the scoop into the heap, and with a sudden turn whirled the contents out and down to the Yukon in a golden shower. Porportuk seized her wrist as she thrust the scoop a second time into the heap.

"It is mine," she said calmly. Porportuk released his grip, but he gritted his teeth and scowled darkly as she continued to scoop the gold into the river till none was left.

The crowd had eyes for naught but Akoon, and the rifle of Porportuk's man lay across the hollow of his arm, the muzzle directed at Akoon a yard away, the man's thumb on the hammer. But Akoon did nothing.

"Make out the bill of sale," Porportuk said grimly.

And Tommy made out the bill of sale, wherein all right and title in the woman El-Soo was vested in the man Porportuk. El-Soo signed the document, and Porportuk folded it and put it away in his pouch. Suddenly his eyes flashed, and in sudden speech he addressed El-Soo.

"But it was not your father's debt," he said. "What I paid was the price for you. Your sale is business of to-day and not of last year and the years before. The ounces paid for you will buy at the post to-day seventeen dollars of flour, and not sixteen. I have lost a dollar on each ounce. I have lost six hundred and twenty-five dollars."

El-Soo thought for a moment, and saw the error she had made. She smiled, and then she laughed.

"You are right," she laughed. "I made a mistake. But it is too late. You have paid, and the gold is gone. You did not think quick. It is your loss. Your wit is slow these days, Porportuk. You are getting old."

He did not answer. He glanced uneasily at Akoon, and was reassured. His lips tightened, and a hint of cruelty came into his face. "Come," he said, "we will go to my house."

"Do you remember the two things I told you in the spring?" El-Soo asked, making no movement to accompany him.

"My head would be full with the things women say, did I heed them," he answered.

"I told you that you would be paid," El-Soo went on carefully. "And I told you that I would never be your wife."

"But that was before the bill of sale." Porportuk crackled the paper between his fingers inside the pouch. "I have bought you before all the world. You belong to me. You will not deny that you belong to me."

"I belong to you," El-Soo said steadily.

"I own you."

"You own me."

Porportuk's voice rose slightly and triumphantly. "As a dog, own you."

"As a dog you own me," El-Soo continued calmly. "But, Porportuk, you forget the thing I told you. Had any other man bought me, I should have been that man's wife. I should have been a good wife to that man. Such was my will. But my will with you was that I should never be your wife. Wherefore, I am your dog."

Porportuk knew that he played with fire, and he resolved to play firmly. "Then I speak to you, not as El-Soo, but as a dog," he said; "and I tell you to come with me." He half reached to grip her arm, but with a gesture she held him back.

"Not so fast, Porportuk. You buy a dog. The dog runs away. It is your loss. I am your dog. What if I run away?"

"As the owner of the dog, I shall beat you–"

"When you catch me?"

"When I catch you."

"Then catch me."

He reached swiftly for her, but she eluded him. She laughed as she circled around the table. "Catch her!" Porportuk commanded the Indian with the rifle, who stood near to her. But as the Indian stretched forth his arm to her, the Eldorado king felled him with a fist blow under the ear. The rifle clattered to the ground. Then was Akoon's chance. His eyes glittered, but he did nothing.

Porportuk was an old man, but his cold nights retained for him his activity. He did not circle the table. He came across suddenly, over the top of the table. El-Soo was taken off her guard. She sprang back with a sharp cry of alarm, and Porportuk would have caught her had it not been for Tommy. Tommy's leg went out. Porportuk tripped and pitched forward on the ground. El-Soo got her start.

"Then catch me," she laughed over her shoulder, as she fled away.

She ran lightly and easily, but Porportuk ran swiftly and savagely. He outran her. In his youth he had been swiftest of all the young men. But El-Soo dodged in a willowy, elusive way. Being in native dress, her feet were not cluttered with skirts, and her pliant body curved a flight that defied the gripping fingers of Porportuk.

With laughter and tumult, the great crowd scattered out to see the chase. It led through the Indian encampment; and ever dodging, circling, and reversing, El-Soo and Porportuk appeared and disappeared among the tents. El-Soo seemed to balance herself against the air with her arms, now one side, now on the other, and sometimes her body, too, leaned out upon the air far from the perpendicular as she achieved her sharpest curves. And Porportuk, always a leap behind, or a leap this side or that, like a lean hound strained after her.

They crossed the open ground beyond the encampment and disappeared in the forest. Tana-naw Station waited their reappearance, and long and vainly it waited.

In the meantime Akoon ate and slept, and lingered much at the steamboat landing, deaf to the rising resentment of Tana-naw Station in that he did nothing. Twenty-four hours later Porportuk returned. He was tired and savage. He spoke to no one but Akoon, and with him tried to pick a quarrel. But Akoon shrugged his shoulders and walked away. Porportuk did not waste time. He outfitted half a dozen of the young men, selecting the best trackers and travellers, and at their head plunged into the forest.

Next day the steamer Seattle, bound up river, pulled in to the shore and wooded up. When the lines were cast off and she churned out from the bank, Akoon was on board in the pilot-house. Not many hours afterward, when it was his turn at the wheel, he saw a small birch-bark canoe put off from the shore. There was only one person in it. He studied it carefully, put the wheel over, and slowed down.

The captain entered the pilot-house. "What's the matter?" he demanded. "The water's good."

Akoon grunted. He saw a larger canoe leaving the bank, and in it were a number of persons. As the Seattle lost headway, he put the wheel over some more.

The captain fumed. "It's only a squaw," he protested.

Akoon did not grunt. He was all eyes for the squaw and the pursuing canoe. In the latter six paddles were flashing, while the squaw paddled slowly.

"You'll be aground," the captain protested, seizing the wheel.

But Akoon countered his strength on the wheel and looked him in the eyes. The captain slowly released the spokes. "Queer beggar," he sniffed to himself.

Akoon held the Seattle on the edge of the shoal water and waited till he saw the squaw's fingers clutch the forward rail. Then he signalled for full speed ahead and ground the wheel over. The large canoe was very near, but the gap between it and the steamer was widening.

The squaw laughed and leaned over the rail. "Then catch me, Porportuk!" she cried.

Akoon left the steamer at Fort Yukon. He outfitted a small poling-boat and went up the Porcupine River. And with him went El-Soo. It was a weary journey, and the way led across the backbone of the world; but Akoon had travelled it before. When they came to the head-waters of the Porcupine, they left the boat and went on foot across the Rocky Mountains.

Akoon greatly liked to walk behind El-Soo and watch the movement of her. There was a music in it that he loved. And especially he loved the well-rounded calves in their sheaths of soft-tanned leather, the slim ankles, and the small moccasined feet that were tireless through the longest days.

"You are light as air," he said, looking up at her. "It is no labor for you to walk. You almost float, so lightly do your feet rise and fall. You are like a deer, El-Soo; you are like a deer, and your eyes are like deer's eyes, sometimes when you look at me, or when you hear a quick sound and wonder if it be danger that stirs. Your eyes are like a deer's eyes now as you look at me."

And El-Soo, luminous and melting, bent and kissed Akoon.

"When we reach the Mackenzie, we will not delay," Akoon said later. "We will go south before the winter catches us. We will go to the sunlands where there is no snow. But we will return. I have seen much of the world, and there is no land like Alaska, no sun like our sun, and the snow is good after the long summer."

"And you will learn to read," said El-Soo.

And Akoon said, "I will surely learn to read."

But there was delay when they reached the Mackenzie. They fell in with a band of Mackenzie Indians and, hunting, Akoon was shot by accident. The rifle was in the hands of a youth. The bullet broke Akoon's right arm and, ranging farther, broke two of his ribs. Akoon knew rough surgery, while El-Soo had learned some refinements at Holy Cross. The bones were finally set, and Akoon lay by the fire for them to knit. Also, he lay by the fire so that the smoke would keep the mosquitoes away.

Then it was that Porportuk, with his six young men, arrived. Akoon groaned in his helplessness and made appeal to the Mackenzies. But Porportuk made demand, and the Mackenzies were perplexed. Porportuk was for seizing upon El-Soo, but this they would not permit. Judgment must be given, and, as it was an affair of man and woman, the council of the old men was called–this that warm judgment might not be given by the young men, who were warm of heart.

The old men sat in a circle about the smudge-fire. Their faces were lean and wrinkled, and they gasped and panted for air. The smoke was not good for them. Occasionally they struck with withered hands at the mosquitoes that braved the smoke. After such exertion they coughed hollowly and painfully. Some spat blood, and one of them sat a bit apart with head bowed forward, and bled slowly and continuously at the mouth; the coughing sickness had gripped them. They were as dead men; their time was short. It was a judgment of the dead.

"And I paid for her a heavy price," Porportuk concluded his complaint. "Such a price you have never seen. Sell all that is yours–sell your spears and arrows and rifles, sell your skins and furs, sell your tents and boats and dogs, sell everything, and you will not have maybe a thousand dollars. Yet did I pay for the woman, El-Soo, twenty-six times the price of all your spears and arrows and rifles, your skins and furs, your tents and boats and dogs. It was a heavy price."

The old men nodded gravely, though their weazened eye-slits widened with wonder that any woman should be worth such a price. The one that bled at the mouth wiped his lips. "Is it true talk?" he asked each of Porportuk's six young men. And each answered that it was true.

"Is it true talk?" he asked El-Soo, and she answered, "It is true."

"But Porportuk has not told that he is an old man," Akoon said, "and that he has daughters older than El-Soo."

"It is true, Porportuk is an old man," said El-Soo.

"It is for Porportuk to measure the strength of his age," said he who bled at the mouth. "We be old men. Behold! Age is never so old as youth would measure it."

And the circle of old men champed their gums, and nodded approvingly, and coughed.

"I told him that I would never be his wife," said El-Soo.

"Yet you took from him twenty-six times all that we possess?" asked a one-eyed old man.

El-Soo was silent.

"It is true?" And his one eye burned and bored into her like a fiery gimlet.

"It is true," she said.

"But I will run away again," she broke out passionately, a moment later. "Always will I run away."

"That is for Porportuk to consider," said another of the old men. "It is for us to consider the judgment."

"What price did you pay for her?" was demanded of Akoon.

"No price did I pay for her," he answered. "She was above price. I did not measure her in gold-dust, nor in dogs, and tents, and furs."

The old men debated among themselves and mumbled in undertones. "These old men are ice," Akoon said in English. "I will not listen to their judgment, Porportuk. If you take El-Soo, I will surely kill you."

The old men ceased and regarded him suspiciously. "We do not know the speech you make," one said.

"He but said that he would kill me," Porportuk volunteered. "So it were well to take from him his rifle, and to have some of your young men sit by him, that he may not do me hurt. He is a young man, and what are broken bones to youth!"

Akoon, lying helpless, had rifle and knife taken from him, and to either side of his shoulders sat young men of the Mackenzies. The one-eyed old man arose and stood upright. "We marvel at the price paid for one mere woman," he began; "but the wisdom of the price is no concern of ours. We are here to give judgment, and judgment we give. We have no doubt. It is known to all that Porportuk paid a heavy price for the woman El-Soo. Wherefore does the woman El-Soo belong to Porportuk and none other." He sat down heavily, and coughed. The old men nodded and coughed.

"I will kill you," Akoon cried in English.

Porportuk smiled and stood up. "You have given true judgment," he said to the council, "and my young men will give to you much tobacco. Now let the woman be brought to me."

Akoon gritted his teeth. The young men took El-Soo by the arms. She did not resist, and was led, her face a sullen flame, to Porportuk.

"Sit there at my feet till I have made my talk," he commanded. He paused a moment. "It is true," he said, "I am an old man. Yet can understand the ways of youth. The fire has not all gone out of me. Yet am I no longer young, nor am I minded to run these old legs of mine through all the years that remain to me. El-Soo can run fast and well. She is a deer. This I know, for I have seen and run after her. It is not good that a wife should run so fast. I paid for her a heavy price, yet does she run away from me. Akoon paid no price at all, yet does she run to him.

"When I came among you people of the Mackenzie, I was of one mind. As I listened in the council and thought of the swift legs of El-Soo, I was of many minds. Now am I of one mind again, but it is a different mind from the one I brought to the council. Let me tell you my mind. When a dog runs once away from a master, it will run away again. No matter how many times it is brought back, each time it will run away again. When we have such dogs, we sell them. El-Soo is like a dog that runs away. I will sell her. Is there any man of the council that will buy?"

The old men coughed and remained silent.

"Akoon would buy," Porportuk went on, "but he has no money. Wherefore I will give El-Soo to him, as he said, without price. Even now will I give her to him."

Reaching down, he took El-Soo by the hand and led her across the space to where Akoon lay on his back.

"She has a bad habit, Akoon," he said, seating her at Akoon's feet. "As she has run away from me in the past, in the days to come she may run away from you. But there is no need to fear that she will ever run away, Akoon. I shall see to that. Never will she run away from you–this the word of Porportuk. She has great wit. I know, for often has it bitten into me. Yet am I minded myself to give my wit play for once. And by my wit will I secure her to you, Akoon."

Stooping, Porportuk crossed El-Soo's feet, so that the instep of one lay over that of the other; and then, before his purpose could be divined, he discharged his rifle through the two ankles. As Akoon struggled to rise against the weight of the young men, there was heard the crunch of the broken bone rebroken. "It is just," said the old men, one to another.

El-Soo made no sound. She sat and looked at her shattered ankles, on which she would never walk again.

"My legs are strong, El-Soo," Akoon said. "But never will they bear me away from you."

El-Soo looked at him, and for the first time in all the time he had known her, Akoon saw tears in her eyes.

"Your eyes are like deer's eyes, El-Soo," he said.

"Is it just?" Porportuk asked, and grinned from the edge of the smoke as he prepared to depart.

"It is just," the old men said. And they sat on in the silence.

Wonder of Woman

"Just the same, I notice you ain't tumbled over yourself to get married," Shorty remarked, continuing a conversation that had lapsed some few minutes before.

Smoke, sitting on the edge of the sleeping-robe and examining the feet of a dog he had rolled snarling on its back in the snow, did not answer. And Shorty, turning a steaming moccasin propped on a stick before the fire, studied his partner's face keenly.

"Cock your eye up at that there aurora borealis," Shorty went on. "Some frivolous, eh? Just like any shilly-shallyin', shirt-dancing woman. The best of them is frivolous, when they ain't foolish. And they's cats, all of 'em, the littlest an' the biggest, the nicest and the otherwise. They're sure devourin' lions an' roarin' hyenas when they get on the trail of a man they've cottoned to."

Again the monologue languished. Smoke cuffed the dog when it attempted to snap his hand, and went on examining its bruised and bleeding pads.

"Huh!" pursued Shorty. "Mebbe I couldn't 'a' married if I'd a mind to! An' mebbe I wouldn't 'a' been married without a mind to, if I hadn't hiked for tall timber. Smoke, d'you want to know what saved me? I'll tell you. My wind. I just kept a-runnin'. I'd like to see any skirt run me outa breath."

Smoke released the animal and turned his own steaming, stick-propped moccasins. "We've got to rest over to-morrow and make moccasins," he vouchsafed. "That little crust is playing the devil with their feet."

"We oughta keep goin' somehow," Shorty objected. "We ain't got grub enough to turn back with, and we gotta strike that run of caribou or them white Indians almighty soon or we'll be eatin' the dogs, sore feet an' all. Now who ever seen them white Indians anyway? Nothin' but hearsay. An' how can a Indian be white? A black white man'd be as natural. Smoke, we just oughta travel to-morrow. The country's plumb dead of game. We ain't seen even a rabbit-track in a week, you know that. An' we gotta get out of this dead streak into somewhere that meat's runnin'."

"They'll travel all the better with a day's rest for their feet and moccasins all around," Smoke counseled. "If you get a chance at any low divide, take a peep over at the country beyond. We're likely to strike open rolling country any time now. That's what La Perle told us to look for."

"Huh! By his own story, it was ten years ago that La Perle come through this section, an' he was that loco from hunger he couldn't know what he did see. Remember what he said of whoppin' big flags floatin' from the tops of the mountains? That shows how loco HE was. An' he said himself he never seen any white Indians–that was Anton's yarn. An', besides, Anton kicked the bucket two years before you an' me come to

Alaska. But I'll take a look to-morrow. An' mebbe I might pick up a moose. What d' you say we turn in?"

