

The Short Stories of Jack London: Part 1

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An Adventure in the Upper Sea

I AM a retired captain of the upper sea. That is to say, when I was a younger man (which is not so long ago) I was an aeronaut and navigated that aerial ocean which is all around about us and above us. Naturally it is a hazardous profession, and naturally I have had many thrilling experiences, the most thrilling, or at least the most nerve-racking, being the one I am about to relate.

It happened before I went in for hydrogen gas balloons, all of varnished silk, doubled and lined, and all that, and fit for voyages of days instead of mere hours. The Little Nassau (named after the Great Nassau of many years back) was the balloon I was making ascents in at the time. It was a fair-sized, hot-air affair, of single thickness, good for an hour's flight or so and capable of attaining an altitude of a mile or more. It answered my purpose, for my act at the time was making half-mile parachute jumps at recreation parks and country fairs. I was in Oakland, a California town, filling a summer's engagement with a street railway company. The company owned a large park outside the city, and of course it was to its interest to provide attractions which would send the townspeople over its line when they went out to get a whiff of country air. My contract called for two ascensions weekly, and my act was an especially taking feature, for it was on my days that the largest crowds were drawn.

Before you can understand what happened, I must first explain a bit about the nature of the hot air balloon which is used for parachute jumping. If you have ever witnessed such a jump, you will remember that directly the parachute was cut loose the balloon turned upside down, emptied itself of its smoke and heated air, flattened out and fell straight down, beating the parachute to the ground. Thus there is no chasing a big deserted bag for miles and miles across the country, and much time, as well as trouble, is thereby saved. This maneuver is accomplished by attaching a weight, at the end of a long rope, to the top of the balloon. The aeronaut, with his parachute and trapeze, hangs to the bottom of the balloon, and, weighing more, keeps it right side down. But when he lets go, the weight attached to the top immediately drags the top down, and the bottom, which is the open mouth, goes up, the heated air pouring out. The weight used for this purpose on the Little Nassau was a bag of sand.

On the particular day I have in mind there was an unusually large crowd in attendance, and the police had their hands full keeping the people back. There was much pushing and shoving, and the ropes were bulging with the pressure of men, women and children. As I came down from the dressing room I noticed two girls outside the ropes, of about fourteen and sixteen, and inside the rope a youngster of eight or nine. They were holding him by the hands, and he was struggling, excitedly and half in laughter,

to get away from them. I thought nothing of it at the time — just a bit of childish play, no more; and it was only in the light of after events that the scene was impressed vividly upon me.

“Keep them cleared out, George!” I called to my assistant. “We don’t want any accidents.”

“Ay,” he answered, “that I will, Charley.”

George Guppy had helped me in no end of ascents, and because of his coolness, judgment and absolute reliability I had come to trust my life in his hands with the utmost confidence. His business it was to overlook the inflating of the balloon, and to see that everything about the parachute was in perfect working order.

The Little Nassau was already filled and straining at the guys. The parachute lay flat along the ground and beyond it the trapeze. I tossed aside my overcoat, took my position, and gave the signal to let go. As you know, the first rush upward from the earth is very sudden, and this time the balloon, when it first caught the wind, heeled violently over and was longer than usual in righting. I looked down at the old familiar sight of the world rushing away from me. And there were the thousands of people, every face silently upturned. And the silence startled me, for, as crowds went, this was the time for them to catch their first breath and send up a roar of applause. But there was no hand-clapping, whistling, cheering-only silence. And instead, clear as a bell and distinct, without the slightest shake or quaver, came George’s voice through the megaphone:

“Ride her down, Charley! Ride the balloon down!”

What had happened? I waved my hand to show that I had heard, and began to think. Had something gone wrong with the parachute? Why should I ride the balloon down instead of making the jump which thousands were waiting to see? What was the matter? And as I puzzled, I received another start. The earth was a thousand feet beneath, and yet I heard a child crying softly, and seemingly very close to hand. And though the Little Nassau was shooting skyward like a rocket, the crying did not grow fainter and fainter and die away. I confess I was almost on the edge of a funk, when, unconsciously following up the noise with my eyes, I looked above me and saw a boy astride the sandbag which was to bring the Little Nassau to earth. And it was the same little boy I had seen struggling with the two girls — his sisters, as I afterward learned.

There he was, astride the sandbag and holding on to the rope for dear life. A puff of wind heeled the balloon slightly, and he swung out into space for ten or a dozen feet, and back again, fetching up against the tight canvas with a thud which even shook me, thirty feet or more beneath. I thought to see him dashed loose, but he clung on and whimpered. They told me afterward, how, at the moment they were casting off the balloon, the little fellow had torn away from his sisters, ducked under the rope, and deliberately jumped astride the sandbag. It has always been a wonder to me that he was not jerked off in the first rush.

Well, I felt sick all over as I looked at him there, and I understood why the balloon had taken longer to right itself, and why George had called after me to ride her down. Should I cut loose with the parachute, the bag would at once turn upside down, empty itself, and begin its swift descent. The only hope lay in my riding her down and in the boy holding on. There was no possible way for me to reach him. No man could climb the slim, closed parachute; and even if a man could, and made the mouth of the balloon, what could he do? Straight out, and fifteen feet away, trailed the boy on his ticklish perch, and those fifteen feet were empty space.

I thought far more quickly than it takes to tell all this, and realized on the instant that the boy's attention must be called away from his terrible danger. Exercising all the self-control I possessed, and striving to make myself very calm, I said cheerily:

"Hello, up there, who are you?"

He looked down at me, choking back his tears and brightening up, but just then the balloon ran into a cross-current, turned half around and lay over. This set him swinging back and forth, and he fetched the canvas another bump. Then he began to cry again.

"Isn't it great?" I asked heartily, as though it was the most enjoyable thing in the world; and, without waiting for him to answer: "What's your name?"

"Tommy Dermott," he answered.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Tommy Dermott," I went on. "But I'd like to know who said you could ride up with me?"

He laughed and said he just thought he'd ride up for the fun of it. And so we went on, I sick with fear for him, and cudgeling my brains to keep up the conversation. I knew that it was all I could do, and that his life depended upon my ability to keep his mind off his danger. I pointed out to him the great panorama spreading away to the horizon and four thousand feet beneath us. There lay San Francisco Bay like a great placid lake, the haze of smoke over the city, the Golden Gate, the ocean fog-rim beyond, and Mount Tamalpais over all, clear-cut and sharp against the sky. Directly below us I could see a buggy, apparently crawling, but I knew from experience that the men in it were lashing the horses on our trail.

But he grew tired of looking around, and I could see he was beginning to get frightened.

"How would you like to go in for the business?" I asked.

He cheered up at once and asked "Do you get good pay?"

But the Little Nassau, beginning to cool, had started on its long descent, and ran into counter currents which bobbed it roughly about. This swung the boy around pretty lively, smashing him into the bag once quite severely. His lip began to tremble at this, and he was crying again. I tried to joke and laugh, but it was no use. His pluck was oozing out, and at any moment I was prepared to see him go shooting past me.

I was in despair. Then, suddenly, I remembered how one fright could destroy another fright, and I frowned up at him and shouted sternly:

“You just hold on to that rope! If you don’t I’ll thrash you within an inch of your life when I get you down on the ground! Understand?”

“Ye-ye-yes, sir,” he whimpered, and I saw that the thing had worked. I was nearer to him than the earth, and he was more afraid of me than of falling.

“Why, you’ve got a snap up there on that soft bag,” I rattled on.

“Yes,” I assured him, “this bar down here is hard and narrow, and it hurts to sit on it.”

Then a thought struck him, and he forgot all about his aching fingers.

“When are you going to jump?” he asked. “That’s what I came up to see.”

I was sorry to disappoint him, but I wasn’t going to make any jump.

But he objected to that. “It said so in the papers,” he said.

“I don’t care,” I answered. “I’m feeling sort of lazy today, and I’m just going to ride down the balloon. It’s my balloon and I guess I can do as I please about it. And, anyway, we’re almost down now.”

And we were, too, and sinking fast. And right there and then that youngster began to argue with me as to whether it was right for me to disappoint the people, and to urge their claims upon me. And it was with a happy heart that I held up my end of it, justifying myself in a thousand different ways, till we shot over a grove of eucalyptus trees and dipped to meet the earth.

“Hold on tight!” I shouted, swinging down from the trapeze by my hands in order to make a landing on my feet.

We skimmed past a barn, missed a mesh of clothesline, frightened the barnyard chickens into a panic, and rose up again clear over a haystack—all this almost quicker than it takes to tell. Then we came down in an orchard, and when my feet had touched the ground I fetched up the balloon by a couple of turns of the trapeze around an apple tree.

I have had my balloon catch fire in mid air, I have hung on the cornice of a ten-story house, I have dropped like a bullet for six hundred feet when a parachute was slow in opening; but never have I felt so weak and faint and sick as when I staggered toward the unscratched boy and gripped him by the arm.

“Tommy Dermott,” I said, when I had got my nerves back somewhat. “Tommy Dermott, I’m going to lay you across my knee and give you the greatest thrashing a boy ever got in the world’s history.”

“No, you don’t,” he answered, squirming around. “You said you wouldn’t if I held on tight.”

“That’s all right,” I said, “but I’m going to, just the same. The fellows who go up in balloons are bad, unprincipled men, and I’m going to give you a lesson right now to make you stay away from them, and from balloons, too.”

And then I gave it to him, and if it wasn’t the greatest thrashing in the world, it was the greatest he ever got.

But it took all the grit out of me, left me nerve-broken, that experience. I canceled the engagement with the street railway company, and later on went in for gas. Gas is much the safer, anyway.

All Gold Cañon

It was the green heart of the cānon, where the walls swerved back from the rigid plan and relieved their harshness of line by making a little sheltered nook and filling it to the brim with sweetness and roundness and softness. Here all things rested. Even the narrow stream ceased its turbulent down-rush long enough to form a quiet pool. Knee-deep in the water, with drooping head and half-shut eyes, drowsed a red-coated, many-antlered buck.

On one side, beginning at the very lip of the pool, was a tiny meadow, a cool, resilient surface of green that extended to the base of the frowning wall. Beyond the pool a gentle slope of earth ran up and up to meet the opposing wall. Fine grass covered the slope—grass that was spangled with flowers, with here and there patches of color, orange and purple and golden. Below, the cānon was shut in. There was no view. The walls leaned together abruptly and the cānon ended in a chaos of rocks, moss-covered and hidden by a green screen of vines and creepers and boughs of trees. Up the cānon rose far hills and peaks, the big foot-hills, pine-covered and remote. And far beyond, like clouds upon the border of the sky, towered minarets of white, where the Sierra's eternal snows flashed austerely the blazes of the sun.

There was no dust in the cānon. The leaves and flowers were clean and virginal. The grass was young velvet. Over the pool three cottonwoods sent their snowy fluffs fluttering down the quiet air. On the slope the blossoms of the wine-wooded manzanita filled the air with springtime odors, while the leaves, wise with experience, were already beginning their vertical twist against the coming aridity of summer. In the open spaces on the slope, beyond the farthest shadow-reach of the manzanita, poised the mariposa lilies, like so many flights of jewelled moths suddenly arrested and on the verge of trembling into flight again. Here and there that woods harlequin, the madrone, permitting itself to be caught in the act of changing its pea-green trunk to madder-red, breathed its fragrance into the air from great clusters of waxen bells. Creamy white were these bells, shaped like lilies-of-the-valley, with the sweetness of perfume that is of the springtime.

There was not a sigh of wind. The air was drowsy with its weight of perfume. It was a sweetness that would have been cloying had the air been heavy and humid. But the air was sharp and thin. It was as starlight transmuted into atmosphere, shot through and warmed by sunshine, and flower-drenched with sweetness.

An occasional butterfly drifted in and out through the patches of light and shade. And from all about rose the low and sleepy hum of mountain bees—feasting Sybarites that jostled one another good-naturedly at the board, nor found time for rough discour-

tesy. So quietly did the little stream drip and ripple its way through the cānon that it spoke only in faint and occasional gurgles. The voice of the stream was as a drowsy whisper, ever interrupted by dozings and silences, ever lifted again in the awakenings.

The motion of all things was a drifting in the heart of the cānon. Sunshine and butterflies drifted in and out among the trees. The hum of the bees and the whisper of the stream were a drifting of sound. And the drifting sound and drifting color seemed to weave together in the making of a delicate and intangible fabric which was the spirit of the place. It was a spirit of peace that was not of death, but of smooth-pulsing life, of quietude that was not silence, of movement that was not action, of repose that was quick with existence without being violent with struggle and travail. The spirit of the place was the spirit of the peace of the living, somnolent with the easement and content of prosperity, and undisturbed by rumors of far wars.

The red-coated, many-antlered buck acknowledged the lordship of the spirit of the place and dozed knee-deep in the cool, shaded pool. There seemed no flies to vex him and he was languid with rest. Sometimes his ears moved when the stream awoke and whispered; but they moved lazily, with foreknowledge that it was merely the stream grown garrulous at discovery that it had slept.

But there came a time when the buck's ears lifted and tensed with swift eagerness for sound. His head was turned down the cānon. His sensitive, quivering nostrils scented the air. His eyes could not pierce the green screen through which the stream rippled away, but to his ears came the voice of a man. It was a steady, monotonous, singsong voice. Once the buck heard the harsh clash of metal upon rock. At the sound he snorted with a sudden start that jerked him through the air from water to meadow, and his feet sank into the young velvet, while he pricked his ears and again scented the air. Then he stole across the tiny meadow, pausing once and again to listen, and faded away out of the cānon like a wraith, soft-footed and without sound.

The clash of steel-shod soles against the rocks began to be heard, and the man's voice grew louder. It was raised in a sort of chant and became distinct with nearness, so that the words could be heard:

“Tu'n around an' tu'n yo' face
Untoe them sweet hills of grace
(D' pow'rs of sin yo' am scornin'!).
Look about an' look aroun',
Fling yo' sin-pack on d' groun'
(Yo' will meet wid d' Lord in d' mornin'!).”

A sound of scrambling accompanied the song, and the spirit of the place fled away on the heels of the red-coated buck. The green screen was burst asunder, and a man peered out at the meadow and the pool and the sloping side-hill. He was a deliberate sort of man. He took in the scene with one embracing glance, then ran his eyes over the details to verify the general impression. Then, and not until then, did he open his mouth in vivid and solemn approval:

“Smoke of life an’ snakes of purgatory! Will you just look at that! Wood an’ water an’ grass an’ a side-hill! A pocket-hunter’s delight an’ a cayuse’s paradise! Cool green for tired eyes! Pink pills for pale people ain’t in it. A secret pasture for prospectors and a resting-place for tired burros, by damn!”

He was a sandy-complexioned man in whose face geniality and humor seemed the salient characteristics. It was a mobile face, quick-changing to inward mood and thought. Thinking was in him a visible process. Ideas chased across his face like wind-flaws across the surface of a lake. His hair, sparse and unkempt of growth, was as indeterminate and colorless as his complexion. It would seem that all the color of his frame had gone into his eyes, for they were startlingly blue. Also, they were laughing and merry eyes, within them much of the naivete and wonder of the child; and yet, in an unassertive way, they contained much of calm self-reliance and strength of purpose founded upon self-experience and experience of the world.

From out the screen of vines and creepers he flung ahead of him a miner’s pick and shovel and gold-pan. Then he crawled out himself into the open. He was clad in faded overalls and black cotton shirt, with hobnailed brogans on his feet, and on his head a hat whose shapelessness and stains advertised the rough usage of wind and rain and sun and camp-smoke. He stood erect, seeing wide-eyed the secrecy of the scene and sensuously inhaling the warm, sweet breath of the cānon-garden through nostrils that dilated and quivered with delight. His eyes narrowed to laughing slits of blue, his face wreathed itself in joy, and his mouth curled in a smile as he cried aloud:

“Jumping dandelions and happy hollyhocks, but that smells good to me! Talk about your attar o’ roses an’ cologne factories! They ain’t in it!”

He had the habit of soliloquy. His quick-changing facial expressions might tell every thought and mood, but the tongue, perforce, ran hard after, repeating, like a second Boswell.

The man lay down on the lip of the pool and drank long and deep of its water. “Tastes good to me,” he murmured, lifting his head and gazing across the pool at the side-hill, while he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. The side-hill attracted his attention. Still lying on his stomach, he studied the hill formation long and carefully. It was a practised eye that travelled up the slope to the crumbling cānon-wall and back and down again to the edge of the pool. He scrambled to his feet and favored the side-hill with a second survey.

“Looks good to me,” he concluded, picking up his pick and shovel and gold-pan.

He crossed the stream below the pool, stepping agilely from stone to stone. Where the side-hill touched the water he dug up a shovelful of dirt and put it into the gold-pan. He squatted down, holding the pan in his two hands, and partly immersing it in the stream. Then he imparted to the pan a deft circular motion that sent the water sluicing in and out through the dirt and gravel. The larger and the lighter particles worked to the surface, and these, by a skilful dipping movement of the pan, he spilled out and over the edge. Occasionally, to expedite matters, he rested the pan and with his fingers raked out the large pebbles and pieces of rock.

The contents of the pan diminished rapidly until only fine dirt and the smallest bits of gravel remained. At this stage he began to work very deliberately and carefully. It was fine washing, and he washed fine and finer, with a keen scrutiny and delicate and fastidious touch. At last the pan seemed empty of everything but water; but with a quick semicircular flirt that sent the water flying over the shallow rim into the stream, he disclosed a layer of black sand on the bottom of the pan. So thin was this layer that it was like a streak of paint. He examined it closely. In the midst of it was a tiny golden speck. He dribbled a little water in over the depressed edge of the pan. With a quick flirt he sent the water sluicing across the bottom, turning the grains of black sand over and over. A second tiny golden speck rewarded his effort.

The washing had now become very fine—fine beyond all need of ordinary placer-mining. He worked the black sand, a small portion at a time, up the shallow rim of the pan. Each small portion he examined sharply, so that his eyes saw every grain of it before he allowed it to slide over the edge and away. Jealously, bit by bit, he let the black sand slip away. A golden speck, no larger than a pin-point, appeared on the rim, and by his manipulation of the water it returned to the bottom of the pan. And in such fashion another speck was disclosed, and another. Great was his care of them. Like a shepherd he herded his flock of golden specks so that not one should be lost. At last, of the pan of dirt nothing remained but his golden herd. He counted it, and then, after all his labor, sent it flying out of the pan with one final swirl of water.

But his blue eyes were shining with desire as he rose to his feet. "Seven," he muttered aloud, asserting the sum of the specks for which he had toiled so hard and which he had so wantonly thrown away. "Seven," he repeated, with the emphasis of one trying to impress a number on his memory.

He stood still a long while, surveying the hillside. In his eyes was a curiosity, new-aroused and burning. There was an exultance about his bearing and a keenness like that of a hunting animal catching the fresh scent of game.

He moved down the stream a few steps and took a second panful of dirt.

Again came the careful washing, the jealous herding of the golden specks, and the wantonness with which he sent them flying into the stream when he had counted their number.

"Five," he muttered, and repeated, "five."

He could not forbear another survey of the hill before filling the pan farther down the stream. His golden herds diminished. "Four, three, two, two, one," were his memory-tabulations as he moved down the stream. When but one speck of gold rewarded his washing, he stopped and built a fire of dry twigs. Into this he thrust the gold-pan and burned it till it was blue-black. He held up the pan and examined it critically. Then he nodded approbation. Against such a color-background he could defy the tiniest yellow speck to elude him.

Still moving down the stream, he panned again. A single speck was his reward. A third pan contained no gold at all. Not satisfied with this, he panned three times again, taking his shovels of dirt within a foot of one another. Each pan proved empty of gold,

and the fact, instead of discouraging him, seemed to give him satisfaction. His elation increased with each barren washing, until he arose, exclaiming jubilantly:

“If it ain’t the real thing, may God knock off my head with sour apples!”

Returning to where he had started operations, he began to pan up the stream. At first his golden herds increased—increased prodigiously. “Fourteen, eighteen, twenty-one, twenty-six,” ran his memory tabulations. Just above the pool he struck his richest pan—thirty-five colors.

“Almost enough to save,” he remarked regretfully as he allowed the water to sweep them away.

The sun climbed to the top of the sky. The man worked on. Pan by pan, he went up the stream, the tally of results steadily decreasing.

“It’s just booful, the way it peters out,” he exulted when a shovelful of dirt contained no more than a single speck of gold.

And when no specks at all were found in several pans, he straightened up and favored the hillside with a confident glance.

“Ah, ha! Mr. Pocket!” he cried out, as though to an auditor hidden somewhere above him beneath the surface of the slope. “Ah, ha! Mr. Pocket! I’m a-comin’, I’m a-comin’, an’ I’m shorely gwine to get yer! You heah me, Mr. Pocket? I’m gwine to get yer as shore as punkins ain’t cauliflowers!”

He turned and flung a measuring glance at the sun poised above him in the azure of the cloudless sky. Then he went down the cãnon, following the line of shovel-holes he had made in filling the pans. He crossed the stream below the pool and disappeared through the green screen. There was little opportunity for the spirit of the place to return with its quietude and repose, for the man’s voice, raised in ragtime song, still dominated the cãnon with possession.

After a time, with a greater clashing of steel-shod feet on rock, he returned. The green screen was tremendously agitated. It surged back and forth in the throes of a struggle. There was a loud grating and clanging of metal. The man’s voice leaped to a higher pitch and was sharp with imperativeness. A large body plunged and panted. There was a snapping and ripping and rending, and amid a shower of falling leaves a horse burst through the screen. On its back was a pack, and from this trailed broken vines and torn creepers. The animal gazed with astonished eyes at the scene into which it had been precipitated, then dropped its head to the grass and began contentedly to graze. A second horse scrambled into view, slipping once on the mossy rocks and regaining equilibrium when its hoofs sank into the yielding surface of the meadow. It was riderless, though on its back was a high-horned Mexican saddle, scarred and discolored by long usage.

The man brought up the rear. He threw off pack and saddle, with an eye to camp location, and gave the animals their freedom to graze. He unpacked his food and got out frying-pan and coffee-pot. He gathered an armful of dry wood, and with a few stones made a place for his fire.

“My!” he said, “but I’ve got an appetite. I could scoff iron-filings an’ horseshoe nails an’ thank you kindly, ma’am, for a second helpin’.”

He straightened up, and, while he reached for matches in the pocket of his overalls, his eyes travelled across the pool to the side-hill. His fingers had clutched the match-box, but they relaxed their hold and the hand came out empty. The man wavered perceptibly. He looked at his preparations for cooking and he looked at the hill.

“Guess I’ll take another whack at her,” he concluded, starting to cross the stream.

“They ain’t no sense in it, I know,” he mumbled apologetically. “But keepin’ grub back an hour ain’t goin’ to hurt none, I reckon.”

A few feet back from his first line of test-pans he started a second line. The sun dropped down the western sky, the shadows lengthened, but the man worked on. He began a third line of test-pans. He was cross-cutting the hillside, line by line, as he ascended. The centre of each line produced the richest pans, while the ends came where no colors showed in the pan. And as he ascended the hillside the lines grew perceptibly shorter. The regularity with which their length diminished served to indicate that somewhere up the slope the last line would be so short as to have scarcely length at all, and that beyond could come only a point. The design was growing into an inverted “V.” The converging sides of this “V” marked the boundaries of the gold-bearing dirt. The apex of the “V” was evidently the man’s goal. Often he ran his eye along the converging sides and on up the hill, trying to divine the apex, the point where the gold-bearing dirt must cease. Here resided “Mr. Pocket”—for so the man familiarly addressed the imaginary point above him on the slope, crying out:

“Come down out o’ that, Mr. Pocket! Be right smart an’ agreeable, an’ come down!”

“All right,” he would add later, in a voice resigned to determination. “All right, Mr. Pocket. It’s plain to me I got to come right up an’ snatch you out bald-headed. An’ I’ll do it! I’ll do it!” he would threaten still later.

Each pan he carried down to the water to wash, and as he went higher up the hill the pans grew richer, until he began to save the gold in an empty baking-powder can which he carried carelessly in his hip-pocket. So engrossed was he in his toil that he did not notice the long twilight of oncoming night. It was not until he tried vainly to see the gold colors in the bottom of the pan that he realized the passage of time. He straightened up abruptly. An expression of whimsical wonderment and awe overspread his face as he drawled:

“Gosh darn my buttons! if I didn’t plumb forget dinner!”

He stumbled across the stream in the darkness and lighted his long-delayed fire. Flapjacks and bacon and warmed-over beans constituted his supper. Then he smoked a pipe by the smouldering coals, listening to the night noises and watching the moonlight stream through the cãnon. After that he unrolled his bed, took off his heavy shoes, and pulled the blankets up to his chin. His face showed white in the moonlight, like the face of a corpse. But it was a corpse that knew its resurrection, for the man rose suddenly on one elbow and gazed across at his hillside.

“Good night, Mr. Pocket,” he called sleepily. “Good night.”

He slept through the early gray of morning until the direct rays of the sun smote his closed eyelids, when he awoke with a start and looked about him until he had established the continuity of his existence and identified his present self with the days previously lived.

To dress, he had merely to buckle on his shoes. He glanced at his fireplace and at his hillside, wavered, but fought down the temptation and started the fire.

“Keep yer shirt on, Bill; keep yer shirt on,” he admonished himself. “What’s the good of rushin’? No use in gettin’ all het up an’ sweaty. Mr. Pocket’ll wait for you. He ain’t a-runnin’ away before you can get yer breakfast. Now, what you want, Bill, is something fresh in yer bill o’ fare. So it’s up to you to go an’ get it.”

He cut a short pole at the water’s edge and drew from one of his pockets a bit of line and a draggled fly that had once been a royal coachman.

“Mebbe they’ll bite in the early morning,” he muttered, as he made his first cast into the pool. And a moment later he was gleefully crying: “What ‘d I tell you, eh? What ‘d I tell you?”

He had no reel, nor any inclination to waste time, and by main strength, and swiftly, he drew out of the water a flashing ten-inch trout. Three more, caught in rapid succession, furnished his breakfast. When he came to the stepping-stones on his way to his hillside, he was struck by a sudden thought, and paused.

“I’d just better take a hike down-stream a ways,” he said. “There’s no tellin’ what cuss may be snoopin’ around.”

But he crossed over on the stones, and with a “I really oughter take that hike,” the need of the precaution passed out of his mind and he fell to work.

At nightfall he straightened up. The small of his back was stiff from stooping toil, and as he put his hand behind him to soothe the protesting muscles, he said:

“Now what d’ye think of that, by damn? I clean forgot my dinner again! If I don’t watch out, I’ll sure be degeneratin’ into a two-meal-a-day crank.”

“Pockets is the damndest things I ever see for makin’ a man absent-minded,” he communed that night, as he crawled into his blankets. Nor did he forget to call up the hillside, “Good night, Mr. Pocket! Good night!”

Rising with the sun, and snatching a hasty breakfast, he was early at work. A fever seemed to be growing in him, nor did the increasing richness of the test-pans allay this fever. There was a flush in his cheek other than that made by the heat of the sun, and he was oblivious to fatigue and the passage of time. When he filled a pan with dirt, he ran down the hill to wash it; nor could he forbear running up the hill again, panting and stumbling profanely, to refill the pan.

He was now a hundred yards from the water, and the inverted “V” was assuming definite proportions. The width of the pay-dirt steadily decreased, and the man extended in his mind’s eye the sides of the “V” to their meeting-place far up the hill. This was his goal, the apex of the “V,” and he panned many times to locate it.

“Just about two yards above that manzanita bush an’ a yard to the right,” he finally concluded.

Then the temptation seized him. "As plain as the nose on your face," he said, as he abandoned his laborious cross-cutting and climbed to the indicated apex. He filled a pan and carried it down the hill to wash. It contained no trace of gold. He dug deep, and he dug shallow, filling and washing a dozen pans, and was unrewarded even by the tiniest golden speck. He was enraged at having yielded to the temptation, and cursed himself blasphemously and pridelessly. Then he went down the hill and took up the cross-cutting.

"Slow an' certain, Bill; slow an' certain," he crooned. "Short-cuts to fortune ain't in your line, an' it's about time you know it. Get wise, Bill; get wise. Slow an' certain's the only hand you can play; so go to it, an' keep to it, too."

As the cross-cuts decreased, showing that the sides of the "V" were converging, the depth of the "V" increased. The gold-trace was dipping into the hill. It was only at thirty inches beneath the surface that he could get colors in his pan. The dirt he found at twenty-five inches from the surface, and at thirty-five inches, yielded barren pans. At the base of the "V," by the water's edge, he had found the gold colors at the grass roots. The higher he went up the hill, the deeper the gold dipped. To dig a hole three feet deep in order to get one test-pan was a task of no mean magnitude; while between the man and the apex intervened an untold number of such holes to be dug. "An' there's no tellin' how much deeper it 'll pitch," he sighed, in a moment's pause, while his fingers soothed his aching back.

Feverish with desire, with aching back and stiffening muscles, with pick and shovel gouging and mauling the soft brown earth, the man toiled up the hill. Before him was the smooth slope, spangled with flowers and made sweet with their breath. Behind him was devastation. It looked like some terrible eruption breaking out on the smooth skin of the hill. His slow progress was like that of a slug, befouling beauty with a monstrous trail.

Though the dipping gold-trace increased the man's work, he found consolation in the increasing richness of the pans. Twenty cents, thirty cents, fifty cents, sixty cents, were the values of the gold found in the pans, and at nightfall he washed his banner pan, which gave him a dollar's worth of gold-dust from a shovelful of dirt.

"I'll just bet it's my luck to have some inquisitive cuss come buttin' in here on my pasture," he mumbled sleepily that night as he pulled the blankets up to his chin.

Suddenly he sat upright. "Bill!" he called sharply. "Now, listen to me, Bill; d'ye hear! It's up to you, to-morrow mornin', to mosey round an' see what you can see. Understand? To-morrow morning, an' don't you forget it!"

He yawned and glanced across at his side-hill. "Good night, Mr. Pocket," he called.

In the morning he stole a march on the sun, for he had finished breakfast when its first rays caught him, and he was climbing the wall of the cãnon where it crumbled away and gave footing. From the outlook at the top he found himself in the midst of loneliness. As far as he could see, chain after chain of mountains heaved themselves into his vision. To the east his eyes, leaping the miles between range and range and between many ranges, brought up at last against the white-peaked Sierras — the main

crest, where the backbone of the Western world reared itself against the sky. To the north and south he could see more distinctly the cross-systems that broke through the main trend of the sea of mountains. To the west the ranges fell away, one behind the other, diminishing and fading into the gentle foothills that, in turn, descended into the great valley which he could not see.

And in all that mighty sweep of earth he saw no sign of man nor of the handiwork of man — save only the torn bosom of the hillside at his feet. The man looked long and carefully. Once, far down his own cānon, he thought he saw in the air a faint hint of smoke. He looked again and decided that it was the purple haze of the hills made dark by a convolution of the cānon wall at its back.

“Hey, you, Mr. Pocket!” he called down into the cānon. “Stand out from under! I’m a-comin’, Mr. Pocket! I’m a-comin’!”

The heavy brogans on the man’s feet made him appear clumsy-footed, but he swung down from the giddy height as lightly and airily as a mountain goat. A rock, turning under his foot on the edge of the precipice, did not disconcert him. He seemed to know the precise time required for the turn to culminate in disaster, and in the meantime he utilized the false footing itself for the momentary earth-contact necessary to carry him on into safety. Where the earth sloped so steeply that it was impossible to stand for a second upright, the man did not hesitate. His foot pressed the impossible surface for but a fraction of the fatal second and gave him the bound that carried him onward. Again, where even the fraction of a second’s footing was out of the question, he would swing his body past by a moment’s hand-grip on a jutting knob of rock, a crevice, or a precariously rooted shrub. At last, with a wild leap and yell, he exchanged the face of the wall for an earth-slide and finished the descent in the midst of several tons of sliding earth and gravel.

His first pan of the morning washed out over two dollars in coarse gold. It was from the centre of the “V.” To either side the diminution in the values of the pans was swift. His lines of cross-cutting holes were growing very short. The converging sides of the inverted “V” were only a few yards apart. Their meeting-point was only a few yards above him. But the pay-streak was dipping deeper and deeper into the earth. By early afternoon he was sinking the test-holes five feet before the pans could show the gold-trace.

For that matter, the gold-trace had become something more than a trace; it was a placer mine in itself, and the man resolved to come back after he had found the pocket and work over the ground. But the increasing richness of the pans began to worry him. By late afternoon the worth of the pans had grown to three and four dollars. The man scratched his head perplexedly and looked a few feet up the hill at the manzanita bush that marked approximately the apex of the “V.” He nodded his head and said oracularly:

“It’s one o’ two things, Bill; one o’ two things. Either Mr. Pocket’s spilled himself all out an’ down the hill, or else Mr. Pocket’s that damned rich you maybe won’t be able

to carry him all away with you. And that ‘d be hell, wouldn’t it, now?” He chuckled at contemplation of so pleasant a dilemma.

Nightfall found him by the edge of the stream, his eyes wrestling with the gathering darkness over the washing of a five-dollar pan.

“Wisht I had an electric light to go on working,” he said.

He found sleep difficult that night. Many times he composed himself and closed his eyes for slumber to overtake him; but his blood pounded with too strong desire, and as many times his eyes opened and he murmured wearily, “Wisht it was sun-up.”

Sleep came to him in the end, but his eyes were open with the first paling of the stars, and the gray of dawn caught him with breakfast finished and climbing the hillside in the direction of the secret abiding-place of Mr. Pocket.

The first cross-cut the man made, there was space for only three holes, so narrow had become the pay-streak and so close was he to the fountainhead of the golden stream he had been following for four days.

“Be ca’m, Bill; be ca’m,” he admonished himself, as he broke ground for the final hole where the sides of the “V” had at last come together in a point.

“I’ve got the almighty cinch on you, Mr. Pocket, an’ you can’t lose me,” he said many times as he sank the hole deeper and deeper.

Four feet, five feet, six feet, he dug his way down into the earth. The digging grew harder. His pick grated on broken rock. He examined the rock.

“Rotten quartz,” was his conclusion as, with the shovel, he cleared the bottom of the hole of loose dirt. He attacked the crumbling quartz with the pick, bursting the disintegrating rock asunder with every stroke. He thrust his shovel into the loose mass. His eye caught a gleam of yellow. He dropped the shovel and squatted suddenly on his heels. As a farmer rubs the clinging earth from fresh-dug potatoes, so the man, a piece of rotten quartz held in both hands, rubbed the dirt away.

“Sufferin’ Sardanopolis!” he cried. “Lumps an’ chunks of it! Lumps an’ chunks of it!”

It was only half rock he held in his hand. The other half was virgin gold. He dropped it into his pan and examined another piece. Little yellow was to be seen, but with his strong fingers he crumbled the rotten quartz away till both hands were filled with glowing yellow. He rubbed the dirt away from fragment after fragment, tossing them into the gold-pan. It was a treasure-hole. So much had the quartz rotted away that there was less of it than there was of gold. Now and again he found a piece to which no rock clung — a piece that was all gold. A chunk, where the pick had laid open the heart of the gold, glittered like a handful of yellow jewels, and he cocked his head at it and slowly turned it around and over to observe the rich play of the light upon it.

“Talk about yer Too Much Gold diggin’s!” the man snorted contemptuously. “Why, this diggin’ ‘d make it look like thirty cents. This diggin’ is All Gold. An’ right here an’ now I name this yere cānon ‘All Gold Cānon,’ b’ gosh!”

Still squatting on his heels, he continued examining the fragments and tossing them into the pan. Suddenly there came to him a premonition of danger. It seemed a shadow had fallen upon him. But there was no shadow. His heart had given a great jump up

into his throat and was choking him. Then his blood slowly chilled and he felt the sweat of his shirt cold against his flesh.

He did not spring up nor look around. He did not move. He was considering the nature of the premonition he had received, trying to locate the source of the mysterious force that had warned him, striving to sense the imperative presence of the unseen thing that threatened him. There is an aura of things hostile, made manifest by messengers too refined for the senses to know; and this aura he felt, but knew not how he felt it. His was the feeling as when a cloud passes over the sun. It seemed that between him and life had passed something dark and smothering and menacing; a gloom, as it were, that swallowed up life and made for death — his death.

Every force of his being impelled him to spring up and confront the unseen danger, but his soul dominated the panic, and he remained squatting on his heels, in his hands a chunk of gold. He did not dare to look around, but he knew by now that there was something behind him and above him. He made believe to be interested in the gold in his hand. He examined it critically, turned it over and over, and rubbed the dirt from it. And all the time he knew that something behind him was looking at the gold over his shoulder.

Still feigning interest in the chunk of gold in his hand, he listened intently and he heard the breathing of the thing behind him. His eyes searched the ground in front of him for a weapon, but they saw only the uprooted gold, worthless to him now in his extremity. There was his pick, a handy weapon on occasion; but this was not such an occasion. The man realized his predicament. He was in a narrow hole that was seven feet deep. His head did not come to the surface of the ground. He was in a trap.

He remained squatting on his heels. He was quite cool and collected; but his mind, considering every factor, showed him only his helplessness. He continued rubbing the dirt from the quartz fragments and throwing the gold into the pan. There was nothing else for him to do. Yet he knew that he would have to rise up, sooner or later, and face the danger that breathed at his back. The minutes passed, and with the passage of each minute he knew that by so much he was nearer the time when he must stand up, or else — and his wet shirt went cold against his flesh again at the thought — or else he might receive death as he stooped there over his treasure.

Still he squatted on his heels, rubbing dirt from gold and debating in just what manner he should rise up. He might rise up with a rush and claw his way out of the hole to meet whatever threatened on the even footing above ground. Or he might rise up slowly and carelessly, and feign casually to discover the thing that breathed at his back. His instinct and every fighting fibre of his body favored the mad, clawing rush to the surface. His intellect, and the craft thereof, favored the slow and cautious meeting with the thing that menaced and which he could not see. And while he debated, a loud, crashing noise burst on his ear. At the same instant he received a stunning blow on the left side of the back, and from the point of impact felt a rush of flame through his flesh. He sprang up in the air, but halfway to his feet collapsed. His body crumpled in like a leaf withered in sudden heat, and he came down, his chest across his pan of gold, his

face in the dirt and rock, his legs tangled and twisted because of the restricted space at the bottom of the hole. His legs twitched convulsively several times. His body was shaken as with a mighty ague. There was a slow expansion of the lungs, accompanied by a deep sigh. Then the air was slowly, very slowly, exhaled, and his body as slowly flattened itself down into inertness.

Above, revolver in hand, a man was peering down over the edge of the hole. He peered for a long time at the prone and motionless body beneath him. After a while the stranger sat down on the edge of the hole so that he could see into it, and rested the revolver on his knee. Reaching his hand into a pocket, he drew out a wisp of brown paper. Into this he dropped a few crumbs of tobacco. The combination became a cigarette, brown and squat, with the ends turned in. Not once did he take his eyes from the body at the bottom of the hole. He lighted the cigarette and drew its smoke into his lungs with a caressing intake of the breath. He smoked slowly. Once the cigarette went out and he relighted it. And all the while he studied the body beneath him.

In the end he tossed the cigarette stub away and rose to his feet. He moved to the edge of the hole. Spanning it, a hand resting on each edge, and with the revolver still in the right hand, he muscled his body down into the hole. While his feet were yet a yard from the bottom he released his hands and dropped down.

At the instant his feet struck bottom he saw the pocket-miner's arm leap out, and his own legs knew a swift, jerking grip that overthrew him. In the nature of the jump his revolver-hand was above his head. Swiftly as the grip had flashed about his legs, just as swiftly he brought the revolver down. He was still in the air, his fall in process of completion, when he pulled the trigger. The explosion was deafening in the confined space. The smoke filled the hole so that he could see nothing. He struck the bottom on his back, and like a cat's the pocket-miner's body was on top of him. Even as the miner's body passed on top, the stranger crooked in his right arm to fire; and even in that instant the miner, with a quick thrust of elbow, struck his wrist. The muzzle was thrown up and the bullet thudded into the dirt of the side of the hole.

The next instant the stranger felt the miner's hand grip his wrist. The struggle was now for the revolver. Each man strove to turn it against the other's body. The smoke in the hole was clearing. The stranger, lying on his back, was beginning to see dimly. But suddenly he was blinded by a handful of dirt deliberately flung into his eyes by his antagonist. In that moment of shock his grip on the revolver was broken. In the next moment he felt a smashing darkness descend upon his brain, and in the midst of the darkness even the darkness ceased.

But the pocket-miner fired again and again, until the revolver was empty. Then he tossed it from him and, breathing heavily, sat down on the dead man's legs.

The miner was sobbing and struggling for breath. "Measly skunk!" he panted; "a-campin' on my trail an' lettin' me do the work, an' then shootin' me in the back!"

He was half crying from anger and exhaustion. He peered at the face of the dead man. It was sprinkled with loose dirt and gravel, and it was difficult to distinguish the features.

“Never laid eyes on him before,” the miner concluded his scrutiny. “Just a common an’ ordinary thief, damn him! An’ he shot me in the back! He shot me in the back!”

He opened his shirt and felt himself, front and back, on his left side.

“Went clean through, and no harm done!” he cried jubilantly. “I’ll bet he aimed all right all right; but he drew the gun over when he pulled the trigger — the cuss! But I fixed ‘m! Oh, I fixed ‘m!”

His fingers were investigating the bullet-hole in his side, and a shade of regret passed over his face. “It’s goin’ to be stiffer’n hell,” he said. “An’ it’s up to me to get mended an’ get out o’ here.”

He crawled out of the hole and went down the hill to his camp. Half an hour later he returned, leading his pack-horse. His open shirt disclosed the rude bandages with which he had dressed his wound. He was slow and awkward with his left-hand movements, but that did not prevent his using the arm.

The bight of the pack-rope under the dead man’s shoulders enabled him to heave the body out of the hole. Then he set to work gathering up his gold. He worked steadily for several hours, pausing often to rest his stiffening shoulder and to exclaim:

“He shot me in the back, the measly skunk! He shot me in the back!”

When his treasure was quite cleaned up and wrapped securely into a number of blanket-covered parcels, he made an estimate of its value.

“Four hundred pounds, or I’m a Hottentot,” he concluded. “Say two hundred in quartz an’ dirt — that leaves two hundred pounds of gold. Bill! Wake up! Two hundred pounds of gold! Forty thousand dollars! An’ it’s yourn — all yourn!”

He scratched his head delightedly and his fingers blundered into an unfamiliar groove. They quested along it for several inches. It was a crease through his scalp where the second bullet had ploughed.

He walked angrily over to the dead man.

“You would, would you?” he bullied. “You would, eh? Well, fixed you good an’ plenty, an’ I’ll give you decent burial, too. That’s more’n you’d have done for me.” He dragged the body to the edge of the hole and toppled it in. It struck the bottom with a dull crash, on its side, the face twisted up to the light. The miner peered down at it.

“An’ you shot me in the back!” he said accusingly.

With pick and shovel he filled the hole. Then he loaded the gold on his horse. It was too great a load for the animal, and when he had gained his camp he transferred part of it to his saddle-horse. Even so, he was compelled to abandon a portion of his outfit — pick and shovel and gold-pan, extra food and cooking utensils, and divers odds and ends.

The sun was at the zenith when the man forced the horses at the screen of vines and creepers. To climb the huge boulders the animals were compelled to uprear and struggle blindly through the tangled mass of vegetation. Once the saddle-horse fell

heavily and the man removed the pack to get the animal on its feet. After it started on its way again the man thrust his head out from among the leaves and peered up at the hillside.

“The measly skunk!” he said, and disappeared.

There was a ripping and tearing of vines and boughs. The trees surged back and forth, marking the passage of the animals through the midst of them. There was a clashing of steel-shod hoofs on stone, and now and again an oath or a sharp cry of command. Then the voice of the man was raised in song: —

“Tu’n around an’ tu’n yo’ face
Untoe them sweet hills of grace
(D’ pow’rs of sin yo’ am scornin’!).
Look about an’ look aroun’,
Fling yo’ sin-pack on d’ groun’
(Yo’ will meet wid d’ Lord in d’ mornin’!).”

The song grew faint and fainter, and through the silence crept back the spirit of the place. The stream once more drowsed and whispered; the hum of the mountain bees rose sleepily. Down through the perfume-weighted air fluttered the snowy fluffs of the cottonwoods. The butterflies drifted in and out among the trees, and over all blazed the quiet sunshine. Only remained the hoof-marks in the meadow and the torn hillside to mark the boisterous trail of the life that had broken the peace of the place and passed on.

Aloha Oe

NEVER are there such departures as from the dock at Honolulu. The great transport lay with steam up, ready to pull out. A thousand persons were on her decks; five thousand stood on the wharf. Up and down the long gangway passed native princes and princesses, sugar kings and the high officials of the Territory. Beyond, in long lines, kept in order by the native police, were the carriages and motor-cars of the Honolulu aristocracy. On the wharf the Royal Hawaiian Band played "Aloha Oe," and when it finished, a stringed orchestra of native musicians on board the transport took up the same sobbing strains, the native woman singer's voice rising birdlike above the instruments and the hubbub of departure. It was a silver reed, sounding its clear, unmistakable note in the great diapason of farewell.

Forward, on the lower deck, the rail was lined six deep with khaki-clad young boys, whose bronzed faces told of three years' campaigning under the sun. But the farewell was not for them. Nor was it for the white-clad captain on the lofty bridge, remote as the stars, gazing down upon the tumult beneath him. Nor was the farewell for the young officers farther aft, returning from the Philippines, nor for the white-faced, climate-ravaged women by their sides. Just aft the gangway, on the promenade deck, stood a score of United States Senators with their wives and daughters—the Senatorial junketing party that for a month had been dined and wined, surfeited with statistics and dragged up volcanic hill and down lava dale to behold the glories and resources of Hawaii. It was for the junketing party that the transport had called in at Honolulu, and it was to the junketing party that Honolulu was saying good-bye.

The Senators were garlanded and bedecked with flowers. Senator Jeremy Sambrooke's stout neck and portly bosom were burdened with a dozen wreaths. Out of this mass of bloom and blossom projected his head and the greater portion of his freshly sunburned and perspiring face. He thought the flowers an abomination, and as he looked out over the multitude on the wharf it was with a statistical eye that saw none of the beauty, but that peered into the labour power, the factories, the railroads, and the plantations that lay back of the multitude and which the multitude expressed. He saw resources and thought development, and he was too busy with dreams of material achievement and empire to notice his daughter at his side, talking with a young fellow in a natty summer suit and straw hat, whose eager eyes seemed only for her and never left her face. Had Senator Jeremy had eyes for his daughter, he would have seen that, in place of the young girl of fifteen he had brought to Hawaii a short month before, he was now taking away with him a woman.

Hawaii has a ripening climate, and Dorothy Sambrooke had been exposed to it under exceptionally ripening circumstances. Slender, pale, with blue eyes a trifle tired from poring over the pages of books and trying to muddle into an understanding of life—such she had been the month before. But now the eyes were warm instead of tired, the cheeks were touched with the sun, and the body gave the first hint and promise of swelling lines. During that month she had left books alone, for she had found greater joy in reading from the book of life. She had ridden horses, climbed volcanoes, and learned surf swimming. The tropics had entered into her blood, and she was aglow with the warmth and colour and sunshine. And for a month she had been in the company of a man—Stephen Knight, athlete, surf-board rider, a bronzed god of the sea who bitted the crashing breakers, leaped upon their backs, and rode them in to shore.

Dorothy Sambrooke was unaware of the change. Her consciousness was still that of a young girl, and she was surprised and troubled by Steve's conduct in this hour of saying good-bye. She had looked upon him as her playfellow, and for the month he had been her playfellow; but now he was not parting like a playfellow. He talked excitedly and disconnectedly, or was silent, by fits and starts. Sometimes he did not hear what she was saying, or if he did, failed to respond in his wonted manner. She was perturbed by the way he looked at her. She had not known before that he had such blazing eyes. There was something in his eyes that was terrifying. She could not face it, and her own eyes continually drooped before it. Yet there was something alluring about it, as well, and she continually returned to catch a glimpse of that blazing, imperious, yearning something that she had never seen in human eyes before. And she was herself strangely bewildered and excited.

The transport's huge whistle blew a deafening blast, and the flower-crowned multitude surged closer to the side of the dock. Dorothy Sambrooke's fingers were pressed to her ears; and as she made a moue of distaste at the outrage of sound, she noticed again the imperious, yearning blaze in Steve's eyes. He was not looking at her, but at her ears, delicately pink and transparent in the slanting rays of the afternoon sun. Curious and fascinated, she gazed at that strange something in his eyes until he saw that he had been caught. She saw his cheeks flush darkly and heard him utter inarticulately. He was embarrassed, and she was aware of embarrassment herself. Stewards were going about nervously begging shore-going persons to be gone. Steve put out his hand. When she felt the grip of the fingers that had gripped hers a thousand times on surf-boards and lava slopes, she heard the words of the song with a new understanding as they sobbed in the Hawaiian woman's silver throat:

“Ka halia ko aloha kai hiki mai,
Ke hone ae nei i ku'u manawa,
O oe no kan aloha
A loko e hana nei.”

Steve had taught her air and words and meaning—so she had thought, till this instant; and in this instant of the last finger clasp and warm contact of palms she divined for the first time the real meaning of the song. She scarcely saw him go, nor could she

note him on the crowded gangway, for she was deep in a memory maze, living over the four weeks just past, rereading events in the light of revelation.

When the Senatorial party had landed, Steve had been one of the committee of entertainment. It was he who had given them their first exhibition of surf riding, out at Waikiki Beach, paddling his narrow board seaward until he became a disappearing speck, and then, suddenly reappearing, rising like a sea-god from out of the welter of spume and churning white—rising swiftly higher and higher, shoulders and chest and loins and limbs, until he stood poised on the smoking crest of a mighty, mile-long billow, his feet buried in the flying foam, hurling beach-ward with the speed of an express train and stepping calmly ashore at their astounded feet. That had been her first glimpse of Steve. He had been the youngest man on the committee, a youth, himself, of twenty. He had not entertained by speechmaking, nor had he shone decoratively at receptions. It was in the breakers at Waikiki, in the wild cattle drive on Manna Kea, and in the breaking yard of the Haleakala Ranch that he had performed his share of the entertaining.

She had not cared for the interminable statistics and eternal speechmaking of the other members of the committee. Neither had Steve. And it was with Steve that she had stolen away from the open-air feast at Hamakua, and from Abe Louisson, the coffee planter, who had talked coffee, coffee, nothing but coffee, for two mortal hours. It was then, as they rode among the tree ferns, that Steve had taught her the words of “Aloha Oe,” the song that had been sung to the visiting Senators at every village, ranch, and plantation departure.

Steve and she had been much together from the first. He had been her playfellow. She had taken possession of him while her father had been occupied in taking possession of the statistics of the island territory. She was too gentle to tyrannize over her playfellow, yet she had ruled him abjectly, except when in canoe, or on horse or surf-board, at which times he had taken charge and she had rendered obedience. And now, with this last singing of the song, as the lines were cast off and the big transport began backing slowly out from the dock, she knew that Steve was something more to her than playfellow.

Five thousand voices were singing “Aloha Oe,”—“MY LOVE BE WITH YOU TILL WE MEET AGAIN,”—and in that first moment of known love she realized that she and Steve were being torn apart. When would they ever meet again? He had taught her those words himself. She remembered listening as he sang them over and over under the hau tree at Waikiki. Had it been prophecy? And she had admired his singing, had told him that he sang with such expression. She laughed aloud, hysterically, at the recollection. With such expression!—when he had been pouring his heart out in his voice. She knew now, and it was too late. Why had he not spoken? Then she realized that girls of her age did not marry. But girls of her age did marry—in Hawaii—was her instant thought. Hawaii had ripened her—Hawaii, where flesh is golden and where all women are ripe and sun-kissed.

Vainly she scanned the packed multitude on the dock. What had become of him? She felt she could pay any price for one more glimpse of him, and she almost hoped that some mortal sickness would strike the lonely captain on the bridge and delay departure. For the first time in her life she looked at her father with a calculating eye, and as she did she noted with newborn fear the lines of will and determination. It would be terrible to oppose him. And what chance would she have in such a struggle? But why had Steve not spoken? Now it was too late. Why had he not spoken under the hau tree at Waikiki?

And then, with a great sinking of the heart, it came to her that she knew why. What was it she had heard one day? Oh, yes, it was at Mrs. Stanton's tea, that afternoon when the ladies of the "Missionary Crowd" had entertained the ladies of the Senatorial party. It was Mrs. Hodgkins, the tall blonde woman, who had asked the question. The scene came back to her vividly—the broad lanai, the tropic flowers, the noiseless Asiatic attendants, the hum of the voices of the many women and the question Mrs. Hodgkins had asked in the group next to her. Mrs. Hodgkins had been away on the mainland for years, and was evidently inquiring after old island friends of her maiden days. "What has become of Susie Maydwell?" was the question she had asked. "Oh, we never see her any more; she married Willie Kupele," another island woman answered. And Senator Behrend's wife laughed and wanted to know why matrimony had affected Susie Maydwell's friendships.

"Hapa-haole," was the answer; "he was a half-caste, you know, and we of the Islands have to think about our children."

Dorothy turned to her father, resolved to put it to the test.

"Papa, if Steve ever comes to the United States, mayn't he come and see us some time?"

"Who? Steve?"

"Yes, Stephen Knight—you know him. You said good-bye to him not five minutes ago. Mayn't he, if he happens to be in the United States some time, come and see us?"

"Certainly not," Jeremy Sambrooke answered shortly. "Stephen Knight is a hapa-haole and you know what that means."

"Oh," Dorothy said faintly, while she felt a numb despair creep into her heart.

Steve was not a hapa-haole—she knew that; but she did not know that a quarter-strain of tropic sunshine streamed in his veins, and she knew that that was sufficient to put him outside the marriage pale. It was a strange world. There was the Honourable A. S. Cleghorn, who had married a dusky princess of the Kamehameha blood, yet men considered it an honour to know him, and the most exclusive women of the ultra-exclusive "Missionary Crowd" were to be seen at his afternoon teas. And there was Steve. No one had disapproved of his teaching her to ride a surf-board, nor of his leading her by the hand through the perilous places of the crater of Kilauea. He could have dinner with her and her father, dance with her, and be a member of the entertainment committee; but because there was tropic sunshine in his veins he could not marry her.

And he didn't show it. One had to be told to know. And he was so good-looking. The picture of him limned itself on her inner vision, and before she was aware she was pleasuring in the memory of the grace of his magnificent body, of his splendid shoulders, of the power in him that tossed her lightly on a horse, bore her safely through the thundering breakers, or towed her at the end of an alpenstock up the stern lava crest of the House of the Sun. There was something subtler and mysterious that she remembered, and that she was even then just beginning to understand—the aura of the male creature that is man, all man, masculine man. She came to herself with a shock of shame at the thoughts she had been thinking. Her cheeks were dyed with the hot blood which quickly receded and left them pale at the thought that she would never see him again. The stem of the transport was already out in the stream, and the promenade deck was passing abreast of the end of the dock.

“There's Steve now,” her father said. “Wave good-bye to him, Dorothy.”

Steve was looking up at her with eager eyes, and he saw in her face what he had not seen before. By the rush of gladness into his own face she knew that he knew. The air was throbbing with the song-

My love to you.

My love be with you till we meet again.

There was no need for speech to tell their story. About her, passengers were flinging their garlands to their friends on the dock. Steve held up his hands and his eyes pleaded. She slipped her own garland over her head, but it had become entangled in the string of Oriental pearls that Mervin, an elderly sugar king, had placed around her neck when he drove her and her father down to the steamer.

She fought with the pearls that clung to the flowers. The transport was moving steadily on. Steve was already beneath her. This was the moment. The next moment and he would be past. She sobbed, and Jeremy Sambrooke glanced at her inquiringly.

“Dorothy!” he cried sharply.

She deliberately snapped the string, and, amid a shower of pearls, the flowers fell to the waiting lover. She gazed at him until the tears blinded her and she buried her face on the shoulder of Jeremy Sambrooke, who forgot his beloved statistics in wonderment at girl babies that insisted on growing up. The crowd sang on, the song growing fainter in the distance, but still melting with the sensuous love-languor of Hawaii, the words biting into her heart like acid because of their untruth.

Aloha oe, Aloha oe, e ke onaona no ho ika lipo,

A fond embrace, ahoi ae au, until we meet again.

Amateur Night

THE elevator boy smiled knowingly to him self. When he took her up, he had noted the sparkle in her eyes, the color in her cheeks. His little cage had quite warmed with the glow of her repressed eagerness. And now, on the down trip, it was glacier-like. The sparkle and the color were gone. She was frowning, and what little he could see of her eyes was cold and steel-gray. Oh, he knew the symptoms, he did. He was an observer, and he knew it, too, and some day, when he was big enough, he was going to be a reporter, sure. And in the meantime he studied the procession of life as it streamed up and down eighteen sky-scraper floors in his elevator car. He slid the door open for her sympathetically and watched her trip determinedly out into the street.

There was a robustness in her carriage which came of the soil rather than of the city pavement. But it was a robustness in a finer than the wonted sense, a vigorous daintiness, it might be called, which gave an impression of virility with none of the womanly left out. It told of a heredity of seekers and fighters, of people that worked stoutly with head and hand, of ghosts that reached down out of the misty past and moulded and made her to be a doer of things.

But she was a little angry, and a great deal hurt. "I can guess what you would tell me," the editor had kindly but firmly interrupted her lengthy preamble in the long-looked-forward-to interview just ended. "And you have told me enough," he had gone on (heartlessly, she was sure, as she went over the conversation in its freshness). "You have done no newspaper work. You are undrilled, undisciplined, unhammered into shape. You have received a high-school education, and possibly topped it off with normal school or college. You have stood well in English. Your friends have all told you how cleverly you write, and how beautifully, and so forth and so forth. You think you can do newspaper work, and you want me to put you on. Well, I am sorry, but there are no openings. If you knew how crowded — "

"But if there are no openings," she had interrupted, in turn, "how did those who are in, get in? How am I to show that I am eligible to get in?"

"They made themselves indispensable," was the terse response. "Make yourself indispensable."

"But how can I, if I do not get the chance?"

"Make your chance."

"But how?" she had insisted, at the same time privately deeming him a most unreasonable man.

"How? That is your business, not mine," he said conclusively, rising in token that the interview was at an end. "I must inform you, my dear young lady, that there have

been at least eighteen other aspiring young ladies here this week, and that I have not the time to tell each and every one of them how. The function I perform on this paper is hardly that of instructor in a school of journalism.”

She caught an outbound car, and ere she descended from it she had conned the conversation over and over again. “But how?” she repeated to herself, as she climbed the three flights of stairs to the rooms where she and her sister “bach’ed.” “But how?” And so she continued to put the interrogation, for the stubborn Scotch blood, though many times removed from Scottish soil, was still strong in her. And, further, there was need that she should learn how. Her sister Letty and she had come up from an interior town to the city to make their way in the world. John Wyman was land-poor. Disastrous business enterprises had burdened his acres and forced his two girls, Edna and Letty, into doing something for themselves. A year of school-teaching and of night-study of shorthand and typewriting had capitalized their city project and fitted them for the venture, which same venture was turning out anything but successful. The city seemed crowded with inexperienced stenographers and typewriters, and they had nothing but their own inexperience to offer. Edna’s secret ambition had been journalism; but she had planned a clerical position first, so that she might have time and space in which to determine where and on what line of journalism she would embark. But the clerical position had not been forthcoming, either for Letty or her, and day by day their little hoard dwindled, though the room rent remained normal and the stove consumed coal with undiminished voracity. And it was a slim little hoard by now.

“There’s Max Irwin,” Letty said, talking it over. “He’s a journalist with a national reputation. Go and see him, Ed. He knows how, and he should be able to tell you how.”

“But I don’t know him,” Edna objected.

“No more than you knew the editor you saw to-day.”

“Y-e-s,” (long and judicially), “but that’s different.”

“Not a bit different from the strange men and women you’ll interview when you’ve learned how,” Letty encouraged.

“I hadn’t looked at it in that light,” Edna conceded. “After all, where’s the difference between, interviewing Mr. Max Irwin for some paper, or interviewing Mr. Max Irwin for myself? It will be practice, too. I’ll go and look him up in the directory.”

“Letty, I know I can write if I get the chance,” she announced decisively a moment later. “I just FEEL that I have the feel of it, if you know what I mean.”

And Letty knew and nodded. “I wonder what he is like?” she asked softly.

“I’ll make it my business to find out,” Edna assured her; “and I’ll let you know inside forty-eight hours.”

Letty clapped her hands. “Good! That’s the newspaper spirit! Make it twenty-four hours and you are perfect!”

“ — and I am very sorry to trouble you,” she concluded the statement of her case to Max Irwin, famous war correspondent and veteran journalist.

“Not at all,” he answered, with a deprecatory wave of the hand. “If you don’t do your own talking, who’s to do it for you? Now I understand your predicament precisely.

You want to get on the INTELLIGENCER, you want to get in at once, and you have had no previous experience. In the first place, then, have you any pull? There are a dozen men in the city, a line from whom would be an open-sesame. After that you would stand or fall by your own ability. There's Senator Longbridge, for instance, and Claus Inskeep the street-car magnate, and Lane, and McChesney — " He paused, with voice suspended.

"I am sure I know none of them," she answered despondently.

"It's not necessary. Do you know any one that knows them? or any one that knows any one else that knows them?"

Edna shook her head.

"Then we must think of something else," he went on, cheerfully. "You'll have to do something yourself. Let me see."

He stopped and thought for a moment, with closed eyes and wrinkled forehead. She was watching him, studying him intently, when his blue eyes opened with a snap and his face suddenly brightened.

"I have it! But no, wait a minute."

And for a minute it was his turn to study her. And study her he did, till she could feel her cheeks flushing under his gaze.

"You'll do, I think, though it remains to be seen," he said enigmatically. "It will show the stuff that's in you, besides, and it will be a better claim upon the INTELLIGENCER people than all the lines from all the senators and magnates in the world. The thing for you is to do Amateur Night at the Loops."

"I — I hardly understand," Edna said, for his suggestion conveyed no meaning to her. "What are the 'Loops'? and what is 'Amateur Night'?"

"I forgot you said you were from the interior. But so much the better, if you've only got the journalistic grip. It will be a first impression, and first impressions are always unbiased, unprejudiced, fresh, vivid. The Loops are out on the rim of the city, near the Park, — a place of diversion. There's a scenic railway, a water toboggan slide, a concert band, a theatre, wild animals, moving pictures, and so forth and so forth. The common people go there to look at the animals and enjoy themselves, and the other people go there to enjoy themselves by watching the common people enjoy themselves. A democratic, fresh-air-breathing, frolicking affair, that's what the Loops are.

"But the theatre is what concerns you. It's vaudeville. One turn follows another — jugglers, acrobats, rubber-jointed wonders, fire-dancers, coon-song artists, singers, players, female impersonators, sentimental soloists, and so forth and so forth. These people are professional vaudevillists. They make their living that way. Many are excellently paid. Some are free rovers, doing a turn wherever they can get an opening, at the Obermann, the Orpheus, the Alcatraz, the Louvre, and so forth and so forth. Others cover circuit pretty well all over the country. An interesting phase of life, and the pay is big enough to attract many aspirants.

"Now the management of the Loops, in its bid for popularity, instituted what is called 'Amateur Night'; that is to say, twice a week, after the professionals have done

their turns, the stage is given over to the aspiring amateurs. The audience remains to criticise. The populace becomes the arbiter of art — or it thinks it does, which is the same thing; and it pays its money and is well pleased with itself, and Amateur Night is a paying proposition to the management.

“But the point of Amateur Night, and it is well to note it, is that these amateurs are not really amateurs. They are paid for doing their turn. At the best, they may be termed ‘professional amateurs.’ It stands to reason that the management could not get people to face a rampant audience for nothing, and on such occasions the audience certainly goes mad. It’s great fun — for the audience. But the thing for you to do, and it requires nerve, I assure you, is to go out, make arrangements for two turns, (Wednesday and Saturday nights, I believe), do your two turns, and write it up for the Sunday Intelligencer.”

“But — but,” she quavered, “I — I — ” and there was a suggestion of disappointment and tears in her voice.

“I see,” he said kindly. “You were expecting something else, something different, something better. We all do at first. But remember the admiral of the Queen’s Na-vee, who swept the floor and polished up the handle of the big front door. You must face the drudgery of apprenticeship or quit right now. What do you say?”

The abruptness with which he demanded her decision startled her. As she faltered, she could see a shade of disappointment beginning to darken his face.

“In a way it must be considered a test,” he added encouragingly. “A severe one, but so much the better. Now is the time. Are you game?”

“I’ll try,” she said faintly, at the same time making a note of the directness, abruptness, and haste of these city men with whom she was coming in contact.

“Good! Why, when I started in, I had the dreariest, deadliest details imaginable. And after that, for a weary time, I did the police and divorce courts. But it all came well in the end and did me good. You are luckier in making your start with Sunday work. It’s not particularly great. What of it? Do it. Show the stuff you’re made of, and you’ll get a call for better work—better class and better pay. Now you go out this afternoon to the Loops, and engage to do two turns.”

“But what kind of turns can I do?” Edna asked dubiously.

“Do? That’s easy. Can you sing? Never mind, don’t need to sing. Screech, do anything — that’s what you’re paid for, to afford amusement, to give bad art for the populace to howl down. And when you do your turn, take some one along for chaperon. Be afraid of no one. Talk up. Move about among the amateurs waiting their turn, pump them, study them, photograph them in your brain. Get the atmosphere, the color, strong color, lots of it. Dig right in with both hands, and get the essence of it, the spirit, the significance. What does it mean? Find out what it means. That’s what you’re there for. That’s what the readers of the Sunday Intelligencer want to know.

“Be terse in style, vigorous of phrase, apt, concretely apt, in similitude. Avoid platitudes and commonplaces. Exercise selection. Seize upon things salient, eliminate the rest, and you have pictures. Paint those pictures in words and the Intelligencer will

have you. Get hold of a few back numbers, and study the Sunday Intelligencer feature story. Tell it all in the opening paragraph as advertisement of contents, and in the contents tell it all over again. Then put a snapper at the end, so if they're crowded for space they can cut off your contents anywhere, reattach the snapper, and the story will still retain form. There, that's enough. Study the rest out for yourself."

They both rose to their feet, Edna quite carried away by his enthusiasm and his quick, jerky sentences, bristling with the things she wanted to know.

"And remember, Miss Wyman, if you're ambitious, that the aim and end of journalism is not the feature article. Avoid the rut. The feature is a trick. Master it, but don't let it master you. But master it you must; for if you can't learn to do a feature well, you can never expect to do anything better. In short, put your whole self into it, and yet, outside of it, above it, remain yourself, if you follow me. And now good luck to you."

They had reached the door and were shaking hands.

"And one thing more," he interrupted her thanks, "let me see your copy before you turn it in. I may be able to put you straight here and there."

Edna found the manager of the Loops a full-fleshed, heavy-jowled man, bushy of eyebrow and generally belligerent of aspect, with an absent-minded scowl on his face and a black cigar stuck in the midst thereof. Symes was his name, she had learned, Ernst Symes.

"Whatcher turn?" he demanded, ere half her brief application had left her lips.

"Sentimental soloist, soprano," she answered promptly, remembering Irwin's advice to talk up.

"Whatcher name?" Mr. Symes asked, scarcely deigning to glance at her.

She hesitated. So rapidly had she been rushed into the adventure that she had not considered the question of a name at all.

"Any name? Stage name?" he bellowed impatiently.

"Nan Bellayne," she invented on the spur of the moment. "B-e-l-l-a-y-n-e. Yes, that's it."

He scribbled it into a notebook. "All right. Take your turn Wednesday and Saturday."

"How much do I get?" Edna demanded.

"Two-an'-a-half a turn. Two turns, five. Getcher pay first Monday after second turn."

And without the simple courtesy of "Good day," he turned his back on her and plunged into the newspaper he had been reading when she entered.

Edna came early on Wednesday evening, Letty with her, and in a telescope basket her costume — a simple affair. A plaid shawl borrowed from the washerwoman, a ragged scrubbing skirt borrowed from the charwoman, and a gray wig rented from a costumer for twenty-five cents a night, completed the outfit; for Edna had elected to be an old Irishwoman singing broken-heartedly after her wandering boy.

Though they had come early, she found everything in uproar. The main performance was under way, the orchestra was playing and the audience intermittently applauding. The infusion of the amateurs clogged the working of things behind the stage, crowded

the passages, dressing rooms, and wings, and forced everybody into everybody else's way. This was particularly distasteful to the professionals, who carried themselves as befitted those of a higher caste, and whose behavior toward the pariah amateurs was marked by hauteur and even brutality. And Edna, bullied and elbowed and shoved about, clinging desperately to her basket and seeking a dressing room, took note of it all.

A dressing room she finally found, jammed with three other amateur "ladies," who were "making up" with much noise, high-pitched voices, and squabbling over a lone mirror. Her own make-up was so simple that it was quickly accomplished, and she left the trio of ladies holding an armed truce while they passed judgment upon her. Letty was close at her shoulder, and with patience and persistence they managed to get a nook in one of the wings which commanded a view of the stage.

A small, dark man, dapper and debonair, swallow-tailed and top-hatted, was waltzing about the stage with dainty, mincing steps, and in a thin little voice singing something or other about somebody or something evidently pathetic. As his waning voice neared the end of the lines, a large woman, crowned with an amazing wealth of blond hair, thrust rudely past Edna, trod heavily on her toes, and shoved her contemptuously to the side. "Bloomin' hamateur!" she hissed as she went past, and the next instant she was on the stage, graciously bowing to the audience, while the small, dark man twirled extravagantly about on his tiptoes.

"Hello, girls!"

This greeting, drawled with an inimitable vocal caress in every syllable, close in her ear, caused Edna to give a startled little jump. A smooth-faced, moon-faced young man was smiling at her good-naturedly. His "make-up" was plainly that of the stock tramp of the stage, though the inevitable whiskers were lacking.

"Oh, it don't take a minute to slap'm on," he explained, divining the search in her eyes and waving in his hand the adornment in question. "They make a feller sweat," he explained further. And then, "What's yer turn?"

"Soprano — sentimental," she answered, trying to be offhand and at ease.

"Whata you doin' it for?" he demanded directly.

"For fun; what else?" she countered.

"I just sized you up for that as soon as I put eyes on you. You ain't graftin' for a paper, are you?"

"I never met but one editor in my life," she replied evasively, "and I, he — well, we didn't get on very well together."

"Hittin' 'm for a job?"

Edna nodded carelessly, though inwardly anxious and cudgelling her brains for something to turn the conversation.

"What'd he say?"

"That eighteen other girls had already been there that week."

"Gave you the icy mit, eh?" The moon-faced young man laughed and slapped his thighs. "You see, we're kind of suspicious. The Sunday papers 'd like to get Amateur

Night done up brown in a nice little package, and the manager don't see it that way. Gets wild-eyed at the thought of it."

"And what's your turn?" she asked.

"Who? me? Oh, I'm doin' the tramp act tonight. I'm Charley Welsh, you know."

She felt that by the mention of his name he intended to convey to her complete enlightenment, but the best she could do was to say politely, "Oh, is that so?"

She wanted to laugh at the hurt disappointment which came into his face, but concealed her amusement.

"Come, now," he said brusquely, "you can't stand there and tell me you've never heard of Charley Welsh? Well, you must be young. Why, I'm an Only, the Only amateur at that. Sure, you must have seen me. I'm everywhere. I could be a professional, but I get more dough out of it by doin' the amateur."

"But what's an 'Only'?" she queried. "I want to learn."

"Sure," Charley Welsh said gallantly. "I'll put you wise. An 'Only' is a nonpareil, the feller that does one kind of a turn better'n any other feller. He's the Only, see?"

And Edna saw.

"To get a line on the biz," he continued, "throw yer lamps on me. I'm the Only all-round amateur. To-night I make a bluff at the tramp act. It's harder to bluff it than to really do it, but then it's acting, it's amateur, it's art. See? I do everything, from Sheeny monologue to team song and dance and Dutch comedian. Sure, I'm Charley Welsh, the Only Charley Welsh."

And in this fashion, while the thin, dark man and the large, blond woman warbled dulcetly out on the stage and the other professionals followed in their turns, did Charley Welsh put Edna wise, giving her much miscellaneous and superfluous information and much that she stored away for the Sunday Intelligencer.

"Well, tra la loo," he said suddenly. "There's his highness chasin' you up. Yer first on the bill. Never mind the row when you go on. Just finish yer turn like a lady."

It was at that moment that Edna felt her journalistic ambition departing from her, and was aware of an overmastering desire to be somewhere else. But the stage manager, like an ogre, barred her retreat. She could hear the opening bars of her song going up from the orchestra and the noises of the house dying away to the silence of anticipation.

"Go ahead," Letty whispered, pressing her hand; and from the other side came the peremptory "Don't flunk!" of Charley Welsh.

But her feet seemed rooted to the floor, and she leaned weakly against a shift scene. The orchestra was beginning over again, and a lone voice from the house piped with startling distinctness:

"Puzzle picture! Find Nannie!"

A roar of laughter greeted the sally, and Edna shrank back. But the strong hand of the manager descended on her shoulder, and with a quick, powerful shove propelled her out on to the stage. His hand and arm had flashed into full view, and the audience, grasping the situation, thundered its appreciation. The orchestra was drowned out by the terrible din, and Edna could see the bows scraping away across the violins,

apparently without sound. It was impossible for her to begin in time, and as she patiently waited, arms akimbo and ears straining for the music, the house let loose again (a favorite trick, she afterward learned, of confusing the amateur by preventing him or her from hearing the orchestra).

But Edna was recovering her presence of mind. She became aware, pit to dome, of a vast sea of smiling and fun-distorted faces, of vast roars of laughter, rising wave on wave, and then her Scotch blood went cold and angry. The hard-working but silent orchestra gave her the cue, and, without making a sound, she began to move her lips, stretch forth her arms, and sway her body, as though she were really singing. The noise in the house redoubled in the attempt to drown her voice, but she serenely went on with her pantomime. This seemed to continue an interminable time, when the audience, tiring of its prank and in order to hear, suddenly stilled its clamor, and discovered the dumb show she had been making. For a moment all was silent, save for the orchestra, her lips moving on without a sound, and then the audience realized that it had been sold, and broke out afresh, this time with genuine applause in acknowledgment of her victory. She chose this as the happy moment for her exit, and with a bow and a backward retreat, she was off the stage in Letty's arms.

The worst was past, and for the rest of the evening she moved about among the amateurs and professionals, talking, listening, observing, finding out what it meant and taking mental notes of it all. Charley Welsh constituted himself her preceptor and guardian angel, and so well did he perform the self-allotted task that when it was all over she felt fully prepared to write her article. But the proposition had been to do two turns, and her native pluck forced her to live up to it. Also, in the course of the intervening days, she discovered fleeting impressions that required verification; so, on Saturday, she was back again, with her telescope basket and Letty.

The manager seemed looking for her, and she caught an expression of relief in his eyes when he first saw her. He hurried up, greeted her, and bowed with a respect ludicrously at variance with his previous ogre-like behavior. And as he bowed, across his shoulders she saw Charley Welsh deliberately wink.

But the surprise had just begun. The manager begged to be introduced to her sister, chatted entertainingly with the pair of them, and strove greatly and anxiously to be agreeable. He even went so far as to give Edna a dressing room to herself, to the unspeakable envy of the three other amateur ladies of previous acquaintance. Edna was nonplussed, and it was not till she met Charley Welsh in the passage that light was thrown on the mystery.

"Hello!" he greeted her. "On Easy Street, eh? Everything slidin' your way."

She smiled brightly.

"Thinks yer a female reporter, sure. I almost split when I saw'm layin' himself out sweet an' pleasin'. Honest, now, that ain't yer graft, is it?"

"I told you my experience with editors," she parried. "And honest now, it was honest, too."

But the Only Charley Welsh shook his head dubiously. "Not that I care a rap," he declared. "And if you are, just gimme a couple of lines of notice, the right kind, good ad, you know. And if yer not, why yer all right anyway. Yer not our class, that's straight."

After her turn, which she did this time with the nerve of an old campaigner, the manager returned to the charge; and after saying nice things and being generally nice himself, he came to the point.

"You'll treat us well, I hope," he said insinuatingly. "Do the right thing by us, and all that?"

"Oh," she answered innocently, "you couldn't persuade me to do another turn; I know I seemed to take and that you'd like to have me, but I really, really can't."

"You know what I mean," he said, with a touch of his old bulldozing manner.

"No, I really won't," she persisted. "Vaudeville's too — too wearing on the nerves, my nerves, at any rate."

Whereat he looked puzzled and doubtful, and forbore to press the point further.

But on Monday morning, when she came to his office to get her pay for the two turns, it was he who puzzled her.

"You surely must have mistaken me," he lied glibly. "I remember saying something about paying your car fare. We always do this, you know, but we never, never pay amateurs. That would take the life and sparkle out of the whole thing. No, Charley Welsh was stringing you. He gets paid nothing for his turns. No amateur gets paid. The idea is ridiculous. However, here's fifty cents. It will pay your sister's car fare also. And," — very suavely, — "speaking for the Loops, permit me to thank you for the kind and successful contribution of your services."

That afternoon, true to her promise to Max Irwin, she placed her typewritten copy into his hands. And while he ran over it, he nodded his head from time to time, and maintained a running fire of commendatory remarks: "Good! — that's it! — that's the stuff! — psychology's all right! — the very idea! — you've caught it! — excellent! — missed it a bit here, but it'll go — that's vigorous! — strong! — vivid! — pictures! pictures! — excellent! — most excellent!"

And when he had run down to the bottom of the last page, holding out his hand: "My dear Miss Wyman, I congratulate you. I must say you have exceeded my expectations, which, to say the least, were large. You are a journalist, a natural journalist. You've got the grip, and you're sure to get on. The Intelligencer will take it, without doubt, and take you too. They'll have to take you. If they don't, some of the other papers will get you."

"But what's this?" he queried, the next instant, his face going serious. "You've said nothing about receiving the pay for your turns, and that's one of the points of the feature. I expressly mentioned it, if you'll remember."

"It will never do," he said, shaking his head ominously, when she had explained. "You simply must collect that money somehow. Let me see. Let me think a moment."

"Never mind, Mr. Irwin," she said. "I've bothered you enough. Let me use your 'phone, please, and I'll try Mr. Ernst Symes again."

He vacated his chair by the desk, and Edna took down the receiver.

“Charley Welsh is sick,” she began, when the connection had been made. “What? No I’m not Charley Welsh. Charley Welsh is sick, and his sister wants to know if she can come out this afternoon and draw his pay for him?”

“Tell Charley Welsh’s sister that Charley Welsh was out this morning, and drew his own pay,” came back the manager’s familiar tones, crisp with asperity.

“All right,” Edna went on. “And now Nan Bellayne wants to know if she and her sister can come out this afternoon and draw Nan Bellayne’s pay?”

“What’d he say? What’d he say?” Max Irwin cried excitedly, as she hung up.

“That Nan Bellayne was too much for him, and that she and her sister could come out and get her pay and the freedom of the Loops, to boot.”

“One thing, more,” he interrupted her thanks at the door, as on her previous visit. “Now that you’ve shown the stuff you’re made of, I should esteem it, ahem, a privilege to give you a line myself to the Intelligencer people.”

And ‘Frisco Kid Came Back

“HELLO ye stiffs! — got the makin’s? I got ter smoke so bad I can taste it. Say! it’s like t’ree squares a day an’ a hold me down, ter be wid yer onst more.

“Wot’v I been doin’ wid meself? an, w’ere did I snare me good togs? Well, it’s dis way. I wuz down in my luck — way down in G — way down under me uppers — Say! I wuz down dat far I fell clear troo’ an’ cum up on top on de udder side — way up in C. Say! yer wudn’t a knowed me!

“Dis is how de presto change happened. I struck a jay town on de C. B. and Q. jerk an’ got hoodooed. I battered a house fer me breakfas’ an’ bump’t up inter a red-headed woman. Say! I wuz dat rattled I fergot ter steal de soap. De nex’ house I slammed de gate at, dere wuz a cross-eyed man, an’ I didn’t spit in me hat. Dat done me all up. I was clean off me nut wid de hoodoo.

“After dat I cudn’t put me han’ ter nuthin’ widout gettin’ de gee hee. Nuthin’ went O. K. Bimeby, w’en I wuz mopin’ up de main-drag, I struck a guy fer de price, an’ he wuz a fly-cop an’ I got thirty days. Dat settled me. Me name wuz Mud. I wuz not in it. I wuz outen de movement.

“W’en I did me time I wuz goin’ ter give de burg de swift an’ elegant side sneak — but I didn’t. An’ dats how I fell clean troo’. Dere wuzn’t a freight along ‘till dark, so I chases meself around ter have a swim. Den I swiped a kid’s line an’ went ter fishin’. Dey wudn’t bite. I cudn’t ketch a cat. I cudn’t ketch nuthin’ ‘till an old Rube take a tumble to himself offen de end. He cum sailin’ by wid a horrible thirst on — he cudn’t get enuff. I trowed ‘m de line an’ snared ‘m de firs’ rattle outen de box.

“W’en I got ‘m landed, he sez, ‘Yer me saviour.’

“‘So yer tellin’ me,’ sez I.

“‘Yer an angel,’ sez he.

“‘Yer bet yer sweet life,’ sez I.

“‘I’ll reward ye,’ sez he.

“‘Now yer shoutin’,’ sez I.

“Say! dat old guy chases me home, an’ after he chewed de rag wid his ole woman — mebbe yer tinkin’ I’m tellin’ yer a fairy story — but may I never get der price again, if dey didn’t adopt me.

“I tole dem me tale of woe. Wot did I w’isper? I tole ‘m how me ole man uster t’ump me ole woman w’en he got an edge on, an’ I tole ‘m how pious she wuz, an’ how she uster tell me to be upright an’ noble — an’ how she kicked de buycket wid a broken heart, an’ how de ole man kicked me out, an’ how he swilled like ‘r fish till he kicked

de pig, too. Me little song wuz nuthin' but kick — 'fer tell yer de truth,' sez I, 'I wuz never growed up, I wuz kicked up. Dat's how I cum here — I wuz kicked here.'

"Den de ole girl took me in her arms an' sez, 'Me poor boy.' An' de ole boy blows his bandana fit ter kill, an' I makes de stage hit by cryin' meself. Say! dat brung down de house — we all blubbered.

"De old girl — say! she was a nice ole girl — she sez I wud never get kicked no more, an' de ole hoss, he sez he had enuff fer ter take care 'v me too. Dat's how I fell troo' me luck an' cum out on top.

"W'y didn't I hol' it down? Wot are yer givin' us? Wait till I give yer me spiel. It was no snap. see! Dey wuz too good fer me. Every time I'd get settled down ter tinkin' 'v de gang, he'd ask me wot de las' verse wuz, an' w'en I didn't know, he'd look dat hurt it 'd make me feel bad. I never cud listen, 'cept w'en he'd read about Joshua. Say! he wuz a scrapper fer yer life! Den I liked Samson, too. De barbers were on a strike w'ere he lived, an' he wuz stronger dan a locomotive. Parts wuz as good as Deadwood Dick an Nick Carter, an' w'en he cum to w'ere an ole bloke wuz dat long winded, he lived over nine hundred years. Say! it wuz out uv sight; but den dey wuz a whole lot 'v dem an' I got weary. An' w'en he'd read about dere sons, an' de sons of dem sons, an' de sons of dem sons, an' all de udder sons beside, I'd pound me ear an' snore.

"Den, I cudn't quit swearin', an' every time I'd rip a big 'n out, de old gal'd show de whites 'v her eyes an' say, 'Thomas!' long an' solem' an' reprov'in' like.

"An' dey wud allus smell me breath ter see if I'd ben smokin'. An' dey wudn't let me eat wid me knife, nor spill de java out 'n me saucer. I cudn't never ketch on ter dere style. I was allus jabbin' me knife inter de butter dish, or fergettin' ter put de sugar spoon back in de bowl. Den I chewed out loud an' dat scraped on dere nerves. An' I'd allus fergit an' put de napkins in me pocket w'en I wuz done. Den dey made me sport me head piece straight on me nut, an' dey sed I swung me shoulders too much w'en I walked.

"Den I kep' gettin' inter scraps wid de kids on de block. Had to do somethin' fer excitement, see! One time I got a lot 'v dem on de back fence, an' made 'm sit in a row, wid each a chew of Star in his han'. W'en I guv de word dey all began ter chew. De kid dat chewed de longes' wuz ter get a bird uv a kite I made fer de occasion. Say! yer ouden seen dem kids. W'en I called time, dere wuzn't one left on de fence. Yer'd t'ink de cholera 'd struck de town de way all chased home, sick. Say! yer ouden ben dere. Dere mudders waltzed over ter de house in flocks an' pestered de life ouden de ole girl. Dey sed I wuz corruptin' de good morals uv dere sons, an' dat I was a menace ter dere lives an' property.

"I got inter lots uv scrapes like dat; but I allus jollied dem up an' made it all right. Dey tried ter sen' me ter school — Say! I got de G. B. de firs' day. Dey never got tired — dey wuz allus tryin' ter improve me. Dey wuz bound ter make a good boy ouden me, an' I wuz boun' dey wudn't.

"Bimeby I got homesick. I got ter t'inking of de road again — of de gang an' de good ole times I had wid dem. Say! it'd make me heart jump w'en I'd hear an engine whistle,

an' I'd t'ink 'v freights an' passengers, an' remember how I uster ketch de blind an' shinny up ter de decks, or grab a gunnel an' swing underneath. An' I wuz jes' dyin' fer a game uv craps 'r seven up. I made up me mind date de adoption scheme was N. G. One day I got ter rememberin' de las' mulligan I had. Yer knows de time — w'en Pittsburg Joe bummed de butcher-shops, an' Chi Slim de bakeries, an' de Montana Sports de groceries, an' you an' I swiped de chickens, w'ile Moulder Blackey got de beer, an' Leary Joe made de fire, an' Skysail Jack did de cookin'. Say! it made me mouth water ter t'ink uv it. I cudn't stand it no longer, so I guv me adopted parents de ditch, an' hit de road onst more.

“Ah! dere's de greasy, old deck again. Don't care 'f I do. I'll go yer jes' onst fer luck. Cut fer deal — Jack High.”

The Apostate

“Now I wake me up to work;
I pray the Lord I may not shirk.
If I should die before the night,
I pray the Lord my work’s all right.”
Amen.

“If you don’t git up, Johnny, I won’t give you a bite to eat!”

The threat had no effect on the boy. He clung stubbornly to sleep, fighting for its oblivion as the dreamer fights for his dream. The boy’s hands loosely clenched themselves, and he made feeble, spasmodic blows at the air. These blows were intended for his mother, but she betrayed practised familiarity in avoiding them as she shook him roughly by the shoulder. “Lemme ‘lone!”

It was a cry that began, muffled, in the deeps of sleep, that swiftly rushed upward, like a wail, into passionate belligerence, and that died away and sank down into an inarticulate whine. It was a bestial cry, as of a soul in torment, filled with infinite protest and pain.

But she did not mind. She was a sad-eyed, tired-faced woman, and she had grown used to this task, which she repeated every day of her life. She got a grip on the bed-clothes and tried to strip them down; but the boy, ceasing his punching, clung to them desperately. In a huddle, at the foot of the bed, he still remained covered. Then she tried dragging the bedding to the floor. The boy opposed her. She braced herself. Hers was the superior weight, and the boy and bedding gave, the former instinctively following the latter in order to shelter against the chill of the room that bit into his body.

As he toppled on the edge of the bed it seemed that he must fall head-first to the floor. But consciousness fluttered up in him. He righted himself and for a moment perilously balanced. Then he struck the floor on his feet. On the instant his mother seized him by the shoulders and shook him. Again his fists struck out, this time with more force and directness. At the same time his eyes opened. She released him. He was awake.

“All right,” he mumbled.

She caught up the lamp and hurried out, leaving him in darkness.

“You’ll be docked,” she warned back to him.

He did not mind the darkness. When he had got into his clothes, he went out into the kitchen. His tread was very heavy for so thin and light a boy. His legs dragged with

their own weight, which seemed unreasonable because they were such skinny legs. He drew a broken-bottomed chair to the table.

“Johnny!” his mother called sharply.

He arose as sharply from the chair, and, without a word, went to the sink. It was a greasy, filthy sink. A smell came up from the outlet. He took no notice of it. That a sink should smell was to him part of the natural order, just as it was a part of the natural order that the soap should be grimy with dish-water and hard to lather. Nor did he try very hard to make it lather. Several splashes of the cold water from the running faucet completed the function. He did not wash his teeth. For that matter he had never seen a tooth-brush, nor did he know that there existed beings in the world who were guilty of so great a foolishness as tooth washing.

“You might wash yourself wunst a day without bein’ told,” his mother complained.

She was holding a broken lid on the pot as she poured two cups of coffee. He made no remark, for this was a standing quarrel between them, and the one thing upon which his mother was hard as adamant. “Wunst” a day it was compulsory that he should wash his face. He dried himself on a greasy towel, damp and dirty and ragged, that left his face covered with shreds of lint.

“I wish we didn’t live so far away,” she said, as he sat down. “I try to do the best I can. You know that. But a dollar on the rent is such a savin’, an’ we’ve more room here. You know that.”

He scarcely followed her. He had heard it all before, many times. The range of her thought was limited, and she was ever harking back to the hardship worked upon them by living so far from the mills.

“A dollar means more grub,” he remarked sententiously. “I’d sooner do the walkin’ an’ git the grub.”

He ate hurriedly, half chewing the bread and washing the unmasticated chunks down with coffee. The hot and muddy liquid went by the name of coffee. Johnny thought it was coffee—and excellent coffee. That was one of the few of life’s illusions that remained to him. He had never drunk real coffee in his life.

In addition to the bread, there was a small piece of cold pork. His mother refilled his cup with coffee. As he was finishing the bread, he began to watch if more was forthcoming. She intercepted his questioning glance.

“Now, don’t be hoggish, Johnny,” was her comment. “You’ve had your share. Your brothers an’ sisters are smaller’n you.”

He did not answer the rebuke. He was not much of a talker. Also, he ceased his hungry glancing for more. He was uncomplaining, with a patience that was as terrible as the school in which it had been learned. He finished his coffee, wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, and started to rise.

“Wait a second,” she said hastily. “I guess the loaf kin stand you another slice—a thin un.”

There was legerdemain in her actions. With all the seeming of cutting a slice from the loaf for him, she put loaf and slice back in the bread box and conveyed to him

one of her own two slices. She believed she had deceived him, but he had noted her sleight-of-hand. Nevertheless, he took the bread shamelessly. He had a philosophy that his mother, what of her chronic sickliness, was not much of an eater anyway.

She saw that he was chewing the bread dry, and reached over and emptied her coffee cup into his.

“Don’t set good somehow on my stomach this morning,” she explained.

A distant whistle, prolonged and shrieking, brought both of them to their feet. She glanced at the tin alarm-clock on the shelf. The hands stood at half-past five. The rest of the factory world was just arousing from sleep. She drew a shawl about her shoulders, and on her head put a dingy hat, shapeless and ancient.

“We’ve got to run,” she said, turning the wick of the lamp and blowing down the chimney.

They groped their way out and down the stairs. It was clear and cold, and Johnny shivered at the first contact with the outside air. The stars had not yet begun to pale in the sky, and the city lay in blackness. Both Johnny and his mother shuffled their feet as they walked. There was no ambition in the leg muscles to swing the feet clear of the ground.

After fifteen silent minutes, his mother turned off to the right.

“Don’t be late,” was her final warning from out of the dark that was swallowing her up.

He made no response, steadily keeping on his way. In the factory quarter, doors were opening everywhere, and he was soon one of a multitude that pressed onward through the dark. As he entered the factory gate the whistle blew again. He glanced at the east. Across a ragged sky-line of housetops a pale light was beginning to creep. This much he saw of the day as he turned his back upon it and joined his work gang.

He took his place in one of many long rows of machines. Before him, above a bin filled with small bobbins, were large bobbins revolving rapidly. Upon these he wound the jute-twine of the small bobbins. The work was simple. All that was required was celerity. The small bobbins were emptied so rapidly, and there were so many large bobbins that did the emptying, that there were no idle moments.

He worked mechanically. When a small bobbin ran out, he used his left hand for a brake, stopping the large bobbin and at the same time, with thumb and forefinger, catching the flying end of twine. Also, at the same time, with his right hand, he caught up the loose twine-end of a small bobbin. These various acts with both hands were performed simultaneously and swiftly. Then there would come a flash of his hands as he looped the weaver’s knot and released the bobbin. There was nothing difficult about weaver’s knots. He once boasted he could tie them in his sleep. And for that matter, he sometimes did, toiling centuries long in a single night at tying an endless succession of weaver’s knots.

Some of the boys shirked, wasting time and machinery by not replacing the small bobbins when they ran out. And there was an overseer to prevent this. He caught Johnny’s neighbor at the trick, and boxed his ears.

“Look at Johnny there—why ain’t you like him?” the overseer wrathfully demanded.

Johnny’s bobbins were running full blast, but he did not thrill at the indirect praise. There had been a time . . . but that was long ago, very long ago. His apathetic face was expressionless as he listened to himself being held up as a shining example. He was the perfect worker. He knew that. He had been told so, often. It was a commonplace, and besides it didn’t seem to mean anything to him any more. From the perfect worker he had evolved into the perfect machine. When his work went wrong, it was with him as with the machine, due to faulty material. It would have been as possible for a perfect nail-die to cut imperfect nails as for him to make a mistake.

And small wonder. There had never been a time when he had not been in intimate relationship with machines. Machinery had almost been bred into him, and at any rate he had been brought up on it. Twelve years before, there had been a small flutter of excitement in the loom room of this very mill. Johnny’s mother had fainted. They stretched her out on the floor in the midst of the shrieking machines. A couple of elderly women were called from their looms. The foreman assisted. And in a few minutes there was one more soul in the loom room than had entered by the doors. It was Johnny, born with the pounding, crashing roar of the looms in his ears, drawing with his first breath the warm, moist air that was thick with flying lint. He had coughed that first day in order to rid his lungs of the lint; and for the same reason he had coughed ever since.

The boy alongside of Johnny whimpered and sniffed. The boy’s face was convulsed with hatred for the overseer who kept a threatening eye on him from a distance; but every bobbin was running full. The boy yelled terrible oaths into the whirling bobbins before him; but the sound did not carry half a dozen feet, the roaring of the room holding it in and containing it like a wall.

Of all this Johnny took no notice. He had a way of accepting things. Besides, things grow monotonous by repetition, and this particular happening he had witnessed many times. It seemed to him as useless to oppose the overseer as to defy the will of a machine. Machines were made to go in certain ways and to perform certain tasks. It was the same with the overseer.

But at eleven o’clock there was excitement in the room. In an apparently occult way the excitement instantly permeated everywhere. The one-legged boy who worked on the other side of Johnny bobbed swiftly across the floor to a bin truck that stood empty. Into this he dived out of sight, crutch and all. The superintendent of the mill was coming along, accompanied by a young man. He was well dressed and wore a starched shirt—a gentleman, in Johnny’s classification of men, and also, “the Inspector.”

He looked sharply at the boys as he passed along. Sometimes he stopped and asked questions. When he did so, he was compelled to shout at the top of his lungs, at which moments his face was ludicrously contorted with the strain of making himself heard. His quick eye noted the empty machine alongside of Johnny’s, but he said nothing. Johnny also caught his eye, and he stopped abruptly. He caught Johnny by the arm

to draw him back a step from the machine; but with an exclamation of surprise he released the arm.

“Pretty skinny,” the superintendent laughed anxiously.

“Pipe stems,” was the answer. “Look at those legs. The boy’s got the rickets—incipient, but he’s got them. If epilepsy doesn’t get him in the end, it will be because tuberculosis gets him first.”

Johnny listened, but did not understand. Furthermore he was not interested in future ills. There was an immediate and more serious ill that threatened him in the form of the inspector.

“Now, my boy, I want you to tell me the truth,” the inspector said, or shouted, bending close to the boy’s ear to make him hear. “How old are you?”

“Fourteen,” Johnny lied, and he lied with the full force of his lungs. So loudly did he lie that it started him off in a dry, hacking cough that lifted the lint which had been settling in his lungs all morning.

“Looks sixteen at least,” said the superintendent.

“Or sixty,” snapped the inspector.

“He’s always looked that way.”

“How long?” asked the inspector, quickly.

“For years. Never gets a bit older.”

“Or younger, I dare say. I suppose he’s worked here all those years?”

“Off and on—but that was before the new law was passed,” the superintendent hastened to add. “Machine idle?” the inspector asked, pointing at the unoccupied machine beside Johnny’s, in which the part-filled bobbins were flying like mad.

“Looks that way.” The superintendent motioned the overseer to him and shouted in his ear and pointed at the machine. “Machine’s idle,” he reported back to the inspector.

They passed on, and Johnny returned to his work, relieved in that the ill had been averted. But the one-legged boy was not so fortunate. The sharp-eyed inspector haled him out at arm’s length from the bin truck. His lips were quivering, and his face had all the expression of one upon whom was fallen profound and irremediable disaster. The overseer looked astounded, as though for the first time he had laid eyes on the boy, while the superintendent’s face expressed shock and displeasure.

“I know him,” the inspector said. “He’s twelve years old. I’ve had him discharged from three factories inside the year. This makes the fourth.”

He turned to the one-legged boy. “You promised me, word and honor, that you’d go to school.”

The one-legged boy burst into tears. “Please, Mr. Inspector, two babies died on us, and we’re awful poor.”

“What makes you cough that way?” the inspector demanded, as though charging him with crime.

And as in denial of guilt, the one-legged boy replied: “It ain’t nothin’. I jes’ caught a cold last week, Mr. Inspector, that’s all.”

In the end the one-legged boy went out of the room with the inspector, the latter accompanied by the anxious and protesting superintendent. After that monotony settled down again. The long morning and the longer afternoon wore away and the whistle blew for quitting time. Darkness had already fallen when Johnny passed out through the factory gate. In the interval the sun had made a golden ladder of the sky, flooded the world with its gracious warmth, and dropped down and disappeared in the west behind a ragged sky-line of housetops.

Supper was the family meal of the day—the one meal at which Johnny encountered his younger brothers and sisters. It partook of the nature of an encounter, to him, for he was very old, while they were distressingly young. He had no patience with their excessive and amazing juvenility. He did not understand it. His own childhood was too far behind him. He was like an old and irritable man, annoyed by the turbulence of their young spirits that was to him arrant silliness. He glowered silently over his food, finding compensation in the thought that they would soon have to go to work. That would take the edge off of them and make them sedate and dignified—like him. Thus it was, after the fashion of the human, that Johnny made of himself a yardstick with which to measure the universe.