Smoke spent the morning in camp, sewing dog-moccasins and repairing harnesses. At noon he cooked a meal for two, ate his share, and began to look for Shorty's return. An hour later he strapped on his snow-shoes and went out on his partner's trail. The way led up the bed of the stream, through a narrow gorge that widened suddenly into a moose-pasture. But no moose had been there since the first snow of the preceding fall. The tracks of Shorty's snow-shoes crossed the pasture and went up the easy slope of a low divide. At the crest Smoke halted. The tracks continued down the other slope. The first spruce-trees, in the creek bed, were a mile away, and it was evident that Shorty had passed through them and gone on. Smoke looked at his watch, remembered the oncoming darkness, the dogs, and the camp, and reluctantly decided against going farther. But before he retraced his steps he paused for a long look. All the eastern sky-line was saw-toothed by the snowy backbone of the Rockies. The whole mountain system, range upon range, seemed to trend to the northwest, cutting athwart the course to the open country reported by La Perle. The effect was as if the mountains conspired to thrust back the traveler toward the west and the Yukon. Smoke wondered how many men in the past, approaching as he had approached, had been turned aside by that forbidding aspect. La Perle had not been turned aside, but, then, La Perle had crossed over from the eastern slope of the Rockies.

Until midnight Smoke maintained a huge fire for the guidance of Shorty. And in the morning, waiting with camp broken and dogs harnessed for the first break of light, Smoke took up the pursuit. In the narrow pass of the canyon, his lead-dog pricked up its ears and whined. Then Smoke came upon the Indians, six of them, coming toward him. They were traveling light, without dogs, and on each man's back was the smallest of pack outfits. Surrounding Smoke, they immediately gave him several matters for surprise. That they were looking for him was clear. That they talked no Indian tongue of which he knew a word was also quickly made clear. They were not white Indians, though they were taller and heavier than the Indians of the Yukon basin. Five of them carried the old-fashioned, long-barreled Hudson Bay Company musket, and in the hands of the sixth was a Winchester rifle which Smoke knew to be Shorty's.

Nor did they waste time in making him a prisoner. Unarmed himself, Smoke could only submit. The contents of the sled were distributed among their own packs, and he was given a pack composed of his and Shorty's sleeping-furs. The dogs were unharnessed, and when Smoke protested, one of the Indians, by signs, indicated a trail too rough for sled-travel. Smoke bowed to the inevitable, cached the sled end-on in the snow on the bank above the stream, and trudged on with his captors. Over the divide to the north they went, down to the spruce-trees which Smoke had glimpsed the preceding afternoon. They followed the stream for a dozen miles, abandoning it when it trended to the west and heading directly eastward up a narrow tributary.

The first night was spent in a camp which had been occupied for several days. Here was cached a quantity of dried salmon and a sort of pemmican, which the Indians

added to their packs. From this camp a trail of many snow-shoes led off–Shorty's captors, was Smoke's conclusion; and before darkness fell he succeeded in making out the tracks Shorty's narrower snow-shoes had left. On questioning the Indians by signs, they nodded affirmation and pointed to the north.

Always, in the days that followed, they pointed north; and always the trail, turning and twisting through a jumble of upstanding peaks, trended north. Everywhere, in this bleak snow-solitude, the way seemed barred, yet ever the trail curved and coiled, finding low divides and avoiding the higher and untraversable chains. The snow-fall was deeper than in the lower valleys, and every step of the way was snow-shoe work. Furthermore, Smoke's captors, all young men, traveled light and fast; and he could not forbear the prick of pride in the knowledge that he easily kept up with them. They were travel-hardened and trained to snow-shoes from infancy; yet such was his condition that the traverse bore no more of ordinary hardship to him than to them.

In six days they gained and crossed the central pass, low in comparison with the mountains it threaded, yet formidable in itself and not possible for loaded sleds. Five days more of tortuous winding, from lower altitude to lower altitude, brought them to the open, rolling, and merely hilly country La Perle had found ten years before. Smoke knew it with the first glimpse, on a sharp cold day, the thermometer forty below zero, the atmosphere so clear that he could see a hundred miles. Far as he could see rolled the open country. High in the east the Rockies still thrust their snowy ramparts heavenward. To the south and west extended the broken ranges of the projecting spur-system they had crossed. And in this vast pocket lay the country La Perle had traversed–snow-blanketed, but assuredly fat with game at some time in the year, and in the summer a smiling, forested, and flowered land.

Before midday, traveling down a broad stream, past snow-buried willows and naked aspens, and across heavily timbered flats of spruce, they came upon the site of a large camp, recently abandoned. Glancing as he went by, Smoke estimated four or five hundred fires, and guessed the population to be in the thousands. So fresh was the trail, and so well packed by the multitude, that Smoke and his captors took off their snow-shoes and in their moccasins struck a swifter pace. Signs of game appeared and grew plentiful–tracks of wolves and lynxes that without meat could not be. Once, one of the Indians cried out with satisfaction and pointed to a large area of open snow, littered with fang-polished skulls of caribou, trampled and disrupted as if an army had fought upon it. And Smoke knew that a big killing had been made by the hunters since the last snow-flurry.

In the long twilight no sign was manifested of making camp. They held steadily on through a deepening gloom that vanished under a sky of light–great, glittering stars half veiled by a greenish vapor of pulsing aurora borealis. His dogs first caught the noises of the camp, pricking their ears and whining in low eagerness. Then it came to the ears of the humans, a murmur, dim with distance, but not invested with the soothing grace that is common to distant murmurs. Instead, it was in a high, wild key, a beat of shrill sound broken by shriller sounds–the long wolf-howling of many

wolf-dogs, a screaming of unrest and pain, mournful with hopelessness and rebellion. Smoke swung back the crystal of his watch and by the feel of finger-tips on the naked hands made out eleven o'clock. The men about him quickened. The legs that had lifted through a dozen strenuous hours lifted in a still swifter pace that was half a run and mostly a running jog. Through a dark spruce-flat they burst upon an abrupt glare of light from many fires and upon an abrupt increase of sound. The great camp lay before them.

And as they entered and threaded the irregular runways of the hunting-camp, a vast tumult, as in a wave, rose to meet them and rolled on with them–cries, greetings, questions and answers, jests and jests thrust back again, the snapping snarl of wolf-dogs rushing in furry projectiles of wrath upon Smoke's stranger dogs, the scolding of squaws, laughter, the whimpering of children and wailing of infants, the moans of the sick aroused afresh to pain, all the pandemonium of a camp of nerveless, primitive wilderness folk.

Striking with clubs and the butts of guns, Smoke's party drove back the attacking dogs, while his own dogs, snapping and snarling, awed by so many enemies, shrank in among the legs of their human protectors, and bristled along stiff-legged in menacing prance.

They halted in the trampled snow by an open fire, where Shorty and two young Indians, squatted on their hams, were broiling strips of caribou meat. Three other young Indians, lying in furs on a mat of spruce-boughs, sat up. Shorty looked across the fire at his partner, but with a sternly impassive face, like those of his companions, made no sign and went on broiling the meat.

"What's the matter?" Smoke demanded, half in irritation. "Lost your speech?"

The old familiar grin twisted on Shorty's face. "Nope," he answered. "I'm a Indian. I'm learnin' not to show surprise. When did they catch you?"

"Next day after you left."

"Hum," Shorty said, the light of whimsy dancing in his eyes. "Well, I'm doin' fine, thank you most to death. This is the bachelors' camp." He waved his hand to embrace its magnificence, which consisted of a fire, beds of spruce-boughs laid on top of the snow, flies of caribou skin, and wind-shields of twisted spruce and willow withes. "An' these are the bachelors." This time his hand indicated the young men, and he spat a few spoken gutturals in their own language that brought the white flash of acknowledgment from eyes and teeth. "They're glad to meet you, Smoke. Set down an' dry your moccasins, an' I'll cook up some grub. I'm gettin' the hang of the lingo pretty well, ain't I? You'll have to come to it, for it looks as if we'll be with these folks a long time. They's another white man here. Got caught six years ago. He's a Irishman they picked up over Great Slave Lake way. Danny McCan is what he goes by. He's settled down with a squaw. Got two kids already, but he'll skin out if ever the chance opens up. See that low fire over there to the right? That's his camp."

Apparently this was Smoke's appointed domicile, for his captors left him and his dogs, and went on deeper into the big camp. While he attended to his foot-gear and devoured strips of hot meat, Shorty cooked and talked.

"This is a sure peach of a pickle, Smoke–you listen to me. An' we got to go some to get out. These is the real, blowed-in-the-glass, wild Indians. They ain't white, but their chief is. He talks like a mouthful of hot mush, an' if he ain't full-blood Scotch they ain't no such thing as Scotch in the world. He's the hi-yu, skookum top-chief of the whole caboodle. What he says goes. You want to get that from the start-off. Danny McCan's been tryin' to get away from him for six years. Danny's all right, but he ain't got go in him. He knows a way out–learned it on huntin' trips–to the west of the way you an' me came. He ain't had the nerve to tackle it by his lonely. But we can pull it off, the three of us. Whiskers is the real goods, but he's mostly loco just the same."

"Who's Whiskers?" Smoke queried, pausing in the wolfing-down of a hot strip of meat.

"Why, he's the top geezer. He's the Scotcher. He's gettin' old, an' he's sure asleep now, but he'll see you to-morrow an' show you clear as print what a measly shrimp you are on his stompin'-grounds. These grounds belong to him. You got to get that into your noodle. They ain't never been explored, nor nothin', an' they're hisn. An' he won't let you forget it. He's got about twenty thousand square miles of huntin' country here all his own. He's the white Indian, him an' the skirt. Huh! Don't look at me that way. Wait till you see her. Some looker, an' all white, like her dad–he's Whiskers. An' say, caribou! I've saw 'em. A hundred thousan' of good running meat in the herd, an' ten thousan' wolves an' cats a-followin' an' livin' off the stragglers an' the leavin's. We leave the leavin's. The herd's movin' to the east, an' we'll be followin' 'em any day now. We eat our dogs, an' what we don't eat we smoke 'n cure for the spring before the salmon-run gets its sting in. Say, what Whiskers don't know about salmon an' caribou nobody knows, take it from me."

"Here comes Whiskers lookin' like he's goin' somewheres," Shorty whispered, reaching over and wiping greasy hands on the coat of one of the sled-dogs.

It was morning, and the bachelors were squatting over a breakfast of caribou-meat, which they ate as they broiled. Smoke glanced up and saw a small and slender man, skin-clad like any savage, but unmistakably white, striding in advance of a sled team and a following of a dozen Indians. Smoke cracked a hot bone, and while he sucked out the steaming marrow gazed at his approaching host. Bushy whiskers and yellowish gray hair, stained by camp smoke, concealed most of the face, but failed wholly to hide the gaunt, almost cadaverous, cheeks. It was a healthy leanness, Smoke decided, as he noted the wide flare of the nostrils and the breadth and depth of chest that gave spaciousness to the guaranty of oxygen and life.

"How do you do," the man said, slipping a mitten and holding out his bare hand. "My name is Snass," he added, as they shook hands.

"Mine's Bellew," Smoke returned, feeling peculiarly disconcerted as he gazed into the keen-searching black eyes.

“Getting plenty to eat, I see.”

Smoke nodded and resumed his marrow-bone, the purr of Scottish speech strangely pleasant in his ears.

“Rough rations. But we don’t starve often. And it’s more natural than the hand-reared meat of the cities.”

“I see you don’t like cities,” Smoke laughed, in order to be saying something; and was immediately startled by the transformation Snass underwent.

Quite like a sensitive plant, the man’s entire form seemed to wilt and quiver. Then the recoil, tense and savage, concentered in the eyes, in which appeared a hatred that screamed of immeasurable pain. He turned abruptly away, and, recollecting himself, remarked casually over his shoulder:

“I’ll see you later, Mr. Bellew. The caribou are moving east, and I’m going ahead to pick out a location. You’ll all come on to-morrow.”

“Some Whiskers, that, eh?” Shorty muttered, as Snass pulled on at the head of his outfit.

Again Shorty wiped his hands on the wolf-dog, which seemed to like it as it licked off the delectable grease.

Later on in the morning Smoke went for a stroll through the camp, busy with its primitive pursuits. A big body of hunters had just returned, and the men were scattering to their various fires. Women and children were departing with dogs harnessed to empty toboggan-sleds, and women and children and dogs were hauling sleds heavy with meat fresh from the killing and already frozen. An early spring cold-snap was on, and the wildness of the scene was painted in a temperature of thirty below zero. Woven cloth was not in evidence. Furs and soft-tanned leather clad all alike. Boys passed with bows in their hands, and quivers of bone-barbed arrows; and many a skinning-knife of bone or stone Smoke saw in belts or neck-hung sheaths. Women toiled over the fires, smoke-curing the meat, on their backs infants that stared round-eyed and sucked at lumps of tallow. Dogs, full-kin to wolves, bristled up to Smoke to endure the menace of the short club he carried and to whiff the odor of this newcomer whom they must accept by virtue of the club.

Segregated in the heart of the camp, Smoke came upon what was evidently Snass’s fire. Though temporary in every detail, it was solidly constructed and was on a large scale. A great heap of bales of skins and outfit was piled on a scaffold out of reach of the dogs. A large canvas fly, almost half-tent, sheltered the sleeping-and living-quarters. To one side was a silk tent–the sort favored by explorers and wealthy big-game hunters. Smoke had never seen such a tent, and stepped closer. As he stood looking, the flaps parted and a young woman came out. So quickly did she move, so abruptly did she appear, that the effect on Smoke was as that of an apparition. He seemed to have the same effect on her, and for a long moment they gazed at each other.

She was dressed entirely in skins, but such skins and such magnificently beautiful fur-work Smoke had never dreamed of. Her parka, the hood thrown back, was of some strange fur of palest silver. The mukluks, with walrus-hide soles, were composed of

the silver-padded feet of many lynxes. The long-gauntleted mittens, the tassels at the knees, all the varied furs of the costume, were pale silver that shimmered in the frosty light; and out of this shimmering silver, poised on slender, delicate neck, lifted her head, the rosy face blonde as the eyes were blue, the ears like two pink shells, the light chestnut hair touched with frost-dust and coruscating frost-glints.

All this and more, as in a dream, Smoke saw; then, recollecting himself, his hand fumbled for his cap. At the same moment the wonder-stare in the girl's eyes passed into a smile, and, with movements quick and vital, she slipped a mitten and extended her hand.

"How do you do," she murmured gravely, with a queer, delightful accent, her voice, silvery as the furs she wore, coming with a shock to Smoke's ears, attuned as they were to the harsh voices of the camp squaws.

Smoke could only mumble phrases that were awkwardly reminiscent of his best society manner.

"I am glad to see you," she went on slowly and gropingly, her face a ripple of smiles. "My English you will please excuse. It is not good. I am English like you," she gravely assured him. "My father he is Scotch. My mother she is dead. She is French, and English, and a little Indian, too. Her father was a great man in the Hudson Bay Company. Brrr! It is cold." She slipped on her mitten and rubbed her ears, the pink of which had already turned to white. "Let us go to the fire and talk. My name is Labiskwee. What is your name?"

And so Smoke came to know Labiskwee, the daughter of Snass, whom Snass called Margaret.

"Snass is not my father's name," she informed Smoke. "Snass is only an Indian name."

Much Smoke learned that day, and in the days that followed, as the hunting-camp moved on in the trail of the caribou. These were real wild Indians–the ones Anton had encountered and escaped from long years before. This was nearly the western limit of their territory, and in the summer they ranged north to the tundra shores of the Arctic, and eastward as far as the Luskwa. What river the Luskwa was Smoke could not make out, nor could Labiskwee tell him, nor could McCan. On occasion Snass, with parties of strong hunters, pushed east across the Rockies, on past the lakes and the Mackenzie and into the Barrens. It was on the last traverse in that direction that the silk tent occupied by Labiskwee had been found.

"It belonged to the Millicent-Adbury expedition," Snass told Smoke.

"Oh! I remember. They went after musk-oxen. The rescue expedition never found a trace of them."

"I found them," Snass said. "But both were dead."

"The world still doesn't know. The word never got out."

"The word never gets out," Snass assured him pleasantly.

"You mean if they had been alive when you found them–?"

Snass nodded. "They would have lived on with me and my people."

"Anton got out," Smoke challenged.

"I do not remember the name. How long ago?"

"Fourteen or fifteen years," Smoke answered.

"So he pulled through, after all. Do you know, I've wondered about him. We called him Long Tooth. He was a strong man, a strong man."

"La Perle came through here ten years ago."

Snass shook his head.

"He found traces of your camps. It was summer time."

"That explains it," Snass answered. "We are hundreds of miles to the north in the summer."

But, strive as he would, Smoke could get no clew to Snass's history in the days before he came to live in the northern wilds. Educated he was, yet in all the intervening years he had read no books, no newspapers. What had happened in the world he knew not, nor did he show desire to know. He had heard of the miners on the Yukon, and of the Klondike strike. Gold-miners had never invaded his territory, for which he was glad. But the outside world to him did not exist. He tolerated no mention of it.

Nor could Labiskwee help Smoke with earlier information. She had been born on the hunting-grounds. Her mother had lived for six years after. Her mother had been very beautiful–the only white woman Labiskwee had ever seen. She said this wistfully, and wistfully, in a thousand ways, she showed that she knew of the great outside world on which her father had closed the door. But this knowledge was secret. She had early learned that mention of it threw her father into a rage.

Anton had told a squaw of her mother, and that her mother had been a daughter of a high official in the Hudson Bay Company. Later, the squaw had told Labiskwee. But her mother's name she had never learned.

As a source of information, Danny McCan was impossible. He did not like adventure. Wild life was a horror, and he had had nine years of it. Shanghaied in San Francisco, he had deserted the whaleship at Point Barrow with three companions. Two had died, and the third had abandoned him on the terrible traverse south. Two years he had lived with the Eskimos before raising the courage to attempt the south traverse, and then, within several days of a Hudson Bay Company post, he had been gathered in by a party of Snass's young men. He was a small, stupid man, afflicted with sore eyes, and all he dreamed or could talk about was getting back to his beloved San Francisco and his blissful trade of bricklaying.

"You're the first intelligent man we've had," Snass complimented Smoke one night by the fire. "Except old Four Eyes. The Indians named him so. He wore glasses and was short-sighted. He was a professor of zoology." (Smoke noted the correctness of the pronunciation of the word.) "He died a year ago. My young men picked him up strayed from an expedition on the upper Porcupine. He was intelligent, yes; but he was also a fool. That was his weakness–straying. He knew geology, though, and working in metals. Over on the Luskwa, where there's coal, we have several creditable hand-forges he made. He repaired our guns and taught the young men how. He died last year, and

we really missed him. Strayed–that's how it happened–froze to death within a mile of camp."

It was on the same night that Snass said to Smoke:

"You'd better pick out a wife and have a fire of your own. You will be more comfortable than with those young bucks. The maidens' fires–a sort of feast of the virgins, you know–are not lighted until full summer and the salmon, but I can give orders earlier if you say the word."

Smoke laughed and shook his head.

"Remember," Snass concluded quietly, "Anton is the only one that ever got away. He was lucky, unusually lucky."

Her father had a will of iron, Labiskwee told Smoke.

"Four Eyes used to call him the Frozen Pirate–whatever that means–the Tyrant of the Frost, the Cave Bear, the Beast Primitive, the King of the Caribou, the Bearded Pard, and lots of such things. Four Eyes loved words like these. He taught me most of my English. He was always making fun. You could never tell. He called me his cheetah-chum after times when I was angry. What is cheetah? He always teased me with it."

She chattered on with all the eager naivete of a child, which Smoke found hard to reconcile with the full womanhood of her form and face.

Yes, her father was very firm. Everybody feared him. He was terrible when angry. There were the Porcupines. It was through them, and through the Luskwas, that Snass traded his skins at the posts and got his supplies of ammunition and tobacco. He was always fair, but the chief of the Porcupines began to cheat. And after Snass had warned him twice, he burned his log village, and over a dozen of the Porcupines were killed in the fight. But there was no more cheating. Once, when she was a little girl, there was one white man killed while trying to escape. No, her father did not do it, but he gave the order to the young men. No Indian ever disobeyed her father.

And the more Smoke learned from her, the more the mystery of Snass deepened.

"And tell me if it is true," the girl was saying, "that there was a man and a woman whose names were Paolo and Francesca and who greatly loved each other?"

Smoke nodded.

"Four Eyes told me all about it," she beamed happily. "And so he did not make it up, after all. You see, I was not sure. I asked father, but, oh, he was angry. The Indians told me he gave poor Four Eyes an awful talking to. Then there were Tristan and Iseult–two Iseults. It was very sad. But I should like to love that way. Do all the young men and women in the world do that? They do not here. They just get married. They do not seem to have time. I am English, and I will never marry an Indian–would you? That is why I have not lighted my maiden's fire. Some of the young men are bothering father to make me do it. Libash is one of them. He is a great hunter. And Mahkook comes around singing songs. He is funny. To-night, if you come by my tent after dark, you will hear him singing out in the cold. But father says I can do as I please, and so I shall not light my fire. You see, when a girl makes up her mind to get married, that

is the way she lets young men know. Four Eyes always said it was a fine custom. But I noticed he never took a wife. Maybe he was too old. He did not have much hair, but I do not think he was really very old. And how do you know when you are in love?–like Paolo and Francesca, I mean."

Smoke was disconcerted by the clear gaze of her blue eyes. "Why, they say," he stammered, "those who are in love say it, that love is dearer than life. When one finds out that he or she likes somebody better than everybody else in the world–why, then, they know they are in love. That's the way it goes, but it's awfully hard to explain. You just know it, that's all."

She looked off across the camp-smoke, sighed, and resumed work on the fur mitten she was sewing. "Well," she announced with finality, "I shall never get married anyway."

"Once we hit out we'll sure have some tall runnin'," Shorty said dismally.

"The place is a big trap," Smoke agreed.

From the crest of a bald knob they gazed out over Snass's snowy domain. East, west, and south they were hemmed in by the high peaks and jumbled ranges. Northward, the rolling country seemed interminable; yet they knew, even in that direction, that half a dozen transverse chains blocked the way.

"At this time of the year I could give you three days' start," Snass told Smoke that evening. "You can't hide your trail, you see. Anton got away when the snow was gone. My young men can travel as fast as the best white man; and, besides, you would be breaking trail for them. And when the snow is off the ground, I'll see to it that you don't get the chance Anton had. It's a good life. And soon the world fades. I have never quite got over the surprise of finding how easy it is to get along without the world."

"What's eatin' me is Danny McCan," Shorty confided to Smoke. "He's a weak brother on any trail. But he swears he knows the way out to the westward, an' so we got to put up with him, Smoke, or you sure get yours."

"We're all in the same boat," Smoke answered.

"Not on your life. It's a-comin' to you straight down the pike."

"What is?"

"You ain't heard the news?"

Smoke shook his head.

"The bachelors told me. They just got the word. To-night it comes off, though it's months ahead of the calendar."

Smoke shrugged his shoulders.

"Ain't interested in hearin'?" Shorty teased.

"I'm waiting to hear."

"Well, Danny's wife just told the bachelors," Shorty paused impressively. "An' the bachelors told me, of course, that the maidens' fires is due to be lighted to-night. That's all. Now how do you like it?"

"I don't get your drift, Shorty."

"Don't, eh? Why, it's plain open and shut. They's a skirt after you, an' that skirt is goin' to light a fire, an' that skirt's name is Labiskwee. Oh, I've been watchin' her

watch you when you ain't lookin'. She ain't never lighted her fire. Said she wouldn't marry a Indian. An' now, when she lights her fire, it's a cinch it's my poor old friend Smoke."

"It sounds like a syllogism," Smoke said, with a sinking heart reviewing Labiskwee's actions of the past several days.

"Cinch is shorter to pronounce," Shorty returned. "An' that's always the way–just as we're workin' up our get-away, along comes a skirt to complicate everything. We ain't got no luck. Hey! Listen to that, Smoke!"

Three ancient squaws had halted midway between the bachelors' camp and the camp of McCan, and the oldest was declaiming in shrill falsetto.

Smoke recognized the names, but not all the words, and Shorty translated with melancholy glee.

"Labiskwee, the daughter of Snass, the Rainmaker, the Great Chief, lights her first maiden's fire to-night. Maka, the daughter of Owits, the Wolf-Runner–"

The recital ran through the names of a dozen maidens, and then the three heralds tottered on their way to make announcement at the next fires.

The bachelors, who had sworn youthful oaths to speak to no maidens, were uninterested in the approaching ceremony, and to show their disdain they made preparations for immediate departure on a mission set them by Snass and upon which they had planned to start the following morning. Not satisfied with the old hunters' estimates of the caribou, Snass had decided that the run was split. The task set the bachelors was to scout to the north and west in quest of the second division of the great herd.

Smoke, troubled by Labiskwee's fire-lighting, announced that he would accompany the bachelors. But first he talked with Shorty and with McCan.

"You be there on the third day, Smoke," Shorty said. "We'll have the outfit an' the dogs."

"But remember," Smoke cautioned, "if there is any slip-up in meeting me, you keep on going and get out to the Yukon. That's flat. If you make it, you can come back for me in the summer. If I get the chance, I'll make it, and come back for you."

McCan, standing by his fire, indicated with his eyes a rugged mountain where the high western range out-jutted on the open country.

"That's the one," he said. "A small stream on the south side. We go up it. On the third day you meet us. We'll pass by on the third day. Anywhere you tap that stream you'll meet us or our trail."

But the chance did not come to Smoke on the third day. The bachelors had changed the direction of their scout, and while Shorty and McCan plodded up the stream with their dogs, Smoke and the bachelors were sixty miles to the northeast picking up the trail of the second caribou herd. Several days later, through a dim twilight of falling snow, they came back to the big camp. A squaw ceased from wailing by a fire and darted up to Smoke. Harsh tongued, with bitter, venomous eyes, she cursed him, waving her arms toward a silent, fur-wrapped form that still lay on the sled which had hauled it in.

What had happened, Smoke could only guess, and as he came to McCan's fire he was prepared for a second cursing. Instead, he saw McCan himself industriously chewing a strip of caribou meat.

"I'm not a fightin' man," he whiningly explained. "But Shorty got away, though they're still after him. He put up a hell of a fight. They'll get him, too. He ain't got a chance. He plugged two bucks that'll get around all right. An' he croaked one square through the chest."

"Yes, I know," Smoke answered. "I just met the widow."

"Old Snass'll be wantin' to see you," McCan added. "Them's his orders. Soon as you come in you was to go to his fire. I ain't squealed. You don't know nothing. Keep that in mind. Shorty went off on his own along with me."

At Snass's fire Smoke found Labiskwee. She met him with eyes that shone with such softness and tenderness as to frighten him.

"I'm glad you did not try to run away," she said. "You see, I–" She hesitated, but her eyes didn't drop. They swam with a light unmistakable. "I lighted my fire, and of course it was for you. It has happened. I like you better than everybody else in the world. Better than my father. Better than a thousand Libashes and Mahkooks. I love. It is very strange. I love as Francesca loved, as Iseult loved. Old Four Eyes spoke true. Indians do not love this way. But my eyes are blue, and I am white. We are white, you and I."

Smoke had never been proposed to in his life, and he was unable to meet the situation. Worse, it was not even a proposal. His acceptance was taken for granted. So thoroughly was it all arranged in Labiskwee's mind, so warm was the light in her eyes, that he was amazed that she did not throw her arms around him and rest her head on his shoulder. Then he realized, despite her candor of love, that she did not know the pretty ways of love. Among the primitive savages such ways did not obtain. She had had no chance to learn.

She prattled on, chanting the happy burden of her love, while he strove to grip himself in the effort, somehow, to wound her with the truth. This, at the very first, was the golden opportunity.

"But, Labiskwee, listen," he began. "Are you sure you learned from Four Eyes all the story of the love of Paolo and Francesca?"

She clasped her hands and laughed with an immense certitude of gladness. "Oh! There is more! I knew there must be more and more of love! I have thought much since I lighted my fire. I have–"

And then Snass strode in to the fire through the falling snowflakes, and Smoke's opportunity was lost.

"Good evening," Snass burred gruffly. "Your partner has made a mess of it. I am glad you had better sense."

"You might tell me what's happened," Smoke urged.

The flash of white teeth through the stained beard was not pleasant. "Certainly, I'll tell you. Your partner has killed one of my people. That sniveling shrimp, McCan,

deserted at the first shot. He'll never run away again. But my hunters have got your partner in the mountains, and they'll get him. He'll never make the Yukon basin. As for you, from now on you sleep at my fire. And there'll be no more scouting with the young men. I shall have my eye on you."

Smoke's new situation at Snass's fire was embarrassing. He saw more of Labiskwee than ever. In its sweetness and innocence, the frankness of her love was terrible. Her glances were love glances; every look was a caress. A score of times he nerved himself to tell her of Joy Gastell, and a score of times he discovered that he was a coward. The damnable part of it was that Labiskwee was so delightful. She was good to look upon. Despite the hurt to his self-esteem of every moment spent with her, he pleasured in every such moment. For the first time in his life he was really learning woman, and so clear was Labiskwee's soul, so appalling in its innocence and ignorance, that he could not misread a line of it. All the pristine goodness of her sex was in her, uncultured by the conventionality of knowledge or the deceit of self-protection. In memory he reread his Schopenhauer and knew beyond all cavil that the sad philosopher was wrong. To know woman, as Smoke came to know Labiskwee, was to know that all woman-haters were sick men.

Labiskwee was wonderful, and yet, beside her face in the flesh burned the vision of the face of Joy Gastell. Joy had control, restraint, all the feminine inhibitions of civilization, yet, by the trick of his fancy and the living preachment of the woman before him, Joy Gastell was stripped to a goodness at par with Labiskwee's. The one but appreciated the other, and all women of all the world appreciated by what Smoke saw in the soul of Labiskwee at Snass's fire in the snow-land.

And Smoke learned about himself. He remembered back to all he knew of Joy Gastell, and he knew that he loved her. Yet he delighted in Labiskwee. And what was this feeling of delight but love? He could demean it by no less a name. Love it was. Love it must be. And he was shocked to the roots of his soul by the discovery of this polygamous strain in his nature. He had heard it argued, in the San Francisco studios, that it was possible for a man to love two women, or even three women, at a time. But he had not believed it. How could he believe it when he had not had the experience? Now it was different. He did truly love two women, and though most of the time he was quite convinced that he loved Joy Gastell more, there were other moments when he felt with equal certainty that he loved Labiskwee more.

"There must be many women in the world," she said one day. "And women like men. Many women must have liked you. Tell me."

He did not reply.

"Tell me," she insisted.

"I have never married," he evaded.

"And there is no one else? No other Iseult out there beyond the mountains?"

Then it was that Smoke knew himself a coward. He lied. Reluctantly he did it, but he lied. He shook his head with a slow indulgent smile, and in his face was more of fondness than he dreamed as he noted Labiskwee's swift joy-transfiguration.

He excused himself to himself. His reasoning was jesuitical beyond dispute, and yet he was not Spartan enough to strike this child-woman a quivering heart-stroke.

Snass, too, was a perturbing factor in the problem. Little escaped his black eyes, and he spoke significantly.

"No man cares to see his daughter married," he said to Smoke. "At least, no man of imagination. It hurts. The thought of it hurts, I tell you. Just the same, in the natural order of life, Margaret must marry some time."

A pause fell; Smoke caught himself wondering for the thousandth time what Snass's history must be.

"I am a harsh, cruel man," Snass went on. "Yet the law is the law, and I am just. Nay, here with this primitive people, I am the law and the justice. Beyond my will no man goes. Also, I am a father, and all my days I have been cursed with imagination."

Whither his monologue tended, Smoke did not learn, for it was interrupted by a burst of chiding and silvery laughter from Labiskwee's tent, where she played with a new-caught wolf-cub. A spasm of pain twitched Snass's face.