During the meal, his mother explained in various ways and with infinite repetition that she was trying to do the best she could; so that it was with relief, the scant meal ended, that Johnny shoved back his chair and arose. He debated for a moment between bed and the front door, and finally went out the latter. He did not go far. He sat down on the stoop, his knees drawn up and his narrow shoulders drooping forward, his elbows on his knees and the palms of his hands supporting his chin. As he sat there, he did no thinking. He was just resting. So far as his mind was concerned, it was asleep. His brothers and sisters came out, and with other children played noisily about him. An electric globe on the corner lighted their frolics. He was peevish and irritable, that they knew; but the spirit of adventure lured them into teasing him. They joined hands before him, and, keeping time with their bodies, chanted in his face weird and uncomplimentary doggerel. At first he snarled curses at them—curses he had learned from the lips of various foremen. Finding this futile, and remembering his dignity, he relapsed into dogged silence.

His brother Will, next to him in age, having just passed his tenth birthday, was the ring-leader. Johnny did not possess particularly kindly feelings toward him. His life had early been embittered by continual giving over and giving way to Will. He had a definite feeling that Will was greatly in his debt and was ungrateful about it. In his own playtime, far back in the dim past, he had been robbed of a large part of that playtime by being compelled to take care of Will. Will was a baby then, and then, as now, their mother had spent her days in the mills. To Johnny had fallen the part of little father and little mother as well.

Will seemed to show the benefit of the giving over and the giving way. He was well-built, fairly rugged, as tall as his elder brother and even heavier. It was as though the life-blood of the one had been diverted into the other's veins. And in spirits it was

the same. Johnny was jaded, worn out, without resilience, while his younger brother seemed bursting and spilling over with exuberance.

The mocking chant rose louder and louder. Will leaned closer as he danced, thrusting out his tongue. Johnny's left arm shot out and caught the other around the neck. At the same time he rapped his bony fist to the other's nose. It was a pathetically bony fist, but that it was sharp to hurt was evidenced by the squeal of pain it produced. The other children were uttering frightened cries, while Johnny's sister, Jennie, had dashed into the house.

He thrust Will from him, kicked him savagely on the shins, then reached for him and slammed him face downward in the dirt. Nor did he release him till the face had been rubbed into the dirt several times. Then the mother arrived, an anaemic whirlwind of solicitude and maternal wrath.

"Why can't he leave me alone?" was Johnny's reply to her upbraiding. "Can't he see I'm tired?"

"I'm as big as you," Will raged in her arms, his face a mess of tears, dirt, and blood. "I'm as big as you now, an' I'm goin' to git bigger. Then I'll lick you—see if I don't."

"You ought to be to work, seein' how big you are," Johnny snarled. "That's what's the matter with you. You ought to be to work. An' it's up to your ma to put you to work."

"But he's too young," she protested. "He's only a little boy."

"I was younger'n him when I started to work."

Johnny's mouth was open, further to express the sense of unfairness that he felt, but the mouth closed with a snap. He turned gloomily on his heel and stalked into the house and to bed. The door of his room was open to let in warmth from the kitchen. As he undressed in the semi-darkness he could hear his mother talking with a neighbor woman who had dropped in. His mother was crying, and her speech was punctuated with spiritless snuffles.

"I can't make out what's gittin' into Johnny," he could hear her say. "He didn't used to be this way. He was a patient little angel."

"An' he is a good boy," she hastened to defend. "He's worked faithful, an' he did go to work too young. But it wasn't my fault. I do the best I can, I'm sure."

Prolonged sniffing from the kitchen, and Johnny murmured to himself as his eyelids closed down, "You betcher life I've worked faithful."

The next morning he was torn bodily by his mother from the grip of sleep. Then came the meagre breakfast, the tramp through the dark, and the pale glimpse of day across the housetops as he turned his back on it and went in through the factory gate. It was another day, of all the days, and all the days were alike.

And yet there had been variety in his life—at the times he changed from one job to another, or was taken sick. When he was six, he was little mother and father to Will and the other children still younger. At seven he went into the mills—winding bobbins. When he was eight, he got work in another mill. His new job was marvellously easy. All he had to do was to sit down with a little stick in his hand and guide a stream of cloth

that flowed past him. This stream of cloth came out of the maw of a machine, passed over a hot roller, and went on its way elsewhere. But he sat always in the one place, beyond the reach of daylight, a gas-jet flaring over him, himself part of the mechanism.

He was very happy at that job, in spite of the moist heat, for he was still young and in possession of dreams and illusions. And wonderful dreams he dreamed as he watched the streaming cloth streaming endlessly by. But there was no exercise about the work, no call upon his mind, and he dreamed less and less, while his mind grew torpid and drowsy. Nevertheless, he earned two dollars a week, and two dollars represented the difference between acute starvation and chronic underfeeding.

But when he was nine, he lost his job. Measles was the cause of it. After he recovered, he got work in a glass factory. The pay was better, and the work demanded skill. It was piece-work, and the more skilful he was, the bigger wages he earned. Here was incentive. And under this incentive he developed into a remarkable worker.

It was simple work, the tying of glass stoppers into small bottles. At his waist he carried a bundle of twine. He held the bottles between his knees so that he might work with both hands. Thus, in a sitting position and bending over his own knees, his narrow shoulders grew humped and his chest was contracted for ten hours each day. This was not good for the lungs, but he tied three hundred dozen bottles a day.

The superintendent was very proud of him, and brought visitors to look at him. In ten hours three hundred dozen bottles passed through his hands. This meant that he had attained machine-like perfection. All waste movements were eliminated. Every motion of his thin arms, every movement of a muscle in the thin fingers, was swift and accurate. He worked at high tension, and the result was that he grew nervous. At night his muscles twitched in his sleep, and in the daytime he could not relax and rest. He remained keyed up and his muscles continued to twitch. Also he grew sallow and his lint-cough grew worse. Then pneumonia laid hold of the feeble lungs within the contracted chest, and he lost his job in the glass-works. Now he had returned to the jute mills where he had first begun with winding bobbins. But promotion was waiting for him. He was a good worker. He would next go on the starcher, and later he would go into the loom room. There was nothing after that except increased efficiency.

The machinery ran faster than when he had first gone to work, and his mind ran slower. He no longer dreamed at all, though his earlier years had been full of dreaming. Once he had been in love. It was when he first began guiding the cloth over the hot roller, and it was with the daughter of the superintendent. She was much older than he, a young woman, and he had seen her at a distance only a paltry half-dozen times. But that made no difference. On the surface of the cloth stream that poured past him, he pictured radiant futures wherein he performed prodigies of toil, invented miraculous machines, won to the mastership of the mills, and in the end took her in his arms and kissed her soberly on the brow.

But that was all in the long ago, before he had grown too old and tired to love. Also, she had married and gone away, and his mind had gone to sleep. Yet it had been a wonderful experience, and he used often to look back upon it as other men and women

look back upon the time they believed in fairies. He had never believed in fairies nor Santa Claus; but he had believed implicitly in the smiling future his imagination had wrought into the steaming cloth stream.

He had become a man very early in life. At seven, when he drew his first wages, began his adolescence. A certain feeling of independence crept up in him, and the relationship between him and his mother changed. Somehow, as an earner and breadwinner, doing his own work in the world, he was more like an equal with her. Manhood, full-blown manhood, had come when he was eleven, at which time he had gone to work on the night shift for six months. No child works on the night shift and remains a child.

There had been several great events in his life. One of these had been when his mother bought some California prunes. Two others had been the two times when she cooked custard. Those had been events. He remembered them kindly. And at that time his mother had told him of a blissful dish she would sometime make—"floating island," she had called it, "better than custard." For years he had looked forward to the day when he would sit down to the table with floating island before him, until at last he had relegated the idea of it to the limbo of unattainable ideals.

Once he found a silver quarter lying on the sidewalk. That, also, was a great event in his life, withal a tragic one. He knew his duty on the instant the silver flashed on his eyes, before even he had picked it up. At home, as usual, there was not enough to eat, and home he should have taken it as he did his wages every Saturday night. Right conduct in this case was obvious; but he never had any spending of his money, and he was suffering from candy hunger. He was ravenous for the sweets that only on red-letter days he had ever tasted in his life.

He did not attempt to deceive himself. He knew it was sin, and deliberately he sinned when he went on a fifteen-cent candy debauch. Ten cents he saved for a future orgy; but not being accustomed to the carrying of money, he lost the ten cents. This occurred at the time when he was suffering all the torments of conscience, and it was to him an act of divine retribution. He had a frightened sense of the closeness of an awful and wrathful God. God had seen, and God had been swift to punish, denying him even the full wages of sin.

In memory he always looked back upon that event as the one great criminal deed of his life, and at the recollection his conscience always awoke and gave him another twinge. It was the one skeleton in his closet. Also, being so made and circumstanced, he looked back upon the deed with regret. He was dissatisfied with the manner in which he had spent the quarter. He could have invested it better, and, out of his later knowledge of the quickness of God, he would have beaten God out by spending the whole quarter at one fell swoop. In retrospect he spent the quarter a thousand times, and each time to better advantage.

There was one other memory of the past, dim and faded, but stamped into his soul everlasting by the savage feet of his father. It was more like a nightmare than a remembered vision of a concrete thing—more like the race-memory of man that makes him fall in his sleep and that goes back to his arboreal ancestry.

This particular memory never came to Johnny in broad daylight when he was wide awake. It came at night, in bed, at the moment that his consciousness was sinking down and losing itself in sleep. It always aroused him to frightened wakefulness, and for the moment, in the first sickening start, it seemed to him that he lay crosswise on the foot of the bed. In the bed were the vague forms of his father and mother. He never saw what his father looked like. He had but one impression of his father, and that was that he had savage and pitiless feet.

His earlier memories lingered with him, but he had no late memories. All days were alike. Yesterday or last year were the same as a thousand years—or a minute. Nothing ever happened. There were no events to mark the march of time. Time did not march. It stood always still. It was only the whirling machines that moved, and they moved nowhere—in spite of the fact that they moved faster.

* * *

When he was fourteen, he went to work on the starcher. It was a colossal event. Something had at last happened that could be remembered beyond a night's sleep or a week's pay-day. It marked an era. It was a machine Olympiad, a thing to date from. "When I went to work on the starcher," or, "after," or "before I went to work on the starcher," were sentences often on his lips.

He celebrated his sixteenth birthday by going into the loom room and taking a loom. Here was an incentive again, for it was piece-work. And he excelled, because the clay of him had been moulded by the mills into the perfect machine. At the end of three months he was running two looms, and, later, three and four.

At the end of his second year at the looms he was turning out more yards than any other weaver, and more than twice as much as some of the less skilful ones. And at home things began to prosper as he approached the full stature of his earning power. Not, however, that his increased earnings were in excess of need. The children were growing up. They ate more. And they were going to school, and school-books cost money. And somehow, the faster he worked, the faster climbed the prices of things. Even the rent went up, though the house had fallen from bad to worse disrepair.

He had grown taller; but with his increased height he seemed leaner than ever. Also, he was more nervous. With the nervousness increased his peevishness and irritability. The children had learned by many bitter lessons to fight shy of him. His mother respected him for his earning power, but somehow her respect was tinged with fear.

There was no joyousness in life for him. The procession of the days he never saw. The nights he slept away in twitching unconsciousness. The rest of the time he worked, and his consciousness was machine consciousness. Outside this his mind was a blank. He had no ideals, and but one illusion; namely, that he drank excellent coffee. He was a work-beast. He had no mental life whatever; yet deep down in the crypts of his mind, unknown to him, were being weighed and sifted every hour of his toil, every movement of his hands, every twitch of his muscles, and preparations were making for a future course of action that would amaze him and all his little world.

It was in the late spring that he came home from work one night aware of unusual tiredness. There was a keen expectancy in the air as he sat down to the table, but he did not notice. He went through the meal in moody silence, mechanically eating what was before him. The children um'd and ah'd and made smacking noises with their mouths. But he was deaf to them.

"D'ye know what you're eatin'?" his mother demanded at last, desperately.

He looked vacantly at the dish before him, and vacantly at her.

"Floatin' island," she announced triumphantly.

"Oh," he said.

"Floating island!" the children chorussed loudly.

"Oh," he said. And after two or three mouthfuls, he added, "guess I ain't hungry to-night."

He dropped the spoon, shoved back his chair, and arose wearily from the table.

"An' I guess I'll go to bed."

His feet dragged more heavily than usual as he crossed the kitchen floor. Undressing was a Titan's task, a monstrous futility, and he wept weakly as he crawled into bed, one shoe still on. He was aware of a rising, swelling something inside his head that made his brain thick and fuzzy. His lean fingers felt as big as his wrist, while in the ends of them was a remoteness of sensation vague and fuzzy like his brain. The small of his back ached intolerably. All his bones ached. He ached everywhere. And in his head began the shrieking, pounding, crashing, roaring of a million looms. All space was filled with flying shuttles. They darted in and out, intricately, amongst the stars. He worked a thousand looms himself, and ever they speeded up, faster and faster, and his brain unwound, faster and faster, and became the thread that fed the thousand flying shuttles.

He did not go to work next morning. He was too busy weaving colossally on the thousand looms that ran inside his head. His mother went to work, but first she sent for the doctor. It was a severe attack of la grippe, he said. Jennie served as nurse and carried out his instructions.

It was a very severe attack, and it was a week before Johnny dressed and tottered feebly across the floor. Another week, the doctor said, and he would be fit to return to work. The foreman of the loom room visited him on Sunday afternoon, the first day of his convalescence. The best weaver in the room, the foreman told his mother. His job would be held for him. He could come back to work a week from Monday.

"Why don't you thank 'im, Johnny?" his mother asked anxiously.

"He's ben that sick he ain't himself yet," she explained apologetically to the visitor.

Johnny sat hunched up and gazing steadfastly at the floor. He sat in the same position long after the foreman had gone. It was warm outdoors, and he sat on the stoop in the afternoon. Sometimes his lips moved. He seemed lost in endless calculations.

Next morning, after the day grew warm, he took his seat on the stoop. He had pencil and paper this time with which to continue his calculations, and he calculated painfully and amazingly.

“What comes after millions?” he asked at noon, when Will came home from school. “An’ how d’ye work ‘em?”

That afternoon finished his task. Each day, but without paper and pencil, he returned to the stoop. He was greatly absorbed in the one tree that grew across the street. He studied it for hours at a time, and was unusually interested when the wind swayed its branches and fluttered its leaves. Throughout the week he seemed lost in a great communion with himself. On Sunday, sitting on the stoop, he laughed aloud, several times, to the perturbation of his mother, who had not heard him laugh in years.

Next morning, in the early darkness, she came to his bed to rouse him. He had had his fill of sleep all week, and awoke easily. He made no struggle, nor did he attempt to hold on to the bedding when she stripped it from him. He lay quietly, and spoke quietly.

“It ain’t no use, ma.”

“You’ll be late,” she said, under the impression that he was still stupid with sleep.

“I’m awake, ma, an’ I tell you it ain’t no use. You might as well lemme alone. I ain’t goin’ to git up.”

“But you’ll lose your job!” she cried.

“I ain’t goin’ to git up,” he repeated in a strange, passionless voice.

She did not go to work herself that morning. This was sickness beyond any sickness she had ever known. Fever and delirium she could understand; but this was insanity. She pulled the bedding up over him and sent Jennie for the doctor.

When that person arrived, Johnny was sleeping gently, and gently he awoke and allowed his pulse to be taken.

“Nothing the matter with him,” the doctor reported. “Badly debilitated, that’s all. Not much meat on his bones.”

“He’s always been that way,” his mother volunteered.

“Now go ‘way, ma, an’ let me finish my snooze.”

Johnny spoke sweetly and placidly, and sweetly and placidly he rolled over on his side and went to sleep.

At ten o’clock he awoke and dressed himself. He walked out into the kitchen, where he found his mother with a frightened expression on her face.

“I’m goin’ away, ma,” he announced, “an’ I jes’ want to say good-by.” She threw her apron over her head and sat down suddenly and wept. He waited patiently.

“I might a-known it,” she was sobbing.

“Where?” she finally asked, removing the apron from her head and gazing up at him with a stricken face in which there was little curiosity.

“I don’t know—anywhere.”

As he spoke, the tree across the street appeared with dazzling brightness on his inner vision. It seemed to lurk just under his eyelids, and he could see it whenever he wished.

“An’ your job?” she quavered.

“I ain’t never goin’ to work again.”

"My God, Johnny!" she wailed, "don't say that!"

What he had said was blasphemy to her. As a mother who hears her child deny God, was Johnny's mother shocked by his words.

"What's got into you, anyway?" she demanded, with a lame attempt at imperative-ness.

"Figures," he answered. "Jes' figures. I've ben doin' a lot of figurin' this week, an' it's most surprisin'."

"I don't see what that's got to do with it," she sniffled.

Johnny smiled patiently, and his mother was aware of a distinct shock at the persistent absence of his peevishness and irritability.

"I'll show you," he said. "I'm plum' tired out. What makes me tired? Moves. I've ben movin' ever since I was born. I'm tired of movin', an' I ain't goin' to move any more. Remember when I worked in the glass-house? I used to do three hundred dozen a day. Now I reckon I made about ten different moves to each bottle. That's thirty-six thousan' moves a day. Ten days, three hundred an' sixty thousan' moves a day. One month, one million an' eighty thousan' moves. Chuck out the eighty thousan'—" he spoke with the complacent beneficence of a philanthropist—"chuck out the eighty thousan', that leaves a million moves a month—twelve million moves a year.

"At the looms I'm movin' twic'st as much. That makes twenty-five million moves a year, an' it seems to me I've ben a movin' that way 'most a million years.

"Now this week I ain't moved at all. I ain't made one move in hours an' hours. I tell you it was swell, jes' settin' there, hours an' hours, an' doin' nothin'. I ain't never ben happy before. I never had any time. I've ben movin' all the time. That ain't no way to be happy. An' I ain't goin' to do it any more. I'm jes' goin' to set, an' set, an' rest, an' rest, and then rest some more."

"But what's goin' to come of Will an' the children?" she asked despairingly.

"That's it, 'Will an' the children,'" he repeated.

But there was no bitterness in his voice. He had long known his mother's ambition for the younger boy, but the thought of it no longer rankled. Nothing mattered any more. Not even that.

"I know, ma, what you've ben plannin' for Will—keepin' him in school to make a bookkeeper out of him. But it ain't no use, I've quit. He's got to go to work."

"An' after I have brung you up the way I have," she wept, starting to cover her head with the apron and changing her mind.

"You never brung me up," he answered with sad kindness. "brung myself up, ma, an' I brung up Will. He's bigger'n me, an' heavier, an' taller. When I was a kid, I reckon I didn't git enough to eat. When he come along an' was a kid, I was workin' an' earnin' grub for him too. But that's done with. Will can go to work, same as me, or he can go to hell, I don't care which. I'm tired. I'm goin' now. Ain't you goin' to say good-by?"

She made no reply. The apron had gone over her head again, and she was crying. He paused a moment in the doorway.

"I'm sure I done the best I knew how," she was sobbing.

He passed out of the house and down the street. A wan delight came into his face at the sight of the lone tree. "Jes' ain't goin' to do nothin'," he said to himself, half aloud, in a crooning tone. He glanced wistfully up at the sky, but the bright sun dazzled and blinded him.

It was a long walk he took, and he did not walk fast. It took him past the jute-mill. The muffled roar of the loom room came to his ears, and he smiled. It was a gentle, placid smile. He hated no one, not even the pounding, shrieking machines. There was no bitterness in him, nothing but an inordinate hunger for rest.

The houses and factories thinned out and the open spaces increased as he approached the country. At last the city was behind him, and he was walking down a leafy lane beside the railroad track. He did not walk like a man. He did not look like a man. He was a travesty of the human. It was a twisted and stunted and nameless piece of life that shambled like a sickly ape, arms loose-hanging, stoop-shouldered, narrow-chested, grotesque and terrible.

He passed by a small railroad station and lay down in the grass under a tree. All afternoon he lay there. Sometimes he dozed, with muscles that twitched in his sleep. When awake, he lay without movement, watching the birds or looking up at the sky through the branches of the tree above him. Once or twice he laughed aloud, but without relevance to anything he had seen or felt.

After twilight had gone, in the first darkness of the night, a freight train rumbled into the station. When the engine was switching cars on to the side-track, Johnny crept along the side of the train. He pulled open the side-door of an empty box-car and awkwardly and laboriously climbed in. He closed the door. The engine whistled. Johnny was lying down, and in the darkness he smiled.

God of His Fathers

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On every hand stretched the forest primeval, – the home of noisy comedy and silent tragedy. Here the struggle for survival continued to wage with all its ancient brutality. Briton and Russian were still to overlap in the Land of the Rainbow's End – and this was the very heart of it – nor had Yankee gold yet purchased its vast domain. The wolf-pack still clung to the flank of the cariboo-herd, singling out the weak and the big with calf, and pulling them down as remorselessly as were it a thousand, thousand generations into the past. The sparse aborigines still acknowledged the rule of their chiefs and medicine men, drove out bad spirits, burned their witches, fought their neighbors, and ate their enemies with a relish which spoke well of their bellies. But it was at the moment when the stone age was drawing to a close. Already, over unknown trails and chartless wildernesses, were the harbingers of the steel arriving, – fairfaced, blue-eyed, indomitable men, incarnations of the unrest of their race. By accident or design, single-handed and in twos and threes, they came from no one knew whither, and fought, or died, or passed on, no one knew whence. The priests raged against them, the chiefs called forth their fighting men, and stone clashed with steel; but to little purpose. Like water seeping from some mighty reservoir, they trickled through the dark forests and mountain passes, threading the highways in bark canoes, or with their moccasined feet breaking trail for the wolf-dogs. They came of a great breed, and their mothers were many; but the fur-clad denizens of the Northland had this yet to learn. So many an unsung wanderer fought his last and died under the cold fire of the aurora, as did his brothers in burning sands and reeking jungles, and as they shall continue to do till in the fulness of time the destiny of their race be achieved.

It was near twelve. Along the northern horizon a rosy glow, fading to the west and deepening to the east, marked the unseen dip of the midnight sun. The gloaming and the dawn were so commingled that there was no night, – simply a wedding of day with day, a scarcely perceptible blending of two circles of the sun. A kildee timidly chirped good-night; the full, rich throat of a robin proclaimed good-morrow. From an island on the breast of the Yukon a colony of wild fowl voiced its interminable wrongs, while a loon laughed mockingly back across a still stretch of river.

In the foreground, against the bank of a lazy eddy, birch- bark canoes were lined two and three deep. Ivory-bladed spears, bone-barbed arrows, buckskinthonged bows, and simple basket- woven traps bespoke the fact that in the muddy current of the river the salmon-run was on. In the background, from the tangle of skin tents and drying frames, rose the voices of the fisher folk. Bucks skylarked with bucks or flirted with the

maidens, while the older squaws, shut out from this by virtue of having fulfilled the end of their existence in reproduction, gossiped as they braided rope from the green roots of trailing vines. At their feet their naked progeny played and squabbled, or rolled in the muck with the tawny wolf-dogs.

To one side of the encampment, and conspicuously apart from it, stood a second camp of two tents. But it was a white man's camp. If nothing else, the choice of position at least bore convincing evidence of this. In case of offence, it commanded the Indian quarters a hundred yards away; of defence, a rise to the ground and the cleared intervening space; and last, of defeat, the swift slope of a score of yards to the canoes below. From one of the tents came the petulant cry of a sick child and the crooning song of a mother. In the open, over the smouldering embers of a fire, two men held talk.

"Eh? I love the church like a good son. Bien! So great a love that my days have been spent in fleeing away from her, and my nights in dreaming dreams of reckoning. Look you!" The half-breed's voice rose to an angry snarl. "I am Red River born. My father was white – as white as you. But you are Yankee, and he was British bred, and a gentleman's son. And my mother was the daughter of a chief, and was a man. Ay, and one had to look the second time to see what manner of blood ran in my veins; for I lived with the whites, and was one of them, and my father's heart beat in me. It happened

there was a maiden – white – who looked on me with kind eyes. Her father had much land and many horses; also he was a big man among his people, and his blood was the blood of the French. He said the girl knew not her own mind, and talked overmuch with her, and became wroth that such things should be.

"But she knew her mind, for we came quick before the priest. And quicker had come her father, with lying words, false promises, know not what; so that the priest stiffened his neck and would not make us that we might live one with the other. As at the beginning it was the church which would not bless my birth, so now it was the church which refused me marriage and put the blood of men upon my hands. Bien! Thus have I cause to love the church. So I struck the priest on his woman's mouth, and we took swift horses, the girl and I, to Fort Pierre, where was a minister of good heart. But hot on our trail was her father, and brothers, and other men he had gathered to him. And we fought, our horses on the run, till I emptied three saddles and the rest drew off and went on to Fort Pierre. Then we took east, the girl and I, to the hills and forests, and we lived one with the other, and we were not married, – the work of the good church which I love like a son.

"But mark you, for this is the strangeness of woman, the way of which no man may understand. One of the saddles I emptied was that of her father's, and the hoofs of those who came behind had pounded him into the earth. This we saw, the girl and I, and this I had forgot had she not remembered. And in the quiet of the evening, after the day's hunt were done, it came between us, and in the silence of the night when we lay beneath the stars and should have been one. It was there always. She never spoke,

but it sat by our fire and held us ever apart. She tried to put it aside, but at such times it would rise up till I could read it in the look of her eyes, in the very intake of her breath.

“So in the end she bore me a child, a woman-child, and died. Then I went among my mother’s people, that it might nurse at a warm breast and live. But my hands were wet with the blood of men, look you, because of the church, wet with the blood of men. And the Riders of the North came for me, but my mother’s brother, who was then chief in his own right, hid me and gave me horses and food. And we went away, my woman-child and I, even to the Hudson Bay Country, where white men were few and the questions they asked not many. And I worked for the company as a hunter, as a guide, as a driver of dogs, till my woman-child was become a woman, tall, and slender, and fair to the eye. “You know the winter, long and lonely, breeding evil thoughts and bad deeds. The Chief Factor was a hard man, and bold. And he was not such that a woman would delight in looking upon. But he cast eyes upon my woman-child who was become a woman. Mother of God! he sent me away on a long trip with the dogs, that he might -you understand, he was a hard man and without heart. She was most white, and her soul was white, and a good woman, and – well, she died.

“It was bitter cold the night of my return, and I had been away months, and the dogs were limping sore when I came to the fort. The Indians and breeds looked on me in silence, and I felt the fear of knew not what, but I said nothing till the dogs were fed and I had eaten as a man with work before him should. Then I spoke up, demanding the word, and they shrank from me, afraid of my anger and what I should do; but the story came out, the pitiful story, word for word and act for act, and they marvelled that I should be so quiet.

“When they had done I went to the Factor’s house, calmer than now in the telling of it. He had been afraid and called upon the breeds to help him; but they were not pleased with the deed, and had left him to lie on the bed he had made. So he had fled to the house of the priest. Thither I followed. But when I was come to that place, the priest stood in my way, and spoke soft words, and said a man in anger should go neither to the right nor left, but straight to God. I asked by the right of a father’s wrath that he give me past, but he said only over his body, and besought with me to pray. Look you, it was the church, always the church; for I passed over his body and sent the Factor to meet my woman-child before his god, which is a bad god, and the god of the white men.

“Then was there hue and cry, for word was sent to the station below, and I came away. Through the Land of the Great Slave, down the Valley of the Mackenzie to the never-opening ice, over the White Rockies, past the Great Curve of the Yukon, even to this place did come. And from that day to this, yours is the first face of my father’s people I have looked upon. May it be the last! These people, which are my people, are a simple folk, and I have been raised to honor among them. My word is their law, and their priests but do my bidding, else would I not suffer them. When I speak for them I speak for myself. We ask to be let alone. We do not want your kind. If we permit you

to sit by our fires, after you will come your church, your priests, and your gods. And know this, for each white man who comes to my village, him will I make deny his god. You are the first, and I give you grace. So it were well you go, and go quickly.”

“I am not responsible for my brothers,” the second man spoke up, filling his pipe in a meditative manner. Hay Stockard was at times as thoughtful of speech as he was wanton of action; but only at times.

“But I know your breed,” responded the other. “Your brothers are many, and it is you and yours who break the trail for them to follow. In time they shall come to possess the land, but not in my time. Already, have I heard, are they on the head-reaches of the Great River, and far away below are the Russians.”

Hay Stockard lifted his head with a quick start. This was startling geographical information. The Hudson Bay post at Fort Yukon had other notions concerning the course of the river, believing it to flow into the Arctic.

“Then the Yukon empties into Bering Sea?” he asked.

“I do not know, but below there are Russians, many Russians. Which is neither here nor there. You may go on and see for yourself; you may go back to your brothers; but up the Koyukuk you shall not go while the priests and fighting men do my bidding. Thus do I command, I, Baptiste the Red, whose word is law and who am head man over this people.”

“And should I not go down to the Russians, or back to my brothers?”

“Then shall you go swift-footed before your god, which is a bad god, and the god of the white men.”

The red sun shot up above the northern skyline, dripping and bloody. Baptiste the Red came to his feet, nodded curtly, and went back to his camp amid the crimson shadows and the singing of the robins.

Hay Stockard finished his pipe by the fire, picturing in smoke and coal the unknown upper reaches of the Koyukuk, the strange stream which ended here its arctic travels and merged its waters with the muddy Yukon flood. Somewhere up there, if the dying words of a shipwrecked sailorman who had made the fearful overland journey were to be believed, and if the vial of golden grains in his pouch attested to anything, – somewhere up there, in that home of winter, stood the Treasure House of the North. And as keeper of the gate, Baptiste the Red, English half-breed and renegade, barred the way.

“Bah!” He kicked the embers apart and rose to his full height, arms lazily outstretched, facing the flushing north with careless soul.

Hay Stockard swore, harshly, in the rugged monosyllables of his mother tongue. His wife lifted her gaze from the pots and pans, and followed his in a keen scrutiny of the river. She was a woman of the Teslin Country, wise in the ways of her husband’s vernacular when it grew intensive. From the slipping of a snowshoe thong to the forefront of sudden death, she could gauge occasion by the pitch and volume of his blasphemy. So she knew the present occasion merited attention. A long canoe, with paddles flashing back the rays of the westering sun, was crossing the current from above and urging in

for the eddy. Hay Stockard watched it intently. Three men rose and dipped, rose and dipped, in rhythmical precision; but a red bandanna, wrapped about the head of one, caught and held his eye.

“Bill!” he called. “Oh, Bill!”

A shambling, loose-jointed giant rolled out of one of the tents, yawning and rubbing the sleep from his eyes. Then he sighted the strange canoe and was wide awake on the instant.

“By the jumping Methuselah! That damned sky-pilot!”

Hay Stockard nodded his head bitterly, half-reached for his rifle, then shrugged his shoulders.

“Pot-shot him,” Bill suggested, “and settle the thing out of hand. He ‘ll spoil us sure if we don’t.” But the other declined this drastic measure and turned away, at the same time bidding the woman return to her work, and calling Bill back from the bank. The two Indians in the canoe moored it on the edge of the eddy, while its white occupant, conspicuous by his gorgeous head-gear, came up the bank.

“Like Paul of Tarsus, I give you greeting. Peace be unto you and grace before the Lord.”

His advances were met sullenly, and without speech. “To you, Hay Stockard, blasphemer and Philistine, greeting. In your heart is the lust of Mammon, in your mind cunning devils, in your tent this woman whom you live with in adultery; yet of these divers sins, even here in the wilderness, I, Sturges Owen, apostle to the Lord, bid you to repent and cast from you your iniquities.”

“Save your cant! Save your cant!” Hay Stockard broke in testily. “You ‘ll need all you ‘ve got, and more, for Red Baptiste over yonder.”

He waved his hand toward the Indian camp, where the half-breed was looking steadily across, striving to make out the new-comers. Sturges Owen, disseminator of light and apostle to the Lord, stepped to the edge of the steep and commanded his men to bring up the camp outfit. Stockard followed him.

“Look here,” he demanded, plucking the missionary by the shoulder and twirling him about. “Do you value your hide?”

“My life is in the Lord’s keeping, and I do but work in His vineyard,” he replied solemnly.

“Oh, stow that! Are you looking for a job of martyrship?”

“If He so wills.”

“Well, you ‘ll find it right here, but I ‘m going to give you some advice first. Take it or leave it. If you stop here, you ‘ll be cut off in the midst of your labors. And not you alone, but your men, Bill, my wife – “

“Who is a daughter of Belial and hearkeneth not to the true Gospel.”

“And myself. Not only do you bring trouble upon yourself, but upon us. I was frozen in with you last winter, as you will well recollect, and I know you for a good man and a fool. If you think it your duty to strive with the heathen, well and good; but do exercise some wit in the way you go about it. This man, Red Baptiste, is no Indian.

He comes of our common stock, is as bull-necked as I ever dared be, and as wild a fanatic the one way as you are the other. When you two come together, hell 'll be to pay, and I don't care to be mixed up in it. Understand? So take my advice and go away. If you go down- stream, you 'll fall in with the Russians. There 's bound to be Greek priests among them, and they 'll see you safe through to Bering Sea, – that 's where the Yukon empties, -and from there it won't be hard to get back to civilization. Take my word for it and get out of here as fast as God 'll let you."

"He who carries the Lord in his heart and the Gospel in his hand hath no fear of the machinations of man or devil," the missionary answered stoutly. "I will see this man and wrestle with him. One backslider returned to the fold is a greater victory than a thousand heathen. He who is strong for evil can be as mighty for good, witness Saul when he journeyed up to Damascus to bring Christian captives to Jerusalem. And the voice of the Saviour came to him, crying, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' And therewith Paul arrayed himself on the side of the Lord, and thereafter was most mighty in the saving of souls. And even as thou, Paul of Tarsus, even so do I work in the vineyard of the Lord, bearing trials and tribulations, scoffs and sneers, stripes and punishments, for His dear sake."

"Bring up the little bag with the tea and a kettle of water," he called the next instant to his boatmen; "not forgetting the haunch of cariboo and the mixing-pan." When his men, converts by his own hand, had gained the bank, the trio fell to their knees, hands and backs burdened with camp equipage, and offered up thanks for their passage through the wilderness and their safe arrival. Hay Stockard looked upon the function with sneering disapproval, the romance and solemnity of it lost to his matter-of-fact soul. Baptiste the Red, still gazing across, recognized the familiar postures, and remembered the girl who had shared his star-roofed couch in the hills and forests, and the womanchild who lay somewhere by bleak Hudson's Bay.

"Confound it, Baptiste, could n't think of it. Not for a moment. Grant that this man is a fool and of small use in the nature of things, but still, you know, I can't give him up."

Hay Stockard paused, striving to put into speech the rude ethics of his heart.

"He 's worried me, Baptiste, in the past and now, and caused me all manner of troubles; but can't you see, he 's my own breed – white – and – and -why, I could n't buy my life with his, not if he was a nigger."

"So be it," Baptiste the Red made answer. "I have given you grace and choice. I shall come presently, with my priests and fighting men, and either shall I kill you, or you deny your god. Give up the priest to my pleasure, and you shall depart in peace. Otherwise your trail ends here. My people are against you to the babies. Even now have the children stolen away your canoes." He pointed down to the river. Naked boys had slipped down the water from the point above, cast loose the canoes, and by then had worked them into the current. When they had drifted out of rifle-shot they clambered over the sides and paddled ashore.

“Give me the priest, and you may have them back again. Come! Speak your mind, but without haste.”

Stockard shook his head. His glance dropped to the woman of the Teslin Country with his boy at her breast, and he would have wavered had he not lifted his eyes to the men before him.

“I am not afraid,” Sturges Owen spoke up. “The Lord bears me in his right hand, and alone am I ready to go into the camp of the unbeliever. It is not too late. Faith may move mountains. Even in the eleventh hour may I win his soul to the true righteousness.”

“Trip the beggar up and make him fast,” Bill whispered hoarsely in the ear of his leader, while the missionary kept the floor and wrestled with the heathen. “Make him hostage, and bore him if they get ugly.”

“No,” Stockard answered. “I gave him my word that he could speak with us unmolested. Rules of warfare, Bill; rules of warfare. He’s been on the square, given us warning, and all that, and – why, damn it, man, I can’t break my word!”

“He ‘ll keep his, never fear.”

“Don’t doubt it, but I won’t let a half-breed outdo me in fair dealing. Why not do what he wants, – give him the missionary and be done with it?”

“N-no,” Bill hesitated doubtfully.

“Shoe pinches, eh?”

Bill flushed a little and dropped the discussion. Baptiste the Red was still waiting the final decision. Stockard went up to him.

“It ‘s this way, Baptiste. I came to your village minded to go up the Koyukuk. I intended no wrong. My heart was clean of evil. It is still clean. Along comes this priest, as you call him. I did n’t bring him here. He ‘d have come whether I was here or not. But now that he is here, being of my people, I ‘ve got to stand by him. And ‘m going to. Further, it will be no child’s play. When you have done, your village will be silent and empty, your people wasted as after a famine. True, we will be gone; likewise the pick of your fighting men -”

“But those who remain shall be in peace, nor shall the word of strange gods and the tongues of strange priests be buzzing in their ears.”

Both men shrugged their shoulders and turned away, the half-breed going back to his own camp. The missionary called his two men to him, and they fell into prayer. Stockard and Bill attacked the few standing pines with their axes, felling them into convenient breastworks. The child had fallen asleep, so the woman placed it on a heap of furs and lent a hand in fortifying the camp. Three sides were thus defended, the steep declivity at the rear precluding attack from that direction. When these arrangements had been completed, the two men stalked into the open, clearing away, here and there, the scattered underbrush. From the opposing camp came the booming of war- drums and the voices of the priests stirring the people to anger.

“Worst of it is they ‘ll come in rushes,” Bill complained as they walked back with shouldered axes.

“And wait till midnight, when the light gets dim for shooting.”

“Can’t start the ball a-rolling too early, then.” Bill exchanged the axe for a rifle, and took a careful rest. One of the medicine-men, towering above his tribesmen, stood out distinctly. Bill drew a bead on him.

“All ready?” he asked.

Stockard opened the ammunition box, placed the woman where she could reload in safety, and gave the word. The medicine-man dropped. For a moment there was silence, then a wild howl went up and a flight of bone arrows fell short.

“I ‘d like to take a look at the beggar,” Bill remarked, throwing a fresh shell into place. “I ‘ll swear I drilled him clean between the eyes.”

“Did n’t work.” Stockard shook his head gloomily. Baptiste had evidently quelled the more warlike of his followers, and instead of precipitating an attack in the bright light of day, the shot had caused a hasty exodus, the Indians drawing out of the village beyond the zone of fire.

In the full tide of his proselyting fervor, borne along by the hand of God, Sturges Owen would have ventured alone into the camp of the unbeliever, equally prepared for miracle or martyrdom; but in the waiting which ensued, the fever of conviction died away gradually, as the natural man asserted itself. Physical fear replaced spiritual hope; the love of life, the love of God. It was no new experience. He could feel his weakness coming on, and knew it of old time. He had struggled against it and been overcome by it before. He remembered when the other men had driven their paddles like mad in the van of a roaring ice-flood, how, at the critical moment, in a panic of worldly terror, he had dropped his paddle and besought wildly with his God for pity. And there were other times. The recollection was not pleasant. It brought shame to him that his spirit should be so weak and his flesh so strong. But the love of life! the love of life! He could not strip it from him. Because of it had his dim ancestors perpetuated their line; because of it was he destined to perpetuate his. His courage, if courage it might be called, was bred of fanaticism. The courage of Stockard and Bill was the adherence to deep-rooted ideals. Not that the love of life was less, but the love of race tradition more; not that they were unafraid to die, but that they were brave enough not to live at the price of shame.

The missionary rose, for the moment swayed by the mood of sacrifice. He half crawled over the barricade to proceed to the other camp, but sank back, a trembling mass, wailing: “As the spirit moves! As the spirit moves! Who am I that I should set aside the judgments of God? Before the foundations of the world were all things written in the book of life. Worm that I am, shall I erase the page or any portion thereof? As God wills, so shall the spirit move!”

Bill reached over, plucked him to his feet, and shook him, fiercely, silently. Then he dropped the bundle of quivering nerves and turned his attention to the two converts. But they showed little fright and a cheerful alacrity in preparing for the coming passage at arms.

Stockard, who had been talking in undertones with the Teslin woman, now turned to the missionary.

“Fetch him over here,” he commanded of Bill.

“Now,” he ordered, when Sturges Owen had been duly deposited before him, “make us man and wife, and be lively about it.” Then he added apologetically to Bill: “No telling how it ‘s to end, so I just thought I ‘d get my affairs straightened up.”

The woman obeyed the behest of her white lord. To her the ceremony was meaningless. By her lights she was his wife, and had been from the day they first foregathered. The converts served as witnesses. Bill stood over the missionary, prompting him when he stumbled. Stockard put the responses in the woman’s mouth, and when the time came, for want of better, ringed her finger with thumb and forefinger of his own.

“Kiss the bride!” Bill thundered, and Sturges Owen was too weak to disobey.

“Now baptize the child!”

“Neat and tidy,” Bill commented.

“Gathering the proper outfit for a new trail,” the father explained, taking the boy from the mother’s arms. “I was grub- staked, once, into the Cascades, and had everything in the kit except salt. Never shall forget it. And if the woman and the kid cross the divide to-night they might as well be prepared for potluck. A long shot, Bill, between ourselves, but nothing lost if it misses.”

A cup of water served the purpose, and the child was laid away in a secure corner of the barricade. The men built the fire, and the evening meal was cooked.

The sun hurried round to the north, sinking closer to the horizon. The heavens in that quarter grew red and bloody. The shadows lengthened, the light dimmed, and in the sombre recesses of the forest life slowly died away. Even the wild fowl in the river softened their raucous chatter and feigned the nightly farce of going to bed. Only the tribesmen increased their clamor, war-drums booming and voices raised in savage folk songs. But as the sun dipped they ceased their tumult. The rounded hush of midnight was complete. Stockard rose to his knees and peered over the logs. Once the child wailed in pain and disconcerted him. The mother bent over it, but it slept again. The silence was interminable, profound. Then, of a sudden, the robins burst into full-throated song. The night had passed.

A flood of dark figures boiled across the open. Arrows whistled and bowthongs sang. The shrill-tongued rifles answered back. A spear, and a mighty cast, transfixed the Teslin woman as she hovered above the child. A spent arrow, diving between the logs, lodged in the missionary’s arm.

There was no stopping the rush. The middle distance was cumbered with bodies, but the rest surged on, breaking against and over the barricade like an ocean wave. Sturges Owen fled to the tent, while the men were swept from their feet, buried beneath the human tide. Hay Stockard alone regained the surface, flinging the tribesmen aside like yelping curs. He had managed to seize an axe. A dark hand grasped the child by a naked foot, and drew it from beneath its mother. At arm’s length its puny body circled through the air, dashing to death against the logs. Stockard clove the man to

the chin and fell to clearing space. The ring of savage faces closed in, raining upon him spear-thrusts and bonebarbed arrows. The sun shot up, and they swayed back and forth in the crimson shadows. Twice, with his axe blocked by too deep a blow, they rushed him; but each time he flung them clear. They fell underfoot and he trampled dead and dying, the way slippery with blood. And still the day brightened and the robins sang. Then they drew back from him in awe, and he leaned breathless upon his axe.

“Blood of my soul!” cried Baptiste the Red. “But thou art a man. Deny thy god, and thou shalt yet live.”

Stockard swore his refusal, feebly but with grace.

“Behold! A woman!” Sturges Owen had been brought before the half-breed.

Beyond a scratch on the arm, he was uninjured, but his eyes roved about him in an ecstasy of fear. The heroic figure of the blasphemer, bristling with wounds and arrows, leaning defiantly upon his axe, indifferent, indomitable, superb, caught his wavering vision. And he felt a great envy of the man who could go down serenely to the dark gates of death. Surely Christ, and not he, Sturges Owen, had been moulded in such manner. And why not he? He felt dimly the curse of ancestry, the feebleness of spirit which had come down to him out of the past, and he felt an anger at the creative force, symbolize it as he would, which had formed him, its servant, so weakly. For even a stronger man, this anger and the stress of circumstance were sufficient to breed apostasy, and for Sturges Owen it was inevitable. In the fear of man’s anger he would dare the wrath of God. He had been raised up to serve the Lord only that he might be cast down. He had been given faith without the strength of faith; he had been given spirit without the power of spirit. It was unjust.

“Where now is thy god?” the half-breed demanded.

“I do not know.” He stood straight and rigid, like a child repeating a catechism.

“Hast thou then a god at all?” “I had.”

“And now?”

“No.”

Hay Stockard swept the blood from his eyes and laughed. The missionary looked at him curiously, as in a dream. A feeling of infinite distance came over him, as though of a great remove. In that which had transpired, and which was to transpire, he had no part. He was a spectator – at a distance, yes, at a distance. The words of Baptiste came to him faintly: –

“Very good. See that this man go free, and that no harm befall him. Let him depart in peace. Give him a canoe and food. Set his face toward the Russians, that he may tell their priests of Baptiste the Red, in whose country there is no god.”

They led him to the edge of the steep, where they paused to witness the final tragedy. The half-breed turned to Hay Stockard.

“There is no god,” he prompted.

The man laughed in reply. One of the young men poised a war-spear for the cast.

“Hast thou a god?”

“Ay, the God of my fathers.”

He shifted the axe for a better grip. Baptiste the Red gave the sign, and the spear hurtled full against his breast. Sturges Owen saw the ivory head stand out beyond his back, saw the man sway, laughing, and snap the shaft short as he fell upon it. Then he went down to the river, that he might carry to the Russians the message of Baptiste the Red, in whose country there was no god.

At the Rainbow's End

It was for two reasons that Montana Kid discarded his "chaps" and Mexican spurs, and shook the dust of the Idaho ranges from his feet. In the first place, the encroachments of a steady, sober, and sternly moral civilization had destroyed the primeval status of the western cattle ranges, and refined society turned the cold eye of disfavor upon him and his ilk. In the second place, in one of its cyclopean moments the race had arisen and shoved back its frontier several thousand miles. Thus, with unconscious foresight, did mature society make room for its adolescent members. True, the new territory was mostly barren; but its several hundred thousand square miles of frigidity at least gave breathing space to those who else would have suffocated at home.

Montana Kid was such a one. Heading for the sea-coast, with a haste several sheriff's posses might possibly have explained, and with more nerve than coin of the realm, he succeeded in shipping from a Puget Sound port, and managed to survive the contingent miseries of steerage sea-sickness and steerage grub. He was rather sallow and drawn, but still his own indomitable self, when he landed on the Dyea beach one day in the spring of the year. Between the cost of dogs, grub, and outfits, and the customs exactions of the two clashing governments, it speedily penetrated to his understanding that the Northland was anything save a poor man's Mecca. So he cast about him in search of quick harvests. Between the beach and the passes were scattered many thousands of passionate pilgrims. These pilgrims Montana Kid proceeded to farm. At first he dealt faro in a pine-board gambling shack; but disagreeable necessity forced him to drop a sudden period into a man's life, and to move on up trail. Then he effected a corner in horseshoe nails, and they circulated at par with legal tender, four to the dollar, till an unexpected consignment of a hundred barrels or so broke the market and forced him to disgorge his stock at a loss. After that he located at Sheep Camp, organized the professional packers, and jumped the freight ten cents a pound in a single day. In token of their gratitude, the packers patronized his faro and roulette layouts and were mulcted cheerfully of their earnings. But his commercialism was of too lusty a growth to be long endured; so they rushed him one night, burned his shanty, divided the bank, and headed him up the trail with empty pockets.

Ill-luck was his running mate. He engaged with responsible parties to run whisky across the line by way of precarious and unknown trails, lost his Indian guides, and had the very first outfit confiscated by the Mounted Police. Numerous other misfortunes tended to make him bitter of heart and wanton of action, and he celebrated his arrival at Lake Bennett by terrorizing the camp for twenty straight hours. Then a miners' meeting took him in hand, and commanded him to make himself scarce. He

had a wholesome respect for such assemblages, and he obeyed in such haste that he inadvertently removed himself at the tail-end of another man's dog team. This was equivalent to horse-stealing in a more mellow clime, so he hit only the high places across Bennett and down Tagish, and made his first camp a full hundred miles to the north.

Now it happened that the break of spring was at hand, and many of the principal citizens of Dawson were travelling south on the last ice. These he met and talked with, noted their names and possessions, and passed on. He had a good memory, also a fair imagination; nor was veracity one of his virtues.

II

Dawson, always eager for news, beheld Montana Kid's sled heading down the Yukon, and went out on the ice to meet him. No, he hadn't any newspapers; didn't know whether Durrant was hanged yet, nor who had won the Thanksgiving game; hadn't heard whether the United States and Spain had gone to fighting; didn't know who Dreyfus was; but O'Brien? Hadn't they heard? O'Brien, why, he was drowned in the White Horse; Sitka Charley the only one of the party who escaped. Joe Ladue? Both legs frozen and amputated at the Five Fingers. And Jack Dalton? Blown up on the "Sea Lion" with all hands. And Bettles? Wrecked on the "Carthagina," in Seymour Narrows,—twenty survivors out of three hundred. And Swiftwater Bill? Gone through the rotten ice of Lake LeBarge with six female members of the opera troupe he was convoying. Governor Walsh? Lost with all hands and eight sleds on the Thirty Mile. Devereaux? Who was Devereaux? Oh, the courier! Shot by Indians on Lake Marsh.

So it went. The word was passed along. Men shouldered in to ask after friends and partners, and in turn were shouldered out, too stunned for blasphemy. By the time Montana Kid gained the bank he was surrounded by several hundred fur-clad miners. When he passed the Barracks he was the centre of a procession. At the Opera House he was the nucleus of an excited mob, each member struggling for a chance to ask after some absent comrade. On every side he was being invited to drink. Never before had the Klondike thus opened its arms to a che-cha-qua. All Dawson was humming. Such a series of catastrophes had never occurred in its history. Every man of note who had gone south in the spring had been wiped out. The cabins vomited forth their occupants. Wild-eyed men hurried down from the creeks and gulches to seek out this man who had told a tale of such disaster. The Russian half-breed wife of Bettles sought the fireplace, inconsolable, and rocked back and forth, and ever and anon flung white wood-ashes upon her raven hair. The flag at the Barracks flopped dismally at half-mast. Dawson mourned its dead.

Why Montana Kid did this thing no man may know. Nor beyond the fact that the truth was not in him, can explanation be hazarded. But for five whole days he plunged the land in wailing and sorrow, and for five whole days he was the only man in the Klondike. The country gave him its best of bed and board. The saloons granted him the freedom of their bars. Men sought him continuously. The high officials bowed down to him for further information, and he was feasted at the Barracks by Constantine and

his brother officers. And then, one day, Devereaux, the government courier, halted his tired dogs before the gold commissioner's office. Dead? Who said so? Give him a moose steak and he'd show them how dead he was. Why, Governor Walsh was in camp on the Little Salmon, and O'Brien coming in on the first water. Dead? Give him a moose steak and he'd show them.

And forthwith Dawson hummed. The Barracks' flag rose to the masthead, and Bettles' wife washed herself and put on clean raiment. The community subtly signified its desire that Montana Kid obliterate himself from the landscape. And Montana Kid obliterated; as usual, at the tail-end of some one else's dog team. Dawson rejoiced when he headed down the Yukon, and wished him godspeed to the ultimate destination of the case-hardened sinner. After that the owner of the dogs bestirred himself, made complaint to Constantine, and from him received the loan of a policeman.

III

With Circle City in prospect and the last ice crumbling under his runners, Montana Kid took advantage of the lengthening days and travelled his dogs late and early. Further, he had but little doubt that the owner of the dogs in question had taken his trail, and he wished to make American territory before the river broke. But by the afternoon of the third day it became evident that he had lost in his race with spring. The Yukon was growling and straining at its fetters. Long detours became necessary, for the trail had begun to fall through into the swift current beneath, while the ice, in constant unrest, was thundering apart in great gaping fissures. Through these and through countless airholes, the water began to sweep across the surface of the ice, and by the time he pulled into a woodchopper's cabin on the point of an island, the dogs were being rushed off their feet and were swimming more often than not. He was greeted sourly by the two residents, but he unharnessed and proceeded to cook up.

Donald and Davy were fair specimens of frontier inefficients. Canadian-born, city-bred Scots, in a foolish moment they had resigned their counting-house desks, drawn upon their savings, and gone Klondiking. And now they were feeling the rough edge of the country. Grubless, spiritless, with a lust for home in their hearts, they had been staked by the P. C. Company to cut wood for its steamers, with the promise at the end of a passage home. Disregarding the possibilities of the ice-run, they had fittingly demonstrated their inefficiency by their choice of the island on which they located. Montana Kid, though possessing little knowledge of the break-up of a great river, looked about him dubiously, and cast yearning glances at the distant bank where the towering bluffs promised immunity from all the ice of the Northland.

After feeding himself and dogs, he lighted his pipe and strolled out to get a better idea of the situation. The island, like all its river brethren, stood higher at the upper end, and it was here that Donald and Davy had built their cabin and piled many cords of wood. The far shore was a full mile away, while between the island and the near shore lay a back-channel perhaps a hundred yards across. At first sight of this, Montana Kid was tempted to take his dogs and escape to the mainland, but on closer inspection

he discovered a rapid current flooding on top. Below, the river twisted sharply to the west, and in this turn its breast was studded by a maze of tiny islands.

“That’s where she’ll jam,” he remarked to himself.

Half a dozen sleds, evidently bound up-stream to Dawson, were splashing through the chill water to the tail of the island. Travel on the river was passing from the precarious to the impossible, and it was nip and tuck with them till they gained the island and came up the path of the wood-choppers toward the cabin. One of them, snow-blind, towed helplessly at the rear of a sled. Husky young fellows they were, rough-garmented and trail-worn, yet Montana Kid had met the breed before and knew at once that it was not his kind.

“Hello! How’s things up Dawson-way?” queried the foremost, passing his eye over Donald and Davy and settling it upon the Kid.

A first meeting in the wilderness is not characterized by formality. The talk quickly became general, and the news of the Upper and Lower Countries was swapped equitably back and forth. But the little the newcomers had was soon over with, for they had wintered at Minook, a thousand miles below, where nothing was doing. Montana Kid, however, was fresh from Salt Water, and they annexed him while they pitched camp, swamping him with questions concerning the outside, from which they had been cut off for a twelvemonth.

A shrieking split, suddenly lifting itself above the general uproar on the river, drew everybody to the bank. The surface water had increased in depth, and the ice, assailed from above and below, was struggling to tear itself from the grip of the shores. Fissures reverberated into life before their eyes, and the air was filled with multitudinous crackling, crisp and sharp, like the sound that goes up on a clear day from the firing line.

From up the river two men were racing a dog team toward them on an uncovered stretch of ice. But even as they looked, the pair struck the water and began to flounder through. Behind, where their feet had sped the moment before, the ice broke up and turned turtle. Through this opening the river rushed out upon them to their waists, burying the sled and swinging the dogs off at right angles in a drowning tangle. But the men stopped their flight to give the animals a fighting chance, and they groped hurriedly in the cold confusion, slashing at the detaining traces with their sheath-knives. Then they fought their way to the bank through swirling water and grinding ice, where, foremost in leaping to the rescue among the jarring fragments, was the Kid.

“Why, blime me, if it ain’t Montana Kid!” exclaimed one of the men whom the Kid was just placing upon his feet at the top of the bank. He wore the scarlet tunic of the Mounted Police and jocularly raised his right hand in salute.

“Got a warrant for you, Kid,” he continued, drawing a bedraggled paper from his breast pocket, “an’ I ‘ope as you’ll come along peaceable.”

Montana Kid looked at the chaotic river and shrugged his shoulders, and the policeman, following his glance, smiled.

“Where are the dogs?” his companion asked.

“Gentlemen,” interrupted the policeman, “this ‘ere mate o’ mine is Jack Sutherland, owner of Twenty-Two Eldorado—“

“Not Sutherland of ‘92?” broke in the snow-blinded Minook man, groping feebly toward him.

“The same.” Sutherland gripped his hand.

“And you?”

“Oh, I’m after your time, but I remember you in my freshman year,—you were doing P. G. work then. Boys,” he called, turning half about, “this is Sutherland, Jack Sutherland, erstwhile full-back on the ‘Varsity. Come up, you gold-chasers, and fall upon him! Sutherland, this is Greenwich,—played quarter two seasons back.”

“Yes, I read of the game,” Sutherland said, shaking hands. “And I remember that big run of yours for the first touchdown.”

Greenwich flushed darkly under his tanned skin and awkwardly made room for another.

“And here’s Matthews,—Berkeley man. And we’ve got some Eastern cracks knocking about, too. Come up, you Princeton men! Come up! This is Sutherland, Jack Sutherland!”

Then they fell upon him heavily, carried him into camp, and supplied him with dry clothes and numerous mugs of black tea.

Donald and Davy, overlooked, had retired to their nightly game of crib. Montana Kid followed them with the policeman.

“Here, get into some dry togs,” he said, pulling them from out his scanty kit. “Guess you’ll have to bunk with me, too.”

“Well, I say, you’re a good ‘un,” the policeman remarked as he pulled on the other man’s socks. “Sorry I’ve got to take you back to Dawson, but I only ‘ope they won’t be ‘ard on you.”

“Not so fast.” The Kid smiled curiously. “We ain’t under way yet. When I go I’m going down river, and I guess the chances are you’ll go along.”

“Not if I know myself—“

“Come on outside, and I’ll show you, then. These damn fools,” thrusting a thumb over his shoulder at the two Scots, “played smash when they located here. Fill your pipe, first—this is pretty good plug—and enjoy yourself while you can. You haven’t many smokes before you.”

The policeman went with him wonderingly, while Donald and Davy dropped their cards and followed. The Minook men noticed Montana Kid pointing now up the river, now down, and came over.

“What’s up?” Sutherland demanded.

“Nothing much.” Nonchalance sat well upon the Kid. “Just a case of raising hell and putting a chunk under. See that bend down there? That’s where she’ll jam millions of tons of ice. Then she’ll jam in the bends up above, millions of tons. Upper jam breaks first, lower jam holds, pouf!” He dramatically swept the island with his hand. “Millions of tons,” he added reflectively.

“And what of the woodpiles?” Davy questioned.

The Kid repeated his sweeping gestures and Davy wailed, “The labor of months! It canna be! Na, na, lad, it canna be. I doot not it’s a jowk. Ay, say that it is,” he appealed.

But when the Kid laughed harshly and turned on his heel, Davy flung himself upon the piles and began frantically to toss the cordwood back from the bank.

“Lend a hand, Donald!” he cried. “Can ye no lend a hand? ‘T is the labor of months and the passage home!”

Donald caught him by the arm and shook him, but he tore free. “Did ye no hear, man? Millions of tons, and the island shall be sweepit clean.”

“Straighthen yersel’ up, man,” said Donald. “It’s a bit fashed ye are.”

But Davy fell upon the cordwood. Donald stalked back to the cabin, buckled on his money belt and Davy’s, and went out to the point of the island where the ground was highest and where a huge pine towered above its fellows.

The men before the cabin heard the ringing of his axe and smiled. Greenwich returned from across the island with the word that they were penned in. It was impossible to cross the back-channel. The blind Minook man began to sing, and the rest joined in with —

“Wonder if it’s true? Does it seem so to you? Seems to me he’s lying—Oh, I wonder if it’s true?”

“It’s ay sinfu’,” Davy moaned, lifting his head and watching them dance in the slanting rays of the sun. “And my guid wood a’ going to waste.”

“Oh, I wonder if it’s true,” was flaunted back.

The noise of the river ceased suddenly. A strange calm wrapped about them. The ice had ripped from the shores and was floating higher on the surface of the river, which was rising. Up it came, swift and silent, for twenty feet, till the huge cakes rubbed softly against the crest of the bank. The tail of the island, being lower, was overrun. Then, without effort, the white flood started down-stream. But the sound increased with the momentum, and soon the whole island was shaking and quivering with the shock of the grinding bergs. Under pressure, the mighty cakes, weighing hundreds of tons, were shot into the air like peas. The frigid anarchy increased its riot, and the men had to shout into one another’s ears to be heard. Occasionally the racket from the back channel could be heard above the tumult. The island shuddered with the impact of an enormous cake which drove in squarely upon its point. It ripped a score of pines out by the roots, then swinging around and over, lifted its muddy base from the bottom of the river and bore down upon the cabin, slicing the bank and trees away like a gigantic knife. It seemed barely to graze the corner of the cabin, but the cribbed logs tilted up like matches, and the structure, like a toy house, fell backward in ruin.

“The labor of months! The labor of months, and the passage home!” Davy wailed, while Montana Kid and the policeman dragged him backward from the woodpiles.

“You’ll ‘ave plenty o’ hoppertunity all in good time for yer passage ‘ome,” the policeman growled, clouting him alongside the head and sending him flying into safety.

Donald, from the top of the pine, saw the devastating berg sweep away the cordwood and disappear down-stream. As though satisfied with this damage, the ice-flood quickly dropped to its old level and began to slacken its pace. The noise likewise eased down, and the others could hear Donald shouting from his eyrie to look down-stream. As forecast, the jam had come among the islands in the bend, and the ice was piling up in a great barrier which stretched from shore to shore. The river came to a standstill, and the water finding no outlet began to rise. It rushed up till the island was awash, the men splashing around up to their knees, and the dogs swimming to the ruins of the cabin. At this stage it abruptly became stationary, with no perceptible rise or fall.

Montana Kid shook his head. "It's jammed above, and no more's coming down."

"And the gamble is, which jam will break first," Sutherland added.

"Exactly," the Kid affirmed. "If the upper jam breaks first, we haven't a chance. Nothing will stand before it."

The Minook men turned away in silence, but soon "Rumsky Ho" floated upon the quiet air, followed by "The Orange and the Black." Room was made in the circle for Montana Kid and the policeman, and they quickly caught the ringing rhythm of the choruses as they drifted on from song to song.

"Oh, Donald, will ye no lend a hand?" Davy sobbed at the foot of the tree into which his comrade had climbed. "Oh, Donald, man, will ye no lend a hand?" he sobbed again, his hands bleeding from vain attempts to scale the slippery trunk.

But Donald had fixed his gaze up river, and now his voice rang out, vibrant with fear: —

"God Almichty, here she comes!"

Standing knee-deep in the icy water, the Minook men, with Montana Kid and the policeman, gripped hands and raised their voices in the terrible, "Battle Hymn of the Republic." But the words were drowned in the advancing roar.

And to Donald was vouchsafed a sight such as no man may see and live. A great wall of white flung itself upon the island. Trees, dogs, men, were blotted out, as though the hand of God had wiped the face of nature clean. This much he saw, then swayed an instant longer in his lofty perch and hurtled far out into the frozen hell.

Bald-Face

London submitted this story to nearly a dozen periodicals before giving it to the Aegis. Bald-Face is a bear yarn about a side-hill grizzly whose down-hill-side legs are twice as long as the uphill-side legs.

“Talkin’ of bear — ”

The Klondike King paused meditatively, and the group on the hotel porch hitched their chairs up closer.

“Talkin’ of bear,” he went on, “now up in the Northern Country there are various kinds. On the Little Pelly, for instance, they come down that thick in the summer to feed on the salmon that you can’t get an Indian or white man to go nigher than a day’s journey to the place. And up in the Rampart Mountains there’s a curious kind of bear called the ‘side-hill grizzly.’ That’s because he’s traveled on the side-hills ever since the Flood, and the two legs on the down-hill side are twice as long as the two on the up-hill. And he can out-run a jack rabbit when he gets steam up. Dangerous? Catch you? Bless you, no. All a man has to do is to circle down the hill and run the other way. You see, that throws mister bear’s long legs up the hill and the short ones down. Yes, he’s a mighty peculiar creature, but that wasn’t what I started in to tell about.

“They’ve got another kind of bear up on the Yukon, and his legs are all right, too. He’s called the bald-face grizzly, and he’s jest as big as he is bad. It’s only the fool white men that think of hunting him. Indiana got too much sense. But there’s one thing about the bald-face that a man has to learn: he never gives the trail to mortal creature. If you see him comin’, and you value your skin, you get out of his path. If you don’t, there’s bound to be trouble. If the bald-face met Jehovah Himself ! on the trail, he’d not give him an inch. O, he’s a selfish beggar, take my word for it. But I had to learn all this. Didn’t know anything about bear when I went into the country, exceptin’ when I was a youngster I’d seen a heap of cinnamons and that little black kind. And they was nothin’ to be scared at.

“Well, after we’d got settled down on our claim, I went up on the hill lookin’ for a likely piece of birch to make an ax-handle out of. But it was pretty hard to find the right kind, and I kept a-goin’ and kept a-goin’ for nigh on two hours. Wasn’t in no hurry to make my choice, you see, for I was headin’ down to the Forks, where I was goin’ to borrow a log-bit from Old Joe Gee. When I started, I’d put a couple of sour-dough biscuits and some sow-belly in my pocket in case I might get hungry. And I’m tellin’ you that lunch came in right handy before I was done with it.

“Bime-by I hit upon the likeliest little birch saplin’, right in the middle of a clump of jack pine. Jest as I raised my hand-ax I happened to cast my eyes down the hill. There was a big bear comin’ up, swingin’ along on all fours, right in my direction. It was a bald-face, but little I knew then about such kind.

“‘Jest watch me scare him; I says to myself, and I stayed out of sight in the trees.

“Well, I waited till he was about a hundred feet off, then out I runs into the open.

“‘Oof! oof!’ I hollered at him, expectin’ to see him turn tail like chain lightning.

“Turn tail? He jest throwed up his head for one good look and came a comin’.

“‘Oof! oof!’ I hollered, louder’n ever. But he jest came a comin’.

“‘Consarn you!’ I says to myself, gettin’ mad. ‘I’ll make you jump the trail.’

“So I grabs my hat, and wavin’ and hollerin’ starts down the trail to meet him. A big sugar pine had gone down in a windfall and lay about breast high. I stops jest behind it, old bald-face comin’ all the time. It was jest then that fear came to me. I yelled like a Comanche Indian as he raised up to come over the log, and fired my hat full in his face. Then I lit out.

“Say! I rounded the end of that log and put down the hill at a two-twenty clip, old bald-face reachin’ for me at every jump. At the bottom was a broad, open flat, quarter of a mile to timber and full of nigger-heads. I knew if ever I slipped I was a goner, but I hit only the high places till you couldn’t a-seen my trail for smoke. And the old devil snortin’ along hot after me. Midway across, he reached for me, jest strikin’ the heel of my moccasin with his claw. Tell you I was doin’ some tall thinkin’ jest then. I knew he had the wind of me and I could never make the brush, so I pulled my little lunch out of my pocket and dropped it on the fly.

“Never looked back till I hit the timber, and then he was mouthing the biscuits in a way which wasn’t nice to see, considerin’ how close he’d been to me. I never slacked up. No, sir! Jest kept hittin’ the trail for all there was in me. But jest as I came around a bend, heelin’ it right lively I tell you, what’d I see in middle of the trail before me, and comin’ my way, but another bald-face!

“‘Whoof!’ he says when he spotted me, and he came a-runnin’.

“Instanter I was about and hittin’ the back trail twice as fast as I’d come. The way this one was puffin’ after me, I’d clean forgot all about the other bald-face. First thing I knew I seen him mosying along kind of easy, wonderin’ most likely what had become of me, and if I tasted as good as my lunch. Say! when he seen me he looked real pleased. And then he came a-jumpin’ for me.

“‘Whoof!’ he says.

“‘Whoof!’ says the one behind me.

“Bang I goes, slap off the trail sideways, a-plungin’ and a-clawin’ through the brush like a wild man. By this time I was clean crazed; thought the whole country was full of bald-faces. Next thing I knows — whop, I comes up against something in a tangle of wild blackberry bushes. Then that something hits me a slap and closes in on me. Another bald-face! And then and there I knew I was gone for sure. But I made up to

die game, and of all the rampin' and roarin' and rippin' and tearin' you ever see, that was the worst.

“‘My God! O my wife!’ it says. And I looked and it was a man I was hammering into kingdom come.

“‘Thought you was a bear,’ says I.

“He kind of caught his breath and looked at me. Then he says, ‘Same here.’

“Seemed as though he’d been chased by a bald-face, too, and had hid in the blackberries. So that’s how we mistook each other.

“But by that time the racket on the trail was something terrible, and we didn’t wait to explain matters. That afternoon we got Joe Gee and some rifles and came back loaded for bear. Mebbe you won’t believe me, but when we got to the spot, there was the two bald-faces lyin’ dead. You see, when I jumped out, they came together, and each refused to give trail to the other. So they fought it out.

“Talkin’ of bear. As I was sayin’ —

The Banks of the Sacramento

“And it’s blow, ye winds, heigh-ho,
For Cal-i-for-ni-o;
For there’s plenty of gold so I’ve been told,
On the banks of the Sacramento!”

It was only a little boy, singing in a shrill treble the sea chantey which seamen sing the wide world over when they man the capstan bars and break the anchors out for “Frisco” port. It was only a little boy who had never seen the sea, but two hundred feet beneath him rolled the Sacramento. “Young” Jerry he was called, after “Old” Jerry, his father, from whom he had learned the song, as well as received his shock of bright-red hair, his blue, dancing eyes, and his fair and inevitably freckled skin.

For Old Jerry had been a sailor, and had followed the sea till middle life, haunted always by the words of the ringing chantey. Then one day he had sung the song in earnest, in an Asiatic port, swinging and thrilling round the capstan-circle with twenty others. And at San Francisco he turned his back upon his ship and upon the sea, and went to behold with his own eyes the banks of the Sacramento.

He beheld the gold, too, for he found employment at the Yellow Dream mine, and proved of utmost usefulness in rigging the great ore-cables across the river and two hundred feet above its surface.

After that he took charge of the cables and kept them in repair, and ran them and loved them, and became himself an indispensable fixture of the Yellow Dream mine. Then he loved pretty Margaret Kelly; but she had left him and Young Jerry, the latter barely toddling, to take up his last long sleep in the little graveyard among the great sober pines.

Old Jerry never went back to the sea. He remained by his cables, and lavished upon them and Young Jerry all the love of his nature. When evil days came to the Yellow Dream, he still remained in the employ of the company as watchman over the all but abandoned property.

But this morning he was not visible. Young Jerry only was to be seen, sitting on the cabin step and singing the ancient chantey. He had cooked and eaten his breakfast all by himself, and had just come out to take a look at the world. Twenty feet before him stood the steel drum round which the endless cable worked. By the drum, snug and fast, was the ore-car. Following with his eyes the dizzy flight of the cables to the farther bank, he could see the other drum and the other car.

The contrivance was worked by gravity, the loaded car crossing the river by virtue of its own weight, and at the same time dragging the empty car back. The loaded car

being emptied, and the empty car being loaded with more ore, the performance could be repeated—a performance which had been repeated tens of thousands of times since the day Old Jerry became the keeper of the cables.

Young Jerry broke off his song at the sound of approaching footsteps. A tall, blue-skirted man, a rifle across the hollow of his arm, came out from the gloom of the pine-trees. It was Hall, watchman of the Yellow Dragon mine, the cables of which spanned the Sacramento a mile farther up.

“Hello, younker!” was his greeting. “What you doin’ here by your lonesome?”

“Oh, bachin;” Jerry tried to answer unconcernedly, as if it were a very ordinary sort of thing. “Dad’s away, you see.”

“Where’s he gone?” the man asked.

“San Francisco. Went last night. His brother’s dead in the old country, and he’s gone down to see the lawyers. Won’t be back till tomorrow night.”

So spoke Jerry, and with pride, because of the responsibility which had fallen to him of keeping an eye on the property of the Yellow Dream, and the glorious adventure of living alone on the cliff above the river and of cooking his own meals.

Well, take care of yourself,” Hall said, “and don’t monkey with the cables. I’m goin’ to see if I can’t pick up a deer in the Cripple Cow Canon.”

“It’s goin’ to rain, I think,” Jerry said, with mature deliberation.

“And it’s little I mind a wettin’,” Hall laughed, as he strode away among the trees.

Jerry’s prediction concerning rain was more than fulfilled. By ten o’clock the pines were swaying and moaning, the cabin windows rattling, and the rain driving by in fierce squalls. At half past eleven he kindled a fire, and promptly at the stroke of twelve sat down to his dinner.

No out-of-doors for him that day, he decided, when he had washed the few dishes and put them neatly away; and he wondered how wet Hall was and whether he had succeeded in picking up a deer.

At one o’clock there came a knock at the door, and when he opened it a man and a woman staggered in on the breast of a great gust of wind. They were Mr. and Mrs. Spillane, ranchers, who lived in a lonely valley a dozen miles back from the river.

“Where’s Hall?” was Spillane’s opening speech, and he spoke sharply and quickly.

Jerry noted that he was nervous and abrupt in his movements, and that Mrs. Spillane seemed laboring under some strong anxiety. She was a thin, washed-out, worked-out woman, whose life of dreary and unending toil had stamped itself harshly upon her face. It was the same life that had bowed her husband’s shoulders and gnarled his hands and turned his hair to a dry and dusty gray.

“He’s gone hunting up Cripple Cow,” Jerry answered. “Did you want to cross?”

The woman began to weep quietly, while Spillane dropped a troubled exclamation and strode to the window. Jerry joined him in gazing out to where the cables lost themselves in the thick downpour.

It was the custom of the backwoods people in that section of country to cross the Sacramento on the Yellow Dragon cable. For this service a small toll was charged, which tolls the Yellow Dragon Company applied to the payment of Hall's wages.

"We've got to get across, Jerry," Spillane said, at the same time jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of his wife. "Her father's hurt at the Clover Leaf Powder explosion. Not expected to live. We just got word."

Jerry felt himself fluttering inwardly. He knew that Spillane wanted to cross on the Yellow Dream cable, and in the absence of his father he felt that he dared not assume such a responsibility, for the cable had never been used for passengers; in fact, had not been used at all for a long time.

"Maybe Hall will be back soon," he said.

Spillane shook his head, and demanded, "Where's your father?"

"San Francisco," Jerry answered, briefly.

Spillane groaned, and fiercely drove his clenched fist into the palm of the other hand. His wife was crying more audibly, and Jerry could hear her murmuring, "And daddy's dyin', dyin'!"

The tears welled up in his own eyes, and he stood irresolute, not knowing what he should do. But the man decided for him.

"Look here, kid," he said, with determination, "the wife and me are goin' over on this here cable of yours! Will you run it for us?"

Jerry backed slightly away. He did it unconsciously, as if recoiling instinctively from something unwelcome.

"Better see if Hall's back," he suggested.

"And if he ain't?"

Again Jerry hesitated.

"I'll stand for the risk," Spillane added. "Don't you see, kid, we've simply got to cross!"

Jerry nodded his head reluctantly.

"And there ain't no use waitin' for Hall," Spillane went on. "You know as well as me he ain't back from Cripple Cow this time of day! So come along and let's get started."

No wonder that Mrs. Spillane seemed terrified as they helped her into the ore-car — so Jerry thought, as he gazed into the apparently fathomless gulf beneath her. For it was so filled with rain and cloud, hurtling and curling in the fierce blast, that the other shore, seven hundred feet away, was invisible, while the cliff at their feet dropped sheer down and lost itself in the swirling vapor. By all appearances it might be a mile to bottom instead of two hundred feet.

"All ready?" he asked.

"Let her go!" Spillane shouted, to make himself heard above the roar of the wind.

He had clambered in beside his wife, and was holding one of her hands in his.

Jerry looked upon this with disapproval. "You'll need all your hands for holdin' on, the way the wind's yowlin'."

The man and the woman shifted their hands accordingly, tightly gripping the sides of the car, and Jerry slowly and carefully released the brake. The drum began to revolve as the endless cable passed round it, and the car slid slowly out into the chasm, its trolley wheels rolling on the stationary cable overhead, to which it was suspended.

It was not the first time Jerry had worked the cable, but it was the first time he had done so away from the supervising eye of his father. By means of the brake he regulated the speed of the car. It needed regulating, for at times, caught by the stronger gusts of wind, it swayed violently back and forth; and once, just before it was swallowed up in a rain squall, it seemed about to spill out its human contents.

After that Jerry had no way of knowing where the car was except by means of the cable. This he watched keenly as it glided around the drum. "Three hundred feet," he breathed to himself, as the cable markings went by, "three hundred and fifty, four hundred; four hundred and — "

The cable had stopped. Jerry threw off the brake, but it did not move. He caught the cable with his hands and tried to start it by tugging smartly. Something had gone wrong. What? He could not guess; he could not see. Looking up, he could vaguely make out the empty car, which had been crossing from the opposite cliff at a speed equal to that of the loaded car. It was about two hundred and fifty feet away. That meant, he knew, that somewhere in the gray obscurity, two hundred feet above the river and two hundred and fifty feet from the other bank, Spillane and his wife were suspended and stationary.

Three times Jerry shouted with all the shrill force of his lungs, but no answering cry came out of the storm. It was impossible for him to hear them or to make himself heard. As he stood for a moment, thinking rapidly, the flying clouds seemed to thin and lift. He caught a brief glimpse of the swollen Sacramento beneath, and a briefer glimpse of the car and the man and woman. Then the clouds descended thicker than ever.

The boy examined the drum closely, and found nothing the matter with it. Evidently it was the drum on the other side that had gone wrong. He was appalled at thought of the man and woman out there in the midst of the storm, hanging over the abyss, rocking back and forth in the frail car and ignorant of what was taking place on shore. And he did not like to think of their hanging there while he went round by the Yellow Dragon cable to the other drum.

But he remembered a block and tackle in the tool-house, and ran and brought it. They were double blocks, and he murmured aloud, "A purchase of four," as he made the tackle fast to the endless cable. Then he heaved upon it, heaved until it seemed that his arms were being drawn out from their sockets and that his shoulder muscles would be ripped asunder. Yet the cable did not budge. Nothing remained but to cross over to the other side.

He was already soaking wet, so he did not mind the rain as he ran over the trail to the Yellow Dragon. The storm was with him, and it was easy going, although there was no Hall at the other end of it to man the brake for him and regulate the speed of

the car. This he did for himself, however, by means of a stout rope, which he passed, with a turn, round the stationary cable.

As the full force of the wind struck him in mid-air, swaying the cable and whistling and roaring past it, and rocking and careening the car, he appreciated more fully what must be the condition of mind of Spillane and his wife. And this appreciation gave strength to him, as, safely across, he fought his way up the other bank, in the teeth of the gale, to the Yellow Dream cable.

To his consternation, he found the drum in thorough working order. Everything was running smoothly at both ends. Where was the hitch? In the middle, without a doubt.

From this side, the car containing Spillane was only two hundred and fifty feet away. He could make out the man and woman through the whirling vapor, crouching in the bottom of the car and exposed to the pelting rain and the full fury of the wind. In a lull between the squalls he shouted to Spillane to examine the trolley of the car.

Spillane heard, for he saw him rise up cautiously on his knees, and with his hands go over both trolley-wheels. Then he turned his face toward the bank.

“She’s all right, kid!”

Jerry heard the words, faint and far, as from a remote distance. Then what was the matter? Nothing remained but the other and empty car, which he could not see, but which he knew to be there, somewhere in that terrible gulf two hundred feet beyond Spillane’s car.

His mind was made up on the instant. He was only fourteen years old, slightly and wirily built; but his life had been lived among the mountains, his father had taught him no small measure of “sailing,” and he was not particularly afraid of heights.

In the tool-box by the drum he found an old monkey-wrench and a short bar of iron, also a coil of fairly new Manila rope. He looked in vain for a piece of board with which to rig a “boatswain’s chair.” There was nothing at hand but large planks, which he had no means of sawing, so he was compelled to do without the more comfortable form of saddle.

The saddle he rigged was very simple. With the rope he made merely a large loop round the stationary cable, to which hung the empty car. When he sat in the loop his hands could just reach the cable conveniently, and where the rope was likely to fray against the cable he lashed his coat, in lieu of the old sack he would have used had he been able to find one.

These preparations swiftly completed, he swung out over the chasm, sitting in the rope saddle and pulling himself along the cable by his hands. With him he carried the monkey-wrench and short iron bar and a few spare feet of rope. It was a slightly up-hill pull, but this he did not mind so much as the wind. When the furious gusts hurled him back and forth, sometimes half twisting him about, and he gazed down into the gray depths, he was aware that he was afraid. It was an old cable. What if it should break under his weight and the pressure of the wind?

It was fear he was experiencing, honest fear, and he knew that there was a “gone” feeling in the pit of his stomach, and a trembling of the knees which he could not quell.

But he held himself bravely to the task. The cable was old and worn, sharp pieces of wire projected from it, and his hands were cut and bleeding by the time he took his first rest, and held a shouted conversation with Spillane. The car was directly beneath him and only a few feet away, so he was able to explain the condition of affairs and his errand.

“Wish I could help you,” Spillane shouted at him as he started on, “but the wife’s gone all to pieces! Anyway, kid, take care of yourself! I got myself in this fix, but it’s up to you to get me out!”

“Oh, I’ll do it!” Jerry shouted back. “Tell Mrs. Spillane that she’ll be ashore now in a jiffy!”

In the midst of pelting rain, which half-blinded him, swinging from side to side like a rapid and erratic pendulum, his torn hands paining him severely and his lungs panting from his exertions and panting from the very air which the wind sometimes blew into his mouth with strangling force, he finally arrived at the empty car.

A single glance showed him that he had not made the dangerous journey in vain. The front trolley-wheel, loose from long wear, had jumped the cable, and the cable was now jammed tightly between the wheel and the sheave-block.

One thing was clear — the wheel must be removed from the block. A second thing was equally clear — while the wheel was being removed the car would have to be fastened to the cable by the rope he had brought.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, beyond making the car secure, he had accomplished nothing. The key which bound the wheel on its axle was rusted and jammed. He hammered at it with one hand and held on the best he could with the other, but the wind persisted in swinging and twisting his body, and made his blows miss more often than not. Nine-tenths of the strength he expended was in trying to hold himself steady. For fear that he might drop the monkey-wrench he made it fast to his wrist with his handkerchief.

At the end of half an hour Jerry had hammered the key clear, but he could not draw it out. A dozen times it seemed that he must give up in despair, that all the danger and toil he had gone through were for nothing. Then an idea came to him, and he went through his pockets with feverish haste, and found what he sought — a ten-penny nail.

But for that nail, put in his pocket he knew not when or why, he would have had to make another trip over the cable and back. Thrusting the nail through the looped head of the key, he at last had a grip, and in no time the key was out.

Then came punching and prying with the iron bar to get the wheel itself free from where it was jammed by the cable against the side of the block. After that Jerry replaced the wheel, and by means of the rope, heaved up on the car till the trolley once more rested properly on the cable.

All this took time. More than an hour and a half had elapsed since his arrival at the empty car. And now, for the first time, he dropped out of his saddle and down into the car. He removed the detaining ropes, and the trolley-wheels began slowly to

revolve. The car was moving, and he knew that somewhere beyond, although he could not see, the car of Spillane was likewise moving, and in the opposite direction.

There was no need for a brake, for his weight sufficiently counterbalanced the weight in the other car; and soon he saw the cliff rising out of the cloud depths and the old familiar drum going round and round.

Jerry climbed out and made the car securely fast. He did it deliberately and carefully, and then, quite unhero-like, he sank down by the drum, regardless of the pelting storm, and burst out sobbing.

There were many reasons why he sobbed — partly from the pain of his hands, which was excruciating; partly from exhaustion; partly from relief and release from the nerve-tension he had been under for so long; and in a large measure from thankfulness that the man and woman were saved.

They were not there to thank him; but somewhere beyond that howling, storm-driven gulf he knew they were hurrying over the trail toward the Clover Leaf.

Jerry staggered to the cabin, and his hand left the white knob red with blood as he opened the door, but he took no notice of it.

He was too proudly contented with himself, for he was certain that he had done well, and he was honest enough to admit to himself that he had done well. But a small regret arose and persisted in his thoughts — if his father had only been there to see!

Bâtard

OR

DIABLE A DOG

Bâtard was a devil. This was recognized throughout the Northland. "Hell's Spawn" he was called by many men, but his master, Black Leclère, chose for him the shameful name "Bâtard." Now Black Leclère was also a devil, and the twain were well matched. There is a saying that when two devils come together, hell is to pay. This is to be expected, and this certainly was to be expected when Bâtard and Black Leclère came together. The first time they met, Bâtard was a part-grown puppy, lean and hungry, with bitter eyes; and they met with snap and snarl, and wicked looks, for Leclère's upper lip had a wolfish way of lifting and showing the white, cruel teeth. And it lifted then, and his eyes glinted viciously, as he reached for Bâtard and dragged him out from the squirming litter. It was certain that they divined each other, for on the instant Bâtard had buried his puppy fangs in Leclère's hand, and Leclère, thumb and finger, was coolly choking his young life out of him.

"Sacredam," the Frenchman said softly, flirting the quick blood from his bitten hand and gazing down on the little puppy choking and gasping in the snow.

Leclère turned to John Hamlin, storekeeper of the Sixty Mile Post. "Dat fo' w'at Ah lak heem. 'Ow moch, eh, you, M'sieu'? 'Ow moch? Ah buy heem, now; Ah buy heem queek."

And because he hated him with an exceeding bitter hate, Leclère bought Bâtard and gave him his shameful name. And for five years the twain adventured across the Northland, from St. Michael's and the Yukon delta to the head-reaches of the Pelly and even so far as the Peace River, Athabasca, and the Great Slave. And they acquired a reputation for uncompromising wickedness, the like of which never before attached itself to man and dog.

Bâtard did not know his father,—hence his name,—but, as John Hamlin knew, his father was a great gray timber wolf. But the mother of Bâtard, as he dimly remembered her, was snarling, bickering, obscene, husky, full-fronted and heavy-chested, with a malign eye, a cat-like grip on life, and a genius for trickery and evil. There was neither faith nor trust in her. Her treachery alone could be relied upon, and her wild-wood amours attested her general depravity. Much of evil and much of strength were there in these, Bâtard's progenitors, and, bone and flesh of their bone and flesh, he had inherited it all. And then came Black Leclère, to lay his heavy hand on the bit of pulsating puppy life, to press and prod and mould till it became a big bristling beast, acute in knavery, overspilling with hate, sinister, malignant, diabolical. With a proper

master Bâtard might have made an ordinary, fairly efficient sled-dog. He never got the chance: Leclère but confirmed him in his congenital iniquity.

The history of Bâtard and Leclère is a history of war—of five cruel, relentless years, of which their first meeting is fit summary. To begin with, it was Leclère's fault, for he hated with understanding and intelligence, while the long-legged, ungainly puppy hated only blindly, instinctively, without reason or method. At first there were no refinements of cruelty (these were to come later), but simple beatings and crude brutalities. In one of these Bâtard had an ear injured. He never regained control of the riven muscles, and ever after the ear drooped limply down to keep keen the memory of his tormentor. And he never forgot.

His puppyhood was a period of foolish rebellion. He was always worsted, but he fought back because it was his nature to fight back. And he was unconquerable. Yelping shrilly from the pain of lash and club, he none the less contrived always to throw in the defiant snarl, the bitter vindictive menace of his soul which fetched without fail more blows and beatings. But his was his mother's tenacious grip on life. Nothing could kill him. He flourished under misfortune, grew fat with famine, and out of his terrible struggle for life developed a preternatural intelligence. His were the stealth and cunning of the husky, his mother, and the fierceness and valor of the wolf, his father.

Possibly it was because of his father that he never wailed. His puppy yelps passed with his lanky legs, so that he became grim and taciturn, quick to strike, slow to warn. He answered curse with snarl, and blow with snap, grinning the while his implacable hatred; but never again, under the extremest agony, did Leclère bring from him the cry of fear nor of pain. This unconquerableness but fanned Leclère's wrath and stirred him to greater deviltries.

Did Leclère give Bâtard half a fish and to his mates whole ones, Bâtard went forth to rob other dogs of their fish. Also he robbed caches and expressed himself in a thousand rogueries, till he became a terror to all dogs and masters of dogs. Did Leclère beat Bâtard and fondle Babette,—Babette who was not half the worker he was,—why, Bâtard threw her down in the snow and broke her hind leg in his heavy jaws, so that Leclère was forced to shoot her. Likewise, in bloody battles, Bâtard mastered all his teammates, set them the law of trail and forage, and made them live to the law he set. In five years he heard but one kind word, received but one soft stroke of a hand, and then he did not know what manner of things they were. He leaped like the untamed thing he was, and his jaws were together in a flash. It was the missionary at Sunrise, a newcomer in the country, who spoke the kind word and gave the soft stroke of the hand. And for six months after, he wrote no letters home to the States, and the surgeon at McQuestion travelled two hundred miles on the ice to save him from blood-poisoning.

Men and dogs looked askance at Bâtard when he drifted into their camps and posts. The men greeted him with feet threateningly lifted for the kick, the dogs with bristling manes and bared fangs. Once a man did kick Bâtard, and Bâtard, with quick wolf snap, closed his jaws like a steel trap on the man's calf and crunched down to the bone. Whereat the man was determined to have his life, only Black Leclère, with

ominous eyes and naked hunting-knife, stepped in between. The killing of Bâtard—ah, sacredam, that was a pleasure Leclère reserved for himself. Some day it would happen, or else—bah! who was to know? Anyway, the problem would be solved.

For they had become problems to each other. The very breath each drew was a challenge and a menace to the other. Their hate bound them together as love could never bind. Leclère was bent on the coming of the day when Bâtard should wilt in spirit and cringe and whimper at his feet. And Bâtard—Leclère knew what was in Bâtard’s mind, and more than once had read it in Bâtard’s eyes. And so clearly had he read, that when Bâtard was at his back, he made it a point to glance often over his shoulder.

Men marvelled when Leclère refused large money for the dog. “Some day you’ll kill him and be out his price,” said John Hamlin once, when Bâtard lay panting in the snow where Leclère had kicked him, and no one knew whether his ribs were broken, and no one dared look to see.

“Dat,” said Leclère, dryly, “dat is my biz’ness, M’sieu’.”

And the men marvelled that Bâtard did not run away. They did not understand. But Leclère understood. He was a man who lived much in the open, beyond the sound of human tongue, and he had learned the voices of wind and storm, the sigh of night, the whisper of dawn, the clash of day. In a dim way he could hear the green things growing, the running of the sap, the bursting of the bud. And he knew the subtle speech of the things that moved, of the rabbit in the snare, the moody raven beating the air with hollow wing, the baldface shuffling under the moon, the wolf like a gray shadow gliding betwixt the twilight and the dark. And to him Bâtard spoke clear and direct. Full well he understood why Bâtard did not run away, and he looked more often over his shoulder.

When in anger, Bâtard was not nice to look upon, and more than once had he leapt for Leclère’s throat, to be stretched quivering and senseless in the snow, by the butt of the ever ready dogwhip. And so Bâtard learned to bide his time. When he reached his full strength and prime of youth, he thought the time had come. He was broad-chested, powerfully muscled, of far more than ordinary size, and his neck from head to shoulders was a mass of bristling hair—to all appearances a full-blooded wolf. Leclère was lying asleep in his furs when Bâtard deemed the time to be ripe. He crept upon him stealthily, head low to earth and lone ear laid back, with a feline softness of tread. Bâtard breathed gently, very gently, and not till he was close at hand did he raise his head. He paused for a moment, and looked at the bronzed bull throat, naked and knotty, and swelling to a deep and steady pulse. The slaver dripped down his fangs and slid off his tongue at the sight, and in that moment he remembered his drooping ear, his uncounted blows and prodigious wrongs, and without a sound sprang on the sleeping man.

Leclère awoke to the pang of the fangs in his throat, and, perfect animal that he was, he awoke clear-headed and with full comprehension. He closed on Bâtard’s windpipe with both his hands, and rolled out of his furs to get his weight uppermost. But the thousands of Bâtard’s ancestors had clung at the throats of unnumbered moose and

caribou and dragged them down, and the wisdom of those ancestors was his. When Leclère's weight came on top of him, he drove his hind legs upward and in, and clawed down chest and abdomen, ripping and tearing through skin and muscle. And when he felt the man's body wince above him and lift, he worried and shook at the man's throat. His team-mates closed around in a snarling circle, and Bâtard, with failing breath and fading sense, knew that their jaws were hungry for him. But that did not matter—it was the man, the man above him, and he ripped and clawed, and shook and worried, to the last ounce of his strength. But Leclère choked him with both his hands, till Bâtard's chest heaved and writhed for the air denied, and his eyes glazed and set, and his jaws slowly loosened, and his tongue protruded black and swollen.

“Eh? Bon, you devil!” Leclère gurgled, mouth and throat clogged with his own blood, as he shoved the dizzy dog from him.

And then Leclère cursed the other dogs off as they fell upon Bâtard. They drew back into a wider circle, squatting alertly on their haunches and licking their chops, the hair on every neck bristling and erect.

Bâtard recovered quickly, and at sound of Leclère's voice, tottered to his feet and swayed weakly back and forth.

“A-h-ah! You beeg devil!” Leclère spluttered. “Ah fix you; Ah fix you plentee, by Gar!”

Bâtard, the air biting into his exhausted lungs like wine, flashed full into the man's face, his jaws missing and coming together with a metallic clip. They rolled over and over on the snow, Leclère striking madly with his fists. Then they separated, face to face, and circled back and forth before each other. Leclère could have drawn his knife. His rifle was at his feet. But the beast in him was up and raging. He would do the thing with his hands—and his teeth. Bâtard sprang in, but Leclère knocked him over with a blow of the fist, fell upon him, and buried his teeth to the bone in the dog's shoulder.

It was a primordial setting and a primordial scene, such as might have been in the savage youth of the world. An open space in a dark forest, a ring of grinning wolf-dogs, and in the centre two beasts, locked in combat, snapping and snarling, raging madly about, panting, sobbing, cursing, straining, wild with passion, in a fury of murder, ripping and tearing and clawing in elemental brutishness.

But Leclère caught Bâtard behind the ear, with a blow from his fist, knocking him over, and, for the instant, stunning him. Then Leclère leaped upon him with his feet, and sprang up and down, striving to grind him into the earth. Both Bâtard's hind legs were broken ere Leclère ceased that he might catch breath.

“A-a-ah! A-a-ah!” he screamed, incapable of speech, shaking his fist, through sheer impotence of throat and larynx.

But Bâtard was indomitable. He lay there in a helpless welter, his lip feebly lifting and writhing to the snarl he had not the strength to utter. Leclère kicked him, and the tired jaws closed on the ankle, but could not break the skin. Then Leclère picked up

the whip and proceeded almost to cut him to pieces, at each stroke of the lash crying: "Dis taim Ah break you! Eh? By Gar! Ah break you!"

In the end, exhausted, fainting from loss of blood, he crumpled up and fell by his victim, and when the wolf-dogs closed in to take their vengeance, with his last consciousness dragged his body on top Bâtard to shield him from their fangs.

This occurred not far from Sunrise, and the missionary, opening the door to Leclère a few hours later, was surprised to note the absence of Bâtard from the team. Nor did his surprise lessen when Leclère threw back the robes from the sled, gathered Bâtard into his arms, and staggered across the threshold. It happened that the surgeon of McQuestion, who was something of a gadabout, was up on a gossip, and between them they proceeded to repair Leclère.

"Merci, non," said he. "Do you fix firs' de dog. To die? Non. Eet is not good. Becos' heem Ah mus' yet break. Dat fo' w'at he mus' not die."

The surgeon called it a marvel, the missionary a miracle, that Leclère pulled through at all; and so weakened was he, that in the spring the fever got him, and he went on his back again. Bâtard had been in even worse plight, but his grip on life prevailed, and the bones of his hind legs knit, and his organs righted themselves, during the several weeks he lay strapped to the floor. And by the time Leclère, finally convalescent, sallow and shaky, took the sun by the cabin door, Bâtard had reasserted his supremacy among his kind, and brought not only his own team-mates but the missionary's dogs into subjection.

He moved never a muscle, nor twitched a hair, when, for the first time, Leclère tottered out on the missionary's arm, and sank down slowly and with infinite caution on the three-legged stool.

"Bon!—" he said. "Bon! De good sun!" And he stretched out his wasted hands and washed them in the warmth.

Then his gaze fell on the dog, and the old light blazed back in his eyes. He touched the missionary lightly on the arm. "Mon père, dat is one beeg devil, dat Bâtard. You will bring me one pistol, so, dat Ah drink de sun in peace."

And thenceforth for many days he sat in the sun before the cabin door. He never dozed, and the pistol lay always across his knees. Bâtard had a way, the first thing each day, of looking for the weapon in its wonted place. At sight of it he would lift his lip faintly in token that he understood, and Leclère would lift his own lip in an answering grin. One day the missionary took note of the trick.

"Bless me!" he said. "I really believe the brute comprehends."

Leclère laughed softly. "Look you, mon père. Dat w'at Ah now spik, to dat does he lissen."

As if in confirmation, Bâtard just perceptibly wriggled his lone ear up to catch the sound.

"Ah say 'keel.'"

Bâtard growled deep down in his throat, the hair bristled along his neck, and every muscle went tense and expectant.

“Ah lift de gun, so, like dat.” And suiting action to word, he sighted the pistol at Bâtard.

Bâtard, with a single leap, sideways, landed around the corner of the cabin out of sight.

“Bless me!” he repeated at intervals.

Leclère grinned proudly.

“But why does he not run away?”

The Frenchman’s shoulders went up in the racial shrug that means all things from total ignorance to infinite understanding.

“Then why do you not kill him?”

Again the shoulders went up.

“Mon père,” he said after a pause, “de taim is not yet. He is one beeg devil. Some taim Ah break heem, so, an’ so, all to leetle bits. Hey? Some taim. Bon!”

A day came when Leclère gathered his dogs together and floated down in a bateau to Forty Mile, and on to the Porcupine, where he took a commission from the P. C. Company, and went exploring for the better part of a year. After that he poled up the Koyokuk to deserted Arctic City, and later came drifting back, from camp to camp, along the Yukon. And during the long months Bâtard was well lessoned. He learned many tortures, and, notably, the torture of hunger, the torture of thirst, the torture of fire, and, worst of all, the torture of music.

Like the rest of his kind, he did not enjoy music. It gave him exquisite anguish, racking him nerve by nerve, and ripping apart every fibre of his being. It made him howl, long and wolf-like, as when the wolves bay the stars on frosty nights. He could not help howling. It was his one weakness in the contest with Leclère, and it was his shame. Leclère, on the other hand, passionately loved music—as passionately as he loved strong drink. And when his soul clamored for expression, it usually uttered itself in one or the other of the two ways, and more usually in both ways. And when he had drunk, his brain a-lilt with unsung song and the devil in him aroused and rampant, his soul found its supreme utterance in torturing Bâtard.

“Now we will haf a leetle museek,” he would say. “Eh? W’at you t’ink, Bâtard?”

It was only an old and battered harmonica, tenderly treasured and patiently repaired; but it was the best that money could buy, and out of its silver reeds he drew weird vagrant airs that men had never heard before. Then Bâtard, dumb of throat, with teeth tight clenched, would back away, inch by inch, to the farthest cabin corner. And Leclère, playing, playing, a stout club tucked under his arm, followed the animal up, inch by inch, step by step, till there was no further retreat.