"I can stand it," he muttered grimly. "Margaret must be married, and it is my fortune, and hers, that you are here. I had little hopes of Four Eyes. McCan was so hopeless I turned him over to a squaw who had lighted her fire twenty seasons. If it hadn't been you, it would have been an Indian. Libash might have become the father of my grandchildren."

And then Labiskwee came from her tent to the fire, the wolf-cub in her arms, drawn as by a magnet, to gaze upon the man, in her eyes the love that art had never taught to hide.

* * * * * *

"Listen to me," said McCan. "The spring thaw is here, an' the crust is comin' on the snow. It's the time to travel, exceptin' for the spring blizzards in the mountains. I know them. I would run with no less a man than you."

"But you can't run," Smoke contradicted. "You can keep up with no man. Your backbone is limber as thawed marrow. If I run, I run alone. The world fades, and perhaps I shall never run. Caribou meat is very good, and soon will come summer and the salmon."

Said Snass: "Your partner is dead. My hunters did not kill him. They found the body, frozen in the first of the spring storms in the mountains. No man can escape. When shall we celebrate your marriage?"

And Labiskwee: "I watch you. There is trouble in your eyes, in your face. Oh, I do know all your face. There is a little scar on your neck, just under the ear. When you are happy, the corners of your mouth turn up. When you think sad thoughts they turn down. When you smile there are three and four wrinkles at the corners of your eyes. When you laugh there are six. Sometimes I have almost counted seven. But I cannot count them now. I have never read books. I do not know how to read. But Four Eyes taught me much. My grammar is good. He taught me. And in his own eyes I have seen the trouble of the hunger for the world. He was often hungry for the world. Yet here

was good meat, and fish in plenty, and the berries and the roots, and often flour came back for the furs through the Porcupines and the Luskwas. Yet was he hungry for the world. Is the world so good that you, too, are hungry for it? Four Eyes had nothing. But you have me." She sighed and shook her head. "Four Eyes died still hungry for the world. And if you lived here always would you, too, die hungry for the world? I am afraid I do not know the world. Do you want to run away to the world?"

Smoke could not speak, but by his mouth-corner lines was she convinced.

Minutes of silence passed, in which she visibly struggled, while Smoke cursed himself for the unguessed weakness that enabled him to speak the truth about his hunger for the world while it kept his lips tight on the truth of the existence of the other woman.

Again Labiskwee sighed.

"Very well. I love you more than I fear my father's anger, and he is more terrible in anger than a mountain storm. You told me what love is. This is the test of love. I shall help you to run away back to the world."

Smoke awakened softly and without movement. Warm small fingers touched his cheek and slid gently to a pressure on his lips. Fur, with the chill of frost clinging in it, next tingled his skin, and the one word, "Come," was breathed in his ear. He sat up carefully and listened. The hundreds of wolf-dogs in the camp had lifted their nocturnal song, but under the volume of it, close at hand, he could distinguish the light, regular breathing of Snass.

Labiskwee tugged gently at Smoke's sleeve, and he knew she wished him to follow. He took his moccasins and German socks in his hand and crept out into the snow in his sleeping moccasins. Beyond the glow from the dying embers of the fire, she indicated to him to put on his outer foot-gear, and while he obeyed, she went back under the fly where Snass slept.

Feeling the hands of his watch Smoke found it was one in the morning. Quite warm it was, he decided, not more than ten below zero. Labiskwee rejoined him and led him on through the dark runways of the sleeping camp. Walk lightly as they could, the frost crunched crisply under their moccasins, but the sound was drowned by the clamor of the dogs, too deep in their howling to snarl at the man and woman who passed.

"Now we can talk," she said, when the last fire had been left half a mile behind.

And now, in the starlight, facing him, Smoke noted for the first time that her arms were burdened, and, on feeling, discovered she carried his snowshoes, a rifle, two belts of ammunition, and his sleeping-robes.

"I have everything fixed," she said, with a happy little laugh. "I have been two days making the cache. There is meat, even flour, matches, and skees, which go best on the hard crust and, when they break through, the webs will hold up longer. Oh, I do know snow-travel, and we shall go fast, my lover."

Smoke checked his speech. That she had been arranging his escape was surprise enough, but that she had planned to go with him was more than he was prepared for. Unable to think immediate action, he gently, one by one, took her burdens from her.

He put his arm around her and pressed her close, and still he could not think what to do.

"God is good," she whispered. "He sent me a lover."

Yet Smoke was brave enough not to suggest his going alone. And before he spoke again he saw all his memory of the bright world and the sun-lands reel and fade.

"We will go back, Labiskwee," he said. "You will be my wife, and we shall live always with the Caribou People."

"No! no!" She shook her head; and her body, in the circle of his arm, resented his proposal. "I know. I have thought much. The hunger for the world would come upon you, and in the long nights it would devour your heart. Four Eyes died of hunger for the world. So would you die. All men from the world hunger for it. And I will not have you die. We will go on across the snow mountains on the south traverse."

"Dear, listen," he urged. "We must go back."

She pressed her mitten against his lips to prevent further speech. "You love me. Say that you love me."

"I do love you, Labiskwee. You are my wonderful sweetheart."

Again the mitten was a caressing obstacle to utterance.

"We shall go on to the cache," she said with decision. "It is three miles from here. Come."

He held back, and her pull on his arm could not move him. Almost was he tempted to tell her of the other woman beyond the south traverse.

"It would be a great wrong to you to go back," she said. "I–I am only a wild girl, and I am afraid of the world; but I am more afraid for you. You see, it is as you told me. I love you more than anybody else in the world. I love you more than myself. The Indian language is not a good language. The English language is not a good language. The thoughts in my heart for you, as bright and as many as the stars–there is no language for them. How can I tell you them? They are there–see?"

As she spoke she slipped the mitten from his hand and thrust the hand inside the warmth of her parka until it rested against her heart. Tightly and steadily she pressed his hand in its position. And in the long silence he felt the beat, beat of her heart, and knew that every beat of it was love. And then, slowly, almost imperceptibly, still holding his hand, her body began to incline away from his and toward the direction of the cache. Nor could he resist. It was as if he were drawn by her heart itself that so nearly lay in the hollow of his hand.

So firm was the crust, frozen during the night after the previous day's surface-thaw, that they slid along rapidly on their skees.

"Just here, in the trees, is the cache," Labiskwee told Smoke.

The next moment she caught his arm with a startle of surprise. The flames of a small fire were dancing merrily, and crouched by the fire was McCan. Labiskwee muttered something in Indian, and so lashlike was the sound that Smoke remembered she had been called "cheetah" by Four Eyes.

"I was minded you'd run without me," McCan explained when they came up, his small peering eyes glimmering with cunning. "So I kept an eye on the girl, an' when I seen her caching skees an' grub, I was on. I've brought my own skees an' webs an' grub. The fire? Sure, an' it was no danger. The camp's asleep an' snorin', an' the waitin' was cold. Will we be startin' now?"

Labiskwee looked swift consternation at Smoke, as swiftly achieved a judgement on the matter, and spoke. And in the speaking she showed, child-woman though she was in love, the quick decisiveness of one who in other affairs of life would be no clinging vine.

"McCan, you are a dog," she hissed, and her eyes were savage with anger. "I know it is in your heart to raise the camp if we do not take you. Very well. We must take you. But you know my father. I am like my father. You will do your share of the work. You will obey. And if you play one dirty trick, it would be better for you if you had never run."

McCan looked up at her, his small pig-eyes hating and cringing, while in her eyes, turned to Smoke, the anger melted into luminous softness.

"Is it right, what I have said?" she queried.

Daylight found them in the belt of foothills that lay between the rolling country and the mountains. McCan suggested breakfast, but they held on. Not until the afternoon thaw softened the crust and prevented travel would they eat.

The foothills quickly grew rugged, and the stream, up whose frozen bed they journeyed, began to thread deeper and deeper canyons. The signs of spring were less frequent, though in one canyon they found foaming bits of open water, and twice they came upon clumps of dwarf willow upon which were the first hints of swelling buds.

Labiskwee explained to Smoke her knowledge of the country and the way she planned to baffle pursuit. There were but two ways out, one west, the other south. Snass would immediately dispatch parties of young men to guard the two trails. But there was another way south. True, it did no more than penetrate half-way into the high mountains, then, twisting to the west and crossing three divides, it joined the regular trail. When the young men found no traces on the regular trail they would turn back in the belief that the escape had been made by the west traverse, never dreaming that the runaways had ventured the harder and longer way around.

Glancing back at McCan, in the rear, Labiskwee spoke in an undertone to Smoke. "He is eating," she said. "It is not good."

Smoke looked. The Irishman was secretly munching caribou suet from the pocketful he carried.

"No eating between meals, McCan," he commanded. "There's no game in the country ahead, and the grub will have to be whacked in equal rations from the start. The only way you can travel with us is by playing fair."

By one o'clock the crust had thawed so that the skees broke through, and before two o'clock the web-shoes were breaking through. Camp was made and the first meal eaten. Smoke took stock of the food. McCan's supply was a disappointment. So many

silver fox-skins had he stuffed in the bottom of the meat bag that there was little space left for meat.

"Sure an' I didn't know there was so many," he explained. "I done it in the dark. But they're worth good money. An' with all this ammunition we'll be gettin' game a-plenty."

"The wolves will eat you a-plenty," was Smoke's hopeless comment, while Labiskwee's eyes flashed their anger.

Enough food for a month, with careful husbanding and appetites that never blunted their edge, was Smoke's and Labiskwee's judgment. Smoke apportioned the weight and bulk of the packs, yielding in the end to Labiskwee's insistence that she, too, should carry a pack.

Next day the stream shallowed out in a wide mountain valley, and they were already breaking through the crust on the flats when they gained the harder surface of the slope of the divide.

"Ten minutes later and we wouldn't have got across the flats," Smoke said, when they paused for breath on the bald crest of the summit. "We must be a thousand feet higher here."

But Labiskwee, without speaking, pointed down to an open flat among the trees. In the midst of it, scattered abreast, were five dark specks that scarcely moved.

"The young men," said Labiskwee.

"They are wallowing to their hips," Smoke said. "They will never gain the hard footing this day. We have hours the start of them. Come on, McCan. Buck up. We don't eat till we can't travel."

McCan groaned, but there was no caribou suet in his pocket, and he doggedly brought up the rear.

In the higher valley in which they now found themselves, the crust did not break till three in the afternoon, at which time they managed to gain the shadow of a mountain where the crust was already freezing again. Once only they paused to get out McCan's confiscated suet, which they ate as they walked. The meat was frozen solid, and could be eaten only after thawing over a fire. But the suet crumbled in their mouths and eased the palpitating faintness in their stomachs.

Black darkness, with an overcast sky, came on after a long twilight at nine o'clock, when they made camp in a clump of dwarf spruce. McCan was whining and helpless. The day's march had been exhausting, but in addition, despite his nine years' experience in the arctic, he had been eating snow and was in agony with his parched and burning mouth. He crouched by the fire and groaned, while they made the camp.

Labiskwee was tireless, and Smoke could not but marvel at the life in her body, at the endurance of mind and muscle. Nor was her cheerfulness forced. She had ever a laugh or a smile for him, and her hand lingered in caress whenever it chanced to touch his. Yet, always, when she looked at McCan, her face went hard and pitiless and her eyes flashed frostily.

In the night came wind and snow, and through a day of blizzard they fought their way blindly, missing the turn of the way that led up a small stream and crossed a divide to the west. For two more days they wandered, crossing other and wrong divides, and in those two days they dropped spring behind and climbed up into the abode of winter.

"The young men have lost our trail, an' what's to stop us restin' a day?" McCan begged.

But no rest was accorded. Smoke and Labiskwee knew their danger. They were lost in the high mountains, and they had seen no game nor signs of game. Day after day they struggled on through an iron configuration of landscape that compelled them to labyrinthine canyons and valleys that led rarely to the west. Once in such a canyon, they could only follow it, no matter where it led, for the cold peaks and higher ranges on either side were unscalable and unendurable. The terrible toil and the cold ate up energy, yet they cut down the size of the ration they permitted themselves.

One night Smoke was awakened by a sound of struggling. Distinctly he heard a gasping and strangling from where McCan slept. Kicking the fire into flame, by its light he saw Labiskwee, her hands at the Irishman's throat and forcing from his mouth a chunk of partly chewed meat. Even as Smoke saw this, her hand went to her hip and flashed with the sheath-knife in it.

"Labiskwee!" Smoke cried, and his voice was peremptory.

The hand hesitated.

"Don't," he said, coming to her side.

She was shaking with anger, but the hand, after hesitating a moment longer, descended reluctantly to the sheath. As if fearing she could not restrain herself, she crossed to the fire and threw on more wood. McCan sat up, whimpering and snarling, between fright and rage spluttering an inarticulate explanation.

"Where did you get it?" Smoke demanded.

"Feel around his body," Labiskwee said.

It was the first word she had spoken, and her voice quivered with the anger she could not suppress.

McCan strove to struggle, but Smoke gripped him cruelly and searched him, drawing forth from under his armpit, where it had been thawed by the heat of his body, a strip of caribou meat. A quick exclamation from Labiskwee drew Smoke's attention. She had sprung to McCan's pack and was opening it. Instead of meat, out poured moss, spruce-needles, chips–all the light refuse that had taken the place of the meat and given the pack its due proportion minus its weight.

Again Labiskwee's hand went to her hip, and she flew at the culprit only to be caught in Smoke's arms, where she surrendered herself, sobbing with the futility of her rage.

"Oh, lover, it is not the food," she panted. "It is you, your life. The dog! He is eating you, he is eating you!"

“We will yet live,” Smoke comforted her. “Hereafter he shall carry the flour. He can’t eat that raw, and if he does I’ll kill him myself, for he will be eating your life as well as mine.” He held her closer. “Sweetheart, killing is men’s work. Women do not kill.”

“You would not love me if I killed the dog?” she questioned in surprise.

“Not so much,” Smoke temporized.

She sighed with resignation. “Very well,” she said. “I shall not kill him.”

The pursuit by the young men was relentless. By miracles of luck, as well as by deduction from the topography of the way the runaways must take, the young men picked up the blizzard-blinded trail and clung to it. When the snow flew, Smoke and Labiskwee took the most improbable courses, turning east when the better way opened south or west, rejecting a low divide to climb a higher. Being lost, it did not matter. Yet they could not throw the young men off. Sometimes they gained days, but always the young men appeared again. After a storm, when all trace was lost, they would cast out like a pack of hounds, and he who caught the later trace made smoke signals to call his comrades on.

Smoke lost count of time, of days and nights and storms and camps. Through a vast mad phantasmagoria of suffering and toil he and Labiskwee struggled on, with McCan somehow stumbling along in the rear, babbling of San Francisco, his everlasting dream. Great peaks, pitiless and serene in the chill blue, towered about them. They fled down black canyons with walls so precipitous that the rock frowned naked, or wallowed across glacial valleys where frozen lakes lay far beneath their feet. And one night, between two storms, a distant volcano glared the sky. They never saw it again, and wondered whether it had been a dream.

Crusts were covered with yards of new snow, that crusted and were snow-covered again. There were places, in canyon-and pocket-drifts, where they crossed snow hundreds of feet deep, and they crossed tiny glaciers, in drafty rifts, wind-scurried and bare of any snow. They crept like silent wraiths across the faces of impending avalanches, or roused from exhausted sleep to the thunder of them. They made fireless camps above timber-line, thawing their meat-rations with the heat of their bodies ere they could eat. And through it all Labiskwee remained Labiskwee. Her cheer never vanished, save when she looked at McCan, and the greatest stupor of fatigue and cold never stilled the eloquence of her love for Smoke.

Like a cat she watched the apportionment of the meager ration, and Smoke could see that she grudged McCan every munch of his jaws. Once, she distributed the ration. The first Smoke knew was a wild harangue of protest from McCan. Not to him alone, but to herself, had she given a smaller portion than to Smoke. After that, Smoke divided the meat himself. Caught in a small avalanche one morning after a night of snow, and swept a hundred yards down the mountain, they emerged half-stifled and unhurt, but McCan emerged without his pack in which was all the flour. A second and larger snow-slide buried it beyond hope of recovery. After that, though the disaster had been through no fault of his, Labiskwee never looked at McCan, and Smoke knew it was because she dared not.

It was a morning, stark still, clear blue above, with white sun-dazzle on the snow. The way led up a long, wide slope of crust. They moved like weary ghosts in a dead world. No wind stirred in the stagnant, frigid calm. Far peaks, a hundred miles away, studding the backbone of the Rockies up and down, were as distinct as if no more than five miles away.

"Something is going to happen," Labiskwee whispered. "Don't you feel it?–here, there, everywhere? Everything is strange."

"I feel a chill that is not of cold," Smoke answered. "Nor is it of hunger."

"It is in your head, your heart," she agreed excitedly. "That is the way I feel it."

"It is not of my senses," Smoke diagnosed. "I sense something, from without, that is tingling me with ice; it is a chill of my nerves."

A quarter of an hour later they paused for breath.

"I can no longer see the far peaks," Smoke said.

"The air is getting thick and heavy," said Labiskwee. "It is hard to breathe."

"There be three suns," McCan muttered hoarsely, reeling as he clung to his staff for support.

There was a mock sun on either side of the real sun.

"There are five," said Labiskwee; and as they looked, new suns formed and flashed before their eyes.

"By Heaven, the sky is filled with suns beyant all countin'," McCan cried in fear.

Which was true, for look where they would, half the circle of the sky dazzled and blazed with new suns forming.

McCan yelped sharply with surprise and pain. "I'm stung!" he cried out, then yelped again.

Then Labiskwee cried out, and Smoke felt a prickling stab on his cheek so cold that it burned like acid. It reminded him of swimming in the salt sea and being stung by the poisonous filaments of Portuguese men-of-war. The sensations were so similar that he automatically brushed his cheek to rid it of the stinging substance that was not there.

And then a shot rang out, strangely muffled. Down the slope were the young men, standing on their skees, and one after another opened fire.

"Spread out!" Smoke commanded. "And climb for it! We're almost to the top. They're a quarter of a mile below, and that means a couple of miles the start of them on the down-going of the other side."

With faces prickling and stinging from invisible atmospheric stabs, the three scattered widely on the snow surface and toiled upward. The muffled reports of the rifles were weird to their ears.

"Thank the Lord," Smoke panted to Labiskwee, "that four of them are muskets, and only one a Winchester. Besides, all these suns spoil their aim. They are fooled. They haven't come within a hundred feet of us."

"It shows my father's temper," she said. "They have orders to kill."

"How strange you talk," Smoke said. "Your voice sounds far away."

“Cover your mouth,” Labiskwee cried suddenly. “And do not talk. I know what it is. Cover your mouth with your sleeve, thus, and do not talk.”

McCan fell first, and struggled wearily to his feet. And after that all fell repeatedly ere they reached the summit. Their wills exceeded their muscles, they knew not why, save that their bodies were oppressed by a numbness and heaviness of movement. From the crest, looking back, they saw the young men stumbling and falling on the upward climb.

“They will never get here,” Labiskwee said. “It is the white death. I know it, though I have never seen it. I have heard the old men talk. Soon will come a mist–unlike any mist or fog or frost-smoke you ever saw. Few have seen it and lived.”

McCan gasped and strangled.

“Keep your mouth covered,” Smoke commanded.

A pervasive flashing of light from all about them drew Smoke’s eyes upward to the many suns. They were shimmering and veiling. The air was filled with microscopic fire-glints. The near peaks were being blotted out by the weird mist; the young men, resolutely struggling nearer, were being engulfed in it. McCan had sunk down, squatting, on his skees, his mouth and eyes covered by his arms.

“Come on, make a start,” Smoke ordered.

“I can’t move,” McCan moaned.

His doubled body set up a swaying motion. Smoke went toward him slowly, scarcely able to will movement through the lethargy that weighed his flesh. He noted that his brain was clear. It was only the body that was afflicted.

“Let him be,” Labiskwee muttered harshly.

But Smoke persisted, dragging the Irishman to his feet and facing him down the long slope they must go. Then he started him with a shove, and McCan, braking and steering with his staff, shot into the sheen of diamond-dust and disappeared.

Smoke looked at Labiskwee, who smiled, though it was all she could do to keep from sinking down. He nodded for her to push off, but she came near to him, and side by side, a dozen feet apart, they flew down through the stinging thickness of cold fire.

Brake as he would, Smoke’s heavier body carried him past her, and he dashed on alone, a long way, at tremendous speed that did not slacken till he came out on a level, crusted plateau. Here he braked till Labiskwee overtook him, and they went on, again side by side, with diminishing speed which finally ceased. The lethargy had grown more pronounced. The wildest effort of will could move them no more than at a snail’s pace. They passed McCan, again crouched down on his skees, and Smoke roused him with his staff in passing.

“Now we must stop,” Labiskwee whispered painfully, “or we will die. We must cover up–so the old men said.”

She did not delay to untie knots, but began cutting her pack-lashings. Smoke cut his, and, with a last look at the fiery death-mist and the mockery of suns, they covered themselves over with the sleeping-furs and crouched in each other’s arms. They felt a body stumble over them and fall, then heard feeble whimpering and blaspheming

drowned in a violent coughing fit, and knew it was McCan who huddled against them as he wrapped his robe about him.

Their own lung-strangling began, and they were racked and torn by a dry cough, spasmodic and uncontrollable. Smoke noted his temperature rising in a fever, and Labiskwee suffered similarly. Hour after hour the coughing spells increased in frequency and violence, and not till late afternoon was the worst reached. After that the mend came slowly, and between spells they dozed in exhaustion.

McCan, however, steadily coughed worse, and from his groans and howls they knew he was in delirium. Once, Smoke made as if to throw the robes back, but Labiskwee clung to him tightly.

"No," she begged. "It is death to uncover now. Bury your face here, against my parka, and breathe gently and do no talking–see, the way I am doing."

They dozed on through the darkness, though the decreasing fits of coughing of one invariably aroused the other. It was after midnight, Smoke judged, when McCan coughed his last. After that he emitted low and bestial moanings that never ceased.

Smoke awoke with lips touching his lips. He lay partly in Labiskwee's arms, his head pillowed on her breast. Her voice was cheerful and usual. The muffled sound of it had vanished.

"It is day," she said, lifting the edge of the robes a trifle. "See, O my lover. It is day; we have lived through; and we no longer cough. Let us look at the world, though I could stay here thus forever and always. This last hour has been sweet. I have been awake, and I have been loving you."

"I do not hear McCan," Smoke said. "And what has become of the young men that they have not found us?"

He threw back the robes and saw a normal and solitary sun in the sky. A gentle breeze was blowing, crisp with frost and hinting of warmer days to come. All the world was natural again. McCan lay on his back, his unwashed face, swarthy from camp-smoke, frozen hard as marble. The sight did not affect Labiskwee.

"Look!" she cried. "A snow bird! It is a good sign."

There was no evidence of the young men. Either they had died on the other side of the divide or they had turned back.

There was so little food that they dared not eat a tithe of what they needed, nor a hundredth part of what they desired, and in the days that followed, wandering through the lone mountain-land, the sharp sting of life grew blunted and the wandering merged half into a dream. Smoke would become abruptly conscious, to find himself staring at the never-ending hated snow-peaks, his senseless babble still ringing in his ears. And the next he would know, after seeming centuries, was that again he was roused to the sound of his own maunderings. Labiskwee, too, was light-headed most of the time. In the main their efforts were unreasoned, automatic. And ever they worked toward the west, and ever they were baffled and thrust north or south by snow-peaks and impassable ranges.

"There is no way south," Labiskwee said. "The old men know. West, only west, is the way."

The young men no longer pursued, but famine crowded on the trail.

Came a day when it turned cold, and a thick snow, that was not snow but frost crystals of the size of grains of sand, began to fall. All day and night it fell, and for three days and nights it continued to fall. It was impossible to travel until it crusted under the spring sun, so they lay in their furs and rested, and ate less because they rested. So small was the ration they permitted that it gave no appeasement to the hunger pang that was much of the stomach, but more of the brain. And Labiskwee, delirious, maddened by the taste of her tiny portion, sobbing and mumbling, yelping sharp little animal cries of joy, fell upon the next day's portion and crammed it into her mouth.

Then it was given to Smoke to see a wonderful thing. The food between her teeth roused her to consciousness. She spat it out, and with a great anger struck herself with her clenched fist on the offending mouth.

It was given to Smoke to see many wonderful things in the days yet to come. After the long snow-fall came on a great wind that drove the dry and tiny frost-particles as sand is driven in a sand-storm. All through the night the sand-frost drove by, and in the full light of a clear and wind-blown day, Smoke looked with swimming eyes and reeling brain upon what he took to be the vision of a dream. All about towered great peaks and small, lone sentinels and groups and councils of mighty Titans. And from the tip of every peak, swaying, undulating, flaring out broadly against the azure sky, streamed gigantic snow-banners, miles in length, milky and nebulous, ever waving lights and shadows and flashing silver from the sun.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord," Smoke chanted, as he gazed upon these dusts of snow wind-driven into sky-scarves of shimmering silken light.

And still he gazed, and still the bannered peaks did not vanish, and still he considered that he dreamed, until Labiskwee sat up among the furs.

"I dream, Labiskwee," he said. "Look. Do you, too, dream within my dream?"

"It is no dream," she replied. "This have the old men told me. And after this will blow the warm winds, and we shall live and win west."

Smoke shot a snow-bird, and they divided it. Once, in a valley where willows budded standing in the snow, he shot a snowshoe rabbit. Another time he got a lean, white weasel. This much of meat they encountered, and no more, though, once, half-mile high and veering toward the west and the Yukon, they saw a wild-duck wedge drive by.

"It is summer in the lower valleys," said Labiskwee. "Soon it will be summer here."

Labiskwee's face had grown thin, but the bright, large eyes were brighter and larger, and when she looked at him she was transfigured by a wild, unearthly beauty.

The days lengthened, and the snow began to sink. Each day the crust thawed, each night it froze again; and they were afoot early and late, being compelled to camp and rest during the midday hours of thaw when the crust could not bear their weight. When

Smoke grew snow-blind, Labiskwee towed him on a thong tied to her waist. And when she was so blinded, she towed behind a thong to his waist. And starving, in a deeper dream, they struggled on through an awakening land bare of any life save their own.

Exhausted as he was, Smoke grew almost to fear sleep, so fearful and bitter were the visions of that mad, twilight land. Always were they of food, and always was the food, at his lips, snatched away by the malign deviser of dreams. He gave dinners to his comrades of the old San Francisco days, himself, with whetting appetite and jealous eye, directing the arrangements, decorating the table with crimson-leafed runners of the autumn grape. The guests were dilatory, and while he greeted them and all sparkled with their latest cleverness, he was frantic with desire for the table. He stole to it, unobserved, and clutched a handful of black ripe olives, and turned to meet still another guest. And others surrounded him, and the laugh and play of wit went on, while all the time, hidden in his closed hand, was this madness of ripe olives.

He gave many such dinners, all with the same empty ending. He attended Gargantuan feasts, where multitudes fed on innumerable bullocks roasted whole, prying them out of smoldering pits and with sharp knives slicing great strips of meat from the steaming carcasses. He stood, with mouth agape, beneath long rows of turkeys which white-aproned shopmen sold. And everybody bought save Smoke, mouth still agape, chained by a leadenness of movement to the pavement. A boy again, he sat with spoon poised high above great bowls of bread and milk. He pursued shy heifers through upland pastures and centuries of torment in vain effort to steal from them their milk, and in noisome dungeons he fought with rats for scraps and refuse. There was no food that was not a madness to him, and he wandered through vast stables, where fat horses stood in mile-long rows of stalls, and sought but never found the bran-bins from which they fed.

Once, only, he dreamed to advantage. Famishing, shipwrecked or marooned, he fought with the big Pacific surf for rock-clinging mussels, and carried them up the sands to the dry flotsam of the spring tides. Of this he built a fire, and among the coals he laid his precious trove. He watched the steam jet forth and the locked shells pop apart, exposing the salmon-colored meat. Cooked to a turn–he knew it; and this time there was no intruding presence to whisk the meal away. At last–so he dreamed within the dream–the dream would come true. This time he would eat. Yet in his certitude he doubted, and he was steeled for the inevitable shift of vision until the salmon-colored meat, hot and savory, was in his mouth. His teeth closed upon it. He ate! The miracle had happened! The shock aroused him. He awoke in the dark, lying on his back, and heard himself mumbling little piggish squeals and grunts of joy. His jaws were moving, and between his teeth meat was crunching. He did not move, and soon small fingers felt about his lips, and between them was inserted a tiny sliver of meat. And in that he would eat no more, rather than that he was angry, Labiskwee cried and in his arms sobbed herself to sleep. But he lay on awake, marveling at the love and the wonder of woman.

The time came when the last food was gone. The high peaks receded, the divides became lower, and the way opened promisingly to the west. But their reserves of strength were gone, and, without food, the time quickly followed when they lay down at night and in the morning did not arise. Smoke weakly gained his feet, collapsed, and on hands and knees crawled about the building of a fire. But try as she would Labiskwee sank back each time in an extremity of weakness. And Smoke sank down beside her, a wan sneer on his face for the automatism that had made him struggle for an unneeded fire. There was nothing to cook, and the day was warm. A gentle breeze sighed in the spruce-trees, and from everywhere, under the disappearing snow, came the trickling music of unseen streamlets.

Labiskwee lay in a stupor, her breathing so imperceptible that often Smoke thought her dead. In the afternoon the chattering of a squirrel aroused him. Dragging the heavy rifle, he wallowed through the crust that had become slush. He crept on hands and knees, or stood upright and fell forward in the direction of the squirrel that chattered its wrath and fled slowly and tantalizingly before him. He had not the strength for a quick shot, and the squirrel was never still. At times Smoke sprawled in the wet snow-melt and cried out of weakness. Other times the flame of his life flickered, and blackness smote him. How long he lay in the last faint he did not know, but he came to, shivering in the chill of evening, his wet clothing frozen to the re-forming crust. The squirrel was gone, and after a weary struggle he won back to the side of Labiskwee. So profound was his weakness that he lay like a dead man through the night, nor did dreams disturb him.

The sun was in the sky, the same squirrel chattering through the trees, when Labiskwee's hand on Smoke's cheek awakened him.

"Put your hand on my heart, lover," she said, her voice clear but faint and very far away. "My heart is my love, and you hold it in your hand."

A long time seemed to go by, ere she spoke again.

"Remember always, there is no way south. That is well known to the Caribou People. West–that is the way–and you are almost there–and you will make it."

And Smoke drowsed in the numbness that is near to death, until once more she aroused him.

"Put your lips on mine," she said. "I will die so."

"We will die together, sweetheart," was his answer.

"No." A feeble flutter of her hand checked him, and so thin was her voice that scarcely did he hear it, yet did he hear all of it. Her hand fumbled and groped in the hood of her parka, and she drew forth a pouch that she placed in his hand. "And now your lips, my lover. Your lips on my lips, and your hand on my heart."

And in that long kiss darkness came upon him again, and when again he was conscious he knew that he was alone and he knew that he was to die. He was wearily glad that he was to die.

He found his hand resting on the pouch. With an inward smile at the curiosity that made him pull the draw-string, he opened it. Out poured a tiny flood of food.

There was no particle of it that he did not recognize, all stolen by Labiskwee from Labiskwee–bread-fragments saved far back in the days ere McCan lost the flour; strips and strings of caribou-meat, partly gnawed; crumbles of suet; the hind-leg of the snow-shoe rabbit, untouched; the hind-leg and part of the fore-leg of the white weasel; the wing dented still by her reluctant teeth, and the leg of the snow-bird–pitiful remnants, tragic renunciations, crucifixions of life, morsels stolen from her terrible hunger by her incredible love.

With maniacal laughter Smoke flung it all out on the hardening snow-crust and went back into the blackness.

He dreamed. The Yukon ran dry. In its bed, among muddy pools of water and ice-scoured rocks, he wandered, picking up fat nugget-gold. The weight of it grew to be a burden to him, till he discovered that it was good to eat. And greedily he ate. After all, of what worth was gold that men should prize it so, save that it was good to eat?