At first Bâtard would crowd himself into the smallest possible space, grovelling close to the floor; but as the music came nearer and nearer, he was forced to uprear, his back jammed into the logs, his fore legs fanning the air as though to beat off the rippling waves of sound. He still kept his teeth together, but severe muscular contractions attacked his body, strange twitchings and jerkings, till he was all a-quiver and writhing in silent torment. As he lost control, his jaws spasmodically wrenched apart, and deep

throaty vibrations issued forth, too low in the register of sound for human ear to catch. And then, nostrils distended, eyes dilated, hair bristling in helpless rage, arose the long wolf howl. It came with a slurring rush upward, swelling to a great heart-breaking burst of sound, and dying away in sadly cadenced woe—then the next rush upward, octave upon octave; the bursting heart; and the infinite sorrow and misery, fainting, fading, falling, and dying slowly away.

It was fit for hell. And Leclère, with fiendish ken, seemed to divine each particular nerve and heartstring, and with long wails and tremblings and sobbing minors to make it yield up its last shred of grief. It was frightful, and for twenty-four hours after, Bâtard was nervous and unstrung, starting at common sounds, tripping over his own shadow, but, withal, vicious and masterful with his team-mates. Nor did he show signs of a breaking spirit. Rather did he grow more grim and taciturn, biding his time with an inscrutable patience that began to puzzle and weigh upon Leclère. The dog would lie in the firelight, motionless, for hours, gazing straight before him at Leclère, and hating him with his bitter eyes.

Often the man felt that he had bucked against the very essence of life—the unconquerable essence that swept the hawk down out of the sky like a feathered thunderbolt, that drove the great gray goose across the zones, that hurled the spawning salmon through two thousand miles of boiling Yukon flood. At such times he felt impelled to express his own unconquerable essence; and with strong drink, wild music, and Bâtard, he indulged in vast orgies, wherein he pitted his puny strength in the face of things, and challenged all that was, and had been, and was yet to be.

“Dere is somet’ing dere,” he affirmed, when the rhythmmed vagaries of his mind touched the secret chords of Bâtard’s being and brought forth the long lugubrious howl. “Ah pool eet out wid bot’ my han’s, so, an’ so. Ha! Ha! Eet is fonee! Eet is ver’ fonee! De priest chant, de womans pray, de mans swear, de leetle bird go peep-peep, Bâtard, heem go yow-yow—an’ eet is all de ver’ same t’ing. Ha! Ha!”

Father Gautier, a worthy priest, once reproved him with instances of concrete perdition. He never reproved him again.

“Eet may be so, mon père,” he made answer. “An’ Ah t’ink Ah go troo hell a-snappin’, lak de hemlock troo de fire. Eh, mon père?”

But all bad things come to an end as well as good, and so with Black Leclère. On the summer low water, in a poling boat, he left McDougall for Sunrise. He left McDougall in company with Timothy Brown, and arrived at Sunrise by himself. Further, it was known that they had quarrelled just previous to pulling out; for the Lizzie, a wheezy ten-ton sternwheeler, twenty-four hours behind, beat Leclère in by three days. And when he did get in, it was with a clean-drilled bullet-hole through his shoulder muscle, and a tale of ambush and murder.

A strike had been made at Sunrise, and things had changed considerably. With the infusion of several hundred gold-seekers, a deal of whiskey, and half a dozen equipped gamblers, the missionary had seen the page of his years of labor with the Indians wiped clean. When the squaws became preoccupied with cooking beans and keeping the fire

going for the wifeless miners, and the bucks with swapping their warm furs for black bottles and broken timepieces, he took to his bed, said "bless me" several times, and departed to his final accounting in a rough-hewn, oblong box. Whereupon the gamblers moved their roulette and faro tables into the mission house, and the click of chips and clink of glasses went up from dawn till dark and to dawn again.

Now Timothy Brown was well beloved among these adventurers of the north. The one thing against him was his quick temper and ready fist,—a little thing, for which his kind heart and forgiving hand more than atoned. On the other hand, there was nothing to atone for Black Leclère. He was "black," as more than one remembered deed bore witness, while he was as well hated as the other was beloved. So the men of Sunrise put an antiseptic dressing on his shoulder and haled him before Judge Lynch.

It was a simple affair. He had quarrelled with Timothy Brown at McDougall. With Timothy Brown he had left McDougall. Without Timothy Brown he had arrived at Sunrise. Considered in the light of his evilness, the unanimous conclusion was that he had killed Timothy Brown. On the other hand, Leclère acknowledged their facts, but challenged their conclusion, and gave his own explanation. Twenty miles out of Sunrise he and Timothy Brown were poling the boat along the rocky shore. From that shore two rifle-shots rang out. Timothy Brown pitched out of the boat and went down bubbling red, and that was the last of Timothy Brown. He, Leclère, pitched into the bottom of the boat with a stinging shoulder. He lay very quiet, peeping at the shore. After a time two Indians stuck up their heads and came out to the water's edge, carrying between them a birch-bark canoe. As they launched it, Leclère let fly. He potted one, who went over the side after the manner of Timothy Brown. The other dropped into the bottom of the canoe, and then canoe and poling boat went down the stream in a drifting battle. After that they hung up on a split current, and the canoe passed on one side of an island, the poling boat on the other. That was the last of the canoe, and he came on into Sunrise. Yes, from the way the Indian in the canoe jumped, he was sure he had potted him. That was all.

This explanation was not deemed adequate. They gave him ten hours' grace while the Lizzie steamed down to investigate. Ten hours later she came wheezing back to Sunrise. There had been nothing to investigate. No evidence had been found to back up his statements. They told him to make his will, for he possessed a fifty-thousand-dollar Sunrise claim, and they were a law-abiding as well as a law-giving breed.

Leclère shrugged his shoulders. "Bot one t'ing," he said; "a leetle, w'at you call, favor—a leetle favor, dat is eet. I gif my feefty t'ousan' dollair to de church. I gif my husky dog, Bâtard, to de devil. De leetle favor? Firs' you hang heem, an' den you hang me. Eet is good, eh?"

Good it was, they agreed, that Hell's Spawn should break trail for his master across the last divide, and the court was adjourned down to the river bank, where a big spruce tree stood by itself. Slackwater Charley put a hangman's knot in the end of a hauling-line, and the noose was slipped over Leclère's head and pulled tight around his neck. His hands were tied behind his back, and he was assisted to the top of a cracker

box. Then the running end of the line was passed over an overhanging branch, drawn taut, and made fast. To kick the box out from under would leave him dancing on the air.

“Now for the dog,” said Webster Shaw, sometime mining engineer. “You’ll have to rope him, Slackwater.”

Leclère grinned. Slackwater took a chew of tobacco, rove a running noose, and proceeded leisurely to coil a few turns in his hand. He paused once or twice to brush particularly offensive mosquitoes from off his face. Everybody was brushing mosquitoes, except Leclère, about whose head a small cloud was visible. Even Bâtard, lying full-stretched on the ground, with his fore paws rubbed the pests away from eyes and mouth.

But while Slackwater waited for Bâtard to lift his head, a faint call came down the quiet air, and a man was seen waving his arms and running across the flat from Sunrise. It was the storekeeper.

“C-call ‘er off, boys,” he panted, as he came in among them.

“Little Sandy and Bernadotte’s jes’ got in,” he explained with returning breath. “Landed down below an’ come up by the short cut. Got the Beaver with ‘m. Picked ‘m up in his canoe, stuck in a back channel, with a couple of bullet holes in ‘m. Other buck was Klok-Kutz, the one that knocked spots out of his squaw and dusted.”

“Eh? W’at Ah say? Eh?” Leclère cried exultantly. “Dat de one fo’ sure! Ah know. Ah spik true.”

“The thing to do is teach these damned Siwashes a little manners,” spoke Webster Shaw. “They’re getting fat and sassy, and we’ll have to bring them down a peg. Round in all the bucks and string up the Beaver for an object lesson. That’s the programme. Come on and let’s see what he’s got to say for himself.”

“Heh, M’sieu’!” Leclère called, as the crowd began to melt away through the twilight in the direction of Sunrise. “Ah lak ver’ moch to see de fon.”

“Oh, we’ll turn you loose when we come back,” Webster Shaw shouted over his shoulder. “In the meantime meditate on your sins and the ways of providence. It will do you good, so be grateful.”

As is the way with men who are accustomed to great hazards, whose nerves are healthy and trained to patience, so it was with Leclère, who settled himself to the long wait—which is to say that he reconciled his mind to it. There was no settling of the body, for the taut rope forced him to stand rigidly erect. The least relaxation of the leg muscles pressed the rough-fibred noose into his neck, while the upright position caused him much pain in his wounded shoulder. He projected his under lip and expelled his breath upward along his face to blow the mosquitoes away from his eyes. But the situation had its compensation. To be snatched from the maw of death was well worth a little bodily suffering, only it was unfortunate that he should miss the hanging of the Beaver.

And so he mused, till his eyes chanced to fall upon Bâtard, head between fore paws and stretched on the ground asleep. And then Leclère ceased to muse. He studied the

animal closely, striving to sense if the sleep were real or feigned. Bâtard's sides were heaving regularly, but Leclère felt that the breath came and went a shade too quickly; also he felt that there was a vigilance or alertness to every hair that belied unshackling sleep. He would have given his Sunrise claim to be assured that the dog was not awake, and once, when one of his joints cracked, he looked quickly and guiltily at Bâtard to see if he roused. He did not rouse then, but a few minutes later he got up slowly and lazily, stretched, and looked carefully about him.

"Sacredam," said Leclère, under his breath.

Assured that no one was in sight or hearing, Bâtard sat down, curled his upper lip almost into a smile, looked up at Leclère, and licked his chops.

"Ah see my feenish," the man said, and laughed sardonically aloud.

Bâtard came nearer, the useless ear wabbling, the good ear cocked forward with devilish comprehension. He thrust his head on one side quizzically, and advanced with mincing, playful steps. He rubbed his body gently against the box till it shook and shook again. Leclère teetered carefully to maintain his equilibrium.

"Bâtard," he said calmly, "look out. Ah keel you." Bâtard snarled at the word, and shook the box with greater force. Then he upreared, and with his fore paws threw his weight against it higher up. Leclère kicked out with one foot, but the rope bit into his neck and checked so abruptly as nearly to overbalance him.

"Hi, ya! Chook! Mush-on!-" he screamed.

Bâtard retreated, for twenty feet or so, with a fiendish levity in his bearing that Leclère could not mistake. He remembered the dog often breaking the scum of ice on the water hole, by lifting up and throwing his weight upon it; and, remembering, he understood what he now had in mind. Bâtard faced about and paused. He showed his white teeth in a grin, which Leclère answered; and then hurled his body through the air, in full charge, straight for the box.

Fifteen minutes later, Slackwater Charley and Webster Shaw, returning, caught a glimpse of a ghostly pendulum swinging back and forth in the dim light. As they hurriedly drew in closer, they made out the man's inert body, and a live thing that clung to it, and shook and worried, and gave to it the swaying motion.

"Hi, ya! Chook! you Spawn of Hell," yelled Webster Shaw.

But Bâtard glared at him, and snarled threateningly, without loosing his jaws.

Slackwater Charley got out his revolver, but his hand was shaking, as with a chill, and he fumbled.

"Here, you take it," he said, passing the weapon over.

Webster Shaw laughed shortly, drew a sight between the gleaming eyes, and pressed the trigger. Bâtard's body twitched with the shock, thrashed the ground spasmodically for a moment, and went suddenly limp. But his teeth still held fast locked.

The Benefit of the Doubt

Carter Watson, a current magazine under his arm, strolled slowly along, gazing about him curiously. Twenty years had elapsed since he had been on this particular street, and the changes were great and stupefying. This Western city of three hundred thousand souls had contained but thirty thousand, when, as a boy, he had been wont to ramble along its streets. In those days the street he was now on had been a quiet residence street in the respectable workingclass quarter. On this late afternoon he found that it had been submerged by a vast and vicious tenderloin. Chinese and Japanese shops and dens abounded, all confusedly intermingled with low white resorts and boozing dens. This quiet street of his youth had become the toughest quarter of the city.

He looked at his watch. It was half-past five. It was the slack time of the day in such a region, as he well knew, yet he was curious to see. In all his score of years of wandering and studying social conditions over the world, he had carried with him the memory of his old town as a sweet and wholesome place. The metamorphosis he now beheld was startling. He certainly must continue his stroll and glimpse the infamy to which his town had descended.

Another thing: Carter Watson had a keen social and civic consciousness. Independently wealthy, he had been loath to dissipate his energies in the pink teas and freak dinners of society, while actresses, race-horses, and kindred diversions had left him cold. He had the ethical bee in his bonnet and was a reformer of no mean pretension, though his work had been mainly in the line of contributions to the heavier reviews and quarterlies and to the publication over his name of brightly, cleverly written books on the working classes and the slum-dwellers. Among the twenty-seven to his credit occurred titles such as, "If Christ Came to New Orleans," "The Worked-out Worker," "Tenement Reform in Berlin," "The Rural Slums of England," "The people of the East Side," "Reform Versus Revolution," "The University Settlement as a Hot Bed of Radicalism" and "The Cave Man of Civilization."

But Carter Watson was neither morbid nor fanatic. He did not lose his head over the horrors he encountered, studied, and exposed. No hair brained enthusiasm branded him. His humor saved him, as did his wide experience and his con. conservative philosophic temperament. Nor did he have any patience with lightning change reform theories. As he saw it, society would grow better only through the painfully slow and arduously painful processes of evolution. There were no short cuts, no sudden regenerations. The betterment of mankind must be worked out in agony and misery just as all past social betterments had been worked out.

But on this late summer afternoon, Carter Watson was curious. As he moved along he paused before a gaudy drinking place. The sign above read, "The Vendome." There were two entrances. One evidently led to the bar. This he did not explore. The other was a narrow hallway. Passing through this he found himself in a huge room, filled with chair-encircled tables and quite deserted. In the dim light he made out a piano in the distance. Making a mental note that he would come back some time and study the class of persons that must sit and drink at those multitudinous tables, he proceeded to circumnavigate the room.

Now, at the rear, a short hallway led off to a small kitchen, and here, at a table, alone, sat Patsy Horan, proprietor of the Vendome, consuming a hasty supper ere the evening rush of business. Also, Patsy Horan was angry with the world. He had got out of the wrong side of bed that morning, and nothing had gone right all day. Had his barkeepers been asked, they would have described his mental condition as a grouch. But Carter Watson did not know this. As he passed the little hallway, Patsy Horan's sullen eyes lighted on the magazine he carried under his arm. Patsy did not know Carter Watson, nor did he know that what he carried under his arm was a magazine. Patsy, out of the depths of his grouch, decided that this stranger was one of those pests who marred and scarred the walls of his back rooms by tacking up or pasting up advertisements. The color on the front cover of the magazine convinced him that it was such an advertisement. Thus the trouble began. Knife and fork in hand, Patsy leaped for Carter Watson.

"Out wid yeh!" Patsy bellowed. "I know yer game!"

Carter Watson was startled. The man had come upon him like the eruption of a jack-in-the-box.

"A defacin' me walls," cried Patsy, at the same time emitting a string of vivid and vile, rather than virile, epithets of opprobrium.

"If I have given any offense I did not mean to – "

But that was as far as the visitor got. Patsy interrupted.

"Get out wid yeh; yeh talk too much wid yer mouth," quoted Patsy, emphasizing his remarks with flourishes of the knife and fork.

Carter Watson caught a quick vision of that eating-fork inserted uncomfortably between his ribs, knew that it would be rash to talk further with his mouth, and promptly turned to go. The sight of his meekly retreating back must have further enraged Patsy Horan, for that worthy, dropping the table implements, sprang upon him.

Patsy weighed one hundred and eighty pounds. So did Watson. In this they were equal. But Patsy was a rushing, rough-and-tumble saloon-fighter, while Watson was a boxer. In this the latter had the advantage, for Patsy came in wide open, swinging his right in a perilous sweep. All Watson had to do was to straight-left him and escape. But Watson had another advantage. His boxing, and his experience in the slums and ghettos of the world, had taught him restraint.

He pivoted on his feet, and, instead of striking, ducked the other's swinging blow and went into a clinch. But Patsy, charging like a bull, had the momentum of his rush, while Watson, whirling to meet him, had no momentum. As a result, the pair of them went down, with all their three hundred and sixty pounds of weight, in a long crashing fall, Watson underneath. He lay with his head touching the rear wall of the large room. The street was a hundred and fifty feet away, and he did some quick thinking. His first thought was to avoid trouble. He had no wish to get into the papers of this, his childhood town, where many of his relatives and family friends still lived.

So it was that he locked his arms around the man on top of him, held him close, and waited for the help to come that must come in response to the crash of the fall. The help came – that is, six men ran in from the bar and formed about in a semi-circle.

"Take him off, fellows," Watson said. "I haven't struck him, and I don't want any fight."

But the semi-circle remained silent. Watson held on and waited. Patsy, after various vain efforts to inflict damage, made an overture.

"Leggo o' me an' I'll get off o' yeh," said he.

Watson let go, but when Patsy scrambled to his feet he stood over his recumbent foe, ready to strike.

"Get up," Patsy commanded.

His voice was stern and implacable, like the voice of God calling to judgment, and Watson knew there was no mercy there.

"Stand back and I'll get up," he countered.

"If yer a gentleman, get up," quoth Patsy, his pale blue eyes aflame with wrath, his fist ready for a crushing blow.

At the same moment he drew his foot back to kick the other in the face. Watson blocked the kick with his crossed arms and sprang to his feet so quickly that he was in a clinch with his antagonist before the latter could strike. Holding him, Watson spoke to the onlookers:

"Take him away from me, fellows. You see I am not striking him. I don't want to fight. I want to get out of here."

The circle did not move nor speak. Its silence was ominous and sent a chill to Watson's heart.

Patsy made an effort to throw him, which culminated in his putting Patsy on his back. Tearing loose from him, Watson sprang to his feet and made for the door. But the circle of men was interposed a wall. He noticed the white, pasty faces, the kind that never see the sun, and knew that the men who barred his way were the nightprowlers and preying beasts of the city jungle. By them he was thrust back upon the pursuing, bull-rushing Patsy.

Again it was a clinch, in which, in momentary safety, Watson appealed to the gang. And again his words fell on deaf ears. Then it was that he knew of many similar knew fear. For he had known of many similar situations, in low dens like this, when solitary men were man-handled, their ribs and features caved in, themselves beaten and kicked

to death. And he knew, further, that if he were to escape he must neither strike his assailant nor any of the men who opposed him.

Yet in him was righteous indignation. Under no circumstances could seven to one be fair. Also, he was angry, and there stirred in him the fighting beast that is in all men. But he remembered his wife and children, his unfinished book, the ten thousand rolling acres of the up-country ranch he loved so well. He even saw in flashing visions the blue of the sky, the golden sun pouring down on his flower-spangled meadows, the lazy cattle knee-deep in the brooks, and the flash of trout in the riffles. Life was good-too good for him to risk it for a moment's sway of the beast. In short, Carter Watson was cool and scared.

His opponent, locked by his masterly clinch, was striving to throw him. Again Watson put him on the floor, broke away, and was thrust back by the pasty-faced circle to duck Patsy's swinging right and effect another clinch. This happened many times. And Watson grew even cooler, while the baffled Patsy, unable to inflict punishment, raged wildly and more wildly. He took to batting with his head in the clinches. The first time, he landed his forehead flush on Watson's nose. After that, the latter, in the clinches, buried his face in Patsy's breast. But the enraged Patsy batted on, striking his own eye and nose and cheek on the top of the other's head. The more he was thus injured, the more and the harder did Patsy bat.

This one-sided contest continued for twelve or fifteen minutes. Watson never struck a blow, and strove only to escape. Sometimes, in the free moments, circling about among the tables as he tried to win the door, the pasty-faced men gripped his coat-tails and flung him back at the swinging right of the on-rushing Patsy. Time upon time, and times without end, he clinched and put Patsy on his back, each time first whirling him around and putting him down in the direction of the door and gaining toward that goal by the length of the fall.

In the end, hatless, disheveled, with streaming nose and one eye closed, Watson won to the sidewalk and into the arms of a policeman.

"Arrest that man," Watson panted.

"Hello, Patsy," said the policeman. "What's the mix-up?"

"Hello, Charley," was the answer. "This guy comes in – "

"Arrest that man, officer," Watson repeated.

"G'wan! Beat it!" said Patsy.

"Beat it!" added the policeman. "If you don't, I'll pull you in."

"Not unless you arrest that man. He has committed a violent and unprovoked assault on me."

"Is it so, Patsy?" was the officer's query.

"Nah. Lemme tell you, Charley, an' I got the witnesses to prove it, so help me God. I was settin' in me kitchen eatin' a bowl of soup, when this guy comes in an' gets gay wid me. I never seen him in me born days before. He was drunk – "

"Look at me, officer," protested the indignant sociologist. "Am I drunk?"

The officer looked at him with sullen, menacing eyes and nodded to Patsy to continue.

“This guy gets gay wid me. ‘I’m Tim McGrath,’ says he, ‘an’ I can do the like to you,’ says he. ‘Put up yer hands.’ I smiles, an’ wid that, biff biff, he lands me twice an’ spills me soup. Look at me eye. I’m fair murdered.”

“What are you going to do, officer?” Watson demanded.

“Go on, beat it,” was the answer, “or I’ll pull you sure.”

The civic righteousness of Carter Watson flamed up.

“Mr. Officer, I protest – “

But at that moment the policeman grabbed his arm with a savage jerk that nearly overthrew him.

“Come on, you’re pulled.”

“Arrest him, too,” Watson demanded.

“Nix on that play,” was the reply.

“What did you assault him for, him a peacefully eatin’ his soup?”

II

Carter Watson was genuinely angry. Not only had he been wantonly assaulted, badly battered, and arrested, but the morning papers without exception came out with lurid accounts of his drunken brawl with the proprietor of the notorious Vendome. Not one accurate or truthful line was published. Patsy Horan and his satellites described the battle in detail. The one incontestable thing was that Carter Watson had been drunk. Thrice he had been thrown out of the place and into the gutter, and thrice he had come back, breathing blood and fire and announcing that he was going to clean out the place. “EMINENT SOCIOLOGIST JAGGED AND JUGGED,” was the first head-line he read, on the front page, accompanied by a large portrait of himself. Other headlines were: “CARTER WATSON ASPIRED TO CHAMPIONSHIP HONORS”; “CARTER WATSON GETS HIS”; “NOTED SOCIOLOGIST ATTEMPTS TO CLEAN OUT A TENDERLOIN CAFE”; and “CARTER WATSON KNOCKED OUT BY PATSY HORAN IN THREE ROUNDS.”

At the police court, next morning, under bail, appeared Carter Watson to answer the complaint of the People Versus Carter Watson, for the latter’s assault and battery on one Patsy Horan. But first, the Prosecuting Attorney, who was paid to prosecute all offenders against the People, drew him aside and talked with him privately.

“Why not let it drop!” said the Prosecuting Attorney. “I tell you what you do, Mr. Watson: Shake hands with Mr. Horan and make it up, and we’ll drop the case right here. A word to the Judge, and the case against you will be dismissed.”

“But I don’t want it dismissed,” was the answer. “Your office being what it is, you should be prosecuting me instead of asking me to make up with this – this fellow.”

“Oh, I’ll prosecute you all right,” retorted the Prosecuting Attorney.

“Also you will have to prosecute this Patsy Horan,” Watson advised; “for I shall now have him arrested for assault and battery.”

“You’d better shake and make up,” the Prosecuting Attorney repeated, and this time there was almost a threat in his voice.

The trials of both men were set for a week later, on the same morning, in Police Judge Witberg’s court.

“You have no chance,” Watson was told by an old friend of his boyhood, the retired manager of the biggest paper in the city. “Everybody knows you were beaten up by this man. His reputation is most unsavory. But it won’t help you in the least. Both cases will be dismissed. This will be because you are you. Any ordinary man would be convicted.”

“But I do not understand,” objected the perplexed sociologist. “Without warning I was attacked by this man; and badly beaten. I did not strike a blow. I – “

“That has nothing to do with it,” the other cut him off.

“Then what is there that has anything to do with it?”

“I’ll tell you. You are now up against the local police and political machine. Who are you? You are not even a legal resident in this town. You live up in the country. You haven’t a vote of your own here. Much less do you swing any votes. This dive proprietor swings a string of votes in his precincts – a mighty long string.”

“Do you mean to tell me that this Judge Witberg will violate the sacredness of his office and oath by letting this brute off?” Watson demanded.

“Watch him,” was the grim reply. “Oh, he’ll do it nicely enough. He will give an extra-legal, extra-judicial decision, abounding in every word in the dictionary that stands for fairness and right.”

“But there are the newspapers,” Watson cried.

“They are not fighting the administration at present. They’ll give it to you hard. You see what they have already done to you.”

“Then these snips of boys on the police detail won’t write the truth?”

“They will write something so near like the truth that the public will believe it. They write their stories under instruction, you know. They have their orders to twist and color, and there won’t be much left of you when they get done. Better drop the whole thing right now. You are in bad.”

“But the trials are set.”

“Give the word and they’ll drop them now. A man can’t fight a machine unless he has a machine behind him.”

III

But Carter Watson was stubborn. He was convinced that the machine would beat him, but all his days he had sought social experience, and this was certainly something new.

The morning of the trial the Prosecuting Attorney made another attempt to patch up the affair.

“If you feel that way, I should like to get a lawyer to prosecute the case,” said Watson.

“No, you don’t,” said the Prosecuting Attorney. “I am paid by the People to prosecute, and prosecute I will. But let me tell you. You have no chance. We shall lump both cases into one, and you watch out.”

Judge Witberg looked good to Watson. A fairly young man, short, comfortably stout, smooth-shaven and with an intelligent face, he seemed a very nice man indeed. This good impression was added to by the smiling lips and the wrinkles of laughter in the corners of his black eyes. Looking at him and studying him, Watson felt almost sure that his old friend’s prognostication was wrong.

But Watson was soon to learn. Patsy Horan and two of his satellites testified to a most colossal aggregation of perjuries. Watson could not have believed it possible without having experienced it. They denied the existence of the other four men. And of the two that testified, one claimed to have been in the kitchen, a witness to Watson’s unprovoked assault on Patsy, while the other, remaining in the bar, had witnessed Watson’s second and third rushes into the place as he attempted to annihilate the unoffending Patsy. The vile language ascribed to Watson was so voluminously and unspeakably vile, that he felt they were injuring their own case. It was so impossible that he should utter such things. But when they described the brutal blows he had rained on poor Patsy’s face, and the chair he demolished when he vainly attempted to kick Patsy, Watson waxed secretly hilarious and at the same time sad. The trial was a farce, but such lowness of life was depressing to contemplate when he considered the long upward climb humanity must make.

Watson could not recognize himself, nor could his worst enemy have recognized him, in the swashbuckling, rough-housing picture that was painted of him. But, as in all cases of complicated perjury, rifts and contradictions in the various stories appeared. The Judge somehow failed to notice them, while the Prosecuting Attorney and Patsy’s attorney shied off from them gracefully. Watson had not bothered to get a lawyer for himself, and he was now glad that he had not.

Still, he retained a semblance of faith in Judge Witberg when he went himself on the stand and started to tell his story.

“I was strolling casually along the street, your Honor,” Watson began, but was interrupted by the Judge.

“We are not here to consider your previous actions,” bellowed Judge Witberg. “Who struck the first blow?”

“Your Honor,” Watson pleaded, “I have no witnesses of the actual fray, and the truth of my story can only be brought out by telling the story fully – “

Again he was interrupted.

“We do not care to publish any magazines here,” Judge Witberg roared, looking at him so fiercely and malevolently that Watson could scarcely bring himself to believe that this was same man he had studied a few minutes previously.

“Who struck the first blow?” Patsy’s attorney asked.

The Prosecuting Attorney interposed, demanding to know which of the two cases lumped together was, and by what right Patsy’s lawyer, at that stage of the proceed-

ings, should take the witness. Patsy's attorney fought back. Judge Witberg interfered, professing no knowledge of any two cases being lumped together. All this had to be explained. Battle royal raged, terminating in both attorneys apologizing to the Court and to each other. And so it went, and to Watson it had the seeming of a group of pickpockets ruffling and bustling an honest man as they took his purse. The machine was working, that was all.

"Why did you enter this place of unsavory reputations?" was asked him.

"It has been my custom for many years, as a student of economics and sociology, to acquaint myself – "

But this was as far as Watson got.

"We want none of your ologies here," snarled Judge Witberg. "It is a plain question. Answer it plainly. Is it true or not true that you were drunk? That is the gist of the question."

When Watson attempted to tell how Patsy had injured his face in his attempts to bat with his head, Watson was openly scouted and flouted, and Judge Witberg again took him in hand.

"Are you aware of the solemnity of the oath you took to testify to nothing but the truth on this witness stand?" the Judge demanded. "This is a fairy story you are telling. It is not reasonable that a man would so injure himself, and continue to injure himself, by striking the soft and sensitive parts of his face against your head. You are a sensible man. It is unreasonable, is it not?"

"Men are unreasonable when they are angry," Watson answered meekly.

Then it was that Judge Witberg was deeply outraged and righteously wrathful.

"What right have you to say that?" he cried. "It is gratuitous. It has no bearing on the case. You are here as a witness, sir, of events that have transpired. The Court does not wish to hear any expressions of opinion from you at all."

"I but answered your question, your Honor," Watson protested humbly.

"You did nothing of the sort," was the next blast. "And let me warn you, sir, let me warn you, that you are laying yourself liable to contempt by such insolence. And I will have you know that we know how to observe the law and the rules of courtesy down here in this little courtroom. I am ashamed of you."

And, while the next punctilious legal wrangle between the attorneys interrupted his tale of what happened in the Vendome, Carter Watson, without bitterness, amused and at the same time sad, saw rise before him the machine, large and small, that dominated his country, the unpunished and shameless grafts of a thousand cities perpetrated by the spidery and vermin-like creatures of the machines. Here it was before him, a courtroom and a judge, bowed down in subservience by the machine to a dive-keeper who swung a string of votes. Petty and sordid as it was, it was one face of the many-faced machine that loomed colossally, in every city and state, in a thousand guises overshadowing the land.

A familiar phrase rang in his ears: "It is to laugh." At the height of the wrangle, he giggled, once, aloud, and earned a sullen frown from Judge Witberg. Worse, a myriad

times, he decided, were these bullying lawyers and this bullying judge then the bucko mates in first quality hell-ships, who not only did their own bullying but protected themselves as well. These petty rascallions, on the other hand, sought protection behind the majesty of the law. They struck, but no one was permitted to strike back, for behind them were the prison cells and the clubs of the stupid policemen – paid and professional fighters and beaters-up of men. Yet he was not bitter. The grossness and the sliminess of it was forgotten in the simple grotesqueness of it, and he had the saving sense of humor.

Nevertheless, hectoring and heckled though he was, he managed in the end to give a simple, straightforward version of the affair, and, despite a belligerent cross-examination, his story was not shaken in any particular. Quite different it was from the perjuries that had shouted aloud from the perjuries of Patsy and his two witnesses.

Both Patsy's attorney and the Prosecuting Attorney rested their cases, letting everything go before the Court without argument. Watson protested against this, but was silenced when the Prosecuting Attorney told him that Public Prosecutor and knew his business.

"Patrick Horan has testified that he was in danger of his life and that he was compelled to defend himself," Judge Witberg's verdict began. "Mr. Watson has testified to the same thing. Each has sworn that the other struck the first blow; each has sworn that the other made an unprovoked assault on him. It is an axiom of the law that the defendant should be given the benefit of the doubt. A very reasonable doubt exists. Therefore, in the case of the People Versus Carter Watson the benefit of the doubt is given to said Carter Watson and he is herewith ordered discharged from custody. The same reasoning applies to the case of the People Versus Patrick Horan. He is given the benefit of the doubt and discharged from custody. My recommendation is that both defendants shake hands and make up."

In the afternoon papers the first headline that caught Watson's eye was: "CARTER WATSON ACQUITTED." In the second paper it was: "CARTER WATSON ESCAPES A FINE." But what capped everything was the one beginning: "CARTER WATSON A GOOD FELLOW." In the text he read how Judge Witberg had advised both fighters to shake hands, which they promptly did. Further, he read:

" 'Let's have a nip on it,' said Patsy Horan.

" 'Sure,' said Carter Watson.

"And, arm in arm, they ambled for the nearest saloon."

IV

Now, from the whole adventure, Watson carried away no bitterness. It was a social experience of a new order, and it led to the writing of another book, which he entitled, "POLICE COURT PROCEDURE: A Tentative Analysis."

One summer morning a year later, on his ranch, he left his horse and himself clambered on through a miniature canyon to inspect some rock ferns he had planted the previous winter. Emerging from the upper end of the canyon, he came out on one of his flower-spangled meadows, a delightful isolated spot, screened from the world by

low hills and clumps of trees. And here he found a man, evidently on a stroll from the summer hotel down at the little town a mile away. They met face to face and the recognition was mutual. It was Judge Witberg. Also, it was a clear case of trespass, for Watson had trespass signs upon his boundaries, though he never enforced them.

Judge Witberg held out his hand, which Watson refused to see.

“Politics is a dirty trade, isn’t it, Judge?” he remarked. “Oh, yes, I see your hand, but I don’t care to take it. The papers said I shook hands with Patsy Horan after the trial. You know I did not, but let me tell you that I’d a thousand times rather shake hands with him and his vile following of curs, than with you.”

Judge Witberg was painfully flustered, and as he hemmed and hawed and essayed to speak, Watson, looking at him, was struck by a sudden whim, and he determined on a grim and facetious antic.

“I should scarcely expect any animus from a man of your acquirements and knowledge of the world,” the Judge was saying.

“Animus?” Watson replied. “Certainly not. I haven’t such a thing in my nature. And to prove it, let me show you something curious, something you have never seen before.” Casting about him, Watson picked up a rough stone the size of his fist. “See this. Watch me.”

So saying, Carter Watson tapped himself a sharp blow on the cheek. The stone laid the flesh open to the bone and the blood spurted forth.

“The stone was too sharp,” he announced to the astounded police judge, who thought he had gone mad.

“I must bruise it a trifle. There is nothing like being realistic in such matters.”

Whereupon Carter Watson found a smooth stone and with it pounded his cheek nicely several times.

“Ah,” he cooed. “That will turn beautifully green and black in a few hours. It will be most convincing.”

“You are insane,” Judge Witberg quavered.

“Don’t use such vile language to me,” said Watson. “You see my bruised and bleeding face? You did that, with that right hand of yours. You hit me twice – biff, biff. It is a brutal and unprovoked assault. I am in danger of my life. I must protect myself.”

Judge Witberg backed away in alarm before the menacing fists of the other.

“If you strike me I’ll have you arrested,” Judge Witberg threatened.

“That is what I told Patsy,” was the answer. “And do you know what he did when I told him that?”

“No.”

“That!”

And at the same moment Watson’s right fist landed flush on Judge Witberg’s nose, putting that legal gentleman over on his back on the grass.

“Get up!” commanded Watson. “If you are a gentleman, get up – that’s what Patsy told me, you know.”

Judge Witberg declined to rise, and was dragged to his feet by the coat-collar, only to have one eye blacked and be put on his back again. After that it was a red Indian massacre. Judge Witberg was humanely and scientifically beaten up. His checks were boxed, his ears cuffed, and his face was rubbed in the turf. And all the time Watson expostulated the way Patsy Horan had done it. Occasionally, and very carefully, the facetious sociologist administered a real bruising blow. Once, dragging the poor Judge to his feet, he deliberately bumped his own nose on the gentleman's head. The nose promptly bled.

"See that!" cried Watson, stepping back and deftly shedding his blood all down his own shirt front. "You did it. With your fist you did it. It is awful. I am fair murdered. I must again defend myself."

And once more Judge Witberg impacted his features on a fist and was sent to grass.

"I will have you arrested," he sobbed as he lay.

"That's what Patsy said."

"A brutal —sniff, sniff, — and unprovoked — sniff, sniff— assault."

"That's what Patsy said."

"I will surely have you arrested."

"Speaking slangily, not if I can beat you to it."

And with that, Carter Watson departed down the canyon, mounted his horse, and rode to town.

An hour later, as Judge Witberg limped up the grounds to his hotel, he was arrested by a village constable on a charge of assault and battery preferred by Carter Watson.

V

"Your Honor," Watson said next day to the village Justice, a well to do farmer and graduate, thirty years before, from a cow college, "since this Sol Witberg has seen fit to charge me with battery, following upon my charge of battery against him, I would suggest that both cases be lumped together. The testimony and the facts are the same in both cases."

To this the Justice agreed, and the double case proceeded. Watson, as prosecuting witness, first took the stand and told his story.

"I was picking flowers," he testified. "Picking flowers on my own land, never dreaming of danger. Suddenly this man rushed upon me from behind the trees. 'I am the Dodo,' he says, 'and I can do you to a frazzle. Put up your hands.' I smiled, but with that, biff, biff, he struck me, knocking me down and spilling my flowers. The language he used was frightful. It was an unprovoked and brutal assault. Look at my cheek. Look at my nose — I could not understand it. He must have been drunk. Before I recovered from my surprise he had administered this beating. I was in danger of my life and was compelled to defend myself. That is all, Your Honor, though I must say, in conclusion, that I cannot get over my perplexity. Why did he say he was the Dodo? Why did he so wantonly attack me?"

And thus was Sol Witberg given a liberal education in the art of perjury. Often, from his high seat, he had listened indulgently to police court perjuries in cooked-up

cases; but for the first time perjury was directed against him, and he no longer sat above the court, with the bailiffs, the Policemen's clubs, and the prison cells behind him.

"Your Honor," he cried, "never have I heard such a pack of lies told by so bare-faced a liar – !"

Watson here sprang to his feet.

"Your Honor, I protest. It is for your Honor to decide truth or falsehood. The witness is on the stand to testify to actual events that have transpired. His personal opinion upon things in general, and upon me, has no bearing on the case whatever."

The Justice scratched his head and waxed phlegmatically indignant.

"The point is well taken," he decided. "I am surprised at you, Mr. Witberg, claiming to be a judge and skilled in the practice of the law, and yet being guilty of such unlawyerlike conduct. Your manner, sir, and your methods, remind me of a shyster. This is a simple case of assault and battery. We are here to determine who struck the first blow, and we are not interested in your estimates of Mr. Watson's personal character. Proceed with your story."

Sol Witberg would have bitten his bruised and swollen lip in chagrin, had it not hurt so much. But he contained himself and told a simple, straightforward, truthful story.

"Your Honor," Watson said, "I would suggest that you ask him what he was doing on my premises."

"A very good question. What were you doing, sir, on Mr. Watson's premises?"

"I did not know they were his premises."

"It was a trespass, your Honor," Watson cried. "The warnings are posted conspicuously."

"I saw no warnings," said Sol Witberg.

"I have seen them myself," snapped the Justice. "They are very conspicuous. And I would warn you, sir, that if you palter with the truth in such little matters you may darken your more important statements with suspicion. Why did you strike Mr. Watson?"

"Your Honor, as I have testified, I did not strike a blow."

The Justice looked at Carter Watson's bruised and swollen visage, and turned to glare at Sol Witberg.

"Look at that man's cheek!" he thundered. "If you did not strike a blow how comes it that he is so disfigured and injured?"

"As I testified –"

"Be careful," the Justice warned.

"I will be careful, sir. I will say nothing but the truth. He struck himself with a rock. He struck himself with two different rocks."

"Does it stand to reason that a man, any man not a lunatic, would so injure himself, and continue to injure himself, by striking the soft and sensitive parts of his face with a stone?" Carter Watson demanded

“It sounds like a fairy story,” was the Justice’s comment.

“Mr. Witberg, had you been drinking?”

“No, sir.”

“Do you never drink?”

“On occasion.”

The Justice meditated on this answer with an air of astute profundity.

Watson took advantage of the opportunity to wink at Sol Witberg, but that much-abused gentleman saw nothing humorous in the situation.

“A very peculiar case, a very peculiar case,” the Justice announced, as he began his verdict. “The evidence of the two parties is flatly contradictory. There are no witnesses outside the two principals. Each claims the other committed the assault, and I have no legal way of determining the truth. But I have my private opinion, Mr. Witberg, and I would recommend that henceforth you keep off of Mr. Watson’s premises and keep away from this section of the country – “

“This is an outrage!” Sol Witberg blurted out.

“Sit down, sir!” was the Justice’s thundered command. “If you interrupt the Court in this manner again, I shall fine you for contempt. And I warn you I shall fine you heavily – you, a judge yourself, who should be conversant with the courtesy and dignity of courts. I shall now give my verdict:

“It is a rule of law that the defendant shall be given the benefit of the doubt. As I have said, and I repeat, there is no legal way for me to determine who struck the first blow. Therefore, and much to my regret,” – here he paused and glared at Sol Witberg – “in each of these cases I am compelled to give the defendant the benefit of the doubt. Gentlemen, you are both dismissed.”

“Let us have a nip on it,” Watson said to Witberg, as they left the courtroom; but that outraged person refused to lock arms and amble to the nearest saloon.

The Bones of Kahekili

From over the lofty Koolau Mountains, vagrant wisps of the trade wind drifted, faintly swaying the great, unwhipped banana leaves, rustling the palms, and fluttering and setting up a whispering among the lace-leaved algaroba trees. Only intermittently did the atmosphere so breathe—for breathing it was, the suspiring of the languid, Hawaiian afternoon. In the intervals between the soft breathings, the air grew heavy and balmy with the perfume of flowers and the exhalations of fat, living soil.

Of humans about the low bungalow-like house, there were many; but one only of them slept. The rest were on the tense tiptoes of silence. At the rear of the house a tiny babe piped up a thin blating wail that the quickly thrust breast could not appease. The mother, a slender hapa-haole (half-white), clad in a loose-flowing holoku of white muslin, hastened away swiftly among the banana and papaia trees to remove the babe's noise by distance. Other women, hapa-haole and full native, watched her anxiously as she fled.

At the front of the house, on the grass, squatted a score of Hawaiians. Well-muscled, broad-shouldered, they were all strapping men. Brown-skinned, with luminous brown eyes and black, their features large and regular, they showed all the signs of being as good-natured, merry-hearted, and soft-tempered as the climate. To all of which a seeming contradiction was given by the ferociousness of their accoutrement. Into the tops of their rough leather leggings were thrust long knives, the handles projecting. On their heels were huge-rowelled Spanish spurs. They had the appearance of banditti, save for the incongruous wreaths of flowers and fragrant maile that encircled the crowns of their flopping cowboy hats. One of them, deliciously and roguishly handsome as a faun, with the eyes of a faun, wore a flaming double-hibiscus bloom coquettishly tucked over his ear. Above them, casting a shelter of shade from the sun, grew a wide-spreading canopy of *Ponciana regia*, itself a flame of blossoms, out of each of which sprang pom-poms of feathery stamens. From far off, muffled by distance, came the faint stamping of their tethered horses. The eyes of all were intently fixed upon the solitary sleeper who lay on his back on a lauhala mat a hundred feet away under the monkey-pod trees.

Large as were the Hawaiian cowboys, the sleeper was larger. Also, as his snow-white hair and beard attested, he was much older. The thickness of his wrist and the greatness of his fingers made authentic the mighty frame of him hidden under loose dungaree pants and cotton shirt, buttonless, open from midriff to Adam's apple, exposing a chest matted with a thatch of hair as white as that of his head and face. The depth and breadth of that chest, its resilience, and its relaxed and plastic muscles, tokened the

knotty strength that still resided in him. Further, no bronze and beat of sun and wind availed to hide the testimony of his skin that he was all haole—a white man.

On his back, his great white beard, thrust skyward, untrimmed of barbers, stiffened and subsided with every breath, while with the outblow of every exhalation the white moustache erected perpendicularly like the quills of a porcupine and subsided with each intake. A young girl of fourteen, clad only in a single shift, or muumuu, herself a grand-daughter of the sleeper, crouched beside him and with a feathered fly-flapper brushed away the flies. In her face were depicted solicitude, and nervousness, and awe, as if she attended on a god.

And truly, Hardman Pool, the sleeping whiskery one, was to her, and to many and sundry, a god—a source of life, a source of food, a fount of wisdom, a giver of law, a smiling beneficence, a blackness of thunder and punishment—in short, a man-master whose record was fourteen living and adult sons and daughters, six great-grandchildren, and more grandchildren than could he in his most lucid moments enumerate.

Fifty-one years before, he had landed from an open boat at Laupahoehoe on the windward coast of Hawaii. The boat was the one surviving one of the whaler Black Prince of New Bedford. Himself New Bedford born, twenty years of age, by virtue of his driving strength and ability he had served as second mate on the lost whale-ship. Coming to Honolulu and casting about for himself, he had first married Kalama Mamaiopili, next acted as pilot of Honolulu Harbour, after that started a saloon and boarding house, and, finally, on the death of Kalama's father, engaged in cattle ranching on the broad pasture lands she had inherited.

For over half a century he had lived with the Hawaiians, and it was conceded that he knew their language better than did most of them. By marrying Kalama, he had married not merely her land, but her own chief rank, and the fealty owed by the commoners to her by virtue of her genealogy was also accorded him. In addition, he possessed of himself all the natural attributes of chiefship: the gigantic stature, the fearlessness, the pride; and the high hot temper that could brook no impudence nor insult, that could be neither bullied nor awed by any utmost magnificence of power that walked on two legs, and that could compel service of lesser humans, not by any ignoble purchase by bargaining, but by an unspoken but expected condescending of largesse. He knew his Hawaiians from the outside and the in, knew them better than themselves, their Polynesian circumlocutions, faiths, customs, and mysteries.

And at seventy-one, after a morning in the saddle over the ranges that began at four o'clock, he lay under the monkey-pods in his customary and sacred siesta that no retainer dared to break, nor would dare permit any equal of the great one to break. Only to the King was such a right accorded, and, as the King had early learned, to break Hardman Pool's siesta was to gain awake a very irritable and grumpy Hardman Pool who would talk straight from the shoulder and say unpleasant but true things that no king would care to hear.

The sun blazed down. The horses stamped remotely. The fading trade-wind wisps sighed and rustled between longer intervals of quiescence. The perfume grew heavier.

The woman brought back the babe, quiet again, to the rear of the house. The monkey-pods folded their leaves and swooned to a siesta of their own in the soft air above the sleeper. The girl, breathless as ever from the enormous solemnity of her task, still brushed the flies away; and the score of cowboys still intently and silently watched.

Hardman Pool awoke. The next out-breath, expected of the long rhythm, did not take place. Neither did the white, long moustache rise up. Instead, the cheeks, under the whiskers, puffed; the eyelids lifted, exposing blue eyes, choleric and fully and immediately conscious; the right hand went out to the half-smoked pipe beside him, while the left hand reached the matches.

“Get me my gin and milk,” he ordered, in Hawaiian, of the little maid, who had been startled into a tremble by his awaking.

He lighted the pipe, but gave no sign of awareness of the presence of his waiting retainers until the tumbler of gin and milk had been brought and drunk.

“Well?” he demanded abruptly, and in the pause, while twenty faces wreathed in smiles and twenty pairs of dark eyes glowed luminously with well-wishing pleasure, he wiped the lingering drops of gin and milk from his hairy lips. “What are you hanging around for? What do you want? Come over here.”

Twenty giants, most of them young, uprose and with a great clanking and jangling of spurs and spur-chains strode over to him. They grouped before him in a semicircle, trying bashfully to wedge their shoulders, one behind another’s, their faces a-grin and apologetic, and at the same time expressing a casual and unconscious democraticness. In truth, to them Hardman Pool was more than mere chief. He was elder brother, or father, or patriarch; and to all of them he was related, in one way or another, according to Hawaiian custom, through his wife and through the many marriages of his children and grandchildren. His slightest frown might perturb them, his anger terrify them, his command compel them to certain death; yet, on the other hand, not one of them would have dreamed of addressing him otherwise than intimately by his first name, which name, “Hardman,” was transmuted by their tongues into Kanaka Oolea.

At a nod from him, the semicircle seated itself on the manienie grass, and with further deprecatory smiles waited his pleasure.

“What do you want?” demanded, in Hawaiian, with a brusqueness and sternness they knew were put on.

They smiled more broadly, and deliciously squirmed their broad shoulders and great torsos with the appeasingness of so many wriggling puppies. Hardman Pool singled out one of them.

“Well, Iliiopoi, what do YOU want?”

“Ten dollars, Kanaka Oolea.”

“Ten dollars!” Pool cried, in apparent shock at mention of so vast a sum. “Does it mean you are going to take a second wife? Remember the missionary teaching. One wife at a time, Iliiopoi; one wife at a time. For he who entertains a plurality of wives will surely go to hell.”

Giggles and flashings of laughing eyes from all greeted the joke.

“No, Kanaka Oolea,” came the reply. “The devil knows I am hard put to get kow-kow for one wife and her several relations.”

“Kow-kow?” Pool repeated the Chinese-introduced word for food which the Hawaiians had come to substitute for their own paina. “Didn’t you boys get kow-kow here this noon?”

“Yes, Kanaka Oolea,” volunteered an old, withered native who had just joined the group from the direction of the house. “All of them had kow-kow in the kitchen, and plenty of it. They ate like lost horses brought down from the lava.”

“And what do you want, Kumuhana?” Pool diverted to the old one, at the same time motioning to the little maid to flap flies from the other side of him.

“Twelve dollars,” said Kumuhana. “I want to buy a Jackass and a second-hand saddle and bridle. I am growing too old for my legs to carry me in walking.”

“You wait,” his haole lord commanded. “I will talk with you about the matter, and about other things of importance, when I am finished with the rest and they are gone.”

The withered old one nodded and proceeded to light his pipe.

“The kow-kow in the kitchen was good,” Iliiopo resumed, licking his lips. “The poi was one-finger, the pig fat, the salmon-belly unstinking, the fish of great freshness and plenty, though the opihis” (tiny, rock-clinging shell-fish) “had been salted and thereby made tough. Never should the opihis be salted. Often have I told you, Kanaka Oolea, that opihis should never be salted. I am full of good kow-kow. My belly is heavy with it. Yet is my heart not light of it because there is no kow-kow in my own house, where is my wife, who is the aunt of your fourth son’s second wife, and where is my baby daughter, and my wife’s old mother, and my wife’s old mother’s feeding child that is a cripple, and my wife’s sister who lives likewise with us along with her three children, the father being dead of a wicked dropsy—“

“Will five dollars save all of you from funerals for a day or several?” Pool testily cut the tale short.

“Yes, Kanaka Oolea, and as well it will buy my wife a new comb and some tobacco for myself.”

From a gold-sack drawn from the hip-pocket of his dungarees, Hardman Pool drew the gold piece and tossed it accurately into the waiting hand.

To a bachelor who wanted six dollars for new leggings, tobacco, and spurs, three dollars were given; the same to another who needed a hat; and to a third, who modestly asked for two dollars, four were given with a flowery-worded compliment anent his prowess in roping a recent wild bull from the mountains. They knew, as a rule, that he cut their requisitions in half, therefore they doubled the size of their requisitions. And Hardman Pool knew they doubled, and smiled to himself. It was his way, and, further, it was a very good way with his multitudinous relatives, and did not reduce his stature in their esteem.

“And you, Ahuhu?” he demanded of one whose name meant “poison-wood.”

“And the price of a pair of dungarees,” Ahuhu concluded his list of needs. “I have ridden much and hard after your cattle, Kanaka Oolea, and where my dungarees have

pressed against the seat of the saddle there is no seat to my dungarees. It is not well that it be said that a Kanaka Oolea cowboy, who is also a cousin of Kanaka Oolea's wife's half-sister, should be shamed to be seen out of the saddle save that he walks backward from all that behold him."

"The price of a dozen pairs of dungarees be thine, Ahuhu," Hardman Pool beamed, tossing to him the necessary sum. "I am proud that my family shares my pride. Afterward, Ahuhu, out of the dozen dungarees you will give me one, else shall I be compelled to walk backward, my own and only dungarees being in like manner well worn and shameful."

And in laughter of love at their haole chief's final sally, all the sweet-child-minded and physically gorgeous company of them departed to their waiting horses, save the old withered one, Kumuhana, who had been bidden to wait.

For a full five minutes they sat in silence. Then Hardman Pool ordered the little maid to fetch a tumbler of gin and milk, which, when she brought it, he nodded her to hand to Kumuhana. The glass did not leave his lips until it was empty, whereon he gave a great audible out-breath of "A-a-ah," and smacked his lips.

"Much awa have I drunk in my time," he said reflectively. "Yet is the awa but a common man's drink, while the haole liquor is a drink for chiefs. The awa has not the liquor's hot willingness, its spur in the ribs of feeling, its biting alive of oneself that is very pleasant since it is pleasant to be alive."

Hardman Pool smiled, nodded agreement, and old Kumuhana continued.

"There is a warmingness to it. It warms the belly and the soul. It warms the heart. Even the soul and the heart grow cold when one is old."

"You ARE old," Pool conceded. "Almost as old as I."

Kumuhana shook his head and murmured. "Were I no older than you I would be as young as you."

"I am seventy-one," said Pool.

"I do not know ages that way," was the reply. "What happened when you were born?"

"Let me see," Pool calculated. "This is 1880. Subtract seventy-one, and it leaves nine. I was born in 1809, which is the year Keliimakai died, which is the year the Scotchman, Archibald Campbell, lived in Honolulu."

"Then am I truly older than you, Kanaka Oolea. I remember the Scotchman well, for I was playing among the grass houses of Honolulu at the time, and already riding a surf-board in the wahine" (woman) "surf at Waikiki. I can take you now to the spot where was the Scotchman's grass house. The Seaman's Mission stands now on the very ground. Yet do I know when I was born. Often my grandmother and my mother told me of it. I was born when Madame Pele" (the Fire Goddess or Volcano Goddess) "became angry with the people of Paiea because they sacrificed no fish to her from their fish-pool, and she sent down a flow of lava from Huulalai and filled up their pond. For ever was the fish-pond of Paiea filled up. That was when I was born."

“That was in 1801, when James Boyd was building ships for Kamehameha at Hilo,” Pool cast back through the calendar; “which makes you seventy-nine, or eight years older than I. You are very old.”

“Yes, Kanaka Oolea,” muttered Kumuhana, pathetically attempting to swell his shrunken chest with pride.

“And you are very wise.”

“Yes, Kanaka Oolea.”

“And you know many of the secret things that are known only to old men.”

“Yes, Kanaka Oolea.”

“And then you know—“ Hardman Pool broke off, the more effectively to impress and hypnotize the other ancient with the set stare of his pale-washed blue eyes. “They say the bones of Kahekili were taken from their hiding-place and lie to-day in the Royal Mausoleum. I have heard it whispered that you alone of all living men truly know.”

“I know,” was the proud answer. “I alone know.”

“Well, do they lie there? Yes or no?”

“Kahekili was an alii” (high chief). “It is from this straight line that your wife Kalama came. She is an alii.” The old retainer paused and pursed his lean lips in meditation. “I belong to her, as all my people before me belonged to her people before her. She only can command the great secrets of me. She is wise, too wise ever to command me to speak this secret. To you, O Kanaka Oolea, I do not answer yes, I do not answer no. This is a secret of the aliis that even the aliis do not know.”

“Very good, Kumuhana,” Hardman Pool commanded. “Yet do you forget that I am an alii, and that what my good Kalama does not dare ask, I command to ask. I can send for her, now, and tell her to command your answer. But such would be a foolishness unless you prove yourself doubly foolish. Tell me the secret, and she will never know. A woman’s lips must pour out whatever flows in through her ears, being so made. I am a man, and man is differently made. As you well know, my lips suck tight on secrets as a squid sucks to the salty rock. If you will not tell me alone, then will you tell Kalama and me together, and her lips will talk, her lips will talk, so that the latest malahini will shortly know what, otherwise, you and I alone will know.”

Long time Kumuhana sat on in silence, debating the argument and finding no way to evade the fact-logic of it.

“Great is your haole wisdom,” he conceded at last.

“Yes? or no?” Hardman Pool drove home the point of his steel.

Kumuhana looked about him first, then slowly let his eyes come to rest on the fly-flapping maid.

“Go,” Pool commanded her. “And come not back without you hear a clapping of my hands.”

Hardman Pool spoke no further, even after the flapper had disappeared into the house; yet his face adamantly looked: “Yes or no?”

Again Kumuhana looked carefully about him, and up into the monkey-pod boughs as if to apprehend a lurking listener. His lips were very dry. With his tongue he moist-

ened them repeatedly. Twice he essayed to speak, but was inarticulately husky. And finally, with bowed head, he whispered, so low and solemnly that Hardman Pool bent his own head to hear: "No."

Pool clapped his hands, and the little maid ran out of the house to him in tremulous, fluttery haste.

"Bring a milk and gin for old Kumuhana, here," Pool commanded; and, to Kumuhana: "Now tell me the whole story."

"Wait," was the answer. "Wait till the little wahine has come and gone."

And when the maid was gone, and the gin and milk had travelled the way predestined of gin and milk when mixed together, Hardman Pool waited without further urge for the story. Kumuhana pressed his hand to his chest and coughed hollowly at intervals, bidding for encouragement; but in the end, of himself, spoke out.

"It was a terrible thing in the old days when a great alii died. Kahekili was a great alii. He might have been king had he lived. Who can tell? I was a young man, not yet married. You know, Kanaka Oolea, when Kahekili died, and you can tell me how old I was. He died when Governor Boki ran the Blonde Hotel here in Honolulu. You have heard?"

"I was still on windward Hawaii," Pool answered. "But I have heard. Boki made a distillery, and leased Manoa lands to grow sugar for it, and Kaahumanu, who was regent, cancelled the lease, rooted out the cane, and planted potatoes. And Boki was angry, and prepared to make war, and gathered his fighting men, with a dozen whaleship deserters and five brass six-pounders, out at Waikiki—"

"That was the very time Kahekili died," Kumuhana broke in eagerly. "You are very wise. You know many things of the old days better than we old kanakas."

"It was 1829," Pool continued complacently. "You were twenty-eight years old, and I was twenty, just coming ashore in the open boat after the burning of the Black Prince."

"I was twenty-eight," Kumuhana resumed. "It sounds right. I remember well Boki's brass guns at Waikiki. Kahekili died, too, at the time, at Waikiki. The people to this day believe his bones were taken to the Hale o Keawe" (mausoleum) "at Honaunau, in Kona—"

"And long afterward were brought to the Royal Mausoleum here in Honolulu," Pool supplemented.

"Also, Kanaka Oolea, there are some who believe to this day that Queen Alice has them stored with the rest of her ancestral bones in the big jars in her taboo room. All are wrong. I know. The sacred bones of Kahekili are gone and for ever gone. They rest nowhere. They have ceased to be. And many kona winds have whitened the surf at Waikiki since the last man looked upon the last of Kahekili. I alone remain alive of those men. I am the last man, and I was not glad to be at the finish.

"For see! I was a young man, and my heart was white-hot lava for Malia, who was in Kahekili's household. So was Anapuni's heart white-hot for her, though the colour of his heart was black, as you shall see. We were at a drinking that night—Anapuni and I—the night that Kahekili died. Anapuni and I were only commoners, as were all

of us kanakas and wahines who were at the drinking with the common sailors and whaleship men from before the mast. We were drinking on the mats by the beach at Waikiki, close to the old heiau" (temple) "that is not far from what is now the Wilders' beach place. I learned then and for ever what quantities of drink haole sailormen can stand. As for us kanakas, our heads were hot and light and rattly as dry gourds with the whisky and the rum.

"It was past midnight, I remember well, when I saw Malia, whom never had I seen at a drinking, come across the wet-hard sand of the beach. My brain burned like red cinders of hell as I looked upon Anapuni look upon her, he being nearest to her by being across from me in the drinking circle. Oh, I know it was whisky and rum and youth that made the heat of me; but there, in that moment, the mad mind of me resolved, if she spoke to him and yielded to dance with him first, that I would put both my hands around his throat and throw him down and under the wahine surf there beside us, and drown and choke out his life and the obstacle of him that stood between me and her. For know, that she had never decided between us, and it was because of him that she was not already and long since mine.

"She was a grand young woman with a body generous as that of a chiefess and more wonderful, as she came upon us, across the wet sand, in the shimmer of the moonlight. Even the haole sailormen made pause of silence, and with open mouths stared upon her. Her walk! I have heard you talk, O Kanaka Oolea, of the woman Helen who caused the war of Troy. I say of Malia that more men would have stormed the walls of hell for her than went against that old-time city of which it is your custom to talk over much and long when you have drunk too little milk and too much gin.

"Her walk! In the moonlight there, the soft glow-fire of the jelly-fishes in the surf like the kerosene-lamp footlights I have seen in the new haole theatre! It was not the walk of a girl, but a woman. She did not flutter forward like rippling wavelets on a reef-sheltered, placid beach. There was that in her manner of walk that was big and queenlike, like the motion of the forces of nature, like the rhythmic flow of lava down the slopes of Kau to the sea, like the movement of the huge orderly trade-wind seas, like the rise and fall of the four great tides of the year that may be like music in the eternal ear of God, being too slow of occurrence in time to make a tune for ordinary quick-pulsing, brief-living, swift-dying man.

"Anapuni was nearest. But she looked at me. Have you ever heard a call, Kanaka Oolea, that is without sound yet is louder than the conches of God? So called she to me across that circle of the drinking. I half arose, for I was not yet full drunken; but Anapuni's arm caught her and drew her, and I sank back on my elbow and watched and raged. He was for making her sit beside him, and I waited. Did she sit, and, next, dance with him, I knew that ere morning Anapuni would be a dead man, choked and drowned by me in the shallow surf.

"Strange, is it not, Kanaka Oolea, all this heat called 'love'? Yet it is not strange. It must be so in the time of one's youth, else would mankind not go on."

“That is why the desire of woman must be greater than the desire of life,” Pool concurred. “Else would there be neither men nor women.”

“Yes,” said Kumuhana. “But it is many a year now since the last of such heat has gone out of me. I remember it as one remembers an old sunrise—a thing that was. And so one grows old, and cold, and drinks gin, not for madness, but for warmth. And the milk is very nourishing.

“But Malia did not sit beside him. I remember her eyes were wild, her hair down and flying, as she bent over him and whispered in his ear. And her hair covered him about and hid him as she whispered, and the sight of it pounded my heart against my ribs and dizzied my head till scarcely could I half-see. And I willed myself with all the will of me that if, in short minutes, she did not come over to me, I would go across the circle and get her.

“It was one of the things never to be. You remember Chief Konukalani? Himself he strode up to the circle. His face was black with anger. He gripped Malia, not by the arm, but by the hair, and dragged her away behind him and was gone. Of that, even now, can I understand not the half. I, who was for slaying Anapuni because of her, raised neither hand nor voice of protest when Konukalani dragged her away by the hair—nor did Anapuni. Of course, we were common men, and he was a chief. That I know. But why should two common men, mad with desire of woman, with desire of woman stronger in them than desire of life, let any one chief, even the highest in the land, drag the woman away by the hair? Desiring her more than life, why should the two men fear to slay then and immediately the one chief? Here is something stronger than life, stronger than woman, but what is it? and why?”

“I will answer you,” said Hardman Pool. “It is so because most men are fools, and therefore must be taken care of by the few men who are wise. Such is the secret of chiefship. In all the world are chiefs over men. In all the world that has been have there ever been chiefs, who must say to the many fool men: ‘Do this; do not do that. Work, and work as we tell you or your bellies will remain empty and you will perish. Obey the laws we set you or you will be beasts and without place in the world. You would not have been, save for the chiefs before you who ordered and regulated for your fathers. No seed of you will come after you, except that we order and regulate for you now. You must be peace-abiding, and decent, and blow your noses. You must be early to bed of nights, and up early in the morning to work if you would heave beds to sleep in and not roost in trees like the silly fowls. This is the season for the yam-planting and you must plant now. We say now, to-day, and not picnicking and hulaing to-day and yam-planting to-morrow or some other day of the many careless days. You must not kill one another, and you must leave your neighbours’ wives alone. All this is life for you, because you think but one day at a time, while we, your chiefs, think for you all days and for days ahead.”

“Like a cloud on the mountain-top that comes down and wraps about you and that you dimly see is a cloud, so is your wisdom to me, Kanaka Oolea,” Kumuhana

murmured. "Yet is it sad that I should be born a common man and live all my days a common man."

"That is because you were of yourself common," Hardman Pool assured him. "When a man is born common, and is by nature uncommon, he rises up and overthrows the chiefs and makes himself chief over the chiefs. Why do you not run my ranch, with its many thousands of cattle, and shift the pastures by the rain-fall, and pick the bulls, and arrange the bargaining and the selling of the meat to the sailing ships and war vessels and the people who live in the Honolulu houses, and fight with lawyers, and help make laws, and even tell the King what is wise for him to do and what is dangerous? Why does not any man do this that I do? Any man of all the men who work for me, feed out of my hand, and let me do their thinking for them—me, who work harder than any of them, who eats no more than any of them, and who can sleep on no more than one lauhala mat at a time like any of them?"

"I am out of the cloud, Kanaka Oolea," said Kumuhana, with a visible brightening of countenance. "More clearly do I see. All my long years have the aliis I was born under thought for me. Ever, when I was hungry, I came to them for food, as I come to your kitchen now. Many people eat in your kitchen, and the days of feasts when you slay fat steers for all of us are understandable. It is why I come to you this day, an old man whose labour of strength is not worth a shilling a week, and ask of you twelve dollars to buy a jackass and a second-hand saddle and bridle. It is why twice ten fool men of us, under these monkey-pods half an hour ago, asked of you a dollar or two, or four or five, or ten or twelve. We are the careless ones of the careless days who will not plant the yam in season if our alii does not compel us, who will not think one day for ourselves, and who, when we age to worthlessness, know that our alii will think kow-kow into our bellies and a grass thatch over our heads.

Hardman Pool bowed his appreciation, and urged:

"But the bones of Kahekili. The Chief Konukalani had just dragged away Malia by the hair of the head, and you and Anapuni sat on without protest in the circle of drinking. What was it Malia whispered in Anapuni's ear, bending over him, her hair hiding the face of him?"

"That Kahekili was dead. That was what she whispered to Anapuni. That Kahekili was dead, just dead, and that the chiefs, ordering all within the house to remain within, were debating the disposal of the bones and meat of him before word of his death should get abroad. That the high priest Eoppo was deciding them, and that she had overheard no less than Anapuni and me chosen as the sacrifices to go the way of Kahekili and his bones and to care for him afterward and for ever in the shadowy other world."

"The moepuu, the human sacrifice," Pool commented. "Yet it was nine years since the coming of the missionaries."

"And it was the year before their coming that the idols were cast down and the taboos broken," Kumuhana added. "But the chiefs still practised the old ways, the custom of hunakele, and hid the bones of the aliis where no men should find them and

make fish-hooks of their jaws or arrow heads of their long bones for the slaying of little mice in sport. Behold, O Kanaka Oolea!"

The old man thrust out his tongue; and, to Pool's amazement, he saw the surface of that sensitive organ, from root to tip, tattooed in intricate designs.

"That was done after the missionaries came, several years afterward, when Keopuolani died. Also, did I knock out four of my front teeth, and half-circles did I burn over my body with blazing bark. And whoever ventured out-of-doors that night was slain by the chiefs. Nor could a light be shown in a house or a whisper of noise be made. Even dogs and hogs that made a noise were slain, nor all that night were the ships' bells of the haoles in the harbour allowed to strike. It was a terrible thing in those days when an alii died.

"But the night that Kahekili died. We sat on in the drinking circle after Konukalani dragged Malia away by the hair. Some of the haole sailors grumbled; but they were few in the land in those days and the kanakas many. And never was Malia seen of men again. Konukalani alone knew the manner of her slaying, and he never told. And in after years what common men like Anapuni and me should dare to question him?

"Now she had told Anapuni before she was dragged away. But Anapuni's heart was black. Me he did not tell. Worthy he was of the killing I had intended for him. There was a giant harpooner in the circle, whose singing was like the bellowing of bulls; and, gazing on him in amazement while he roared some song of the sea, when next I looked across the circle to Anapuni, Anapuni was gone. He had fled to the high mountains where he could hide with the bird-catchers a week of moons. This I learned afterward.

"I? I sat on, ashamed of my desire of woman that had not been so strong as my slave-obedience to a chief. And I drowned my shame in large drinks of rum and whisky, till the world went round and round, inside my head and out, and the Southern Cross danced a hula in the sky, and the Koolau Mountains bowed their lofty summits to Waikiki and the surf of Waikiki kissed them on their brows. And the giant harpooner was still roaring, his the last sounds in my ear, as I fell back on the lauhala mat, and was to all things for the time as one dead.

"When I awoke was at the faint first beginning of dawn. I was being kicked by a hard naked heel in the ribs. What of the enormousness of the drink I had consumed, the feelings aroused in me by the heel were not pleasant. The kanakas and wahines of the drinking were gone. I alone remained among the sleeping sailormen, the giant harpooner snoring like a whale, his head upon my feet.

"More heel-kicks, and I sat up and was sick. But the one who kicked was impatient, and demanded to know where was Anapuni. And I did not know, and was kicked, this time from both sides by two impatient men, because I did not know. Nor did I know that Kahekili was dead. Yet did I guess something serious was afoot, for the two men who kicked me were chiefs, and no common men crouched behind them to do their bidding. One was Aimoku, of Kaneche; the other Humuhumu, of Manoa.

"They commanded me to go with them, and they were not kind in their commanding; and as I uprose, the head of the giant harpooner was rolled off my feet, past the edge

of the mat, into the sand. He grunted like a pig, his lips opened, and all of his tongue rolled out of his mouth into the sand. Nor did he draw it back. For the first time I knew how long was a man's tongue. The sight of the sand on it made me sick for the second time. It is a terrible thing, the next day after a night of drinking. I was afire, dry afire, all the inside of me like a burnt cinder, like aa lava, like the harpooner's tongue dry and gritty with sand. I bent for a half-drunk drinking coconut, but Aimoku kicked it out of my shaking fingers, and Humuhumu smote me with the heel of his hand on my neck.

"They walked before me, side by side, their faces solemn and black, and I walked at their heels. My mouth stank of the drink, and my head was sick with the stale fumes of it, and I would have cut off my right hand for a drink of water, one drink, a mouthful even. And, had I had it, I know it would have sizzled in my belly like water spilled on heated stones for the roasting. It is terrible, the next day after the drinking. All the life-time of many men who died young has passed by me since the last I was able to do such mad drinking of youth when youth knows not capacity and is undeterred.

"But as we went on, I began to know that some alii was dead. No kanakas lay asleep in the sand, nor stole home from their love-making; and no canoes were abroad after the early fish most catchable then inside the reef at the change of the tide. When we came, past the hoiau" (temple), "to where the Great Kamehameha used to haul out his brigs and schooners, I saw, under the canoe-sheds, that the mat-thatches of Kahekili's great double canoe had been taken off, and that even then, at low tide, many men were launching it down across the sand into the water. But all these men were chiefs. And, though my eyes swam, and the inside of my head went around and around, and the inside of my body was a cinder athirst, I guessed that the alii who was dead was Kahekili. For he was old, and most likely of the aliis to be dead."

"It was his death, as I have heard it, more than the intercession of Kekuanaoa, that spoiled Governor Boki's rebellion," Hardman Pool observed.

"It was Kahekili's death that spoiled it," Kumuhana confirmed. "All commoners, when the word slipped out that night of his death, fled into the shelter of the grass houses, nor lighted fire nor pipes, nor breathed loudly, being therein and thereby taboo from use for sacrifice. And all Governor Boki's commoners of fighting men, as well as the haole deserters from ships, so fled, so that the brass guns lay unserved and his handful of chiefs of themselves could do nothing.

"Aimoku and Humuhumu made me sit on the sand to the side from the launching of the great double-canoe. And when it was afloat all the chiefs were athirst, not being used to such toil; and I was told to climb the palms beside the canoe-sheds and throw down drink-coconuts. They drank and were refreshed, but me they refused to let drink.

"Then they bore Kahekili from his house to the canoe in a haole coffin, oiled and varnished and new. It had been made by a ship's carpenter, who thought he was making a boat that must not leak. It was very tight, and over where the face of Kahekili lay was nothing but thin glass. The chiefs had not screwed on the outside plank to cover

the glass. Maybe they did not know the manner of haole coffins; but at any rate I was to be glad they did not know, as you shall see.

“‘There is but one moepuu,’ said the priest Eoppo, looking at me where I sat on the coffin in the bottom of the canoe. Already the chiefs were paddling out through the reef.

“‘The other has run into hiding,’ Aimoku answered. ‘This one was all we could get.’

“And then I knew. I knew everything. I was to be sacrificed. Anapuni had been planned for the other sacrifice. That was what Malia had whispered to Anapuni at the drinking. And she had been dragged away before she could tell me. And in his blackness of heart he had not told me.

“‘There should be two,’ said Eoppo. ‘It is the law.’

“Aimoku stopped paddling and looked back shoreward as if to return and get a second sacrifice. But several of the chiefs contended no, saying that all commoners were fled to the mountains or were lying taboo in their houses, and that it might take days before they could catch one. In the end Eoppo gave in, though he grumbled from time to time that the law required two moepuus.

“We paddled on, past Diamond Head and abreast of Koko Head, till we were in the midway of the Molokai Channel. There was quite a sea running, though the trade wind was blowing light. The chiefs rested from their paddles, save for the steersmen who kept the canoes bow-on to the wind and swell. And, ere they proceeded further in the matter, they opened more coconuts and drank.

“‘I do not mind so much being the moepuu,’ I said to Humuhumu; ‘but I should like to have a drink before I am slain.’ I got no drink. But I spoke true. I was too sick of the much whisky and rum to be afraid to die. At least my mouth would stink no more, nor my head ache, nor the inside of me be as dry-hot sand. Almost worst of all, I suffered at thought of the harpooner’s tongue, as last I had seen it lying on the sand and covered with sand. O Kanaka Oolea, what animals young men are with the drink! Not until they have grown old, like you and me, do they control their wantonness of thirst and drink sparingly, like you and me.”

“Because we have to,” Hardman Pool rejoined. “Old stomachs are worn thin and tender, and we drink sparingly because we dare not drink more. We are wise, but the wisdom is bitter.”

“The priest Eoppo sang a long mele about Kahekili’s mother and his mother’s mother, and all their mothers all the way back to the beginning of time,” Kumuhana resumed. “And it seemed I must die of my sand-hot dryness ere he was done. And he called upon all the gods of the under world, the middle world and the over world, to care for and cherish the dead alii about to be consigned to them, and to carry out the curses—they were terrible curses—he laid upon all living men and men to live after who might tamper with the bones of Kahekili to use them in sport of vermin-slaying.

“Do you know, Kanaka Oolea, the priest talked a language largely different, and I know it was the priest language, the old language. Maui he did not name Maui, but Maui-Tiki-Tiki and Maui-Po-Tiki. And Hina, the goddess-mother of Maui, he named

Ina. And Maui's god-father he named sometimes Akalana and sometimes Kanaloa. Strange how one about to die and very thirsty should remember such things! And I remember the priest named Hawaii as Vaii, and Lanai as Ngangai."

"Those were the Maori names," Hardman Pool explained, "and the Samoan and Tongan names, that the priests brought with them in their first voyages from the south in the long ago when they found Hawaii and settled to dwell upon it."

"Great is your wisdom, O Kanaka Oolea," the old man accorded solemnly. "Ku, our Supporter of the Heavens, the priest named Tu, and also Ru; and La, our God of the Sun, he named Ra—"

"And Ra was a sun-god in Egypt in the long ago," Pool interrupted with a sparkle of interest. "Truly, you Polynesians have travelled far in time and space since first you began. A far cry it is from Old Egypt, when Atlantis was still afloat, to Young Hawaii in the North Pacific. But proceed, Kumuhana. Do you remember anything also of what the priest Eoppo sang?"

"At the very end," came the confirming nod, "though I was near dead myself, and nearer to die under the priest's knife, he sang what I have remembered every word of. Listen! It was thus."

And in quavering falsetto, with the customary broken-notes, the old man sang.

"A Maori death-chant unmistakable," Pool exclaimed, "sung by an Hawaiian with a tattooed tongue! Repeat it once again, and I shall say it to you in English."

And when it had been repeated, he spoke it slowly in English:

"But death is nothing new.

Death is and has been ever since old Maui died.

Then Pata-tai laughed loud

And woke the goblin-god,

Who severed him in two, and shut him in,

So dusk of eve came on."

"And at the last," Kumuhana resumed, "I was not slain. Eoppo, the killing knife in hand and ready to lift for the blow, did not lift. And I? How did I feel and think? Often, Kanaka Oolea, have I since laughed at the memory of it. I felt very thirsty. I did not want to die. I wanted a drink of water. I knew I was going to die, and I kept remembering the thousand waterfalls falling to waste down the pans" (precipices) "of the windward Koolau Mountains. I did not think of Anapuni. I was too thirsty. I did not think of Malia. I was too thirsty. But continually, inside my head, I saw the tongue of the harpooner, covered dry with sand, as I had last seen it, lying in the sand. My tongue was like that, too. And in the bottom of the canoe rolled about many drinking nuts. Yet I did not attempt to drink, for these were chiefs and I was a common man.

"'No,' said Eoppo, commanding the chiefs to throw overboard the coffin. 'There are not two moepuus, therefore there shall be none.'

"'Slay the one,' the chiefs cried.

"But Eoppo shook his head, and said: 'We cannot send Kahekili on his way with only the tops of the taro.'

“‘Half a fish is better than none,’ Aimoku said the old saying.

“‘Not at the burying of an alii,’ was the priest’s quick reply. ‘It is the law. We cannot be niggard with Kahekili and cut his allotment of sacrifice in half.’

“So, for the moment, while the coffin went overside, I was not slain. And it was strange that I was glad immediately that I was to live. And I began to remember Malia, and to begin to plot a vengeance on Anapuni. And with the blood of life thus freshening in me, my thirst multiplied on itself tenfold and my tongue and mouth and throat seemed as sanded as the tongue of the harpooner. The coffin being overboard, I was sitting in the bottom of the canoe. A coconut rolled between my legs and I closed them on it. But as I picked it up in my hand, Aimoku smote my hand with the paddle-edge. Behold!”

He held up the hand, showing two fingers crooked from never having been set.

“I had no time to vex over my pain, for worse things were upon me. All the chiefs were crying out in horror. The coffin, head-end up, had not sunk. It bobbed up and down in the sea astern of us. And the canoe, without way on it, bow-on to sea and wind, was drifted down by sea and wind upon the coffin. And the glass of it was to us, so that we could see the face and head of Kahekili through the glass; and he grinned at us through the glass and seemed alive already in the other world and angry with us, and, with other-world power, about to wreak his anger upon us. Up and down he bobbed, and the canoe drifted closer upon him.

“‘Kill him!’ ‘Bleed him!’ ‘Thrust to the heart of him!’ These things the chiefs were crying out to Eoppo in their fear. ‘Over with the taro tops!’ ‘Let the alii have the half of a fish!’

“Eoppo, priest though he was, was likewise afraid, and his reason weakened before the sight of Kahekili in his haole coffin that would not sink. He seized me by the hair, drew me to my feet, and lifted the knife to plunge to my heart. And there was no resistance in me. I knew again only that I was very thirsty, and before my swimming eyes, in mid-air and close up, dangled the sanded tongue of the harpooner.

“But before the knife could fall and drive in, the thing happened that saved me. Akai, half-brother to Governor Boki, as you will remember, was steersman of the canoe, and, therefore, in the stern, was nearest to the coffin and its dead that would not sink. He was wild with fear, and he thrust out with the point of his paddle to fend off the confined alii that seemed bent to come on board. The point of the paddle struck the glass. The glass broke—“

“And the coffin immediately sank,” Hardman Pool broke in; “the air that floated it escaping through the broken glass.”

“The coffin immediately sank, being builded by the ship’s carpenter like a boat,” Kumuhana confirmed. “And I, who was a moepuu, became a man once more. And I lived, though I died a thousand deaths from thirst before we gained back to the beach at Waikiki.

“And so, O Kanaka Oolea, the bones of Kahekili do not lie in the Royal Mausoleum. They are at the bottom of Molokai Channel, if not, long since, they have become

floating dust of slime, or, builded into the bodies of the coral creatures dead and gone, are builded into the coral reef itself. Of men I am the one living who saw the bones of Kahekili sink into the Molokai Channel.”

In the pause that followed, wherein Hardman Pool was deep sunk in meditation, Kumuhana licked his dry lips many times. At the last he broke silence:

“The twelve dollars, Kanaka Oolea, for the jackass and the second-hand saddle and bridle?”

“The twelve dollars would be thine,” Pool responded, passing to the ancient one six dollars and a half, “save that I have in my stable junk the very bridle and saddle for you which I shall give you. These six dollars and a half will buy you the perfectly suitable jackass of the pake” (Chinese) “at Kokako who told me only yesterday that such was the price.”

They sat on, Pool meditating, conning over and over to himself the Maori death-chant he had heard, and especially the line, “So dusk of eve came on,” finding in it an intense satisfaction of beauty; Kumuhana licking his lips and tokening that he waited for something more. At last he broke silence.

“I have talked long, O Kanaka Oolea. There is not the enduring moistness in my mouth that was when I was young. It seems that afresh upon me is the thirst that was mine when tormented by the visioned tongue of the harpooner. The gin and milk is very good, O Kanaka Oolea, for a tongue that is like the harpooner’s.”

A shadow of a smile flickered across Pool’s face. He clapped his hands, and the little maid came running.

“Bring one glass of gin and milk for old Kumuhana,” commanded Hardman Pool.

WAIKIKI, HONOLULU

June 28, 1916.

Brown Wolf

SHE had delayed, because of the dew-wet grass, in order to put on her overshoes, and when she emerged from the house found her waiting husband absorbed in the wonder of a bursting almond-bud. She sent a questing glance across the tall grass and in and out among the orchard trees.

“Where’s Wolf?” she asked.

“He was here a moment ago.” Walt Irvine drew himself away with a jerk from the metaphysics and poetry of the organic miracle of blossom, and surveyed the landscape. “He was running a rabbit the last I saw of him.”

“Wolf! Wolf! Here Wolf!” she called, as they left the clearing and took the trail that led down through the waxen-belled manzanita jungle to the county road.

Irvine thrust between his lips the little finger of each hand and lent to her efforts a shrill whistling.

She covered her ears hastily and made a wry grimace.

“My! for a poet, delicately attuned and all the rest of it, you can make unlovely noises. My ear-drums are pierced. You outwhistle—“

“Orpheus.”

“I was about to say a street-arab,” she concluded severely.

“Poesy does not prevent one from being practical — at least it doesn’t prevent ME. Mine is no futility of genius that can’t sell gems to the magazines.”

He assumed a mock extravagance, and went on:

“I am no attic singer, no ballroom warbler. And why? Because I am practical. Mine is no squalor of song that cannot transmute itself, with proper exchange value, into a flower-crowned cottage, a sweet mountain-meadow, a grove of red-woods, an orchard of thirty-seven trees, one long row of blackberries and two short rows of strawberries, to say nothing of a quarter of a mile of gurgling brook. I am a beauty-merchant, a trader in song, and I pursue utility, dear Madge. I sing a song, and thanks to the magazine editors I transmute my song into a waft of the west wind sighing through our redwoods, into a murmur of waters over mossy stones that sings back to me another song than the one I sang and yet the same song wonderfully — er — transmuted.”

“O that all your song-transmutations were as successful!” she laughed.

“Name one that wasn’t.”

“Those two beautiful sonnets that you transmuted into the cow that was accounted the worst milker in the township.”

“She was beautiful — “ he began,

“But she didn’t give milk,” Madge interrupted.

“But she WAS beautiful, now, wasn’t she?” he insisted.

“And here’s where beauty and utility fall out,” was her reply. “And there’s the Wolf!”

From the thicket-covered hillside came a crashing of underbrush, and then, forty feet above them, on the edge of the sheer wall of rock, appeared a wolf’s head and shoulders. His braced fore paws dislodged a pebble, and with sharp-pricked ears and peering eyes he watched the fall of the pebble till it struck at their feet. Then he transferred his gaze and with open mouth laughed down at them.

“You Wolf, you!” and “You blessed Wolf!” the man and woman called out to him.

The ears flattened back and down at the sound, and the head seemed to snuggle under the caress of an invisible hand.

They watched him scramble backward into the thicket, then proceeded on their way. Several minutes later, rounding a turn in the trail where the descent was less precipitous, he joined them in the midst of a miniature avalanche of pebbles and loose soil. He was not demonstrative. A pat and a rub around the ears from the man, and a more prolonged caressing from the woman, and he was away down the trail in front of them, gliding effortlessly over the ground in true wolf fashion.

In build and coat and brush he was a huge timber-wolf; but the lie was given to his wolfhood by his color and marking. There the dog unmistakably advertised itself. No wolf was ever colored like him. He was brown, deep brown, red-brown, an orgy of browns. Back and shoulders were a warm brown that paled on the sides and underneath to a yellow that was dingy because of the brown that lingered in it. The white of the throat and paws and the spots over the eyes was dirty because of the persistent and ineradicable brown, while the eyes themselves were twin topazes, golden and brown.

The man and woman loved the dog very much; perhaps this was because it had been such a task to win his love. It had been no easy matter when he first drifted in mysteriously out of nowhere to their little mountain cottage. Footsore and famished, he had killed a rabbit under their very noses and under their very windows, and then crawled away and slept by the spring at the foot of the blackberry bushes. When Walt Irvine went down to inspect the intruder, he was snarled at for his pains, and Madge likewise was snarled at when she went down to present, as a peace-offering, a large pan of bread and milk.

A most unsociable dog he proved to be, resenting all their advances, refusing to let them lay hands on him, menacing them with bared fangs and bristling hair. Nevertheless he remained, sleeping and resting by the spring, and eating the food they gave him after they set it down at a safe distance and retreated. His wretched physical condition explained why he lingered; and when he had recuperated, after several days’ sojourn, he disappeared.

And this would have been the end of him, so far as Irvine and his wife were concerned, had not Irvine at that particular time been called away into the northern part of the state. Riding along on the train, near to the line between California and Oregon, he chanced to look out of the window and saw his unsociable guest sliding along the wagon

road, brown and wolfish, tired yet tireless, dust-covered and soiled with two hundred miles of travel.

Now Irvine was a man of impulse, a poet. He got off the train at the next station, bought a piece of meat at a butcher shop, and captured the vagrant on the outskirts of the town. The return trip was made in the baggage car, and so Wolf came a second time to the mountain cottage. Here he was tied up for a week and made love to by the man and woman. But it was very circumspect love-making. Remote and alien as a traveller from another planet, he snarled down their soft-spoken love-words. He never barked. In all the time they had him he was never known to bark.

To win him became a problem. Irvine liked problems. He had a metal plate made, on which was stamped: RETURN TO WALT IRVINE, GLEN ELLEN, SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA. This was riveted to a collar and strapped about the dog's neck. Then he was turned loose, and promptly he disappeared. A day later came a telegram from Mendocino County. In twenty hours he had made over a hundred miles to the north, and was still going when captured.

He came back by Wells Fargo Express, was tied up three days, and was loosed on the fourth and lost. This time he gained southern Oregon before he was caught and returned. Always, as soon as he received his liberty, he fled away, and always he fled north. He was possessed of an obsession that drove him north. The homing instinct, Irvine called it, after he had expended the selling price of a sonnet in getting the animal back from northern Oregon.

Another time the brown wanderer succeeded in traversing half the length of California, all of Oregon, and most of Washington, before he was picked up and returned "Collect." A remarkable thing was the speed with which he travelled. Fed up and rested, as soon as he was loosed he devoted all his energy to getting over the ground. On the first day's run he was known to cover as high as a hundred and fifty miles, and after that he would average a hundred miles a day until caught. He always arrived back lean and hungry and savage, and always departed fresh and vigorous, cleaving his way northward in response to some prompting of his being that no one could understand.

But at last, after a futile year of flight, he accepted the inevitable and elected to remain at the cottage where first he had killed the rabbit and slept by the spring. Even after that, a long time elapsed before the man and woman succeeded in patting him. It was a great victory, for they alone were allowed to put hands on him. He was fastidiously exclusive, and no guest at the cottage ever succeeded in making up to him. A low growl greeted such approach; if any one had the hardihood to come nearer, the lips lifted, the naked fangs appeared, and the growl became a snarl — a snarl so terrible and malignant that it awed the stoutest of them, as it likewise awed the farmers' dogs that knew ordinary dog-snarling, but had never seen wolf-snarling before.

He was without antecedents. His history began with Walt and Madge. He had come up from the south, but never a clew did they get of the owner from whom he had evidently fled. Mrs. Johnson, their nearest neighbor and the one who supplied them

with milk, proclaimed him a Klondike dog. Her brother was burrowing for frozen pay-streaks in that far country, and so she constituted herself an authority on the subject.

But they did not dispute her. There were the tips of Wolf's ears, obviously so severely frozen at some time that they would never quite heal again. Besides, he looked like the photographs of the Alaskan dogs they saw published in magazines and newspapers. They often speculated over his past, and tried to conjure up (from what they had read and heard) what his northland life had been. That the northland still drew him, they knew; for at night they sometimes heard him crying softly; and when the north wind blew and the bite of frost was in the air, a great restlessness would come upon him and he would lift a mournful lament which they knew to be the long wolf-howl. Yet he never barked. No provocation was great enough to draw from him that canine cry.

Long discussion they had, during the time of winning him, as to whose dog he was. Each claimed him, and each proclaimed loudly any expression of affection made by him. But the man had the better of it at first, chiefly because he was a man. It was patent that Wolf had had no experience with women. He did not understand women. Madge's skirts were something he never quite accepted. The swish of them was enough to set him a-bristle with suspicion, and on a windy day she could not approach him at all.

On the other hand, it was Madge who fed him; also it was she who ruled the kitchen, and it was by her favor, and her favor alone, that he was permitted to come within that sacred precinct. It was because of these things that she bade fair to overcome the handicap of her garments. Then it was that Walt put forth special effort, making it a practice to have Wolf lie at his feet while he wrote, and, between petting and talking, losing much time from his work. Walt won in the end, and his victory was most probably due to the fact that he was a man, though Madge averred that they would have had another quarter of a mile of gurgling brook, and at least two west winds sighing through their redwoods, had Wait properly devoted his energies to song-transmutation and left Wolf alone to exercise a natural taste and an unbiassed judgment.

"It's about time I heard from those triolets", Walt said, after a silence of five minutes, during which they had swung steadily down the trail. "There'll be a check at the post-office, I know, and we'll transmute it into beautiful buckwheat flour, a gallon of maple syrup, and a new pair of overshoes for you."

"And into beautiful milk from Mrs. Johnson's beautiful cow," Madge added. "Tomorrow's the first of the month, you know."

Walt scowled unconsciously; then his face brightened, and he clapped his hand to his breast pocket.

"Never mind. I have here a nice beautiful new cow, the best milker in California."

"When did you write it?" she demanded eagerly. Then, reproachfully, "And you never showed it to me."

"I saved it to read to you on the way to the post-office, in a spot remarkably like this one," he answered, indicating, with a wave of his hand, a dry log on which to sit.

A tiny stream flowed out of a dense fern-brake, slipped down a mossy-lipped stone, and ran across the path at their feet. From the valley arose the mellow song of meadow-larks, while about them, in and out, through sunshine and shadow, fluttered great yellow butterflies.

Up from below came another sound that broke in upon Walt reading softly from his manuscript. It was a crunching of heavy feet, punctuated now and again by the clattering of a displaced stone. As Walt finished and looked to his wife for approval, a man came into view around the turn of the trail. He was bare-headed and sweaty. With a handkerchief in one hand he mopped his face, while in the other hand he carried a new hat and a wilted starched collar which he had removed from his neck. He was a well-built man, and his muscles seemed on the point of bursting out of the painfully new and ready-made black clothes he wore.

“Warm day,” Walt greeted him. Walt believed in country democracy, and never missed an opportunity to practise it.

The man paused and nodded.

“I guess I ain’t used much to the warm,” he vouchsafed half apologetically. “I’m more accustomed to zero weather.”

“You don’t find any of that in this country,” Walt laughed.

“Should say not,” the man answered. “An’ I ain’t here a-lookin’ for it neither. I’m tryin’ to find my sister. Mebbe you know where she lives. Her name’s Johnson, Mrs. William Johnson.”

“You’re not her Klondike brother!” Madge cried, her eyes bright with interest, “about whom we’ve heard so much?”

“Yes’m, that’s me,” he answered modestly. “My name’s Miller, Skiff Miller. I just thought I’d s’prise her.”

“You are on the right track then. Only you’ve come by the foot-path.” Madge stood up to direct him, pointing up the canyon a quarter of a mile. “You see that blasted redwood? Take the little trail turning off to the right. It’s the short cut to her house. You can’t miss it.”

“Yes’m, thank you, ma’am,” he said. He made tentative efforts to go, but seemed awkwardly rooted to the spot. He was gazing at her with an open admiration of which he was quite unconscious, and which was drowning, along with him, in the rising sea of embarrassment in which he floundered.

“We’d like to hear you tell about the Klondike,” Madge said. “Mayn’t we come over some day while you are at your sister’s? Or, better yet, won’t you come over and have dinner with us?”

“Yes’m, thank you, ma’am,” he mumbled mechanically. Then he caught himself up and added: “I ain’t stoppin’ long. I got to be pullin’ north again. I go out on to-night’s train. You see, I’ve got a mail contract with the government.”

When Madge had said that it was too bad, he made another futile effort to go. But he could not take his eyes from her face. He forgot his embarrassment in his admiration, and it was her turn to flush and feel uncomfortable.

It was at this juncture, when Walt had just decided it was time for him to be saying something to relieve the strain, that Wolf, who had been away nosing through the brush, trotted wolf-like into view.

Skiff Miller's abstraction disappeared. The pretty woman before him passed out of his field of vision. He had eyes only for the dog, and a great wonder came into his face.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he enunciated slowly and solemnly.

He sat down ponderingly on the log, leaving Madge standing. At the sound of his voice, Wolf's ears had flattened down, then his mouth had opened in a laugh. He trotted slowly up to the stranger and first smelled his hands, then licked them with his tongue.

Skiff Miller patted the dog's head, and slowly and solemnly repeated, "Well, I'll be damned!"

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said the next moment "I was just s'prised some, that was all."

"We're surprised, too," she answered lightly. "We never saw Wolf make up to a stranger before."

"Is that what you call him — Wolf?" the man asked.

Madge nodded. "But I can't understand his friendliness toward you — unless it's because you're from the Klondike. He's a Klondike dog, you know."

"Yes'm," Miller said absently. He lifted one of Wolf's fore legs and examined the footpads, pressing them and denting them with his thumb. "Kind of SOFT," he remarked. "He ain't been on trail for a long time."

"I say," Walt broke in, "it is remarkable the way he lets you handle him."

Skiff Miller arose, no longer awkward with admiration of Madge, and in a sharp, businesslike manner asked, "How long have you had him?"

But just then the dog, squirming and rubbing against the newcomer's legs, opened his mouth and barked. It was an explosive bark, brief and joyous, but a bark.

"That's a new one on me," Skiff Miller remarked.

Walt and Madge stared at each other. The miracle had happened. Wolf had barked.

"It's the first time he ever barked," Madge said.

"First time I ever heard him, too," Miller volunteered.

Madge smiled at him. The man was evidently a humorist.

"Of course," she said, "since you have only seen him for five minutes."

Skiff Miller looked at her sharply, seeking in her face the guile her words had led him to suspect.

"I thought you understood," he said slowly. "I thought you'd tumbled to it from his makin' up to me. He's my dog. His name ain't Wolf. It's Brown."

"Oh, Walt!" was Madge's instinctive cry to her husband.

Walt was on the defensive at once.

"How do you know he's your dog?" he demanded.

"Because he is," was the reply.

"Mere assertion," Walt said sharply.

In his slow and pondering way, Skiff Miller looked at him, then asked, with a nod of his head toward Madge:

“How d’you know she’s your wife? You just say, ‘Because she is,’ and I’ll say it’s mere assertion. The dog’s mine. I bred ‘m an’ raised ‘m, an’ I guess I ought to know. Look here. I’ll prove it to you.”

Skiff Miller turned to the dog. “Brown!” His voice rang out sharply, and at the sound the dog’s ears flattened down as to a caress. “Gee!” The dog made a swinging turn to the right. “Now mush-on!” And the dog ceased his swing abruptly and started straight ahead, halting obediently at command.

“I can do it with whistles”, Skiff Miller said proudly. “He was my lead dog.”

“But you are not going to take him away with you?” Madge asked tremulously.

The man nodded.

“Back into that awful Klondike world of suffering?”

He nodded and added: “Oh, it ain’t so bad as all that. Look at me. Pretty healthy specimen, ain’t I?”

“But the dogs! The terrible hardship, the heart-breaking toil, the starvation, the frost! Oh, I’ve read about it and I know.”

“I nearly ate him once, over on Little Fish River,” Miller volunteered grimly. “If I hadn’t got a moose that day was all that saved ‘m.”

“I’d have died first!” Madge cried.

“Things is different down here”, Miller explained. “You don’t have to eat dogs. You think different just about the time you’re all in. You’ve never ben all in, so you don’t know anything about it.”

“That’s the very point,” she argued warmly. “Dogs are not eaten in California. Why not leave him here? He is happy. He’ll never want for food — you know that. He’ll never suffer from cold and hardship. Here all is softness and gentleness. Neither the human nor nature is savage. He will never know a whip-lash again. And as for the weather — why, it never snows here.”

“But it’s all-fired hot in summer, beggin’ your pardon,” Skiff Miller laughed.

“But you do not answer,” Madge continued passionately. “What have you to offer him in that northland life?”

“Grub, when I’ve got it, and that’s most of the time,” came the answer.

“And the rest of the time?”

“No grub.”

“And the work?”

“Yes, plenty of work,” Miller blurted out impatiently. “Work without end, an’ famine, an’ frost, an all the rest of the miseries — that’s what he’ll get when he comes with me. But he likes it. He is used to it. He knows that life. He was born to it an’ brought up to it. An’ you don’t know anything about it. You don’t know what you’re talking about. That’s where the dog belongs, and that’s where he’ll be happiest.”

“The dog doesn’t go,” Walt announced in a determined voice. “So there is no need of further discussion.”

“What’s that?” Skiff Miller demanded, his brows lowering and an obstinate flush of blood reddening his forehead.

“I said the dog doesn’t go, and that settles it. I don’t believe he’s your dog. You may have seen him sometime. You may even sometime have driven him for his owner. But his obeying the ordinary driving commands of the Alaskan trail is no demonstration that he is yours. Any dog in Alaska would obey you as he obeyed. Besides, he is undoubtedly a valuable dog, as dogs go in Alaska, and that is sufficient explanation of your desire to get possession of him. Anyway, you’ve got to prove property.”

Skiff Miller, cool and collected, the obstinate flush a trifle deeper on his forehead, his huge muscles bulging under the black cloth of his coat, carefully looked the poet up and down as though measuring the strength of his slenderness.

The Klondiker’s face took on a contemptuous expression as he said finally, “I reckon there’s nothin’ in sight to prevent me takin’ the dog right here an’ now.”