He awoke to another sun. His brain was strangely clear. No longer did his eyesight blur. The familiar palpitation that had vexed him through all his frame was gone. The juices of his body seemed to sing, as if the spring had entered in. Blessed well-being had come to him. He turned to awaken Labiskwee, and saw, and remembered. He looked for the food flung out on the snow. It was gone. And he knew that in delirium and dream it had been the Yukon nugget-gold. In delirium and dream he had taken heart of life from the life sacrifice of Labiskwee, who had put her heart in his hand and opened his eyes to woman and wonder.

He was surprised at the ease of his movements, astounded that he was able to drag her fur-wrapped body to the exposed thawed gravel-bank, which he undermined with the ax and caved upon her.

Three days, with no further food, he fought west. In the mid third day he fell beneath a lone spruce beside a wide stream that ran open and which he knew must be the Klondike. Ere blackness conquered him, he unlashed his pack, said good-by to the bright world, and rolled himself in the robes.

Chirping, sleepy noises awoke him. The long twilight was on. Above him, among the spruce boughs, were ptarmigan. Hunger bit him into instant action, though the action was infinitely slow. Five minutes passed before he was able to get his rifle to his shoulder, and a second five minutes passed ere he dared, lying on his back and aiming straight upward, to pull the trigger. It was a clean miss. No bird fell, but no bird flew. They ruffled and rustled stupidly and drowsily. His shoulder pained him. A second shot was spoiled by the involuntary wince he made as he pulled trigger. Somewhere, in the last three days, though he had no recollection how, he must have fallen and injured it.

The ptarmigan had not flown. He doubled and redoubled the robe that had covered him, and humped it in the hollow between his right arm and his side. Resting the butt of the rifle on the fur, he fired again, and a bird fell. He clutched it greedily and found that he had shot most of the meat out of it. The large-caliber bullet had left little else than a mess of mangled feathers. Still the ptarmigan did not fly, and he decided that it was heads or nothing. He fired only at heads. He reloaded and reloaded the magazine.

He missed; he hit; and the stupid ptarmigan, that were loath to fly, fell upon him in a rain of food–lives disrupted that his life might feed and live. There had been nine of them, and in the end he clipped the head of the ninth, and lay and laughed and wept he knew not why.

The first he ate raw. Then he rested and slept, while his life assimilated the life of it. In the darkness he awoke, hungry, with strength to build a fire. And until early dawn he cooked and ate, crunching the bones to powder between his long-idle teeth. He slept, awoke in the darkness of another night, and slept again to another sun.

He noted with surprise that the fire crackled with fresh fuel and that a blackened coffee-pot steamed on the edge of the coals. Beside the fire, within arm's length, sat Shorty, smoking a brown-paper cigarette and intently watching him. Smoke's lips moved, but a throat paralysis seemed to come upon him, while his chest was suffused with the menace of tears. He reached out his hand for the cigarette and drew the smoke deep into his lungs again and again.

"I have not smoked for a long time," he said at last, in a low calm voice. "For a very long time."

"Nor eaten, from your looks," Shorty added gruffly.

Smoke nodded and waved his hand at the ptarmigan feathers that lay all about.

"Not until recently," he returned. "Do you know, I'd like a cup of coffee. It will taste strange. Also flapjacks and a strip of bacon."

"And beans?" Shorty tempted.

"They would taste heavenly. I find I am quite hungry again."

While the one cooked and the other ate, they told briefly what had happened to them in the days since their separation.

"The Klondike was breakin' up," Shorty concluded his recital, "an' we just had to wait for open water. Two polin' boats, six other men–you know 'em all, an' crackerjacks–an' all kinds of outfit. An' we've sure been a-comin'–polin', linin' up, and portagin'. But the falls'll stick 'em a solid week. That's where I left 'em a-cuttin' a trail over the tops of the bluffs for the boats. I just had a sure natural hunch to keep a-comin'. So I fills a pack with grub an' starts. I knew I'd find you a-driftin' an' all in."

Smoke nodded, and put forth his hand in a silent grip. "Well, let's get started," he said.

"Started hell!" Shorty exploded. "We stay right here an' rest you up an' feed you up for a couple of days."

Smoke shook his head.

"If you could just see yourself," Shorty protested.

And what he saw was not nice. Smoke's face, wherever the skin showed, was black and purple and scabbed from repeated frost-bite. The cheeks were fallen in, so that, despite the covering of beard, the upper rows of teeth ridged the shrunken flesh. Across the forehead and about the deep-sunk eyes, the skin was stretched drum-tight, while the scraggly beard, that should have been golden, was singed by fire and filthy with camp-smoke.

"Better pack up," Smoke said. "I'm going on."

"But you're feeble as a kid baby. You can't hike. What's the rush?"

"Shorty, I am going after the biggest thing in the Klondike, and I can't wait. That's all. Start packing. It's the biggest thing in the world. It's bigger than lakes of gold and mountains of gold, bigger than adventure, and meat-eating, and bear-killing."

Shorty sat with bulging eyes. "In the name of the Lord, what is it?" he queried huskily. "Or are you just simple loco?"

"No, I'm all right. Perhaps a fellow has to stop eating in order to see things. At any rate, I have seen things I never dreamed were in the world. I know what a woman is,–now.

Shorty's mouth opened, and about the lips and in the light of the eyes was the whimsical advertisement of the sneer forthcoming.

"Don't, please," Smoke said gently. "You don't know. I do."

Shorty gulped and changed his thought. "Huh! I don't need no hunch to guess HER name. The rest of 'em has gone up to the drainin' of Surprise Lake, but Joy Gastell allowed she wouldn't go. She's stickin' around Dawson, waitin' to see if I come back with you. An' she sure swears, if I don't, she'll sell her holdin's an' hire a army of gun-fighters, an' go into the Caribou Country an' knock the everlastin' stuffin' outa old Snass an' his whole gang. An' if you'll hold your horses a couple of shakes, I reckon I'll get packed up an' ready to hike along with you."

Yah! Yah! Yah!

He was a whiskey-guzzling Scotchman, and he downed his whiskey neat, beginning with his first tot punctually at six in the morning, and thereafter repeating it at regular intervals throughout the day till bedtime, which was usually midnight. He slept but five hours out of the twenty-four, and for the remaining nineteen hours he was quietly and decently drunk. During the eight weeks I spent with him on Oolong Atoll, I never saw him draw a sober breath. In fact, his sleep was so short that he never had time to sober up. It was the most beautiful and orderly perennial drunk I have ever observed.

McAllister was his name. He was an old man, and very shaky on his pins. His hand trembled as with a palsy, especially noticeable when he poured his whiskey, though I never knew him to spill a drop. He had been twenty-eight years in Melanesia, ranging from German New Guinea to the German Solomons, and so thoroughly had he become identified with that portion of the world, that he habitually spoke in that bastard lingo called "bech-de-mer." Thus, in conversation with me, SUN HE COME UP meant sunrise; KAI-KAI HE STOP meant that dinner was served; and BELLY BELONG ME WALK ABOUT meant that he was sick at his stomach. He was a small man, and a withered one, burned inside and outside by ardent spirits and ardent sun. He was a cinder, a bit of a clinker of a man, a little animated clinker, not yet quite cold, that moved stiffly and by starts and jerks like an automaton. A gust of wind would have blown him away. He weighed ninety pounds.

But the immense thing about him was the power with which he ruled. Oolong Atoll was one hundred and forty miles in circumference. One steered by compass course in its

lagoon. It was populated by five thousand Polynesians, all strapping men and women, many of them standing six feet in height and weighing a couple of hundred pounds. Oolong was two hundred and fifty miles from the nearest land. Twice a year a little schooner called to collect copra. The one white man on Oolong was McAllister, petty trader and unintermittent guzzler; and he ruled Oolong and its six thousand savages with an iron hand. He said come, and they came, go, and they went. They never questioned his will nor judgment. He was cantankerous as only an aged Scotchman can be, and interfered continually in their personal affairs. When Nugu, the king's daughter, wanted to marry Haunau from the other end of the atoll, her father said yes; but McAllister said no, and the marriage never came off. When the king wanted to buy a certain islet in the lagoon from the chief priest, McAllister said no. The king was in debt to the Company to the tune of 180,000 cocoanuts, and until that was paid he was not to spend a single cocoanut on anything else.

And yet the king and his people did not love McAllister. In truth, they hated him horribly, and, to my knowledge, the whole population, with the priests at the head, tried vainly for three months to pray him to death. The devil-devils they sent after him were awe-inspiring, but since McAllister did not believe in devil-devils, they were without power over him. With drunken Scotchmen all signs fail. They gathered up scraps of food which had touched his lips, an empty whiskey bottle, a cocoanut from which he had drunk, and even his spittle, and performed all kinds of deviltries over them. But McAllister lived on. His health was superb. He never caught fever; nor coughs nor colds; dysentery passed him by; and the malignant ulcers and vile skin diseases that attack blacks and whites alike in that climate never fastened upon him. He must have been so saturated with alcohol as to defy the lodgment of germs. I used to imagine them falling to the ground in showers of microscopic cinders as fast as they entered his whiskey-sodden aura. No one loved him, not even germs, while he loved only whiskey, and still he lived.

I was puzzled. I could not understand six thousand natives putting up with that withered shrimp of a tyrant. It was a miracle that he had not died suddenly long since. Unlike the cowardly Melanesians, the people were high-stomached and warlike. In the big graveyard, at head and feet of the graves, were relics of past sanguinary history–blubber-spades, rusty old bayonets and cutlasses, copper bolts, rudder-irons, harpoons, bomb guns, bricks that could have come from nowhere but a whaler's trying-out furnace, and old brass pieces of the sixteenth century that verified the traditions of the early Spanish navigators. Ship after ship had come to grief on Oolong. Not thirty years before, the whaler BLENNERDALE, running into the lagoon for repair, had been cut off with all hands. In similar fashion had the crew of the GASKET, a sandalwood trader, perished. There was a big French bark, the TOULON, becalmed off the atoll, which the islanders boarded after a sharp tussle and wrecked in the Lipau Passage, the captain and a handful of sailors escaping in the longboat. Then there were the Spanish pieces, which told of the loss of one of the early explorers. All this, of the vessels named, is a matter of history, and is to be found in the SOUTH

PACIFIC SAILING DIRECTORY. But that there was other history, unwritten, I was yet to learn. In the meantime I puzzled why six thousand primitive savages let one degenerate Scotch despot live.

One hot afternoon McAllister and I sat on the veranda looking out over the lagoon, with all its wonder of jeweled colors. At our backs, across the hundred yards of palm-studded sand, the outer surf roared on the reef. It was dreadfully warm. We were in four degree south latitude and the sun was directly overhead, having crossed the Line a few days before on its journey south. There was no wind–not even a catspaw. The season of the southeast trade was drawing to an early close, and the northwest monsoon had not yet begun to blow.

"They can't dance worth a damn," said McAllister.

I had happened to mention that the Polynesian dances were superior to the Papuan, and this McAllister had denied, for no other reason than his cantankerousness. But it was too not to argue, and I said nothing. Besides, I had never seen the Oolong people dance.

"I'll prove it to you," he announced, beckoning to the black New Hanover boy, a labor recruit, who served as cook and general house servant. "Hey, you, boy, you tell 'm one fella king come along me."

The boy departed, and back came the prime minister, perturbed, ill at ease, and garrulous with apologetic explanation. In short, the king slept, and was not to be disturbed.

"King he plenty strong fella sleep," was his final sentence.

McAllister was in such a rage that the prime minister incontinently fled, to return with the king himself. They were a magnificent pair, the king especially, who must have been all of six feet three inches in height. His features had the eagle-like quality that is so frequently found in those of the North American Indian. He had been molded and born to rule. His eyes flashed as he listened, but right meekly he obeyed McAllister's command to fetch a couple of hundred of the best dancers, male and female, in the village. And dance they did, for two mortal hours, under that broiling sun. They did not love him for it, and little he cared, in the end dismissing them with abuse and sneers.

The abject servility of those magnificent savages was terrifying. How could it be? What was the secret of his rule? More and more I puzzled as the days went by, and though I observed perpetual examples of his undisputed sovereignty, never a clew was there as to how it was.

One day I happened to speak of my disappointment in failing to trade for a beautiful pair of orange cowries. The pair was worth five pounds in Sydney if it was worth a cent. I had offered two hundred sticks of tobacco to the owner, who had held out for three hundred. When I casually mentioned the situation, McAllister immediately sent for the man, took the shells from him, and turned them over to me. Fifty sticks were all he permitted me to pay for them. The man accepted the tobacco and seemed overjoyed at getting off so easily. As for me, I resolved to keep a bridle on my tongue

in the future. And still I mulled over the secret of McAllister's power. I even went to the extent of asking him directly, but all he did was to cock one eye, look wise, and take another drink.

One night I was out fishing in the lagoon with Oti, the man who had been mulcted of the cowries. Privily, I had made up to him an additional hundred and fifty sticks, and he had come to regard me with a respect that was almost veneration, which was curious, seeing that he was an old man, twice my age at least.

"What name you fella kanaka all the same pickaninny?" I began on him. "This fella trader he one fella. You fella kanaka plenty fella too much. You fella kanaka just like 'm dog–plenty fright along that fella trader. He no eat you, fella. He no get 'm teeth along him. What name you too much fright?"

"S'pose plenty fella kanaka kill m?" he asked.

"He die," I retorted. "You fella kanaka kill 'm plenty fella white man long time before. What name you fright this fella white man?"

"Yes, we kill 'm plenty," was his answer. "My word! Any amount! Long time before. One time, me young fella too much, one big fella ship he stop outside. Wind he no blow. Plenty fella kanaka we get 'm canoe, plenty fella canoe, we go catch 'm that fella ship. My word–we catch 'm big fella fight. Two, three white men shoot like hell. We no fright. We come alongside, we go up side, plenty fella, maybe I think fifty-ten (five hundred). One fella white Mary (woman) belong that fella ship. Never before I see 'm white Mary. Bime by plenty white man finish. One fella skipper he no die. Five fella, six fella white man no die. Skipper he sing out. Some fella white man he fight. Some fella white man he lower away boat. After that, all together over the side they go. Skipper he sling white Mary down. After that they washee (row) strong fella plenty too much. Father belong me, that time he strong fella. He throw 'm one fella spear. That fella spear he go in one side that white Mary. He no stop. My word, he go out other side that fella Mary. She finish. Me no fright. Plenty kanaka too much no fright."

Old Oti's pride had been touched, for he suddenly stripped down his lava-lava and showed me the unmistakable scar of a bullet. Before I could speak, his line ran out suddenly. He checked it and attempted to haul in, but found that the fish had run around a coral branch. Casting a look of reproach at me for having beguiled him from his watchfulness, he went over the side, feet first, turning over after he got under and following his line down to bottom. The water was ten fathoms. I leaned over and watched the play of his feet, growing dim and dimmer, as they stirred the wan phosphorescence into ghostly fires. Ten fathoms–sixty feet–it was nothing to him, an old man, compared with the value of a hook and line. After what seemed five minutes, though it could not have been more than a minute, I saw him flaming whitely upward. He broke surface and dropped a ten pound rock cod into the canoe, the line and hook intact, the latter still fast in the fish's mouth.

"It may be," I said remorselessly. "You no fright long ago. You plenty fright now along that fella trader."

"Yes, plenty fright," he confessed, with an air of dismissing the subject. For half an hour we pulled up our lines and flung them out in silence. Then small fish-sharks began to bite, and after losing a hook apiece, we hauled in and waited for the sharks to go their way.

"I speak you true," Oti broke into speech, "then you savve we fright now."

I lighted up my pipe and waited, and the story that Oti told me in atrocious bech-de-mer I here turn into proper English. Otherwise, in spirit and order of narrative, the tale is as it fell from Oti's lips.

"It was after that that we were very proud. We had fought many times with the strange white men who live upon the sea, and always we had beaten them. A few of us were killed, but what was that compared with the stores of wealth of a thousand thousand kinds that we found on the ships? And then one day, maybe twenty years ago, or twenty-five, there came a schooner right through the passage and into the lagoon. It was a large schooner with three masts. She had five white men and maybe forty boat's crew, black fellows from New Guinea and New Britain; and she had come to fish bêche-de-mer. She lay at anchor across the lagoon from here, at Pauloo, and her boats scattered out everywhere, making camps on the beaches where they cured the bêche-de-mer. This made them weak by dividing them, for those who fished here and those on the schooner at Pauloo were fifty miles apart, and there were others farther away still.