Walt’s face reddened, and the striking-muscles of his arms and shoulders seemed to stiffen and grow tense. His wife fluttered apprehensively into the breach.

“Maybe Mr. Miller is right”, she said. “I am afraid that he is. Wolf does seem to know him, and certainly he answers to the name of ‘Brown.’ He made friends with him instantly, and you know that’s something he never did with anybody before. Besides, look at the way he barked. He was just bursting with joy Joy over what? Without doubt at finding Mr. Miller.”

Walt’s striking-muscles relaxed, and his shoulders seemed to droop with hopelessness.

“I guess you’re right, Madge,” he said. “Wolf isn’t Wolf, but Brown, and he must belong to Mr. Miller.”

“Perhaps Mr. Miller will sell him,” she suggested. “We can buy him.”

Skiff Miller shook his head, no longer belligerent, but kindly, quick to be generous in response to generousness.

“I had five dogs,” he said, casting about for the easiest way to temper his refusal. “He was the leader. They was the crack team of Alaska. Nothin’ could touch ‘em. In 1898 I refused five thousand dollars for the bunch. Dogs was high, then, anyway; but that wasn’t what made the fancy price. It was the team itself. Brown was the best in the team. That winter I refused twelve hundred for ‘m. I didn’t sell ‘m then, an’ I ain’t a-sellin’ ‘m now. Besides, I think a mighty lot of that dog. I’ve ben lookin’ for ‘m for three years. It made me fair sick when I found he’d ben stole — not the value of him, but the — well, I liked ‘m like hell, that’s all, beggin’ your pardon. I couldn’t believe my eyes when I seen ‘m just now. I thought I was dreamin’. It was too good to be true. Why, I was his wet-nurse. I put ‘m to bed, snug every night. His mother died, and I brought ‘m up on condensed milk at two dollars a can when I couldn’t afford it in my own coffee. He never knew any mother but me. He used to suck my finger regular, the darn little cuss — that finger right there!”

And Skiff Miller, too overwrought for speech, held up a fore finger for them to see.

“That very finger,” he managed to articulate, as though it somehow clinched the proof of ownership and the bond of affection.

He was still gazing at his extended finger when Madge began to speak.

“But the dog,” she said. “You haven’t considered the dog.”

Skiff Miller looked puzzled.

“Have you thought about him?” she asked.

“Don’t know what you’re drivin’ at,” was the response.

“Maybe the dog has some choice in the matter,” Madge went on. “Maybe he has his likes and desires. You have not considered him. You give him no choice. It has never entered your mind that possibly he might prefer California to Alaska. You consider only what you like. You do with him as you would with a sack of potatoes or a bale of hay.”

This was a new way of looking at it, and Miller was visibly impressed as he debated it in his mind. Madge took advantage of his indecision.

“If you really love him, what would be happiness to him would be your happiness also,” she urged.

Skiff Miller continued to debate with himself, and Madge stole a glance of exultation to her husband, who looked back warm approval.

“What do you think?” the Klondiker suddenly demanded.

It was her turn to be puzzled. “What do you mean?” she asked.

“D’ye think he’d sooner stay in California?”

She nodded her head with positiveness. “I am sure of it.”

Skiff Miller again debated with himself, though this time aloud, at the same time running his gaze in a judicial way over the mooted animal.

“He was a good worker. He’s done a heap of work for me. He never loafed on me, an’ he was a joe-dandy at hammerin’ a raw team into shape. He’s got a head on him. He can do everything but talk. He knows what you say to him. Look at ‘m now. He knows we’re talkin’ about him.”

The dog was lying at Skiff Miller’s feet, head close down on paws, ears erect and listening, and eyes that were quick and eager to follow the sound of speech as it fell from the lips of first one and then the other.

“An’ there’s a lot of work in ‘m yet. He’s good for years to come. An’ I do like him. I like him like hell.”

Once or twice after that Skiff Miller opened his mouth and closed it again without speaking. Finally he said:

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do. Your remarks, ma’am, has some weight in them. The dog’s worked hard, and maybe he’s earned a soft berth an’ has got a right to choose. Anyway, we’ll leave it up to him. Whatever he says, goes. You people stay right here settin’ down. I’ll say good-by and walk off casual-like. If he wants to stay, he can stay. If he wants to come with me, let ‘m come. I won’t call ‘m to come an’ don’t you call ‘m to come back.”

He looked with sudden suspicion at Madge, and added, "Only you must play fair. No persuadin' after my back is turned."

"We'll play fair," Madge began, but Skiff Miller broke in on her assurances.

"I know the ways of women," he announced. "Their hearts is soft. When their hearts is touched they're likely to stack the cards, look at the bottom of the deck, an' lie like the devil — beggin' your pardon, ma'am. I'm only discoursin' about women in general."

"I don't know how to thank you," Madge quavered.

"I don't see as you've got any call to thank me," he replied. "Brown ain't decided yet. Now you won't mind if I go away slow? It's no more'n fair, seein' I'll be out of sight inside a hundred yards." — Madge agreed, and added, "And I promise you faithfully that we won't do anything to influence him."

"Well, then, I might as well be gettin' along," Skiff Miller said in the ordinary tones of one departing.

At this change in his voice, Wolf lifted his head quickly, and still more quickly got to his feet when the man and woman shook hands. He sprang up on his hind legs, resting his fore paws on her hip and at the same time licking Skiff Miller's hand. When the latter shook hands with Walt, Wolf repeated his act, resting his weight on Walt and licking both men's hands.

"It ain't no picnic, I can tell you that," were the Klondiker's last words, as he turned and went slowly up the trail.

For the distance of twenty feet Wolf watched him go, himself all eagerness and expectancy, as though waiting for the man to turn and retrace his steps. Then, with a quick low whine, Wolf sprang after him, overtook him, caught his hand between his teeth with reluctant tenderness, and strove gently to make him pause.

Failing in this, Wolf raced back to where Walt Irvine sat, catching his coat-sleeve in his teeth and trying vainly to drag him after the retreating man.

Wolf's perturbation began to wax. He desired ubiquity. He wanted to be in two places at the same time, with the old master and the new, and steadily the distance between them was increasing. He sprang about excitedly, making short nervous leaps and twists, now toward one, now toward the other, in painful indecision, not knowing his own mind, desiring both and unable to choose, uttering quick sharp whines and beginning to pant.

He sat down abruptly on his haunches, thrusting his nose upward, the mouth opening and closing with jerking movements, each time opening wider. These jerking movements were in unison with the recurrent spasms that attacked the throat, each spasm severer and more intense than the preceding one. And in accord with jerks and spasms the larynx began to vibrate, at first silently, accompanied by the rush of air expelled from the lungs, then sounding a low, deep note, the lowest in the register of the human ear. All this was the nervous and muscular preliminary to howling.

But just as the howl was on the verge of bursting from the full throat, the wide-opened mouth was closed, the paroxysms ceased, and he looked long and steadily at the

retreating man. Suddenly Wolf turned his head, and over his shoulder just as steadily regarded Walt. The appeal was unanswered. Not a word nor a sign did the dog receive, no suggestion and no clue as to what his conduct should be.

A glance ahead to where the old master was nearing the curve of the trail excited him again. He sprang to his feet with a whine, and then, struck by a new idea, turned his attention to Madge. Hitherto he had ignored her, but now, both masters failing him, she alone was left. He went over to her and snuggled his head in her lap, nudging her arm with his nose — an old trick of his when begging for favors. He backed away from her and began writhing and twisting playfully, curvetting and prancing, half rearing and striking his fore paws to the earth, struggling with all his body, from the wheedling eyes and flattening ears to the wagging tail, to express the thought that was in him and that was denied him utterance.

This, too, he soon abandoned. He was depressed by the coldness of these humans who had never been cold before. No response could he draw from them, no help could he get. They did not consider him. They were as dead.

He turned and silently gazed after the old master. Skiff Miller was rounding the curve. In a moment he would be gone from view. Yet he never turned his head, plodding straight onward, slowly and methodically, as though possessed of no interest in what was occurring behind his back.

And in this fashion he went out of view. Wolf waited for him to reappear. He waited a long minute, silently, quietly, without movement, as though turned to stone — withal stone quick with eagerness and desire. He barked once, and waited. Then he turned and trotted back to Walt Irvine. He sniffed his hand and dropped down heavily at his feet, watching the trail where it curved emptily from view.

The tiny stream slipping down the mossy-lipped stone seemed suddenly to increase the volume of its gurgling noise. Save for the meadow-larks, there was no other sound. The great yellow butterflies drifted silently through the sunshine and lost themselves in the drowsy shadows. Madge gazed triumphantly at her husband.

A few minutes later Wolf got upon his feet. Decision and deliberation marked his movements. He did not glance at the man and woman. His eyes were fixed up the trail. He had made up his mind. They knew it. And they knew, so far as they were concerned, that the ordeal had just begun.

He broke into a trot, and Madge's lips pursed, forming an avenue for the caressing sound that it was the will of her to send forth. But the caressing sound was not made. She was impelled to look at her husband, and she saw the sternness with which he watched her. The pursed lips relaxed, and she sighed inaudibly.

Wolf's trot broke into a run. Wider and wider were the leaps he made. Not once did he turn his head, his wolf's brush standing out straight behind him. He cut sharply across the curve of the trail and was gone.

Bunches of Knuckles

Arrangements quite extensive had been made for the celebration of Christmas on the yacht Samoset. Not having been in any civilized port for months, the stock of provisions boasted few delicacies; yet Minnie Duncan had managed to devise real feasts for cabin and forecastle.

“Listen, Boyd, she told her husband. “Here are the menus. For the cabin, raw bonita native style, turtle soup, omelette a la Samoset — ”

“What the dickens?” Boyd Duncan interrupted.

“Well, if you must know, I found a tin of mushrooms and a package of egg-powder which had fallen down behind the locker, and there are other things as well that will go into it. But don’t interrupt. Boiled yam, fried taro, alligator pear salad – there, you’ve got me all mixed, Then I found a last delectable half-pound of dried squid. There will be baked beans Mexican, if I can hammer it into Toyama’s head; also, baked papaia with Marquesan honey, and, lastly, a wonderful pie the secret of which Toyama refuses to divulge.”

“I wonder if it is possible to concoct a punch or a cocktail out of trade rum?” Duncan muttered gloomily.

“Oh! I forgot! Come with me.”

His wife caught his hand and led him through the small connecting door to her tiny stateroom. Still holding his hand, she fished in the depths of a hat-locker and brought forth a pint bottle of champagne.

“The dinner is complete!” he cried.

“Wait.”

She fished again, and was rewarded with a silver-mounted whisky flask. She held it to the light of a port-hole, and the liquor showed a quarter of the distance from the bottom.

“I’ve been saving it for weeks,” she explained. “And there’s enough for you and Captain Dettmar.”

“Two mighty small drinks,” Duncan complained.

“There would have been more, but I gave a drink to Lorenzo when he was sick.”

Duncan growled, “Might have given him rum,” facetiously.

“The nasty stuff! For a sick man? Don’t be greedy, Boyd. And I’m glad there isn’t any more, for Captain Dettmar’s sake. Drinking always makes him irritable. And now for the men’s dinner. Soda crackers, sweet cakes, candy — ”

“Substantial, I must say.”

“Do hush. Rice, and curry, yam, taro, bonita, of course, a big cake Toyama is making, young pig — ”

“Oh, I say,” he protested.

“It is all right, Boyd. We’ll be in Attu-Attu in three days. Besides, it’s my pig. That old chief what-ever-his-name distinctly presented it to me. You saw him yourself. And then two tins of bullamacow. That’s their dinner. And now about the presents. Shall we wait until tomorrow, or give them this evening?”

“Christmas Eve, by all means,” was the man’s judgment. “We’ll call all hands at eight bells; I’ll give them a tot of rum all around, and then you give the presents. Come on up on deck. It’s stifling down here. I hope Lorenzo has better luck with the dynamo; without the fans there won’t be much sleeping to-night if we’re driven below.”

They passed through the small main-cabin, climbed a steep companion ladder, and emerged on deck. The sun was setting, and the promise was for a clear tropic night. The Samoset, with fore-and main-sail winged out on either side, was slipping a lazy four-knots through the smooth sea. Through the engine-room skylight came a sound of hammering. They strolled aft to where Captain Dettmar, one foot on the rail, was oiling the gear of the patent log. At the wheel stood a tall South Sea Islander, clad in white undershirt and scarlet hip-cloth.

Boyd Duncan was an original. At least that was the belief of his friends. Of comfortable fortune, with no need to do anything but take his comfort, he elected to travel about the world in outlandish and most uncomfortable ways. Incidentally, he had ideas about coral-reefs, disagreed profoundly with Darwin on that subject, had voiced his opinion in several monographs and one book, and was now back at his hobby, cruising the South Seas in a tiny, thirty-ton yacht and studying reef-formations.

His wife, Minnie Duncan, was also declared an original, inasmuch as she joyfully shared his vagabond wanderings. Among other things, in the six exciting years of their marriage she had climbed Chimborazo with him, made a three-thousand-mile winter journey with dogs and sleds in Alaska, ridden a horse from Canada to Mexico, cruised the Mediterranean in a ten-ton yawl, and canoed from Germany to the Black Sea across the heart of Europe. They were a royal pair of wanderlusts, he, big and broad-shouldered, she a small, brunette, and happy woman, whose one hundred and fifteen pounds were all grit and endurance, and withal, pleasing to look upon.

The Samoset had been a trading schooner, when Duncan bought her in San Francisco and made alterations. Her interior was wholly rebuilt, so that the hold became main-cabin and staterooms, while abaft amidships were installed engines, a dynamo, an ice machine, storage batteries, and, far in the stern, gasoline tanks. Necessarily, she carried a small crew. Boyd, Minnie, and Captain Dettmar were the only whites on board, though Lorenzo, the small and greasy engineer, laid a part claim to white, being a Portuguese half-caste. A Japanese served as cook, and a Chinese as cabin boy. Four white sailors had constituted the original crew for’ard, but one by one they had yielded to the charms of palm-waving South Sea isles and been replaced by islanders. Thus, one of the dusky sailors hailed from Easter Island, a second from the Carolines,

a third from the Paumotus, while the fourth was a gigantic Samoan. At sea, Boyd Duncan, himself a navigator, stood a mate's watch with Captain Dettmar, and both of them took a wheel or lookout occasionally. On a pinch, Minnie herself could take a wheel, and it was on pinches that she proved herself more dependable at steering than did the native sailors.

At eight bells, all hands assembled at the wheel, and Boyd Duncan appeared with a black bottle and a mug. The rum he served out himself, half a mug of it to each man. They gulped the stuff down with many facial expressions of delight, followed by loud lip-smackings of approval, though the liquor was raw enough and corrosive enough to burn their mucous membranes. All drank except Lee Goom, the abstemious cabin boy. This rite accomplished, they waited for the next, the present-giving. Generously molded on Polynesian lines, huge-bodied and heavy-muscled, they were nevertheless like so many children, laughing merrily at little things, their eager black eyes flashing in the lantern light as their big bodies swayed to the heave and roll of the ship.

Calling each by name, Minnie gave the presents out, accompanying each presentation with some happy remark that added to the glee. There were trade watches, clasp knives, amazing assortments of fish-hooks in packages, plug tobacco, matches, and gorgeous strips of cotton for loincloths all around. That Boyd Duncan was liked by them was evidenced by the roars of laughter with which they greeted his slightest joking allusion.

Captain Dettmar, white-faced, smiling only when his employer chanced to glance at him, leaned against the wheel-box, looking on. Twice, he left the group and went below, remaining there but a minute each time. Later, in the main cabin, when Lorenzo, Lee Goom and Toyama received their presents, he disappeared into his stateroom twice again. For of all times, the devil that slumbered in Captain Dettmar's soul chose this particular time of good cheer to awaken. Perhaps it was not entirely the devil's fault, for Captain Dettmar, privily cherishing a quart of whisky for many weeks, had selected Christmas Eve for broaching it.

It was still early in the evening – two bells had just gone – when Duncan and his wife stood by the cabin companionway, gazing to windward and canvassing the possibility of spreading their beds on deck. A small, dark blot of cloud, slowly forming on the horizon, carried the threat of a rain-squall, and it was this they were discussing when Captain Dettmar, coming from aft and about to go below, glanced at them with sudden suspicion. He paused, his face working spasmodically. Then he spoke:

“You are talking about me.”

His voice was hoarse, and there was an excited vibration in it. Minnie Duncan started, then glanced at her husband's immobile face, took the cue, and remained silent.

“I say you were talking about me,” Captain Dettmar repeated, this time with almost a snarl.

He did not lurch nor betray the liquor on him in any way save by the convulsive working of his face.

"Minnie, you'd better go down," Duncan said gently. "Tell Lee Goom we'll sleep below. It won't be long before that squall is drenching things."

She took the hint and left, delaying just long enough to give one anxious glance at the dim faces of the two men.

Duncan puffed at his cigar and waited till his wife's voice, in talk with the cabin-boy, came up through the open skylight.

"Well?" Duncan demanded in a low voice, but sharply.

"I said you were talking about me. I say it again. Oh, I haven't been blind. Day after day I've seen the two of you talking about me. Why don't you come out and say it to my face! I know you know. And I know your mind's made up to discharge me at Attu-Attu."

"I am sorry you are making such a mess of everything," was Duncan's quiet reply.

But Captain Dettmar's mind was set on trouble.

"You know you are going to discharge me. You think you are too good to associate with the likes of me – you and your wife."

"Kindly keep her out of this," Duncan warned. "What do you want?"

"I want to know what you are going to do!"

"Discharge you, after this, at Attu-Attu."

"You intended to, all along."

"On the contrary. It is your present conduct that compels me."

"You can't give me that sort of talk."

"I can't retain a captain who calls me a liar."

Captain Dettmar for the moment was taken aback. His face and lips worked, but he could say nothing. Duncan coolly pulled at his cigar and glanced aft at the rising cloud of squall.

"Lee Goom brought the mail aboard at Tahiti," Captain Dettmar began.

"We were hove short then and leaving. You didn't look at your letters until we were outside, and then it was too late. That's why you didn't discharge me at Tahiti. Oh, I know. I saw the long envelope when Lee Goom came over the side. It was from the Governor of California, printed on the corner for any one to see. You'd been working behind my back. Some beachcomber in Honolulu had whispered to you, and you'd written to the Governor to find out. And that was his answer Lee Goom carried out to you. Why didn't you come to me like a man! No, you must play underhand with me, knowing that this billet was the one chance for me to get on my feet again. And as soon as you read the Governor's letter your mind was made up to get rid of me. I've seen it on your face ever since for all these months.. I've seen the two of you, polite as hell to me all the time, and getting away in corners and talking about me and that affair in 'Frisco."

"Are you done?" Duncan asked, his voice low, and tense. "Quite done?"

Captain Dettmar made no answer.

"Then I'll tell you a few things. It was precisely because of that affair in 'Frisco that I did not discharge you in Tahiti. God knows you gave me sufficient provocation.

I thought that if ever a man needed a chance to rehabilitate himself, you were that man. Had there been no black mark against you, I would have discharged you when I learned how you were robbing me.”

Captain Dettmar showed surprise, started to interrupt, then changed his mind.

“There was that matter of the deck-calking, the bronze rudder-irons, the overhauling of the engine, the new spinnaker boom, the new davits, and the repairs to the whale-boat. You OKd the shipyard bill. It was four thousand one hundred and twenty-two francs. By the regular shipyard charges it ought not to have been a centime over twenty-five hundred francs-“

“If you take the word of those alongshore sharks against mine — ’ the other began thickly.

“Save yourself the trouble of further lying,” Duncan went on coldly. “I looked it up. I got Flaubin before the Governor himself, and the old rascal confessed to sixteen hundred overcharge. Said you’d stuck him up for it. Twelve hundred went to you, and his share was four hundred and the job. Don’t interrupt. I’ve got his affidavit below. Then was when I would have put you ashore, except for the cloud you were under. You had to have this one chance or go clean to hell. I gave you the chance. And what have you got to say about it?”

“What did the Governor say?” Captain Dettmar demanded truculently.

“Which governor?”

“Of California. Did he lie to you like all the rest?”

“I’ll tell you what he said. He said that you had been convicted on circumstantial evidence; that was why you had got life imprisonment instead of hanging; that you had always stoutly maintained your innocence; that you were the black sheep of the Maryland Dettmars; that they moved heaven and earth for your pardon; that your prison conduct was most exemplary; that he was prosecuting attorney at the time you were convicted; that after you had served seven years he yielded to your family’s plea and pardoned you; and that in his own mind existed a doubt that you had killed McSweeny.”

There was a pause, during which Duncan went on studying the rising squall, while Captain Dettmar’s face worked terribly.

“Well, the Governor was wrong,” he announced, with a short laugh. “I did kill McSweeny. I did get the watchman drunk that night. I beat McSweeny to death in his bunk. I used the iron belaying pin that appeared in the evidence. He never had a chance. I beat him to a jelly. Do you want the details?”

Duncan looked at him in the curious way one looks at any monstrosity, but made no reply.

“Oh, I’m not afraid to tell you,” Captain Dettmar blustered on. “There are no witnesses. Besides, I am a free man now. I am pardoned, and by God they can never put me back in that hole again. I broke McSweeny’s jaw with the first blow. He was lying on his back asleep. He said, ‘My God, Jim! My God!’ It was funny to see his

broken jaw wabble as he said it. Then I smashed him ...I say, do you want the rest of the details?"

"Is that all you have to say?" was the answer.

"Isn't it enough?" Captain Dettmar retorted.

"It is enough."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Put you ashore at Attu-Attu."

"And in the meantime?"

"In the meantime ..." Duncan paused. An increase of weight in the wind rippled his hair. The stars overhead vanished, and the Samoset swung four points off her course in the careless steersman's hands. "In the meantime throw your halyards down on deck and look to your wheel. I'll call the men."

The next moment the squall burst upon them. Captain Dettmar, springing aft, lifted the coiled mainsail halyards from their pins and threw them, ready to run, on the deck. The three islanders swarmed from the tiny forecabin, two of them leaping to the halyards and holding by a single turn, while the third fastened down the companion, and swung the ventilators around. Below, Lee Goom and Toyama were lowering skylight covers and screwing up deadeyes. Duncan pulled shut the cover of the companion scuttle, and held on, waiting, the first drops of rain pelting his face, while the Samoset leaped violently ahead, at the same time heeling first to starboard then to port as the gusty pressures caught her winged-out sails.

All waited. But there was no need to lower away on the run. The power went out of the wind, and the tropic rain poured a deluge over everything. Then it was, the danger past, and as the Kanakas began to coil the halyards back on the pins, that Boyd Duncan went below.

"All right," he called in cheerily to his wife. "Only a puff."

"And Captain Dettmar?" she queried.

"Has been drinking, that is all. I shall get rid of him at Attu-Attu."

But before Duncan climbed into his bunk, he strapped around himself, against the skin and under his pajama coat, a heavy automatic pistol.

He fell asleep almost immediately, for his was the gift of perfect relaxation. He did things tensely, in the way savages do, but the instant the need passed he relaxed, mind and body. So it was that he slept, while the rain still poured on deck and the yacht plunged and rolled in the brief, sharp sea caused by the squall.

He awoke with a feeling of suffocation and heaviness. The electric fans had stopped, and the air was thick and stifling. Mentally cursing all Lorenzos and storage batteries, he heard his wife moving in the adjoining stateroom and pass out into the main cabin. Evidently heading for the fresher air on deck, he thought, and decided it was a good example to imitate. Putting on his slippers and tucking a pillow and a blanket under his arm, he followed her. As he was about to emerge from the companionway, the ship's clock in the cabin began to strike and he stopped to listen. Four bells sounded. It was two in the morning. From without came the creaking of the gaff-jaw against the mast.

The Samoset rolled and righted on a sea, and in the light breeze her canvas gave forth a hollow thrum.

He was just putting his foot out on the damp deck when he heard his wife scream. It was a startled frightened scream that ended in a splash overside. He leaped out and ran aft. In the dim starlight he could make out her head and shoulders disappearing astern in the lazy wake.

“What was it?” Captain Dettmar, who was at the wheel, asked.

“Mrs. Duncan,” was Duncan’s reply, as he tore the life-buoy from its hook and flung it aft. “Jibe over to starboard and come up on the wind!” he commanded.

And then Boyd Duncan made a mistake. He dived overboard.

When he came up, he glimpsed the blue-light on the buoy, which had ignited automatically when it struck the water. He swam for it, and found Minnie had reached it first.

“Hello,” he said. “Just trying to keep cool?”

“Oh, Boyd!” was her answer, and one wet hand reached out and touched his.

The blue light, through deterioration or damage, flickered out. As they lifted on the smooth crest of a wave, Duncan turned to look where the Samoset made a vague blur in the darkness. No lights showed, but there was noise of confusion. He could hear Captain Dettmar’s shouting above the cries of the others.

“I must say he’s taking his time,” Duncan grumbled. “Why doesn’t he jibe? There she goes now.”

They could hear the rattle of the boom tackle blocks as the sail was eased across.

“That was the mainsail,” he muttered. “Jibed to port when I told him starboard.”

Again they lifted on a wave, and again and again, ere they could make out the distant green of the Samoset’s starboard light. But instead of remaining stationary, in token that the yacht was coming toward them, it began moving across their field of vision. Duncan swore.

“What’s the lubber holding over there for!” he demanded. “He’s got his compass. He knows our bearing.”

But the green light, which was all they could see, and which they could see only when they were on top of a wave, moved steadily away from them, withal it was working up to windward, and grew dim and dimmer. Duncan called out loudly and repeatedly, and each time, in the intervals, they could hear, very faintly, the voice of Captain Dettmar shouting orders.

“How can he hear me with such a racket?” Duncan complained.

“He’s doing it so the crew won’t hear you,” was Minnie’s answer.

There was something in the quiet way she said it that caught her husband’s attention.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that he is not trying to pick us up,” she went on in the same composed voice. “He threw me overboard.”

“You are not making a mistake?”

“How could I? I was at the main rigging, looking to see if any more rain threatened. He must have left the wheel and crept behind me. I was holding on to a stay with one hand. He gripped my hand free from behind and threw me over. It’s too bad you didn’t know, or else you would have staid aboard.”

Duncan groaned, but said nothing for several minutes. The green light changed the direction of its course.

“She’s gone about,” he announced. “You are right. He’s deliberately working around us and to windward. Up wind they can never hear me. But here goes.”

He called at minute intervals for a long time. The green light disappeared, being replaced by the red, showing that the yacht had gone about again.

“Minnie,” he said finally, “it pains me to tell you, but you married a fool. Only a fool would have gone overboard as I did.”

“What chance have we of being picked up ...by some other vessel, I mean?” she asked.

“About one in ten thousand, or ten thousand million. Not a steamer route nor trade route crosses this stretch of ocean. And there aren’t any whalers knocking about the South Seas. There might be a stray trading schooner running across from Tutuwanga. But I happen to know that island is visited only once a year. A chance in a million is ours.”

“And we’ll play that chance,” she rejoined stoutly.

“You ARE a joy!” His hand lifted hers to his lips. “And Aunt Elizabeth always wondered what I saw in you. Of course we’ll play that chance. And we’ll win it, too. To happen otherwise would be unthinkable. Here goes.”

He slipped the heavy pistol from his belt and let it sink into the sea. The belt, however, he retained.

“Now you get inside the buoy and get some sleep. Duck under.”

She ducked obediently, and came up inside the floating circle. He fastened the straps for her, then, with the pistol belt, buckled himself across one shoulder to the outside of the buoy.

“We’re good for all day to-morrow,” he said. “Thank God the water’s warm. It won’t be a hardship for the first twenty-hour hours, anyway. And if we’re not picked up by nightfall, we’ve just got to hang on for another day, that’s all.”

For half an hour they maintained silence, Duncan, his head resting on the arm that was on the buoy, seemed asleep.

“Boyd?” Minnie said softly.

“Thought you were asleep,” he growled.

“Boyd, if we don’t come through this — ”

“Stow that!” he broke in ungallantly. “Of course we’re coming through. There is isn’t a doubt of it. Somewhere on this ocean is a ship that’s heading right for us. You wait and see. Just the same I wish my brain were equipped with wireless. Now I’m going to sleep, if you don’t.”

But for once, sleep baffled him. An hour later he heard Minnie stir and knew she was awake.

“Say, do you know what I’ve been thinking!” she asked.

“No; what?”

“That I’ll wish you a Merry Christmas.”

“By George, I never thought of it. Of course it’s Christmas Day. We’ll have many more of them, too. And do you know what I’ve been thinking? What a confounded shame we’re done out of our Christmas dinner. Wait till I lay hands on Dettmar. I’ll take it out of him. And it won’t be with an iron belaying pin either, Just two bunches of naked knuckles, that’s all.”

Despite his facetiousness, Boyd Duncan had little hope. He knew well enough the meaning of one chance in a million, and was calmly certain that his wife and he had entered upon their last few living hours – hours that were inevitably bound to be black and terrible with tragedy.

The tropic sun rose in a cloudless sky. Nothing was to be seen. The Samoset was beyond the sea-rim. As the sun rose higher, Duncan ripped his pajama trousers in halves and fashioned them into two rude turbans. Soaked in sea-water they offset the heat-rays.

“When I think of that dinner, I’m really angry,” he complained, as he noted an anxious expression threatening to set on his wife’s face. “And I want you to be with me when I settle with Dettmar. I’ve always been opposed to women witnessing scenes of blood, but this is different. It will be a beating.”

“I hope I don’t break my knuckles on him,” he added, after a pause.

Midday came and went, and they floated on, the center of a narrow sea-circle. A gentle breath of the dying trade-wind fanned them, and they rose and fell monotonously on the smooth swells of a perfect summer sea. Once, a gunie spied them, and for half an hour circled about them with majestic sweeps. And, once, a huge rayfish, measuring a score of feet across the tips, passed within a few yards.

By sunset, Minnie began to rave, softly, babblingly, like a child. Duncan’s face grew haggard as he watched and listened, while in his mind he revolved plans of how best to end the hours of agony that were. coining. And, so planning, as they rose on a larger swell than usual, he swept the circle of the sea with his eyes, and saw, what made him cry out.

“Minnie!” She did not answer, and he shouted her name again in her ear, with all the voice he could command. Her eyes opened, in them fluttered commingled consciousness and delirium. He slapped her hands and wrists till the sting of the blows roused her.

“There she is, the chance in a million!” he cried.

“A steamer at that, heading straight for us! By George, it’s a cruiser! I have it — !the Annapolis, returning with those astronomers from Tutuwanga.

. . . .

United States Consul Lingford was a fussy, elderly gentleman, and in the two years of his service at Attu-Attu had never encountered so unprecedented a case as that laid

before him by Boyd Duncan. The latter, with his wife, had been landed there by the *Annapolis*, which had promptly gone on with its cargo of astronomers to Fiji.

"It was cold-blooded, deliberate attempt to murder," said Consul Lingford. "The law shall take its course. I don't know how precisely to deal with this Captain Dettmar, but if he comes to Attu-Attu, depend upon it he shall be dealt with, he – ah – shall be dealt with. In the meantime, I shall read up the law. And now, won't you and your good lady stop for lunch!"

As Duncan accepted the invitation, Minnie, who had been glancing out of the window at the harbor, suddenly leaned forward and touched her husband's arm. He followed her gaze, and saw the *Samoset*, flag at half mast, rounding up and dropping anchor scarcely a hundred yards away.

"There's my boat now," Duncan said to the Consul. "And there's the launch over the side, and Captain Dettmar dropping into it. If I don't miss my guess, he's coming to report our deaths to you."

The launch landed on the white beach, and leaving Lorenzo tinkering with the engine, Captain Dettmar strode across the beach and up the path to the Consulate.

"Let him make his report," Duncan said. "We'll just step into this next room and listen."

And through the partly open door, he and his wife heard Captain Dettmar, with tears in his voice, describe the loss of his owners.

"I jibed over and went back across the very spot," he concluded. "There was not a sign of them. I called and called, but there was never an answer. I tacked back and forth and wore for two solid hours, then hove to till daybreak, and cruised back and forth all day, two men at the mastheads. It is terrible. I am heartbroken. Mr. Duncan was a splendid man, and I shall never..."

But he never completed the sentence, for at that moment his splendid employer strode out upon him, leaving Minnie standing in the doorway. Captain Dettmar's white face blanched even whiter.

"I did my best to pick you up, sir," he began.

Boyd Duncan's answer was couched in terms of bunched knuckles, two bunches of them, that landed right and left on Captain Dettmar's face.

Captain Dettmar staggered backward, recovered, and rushed with swinging arms at his employer, only to be met with a blow squarely between the eyes. This time the Captain went down, bearing the typewriter under him as he crashed to the floor.

"This is not permissible," Consul Lingford spluttered. "I beg of you, I beg of you, to desist."

"I'll pay the damages to office furniture," Duncan answered, and at the same time landing more bunched knuckles on the eyes and nose of Dettmar.

Consul Lingford bobbed around in the turmoil like a wet hen, while his office furniture went to ruin. Once, he caught Duncan by the arm, but was flung back, gasping, half-across the room. Another time he appealed to Minnie.

"Mrs. Duncan, won't you, please, please, restrain your husband?"

But she, white-faced and trembling, resolutely shook her head and watched the fray with all her eyes.

“It is outrageous,” Consul Lingford cried, dodging the hurtling bodies of the two men. “It is an affront to the Government, to the United States Government. Nor will it be overlooked, I warn you. Oh, do pray desist, Mr. Duncan. You will kill the man. I beg of you. I beg, I beg...”

But the crash of a tall vase filled with crimson hibiscus blossoms left him speechless.

The time came when Captain Dettmar could no longer get up. He got as far as hands and knees, struggled vainly to rise further, then collapsed. Duncan stirred the groaning wreck with his foot.

“He’s all right,” he announced. “I’ve only given him what he has given many a sailor and worse.”

“Great heavens, sir!” Consul Lingford exploded, staring horror-stricken at the man whom he had invited to lunch.

Duncan giggled involuntarily, then controlled himself.

“I apologize, Mr. Lingford, I most heartily apologize. I fear I was slightly carried away by my feelings.”

Consul Lingford gulped and sawed the air speechlessly with his arms.

“Slightly, sir? Slightly?” he managed to articulate.

“Boyd,” Minnie called softly from the doorway.

He turned and looked.

“You ARE a joy,” she said.

“And now, Mr. Lingford, I am done with him,” Duncan said. “I turn over what is left to you and the law.”

“That?” Consul Lingford queried, in accent of horror.

“That,” Boyd Duncan replied, looking ruefully at his battered knuckles.

By the Turtles of Tasman

I

Law, order, and restraint had carved Frederick Travers' face. It was the strong, firm face of one used to power and who had used power with wisdom and discretion. Clean living had made the healthy skin, and the lines graven in it were honest lines. Hard and devoted work had left its wholesome handiwork, that was all. Every feature of the man told the same story, from the clear blue of the eyes to the full head of hair, light brown, touched with grey, and smoothly parted and drawn straight across above the strong-domed forehead. He was a seriously groomed man, and the light summer business suit no more than befitted his alert years, while it did not shout aloud that its possessor was likewise the possessor of numerous millions of dollars and property.

For Frederick Travers hated ostentation. The machine that waited outside for him under the porte-cochère was sober black. It was the most expensive machine in the county, yet he did not care to flaunt its price or horse-power in a red flare across the landscape, which also was mostly his, from the sand dunes and the everlasting beat of the Pacific breakers, across the fat bottomlands and upland pastures, to the far summits clad with redwood forest and wreathed in fog and cloud.

A rustle of skirts caused him to look over his shoulder. Just the faintest hint of irritation showed in his manner. Not that his daughter was the object, however. Whatever it was, it seemed to lie on the desk before him.

"What is that outlandish name again?" she asked. "I know I shall never remember it. See, I've brought a pad to write it down."

Her voice was low and cool, and she was a tall, well-formed, clear-skinned young woman. In her voice and complacency she, too, showed the drill-marks of order and restraint.

Frederick Travers scanned the signature of one of two letters on the desk. "Bronislawa Plaskowitzkaia Travers," he read; then spelled the difficult first portion, letter by letter, while his daughter wrote it down.

"Now, Mary," he added, "remember Tom was always harum scarum, and you must make allowances for this daughter of his. Her very name is—ah—disconcerting. I haven't seen him for years, and as for her..." A shrug epitomised his apprehension. He smiled with an effort at wit. "Just the same, they're as much your family as mine. If he is my brother, he is your uncle. And if she's my niece, you're both cousins."

Mary nodded. "Don't worry, father. I'll be nice to her, poor thing. What nationality was her mother?—to get such an awful name."

"I don't know. Russian, or Polish, or Spanish, or something. It was just like Tom. She was an actress or singer—I don't remember. They met in Buenos Ayres. It was an elopement. Her husband—"

"Then she was already married!"

Mary's dismay was unfeigned and spontaneous, and her father's irritation grew more pronounced. He had not meant that. It had slipped out.

"There was a divorce afterward, of course. I never knew the details. Her mother died out in China—no; in Tasmania. It was in China that Tom—" His lips shut with almost a snap. He was not going to make any more slips. Mary waited, then turned to the door, where she paused.

"I've given her the rooms over the rose court," she said. "And I'm going now to take a last look."

Frederick Travers turned back to the desk, as if to put the letters away, changed his mind, and slowly and ponderingly reread them.

"Dear Fred:

"It's been a long time since I was so near to the old home, and I'd like to take a run up. Unfortunately, I played ducks and drakes with my Yucatan project—I think I wrote about it—and I'm broke as usual. Could you advance me funds for the run? I'd like to arrive first class. Polly is with me, you know. I wonder how you two will get along.

"Tom.

"P.S. If it doesn't bother you too much, send it along next mail."

"Dear Uncle Fred":

the other letter ran, in what seemed to him a strange, foreign-taught, yet distinctly feminine hand.

"Dad doesn't know I am writing this. He told me what he said to you. It is not true. He is coming home to die. He doesn't know it, but I've talked with the doctors. And he'll have to come home, for we have no money. We're in a stuffy little boarding house, and it is not the place for Dad. He's helped other persons all his life, and now is the time to help him. He didn't play ducks and drakes in Yucatan. I was with him, and I know. He dropped all he had there, and he was robbed. He can't play the business game against New Yorkers. That explains it all, and I am proud he can't.

"He always laughs and says I'll never be able to get along with you. But I don't agree with him. Besides, I've never seen a really, truly blood relative in my life, and there's your daughter. Think of it!—a real live cousin!

"In anticipation,

"Your niece,

"BRONISLAWA PLASKOWEITZKAIA TRAVERS.

"P.S. You'd better telegraph the money, or you won't see Dad at all. He doesn't know how sick he is, and if he meets any of his old friends he'll be off and away on some wild goose chase. He's beginning to talk Alaska. Says it will get the fever out of his bones. Please know that we must pay the boarding house, or else we'll arrive without luggage.

“B.P.T.”

Frederick Travers opened the door of a large, built-in safe and methodically put the letters away in a compartment labelled “Thomas Travers.”

“Poor Tom! Poor Tom!” he sighed aloud.

II

The big motor car waited at the station, and Frederick Travers thrilled as he always thrilled to the distant locomotive whistle of the train plunging down the valley of Isaac Travers River. First of all westering white-men, had Isaac Travers gazed on that splendid valley, its salmon-laden waters, its rich bottoms, and its virgin forest slopes. Having seen, he had grasped and never let go. “Land-poor,” they had called him in the mid-settler period. But that had been in the days when the placers petered out, when there were no wagon roads nor tugs to draw in sailing vessels across the perilous bar, and when his lonely grist mill had been run under armed guards to keep the marauding Klamaths off while wheat was ground. Like father, like son, and what Isaac Travers had grasped, Frederick Travers had held. It had been the same tenacity of hold. Both had been far-visioned. Both had foreseen the transformation of the utter West, the coming of the railroad, and the building of the new empire on the Pacific shore.

Frederick Travers thrilled, too, at the locomotive whistle, because, more than any man’s, it was his railroad. His father had died still striving to bring the railroad in across the mountains that averaged a hundred thousand dollars to the mile. He, Frederick, had brought it in. He had sat up nights over that railroad; bought newspapers, entered politics, and subsidised party machines; and he had made pilgrimages, more than once, at his own expense, to the railroad chiefs of the East. While all the county knew how many miles of his land were crossed by the right of way, none of the county guessed nor dreamed the number of his dollars which had gone into guaranties and railroad bonds. He had done much for his county, and the railroad was his last and greatest achievement, the capstone of the Travers’ effort, the momentous and marvellous thing that had been brought about just yesterday. It had been running two years, and, highest proof of all of his judgment, dividends were in sight. And farther reaching reward was in sight. It was written in the books that the next Governor of California was to be spelled, Frederick A. Travers.

Twenty years had passed since he had seen his elder brother, and then it had been after a gap of ten years. He remembered that night well. Tom was the only man who dared run the bar in the dark, and that last time, between nightfall and the dawn, with a southeaster breezing up, he had sailed his schooner in and out again. There had been no warning of his coming—a clatter of hoofs at midnight, a lathered horse in the stable, and Tom had appeared, the salt of the sea on his face as his mother attested. An hour only he remained, and on a fresh horse was gone, while rain squalls rattled upon the windows and the rising wind moaned through the redwoods, the memory of his visit a whiff, sharp and strong, from the wild outer world. A week later, sea-hammered and bar-bound for that time, had arrived the revenue cutter Bear, and there had been a column of conjecture in the local paper, hints of a heavy landing of opium and of a

vain quest for the mysterious schooner Halcyon. Only Fred and his mother, and the several house Indians, knew of the stiffened horse in the barn and of the devious way it was afterward smuggled back to the fishing village on the beach.

Despite those twenty years, it was the same old Tom Travers that alighted from the Pullman. To his brother's eyes, he did not look sick. Older he was of course. The Panama hat did not hide the grey hair, and though indefinitely hinting of shrunkenness, the broad shoulders were still broad and erect. As for the young woman with him, Frederick Travers experienced an immediate shock of distaste. He felt it vitally, yet vaguely. It was a challenge and a mock, yet he could not name nor place the source of it. It might have been the dress, of tailored linen and foreign cut, the shirtwaist, with its daring stripe, the black wilfulness of the hair, or the flaunt of poppies on the large straw hat or it might have been the flash and colour of her—the black eyes and brows, the flame of rose in the cheeks, the white of the even teeth that showed too readily. "A spoiled child," was his thought, but he had no time to analyse, for his brother's hand was in his and he was making his niece's acquaintance.

There it was again. She flashed and talked like her colour, and she talked with her hands as well. He could not avoid noting the smallness of them. They were absurdly small, and his eyes went to her feet to make the same discovery. Quite oblivious of the curious crowd on the station platform, she had intercepted his attempt to lead to the motor car and had ranged the brothers side by side. Tom had been laughingly acquiescent, but his younger brother was ill at ease, too conscious of the many eyes of his townspeople. He knew only the old Puritan way. Family displays were for the privacy of the family, not for the public. He was glad she had not attempted to kiss him. It was remarkable she had not. Already he apprehended anything of her.

She embraced them and penetrated them with sun-warm eyes that seemed to see through them, and over them, and all about them.

"You're really brothers," she cried, her hands flashing with her eyes. "Anybody can see it. And yet there is a difference—I don't know. I can't explain."

In truth, with a tact that exceeded Frederick Travers' farthest disciplined forbearance, she did not dare explain. Her wide artist-eyes had seen and sensed the whole trenchant and essential difference. Alike they looked, of the unmistakable same stock, their features reminiscent of a common origin; and there resemblance ceased. Tom was three inches taller, and well-greying was the long, Viking moustache. His was the same eagle-like nose as his brother's, save that it was more eagle-like, while the blue eyes were pronouncedly so. The lines of the face were deeper, the cheek-bones higher, the hollows larger, the weather-beat darker. It was a volcanic face. There had been fire there, and the fire still lingered. Around the corners of the eyes were more laughter-wrinkles and in the eyes themselves a promise of deadlier seriousness than the younger brother possessed. Frederick was bourgeois in his carriage, but in Tom's was a certain careless ease and distinction. It was the same pioneer blood of Isaac Travers in both men, but it had been retorted in widely different crucibles. Frederick represented the straight and expected line of descent. His brother expressed a vast and intangible some-

thing that was unknown in the Travers stock. And it was all this that the black-eyed girl saw and knew on the instant. All that had been inexplicable in the two men and their relationship cleared up in the moment she saw them side by side.

“Wake me up,” Tom was saying. “I can’t believe I arrived on a train. And the population? There were only four thousand thirty years ago.”

“Sixty thousand now,” was the other’s answer. “And increasing by leaps and bounds. Want to spin around for a look at the city? There’s plenty of time.”

As they sped along the broad, well-paved streets, Tom persisted in his Rip Van Winkle pose. The waterfront perplexed him. Where he had once anchored his sloop in a dozen feet of water, he found solid land and railroad yards, with wharves and shipping still farther out.

“Hold on! Stop!” he cried, a few blocks on, looking up at a solid business block. “Where is this, Fred?”

“Fourth and Travers—don’t you remember?”

Tom stood up and gazed around, trying to discern the anciently familiar configuration of the land under its clutter of buildings.

“I ... I think...” he began hesitantly. “No; by George, I’m sure of it. We used to hunt cottontails over that ground, and shoot blackbirds in the brush. And there, where the bank building is, was a pond.” He turned to Polly. “I built my first raft there, and got my first taste of the sea.”

“Heaven knows how many gallons of it,” Frederick laughed, nodding to the chauffeur. “They rolled you on a barrel, I remember.”

“Oh! More!” Polly cried, clapping her hands.

“There’s the park,” Frederick pointed out a little later, indicating a mass of virgin redwoods on the first dip of the bigger hills.

“Father shot three grizzlies there one afternoon,” was Tom’s remark.

“I presented forty acres of it to the city,” Frederick went on. “Father bought the quarter section for a dollar an acre from Leroy.”

Tom nodded, and the sparkle and flash in his eyes, like that of his daughter, were unlike anything that ever appeared in his brother’s eyes.

“Yes,” he affirmed, “Leroy, the negro squawman. I remember the time he carried you and me on his back to Alliance, the night the Indians burned the ranch. Father stayed behind and fought.”

“But he couldn’t save the grist mill. It was a serious setback to him.”

“Just the same he nailed four Indians.”

In Polly’s eyes now appeared the flash and sparkle.

“An Indian-fighter!” she cried. “Tell me about him.”

“Tell her about Travers Ferry,” Tom said.

“That’s a ferry on the Klamath River on the way to Orleans Bar and Siskiyou. There was great packing into the diggings in those days, and, among other things, father had made a location there. There was rich bench farming land, too. He built a suspension bridge—wove the cables on the spot with sailors and materials freighted in from the

coast. It cost him twenty thousand dollars. The first day it was open, eight hundred mules crossed at a dollar a head, to say nothing of the toll for foot and horse. That night the river rose. The bridge was one hundred and forty feet above low water mark. Yet the freshet rose higher than that, and swept the bridge away. He'd have made a fortune there otherwise."

"That wasn't it at all," Tom blurted out impatiently. "It was at Travers Ferry that father and old Jacob Vance were caught by a war party of Mad River Indians. Old Jacob was killed right outside the door of the log cabin. Father dragged the body inside and stood the Indians off for a week. Father was some shot. He buried Jacob under the cabin floor."

"I still run the ferry," Frederick went on, "though there isn't so much travel as in the old days. I freight by wagon-road to the Reservation, and then mule-back on up the Klamath and clear in to the forks of Little Salmon. I have twelve stores on that chain now, a stage-line to the Reservation, and a hotel there. Quite a tourist trade is beginning to pick up."

And the girl, with curious brooding eyes, looked from brother to brother as they so differently voiced themselves and life.

"Ay, he was some man, father was," Tom murmured.

There was a drowsy note in his speech that drew a quick glance of anxiety from her. The machine had turned into the cemetery, and now halted before a substantial vault on the crest of the hill.

"I thought you'd like to see it," Frederick was saying. "I built that mausoleum myself, most of it with my own hands. Mother wanted it. The estate was dreadfully encumbered. The best bid I could get out of the contractors was eleven thousand. I did it myself for a little over eight."

"Must have worked nights," Tom murmured admiringly and more sleepily than before.

"I did, Tom, I did. Many a night by lantern-light. I was so busy. I was reconstructing the water works then—the artesian wells had failed—and mother's eyes were troubling her. You remember—cataract—I wrote you. She was too weak to travel, and I brought the specialists up from San Francisco. Oh, my hands were full. I was just winding up the disastrous affairs of the steamer line father had established to San Francisco, and I was keeping up the interest on mortgages to the tune of one hundred and eighty thousand dollars."

A soft stertorous breathing interrupted him. Tom, chin on chest, was asleep. Polly, with a significant look, caught her uncle's eye. Then her father, after an uneasy restless movement, lifted drowsy lids.

"Deuced warm day," he said with a bright apologetic laugh. "I've been actually asleep. Aren't we near home?"

Frederick nodded to the chauffeur, and the car rolled on.

III

The house that Frederick Travers had built when his prosperity came, was large and costly, sober and comfortable, and with no more pretence than was naturally attendant on the finest country home in the county. Its atmosphere was just the sort that he and his daughter would create. But in the days that followed his brother's home-coming, all this was changed. Gone was the subdued and ordered repose. Frederick was neither comfortable nor happy. There was an unwonted flurry of life and violation of sanctions and traditions. Meals were irregular and protracted, and there were midnight chafing-dish suppers and bursts of laughter at the most inappropriate hours.

Frederick was abstemious. A glass of wine at dinner was his wildest excess. Three cigars a day he permitted himself, and these he smoked either on the broad veranda or in the smoking room. What else was a smoking room for? Cigarettes he detested. Yet his brother was ever rolling thin, brown-paper cigarettes and smoking them wherever he might happen to be. A litter of tobacco crumbs was always to be found in the big easy chair he frequented and among the cushions of the window-seats. Then there were the cocktails. Brought up under the stern tutelage of Isaac and Eliza Travers, Frederick looked upon liquor in the house as an abomination. Ancient cities had been smitten by God's wrath for just such practices. Before lunch and dinner, Tom, aided and abetted by Polly, mixed an endless variety of drinks, she being particularly adept with strange swivel-stick concoctions learned at the ends of the earth. To Frederick, at such times, it seemed that his butler's pantry and dining room had been turned into bar-rooms. When he suggested this, under a facetious show, Tom proclaimed that when he made his pile he would build a liquor cabinet in every living room of his house.

And there were more young men at the house than formerly, and they helped in disposing of the cocktails. Frederick would have liked to account in that manner for their presence, but he knew better. His brother and his brother's daughter did what he and Mary had failed to do. They were the magnets. Youth and joy and laughter drew to them. The house was lively with young life. Ever, day and night, the motor cars honked up and down the gravelled drives. There were picnics and expeditions in the summer weather, moonlight sails on the bay, starts before dawn or home-comings at midnight, and often, of nights, the many bedrooms were filled as they had never been before. Tom must cover all his boyhood ramblings, catch trout again on Bull Creek, shoot quail over Walcott's Prairie, get a deer on Round Mountain. That deer was a cause of pain and shame to Frederick. What if it was closed season? Tom had triumphantly brought home the buck and gleefully called it sidehill-salmon when it was served and eaten at Frederick's own table.

They had clambakes at the head of the bay and musselbakes down by the roaring surf; and Tom told shamelessly of the Halcyon, and of the run of contraband, and asked Frederick before them all how he had managed to smuggle the horse back to the fishermen without discovery. All the young men were in the conspiracy with Polly to pamper Tom to his heart's desire. And Frederick heard the true inwardness of the killing of the deer; of its purchase from the overstocked Golden Gate Park; of its crated carriage by train, horse-team and mule-back to the fastnesses of Round Mountain; of

Tom falling asleep beside the deer-run the first time it was driven by; of the pursuit by the young men, the jaded saddle horses, the scrambles and the falls, and the roping of it at Burnt Ranch Clearing; and, finally, of the triumphant culmination, when it was driven past a second time and Tom had dropped it at fifty yards. To Frederick there was a vague hurt in it all. When had such consideration been shown him?

There were days when Tom could not go out, postponements of outdoor frolics, when, still the centre, he sat and drowsed in the big chair, waking, at times, in that unexpected queer, bright way of his, to roll a cigarette and call for his ukulele—a sort of miniature guitar of Portuguese invention. Then, with strumming and tumtuming, the live cigarette laid aside to the imminent peril of polished wood, his full baritone would roll out in South Sea hulas and sprightly French and Spanish songs.

One, in particular, had pleased Frederick at first. The favourite song of a Tahitian king, Tom explained—the last of the Pomares, who had himself composed it and was wont to lie on his mats by the hour singing it. It consisted of the repetition of a few syllables. “E meu ru ru a vau,” it ran, and that was all of it, sung in a stately, endless, ever-varying chant, accompanied by solemn chords from the ukelele. Polly took great joy in teaching it to her uncle, but when, himself questing for some of this genial flood of life that bathed about his brother, Frederick essayed the song, he noted suppressed glee on the part of his listeners, which increased, through giggles and snickers, to a great outburst of laughter. To his disgust and dismay, he learned that the simple phrase he had repeated and repeated was nothing else than “I am so drunk.” He had been made a fool of. Over and over, solemnly and gloriously, he, Frederick Travers, had announced how drunk he was. After that, he slipped quietly out of the room whenever it was sung. Nor could Polly’s later explanation that the last word was “happy,” and not “drunk,” reconcile him; for she had been compelled to admit that the old king was a toper, and that he was always in his cups when he struck up the chant.

Frederick was constantly oppressed by the feeling of being out of it all. He was a social being, and he liked fun, even if it were of a more wholesome and dignified brand than that to which his brother was addicted. He could not understand why in the past the young people had voted his house a bore and come no more, save on state and formal occasions, until now, when they flocked to it and to his brother, but not to him. Nor could he like the way the young women petted his brother, and called him Tom, while it was intolerable to see them twist and pull his buccaneer moustache in mock punishment when his sometimes too-jolly banter sank home to them.

Such conduct was a profanation to the memory of Isaac and Eliza Travers. There was too much an air of revelry in the house. The long table was never shortened, while there was extra help in the kitchen. Breakfast extended from four until eleven, and the midnight suppers, entailing raids on the pantry and complaints from the servants, were a vexation to Frederick. The house had become a restaurant, a hotel, he sneered bitterly to himself; and there were times when he was sorely tempted to put his foot down and reassert the old ways. But somehow the ancient sorcery of his masterful brother was too strong upon him; and at times he gazed upon him with a sense almost

of awe, groping to fathom the alchemy of charm, baffled by the strange lights and fires in his brother's eyes, and by the wisdom of far places and of wild nights and days written in his face. What was it? What lordly vision had the other glimpsed?—he, the irresponsible and careless one? Frederick remembered a line of an old song—"Along the shining ways he came." Why did his brother remind him of that line? Had he, who in boyhood had known no law, who in manhood had exalted himself above law, in truth found the shining ways?

There was an unfairness about it that perplexed Frederick, until he found solace in dwelling upon the failure Tom had made of life. Then it was, in quiet intervals, that he got some comfort and stiffened his own pride by showing Tom over the estate.

"You have done well, Fred," Tom would say. "You have done very well."

He said it often, and often he drowsed in the big smooth-running machine.

"Everything orderly and sanitary and spick and span—not a blade of grass out of place," was Polly's comment. "How do you ever manage it? I should not like to be a blade of grass on your land," she concluded, with a little shivery shudder.

"You have worked hard," Tom said.

"Yes, I have worked hard," Frederick affirmed. "It was worth it."

He was going to say more, but the strange flash in the girl's eyes brought him to an uncomfortable pause. He felt that she measured him, challenged him. For the first time his honourable career of building a county commonwealth had been questioned—and by a chit of a girl, the daughter of a wastrel, herself but a flighty, fly-away, foreign creature.

Conflict between them was inevitable. He had disliked her from the first moment of meeting. She did not have to speak. Her mere presence made him uncomfortable. He felt her unspoken disapproval, though there were times when she did not stop at that. Nor did she mince language. She spoke forthright, like a man, and as no man had ever dared to speak to him.

"I wonder if you ever miss what you've missed," she told him. "Did you ever, once in your life, turn yourself loose and rip things up by the roots? Did you ever once get drunk? Or smoke yourself black in the face? Or dance a hoe-down on the ten commandments? Or stand up on your hind legs and wink like a good fellow at God?"

"Isn't she a rare one!" Tom gurgled. "Her mother over again."

Outwardly smiling and calm, there was a chill of horror at Frederick's heart. It was incredible.

"I think it is the English," she continued, "who have a saying that a man has not lived until he has kissed his woman and struck his man. I wonder—confess up, now—if you ever struck a man."

"Have you?" he countered.

She nodded, an angry reminiscent flash in her eyes, and waited.

"No, I have never had that pleasure," he answered slowly. "I early learned control."

Later, irritated by his self-satisfied complacency and after listening to a recital of how he had cornered the Klamath salmon-packing, planted the first oysters on the bay

and established that lucrative monopoly, and of how, after exhausting litigation and a campaign of years he had captured the water front of Williamsport and thereby won to control of the Lumber Combine, she returned to the charge.

“You seem to value life in terms of profit and loss,” she said. “I wonder if you have ever known love.”

The shaft went home. He had not kissed his woman. His marriage had been one of policy. It had saved the estate in the days when he had been almost beaten in the struggle to disencumber the vast holdings Isaac Travers’ wide hands had grasped. The girl was a witch. She had probed an old wound and made it hurt again. He had never had time to love. He had worked hard. He had been president of the chamber of commerce, mayor of the city, state senator, but he had missed love. At chance moments he had come upon Polly, openly and shamelessly in her father’s arms, and he had noted the warmth and tenderness in their eyes. Again he knew that he had missed love. Wanton as was the display, not even in private did he and Mary so behave. Normal, formal, and colourless, she was what was to be expected of a loveless marriage. He even puzzled to decide whether the feeling he felt for her was love. Was he himself loveless as well?

In the moment following Polly’s remark, he was aware of a great emptiness. It seemed that his hands had grasped ashes, until, glancing into the other room, he saw Tom asleep in the big chair, very grey and aged and tired. He remembered all that he had done, all that he possessed. Well, what did Tom possess? What had Tom done?—save play ducks and drakes with life and wear it out until all that remained was that dimly flickering spark in a dying body.

What bothered Frederick in Polly was that she attracted him as well as repelled him. His own daughter had never interested him in that way. Mary moved along frictionless grooves, and to forecast her actions was so effortless that it was automatic. But Polly! many-hued, protean-natured, he never knew what she was going to do next.

“Keeps you guessing, eh?” Tom chuckled.

She was irresistible. She had her way with Frederick in ways that in Mary would have been impossible. She took liberties with him, cosened him or hurt him, and compelled always in him a sharp awareness of her existence.

Once, after one of their clashes, she devilled him at the piano, playing a mad damned thing that stirred and irritated him and set his pulse pounding wild and undisciplined fancies in the ordered chamber of his brain. The worst of it was she saw and knew just what she was doing. She was aware before he was, and she made him aware, her face turned to look at him, on her lips a mocking, contemplative smile that was almost a superior sneer. It was this that shocked him into consciousness of the orgy his imagination had been playing him. From the wall above her, the stiff portraits of Isaac and Eliza Travers looked down like reproachful spectres. Infuriated, he left the room. He had never dreamed such potencies resided in music. And then, and he remembered it with shame, he had stolen back outside to listen, and she had known, and once more she had devilled him.

When Mary asked him what he thought of Polly's playing, an unbidden contrast leaped to his mind. Mary's music reminded him of church. It was cold and bare as a Methodist meeting house. But Polly's was like the mad and lawless ceremonial of some heathen temple where incense arose and nautch girls writhed.

"She plays like a foreigner," he answered, pleased with the success and oppositeness of his evasion.

"She is an artist," Mary affirmed solemnly. "She is a genius. When does she ever practise? When did she ever practise? You know how I have. My best is like a five-finger exercise compared with the foolishness she ripples off. Her music tells me things—oh, things wonderful and unutterable. Mine tells me, 'one-two-three, one-two-three.' Oh, it is maddening! I work and work and get nowhere. It is unfair. Why should she be born that way, and not I?"

"Love," was Frederick's immediate and secret thought; but before he could dwell upon the conclusion, the unprecedented had happened and Mary was sobbing in a break-down of tears. He would have liked to take her in his arms, after Tom's fashion, but he did not know how. He tried, and found Mary as unschooled as himself. It resulted only in an embarrassed awkwardness for both of them.

The contrasting of the two girls was inevitable. Like father like daughter. Mary was no more than a pale camp-follower of a gorgeous, conquering general. Frederick's thrift had been sorely educated in the matter of clothes. He knew just how expensive Mary's clothes were, yet he could not blind himself to the fact that Polly's vagabond makeshifts, cheap and apparently haphazard, were always all right and far more successful. Her taste was unerring. Her ways with a shawl were inimitable. With a scarf she performed miracles.

"She just throws things together," Mary complained. "She doesn't even try. She can dress in fifteen minutes, and when she goes swimming she beats the boys out of the dressing rooms." Mary was honest and incredulous in her admiration. "I can't see how she does it. No one could dare those colours, but they look just right on her."

"She's always threatened that when I became finally flat broke she'd set up dress-making and take care of both of us," Tom contributed.

Frederick, looking over the top of a newspaper, was witness to an illuminating scene; Mary, to his certain knowledge, had been primping for an hour ere she appeared.

"Oh! How lovely!" was Polly's ready appreciation. Her eyes and face glowed with honest pleasure, and her hands wove their delight in the air. "But why not wear that bow so and thus?"

Her hands flashed to the task, and in a moment the miracle of taste and difference achieved by her touch was apparent even to Frederick.

Polly was like her father, generous to the point of absurdity with her meagre possessions. Mary admired a Spanish fan—a Mexican treasure that had come down from one of the grand ladies of the Court of the Emperor Maximilian. Polly's delight flamed like wild-fire. Mary found herself the immediate owner of the fan, almost labouring under the fictitious impression that she had conferred an obligation by accepting it.

Only a foreign woman could do such things, and Polly was guilty of similar gifts to all the young women. It was her way. It might be a lace handkerchief, a pink Paumotan pearl, or a comb of hawksbill turtle. It was all the same. Whatever their eyes rested on in joy was theirs. To women, as to men, she was irresistible.

“I don’t dare admire anything any more,” was Mary’s plaint. “If I do she always gives it to me.”

Frederick had never dreamed such a creature could exist. The women of his own race and place had never adumbrated such a possibility. He knew that whatever she did—her quick generousities, her hot enthusiasms or angers, her birdlike caressing ways—was unbelievably sincere. Her extravagant moods at the same time shocked and fascinated him. Her voice was as mercurial as her feelings. There were no even tones, and she talked with her hands. Yet, in her mouth, English was a new and beautiful language, softly limpid, with an audacity of phrase and tellingness of expression that conveyed subtleties and nuances as unambiguous and direct as they were unexpected from one of such childlikeness and simplicity. He woke up of nights and on his darkened eyelids saw bright memory-pictures of the backward turn of her vivid, laughing face.

IV

Like daughter like father. Tom, too, had been irresistible. All the world still called to him, and strange men came from time to time with its messages. Never had there been such visitors to the Travers home. Some came with the reminiscent roll of the sea in their gait. Others were black-browed ruffians; still others were fever-burnt and sallow; and about all of them was something bizarre and outlandish. Their talk was likewise bizarre and outlandish, of things to Frederick unguessed and undreamed, though he recognised the men for what they were—soldiers of fortune, adventurers, free lances of the world. But the big patent thing was the love and loyalty they bore their leader. They named him variously?—Black Tom, Blondine, Husky Travers, Malemute Tom, Swiftwater Tom—but most of all he was Captain Tom. Their projects and propositions were equally various, from the South Sea trader with the discovery of a new guano island and the Latin-American with a nascent revolution on his hands, on through Siberian gold chases and the prospecting of the placer benches of the upper Kuskokeem, to darker things that were mentioned only in whispers. And Captain Tom regretted the temporary indisposition that prevented immediate departure with them, and continued to sit and drowse more and more in the big chair. It was Polly, with a camaraderie distasteful to her uncle, who got these men aside and broke the news that Captain Tom would never go out on the shining ways again. But not all of them came with projects. Many made love-calls on their leader of old and unforgettable days, and Frederick sometimes was a witness to their meeting, and he marvelled anew at the mysterious charm in his brother that drew all men to him.

“By the turtles of Tasman!” cried one, “when I heard you was in California, Captain Tom, I just had to come and shake hands. I reckon you ain’t forgot Tasman, eh?—nor the scrap at Thursday Island. Say—old Tasman was killed by his niggers only last

year up German New Guinea way. Remember his cook-boy?—Ngani-Ngani? He was the ringleader. Tasman swore by him, but Ngani-Ngani hatcheted him just the same.”

“Shake hands with Captain Carlsen, Fred,” was Tom’s introduction of his brother to another visitor. “He pulled me out of a tight place on the West Coast once. I’d have cashed in, Carlsen, if you hadn’t happened along.”

Captain Carlsen was a giant hulk of a man, with gimlet eyes of palest blue, a slash-scarred mouth that a blazing red beard could not quite hide, and a grip in his hand that made Frederick squirm.

A few minutes later, Tom had his brother aside.

“Say, Fred, do you think it will bother to advance me a thousand?”

“Of course,” Frederick answered splendidly. “You know half of that I have is yours, Tom.”

And when Captain Carlsen departed, Frederick was morally certain that the thousand dollars departed with him.

Small wonder Tom had made a failure of life—and come home to die. Frederick sat at his own orderly desk taking stock of the difference between him and his brother. Yes, and if it hadn’t been for him, there would have been no home for Tom to die in.

Frederick cast back for solace through their joint history. It was he who had always been the mainstay, the dependable one. Tom had laughed and rollicked, played hooky from school, disobeyed Isaac’s commandments. To the mountains or the sea, or in hot water with the neighbours and the town authorities—it was all the same; he was everywhere save where the dull plod of work obtained. And work was work in those backwoods days, and he, Frederick, had done the work. Early and late and all days he had been at it. He remembered the season when Isaac’s wide plans had taken one of their smashes, when food had been scarce on the table of a man who owned a hundred thousand acres, when there had been no money to hire harvesters for the hay, and when Isaac would not let go his grip on a single one of his acres. He, Frederick, had pitched the hay, while Isaac mowed and raked. Tom had lain in bed and run up a doctor bill with a broken leg, gained by falling off the ridge-pole of the barn—which place was the last in the world to which any one would expect to go to pitch hay. About the only work Tom had ever done, it seemed to him, was to fetch in venison and bear-oil, to break colts, and to raise a din in the valley pastures and wooded canyons with his bear-hounds.

Tom was the elder, yet when Isaac died, the estate, with all its vast possibilities would have gone to ruin, had not he, Frederick, buckled down to it and put the burden on his back. Work! He remembered the enlargement of the town water-system—how he had manoeuvred and financed, persuaded small loans at ruinous interest, and laid pipe and made joints by lantern light while the workmen slept, and then been up ahead of them to outline and direct and rack his brains over the raising of the next week-end wages. For he had carried on old Isaac’s policy. He would not let go. The future would vindicate.

And Tom!—with a bigger pack of bear dogs ranging the mountains and sleeping out a week at a time. Frederick remembered the final conference in the kitchen—Tom, and he, and Eliza Travers, who still cooked and baked and washed dishes on an estate that carried a hundred and eighty thousand dollars in mortgages.

“Don’t divide,” Eliza Travers had pleaded, resting her soap-flecked, parboiled arms. “Isaac was right. It will be worth millions. The country is opening up. We must all pull together.”

“I don’t want the estate,” Tom cried. “Let Frederick have it. What I want...”

He never completed the sentence, but all the vision of the world burned in his eyes.

“I can’t wait,” he went on. “You can have the millions when they come. In the meantime let me have ten thousand. I’ll sign off quitclaim to everything. And give me the old schooner, and some day I’ll be back with a pot of money to help you out.”

Frederick could see himself, in that far past day, throwing up his arms in horror and crying:

“Ten thousand!—when I’m strained to the breaking point to raise this quarter’s interest!”

“There’s the block of land next to the court house,” Tom had urged. “I know the bank has a standing offer for ten thousand.”

“But it will be worth a hundred thousand in ten years,” Frederick had objected.

“Call it so. Say I quitclaim everything for a hundred thousand. Sell it for ten and let me have it. It’s all I want, and I want it now. You can have the rest.”

And Tom had had his will as usual (the block had been mortgaged instead of sold), and sailed away in the old schooner, the benediction of the town upon his head, for he had carried away in his crew half the riff-raff of the beach.

The bones of the schooner had been left on the coast of Java. That had been when Eliza Travers was being operated on for her eyes, and Frederick had kept it from her until indubitable proof came that Tom was still alive.

Frederick went over to his files and drew out a drawer labelled “Thomas Travers.” In it were packets, methodically arranged. He went over the letters. They were from everywhere—China, Rangoon, Australia, South Africa, the Gold Coast, Patagonia, Armenia, Alaska. Briefly and infrequently written, they epitomised the wanderer’s life. Frederick ran over in his mind a few of the glimpsed highlights of Tom’s career. He had fought in some sort of foreign troubles in Armenia. He had been an officer in the Chinese army, and it was a certainty that the trade he later drove in the China Seas was illicit. He had been caught running arms into Cuba. It seemed he had always been running something somewhere that it ought not to have been run. And he had never outgrown it. One letter, on crinkly tissue paper, showed that as late as the Japanese-Russian War he had been caught running coal into Port Arthur and been taken to the prize court at Sasebo, where his steamer was confiscated and he remained a prisoner until the end of the war.

Frederick smiled as he read a paragraph: “How do you prosper? Let me know any time a few thousands will help you.” He looked at the date, April 18, 1883, and opened

another packet. "May 5th," 1883, was the dated sheet he drew out. "Five thousand will put me on my feet again. If you can, and love me, send it along pronto—that's Spanish for rush."

He glanced again at the two dates. It was evident that somewhere between April 18th and May 5th Tom had come a cropper. With a smile, half bitter, Frederick skimmed on through the correspondence: "There's a wreck on Midway Island. A fortune in it, salvage you know. Auction in two days. Cable me four thousand." The last he examined, ran: "A deal I can swing with a little cash. It's big, I tell you. It's so big I don't dare tell you." He remembered that deal—a Latin-American revolution. He had sent the cash, and Tom had swung it, and himself as well, into a prison cell and a death sentence.

Tom had meant well, there was no denying that. And he had always religiously forwarded his I O U's. Frederick musingly weighed the packet of them in his hand, as though to determine if any relation existed between the weight of paper and the sums of money represented on it.

He put the drawer back in the cabinet and passed out. Glancing in at the big chair he saw Polly just tiptoeing from the room. Tom's head lay back, and his breathing was softly heavy, the sickness pronouncedly apparent on his relaxed face.

V

"I have worked hard," Frederick explained to Polly that evening on the veranda, unaware that when a man explains it is a sign his situation is growing parlous. "I have done what came to my hand—how creditably it is for others to say. And I have been paid for it. I have taken care of others and taken care of myself. The doctors say they have never seen such a constitution in a man of my years. Why, almost half my life is yet before me, and we Travers are a long-lived stock. I took care of myself, you see, and I have myself to show for it. I was not a waster. I conserved my heart and my arteries, and yet there are few men who can boast having done as much work as I have done. Look at that hand. Steady, eh? It will be as steady twenty years from now. There is nothing in playing fast and loose with oneself."

And all the while Polly had been following the invidious comparison that lurked behind his words.

"You can write 'Honourable' before your name," she flashed up proudly. "But my father has been a king. He has lived. Have you lived? What have you got to show for it? Stocks and bonds, and houses and servants—pouf! Heart and arteries and a steady hand—is that all? Have you lived merely to live? Were you afraid to die? I'd rather sing one wild song and burst my heart with it, than live a thousand years watching my digestion and being afraid of the wet. When you are dust, my father will be ashes. That is the difference."

"But my dear child—" he began.

"What have you got to show for it?" she flamed on. "Listen!"

From within, through the open window, came the tinkling of Tom's ukulele and the rollicking lilt of his voice in an Hawaiian hula. It ended in a throbbing, primitive love-call from the sensuous tropic night that no one could mistake. There was a burst

of young voices, and a clamour for more. Frederick did not speak. He had sensed something vague and significant.

Turning, he glanced through the window at Tom, flushed and royal, surrounded by the young men and women, under his Viking moustache lighting a cigarette from a match held to him by one of the girls. It abruptly struck Frederick that never had he lighted a cigar at a match held in a woman's hand.

"Doctor Tyler says he oughtn't to smoke—it only aggravates," he said; and it was all he could say.

As the fall of the year came on, a new type of men began to frequent the house. They proudly called themselves "sour-doughs," and they were arriving in San Francisco on the winter's furlough from the gold-diggings of Alaska. More and more of them came, and they pre-empted a large portion of one of the down-town hotels. Captain Tom was fading with the season, and almost lived in the big chair. He drowsed oftener and longer, but whenever he awoke he was surrounded by his court of young people, or there was some comrade waiting to sit and yarn about the old gold days and plan for the new gold days.

For Tom—Husky Travers, the Yukoners named him—never thought that the end approached. A temporary illness, he called it, the natural enfeeblement following upon a prolonged bout with Yucatan fever. In the spring he would be right and fit again. Cold weather was what he needed. His blood had been cooked. In the meantime it was a case of take it easy and make the most of the rest.

And no one undeceived him—not even the Yukoners, who smoked pipes and black cigars and chewed tobacco on Frederick's broad verandas until he felt like an intruder in his own house. There was no touch with them. They regarded him as a stranger to be tolerated. They came to see Tom. And their manner of seeing him was provocative of innocent envy pangs to Frederick. Day after day he watched them. He would see the Yukoners meet, perhaps one just leaving the sick room and one just going in. They would clasp hands, solemnly and silently, outside the door. The newcomer would question with his eyes, and the other would shake his head. And more than once Frederick noted the moisture in their eyes. Then the newcomer would enter and draw his chair up to Tom's, and with jovial voice proceed to plan the outfitting for the exploration of the upper Kuskokeem; for it was there Tom was bound in the spring. Dogs could be had at Larabee's—a clean breed, too, with no taint of the soft Southland strains. It was rough country, it was reported, but if sour-doughs couldn't make the traverse from Larabee's in forty days they'd like to see a chechako do it in sixty.

And so it went, until Frederick wondered, when he came to die, if there was one man in the county, much less in the adjoining county, who would come to him at his bedside.

Seated at his desk, through the open windows would drift whiffs of strong tobacco and rumbling voices, and he could not help catching snatches of what the Yukoners talked.

“D’ye recollect that Koyokuk rush in the early nineties?” he would hear one say. “Well, him an’ me was pardners then, tradin’ an’ such. We had a dinky little steamboat, the Blatterbat. He named her that, an’ it stuck. He was a caution. Well, sir, as I was sayin’, him an’ me loaded the little Blatterbat to the guards an’ started up the Koyokuk, me firin’ an’ engineerin’ an’ him steerin’, an’ both of us deck-handin’. Once in a while we’d tie to the bank an’ cut firewood. It was the fall, an’ mush-ice was comin’ down, an’ everything gettin’ ready for the freeze up. You see, we was north of the Arctic Circle then an’ still headin’ north. But they was two hundred miners in there needin’ grub if they wintered, an’ we had the grub.

“Well, sir, pretty soon they begun to pass us, driftin’ down the river in canoes an’ rafts. They was pullin’ out. We kept track of them. When a hundred an’ ninety-four had passed, we didn’t see no reason for keepin’ on. So we turned tail and started down. A cold snap had come, an’ the water was fallin’ fast, an’ dang me if we didn’t ground on a bar-up-stream side. The Blatterbat hung up solid. Couldn’t budge her. ‘It’s a shame to waste all that grub,’ says I, just as we was pullin’ out in a canoe. ‘Let’s stay an’ eat it,’ says he. An’ dang me if we didn’t. We wintered right there on the Blatterbat, huntin’ and tradin’ with the Indians, an’ when the river broke next year we brung down eight thousand dollars’ worth of skins. Now a whole winter, just two of us, is goin’ some. But never a cross word out of him. Best-tempered pardner I ever seen. But fight!”

“Huh!” came the other voice. “I remember the winter Oily Jones allowed he’d clean out Forty Mile. Only he didn’t, for about the second yap he let off he ran afoul of Husky Travers. It was in the White Caribou. ‘I’m a wolf!’ yaps Jones. You know his style, a gun in his belt, fringes on his moccasins, and long hair down his back. ‘I’m a wolf,’ he yaps, ‘an’ this is my night to howl. Hear me, you long lean makeshift of a human critter?’—an’ this to Husky Travers.”

“Well?” the other voice queried, after a pause.

“In about a second an’ a half Oily Jones was on the floor an’ Husky on top askin’ somebody kindly to pass him a butcher knife. What’s he do but plumb hack off all of Oily Jones’ long hair. ‘Now howl, damn you, howl,’ says Husky, gettin’ up.”

“He was a cool one, for a wild one,” the first voice took up. “I seen him buck roulette in the Little Wolverine, drop nine thousand in two hours, borrow some more, win it back in fifteen minutes, buy the drinks, an’ cash in—dang me, all in fifteen minutes.”

One evening Tom was unusually brightly awake, and Frederick, joining the rapt young circle, sat and listened to his brother’s serio-comic narrative of the night of wreck on the island of Blang; of the swim through the sharks where half the crew was lost; of the great pearl which Desay brought ashore with him; of the head-decorated palisade that surrounded the grass palace wherein dwelt the Malay queen with her royal consort, a shipwrecked Chinese Eurasian; of the intrigue for the pearl of Desay; of mad feasts and dances in the barbaric night, and quick dangers and sudden deaths; of the queen’s love-making to Desay, of Desay’s love-making to the queen’s daughter, and of Desay, every joint crushed, still alive, staked out on the reef at low tide to be

eaten by the sharks; of the coming of the plague; of the beating of tom-toms and the exorcising of the devil-devil doctors; of the flight over the man-trapped, wild-pig runs of the mountain bush-men; and of the final rescue by Tasman, he who was hatcheted only last year and whose head reposed in some Melanesian stronghold—and all breathing of the warmth and abandon and savagery of the burning islands of the sun.

And despite himself, Frederick sat entranced; and when all the tale was told, he was aware of a queer emptiness. He remembered back to his boyhood, when he had pored over the illustrations in the old-fashioned geography. He, too, had dreamed of amazing adventure in far places and desired to go out on the shining ways. And he had planned to go; yet he had known only work and duty. Perhaps that was the difference. Perhaps that was the secret of the strange wisdom in his brother's eyes. For the moment, faint and far, vicariously, he glimpsed the lordly vision his brother had seen. He remembered a sharp saying of Polly's. "You have missed romance. You traded it for dividends." She was right, and yet, not fair. He had wanted romance, but the work had been placed ready to his hand. He had toiled and moiled, day and night, and been faithful to his trust. Yet he had missed love and the world-living that was forever a-whisper in his brother. And what had Tom done to deserve it?—a wastrel and an idle singer of songs.

His place was high. He was going to be the next governor of California. But what man would come to him and lie to him out of love? The thought of all his property seemed to put a dry and gritty taste in his mouth. Property! Now that he looked at it, one thousand dollars was like any other thousand dollars; and one day (of his days) was like any other day. He had never made the pictures in the geography come true. He had not struck his man, nor lighted his cigar at a match held in a woman's hand. A man could sleep in only one bed at a time—Tom had said that. He shuddered as he strove to estimate how many beds he owned, how many blankets he had bought. And all the beds and blankets would not buy one man to come from the end of the earth, and grip his hand, and cry, "By the turtles of Tasman!"

Something of all this he told Polly, an undercurrent of complaint at the unfairness of things in his tale. And she had answered:

"It couldn't have been otherwise. Father bought it. He never drove bargains. It was a royal thing, and he paid for it royally. You grudged the price, don't you see. You saved your arteries and your money and kept your feet dry."

VI

On an afternoon in the late fall all were gathered about the big chair and Captain Tom. Though he did not know it, he had drowsed the whole day through and only just awakened to call for his ukulele and light a cigarette at Polly's hand. But the ukulele lay idle on his arm, and though the pine logs crackled in the huge fireplace he shivered and took note of the cold.

"It's a good sign," he said, unaware that the faintness of his voice drew the heads of his listeners closer. "The cold weather will be a tonic. It's a hard job to work the tropics out of one's blood. But I'm beginning to shape up now for the Kuskokeem. In the spring, Polly, we start with the dogs, and you'll see the midnight sun. How your

mother would have liked the trip. She was a game one. Forty sleeps with the dogs, and we'll be shaking out yellow nuggets from the moss-roots. Larabee has some fine animals. I know the breed. They're timber wolves, that's what they are, big grey timber wolves, though they sport brown about one in a litter—isn't that right, Bennington?"

"One in a litter, that's just about the average," Bennington, the Yukoner, replied promptly, but in a voice hoarsely unrecognisable.

"And you must never travel alone with them," Captain Tom went on. "For if you fall down they'll jump you. Larabee's brutes only respect a man when he stands upright on his legs. When he goes down, he's meat. I remember coming over the divide from Tanana to Circle City. That was before the Klondike strike. It was in '94 ... no, '95, and the bottom had dropped out of the thermometer. There was a young Canadian with the outfit. His name was it was ... a peculiar one ... wait a minute it will come to me..."

His voice ceased utterly, though his lips still moved. A look of unbelief and vast surprise dawned on his face. Followed a sharp, convulsive shudder. And in that moment, without warning, he saw Death. He looked clear-eyed and steady, as if pondering, then turned to Polly. His hand moved impotently, as if to reach hers, and when he found it, his fingers could not close. He gazed at her with a great smile that slowly faded. The eyes drooped as the life went out, and remained a face of quietude and repose. The ukulele clattered to the floor. One by one they went softly from the room, leaving Polly alone.

From the veranda, Frederick watched a man coming up the driveway. By the roll of the sea in his walk, Frederick could guess for whom the stranger came. The face was swarthy with sun and wrinkled with age that was given the lie by the briskness of his movements and the alertness in the keen black eyes. In the lobe of each ear was a tiny circlet of gold.

"How do you do, sir," the man said, and it was patent that English was not the tongue he had learned at his mother's knee. "How's Captain Tom? They told me in the town that he was sick."

"My brother is dead," Frederick answered.

The stranger turned his head and gazed out over the park-like grounds and up to the distant redwood peaks, and Frederick noted that he swallowed with an effort.

"By the turtles of Tasman, he was a man," he said, in a deep, changed voice.

"By the turtles of Tasman, he was a man," Frederick repeated; nor did he stumble over the unaccustomed oath.

THE END.

The Captain of the Susan Drew

A SUNSET of gilt and blue and rose palpitated on the horizon. A tap-estry of misty rain, draping downward from indefinite clouds, obscured the eastern line of sea and sky. Midway between, slightly nearer to the rain, a painted rainbow reached almost to the zenith. So lofty was its arch that the ends seemed to curve inward to the ocean

in a vain attempt to complete the perfect circle. Into this triumphal arch, toward the blue twilight beyond, sailed an open boat.

Nor did ever more strangely freighted boat float on the Pacific. In the sternsheets, on the weather side, a stupid-looking Norwegian sailor, in uniform of a quartermaster, steered with one hand while with the other he held the sheet of the spritsail. From a holster, belted about his waist, peeped the butt of a business-like revolver. His cap lay on his knees, removed for the sake of coolness; and his short flaxen hair was prodigiously ridged over a bruise of recent origin. Beside the sailor sat two women. The nearer one was comfortably stout and matronly, with large, dark eyes, full, direct, human. Her shoulders were protected against sunburn by a man's light overcoat. Because of the heat, this was open and unbuttoned, revealing the décolleté and rich materials of dinner dress. Jewels glinted in the hair, at the neck, and on the fingers. Beside her was a young woman of two-or three-and-twenty, likewise décolleté, sun-shielded by a strip of stained oilskin. Her eyes, as well as the straight, fine nose and the line of the red curve of the not too passionate mouth, advertised the closest relationship with the first woman. In the opposite sternsheet and on the first cross-seat, lolled three men in black trousers and dinner jackets. Their heads were protected by small squares of stained oilskin similar to that which lay across the young woman's shoulders. One, a youngster of

eighteen, wore an expression of desperate yearning; the second, half as old again, talked with the daughter; the third, middle-aged and complacent, devoted himself to the mother.

Amidships, on the bottom alongside the centerboard case, sat two dark-eyed women, as evidently maids as their nationality was respectively the one Spanish and the other Italian. On the other side of the centerboard, very straight-backed and erect, was an unmistakable English valet, with gaze always set on the middle-aged gentleman to anticipate any want or order.

For'ard of the centerboard and just aft the mast-step, crouched two hard-featured Chinese, both with broken heads swathed in bloody sweat-cloths, both clad in dungaree garments grimed and blackened with oil and coal dust.

When it is considered that hundreds of weary sea-leagues intervened between the open boat and the nearest land, the inappropriateness of costume of half of its occupants may be appreciated.

"Well, brother Willie, what would you rather have or go swim-ming!" teased the young woman.

"A cigarette, if Harrison weren't such a pincher," the youth answered bitterly.

"I 've only four left," Harrison said. "You 've smoked the whole case. I've had only two."

Temple Harrison was a joker. He winked privily at Patty Gifford, drew a curved silver case from his hip pocket, and carefully counted the four cigarettes. Willie Gifford watched with so ferocious infatuation that his sister cried out:

"B-r-r! Stop it! You make me shiver. You look positively cannibal-istic."

“That’s all right for you,” was the brother’s retort. “You don’t know what tobacco means, or you ‘d look cannibalistic yourself. You will, anyway,” he concluded ominously, “after a couple of days more. I noticed you weren’t a bit shy of taking a bigger cup of water than the rest when Harrison passed it around. I wasn’t asleep.”

Patty flushed guiltily.

“It was only a sip,” she pleaded.

Harrison took out one cigarette, handed it over, and snapped the case shut.

“Blackmailer!” he hissed.

But Willie Gifford was oblivious. Already, with trembling fingers, he had lighted a match and was drawing the first inhalation deep into his lungs. On his face was a vacuous ecstasy.

“Everything will come out all right,” Mrs. Gifford was saying to Sedley Brown, who sat opposite her in the sternsheets.

“Certainly; after the miracle of last night, being saved by some passing ship is the merest bagatelle,” he agreed. “It was a miracle. I cannot understand now how our party remained intact and got away in the one boat. And if it hadn’t been for the purser, Peyton wouldn’t have been saved, nor your maids.”

“Nor would we, if it hadn’t been for dear brave Captain Ashley,” Mrs. Gifford took up. “It was he, and the first officer.”

“They were heroes,” Sedley Brown praised warmly. “But still, there could have been so few saved, I don’t see. . . .”

“I don’t see why you don’t see, with you and mother the heaviest stockholders in the line,” Willie Gifford dashed in. “Why shouldn’t they have made a special effort? It was up to them.”

Temple Harrison smiled to himself. Between them, Mrs. Gifford and Sedley Brown owned the majority of the stock of the Asiatic Mail — the flourishing steamship line which old Silas Gifford had built for the purpose of feeding his railroad with through freight from China and Japan. Mrs. Gifford had married his son, Seth, and the stock at the same time.

“I am sure, Willie, we were given no unfair consideration,” Mrs. Gifford reproved. “Of course shipwrecks are attended by confusion and disorder, and strong measures are necessary to stay a panic. We were very fortunate, that is all.”

“I wasn’t asleep,” Willie replied. “And all I ‘ve got to say is it’s up to you to make the board of directors promote Captain Ashley to be Commodore — that is, if he ain’t dead and gone, which I guess he is.”

“As I was saying,” Mrs. Gifford addressed Sedley Brown, “the worst is past. It is scarcely a matter of hardship ere we shall be rescued. The weather is delightful, and the nights are not the slightest bit chilly. Depend upon it, Willie, Captain Ashley shall not be forgotten, nor the first officer and purser, nor — ” here she turned with a smile to the quartermaster — ”nor shall Gronwold go unrewarded.”

“A penny for your thoughts,” Patty challenged Harrison several minutes later. He startled and looked at her, shook off his absentmindedness with a laugh and declined the offer.

“For he had been revisioning the horrors of less than twenty-four hours before. It had happened at dinner. The crash of collision had come just as coffee was serving. Yes, there had been confusion and disorder, if so could be termed the madness of a thousand souls in the face of imminent death. He saw again the silk-gowned Chinese table stewards join in the jam at the foot of the stairway, where blows were already being struck and women and children trampled. He remembered, as his own party, led by Captain Ashley, worked its devious way up from deck to deck, seeing the white officers, engineers, and quartermasters buckling on their revolvers as they ran to their positions. Nor would he ever forget the eruption from the bowels of the great ship of the hundreds of Chinese stokers and trimmers, nor the half a thousand terrified steerage

passengers — Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, coolies and land-creatures all stark mad and frantic in desire to live.

Not all the deaths would be due to drowning, he thought grimly, as he recollected the crack of revolvers and sharp barking of automatic pistols, the thuds of clubs and boat-stretchers on heads, and the grunts of men going down under the silent thrusts of sheath-knives.

Mrs. Gifford might believe what she wished to believe, but he, for one, was deeply grateful to his lucky star which made him a member of the only party of passengers that was shown any consideration. Consideration! He could still see the protesting English duke flung neck and crop from the boat deck to the raging steerage fighting up the ladders. And there was number four boat, launched by inexperienced hands, spilling its passengers into the sea and hanging perpendicularly in the davits. The white sailors

who belonged to it and should have launched it had been impressed by Captain Ashley. Then there was the American Consul-General to Siam — that was just before the electric lights went out — with wife, nurses, and children, shouting his official importance in Captain Ashley’s face and being directed to number four boat hanging on end.

Yes, Captain Ashley surely deserved the commodoreship of the Asiatic Mail — if he lived. But that he survived, Temple Harrison could not believe. He remembered the outburst of battle — advertisement that the boat deck had been carried — which came just as their boat was lowering away. Of its crew, only Gronwold, with a broken head, was in it. The rest did not slide down the falls, as was intended. Doubtlessly they had gone down before the rush of Asiatics, and so had Captain Ashley, though first he had cut the

falls and shouted down to them to shove clear for their lives.

And they had, with a will, shoved clear. Harrison recalled how had pressed the end of an oar against the steel side of the Mingalia and afterward rowed insanely to

the accompaniment of leaping bodies falling into the sea astern. And when well clear, he remembered how Gronwold had suddenly stood up and laid about with the heavy tiller overside, until Patty made him desist. Mutely taking the rain of blows on their heads and clinging stedfastly to the gunwale, were the two Chi-nese stokers who now crouched for'ard by the mast. No; Willie Gifford had not been asleep. He, too, had pressed an oar-blade against the Mingalia's side and rowed blisters into his soft hands. But Mrs. Gifford was right. There were several things it would be well to forget.

Charley's Coup

Perhaps our most laughable exploit on the fish patrol, and at the same time our most dangerous one, was when we rounded in, at a single haul, an even score of wrathful fishermen. Charley called it a "coop," having heard Neil Partington use the term; but I think he misunderstood the word, and thought it meant "coop," to catch, to trap. The fishermen, however, coup or coop, must have called it a Waterloo, for it was the severest stroke ever dealt them by the fish patrol, while they had invited it by open and impudent defiance of the law.

During what is called the "open season" the fishermen might catch as many salmon as their luck allowed and their boats could hold. But there was one important restriction. From sun-down Saturday night to sun-up Monday morning, they were not permitted to set a net. This was a wise provision on the part of the Fish Commission, for it was necessary to give the spawning salmon some opportunity to ascend the river and lay their eggs. And this law, with only an occasional violation, had been obediently observed by the Greek fishermen who caught salmon for the canneries and the market.

One Sunday morning, Charley received a telephone call from a friend in Collinsville, who told him that the full force of fishermen was out with its nets. Charley and I jumped into our salmon boat and started for the scene of the trouble. With a light favoring wind at our back we went through the Carquinez Straits, crossed Suisun Bay, passed the Ship Island Light, and came upon the whole fleet at work.

But first let me describe the method by which they worked. The net used is what is known as a gill-net. It has a simple diamond-shaped mesh which measures at least seven and one-half inches between the knots. From five to seven and even eight hundred feet in length, these nets are only a few feet wide. They are not stationary, but float with the current, the upper edge supported on the surface by floats, the lower edge sunk by means of leaden weights,

This arrangement keeps the net upright in the current and effectually prevents all but the smaller fish from ascending the river. The salmon, swimming near the surface, as is their custom, run their heads through these meshes, and are prevented from going on through by their larger girth of body, and from going back because of their gills, which catch in the mesh. It requires two fishermen to set such a net,-one to row the boat, while the other, standing in the stern, carefully pays out the net. When it is all out, stretching directly across the stream, the men make their boat fast to one end of the net and drift along with it.

As we came upon the fleet of law-breaking fishermen, each boat two or three hundred yards from its neighbors, and boats and nets dotting the river as far as we could see, Charley said:

“I’ve only one regret, lad, and that is that I have’nt a thousand arms so as to be able to catch them all. As it is, we’ll only be able to catch one boat, for while we are tackling that one it will be up nets and away with the rest.”

As we drew closer, we observed none of the usual flurry and excitement which our appearance invariably produced. Instead, each boat lay quietly by its net, while the fishermen favored us with not the slightest attention.

“It’s curious,” Charley muttered. “Can it be they don’t recognize us?”

I said that it was impossible, and Charley agreed; yet there was a whole fleet, manned by men who knew us only too well, and who took no more notice of us than if we were a hay scow or a pleasure yacht.

This did not continue to be the case, however, for as we bore down upon the nearest net, the men to whom it belonged detached their boat and rowed slowly toward the shore. The rest of the boats showed no, sign of uneasiness.

“That’s funny,” was Charley’s remark. “But we can confiscate the net, at any rate.”

We lowered sail, picked up one end of the net, and began to heave it into the boat. But at the first heave we heard a bullet zip-zipping past us on the water, followed by the faint report of a rifle. The men who had rowed ashore were shooting at us. At the next heave a second bullet went zipping past, perilously near. Charley took a turn around a pin and sat down. There were no more shots. But as soon as he began to heave in, the shooting recommenced.

“That settles it,” he said, flinging the end of the net overboard. “You fellows want it worse than we do, and you can have it.”

We rowed over toward the next net, for Charley was intent on finding out whether or not we were face to face with an organized defiance. As we approached, the two fishermen proceeded to cast off from their net and row ashore, while the first two rowed back and made fast to the net we had abandoned. And at the second net we were greeted by rifle shots till we desisted and went on to the third, where the manoeuvre was again repeated.

Then we gave it up, completely routed, and hoisted sail and started on the long windward beat back to Benicia. A number of Sundays went by, on each of which the law was persistently violated. Yet, short of an armed force of soldiers, we could do nothing. The fishermen had hit upon a new idea and were using it for all it was worth, while there seemed no way by which we could get the better of them.

About this time Neil Partington happened along from the Lower Bay, where he had been for a number of weeks. With him was Nicholas, the Greek boy who had helped us in our raid on the oyster pirates, and the pair of them took a hand. We made our arrangements carefully. It was planned that while Charley and I tackled the nets, they were to be hidden ashore so as to ambush the fishermen who landed to shoot at us.

It was a pretty plan. Even Charley said it was. But we reckoned not half so well as the Greeks. They forestalled us by ambushing Neil and Nicholas and taking them prisoners, while, as of old, bullets whistled about our ears when Charley and I attempted to take possession of the nets. When we were again beaten off, Neil Partington and Nicholas were released. They were rather shamefaced when they put in an appearance, and Charley chaffed them unmercifully. But Neil chaffed back, demanding to know why Charley's imagination had not long since overcome the difficulty.

"Just you wait; the idea'll come all right," Charley promised.

"Most probably," Neil agreed. "But I'm afraid the salmon will be exterminated first, and then there will be no need for it when it does come."

Neil Partington, highly disgusted with his adventure, departed for the Lower Bay, taking Nicholas with him, and Charley and I were left to our own resources. This meant that the Sunday fishing would be left to itself, too, until such time as Charley's idea happened along. I puzzled my head a good deal to find out some way of checkmating the Greeks, as also did Charley, and we broached a thousand expedients which on discussion proved worthless.

The fishermen, on the other hand, were in high feather, and their boasts went up and down the river to add to our discomfiture. Among all classes of them we became aware of a growing insubordination. We were beaten, and they were losing respect for us. With the loss of respect, contempt began to arise. Charley began to be spoken of as the "olda woman," and I received my rating as the "pee-wee kid." The situation was fast becoming unbearable, and we knew that we should have to deliver a stunning stroke at the Greeks in order to regain the old-time respect in which we had stood.

Then one morning the idea came. We were down on Steamboat Wharf, where the river steamers made their landings, and where we found a group of amused long-shoremen and loafers listening to the hard-luck tale of a sleepy-eyed young fellow in long sea-boots. He was a sort of amateur fisherman, he said, fishing for the local market of Berkeley. Now Berkeley was on the Lower Bay, thirty miles away. On the previous night, he said, he had set his net and dozed off to sleep in the bottom of the boat.

The next he knew it was morning, and he opened his eyes to find his boat rubbing softly against the piles of Steamboat Wharf at Benicia. Also he saw the river steamer Apache lying ahead of him, and a couple of deck-hands disentangling the shreds of his net from the paddle-wheel. In short, after he had gone to sleep, his fisherman's riding light had gone out, and the Apache had run over his net. Though torn pretty well to pieces, the net in some way still remained foul, and he had had a thirty-mile tow out of his course.

Charley nudged me with his elbow. I grasped his thought on the instant, but objected:

"We can't charter a steamboat."

"Don't intend to," he rejoined. "But let's run over to Turner's Shipyard. I've something in my mind there that may be of use to us."

And over we went to the shipyard, where Charley led the way to the Mary Rebecca, lying hauled out on the ways, where she was being cleaned and overhauled. She was a scow-schooner we both knew well, carrying a cargo of one hundred and forty tons and a spread of canvas greater than other schooner on the bay.

"How d'ye do, Ole," Charley greeted a big blue-shirted Swede who was greasing the jaws of the main gaff with a piece of pork rind.

Ole grunted, puffed away at his pipe, and went on greasing. The captain of a bay schooner is supposed to work with his hands just as well as the men.

Ole Ericson verified Charley's conjecture that the Mary Rebecca, as soon as launched, would run up the San Joaquin River nearly to Stockton for a load of wheat. Then Charley made his proposition, and Ole Ericson shook his head.

"Just a hook, one good-sized hook," Charley pleaded.

"No, Ay tank not," said Ole Ericson. "Der Mary Rebecca yust hang up on efery mud-bank with that hook. Ay don't want to lose der Mary Rebecca. She's all Ay got."

"No, no," Charley hurried to explain. "We can put the end of the hook through the bottom from the outside, and fasten it on the inside with a nut. After it's done its work, why, all we have to do is to go down into the hold, unscrew the nut, and out drops the hook. Then drive a wooden peg into the hole, and the Mary Rebecca will be all right again."

Ole Ericson was obstinate for a long time; but in the end, after we had had dinner with him, he was brought round to consent.

"Ay do it, by Yupiter!" he said, striking one huge fist into the palm of the other hand. "But yust hurry you up wid der hook. Der Mary Rebecca slides into der water to-night."

It was Saturday, and Charley had need to hurry. We headed for the shipyard blacksmith shop, where, under Charley's directions, a most generously curved book of heavy steel was made. Back we hastened to the Mary Rebecca. Aft of the great centre-board case, through what was properly her keel, a hole was bored. The end of the hook was inserted from the outside, and Charley, on the inside, screwed the nut on tightly. As it stood complete, the hook projected over a foot beneath the bottom of the schooner. Its curve was something like the curve of a sickle, but deeper.

In the late afternoon the Mary Rebecca was launched, and preparations were finished for the start up-river next morning. Charley and Ole intently studied the evening sky for signs of wind, for without a good breeze our project was doomed to failure. They agreed that there were all the signs of a stiff westerly wind-not the ordinary afternoon sea-breeze, but a half-gale, which even then was springing up.

Next morning found their predictions verified. The sun was shining brightly, but something more than a half-gale was shrieking up the Carquinez Straits, and the Mary Rebecca got under way with two reefs in her mainsail and one in her foresail. We found it quite rough in the Straits and in Suisun Bay; but as the water grew more land-locked it became calm, though without let-up in the wind.

Off Ship Island Light the reefs were shaken out, and at Charley's suggestion a big fisherman's staysail was made all ready for hoisting, and the maintopsail, bunched into a cap at the masthead, was overhauled so that it could be set on an instant's notice.

We were tearing along, wing-and-wing, before the wind, foresail to starboard and mainsail to port, as we came upon the salmon fleet. There they were, boats and nets, as on that first Sunday when they had bested us, strung out evenly over the river as far as we could see. A narrow space on the right-hand side of the channel was left clear for steamboats, but the rest of the river was covered with the wide-stretching nets. The narrow space was our logical course, but Charley, at the wheel, steered the Mary Rebecca straight for the nets. This did not cause any alarm among the fishermen, because up-river sailing craft are always provided with "shoes" on the ends of their keels, which permit them to slip over the nets without fouling them.

"Now she takes it!" Charley cried, as we dashed across the middle of a line of floats which marked a net. At one end of this line was a small barrel buoy, at the other the two fishermen in their boat. Buoy and boat at once began to draw together, and the fishermen to cry out, as they were jerked after us. A couple of minutes later we hooked a second net, and then a third, and in this fashion we tore straight up through the centre of the fleet.

The consternation we spread among the fishermen was tremendous. As fast as we hooked a net the two ends of it, buoy and boat, came together as they dragged out astern; and so many buoys and boats, coming together at such breakneck speed, kept the fishermen on the jump to avoid smashing into one another. Also, they shouted at us like mad to heave to into the wind, for they took it as some drunken prank on the part of scow-sailors, little dreaming that we were the fish patrol.

The drag of a single net is very heavy, and Charley and Ole Ericson decided that even in such a wind ten nets were all the Mary Rebecca could take along with her. So when we had hooked ten nets, with ten boats containing twenty men streaming along behind us, we veered to the left out of the fleet and headed toward Collinsville.

We were all jubilant. Charley was handling the wheel as though he were steering the winning yacht home in a race. The two sailors who made up the crew of the Mary Rebecca, were grinning and joking. Ole Ericson was rubbing his huge hands in child-like glee.

"Ay tank you fish patrol fallers never ban so lucky as when you sail with Ole Ericson," he was saying, when a rifle cracked sharply astern, and a bullet gouged along the newly painted cabin, glanced on a nail, and sang shrilly onward into space.

This was too much for Ole Ericson. At sight of his beloved paintwork thus defaced, he jumped up and shook his fist at the fishermen; but a second bullet smashed into the cabin not six inches from his head, and he dropped down to the deck under cover of the rail.

All the fishermen had rifles, and they now opened a general fusillade. We were all driven to cover—even Charley, who was compelled to desert the wheel. Had it not been for the heavy drag of the nets, we would inevitably have broached to at the mercy of

the enraged fishermen. But the nets, fastened to the bottom of the Mary Rebecca well aft, held her stern into the wind, and she continued to plough on, though somewhat erratically.

Charley, lying on the deck, could just manage to reach the lower spokes of the wheel; but while he could steer after a fashion, it was very awkward. Ole Ericson bethought himself of a large piece of sheet steel in the empty hold.

It was in fact a plate from the side of the New Jersey, a steamer which had recently been wrecked outside the Golden Gate, and in the salving of which the Mary Rebecca had taken part.

Crawling carefully along the deck, the two sailors, Ole, and myself got the heavy plate on deck and aft, where we reared it as a shield between the wheel and the fishermen. The bullets whanged and banged against it till it rang like a bull's-eye, but Charley grinned in its shelter, and coolly went on steering.

So we raced along, behind us a howling, screaming bedlam of wrathful Greeks, Collinsville ahead, and bullets spat-spatting all around us.

"Ole," Charley said in a faint voice, "I don't know what we're going to do."

Ole Ericson, lying on his back close to the rail and grinning upward at the sky, turned over on his side and looked at him. "Ay tank we go into Collinsville yust der same," he said.

"But we can't stop," Charley groaned. "I never thought of it, but we can't stop."

A look of consternation slowly overspread Ole Ericson's broad face. It was only too true. We had a hornet's nest on our hands, and to stop at Collinsville would be to have it about our ears.

"Every man Jack of them has a gun," one of the sailors remarked cheerfully.

"Yes, and a knife, too," the other sailor added.

It was Ole Ericson's turn to groan. "What for a Svaedish faller like me monkey with none of my bizness, I don't know," he soliloquized.

A bullet glanced on the stern and sang off to starboard like a spiteful bee. "There's nothing to do but plump the Mary Rebecca ashore and run for it," was the verdict of the first cheerful sailor.

"And leaf der Mary Rebecca?" Ole demanded, with unspeakable horror in his voice.

"Not unless you want to," was the response. "But I don't want to be within a thousand miles of her when those fellers come aboard"-indicating the bedlam of excited Greeks towing behind.

We were right in at Collinsville then, and went foaming by within biscuit-toss of the wharf.

"I only hope the wind holds out," Charley said, stealing a glance at our prisoners.

"What of der wind?" Ole demanded disconsolately. "Der river will not hold out, and then . . . and then . . ."

"It's head for tall timber, and the Greeks take the hindermost," adjudged the cheerful sailor, while Ole was stuttering over what would happen when we came to the end of the river.

We had now reached a dividing of the ways. To the left was the mouth of the Sacramento River, to the right the mouth of the San Joaquin. The cheerful sailor crept forward and jibed over the foresail as Charley put the helm to starboard and we swerved to the right into the San Joaquin. The wind, from which we had been running away on an even keel, now caught us on our beam, and the Mary Rebecca was pressed down on her port side as if she were about to capsize.

Still we dashed on, and still the fishermen dashed on behind. The value of their nets was greater than the fines they would have to pay for violating the fish laws; so to cast off from their nets and escape, which they could easily do, would profit them nothing. Further, they remained by their nets instinctively, as a sailor remains by his ship. And still further, the desire for vengeance was roused, and we could depend upon it that they would follow us to the ends of the earth, if we undertook to tow them that far.

The rifle-firing had ceased, and we looked astern to see what our prisoners were doing. The boats were strung along at unequal distances apart, and we saw the four nearest ones bunching together. This was done by the boat ahead trailing a small rope astern to the one behind. When this was caught, they would cast off from their net and heave in on the line till they were brought up to the boat in front. So great was the speed at which we were travelling, however, that this was very slow work. Sometimes the men would strain to their utmost and fail to get in an inch of the rope; at other times they came ahead more rapidly.

When the four boats were near enough together for a man to pass from one to another, one Greek from each of three got into the nearest boat to us, taking his rifle with him. This made five in the foremost boat, and it was plain that their intention was to board us. This they undertook to do, by main strength and sweat, running hand over hand the float-line of a net. And though it was slow, and they stopped frequently to rest, they gradually drew nearer.

Charley smiled at their efforts, and said, "Give her the topsail, Ole."

The cap at the mainmast head was broken out, and sheet and downhaul pulled flat, amid a scattering rifle fire from the boats; and the Mary Rebecca lay over and sprang ahead faster than ever.

But the Greeks were undaunted. Unable, at the increased speed, to draw themselves nearer by means of their hands, they rigged from the blocks of their boat sail what sailors call a "watch-tackle." One of them, held by the legs by his mates, would lean far over the bow and make the tackle fast to the float-line. Then they would heave in on the tackle till the blocks were together, when the manoeuvre would be repeated.

"Have to give her the staysail," Charley said.

Ole Ericson looked at the straining Mary Rebecca and shook his head. "It will take der masts out of her," he said.

"And we'll be taken out of her if you don't," Charley replied.

Ole shot an anxious glance at his masts, another at the boat load of armed Greeks, and consented.

The five men were in the bow of the boat—a bad place when a craft is towing. I was watching the behavior of their boat as the great fisherman’s staysail, far, far larger than the top-sail and used only in light breezes, was broken out. As the Mary Rebecca lurched forward with a tremendous jerk, the nose of the boat ducked down into the water, and the men tumbled over one another in a wild rush into the stern to save the boat from being dragged sheer under water.

“That settles them!” Charley remarked, though he was anxiously studying the behavior of the Mary Rebecca, which was being driven under far more canvas than she was rightly able to carry.

“Next stop is Antioch!” announced the cheerful sailor, after the manner of a railway conductor. “And next comes Merryweather!”

“Come here, quick,” Charley said to me.

I crawled across the deck and stood upright beside him in the shelter of the sheet steel.

“Feel in my inside pocket,” he commanded, “and get my notebook. That’s right. Tear out a blank page and write what I tell you.”

And this is what I wrote:

Telephone to Merryweather, to the sheriff, the constable, or the judge. Tell them we are coming and to turn out the town. Arm everybody. Have them down on the wharf to meet us or we are gone gooses.

Now make it good and fast to that marlin-spike, and stand by to toss it ashore.”

I did as he directed. By then we were close to Antioch. The wind was shouting through our rigging, the Mary Rebecca was half over on her side and rushing ahead like an ocean greyhound. The seafaring folk of Antioch had seen us breaking out topsail and staysail, a most reckless performance in such weather, and had hurried to the wharf-ends in little groups to find out what was the matter.

Straight down the water front we boomed, Charley edging in till a man could almost leap ashore. When he gave the signal I tossed the marlinspike. It struck the planking of the wharf a resounding smash, bounced along fifteen or twenty feet, and was pounced upon by the amazed onlookers.

It all happened in a flash, for the next minute Antioch was behind and we were heeling it up the San Joaquin toward Merryweather, six miles away. The river straightened out here into its general easterly course, and we squared away before the wind, wing-and-wing once more, the foresail bellying out to starboard.

Ole Ericson seemed sunk into a state of stolid despair. Charley and the two sailors were looking hopeful, as they had good reason to be. Merryweather was a coal-mining town, and, it being Sunday, it was reasonable to expect the men to be in town. Further, the coal-miners had never lost any love for the Greek fishermen, and were pretty certain to render us hearty assistance.

We strained our eyes for a glimpse of the town, and the first sight we caught of it gave us immense relief. The wharves were black with men. As we came closer, we could see them still arriving, stringing down the main street, guns in their hands and

on the run. Charley glanced astern at the fishermen with a look of ownership in his eye which till then had been missing. The Greeks were plainly overawed by the display of armed strength and were putting their own rifles away.

We took in topsail and staysail, dropped the main peak, and as we got abreast of the principal wharf jibed the mainsail. The Mary Rebecca shot around into the wind, the captive fishermen describing a great arc behind her, and forged ahead till she lost way, when lines we're flung ashore and she was made fast. This was accomplished under a hurricane of cheers from the delighted miners.

Ole Ericson heaved a great sigh. "Ay never tank Ay see my wife never again," he confessed.

"Why, we were never in any danger," said Charley.

Ole looked at him incredulously.

"Sure, I mean it," Charley went on. "All we had to do, any time, was to let go our end-as I am going to do now, so that those Greeks can untangle their nets."

He went below with a monkey-wrench, unscrewed the nut, and let the hook drop off. When the Greeks had hauled their nets into their boats and made everything shipshape, a posse of citizens took them off our hands and led them away to jail.

"Ay tank Ay ban a great big fool," said Ole Ericson. But he changed his mind when the admiring townspeople crowded aboard to shake hands with him, and a couple of enterprising newspaper men took photographs of the Mary Rebecca and her captain.

Chased by the Trail

WALT first blinked his eyes in the light of day in a trading post on the Yukon River. Masters, his father, was one of those world missionaries who are known as "pioneers," and who spend the years of their life in pushing outward the walls of civilization and in planting the wilderness. He had selected Alaska as his field of labor, and his wife had gone with him to that land of frost and cold.

Now, to be born to the moccasin and pack-strap is indeed a hard way of entering the world, but far harder it is to lose one's mother while yet a child. This was Walt's misfortune when he was fourteen years old.

He had, at different times, done deeds which few boys get the chance get the chance to do, and he had learned to take some pride in himself and to be unafraid. With most people pride goeth before a fall; but not so with Walt. His was a healthy belief in his own strength and fitness, and knowing his limitations, he was neither overweening nor presumptuous. He had learned to meet reverses with the stoicism of the Indian. Shame, to him, lay not in the failure to accomplish, but in the failure to strive. So, when he attempted to cross the Yukon between two ice-runs, and was chased by the trail, he was not cast down by his defeat.

The way of it was this. After passing the winter at his father's claim on Mazy May, he came down to an island on the Yukon and went into camp. This was late in the spring, just before the breaking of the ice on the river. It was quite warm, and the days were growing marvelously long. Only the night before, when he was talking with Chilkoot Jim, the daylight had not faded and sent him off to bed till after ten o'clock. Even Chilkoot Jim, an Indian boy who was about Walt's own age, was surprised at the rapidity with which summer was coming on. The snow had melted from all the southern hillsides and the level surfaces of the flats and islands; everywhere could be heard the trickling of water and the song of hidden rivulets; but somehow, under its three-foot ice-sheet, the Yukon delayed to heave its great length of three thousand miles and shake off the frosty fetters which bound it.

But it was evident that the time was fast approaching when it would again run free. Great fissures were splitting the ice in all directions, while the water was beginning to flood through them and over the top. On this morning a frightful rumbling brought the two boys hurriedly from their blankets. Standing on the bank, they soon discovered the cause. The Stewart River had broken loose and reared a great ice barrier, where it entered the Yukon, barely a mile above their island. While a great deal of the Stewart ice had been thus piled up, the remainder was now flowing under the Yukon

ice, pounding and thumping at the solid surface above it as it passed onward toward the sea.

“To-day um break um,” Chilkoot Jim said, nodding his head. “Sure!”

“And then maybe two days for the ice to pass by,” Walt added, “and you and I’ll be starting for Dawson. It’s only seventy miles, and if the current runs five miles an hour and we paddle three, we ought to make it inside of ten hours. What do you think?”

“Sure!” Chilkoot Jim did not know much English, and this favorite word of his was made to do duty on all occasions.

After breakfast the boys got out the Peterborough canoe from its winter cache. It was an admirable sample of the boat-builder’s skill, an imported article brought from the first mail in six months into the Klondike. Walt, who happened to be in Dawson at the time had bought it for three hundred dollars’ worth of dust which he had mined on the Mazy May.

It had been a revelation, both to him and to Chilkoot Jim, for up to its advent they had been used to no other craft than the flimsy birchbark canoes of the Indians and the crude poling-boats of the whites. Jim, in fact, spent many a happy half-hour in silent admiration of its perfect lines.

“Um good. Sure!” Jim lifted his gaze from the dainty craft, expressing his delight in the same terms for the thousandth time. But glancing over Walt’s shoulder, he saw something on the river which startled him. “Look! See!” he cried.

A man had been racing a dog-team across the slushy surface for the shore, and had been cut off by the rising flood. As Walt whirled round to see, the ice behind the man burst into violent commotion, splitting and smashing into fragments which bobbed up and down and turned turtle like so many corks.

A gush of water followed, burying the sled and washing the dogs from their feet. Tangled in their harness and securely fastened to the heavy sled, they must drown in a few minutes unless rescued by the man. Bravely his manhood answered.

Floundering about with the drowning animals, nearly hip-deep in the icy flood, he cut and slashed with his sheath-knife at the traces. One by one the dogs struck out for shore, the first reaching safety ere the last was released. Then the master, abandoning the sled, followed them. It was a struggle in which little help could be given, and Walt and Chilkoot Jim could only, at the last, grasp his hands and drag him, half-fainting, up the bank.

First he sat down till he had recovered his breath; next he knocked the water from his ears like a boy who had just been swimming; and after that he whistled his dogs together to see whether they had all escaped. These things done, he turned his attention to the lads.

“I’m Muso,” he said, “Pete Muso, and I’m looking for Charley Drake. His partner is dying down at Dawson, and they want him to come at once, as soon as the river breaks. He’s got a cabin on this island, hasn’t he?”

“Yes,” Walt answered, “but he’s over on the other side of the river, with a couple of other men, getting out a raft of logs for a grub-stake.”

The stranger's disappointment was great. Exhausted by his weary journey, just escaped from sudden death, overcome by all he had undergone in carrying the message which was now useless, he looked dazed. The tears welled into his eyes, and his voice was choked with sobs as he repeated, aimlessly, "But his partner's dying. It's his partner, you know, and he wants to see him before he dies."

Walt and Jim knew that nothing could be done, and as aimlessly looked out on the hopeless river. No man could venture on it and live. On the other bank, and several miles up-stream, a thin column of smoke wavered to the sky. Charley Drake was cooking his dinner there; seventy miles below, his partner lay dying; yet no word of it could be sent.

But even as they looked, a change came over the river. There was a muffled rending and tearing, and, as if by magic, the surface water disappeared, while the great ice-sheet, reaching from shore to shore, and broken into all manner and sizes of cakes, floated silently up toward them. The ice which had been pounding along underneath had evidently grounded at some point lower down, and was now backing up the water like a mill-dam. This had broken the ice-sheet from the land and lifted it on top of the rising water.

"Um break up very quick," Chilkoot Jim said.

The Indian boy laughed. "Mebbe you get um in middle, mebbe not. All the same, the trail um go down-stream, and you go, too. Sure!" He glanced at Walt, that he might back him up in preventing this insane attempt.

"You're not going to try and make it across?" Walt queried.

"But you mustn't!" Walt protested. "It's certain death. The river'll break before you get half-way, and then what good'll your message be?"

But the stranger doggedly went on undressing, muttering in an undertone, "I want Charley Drake! Don't you understand? It's his partner, dying."

"Um sick man. Bimeby — " The Indian boy put a finger to his forehead and whirled his hand in quick circles, thus indicating the approach of brain fever. "Um work too hard, and um think too much, all the time think about sick man at Dawson. Very quick um head go round — so." And he feigned the bodily dizziness which is caused by a disordered brain.

By this time, undressed as if for a swim, Muso rose to his feet and started for the bank. Walt stepped in front, barring the way. He shot a glance at his comrade. Jim nodded that he understood and would stand by.

"Get out of my way, boy!" Muso commanded, roughly, trying to thrust him aside.

But Walt closed in, and with the aid of Jim succeeded in tripping him upon his back. He struggled weakly for a few moments, but was too wearied by his long journey to cope successfully with the two boys whose muscles were healthy and trail-hardened.

"Pack um into camp, roll um in plenty blanket, and I fix um good," Jim advised.

This was quickly accomplished, and the sufferer made as comfortable as possible. After he had been attended to, and Jim had utilized the medical lore picked up in the camps of his own people, they fed the stranger's dogs and cooked dinner. They said

very little to each other, but each boy was thinking hard, and when they went out into the sunshine a few minutes later, their minds were intent on the same project.

The river had now risen twenty feet, the ice rubbing softly against the top of the bank. All noise had ceased. Countless millions of tons of ice and water were silently waiting the supreme moment, when all bonds would be broken and the mad rush to the sea would begin. Suddenly, without the slighted apparent effort, everything began to move downstream. The jam had broken.

Slowly at first, but faster and faster the frozen sea dashed past. The noise returned again, and the air trembled to a mighty churning and grinding. Huge blocks of ice were shot into the air by the pressure; others butted wildly into the bank; still others, swinging and pivoting, reached inshore and swept rows of pines away as easily as if they were so many matches.

In awe-stricken silence the boys watched the magnificent spectacle, and it was not until the ice had slackened its speed and fallen to its old level that Walt cried, "Look, Jim! Look at the trail going by!"

And in truth it was the trail going by — the trail upon which they had camped and traveled during all the preceding winter. Next winter they would journey with dogs and sleds over the same ground, but not on the same trail. That trail, the old trail, was passing away before their eyes.

Looking up-stream, they saw open water. No more ice was coming down, although vast quantities of it still remained on the upper reaches, jammed somewhere amid the maze of islands which covered the Yukon's breast. As a matter of fact, there were several more jams yet to break, one after another, and to send down as many ice-runs. The next might come along in a few minutes; it might delay for hours. Perhaps there would be time to paddle across. Walt looked questioningly at his comrade.

"Sure!" Jim remarked, and without another word they carried the canoe down the bank. Each knew the danger of what they were about to attempt, but they wasted no speech over it. Wild life had taught them both that the need of things demanded effort and action, and that the tongue found its fit vocation at the camp-fire when the day's work was done.

With dexterity born of long practice they launched the canoe, and were soon making it spring to each stroke of the paddles as they stemmed the muddy current. A steady procession of lagging ice-cakes, each thoroughly capable of crushing the Peterborough like an egg-shell, was drifting on the surface, and it required of the boys the utmost vigilance and skill to thread them safely.

Anxiously they watched the great bend above, down which at any moment might rush another ice-run. And as anxiously they watched the ice stranded against the bank and towering a score of feet above them. Cake was poised upon cake and piled in precarious confusion, while the boys had to hug the shore closely to avoid the swifter current of midstream. Now and again great heaps of this ice tottered and fell into the river, rolling and rumbling like distant thunder, and lashing the water into fair-sized tidal waves.

Several times they were nearly swamped, but saved themselves by quick work with the paddles. And all the time Charley Drake's pillared camp smoke grew nearer and clearer. But it was still on the opposite shore, and they knew they must get higher up before they attempted to shoot across.

Entering the Stewart River, they paddled up a few hundred yards, shot across, and then continued up the right bank of the Yukon. Before long they came to the Bald-Face Bluffs — huge walls of rock which rose perpendicularly from the river. Here the current was swiftest inshore, forming the first serious obstacle encountered by the boys. Below the bluffs they rested from their exertions in a favorable eddy, and then, paddling their strongest, strove to dash past.

At first they gained, but in the swiftest place the current overpowered them. For a full sixty seconds they remained stationary, neither advancing nor receding, the grim cliff base within reach of their arms, their paddles dipping and lifting like clockwork, and the rough water dashing by in muddy haste. For a full sixty seconds, and then the canoe sheered in to the shore. To prevent instant destruction, they pressed their paddles against the rocks, sheered back into the stream, and were swept away. Regaining the eddy, they stopped for breath. A second time they attempted the passage; but just as they were almost past, a threatening ice-cake whirled down upon them on the angry tide, and they were forced to flee before it.

"Um stiff, I think yes," Chilkoot Jim said, mopping the sweat from his face as they again rested in the eddy. "Next time um make um, sure."

"We've got to. That's all there is about it," Walt answered, his teeth set and lips tight-drawn, for Pete Muso had set a bad example, and he was almost ready to cry from exhaustion and failure. A third time they darted out of the head of the eddy, plunged into the swirling waters, and worked a snail-like course ahead. Often they stood still for the space of many strokes, but whatever they gained they held, and they at last drew out into easier water far above. But every moment was precious. There was no telling when the Yukon would again become a scene of wild anarchy in which neither man nor any of his works could hope to endure. So they held steadily to their course till they had passed above Charley Drake's camp by a quarter of a mile. The river was fully a mile wide at this point, and they had to reckon on being carried down by the swift current in crossing it.

Walt turned his head from his place in the bow. Jim nodded. Without further parley they headed the canoe out from the shore, at an angle of forty-five degrees against the current. They were on the last stretch now; the goal was in fair sight. Indeed, as they looked up from their toil to mark their progress, they could see Charley Drake and his two comrades come town to the edge of the river to watch them.

Five hundred yards; four hundred yards; the Peterborough cut the water like a blade of steel; the paddles were dipping, dipping, dipping in rapid rhythm — and then a warning shout from the bank sent a chill to their hearts. Round the great bend just above rolled a mighty wall of glistening white. Behind it, urging it on to lightning speed, were a million tons of long-pent water.

The right flank of the ice-run, unable to get cleanly round the bend, collided with the opposite shore, and even as they looked they saw the ice mountains rear toward the sky, rise, collapse, and rise again in glittering convulsions. The advancing roar filled the air so that Walt could not make himself heard; but he paused long enough to wave his paddle significantly in the direction of Dawson. Perhaps Charley Drake, seeing, might understand.

With two swift strokes they whirled the Peterborough down-stream. They must keep ahead of the rushing flood. It was impossible to make either bank tat that moment. Every ounce of their strength went into the paddles, and the frail canoe fairly rose and leaped ahead at each stroke. They said nothing. Each knew and had faith in the other, and they were too wise to waste their breath. The shore-line — trees, islands and the Stewart River — flew by at a bewildering rate, but they barely looked at it.

Occasionally Chilkoot Jim stole a glance behind him at the pursuing trail, and marked the fact that they held their own. Once he shaped a sharper course toward the bank, but found the trail was overtaking them, and gave it up.

Gradually they worked in to land, their failing strength warning them that it was soon or never. And at last, when they did draw up to the bank, they were confronted by the inhospitable barrier of the stranded shore-ice. Not a place could be found to land, and with safety virtually within arm's reach, they were forced to flee on down the stream. They passed a score of places, at each of which, had they had plenty of time, they could have clambered out; but behind pressed on the inexorable trail, and would not let them pause.

Half a mile of this work drew heavily upon their strength; and the trail came upon them nearer and nearer. Its sullen grind was in their ears, and its collisions against the bank made one continuous succession of terrifying crashes. Walt felt his heart thumping against his ribs and caught each breath in painful gasps. But worst of all was the constant demand upon his arms.

If he could only rest for the space of one stroke, he felt that the torture would be relieved; but no, it was dip and lift, dip and lift, till it seemed as if at each stroke he would surely die. But he knew that Chilkoot Jim was suffering likewise; and their lives depended each upon the other; and that it would be a blot upon his manhood should he fail or even miss a stroke.

They were very weary, but their faith was large, and if either felt afraid, it was not of the other, but of himself.

Flashing round a sharp point, they came upon their last chance for escape. An island lay close inshore, upon the nose of which the ice lay piled in a long slope. They drove the Peterborough half out of the water upon a shelving cake and leaped out. Then, dragging the canoe along, slipping and tripping and falling, but always getting nearer the top, they made their last mad scramble.

As they cleared the crest and fell within the shelter of the pines, a tremendous crash announced the arrival of the trail. One huge cake, shoved to the, shoved to the top of the rim-ice, balanced threateningly above them and then toppled forward.

With one jerk they flung themselves and the canoe from beneath, and again fell, breathless and panting for air. The thunder of the ice-run came dimly to their ears; but they did not care. It held no interest for them whatsoever. All they wished was simply to lie there, just as they had fallen, and enjoy the inaction of repose.

Two hours later, when the river once more ran open, they carried the Peterborough down to the water. But just before they launched it, Charley Drake and a comrade paddled up in another canoe.

“Well, you boys hardly deserve to have good folks out looking for you, the way you’ve behaved,” was his greeting. “What under the sun made you leave your tent and get chased by the trail? Eh? That’s what I’d like to know.”

It took but a minute to explain the real state of affairs, and but another to see Charley Drake hurrying along on his way to his sick partner at Dawson.

“Pretty close shave, that,” Walt Masters said, as they prepared to get aboard and paddle back to camp.

“Sure!” Chilkoot Jim replied, rubbing his stiffened biceps in a meditative fashion.

The Chinago

The coral waxes, the palm grows, but man departs.

- -Tahitian proverb

Ah Cho did not understand French. He sat in the crowded court room, very weary and bored, listening to the unceasing, explosive French that now one official and now another uttered. It was just so much gabble to Ah Cho, and he marvelled at the stupidity of the Frenchmen who took so long to find out the murderer of Chung Ga, and who did not find him at all. The five hundred coolies on the plantation knew that Ah San had done the killing, and here was Ah San not even arrested. It was true that all the coolies had agreed secretly not to testify against one another; but then, it was so simple, the Frenchmen should have been able to discover that Ah San was the man. They were very stupid, these Frenchmen.

Ah Cho had done nothing of which to be afraid. He had had no hand in the killing. It was true he had been present at it, and Schemmer, the overseer on the plantation, had rushed into the barracks immediately afterward and caught him there, along with four or five others; but what of that? Chung Ga had been stabbed only twice. It stood to reason that five or six men could not inflict two stab wounds. At the most, if a man had struck but once, only two men could have done it.

So it was that Ah Cho reasoned, when he, along with his four companions, had lied and blocked and obfuscated in their statements to the court concerning what had taken place. They had heard the sounds of the killing, and, like Schemmer, they had run to the spot. They had got there before Schemmer—that was all. True, Schemmer had testified that, attracted by the sound of quarrelling as he chanced to pass by, he had stood for at least five minutes outside; that then, when he entered, he found the prisoners already inside; and that they had not entered just before, because he had been standing by the one door to the barracks. But what of that? Ah Cho and his four fellow-prisoners had testified that Schemmer was mistaken. In the end they would be let go. They were all confident of that. Five men could not have their heads cut off for two stab wounds. Besides, no foreign devil had seen the killing. But these Frenchmen were so stupid. In China, as Ah Cho well knew, the magistrate would order all of them to the torture and learn the truth. The truth was very easy to learn under torture. But these Frenchmen did not torture—bigger fools they! Therefore they would never find out who killed Chung Ga.

But Ah Cho did not understand everything. The English Company that owned the plantation had imported into Tahiti, at great expense, the five hundred coolies. The stockholders were clamoring for dividends, and the Company had not yet paid any;

wherefore the Company did not want its costly contract laborers to start the practice of killing one another. Also, there were the French, eager and willing to impose upon the Chinagos the virtues and excellences of French law. There was nothing like setting an example once in a while; and, besides, of what use was New Caledonia except to send men to live out their days in misery and pain in payment of the penalty for being frail and human?

Ah Cho did not understand all this. He sat in the court room and waited for the baffled judgment that would set him and his comrades free to go back to the plantation and work out the terms of their contracts. This judgment would soon be rendered. Proceedings were drawing to a close. He could see that. There was no more testifying, no more gabble of tongues. The French devils were tired, too, and evidently waiting for the judgment. And as he waited he remembered back in his life to the time when he had signed the contract and set sail in the ship for Tahiti. Times had been hard in his seacoast village, and when he indentured himself to labor for five years in the South Seas at fifty cents Mexican a day, he had thought himself fortunate. There were men in his village who toiled a whole year for ten dollars Mexican, and there were women who made nets all the year round for five dollars, while in the houses of shopkeepers there were maid-servants who received four dollars for a year of service. And here he was to receive fifty cents a day; for one day, only one day, he was to receive that princely sum! What if the work were hard? At the end of the five years he would return home—that was in the contract—and he would never have to work again. He would be a rich man for life, with a house of his own, a wife, and children growing up to venerate him. Yes, and back of the house he would have a small garden, a place of meditation and repose, with goldfish in a tiny lakelet, and wind bells tinkling in the several trees, and there would be a high wall all around so that his meditation and repose should be undisturbed. Well, he had worked out three of those five years. He was already a wealthy man (in his own country), through his earnings, and only two years more intervened between the cotton plantation on Tahiti and the meditation and repose that awaited him. But just now he was losing money because of the unfortunate accident of being present at the killing of Chung Ga. He had lain three weeks in prison, and for each day of those three weeks he had lost fifty cents. But now judgment would soon be given, and he would go back to work.

Ah Cho was twenty-two years old. He was happy and good-natured, and it was easy for him to smile. While his body was slim in the Asiatic way, his face was rotund. It was round, like the moon, and it irradiated a gentle complacency and a sweet kindness of spirit that was unusual among his countrymen. Nor did his looks belie him. He never caused trouble, never took part in wrangling. He did not gamble. His soul was not harsh enough for the soul that must belong to a gambler. He was content with little things and simple pleasures. The hush and quiet in the cool of the day after the blazing toil in the cotton field was to him an infinite satisfaction. He could sit for hours gazing at a solitary flower and philosophizing about the mysteries and riddles of being. A blue heron on a tiny crescent of sandy beach, a silvery splatter of flying fish, or a

sunset of pearl and rose across the lagoon, could entrance him to all forgetfulness of the procession of wearisome days and of the heavy lash of Schemmer.

Schemmer, Karl Schemmer, was a brute, a brutish brute. But he earned his salary. He got the last particle of strength out of the five hundred slaves; for slaves they were until their term of years was up. Schemmer worked hard to extract the strength from those five hundred sweating bodies and to transmute it into bales of fluffy cotton ready for export. His dominant, iron-clad, primeval brutishness was what enabled him to effect the transmutation. Also, he was assisted by a thick leather belt, three inches wide and a yard in length, with which he always rode and which, on occasion, could come down on the naked back of a stooping coolie with a report like a pistol-shot. These reports were frequent when Schemmer rode down the furrowed field.

Once, at the beginning of the first year of contract labor, he had killed a coolie with a single blow of his fist. He had not exactly crushed the man's head like an egg-shell, but the blow had been sufficient to addle what was inside, and, after being sick for a week, the man had died. But the Chinese had not complained to the French devils that ruled over Tahiti. It was their own lookout. Schemmer was their problem. They must avoid his wrath as they avoided the venom of the centipedes that lurked in the grass or crept into the sleeping quarters on rainy nights. The Chinagos—such they were called by the indolent, brown-skinned island folk—saw to it that they did not displease Schemmer too greatly. This was equivalent to rendering up to him a full measure of efficient toil. That blow of Schemmer's fist had been worth thousands of dollars to the Company, and no trouble ever came of it to Schemmer.

The French, with no instinct for colonization, futile in their childish playgame of developing the resources of the island, were only too glad to see the English Company succeed. What matter of Schemmer and his redoubtable fist? The Chinago that died? Well, he was only a Chinago. Besides, he died of sunstroke, as the doctor's certificate attested. True, in all the history of Tahiti no one had ever died of sunstroke. But it was that, precisely that, which made the death of this Chinago unique. The doctor said as much in his report. He was very candid. Dividends must be paid, or else one more failure would be added to the long history of failure in Tahiti.

There was no understanding these white devils. Ah Cho pondered their inscrutable-ness as he sat in the court room waiting the judgment. There was no telling what went on at the back of their minds. He had seen a few of the white devils. They were all alike—the officers and sailors on the ship, the French officials, the several white men on the plantation, including Schemmer. Their minds all moved in mysterious ways there was no getting at. They grew angry without apparent cause, and their anger was always dangerous. They were like wild beasts at such times. They worried about little things, and on occasion could out-toil even a Chinago. They were not temperate as Chinagos were temperate; they were gluttons, eating prodigiously and drinking more prodigiously. A Chinago never knew when an act would please them or arouse a storm of wrath. A Chinago could never tell. What pleased one time, the very next time might provoke an outburst of anger. There was a curtain behind the eyes of the white devils

that screened the backs of their minds from the Chinago's gaze. And then, on top of it all, was that terrible efficiency of the white devils, that ability to do things, to make things go, to work results, to bend to their wills all creeping, crawling things, and the powers of the very elements themselves. Yes, the white men were strange and wonderful, and they were devils. Look at Schemmer.

Ah Cho wondered why the judgment was so long in forming. Not a man on trial had laid hand on Chung Ga. Ah San alone had killed him. Ah San had done it, bending Chung Ga's head back with one hand by a grip of his queue, and with the other hand, from behind, reaching over and driving the knife into his body. Twice had he driven it in. There in the court room, with closed eyes, Ah Cho saw the killing acted over again—the squabble, the vile words bandied back and forth, the filth and insult flung upon venerable ancestors, the curses laid upon unbegotten generations, the leap of Ah San, the grip on the queue of Chung Ga, the knife that sank twice into his flesh, the bursting open of the door, the irruption of Schemmer, the dash for the door, the escape of Ah San, the flying belt of Schemmer that drove the rest into the corner, and the firing of the revolver as a signal that brought help to Schemmer. Ah Cho shivered as he lived it over. One blow of the belt had bruised his cheek, taking off some of the skin. Schemmer had pointed to the bruises when, on the witness-stand, he had identified Ah Cho. It was only just now that the marks had become no longer visible. That had been a blow. Half an inch nearer the centre and it would have taken out his eye. Then Ah Cho forgot the whole happening in a vision he caught of the garden of meditation and repose that would be his when he returned to his own land.

He sat with impassive face, while the magistrate rendered the judgment. Likewise were the faces of his four companions impassive. And they remained impassive when the interpreter explained that the five of them had been found guilty of the murder of Chung Ga, and that Ah Chow should have his head cut off, Ah Cho serve twenty years in prison in New Caledonia, Wong Li twelve years, and Ah Tong ten years. There was no use in getting excited about it. Even Ah Chow remained expressionless as a mummy, though it was his head that was to be cut off. The magistrate added a few words, and the interpreter explained that Ah Chow's face having been most severely bruised by Schemmer's strap had made his identification so positive that, since one man must die, he might as well be that man. Also, the fact that Ah Cho's face likewise had been severely bruised, conclusively proving his presence at the murder and his undoubted participation, had merited him the twenty years of penal servitude. And down to the ten years of Ah Tong, the proportioned reason for each sentence was explained. Let the Chinagos take the lesson to heart, the Court said finally, for they must learn that the law would be fulfilled in Tahiti though the heavens fell.

The five Chinagos were taken back to jail. They were not shocked nor grieved. The sentences being unexpected was quite what they were accustomed to in their dealings with the white devils. From them a Chinago rarely expected more than the unexpected. The heavy punishment for a crime they had not committed was no stranger than the countless strange things that white devils did. In the weeks that followed, Ah Cho often

contemplated Ah Chow with mild curiosity. His head was to be cut off by the guillotine that was being erected on the plantation. For him there would be no declining years, no gardens of tranquillity. Ah Cho philosophized and speculated about life and death. As for himself, he was not perturbed. Twenty years were merely twenty years. By that much was his garden removed from him—that was all. He was young, and the patience of Asia was in his bones. He could wait those twenty years, and by that time the heats of his blood would be assuaged and he would be better fitted for that garden of calm delight. He thought of a name for it; he would call it The Garden of the Morning Calm. He was made happy all day by the thought, and he was inspired to devise a moral maxim on the virtue of patience, which maxim proved a great comfort, especially to Wong Li and Ah Tong. Ah Chow, however, did not care for the maxim. His head was to be separated from his body in so short a time that he had no need for patience to wait for that event. He smoked well, ate well, slept well, and did not worry about the slow passage of time.

Cruchot was a gendarme. He had seen twenty years of service in the colonies, from Nigeria and Senegal to the South Seas, and those twenty years had not perceptibly brightened his dull mind. He was as slow-witted and stupid as in his peasant days in the south of France. He knew discipline and fear of authority, and from God down to the sergeant of gendarmes the only difference to him was the measure of slavish obedience which he rendered. In point of fact, the sergeant bulked bigger in his mind than God, except on Sundays when God's mouthpieces had their say. God was usually very remote, while the sergeant was ordinarily very close at hand.

Cruchot it was who received the order from the Chief Justice to the jailer commanding that functionary to deliver over to Cruchot the person of Ah Chow. Now, it happened that the Chief Justice had given a dinner the night before to the captain and officers of the French man-of-war. His hand was shaking when he wrote out the order, and his eyes were aching so dreadfully that he did not read over the order. It was only a Chinago's life he was signing away, anyway. So he did not notice that he had omitted the final letter in Ah Chow's name. The order read "Ah Cho," and, when Cruchot presented the order, the jailer turned over to him the person of Ah Cho. Cruchot took that person beside him on the seat of a wagon, behind two mules, and drove away.

Ah Cho was glad to be out in the sunshine. He sat beside the gendarme and beamed. He beamed more ardently than ever when he noted the mules headed south toward Atimaono. Undoubtedly Schemmer had sent for him to be brought back. Schemmer wanted him to work. Very well, he would work well. Schemmer would never have cause to complain. It was a hot day. There had been a stoppage of the trades. The mules sweated, Cruchot sweated, and Ah Cho sweated. But it was Ah Cho that bore the heat with the least concern. He had toiled three years under that sun on the plantation. He beamed and beamed with such genial good nature that even Cruchot's heavy mind was stirred to wonderment.

"You are very funny," he said at last.

Ah Cho nodded and beamed more ardently. Unlike the magistrate, Cruchot spoke to him in the Kanaka tongue, and this, like all Chinagos and all foreign devils, Ah Cho understood.

“You laugh too much,” Cruchot chided. “One’s heart should be full of tears on a day like this.”

“I am glad to get out of the jail.”

“Is that all?” The gendarme shrugged his shoulders.

“Is it not enough?” was the retort.

“Then you are not glad to have your head cut off?”

Ah Cho looked at him in abrupt perplexity and said:

“Why, I am going back to Atimaono to work on the plantation for Schemmer. Are you not taking me to Atimaono?”

Cruchot stroked his long mustaches reflectively. “Well, well,” he said finally, with a flick of the whip at the off mule, “so you don’t know?”

“Know what?” Ah Cho was beginning to feel a vague alarm. “Won’t Schemmer let me work for him any more?”

“Not after to-day.” Cruchot laughed heartily. It was a good joke. “You see, you won’t be able to work after to-day. A man with his head off can’t work, eh?” He poked the Chinago in the ribs, and chuckled.

Ah Cho maintained silence while the mules trotted a hot mile. Then he spoke: “Is Schemmer going to cut off my head?”

Cruchot grinned as he nodded.

“It is a mistake,” said Ah Cho, gravely. “I am not the Chinago that is to have his head cut off. I am Ah Cho. The honorable judge has determined that I am to stop twenty years in New Caledonia.”

The gendarme laughed. It was a good joke, this funny Chinago trying to cheat the guillotine. The mules trotted through a cocconut grove and for half a mile beside the sparkling sea before Ah Cho spoke again.

“I tell you I am not Ah Chow. The honorable judge did not say that my head was to go off.”

“Don’t be afraid,” said Cruchot, with the philanthropic intention of making it easier for his prisoner. “It is not difficult to die that way.” He snapped his fingers. “It is quick—like that. It is not like hanging on the end of a rope and kicking and making faces for five minutes. It is like killing a chicken with a hatchet. You cut its head off, that is all. And it is the same with a man. Pouf!—it is over. It doesn’t hurt. You don’t even think it hurts. You don’t think. Your head is gone, so you cannot think. It is very good. That is the way I want to die—quick, ah, quick. You are lucky to die that way. You might get the leprosy and fall to pieces slowly, a finger at a time, and now and again a thumb, also the toes. I knew a man who was burned by hot water. It took him two days to die. You could hear him yelling a kilometre away. But you? Ah! so easy! Chck!—the knife cuts your neck like that. It is finished. The knife may even tickle. Who can say? Nobody who died that way ever came back to say.”

He considered this last an excruciating joke, and permitted himself to be convulsed with laughter for half a minute. Part of his mirth was assumed, but he considered it his humane duty to cheer up the Chinago.

“But I tell you I am Ah Cho,” the other persisted. “I don’t want my head cut off.”

Cruchot scowled. The Chinago was carrying the foolishness too far.

“I am not Ah Chow—“ Ah Cho began. “That will do,” the gendarme interrupted. He puffed up his cheeks and strove to appear fierce.

“I tell you I am not—“ Ah Cho began again.

“Shut up!” bawled Cruchot.

After that they rode along in silence. It was twenty miles from Papeete to Atimaono, and over half the distance was covered by the time the Chinago again ventured into speech.

“I saw you in the court room, when the honorable judge sought after our guilt,” he began. “Very good. And do you remember that Ah Chow, whose head is to be cut off—do you remember that he—Ah Chow—was a tall man? Look at me.”

He stood up suddenly, and Cruchot saw that he was a short man. And just as suddenly Cruchot caught a glimpse of a memory picture of Ah Chow, and in that picture Ah Chow was tall. To the gendarme all Chinagos looked alike. One face was like another. But between tallness and shortness he could differentiate, and he knew that he had the wrong man beside him on the seat. He pulled up the mules abruptly, so that the pole shot ahead of them, elevating their collars.

“You see, it was a mistake,” said Ah Cho, smiling pleasantly.

But Cruchot was thinking. Already he regretted that he had stopped the wagon. He was unaware of the error of the Chief Justice, and he had no way of working it out; but he did know that he had been given this Chinago to take to Atimaono and that it was his duty to take him to Atimaono. What if he was the wrong man and they cut his head off? It was only a Chinago when all was said, and what was a Chinago, anyway? Besides, it might not be a mistake. He did not know what went on in the minds of his superiors. They knew their business best. Who was he to do their thinking for them? Once, in the long ago, he had attempted to think for them, and the sergeant had said: “Cruchot, you are a fool! The quicker you know that, the better you will get on. You are not to think; you are to obey and leave thinking to your betters.” He smarted under the recollection. Also, if he turned back to Papeete, he would delay the execution at Atimaono, and if he were wrong in turning back, he would get a reprimand from the sergeant who was waiting for the prisoner. And, furthermore, he would get a reprimand at Papeete as well.

He touched the mules with the whip and drove on. He looked at his watch. He would be half an hour late as it was, and the sergeant was bound to be angry. He put the mules into a faster trot. The more Ah Cho persisted in explaining the mistake, the more stubborn Cruchot became. The knowledge that he had the wrong man did not make his temper better. The knowledge that it was through no mistake of his confirmed him in the belief that the wrong he was doing was the right. And, rather

than incur the displeasure of the sergeant, he would willingly have assisted a dozen wrong Chinagos to their doom.

As for Ah Cho, after the gendarme had struck him over the head with the butt of the whip and commanded him in a loud voice to shut up, there remained nothing for him to do but to shut up. The long ride continued in silence. Ah Cho pondered the strange ways of the foreign devils. There was no explaining them. What they were doing with him was of a piece with everything they did. First they found guilty five innocent men, and next they cut off the head of the man that even they, in their benighted ignorance, had deemed meritorious of no more than twenty years' imprisonment. And there was nothing he could do. He could only sit idly and take what these lords of life measured out to him. Once, he got in a panic, and the sweat upon his body turned cold; but he fought his way out of it. He endeavored to resign himself to his fate by remembering and repeating certain passages from the "Yin Chih Wen" ("The Tract of the Quiet Way"); but, instead, he kept seeing his dream-garden of meditation and repose. This bothered him, until he abandoned himself to the dream and sat in his garden listening to the tinkling of the wind-bells in the several trees. And lo! sitting thus, in the dream, he was able to remember and repeat the passages from "The Tract of the Quiet Way."

So the time passed nicely until Atimaono was reached and the mules trotted up to the foot of the scaffold, in the shade of which stood the impatient sergeant. Ah Cho was hurried up the ladder of the scaffold. Beneath him on one side he saw assembled all the coolies of the plantation. Schemmer had decided that the event would be a good object-lesson, and so had called in the coolies from the fields and compelled them to be present. As they caught sight of Ah Cho they gabbled among themselves in low voices. They saw the mistake; but they kept it to themselves. The inexplicable white devils had doubtlessly changed their minds. Instead of taking the life of one innocent man, they were taking the life of another innocent man. Ah Chow or Ah Cho—what did it matter which? They could never understand the white dogs any more than could the white dogs understand them. Ah Cho was going to have his head cut off, but they, when their two remaining years of servitude were up, were going back to China.

Schemmer had made the guillotine himself. He was a handy man, and though he had never seen a guillotine, the French officials had explained the principle to him. It was on his suggestion that they had ordered the execution to take place at Atimaono instead of at Papeete. The scene of the crime, Schemmer had argued, was the best possible place for the punishment, and, in addition, it would have a salutary influence upon the half-thousand Chinagos on the plantation. Schemmer had also volunteered to act as executioner, and in that capacity he was now on the scaffold, experimenting with the instrument he had made. A banana tree, of the size and consistency of a man's neck, lay under the guillotine. Ah Cho watched with fascinated eyes. The German, turning a small crank, hoisted the blade to the top of the little derrick he had rigged. A jerk on a stout piece of cord loosed the blade and it dropped with a flash, neatly severing the banana trunk.

“How does it work?” The sergeant, coming out on top the scaffold, had asked the question.

“Beautifully,” was Schemmer’s exultant answer. “Let me show you.”

Again he turned the crank that hoisted the blade, jerked the cord, and sent the blade crashing down on the soft tree. But this time it went no more than two-thirds of the way through.

The sergeant scowled. “That will not serve,” he said.

Schemmer wiped the sweat from his forehead. “What it needs is more weight,” he announced. Walking up to the edge of the scaffold, he called his orders to the blacksmith for a twenty-five-pound piece of iron. As he stooped over to attach the iron to the broad top of the blade, Ah Cho glanced at the sergeant and saw his opportunity.

“The honorable judge said that Ah Chow was to have his head cut off,” he began.

The sergeant nodded impatiently. He was thinking of the fifteen-mile ride before him that afternoon, to the windward side of the island, and of Berthe, the pretty half-caste daughter of Lafi re, the pearl-trader, who was waiting for him at the end of it. “Well, I am not Ah Chow. I am Ah Cho. The honorable jailer has made a mistake. Ah Chow is a tall man, and you see I am short.”

The sergeant looked at him hastily and saw the mistake. “Schemmer!” he called, imperatively. “Come here.”

The German grunted, but remained bent over his task till the chunk of iron was lashed to his satisfaction. “Is your Chinago ready?” he demanded.

“Look at him,” was the answer. “Is he the Chinago?”

Schemmer was surprised. He swore tersely for a few seconds, and looked regretfully across at the thing he had made with his own hands and which he was eager to see work. “Look here,” he said finally, “we can’t postpone this affair. I’ve lost three hours’ work already out of those five hundred Chinagos. I can’t afford to lose it all over again for the right man. Let’s put the performance through just the same. It is only a Chinago.”

The sergeant remembered the long ride before him, and the pearl-trader’s daughter, and debated with himself.

“They will blame it on Cruchot—if it is discovered,” the German urged. “But there’s little chance of its being discovered. Ah Chow won’t give it away, at any rate.”

“The blame won’t lie with Cruchot, anyway,” the sergeant said. “It must have been the jailer’s mistake.”

“Then let’s go on with it. They can’t blame us. Who can tell one Chinago from another? We can say that we merely carried out instructions with the Chinago that was turned over to us. Besides, really can’t take all those coolies a second time away from their labor.”

They spoke in French, and Ah Cho, who did not understand a word of it, nevertheless knew that they were determining his destiny. He knew, also, that the decision rested with the sergeant, and he hung upon that official’s lips.

“All right,” announced the sergeant. “Go ahead with it. He is only a Chinago.”

"I'm going to try it once more, just to make sure." Schemmer moved the banana trunk forward under the knife, which he had hoisted to the top of the derrick.

Ah Cho tried to remember maxims from "The Tract of the Quiet Way." "Live in concord," came to him; but it was not applicable. He was not going to live. He was about to die. No, that would not do. "Forgive malice"—yes, but there was no malice to forgive. Schemmer and the rest were doing this thing without malice. It was to them merely a piece of work that had to be done, just as clearing the jungle, ditching the water, and planting cotton were pieces of work that had to be done. Schemmer jerked the cord, and Ah Cho forgot "The Tract of the Quiet Way." The knife shot down with a thud, making a clean slice of the tree.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the sergeant, pausing in the act of lighting a cigarette. "Beautiful, my friend."

Schemmer was pleased at the praise.

"Come on, Ah Chow," he said, in the Tahitian tongue.

"But I am not Ah Chow—" Ah Cho began.

"Shut up!" was the answer. "If you open your mouth again, I'll break your head."

The overseer threatened him with a clenched fist, and he remained silent. What was the good of protesting? Those foreign devils always had their way. He allowed himself to be lashed to the vertical board that was the size of his body. Schemmer drew the buckles tight—so tight that the straps cut into his flesh and hurt. But he did not complain. The hurt would not last long. He felt the board tilting over in the air toward the horizontal, and closed his eyes. And in that moment he caught a last glimpse of his garden of meditation and repose. It seemed to him that he sat in the garden. A cool wind was blowing, and the bells in the several trees were tinkling softly. Also, birds were making sleepy noises, and from beyond the high wall came the subdued sound of village life.

Then he was aware that the board had come to rest, and from muscular pressures and tensions he knew that he was lying on his back. He opened his eyes. Straight above him he saw the suspended knife blazing in the sunshine. He saw the weight which had been added, and noted that one of Schemmer's knots had slipped. Then he heard the sergeant's voice in sharp command. Ah Cho closed his eyes hastily. He did not want to see that knife descend. But he felt it—for one great fleeting instant. And in that instant he remembered Cruchot and what Cruchot had said. But Cruchot was wrong. The knife did not tickle. That much he knew before he ceased to know.

Chris Farrington, Able Seaman

“If you vas in der old country ships, a liddle shaver like you vood pe only der boy, and you vood wait on der able seamen. Und ven der able seaman sing out, ‘Boy, der water-jug!’ you vood jump quick, like a shot, and bring der water-jug. Und ven der able seaman sing out, ‘Boy, my boots!’ you vood get der boots. Und you vood pe politeful, and say ‘Yessir’ and ‘No sir.’ But you pe in der American ship, and you t’ink you are so good as der able seamen. Chris, mine boy, I haf ben a sailorman for twenty-two years, and do you t’ink you are so good as me? I vas a sailorman pefore you vas borned, and I knot and reef and splice ven you play mit topstrings and fly kites.”

“But you are unfair, Emil!” cried Chris Farrington, his sensitive face flushed and hurt. He was a slender though strongly built young fellow of seventeen, with Yankee ancestry writ large all over him.

“Dere you go vonce again!” the Swedish sailor exploded. “My name is Mister Johansen, and a kid of a boy like you call me ‘Emil!’ It vas insulting, and comes because of der American ship!”

“But you call me ‘Chris!’” the boy expostulated, reproachfully.

“But you vas a boy.”

“Who does a man’s work,” Chris retorted. “And because I do a man’s work I have as much right to call you by your first name as you me. We are all equals in this fo’castle, and you know it. When we signed for the voyage in San Francisco, we signed as sailors on the Sophie Sutherland and there was no difference made with any of us. Haven’t I always done my work? Did I ever shirk? Did you or any other man ever have to take a wheel for me? Or a lookout? Or go aloft?”

“Chris is right,” interrupted a young English sailor. “No man has had to do a tap of his work yet. He signed as good as any of us, and he’s shown himself as good — ”

“Better!” broke in a Nova Scotia man. “Better than some of us! When we struck the sealing-grounds he turned out to be next to the best boat-steerer aboard. Only French Louis, who’d been at it for years, could beat him. I’m only a boat-puller, and you’re only a boat-puller, too, Emil Johansen, for all your twenty-two years at sea. Why don’t you become a boat-steerer?”

“Too clumsy,” laughed the Englishman, “and too slow.”

“Little that counts, one way or the other,” joined in Dane Jurgensen, coming to the aid of his Scandinavian brother. “Emil is a man grown and an able seaman; the boy is neither.”

And so the argument raged back and forth, the Swedes, Norwegians and Danes, because of race kinship, taking the part of Johansen, and the English, Canadians and

Americans taking the part of Chris. From an unprejudiced point of view, the right was on the side of Chris. As he had truly said, he did a man's work, and the same work that any of them did. But they were prejudiced, and badly so, and out of the words which passed rose a standing quarrel which divided the forecastle into two parties.

The Sophie Sutherland was a seal-hunter, registered out of San Francisco, and engaged in hunting the furry sea-animals along the Japanese coast north to Bering Sea. The other vessels were two-masted schooners, but she was a three-master and the largest in the fleet. In fact, she was a full-rigged, three-topmast schooner, newly built.

Although Chris Farrington knew that justice was with him, and that he performed all his work faithfully and well, many a time, in secret thought, he longed for some pressing emergency to arise whereby he could demonstrate to the Scandinavian seamen that he also was an able seaman.

But one stormy night, by an accident for which he was in nowise accountable, in overhauling a spare anchor-chain he had all the fingers of his left hand badly crushed. And his hopes were likewise crushed, for it was impossible for him to continue hunting with the boats, and he was forced to stay idly aboard until his fingers should heal. Yet, although he little dreamed it, this very accident was to give him the long-looked-for opportunity.

One afternoon in the latter part of May the Sophie Sutherland rolled sluggishly in a breathless calm. The seals were abundant, the hunting good, and the boats were all away and out of sight. And with them was almost every man of the crew. Besides Chris, there remained only the captain, the sailing-master and the Chinese cook.

The captain was captain only by courtesy. He was an old man, past eighty, and blissfully ignorant of the sea and its ways; but he was the owner of the vessel, and hence the honorable title. Of course the sailing-master, who was really captain, was a thorough-going seaman. The mate, whose post was aboard, was out with the boats, having temporarily taken Chris's place as boat-steerer.

When good weather and good sport came together, the boats were accustomed to range far and wide, and often did not return to the schooner until long after dark. But for all that it was a perfect hunting day, Chris noted a growing anxiety on the part of the sailing-master. He paced the deck nervously, and was constantly sweeping the horizon with his marine glasses. Not a boat was in sight. As sunset arrived, he even sent Chris aloft to the mizzen-topmast-head, but with no better luck. The boats could not possibly be back before midnight.

Since noon the barometer had been falling with startling rapidity, and all the signs were ripe for a great storm — how great, not even the sailing-master anticipated. He and Chris set to work to prepare for it. They put storm gaskets on the furled topsails, lowered and stowed the foresail and spanker and took in the two inner jibs. In the one remaining jib they put a single reef, and a single reef in the mainsail.

Night had fallen before they finished, and with the darkness came the storm. A low moan swept over the sea, and the wind struck the Sophie Sutherland flat. But she righted quickly, and with the sailing-master at the wheel, sheered her bow into within

five points of the wind. Working as well as he could with his bandaged hand, and with the feeble aid of the Chinese cook, Chris went forward and backed the jib over the weather side. This with the flat mainsail left the schooner hove to.

“God help the boats! It’s no gale! It’s a typhoon!” the sailing-master shouted to Chris at eleven o’clock. “Too much canvas! Got to get two more reefs into that mainsail, and got to do it right away!” He glanced at the old captain, shivering in oilskins at the binnacle and holding on for dear life. “There’s only you and I, Chris — and the cook; but he’s next to worthless!”

In order to make the reef, it was necessary to lower the mainsail, and the removal of this after pressure was bound to make the schooner fall off before the wind and sea because of the forward pressure of the jib.

“Take the wheel!” the sailing-master directed. “And when I give the word, hard up with it! And when she’s square before it, steady her! And keep her there! We’ll heave to again as soon as I get the reefs in!”

Gripping the kicking spokes, Chris watched him and the reluctant cook go forward into the howling darkness. The Sophie Sutherland was plunging into the huge head-seas and wallowing tremendously, the tense steel stays and taut rigging humming like harp-strings to the wind. A buffeted cry came to his ears, and he felt the schooner’s bow paying off of its own accord. The mainsail was down!

He ran the wheel hard-over and kept anxious track of the changing direction of the wind on his face and of the heave of the vessel. This was the crucial moment. In performing the evolution she would have to pass broadside to the surge before she could get before it. The wind was blowing directly on his right cheek, when he felt the Sophie Sutherland lean over and begin to rise toward the sky — up — up — an infinite distance! Would she clear the crest of the gigantic wave?

Again by the feel of it, he could see nothing, he knew that a wall of water was rearing and curving far above him along the whole weather side. There was an instant’s calm as the liquid wall intervened and shut off the wind. The schooner righted, and for that instant seemed at perfect rest. Then she rolled to meet the descending rush.

Chris shouted to the captain to hold tight, and prepared himself for the shock. But the man did not live who could face it. An ocean of water smote Chris’s back and his clutch on the spokes was loosened as if it were a baby’s. Stunned, powerless, like a straw on the face of a torrent, he was swept onward he knew not whither. Missing the corner of the cabin, he was dashed forward along the poop runway a hundred feet or more, striking violently against the foot of the foremast. A second wave, crushing inboard, hurled him back the way he had come, and left him half-drowned where the poop steps should have been.

Bruised and bleeding, dimly conscious, he felt for the rail and dragged himself to his feet. Unless something could be done, he knew the last moment had come. As he faced the poop, the wind drove into his mouth with suffocating force. This brought him back to his senses with a start. The wind was blowing from dead aft! The schooner was out of the trough and before it! But the send of the sea was bound to breach her to again.

Crawling up the runway, he managed to get to the wheel just in time to prevent this. The binnacle light was still burning. They were safe!

That is, he and the schooner were safe. As to the welfare of his three companions he could not say. Nor did he dare leave the wheel in order to find out, for it took every second of his undivided attention to keep the vessel to her course. The least fraction of carelessness and the heave of the sea under the quarter was liable to thrust her into the trough. So, a boy of one hundred and forty pounds, he clung to his herculean task of guiding the two hundred straining tons of fabric amid the chaos of the great storm forces.

Half an hour later, groaning and sobbing, the captain crawled to Chris's feet. All was lost, he whimpered. He was smitten unto death. The galley had gone by the board, the mainsail and running-gear, the cook, everything!

"Where's the sailing-master?" Chris demanded when he had caught his breath after steadying a wild lurch of the schooner. It was no child's play to steer a vessel under single-reefed jib before a typhoon.

"Clean up for'ard," the old man replied. "Jammed under the fo'c'slehead, but still breathing. Both his arms are broken, he says, and he doesn't know how many ribs. He's hurt bad."

"Well, he'll drown there the way she's shipping water through the hawse-pipes. Go for'ard!" Chris commanded, taking charge of things as a matter of course. "Tell him not to worry; that I'm at the wheel. Help him as much as you can, and make him help" — he stopped and ran the spokes to starboard as a tremendous billow rose under the stern and yawed the schooner to port — "and make him help himself for the rest. Unship the fo'castle hatch and get him down into a bunk. Then ship the hatch again."

The captain turned his aged face forward and wavered pitifully. The waist of the ship was full of water to the bulwarks. He had just come through it, and knew death lurked every inch of the way.

"Go!" Chris shouted, fiercely. And as the fear-stricken man started, "And take another look for the cook!"

Two hours later, almost dead from suffering, the captain returned. He had obeyed orders. The sailing-master was helpless, although safe in a bunk; the cook was gone. Chris sent the captain below to the cabin to change his clothes.

After interminable hours of toil, day broke cold and gray. Chris looked about him. The Sophie Sutherland was racing before the typhoon like a thing possessed. There was no rain, but the wind whipped the spray of the sea mast-high, obscuring everything except in the immediate neighborhood.

Two waves only could Chris see at a time — the one before and the one behind. So small and insignificant the schooner seemed on the long Pacific roll! Rushing up a maddening mountain, she would poise like a cockle-shell on the giddy summit, breathless and rolling, leap outward and down into the yawning chasm beneath, and bury herself in the smother of foam at the bottom. Then the recovery, another mountain, another sickening upward rush, another poise, and the downward crash. Abreast of him,

to starboard, like a ghost of the storm, Chris saw the cook dashing apace with the schooner. Evidently, when washed overboard, he had grasped and become entangled in a trailing halyard.

For three hours more, along with this gruesome companion, Chris held the Sophie Sutherland before the wind and sea. He had long since forgotten his mangled fingers. The bandages had been torn away, and the cold, salt spray had eaten into the half-healed wounds until they were numb and no longer pained. But he was not cold. The terrific labor of steering forced the perspiration from every pore. Yet he was faint and weak with hunger and exhaustion, and hailed with delight the advent on deck of the captain, who fed him all of a pound of cake-chocolate. It strengthened him at once.

He ordered the captain to cut the halyard by which the cook's body was towing, and also to go forward and cut loose the jib-halyard and sheet. When he had done so, the jib fluttered a couple of moments like a handkerchief, then tore out of the bolt-ropes and vanished. The Sophie Sutherland was running under bare poles.

By noon the storm had spent itself, and by six in the evening the waves had died down sufficiently to let Chris leave the helm. It was almost hopeless to dream of the small boats weathering the typhoon, but there is always the chance in saving human life, and Chris at once applied himself to going back over the course along which he had fled. He managed to get a reef in one of the inner jibs and two reefs in the spanker, and then, with the aid of the watch-tackle, to hoist them to the stiff breeze that yet blew. And all through the night, tacking back and forth on the back track, he shook out canvas as fast as the wind would permit.

The injured sailing-master had turned delirious and between tending him and lending a hand with the ship, Chris kept the captain busy.

"Taught me more seamanship," as he afterward said, "than I'd learned on the whole voyage." But by daybreak the old man's feeble frame succumbed, and he fell off into exhausted sleep on the weather poop.

Chris, who could now lash the wheel, covered the tired man with blankets from below, and went fishing in the lazaretto for something to eat. But by the day following he found himself forced to give in, drowsing fitfully by the wheel and waking ever and anon to take a look at things.

On the afternoon of the third day he picked up a schooner, dismasted and battered. As he approached, close-hauled on the wind, he saw her decks crowded by an unusually large crew, and on sailing in closer, made out among others the faces of his missing comrades. And he was just in the nick of time, for they were fighting a losing fight at the pumps. An hour later they, with the crew of the sinking craft, were aboard the Sophie Sutherland.

Having wandered so far from their own vessel, they had taken refuge on the strange schooner just before the storm broke. She was a Canadian sealer on her first voyage, and as was now apparent, her last.

The captain of the Sophie Sutherland had a story to tell, also, and he told it well — so well, in fact, that when all hands were gathered together on deck during the dog-watch, Emil Johansen strode over to Chris and gripped him by the hand.

“Chris,” he said, so loudly that all could hear, “Chris, I gif in. You vas yoost so good a sailorman as I. You vas a bully boy and able seaman, and I pe proud for you!

“Und Chris! “ He turned as if he had forgotten something, and called back, “From dis time always you call me ‘Emil’ mitout der ‘Mister!’”

Chun Ah Chun

There was nothing striking in the appearance of Chun Ah Chun. He was rather undersized, as Chinese go, and the Chinese narrow shoulders and spareness of flesh were his. The average tourist, casually glimpsing him on the streets of Honolulu, would have concluded that he was a good-natured little Chinese, probably the proprietor of a prosperous laundry or tailorshop. In so far as good nature and prosperity went, the judgment would be correct, though beneath the mark; for Ah Chun was as good-natured as he was prosperous, and of the latter no man knew a tithe the tale. It was well known that he was enormously wealthy, but in his case “enormous” was merely the symbol for the unknown.

Ah Chun had shrewd little eyes, black and beady and so very little that they were like gimlet-holes. But they were wide apart, and they sheltered under a forehead that was patently the forehead of a thinker. For Ah Chun had his problems, and had had them all his life. Not that he ever worried over them. He was essentially a philosopher, and whether as coolie, or multi-millionaire and master of many men, his poise of soul was the same. He lived always in the high equanimity of spiritual repose, undeterred by good fortune, unruffled by ill fortune. All things went well with him, whether they were blows from the overseer in the cane field or a slump in the price of sugar when he owned those cane fields himself. Thus, from the steadfast rock of his sure content he mastered problems such as are given to few men to consider, much less to a Chinese peasant.

He was precisely that—a Chinese peasant, born to labour in the fields all his days like a beast, but fated to escape from the fields like the prince in a fairy tale. Ah Chun did not remember his father, a small farmer in a district not far from Canton; nor did he remember much of his mother, who had died when he was six. But he did remember his respected uncle, Ah Kow, for him had he served as a slave from his sixth year to his twenty-fourth. It was then that he escaped by contracting himself as a coolie to labour for three years on the sugar plantations of Hawaii for fifty cents a day.

Ah Chun was observant. He perceived little details that not one man in a thousand ever noticed. Three years he worked in the field, at the end of which time he knew more about cane-growing than the overseers or even the superintendent, while the superintendent would have been astounded at the knowledge the weazened little coolie possessed of the reduction processes in the mill. But Ah Chun did not study only sugar processes. He studied to find out how men came to be owners of sugar mills and plantations. One judgment he achieved early, namely, that men did not become rich from the labour of their own hands. He knew, for he had laboured for a score of years

himself. The men who grew rich did so from the labour of the hands of others. That man was richest who had the greatest number of his fellow creatures toiling for him.

So, when his term of contract was up, Ah Chun invested his savings in a small importing store, going into partnership with one, Ah Yung. The firm ultimately became the great one of "Ah Chun and Ah Yung," which handled anything from India silks and ginseng to guano islands and blackbird brigs. In the meantime, Ah Chun hired out as cook. He was a good cook, and in three years he was the highest-paid chef in Honolulu. His career was assured, and he was a fool to abandon it, as Dantin, his employer, told him; but Ah Chun knew his own mind best, and for knowing it was called a triple-fool and given a present of fifty dollars over and above the wages due him.

The firm of Ah Chun and Ah Yung was prospering. There was no need for Ah Chun longer to be a cook. There were boom times in Hawaii. Sugar was being extensively planted, and labour was needed. Ah Chun saw the chance, and went into the labour-importing business. He brought thousands of Cantonese coolies into Hawaii, and his wealth began to grow. He made investments. His beady black eyes saw bargains where other men saw bankruptcy. He bought a fish-pond for a song, which later paid five hundred per cent and was the opening wedge by which he monopolized the fish market of Honolulu. He did not talk for publication, nor figure in politics, nor play at revolutions, but he forecast events more clearly and farther ahead than did the men who engineered them. In his mind's eye he saw Honolulu a modern, electric-lighted city at a time when it straggled, unkempt and sand-tormented, over a barren reef of uplifted coral rock. So he bought land. He bought land from merchants who needed ready cash, from impecunious natives, from riotous traders' sons, from widows and orphans and the lepers deported to Molokai; and, somehow, as the years went by, the pieces of land he had bought proved to be needed for warehouses, or coffee buildings, or hotels. He leased, and rented, sold and bought, and resold again.

But there were other things as well. He put his confidence and his money into Parkinson, the renegade captain whom nobody would trust. And Parkinson sailed away on mysterious voyages in the little Vega. Parkinson was taken care of until he died, and years afterward Honolulu was astonished when the news leaked out that the Drake and Acorn guano islands had been sold to the British Phosphate Trust for three-quarters of a million. Then there were the fat, lush days of King Kalakaua, when Ah Chun paid three hundred thousand dollars for the opium licence. If he paid a third of a million for the drug monopoly, the investment was nevertheless a good one, for the dividends bought him the Kalalau Plantation, which, in turn, paid him thirty per cent for seventeen years and was ultimately sold by him for a million and a half.

It was under the Kamehamehas, long before, that he had served his own country as Chinese Consul—a position that was not altogether unluccrative; and it was under Kamehameha IV that he changed his citizenship, becoming an Hawaiian subject in order to marry Stella Allendale, herself a subject of the brown-skinned king, though more of Anglo-Saxon blood ran in her veins than of Polynesian. In fact, the random breeds in her were so attenuated that they were valued at eighths and sixteenths. In

the latter proportions was the blood of her great-grandmother, Paahao—the Princess Paahao, for she came of the royal line. Stella Allendale's great-grandfather had been a Captain Blunt, an English adventurer who took service under Kamehameha I and was made a tabu chief himself. Her grandfather had been a New Bedford whaling captain, while through her own father had been introduced a remote blend of Italian and Portuguese which had been grafted upon his own English stock. Legally a Hawaiian, Ah Chun's spouse was more of any one of three other nationalities.

And into this conglomerate of the races, Ah Chun introduced the Mongolian mixture. Thus, his children by Mrs. Ah Chun were one thirty-second Polynesian, one-sixteenth Italian, one sixteenth Portuguese, one-half Chinese, and eleven thirty-seconds English and American. It might well be that Ah Chun would have refrained from matrimony could he have foreseen the wonderful family that was to spring from this union. It was wonderful in many ways. First, there was its size. There were fifteen sons and daughters, mostly daughters. The sons had come first, three of them, and then had followed, in unswerving sequence, a round dozen of girls. The blend of the race was excellent. Not alone fruitful did it prove, for the progeny, without exception, was healthy and without blemish. But the most amazing thing about the family was its beauty. All the girls were beautiful—delicately, ethereally beautiful. Mamma Ah Chun's rotund lines seemed to modify papa Ah Chun's lean angles, so that the daughters were willowy without being lathy, round-muscled without being chubby. In every feature of every face were haunting reminiscences of Asia, all manipulated over and disguised by Old England, New England, and South of Europe. No observer, without information, would have guessed, the heavy Chinese strain in their veins; nor could any observer, after being informed, fail to note immediately the Chinese traces.

As beauties, the Ah Chun girls were something new. Nothing like them had been seen before. They resembled nothing so much as they resembled one another, and yet each girl was sharply individual. There was no mistaking one for another. On the other hand, Maud, who was blue-eyed and yellow-haired, would remind one instantly of Henrietta, an olive brunette with large, languishing dark eyes and hair that was blue-black. The hint of resemblance that ran through them all, reconciling every differentiation, was Ah Chun's contribution. He had furnished the groundwork upon which had been traced the blended patterns of the races. He had furnished the slim-boned Chinese frame, upon which had been builded the delicacies and subtleties of Saxon, Latin, and Polynesian flesh.

Mrs. Ah Chun had ideas of her own to which Ah Chun gave credence, though never permitting them expression when they conflicted with his own philosophic calm. She had been used all her life to living in European fashion. Very well. Ah Chun gave her a European mansion. Later, as his sons and daughters grew able to advise, he built a bungalow, a spacious, rambling affair, as unpretentious as it was magnificent. Also, as time went by, there arose a mountain house on Tantalus, to which the family could flee when the "sick wind" blew from the south. And at Waikiki he built a beach residence on an extensive site so well chosen that later on, when the United States government

condemned it for fortification purposes, an immense sum accompanied the condemnation. In all his houses were billiard and smoking rooms and guest rooms galore, for Ah Chun's wonderful progeny was given to lavish entertainment. The furnishing was extravagantly simple. Kings' ransoms were expended without display—thanks to the educated tastes of the progeny.

Ah Chun had been liberal in the matter of education. "Never mind expense," he had argued in the old days with Parkinson when that slack mariner could see no reason for making the Vega seaworthy; "you sail the schooner, I pay the bills." And so with his sons and daughters. It had been for them to get the education and never mind the expense. Harold, the eldest-born, had gone to Harvard and Oxford; Albert and Charles had gone through Yale in the same classes. And the daughters, from the eldest down, had undergone their preparation at Mills Seminary in California and passed on to Vassar, Wellesley, or Bryn Mawr. Several, having so desired, had had the finishing touches put on in Europe. And from all the world Ah Chun's sons and daughters returned to him to suggest and advise in the garnishment of the chaste magnificence of his residences. Ah Chun himself preferred the voluptuous glitter of Oriental display; but he was a philosopher, and he clearly saw that his children's tastes were correct according to Western standards.

Of course, his children were not known as the Ah Chun children. As he had evolved from a coolie labourer to a multi-millionaire, so had his name evolved. Mamma Ah Chun had spelled it A'Chun, but her wiser offspring had elided the apostrophe and spelled it Achun. Ah Chun did not object. The spelling of his name interfered no whit with his comfort nor his philosophic calm. Besides, he was not proud. But when his children arose to the height of a starched shirt, a stiff collar, and a frock coat, they did interfere with his comfort and calm. Ah Chun would have none of it. He preferred the loose-flowing robes of China, and neither could they cajole nor bully him into making the change. They tried both courses, and in the latter one failed especially disastrously. They had not been to America for nothing. They had learned the virtues of the boycott as employed by organized labour, and he, their father, Chun Ah Chun, they boycotted in his own house, Mamma Achun aiding and abetting. But Ah Chun himself, while unversed in Western culture, was thoroughly conversant with Western labour conditions. An extensive employer of labour himself, he knew how to cope with its tactics. Promptly he imposed a lockout on his rebellious progeny and erring spouse. He discharged his scores of servants, locked up his stables, closed his houses, and went to live in the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, in which enterprise he happened to be the heaviest stockholder. The family fluttered distractedly on visits about with friends, while Ah Chun calmly managed his many affairs, smoked his long pipe with the tiny silver bowl, and pondered the problem of his wonderful progeny.

This problem did not disturb his calm. He knew in his philosopher's soul that when it was ripe he would solve it. In the meantime he enforced the lesson that complacent as he might be, he was nevertheless the absolute dictator of the Achun destinies. The family held out for a week, then returned, along with Ah Chun and the many servants, to

occupy the bungalow once more. And thereafter no question was raised when Ah Chun elected to enter his brilliant drawing-room in blue silk robe, wadded slippers, and black silk skull-cap with red button peak, or when he chose to draw at his slender-stemmed silver-bowled pipe among the cigarette-and cigar-smoking officers and civilians on the broad verandas or in the smoking room.

Ah Chun occupied a unique position in Honolulu. Though he did not appear in society, he was eligible anywhere. Except among the Chinese merchants of the city, he never went out; but he received, and he always was the centre of his household and the head of his table. Himself peasant, born Chinese, he presided over an atmosphere of culture and refinement second to none in all the islands. Nor were there any in all the islands too proud to cross his threshold and enjoy his hospitality. First of all, the Ah Chun bungalow was of irreproachable tone. Next, Ah Chun was a power. And finally, Ah Chun was a moral paragon and an honest business man. Despite the fact that business morality was higher than on the mainland, Ah Chun outshone the business men of Honolulu in the scrupulous rigidity of his honesty. It was a saying that his word was as good as his bond. His signature was never needed to bind him. He never broke his word. Twenty years after Hotchkiss, of Hotchkiss, Morterson Company, died, they found among mislaid papers a memorandum of a loan of thirty thousand dollars to Ah Chun. It had been incurred when Ah Chun was Privy Councillor to Kamehameha II. In the bustle and confusion of those heyday, money-making times, the affair had slipped Ah Chun's mind. There was no note, no legal claim against him, but he settled in full with the Hotchkiss' Estate, voluntarily paying a compound interest that dwarfed the principal. Likewise, when he verbally guaranteed the disastrous Kakiku Ditch Scheme, at a time when the least sanguine did not dream a guarantee necessary—"Signed his cheque for two hundred thousand without a quiver, gentlemen, without a quiver," was the report of the secretary of the defunct enterprise, who had been sent on the forlorn hope of finding out Ah Chun's intentions. And on top of the many similar actions that were true of his word, there was scarcely a man of repute in the islands that at one time or another had not experienced the helping financial hand of Ah Chun.

So it was that Honolulu watched his wonderful family grow up into a perplexing problem and secretly sympathized with him, for it was beyond any of them to imagine what he was going to do with it. But Ah Chun saw the problem more clearly than they. No one knew as he knew the extent to which he was an alien in his family. His own family did not guess it. He saw that there was no place for him amongst this marvellous seed of his loins, and he looked forward to his declining years and knew that he would grow more and more alien. He did not understand his children. Their conversation was of things that did not interest him and about which he knew nothing. The culture of the West had passed him by. He was Asiatic to the last fibre, which meant that he was heathen. Their Christianity was to him so much nonsense. But all this he would have ignored as extraneous and irrelevant, could he have but understood the young people themselves. When Maud, for instance, told him that the housekeeping bills for the month were thirty thousand—that he understood, as he understood Albert's request

for five thousand with which to buy the schooner yacht Muriel and become a member of the Hawaiian Yacht Club. But it was their remoter, complicated desires and mental processes that obfuscated him. He was not slow in learning that the mind of each son and daughter was a secret labyrinth which he could never hope to tread. Always he came upon the wall that divides East from West. Their souls were inaccessible to him, and by the same token he knew that his soul was inaccessible to them.

Besides, as the years came upon him, he found himself harking back more and more to his own kind. The reeking smells of the Chinese quarter were spicy to him. He sniffed them with satisfaction as he passed along the street, for in his mind they carried him back to the narrow tortuous alleys of Canton swarming with life and movement. He regretted that he had cut off his queue to please Stella Allendale in the prenuptial days, and he seriously considered the advisability of shaving his crown and growing a new one. The dishes his highly paid chef concocted for him failed to tickle his reminiscent palate in the way that the weird messes did in the stuffy restaurant down in the Chinese quarter. He enjoyed vastly more a half-hour's smoke and chat with two or three Chinese chums, than to preside at the lavish and elegant dinners for which his bungalow was famed, where the pick of the Americans and Europeans sat at the long table, men and women on equality, the women with jewels that blazed in the subdued light against white necks and arms, the men in evening dress, and all chattering and laughing over topics and witticisms that, while they were not exactly Greek to him, did not interest him nor entertain.

But it was not merely his alienness and his growing desire to return to his Chinese flesh-pots that constituted the problem. There was also his wealth. He had looked forward to a placid old age. He had worked hard. His reward should have been peace and repose. But he knew that with his immense fortune peace and repose could not possibly be his. Already there were signs and omens. He had seen similar troubles before. There was his old employer, Dantin, whose children had wrested from him, by due process of law, the management of his property, having the Court appoint guardians to administer it for him. Ah Chun knew, and knew thoroughly well, that had Dantin been a poor man, it would have been found that he could quite rationally manage his own affairs. And old Dantin had had only three children and half a million, while he, Chun Ah Chun, had fifteen children and no one but himself knew how many millions.

"Our daughters are beautiful women," he said to his wife, one evening. "There are many young men. The house is always full of young men. My cigar bills are very heavy. Why are there no marriages?"

Mamma Achun shrugged her shoulders and waited.

"Women are women and men are men—it is strange there are no marriages. Perhaps the young men do not like our daughters."

"Ah, they like them well enough," Mamma Chun answered; "but you see, they cannot forget that you are your daughters' father."

"Yet you forgot who my father was," Ah Chun said gravely. "All you asked was for me to cut off my queue."

"The young men are more particular than I was, I fancy."

"What is the greatest thing in the world?" Ah Chun demanded with abrupt irrelevance.

Mamma Achun pondered for a moment, then replied: "God."

He nodded. "There are gods and gods. Some are paper, some are wood, some are bronze. I use a small one in the office for a paper-weight. In the Bishop Museum are many gods of coral rock and lava stone."

"But there is only one God," she announced decisively, stiffening her ample frame argumentatively.

Ah Chun noted the danger signal and sheered off.

"What is greater than God, then?" he asked. "I will tell you. It is money. In my time I have had dealings with Jews and Christians, Mohammedans and Buddhists, and with little black men from the Solomons and New Guinea who carried their god about them, wrapped in oiled paper. They possessed various gods, these men, but they all worshipped money. There is that Captain Higginson. He seems to like Henrietta."

"He will never marry her," retorted Mamma Achun. "He will be an admiral before he dies—"

"A rear-admiral," Ah Chun interpolated.

"Yes, I know. That is the way they retire."

"His family in the United States is a high one. They would not like it if he married . . . if he did not marry an American girl."

Ah Chun knocked the ashes out of his pipe, thoughtfully refilling the silver bowl with a tiny pletet of tobacco. He lighted it and smoked it out before he spoke.

"Henrietta is the oldest girl. The day she marries I will give her three hundred thousand dollars. That will fetch that Captain Higginson and his high family along with him. Let the word go out to him. I leave it to you."

And Ah Chun sat and smoked on, and in the curling smoke-wreaths he saw take shape the face and figure of Toy Shuey—Toy Shuey, the maid of all work in his uncle's house in the Cantonese village, whose work was never done and who received for a whole year's work one dollar. And he saw his youthful self arise in the curling smoke, his youthful self who had toiled eighteen years in his uncle's field for little more. And now he, Ah Chun, the peasant, dowered his daughter with three hundred thousand years of such toil. And she was but one daughter of a dozen. He was not elated at the thought. It struck him that it was a funny, whimsical world, and he chuckled aloud and startled Mamma Achun from a revery which he knew lay deep in the hidden crypts of her being where he had never penetrated.

But Ah Chun's word went forth, as a whisper, and Captain Higginson forgot his rear-admiralship and his high family and took to wife three hundred thousand dollars and a refined and cultured girl who was one thirty-second Polynesian, one-sixteenth

Italian, one-sixteenth Portuguese, eleven thirty-seconds English and Yankee, and one-half Chinese.

Ah Chun's munificence had its effect. His daughters became suddenly eligible and desirable. Clara was the next, but when the Secretary of the Territory formally proposed for her, Ah Chun informed him that he must wait his turn, that Maud was the oldest and that she must be married first. It was shrewd policy. The whole family was made vitally interested in marrying off Maud, which it did in three months, to Ned Humphreys, the United States immigration commissioner. Both he and Maud complained, for the dowry was only two hundred thousand. Ah Chun explained that his initial generosity had been to break the ice, and that after that his daughters could not expect otherwise than to go more cheaply.

Clara followed Maud, and thereafter, for a space of two years; there was a continuous round of weddings in the bungalow. In the meantime Ah Chun had not been idle. Investment after investment was called in. He sold out his interests in a score of enterprises, and step by step, so as not to cause a slump in the market, he disposed of his large holdings in real estate. Toward the last he did precipitate a slump and sold at sacrifice. What caused this haste were the squalls he saw already rising above the horizon. By the time Lucille was married, echoes of bickerings and jealousies were already rumbling in his ears. The air was thick with schemes and counter-schemes to gain his favour and to prejudice him against one or another or all but one of his sons-in-law. All of which was not conducive to the peace and repose he had planned for his old age.

He hastened his efforts. For a long time he had been in correspondence with the chief banks in Shanghai and Macao. Every steamer for several years had carried away drafts drawn in favour of one, Chun Ah Chun, for deposit in those Far Eastern banks. The drafts now became heavier. His two youngest daughters were not yet married. He did not wait, but dowered them with a hundred thousand each, which sums lay in the Bank of Hawaii, drawing interest and awaiting their wedding day. Albert took over the business of the firm of Ah Chun and Ah Yung, Harold, the eldest, having elected to take a quarter of a million and go to England to live. Charles, the youngest, took a hundred thousand, a legal guardian, and a course in a Keeley institute. To Mamma Achun was given the bungalow, the mountain House on Tantalus, and a new seaside residence in place of the one Ah Chun sold to the government. Also, to Mamma Achun was given half a million in money well invested.

Ah Chun was now ready to crack the nut of the problem. One fine morning when the family was at breakfast—he had seen to it that all his sons-in-law and their wives were present—he announced that he was returning to his ancestral soil. In a neat little homily he explained that he had made ample provision for his family, and he laid down various maxims that he was sure, he said, would enable them to dwell together in peace and harmony. Also, he gave business advice to his sons-in-law, preached the virtues of temperate living and safe investments, and gave them the benefit of his encyclopedic knowledge of industrial and business conditions in Hawaii. Then he called

for his carriage, and, in the company of the weeping Mamma Achun, was driven down to the Pacific Mail steamer, leaving behind him a panic in the bungalow. Captain Higginson clamoured wildly for an injunction. The daughters shed copious tears. One of their husbands, an ex-Federal judge, questioned Ah Chun's sanity, and hastened to the proper authorities to inquire into it. He returned with the information that Ah Chun had appeared before the commission the day before, demanded an examination, and passed with flying colours. There was nothing to be done, so they went down and said good-bye to the little old man, who waved farewell from the promenade deck as the big steamer poked her nose seaward through the coral reef.

But the little old man was not bound for Canton. He knew his own country too well, and the squeeze of the Mandarins, to venture into it with the tidy bulk of wealth that remained to him. He went to Macao. Now Ah Chun had long exercised the power of a king and he was as imperious as a king. When he landed at Macao and went into the office of the biggest European hotel to register, the clerk closed the book on him. Chinese were not permitted. Ah Chun called for the manager and was treated with contumely. He drove away, but in two hours he was back again. He called the clerk and manager in, gave them a month's salary, and discharged them. He had made himself the owner of the hotel; and in the finest suite he settled down during the many months the gorgeous palace in the suburbs was building for him. In the meantime, with the inevitable ability that was his, he increased the earnings of his big hotel from three per cent to thirty.

The troubles Ah Chun had flown began early. There were sons-in-law that made bad investments, others that played ducks and drakes with the Achun dowries. Ah Chun being out of it, they looked at Mamma Ah Chun and her half million, and, looking, engendered not the best of feeling toward one another. Lawyers waxed fat in the striving to ascertain the construction of trust deeds. Suits, cross-suits, and counter-suits cluttered the Hawaiian courts. Nor did the police courts escape. There were angry encounters in which harsh words and harsher blows were struck. There were such things as flower pots being thrown to add emphasis to winged words. And suits for libel arose that dragged their way through the courts and kept Honolulu agog with excitement over the revelations of the witnesses.

In his palace, surrounded by all dear delights of the Orient, Ah Chun smokes his placid pipe and listens to the turmoil overseas. By each mail steamer, in faultless English, typewritten on an American machine, a letter goes from Macao to Honolulu, in which, by admirable texts and precepts, Ah Chun advises his family to live in unity and harmony. As for himself, he is out of it all, and well content. He has won to peace and repose. At times he chuckles and rubs his hands, and his slant little black eyes twinkle merrily at the thought of the funny world. For out of all his living and philosophizing, that remains to him—the conviction that it is a very funny world.

Created He Them

SHE met him at the door.

"I did not think you would be so early."

"It is half past eight." He looked at his watch. "The train leaves a 9:12."

He was very businesslike, until he saw her lips tremble as she abruptly turned and led the way.

"It'll be all right, little woman," he said soothingly. "Doctor Bodineau's the man. He'll pull him through, you'll see."

They entered the living-room. His glance quested apprehensively about, then turned to her.

"Where's Al?"

She did not answer, but with a sudden impulse came close to him and stood motionless. She was a slender, dark-eyed woman, in whose face was stamped the strain and stress of living. But the fine lines and the haunted look in the eyes were not the handiwork of mere worry. He knew whose handiwork it was as he looked upon it, and she knew when she consulted her mirror.

"It's no use, Mary," he said. He put his hand on her shoulder. "We've tried everything. It's a wretched business, I know, but what else can we do? You've failed. Doctor Bodineau's all that's left."

"If I had another chance . . ." she began falteringly.

"We've threshed that all out," he answered harshly. "You've got to buck up, now. You know what conclusion we arrived at. You know you haven't the ghost of a hope in another chance."

She shook her head. "I know it. But it is terrible, the thought of his going away to fight it out alone."

"He won't be alone. There's Doctor Bodineau. And besides, it's a beautiful place."

She remained silent.

"It is the only thing," he said.

"It is the only thing," she repeated mechanically.

He looked at his watch. "Where's Al?"

"I'll send him."

When the door had closed behind her, he walked over to the window and looked out, drumming absently with his knuckles on the pane.

"Hello."

He turned and responded to the greeting of the man who had just entered. There was a perceptible drag to the man's feet as he walked across toward the window and paused irresolutely halfway.

"I've changed my mind, George," he announced hurriedly and nervously. "I'm not going."

He plucked at his sleeve, shuffled with his feet, dropped his eyes, and with a strong effort raised them again to confront the other.

George regarded him silently, his nostrils distending and his lean fingers unconsciously crooking like an eagle's talons about to clutch.

In line and feature there was much of resemblance between the two men; and yet, in the strongest resemblances there was a radical difference. Theirs were the same black eyes, but those of the man at the window were sharp and straight looking, while those of the man in the middle of the room were cloudy and furtive. He could not face the other's gaze, and continually and vainly struggled with himself to do so. The high cheek bones with the hollows beneath were the same, yet the texture of the hollows seemed different. The thin-lipped mouths were from the same mould, but George's lips were firm and muscular, while Al's were soft and loose—the lips of an ascetic turned voluptuary. There was also a sag at the corners. His flesh hinted of grossness, especially so in the eagle-like aquiline nose that must once have been the other's, but that had lost the austerity the other's still retained.

Al fought for steadiness in the middle of the floor. The silence bothered him. He had a feeling that he was about to begin swaying back and forth. He moistened his lips with his tongue.

"I'm going to stay," he said desperately.

He dropped his eyes and plucked again at his sleeve.

"And you are only twenty-six years old," George said at last. "You poor, feeble old man." lilt.

"Don't be so sure of that," Al retorted, with a flash of belligerence.

"Do you remember when we swam that mile and a half across the channel?"

"Well, and what of it?" A sullen expression was creeping across Al's face.

"And do you remember when we boxed in the barn after school?"

"I could take all you gave me."

"All I gave you!" George's voice rose momentarily to a higher pitch. "You licked me four afternoons out of five. You were twice as strong as I—three times as strong. And now I'd be afraid to land on you with a sofa cushion; you'd crumple up like a last year's leaf. You'd die, you poor, miserable old man."

"You needn't abuse me just because I've changed my mind," the other protested, the hint of a whine in his voice.

His wife entered, and he looked appeal to her; but the man at the window strode suddenly up to him and burst out:—

"You don't know your own mind for two successive minutes! You haven't any mind, you spineless, crawling worm!"

"You can't make me angry." Al smiled with cunning, and glanced triumphantly at his wife. "You can't make me angry," he repeated, as though the idea were thoroughly gratifying to him. "I know your game. It's my stomach, I tell you. I can't help it. Before God, I can't! Isn't it my stomach, Mary?"

She glanced at George and spoke composedly, though she hid a trembling hand in a fold of her skirt.

"Isn't it time?" she asked softly.

Her husband turned upon her savagely. "I'm not going to go!" he cried. "That's just what I've been telling . . . him. And I tell you again, all of you, I'm not going. You can't bully me." "Why, Al, dear, you said—" she began.

"Never mind what I said!" he broke out. "I've said something else right now, and you've heard it, and that settles it."

He walked across the room and threw himself with emphasis into a Morris chair. But the other man was swiftly upon him. The talon-like fingers gripped his shoulders, jerked him to his feet, and held him there.

"You've reached the limit, Al, and I want you to understand it. I've tried to treat you like . . . like my brother, but hereafter I shall treat you like the thing that you are. Do you understand?"

The anger in his voice was cold. The blaze in his eyes was cold. It was vastly more effective than any outburst, and Al cringed under it and under the clutching hand that was bruising his shoulder muscles.

"It is only because of me that you have this house, that you have the food you eat. Your position? Any other man would have been shown the door a year ago—two years ago. I have held you in it. Your salary has been charity. It has been paid out of my pocket. Mary . . . her dresses. . . that gown she has on is made over; she wears the discarded dresses of her sisters, of my wife. Charity—do you understand? Your children—they are wearing the discarded clothes of my children, of the children of my neighbors who think the clothes went to some orphan asylum. And it is an orphan asylum . . . or it soon will be."

He emphasized each point with an unconscious tightening of his grip on the shoulder. Al was squirming with the pain of it. The sweat was starting out on his forehead.

"Now listen well to me," his brother went on. "In three minutes you will tell me that you are going with me. If you don't, Mary and the children will be taken away from you—to-day. You needn't ever come to the office. This house will be closed to you. And in six months I shall have the pleasure of burying you. You have three minutes to make up your mind."

Al made a strangling movement, and reached up with weak fingers to the clutching hand.

"My heart . . . let me go . . . you'll be the death of me," he gasped.

The hand thrust him down forcibly into the Morris chair and released him.

The clock on the mantle ticked loudly. George glanced at it, and at Mary. She was leaning against the table, unable to conceal her trembling. He became unpleasantly

aware of the feeling of his brother's fingers on his hand. Quite unconsciously he wiped the back of the hand upon his coat. The clock ticked on in the silence. It seemed to George that the room reverberated with his voice. He could hear himself still speaking.

"I'll go," came from the Morris chair.

It was a weak and shaken voice, and it was a weak and shaken man that pulled himself out of the Morris chair. He started toward the door.

"Where are you going?" George demanded.

"Suit case," came the response. "Mary'll send the trunk later. I'll be back in a minute."

The door closed after him. A moment later, struck with sudden suspicion, George was opening the door. He glanced in. His brother stood at a sideboard, in one hand a decanter, in the other hand, bottom up and to his lips, a whiskey glass.

Across the glass Al saw that he was observed. It threw him into a panic. Hastily he tried to refill the glass and get it to his lips; but glass and decanter were sent smashing to the floor. He snarled. It was like the sound of a wild beast. But the grip on his shoulder subdued and frightened him. He was being propelled toward the door.

"The suit case," he gasped. "It's there . . . in that room. Let me get it."

"Where's the key?" his brother asked, when he had brought it.

"It isn't locked."

The next moment the suit case was spread open, and George's hand was searching the contents. From one side it brought out a bottle of whiskey, from the other side a flask. He snapped the case shut.

"Come on," he said. "If we miss one car, we miss that train."

He went out into the hallway, leaving Al with his wife. It was like a funeral, George thought, as he waited.

His brother's overcoat caught on the knob of the front door and delayed its closing long enough for Mary's first sob to come to their ears. George's lips were very thin and compressed as he went down the steps. In one hand he carried the suit case. With the other hand he held his brother's arm.

As they neared the corner, he heard the electric car a block away, and urged his brother on. Al was breathing hard. His feet dragged, and shuffled, and he held back.

"A hell of a brother you are," he panted.

For reply, he received a vicious jerk on his arm. It reminded him of his childhood when he was hurried along by some angry grown-up. And like a child, he had to be helped up the car step. He sank down on an outside seat, panting, sweating, overcome by the exertion. He followed George's eyes as the latter looked him up and down.

"A hell of a brother you are," was George's comment when he had finished the inspection.

Moisture welled into Al's eyes.

"It's my stomach," he said with self-pity.

"I don't wonder," was the retort. "Burnt out like the crater of a volcano. Fervent heat isn't a circumstance."

Thereafter they did not speak. When they arrived at the transfer point, George came to himself with a start. He smiled. With fixed gaze that did not see the houses that streamed across his field of vision, he had himself been sunk deep in self-pity. He helped his brother from the car, and looked up the intersecting street. The car they were to take was not in sight.

Al's eyes chanced upon the corner grocery and saloon across the way. At once he became restless. His hands passed beyond his control, and he yearned hungrily across the street to the door that swung open even as he looked and let in a happy pilgrim. And in that instant he saw the white-jacketed bar-tender against an array of glittering glass. Quite unconsciously he started to cross the street.

"Hold on." George's hand was on his arm.

"I want some whiskey," he answered.

"You've already had some."

"That was hours ago. Go on, George, let me have some. It's the last day. Don't shut off on me until we get there—God knows it will be soon enough."

George glanced desperately up the street. The car was in sight.

"There isn't time for a drink," he said.

"I don't want a drink. I want a bottle." Al's voice became wheedling. "Go on, George. It's the last, the very last."

"No." The denial was as final as George's thin lips could make it.

Al glanced at the approaching car. He sat down suddenly on the curbstone.

"What's the matter?" his brother asked, with momentary alarm.

"Nothing. I want some whiskey. It's my stomach."

"Come on now, get up."

George reached for him, but was anticipated, for his brother sprawled flat on the pavement, oblivious to the dirt and to the curious glances of the passers-by. The car was clanging its gong at the crossing, a block away.

"You'll miss it," Al grinned from the pavement. "And it will be your fault."

George's fists clenched tightly.

"For two cents I'd give you a thrashing."

"And miss the car," was the triumphant comment from the pavement.