"Our king and headmen held council, and I was one in the canoe that paddled all afternoon and all night across the lagoon, bringing word to the people of Pauloo that in the morning we would attack the fishing camps at the one time and that it was for them to take the schooner. We who brought the word were tired with the paddling, but we took part in the attack. On the schooner were two white men, the skipper and the second mate, with half a dozen black boys. The skipper with three boys we caught on shore and killed, but first eight of us the skipper killed with his two revolvers. We fought close together, you see, at hand grapples.

"The noise of our fighting told the mate what was happening, and he put food and water and a sail in the small dingy, which was so small that it was no more than twelve feet long. We came down upon the schooner, a thousand men, covering the lagoon with our canoes. Also, we were blowing conch shells, singing war songs, and striking the sides of the canoes with our paddles. What chance had one white man and three black boys against us? No chance at all, and the mate knew it.

"White men are hell. I have watched them much, and I am an old man now, and I understand at last why the white men have taken to themselves all the islands in the sea. It is because they are hell. Here are you in the canoe with me. You are hardly more than a boy. You are not wise, for each day I tell you many things you do not know. When I was a little pickaninny, I knew more about fish and the ways of fish than you know now. I am an old man, but I swim down to the bottom of the lagoon, and you cannot follow me. What are you good for, anyway? I do not know, except to fight. I have never seen you fight, yet I know that you are like your brothers and that

you will fight like hell. Also, you are a fool, like your brothers. You do not know when you are beaten. You will fight until you die, and then it will be too late to know that you are beaten.

"Now behold what this mate did. As we came down upon him, covering the sea and blowing our conches, he put off from the schooner in the small boat, along with the three black boys, and rowed for the passage. There again he was a fool, for no wise man would put out to sea in so small a boat. The sides of it were not four inches above the water. Twenty canoes went after him, filled with two hundred young men. We paddled five fathoms while his black boys were rowing one fathom. He had no chance, but he was a fool. He stood up in the boat with a rifle, and he shot many times. He was not a good shot, but as we drew close many of us were wounded and killed. But still he had no chance.

"I remember that all the time he was smoking a cigar. When we were forty feet away and coming fast, he dropped the rifle, lighted a stick of dynamite with the cigar, and threw it at us. He lighted another and another, and threw them at us very rapidly, many of them. I know now that he must have split the ends of the fuses and stuck in match heads, because they lighted so quickly. Also, the fuses were very short. Sometimes the dynamite sticks went off in the air, but most of them went off in the canoes. And each time they went off in a canoe, that canoe was finished. Of the twenty canoes, the half were smashed to pieces. The canoe I was in was so smashed, and likewise the two men who sat next to me. The dynamite fell between them. The other canoes turned and ran away. Then that mate yelled, Yah! Yah! Yah!' at us. Also he went at us again with his rifle, so that many were killed through the back as they fled away. And all the time the black boys in the boat went on rowing. You see, I told you true, that mate was hell.

"Nor was that all. Before he left the schooner, he set her on fire, and fixed up all the powder and dynamite so that it would go off at one time. There were hundreds of us on board, trying to put out the fire, heaving up water from overside, when the schooner blew up. So that all we had fought for was lost to us, besides many more of us being killed. Sometimes, even now, in my old age, I have bad dreams in which I hear that mate yell, Yah! Yah! Yah!' In a voice of thunder he yells, Yah! Yah! Yah!' But all those in the fishing camps were killed.

"The mate went out of the passage in his little boat, and that was the end of him we made sure, for how could so small a boat, with four men in it, live on the ocean? A month went by, and then, one morning, between two rain squalls, a schooner sailed in through our passage and dropped anchor before the village. The king and the headmen made big talk, and it was agreed that we would take the schooner in two or three days. In the meantime, as it was our custom always to appear friendly, we went off to her in canoes, bringing strings of cocoanuts, fowls, and pigs, to trade. But when we were alongside, many canoes of us, the men on board began to shoot us with rifles, and as we paddled away I saw the mate who had gone to sea in the little boat spring upon the rail and dance and yell, Yah! Yah! Yah!'

“That afternoon they landed from the schooner in three small boats filled with white men. They went right through the village, shooting every man they saw. Also they shot the fowls and pigs. We who were not killed got away in canoes and paddled out into the lagoon. Looking back, we could see all the houses on fire. Late in the afternoon we saw many canoes coming from Nihi, which is the village near the Nihi Passage in the northeast. They were all that were left, and like us their village had been burned by a second schooner that had come through Nihi Passage.

“We stood on in the darkness to the westward for Pauloo, but in the middle of the night we heard women wailing and then we ran into a big fleet of canoes. They were all that were left of Pauloo, which likewise was in ashes, for a third schooner had come in through the Pauloo Passage. You see, that mate, with his black boys, had not been drowned. He had made the Solomon Islands, and there told his brothers of what we had done in Oolong. And all his brothers had said they would come and punish us, and there they were in the three schooners, and our three villages were wiped out.

“And what was there for us to do? In the morning the two schooners from windward sailed down upon us in the middle of the lagoon. The trade wind was blowing fresh, and by scores of canoes they ran us down. And the rifles never ceased talking. We scattered like flying fish before the bonita, and there were so many of us that we escaped by thousands, this way and that, to the islands on the rim of the atoll.

“And thereafter the schooners hunted us up and down the lagoon. In the nighttime we slipped past them. But the next day, or in two days or three days, the schooners would be coming back, hunting us toward the other end of the lagoon. And so it went. We no longer counted nor remembered our dead. True, we were many and they were few. But what could we do? I was in one of the twenty canoes filled with men who were not afraid to die. We attacked the smallest schooner. They shot us down in heaps. They threw dynamite into the canoes, and when the dynamite gave out, they threw hot water down upon us. And the rifles never ceased talking. And those whose canoes were smashed were shot as they swam away. And the mate danced up and down upon the cabin top and yelled, “Yah! Yah! Yah!’

“Every house on every smallest island was burned. Not a pig nor a fowl was left alive. Our wells were defiled with the bodies of the slain, or else heaped high with coral rock. We were twenty-five thousand on Oolong before the three schooners came. Today we are five thousand. After the schooners left, we were but three thousand, as you shall see.

“At last the three schooners grew tired of chasing us back and forth. So they went, the three of them, to Nihi, in the northeast. And then they drove us steadily to the west. Their nine boats were in the water as well. They beat up every island as they moved along. They drove us, drove us, drove us day by day. And every night the three schooners and the nine boats made a chain of watchfulness that stretched across the lagoon from rim to rim, so that we could not escape back.

“They could not drive us forever that way, for the lagoon was only so large, and at last all of us that yet lived were driven upon the last sand bank to the west. Beyond lay

the open sea. There were ten thousand of us, and we covered the sand bank from the lagoon edge to the pounding surf on the other side. No one could lie down. There was no room. We stood hip to hip and shoulder to shoulder. Two days they kept us there, and the mate would climb up in the rigging to mock us and yell, Yah! Yah! Yah!' till we were well sorry that we had ever harmed him or his schooner a month before. We had no food, and we stood on our feet two days and nights. The little babies died, and the old and weak died, and the wounded died. And worst of all, we had no water to quench our thirst, and for two days the sun beat down on us, and there was no shade. Many men and women waded out into the ocean and were drowned, the surf casting their bodies back on the beach. And there came a pest of flies. Some men swam to the sides of the schooners, but they were shot to the last one. And we that lived were very sorry that in our pride we tried to take the schooner with the three masts that came to fish for bêche-de-mer.

"On the morning of the third day came the skippers of the three schooners and that mate in a small boat. They carried rifles, all of them, and revolvers, and they made talk. It was only that they were weary of killing us that they had stopped, they told us. And we told them that we were sorry, that never again would we harm a white man, and in token of our submission we poured sand upon our heads. And all the women and children set up a great wailing for water, so that for some time no man could make himself heard. Then we were told our punishment. We must fill the three schooners with copra and bêche-de-mer. And we agreed, for we wanted water, and our hearts were broken, and we knew that we were children at fighting when we fought with white men who fight like hell. And when all the talk was finished, the mate stood up and mocked us, and yelled, Yah! Yah! Yah!' After that we paddled away in our canoes and sought water.

"And for weeks we toiled at catching bêche-de-mer and curing it, in gathering the cocoanuts and turning them into copra. By day and night the smoke rose in clouds from all the beaches of all the islands of Oolong as we paid the penalty of our wrongdoing. For in those days of death it was burned clearly on all our brains that it was very wrong to harm a white man.

"By and by, the schooners full of copra and bêche-de-mer and our trees empty of cocoanuts, the three skippers and that mate called us all together for a big talk. And they said they were very glad that we had learned our lesson, and we said for the ten-thousandth time that we were sorry and that we would not do it again. Also, we poured sand upon our heads. Then the skippers said that it was all very well, but just to show us that they did not forget us, they would send a devil-devil that we would never forget and that we would always remember any time we might feel like harming a white man. After that the mate mocked us one more time and yelled, Yah! Yah! Yah!' Then six of our men, whom we thought long dead, were put ashore from one of the schooners, and the schooners hoisted their sails and ran out through the passage for the Solomons.

"The six men who were put ashore were the first to catch the devil-devil the skippers sent back after us."

"A great sickness came," I interrupted, for I recognized the trick. The schooner had had measles on board, and the six prisoners had been deliberately exposed to it.

"Yes, a great sickness," Oti went on. "It was a powerful devil-devil. The oldest man had never heard of the like. Those of our priests that yet lived we killed because they could not overcome the devil-devil. The sickness spread. I have said that there were ten thousand of us that stood hip to hip and shoulder to shoulder on the sandbank. When the sickness left us, there were three thousand yet alive. Also, having made all our cocoanuts into copra, there was a famine.

"That fella trader," Oti concluded, "he like 'm that much dirt. He like 'm clam he die KAI-KAI (meat) he stop, stink 'm any amount. He like 'm one fella dog, one sick fella dog plenty fleas stop along him. We no fright along that fella trader. We fright because he white man. We savve plenty too much no good kill white man. That one fella sick dog trader he plenty brother stop along him, white men like 'm you fight like hell. We no fright that damn trader. Some time he made kanaka plenty cross along him and kanaka want 'm kill m, kanaka he think devil-devil and kanaka he hear that fella mate sing out, Yah! Yah! Yah!' and kanaka no kill m."

Oti baited his hook with a piece of squid, which he tore with his teeth from the live and squirming monster, and hook and bait sank in white flames to the bottom.

"Shark walk about he finish," he said. "I think we catch 'm plenty fella fish."

His line jerked savagely. He pulled it in rapidly, hand under hand, and landed a big gasping rock cod in the bottom of the canoe.

"Sun he come up, I make 'm that dam fella trader one present big fella fish," said Oti.

Yellow Handkerchief

“I’m not wanting to dictate to you, lad,” Charley said; “but I’m very much against your making a last raid. You’ve gone safely through rough times with rough men, and it would be a shame to have something happen to you at the very end.”

“But how can I get out of making a last raid?” I demanded, with the cocksureness of youth. “There always has to be a last, you know, to anything.”

Charley crossed his legs, leaned back, and considered the problem. “Very true. But why not call the capture of Demetrios Contos the last? You’re back from it safe and sound and hearty, for all your good wetting, and-and-“ His voice broke and he could not speak for a moment. “And I could never forgive myself if anything happened to you now.”

I laughed at Charley’s fears while I gave in to the claims of his affection, and agreed to consider the last raid already performed. We had been together for two years, and now I was leaving the fish patrol in order to go back and finish my education. I had earned and saved money to put me through three years at the high school, and though the beginning of the term was several months away, I intended doing a lot of studying for the entrance examinations.

My belongings were packed snugly in a sea-chest, and I was all ready to buy my ticket and ride down on the train to Oakland, when Neil Partington arrived in Benicia. The Reindeer was needed immediately for work far down on the Lower Bay, and Neil said he intended to run straight for Oakland. As that was his home and as I was to live with his family while going to school, he saw no reason, he said, why I should not put my chest aboard and come along.

So the chest went aboard, and in the middle of the afternoon we hoisted the Reindeer’s big mainsail and cast off. It was tantalizing fall weather. The sea-breeze, which had blown steadily all summer, was gone, and in its place were capricious winds and murky skies which made the time of arriving anywhere extremely problematical. We started on the first of the ebb, and as we slipped down the Carquinez Straits, I looked my last for some time upon Benicia and the bight at Turner’s Shipyard, where we had besieged the Lancashire Queen, and had captured Big Alec, the King of the Greeks. And at the mouth of the Straits I looked with not a little interest upon the spot where a few days before I should have drowned but for the good that was in the nature of Demetrios Contos.

A great wall of fog advanced across San Pablo Bay to meet us, and in a few minutes the Reindeer was running blindly through the damp obscurity. Charley, who was steering, seemed to have an instinct for that kind of work. How he did it, he him-

self confessed that he did not know; but he had a way of calculating winds, currents, distance, time, drift, and sailing speed that was truly marvellous.

"It looks as though it were lifting," Neil Partington said, a couple of hours after we had entered the fog. "Where do you say we are, Charley?"

Charley looked at his watch, "Six o'clock, and three hours more of ebb," he remarked casually.

"But where do you say we are?" Neil insisted.

Charley pondered a moment, and then answered, "The tide has edged us over a bit out of our course, but if the fog lifts right now, as it is going to lift, you'll find we're not more than a thousand miles off McNear's Landing."

"You might be a little more definite by a few miles, anyway," Neil grumbled, showing by his tone that he disagreed.

"All right, then," Charley said, conclusively, "not less than a quarter of a mile, not more than a half."

The wind freshened with a couple of little puffs, and the fog thinned perceptibly.

"McNear's is right off there," Charley said, pointing directly into the fog on our weather beam.

The three of us were peering intently in that direction, when the Reindeer struck with a dull crash and came to a standstill. We ran forward, and found her bowsprit entangled in the tanned rigging of a short, chunky mast. She had collided, head on, with a Chinese junk lying at anchor.

At the moment we arrived forward, five Chinese, like so many bees, came swarming out of the little 'tween-decks cabin, the sleep still in their eyes.

Leading them came a big, muscular man, conspicuous for his pock-marked face and the yellow silk handkerchief swathed about his head. It was Yellow Handkerchief, the Chinaman whom we had arrested for illegal shrimp-fishing the year before, and who, at that time, had nearly sunk the Reindeer, as he had nearly sunk it now by violating the rules of navigation.

"What d'ye mean, you yellow-faced heathen, lying here in a fairway without a horn a-going?" Charley cried hotly.

"Mean?" Neil calmly answered. "Just take a look-that's what he means."

Our eyes followed the direction indicated by Neil's finger, and we saw the open amidships of the junk, half filled, as we found on closer examination, with fresh-caught shrimps. Mingled with the shrimps were myriads of small fish, from a quarter of an inch upward in size.

Yellow Handkerchief had lifted the trap-net at high-water slack, and, taking advantage of the concealment offered by the fog, had boldly been lying by, waiting to lift the net again at low-water slack.

"Well," Neil hummed and hawed, "in all my varied and extensive experience as a fish patrolman, I must say this is the easiest capture I ever made. What'll we do with them, Charley?"

"Tow the junk into San Rafael, of course," came the answer. Charley turned to me. "You stand by the junk, lad, and I'll pass you a towing line. If the wind doesn't fail us, we'll make the creek before the tide gets too low, sleep at San Rafael, and arrive in Oakland to-morrow by midday."

So saying, Charley and Neil returned to the Reindeer and got under way, the junk towing astern. I went aft and took charge of the prize, steering by means of an antiquated tiller and a rudder with large, diamond-shaped holes, through which the water rushed back and forth.

By now the last of the fog had vanished, and Charley's estimate of our position was confirmed by the sight of McNear's Landing a short half-mile away. Following along the west shore, we rounded Point Pedro in plain view of the Chinese shrimp villages, and a great to-do was raised when they saw one of their junks towing behind the familiar fish patrol sloop.