George looked at the car. It was halfway down the block. He looked at his watch. He debated a second longer.

"All right," he said. "I'll get it. But you get on that car. If you miss it, I'll break the bottle over your head."

He dashed across the street and into the saloon. The car came in and stopped. There were no passengers to get off. Al dragged himself up the steps and sat down. He smiled as the conductor rang the bell and the car started. The swinging door of the saloon burst open. Clutching in his hand the suit case and a pint bottle of whiskey, George started in pursuit. The conductor, his hand on the bell cord, waited to see if it would be necessary to stop. It was not. George swung lightly aboard, sat down beside his brother, and passed him the bottle.

"You might have got a quart," Al said reproachfully.

He extracted the cork with a pocket corkscrew, and elevated the bottle.

"I'm sick . . . my stomach," he explained in apologetic tones to the passenger who sat next to him.

On the train they sat in the smoking-car. George felt that it was imperative. Also, having successfully caught the train, his heart softened. He felt more kindly toward his brother, and accused himself of unnecessary harshness. He strove to atone by talking about their mother, and sisters, and the little affairs and interests of the family. But Al was morose, and devoted himself to the bottle. As the time passed, his mouth hung looser and looser, while the rings under his eyes seemed to puff out and all his facial muscles to relax.

"It's my stomach," he said, once, when he finished the bottle and dropped it under the seat; but the swift hardening of his brother's face did not encourage further explanations.

The conveyance that met them at the station had all the dignity and luxuriousness of a private carriage. George's eyes were keen for the ear marks of the institution to which they were going, but his apprehensions were allayed from moment to moment. As they entered the wide gateway and rolled on through the spacious grounds, he felt sure that the institutional side of the place would not jar upon his brother. It was more like a summer hotel, or, better yet, a country club. And as they swept on through the spring sunshine, the songs of birds in his ears and in his nostrils the breath of flowers, George sighed for a week of rest in such a place, and before his eyes loomed the arid vista of summer in town and at the office. There was not room in his income for his brother and himself.

"Let us take a walk in the grounds," he suggested, after they had met Doctor Bodineau and inspected the quarters assigned to Al. "The carriage leaves for the station in half an hour, and we'll just have time."

"It's beautiful," he remarked a moment later. Under his feet was the velvet grass, the trees arched overhead, and he stood in mottled sunshine. "I wish I could stay for a month."

"I'll trade places with you," Al said quickly.

George laughed it off, but he felt a sinking of the heart.

"Look at that oak!" he cried. "And that woodpecker! Isn't he a beauty!"

"I don't like it here," he heard his brother mutter.

George's lips tightened in preparation for the struggle, but he said:—

"I'm going to send Mary and the children off to the mountains. She needs it, and so do they. And when you're in shape, I'll send you right on to join them. Then you can take your summer vacation before you come back to the office."

"I'm not going to stay in this damned hole, for all you talk about it," Al announced abruptly.

"Yes you are, and you're going to get your health and strength back again so that the look of you will put the color in Mary's cheeks where it used to be."

"I'm going back with you." Al's voice was firm. "I'm going to take the same train back. It's about time for that carriage, I guess."

"I haven't told you all my plans," George tried to go on, but Al cut him off.

"You might as well quit that. I don't want any of your soapy talking. You treat me like a child. I'm not a child. My mind's made up, and I'll show you how long it can stay made up. You needn't talk to me. I don't care a rap for what you're going to say."

A baleful light was in his eyes, and to his brother he seemed for all the world like a cornered rat, desperate and ready to fight. As George looked at him he remembered back to their childhood, and it came to him that at last was aroused in Al the same old stubborn strain that had enabled him, as a child, to stand against all force and persuasion.

George abandoned hope. He had lost. This creature was not human. The last fine instinct of the human had fled. It was a brute, sluggish and stolid, impossible to move—just the raw stuff of life, combative, rebellious, and indomitable. And as he contemplated his brother he felt in himself the rising up of a similar brute. He became suddenly aware that his fingers were tensing and crooking like a thug's, and he knew the desire to kill. And his reason, turned traitor at last, counselled that he should kill, that it was the only thing left for him to do.

He was aroused by a servant calling to him through the trees that the carriage was waiting. He answered. Then, looking straight before him, he discovered his brother. He had forgotten it was his brother. It had been only a thing the moment before. He began to talk, and as he talked the way became clear to him His reason had not turned traitor.

The brute in him had merely orientated his reason

"You are no earthly good, Al," he said. "You know that. You've made Mary's life a hell You are a curse to your children And you have not made life exactly a paradise for the rest of us."

"There's no use your talking," Al interjected. "I'm not going to stay here."

"That's what I'm coming to," George continued. "You don't have stay here." (Al's face brightened, and he involuntarily made a movement, I meet, as though about to start toward the carriage.) "On the other hand, it is not necessary that you should return with me. There is another way."

George's hand went to his hip pocket and appeared with a revolver. It lay along his palm, the butt toward Al, and toward Al he extended it. At the same time, with his head, he indicated the near-by thicket.

"You can't bluff me," Al snarled.

"It is not a bluff, Al. Look at me. I mean it. And if you don't do it for yourself, I shall have to do it for you."

They faced each other, the proffered revolver still extended. Al debated for a moment, then his eyes blazed. With a quick movement he seized the revolver.

"My God! I'll do it," he said. "I'll show you what I've got in me."

George felt suddenly sick. He turned away. He did not see his brother enter the thicket, but he heard the passage of his body through the leaves and branches.

“Good-by, Al,” he called.

“Good-by,” came from the thicket.

George felt the sweat upon his forehead. He began mopping his face with his handkerchief. He heard, as from a remote distance, the voice of the servant again calling to him that the carriage was waiting. The woodpecker dropped down through the mottled sunshine and lighted on the trunk of a tree a dozen feet away. George felt that it was all a dream, and yet through it all he felt supreme justification. It was the right thing to do. It was the only thing.

His whole body gave a spasmodic start, as though the revolver had been fired. It was the voice of Al, close at his back.

“Here’s your gun,” Al said. “I’ll stay.”

The servant appeared among the trees, approaching rapidly and calling anxiously. George put the weapon in his pocket and caught both his brother’s hands in his own.

“God bless you, old man,” he murmured; “and”—with a final ueeze of the hands—“good luck!”

“I’m coming,” he called to the servant; and turned and ran through the trees toward the carriage.

A Curious Fragment

[The capitalist, or industrial oligarch, Roger Vanderwater, mentioned in the narrative, has been identified as the ninth in the line of the Vanderwaters that controlled for hundreds of years the cotton factories of the South. This Roger Vanderwater flourished in the last decades of the twentysixth century after Christ, which was the fifth century of the terrible industrial oligarchy that was reared upon the ruins of the early Republic.

From internal evidences we are convinced that the narrative which follows was not reduced to writing till the twenty-ninth century. Not only was it unlawful to write or print such matter during that period, but the working-class was so illiterate that only in rare instances were its members able to read and write. This was the dark reign of the overman, in whose speech the great mass of the people were characterized as the “herd animals.” All literacy was frowned upon and stamped out. From the statute books of the times may be instanced that black law that made it a capital offence for any man, no matter of what class, to teach even the alphabet to a member of the working-class. Such stringent limitation of education to the ruling class was necessary if that class was to continue to rule.

One result of the foregoing was the development of the professional story-tellers. These story-tellers were paid by the oligarchy, and the tales they told were legendary, mythical, romantic, and harmless. But the spirit of freedom never quite died out, and agitators, under the guise of storytellers, preached revolt to the slave class. That the following tale was banned by the oligarchs we have proof from the records of the criminal police court of Ashbury, wherein, on January 27, 2734, one John Tourney, found guilty of telling the tale in a boozing-ken of laborers, was sentenced to five years’ penal servitude in the borax mines of the Arizona Desert.

— EDITOR’S NOTE.]

LISTEN, my brothers, and I will tell you a tale of an arm. It was the arm of Tom Dixon, and Tom Dixon was a weaver of the first class in a factory of that hell-hound and master, Roger Vanderwater. This factory was called “Hell’s Bottom” . . . by the slaves who toiled in it, and I guess they ought to know; and it was situated in Kingsbury, at the other end of the town from Vanderwater’s summer palace. You do not know where Kingsbury is? There are many things, my brothers, that you do not know, and it is sad. It is because you do not know that you are slaves. When I have told you this tale, I should like to form a class among you for the learning of written and printed speech. Our masters read and write and possess many books, and it is because of that that they are our masters, and live in palaces, and do not work. When the toilers learn to

read and write,—all of them,—they will grow strong; then they will use their strength to break their bonds, and there will be no more masters and no more slaves.

Kingsbury, my brothers, is in the old State of Alabama. For three hundred years the Vanderwaters have owned Kingsbury and its slave pens and factories, and slave pens and factories in many other places and States. You have heard of the Vanderwaters,—who has not?—but let me tell you things you do not know about them. The first Vanderwater was a slave, even as you and I. Have you got that? He was a slave, and that was over three hundred years ago. His father was a machinist in the slave pen of Alexander Burrell, and his mother was a washerwoman in the same slave pen. There is no doubt about this. I am telling you truth. It is history. It is printed, every word of it, in the history books of our masters, which you cannot read because your masters will not permit you to learn to read. You can understand why they will not permit you to learn to read, when there are such things in the books. They know, and they are very wise. If you did read such things, you might be wanting in respect to your masters, which would be a dangerous thing . . . to your masters. But I know, for I can read, and I am telling you what I have read with my own eyes in the history books of our masters.

The first Vanderwater's name was not Vanderwater; it was Vange—Bill Vange, the son of Yergis Vange, the machinist, and Laura Carnly, the washerwoman. Young Bill Vange was strong. He might have remained with the slaves and led them to freedom; instead, however, he served the masters and was well rewarded. He began his service, when yet a small child, as a spy in his home slave pen. He is known to have informed on his own father for seditious utterance. This is fact. I have read it with my own eyes in the records. He was too good a slave for the slave pen. Alexander Burrell took him out, while yet a child, and he was taught to read and write. He was taught many things, and he was entered in the secret service of the government. Of course, he no longer wore the slave dress, except for disguise at such times when he sought to penetrate the secrets and plots of the slaves. It was he, when but eighteen years of age, who brought that great hero and comrade, Ralph Jacobus, to trial and execution in the electric chair. Of course, you have all heard the sacred name of Ralph Jacobus, but it is news to you that he was brought to his death by the first Vanderwater, whose name was Vange. I know. I have read it in the books. There are many interesting things like that in the books.

And after Ralph Jacobus died his shameful death, Bill Vange's name began the many changes it was to undergo. He was known as "Sly Vange" far and wide. He rose high in the secret service, and he was rewarded in grand ways, but still he was not a member of the master class. The men were willing that he should become so; it was the women of the master class who refused to have Sly Vange one of them. Sly Vange gave good service to the masters. He had been a slave himself, and he knew the ways of the slaves. There was no fooling him. In those days the slaves were braver than now, and they were always trying for their freedom. And Sly Vange was everywhere, in all their schemes and plans, bringing their schemes and plans to naught and their leaders to the

electric chair. It was in 2255 that his name was next changed for him. It was in that year that the Great Mutiny took place. In that region west of the Rocky Mountains, seventeen millions of slaves strove bravely to overthrow their masters. Who knows, if Sly Vange had not lived, but that they would have succeeded? But Sly Vange was very much alive. The masters gave him supreme command of the situation. In eight months of fighting, one million and three hundred and fifty thousand slaves were killed. Vange, Bill Vange, Sly Vange, killed them, and he broke the Great Mutiny. And he was greatly rewarded, and so red were his hands with the blood of the slaves that thereafter he was called "Bloody Vange." You see, my brothers, what interesting things are to be found in the books when one can read them. And, take my word for it, there are many other things, even more interesting, in the books. And if you will but study with me, in a year's time you can read those books for yourselves—ay, in six months some of you will be able to read those books for yourselves.

Bloody Vange lived to a ripe old age, and always, to the last, was he received in the councils of the masters; but never was he made a master himself. He had first opened his eyes, you see, in a slave pen. But oh, he was well rewarded! He had a dozen palaces in which to live. He, who was no master, owned thousands of slaves. He had a great pleasure yacht upon the sea that was a floating palace, and he owned a whole island in the sea where toiled ten thousand slaves on his coffee plantations. But in his old age he was lonely, for he lived apart, hated by his brothers, the slaves, and looked down upon by those he had served and who refused to be his brothers. The masters looked down upon him because he had been born a slave. Enormously wealthy he died; but he died horribly, tormented by his conscience, regretting all he had done and the red stain on his name.

But with his children it was different. They had not been born in the slave pen, and by the special ruling of the Chief Oligarch of that time, John Morrison, they were elevated to the master class. And it was then that the name of Vange disappears from the page of history. It becomes Vanderwater, and Jason Vange, the son of Bloody Vange, becomes Jason Vanderwater, the founder of the Vanderwater line. But that was three hundred years ago, and the Vanderwaters of to-day forget their beginnings and imagine that somehow the clay of their bodies is different stuff from the clay in your body and mine and in the bodies of all slaves. And I ask you, Why should a slave become the master of another slave? And why should the son of a slave become the master of many slaves? I leave these questions for you to answer for yourselves, but do not forget that in the beginning the Vanderwaters were slaves.

And now, my brothers, I come back to the beginning of my tale to tell you of Tom Dixon's arm. Roger Vanderwater's factory in Kingsbury was rightly named "Hell's Bottom," but the men who toiled in it were men, as you shall see. Women toiled there, too, and children, little children. All that toiled there had the regular slave rights under the law, but only under the law, for they were deprived of many of their rights by the two overseers of Hell's Bottom, Joseph Clancy and Adolph Munster.

It is a long story, but I shall not tell all of it to you. I shall tell only about the arm. It happened that, according to the law, a portion of the starvation wage of the slaves was held back each month and put into a fund. This fund was for the purpose of helping such unfortunate fellow-workmen as happened to be injured by accidents or to be overtaken by sickness. As you know with yourselves, these funds are controlled by the overseers. It is the law, and so it was that the fund at Hell's Bottom was controlled by the two overseers of accursed memory.

Now, Clancy and Munster took this fund for their own use. When accidents happened to the workmen, their fellows, as was the custom, made grants from the fund; but the overseers refused to pay over the grants. What could the slaves do? They had their rights under the law, but they had no access to the law. Those that complained to the overseers were punished. You know yourselves what form such punishment takes—the fines for faulty work that is not faulty; the overcharging of accounts in the Company's store; the vile treatment of one's women and children; and the allotment to bad machines whereon, work as one will, he starves.

Once, the slaves of Hell's Bottom protested to Vanderwater. It was the time of the year when he spent several months in Kingsbury. One of the slaves could write; it chanced that his mother could write, and she had secretly taught him as her mother had secretly taught her. So this slave wrote a round robin, wherein was contained their grievances, and all the slaves signed by mark. And, with proper stamps upon the envelope, the round robin was mailed to Roger Vanderwater. And Roger Vanderwater did nothing, save to turn the round robin over to the two overseers. Clancy and Munster were angered. They turned the guards loose at night on the slave pen. The guards were armed with pick handles. It is said that next day only half of the slaves were able to work in Hell's Bottom. They were well beaten. The slave who could write was so badly beaten that he lived only three months. But before he died, he wrote once more, to what purpose you shall hear.

Four or five weeks afterward, Tom Dixon, a slave, had his arm torn off by a belt in Hell's Bottom. His fellow-workmen, as usual, made a grant to him from the fund, and Clancy and Munster, as usual, refused to pay it over from the fund. The slave who could write, and who even then was dying, wrote anew a recital of their grievances. And this document was thrust into the hand of the arm that had been torn from Tom Dixon's body.

Now it chanced that Roger Vanderwater was lying ill in his palace at the other end of Kingsbury—not the dire illness that strikes down you and me, brothers; just a bit of biliousness, mayhap, or no more than a bad headache because he had eaten too heartily or drunk too deeply. But it was enough for him, being tender and soft from careful rearing. Such men, packed in cotton wool all their lives, are exceeding tender and soft. Believe me, brothers, Roger Vanderwater felt as badly with his aching head, or thought he felt as badly, as Tom Dixon really felt with his arm torn out by the roots.

It happened that Roger Vanderwater was fond of scientific farming, and that on his farm, three miles outside of Kingsbury, he had managed to grow a new kind of strawberry. He was very proud of that new strawberry of his, and he would have been out to see and pick the first ripe ones, had it not been for his illness. Because of his illness he had ordered the old farm slave to bring in personally the first box of the berries. All this was learned from the gossip of a palace scullion, who slept each night in the slave pen. The overseer of the plantation should have brought in the berries, but he was on his back with a broken leg from trying to break a colt. The scullion brought the word in the night, and it was known that next day the berries would come in. And the men in the slave pen of Hell's Bottom, being men and not cowards, held a council.

The slave who could write, and who was sick and dying from the pick-handle beating, said he would carry Tom Dixon's arm; also, he said he must die anyway, and that it mattered nothing if he died a little sooner. So five slaves stole from the slave pen that night after the guards had made their last rounds. One of the slaves was the man who could write. They lay in the brush by the roadside until late in the morning, when the old farm slave came driving to town with the precious fruit for the master. What of the farm slave being old and rheumatic, and of the slave who could write being stiff and injured from his beating, they moved their bodies about when they walked, very much in the same fashion. The slave who could write put on the other's clothes, pulled the broad-brimmed hat over his eyes, climbed upon the seat of the wagon, and drove on to town. The old farm slave was kept tied all day in the bushes until evening, when the others loosed him and went back to the slave pen to take their punishment for having broken bounds.

In the meantime, Roger Vanderwater lay waiting for the berries in his wonderful bedroom—such wonders and such comforts were there that they would have blinded the eyes of you and me who have never seen such things. The slave who could write said afterward that it was like a glimpse of Paradise. And why not? The labor and the lives of ten thousand slaves had gone to the making of that bedchamber, while they themselves slept in vile lairs like wild beasts. The slave who could write brought in the berries on a silver tray or platter—you see, Roger Vanderwater wanted to speak with him in person about the berries. The slave who could write tottered his dying body across the wonderful room and knelt by the couch of Vanderwater, holding out before him the tray. Large, green leaves covered the top of the tray, and these the body-servant alongside whisked away so that Vanderwater could see. And Roger Vanderwater, propped upon his elbow, saw. He saw the fresh, wonderful fruit lying there like precious jewels, and in the midst of it the arm of Tom Dixon as it had been torn from his body, wellwashed, of course, my brothers, and very white against the blood-red fruit. And also he saw, clutched in the stiff, dead fingers, the petition of his slaves who toiled in Hell's Bottom.

"Take and read," said the slave who could write. And even as the master took the petition, the body-servant, who till then had been motionless with surprise, struck with his fist the kneeling slave upon the mouth. The slave was dying anyway, and was very weak, and did not mind. He made no sound, and, having fallen over on his side,

he lay there quietly, bleeding from the blow on the mouth. The physician, who had run for the palace guards, came back with them, and the slave was dragged upright upon his feet. But as they dragged him up, his hand clutched Tom Dixon's arm from where it had fallen on the floor.

"He shall be flung alive to the hounds!" the body-servant was crying in great wrath. "He shall be flung alive to the hounds!"

But Roger Vanderwater, forgetting his headache, still leaning on his elbow, commanded silence, and went on reading the petition. And while he read, there was silence, all standing upright, the wrathful body-servant, the physician, the palace guards, and in their midst the slave, bleeding at the mouth and still holding Tom Dixon's arm. And when Roger Vanderwater had done, he turned upon the slave, saying:—

"If in this paper there be one lie, you shall be sorry that you were ever born."

And the slave said, "I have been sorry all my life that I was born."

Roger Vanderwater looked at him closely, and the slave said:—

"You have done your worst to me. I am dying now. In a week I shall.

"What do you with that?" the master asked, pointing to the arm; and the slave made answer:—

"I take it back to the pen to give it burial. Tom Dixon was my friend. We worked beside each other at our looms."

There is little more to my tale, brothers. The slave and the arm were sent back in a cart to the pen. Nor were any of the slaves punished for what they had done. Instead, Roger Vanderwater made investigation and punished the two overseers, Joseph Clancy and Adolph Munster. Their freeholds were taken from them. They were branded, each upon the forehead, their right hands were cut off, and they were turned loose upon the highway to wander and beg until they died. And the fund was managed rightfully thereafter for a time—for a time, only, my brothers; for after Roger Vanderwater came his son, Albert, who was a cruel master and half mad.

Brothers, that slave who carried the arm into the presence of the master was my father. He was a brave man. And even as his mother secretly taught him to read, so did he teach me. Because he died shortly after from the pick-handle beating, Roger Vanderwater took me out of the slave pen and tried to make various better things out of me. I might have become an overseer in Hell's Bottom, but I chose to become a story-teller, wandering over the land and getting close to my brothers, the slaves, everywhere. And I tell you stories like this, secretly, knowing that you will not betray me; for if you did, you know as well as I that my tongue will be torn out and that I shall tell stories no more. And my message is, brothers, that there is a good time coming, when all will be well in the world and there will be neither masters nor slaves. But first you must prepare for that good time by learning to read. There is power in the printed word. And here am I to teach you to read, and as well there are others to see that you get the books when I am gone along upon my way—the history books wherein you will learn about your masters, and learn to become strong even as they.

A Daughter of the Aurora

“You—what you call—lazy mans, you lazy mans would desire me to haf for wife. It is not good. Nevaire, no, nevaire, will lazy mans my hoosband be.”

Thus Joy Molineau spoke her mind to Jack Harrington, even as she had spoken it, but more tritely and in his own tongue, to Louis Savoy the previous night.

“Listen, Joy—“

“No, no; why moos’ I listen to lazy mans? It is vaire bad, you hang rount, make visitation to my cabin, and do nothing. How you get grub for the famine? Why haf not you the dust? Odder mans haf plentee.”

“But I work hard, Joy. Never a day am I not on trail or up creek. Even now have I just come off. My dogs are yet tired. Other men have luck and find plenty of gold; but I—I have no luck.”

“Ah! But when this mans with the wife which is Indian, this mans McCormack, when him discovaire the Klondike, you go not. Odder mans go; odder mans now rich.”

“You know I was prospecting over on the head-reaches of the Tanana,” Harrington protested, “and knew nothing of the Eldorado or Bonanza until it was too late.”

“That is deerferent; only you are—what you call way off.”

“What?”

“Way off. In the—yes—in the dark. It is nevaire too late. One vaire rich mine is there, on the creek which is Eldorado. The mans drive the stake and him go ‘way. No odddr mans know what of him become. The mans, him which drive the stake, is nevaire no more. Sixty days no mans on that claim file the papaire. Then odder mans, plentee odder mans—what you call—jump that claim. Then they race, O so queek, like the wind, to file the papaire. Him be vaire rich. Him get grub for famine.”

Harrington hid the major portion of his interest.

“When’s the time up?” he asked. “What claim is it?”

“So I speak Louis Savoy last night,” she continued, ignoring him. “Him I think the winnaire.”

“Hang Louis Savoy!”

“So Louis Savoy speak in my cabin last night. Him say, ‘Joy, I am strong mans. I haf good dogs. I haf long wind. I will be winnaire. Then you will haf me for hoosband?’ And I say to him, I say—“

“What’d you say?”

“I say, ‘If Louis Savoy is winnaire, then will he haf me for wife.’“

“And if he don’t win?”

“Then Louis Savoy, him will not be—what you call—the father of my children.”

“And if I win?”

“You winnaire? Ha! ha! Nevaire!”

Exasperating as it was, Joy Molineau’s laughter was pretty to hear. Harrington did not mind it. He had long since been broken in. Besides, he was no exception. She had forced all her lovers to suffer in kind. And very enticing she was just then, her lips parted, her color heightened by the sharp kiss of the frost, her eyes vibrant with the lure which is the greatest of all lures and which may be seen nowhere save in woman’s eyes. Her sled-dogs clustered about her in hirsute masses, and the leader, Wolf Fang, laid his long snout softly in her lap.

“If I do win?” Harrington pressed.

She looked from dog to lover and back again.

“What you say, Wolf Fang? If him strong mans and file the papaire, shall we his wife become? Eh? What you say?”

Wolf Fang picked up his ears and growled at Harrington.

“It is vaire cold,” she suddenly added with feminine irrelevance, rising to her feet and straightening out the team.

Her lover looked on stolidly. She had kept him guessing from the first time they met, and patience had been joined unto his virtues.

“Hi! Wolf Fang!” she cried, springing upon the sled as it leaped into sudden motion. “Ai! Ya! Mush-on!”

From the corner of his eye Harrington watched her swinging down the trail to Forty Mile. Where the road forked and crossed the river to Fort Cudahy, she halted the dogs and turned about.

“O Mistaire Lazy Mans!” she called back. “Wolf Fang, him say yes—if you winnaire!”

But somehow, as such things will, it leaked out, and all Forty Mile, which had hitherto speculated on Joy Molineau’s choice between her two latest lovers, now hazarded bets and guesses as to which would win in the forthcoming race. The camp divided itself into two factions, and every effort was put forth in order that their respective favorites might be the first in at the finish. There was a scramble for the best dogs the country could afford, for dogs, and good ones, were essential, above all, to success. And it meant much to the victor. Besides the possession of a wife, the like of which had yet to be created, it stood for a mine worth a million at least.

That fall, when news came down of McCormack’s discovery on Bonanza, all the Lower Country, Circle City and Forty Mile included, had stampeded up the Yukon,—at least all save those who, like Jack Harrington and Louis Savoy, were away prospecting in the west. Moose pastures and creeks were staked indiscriminately and promiscuously; and incidentally, one of the unlikeliest of creeks, Eldorado. Olaf Nelson laid claim to five hundred of its linear feet, duly posted his notice, and as duly disappeared. At that time the nearest recording office was in the police barracks at Fort Cudahy, just across the river from Forty Mile; but when it became bruited abroad that Eldorado Creek was a treasure-house, it was quickly discovered that Olaf Nelson had failed to make the down-Yukon trip to file upon his property. Men cast hungry eyes upon the ownerless

claim, where they knew a thousand-thousand dollars waited but shovel and sluice-box. Yet they dared not touch it; for there was a law which permitted sixty days to lapse between the staking and the filing, during which time a claim was immune. The whole country knew of Olaf Nelson's disappearance, and scores of men made preparation for the jumping and for the consequent race to Fort Cudahy.

But competition at Forty Mile was limited. With the camp devoting its energies to the equipping either of Jack Harrington or Louis Savoy, no man was unwise enough to enter the contest single-handed. It was a stretch of a hundred miles to the Recorder's office, and it was planned that the two favorites should have four relays of dogs stationed along the trail. Naturally, the last relay was to be the crucial one, and for these twenty-five miles their respective partisans strove to obtain the strongest possible animals. So bitter did the factions wax, and so high did they bid, that dogs brought stiffer prices than ever before in the annals of the country. And, as it chanced, this scramble for dogs turned the public eye still more searchingly upon Joy Molineau. Not only was she the cause of it all, but she possessed the finest sled-dog from Chilkoot to Bering Sea. As wheel or leader, Wolf Fang had no equal. The man whose sled he led down the last stretch was bound to win. There could be no doubt of it. But the community had an innate sense of the fitness of things, and not once was Joy vexed by overtures for his use. And the factions drew consolation from the fact that if one man did not profit by him, neither should the other.

However, since man, in the individual or in the aggregate, has been so fashioned that he goes through life blissfully obtuse to the deeper subtleties of his womankind, so the men of Forty Mile failed to divine the inner deviltry of Joy Molineau. They confessed, afterward, that they had failed to appreciate this dark-eyed daughter of the aurora, whose father had traded furs in the country before ever they dreamed of invading it, and who had herself first opened eyes on the scintillant northern lights. Nay, accident of birth had not rendered her less the woman, nor had it limited her woman's understanding of men. They knew she played with them, but they did not know the wisdom of her play, its deepness and its deftness. They failed to see more than the exposed card, so that to the very last Forty Mile was in a state of pleasant obfuscation, and it was not until she cast her final trump that it came to reckon up the score.

Early in the week the camp turned out to start Jack Harrington and Louis Savoy on their way. They had taken a shrewd margin of time, for it was their wish to arrive at Olaf Nelson's claim some days previous to the expiration of its immunity, that they might rest themselves, and their dogs be fresh for the first relay. On the way up they found the men of Dawson already stationing spare dog teams along the trail, and it was manifest that little expense had been spared in view of the millions at stake.

A couple of days after the departure of their champions, Forty Mile began sending up their relays,—first to the seventy-five station, then to the fifty, and last to the twenty-five. The teams for the last stretch were magnificent, and so equally matched that the camp discussed their relative merits for a full hour at fifty below, before they were

permitted to pull out. At the last moment Joy Molineau dashed in among them on her sled. She drew Lon McFane, who had charge of Harrington's team, to one side, and hardly had the first words left her lips when it was noticed that his lower jaw dropped with a celerity and emphasis suggestive of great things. He unhitched Wolf Fang from her sled, put him at the head of Harrington's team, and mushed the string of animals into the Yukon trail.

"Poor Louis Savoy!" men said; but Joy Molineau flashed her black eyes defiantly and drove back to her father's cabin.

Midnight drew near on Olaf Nelson's claim. A few hundred fur-clad men had preferred sixty below and the jumping, to the inducements of warm cabins and comfortable bunks. Several score of them had their notices prepared for posting and their dogs at hand. A bunch of Captain Constantine's mounted police had been ordered on duty that fair play might rule. The command had gone forth that no man should place a stake till the last second of the day had ticked itself into the past. In the northland such commands are equal to Jehovah's in the matter of potency; the dum-dum as rapid and effective as the thunderbolt. It was clear and cold. The aurora borealis painted palpitating color revels on the sky. Rosy waves of cold brilliancy swept across the zenith, while great coruscating bars of greenish white blotted out the stars, or a Titan's hand reared mighty arches above the Pole. And at this mighty display the wolf-dogs howled as had their ancestors of old time.

A bearskin-coated policeman stepped prominently to the fore, watch in hand. Men hurried among the dogs, rousing them to their feet, untangling their traces, straightening them out. The entries came to the mark, firmly gripping stakes and notices. They had gone over the boundaries of the claim so often that they could now have done it blindfolded. The policeman raised his hand. Casting off their superfluous furs and blankets, and with a final cinching of belts, they came to attention.

"Time!"

Sixty pairs of hands unmitted; as many pairs of moccasins gripped hard upon the snow.

"Go!"

They shot across the wide expanse, round the four sides, sticking notices at every corner, and down the middle where the two centre stakes were to be planted. Then they sprang for the sleds on the frozen bed of the creek. An anarchy of sound and motion broke out. Sled collided with sled, and dog-team fastened upon dog-team with bristling manes and screaming fangs. The narrow creek was glutted with the struggling mass. Lashes and butts of dog-whips were distributed impartially among men and brutes. And to make it of greater moment, each participant had a bunch of comrades intent on breaking him out of jam. But one by one, and by sheer strength, the sleds crept out and shot from sight in the darkness of the overhanging banks.

Jack Harrington had anticipated this crush and waited by his sled until it untangled. Louis Savoy, aware of his rival's greater wisdom in the matter of dog-driving, had followed his lead and also waited. The rout had passed beyond ear-shot when they

took the trail, and it was not till they had travelled the ten miles or so down to Bonanza that they came upon it, speeding along in single file, but well bunched. There was little noise, and less chance of one passing another at that stage. The sleds, from runner to runner, measured sixteen inches, the trail eighteen; but the trail, packed down fully a foot by the traffic, was like a gutter. On either side spread the blanket of soft snow crystals. If a man turned into this in an endeavor to pass, his dogs would wallow perforce to their bellies and slow down to a snail's pace. So the men lay close to their leaping sleds and waited. No alteration in position occurred down the fifteen miles of Bonanza and Klondike to Dawson, where the Yukon was encountered. Here the first relays waited. But here, intent to kill their first teams, if necessary, Harrington and Savoy had had their fresh teams placed a couple of miles beyond those of the others. In the confusion of changing sleds they passed full half the bunch. Perhaps thirty men were still leading them when they shot on to the broad breast of the Yukon. Here was the tug. When the river froze in the fall, a mile of open water had been left between two mighty jams. This had but recently crusted, the current being swift, and now it was as level, hard, and slippery as a dance floor. The instant they struck this glare ice Harrington came to his knees, holding precariously on with one hand, his whip singing fiercely among his dogs and fearsome abjurations hurtling about their ears. The teams spread out on the smooth surface, each straining to the uttermost. But few men in the North could lift their dogs as did Jack Harrington. At once he began to pull ahead, and Louis Savoy, taking the pace, hung on desperately, his leaders running even with the tail of his rival's sled.

Midway on the glassy stretch their relays shot out from the bank. But Harrington did not slacken. Watching his chance when the new sled swung in close, he leaped across, shouting as he did so and jumping up the pace of his fresh dogs. The other driver fell off somehow. Savoy did likewise with his relay, and the abandoned teams, swerving to right and left, collided with the others and piled the ice with confusion. Harrington cut out the pace; Savoy hung on. As they neared the end of the glare ice, they swept abreast of the leading sled. When they shot into the narrow trail between the soft snowbanks, they led the race; and Dawson, watching by the light of the aurora, swore that it was neatly done.

When the frost grows lusty at sixty below, men cannot long remain without fire or excessive exercise, and live. So Harrington and Savoy now fell to the ancient custom of "ride and run." Leaping from their sleds, tow-thongs in hand, they ran behind till the blood resumed its wonted channels and expelled the frost, then back to the sleds till the heat again ebbed away. Thus, riding and running, they covered the second and third relays. Several times, on smooth ice, Savoy spurted his dogs, and as often failed to gain past. Strung along for five miles in the rear, the remainder of the race strove to overtake them, but vainly, for to Louis Savoy alone was the glory given of keeping Jack Harrington's killing pace.

As they swung into the seventy-five-mile station, Lon McFane dashed alongside; Wolf Fang in the lead caught Harrington's eye, and he knew that the race was his. No

team in the North could pass him on those last twenty-five miles. And when Savoy saw Wolf Fang heading his rival's team, he knew that he was out of the running, and he cursed softly to himself, in the way woman is most frequently cursed. But he still clung to the other's smoking trail, gambling on chance to the last. And as they churned along, the day breaking in the southeast, they marvelled in joy and sorrow at that which Joy Molineau had done.

Forty Mile had early crawled out of its sleeping furs and congregated near the edge of the trail. From this point it could view the up-Yukon course to its first bend several miles away. Here it could also see across the river to the finish at Fort Cudahy, where the Gold Recorder nervously awaited. Joy Molineau had taken her position several rods back from the trail, and under the circumstances, the rest of Forty Mile forbore interposing itself. So the space was clear between her and the slender line of the course. Fires had been built, and around these men wagered dust and dogs, the long odds on Wolf Fang.

"Here they come!" shrilled an Indian boy from the top of a pine.

Up the Yukon a black speck appeared against the snow, closely followed by a second. As these grew larger, more black specks manifested themselves, but at a goodly distance to the rear. Gradually they resolved themselves into dogs and sleds, and men lying flat upon them. "Wolf Fang leads," a lieutenant of police whispered to Joy. She smiled her interest back.

"Ten to one on Harrington!" cried a Birch Creek King, dragging out his sack.

"The Queen, her pay you not mooch?" queried Joy.

The lieutenant shook his head.

"You have some dust, ah, how mooch?" she continued.

He exposed his sack. She gauged it with a rapid eye.

"Mebbe—say—two hundred, eh? Good. Now I give—what you call—the tip. Covaire the bet." Joy smiled inscrutably. The lieutenant pondered. He glanced up the trail. The two men had risen to their knees and were lashing their dogs furiously, Harrington in the lead.

"Ten to one on Harrington!" bawled the Birch Creek King, flourishing his sack in the lieutenant's face.

"Covaire the bet," Joy prompted.

He obeyed, shrugging his shoulders in token that he yielded, not to the dictate of his reason, but to her charm. Joy nodded to reassure him.

All noise ceased. Men paused in the placing of bets.

Yawing and reeling and plunging, like luggers before the wind, the sleds swept wildly upon them. Though he still kept his leader up to the tail of Harrington's sled, Louis Savoy's face was without hope. Harrington's mouth was set. He looked neither to the right nor to the left. His dogs were leaping in perfect rhythm, firm-footed, close to the trail, and Wolf Fang, head low and unseeing, whining softly, was leading his comrades magnificently.

Forty Mile stood breathless. Not a sound, save the roar of the runners and the voice of the whips.

Then the clear voice of Joy Molineau rose on the air. "Ai! Ya! Wolf Fang! Wolf Fang!"

Wolf Fang heard. He left the trail sharply, heading directly for his mistress. The team dashed after him, and the sled poised an instant on a single runner, then shot Harrington into the snow. Savoy was by like a flash. Harrington pulled to his feet and watched him skimming across the river to the Gold Recorder's. He could not help hearing what was said.

"Ah, him do vaire well," Joy Molineau was explaining to the lieutenant. "Him—what you call—set the pace. Yes, him set the pace vaire well."

A Day's Lodging

It was the gosh-dangdest stampede I ever seen. A thousand dog-teams hittin' the ice. You couldn't see 'm fer smoke. Two white men an' a Swede froze to death that night, an' there was a dozen busted their lungs. But didn't I see with my own eyes the bottom of the water-hole? It was yellow with gold like a mustard-plaster. That's why I staked the Yukon for a minin' claim. That's what made the stampede. An' then there was nothin' to it. That's what I said — NOTHIN' to it. An' I ain't got over guessin' yet.

— Narrative of Shorty.

JOHN MESSNER clung with mittened hand to the bucking gee-pole and held the sled in the trail. With the other mittened hand he rubbed his cheeks and nose. He rubbed his cheeks and nose every little while. In point of fact, he rarely ceased from rubbing them, and sometimes, as their numbness increased, he rubbed fiercely. His forehead was covered by the visor of his fur cap, the flaps of which went over his ears. The rest of his face was protected by a thick beard, golden-brown under its coating of frost.

Behind him churned a heavily loaded Yukon sled, and before him toiled a string of five dogs. The rope by which they dragged the sled rubbed against the side of Messner's leg. When the dogs swung on a bend in the trail, he stepped over the rope. There were many bends, and he was compelled to step over it often. Sometimes he tripped on the rope, or stumbled, and at all times he was awkward, betraying a weariness so great that the sled now and again ran upon his heels.

When he came to a straight piece of trail, where the sled could get along for a moment without guidance, he let go the gee-pole and batted his right hand sharply upon the hard wood. He found it difficult to keep up the circulation in that hand. But while he pounded the one hand, he never ceased from rubbing his nose and cheeks with the other.

"It's too cold to travel, anyway," he said. He spoke aloud, after the manner of men who are much by themselves. "Only a fool would travel at such a temperature. If it isn't eighty below, it's because it's seventy-nine."

He pulled out his watch, and after some fumbling got it back into the breast pocket of his thick woollen jacket. Then he surveyed the heavens and ran his eye along the white sky-line to the south.

"Twelve o'clock," he mumbled, "A clear sky, and no sun."

He plodded on silently for ten minutes, and then, as though there had been no lapse in his speech, he added:

“And no ground covered, and it’s too cold to travel.”

Suddenly he yelled “Whoa!” at the dogs, and stopped. He seemed in a wild panic over his right hand, and proceeded to hammer it furiously against the gee-pole.

“You — poor — devils!” he addressed the dogs, which had dropped down heavily on the ice to rest. His was a broken, jerky utterance, caused by the violence with which he hammered his numb hand upon the wood. “What have you done anyway that a two-legged other animal should come along, break you to harness, curb all your natural proclivities, and make slave-beasts out of you?”

He rubbed his nose, not reflectively, but savagely, in order to drive the blood into it, and urged the dogs to their work again. He travelled on the frozen surface of a great river. Behind him it stretched away in a mighty curve of many miles, losing itself in a fantastic jumble of mountains, snow-covered and silent. Ahead of him the river split into many channels to accommodate the freight of islands it carried on its breast. These islands were silent and white. No animals nor humming insects broke the silence. No birds flew in the chill air. There was no sound of man, no mark of the handiwork of man. The world slept, and it was like the sleep of death.

John Messner seemed succumbing to the apathy of it all. The frost was benumbing his spirit. He plodded on with bowed head, unobservant, mechanically rubbing nose and cheeks, and batting his steering hand against the gee-pole in the straight trail-stretches.

But the dogs were observant, and suddenly they stopped, turning their heads and looking back at their master out of eyes that were wistful and questioning. Their eyelashes were frosted white, as were their muzzles, and they had all the seeming of decrepit old age, what of the frost-rime and exhaustion.

The man was about to urge them on, when he checked himself, roused up with an effort, and looked around. The dogs had stopped beside a water-hole, not a fissure, but a hole man-made, chopped laboriously with an axe through three and a half feet of ice. A thick skin of new ice showed that it had not been used for some time. Messner glanced about him. The dogs were already pointing the way, each wistful and hoary muzzle turned toward the dim snow@path that left the main river trail and climbed the bank of the island.

“All right, you sore-footed brutes,” he said. “I’ll investigate. You’re not a bit more anxious to quit than I am.”

He climbed the bank and disappeared. The dogs did not lie down, but on their feet eagerly waited his return. He came back to them, took a hauling-rope from the front of the sled, and put it around his shoulders. Then he GEE’D the dogs to the right and put them at the bank on the run. It was a stiff pull, but their weariness fell from them as they crouched low to the snow, whining with eagerness and gladness as they struggled upward to the last ounce of effort in their bodies. When a dog slipped or faltered, the one behind nipped his hind quarters. The man shouted encouragement and threats, and threw all his weight on the hauling-rope.

They cleared the bank with a rush, swung to the left, and dashed up to a small log cabin. It was a deserted cabin of a single room, eight feet by ten on the inside. Messner unharnessed the animals, unloaded his sled and took possession. The last chance wayfarer had left a supply of firewood. Messner set up his light sheet-iron stove and started a fire. He put five sun-cured salmon into the oven to thaw out for the dogs, and from the water-hole filled his coffee-pot and cooking-pail.

While waiting for the water to boil, he held his face over the stove. The moisture from his breath had collected on his beard and frozen into a great mass of ice, and this he proceeded to thaw out. As it melted and dropped upon the stove it sizzled and rose about him in steam. He helped the process with his fingers, working loose small ice-chunks that fell rattling to the floor.

A wild outcry from the dogs without did not take him from his task. He heard the wolfish snarling and yelping of strange dogs and the sound of voices. A knock came on the door.

"Come in," Messner called, in a voice muffled because at the moment he was sucking loose a fragment of ice from its anchorage on his upper lip.

The door opened, and, gazing out of his cloud of steam, he saw a man and a woman pausing on the threshold.

"Come in," he said peremptorily, "and shut the door!"

Peering through the steam, he could make out but little of their personal appearance. The nose and cheek strap worn by the woman and the trail-wrappings about her head allowed only a pair of black eyes to be seen. The man was dark-eyed and smooth-shaven all except his mustache, which was so iced up as to hide his mouth.

"We just wanted to know if there is any other cabin around here," he said, at the same time glancing over the unfurnished state of the room. "We thought this cabin was empty."

"It isn't my cabin," Messner answered. "I just found it a few minutes ago. Come right in and camp. Plenty of room, and you won't need your stove. There's room for all."

At the sound of his voice the woman peered at him with quick curiousness.

"Get your things off," her companion said to her. "I'll unhitch and get the water so we can start cooking."

Messner took the thawed salmon outside and fed his dogs. He had to guard them against the second team of dogs, and when he had reentered the cabin the other man had unpacked the sled and fetched water. Messner's pot was boiling. He threw in the coffee, settled it with half a cup of cold water, and took the pot from the stove. He thawed some sour-dough biscuits in the oven, at the same time heating a pot of beans he had boiled the night before and that had ridden frozen on the sled all morning.

Removing his utensils from the stove, so as to give the newcomers a chance to cook, he proceeded to take his meal from the top of his grub-box, himself sitting on his bed-roll. Between mouthfuls he talked trail and dogs with the man, who, with head over

the stove, was thawing the ice from his mustache. There were two bunks in the cabin, and into one of them, when he had cleared his lip, the stranger tossed his bed-roll.

"We'll sleep here," he said, "unless you prefer this bunk. You're the first comer and you have first choice, you know."

"That's all right," Messner answered. "One bunk's just as good as the other."

He spread his own bedding in the second bunk, and sat down on the edge. The stranger thrust a physician's small travelling case under his blankets at one end to serve for a pillow.

"Doctor?" Messner asked.

"Yes," came the answer, "but I assure you I didn't come into the Klondike to practise."

The woman busied herself with cooking, while the man sliced bacon and fired the stove. The light in the cabin was dim, filtering through in a small window made of onion-skin writing paper and oiled with bacon grease, so that John Messner could not make out very well what the woman looked like. Not that he tried. He seemed to have no interest in her. But she glanced curiously from time to time into the dark corner where he sat.

"Oh, it's a great life," the doctor proclaimed enthusiastically, pausing from sharpening his knife on the stovepipe. "What I like about it is the struggle, the endeavor with one's own hands, the primitiveness of it, the realness."

"The temperature is real enough," Messner laughed.

"Do you know how cold it actually is?" the doctor demanded.

The other shook his head.

"Well, I'll tell you. Seventy-four below zero by spirit thermometer on the sled."

"That's one hundred and six below freezing point — too cold for travelling, eh?"

"Practically suicide," was the doctor's verdict. "One exerts himself. He breathes heavily, taking into his lungs the frost itself. It chills his lungs, freezes the edges of the tissues. He gets a dry, hacking cough as the dead tissue sloughs away, and dies the following summer of pneumonia, wondering what it's all about. I'll stay in this cabin for a week, unless the thermometer rises at least to fifty below."

"I say, Tess," he said, the next moment, "don't you think that coffee's boiled long enough!"

At the sound of the woman's name, John Messner became suddenly alert. He looked at her quickly, while across his face shot a haunting expression, the ghost of some buried misery achieving swift resurrection. But the next moment, and by an effort of will, the ghost was laid again. His face was as placid as before, though he was still alert, dissatisfied with what the feeble light had shown him of the woman's face.

Automatically, her first act had been to set the coffee-pot back. It was not until she had done this that she glanced at Messner. But already he had composed himself. She saw only a man sitting on the edge of the bunk and incuriously studying the toes of his moccasins. But, as she turned casually to go about her cooking, he shot another swift look at her, and she, glancing as swiftly back, caught his look. He shifted on past

her to the doctor, though the slightest smile curled his lip in appreciation of the way she had trapped him.

She drew a candle from the grub-box and lighted it. One look at her illuminated face was enough for Messner. In the small cabin the widest limit was only a matter of several steps, and the next moment she was alongside of him. She deliberately held the candle close to his face and stared at him out of eyes wide with fear and recognition. He smiled quietly back at her.

“What are you looking for, Tess?” the doctor called.

“Hairpins,” she replied, passing on and rummaging in a clothes-bag on the bunk.

They served their meal on their grub-box, sitting on Messner’s grub-box and facing him. He had stretched out on his bunk to rest, lying on his side, his head on his arm. In the close quarters it was as though the three were together at table.

“What part of the States do you come from?” Messner asked.

“San Francisco,” answered the doctor. “I’ve been in here two years, though.”

“I hail from California myself,” was Messner’s announcement.

The woman looked at him appealingly, but he smiled and went on:

“Berkeley, you know.”

The other man was becoming interested.

“U. C.?” he asked.

“Yes, Class of ‘86.”

“I meant faculty,” the doctor explained. “You remind me of the type.”

“Sorry to hear you say so,” Messner smiled back. “I’d prefer being taken for a prospector or a dog-musher.”

“I don’t think he looks any more like a professor than you do a doctor,” the woman broke in.

“Thank you,” said Messner. Then, turning to her companion, “By the way, Doctor, what is your name, if I may ask?”

“Haythorne, if you’ll take my word for it. I gave up cards with civilization.”

“And Mrs. Haythorne,” Messner smiled and bowed.

She flashed a look at him that was more anger than appeal.

Haythorne was about to ask the other’s name. His mouth had opened to form the question when Messner cut him off.

“Come to think of it, Doctor, you may possibly be able to satisfy my curiosity. There was a sort of scandal in faculty circles some two or three years ago. The wife of one of the English professors — er, if you will pardon me, Mrs. Haythorne — disappeared with some San Francisco doctor, I understood, though his name does not just now come to my lips. Do you remember the incident?”

Haythorne nodded his head. “Made quite a stir at the time. His name was Womble — Graham Womble. He had a magnificent practice. I knew him somewhat.”

“Well, what I was trying to get at was what had become of them. I was wondering if you had heard. They left no trace, hide nor hair.”

"He covered his tracks cunningly." Haythorne cleared his throat. "There was rumor that they went to the South Seas — were lost on a trading schooner in a typhoon, or something like that."

"I never heard that," Messner said. "You remember the case, Mrs. Haythorne?"

"Perfectly," she answered, in a voice the control of which was in amazing contrast to the anger that blazed in the face she turned aside so that Haythorne might not see.

The latter was again on the verge of asking his name, when Messner remarked:

"This Dr. Womble, I've heard he was very handsome, and — er — quite a success, so to say, with the ladies."

"Well, if he was, he finished himself off by that affair," Haythorne grumbled.

"And the woman was a termagant — at least so I've been told. It was generally accepted in Berkeley that she made life — er — not exactly paradise for her husband."

"I never heard that," Haythorne rejoined. "In San Francisco the talk was all the other way."

"Woman sort of a martyr, eh? — crucified on the cross of matrimony?"

The doctor nodded. Messner's gray eyes were mildly curious as he went on:

"That was to be expected — two sides to the shield. Living in Berkeley I only got the one side. She was a great deal in San Francisco, it seems."

"Some coffee, please," Haythorne said.

The woman refilled his mug, at the same time breaking into light laughter.

"You're gossiping like a pair of beldames," she chided them.

"It's so interesting," Messner smiled at her, then returned to the doctor. "The husband seems then to have had a not very savory reputation in San Francisco?"

"On the contrary, he was a moral prig," Haythorne blurted out, with apparently undue warmth. "He was a little scholastic shrimp without a drop of red blood in his body."

"Did you know him?"

"Never laid eyes on him. I never knocked about in university circles."

"One side of the shield again," Messner said, with an air of weighing the matter judicially. While he did not amount to much, it is true — that is, physically — I'd hardly say he was as bad as all that. He did take an active interest in student athletics. And he had some talent. He once wrote a Nativity play that brought him quite a bit of local appreciation. I have heard, also, that he was slated for the head of the English department, only the affair happened and he resigned and went away. It quite broke his career, or so it seemed. At any rate, on our side the shield, it was considered a knock-out blow to him. It was thought he cared a great deal for his wife."

Haythorne, finishing his mug of coffee, grunted uninterestedly and lighted his pipe.

"It was fortunate they had no children," Messner continued.

But Haythorne, with a glance at the stove, pulled on his cap and mittens.

"I'm going out to get some wood," he said. "Then I can take off my moccasins and he comfortable."

The door slammed behind him. For a long minute there was silence. The man continued in the same position on the bed. The woman sat on the grub-box, facing him.

“What are you going to do?” she asked abruptly.

Messner looked at her with lazy indecision. “What do you think I ought to do? Nothing scenic, I hope. You see I am stiff and trail-sore, and this bunk is so restful.”

She gnawed her lower lip and fumed dumbly.

“But — ” she began vehemently, then clenched her hands and stopped.

“I hope you don’t want me to kill Mr. — er — Haythorne,” he said gently, almost pleadingly. “It would be most distressing, and, I assure you, really it is unnecessary.”

“But you must do something,” she cried.

“On the contrary, it is quite conceivable that I do not have to do anything.”

“You would stay here?”

He nodded.

She glanced desperately around the cabin and at the bed unrolled on the other bunk. “Night is coming on. You can’t stop here. You can’t! I tell you, you simply can’t!”

“Of course I can. I might remind you that I found this cabin first and that you are my guests.”

Again her eyes travelled around the room, and the terror in them leaped up at sight of the other bunk.

“Then we’ll have to go,” she announced decisively.

“Impossible. You have a dry, hacking cough — the sort Mr. — er — Haythorne so aptly described. You’ve already slightly chilled your lungs. Besides, he is a physician and knows. He would never permit it.”

“Then what are you going to do?” she demanded again, with a tense, quiet utterance that boded an outbreak.

Messner regarded her in a way that was almost paternal, what of the profundity of pity and patience with which he contrived to suffuse it.

“My dear Theresa, as I told you before, I don’t know. I really haven’t thought about it.”

“Oh! You drive me mad!” She sprang to her feet, wringing her hands in impotent wrath. “You never used to be this way.”

“I used to be all softness and gentleness,” he nodded concurrence. “Was that why you left me?”

“You are so different, so dreadfully calm. You frighten me. I feel you have something terrible planned all the while. But whatever you do, don’t do anything rash. Don’t get excited — ”

“I don’t get excited any more,” he interrupted. “Not since you went away.”

“You have improved — remarkably,” she retorted.

He smiled acknowledgment. “While I am thinking about what I shall do, I’ll tell you what you will have to do — tell Mr. — er — Haythorne who I am. It may make our stay in this cabin more — may I say, sociable?”

“Why have you followed me into this frightful country?” she asked irrelevantly.

“Don’t think I came here looking for you, Theresa. Your vanity shall not be tickled by any such misapprehension. Our meeting is wholly fortuitous. I broke with the life academic and I had to go somewhere. To be honest, I came into the Klondike because I thought it the place you were least liable to be in.”

There was a fumbling at the latch, then the door swung in and Haythorne entered with an armful of firewood. At the first warning, Theresa began casually to clear away the dishes. Haythorne went out again after more wood.

“Why didn’t you introduce us?” Messner queried.

“I’ll tell him,” she replied, with a toss of her head. “Don’t think I’m afraid.”

“I never knew you to be afraid, very much, of anything.”

“And I’m not afraid of confession, either,” she said, with softening face and voice.

“In your case, I fear, confession is exploitation by indirection, profit-making by ruse, self-aggrandizement at the expense of God.”

“Don’t be literary,” she pouted, with growing tenderness. “I never did like epigrammatic discussion. Besides, I’m not afraid to ask you to forgive me.”

“There is nothing to forgive, Theresa. I really should thank you. True, at first I suffered; and then, with all the graciousness of spring, it dawned upon me that I was happy, very happy. It was a most amazing discovery.”

“But what if I should return to you?” she asked.

“I should” (he looked at her whimsically), “be greatly perturbed.”

“I am your wife. You know you have never got a divorce.”

“I see,” he meditated. “I have been careless. It will be one of the first things I attend to.”

She came over to his side, resting her hand on his arm. “You don’t want me, John?” Her voice was soft and caressing, her hand rested like a lure. “If I told you I had made a mistake? If I told you that I was very unhappy? — and I am. And I did make a mistake.”

Fear began to grow on Messner. He felt himself wilting under the lightly laid hand. The situation was slipping away from him, all his beautiful calmness was going. She looked at him with melting eyes, and he, too, seemed all dew and melting. He felt himself on the edge of an abyss, powerless to withstand the force that was drawing him over.

“I am coming back to you, John. I am coming back to-day . . . now.”

As in a nightmare, he strove under the hand. While she talked, he seemed to hear, rippling softly, the song of the Lorelei. It was as though, somewhere, a piano were playing and the actual notes were impinging on his ear-drums.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet, thrust her from him as her arms attempted to clasp him, and retreated backward to the door. He was in a panic.

“I’ll do something desperate!” he cried.

“I warned you not to get excited.” She laughed mockingly, and went about washing the dishes. “Nobody wants you. I was just playing with you. I am happier where I am.”

But Messner did not believe. He remembered her facility in changing front. She had changed front now. It was exploitation by indirection. She was not happy with the other man. She had discovered her mistake. The flame of his ego flared up at the thought. She wanted to come back to him, which was the one thing he did not want. Unwittingly, his hand rattled the door-latch.

“Don’t run away,” she laughed. “I won’t bite you.”

“I am not running away,” he replied with child-like defiance, at the same time pulling on his mittens. “I’m only going to get some water.”

He gathered the empty pails and cooking pots together and opened the door. He looked back at her.

“Don’t forget you’re to tell Mr. — er — Haythorne who I am.”

Messner broke the skin that had formed on the water-hole within the hour, and filled his pails. But he did not return immediately to the cabin. Leaving the pails standing in the trail, he walked up and down, rapidly, to keep from freezing, for the frost bit into the flesh like fire. His beard was white with his frozen breath when the perplexed and frowning brows relaxed and decision came into his face. He had made up his mind to his course of action, and his frigid lips and cheeks crackled into a chuckle over it. The pails were already skinned over with young ice when he picked them up and made for the cabin.

When he entered he found the other man waiting, standing near the stove, a certain stiff awkwardness and indecision in his manner. Messner set down his water-pails.

“Glad to meet you, Graham Womble,” he said in conventional tones, as though acknowledging an introduction.

Messner did not offer his hand. Womble stirred uneasily, feeling for the other the hatred one is prone to feel for one he has wronged.

“And so you’re the chap,” Messner said in marvelling accents. “Well, well. You see, I really am glad to meet you. I have been — er — curious to know what Theresa found in you — where, I may say, the attraction lay. Well, well.”

And he looked the other up and down as a man would look a horse up and down.

“I know how you must feel about me,” Womble began.

“Don’t mention it,” Messner broke in with exaggerated cordiality of voice and manner. “Never mind that. What I want to know is how do you find her? Up to expectations? Has she worn well? Life been all a happy dream ever since?”

“Don’t be silly,” Theresa interjected.

“I can’t help being natural,” Messner complained.

“You can be expedient at the same time, and practical,” Womble said sharply. “What we want to know is what are you going to do?”

Messner made a well-feigned gesture of helplessness. “I really don’t know. It is one of those impossible situations against which there can be no provision.”

“All three of us cannot remain the night in this cabin.”

Messner nodded affirmation.

“Then somebody must get out.”

“That also is incontrovertible,” Messner agreed. “When three bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time, one must get out.”

“And you’re that one,” Womble announced grimly. “It’s a ten-mile pull to the next camp, but you can make it all right.”

“And that’s the first flaw in your reasoning,” the other objected. “Why, necessarily, should I be the one to get out? I found this cabin first.”

“But Tess can’t get out,” Womble explained. “Her lungs are already slightly chilled.”

“I agree with you. She can’t venture ten miles of frost. By all means she must remain.”

“Then it is as I said,” Womble announced with finality.

Messner cleared his throat. “Your lungs are all right, aren’t they?”

“Yes, but what of it?”

Again the other cleared his throat and spoke with painstaking and judicial slowness. “Why, I may say, nothing of it, except, ah, according to your own reasoning, there is nothing to prevent your getting out, hitting the frost, so to speak, for a matter of ten miles. You can make it all right.”

Womble looked with quick suspicion at Theresa and caught in her eyes a glint of pleased surprise.

“Well?” he demanded of her.

She hesitated, and a surge of anger darkened his face. He turned upon Messner.

“Enough of this. You can’t stop here.”

“Yes, I can.”

“I won’t let you.” Womble squared his shoulders. “I’m running things.”

“I’ll stay anyway,” the other persisted.

“I’ll put you out.”

“I’ll come back.”

Womble stopped a moment to steady his voice and control himself. Then he spoke slowly, in a low, tense voice.

“Look here, Messner, if you refuse to get out, I’ll thrash you. This isn’t California. I’ll beat you to a jelly with my two fists.”

Messner shrugged his shoulders. “If you do, I’ll call a miners’ meeting and see you strung up to the nearest tree. As you said, this is not California. They’re a simple folk, these miners, and all I’ll have to do will be to show them the marks of the beating, tell them the truth about you, and present my claim for my wife.”

The woman attempted to speak, but Womble turned upon her fiercely.

“You keep out of this,” he cried.

In marked contrast was Messner’s “Please don’t intrude, Theresa.”

What of her anger and pent feelings, her lungs were irritated into the dry, hacking cough, and with blood-suffused face and one hand clenched against her chest, she waited for the paroxysm to pass.

Womble looked gloomily at her, noting her cough.

“Something must be done,” he said. “Yet her lungs can’t stand the exposure. She can’t travel till the temperature rises. And I’m not going to give her up.”

Messner hemmed, cleared his throat, and hemmed again, semi-apologetically, and said, “I need some money.”

Contempt showed instantly in Womble’s face. At last, beneath him in vileness, had the other sunk himself.

“You’ve got a fat sack of dust,” Messner went on. “I saw you unload it from the sled.”

“How much do you want?” Womble demanded, with a contempt in his voice equal to that in his face.

“I made an estimate of the sack, and I — ah — should say it weighed about twenty pounds. What do you say we call it four thousand?”

“But it’s all I’ve got, man!” Womble cried out.

“You’ve got her,” the other said soothingly. “She must be worth it. Think what I’m giving up. Surely it is a reasonable price.”

“All right.” Womble rushed across the floor to the gold-sack. “Can’t put this deal through too quick for me, you — you little worm!”

“Now, there you err,” was the smiling rejoinder. “As a matter of ethics isn’t the man who gives a bribe as bad as the man who takes a bribe? The receiver is as bad as the thief, you know; and you needn’t console yourself with any fictitious moral superiority concerning this little deal.”

“To hell with your ethics!” the other burst out. “Come here and watch the weighing of this dust. I might cheat you.”

And the woman, leaning against the bunk, raging and impotent, watched herself weighed out in yellow dust and nuggets in the scales erected on the grub-box. The scales were small, making necessary many weighings, and Messner with precise care verified each weighing.

“There’s too much silver in it,” he remarked as he tied up the gold-sack. “I don’t think it will run quite sixteen to the ounce. You got a trifle the better of me, Womble.”

He handled the sack lovingly, and with due appreciation of its preciousness carried it out to his sled.

Returning, he gathered his pots and pans together, packed his grub-box, and rolled up his bed. When the sled was lashed and the complaining dogs harnessed, he returned into the cabin for his mittens.

“Good-by, Tess,” he said, standing at the open door.

She turned on him, struggling for speech but too frantic to word the passion that burned in her.

“Good-by, Tess,” he repeated gently.

“Beast!” she managed to articulate.

She turned and tottered to the bunk, flinging herself face down upon it, sobbing: “You beasts! You beasts!”

John Messner closed the door softly behind him, and, as he started the dogs, looked back at the cabin with a great relief in his face. At the bottom of the bank, beside the water-hole, he halted the sled. He worked the sack of gold out between the lashings and carried it to the water-hole. Already a new skin of ice had formed. This he broke with his fist. Untying the knotted mouth with his teeth, he emptied the contents of the sack into the water. The river was shallow at that point, and two feet beneath the surface he could see the bottom dull-yellow in the fading light. At the sight of it, he spat into the hole.

He started the dogs along the Yukon trail. Whining spiritlessly, they were reluctant to work. Clinging to the gee-pole with his right hand and with his left rubbing cheeks and nose, he stumbled over the rope as the dogs swung on a bend.

“Mush-on, you poor, sore-footed brutes!” he cried. “That’s it, mush-on!”

The Death of Ligoun

Blood for blood, rank for rank.

— Thlinket Code.

“Hear now the death of Ligoun — ”

The speaker ceased, or rather suspended utterance, and gazed upon me with an eye of understanding. I held the bottle between our eyes and the fire, indicated with my thumb the depth of the draught, and shoved it over to him; for was he not Palitlum, the Drinker? Many tales had he told me, and long had I waited for this scriptless scribe to speak of the things concerning Ligoun; for he, of all men living, knew these things best.

He tilted back his head with a grunt that slid swiftly into a gurgle, and the shadow of a man’s torso, monstrous beneath a huge inverted bottle, wavered and danced on the frown of the cliff at our backs. Palitlum released his lips from the glass with a caressing suck and glanced regretfully up into the ghostly vault of the sky where played the wan white light of the summer borealis.

“It be strange,” he said; “cold like water and hot like fire. To the drinker it giveth strength, and from the drinker it taketh away strength. It maketh old men young, and young men old. To the man who is weary it leadeth him to get up and go onward, and to the man unweary it burdeneth him into sleep. My brother was possessed of the heart of a rabbit, yet did he drink of it, and forthwith slay four of his enemies. My father was like a great wolf, showing his teeth to all men, yet did he drink of it and was shot through the back, running swiftly away. It be most strange.”

“It is ‘Three Star,’ and a better than what they poison their bellies with down there,” I answered, sweeping my hand, as it were, over the yawning chasm of blackness and down to where the beach fires glinted far below — tiny jets of flame which gave proportion and reality to the night.

Palitlum sighed and shook his head. “Wherefore I am here with thee.”

And here he embraced the bottle and me in a look which told more eloquently than speech of his shameless thirst.

“Nay,” I said, snuggling the bottle in between my knees. “Speak now of Ligoun. Of the ‘Three Star’ we will hold speech hereafter.”

“There be plenty, and I am not wearied,” he pleaded brazenly. “But the feel of it on my lips, and I will speak great words of Ligoun and his last days.”

“From the drinker it taketh away strength,” I mocked, “and to the man unweary it burdeneth him into sleep.”

“Thou art wise,” he rejoined, without anger and pridelessly. “Like all of thy brothers, thou art wise. Waking or sleeping, the ‘Three Star’ be with thee, yet never have I known thee to drink overlong or overmuch. And the while you gather to you the gold that hides in our mountains and the fish that swim in our seas; and Palitlum, and the brothers of Palitlum, dig the gold for thee and net the fish, and are glad to be made glad when out of thy wisdom thou deemest it fit that the ‘Three Star’ should wet our lips.”

“I was minded to hear of Ligoun,” I said impatiently. “The night grows short, and we have a sore journey to-morrow.”

I yawned and made as though to rise, but Palitlum betrayed a quick anxiety, and with abruptness began: —

“It was Ligoun’s desire, in his old age, that peace should be among the tribes. As a young man he had been first of the fighting men and chief over the war-chiefs of the Islands and the Passes. All his days had been full of fighting. More marks he boasted of bone and lead and iron than any other man. Three wives he had, and for each wife two sons; and the sons, eldest born and last and all died by his side in battle. Restless as the bald-face, he ranged wide and far — north to Unalaska and the Shallow Sea; south to the Queen Charlottes, ay, even did he go with the Kakes, it is told, to far Puget Sound, and slay thy brothers in their sheltered houses.

“But, as I say, in his old age he looked for peace among the tribes. Not that he was become afraid, or overfond of the corner by the fire and the well-filled pot. For he slew with the shrewdness and blood-hunger of the fiercest, drew in his belly to famine with the youngest, and with the stoutest faced the bitter seas and stinging trail. But because of his many deeds, and in punishment, a warship carried him away, even to thy country, O Hair-Face and Boston Man; and the years were many ere he came back, and I was grown to something more than a boy and something less than a young man. And Ligoun, being childless in his old age, made much of me, and grown wise, gave me of his wisdom.

“‘It be good to fight, O Palitlum,’ said he. Nay, O Hair-Face, for I was unknown as Palitlum in those days, being called Olo, the Ever-Hungry. The drink was to come after. ‘It be good to fight,’ spoke Ligoun, ‘but it be foolish. In the Boston Man Country, as I saw with mine eyes, they are not given to fighting one with another, and they be strong. Wherefore, of their strength, they come against us of the Islands and Passes, and we are as camp smoke and sea mist before them. Wherefore I say it be good to fight, most good, but it be likewise foolish.’

“And because of this, though first always of the fighting men, Ligoun’s voice was loudest, ever, for peace. And when he was very old, being greatest of chiefs and richest of men, he gave a potlatch. Never was there such a potlatch. Five hundred canoes were lined against the river bank, and in each canoe there came not less than ten of men and women. Eight tribes were there; from the first and oldest man to the last and youngest babe were they there. And then there were men from far-distant tribes, great travellers and seekers who had heard of the potlatch of Ligoun. And for the length of

seven days they filled their bellies with his meat and drink. Eight thousand blankets did he give to them, as I well know, for who but I kept the tally and apportioned according to degree and rank? And in the end Ligoun was a poor man; but his name was on all men's lips, and other chiefs gritted their teeth in envy that he should be so great.

"And so, because there was weight to his words, he counselled peace; and he journeyed to every potlatch and feast and tribal gathering that he might counsel peace. And so it came that we journeyed together, Ligoun and I, to the great feast given by Niblack, who was chief over the river Indians of the Skoot, which is not far from the Stickeen. This was in the last days, and Ligoun was very old and very close to death. He coughed of cold weather and camp smoke, and often the red blood ran from out his mouth till we looked for him to die.

"'Nay,' he said once at such time; 'it were better that I should die when the blood leaps to the knife, and there is a clash of steel and smell of powder, and men crying aloud what of the cold iron and quick lead.' So, it be plain, O Hair-Face, that his heart was yet strong for battle.

"It is very far from the Chilcat to the Skoot, and we were many days in the canoes. And the while the men bent to the paddles, I sat at the feet of Ligoun and received the Law. Of small need for me to say the Law, O Hair-Face, for it be known to me that in this thou art well skilled. Yet do I speak of the Law of blood for blood, and rank for rank. Also did Ligoun go deeper into the matter, saying: —

"'But know this, O Olo, that there be little honor in the killing of a man less than thee. Kill always the man who is greater, and thy honor shall be according to his greatness. But if, of two men, thou killest the lesser, then is shame thine, for which the very squaws will lift their lips at thee. As I say, peace be good; but remember, O Olo, if kill thou must, that thou killest by the Law.'

"It is a way of the Thlinket-folk," Palitlum vouchsafed half apologetically.

And I remembered the gun-fighters and bad men of my own Western land, and was not perplexed at the way of the Thlinket-folk.

"In time," Palitlum continued, "we came to Chief Niblack and the Skoots. It was a feast great almost as the potlatch of Ligoun. There were we of the Chilcat, and the Sitkas, and the Stickeens who are neighbors to the Skoots, and the Wrangels and the Hoonahs. There were Sundowns and Tahkos from Port Houghton, and their neighbors the Awks from Douglass Channel; the Naass River people, and the Tongas from north of Dixon, and the Kakes who come from the island called Kupreanoff. Then there were Siwashes from Vancouver, Cassiars from the Gold Mountains, Teslin men, and even Sticks from the Yukon Country.

"It was a mighty gathering. But first of all, there was to be a meeting of the chiefs with Niblack, and a drowning of all enmities in quass. The Russians it was who showed us the way of making quass, for so my father told me, — my father, who got it from his father before him. But to this quass had Niblack added many things, such as sugar,

flour, dried apples, and hops, so that it was a man's drink, strong and good. Not so good as 'Three Star,' O Hair-Face, yet good.

"This quass-feast was for the chiefs, and the chiefs only, and there was a score of them. But Ligoun being very old and very great, it was given that I walk with him that he might lean upon my shoulder and that I might ease him down when he took his seat and raise him up when he arose. At the door of Niblack's house, which was of logs and very big, each chief, as was the custom, laid down his spear or rifle and his knife. For as thou knowest, O Hair-Face, strong drink quickens, and old hates flame up, and head and hand are swift to act. But I noted that Ligoun had brought two knives, the one he left outside the door, the other slipped under his blanket, snug to the grip. The other chiefs did likewise, and I was troubled for what was to come.

"The chiefs were ranged, sitting, in a big circle about the room. I stood at Ligoun's elbow. In the middle was the barrel of quass, and by it a slave to serve the drink. First, Niblack made oration, with much show of friendship and many fine words. Then he gave a sign, and the slave dipped a gourd full of quass and passed it to Ligoun, as was fit, for his was the highest rank.

"Ligoun drank it, to the last drop, and I gave him my strength to get on his feet so that he, too, might make oration. He had kind speech for the many tribes, noted the greatness of Niblack to give such a feast, counselled for peace as was his custom, and at the end said that the quass was very good.

"Then Niblack drank, being next of rank to Ligoun, and after him one chief and another in degree and order. And each spoke friendly words and said that the quass was good, till all had drunk. Did I say all? Nay, not all, O Hair-Face. For last of them was one, a lean and catlike man, young of face, with a quick and daring eye, who drank darkly, and spat forth upon the ground, and spoke no word.

"To not say that the quass was good were insult; to spit forth upon the ground were worse than insult. And this very thing did he do. He was known for a chief over the Sticks of the Yukon, and further naught was known of him.

"As I say, it was an insult. But mark this, O Hair-Face: it was an insult, not to Niblack the feast-giver, but to the man chiefest of rank who sat among those of the circle. And that man was Ligoun. There was no sound. All eyes were upon him to see what he might do. He made no movement. His withered lips trembled not into speech; nor did a nostril quiver, nor an eyelid droop. But I saw that he looked wan and gray, as I have seen old men look of bitter mornings when famine pressed, and the women wailed and the children whimpered, and there was no meat nor sign of meat. And as the old men looked, so looked Ligoun.

"There was no sound. It were as a circle of the dead, but that each chief felt beneath his blanket to make sure, and that each chief glanced to his neighbor, right and left, with a measuring eye. I was a stripling; the things I had seen were few; yet I knew it to be the moment one meets but once in all a lifetime.

"The Stick rose up, with every eye upon him, and crossed the room till he stood before Ligoun.

“‘I am Opitsah, the Knife,’ he said.

“But Ligoun said naught, nor looked at him, but gazed unblinking at the ground.

“‘You are Ligoun,’ Opitsah said. ‘You have killed many men. I am still alive.’

“And still Ligoun said naught, though he made the sign to me and with my strength arose and stood upright on his two feet. He was as an old pine, naked and gray, but still a-shoulder to the frost and storm. His eyes were unblinking, and as he had not heard Opitsah, so it seemed he did not see him.

“And Opitsah was mad with anger, and danced stiff-legged before him, as men do when they wish to give another shame. And Opitsah sang a song of his own greatness and the greatness of his people, filled with bad words for the Chilcats and for Ligoun. And as he danced and sang, Opitsah threw off his blanket and with his knife drew bright circles before the face of Ligoun. And the song he sang was the Song of the Knife.

“And there was no other sound, only the singing of Opitsah, and the circle of chiefs that were as dead, save that the flash of the knife seemed to draw smouldering fire from their eyes. And Ligoun, also, was very still. Yet did he know his death, and was unafraid. And the knife sang closer and yet closer to his face, but his eyes were unblinking and he swayed not to right or left, or this way or that.

“And Opitsah drove in the knife, so, twice on the forehead of Ligoun, and the red blood leaped after it. And then it was that Ligoun gave me the sign to bear up under him with my youth that he might walk. And he laughed with a great scorn, full in the face of Opitsah, the Knife. And he brushed Opitsah to the side, as one brushes to the side a low-hanging branch on the trail and passes on.

“And I knew and understood, for there was but shame in the killing of Opitsah before the faces of a score of greater chiefs. I remembered the Law, and knew Ligoun had it in mind to kill by the Law. And who, chiefest of rank but himself, was there but Niblack? And toward Niblack, leaning on my arm, he walked. And to his other arm, clinging and striking, was Opitsah, too small to soil with his blood the hands of so great a man. And though the knife of Opitsah bit in again and again, Ligoun noted it not, nor winced. And in this fashion we three went our way across the room, Niblack sitting in his blanket and fearful of our coming.

“And now old hates flamed up and forgotten grudges were remembered. Lamuk, a Kake, had had a brother drowned in the bad water of the Stickeen, and the Stickeens had not paid in blankets for their bad water, as was the custom to pay. So Lamuk drove straight with his long knife to the heart of Klok-Kutz the Stickeen. And Katchahook remembered a quarrel of the Naass River people with the Tongas of north of Dixon, and the chief of the Tongas he slew with a pistol which made much noise. And the blood-hunger gripped all the men who sat in the circle, and chief slew chief, or was slain, as chance might be. Also did they stab and shoot at Ligoun, for whoso killed him won great honor and would be unforgotten for the deed. And they were about him like wolves about a moose, only they were so many they were in their own way, and they slew one another to make room. And there was great confusion.

“But Ligoun went slowly, without haste, as though many years were yet before him. It seemed that he was certain he would make his kill, in his own way, ere they could slay him. And as I say, he went slowly, and knives bit into him, and he was red with blood. And though none sought after me, who was a mere stripling, yet did the knives find me, and the hot bullets burn me. And still Ligoun leaned his weight on my youth, and Opitsah struck at him, and we three went forward. And when we stood by Niblack, he was afraid, and covered his head with his blanket. The Skoots were ever cowards.

“And Goolzug and Kadishan, the one a fish-eater and the other a meat-killer, closed together for the honor of their tribes. And they raged madly about, and in their battling swung against the knees of Opitsah, who was overthrown and trampled upon. And a knife, singing through the air, smote Skulpin, of the Sitkas, in the throat, and he flung his arms out blindly, reeling, and dragged me down in his fall.

“And from the ground I beheld Ligoun bend over Niblack, and uncover the blanket from his head, and turn up his face to the light. And Ligoun was in no haste. Being blinded with his own blood, he swept it out of his eyes with the back of his hand, so he might see and be sure. And when he was sure that the upturned face was the face of Niblack, he drew the knife across his throat as one draws a knife across the throat of a trembling deer. And then Ligoun stood erect, singing his death-song and swaying gently to and fro. And Skulpin, who had dragged me down, shot with a pistol from where he lay, and Ligoun toppled and fell, as an old pine topples and falls in the teeth of the wind.”

Palitlum ceased. His eyes, smouldering moodily, were bent upon the fire, and his cheek was dark with blood.

“And thou, Palitlum?” I demanded. “And thou?”

“I? I did remember the Law, and I slew Opitsah the Knife, which was well. And I drew Ligoun’s own knife from the throat of Niblack, and slew Skulpin, who had dragged me down. For I was a stripling, and I could slay any man and it were honor. And further, Ligoun being dead, there was no need for my youth, and I laid about me with his knife, choosing the chiefest of rank that yet remained.”

Palitlum fumbled under his shirt and drew forth a beaded sheath, and from the sheath, a knife. It was a knife home-wrought and crudely fashioned from a whip-saw file; a knife such as one may find possessed by old men in a hundred Alaskan villages.

“The knife of Ligoun?” I said, and Palitlum nodded.

“And for the knife of Ligoun,” I said, “will I give thee ten bottles of ‘Three Star.’”

But Palitlum looked at me slowly. “Hair-Face, I am weak as water, and easy as a woman. I have soiled my belly with quass, and hooch, and ‘Three Star.’ My eyes are blunted, my ears have lost their keenness, and my strength has gone into fat. And I am without honor in these days, and am called Palitlum, the Drinker. Yet honor was mine at the potlatch of Niblack, on the Skoot, and the memory of it, and the memory of Ligoun, be dear to me. Nay, didst thou turn the sea itself into ‘Three Star’ and say that it were all mine for the knife, yet would I keep the knife. I am Palitlum, the Drinker, but I was once Olo, the Ever-Hungry, who bore up Ligoun with his youth!”

“Thou art a great man, Palitlum,” I said, “and I honor thee.”

Palitlum reached out his hand.

“The ‘Three Star’ between thy knees be mine for the tale I have told,” he said.

And as I looked on the frown of the cliff at our backs, I saw the shadow of a man’s torso, monstrous beneath a huge inverted bottle.

Demetrios Contos

It must not be thought, from what I have told of the Greek fishermen, that they were altogether bad. Far from it. But they were rough men, gathered together in isolated communities and fighting with the elements for a livelihood. They lived far away from the law and its workings, did not understand it, and thought it tyranny. Especially did the fish laws seem tyrannical. And because of this, they looked upon the men of the fish patrol as their natural enemies.

We menaced their lives, or their living, which is the same thing, in many ways. We confiscated illegal traps and nets, the materials of which had cost them considerable sums and the making of which required weeks of labor. We prevented them from catching fish at many times and seasons, which was equivalent to preventing them from making as good a living as they might have made had we not been in existence. And when we captured them, they were brought into the courts of law, where heavy cash fines were collected from them. As a result, they hated us vindictively. As the dog is the natural enemy of the cat, the snake of man, so were we of the fish patrol the natural enemies of the fishermen.

But it is to show that they could act generously as well as hate bitterly that this story of Demetrios Contos is told. Demetrios Contos lived in Vallejo. Next to Big Alec, he was the largest, bravest, and most influential man among the Greeks. He had given us no trouble, and I doubt if he would ever have clashed with us had he not invested in a new salmon boat. This boat was the cause of all the trouble. He had had it built upon his own model, in which the lines of the general salmon boat were somewhat modified.

To his high elation he found his new boat very fast—in fact, faster than any other boat on the bay or rivers. Forthwith he grew proud and boastful: and, our raid with the *Mary Rebecca* on the Sunday salmon fishers having wrought fear in their hearts, he sent a challenge up to Benicia. One of the local fishermen conveyed it to us; it was to the effect that Demetrios Contos would sail up from Vallejo on the following Sunday, and in the plain sight of Benicia set his net and catch salmon, and that Charley Le Grant, patrolman, might come and get him if he could. Of course Charley and I had heard nothing of the new boat. Our own boat was pretty fast, and we were not afraid to have a brush with any other that happened along.

Sunday came. The challenge had been bruited abroad, and the fishermen and sea-faring folk of Benicia turned out to a man, crowding Steamboat Wharf till it looked like the grand stand at a football match. Charley and I had been sceptical, but the fact of the crowd convinced us that there was something in Demetrios Contos's dare.

In the afternoon, when the sea-breeze had picked up in strength, his sail hove into view as he bowled along before the wind. He tacked a score of feet from the wharf, waved his hand theatrically, like a knight about to enter the lists, received a hearty cheer in return, and stood away into the Straits for a couple of hundred yards. Then he lowered sail, and, drifting the boat sidewise by means of the wind, proceeded to set his net. He did not set much of it, possibly fifty feet; yet Charley and I were thunderstruck at the man's effrontery. We did not know at the time, but we learned afterward, that the net he used was old and worthless. It could catch fish, true; but a catch of any size would have torn it to pieces.

Charley shook his head and said:

"I confess, it puzzles me. What if he has out only fifty feet? He could never get it in if we once started for him. And why does he come here anyway, flaunting his law-breaking in our faces? Right in our home town, too."

Charley's voice took on an aggrieved tone, and he continued for some minutes to inveigh against the brazenness of Demetrios Contos.

In the meantime, the man in question was lolling in the stern of his boat and watching the net floats. When a large fish is meshed in a gill-net, the floats by their agitation advertise the fact. And they evidently advertised it to Demetrios, for he pulled in about a dozen feet of net, and held aloft for a moment, before he flung it into the bottom of the boat, a big, glistening salmon. It was greeted by the audience on the wharf with round after round of cheers. This was more than Charley could stand.

"Come on, lad," he called to me; and we lost no time jumping into our salmon boat and getting up sail.

The crowd shouted warning to Demetrios, and as we darted out from the wharf we saw him slash his worthless net clear with a long knife. His sail was all ready to go up, and a moment later it fluttered in the sunshine. He ran aft, drew in the sheet, and filled on the long tack toward the Contra Costa Hills.

By this time we were not more than thirty feet astern. Charley was jubilant. He knew our boat was fast, and he knew, further, that in fine sailing few men were his equals. He was confident that we should surely catch Demetrios, and I shared his confidence. But somehow we did not seem to gain.

It was a pretty sailing breeze. We were gliding sleekly through the water, but Demetrios was slowly sliding away from us. And not only was he going faster, but he was eating into the wind a fraction of a point closer than we. This was sharply impressed upon us when he went about under the Contra Costa Hills and passed us on the other tack fully one hundred feet dead to windward.

"Whew!" Charley exclaimed. "Either that boat is a daisy, or we've got a five-gallon coal-oil can fast to our keel!"

It certainly looked it one way or the other. And by the time Demetrios made the Sonoma Hills, on the other side of the Straits, we were so hopelessly outdistanced that Charley told me to slack off the sheet, and we squared away for Benicia. The fishermen on Steamboat Wharf showered us with ridicule when we returned and tied up. Charley

and I got out and walked away, feeling rather sheepish, for it is a sore stroke to one's pride when he thinks he has a good boat and knows how to sail it, and another man comes along and beats him.

Charley mooned over it for a couple of days; then word was brought to us, as before, that on the next Sunday Demetrios Contos would repeat his performance. Charley roused himself. He had our boat out of the water, cleaned and repainted its bottom, made a trifling alteration about the centre-board, overhauled the running gear, and sat up nearly all of Saturday night sewing on a new and much larger sail. So large did he make it, in fact, that additional ballast was imperative, and we stowed away nearly five hundred extra pounds of old railroad iron in the bottom of the boat.

Sunday came, and with it came Demetrios Contos, to break the law defiantly in open day. Again we had the afternoon sea-breeze, and again Demetrios cut loose some forty or more feet of his rotten net, and got up sail and under way under our very noses. But he had anticipated Charley's move, and his own sail peaked higher than ever, while a whole extra cloth had been added to the after leech.

It was nip and tuck across to the Contra Costa Hills, neither of us seeming to gain or to lose. But by the time we had made the return tack to the Sonoma Hills, we could see that, while we footed it at about equal speed, Demetrios had eaten into the wind the least bit more than we. Yet Charley was sailing our boat as finely and delicately as it was possible to sail it, and getting more out of it than he ever had before.

Of course, he could have drawn his revolver and fired at Demetrios; but we had long since found it contrary to our natures to shoot at a fleeing man guilty of only a petty offence. Also a sort of tacit agreement seemed to have been reached between the patrolmen and the fishermen. If we did not shoot while they ran away, they, in turn, did not fight if we once laid hands on them. Thus Demetrios Contos ran away from us, and we did no more than try our best to overtake him; and, in turn, if our boat proved faster than his, or was sailed better, he would, we knew, make no resistance when we caught up with him.

With our large sails and the healthy breeze romping up the Carquinez Straits, we found that our sailing was what is called "ticklish." We had to be constantly on the alert to avoid a capsize, and while Charley steered I held the main-sheet in my hand with but a single turn round a pin, ready to let go at any moment. Demetrios, we could see, sailing his boat alone, had his hands full.

But it was a vain undertaking for us to attempt to catch him. Out of his inner consciousness he had evolved a boat that was better than ours. And though Charley sailed fully as well, if not the least bit better, the boat he sailed was not so good as the Greek's.

"Slack away the sheet," Charley commanded; and as our boat fell off before the wind, Demetrios's mocking laugh floated down to us.

Charley shook his head, saying, "It's no use. Demetrios has the better boat. If he tries his performance again, we must meet it with some new scheme."

This time it was my imagination that came to the rescue.

“What’s the matter,” I suggested, on the Wednesday following, “with my chasing Demetrios in the boat next Sunday, while you wait for him on the wharf at Vallejo when he arrives?”

Charley considered it a moment and slapped his knee.

“A good idea! You’re beginning to use that head of yours. A credit to your teacher, I must say.”

“But you mustn’t chase him too far,” he went on, the next moment, “or he’ll head out into San Pablo Bay instead of running home to Vallejo, and there I’ll be, standing lonely on the wharf and waiting in vain for him to arrive.”

On Thursday Charley registered an objection to my plan.

“Everybody’ll know I’ve gone to Vallejo, and you can depend upon it that Demetrios will know, too. I’m afraid we’ll have to give up the idea.”

This objection was only too valid, and for the rest of the day I struggled under my disappointment. But that night a new way seemed to open to me, and in my eagerness I awoke Charley from a sound sleep.

“Well,” he grunted, “what’s the matter? House afire?”

“No,” I replied, “but my head is. Listen to this. On Sunday you and I will be around Benicia up to the very moment Demetrios’s sail heaves into sight. This will lull everybody’s suspicions. Then, when Demetrios’s sail does heave in sight, do you stroll leisurely away and up-town. All the fishermen will think you’re beaten and that you know you’re beaten.”

“So far, so good,” Charley commented, while I paused to catch breath.

“And very good indeed,” I continued proudly. “You stroll carelessly up-town, but when you’re once out of sight you leg it for all you’re worth for Dan Maloney’s. Take the little mare of his, and strike out on the country road for Vallejo. The road’s in fine condition, and you can make it in quicker time than Demetrios can beat all the way down against the wind.”

“And I’ll arrange right away for the mare, first thing in the morning,” Charley said, accepting the modified plan without hesitation.

“But, I say,” he said, a little later, this time waking me out of a sound sleep.

I could hear him chuckling in the dark.

“I say, lad, isn’t it rather a novelty for the fish patrol to be taking to horseback?”

“Imagination,” I answered. “It’s what you’re always preaching—‘keep thinking one thought ahead of the other fellow, and you’re bound to win out.’”

“He! he!” he chuckled. “And if one thought ahead, including a mare, doesn’t take the other fellow’s breath away this time, I’m not your humble servant, Charley Le Grant.”

“But can you manage the boat alone?” he asked, on Friday. “Remember, we’ve a ripping big sail on her.”

I argued my proficiency so well that he did not refer to the matter again till Saturday, when he suggested removing one whole cloth from the after leech. I guess it was the disappointment written on my face that made him desist; for I, also, had a pride in

my boat-sailing abilities, and I was almost wild to get out alone with the big sail and go tearing down the Carquinez Straits in the wake of the flying Greek.

As usual, Sunday and Demetrios Contos arrived together. It had become the regular thing for the fishermen to assemble on Steamboat Wharf to greet his arrival and to laugh at our discomfiture. He lowered sail a couple of hundred yards out and set his customary fifty feet of rotten net.

"I suppose this nonsense will keep up as long as his old net holds out," Charley grumbled, with intention, in the hearing of several of the Greeks.

"Den I give-a heem my old-a net-a," one of them spoke up, promptly and maliciously, "I don't care," Charley answered. "I've got some old net myself he can have-if he'll come around and ask for it."

They all laughed at this, for they could afford to be sweet-tempered with a man so badly outwitted as Charley was.

"Well, so long, lad," Charley called to me a moment later. "I think I'll go up-town to Maloney's."

"Let me take the boat out?" I asked.

"If you want to," was his answer, as he turned on his heel and walked slowly away.

Demetrios pulled two large salmon out of his net, and I jumped into the boat. The fishermen crowded around in a spirit of fun, and when I started to get up sail overwhelmed me with all sorts of jocular advice. They even offered extravagant bets to one another that I would surely catch Demetrios, and two of them, styling themselves the committee of judges, gravely asked permission to come along with me to see how I did it.

But I was in no hurry. I waited to give Charley all the time I could, and I pretended dissatisfaction with the stretch of the sail and slightly shifted the small tackle by which the huge sprit forces up the peak. It was not until I was sure that Charley had reached Dan Maloney's and was on the little mare's back, that I cast off from the wharf and gave the big sail to the wind. A stout puff filled it and suddenly pressed the lee gunwale down till a couple of buckets of water came inboard. A little thing like this will happen to the best small-boat sailors, and yet, though I instantly let go the sheet and righted, I was cheered sarcastically, as though I had been guilty of a very awkward blunder.

When Demetrios saw only one person in the fish patrol boat, and that one a boy, he proceeded to play with me. Making a short tack out, with me not thirty feet behind, he returned, with his sheet a little free, to Steamboat Wharf. And there he made short tacks, and turned and twisted and ducked around, to the great delight of his sympathetic audience. I was right behind him all the time, and I dared to do whatever he did, even when he squared away before the wind and jibed his big sail over-a most dangerous trick with such a sail in such a wind.

He depended upon the brisk sea breeze and the strong ebb-tide, which together kicked up a nasty sea, to bring me to grief. But I was on my mettle, and never in all my life did I sail a boat better than on that day. I was keyed up to concert pitch, my brain was working smoothly and quickly, my hands never fumbled once, and it

seemed that I almost divined the thousand little things which a small-boat sailor must be taking into consideration every second.

It was Demetrios who came to grief instead. Something went wrong with his centre-board, so that it jammed in the case and would not go all the way down. In a moment's breathing space, which he had gained from me by a clever trick, I saw him working impatiently with the centre-board, trying to force it down. I gave him little time, and he was compelled quickly to return to the tiller and sheet.

The centre-board made him anxious. He gave over playing with me, and started on the long beat to Vallejo. To my joy, on the first long tack across, I found that I could eat into the wind just a little bit closer than he. Here was where another man in the boat would have been of value to him; for, with me but a few feet astern, he did not dare let go the tiller and run amidships to try to force down the centre-board.

Unable to hang on as close in the eye of the wind as formerly, he proceeded to slack his sheet a trifle and to ease off a bit, in order to outfoot me. This I permitted him to do till I had worked to windward, when I bore down upon him. As I drew close, he fainted at coming about. This led me to shoot into the wind to forestall him. But it was only a feint, cleverly executed, and he held back to his course while I hurried to make up lost ground.

He was undeniably smarter than I when it came to manoeuvring. Time after time I all but had him, and each time he tricked me and escaped. Besides, the wind was freshening, constantly, and each of us had his hands full to avoid capsizing. As for my boat, it could not have been kept afloat but for the extra ballast. I sat cocked over the weather gunwale, tiller in one hand and sheet in the other; and the sheet, with a single turn around a pin, I was very often forced to let go in the severer puffs. This allowed the sail to spill the wind, which was equivalent to taking off so much driving power, and of course I lost ground. My consolation was that Demetrios was as often compelled to do the same thing.

The strong ebb-tide, racing down the Straits in the teeth of the wind, caused an unusually heavy and spiteful sea, which dashed aboard continually. I was dripping wet, and even the sail was wet half-way up the after leech. Once I did succeed in outmanoeuvring Demetrios, so that my bow bumped into him amidships. Here was where I should have had another man. Before I could run forward and leap aboard, he shoved the boats apart with an oar, laughing mockingly in my face as he did so.

We were now at the mouth of the Straits, in a bad stretch of water. Here the Vallejo Straits and the Carquinez Straits rushed directly at each other. Through the first flowed all the water of Napa River and the great tide-lands; through the second flowed all the water of Suisun Bay and the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. And where such immense bodies of water, flowing swiftly, clashed together, a terrible tide-rip was produced. To make it worse, the wind howled up San Pablo Bay for fifteen miles and drove in a tremendous sea upon the tide-rip.

Conflicting currents tore about in all directions, colliding, forming whirlpools, sucks, and boils, and shooting up spitefully into hollow waves which fell aboard as often from

leeward as from windward. And through it all, confused, driven into a madness of motion, thundered the great smoking seas from San Pablo Bay.

I was as wildly excited as the water. The boat was behaving splendidly, leaping and lurching through the welter like a race-horse. I could hardly contain myself with the joy of it. The huge sail, the howling wind, the driving seas, the plunging boat-I, a pygmy, a mere speck in the midst of it, was mastering the elemental strife, flying through it and over it, triumphant and victorious.

And just then, as I roared along like a conquering hero, the boat received a frightful smash and came instantly to a dead stop. I was flung forward and into the bottom. As I sprang up I caught a fleeting glimpse of a greenish, barnacle-covered object, and knew it at once for what it was, that terror of navigation, a sunken pile. No man may guard against such a thing. Water-logged and floating just beneath the surface, it was impossible to sight it in the troubled water in time to escape.

The whole bow of the boat must have been crushed in, for in a few seconds the boat was half full. Then a couple of seas filled it, and it sank straight down, dragged to bottom by the heavy ballast. So quickly did it all happen that I was entangled in the sail and drawn under. When I fought my way to the surface, suffocating, my lungs almost bursting, I could see nothing of the oars. They must have been swept away by the chaotic currents. I saw Demetrios Contos looking back from his boat, and heard the vindictive and mocking tones of his voice as he shouted exultantly. He held steadily on his course, leaving me to perish.

There was nothing to do but to swim for it, which, in that wild confusion, was at the best a matter of but a few moments. Holding my breath and working with my hands, I managed to get off my heavy sea-boots and my jacket. Yet there was very little breath I could catch to hold, and I swiftly discovered that it was not so much a matter of swimming as of breathing.

I was beaten and buffeted, smashed under by the great San Pablo whitecaps, and strangled by the hollow tide-rip waves which flung themselves into my eyes, nose, and mouth. Then the strange sucks would grip my legs and drag me under, to spout me up in some fierce boiling, where, even as I tried to catch my breath, a great whitecap would crash down upon my head.

It was impossible to survive any length of time. I was breathing more water than air, and drowning all the time. My senses began to leave me, my head to whirl around. I struggled on, spasmodically, instinctively, and was barely half conscious when I felt myself caught by the shoulders and hauled over the gunwale of a boat.

For some time I lay across a seat where I had been flung, face downward, and with the water running out of my mouth. After a while, still weak and faint, I turned around to see who was my rescuer. And there, in the stern, sheet in one hand and tiller in the other, grinning and nodding good-naturedly, sat Demetrios Contos. He had intended to leave me to drown,-he said so afterward,-but his better self had fought the battle, conquered, and sent him back to me.

“You all-a right?” he asked.

I managed to shape a “yes” on my lips, though I could not yet speak.

“You sail-a de boat verr-a good-a,” he said. “So good-a as a man.”

A compliment from Demetrios Contos was a compliment indeed, and I keenly appreciated it, though I could only nod my head in acknowledgment.

We held no more conversation, for I was busy recovering and he was busy with the boat. He ran in to the wharf at Vallejo, made the boat fast, and helped me out. Then it was, as we both stood on the wharf, that Charley stepped out from behind a net-rack and put his hand on Demetrios Contos’s arm.

“He saved my life, Charley,” I protested; “and I don’t think he ought to be arrested.”

A puzzled expression came into Charley’s face, which cleared immediately after, in a way it had when he made up his mind.

“I can’t help it, lad,” he said kindly. “I can’t go back on my duty, and it’s plain duty to arrest him. To-day is Sunday; there are two salmon in his boat which he caught to-day. What else can I do?”

“But he saved my life,” I persisted, unable to make any other argument.

Demetrios Contos’s face went black with rage when he learned Charley’s judgment. He had a sense of being unfairly treated. The better part of his nature had triumphed, he had performed a generous act and saved a helpless enemy, and in return the enemy was taking him to jail.

Charley and I were out of sorts with each other when we went back to Benicia. I stood for the spirit of the law and not the letter; but by the letter Charley made his stand. As far as he could see, there was nothing else for him to do. The law said distinctly that no salmon should be caught on Sunday. He was a patrolman, and it was his duty to enforce that law. That was all there was to it. He had done his duty, and his conscience was clear. Nevertheless, the whole thing seemed unjust to me, and I felt very sorry for Demetrios Contos.

Two days later we went down to Vallejo to the trial. I had to go along as a witness, and it was the most hateful task that I ever performed in my life when I testified on the witness stand to seeing Demetrios catch the two salmon Charley had captured him with.

Demetrios had engaged a lawyer, but his case was hopeless. The jury was out only fifteen minutes, and returned a verdict of guilty. The judge sentenced Demetrios to pay a fine of one hundred dollars or go to jail for fifty days.

Charley stepped up to the clerk of the court. “I want to pay that fine,” he said, at the same time placing five twenty-dollar gold pieces on the desk. “It-it was the only way out of it, lad,” he stammered, turning to me.

The moisture rushed into my eyes as I seized his hand. “I want to pay-“ I began.

“To pay your half?” he interrupted. “I certainly shall expect you to pay it.”

In the meantime Demetrios had been informed by his lawyer that his fee likewise had been paid by Charley.

Demetrios came over to shake Charley’s hand, and all his warm Southern blood flamed in his face. Then, not to be outdone in generosity, he insisted on paying his fine

and lawyer's fee himself, and flew half-way into a passion because Charley refused to let him.