The wind, coming off the land, was rather puffy and uncertain, and it would have been more to our advantage had it been stronger. San Rafael Creek, up which we had to go to reach the town and turn over our prisoners to the authorities, ran through wide-stretching marshes, and was difficult to navigate on a falling tide, while at low tide it was impossible to navigate at all. So, with the tide already half-ebbed, it was necessary for us to make time. This the heavy junk prevented, lumbering along behind and holding the Reindeer back by just so much dead weight.

"Tell those coolies to get up that sail," Charley finally called to me. "We don't want to hang up on the mud flats for the rest of the night."

I repeated the order to Yellow Handkerchief, who mumbled it huskily to his men. He was suffering from a bad cold, which doubled him up in convulsive coughing spells and made his eyes heavy and bloodshot. This made him more evil-looking than ever, and when he glared viciously at me I remembered with a shiver the close shave I had had with him at the time of his previous arrest.

His crew sullenly tailed on to the halyards, and the strange, outlandish sail, lateen in rig and dyed a warm brown, rose in the air. We were sailing on the wind, and when Yellow Handkerchief flattened down the sheet the junk forged ahead and the tow-line went slack. Fast as the Reindeer could sail, the junk outsailed her; and to avoid running her down I hauled a little closer on the wind. But the junk likewise outpointed, and in a couple of minutes I was abreast of the Reindeer and to windward. The tow-line had now tautened, at right angles to the two boats, and the predicament was laughable.

"Cast off!" I shouted.

Charley hesitated.

"It's all right," I added. "Nothing can happen. We'll make the creek on this tack, and you'll be right behind me all the way up to San Rafael."

At this Charley cast off, and Yellow Handkerchief sent one of his men forward to haul in the line. In the gathering darkness I could just make out the mouth of San Rafael Creek, and by the time we entered it I could barely see its banks. The Reindeer was fully five minutes astern, and we continued to leave her astern as we beat up the

narrow, winding channel. With Charley behind us, it seemed I had little to fear from my five prisoners; but the darkness prevented my keeping a sharp eye on them, so I transferred my revolver from my trousers pocket to the side pocket of my coat, where I could more quickly put my hand on it.

Yellow Handkerchief was the one I feared, and that he knew it and made use of it, subsequent events will show. He was sitting a few feet away from me, on what then happened to be the weather side of the junk. I could scarcely see the outlines of his form, but I soon became convinced that he was slowly, very slowly, edging closer to me. I watched him carefully. Steering with my left hand, I slipped my right into my pocket and got hold of the revolver.

I saw him shift along for a couple of inches, and I was just about to order him back-the words were trembling on the tip of my tongue-when I was struck with great force by a heavy figure that had leaped through the air upon me from the lee side. It was one of the crew. He pinioned my right arm so that I could not withdraw my hand from my pocket, and at the same time clapped his other hand over my mouth. Of course, I could have struggled away from him and freed my hand or gotten my mouth clear so that I might cry an alarm, but in a trice Yellow Handkerchief was on top of me.

I struggled around to no purpose in the bottom of the junk, while my legs and arms were tied and my mouth securely bound in what I afterward found to be a cotton shirt. Then I was left lying in the bottom. Yellow Handkerchief took the tiller, issuing his orders in whispers; and from our position at the time, and from the alteration of the sail, which I could dimly make out above me as a blot against the stars, I knew the junk was being headed into the mouth of a small slough which emptied at that point into San Rafael Creek.

In a couple of minutes we ran softly alongside the bank, and the sail was silently lowered. The Chinese kept very quiet. Yellow Handkerchief sat down in the bottom alongside of me, and I could feel him straining to repress his raspy, hacking cough. Possibly seven or eight minutes later I heard Charley's voice as the Reindeer went past the mouth of the slough.

"I can't tell you how relieved I am," I could plainly hear him saying to Neil, "that the lad has finished with the fish patrol without accident."

Here Neil said something which I could not catch, and then Charley's voice went on:

"The youngster takes naturally to the water, and if, when he finishes high school, he takes a course in navigation and goes deep sea, I see no reason why he shouldn't rise to be master of the finest and biggest ship afloat."

It was all very flattering to me, but lying there, bound and gagged by my own prisoners, with the voices growing faint and fainter as the Reindeer slipped on through the darkness toward San Rafael, I must say I was not in quite the proper situation to enjoy my smiling future. With the Reindeer went my last hope. What was to happen

next I could not imagine, for the Chinese were a different race from mine, and from what I knew I was confident that fair play was no part of their make-up.

After waiting a few minutes longer, the crew hoisted the lateen sail, and Yellow Handkerchief steered down toward the mouth of San Rafael Creek. The tide was getting lower, and he had difficulty in escaping the mud-banks. I was hoping he would run aground, but he succeeded in making the Bay without accident.

As we passed out of the creek a noisy discussion arose, which I knew related to me. Yellow Handkerchief was vehement, but the other four as vehemently opposed him. It was very evident that he advocated doing away with me and that they were afraid of the consequences. I was familiar enough with the Chinese character to know that fear alone restrained them. But what plan they offered in place of Yellow Handkerchief's murderous one, I could not make out.

My feelings, as my fate hung in the balance, may be guessed. The discussion developed into a quarrel, in the midst of which Yellow Handkerchief unshipped the heavy tiller and sprang toward me. But his four companions threw themselves between, and a clumsy struggle took place for possession of the tiller. In the end Yellow Handkerchief was overcome, and sullenly returned to the steering, while they soundly berated him for his rashness.

Not long after, the sail was run down and the junk slowly urged forward by means of the sweeps. I felt it ground gently on the soft mud. Three of the Chinese-they all wore long sea-boots-got over the side, and the other two passed me across the rail. With Yellow Handkerchief at my legs and his two companions at my shoulders, they began to flounder along through the mud. After some time their feet struck firmer footing, and I knew they were carrying me up some beach. The location of this beach was not doubtful in my mind. It could be none other than one of the Marin Islands, a group of rocky islets which lay off the Marin County shore.

When they reached the firm sand that marked high tide, I was dropped, and none too gently. Yellow Handkerchief kicked me spitefully in the ribs, and then the trio floundered back through the mud to the junk. A moment later I heard the sail go up and slat in the wind as they drew in the sheet. Then silence fell, and I was left to my own devices for getting free.

I remembered having seen tricksters writhe and squirm out of ropes with which they were bound, but though I writhed and squirmed like a good fellow, the knots remained as hard as ever, and there was no appreciable slack. In the course of my squirming, however, I rolled over upon a heap of clam-shells-the remains, evidently, of some yachting party's clam-bake. This gave me an idea. My hands were tied behind my back; and, clutching a shell in them, I rolled over and over, up the beach, till I came to the rocks I knew to be there.

Rolling around and searching, I finally discovered a narrow crevice, into which I shoved the shell. The edge of it was sharp, and across the sharp edge I proceeded to saw the rope that bound my wrists. The edge of the shell was also brittle, and I broke it by bearing too heavily upon it. Then I rolled back to the heap and returned with as

many shells as I could carry in both hands. I broke many shells, cut my hands a number of times, and got cramps in my legs from my strained position and my exertions.

While I was suffering from the cramps, and resting, I heard a familiar halloo drift across the water. It was Charley, searching for me. The gag in my mouth prevented me from replying, and I could only lie there, helplessly fuming, while he rowed past the island and his voice slowly lost itself in the distance.

I returned to the sawing process, and at the end of half an hour succeeded in severing the rope. The rest was easy. My hands once free, it was a matter of minutes to loosen my legs and to take the gag out of my mouth. I ran around the island to make sure it was an island and not by any chance a portion of the mainland. An island it certainly was, one of the Marin group, fringed with a sandy beach and surrounded by a sea of mud. Nothing remained but to wait till daylight and to keep warm; for it was a cold, raw night for California, with just enough wind to pierce the skin and cause one to shiver.

To keep up the circulation, I ran around the island a dozen times or so, and clambered across its rocky backbone as many times more-all of which was of greater service to me, as I afterward discovered, than merely to warm me up. In the midst of this exercise I wondered if I had lost anything out of my pockets while rolling over and over in the sand. A search showed the absence of my revolver and pocket-knife. The first Yellow Handkerchief had taken; but the knife had been lost in the sand.

I was hunting for it when the sound of rowlocks came to my ears. At first, of course, I thought of Charley; but on second thought I knew Charley would be calling out as he rowed along. A sudden premonition of danger seized me. The Marin Islands are lonely places; chance visitors in the dead of night are hardly to be expected. What if it were Yellow Handkerchief? The sound made by the rowlocks grew more distinct. I crouched in the sand and listened intently. The boat, which I judged a small skiff from the quick stroke of the oars, was landing in the mud about fifty yards up the beach. I heard a raspy, hacking cough, and my heart stood still. It was Yellow Handkerchief. Not to be robbed of his revenge by his more cautious companions, he had stolen away from the village and come back alone.

I did some swift thinking. I was unarmed and helpless on a tiny islet, and a yellow barbarian, whom I had reason to fear, was coming after me. Any place was safer than the island, and I turned instinctively to the water, or rather to the mud. As he began to flounder ashore through the mud, I started to flounder out into it, going over the same course which the Chinese had taken in landing me and in returning to the junk.

Yellow Handkerchief, believing me to be lying tightly bound, exercised no care, but came ashore noisily. This helped me, for, under the shield of his noise and making no more myself than necessary, I managed to cover fifty feet by the time he had made the beach. Here I lay down in the mud. It was cold and clammy, and made me shiver, but I did not care to stand up and run the risk of being discovered by his sharp eyes.

He walked down the beach straight to where he had left me lying, and I had a fleeting feeling of regret at not being able to see his surprise when he did not find me. But it was a very fleeting regret, for my teeth were chattering with the cold.

What his movements were after that I had largely to deduce from the facts of the situation, for I could scarcely see him in the dim starlight. But I was sure that the first thing he did was to make the circuit of the beach to learn if landings had been made by other boats. This he would have known at once by the tracks through the mud.

Convinced that no boat had removed me from the island, he next started to find out what had become of me. Beginning at the pile of clamshells, he lighted matches to trace my tracks in the sand. At such times I could see his villanous face plainly, and, when the sulphur from the matches irritated his lungs, between the raspy cough that followed and the clammy mud in which I was lying, I confess I shivered harder than ever.

The multiplicity of my footprints puzzled him. Then the idea that I might be out in the mud must have struck him, for he waded out a few yards in my direction, and, stooping, with his eyes searched the dim surface long and carefully. He could not have been more than fifteen feet from me, and had he lighted a match he would surely have discovered me.

He returned to the beach and clambered about, over the rocky backbone, again hunting for me with lighted matches, The closeness of the shave impelled me to further flight. Not daring to wade upright, on account of the noise made by floundering and by the suck of the mud, I remained lying down in the mud and propelled myself over its surface by means of my hands. Still keeping the trail made by the Chinese in going from and to the junk, I held on until I reached the water. Into this I waded to a depth of three feet, and then I turned off to the side on a line parallel with the beach.

The thought came to me of going toward Yellow Handkerchief's skiff and escaping in it, but at that very moment he returned to the beach, and, as though fearing the very thing I had in mind, he slushed out through the mud to assure himself that the skiff was safe. This turned me in the opposite direction. Half swimming, half wading, with my head just out of water and avoiding splashing, I succeeded in putting about a hundred feet between myself and the spot where the Chinese had begun to wade ashore from the junk. I drew myself out on the mud and remained lying flat.

Again Yellow Handkerchief returned to the beach and made a search of the island, and again he returned to the heap of clam-shells. I knew what was running in his mind as well as he did himself. No one could leave or land without making tracks in the mud. The only tracks to be seen were those leading from his skiff and from where the junk had been. I was not on the island. I must have left it by one or the other of those two tracks. He had just been over the one to his skiff, and was certain I had not left that way. Therefore I could have left the island only by going over the tracks of the junk landing. This he proceeded to verify by wading out over them himself, lighting matches as he came along.

When he arrived at the point where I had first lain, I knew, by the matches he burned and the time he took, that he had discovered the marks left by my body. These he followed straight to the water and into it, but in three feet of water he could no longer see them. On the other hand, as the tide was still falling, he could easily make out the impression made by the junk's bow, and could have likewise made out the impression of any other boat if it had landed at that particular spot. But there was no such mark; and I knew that he was absolutely convinced that I was hiding somewhere in the mud.

But to hunt on a dark night for a boy in a sea of mud would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack, and he did not attempt it. Instead he went back to the beach and prowled around for some time. I was hoping he would give me up and go, for by this time I was suffering severely from the cold. At last he waded out to his skiff and rowed away. What if this departure of Yellow Handkerchief's were a sham? What if he had done it merely to entice me ashore?

The more I thought of it the more certain I became that he had made a little too much noise with his oars as he rowed away. So I remained, lying in the mud and shivering. I shivered till the muscles of the small of my back ached and pained me as badly as the cold, and I had need of all my self-control to force myself to remain in my miserable situation.

It was well that I did, however, for, possibly an hour later, I thought I could make out something moving on the beach. I watched intently, but my ears were rewarded first, by a raspy cough I knew only too well. Yellow Handkerchief had sneaked back, landed on the other side of the island, and crept around to surprise me if I had returned.

After that, though hours passed without sign of him, I was afraid to return to the island at all. On the other hand, I was almost equally afraid that I should die of the exposure I was undergoing. I had never dreamed one could suffer so. I grew so cold and numb, finally, that I ceased to shiver. But my muscles and bones began to ache in a way that was agony. The tide had long since begun to rise, and, foot by foot, it drove me in toward the beach. High water came at three o'clock, and at three o'clock I drew myself up on the beach, more dead than alive, and too helpless to have offered any resistance had Yellow Handkerchief swooped down upon me.

But no Yellow Handkerchief appeared. He had given me up and gone back to Point Pedro. Nevertheless, I was in a deplorable, not to say dangerous, condition. I could not stand upon my feet, much less walk. My clammy, muddy garments clung to me like sheets of ice. I thought I should never get them off. So numb and lifeless were my fingers, and so weak was I, that it seemed to take an hour to get off my shoes. I had not the strength to break the porpoise-hide laces, and the knots defied me. I repeatedly beat my hands upon the rocks to get some sort of life into them. Sometimes I felt sure I was going to die.

But in the end,-after several centuries, it seemed to me,-I got off the last of my clothes. The water was now close at hand, and I crawled painfully into it and washed the mud from my naked body. Still, I could not get on my feet and walk and I was

afraid to lie still. Nothing remained but to crawl weakly, like a snail, and at the cost of constant pain, up and down the sand. I kept this up as long as possible, but as the east paled with the coming of dawn I began to succumb. The sky grew rosy-red, and the golden rim of the sun, showing above the horizon, found me lying helpless and motionless among the clam-shells.

As in a dream, I saw the familiar mainsail of the Reindeer as she slipped out of San Rafael Creek on a light puff of morning air. This dream was very much broken. There are intervals I can never recollect on looking back over it. Three things, however, I distinctly remember: the first sight of the Reindeer's mainsail; her lying at anchor a few hundred feet away and a small boat leaving her side; and the cabin stove roaring red-hot, myself swathed all over with blankets, except on the chest and shoulders, which Charley was pounding and mauling unmercifully, and my mouth and throat burning with the coffee which Neil Partington was pouring down a trifle too hot.

But burn or no burn, I tell you it felt good. By the time we arrived in Oakland I was as limber and strong as ever,-though Charlie and Neil Partington were afraid I was going to have pneumonia, and Mrs. Partington, for my first six months of school, kept an anxious eye upon me to discover the first symptoms of consumption.

Time flies. It seems but yesterday that I was a lad of sixteen on the fish patrol. Yet I know that I arrived this very morning from China, with a quick passage to my credit, and master of the barkentine Harvester. And I know that to-morrow morning I shall run over to Oakland to see Neil Partington and his wife and family, and later on up to Benicia to see Charley Le Grant and talk over old times. No; I shall not go to Benicia, now that I think about it. I expect to be a highly interested party to a wedding, shortly to take place. Her name is Alice Partington, and, since Charley has promised to be best man, he will have to come down to Oakland instead.

The Short Stories of Jack London: Part 2

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