More than anything else we ever did, I think, this action of Charley's impressed upon the fishermen the deeper significance of the law. Also Charley was raised high in their esteem, while I came in for a little share of praise as a boy who knew how to sail a boat. Demetrios Contos not only never broke the law again, but he became a very good friend of ours, and on more than one occasion he ran up to Benicia to have a gossip with us.

The Devil's Dice Box

We worshipped at alien altars; we bowed our heads in the dust;
Our Law was might is the mightiest; our Creed was unholy lust;
Our Law and our Creed we followed — strange is the tale to tell —
For our Law and our Creed we followed into the pit of hell.

The Mammon Worshippers

NOT only do I know of these things from the finding of the manuscript, but I helped bury the Man who came out of the East; I knew the other men before they disappeared into the East; and I also know that they never came back. It occurred in the old days before the great discoveries on Bonanza and Eldorado, in the times we called the Clondyke the Reindeer River. There were about one hundred white men scattered through all that vast wilderness; perhaps a score of us, because of a great faith in the Upper Country, being in winter quarters where the Stuart River flows into the Yukon.

It was in April, when our grub was running short, that I trailed a wounded moose through many creeks and over many divides, camping on the track by night and hungering for the kill. On this day he headed for the north east, doubled, then broke for the Stuart River, crossing it fifty miles from its mouth. I found a dead Indian woman on the ice, a half-breed, and for all she must have suffered, still very beautiful. She had starved to death, for her squirrel-skin parka had been cut away, strip after strip, and the tops of her moccasins also showed the Indian manner of appeasing hunger. I looted her, and being in great pain through lack of food, continued after the moose, leaving the body to go down with the ice when the river broke. I found in the grub pouch a piece of partially chewed leather, a little over five pounds of large nuggets, and Ae birch-bark manuscript which is here printed. I purposely disguise the location of the place, for some day I shall go there myself, and come back very rich.

(here begins the story proper)

It is all so strange and horrible — I can hardly realize it, hardly realize that I am dying. And to die in the possession of boundless wealth, to die in the treasure chamber of the world, is the hardest part of it. And again, the strange fatality; is it merely a peculiar chain of circumstances? or is it a curse imposed by that First Man from over the mountains? O why this medley of bloodshed, murder, death? Can none escape the — but I must calm myself. Let me begin at the beginning. This Indian woman was once a Mission girl of the Coast, and she writes as I tell her. Perhaps after I am dead she may reach civilization and give my tale to the world.

In the beginning, there were seven of us, eight, counting the girl, located on the third island below the mouth of the Stuart. We were soldiers of fortune whom chance had thrown together, and little was known of each other's antecedents. We had all been several years in the Yukon Basin, while our leader, Inuit Kid, had put in no less than seven and knew the country as few men ever did or ever will. The half-breed, Lucy, was his wife whom he had brought from Haine's Mission on the Coast. Then there were the two Randolph brothers, claiming kinship with the famous Kentucky family of that name; two sailors who had adventured together the whole world over; and a young college graduate (Yale man, if I remember rightly) named Charley. We never knew him by any other, for he had evidently fled some scrape at home and desired to hide it. As for myself, the least said the better. Let it suffice that I had lost my partner in an ice-jam the preceding fall and then drifted into my present company.

It was in the short days of December that the first of the many things I shall speak of occurred. Night had just fallen, and we were smoking, yarning, and sewing moccasins, when the dogs set up a racket. Then we heard some one cursing and the sharp slash of a dog whip, followed by a knock at the door. Before we could open it, the Man from out of the East came in. His first words were 'For Christ's sake, a smoke!' Charley thrust a live pipe into his hand, and he fell to puffing with long sighs of satisfaction. Tall, dark-eyed and black-whiskered, with the muscular leanness habitual to one who travels the Long Trail, he was as graceful and handsome a man as ever delighted the eye of woman. I have often thought that this was the cause of the trouble which afterward came upon him. In answer to our question as to where he came from, he pointed toward the east and went on smoking and sighing. We scented a mystery; never before had we heard of a man coming out of the east, nor had we ever dreamed of it being done in winter time. We made him comfortable, however, and as he stayed over several days to buy dogs for the trip to Dyea, we managed to get a few inklings to his history.

In the first place, we back-tripped his trail and found it led out of Stuart River; and in the second, he had brought over a hundred pounds of gold on his sled, every bit of it being large nuggets with an assay value of over eighteen dollars. These are the facts, the rest being caught from his lips and pieced together. In the summer of two years previous, in the company of two French-Canadian half-breeds, he canoed and portaged from Lake Athabasca to Great Slave Lake, and then down the Mackenzie to the sixty-fifth degree or in a line with Bear Lake. There they waited till the first snow, when they abandoned the river and faced west into the Rockies. After a year's wandering in that unknown region, ever continuing westward, he had encountered the head-waters of the Stuart and journeyed down to the Yukon. He spoke incidentally of the loss of his two comrades, nor was he shy in the exhibition of his gold, frankly telling us that it was merely a sample of what he had discovered. Beyond this we could gain nothing, for he kept his lips resolutely sealed on his previous life. Still, disguise it as he would, there was a certain, vague smack of the man of the world about him which I could not fail to recognize.

Despite our solicitations, he prepared to set out on Christmas Day. He had just harnessed his dogs and was preparing to pull out, when a bunch of dog teams, fresh from the Coast, pulled in. We were at once struck by the similarity between him and the leader of the arrivals. Even before salutations could be exchanged, the explosion took place. The new arrival gave a start of surprise and covered our guest with his rifle. The latter's sang froid was remarkable, for he smiled with a peculiar mockery of the lips and said, "Ah! brother mine." That was all; not another word passed between them; their understanding was too good for that.

The scene which followed would be highly improbable among ordinary people, but all things are possible to the men who face the dangers of the dreary Northland. It seemed like an appointment, long since made, to be kept at this time and place. Rifle in hand and back to back, each paced off fifty yards and faced about, while we drew out of the line of fire.

Never did Christmas Day look down on stranger scene. It was high noon, and the upper rim of the sun, barely showing above the southern horizon, cast a blood-red streak athwart the heavens. On either hand a sun dog blazed, while the air was filled with scintillating particles of frost. A great silence prevailed. The vast expanse of snow seemed a Sahara of monotonous white, broken only by the dark forms of the brothers. A moment they faced each other, then, as the new arrival counted the customary "One, two, three," rifles came to shoulders and began to speak. Such was the rapidity of our guest's fire, that for six shots he kept a shell constantly in the air and then went down, bored through the lungs. His opponent was more deliberate, firing but three. J But he had not escaped unscathed, for a bullet had cut his mitten string, a second had smashed a couple of ribs, while his right arm hung useless, the work of a third.

He staggered across the snow to his brother and gazed upon him with great satisfaction. We raised the stricken man to a sitting posture, and as he showed a desire to speak, his brother bent over him. We never knew what he whispered, but his look of mockery as his soul passed was a keynote to the stranger's sudden anger. He unsheathed his hunting-knife and would have stabbed the dying man, had not Inuit Kid dashed his fist into his face, knocking him backward into the snow. There was a slipping of mittens and a clicking of rifles among the newcomers, and the broil would have become general, had not the stranger gained his feet and stepped between. In response to his orders, the sleds were un-lashed, the loads shifted, and his wounds dressed. Then he was swathed in robes and tied to a sled. The whole thing had happened in less than five minutes — the stranger had arrived, killed our guest, and departed. Men think and act quickly in the Northland.

Stowing the body on the roof of the cabin so that the dogs could not get at it, we entered and held a council of war. The sailors emptied the; two fifty-pound sacks of nuggets on the table, and from this moment the Madness began to grow. Even Lucy, for all her impassive Indian nature, was so fascinated by the glittering heap that she could hardly cook dinner. After a few minutes of talk and conjecture, Inuit Kid returned with the information that the strangers had turned into the Stuart River. Confusion

prevailed. Even the woman understood its import. Charley thanked all the heathen gods that men could not hide their trail in the Arctic, while Innuït Kid thumped the table and swore that he would be the first in at the kill.

Then came the planning and the question as to who should stay behind. Then the Madness broke out. Man after man swore roundly that he would not be left, while the quivering of Lucy's nostrils and the fact that she always followed her lord and master settled the matter for her. And there we sat, gazing on the yellow heap, thinking the strange things and dreaming the strange dreams that men always do, when this thirst of thirsts is on them.

We soon settled it by all hands going, and buckled down to the work of getting ready. Sleds were strengthened, harnesses and moccasins made and repaired, and every dog and every pound of dog-food to be obtained for love or money skirmished from White and Indian. So bust were we, that when we pulled out the following morning, we left a notice for the first comer to bury the man on the roof. And so the Madness grew; for when one fails to bury the dead at his door, he is indeed ready to be destroyed.

A brave sight we made with our eight sleds and five score dogs. While the ordinary team is from five to seven dogs, we had twelve to the sled. Still, though we did not have to go ahead and break trail for our dogs, we were three days in overtaking them. It was plain that they were traveling fast. Contrary to our expectations, however, there was no trouble when they discovered our pursuit — nay, they did not evince the slightest surprise when we overhauled them. We did not like this, and that night and for many nights we kept watch. Nor were we alone, for reconnoitering in the direction of their camp Abe Randolph discovered that they had taken similar precautions.

Though we knew they knew the location of the treasure, they did not know that we were ignorant of it. Each party knew that the other could not give it the slip, because the pursued always breaks a trail for the pursuer in an Arctic chase. It was like two racers, riding easily and waiting for the sprint at the finish to settle the matter. To an onlooker our race must have appeared ludicrous, for we alternated, day by day, in going to the fore and breaking trail. Yet this was the only understanding, for both parties maintained a rigid silence.

Such a contest would have been bearable under ordinary circumstances, but here food was too precious to lag by the wayside. How the dogs suffered; we were forced to stint them in their allowance, at the same time working them to the utmost. By the time we entered on the third hundred miles they began to play out; these we shot and fed to those which still kept their legs. The January days were very short, and at the best we could not knock out more than twenty miles, often not as much as ten. But the heavy work told on us, and at night we crawled into the snow and slept like dead men. How the leader of the other party stood it, I cannot imagine. Often we heard him cursing with the pain, when the sled he was lashed to jolted over rough ice. But his was an indomitable spirit. Not only did he stand it, but his ribs so knitted and healed that when the period of intense cold came, he began to leave the sled and walk. It was a case of have-to, though, else he would have frozen.

But we were all tired and worn, and one of our party began to break under the strain. It was not the girl. God bless her, for she was born and bred to the trail, but the Yale man. He finally became so weak that he could do nothing. Then we forced him onto the trail as soon as he had breakfasted, while we broke camp, lashed the sleds and harnessed the dogs. We always overtook and passed him in a couple of hours, and long after we had pitched camp and eaten supper, he would come staggering in, nearly dead. Though also very tired, the other party was in fair condition, and perceiving our plight, cruelly though of course fairly, took advantage of it. They increased the hours of traveling; yet while we kept up, it was too much for Charley. They no longer waited for us to take our turn in breaking trail, and gradually began to pull away from us. What could we do? We had lost so many dogs that we had already abandoned four of the sleds and every surplus article we possessed. Each man even carried his rifle and ammunition, when previously they had been packed on the sleds.

Slowly, though we never spoke or hinted of it, the question took shape. Were we to abandon Charley or the treasure? Three more days we forced him to the pace, but by the last day he no longer suffered. Though he still stumbled along on his snow shoes, he had lost consciousness, and laughed and cried and babbled about his people, his home, his childhood days. Once he regained consciousness long enough to realize how slender was his thread of life, and to beg us to shoot him. That night the other party traveled four hours after dark, and it exhausted Abe and John Randolph to drag him into camp. He could not eat and slept like a log where he fell, his moccasins scorching in the fire. Next morning they broke camp two hours earlier than usual, and we found it impossible to get Charley up. His brain would rouse but his body could not respond. He was not sick, only exhausted. Rest was the only medicine for him, and we could not give it. We found four more of the dogs unfit for travel and had to shoot them, else we would have lashed him to a sled.

The sleds were loaded, the dogs were harnessed, but we waited and tried and tried in vain. As Old Sol dipped over the horizon at meridian, we rose to our feet. The moment had come. We looked into each other's eyes coldly and without emotion. Lucy's face, though her throat was silent, voiced an eloquent appeal. The Madness was on us; we could not yield. The snapping whips and lunging dogs roused him, and by the look on his face, we knew he understood. It was a piteous look — the look of a wounded doe or of a seal at the killing. So we left him because of the Madness, and small wonder that our gods forsook us as we forsook our comrade.

We took to the trail in silence, the first to break it being Lucy, who dropped back to the side of Inuit Kid and pleaded in low tones. He reluctantly consented to her taking the back trail. She was with us in a few minutes, but we noticed that the holster above the hip was empty. Then a shot rang out, and we knew that Charley had passed beyond the toil of the camps and trail.

They were so bent on losing us that they traveled far into the night — so far that we could not overtake them. The next day had a similar ending, and it was not till the evening of the third day that we pulled into their camp. As before, they showed no

signs of surprise, though we could see that they eyed us pretty thoroughly and noted Charley's absence. With shame, we had noted the same; but by neither sign or word did one comrade show another his heart.

We were sorely tried by the work, by the inexorable morrow which constantly fled across the snow. Hard as it was to struggle on, still harder was it to struggle against the desire for rest. What would I not have given just to cease for one day from all action. How I envied my prosaic boyhood days — nay, I even envied Charley. Often I thought of blowing out my brains to get the peace I so hungered for. For the first time I understood the terrible significance of Longfellow's lines:

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.

And during the long hours of toil, with the monotonous grind of the steel-shod sleds and the perpetual uplifting of the snow shoes, they were always in my thoughts. But the great lust, the Madness, kept me up and prevented me throwing my revolver away. Nor did I suffer alone, for we were all light-headed, babbling and staggering along like drunken men. All, except Inuit Kid and Lucy; their pluck was superhuman. Not only did they take their pain without sign, but at the labor of cooking, pitching and breaking camp, they did double duty.

The intense cold made it harder. For two weeks the thermometer had been ranging under fifty degrees below zero; for eight days it had been below sixty; and now it sank past seventy-four. At this temperature, our "painkiller" (our only and entire medicine chest) froze solid. How much colder it got we could not tell. Our faces were frozen a purplish-black and covered with great scabs, while we were in continual agony from our feet. Constant snow shoeing had developed large run-in sores on the soles. Our dogs were dropping fast. There were barely twenty left out of our five score. But it could not last forever, and one morning our quarry turned out of the river, taking a small tributary entering from the left. The chase was drawing to a close.

A day's journey up this brought us to its forks, where we camped, a good watch being kept so they could not slip away from us in the dark. Dawn found us under way again. We were in the Rockies now, almost to the backbone, and the branch had become a gorge. We felt sure that the end was at hand, looked to our weapons, and made all arrangements for the final sprint. All day we fought our way through the cold and snow, and when nightfall and the end of the gorge appeared, we were sorely disappointed. But imagine our astonishment when the quarry strained at the divide, and with axes, began to cut steps in the hard snow for themselves and dogs. No sign of camping, so we figured that our goal must be very near.

We cleared the crest as the rising moon silvered the snow, and found ourselves on a large plateau, above which towered lofty peaks, dismal and repellent in their white splendor. Up to now the course had evidently been clear, but when the other party began to travel by compass, we swung abreast and feigned great interest in our own.

So well did we play our game, that our opponents never knew our utter ignorance of the location of the treasure. It was a beautiful night, and the ghostly, Arctic silence enveloped us like a shroud. The cold was bitter, every breath cutting our lungs like a knife, while our faces were massed I with ice. And on all our misery, the stars looked down unpityingly — nay, exultantly, as they danced and leaped as they always do in the Great Cold.

Suddenly, in the very center of the plateau, their dogs were forced to a gallop. There was a general loosening of knives and pistols as we followed suit and swept along, still abreast. It was weird indeed, this last stretch of a mighty race — men, gold-thirsty, a thousand miles beyond the uttermost bounds of civilization, in the heart of the Northland wastes, running neck and neck for they knew not what. Of a sudden the dogs threw themselves back on their haunches. We were on the edge of a great hole, which seemed to sink to the heart of the tableland. Round, perhaps three hundred feet in diameter, it was a sheer thousand to bottom. The walls were everywhere perpendicular, save in one place on the opposite place, where erosion and successive slides had broken up the precipitous formation. It seemed like a great dice box, and to complete the illusion, at the bottom were five enormous cubes of stone.

Cursing, lashing, mushing the dogs, we skirted the dizzy edge at full gallop; nor paused, taking the steep descent like mad-men. Side by side, Inuit Kid and the stranger leader led, followed by both parties, men and dogs, confusedly mixed together. The sleds turned over and went down sideways, backwards and upside down, dragging after them the dogs, which had flown at each other's throats. We tried to escape the tangle but were swept off our feet and carried along. It was a veritable avalanche of life. In our pell-mell progress we dislodged great quantities of snow, on the breast of which we were carried along like a swimmer on the crest of a wave. We overtook and enveloped the two leaders in the common ruin, and naught could be heard above the roar of our transit, save a confused treble of snarling and cursing.

I cannot even now understand how we escaped total destruction; but escape we did, fetching up among the great blocks of stone on the bottom. Groaning from our wounds, we dragged each other out of the mess, disentangled the dogs, and counted losses. Two of their men had been badly crushed; one of our sailors had broken both legs; while half a dozen dogs had been torn to pieces in the fighting.

The moon had now passed beyond the rim of the pit and darkness was about us. We stumbled upon a small, single-roomed log cabin, and into this both gangs crowded. After a little delay in thawing the fat, a bacon-grease slush-lamp was lighted and we gazed about us. It was an ordinary cabin, with a rock fireplace and chinked with moss; but on a rough table was heaped a pile of nuggets, worth perhaps forty or fifty thousand dollars. As this was but a foretaste, we paid little attention to it. Underneath the table were fragments of a human skeleton, perchance that of the original discoverer. On top the gold we found numerous pieces of birch bark, covered with writing. It was in French, and one of the other party translated it aloud.

Over twenty years before, we learned, the writer, "sick unto death and deserted by his comrade," had laid him down to die. He had wandered here from the Hudson Bay Company's posts above Athabasca, and discovered the treasure. He described his theory of its deposit, and dwelt at great length on the cowardice and treachery of his partner, concluding by calling down a curse upon the gold in the name of all that was most holy and most diabolical. (I shudder now, as I think of those terrible words, and if ever a curse was efficacious, this one was.) Beneath it, another hand had dated ten years later and written:

Ha! Ha! Though his partner died, I am here, and by all the Saints it won't work with me.

— Donald Ross."

Another one took up the strain, evidently our unlucky December guest, for it was dated but three months back. It ran:

"Poor devil! he laughed before he was out of the woods. But he laughs best who laughs last. Ha! Ha! Ha!

— Griffith Benson."

We all burst into laughter as the reading finished — partly hysterical, I'll admit, but with a ring of derision, satisfaction, and blind egotism. Of course the others had succumbed to the potency of that First Man's curse, but we knew it was different with us. Most truly were we mad.

The fireplace was soon roaring, supper cooked and eaten, the wounded men made comfortable, and the rest of us turned in. The cabin had been divided between the two gangs, each setting a watch through fear of treachery.

Morning brought with it the discovery of the mine — in short, the whole bottom of the pit was the mine. Bed-rock had been tapped in several previous workings, and every one was rich, beyond our wildest dreams. Fine gold, coarse gold, nuggets — one could simply shovel it out. Panning and rocking was unnecessary; it had only to be picked up. Evidently in the cycles of the dim past, a great quartz ledge had reared itself for thousands of feet above the present hole; and by erosion, the action of ice during the Glacial Period, or some other freak of nature, it had disintegrated and deposited its golden spoil. We could not even hazard a guess as to how the pit had been formed or what had come of the debris, though we were sure of some subterranean outlet, else would it have been filled with water.

Gold there was, and in plenty for all, and I believe we would have soon reached an amicable division of it, had not Fate been against us. Both parties were at the tail end of their grub. We killed our dogs one by one, went on short rations, and searched the whole country round for game. Moose or cariboo, and all would have been well; but the best the hunting parties could do was to knock over an occasional partridge or snowshoe rabbit. The country seemed barren, and even this small game disappeared at last.

It was now straight dog. But the dogs were thin and the men hungry, so they did not go very far. We had still four left when the other party reached the end of its tether.

For two days their hunters returned empty handed and food did not pass their mouths. Of course we could not whack up, and of course they could not starve peaceably. The outlook was dark indeed, and though no word was spoken, many the black scowl was cast between.

Affairs reached a crisis on the evening of the third day. After lengthy consultation in a corner, their leader left the cabin. There was a snarling among the remnant of the dogs, and the next instant he staggered in, dragging one of them by the scruff of the neck. Everything followed like a flash. Lucy sprang for the dog, but Innuite Kid caught her a back-handed sweep of the arm, hurling her into the corner. At the same instant the Frenchman threw his hunting-knife. Just as Innuite Kid clenched with the stranger, it whistled through the air, burying itself in his shoulder. The work was too close for rifles, but revolvers and knives played merrily. The golden table and the slush-lamp went crashing over, and by the deceptive firelight we fought like fiends. It was give and take, without mercy and without quarter; when opportunity permitted, a wounded adversary was always finished. Even the stricken, underfoot, used the overhand stab on the combatants above them, or gave each other the quietus. Two men clinched and rolled into the fireplace, from which arose the sickening smell of burning flesh. Nor was I idle, till I went underfoot and a great darkness came upon me.

I have heard of the Kilkenny Cats, but never did I dream of taking part in a similar combat. A week has passed since the battle, and I alone am left. In fact, I alone had life when Lucy overhauled the shambles. Grim is the irony of Fate; shortly after the battle she shot two moose, so she is in no danger of starving. But she is busy preparing a stock of "eat, and I know that she will strike out as soon as I am dead. Heaven bless her, for she faces what few men dare face. Should she succeed, of whomsoever gets this I ask to treat her kindly, and if any of the treasure is obtained to give her a fair share. I would advise him, though, to shun this spot, for of a verity it is the pit of hell; but I know it is useless, for what can bid him pause when the thirst of thirsts is on him?

My time is near. Though I may wander, I behold the signs. Often I hear thunder of the rolling dice and see my comrades there at play. Soon I shall go to join them in the game. Should this chance the eyes of my people, I sign my name. Thus may they know my death, and that in sorrow for the wrong I did them, I met it.

The Devils of Fuatino

I

Of his many schooners, ketches and cutters that nosed about among the coral isles of the South Seas, David Grief loved most the Rattler—a yacht-like schooner of ninety tons with so swift a pair of heels that she had made herself famous, in the old days, opium-smuggling from San Diego to Puget Sound, raiding the seal-rookeries of Bering Sea, and running arms in the Far East. A stench and an abomination to government officials, she had been the joy of all sailormen, and the pride of the shipwrights who built her. Even now, after forty years of driving, she was still the same old Rattler, fore-reaching in the same marvellous manner that compelled sailors to see in order to believe and that punctuated many an angry discussion with words and blows on the beaches of all the ports from Valparaiso to Manila Bay.

On this night, close-hauled, her big mainsail preposterously flattened down, her luffs pulsing emptily on the lift of each smooth swell, she was sliding an easy four knots through the water on the veriest whisper of a breeze. For an hour David Grief had been leaning on the rail at the lee fore-rigging, gazing overside at the steady phosphorescence of her gait. The faint back-draught from the headsails fanned his cheek and chest with a wine of coolness, and he was in an ecstasy of appreciation of the schooner's qualities.

"Eh!—She's a beauty, Taute, a beauty," he said to the Kanaka lookout, at the same time stroking the teak of the rail with an affectionate hand.

"Ay, skipper," the Kanaka answered in the rich, big-chested tones of Polynesia. "Thirty years I know ships, but never like 'this. On Raiatea we call her Fanauao."

"The Dayborn," Grief translated the love-phrase. "Who named her so?"

About to answer, Taute peered ahead with sudden intensity. Grief joined him in the gaze.

"Land," said Taute.

"Yes; Fuatino," Grief agreed, his eyes still fixed on the spot where the star-luminous horizon was gouged by a blot of blackness. "It's all right. I'll tell the captain."

The Rattler slid along until the loom of the island could be seen as well as sensed, until the sleepy roar of breakers and the blating of goats could be heard, until the wind, off the land, was flower-drenched with perfume.

"If it wasn't a crevice, she could run the passage a night like this," Captain Glass remarked regretfully, as he watched the wheel lashed hard down by the steersman.

The Rattler, run off shore a mile, had been hove to to wait until daylight ere she attempted the perilous entrance to Fuatino. It was a perfect tropic night, with no hint of rain or squall. For'ard, wherever their tasks left them, the Raiatea sailors sank

down to sleep on deck. Aft, the captain and mate and Grief spread their beds with similar languid unconcern. They lay on their blankets, smoking and murmuring sleepy conjectures about Mataara, the Queen of Fuatino, and about the love affair between her daughter, Naumoo, and Motuaro.

"They're certainly a romantic lot," Brown, the mate, said. "As romantic as we whites."

"As romantic as Pilsach," Grief laughed, "and that is going some. How long ago was it, Captain, that he jumped you?"

"Eleven years," Captain Glass grunted resentfully.

"Tell me about it," Brown pleaded. "They say he's never left Fuatino since. Is that right?"

"Right O," the captain rumbled. "He's in love with his wife—the little hussy! Stole him from me, and as good a sailorman as the trade has ever seen—if he is a Dutchman."

"German," Grief corrected.

"It's all the same," was the retort. "The sea was robbed of a good man that night he went ashore and Notutu took one look at him. I reckon they looked good to each other. Before you could say skat, she'd put a wreath of some kind of white flowers on his head, and in five minutes they were off down the beach, like a couple of kids, holding hands and laughing. I hope he's blown that big coral patch out of the channel. I always start a sheet or two of copper warping past."

"Go on with the story," Brown urged.

"That's all. He was finished right there. Got married that night. Never came on board again. I looked him up next day. Found him in a straw house in the bush, barelegged, a white savage, all mixed up with flowers and things and playing a guitar. Looked like a bally ass. Told me to send his things ashore. I told him I'd see him damned first. And that's all. You'll see her to-morrow. They've got three kiddies now—wonderful little rascals. I've a phonograph down below for him, and about a million records."

"And then you made him trader?" the mate inquired of Grief.

"What else could I do? Fuatino is a love island, and Filsach is a lover. He knows the native, too—one of the best traders I've got, or ever had. He's responsible. You'll see him to-morrow."

"Look here, young man," Captain Glass rumbled threateningly at his mate. "Are you romantic? Because if you are, on board you stay. Fuatino's the island of romantic insanity. Everybody's in love with somebody. They live on love. It's in the milk of the cocoa-nuts, or the air, or the sea. The history of the island for the last ten thousand years is nothing but love affairs. I know. I've talked with the old men. And if I catch you starting down the beach hand in hand—"

His sudden cessation caused both the other men to look at him. They followed his gaze, which passed across them to the main rigging, and saw what he saw, a brown hand and arm, muscular and wet, being joined from overside by a second brown hand

and arm. A head followed, thatched with long elfin locks, and then a face, with roguish black eyes, lined with the marks of wildwood's laughter.

"My God!" Brown breathed. "It's a faun—a sea-faun."

"It's the Goat Man," said Glass.

"It is Mauriri," said Grief. "He is my own blood brother by sacred plight of native custom. His name is mine, and mine is his."

Broad brown shoulders and a magnificent chest rose above the rail, and, with what seemed effortless ease, the whole grand body followed over the rail and noiselessly trod the deck. Brown, who might have been other things than the mate of an island schooner, was enchanted. All that he had ever gleaned from the books proclaimed indubitably the faun-likeness of this visitant of the deep. "But a sad faun," was the young man's judgment, as the golden-brown woods god strode forward to where David Grief sat up with outstretched hand.

"David," said David Grief.

"Mauriri, Big Brother," said Mauriri.

And thereafter, in the custom of men who have pledged blood brotherhood, each called the other, not by the other's name, but by his own. Also, they talked in the Polynesian tongue of Fuatino, and Brown could only sit and guess.

"A long swim to say talofa," Grief said, as the other sat and streamed water on the deck.

"Many days and nights have I watched for your coming, Big Brother," Mauriri replied. "I have sat on the Big Rock, where the dynamite is kept, of which I have been made keeper. I saw you come up to the entrance and run back into darkness. I knew you waited till morning, and I followed. Great trouble has come upon us. Mataara has cried these many days for your coming. She is an old woman, and Motauri is dead, and she is sad."

"Did he marry Naumoo?" Grief asked, after he had shaken his head and sighed by the custom.

"Yes. In the end they ran to live with the goats, till Mataara forgave, when they returned to live with her in the Big House. But he is now dead, and Naumoo soon will die. Great is our trouble, Big Brother. Tori is dead, and Tati-Tori, and Petoo, and Nari, and Pilsach, and others."

"Pilsach, too!" Grief exclaimed. "Has there been a sickness?"

"There has been much killing. Listen, Big Brother, Three weeks ago a strange schooner came. From the Big Rock I saw her topsails above the sea. She towed in with her boats, but they did not warp by the big patch, and she pounded many times. She is now on the beach, where they are strengthening the broken timbers. There are eight white men on board. They have women from some island far to the east. The women talk a language in many ways like ours, only different. But we can understand. They say they were stolen by the men on the schooner. We do not know, but they sing and dance and are happy."

"And the men?" Grief interrupted.

“They talk French. I know, for there was a mate on your schooner who talked French long ago. There are two chief men, and they do not look like the others. They have blue eyes like you, and they are devils. One is a bigger devil than the other. The other six are also devils. They do not pay us for our yams, and taro, and breadfruit. They take everything from us, and if we complain they kill us. Thus was killed Tori, and Tati-Tori, and Petoo, and others. We cannot fight, for we have no guns—only two or three old guns.

“They ill-treat our women. Thus was killed Motuaro, who made defence of Naumoo, whom they have now taken on board their schooner. It was because of this that Pilsach was killed. Him the chief of the two chief men, the Big Devil, shot once in his whaleboat, and twice when he tried to crawl up the sand of the beach. Pilsach was a brave man, and Notutu now sits in the house and cries without end. Many of the people are afraid, and have run to live with the goats. But there is not food for all in the high mountains. And the men will not go out and fish, and they work no more in the gardens because of the devils who take all they have. And we are ready to fight.

“Big Brother, we need guns, and much ammunition. I sent word before I swam out to you, and the men are waiting. The strange white men do not know you are come. Give me a boat, and the guns, and I will go back before the sun. And when you come to-morrow we will be ready for the word from you to kill the strange white men. They must be killed. Big Brother, you have ever been of the blood with us, and the men and women have prayed to many gods for your coming. And you are come.”

“I will go in the boat with you,” Grief said.

“No, Big Brother,” was Mauriri’s reply. “You must be with the schooner. The strange white men will fear the schooner, not us. We will have the guns, and they will not know. It is only when they see your schooner come that they will be alarmed. Send the young man there with the boat.”

So it was that Brown, thrilling with all the romance and adventure he had read and guessed and never lived, took his place in the sternsheets of a whaleboat, loaded with rifles and cartridges, rowed by four Baiatea sailors, steered by a golden-brown, sea-swimming faun, and directed through the warm tropic darkness toward the half-mythical love island of Fuatino, which had been invaded by twentieth century pirates.

II

If a line be drawn between Jaluit, in the Marshall Group, and Bougainville, in the Solomons, and if this line be bisected at two degrees south of the equator by a line drawn from Ukuor, in the Carolines, the high island of Fuatino will be raised in that sun-washed stretch of lonely sea. Inhabited by a stock kindred to the Hawaiian, the Samoan, the Tahitian, and the Maori, Fuatino becomes the apex of the wedge driven by Polynesia far to the west and in between Melanesia and Micronesia. And it was Fuatino that David Grief raised next morning, two miles to the east and in direct line with the rising sun. The same whisper of a breeze held, and the Rattler slid through the smooth sea at a rate that would have been eminently proper for an island schooner had the breeze been thrice as strong.

Fuatino was nothing else than an ancient crater, thrust upward from the sea-bottom by some primordial cataclysm. The western portion, broken and crumbled to sea level, was the entrance to the crater itself, which constituted the harbour. Thus, Fuatino was like a rugged horseshoe, the heel pointing to the west. And into the opening at the heel the Rattler steered. Captain Glass, binoculars in hand and peering at the chart made by himself, which was spread on top the cabin, straightened up with an expression on his face that was half alarm, half resignation.

“It’s coming,” he said. “Fever. It wasn’t due till to-morrow. It always hits me hard, Mr. Grief. In five minutes I’ll be off my head. You’ll have to con the schooner in. Boy! Get my bunk ready! Plenty of blankets! Fill that hot-water bottle! It’s so calm, Mr. Grief, that I think you can pass the big patch without warping. Take the leading wind and shoot her. She’s the only craft in the South Pacific that can do it, and I know you know the trick. You can scrape the Big Rock by just watching out for the main boom.”

He had talked rapidly, almost like a drunken man, as his reeling brain battled with the rising shock of the malarial stroke. When he stumbled toward the companionway, his face was purpling and mottling as if attacked by some monstrous inflammation or decay. His eyes were setting in a glassy bulge, his hands shaking, his teeth clicking in the spasms of chill.

“Two hours to get the sweat,” he chattered with a ghastly grin. “And a couple more and I’ll be all right. I know the damned thing to the last minute it runs its course. Y-y-you t-t-take ch-ch-ch-ch—“

His voice faded away in a weak stutter as he collapsed down into the cabin and his employer took charge. The Rattler was just entering the passage. The heels of the horseshoe island were two huge mountains of rock a thousand feet high, each almost broken off from the mainland and connected with it by a low and narrow peninsula. Between the heels was a half-mile stretch, all but blocked by a reef of coral extending across from the south heel. The passage, which Captain Glass had called a crevice, twisted into this reef, curved directly to the north heel, and ran along the base of the perpendicular rock. At this point, with the main-boom almost grazing the rock on the port side, Grief, peering down on the starboard side, could see bottom less than two fathoms beneath and shoaling steeply. With a whaleboat towing for steerage and as a precaution against back-draughts from the cliff, and taking advantage of a fan of breeze, he shook the Rattler full into it and glided by the big coral patch without warping. As it was, he just scraped, but so softly as not to start the copper.

The harbour of Fuatino opened before him. It was a circular sheet of water, five miles in diameter, rimmed with white coral beaches, from which the verdure-clad slopes rose swiftly to the frowning crater walls. The crests of the walls were saw-toothed, volcanic peaks, capped and halo’d with captive trade-wind clouds. Every nook and crevice of the disintegrating lava gave foothold to creeping, climbing vines and trees—a green foam of vegetation. Thin streams of water, that were mere films of mist, swayed and undulated downward in sheer descents of hundreds of feet. And to complete the magic

of the place, the warm, moist air was heavy with the perfume of the yellow-blossomed cassi.

Fanning along against light, vagrant airs, the Rattler worked in. Calling the whale-boat on board, Grief searched out the shore with his binoculars. There was no life. In the hot blaze of tropic sun the place slept. There was no sign of welcome. Up the beach, on the north shore, where the fringe of cocoanut palms concealed the village, he could see the black bows of the canoes in the canoe-houses. On the beach, on even keel, rested the strange schooner. Nothing moved on board of her or around her. Not until the beach lay fifty yards away did Grief let go the anchor in forty fathoms. Out in the middle, long years before, he had sounded three hundred fathoms without reaching bottom, which was to be expected of a healthy crater-pit like Fuatino. As the chain roared and surged through the hawse-pipe he noticed a number of native women, lusciously large as only those of Polynesia are, in flowing ahu's, flower-crowned, stream out on the deck of the schooner on the beach. Also, and what they did not see, he saw from the galley the squat figure of a man steal for'ard, drop to the sand, and dive into the green screen of bush.

While the sails were furled and gasketed, awnings stretched, and sheets and tackles coiled harbour fashion, David Grief paced the deck and looked vainly for a flutter of life elsewhere than on the strange schooner. Once, beyond any doubt, he heard the distant crack of a rifle in the direction of the Big Rock. There were no further shots, and he thought of it as some hunter shooting a wild goat.

At the end of another hour Captain Glass, under a mountain of blankets, had ceased shivering and was in the inferno of a profound sweat.

"I'll be all right in half an hour," he said weakly.

"Very well," Grief answered. "The place is dead, and I'm going ashore to see Mataara and find out the situation."

"It's a tough bunch; keep your eyes open," the captain warned him. "If you're not back in an hour, send word off."

Grief took the steering-sweep, and four of his Raiatea men bent to the oars. As they landed on the beach he looked curiously at the women under the schooner's awning. He waved his hand tentatively, and they, after giggling, waved back.

"Talofa!" he called.

They understood the greeting, but replied, "Iorana," and he knew they came from the Society Group.

"Huahine," one of his sailors unhesitatingly named their island. Grief asked them whence they came, and with giggles and laughter they replied, "Huahine."

"It looks like old Dupuy's schooner," Grief said, in Tahitian, speaking in a low voice. "Don't look too hard. What do you think, eh? Isn't it the Valetta?"

As the men climbed out and lifted the whale-boat slightly up the beach they stole careless glances at the vessel.

"It is the Valetta," Taute said. "She carried her topmast away seven years ago. At Papeete they rigged a new one. It was ten feet shorter. That is the one."

“Go over and talk with the women, you boys. You can almost see Huahine from Raiatea, and you’ll be sure to know some of them. Find out all you can. And if any of the white men show up, don’t start a row.”

An army of hermit crabs scuttled and rustled away before him as he advanced up the beach, but under the palms no pigs rooted and grunted. The cocoanuts lay where they had fallen, and at the copra-sheds there were no signs of curing. Industry and tidiness had vanished. Grass house after grass house he found deserted. Once he came upon an old man, blind, toothless, prodigiously wrinkled, who sat in the shade and babbled with fear when he spoke to him. It was as if the place had been struck with the plague, was Grief’s thought, as he finally approached the Big House. All was desolation and disarray. There were no flower-crowned men and maidens, no brown babies rolling in the shade of the avocado trees. In the doorway, crouched and rocking back and forth, sat Mataara, the old queen. She wept afresh at sight of him, divided between the tale of her woe and regret that no follower was left to dispense to him her hospitality.

“And so they have taken Naumoo,” she finished. “Motauri is dead. My people have fled and are starving with the goats. And there is no one to open for you even a drinking cocoa-nut. O Brother, your white brothers be devils.”

“They are no brothers of mine, Mataara,” Grief consoled. “They are robbers and pigs, and I shall clean the island of them—“

He broke off to whirl half around, his hand flashing to his waist and back again, the big Colt’s levelled at the figure of a man, bent double, that rushed at him from out of the trees. He did not pull the trigger, nor did the man pause till he had flung himself headlong at Grief’s feet and begun to pour forth a stream of uncouth and awful noises. He recognized the creature as the one he had seen steal from the Valetta and dive into the bush; but not until he raised him up and watched the contortions of the hare-lipped mouth could he understand what he uttered.

“Save me, master, save me!” the man yammered, in English, though he was unmistakably a South Sea native. “I know you! Save me!”

And thereat he broke into a wild outpour of incoherence that did not cease until Grief seized him by the shoulders and shook him into silence.

“I know you,” Grief said. “You were cook in the French Hotel at Papeete two years ago. Everybody called you ‘Hare-Lip.’“

The man nodded violently.

“I am now cook of the Valetta,” he spat and spluttered, his mouth writhing in a fearful struggle with its defect. “I know you. I saw you at the hotel. I saw you at Lavina’s. I saw you on the Kittiwake. I saw you at the Mariposa wharf. You are Captain Grief, and you will save me. Those men are devils. They killed Captain Dupuy. Me they made kill half the crew. Two they shot from the cross-trees. The rest they shot in the water. I knew them all. They stole the girls from Huahine. They added to their strength with jail-men from Noumea. They robbed the traders in the New Hebrides. They killed the trader at Vanikori, and stole two women there. They—“

But Grief no longer heard. Through the trees, from the direction of the harbour, came a rattle of rifles, and he started on the run for the beach. Pirates from Tahiti and convicts from New Caledonia! A pretty bunch of desperadoes that even now was attacking his schooner. Hare-Lip followed, still spluttering and spitting his tale of the white devils' doings.

The rifle-firing ceased as abruptly as it had begun, but Grief ran on, perplexed by ominous conjectures, until, in a turn of the path, he encountered Mauriri running toward him from the beach.

"Big Brother," the Goat Man panted, "I was too late. They have taken your schooner. Come! For now they will seek for you."

He started back up the path away from the beach.

"Where is Brown?" Grief demanded.

"On the Big Rock. I will tell you afterward. Come now!"

"But my men in the whaleboat?"

Mauriri was in an agony of apprehension.

"They are with the women on the strange schooner. They will not be killed. I tell you true. The devils want sailors. But you they will kill. Listen!" From the water, in a cracked tenor voice, came a French hunting song. "They are landing on the beach. They have taken your schooner—that I saw. Come!"

III

Careless of his own life and skin, nevertheless David Grief was possessed of no false hardihood. He knew when to fight and when to run, and that this was the time for running he had no doubt. Up the path, past the old men sitting in the shade, past Mataara crouched in the doorway of the Big House, he followed at the heels of Mauriri. At his own heels, doglike, plodded Hare-Lip. From behind came the cries of the hunters, but the pace Mauriri led them was heartbreaking. The broad path narrowed, swung to the right, and pitched upward. The last grass house was left, and through high thickets of cassi and swarms of great golden wasps the way rose steeply until it became a goat-track. Pointing upward to a bare shoulder of volcanic rock, Mauriri indicated the trail across its face.

"Past that we are safe, Big Brother," he said. "The white devils never dare it, for there are rocks we roll down on their heads, and there is no other path. Always do they stop here and shoot when we cross the rock. Come!"

A quarter of an hour later they paused where the trail went naked on the face of the rock.

"Wait, and when you come, come quickly," Mauriri cautioned.

He sprang into the blaze of sunlight, and from below several rifles pumped rapidly. Bullets smacked about him, and puffs of stone-dust flew out, but he won safely across. Grief followed, and so near did one bullet come that the dust of its impact stung his cheek. Nor was Hare-Lip struck, though he essayed the passage more slowly.

For the rest of the day, on the greater heights, they lay in a lava glen where terraced taro and papaia grew. And here Grief made his plans and learned the fulness of the situation.

“It was ill luck,” Mauriri said. “Of all nights this one night was selected by the white devils to go fishing. It was dark as we came through the passage. They were in boats and canoes. Always do they have their rifles with them. One Raiatea man they shot. Brown was very brave. We tried to get by to the top of the bay, but they headed us off, and we were driven in between the Big Rock and the village. We saved the guns and all the ammunition, but they got the boat. Thus they learned of your coming. Brown is now on this side of the Big Rock with the guns and the ammunition.”

“But why didn’t he go over the top of the Big Rock and give me warning as I came in from the sea?” Grief criticised.

“They knew not the way. Only the goats and I know the way. And this I forgot, for I crept through the bush to gain the water and swim to you. But the devils were in the bush shooting at Brown and the Raiatea men; and me they hunted till daylight, and through the morning they hunted me there in the low-lying land. Then you came in your schooner, and they watched till you went ashore, and I got away through the bush, but you were already ashore.”

“You fired that shot?”

“Yes; to warn you. But they were wise and would not shoot back, and it was my last cartridge.”

“Now you, Hare-Lip?” Grief said to the Valetta’s cook.

His tale was long and painfully detailed. For a year he had been sailing out of Tahiti and through the Paumotus on the Valetta. Old Dupuy was owner and captain. On his last cruise he had shipped two strangers in Tahiti as mate and supercargo. Also, another stranger he carried to be his agent on Fanriki. Raoul Van Asveld and Carl Lepsius were the names of the mate and supercargo.

“They are brothers, I know, for I have heard them talk in the dark, on deck, when they thought no one listened,” Hare-Lip explained.

The Valetta cruised through the Low Islands, picking up shell and pearls at Dupuy’s stations. Frans Amundson, the third stranger, relieved Pierre Gollard at Fanriki. Pierre Gollard came on board to go back to Tahiti. The natives of Fanriki said he had a quart of pearls to turn over to Dupuy. The first night out from Fanriki there was shooting in the cabin. Then the bodies of Dupuy and Pierre Gollard were thrown overboard. The Tahitian sailors fled to the forecabin. For two days, with nothing to eat and the Valetta hove to, they remained below. Then Raoul Van Asveld put poison in the meal he made Hare-Lip cook and carry for’ard. Half the sailors died.

“He had a rifle pointed at me, master; what could I do?” Hare-Lip whimpered. “Of the rest, two went up the rigging and were shot. Fanriki was ten miles away. The others went overboard to swim. They were shot as they swam. I, only, lived, and the two devils; for me they wanted to cook for them. That day, with the breeze, they went back to Fanrika and took on Frans Amundson, for he was one of them.”

Then followed Hare-Lip's nightmare experiences as the schooner wandered on the long reaches to the westward. He was the one living witness and knew they would have killed him had he not been the cook. At Noumea five convicts had joined them. Hare-Lip was never permitted ashore at any of the islands, and Grief was the first outsider to whom he had spoken.

"And now they will kill me," Hare-Lip spluttered, "for they will know I have told you. Yet am I not all a coward, and I will stay with you, master, and die with you."

The Goat Man shook his head and stood up.

"Lie here and rest," he said to Grief. "It will be a long swim to-night. As for this cook-man, I will take him now to the higher places where my brothers live with the goats."

IV

"It is well that you swim as a man should, Big Brother," Mauriri whispered.

From the lava glen they had descended to the head of the bay and taken to the water. They swam softly, without splash, Mauriri in the lead. The black walls of the crater rose about them till it seemed they swam on the bottom of a great bowl. Above was the sky of faintly luminous star-dust. Ahead they could see the light which marked the Rattler, and from her deck, softened by distance, came a gospel hymn played on the phonograph intended for Pilsach.

The two swimmers bore to the left, away from the captured schooner. Laughter and song followed on board after the hymn, then the phonograph started again. Grief grinned to himself at the appositeness of it as "Lead, Kindly Light," floated out over the dark water.

"We must take the passage and land on the Big Rock," Mauriri whispered. "The devils are holding the low land. Listen!"

Half a dozen rifle shots, at irregular intervals, attested that Brown still held the Rock and that the pirates had invested the narrow peninsula.

At the end of another hour they swam under the frowning loom of the Big Rock. Mauriri, feeling his way, led the landing in a crevice, up which for a hundred feet they climbed to a narrow ledge.

"Stay here," said Mauriri. "I go to Brown. In the morning I shall return."

"I will go with you, Brother," Grief said.

Mauriri laughed in the darkness.

"Even you, Big Brother, cannot do this thing. I am the Goat Man, and I only, of all Fuatino, can go over the Big Rock in the night. Furthermore, it will be the first time that even I have done it. Put out your hand. You feel it? That is where Pilsach's dynamite is kept. Lie close beside the wall and you may sleep without falling. I go now."

And high above the sounding surf, on a narrow shelf beside a ton of dynamite, David Grief planned his campaign, then rested his cheek on his arm and slept.

In the morning, when Mauriri led him over the summit of the Big Rock, David Grief understood why he could not have done it in the night. Despite the accustomed

nerve of a sailor for height and precarious clinging, he marvelled that he was able to do it in the broad light of day. There were places, always under minute direction of Mauriri, that he leaned forward, falling, across hundred-foot-deep crevices, until his outstretched hands struck a grip on the opposing wall and his legs could then be drawn across after. Once, there was a ten-foot leap, above half a thousand feet of yawning emptiness and down a fathom's length to a meagre foothold. And he, despite his cool head, lost it another time on a shelf, a scant twelve inches wide, where all hand-holds seemed to fail him. And Mauriri, seeing him sway, swung his own body far out and over the gulf and passed him, at the same time striking him sharply on the back to brace his reeling brain. Then it was, and forever after, that he fully knew why Mauriri had been named the Goat Man.

V

The defence of the Big Rock had its good points and its defects. Impregnable to assault, two men could hold it against ten thousand. Also, it guarded the passage to open sea. The two schooners, Raoul Van Asveld, and his cutthroat following were bottled up. Grief, with the ton of dynamite, which he had removed higher up the rock, was master. This he demonstrated, one morning, when the schooners attempted to put to sea. The Valetta led, the whaleboat towing her manned by captured Fuatino men. Grief and the Goat Man peered straight down from a safe rock-shelter, three hundred feet above. Their rifles were beside them, also a glowing fire-stick and a big bundle of dynamite sticks with fuses and decanators attached. As the whaleboat came beneath, Mauriri shook his head.

"They are our brothers. We cannot shoot."

For'ard, on the Valetta, were several of Grief's own Raiatea sailors. Aft stood another at the wheel. The pirates were below, or on the other schooner, with the exception of one who stood, rifle in hand, amidships. For protection he held Naumoo, the Queen's daughter, close to him.

"That is the chief devil," Mauriri whispered, "and his eyes are blue like yours. He is a terrible man. See! He holds Naumoo that we may not shoot him."

A light air and a slight tide were making into the passage, and the schooner's progress was slow.

"Do you speak English?" Grief called down.

The man startled, half lifted his rifle to the perpendicular, and looked up. There was something quick and catlike in his movements, and in his burned blond face a fighting eagerness. It was the face of a killer.

"Yes," he answered. "What do you want?"

"Turn back, or I'll blow your schooner up," Grief warned. He blew on the fire-stick and whispered, "Tell Naumoo to break away from him and run aft."

From the Rattler, close astern, rifles cracked, and bullets spatted against the rock. Van Asveld laughed defiantly, and Mauriri called down in the native tongue to the woman. When directly beneath, Grief, watching, saw her jerk away from the man. On the instant Grief touched the fire-stick to the match-head in the split end of the short

fuse, sprang into view on the face of the rock, and dropped the dynamite. Van Asveld had managed to catch the girl and was struggling with her. The Goat Man held a rifle on him and waited a chance. The dynamite struck the deck in a compact package, bounded, and rolled into the port scupper. Van Asveld saw it and hesitated, then he and the girl ran aft for their lives. The Goat Man fired, but splintered the corner of the galley. The spattering of bullets from the Rattler increased, and the two on the rock crouched low for shelter and waited. Mauriri tried to see what was happening below, but Grief held him back.

“The fuse was too long,” he said. “I’ll know better next time.”

It was half a minute before the explosion came. What happened afterward, for some little time, they could not tell, for the Rattler’s marksmen had got the range and were maintaining a steady fire. Once, fanned by a couple of bullets, Grief risked a peep. The Valetta, her port deck and rail torn away, was listing and sinking as she drifted back into the harbour. Climbing on board the Rattler were the men and the Huahine women who had been hidden in the Valetta’s cabin and who had swum for it under the protecting fire. The Fuatino men who had been towing in the whaleboat had cast off the line, dashed back through the passage, and were rowing wildly for the south shore.

From the shore of the peninsula the discharges of four rifles announced that Brown and his men had worked through the jungle to the beach and were taking a hand. The bullets ceased coming, and Grief and Mauriri joined in with their rifles. But they could do no damage, for the men of the Rattler were firing from the shelter of the deck-houses, while the wind and tide carried the schooner farther in.

There was no sign of the Valetta, which had sunk in the deep water of the crater.

Two things Raoul Van Asveld did that showed his keenness and coolness and that elicited Grief’s admiration. Under the Rattler’s rifle fire Raoul compelled the fleeing Fuatino men to come in and surrender. And at the same time, dispatching half his cutthroats in the Rattler’s boat, he threw them ashore and across the peninsula, preventing Brown from getting away to the main part of the island. And for the rest of the morning the intermittent shooting told to Grief how Brown was being driven in to the other side of the Big Rock. The situation was unchanged, with the exception of the loss of the Valetta.

VI

The defects of the position on the Big Rock were vital. There was neither food nor water. For several nights, accompanied by one of the Raiatea men, Mauriri swam to the head of the bay for supplies. Then came the night when lights flared on the water and shots were fired. After that the water-side of the Big Rock was invested as well.

“It’s a funny situation,” Brown remarked, who was getting all the adventure he had been led to believe resided in the South Seas. “We’ve got hold and can’t let go, and Raoul has hold and can’t let go. He can’t get away, and we’re liable to starve to death holding him.”

"If the rain came, the rock-basins would fill," said Mauriri. It was their first twenty-four hours without water. "Big Brother, to-night you and I will get water. It is the work of strong men."

That night, with cocoanut calabashes, each of quart capacity and tightly stoppered, he led Grief down to the water from the peninsula side of the Big Rock. They swam out not more than a hundred feet. Beyond, they could hear the occasional click of an oar or the knock of a paddle against a canoe, and sometimes they saw the flare of matches as the men in the guarding boats lighted cigarettes or pipes.

"Wait here," whispered Mauriri, "and hold the calabashes."

Turning over, he swam down. Grief, face downward, watched his phosphorescent track glimmer, and dim, and vanish. A long minute afterward Mauriri broke surface noiselessly at Grief's side.

"Here! Drink!"

The calabash was full, and Grief drank sweet fresh water which had come up from the depths of the salt.

"It flows out from the land," said Mauriri.

"On the bottom?"

"No. The bottom is as far below as the mountains are above. Fifty feet down it flows. Swim down until you feel its coolness."

Several times filling and emptying his lungs in diver fashion, Grief turned over and went down through the water. Salt it was to his lips, and warm to his flesh; but at last, deep down, it perceptibly chilled and tasted brackish. Then, suddenly, his body entered the cold, subterranean stream. He removed the small stopper from the calabash, and, as the sweet water gurgled into it, he saw the phosphorescent glimmer of a big fish, like a sea ghost, drift sluggishly by.

Thereafter, holding the growing weight of the calabashes, he remained on the surface, while Mauriri took them down, one by one, and filled them.

"There are sharks," Grief said, as they swam back to shore.

"Pooh!" was the answer. "They are fish sharks. We of Fuatino are brothers to the fish sharks."

"But the tiger sharks? I have seen them here."

"When they come, Big Brother, we will have no more water to drink—unless it rains."

VII

A week later Mauriri and a Raiatea man swam back with empty calabashes. The tiger sharks had arrived in the harbour. The next day they thirsted on the Big Rock.

"We must take our chance," said Grief. "Tonight I shall go after water with Mautau. Tomorrow night, Brother, you will go with Tehaa."

Three quarts only did Grief get, when the tiger sharks appeared and drove them in. There were six of them on the Rock, and a pint a day, in the sweltering heat of the mid-tropics, is not sufficient moisture for a man's body. The next night Mauriri and Tehaa returned with no water. And the day following Brown learned the full connotation of

thirst, when the lips crack to bleeding, the mouth is coated with granular slime, and the swollen tongue finds the mouth too small for residence.

Grief swam out in the darkness with Mautau. Turn by turn, they went down through the salt, to the cool sweet stream, drinking their fill while the calabashes were filling. It was Mau-tau's turn to descend with the last calabash, and Grief, peering down from the surface, saw the glimmer of sea-ghosts and all the phosphorescent display of the struggle. He swam back alone, but without relinquishing the precious burden of full calabashes.

Of food they had little. Nothing grew on the Rock, and its sides, covered with shellfish at sea level where the surf thundered in, were too precipitous for access. Here and there, where crevices permitted, a few rank shellfish and sea urchins were gleaned. Sometimes frigate birds and other sea birds were snared. Once, with a piece of frigate bird, they succeeded in hooking a shark. After that, with jealously guarded shark-meat for bait, they managed on occasion to catch more sharks.

But water remained their direst need. Mauriri prayed to the Goat God for rain. Taute prayed to the Missionary God, and his two fellow islanders, backsliding, invoked the deities of their old heathen days. Grief grinned and considered. But Brown, wild-eyed, with protruding blackened tongue, cursed. Especially he cursed the phonograph that in the cool twilights ground out gospel hymns from the deck of the Rattler. One hymn in particular, "Beyond the Smiling and the Weeping," drove him to madness. It seemed a favourite on board the schooner, for it was played most of all. Brown, hungry and thirsty, half out of his head from weakness and suffering, could lie among the rocks with equanimity and listen to the tinkling of ukuleles and guitars, and the hulas and himines of the Huahine women. But when the voices of the Trinity Choir floated over the water he was beside himself. One evening the cracked tenor took up the song with the machine:

"Beyond the smiling and the weeping, I shall be soon. Beyond the waking and the sleeping, Beyond the sowing and the reaping, I shall be soon, I shall be soon."

Then it was that Brown rose up. Again and again, blindly, he emptied his rifle at the schooner. Laughter floated up from the men and women, and from the peninsula came a splattering of return bullets; but the cracked tenor sang on, and Brown continued to fire, until the hymn was played out.

It was that night that Grief and Mauriri came back with but one calabash of water. A patch of skin six inches long was missing from Grief's shoulder in token of the scrape of the sandpaper hide of a shark whose dash he had eluded.

VIII

In the early morning of another day, before the sun-blaze had gained its full strength, came an offer of a parley from Raoul Van Asveld.

Brown brought the word in from the outpost among the rocks a hundred yards away. Grief was squatted over a small fire, broiling a strip of shark-flesh. The last twenty-four hours had been lucky. Seaweed and sea urchins had been gathered. Tehaa had caught a shark, and Mauriri had captured a fair-sized octopus at the base of the crevice where

the dynamite was stored. Then, too, in the darkness they had made two successful swims for water before the tiger sharks had nosed them out.

“Said he’d like to come in and talk with you,” Brown said. “But I know what the brute is after. Wants to see how near starved to death we are.”

“Bring him in,” Grief said.

“And then we will kill him,” the Goat Man cried joyously.

Grief shook his head.

“But he is a killer of men, Big Brother, a beast and a devil,” the Goat Man protested.

“He must not be killed, Brother. It is our way not to break our word.”

“It is a foolish way.”

“Still it is our way,” Grief answered gravely, turning the strip of shark-meat over on the coals and noting the hungry sniff and look of Tehaa. “Don’t do that, Tehaa, when the Big Devil comes. Look as if you and hunger were strangers. Here, cook those sea urchins, you, and you, Big Brother, cook the squid. We will have the Big Devil to feast with us. Spare nothing. Cook all.”

And, still broiling meat, Grief arose as Raoul Van Asveld, followed by a large Irish terrier, strode into camp. Raoul did not make the mistake of holding out his hand.

“Hello!” he said. “I’ve heard of you.”

“I wish I’d never heard of you,” Grief answered.

“Same here,” was the response. “At first, before I knew who it was, I thought I had to deal with an ordinary trading captain. That’s why you’ve got me bottled up.”

“And I am ashamed to say that I underrated you,” Grief smiled. “I took you for a thieving beachcomber, and not for a really intelligent pirate and murderer. Hence, the loss of my schooner. Honours are even, I fancy, on that score.”

Raoul flushed angrily under his sunburn, but he contained himself. His eyes roved over the supply of food and the full water-calabashes, though he concealed the incredulous surprise he felt. His was a tall, slender, well-knit figure, and Grief, studying him, estimated his character from his face. The eyes were keen and strong, but a bit too close together—not pinched, however, but just a trifle near to balance the broad forehead, the strong chin and jaw, and the cheekbones wide apart. Strength! His face was filled with it, and yet Grief sensed in it the intangible something the man lacked.

“We are both strong men,” Raoul said, with a bow. “We might have been fighting for empires a hundred years ago.”

It was Grief’s turn to bow.

“As it is, we are squalidly scrapping over the enforcement of the colonial laws of those empires whose destinies we might possibly have determined a hundred years ago.”

“It all comes to dust,” Raoul remarked sen-tentiously, sitting down. “Go ahead with your meal. Don’t let me interrupt.”

“Won’t you join us?” was Grief’s invitation.

The other looked at him with sharp steadiness, then accepted.

“I’m sticky with sweat,” he said. “Can I wash?”

Grief nodded and ordered Mauriri to bring a calabash. Raoul looked into the Goat Man's eyes, but saw nothing save languid uninterest as the precious quart of water was wasted on the ground.

"The dog is thirsty," Raoul said.

Grief nodded, and another calabash was presented to the animal.

Again Raoul searched the eyes of the natives and learned nothing.

"Sorry we have no coffee," Grief apologized. "You'll have to drink plain water. A calabash, Tehaa. Try some of this shark. There is squid to follow, and sea urchins and a seaweed salad. I'm sorry we haven't any frigate bird. The boys were lazy yesterday, and did not try to catch any."

With an appetite that would not have stopped at wire nails dipped in lard, Grief ate perfunctorily, and tossed the scraps to the dog.

"I'm afraid I haven't got down to the primitive diet yet," he sighed, as he sat back. "The tinned goods on the Rattler, now I could make a hearty meal off of them, but this muck—" He took a half-pound strip of broiled shark and flung it to the dog. "I suppose I'll come to it if you don't surrender pretty soon."

Raoul laughed unpleasantly.

"I came to offer terms," he said pointedly.

Grief shook his head.

"There aren't any terms. I've got you where the hair is short, and I'm not going to let go."

"You think you can hold me in this hole!" Raoul cried.

"You'll never leave it alive, except in double irons." Grief surveyed his guest with an air of consideration. "I've handled your kind before. We've pretty well cleaned it out of the South Seas. But you are a—how shall I say?—a sort of an anachronism. You're a throwback, and we've got to get rid of you. Personally, I would advise you to go back to the schooner and blow your brains out. It is the only way to escape what you've got coming to you."

The parley, so far as Raoul was concerned, proved fruitless, and he went back into his own lines convinced that the men on the Big Rock could hold out for years, though he would have been swiftly unconvinced could he have observed Tehaa and the Raiateans, the moment his back was turned and he was out of sight, crawling over the rocks and sucking and crunching the scraps his dog had left uneaten.

IX

"We hunger now, Brother," Grief said, "but it is better than to hunger for many days to come. The Big Devil, after feasting and drinking good water with us in plenty, will not stay long in Fuatino. Even to-morrow may he try to leave. To-night you and I sleep over the top of the Rock, and Tehaa, who shoots well, will sleep with us if he can dare the Rock."

Tehaa, alone among the Raiateans, was cragsman enough to venture the perilous way, and dawn found him in a rock-barricaded nook, a hundred yards to the right of Grief and Mauriri.

The first warning was the firing of rifles from the peninsula, where Brown and his two Raiateans signalled the retreat and followed the besiegers through the jungle to the beach. From the eyrie on the face of the rock Grief could see nothing for another hour, when the Rattler appeared, making for the passage. As before, the captive Fuatino men towed in the whaleboat. Mauriri, under direction of Grief, called down instructions to them as they passed slowly beneath. By Grief's side lay several bundles of dynamite sticks, well-lashed together and with extremely short fuses.

The deck of the Rattler was populous. For'ard, rifle in hand, among the Raiatean sailors, stood a desperado whom Mauriri announced was Raoul's brother. Aft, by the helmsman, stood another. Attached to him, tied waist to waist, with slack, was Mataara, the old Queen. On the other side of the helmsman, his arm in a sling, was Captain Glass. Amidships, as before, was Raoul, and with him, lashed waist to waist, was Naumoo.

"Good morning, Mister David Grief," Raoul called up.

"And yet I warned you that only in double irons would you leave the island," Grief murmured down with a sad inflection.

"You can't kill all your people I have on board," was the answer.

The schooner, moving slowly, jerk by jerk, as the men pulled in the whaleboat, was almost directly beneath. The rowers, without ceasing, slacked on their oars, and were immediately threatened with the rifle of the man who stood for'ard.

"Throw, Big Brother!" Naumoo called up in the Fuatino tongue. "I am filled with sorrow and am willed to die. His knife is ready with which to cut the rope, but I shall hold him tight. Be not afraid, Big Brother. Throw, and throw straight, and good-bye."

Grief hesitated, then lowered the fire-stick which he had been blowing bright.

"Throw!" the Goat Man urged.

Still Grief hesitated.

"If they get to sea, Big Brother, Naumoo dies just the same. And there are all the others. What is her life against the many?"

"If you drop any dynamite, or fire a single shot, we'll kill all on board," Raoul cried up to them. "I've got you, David Grief. You can't kill these people, and I can. Shut up, you!"

This last was addressed to Naumoo, who was calling up in her native tongue and whom Raoul seized by the neck with one hand to choke to silence. In turn, she locked both arms about him and looked up beseechingly to Grief.

"Throw it, Mr. Grief, and be damned to them," Captain Glass rumbled in his deep voice. "They're bloody murderers, and the cabin's full of them."

The desperado who was fastened to the old Queen swung half about to menace Captain Glass with his rifle, when Tehaa, from his position farther along the Rock, pulled trigger on him. The rifle dropped from the man's hand, and on his face was an expression of intense surprise as his legs crumpled under him and he sank down on deck, dragging the Queen with him.

"Port! Hard a port!" Grief cried.

Captain Glass and the Kanaka whirled the wheel over, and the bow of the Rattler headed in for the Rock. Amidships Raoul still struggled with Naumoo. His brother ran from for'ard to his aid, being missed by the fusillade of quick shots from Tehaa and the Goat Man. As Raoul's brother placed the muzzle of his rifle to Naumoo's side Grief touched the fire-stick to the match-head in the split end of the fuse. Even as with both hands he tossed the big bundle of dynamite, the rifle went off, and Naumoo's fall to the deck was simultaneous with the fall of the dynamite. This time the fuse was short enough. The explosion occurred at the instant the deck was reached, and that portion of the Rattler, along with Raoul, his brother, and Naumoo, forever disappeared.

The schooner's side was shattered, and she began immediately to settle. For'ard, every Raiatean sailor dived overboard. Captain Glass met the first man springing up the com-panionway from the cabin, with a kick full in the face, but was overborne and trampled on by the rush. Following the desperadoes came the Huahine women, and as they went overboard, the Rattler sank on an even keel close to the base of the Rock. Her cross-trees still stuck out when she reached bottom.

Looking down, Grief could see all that occurred beneath the surface. He saw Mataara, a fathom deep, unfasten herself from the dead pirate and swim upward. As her head emerged she saw Captain Glass, who could not swim, sinking several yards away. The Queen, old woman that she was, but an islander, turned over, swam down to him, and held him up as she struck out for the unsubmerged cross-trees.

Five heads, blond and brown, were mingled with the dark heads of Polynesia that dotted the surface. Grief, rifle in hand, watched for a chance to shoot. The Goat Man, after a minute, was successful, and they saw the body of one man sink sluggishly. But to the Raiatean sailors, big and brawny, half fish, was the vengeance given. Swimming swiftly, they singled out the blond heads and the brown. Those from above watched the four surviving desperadoes, clutched and locked, dragged far down beneath and drowned like curs.

In ten minutes everything was over. The Huahine women, laughing and giggling, were holding on to the sides of the whaleboat which had done the towing. The Raiatean sailors, waiting for orders, were about the cross-tree to which Captain Glass and Mataara clung.

"The poor old Rattler," Captain Glass lamented.

"Nothing of the sort," Grief answered. "In a week we'll have her raised, new timbers amidships, and we'll be on our way." And to the Queen, "How is it with you, Sister?"

"Naumoo is gone, and Motauri, Brother, but Fuatino is ours again. The day is young. Word shall be sent to all my people in the high places with the goats. And to-night, once again, and as never before, we shall feast and rejoice in the Big House."

"She's been needing new timbers abaft the beam there for years," quoth Captain Glass. "But the chronometers will be out of commission for the rest of the cruise."

THE END.

A Dream Image

“WHOOOP! Rah! Rah! Rah! Get out of the way!” — A thunder of hoofs from behind, and she sprang to the roadside as the turbulent troop dashed by, and in an anarchy of dust and tumult, was lost round the next turn of the road. But in the passing, she had time to note the fierce beauty, the rugged manhood of each flying figure. “Always the same, reckless fools and madmen,” she thought, as she heard them swing to the left at the cross-roads and take the giddy path by the cliffs at a killing lope. Now they stood out in bold relief as they scaled the frightful head of Point Pedro, and she counted six riders ere they turned its flank and were out of sight.

Yes, they were all there, each strapping, wayward son of Old Ralston — Old Ralston, who was as effeminate as any man possibly could be. Whence came this wild strain? And she pondered over the enigma which had so worried the countryside these many years. True, their beauty had come from the mother; but she had never evinced any signs of that savage unconventionality which had been theirs from the cradle. Helen was conversant with the ordinary history of the family. Old Ralston was a self-made man, who, from the drudgery of office boy and clerk, had become a merchant prince. Retiring from business at forty-five, he had married, purchased his beautiful country home, and settled down to become the progenitor of this marvelous race. What wild ancestral strains had been reborn in this wild progeny, she had often speculated on, and her thoughts had always strayed to a picturesque buccaneer of the Spanish Main. It was a pretty fancy, and about the only one she could harmonize with the subject.

And the boyhood of this ungovernable brood: That of the elder sons had come before her time; but like legends, the history of their doings had gone from mouth to mouth. As a little girl she remembered much of the younger boys, and particularly of the youngest, the seventh son. And she remembered now, with a merry smile, an incident of her childhood. How she, six years of age, had been exposed to the wicked wiles of this lad of eight. Meeting accidentally and for the first and last time, in his father’s woods, where she had disobediently wandered, he stormed her heart so valiantly that she surrendered on the spot. There they plighted their troth and spent the afternoon in childish frolic. And when discovered by her people, they found a much-berumpled little maid, crowned with wild flowers and honeysuckle, goddesslike, smiling on young Guilbert’s homage. And then the scene — how he threw one arm about her and doubled up his fist in angry menace. And the attack — how he struck John and kicked his shins, twice returning to the repulse; once, leaving an arm of his jacket in his captor’s clutch and attacking her father so vigorously from behind, as to rip his broadcloth all up the back; and again, when the coachman held him, wriggling

from out the jacket's remnants and striking him so as to quite blacken one I eye. And the retreat — how he crept from tree to tree, bellowing like a young bull in the rutting season. Then the incessant fusillade of clods and stones, and the spattering of mud he gave them as they recrossed the brook. And as they neared the house his attacks became so bold that they sought refuge in the hot-houses. HERE he smashed the glass and behaved so outrageously, that they were forced to gain the shelter of the roof-tree while the coachman was engaged in giving him a good trouncing. But nothing seemed to daunt the little savage, for all during tea he wandered round and round the house, howling in insatiable fury. Nor did he retreat till after having fruitlessly challenged every, male inmate, from her father to the gardener's boy, and then it was to escape from his father's servants, who had made a sally in force.

The boyhood of each had been very similar. After terrorizing the country till their sixteenth or eighteenth years, each had followed in the footsteps of the other, by running away. At first, this characteristic had sorely perplexed the father, but he soon grew to regard it as a childish ill, similar to mumps and measles; and when his last-born, Guilbert, at twenty had manifested none such symptoms, he was surprised and feared for the boy greatly. But Guilbert redeemed the family trait by disappearing while still in his nonage. A living refutation of wagging heads and muttered hints of bad endings, they all came back. And save the broadened polish of the world, they were in no wise changed. Always the same — generous, brave, impulsive; indomitable, wild and fiercely unconventional. But they only sought the home as a pleasant asylum, in which to rest a space from their many adventures, and it was rare coincidence to find the six together in their father's house. As a household, theirs seemed the reverse of a circle of world-weary wanderers, seeking seclusion from the rush of events. Every outside sport was theirs, and the countryside saw them continually, but the social side, never. Their stables and kennels were a sportman's delight; their gymnasium and training quarters a miniature duplicate of those found in the best colleges; and their boathouse the finest on Arunda Bay. Passionately fond, were they, of the water, and in Ralston's Cove, besides the litter of smaller craft, lay six trim yachts — the best productions of the most famous shipyards. And they were not bay craft, either, but outside schooners, the sum of whose voyages embraced the four quarters.

Yet the gossips, as the countryside, had forgotten Guilbert, the last to leave the nest. He seemed more like the dim recollection of a dream-image, merged in past obscurity. So long had his returning been delayed, that, though with an intuitive belief that it would happen, they no more expected him to appear than Christ himself to herald the Millenium. Of his wild doings there had at first been dreadful tidings; but so completely had he gone beyond the ken of rumor, that in the last several years nothing had been heard of him — of course by the countryside, for what the ostracised Ralstons knew was kept to themselves. But the impression prevailed that Guilbert was the worst, the wildest of the whole brood; that in him was the ripened maturity of every trait which had so served to make the Ralston name notorious. In truth, vague as the impression was, it was so strong, that he was never mentioned without a certain indefinable awe,

such as is unconsciously used when men speak of things unusually sacred or terribly evil.

As she continued her stroll, she thought of these things. And as she paused at the cross-roads to drink in the beauty of the nestling bay, she burst into merry laughter, as for the moment she wandered in that magic glen with eight years old Guilbert. — This Guilbert, and she imagined the man he had evolved into; and herself, Helen Garthwaithe, Masters of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy, the college bred woman who had seen and understood the world. The juxtaposition, in thought, of a rnan such as he must have become, with a woman such as she felt herself to be, was indeed ludicrous.

However, all thought of the wild Ralston race vanished with the contusion of her stroll, when she found herself on the busy pier, pleasuring in the throb of life about her. But her interest lay in a yacht, which had just come to anchor on the channel's edge. Already a boat had been lowered and covered half the distance, springing gayly to each quick stroke of the oars. As it makes the landing, two flannel-clad men leap ashore, saluting and receiving her welcome. One, slender and boyish, with the first down of manhood sullyng his rosy cheek, crushes her in a bearish hug — her brother, returning from his summer holidays to spend a short week or so at home before the opening of the college year. The other, broad-shouldered, not over handsome, but whose powerful face bore the stamp of intense intellectuality and whose eyes emitted the deep gaze of the thinker, took her hand with a subdued expression I of earnest regard. He was her brother's friend — not chum, but rather idol, at whose shrine he worshipped with the enthusiasm of youth. He was a marvel of learning, and could string behind his name many proud degrees of collegiate endowment, had played "full," pulled stroke on the 'Varsity, and broken more than one inter-collegiate record, and again; since entering the world, had well laid the foundation for a brilliant literary and scientific career — in short, was one of those bright, all-round men which the American universities have so well succeeded in turning out. By the analytical mind, such friendships are easily accounted for. But when the childish fondness of the one is reciprocated by the other to such an extent that he is willing to waste his vacations and spare moments upon him, even to going down to visit his people and to endure the usual inflictions of such rashness — well, the analytical mind searches for some hidden spring, while the unconsciously logical animal asks "What's the sister like?"

Having received the assurance of a late tea and the carriage's arrival within the hour, Albert descried a group of chums down the pier, and with the glaringly bald diplomacy of all brothers, was off and away. It was not the first time that he had thus displayed his nude tact, and the bareness of it would have been embarrassing, but that they merrily laughed at him and themselves and frankly accepted the situation.

Merged in easy conversation, they strolled down the pier. As they reached its end, his description of the trip was interrupted by the espial of a large schooner-yacht entering the bay, and they paused to admire her beautiful appearance. A gallant sight she was, as she scudded the channel swell. When well a-breast, spinnakers, balloon jib and water-sails came in on the run, and she luffed up, full and by, heading directly for

the pier. A hum of admiration rose all a-down the jetty at the searanship displayed in this manoeuver. On she came, a towering pyramid of snowy canvass above a leaping hull of ebon-black. Nearer and nearer — the yachtsmen began to show surprise and Stanton remarked that it were time she went about. Still on she came, devouring the intervening water at racehorse speed. The old salts began to murmur and in a panic, the crowd swayed back from the pier's end, leaving Stanton and Helen behind. Each had been in momentary expectancy that she would change her course, but her proximity now denied it. The crash seemed inevitable. Stanton threw an arm about Helen's waist to drag her back. But at that instant, clear as a bell, with the quick incisiveness of accustomed command, came the order "Hard-a-lee!"

Slapping and snarling, the three jib sheets were cast off; the topsail halyards let go and clewed up on the run by the down-hauls; and the mainsail backed over to windward with a weather tackle. They saw the bow sheer into the wind; but so close, that they crouched to avoid the overhanging bowsprit, which descried an aerial circle above them as it swept up, obedient to the helm.

Parallel with the pier and not a dozen feet away, glided the yacht, the cynosure of all eyes. The recklessness of the exploit and the perfection of its execution drew the praise from Stanton's lips, as they gazed upon the long sweep of the decks. Beautiful as was the picture, it served but as a background for the real picture. Lightly twirling the wheel part over and gazing at the astonished pier with a wickedly exasperating smile, stood a man of such attractive aspect that every eye was drawn to him. His excellent physique was shown off to advantage in an easy yachting costume. But it was in his face that attraction chiefly centered. Handsome were not strong, nor beautiful appropriate, in describing it: beauty would be the only adequate symbol. Nor was it exactly beauty, for while the features were strong and pleasantly regular, one felt that the charm was due more to the expression, or rather, reflex of the inner man — a reflex of intense, almost animal, masculinity. But this, in turn, was redeemed by a certain, indefinable something, a sort of higher dominance.

Helen beheld him with a troubled sense of familiarity. It seemed Ae dim recollection of a dream-image, merged in past obscurity. Her prominent position on the deserted pier end was rendered the more conspicuous, by the fact that Stanton's arm still unconsciously circled her waist. The yachtman's roving eye caught hers, and never before had a man's eyes so affected her, made her so cognizant of sex distinction. For an instant his bold eyes held hers, then dropped to her waist, returned; and with roguish audacity, he laughed full in her face. Keenly appreciating the embarrassing situation, she disengaged Stanton's arm. Half angry, half hurt, she felt the flush mounting to her face, and as he tossed his head in mock reproof and cast at her a teasing glance of interrogation, her eyes involuntarily dropped. The next moment, he had glided past, leaving her very uncomfortable, indeed. Down the pier slipped the schooner, while the stranger swept the onlookers with his audacious stare.

"All about!" he cried as he whirled the wheel hard down. The jib and fore-sheets were hauled flat and the yacht sprang away on the other tack.

“Now indeed will this theatrical stranger come to grief,” said Stanton. “They’ll be resting on the mud in a minute, for there’s but six men can take a boat her size across the Flats.”

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Nor can it be confessed that Helen felt at all sorry at this prophecy. It was soothing balm to her wounded conceit. But no — across the Flats ran a devious channel, bare of dolphins, buoys, or marks of any description. Thrice he threw the schooner into the wind, and once jibed all over, as he rounded the more difficult turns. Then on and away, straight for the Ralston boat-house. As he neared, the boat-house burst forth in a flame of bunting and roar of salute, while at the mast-head, the yacht I ran up the Ralston pennant.

“Guilbert, wild Guilbert has returned at last,” was the hum of surprise which traveled up and down the jetty.

She had stolen away from the noisy group about the campfire, for on this night she had lapsed into one of her moods and wished to be alone. She was tired of gregarious humanity and suffered from a stress of entertaining. Her brother’s vacation drew to a close, and for the past three days the brunt of hostess had fallen upon her in seeing to the accommodation and amusement of his friends. A score of lusty undergraduates they were — the Glee Club of his college. To-night, on this moonlight sail, their rough hilarity had jarred upon her, and when the wind dropped, she had hailed with delight the proposition to go ashore and build a campfire.

And so she strolled down the moonlit sands, communing with herself, dreaming strange dreams, and giving full rein to her restless ambition. In the dawning of her creative intellectuality, with the world before her and the field of action barely entered upon, was it strange that her talent throbbed within her to the pulse of unknown forces, to the rising fermentation of desires which bade her spring out into rushing humanity and invest with her individuality some of its shifting scenes, or to give the permanency of the terrestrial absolute to some of its transient formulas?

Mid the chaos of her thoughts and longings, she heard the strong young voices rise on the windless air, as they sang the Pilgrim’s Chorus. She paused to listen, only to lose herself in the embrace of her desires. Lone strayed in meditation, she again roused when the full, rich tones of Stanton’s voice, invested with all the sweet sadness of *Ah! che la morte!*, held the calm night with their magic.

As she listened, to her surprise she heard, quite close, a tenor subduedly take up the strain. Startled, interested, she rounded the small bluff, and there, in sharp relief against the yellow stretch of sand and bathed in the silvery moonlight, beheld wild Guilbert Ralston. Bewildered, she came to a halt and watched him. As he sang, his face, raised full to the moon, seemed lighted with a bright glow, as of spirituality. And gazing, she endeavored to analyze: it was not the Saintlike, Christlike reflex of pure divinity — mortality, with all its strength and weakness, was too manifest — rather,

it seemed, a soul, heir to fierce passions and the trammels of the flesh, bathing in the effulgence of a latent nobility. It seemed to symbolize in fiery lettering, I AM: I MIGHT BE. It was as a rebellious spirit, linked to the earth by its pride and weakness, and the phrase, "Lucifer, bright son of the morn," came into her thoughts, unsummoned.

The song ceased. The bright glow faded softly away, and his soul returned to earth and beheld her. Mortality usurped divinity: the god had flown, the man returned: and in his eyes shone the careless, open admiration of man.

He advanced to meet her, doffed his hat, and with bold assurance said, "As you have surreptitiously gazed upon the beauty of my abstraction, so let me gaze, frankly and openly, on yours." And gaze he did, till her eyes were wet with the mute protest of indignation.

"We have met before," he continued. "The other day on the pier, you know. Of course, no introduction; but then how delightfully informal." And he smiled so ingenuously, and with such an air of good fellowship, that her resentment was already half removed.

"And that was not the first time," she enigmatically replied.

"Ah, at a distance I suppose, where you had the advantage."

"No."

"Then who are you? You must be some forgotten friend of my boyhood."

"You were a very small boy at the time, and you will, or rather should remember an instance in which you behaved abominably."

"I'm afraid I can remember too many — which one were you concerned in?"

"Don't you recollect the time you wrecked the hot-houses and our coachman gave you a thrashing?"

"Oh! Then you are Helen Garthwaithe, whom I wooed and won and lost with such celerity. You cut me the very next day."

"And you must confess you deserved it."

"Yes, I suppose so. But think of the blight you cast on my budding genius. Why, I had commenced a poem to you, of most wonderful-versification, and I never touched it again. I found it yesterday, in overhauling some of my boyish traps. How time flies — it seems only the other day that I met that little maiden wandering in my father's woods and to day — 'why I've taken great pleasure in reading your *As the Heart Desires*.'"

"And how did you find it? I suppose you reached the generous masculine conclusion, that it was a pity women would insist going in for the Higher Education."

"O no. I've become reconciled to it. And I found it very readable, though disagreeing with a number of the conclusions."

"So little Guilbert has turned critic — it's much easier than writing poems of wonderful versification, isn't it? But I hope you'll be as lenient as were my reviewers."

"There's the rub — simply because you were a woman, they handled you with gloves. Or — O I don't know — perhaps they look at it differently than I do. It was admirably, and in the main, correctly handled; but as I said before, some of your conclusions were wrong. To appropriate a delightful phrase, you have not yet 'solved the mystery of woman,' and as to that of man, you're lamentably ignorant."

“And of course that statement puts you in the position of one who has. I’m afraid egotism — but there, we’ll not quarrel. And I do hope, Mr. Ralston, that we shall become good friends; though I’m afraid we shall see little of each other.”

“I am home to stay.”

“But — ”

“You are not going away?”

“No, but — ”

“But what?”

“I can hardly express myself — ”

“Oh! I see what you mean — our ostracisation. I suppose my brothers never attempted to redeem it. It does not hurt me. One sows the wind and must harvest the same. But I’d storm Olympus for desire’s sake, and since I desire to know you better, I’ll cultivate society. The doors will be opened, never fear.”

“Then we shall — there! They are calling me, and if I don’t come, they will. I am really glad to have met you, Mr. Ralston. Goodbye.”

He took the extended hand, and then, as she fled down the beach, muttered “Gad! That’s part of the mystery I’d like to solve!”

True to his word, Guilbert cultivated society — not that it was a new venture, but that here he had to face a long established and deep rooted prejudice. It was a society which had witnessed the birth, boyhood and manhood of himself and brothers, yet had never opened its doors to them. Furthermore, he and his had never attempted to propitiate it, but rather had taken pleasure in the estrangement, never missing a chance of displaying their disregard and contempt. But now things were changed, and Guilbert set about the conquest with an earnestness which brooked no defeat. Through his forceful personality, his charm of manner, his traveled polish and his knowledge of men and things, he soon became popular; and before long, no social function was complete without him. To him, it was a fascinating game, and even society felt the pleasant danger-thrill of contact with this social pariah. In fact, though fond mothers often looked askance, he became quite a lion. A clever conversationalist, familiar with the most diversified subjects, and with both a high intuitive and educated knowledge of human nature; small wonder that he pleased all and became one of the most favored.

They met often, and Helen beheld with dismay the increasing glamor of his presence. Many a stern self-analysis she gave herself; yet the problem was as perplexing as ever. At last she evolved the hoary axiom — human nature is not logical. Still, little satisfaction was to be gleaned from it. But one day a light broke in upon her. Summoning her soul to Judgement, she confessed that it was love — love that was not to be found within the narrow limits of reason — and strangest of all, that this absurd, illogical malady was hers.

In vain she endeavored to stem the tide; but she could not force her reason to reassert itself. The daring intrepidity of his race brooked no defense and hurried her on, till he had stormed her heart as valiantly as in that magic dell of long ago. The struggle was

short but severe, and on the crumbling ruins of her philosophy, she realized that there was much to learn from the dual mystery of man and woman.

With the surrender, her alliance of the emotions with the concise particles of gray matter was dissevered, and conscious of loving and being loved, she wonderingly gazed on the broadening sweep of life. It seemed as though she had been translated to a new sphere, a delicious fairyland of reality. And she was appalled at the absurdity, the ludicrousness of the ideals she had builded or the tenets she had held in her previous existence. Never had she idealized such a character as Guilbert's, and constantly had she frowned upon the recognition of a double moral standard. Dry logic and philosophy had fled before the glorious front of love — she no longer thought; she felt.

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Bright summer had fled, and lingering autumn prepared the stern advent of winter. But the sun beat warm on the breathless air and the land seemed to forget that the days of cold and gloom were so near at hand.

She brought her horse to a walk, listening with vague pleasure to the soft swish of the fallen leaves as he picked his steps on the narrow path. With her trained physique, she thought nothing of forty miles a-horse, and though appreciating the advantages of modern travel, thoroughly enjoyed it. The day before, she had taken the road around the outlying spurs of Delarado and spent the night at Irving, at the home of a college chum; but in returning, she had chosen the rough bridle-path across the mountain.

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Lost in a reverie, she forgot the miles before her and let fall the rein on Dick's neck. Tonight, Guilbert and she had decided the announcement was to be made; tonight, the die was to be irrevocably cast; and tonight, this heralding of her own happiness was to bring disappointment and sorrow to another. Stanton had written that he was coming down this day, not for long, perhaps to return immediately. And her, woman's heart knew why.

Suddenly she heard a childish laugh, and Dick stopped midway in a narrow turn, to lazily contemplate a little boy who blocked the way. His hands were manfully buried in jacket pockets, his face wreathed in the merry wonder of childhood.

"How beautiful!" she thought, for she worshipped at the shrine of young life unsullied, yet pregnant with the secrets of futurity.

"Good morning," he said, doffing his hat with a rare, airt grace. "Don't you like riding?" he continued. "I do — that is, I'd like to, but papa thinks I'm not old enough — I'm not six yet, you know."

"Yes," she replied absently, studying his face and endeavoring to recall some familiar likeness.

"Yes, and when I'm six he's going to give me a little pony." And he drew himself up in the pride of prospective ownership.

"But are you not afraid to go so far in the woods, and all alone?"

"My papa is not afraid of anything and neither am I. You ought to see the lions and tigers he's killed — and elephants too. And he says it's wrong for a man to be afraid."

"You are a stranger here, a city boy, I suppose?"

"O no, not a city boy," he corrected. "I live in town, but you see, I often go to the country. Nana is only a little ways behind. May I ride back with you to meet her?"

Grasping his outstretched hands, she pulled him astride of Dick's neck, facing her. Brushing back the wavy hair from his forehead, she looked into his black eyes and scanned the dark beauty of his face. And as she pondered with a vague sense of foreboding, he prattled on, telling her of his toys, his pets, but principally of his father, for whom he evidently had great admiration. He did not live with him but in town, and Nana sometimes brought him down to see him. He came on a horse too, with his big dog. "My father is a man," he concluded proudly, "a man just like I want to be."

"O the familiarity of that face!" she thought. It seemed the dim recollection of a dream-image, merged in past obscurity.

"Guilbert!" A woman's voice rang out. "Guilbert! Come here you naughty boy! How can Nana find you?"

How it stung her! A frightful speculation assuming confirmation! But restraining herself — "And your name, my little man?"

"Guilbert, Guilbert Ralston."

She could hardly keep the saddle; but the mother appearing, she returned the boy, uttered a few conventionalities, and was away at a wild gallop down the rail.

The crash had come. Her philosophy had dissolved before her great love; now that was gone and nothing but a void remained. She could not think — only conjecture and fret. In short, now that the first pain was past, she had fallen into a mood of disgust, aimless and passive.

A sleepless night and a headache had been her portion, and now, events of yesterday seemed a half dream. Returning from her ride, she had barely gained her room when pounding hoofs on the drive-way announced Guilbert's arrival. Coming late, he had evidently learned of her presence from the woman and boy, and failed to overtake her in those swift twenty miles. But she had denied herself to him.

Today he had returned, but she kept to her room, pleading sickness. Besides, divining Stanton's mission, she was afraid to meet him. Like, wounded animal, she wanted to crawl away and suffer alone.

The afternoon was well along and the house quiet: evidently everybody had gone off. In an endeavor to escape herself, she would go down to the boat-house and take out her canoe. Slipping through the deserted house, she gained her wheel and was down the drive, barely escaping the ambushed Stanton who was lying in the hammock with his book. Down the grounds and into the road, she sped through the lengthening shadows.

"Helen!" And from the bushes by the wayside, sprang Guilbert.

"Helen!" in entreaty. But she was already beyond earshot.

But no, not safe. Few were the minutes before she heard the unmistakable sound of a loping horse. At the crest of the hill, just catching the first glimpse of the boat-house, she looked back down the long stretch of road. Guilbert had mounted a horse from the paddock, and hatless, sans bridle or saddle, guiding with his knees, he was riding like a Comanche Indian.

“Verily, for his desire would he storm Olympus,” she thought, as she flew down the long grade. Nor could she deny a certain pleasurable thrill at this exhibition of his ardour. But she gained the boat-house and watched him go on down the beach.

The wind was strong and squally, already blowing half a gale. Soon she was out on the edge of the bar, breasting the tremendous seas and forgetting herself in the keen struggle. For an hour she beat back and forth in her frail craft, skimming the whitecaps which would hav swamped many a larger boat.

“Helen!” Peremptory — no longer entreating. He had seized some fisherman’s plunger on the beach and continued the chase.

The boat dashed past; so closely, that he dropped the tiller in a vain effort to catch her canoe. Her cockleshell handling in less room, she clacked off the two little sheets and headed for the boat-house. But he wore around, jibed over, and cut off her retreat.

It was contested skillfully on either side. Twice he blanketed her, and in the calm of his lea asked her to listen to him. Yet she refused. Again he took the wind from out her small sails and attempted to catch the canoe with a boat-hook. But she was out with her paddle and away, this time getting to windward to prevent the repetition of this manoeuver. With the certitude of fate, he beat up against the wind in her wake, edging her nearer to the breaking bar. Merciless, he forced her closer to the, danger.

Then the untamable spirit of her Teutonic ancestry flamed up — the dogged obstinacy, the fearlessness, the wild danger-love. The bar was a stretch of death, yet she would venture it. Drawing the canvass coverings about her body so that no water could enter the canoe, she shook her sails close into the wind and headed across. Perhaps that buccaneer ancestor, with the passion of burning ships and sacking cities for gold and maidens, animated Guilbert, for he also plunged into the threatening ruin.

Three great combers passed her before they broke, but the fourth could not be escaped. She was caught by the cap and hurled like a cork into the great hollow, buried in a smother of foam. Yet the canoe was staunch and righted without difficulty. The plunger met a similar sea and emerged with the cockpit half afloat. At last they shot out from the last great wave, into the long swell of open ocean.

But she heard the churn of the fore-shoe, the complaining after-leach, and the jerk of the sheet on the noisy traveler, as the plunger gradually drew near. Now the bow was abreast of her, and so close that she could have touched it with her paddle. She shot up into the wind; but the plunger luffed, followed her about, and blanketed her on the other tack. It poised above her on a great sea — for he had thrown the helm hard up in order to run her down. There was a crash of splintering wood and a rush of water, then a strong arm grasped her and she was drawn into the cockpit.

How happily the years had flown! — she gazed dreamily into the fire and her thoughts sped back to that wild night at sea. How, amid the howling elements, he crushed her to him and forced her to listen — laid his life bare, told her all, each mishap, every error. The mother, his wife, but dead. And the boy had found a second mother in her sister. So the darkness was dispelled, and for the third time and more tempestuously than ever, he had wooed and won her.

Though the countryside shook its head and muttered fearful prophecies, they had married, and strange to say, happiness had been her lot. As for Guilbert — I AM, BECAME I WAS: I MIGHT BE, BECAME I AM.

“Helen!”

She awoke to greet him, and the dream-image, merged in past obscurity, vanished — the realization, the reality remained.

The Dream of Debs

I awoke fully an hour before my customary time. This in itself was remarkable, and I lay very wide awake, pondering over it. Something was the matter, something was wrong — I knew not what. I was oppressed by a premonition of something terrible that had happened or was about to happen. But what was it? I strove to orient myself. I remembered that at the time of the Great Earthquake of 1906 many claimed they awakened some moments before the first shock and that during these moments they experienced strange feelings of dread. Was San Francisco again to be visited by earthquake?

I lay for a full minute, numbly expectant, but there occurred no reeling of walls nor shock and grind of falling masonry. All was quiet. That was it! The silence! No wonder I had been perturbed. The hum of the great live city was strangely absent. The surface cars passed along my street, at that time of day, on an average of one every three minutes; but in the ten succeeding minutes not a car passed. Perhaps it was a street-railway strike, was my thought; or perhaps there had been an accident and the power was shut off. But no, the silence was too profound. I heard no jar and rattle of waggon wheels, nor stamp of iron-shod hoofs straining up the steep cobble-stones.

Pressing the push-button beside my bed, I strove to hear the sound of the bell, though I well knew it was impossible for the sound to rise three stories to me even if the bell did ring. It rang all right, for a few minutes later Brown entered with the tray and morning paper. Though his features were impassive as ever, I noted a startled, apprehensive light in his eyes. I noted, also, that there was no cream on the tray.

“The Creamery did not deliver this morning,” he explained; “nor did the bakery.”

I glanced again at the tray. There were no fresh French rolls — only slices of stale graham bread from yesterday, the most detestable of bread so far as I was concerned.

“Nothing was delivered this morning, sir,” Brown started to explain apologetically; but I interrupted him.

“The paper?”

“Yes, sir, it was delivered, but it was the only thing, and it is the last time, too. There won’t be any paper to-morrow. The paper says so. Can I send out and get you some condensed milk?”

I shook my head, accepted the coffee black, and spread open the paper. The headlines explained everything — explained too much, in fact, for the lengths of pessimism to which the journal went were ridiculous. A general strike, it said, had been called all over the United States; and most foreboding anxieties were expressed concerning the provisioning of the great cities.

I read on hastily, skimming much and remembering much of labour troubles in the past. For a generation the general strike had been the dream of organized labour, which dream had arisen originally in the mind of Debs, one of the great labour leaders of thirty years before. I recollected that in my young college-settlement days I had even written an article on the subject for one of the magazines and that I had entitled it "The Dream of Debs." And I must confess that I had treated the idea very cavalierly and academically as a dream and nothing more. Time and the world had rolled on, Gompers was gone, the American Federation of Labour was gone, and gone was Debs with all his wild revolutionary ideas; but the dream had persisted, and here it was at last realized in fact. But I laughed, as I read, at the journal's gloomy outlook. I knew better. I had seen organized labour worsted in too many conflicts. It would be a matter only of days when the thing would be settled. This was a national strike, and it wouldn't take the Government long to break it.

I threw the paper down and proceeded to dress. It would certainly be interesting to be out in the streets of San Francisco when not a wheel was turning and the whole city was taking an enforced vacation.

"I beg your pardon, sir," Brown said, as he handed me my cigar-case, "but Mr. Harmmed has asked to see you before you go out."

"Send him in right away," I answered.

Harmmed was the butler. When he entered I could see he was labouring under controlled excitement. He came at once to the point.

"What shall I do, sir? There will be needed provisions, and the delivery drivers are on strike. And the electricity is shut off — I guess they're on strike, too."

"Are the shops open?" I asked.

"Only the small ones, sir. The retail clerks are out, and the big ones can't open; but the owners and their families are running the little ones themselves."

"Then take the machine," I said, "and go the rounds and make your purchases. Buy plenty of everything you need or may need. Get a box of candles — no, get half-a-dozen boxes. And, when you're done, tell Harrison to bring the machine around to the club for me — not later than eleven."

Harmmed shook his head gravely. "Mr. Harrison has struck along with the Chauffeurs' Union, and I don't know how to run the machine myself."

"Oh, ho, he has, has he?" said. "Well, when next Mister Harrison happens around you tell him that he can look elsewhere for a position."

"Yes, sir."

"You don't happen to belong to a Butlers' Union, do you, Harmmed?"

"No, sir," was the answer. "And even if I did I'd not desert my employer in a crisis like this. No, sir, I would —"

"All right, thank you," I said. "Now you get ready to accompany me. I'll run the machine myself, and we'll lay in a stock of provisions to stand a siege."

It was a beautiful first of May, even as May days go. The sky was cloudless, there was no wind, and the air was warm — almost balmy. Many autos were out, but the

owners were driving them themselves. The streets were crowded but quiet. The working class, dressed in its Sunday best, was out taking the air and observing the effects of the strike. It was all so unusual, and withal so peaceful, that I found myself enjoying it. My nerves were tingling with mild excitement. It was a sort of placid adventure. I passed Miss Chickering. She was at the helm of her little runabout. She swung around and came after me, catching me at the corner.

“Oh, Mr. Corf!” she hailed. “Do you know where I can buy candles? I’ve been to a dozen shops, and they’re all sold out. It’s dreadfully awful, isn’t it?”

But her sparkling eyes gave the lie to her words. Like the rest of us, she was enjoying it hugely. Quite an adventure it was, getting those candles. It was not until we went across the city and down into the working-class quarter south of Market Street that we found small corner groceries that had not yet sold out. Miss Chickering thought one box was sufficient, but I persuaded her into taking four. My car was large, and I laid in a dozen boxes. There was no telling what delays might arise in the settlement of the strike. Also, I filled the car with sacks of flour, baking-powder, tinned goods, and all the ordinary necessities of life suggested by Harmmed, who fussed around and clucked over the purchases like an anxious old hen.

The remarkable thing, that first day of the strike, was that no one really apprehended anything serious. The announcement of organized labour in the morning papers that it was prepared to stay out a month or three months was laughed at. And yet that very first day we might have guessed as much from the fact that the working class took practically no part in the great rush to buy provisions. Of course not. For weeks and months, craftily and secretly, the whole working class had been laying in private stocks of provisions. That was why we were permitted to go down and buy out the little groceries in the working-class neighbourhoods.

It was not until I arrived at the club that afternoon that I began to feel the first alarm. Everything was in confusion. There were no olives for the cocktails, and the service was by hitches and jerks. Most of the men were angry, and all were worried. A babel of voices greeted me as I entered. General Folsom, nursing his capacious paunch in a window-seat in the smoking-room was defending himself against half-a-dozen excited gentlemen who were demanding that he should do something.

“What can I do more than I have done?” he was saying. “There are no orders from Washington. If you gentlemen will get a wire through I’ll do anything I am commanded to do. But I don’t see what can be done. The first thing I did this morning, as soon as I learned of the strike, was to order in the troops from the Presidio — three thousand of them. They’re guarding the banks, the Mint, the post office, and all the public buildings. There is no disorder whatever. The strikers are keeping the peace perfectly. You can’t expect me to shoot them down as they walk along the streets with wives and children all in their best bib and tucker.”

“I’d like to know what’s happening on Wall Street,” I heard Jimmy Wombold say as I passed along. I could imagine his anxiety, for I knew that he was deep in the big Consolidated-Western deal.

“Say, Corf,” Atkinson bustled up to me, “is your machine running?”

“Yes,” I answered, “but what’s the matter with your own?”

“Broken down, and the garages are all closed. And my wife’s somewhere around Truckee, I think, stalled on the overland. Can’t get a wire to her for love or money. She should have arrived this evening. She may be starving. Lend me your machine.”

“Can’t get it across the bay,” Halstead spoke up. “The ferries aren’t running. But I tell you what you can do. There’s Rollinson — oh, Rollinson, come here a moment. Atkinson wants to get a machine across the bay. His wife is stuck on the overland at Truckee. Can’t you bring the Lurlette across from Tiburon and carry the machine over for him?”

The Lurlette was a two-hundred-ton, ocean-going schooner-yacht.

Rollinson shook his head. “You couldn’t get a longshoreman to land the machine on board, even if I could get the Lurlette over, which I can’t, for the crew are members of the Coast Seamen’s Union, and they’re on strike along with the rest.”

“But my wife may be starving,” I could hear Atkinson wailing as I moved on.

At the other end of the smoking-room I ran into a group of men bunched excitedly and angrily around Bertie Messener. And Bertie was stirring them up and prodding them in his cool, cynical way. Bertie didn’t care about the strike. He didn’t care much about anything. He was blasé — at least in all the clean things of life; the nasty things had no attraction for him. He was worth twenty millions, all of it in safe investments, and he had never done a tap of productive work in his life — inherited it all from his father and two uncles. He had been everywhere, seen everything, and done everything but get married, and this last in the face of the grim and determined attack of a few hundred ambitious mammas. For years he had been the greatest catch, and as yet he had avoided being caught. He was disgracefully eligible. On top of his wealth he was young, handsome, and, as I said before, clean. He was a great athlete, a young blond god that did everything perfectly and admirably with the solitary exception of matrimony. And he didn’t care about anything, had no ambitions, no passions, no desire to do the very things he did so much better than other men.

“This is sedition!” one man in the group was crying. Another called it revolt and revolution, and another called it anarchy.

“I can’t see it,” Bertie said. “I have been out in the streets all morning. Perfect order reigns. I never saw a more law-abiding populace. There’s no use calling it names. It’s not any of those things. It’s just what it claims to be, a general strike, and it’s your turn to play, gentlemen.”

“And we’ll play all right!” cried Garfield, one of the traction millionaires. “We’ll show this dirt where its place is — the beasts! Wait till the Government takes a hand.”

“But where is the Government?” Bertie interposed. “It might as well be at the bottom of the sea so far as you’re concerned. You don’t know what’s happening at Washington. You don’t know whether you’ve got a Government or not.”

“Don’t you worry about that,” Garfield blurted out.

"I assure you I'm not worrying," Bertie smiled languidly. "But it seems to me it's what you fellows are doing. Look in the glass, Garfield."

Garfield did not look, but had he looked he would have seen a very excited gentleman with ruffled, iron-grey hair, a flushed face, mouth sullen and vindictive, and eyes wildly gleaming.

"It's not right, I tell you," little Hanover said; and from his tone I was sure that he had already said it a number of times.

"Now that's going too far, Hanover," Bertie replied. "You fellows make me tired. You're all open-shop men. You've eroded my eardrums with your endless gabble for the open shop and the right of a man to work. You've harangued along those lines for years. Labour is doing nothing wrong in going out on this general strike. It is violating no law of God nor man. Don't you talk, Hanover. You've been ringing the changes too long on the God-given right to work . . . or not to work; you can't escape the corollary. It's a dirty little sordid scrap, that's all the whole thing is. You've got labour down and gouged it, and now labour's got you down and is gouging you, that's all, and you're squealing."

Every man in the group broke out in indignant denials that labour had ever been gouged.

"No, sir!" Garfield was shouting. "We've done the best for labour. Instead of gouging it, we've given it a chance to live. We've made work for it. Where would labour be if it hadn't been for us?"

"A whole lot better off," Bertie sneered. "You've got labour down and gouged it every time you got a chance, and you went out of your way to make chances."

"No! No!" were the cries.

"There was the teamsters' strike, right here in San Francisco," Bertie went on imperturbably. "The Employers' Association precipitated that strike. You know that. And you know I know it, too, for I've sat in these very rooms and heard the inside talk and news of the fight. First you precipitated the strike, then you bought the Mayor and the Chief of Police and broke the strike. A pretty spectacle, you philanthropists getting the teamsters down and gouging them.

"Hold on, I'm not through with you. It's only last year that the labour ticket of Colorado elected a governor. He was never seated. You know why. You know how your brother philanthropists and capitalists of Colorado worked it. It was a case of getting labour down and gouging it. You kept the president of the South-western Amalgamated Association of Miners in jail for three years on trumped-up murder charges, and with him out of the way you broke up the association. That was gouging labour, you'll admit. The third time the graduated income tax was declared unconstitutional was a gouge. So was the eight-hour Bill you killed in the last Congress.

"And of all unmitigated immoral gouges, your destruction of the closed-shop principle was the limit. You know how it was done. You bought out Farburg, the last president of the old American Federation of Labour. He was your creature — or the creature of all the trusts and employers' associations, which is the same thing. You

precipitated the big closed-shop strike. Farburg betrayed that strike. You won, and the old American Federation of Labour crumbled to pieces. You follows destroyed it, and by so doing undid yourselves; for right on top of it began the organization of the I.L.W. — the biggest and solidest organization of labour the United States has ever seen, and you are responsible for its existence and for the present general strike. You smashed all the old federations and drove labour into the I.L.W., and the I.L.W. called the general strike — still fighting for the closed shop. And then you have the effrontery to stand here face to face and tell me that you never got labour down and gouged it. Bah!”

This time there were no denials. Garfield broke out in self-defence —

“We’ve done nothing we were not compelled to do, if we were to win.”

“I’m not saying anything about that,” Bertie answered. “What I am complaining about is your squealing now that you’re getting a taste of your own medicine. How many strikes have you won by starving labour into submission? Well, labour’s worked out a scheme whereby to starve you into submission. It wants the closed shop, and, if it can get it by starving you, why, starve you shall.”

“I notice that you have profited in the past by those very labour gouges you mention,” insinuated Brentwood, one of the wiliest and most astute of our corporation lawyers. “The receiver is as bad as the thief,” he sneered. “You had no hand in the gouging, but you took your whack out of the gouge.”

“That is quite beside the question, Brentwood,” Bertie drawled. “You’re as bad as Hanover, intruding the moral element. I haven’t said that anything is right or wrong. It’s all a rotten game, I know; and my sole kick is that you fellows are squealing now that you’re down and labour’s taking a gouge out of you. Of course I’ve taken the profits from the gouging and, thanks to you, gentlemen, without having personally to do the dirty work. You did that for me — oh, believe me, not because I am more virtuous than you, but because my good father and his various brothers left me a lot of money with which to pay for the dirty work.”

“If you mean to insinuate — ” Brentwood began hotly.

“Hold on, don’t get all-ruffled up,” Bertie interposed insolently. “There’s no use in playing hypocrites in this thieves’ den. The high and lofty is all right for the newspapers, boys’ clubs, and Sunday schools — that’s part of the game; but for heaven’s sake don’t let’s play it on one another. You know, and you know that I know just what jobbery was done in the building trades’ strike last fall, who put up the money, who did the work, and who profited by it.” (Brentwood flushed darkly.) “But we are all tarred with the same brush, and the best thing for us to do is to leave morality out of it. Again I repeat, play the game, play it to the last finish, but for goodness’ sake don’t squeal when you get hurt.”

When I left the group Bertie was off on a new tack tormenting them with the more serious aspects of the situation, pointing out the shortage of supplies that was already making itself felt, and asking them what they were going to do about it. A little later I met him in the cloak-room, leaving, and gave him a lift home in my machine.

“It’s a great stroke, this general strike,” he said, as we bowled along through the crowded but orderly streets. “It’s a smashing body-blow. Labour caught us napping and struck at our weakest place, the stomach. I’m going to get out of San Francisco, Corf. Take my advice and get out, too. Head for the country, anywhere. You’ll have more chance. Buy up a stock of supplies and get into a tent or a cabin somewhere. Soon there’ll be nothing but starvation in this city for such as we.”

How correct Bertie Messener was I never dreamed. I decided that he was an alarmist. As for myself, I was content to remain and watch the fun. After I dropped him, instead of going directly home, I went on in a hunt for more food. To my surprise, I learned that the small groceries where I had bought in the morning were sold out. I extended my search to the Potrero, and by good luck managed to pick up another box of candles, two sacks of wheat flour, ten pounds of graham flour (which would do for the servants), a case of tinned corn, and two cases of tinned tomatoes. It did look as though there was going to be at least a temporary food shortage, and I hugged myself over the goodly stock of provisions I had laid in.

The next morning I had my coffee in bed as usual, and, more than the cream, I missed the daily paper. It was this absence of knowledge of what was going on in the world that I found the chief hardship. Down at the club there was little news. Rider had crossed from Oakland in his launch, and Halstead had been down to San Jose and back in his machine. They reported the same conditions in those places as in San Francisco. Everything was tied up by the strike. All grocery stocks had been bought out by the upper classes. And perfect order reigned. But what was happening over the rest of the country — in Chicago? New York? Washington? Most probably the same things that were happening with us, we concluded; but the fact that we did not know with absolute surety was irritating.

General Folsom had a bit of news. An attempt had been made to place army telegraphers in the telegraph offices, but the wires had been cut in every direction. This was, so far, the one unlawful act committed by labour, and that it was a concerted act he was fully convinced. He had communicated by wireless with the army post at Benicia, the telegraph lines were even then being patrolled by soldiers all the way to Sacramento. Once, for one short instant, they had got the Sacramento call, then the wires, somewhere, were cut again. General Folsom reasoned that similar attempts to open communication were being made by the authorities all the way across the continent, but he was non-committal as to whether or not he thought the attempt would succeed. What worried him was the wire-cutting; he could not but believe that it was an important part of the deep-laid labour conspiracy. Also, he regretted that the Government had not long since established its projected chain of wireless stations.

The days came and went, and for a while it was a humdrum time. Nothing happened. The edge of excitement had become blunted. The streets were not so crowded. The working class did not come uptown any more to see how we were taking the strike. And there were not so many automobiles running around. The repair-shops and garages were closed, and whenever a machine broke down it went out of commission. The clutch

on mine broke, and neither love nor money could get it repaired. Like the rest, I was now walking. San Francisco lay dead, and we did not know what was happening over the rest of the country. But from the very fact that we did not know we could conclude only that the rest of the country lay as dead as San Francisco. From time to time the city was placarded with the proclamations of organized labour — these had been printed months before, and evidenced how thoroughly the I.L.W. had prepared for the strike. Every detail had been worked out long in advance. No violence had occurred as yet, with the exception of the shooting of a few wire-cutters by the soldiers, but the people of the slums were starving and growing ominously restless.

The business men, the millionaires, and the professional class held meetings and passed resolutions, but there was no way of making the proclamations public. They could not even get them printed. One result of these meetings, however, was that General Folsom was persuaded into taking military possession of the wholesale houses and of all the flour, grain, and food warehouses. It was high time, for suffering was becoming acute in the homes of the rich, and bread-lines were necessary. I knew that my servants were beginning to draw long faces, and it was amazing — the hole they made in my stock of provisions. In fact, as I afterward surmised, each servant was stealing from me and secreting a private stock of provisions for himself.

But with the formation of the bread-lines came new troubles. There was only so much of a food reserve in San Francisco, and at the best it could not last long. Organized labour, we knew, had its private supplies; nevertheless, the whole working class joined the bread-lines. As a result, the provisions General Folsom had taken possession of diminished with perilous rapidity. How were the soldiers to distinguish between a shabby middle-class man, a member of the I.L.W., or a slum dweller? The first and the last had to be fed, but the soldiers did not know all the I.L.W. men in the city, much less the wives and sons and daughters of the I.L.W. men. The employers helping, a few of the known union men were flung out of the bread-lines; but that amounted to nothing. To make matters worse, the Government tugs that had been hauling food from the army depots on Mare Island to Angel Island found no more food to haul. The soldiers now received their rations from the confiscated provisions, and they received them first.

The beginning of the end was in sight. Violence was beginning to show its face. Law and order were passing away, and passing away, I must confess, among the slum people and the upper classes. Organized labour still maintained perfect order. It could well afford to — it had plenty to eat. I remember the afternoon at the club when I caught Halstead and Brentwood whispering in a corner. They took me in on the venture. Brentwood's machine was still in running order, and they were going out cow-stealing. Halstead had a long butcher knife and a cleaver. We went out to the outskirts of the city. Here and there were cows grazing, but always they were guarded by their owners. We pursued our quest, following along the fringe of the city to the east, and on the hills near Hunter's Point we came upon a cow guarded by a little girl. There was also a young calf with the cow. We wasted no time on preliminaries. The little girl ran away

screaming, while we slaughtered the cow. I omit the details, for they are not nice — we were unaccustomed to such work, and we bungled it.

But in the midst of it, working with the haste of fear, we heard cries, and we saw a number of men running toward us. We abandoned the spoils and took to our heels. To our surprise we were not pursued. Looking back, we saw the men hurriedly cutting up the cow. They had been on the same lay as ourselves. We argued that there was plenty for all, and ran back. The scene that followed beggars description. We fought and squabbled over the division like savages. Brentwood, I remember, was a perfect brute, snarling and snapping and threatening that murder would be done if we did not get our proper share.

And we were getting our share when there occurred a new irruption on the scene. This time it was the dreaded peace officers of the I.L.W. The little girl had brought them. They were armed with whips and clubs, and there were a score of them. The little girl danced up and down in anger, the tears streaming down her cheeks, crying: "Give it to 'em! Give it to 'em! That guy with the specs — he did it! Mash his face for him! Mash his face!" That guy with the specs was I, and I got my face mashed, too, though I had the presence of mind to take off my glasses at the first. My! but we did receive a trouncing as we scattered in all directions. Brentwood, Halstead, and I fled away for the machine. Brentwood's nose was bleeding, while Halstead's cheek was cut across with the scarlet slash of a black-snake whip.

And, lo, when the pursuit ceased and we had gained the machine, there, hiding behind it, was the frightened calf. Brentwood warned us to be cautious, and crept up on it like a wolf or tiger. Knife and cleaver had been left behind, but Brentwood still had his hands, and over and over on the ground he rolled with the poor little calf as he throttled it. We threw the carcass into the machine, covered it over with a robe, and started for home. But our misfortunes had only begun. We blew out a tyre. There was no way of fixing it, and twilight was coming on. We abandoned the machine, Brentwood pulling and staggering along in advance, the calf, covered by the robe, slung across his shoulders. We took turn about carrying that calf, and it nearly killed us. Also, we lost our way. And then, after hours of wandering and toil, we encountered a gang of hoodlums. They were not I.L.W. men, and I guess they were as hungry as we. At any rate, they got the calf and we got the thrashing. Brentwood raged like a madman the rest of the way home, and he looked like one, with his torn clothes, swollen nose, and blackened eyes.

There wasn't any more cow-stealing after that. General Folsom sent his troopers out and confiscated all the cows, and his troopers, aided by the militia, ate most of the meat. General Folsom was not to be blamed; it was his duty to maintain law and order, and he maintained it by means of the soldiers, wherefore he was compelled to feed them first of all.

It was about this time that the great panic occurred. The wealthy classes precipitated the flight, and then the slum people caught the contagion and stampeded wildly out of the city. General Folsom was pleased. It was estimated that at least 200,000

had deserted San Francisco, and by that much was his food problem solved. Well do I remember that day. In the morning I had eaten a crust of bread. Half of the afternoon I had stood in the bread-line; and after dark I returned home, tired and miserable, carrying a quart of rice and a slice of bacon. Brown met me at the door. His face was worn and terrified. All the servants had fled, he informed me. He alone remained. I was touched by his faithfulness and, when I learned that he had eaten nothing all day, I divided my food with him. We cooked half the rice and half the bacon, sharing it equally and reserving the other half for morning. I went to bed with my hunger, and tossed restlessly all night. In the morning I found Brown had deserted me, and, greater misfortune still, he had stolen what remained of the rice and bacon.

It was a gloomy handful of men that came together at the club that morning. There was no service at all. The last servant was gone. I noticed, too, that the silver was gone, and I learned where it had gone. The servants had not taken it, for the reason, I presume, that the club members got to it first. Their method of disposing of it was simple. Down south of Market Street, in the dwellings of the I.L.W., the housewives had given square meals in exchange for it. I went back to my house. Yes, my silver was gone — all but a massive pitcher. This I wrapped up and carried down south of Market Street.

I felt better after the meal, and returned to the club to learn if there was anything new in the situation. Hanover, Collins, and Dakon were just leaving. There was no one inside, they told me, and they invited me to come along with them. They were leaving the city, they said, on Dakon's horses, and there was a spare one for me. Dakon had four magnificent carriage horses that he wanted to save, and General Folsom had given him the tip that next morning all the horses that remained in the city were to be confiscated for food. There were not many horses left, for tens of thousands of them had been turned loose into the country when the hay and grain gave out during the first days. Birdall, I remember, who had great draying interests, had turned loose three hundred dray horses. At an average value of five hundred dollars, this had amounted to \$150,000. He had hoped, at first, to recover most of the horses after the strike was over, but in the end he never recovered one of them. They were all eaten by the people that fled from San Francisco. For that matter, the killing of the army mules and horses for food had already begun.

Fortunately for Dakon, he had had a plentiful supply of hay and grain stored in his stable. We managed to raise four saddles, and we found the animals in good condition and spirited, withal unused to being ridden. I remembered the San Francisco of the great earthquake as we rode through the streets, but this San Francisco was vastly more pitiable. No cataclysm of nature had caused this, but, rather, the tyranny of the labour unions. We rode down past Union Square and through the theatre, hotel, and shopping districts. The streets were deserted. Here and there stood automobiles, abandoned where they had broken down or when the gasolene had given out. There was no sign of life, save for the occasional policemen and the soldiers guarding the banks and public buildings. Once we came upon an I.L.W. man pasting up the latest

proclamation. We stopped to read. "We have maintained an orderly strike," it ran; "and we shall maintain order to the end. The end will come when our demands are satisfied, and our demands will be satisfied when we have starved our employers into submission, as we ourselves in the past have often been starved into submission."

"Messener's very words," Collins said. "And I, for one, am ready to submit, only they won't give me a chance to submit. I haven't had a full meal in an age. I wonder what horse-meat tastes like?"

We stopped to read another proclamation: "When we think our employers are ready to submit we shall open up the telegraphs and place the employers' associations of the United States in communication. But only messages relating to peace terms shall be permitted over the wires."

We rode on, crossed Market Street, and a little later were passing through the working-class district. Here the streets were not deserted. Leaning over the gates or standing in groups were the I.L.W. men. Happy, well-fed children were playing games, and stout housewives sat on the front steps gossiping. One and all cast amused glances at us. Little children ran after us, crying: "Hey, mister, ain't you hungry?" And one woman, nursing a child at her breast, called to Dakon: "Say, Fatty, I'll give you a meal for your skate — ham and potatoes, currant jelly, white bread, canned butter, and two cups of coffee."

"Have you noticed, the last few days," Hanover remarked to me, "that there's not been a stray dog in the streets?"

I had noticed, but I had not thought about it before. It was high time to leave the unfortunate city. We at last managed to connect with the San Bruno Road, along which we headed south. I had a country place near Menlo, and it was our objective. But soon we began to discover that the country was worse off and far more dangerous than the city. There the soldiers and the I.L.W. kept order; but the country had been turned over to anarchy. Two hundred thousand people had fled from San Francisco, and we had countless evidences that their flight had been like that of an army of locusts.

They had swept everything clean. There had been robbery and fighting. Here and there we passed bodies by the roadside and saw the blackened ruins of farm-houses. The fences were down, and the crops had been trampled by the feet of a multitude. All the vegetable patches had been rooted up by the famished hordes. All the chickens and farm animals had been slaughtered. This was true of all the main roads that led out of San Francisco. Here and there, away from the roads, farmers had held their own with shotguns and revolvers, and were still holding their own. They warned us away and refused to parley with us. And all the destruction and violence had been done by the slum-dwellers and the upper classes. The I.L.W. men, with plentiful food supplies, remained quietly in their homes in the cities.

Early in the ride we received concrete proof of how desperate was the situation. To the right of us we heard cries and rifle-shots. Bullets whistled dangerously near. There was a crashing in the underbrush; then a magnificent black truck-horse broke across the road in front of us and was gone. We had barely time to notice that he was bleeding

and lame. He was followed by three soldiers. The chase went on among the trees on the left. We could hear the soldiers calling to one another. A fourth soldier limped out upon the road from the right, sat down on a boulder, and mopped the sweat from his face.

“Militia,” Dakon whispered. “Deserters.”

The man grinned up at us and asked for a match. In reply to Dakon’s “What’s the word?” he informed us that the militiamen were deserting. “No grub,” he explained. “They’re feedin’ it all to the regulars.” We also learned from him that the military prisoners had been released from Alcatraz Island because they could no longer be fed.

I shall never forget the next sight we encountered. We came upon it abruptly around a turn of the road. Overhead arched the trees. The sunshine was filtering down through the branches. Butterflies were fluttering by, and from the fields came the song of larks. And there it stood, a powerful touring car. About it and in it lay a number of corpses. It told its own tale. Its occupants, fleeing from the city, had been attacked and dragged down by a gang of slum dwellers — hoodlums. The thing had occurred within twenty-four hours. Freshly opened meat and fruit tins explained the reason for the attack. Dakon examined the bodies.

“I thought so,” he reported. “I’ve ridden in that car. It was Perriton — the whole family. We’ve got to watch out for ourselves from now on.”

“But we have no food with which to invite attack,” I objected.

Dakon pointed to the horse I rode, and I understood.

Early in the day Dakon’s horse had cast a shoe. The delicate hoof had split, and by noon the animal was limping. Dakon refused to ride it farther, and refused to desert it. So, on his solicitation, we went on. He would lead the horse and join us at my place. That was the last we saw of him; nor did we ever learn his end.

By one o’clock we arrived at the town of Menlo, or, rather, at the site of Menlo, for it was in ruins. Corpses lay everywhere. The business part of the town, as well as part of the residences, had been gutted by fire. Here and there a residence still held out; but there was no getting near them. When we approached too closely we were fired upon. We met a woman who was poking about in the smoking ruins of her cottage. The first attack, she told us had been on the stores, and as she talked we could picture that raging, roaring, hungry mob flinging itself on the handful of townspeople. Millionaires and paupers had fought side by side for the food, and then fought with one another after they got it. The town of Palo Alto and Stanford University had been sacked in similar fashion, we learned. Ahead of us lay a desolate, wasted land; and we thought we were wise in turning off to my place. It lay three miles to the west, snuggling among the first rolling swells of the foothills.

But as we rode along we saw that the devastation was not confined to the main roads. The van of the flight had kept to the roads, sacking the small towns as it went; while those that followed had scattered out and swept the whole countryside like a great broom. My place was built of concrete, masonry, and tiles, and so had escaped being burned, but it was gutted clean. We found the gardener’s body in the windmill,

littered around with empty shot-gun shells. He had put up a good fight. But no trace could we find of the two Italian labourers, nor of the house-keeper and her husband. Not a live thing remained. The calves, the colts, all the fancy poultry and thoroughbred stock, everything, was gone. The kitchen and the fireplaces, where the mob had cooked, were a mess, while many camp-fires outside bore witness to the large number that had fed and spent the night. What they had not eaten they had carried away. There was not a bite for us.

We spent the rest of the night vainly waiting for Dakon, and in the morning, with our revolvers, fought off half-a-dozen marauders. Then we killed one of Dakon's horses, hiding for the future what meat we did not immediately eat. In the afternoon Collins went out for a walk, but failed to return. This was the last straw to Hanover. He was for flight there and then, and I had great difficulty in persuading him to wait for daylight. As for myself, I was convinced that the end of the general strike was near, and I was resolved to return to San Francisco. So, in the morning, we parted company, Hanover heading south, fifty pounds of horse-meat strapped to his saddle, while I, similarly loaded, headed north. Little Hanover pulled through all right, and to the end of his life he will persist, I know, in boring everybody with the narrative of his subsequent adventures.

I got as far as Belmont, on the main road back, when I was robbed of my horse-meat by three militiamen. There was no change in the situation, they said, except that it was going from bad to worse. The I.L.W. had plenty of provisions hidden away and could last out for months. I managed to get as far as Baden, when my horse was taken away from me by a dozen men. Two of them were San Francisco policemen, and the remainder were regular soldiers. This was ominous. The situation was certainly extreme when the regulars were beginning to desert. When I continued my way on foot, they already had the fire started, and the last of Dakon's horses lay slaughtered on the ground.

As luck would have it, I sprained my ankle, and succeeded in getting no farther than South San Francisco. I lay there that night in an out-house, shivering with the cold and at the same time burning with fever. Two days I lay there, too sick to move, and on the third, reeling and giddy, supporting myself on an extemporized crutch, I tottered on toward San Francisco. I was weak as well, for it was the third day since food had passed my lips. It was a day of nightmare and torment. As in a dream I passed hundreds of regular soldiers drifting along in the opposite direction, and many policemen, with their families, organized in large groups for mutual protection.

As I entered the city I remembered the workman's house at which I had traded the silver pitcher, and in that direction my hunger drove me. Twilight was falling when I came to the place. I passed around by the alleyway and crawled up the black steps, on which I collapsed. I managed to reach out with the crutch and knock on the door. Then I must have fainted, for I came to in the kitchen, my face wet with water, and whisky being poured down my throat. I choked and spluttered and tried to talk. I began saying something about not having any more silver pitchers, but that I would

make it up to them afterward if they would only give me something to eat. But the housewife interrupted me.

“Why, you poor man,” she said, “haven’t you heard? The strike was called off this afternoon. Of course we’ll give you something to eat.”

She bustled around, opening a tin of breakfast bacon and preparing to fry it.

“Let me have some now, please,” I begged; and I ate the raw bacon on a slice of bread, while her husband explained that the demands of the I.L.W. had been granted. The wires had been opened up in the early afternoon, and everywhere the employers’ associations had given in. There hadn’t been any employers left in San Francisco, but General Folsom had spoken for them. The trains and steamers would start running in the morning, and so would everything else just as soon as system could be established.

And that was the end of the general strike. I never want to see another one. It was worse than a war. A general strike is a cruel and immoral thing, and the brain of man should be capable of running industry in a more rational way. Harrison is still my chauffeur. It was part of the conditions of the I.L.W. that all of its members should be reinstated in their old positions. Brown never came back, but the rest of the servants are with me. I hadn’t the heart to discharge them — poor creatures, they were pretty hard-pressed when they deserted with the food and silver. And now I can’t discharge them. They have all been unionized by the I.L.W. The tyranny of organized labour is getting beyond human endurance. Something must be done.

Dutch Courage

“JUST our luck!”

Gus Lafee finished wiping his hands and sullenly threw the towel upon the rocks. His attitude was one of deep dejection. The light seemed gone out of the day and the glory from the golden sun. Even the keen mountain air was devoid of relish, and the early morning no longer yielded its customary zest.

“Just our luck!” Gus repeated, this time avowedly for the edification of another young fellow who was busily engaged in sousing his head in the water of the lake.

“What are you grumbling about, anyway?” Hazard Van Dorn lifted a soap-rimmed face questioningly. His eyes were shut. “What’s our luck?”

“Look there!” Gus threw a moody glance skyward. “Some duffer’s got ahead of us. We’ve been scooped, that’s all!”

Hazard opened his eyes, and caught a fleeting glimpse of a white flag waving arrogantly on the edge of a wall of rock nearly a mile above his head. Then his eyes closed with a snap, and his face wrinkled spasmodically. Gus threw him the towel, and uncommiseratingly watched him wipe out the offending soap. He felt too blue himself to take stock in trivialities.

Hazard groaned.

“Does it hurt-much?” Gus queried, coldly, without interest, as if it were no more than his duty to ask after the welfare of his comrade.

“I guess it does,” responded the suffering one.

“Soap’s pretty strong, eh?—Noticed it myself.”

“Tisn’t the soap. It’s-it’s that!” He opened his reddened eyes and pointed toward the innocent white little flag. “That’s what hurts.”

Gus Lafee did not reply, but turned away to start the fire and begin cooking breakfast. His disappointment and grief were too deep for anything but silence, and Hazard, who felt likewise, never opened his mouth as he fed the horses, nor once laid his head against their arching necks or passed caressing fingers through their manes. The two boys were blind, also, to the manifold glories of Mirror Lake which reposed at their very feet. Nine times, had they chosen to move along its margin the short distance of a hundred yards, could they have seen the sunrise repeated; nine times, from behind as many successive peaks, could they have seen the great orb rear his blazing rim; and nine times, had they but looked into the waters of the lake, could they have seen the phenomena reflected faithfully and vividly. But all the Titanic grandeur of the scene was lost to them. They had been robbed of the chief pleasure of their trip to Yosemite Valley. They had been frustrated in their long-cherished design upon Half Dome, and

hence were rendered disconsolate and blind to the beauties and the wonders of the place.

Half Dome rears its ice-scarred head fully five thousand feet above the level floor of Yosemite Valley. In the name itself of this great rock lies an accurate and complete description. Nothing more nor less is it than a cyclopean, rounded dome, split in half as cleanly as an apple that is divided by a knife. It is, perhaps, quite needless to state that but onehalf remains, hence its name, the other half having been carried away by the great ice-river in the stormy time of the Glacial Period. In that dim day one of those frigid rivers gouged a mighty channel from out the solid rock. This channel to-day is Yosemite Valley. But to return to the Half Dome. On its northeastern side, by circuitous trails and stiff climbing, one may gain the Saddle. Against the slope of the Dome the Saddle leans like a gigantic slab, and from the top of this slab, one thousand feet in length, curves the great circle to the summit of the Dome. A few degrees too steep for unaided climbing, these one thousand feet defied for years the adventurous spirits who fixed yearning eyes upon the crest above.

One day, a couple of clear-headed mountaineers had proceeded to insert iron eye-bolts into holes which they drilled into the rock every few feet apart. But when they found themselves three hundred feet above the Saddle, clinging like flies to the precarious wall with on either hand a yawning abyss, their nerves failed them and they abandoned the enterprise. So it remained for an indomitable Scotchman, one George Anderson, finally to achieve the feat. Beginning where they had left off, drilling and climbing for a week, he had at last set foot upon that awful summit and gazed down into the depths where Mirror Lake reposed, nearly a mile beneath.

In the years which followed, many bold men took advantage of the huge rope ladder which he had put in place; but one winter ladder, cables and all were carried away by the snow and ice. True, most of the eye-bolts, twisted and bent, remained. But few men had since essayed the hazardous undertaking, and of those few more than one gave up his life on the treacherous heights, and not one succeeded.

But Gus Lafee and Hazard Van Dorn had left the smiling valley-land of California and journeyed into the high Sierras, intent on the great adventure. And thus it was that their disappointment was deep and grievous when they awoke on this morning to receive the forestalling message of the little white flag.

“Camped at the foot of the Saddle last night and went up at the first peep of day,” Hazard ventured, long after the silent breakfast had been tucked away and the dishes washed.

Gus nodded. It was not in the nature of things that a youth’s spirits should long remain at low ebb, and his tongue was beginning to loosen.

“Guess he’s down by now, lying in camp and feeling as big as Alexander,” the other went on. “And I don’t blame him, either; only I wish it were we.”

“You can be sure he’s down,” Gus spoke up at last. “It’s mighty warm on that naked rock with the sun beating down on it at this time of year. That was our plan, you know, to go up early and come down early. And any man, sensible enough to get to

the top, is bound to have sense enough to do it before the rock gets hot and his hands sweaty.”

“And you can be sure he didn’t take his shoes with him.” Hazard rolled over on his back and lazily regarded the speck of flag fluttering briskly on the sheer edge of the precipice. “Say!” He sat up with a start. “What’s that?”

A metallic ray of light flashed out from the summit of Half Dome, then a second and a third. The heads of both boys were craned backward on the instant, agog with excitement.

“What a duffer!” Gus cried. “Why didn’t he come down when it was cool?”

Hazard shook his head slowly, as if the question were too deep for immediate answer and they had better defer judgment.

The flashes continued, and as the boys soon noted, at irregular intervals of duration and disappearance. Now they were long, now short; and again they came and went with great rapidity, or ceased altogether for several moments at a time.

“I have it!” Hazard’s face lighted up with the coming of understanding. “I have it! That fellow up there is trying to talk to us. He’s flashing the sunlight down to us on a pocket-mirror—dot, dash; dot, dash; don’t you see?”

The light also began to break in Gus’s face. “Ah, I know! It’s what they do in war-time—signaling. They call it heliographing, don’t they? Same thing as telegraphing, only it’s done without wires. And they use the same dots and dashes, too.”

“Yes, the Morse alphabet. Wish I knew it.”

“Same here. He surely must have something to say to us, or he wouldn’t be kicking up all that rumpus.”

Still the flashes came and went persistently, till Gus exclaimed: “That chap’s in trouble, that’s what’s the matter with him! Most likely he’s hurt himself or something or other.”

“Go on!” Hazard scouted.

Gus got out the shotgun and fired both barrels three times in rapid succession. A perfect flutter of flashes came back before the echoes had ceased their antics. So unmistakable was the message that even doubting Hazard was convinced that the man who had forestalled them stood in some grave danger.

“Quick, Gus,” he cried, “and pack! I’ll see to the horses. Our trip hasn’t come to nothing, after all. We’ve got to go right up Half Dome and rescue him. Where’s the map? How do we get to the Saddle?”

““Taking the horse-trail below the Vernal Falls,”” Gus read from the guide-book, ““one mile of brisk traveling brings the tourist to the world-famed Nevada Fall. Close by, rising up in all its pomp and glory, the Cap of Liberty stands guard-“

“Skip all that!” Hazard impatiently interrupted. “The trail’s what we want. “

“Oh, here it is! ‘Following the trail up the side of the fall will bring you to the forks. The left one leads to Little Yosemite Valley, Cloud’s Rest, and other points.’”

“Hold on; that’ll do! I’ve got it on the map now,” again interrupted Hazard. “From the Cloud’s Rest trail a dotted line leads off to Half Dome. That shows the trail’s abandoned. We’ll have to look sharp to find it. It’s a day’s journey.”

“And to think of all that traveling, when right here we’re at the bottom of the Dome!” Gus complained, staring up wistfully at the goal.

“That’s because this is Yosemite, and all the more reason for us to hurry. Come on! Be lively, now!”

Well used as they were to trail life, but few minutes sufficed to see the camp equipage on the backs of the packhorses and the boys in the saddle. In the late twilight of that evening they hobbled their animals in a tiny mountain meadow, and cooked coffee and bacon for themselves at the very base of the Saddle. Here, also, before they turned into their blankets, they found the camp of the unlucky stranger who was destined to spend the night on the naked roof of the Dome.

Dawn was brightening into day when the panting lads threw themselves down at the summit of the Saddle and began taking off their shoes. Looking down from the great height, they seemed perched upon the ridge-pole of the world, and even the snow-crowned Sierra peaks seemed beneath them. Directly below, on the one hand, lay Little Yosemite Valley, half a mile deep; on the other hand, Big Yosemite, a mile. Already the sun’s rays were striking about the adventurers, but the darkness of night still shrouded the two great gulfs into which they peered. And above them, bathed in the full day, rose only the majestic curve of the Dome.

“What’s that for?” Gus asked, pointing to a leather-shielded flask which Hazard was securely fastening in his shirt pocket.

“Dutch courage, of course,” was the reply. “We’ll need all our nerve in this undertaking, and a little bit more, and,” he tapped the flask significantly, “here’s the little bit more.”

“Good idea,” Gus commented.

How they had ever come possessed of this erroneous idea, it would be hard to discover; but they were young yet, and there remained for them many uncut pages of life. Believers, also, in the efficacy of whisky as a remedy for snake-bite, they had brought with them a fair supply of medicine-chest liquor. As yet they had not touched it.

“Have some before we start?” Hazard asked.

Gus looked into the gulf and shook his head. “Better wait till we get up higher and the climbing is more ticklish.”

Some seventy feet above them projected the first eye-bolt. The winter accumulations of ice had twisted and bent it down till it did not stand more than a bare inch and a half above the rock—a most difficult object to lasso at such a distance. Time and again Hazard coiled his lariat in true cowboy fashion and made the cast, and time and again was he baffled by the elusive peg. Nor could Gus do better. Taking advantage of inequalities in the surface, they scrambled twenty feet up the Dome and found they could rest in a shallow crevice. The cleft side of the Dome was so near that they could

look over its edge from the crevice and gaze down the smooth, vertical wall for nearly two thousand feet. It was yet too dark down below for them to see farther.

The peg was now fifty feet away, but the path they must cover to get to it was quite smooth, and ran at an inclination of nearly fifty degrees. It seemed impossible, in that intervening space, to find a resting-place. Either the climber must keep going up, or he must slide down; he could not stop. But just here rose the danger. The Dome was sphere-shaped, and if he should begin to slide, his course would be, not to the point from which he had started and where the Saddle would catch him, but off to the south toward Little Yosemite. This meant a plunge of half a mile.

"I'll try it," Gus said simply.

They knotted the two lariats together, so that they had over a hundred feet of rope between them; and then each boy tied an end to his waist.

"If I slide," Gus cautioned, "come in on the slack and brace yourself. If you don't, you'll follow me, that's all!"

"Ay, ay!" was the confident response. "Better take a nip before you start?"

Gus glanced at the proffered bottle. He knew himself and of what he was capable. "Wait till I make the peg and you join me. All ready?"

"Ay."

He struck out like a cat, on all fours, clawing energetically as he urged his upward progress, his comrade paying out the rope carefully. At first his speed was good, but gradually it dwindled. Now he was fifteen feet from the peg, now ten, now eight-but going, oh, so slowly! Hazard, looking up from his crevice, felt a contempt for him and disappointment in him. It did look easy. Now Gus was five feet away, and after a painful effort, four feet. But when only a yard intervened, he came to a standstill-not exactly a standstill, for, like a squirrel in a wheel, he maintained his position on the face of the Dome by the most desperate clawing.

He had failed, that was evident. The question now was, how to save himself. With a sudden, catlike movement he whirled over on his back, caught his heel in a tiny, saucer-shaped depression and sat up. Then his courage failed him. Day had at last penetrated to the floor of the valley, and he was appalled at the frightful distance.

"Go ahead and make it!" Hazard ordered; but Gus merely shook his head.

"Then come down!"

Again he shook his head. This was his ordeal, to sit, nerveless and insecure, on the brink of the precipice. But Hazard, lying safely in his crevice, now had to face his own ordeal, but one of a different nature. When Gus began to slide-as he soon must-would he, Hazard, be able to take in the slack and then meet the shock as the other tautened the rope and darted toward the plunge? It seemed doubtful. And there he lay, apparently safe, but in reality harnessed to death. Then rose the temptation. Why not cast off the rope about his waist? He would be safe at all events. It was a simple way out of the difficulty. There was no need that two should perish. But it was impossible for such temptation to overcome his pride of race, and his own pride in himself and in his honor. So the rope remained about him.

“Come down!” he ordered; but Gus seemed to have become petrified.

“Come down,” he threatened, “or I’ll drag you down!” He pulled on the rope to show he was in earnest.

“Don’t you dare!” Gus articulated through his clenched teeth.

“Sure I will, if you don’t come!” Again he jerked the rope.

With a despairing gurgle Gus started, doing his best to work sideways from the plunge. Hazard, every sense on the alert, almost exulting in his perfect coolness, took in the slack with deft rapidity. Then, as the rope began to tighten, he braced himself. The shock drew him half out of the crevice; but he held firm and served as the center of the circle, while Gus, with the rope as a radius, described the circumference and ended up on the extreme southern edge of the Saddle. A few moments later Hazard was offering him the flask.

“Take some yourself,” Gus said.

“No; you. I don’t need it.”

“And I’m past needing it.” Evidently Gus was dubious of the bottle and its contents.

Hazard put it away in his pocket. “Are you game,” he asked, “or are you going to give it up?”

“Never!” Gus protested. “I am game. No Lafée ever showed the white feather yet. And if I did lose my grit up there, it was only for the moment-sort of like seasickness. I’m all right now, and I’m going to the top.”

“Good!” encouraged Hazard. “You lie in the crevice this time, and I’ll show you how easy it is.”

But Gus refused. He held that it was easier and safer for him to try again, arguing that it was less difficult for his one hundred and sixteen pounds to cling to the smooth rock than for Hazard’s one hundred and sixty-five; also that it was easier for one hundred and sixty-five pounds to bring a sliding one hundred and sixteen to a stop than vice versa. And further, that he had the benefit of his previous experience. Hazard saw the justice of this, although it was with great reluctance that he gave in.

Success vindicated Gus’s contention. The second time, just as it seemed as if his slide would be repeated, he made a last supreme effort and gripped the coveted peg. By means of the rope, Hazard quickly joined him. The next peg was nearly sixty feet away; but for nearly half that distance the base of some glacier in the forgotten past had ground a shallow furrow. Taking advantage of this, it was easy for Gus to lasso the eye-bolt. And it seemed, as was really the case, that the hardest part of the task was over. True, the curve steepened to nearly sixty degrees above them, but a comparatively unbroken line of eye-bolts, six feet apart, awaited the lads. They no longer had even to use the lasso. Standing on one peg it was child’s play to throw the bight of the rope over the next and to draw themselves up to it.

A bronzed and bearded man met them at the top and gripped their hands in hearty fellowship.

“Talk about your Mont Blancs!” he exclaimed, pausing in the midst of greeting them to survey the mighty panorama. “But there’s nothing on all the earth, nor over it, nor

under it, to compare with this! “ Then he recollected himself and thanked them for coming to his aid. No, he was not hurt or injured in any way. Simply because of his own carelessness, just as he had arrived at the top the previous day, he had dropped his climbing rope. Of course it was impossible to descend without it. Did they understand heliographing? No? That was strange! How did they

“Oh, we knew something was the matter,” Gus interrupted, “from the way you flashed when we fired off the shotgun.”

“Find it pretty cold last night without blankets?” Hazard queried.

“I should say so. I’ve hardly thawed out yet.”

“Have some of this.” Hazard shoved the flask over to him.

The stranger regarded him quite seriously for a moment, then said,

“My dear fellow, do you see that row of pegs? Since it is my honest intention to climb down them very shortly, I am forced to decline. No, I don’t think I’ll have any, though I thank you just the same.”

Hazard glanced at Gus and then put the flask back in his pocket. But when they pulled the doubled rope through the last eye-bolt and set foot on the Saddle, he again drew out the bottle.

“Now that we’re down, we don’t need it,” he remarked, pithily. “And I’ve about come to the conclusion that there isn’t very much in Dutch courage, after all.” He gazed up the great curve of the Dome. “Look at what we’ve done without it!”

Several seconds thereafter a party of tourists, gathered at the margin of Mirror Lake, were astounded at the unwonted phenomenon of a whisky flask descending upon them like a comet out of a clear sky; and all the way back to the hotel they marveled greatly at the wonders of nature, especially meteorites.

The End of the Chapter

“YOU’VE been beastly. You’ve taken no interest in anything, gone nowhere, done nothing — played the hermit. What’s come over you, anyway? Hermitage, old man, is a synonym for hell.”

“Why search so far?” Jack Lennon favored his interlocutor with an apathetic glance. “The world complies more precisely with the invoice. The world, dear chap, is the only original and simon-pure synonym for hell.”

“Not so long as it holds one honest man or woman.”

“Go on, Lennon prompted. “It’s certainly invigorating to listen. The enthusiasms of youth, its unsullied ideals, were ever a pleasure to me. They come like the fresh winds of the sea, rampant with the large airs of unworldly wisdom — ”

“And killing with their salt the dismal fungus which rots on the worldly wise.”

“Good! It is a dismal fungus — rotten, noisome. Keep to your potent illusions. Like the chastity of woman, like the bloom on her cheek, they can never renew. Once brushed aside, they can but curse by recollection: memory becomes a blight, a blasted tablet to one’s own iniquities. Ah, Golden Youth, thrice Golden Youth, trail thou thy clouds of glory elsewhere. I’m going home.”

“I say, don’t be in a rush. Let’s wander around town and have a — a — dickens of a time. Come on, I’ll cheer you up.”

“Avoid the paths of dalliance, O Golden Youth; for with the primroses you gather, one by one; just so, one by one, do your bright-winged illusions slip away. You cannot eat your cake and keep it. I’m going home. Good-night.”

“Blues, blacker than the hinges of Sheol!” the Golden Youth commended with himself as he watched Jack Lennon’s back disappear through the swinging doors. “Ten thousand a year, and not an interest in life. And nothing the matter with him.” There was an aggrieved pitch to his thought. “First thing I know I’ll be called out of bed at an unseemly hour to identify some horrible cadaver at the morgue. See if I don’t. Scareheads in the morning papers. Shocking Event. Prominent Clubman. The Erstwhile Jolly Bohemian — ough!”

The Gilded Youth shivered and sought refuge from his imagination in the noise and clatter of the billiard-room.

Home! Jack Lennon mouthed the word with intense vindictiveness and loathing of spirit, Home! This bemirrored hotel, this gaudy palace — home. He rubbed shoulders with his gregarious species, and took the elevator through the many-floored, many roomed bee-hive to his own apartments.

“Ring up for a whiskey and soda,” he said to his brass-imaged serving man, “and then you can go.”

“Go?”

“Yes, go! To bed — anywhere. I won’t need you. In the morning, before you do anything else, you will find a couple of letters on my desk. Mail them. Understand? Before you do anything else.”

“Yes, sir.”

Left to himself, for a while he stood absently at the window, mooning down upon the scintillating street. Then, as though in sudden recollection of an appointment, he proceeded to make his toilet, scrupulously, if anything, with more than his customary care. When he shaved, it was with the greatest circumspection that he went over with his razor a second time. Even from the corruption of death do they draw their vigor, he thought; and Hawthorne’s auburn-haired woman in her secret sepulchre came to him with unpleasant vividness.

After manicuring his nails with fastidious consideration, and pinning a bud to the lapel of his coat, he wrote a couple of short notes at his desk, addressing, sealing, stamping them with the business-like precision of a clerk. It seemed as though many little things clamored for his attention, and that there should be nothing slovenly in the attention he afforded them. He paused in the act of drawing a black leather case from the desk drawer to light a cigar. The anodyne of the weed painted its pleasure in his eyes. Then he secured a current magazine from the reading stand, and in the company of the black leather case, stretched himself with a comfortable sigh on the sofa.

For while he read, consciously, receptively, so much so that he permitted the cigar to go out. He laid the periodical aside in order to relight it.

“The end of the chapter,” he murmured aloud, idly watching the fantastic smoke-wreathes ascend toward the frescoed ceiling.

And why not? Was not that the one prerogative granted to him and denied to God? And being granted, why should he not exercise it? Unbidden he had come; without summons he could go. Who should say him nay? An experiment, he remembered some one had said, a question put by man to nature, an endeavor to force from her the fecund mystery or the barren falsity of existence. And either way, he reasoned, there was little to lose and much to gain.

He smiled at his dialectical subtleties, and fell to watching the lengthening ash of his Havana. Then his thoughts flew to Claudio’s panic terror and grewsome speculations on the aftermath of death: “Or to be worse than worst of those that lawless and uncertain thoughts imagine howling.”

He laughed softly at the wanton vagaries of his mind, and returned to the smoke-wreathes. The humors of his imagination seized upon him, and he gave free rein, following its whimsicalities through the eddying draperies in much the manner of a bubble-blowing child. It gave zest to the game, to play thus on the giddy verge. The mood pleased him.

But suddenly, so swift that he failed to trace the nexus of his jostling fancies, the smoke resolved itself into white surf thundering on an ocean shore. The couch took unto itself the likeness of a yellow-sanded sea-beach. The golden-balled sun poised at the zenith, while far away, in the haze of the windless sea, melting into the mists of the sky-line, he could discern the dim canvas of a merchant-man.

He was interested. His curiosity was aroused. For a moment he tore himself away from his subjective self that he might identify the scene. Somewhere, sometime, it had been recorded on his brain, had been one of the countless factors in deepening the convolutions of his rugged gray matter. When? Where? Ah, the day he had dared Kitty to be a child again and go in wading! And did she dare? Yes; for he remembered their Predicament — how the wet sand clung to their feet when they came to resume the wool and leather gear of civilization; how they buried them in warm sand till the tiny particles were dried and brushed away; how they laughed, devoid of guile or convention. Jove! a day for the gods!

Where was Kitty? He returned to the thundering surf and the yellow beach. Holding his breath the while, he brushed the sand from one rose-tinted foot. How small it was! and soft! He caught himself covertly comparing it with his own. And he smiled at his grave deceit as he needlessly protracted the task. And the final inspection, in case one glittering grain remained — from the slender ankle, discreetly veiled by the corduroy-braided skirt, over the white-arched instep, down to the last pink wee toe. Jove!

His cigar was out. With the vision still strong upon him, he opened the black leather case and drew forth the world's modern asp — that which was to drop the last period at the chapter's end. He threw out the cylinder with an adroit twist of the wrist, assured himself of its contents, and jerked it into place again. But up there, among the vanishing smoke clouds, palpitated a foot, rose-tinted, white-arching. He laid the revolver on his breast and closed his eyes. It was still there, shimmering through his eyelids as though they were of gauze. A foot, replete with tender and bewitching memories. A foot, which had tripped lightly across his life's scroll and left no trace. Well, well, the confounded thing was pretty. He would wait until it was gone. His aesthetic sense revolted at doing the deed in so fair a presence. Yes, he would wait until it saw fit to go.

An hour later he came to his feet with sudden determination and looked at himself in the mirror. A facetious smile played upon his lips.

"Jack Lennon," he said, "you've been a fool, a gorgeous fool, and now you're going to bed to escape being a greater one."

One hand drew the bud from his coat lapel; with the other he aided the two notes in a precipitate descent from the writing desk to the paper basket.

As he drew the coverings to his chin and felt the cool contact of the sheets, he muttered: "The world? Not so long as one woman's foot twinkles above ground. For with each foot there goes a chapter, and there be many such feet."

The End of the Story

I

The table was of hand-hewn spruce boards, and the men who played whist had frequent difficulties in drawing home their tricks across the uneven surface. Though they sat in their undershirts, the sweat noded and oozed on their faces; yet their feet, heavily moccasined and woollen-socked, tingled with the bite of the frost. Such was the difference of temperature in the small cabin between the floor level and a yard or more above it. The sheet-iron Yukon Stove roared red-hot, yet, eight feet away, on the meat-shelf, placed low and beside the door, lay chunks of solidly frozen moose and bacon. The door, a third of the way up from the bottom, was a thick rime. In the chinking between the logs at the back of the bunks the frost showed white and glistening. A window of oiled paper furnished light. The lower portion of the paper, on the inside, was coated an inch deep with the frozen moisture of the men's breath.

They played a momentous rubber of whist, for the pair that lost was to dig a fishing hole through the seven feet of ice and snow that covered the Yukon.

"It's mighty unusual, a cold snap like this in March," remarked the man who shuffled. "What would you call it, Bob?"

"Oh, fifty-five or sixty below — all of that. What do you make it, Doc?"

Doc turned his head and glanced at the lower part of the door with a measuring eye.

"Not a bit worse than fifty. If anything, slightly under — say forty-nine. See the ice on the door. It's just about the fifty mark, but you'll notice the upper edge is ragged. The time she went seventy the ice climbed a full four inches higher." He picked up his hand, and without ceasing from sorting called "Come in," to a knock on the door.

The man who entered was a big, broad-shouldered Swede, though his nationality was not discernible until he had removed his ear-flapped cap and thawed away the ice which had formed on beard and moustache and which served to mask his face. While engaged in this, the men at the table played out the hand.

"I hear one doctor faller stop this camp," the Swede said inquiringly, looking anxiously from face to face, his own face haggard and drawn from severe and long endured pain. "I come long way. North fork of the Whyo."

"I'm the doctor. What's the matter?"

In response, the man held up his left hand, the second finger of which was monstrously swollen. At the same time he began a rambling, disjointed history of the coming and growth of his affliction.

“Let me look at it,” the doctor broke in impatiently. “Lay it on the table. There, like that.”

Tenderly, as if it were a great boil, the man obeyed.

“Humph,” the doctor grumbled. “A weeping sinew. And travelled a hundred miles to have it fixed. I’ll fix it in a jiffy. You watch me, and next time you can do it yourself.”

Without warning, squarely and at right angles, and savagely, the doctor brought the edge of his hand down on the swollen crooked finger. The man yelled with consternation and agony. It was more like the cry of a wild beast, and his face was a wild beast’s as he was about to spring on the man who had perpetrated the joke.

“That’s all right,” the doctor placated sharply and authoritatively. “How do you feel? Better, eh? Of course. Next time you can do it yourself — Go on and deal, Strothers. I think we’ve got you.”

Slow and ox-like, on the face of the Swede dawned relief and comprehension. The pang over, the finger felt better. The pain was gone. He examined the finger curiously, with wondering eyes, slowly crooking it back and forth. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a gold-sack.

“How much?”

The doctor shook his head impatiently. “Nothing. I’m not practising — Your play, Bob.”

The Swede moved heavily on his feet, re-examined the finger, then turned an admiring gaze on the doctor.

“You are good man. What your name?”

“Linday, Doctor Linday,” Strothers answered, as if solicitous to save his opponent from further irritation.

“The day’s half done,” Linday said to the Swede, at the end of the hand, while he shuffled. “Better rest over to-night. It’s too cold for travelling. There’s a spare bunk.”

He was a slender brunette of a man, lean-cheeked, thin-lipped, and strong. The smooth-shaven face was a healthy sallow. All his movements were quick and precise. He did not fumble his cards. The eyes were black, direct, and piercing, with the trick of seeming to look beneath the surfaces of things. His hands, slender, fine and nervous, appeared made for delicate work, and to the most casual eye they conveyed an impression of strength.

“Our game,” he announced, drawing in the last trick. “Now for the rub and who digs the fishing hole.”

A knock at the door brought a quick exclamation from him.

“Seems we just can’t finish this rubber,” he complained, as the door opened. “What’s the matter with you?” — this last to the stranger who entered.

The newcomer vainly strove to move his icebound jaws and jowls. That he had been on trail for long hours and days was patent. The skin across the cheekbones was black with repeated frost-bite. From nose to chin was a mass of solid ice perforated by the hole through which he breathed. Through this he had also spat tobacco juice, which had frozen, as it trickled, into an amber-coloured icicle, pointed like a Van Dyke beard.

He shook his head dumbly, grinned with his eyes, and drew near to the stove to thaw his mouth to speech. He assisted the process with his fingers, clawing off fragments of melting ice which rattled and sizzled on the stove.

"Nothing the matter with me," he finally announced. "But if they's a doctor in the outfit he's sure needed. They's a man up the Little Peco that's had a ruction with a panther, an' the way he's clawed is something scand'lous."

"How far up?" Doctor Linday demanded.

"A matter of a hundred miles."

"How long since?"

"I've ben three days comin' down."

"Bad?"

"Shoulder dislocated. Some ribs broke for sure. Right arm broke. An' clawed clean to the bone most all over but the face. We sewed up two or three bad places temporary, and tied arteries with twine."

"That settles it," Linday sneered. "Where were they?"

"Stomach."

"He's a sight by now."

"Not on your life. Washed clean with bug-killin' dope before we stitched. Only temporary anyway. Had nothin' but linen thread, but washed that, too."

"He's as good as dead," was Linday's judgment, as he angrily fingered the cards.

"Nope. That man ain't goin' to die. He knows I've come for a doctor, an' he'll make out to live until you get there. He won't let himself die. I know him."

"Christian Science and gangrene, eh?" came the sneer. "Well, I'm not practising. Nor can I see myself travelling a hundred miles at fifty below for a dead man."

"I can see you, an' for a man a long ways from dead."

Linday shook his head. "Sorry you had your trip for nothing. Better stop over for the night."

"Nope. We'll be pullin' out in ten minutes."

"What makes you so cocksure?" Linday demanded testily.

Then it was that Tom Daw made the speech of his life.

"Because he's just goin' on livin' till you get there, if it takes you a week to make up your mind. Besides, his wife's with him, not sheddin' a tear, or nothin', an' she's helpin' him live till you come. They think a almighty heap of each other, an' she's got a will like hisn. If he weakened, she'd just put her immortal soul into hisn an' make him live. Though he ain't weakenin' none, you can stack on that. I'll stack on it. I'll lay you three to one, in ounces, he's alive when you get there. I got a team of dawgs down the bank. You ought to allow to start in ten minutes, an' we ought to make it back in less'n three days because the trail's broke. I'm goin' down to the dawgs now, an' I'll look for you in ten minutes."

Tom Daw pulled down his earflaps, drew on his mittens, and passed out.

"Damn him!" Linday cried, glaring vindictively at the closed door.

II

That night, long after dark, with twenty-five miles behind them, Linday and Tom Daw went into camp. It was a simple but adequate affair: a fire built in the snow; alongside, their sleeping-furs spread in a single bed on a mat of spruce boughs; behind the bed an oblong of canvas stretched to refract the heat. Daw fed the dogs and chopped ice and firewood. Linday's cheeks burned with frost-bite as he squatted over the cooking. They ate heavily, smoked a pipe and talked while they dried their moccasins before the fire, and turned in to sleep the dead sleep of fatigue and health.

Morning found the unprecedented cold snap broken. Linday estimated the temperature at fifteen below and rising. Daw was worried. That day would see them in the canyon, he explained, and if the spring thaw set in the canyon would run open water. The walls of the canyon were hundreds to thousands of feet high. They could be climbed, but the going would be slow.

Camped well in the dark and forbidding gorge, over their pipe that evening they complained of the heat, and both agreed that the thermometer must be above zero — the first time in six months.

"Nobody ever heard tell of a panther this far north," Daw was saying. "Rocky called it a cougar. But I shot a-many of 'em down in Curry County, Oregon, where I come from, an' we called 'em panther. Anyway, it was a bigger cat than ever I seen. It was sure a monster cat. Now how'd it ever stray to such out of the way huntin' range? — that's the question."

Linday made no comment. He was nodding. Propped on sticks, his moccasins steamed unheeded and unturned. The dogs, curled in furry balls, slept in the snow. The crackle of an ember accentuated the profound of silence that reigned. He awoke with a start and gazed at Daw, who nodded and returned the gaze. Both listened. From far off came a vague disturbance that increased to a vast and sombre roaring. As it neared, ever-increasing, riding the mountain tops as well as the canyon depths, bowing the forest before it, bending the meagre, crevice-rooted pines on the walls of the gorge, they knew it for what it was. A wind, strong and warm, a balmy gale, drove past them, flinging a rocket-shower of sparks from the fire. The dogs, aroused, sat on their haunches, bleak noses pointed upward, and raised the long wolf howl.

"It's the Chinook," Daw said.

"It means the river trail, I suppose?"

"Sure thing. And ten miles of it is easier than one over the tops." Daw surveyed Linday for a long, considering minute. "We've just had fifteen hours of trail," he shouted above the wind, tentatively, and again waited. "Doc," he said finally, "are you game?"

For answer, Linday knocked out his pipe and began to pull on his damp moccasins. Between them, and in few minutes, bending to the force of the wind, the dogs were harnessed, camp broken, and the cooking outfit and unused sleeping furs lashed on the sled. Then, through the darkness, for a night of travel, they churned out on the trail Daw had broken nearly a week before. And all through the night the Chinook roared and they urged the weary dogs and spurred their own jaded muscles. Twelve hours of it they made, and stopped for breakfast after twenty-seven hours on trail.

“An hour’s sleep,” said Daw, when they had wolfed pounds of straight moose-meat fried with bacon.

Two hours he let his companion sleep, afraid himself to close his eyes. He occupied himself with making marks upon the soft-surfaced, shrinking snow. Visibly it shrank. In two hours the snow level sank three inches. From every side, faintly heard and near, under the voice of the spring wind, came the trickling of hidden waters. The Little Peco, strengthened by the multitudinous streamlets, rose against the manacles of winter, riving the ice with crashings and snappings.

Daw touched Linday on the shoulder; touched him again; shook, and shook violently.

“Doc,” he murmured admiringly. “You can sure go some.”

The weary black eyes, under heavy lids, acknowledged the compliment.

“But that ain’t the question. Rocky is clawed something scand’lous. As I said before, I helped sew up his in’ards. Doc...” He shook the man, whose eyes had again closed. “I say, Doc! The question is: can you go some more? — hear me? I say, can you go some more?”

The weary dogs snapped and whimpered when kicked from their sleep. The going was slow, not more than two miles an hour, and the animals took every opportunity to lie down in the wet snow.

“Twenty miles of it, and we’ll be through the gorge,” Daw encouraged. “After that the ice can go to blazes, for we can take to the bank, and it’s only ten more miles to camp. Why, Doc, we’re almost there. And when you get Rocky fixed up, you can come down in a canoe in one day.”

But the ice grew more uneasy under them, breaking loose from the shore-line and rising steadily inch by inch. In places where it still held to the shore, the water overran and they waded and slushed across. The Little Peco growled and muttered. Cracks and fissures were forming everywhere as they battled on for the miles that each one of which meant ten along the tops.

“Get on the sled, Doc, an’ take a snooze,” Daw invited.

The glare from the black eyes prevented him from repeating the suggestion.

As early as midday they received definite warning of the beginning of the end. Cakes of ice, borne downward in the rapid current, began to thunder beneath the ice on which they stood. The dogs whimpered anxiously and yearned for the bank.

“That means open water above,” Daw explained. “Pretty soon she’ll jam somewheres, an’ the river’ll raise a hundred feet in a hundred minutes. It’s us for the tops if we can find a way to climb out. Come on! Hit her up I! An’ just to think, the Yukon’ll stick solid for weeks.”

Unusually narrow at this point, the great walls of the canyon were too precipitous to scale. Daw and Linday had to keep on; and they kept on till the disaster happened. With a loud explosion, the ice broke asunder midway under the team. The two animals in the middle of the string went into the fissure, and the grip of the current on their bodies dragged the lead-dog backward and in. Swept downstream under the ice, these three bodies began to drag to the edge the two whining dogs that remained. The men

held back frantically on the sled, but were slowly drawn along with it. It was all over in the space of seconds. Daw slashed the wheel-dog's traces with his sheath-knife, and the animal whipped over the ice-edge and was gone. The ice on which they stood, broke into a large and pivoting cake that ground and splintered against the shore ice and rocks. Between them they got the sled ashore and up into a crevice in time to see the ice-cake up-edge, sink, and down-shelve from view.

Meat and sleeping furs were made into packs, and the sled was abandoned. Linday resented Daw's taking the heavier pack, but Daw had his will.

"You got to work as soon as you get there. Come on."

It was one in the afternoon when they started to climb. At eight that evening they cleared the rim and for half an hour lay where they had fallen. Then came the fire, a pot of coffee, and an enormous feed of moosemeat. But first Linday hefted the two packs, and found his own lighter by half.

"You're an iron man, Daw," he admired.

"Who? Me? Oh, pshaw! You ought to see Rocky. He's made out of platinum, an' armour plate, an' pure gold, an' all strong things. I'm mountaineer, but he plumb beats me out. Down in Curry County I used to 'most kill the boys when we run bear. So when I hooks up with Rocky on our first hunt I had a mean idea to show 'm a few. I let out the links good an' generous, 'most nigh keepin' up with the dawgs, an' along comes Rocky a-treadin' on my heels. I knowed he couldn't last that way, and I just laid down an' did my dangdest. An' there he was, at the end of another hour, a-treadin' steady an' regular on my heels. I was some huffed. 'Mebbe you'd like to come to the front an' show me how to travel,' I says. 'Sure,' says he. An' he done it! I stayed with 'm, but let me tell you I was plumb tuckered by the time the bear tree'd.

"They ain't no stoppin' that man. He ain't afraid of nothin'. Last fall, before the freeze-up, him an' me was headin' for camp about twilight. I was clean shot out — ptarmigan — an' he had one cartridge left. An' the dawgs tree'd a she grizzly. Small one. Only weighed about three hundred, but you know what grizzlies is. 'Don't do it,' says I, when he ups with his rifle. 'You only got that one shot, an' it's too dark to see the sights.'

"'Climb a tree,' says he. I didn't climb no tree, but when that bear come down a-cussin' among the dawgs, an' only creased, I want to tell you I was sure hankerin' for a tree. It was some ruction. Then things come on real bad. The bear slid down a hollow against a big log. Downside, that log was four feet up an' down. Dawgs couldn't get at bear that way. Upside was steep gravel, an' the dawgs'd just naturally slide down into the bear. They was no jumpin' back, an' the bear was a-manglin' 'em fast as they come. All underbrush, gettin' pretty dark, no cartridges, nothin'.

"What's Rocky up an' do? He goes downside of log, reaches over with his knife, an' begins slashin'. But he can only reach bear's rump, an' dawgs bein' ruined fast, one-two-three time. Rocky gets desperate. He don't like to lose his dawgs. He jumps on top log, grabs bear by the slack of the rump, an' heaves over back'ard right over top of that log. Down they go, kit an' kaboodle, twenty feet, bear, dawgs, an' Rocky, slidin',

cussin', an' scratchin', ker-plump into ten feet of water in the bed of stream. They all swum out different ways. Nope, he didn't get the bear, but he saved the dawgs. That's Rocky. They's no stoppin' him when his mind's set."

It was at the next camp that Linday heard how Rocky had come to be injured.

"I'd ben up the draw, about a mile from the cabin, lookin' for a piece of birch likely enough for an axe-handle. Comin' back I heard the darndest goings-on where we had a bear trap set. Some trapper had left the trap in an old cache an' Rocky'd fixed it up. But the goings-on. It was Rocky an' his brother Harry. First I'd hear one yell and laugh, an' then the other, like it was some game. An' what do you think the fool game was? I've saw some pretty nervy cusses down in Curry County, but they beat all. They'd got a whoppin' big panther in the trap an' was takin' turns rappin' it on the nose with a light stick. But that wa'n't the point. I just come out of the brush in time to see Harry rap it. Then he chops six inches off the stick an' passes it to Rocky. You see, that stick was growin' shorter all the time. It ain't as easy as you think. The panther'd slack back an' hunch down an' spit, an' it was mighty lively in duckin' the stick. An' you never knowed when it'd jump. It was caught by the hind leg, which was curious, too, an' it had some slack I'm tellin' you.

"It was just a game of dare they was playin', an' the stick gettin' shorter an' shorter an' the panther madder 'n madder. Bimeby they wa'n't no stick left — only a nubbin, about four inches long, an' it was Rocky's turn. 'Better quit now,' says Harry. 'What for?' says Rocky. 'Because if you rap him again they won't be no stick left for me,' Harry answers. 'Then you'll quit an' I win,' says Rocky with a laugh, an' goes to it.

"An' I don't want to see anything like it again. That cat'd bunched back an' down till it had all of six feet slack in its body. An' Rocky's stick four inches long. The cat got him. You couldn't see one from t'other. No chance to shoot. It was Harry, in the end, that got his knife into the panther's jugular."

"If I'd known how he got it I'd never have come," was Linday's comment.

Daw nodded concurrence.

"That's what she said. She told me sure not to whisper how it happened."

"Is he crazy?" Linday demanded in his wrath.

"They're all crazy. Him an' his brother are all the time devilin' each other to tom-fool things. I seen them swim the riffle last fall, bad water an' mush-ice runnin' — on a dare. They ain't nothin' they won't tackle. An' she's 'most as bad. Not afraid some herself. She'll do anything Rocky'll let her. But he's almighty careful with her. Treats her like a queen. No camp-work or such for her. That's why another man an' me are hired on good wages. They've got slathers of money an' they're sure dippy on each other. 'Looks like good huntin',' says Rocky, when they struck that section last fall. 'Let's make a camp then,' says Harry. An' me all the time thinkin' they was lookin' for gold. Ain't ben a prospect pan washed the whole winter."

Linday's anger mounted. "I haven't any patience with fools. For two cents I'd turn back."

"No you wouldn't," Daw assured him confidently. "They ain't enough grub to turn back, an' we'll be there to-morrow. Just got to cross that last divide an' drop down to the cabin. An' they's a better reason. You're too far from home, an' I just naturally wouldn't let you turn back."

Exhausted as Linday was, the flash in his black eyes warned Daw that he had overreached himself. His hand went out.

"My mistake, Doc. Forget it. I reckon I'm gettin' some cranky what of losin' them dawgs."

III

Not one day, but three days later, the two men, after being snowed in on the summit by a spring blizzard, staggered up to a cabin that stood in a fat bottom beside the roaring Little Peco. Coming in from the bright sunshine to the dark cabin, Linday observed little of its occupants. He was no more than aware of two men and a woman. But he was not interested in them. He went directly to the bunk where lay the injured man. The latter was lying on his back, with eyes closed, and Linday noted the slender stencilling of the brows and the kinky silkiness of the brown hair. Thin and wan, the face seemed too small for the muscular neck, yet the delicate features, despite their waste, were firmly moulded.

"What dressings have you been using?" Linday asked of the woman.

"Corrosive, sublimate, regular solution," came the answer.

He glanced quickly at her, shot an even quicker glance at the face of the injured man, and stood erect. She breathed sharply, abruptly biting off the respiration with an effort of will. Linday turned to the men.

"You clear out — chop wood or something. Clear out."

One of them demurred.

"This is a serious case," Linday went on. "I want to talk to his wife."

"I'm his brother," said the other.

To him the woman looked, praying him with her eyes. He nodded reluctantly and turned toward the door.

"Me, too?" Daw queried from the bench where he had flung himself down.

"You, too."

Linday busied himself with a superficial examination of the patient while the cabin was emptying.

"So?" he said. "So that's your Rex Strang?"

She dropped her eyes to the man in the bunk as if to reassure herself of his identity, and then in silence returned Linday's gaze.

"Why don't you speak?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "What is the use? You know it is Rex Strang."

"Thank you. Though I might remind you that it is the first time I have ever seen him. Sit down." He waved her to a stool, himself taking the bench. "I'm really about all in, you know. There's no turnpike from the Yukon here."

He drew a penknife and began extracting a thorn from his thumb.

“What are you going to do?” she asked, after a minute’s wait.

“Eat and rest up before I start back.”

“What are you going to do about...” She inclined her head toward the unconscious man.

“Nothing.”

She went over to the bunk and rested her fingers lightly on the tight-curved hair.

“You mean you will kill him,” she said slowly. “Kill him by doing nothing, for you can save him if you will.”

“Take it that way.” He considered a moment, and stated his thought with a harsh little laugh. “From time immemorial in this weary old world it has been a not uncommon custom so to dispose of wife-stealers.”

“You are unfair, Grant,” she answered gently. “You forget that I was willing and that I desired. I was a free agent. Rex never stole me. It was you who lost me. I went with him, willing and eager, with song on my lips. As well accuse me of stealing him. We went together.”

“A good way of looking at it,” Linday conceded. “I see you are as keen a thinker as ever, Madge. That must have bothered him.”

“A keen thinker can be a good lover — ”

“And not so foolish,” he broke in.

“Then you admit the wisdom of my course?”

He threw up his hands. “That’s the devil of it, talking with clever women. A man always forgets and traps himself. I wouldn’t wonder if you won him with a syllogism.”

Her reply was the hint of a smile in her straight-looking blue eyes and a seeming emanation of sex pride from all the physical being of her.

“No, I take that back, Madge. If you’d been a numbskull you’d have won him, or any one else, on your looks, and form, and carriage. I ought to know. I’ve been through that particular mill, and, the devil take me, I’m not through it yet.”

His speech was quick and nervous and irritable, as it always was, and, as she knew, it was always candid. She took her cue from his last remark.

“Do you remember Lake Geneva?”

“I ought to. I was rather absurdly happy.”

She nodded, and her eyes were luminous. “There is such a thing as old sake. Won’t you, Grant, please, just remember back ... a little ... oh, so little ... of what we were to each other ... then?”

“Now you’re taking advantage,” he smiled, and returned to the attack on his thumb. He drew the thorn out, inspected it critically, then concluded. “No, thank you. I’m not playing the Good Samaritan.”

“Yet you made this hard journey for an unknown man,” she urged.

His impatience was sharply manifest. “Do you fancy I’d have moved a step had I known he was my wife’s lover?”

“But you are here ... now. And there he lies. What are you going to do?”

“Nothing. Why should I? I am not at the man’s service. He pilfered me.”

She was about to speak, when a knock came on the door.

“Get out!” he shouted.

“If you want any assistance — ”

“Get out! Get a bucket of water! Set it down outside!”

“You are going to...?” she began tremulously.

“Wash up.”

She recoiled from the brutality, and her lips tightened.

“Listen, Grant,” she said steadily. “I shall tell his brother. I know the Strang breed. If you can forget old sake, so can I. If you don’t do something, he’ll kill you. Why, even Tom Daw would if I asked.”

“You should know me better than to threaten,” he reproved gravely, then added, with a sneer: “Besides, I don’t see how killing me will help your Rex Strang.”

She gave a low gasp, closed her lips tightly, and watched his quick eyes take note of the trembling that had beset her.

“It’s not hysteria, Grant,” she cried hastily and anxiously, with clicking teeth. “You never saw me with hysteria. I’ve never had it. I don’t know what it is, but I’ll control it. I am merely beside myself. It’s partly anger — with you. And it’s apprehension and fear. I don’t want to lose him. I do love him, Grant. He is my king, my lover. And I have sat here beside him so many dreadful days now. Oh, Grant, please, please.”

“Just nerves,” he commented drily. “Stay with it. You can best it. If you were a man I’d say take a smoke.”

She went unsteadily back to the stool, where she watched him and fought for control. From the rough fireplace came the singing of a cricket. Outside two wolf-dogs bickered. The injured man’s chest rose and fell perceptibly under the fur robes. She saw a smile, not altogether pleasant, form on Linday’s lips.

“How much do you love him?” he asked.

Her breast filled and rose, and her eyes shone with a light unashamed and proud. He nodded in token that he was answered.

“Do you mind if I take a little time?” He stopped, casting about for the way to begin. “I remember reading a story — Herbert Shaw wrote it, I think. I want to tell you about it. There was a woman, young and beautiful; a man magnificent, a lover of beauty and a wanderer. I don’t know how much like your Rex Strang he was, but I fancy a sort of resemblance. Well, this man was a painter, a bohemian, a vagabond. He kissed — oh, several times and for several weeks — and rode away. She possessed for him what I thought you possessed for me ... at Lake Geneva. In ten years she wept the beauty out of her face. Some women turn yellow, you know, when grief upsets their natural juices.

“Now it happened that the man went blind, and ten years afterward, led as a child by the hand, he stumbled back to her. There was nothing left. He could no longer paint. And she was very happy, and glad he could not see her face. Remember, he worshipped beauty. And he continued to hold her in his arms and believe in her beauty.

The memory of it was vivid in him. He never ceased to talk about it, and to lament that he could not behold it.

“One day he told her of five great pictures he wished to paint. If only his sight could be restored to paint them, he could write finis and be content. And then, no matter how, there came into her hands an elixir. Anointed on his eyes, the sight would surely and fully return.”

Lindsay shrugged his shoulders.

“You see her struggle. With sight, he could paint his five pictures. Also, he would leave her. Beauty was his religion. It was impossible that he could abide her ruined face. Five days she struggled. Then she anointed his eyes.”

Lindsay broke off and searched her with his eyes, the high lights focused sharply in the brilliant black.

“The question is, do you love Rex Strang as much as that?”

“And if I do?” she countered.

“Do you?”

“Yes.”

“You can sacrifice? You can give him up?”

Slow and reluctant was her “Yes.”

“And you will come with me?”

“Yes.” This time her voice was a whisper. “When he is well — yes.”

“You understand. It must be Lake Geneva over again. You will be my wife.”

She seemed to shrink and droop, but her head nodded.

“Very well.” He stood up briskly, went to his pack, and began unstrapping. “I shall need help. Bring his brother in. Bring them all in. Boiling water — let there be lots of it. I’ve brought bandages, but let me see what you have in that line. — Here, Daw, build up that fire and start boiling all the water you can. — Here you,” to the other man, “get that table out and under the window there. Clean it; scrub it; scald it. Clean, man, clean, as you never cleaned a thing before. You, Mrs. Strang, will be my helper. No sheets, I suppose. Well, we’ll manage somehow. — You’re his brother, sir. I’ll give the anæsthetic, but you must keep it going afterward. Now listen, while I instruct you. In the first place — but before that, can you take a pulse?...”

IV

Noted for his daring and success as a surgeon, through the days and weeks that followed Lindsay exceeded himself in daring and success. Never, because of the frightful mangling and breakage, and because of the long delay, had he encountered so terrible a case. But he had never had a healthier specimen of human wreck to work upon. Even then he would have failed, had it not been for the patient’s catlike vitality and almost uncanny physical and mental grip on life.

There were days of high temperature and delirium; days of heart-sinking when Strang’s pulse was barely perceptible; days when he lay conscious, eyes weary and drawn, the sweat of pain on his face. Lindsay was indefatigable, cruelly efficient, audacious and fortunate, daring hazard after hazard and winning. He was not content to

make the man live. He devoted himself to the intricate and perilous problem of making him whole and strong again.

“He will be a cripple?” Madge queried.

“He will not merely walk and talk and be a limping caricature of his former self,” Linday told her. “He shall run and leap, swim riffles, ride bears, fight panthers, and do all things to the top of his fool desire. And, I warn you, he will fascinate women just as of old. Will you like that? Are you content? Remember, you will not be with him.”

“Go on, go on,” she breathed. “Make him whole. Make him what he was.”

More than once, whenever Strang’s recuperation permitted, Linday put him under the anæsthetic and did terrible things, cutting and sewing, rewiring and connecting up the disrupted organism. Later, developed a hitch in the left arm. Strang could lift it so far, and no farther. Linday applied himself to the problem. It was a case of more wires, shrunken, twisted, disconnected. Again it was cut and switch and ease and disentangle. And all that saved Strang was his tremendous vitality and the health of his flesh.

“You will kill him,” his brother complained. “Let him be. For God’s sake let him be. A live and crippled man is better than a whole and dead one.”

Linday flamed in wrath. “You get out! Out of this cabin with you till you can come back and say that I make him live. Pull — by God, man, you’ve got to pull with me with all your soul. Your brother’s travelling a hairline razor-edge. Do you understand? A thought can topple him off. Now get out, and come back sweet and wholesome, convinced beyond all absoluteness that he will live and be what he was before you and he played the fool together. Get out, I say.”

The brother, with clenched hands and threatening eyes, looked to Madge for counsel.

“Go, go, please,” she begged. “He is right. I know he is right.”

Another time, when Strang’s condition seemed more promising, the brother said:

“Doc, you’re a wonder, and all this time I’ve forgotten to ask your name.”

“None of your damn business. Don’t bother me. Get out.”

The mangled right arm ceased from its healing, burst open again in a frightful wound.

“Necrosis,” said Linday.

“That does settle it,” groaned the brother.

“Shut up!” Linday snarled. “Get out! Take Daw with you. Take Bill, too. Get rabbits — alive — healthy ones. Trap them. Trap everywhere.”

“How many?” the brother asked.

“Forty of them — four thousand — forty thousand — all you can get. You’ll help me, Mrs. Strang. I’m going to dig into that arm and size up the damage. Get out, you fellows. You for the rabbits.”

And he dug in, swiftly, unerringly, scraping away disintegrating bone, ascertaining the extent of the active decay.

“It never would have happened,” he told Madge, “if he hadn’t had so many other things needing vitality first. Even he didn’t have vitality enough to go around. I was

watching it, but I had to wait and chance it. That piece must go. He could manage without it, but rabbit-bone will make it what it was."

From the hundreds of rabbits brought in, he weeded out, rejected, selected, tested, selected and tested again, until he made his final choice. He used the last of his chloroform and achieved the bone-graft — living bone to living bone, living man and living rabbit immovable and indissolubly bandaged and bound together, their mutual processes uniting and reconstructing a perfect arm.

And through the whole trying period, especially as Strang mended, occurred passages of talk between Linday and Madge. Nor was he kind, nor she rebellious.

"It's a nuisance," he told her. "But the law is the law, and you'll need a divorce before we can marry again. What do you say? Shall we go to Lake Geneva?"

"As you will," she said.

And he, another time: "What the deuce did you see in him anyway? I know he had money. But you and I were managing to get along with some sort of comfort. My practice was averaging around forty thousand a year then — I went over the books afterward. Palaces and steam yachts were about all that was denied you."

"Perhaps you've explained it," she answered. "Perhaps you were too interested in your practice. Maybe you forgot me."

"Humph," he sneered. "And may not your Rex be too interested in panthers and short sticks?"

He continually girded her to explain what he chose to call her infatuation for the other man.

"There is no explanation," she replied. And, finally, she retorted, "No one can explain love, I least of all. I only knew love, the divine and irrefragable fact, that is all. There was once, at Fort Vancouver, a baron of the Hudson Bay Company who chided the resident Church of England parson. The dominie had written home to England complaining that the Company folk, from the head factor down, were addicted to Indian wives. 'Why didn't you explain the extenuating circumstances?' demanded the baron. Replied the dominie: 'A cow's tail grows downward. I do not attempt to explain why the cow's tail grows downward. I merely cite the fact.'"

"Damn clever women!" cried Linday, his eyes flashing his irritation.

"What brought you, of all places, into the Klondike?" she asked once.

"Too much money. No wife to spend it. Wanted a rest. Possibly overwork. I tried Colorado, but their telegrams followed me, and some of them did themselves. I went on to Seattle. Same thing. Ransom ran his wife out to me in a special train. There was no escaping it. Operation successful. Local newspapers got wind of it. You can imagine the rest. I had to hide, so I ran away to Klondike. And — well, Tom Daw found me playing whist in a cabin down on the Yukon."

Came the day when Strang's bed was carried out of doors and into the sunshine.

"Let me tell him now," she said to Linday.

"No; wait," he answered.

Later, Strang was able to sit up on the edge of the bed, able to walk his first giddy steps, supported on either side.

“Let me tell him now,” she said.

“No. I’m making a complete job of this. I want no set-backs. There’s a slight hitch still in that left arm. It’s a little thing, but I am going to remake him as God made him. Tomorrow I’ve planned to get into that arm and take out the kink. It will mean a couple of days on his back. I’m sorry there’s no more chloroform. He’ll just have to bite his teeth on a spike and hang on. He can do it. He’s got grit for a dozen men.”

Summer came on. The snow disappeared, save on the far peaks of the Rockies to the east. The days lengthened till there was no darkness, the sun dipping at midnight, due north, for a few minutes beneath the horizon. Linday never let up on Strang. He studied his walk, his body movements, stripped him again and again and for the thousandth time made him flex all his muscles. Massage was given him without end, until Linday declared that Tom Daw, Bill, and the brother were properly qualified for Turkish bath and osteopathic hospital attendants. But Linday was not yet satisfied. He put Strang through his whole repertoire of physical feats, searching him the while for hidden weaknesses. He put him on his back again for a week, opened up his leg, played a deft trick or two with the smaller veins, scraped a spot of bone no larger than a coffee grain till naught but a surface of healthy pink remained to be sewed over with the living flesh.

“Let me tell him,” Madge begged.

“Not yet,” was the answer. “You will tell him only when I am ready.”

July passed, and August neared its end, when he ordered Strang out on trail to get a moose. Linday kept at his heels, watching him, studying him. He was slender, a cat in the strength of his muscles, and he walked as Linday had seen no man walk, effortlessly, with all his body, seeming to lift the legs with supple muscles clear to the shoulders. But it was without heaviness, so easy that it invested him with a peculiar grace, so easy that to the eye the speed was deceptive. It was the killing pace of which Tom Daw had complained. Linday toiled behind, sweating and panting; from time to time, when the ground favoured, making short runs to keep up. At the end of ten miles he called a halt and threw himself down on the moss.

“Enough!” he cried. “I can’t keep up with you.”

He mopped his heated face, and Strang sat down on a spruce log, smiling at the doctor, and, with the camaraderie of a pantheist, at all the landscape.

“Any twinges, or hurts, or aches, or hints of aches?” Linday demanded.

Strang shook his curly head and stretched his lithe body, living and joying in every fibre of it.

“You’ll do, Strang. For a winter or two you may expect to feel the cold and damp in the old wounds. But that will pass, and perhaps you may escape it altogether.”

“God, Doctor, you have performed miracles with me. I don’t know how to thank you. I don’t even know your name.”

“Which doesn’t matter. I’ve pulled you through, and that’s the main thing.”

"But it's a name men must know out in the world," Strang persisted. "I'll wager I'd recognise it if I heard it."

"I think you would," was Linday's answer. "But it's beside the matter. I want one final test, and then I'm done with you. Over the divide at the head of this creek is a tributary of the Big Windy. Daw tells me that last year you went over, down to the middle fork, and back again, in three days. He said you nearly killed him, too. You are to wait here and camp to-night. I'll send Daw along with the camp outfit. Then it's up to you to go to the middle fork and back in the same time as last year."

V

"Now," Linday said to Madge. "You have an hour in which to pack. I'll go and get the canoe ready. Bill's bringing in the moose and won't get back till dark. We'll make my cabin to-day, and in a week we'll be in Dawson."

"I was in hope..." She broke off proudly.

"That I'd forego the fee?"

"Oh, a compact is a compact, but you needn't have been so hateful in the collecting. You have not been fair. You have sent him away for three days, and robbed me of my last words to him."

"Leave a letter."

"I shall tell him all."

"Anything less than all would be unfair to the three of us," was Linday's answer.

When he returned from the canoe, her outfit was packed, the letter written.

"Let me read it," he said, "if you don't mind."

Her hesitation was momentary, then she passed it over.

"Pretty straight," he said, when he had finished it. "Now, are you ready?"

He carried her pack down to the bank, and, kneeling, steadied the canoe with one hand while he extended the other to help her in. He watched her closely, but without a tremor she held out her hand to his and prepared to step on board.

"Wait," he said. "One moment. You remember the story I told you of the elixir. I failed to tell you the end. And when she had anointed his eyes and was about to depart, it chanced she saw in the mirror that her beauty had been restored to her. And he opened his eyes, and cried out with joy at the sight of her beauty, and folded her in his arms."

She waited, tense but controlled, for him to continue, a dawn of wonder faintly beginning to show in her face and eyes.

"You are very beautiful, Madge." He paused, then added drily, "The rest is obvious. I fancy Rex Strang's arms won't remain long empty. Good-bye."

"Grant..." she said, almost whispered, and in her voice was all the speech that needs not words for understanding.

He gave a nasty little laugh. "I just wanted to show you I wasn't such a bad sort. Coals of fire, you know."

"Grant..."

He stepped into the canoe and put out a slender, nervous hand.

“Good-bye,” he said.

She folded both her own hands about his.

“Dear, strong hand,” she murmured, and bent and kissed it.

He jerked it away, thrust the canoe out from the bank, dipped the paddle in the swift rush of the current, and entered the head of the riffle where the water poured glassily ere it burst into a white madness of foam.

The Enemy of All the World

It was Silas Bannerman who finally ran down that scientific wizard and arch-enemy of mankind, Emil Gluck. Gluck's confession, before he went to the electric chair, threw much light upon the series of mysterious events, many apparently unrelated, that so perturbed the world between the years 1933 and 1941. It was not until that remarkable document was made public that the world dreamed of there being any connection between the assassination of the King and Queen of Portugal and the murders of the New York City police officers. While the deeds of Emil Gluck were all that was abominable, we cannot but feel, to a certain extent, pity for the unfortunate, malformed, and maltreated genius. This side of his story has never been told before, and from his confession and from the great mass of evidence and the documents and records of the time we are able to construct a fairly accurate portrait of him, and to discern the factors and pressures that moulded him into the human monster he became and that drove him onward and downward along the fearful path he trod.

Emil Gluck was born in Syracuse, New York, in 1895. His father, Josephus Gluck, was a special policeman and night watchman, who, in the year 1900, died suddenly of pneumonia. The mother, a pretty, fragile creature, who, before her marriage, had been a milliner, grieved herself to death over the loss of her husband. This sensitiveness of the mother was the heritage that in the boy became morbid and horrible.

In 1901, the boy, Emil, then six years of age, went to live with his aunt, Mrs. Ann Bartell. She was his mother's sister, but in her breast was no kindly feeling for the sensitive, shrinking boy. Ann Bartell was a vain, shallow, and heartless woman. Also, she was cursed with poverty and burdened with a husband who was a lazy, erratic ne'er-do-well. Young Emil Gluck was not wanted, and Ann Bartell could be trusted to impress this fact sufficiently upon him. As an illustration of the treatment he received in that early, formative period, the following instance is given.

When he had been living in the Bartell home a little more than a year, he broke his leg. He sustained the injury through playing on the forbidden roof — as all boys have done and will continue to do to the end of time. The leg was broken in two places between the knee and thigh. Emil, helped by his frightened playmates, managed to drag himself to the front sidewalk, where he fainted. The children of the neighbourhood were afraid of the hard-featured shrew who presided over the Bartell house; but, summoning their resolution, they rang the bell and told Ann Bartell of the accident. She did not even look at the little lad who lay stricken on the sidewalk, but slammed the door and went back to her wash-tub. The time passed. A drizzle came on, and Emil Gluck, out of his faint, lay sobbing in the rain. The leg should have been set immediately. As

it was, the inflammation rose rapidly and made a nasty case of it. At the end of two hours, the indignant women of the neighbourhood protested to Ann Bartell. This time she came out and looked at the lad. Also she kicked him in the side as he lay helpless at her feet, and she hysterically disowned him. He was not her child, she said, and recommended that the ambulance be called to take him to the city receiving hospital. Then she went back into the house.

It was a woman, Elizabeth Shepstone, who came along, learned the situation, and had the boy placed on a shutter. It was she who called the doctor, and who, brushing aside Ann Bartell, had the boy carried into the house. When the doctor arrived, Ann Bartell promptly warned him that she would not pay him for his services. For two months the little Emil lay in bed, the first month on his back without once being turned over; and he lay neglected and alone, save for the occasional visits of the unremunerated and over-worked physician. He had no toys, nothing with which to beguile the long and tedious hours. No kind word was spoken to him, no soothing hand laid upon his brow, no single touch or act of loving tenderness — naught but the reproaches and harshness of Ann Bartell, and the continually reiterated information that he was not wanted. And it can well be understood, in such environment, how there was generated in the lonely, neglected boy much of the bitterness and hostility for his kind that later was to express itself in deeds so frightful as to terrify the world.

It would seem strange that, from the hands of Ann Bartell, Emil Gluck should have received a college education; but the explanation is simple. Her ne'er-do-well husband, deserting her, made a strike in the Nevada goldfields, and returned to her a many-times millionaire. Ann Bartell hated the boy, and immediately she sent him to the Farristown Academy, a hundred miles away. Shy and sensitive, a lonely and misunderstood little soul, he was more lonely than ever at Farristown. He never came home, at vacation, and holidays, as the other boys did. Instead, he wandered about the deserted buildings and grounds, befriended and misunderstood by the servants and gardeners, reading much, it is remembered, spending his days in the fields or before the fire-place with his nose poked always in the pages of some book. It was at this time that he over-used his eyes and was compelled to take up the wearing of glasses, which same were so prominent in the photographs of him published in the newspapers in 1941.

He was a remarkable student. Application such as his would have taken him far; but he did not need application. A glance at a text meant mastery for him. The result was that he did an immense amount of collateral reading and acquired more in half a year than did the average student in half-a-dozen years. In 1909, barely fourteen years of age, he was ready — “more than ready” the headmaster of the academy said — to enter Yale or Harvard. His juvenility prevented him from entering those universities, and so, in 1909, we find him a freshman at historic Bowdoin College. In 1913 he graduated with highest honours, and immediately afterward followed Professor Bradlough to Berkeley, California. The one friend that Emil Gluck discovered in all his life was Professor Bradlough. The latter's weak lungs had led him to exchange Maine for California, the removal being facilitated by the offer of a professorship in the State University.

Throughout the year 1914, Emil Gluck resided in Berkeley and took special scientific courses. Toward the end of that year two deaths changed his prospects and his relations with life. The death of Professor Bradlough took from him the one friend he was ever to know, and the death of Ann Bartell left him penniless. Hating the unfortunate lad to the last, she cut him off with one hundred dollars.

The following year, at twenty years of age, Emil Gluck was enrolled as an instructor of chemistry in the University of California. Here the years passed quietly; he faithfully performed the drudgery that brought him his salary, and, a student always, he took half-a-dozen degrees. He was, among other things, a Doctor of Sociology, of Philosophy, and of Science, though he was known to the world, in later days, only as Professor Gluck.

He was twenty-seven years old when he first sprang into prominence in the newspapers through the publication of his book, *Sex and Progress*. The book remains to-day a milestone in the history and philosophy of marriage. It is a heavy tome of over seven hundred pages, painfully careful and accurate, and startlingly original. It was a book for scientists, and not one calculated to make a stir. But Gluck, in the last chapter, using barely three lines for it, mentioned the hypothetical desirability of trial marriages. At once the newspapers seized these three lines, "played them up yellow," as the slang was in those days, and set the whole world laughing at Emil Gluck, the bespectacled young professor of twenty-seven. Photographers snapped him, he was besieged by reporters, women's clubs throughout the land passed resolutions condemning him and his immoral theories; and on the floor of the California Assembly, while discussing the state appropriation to the University, a motion demanding the expulsion of Gluck was made under threat of withholding the appropriation — of course, none of his persecutors had read the book; the twisted newspaper version of only three lines of it was enough for them. Here began Emil Gluck's hatred for newspaper men. By them his serious and intrinsically valuable work of six years had been made a laughing-stock and a notoriety. To his dying day, and to their everlasting regret, he never forgave them.

It was the newspapers that were responsible for the next disaster that befell him. For the five years following the publication of his book he had remained silent, and silence for a lonely man is not good. One can conjecture sympathetically the awful solitude of Emil Gluck in that populous University; for he was without friends and without sympathy. His only recourse was books, and he went on reading and studying enormously. But in 1927 he accepted an invitation to appear before the Human Interest Society of Emeryville. He did not trust himself to speak, and as we write we have before us a copy of his learned paper. It is sober, scholarly, and scientific, and, it must also be added, conservative. But in one place he dealt with, and I quote his words, "the industrial and social revolution that is taking place in society." A reporter present seized upon the word "revolution," divorced it from the text, and wrote a garbled account that made Emil Gluck appear an anarchist. At once, "Professor Gluck, anarchist," flamed over the wires and was appropriately "featured" in all the newspapers in the land.

He had attempted to reply to the previous newspaper attack, but now he remained silent. Bitterness had already corroded his soul. The University faculty appealed to him to defend himself, but he sullenly declined, even refusing to enter in defence a copy of his paper to save himself from expulsion. He refused to resign, and was discharged from the University faculty. It must be added that political pressure had been put upon the University Regents and the President.

Persecuted, maligned, and misunderstood, the forlorn and lonely man made no attempt at retaliation. All his life he had been sinned against, and all his life he had sinned against no one. But his cup of bitterness was not yet full to overflowing. Having lost his position, and being without any income, he had to find work. His first place was at the Union Iron Works, in San Francisco, where he proved a most able draughtsman. It was here that he obtained his firsthand knowledge of battleships and their construction. But the reporters discovered him and featured him in his new vocation. He immediately resigned and found another place; but after the reporters had driven him away from half-a-dozen positions, he steeled himself to brazen out the newspaper persecution. This occurred when he started his electroplating establishment — in Oakland, on Telegraph Avenue. It was a small shop, employing three men and two boys. Gluck himself worked long hours. Night after night, as Policeman Carew testified on the stand, he did not leave the shop till one and two in the morning. It was during this period that he perfected the improved ignition device for gas-engines, the royalties from which ultimately made him wealthy.

He started his electroplating establishment early in the spring of 1928, and it was in the same year that he formed the disastrous love attachment for Irene Tackley. Now it is not to be imagined that an extraordinary creature such as Emil Gluck could be any other than an extraordinary lover. In addition to his genius, his loneliness, and his morbidness, it must be taken into consideration that he knew nothing about women. Whatever tides of desire flooded his being, he was unschooled in the conventional expression of them; while his excessive timidity was bound to make his love-making unusual. Irene Tackley was a rather pretty young woman, but shallow and light-headed. At the time she worked in a small candy store across the street from Gluck's shop. He used to come in and drink ice-cream sodas and lemon-squashes, and stare at her. It seems the girl did not care for him, and merely played with him. He was "queer," she said; and at another time she called him a crank when describing how he sat at the counter and peered at her through his spectacles, blushing and stammering when she took notice of him, and often leaving the shop in precipitate confusion.

Gluck made her the most amazing presents — a silver tea-service, a diamond ring, a set of furs, opera-glasses, a ponderous History of the World in many volumes, and a motor-cycle all silver-plated in his own shop. Enters now the girl's lover, putting his foot down, showing great anger, compelling her to return Gluck's strange assortment of presents. This man, William Sherbourne, was a gross and stolid creature, a heavy-jawed man of the working class who had become a successful building-contractor in a small way. Gluck did not understand. He tried to get an explanation, attempting to

speak with the girl when she went home from work in the evening. She complained to Sherbourne, and one night he gave Gluck a beating. It was a very severe beating, for it is on the records of the Red Cross Emergency Hospital that Gluck was treated there that night and was unable to leave the hospital for a week.

Still Gluck did not understand. He continued to seek an explanation from the girl. In fear of Sherbourne, he applied to the Chief of Police for permission to carry a revolver, which permission was refused, the newspapers as usual playing it up sensationally. Then came the murder of Irene Tackley, six days before her contemplated marriage with Sherbourne. It was on a Saturday night. She had worked late in the candy store, departing after eleven o'clock with her week's wages in her purse. She rode on a San Pablo Avenue surface car to Thirty-fourth Street, where she alighted and started to walk the three blocks to her home. That was the last seen of her alive. Next morning she was found, strangled, in a vacant lot.

Emil Gluck was immediately arrested. Nothing that he could do could save him. He was convicted, not merely on circumstantial evidence, but on evidence "cooked up" by the Oakland police. There is no discussion but that a large portion of the evidence was manufactured. The testimony of Captain Shehan was the sheerest perjury, it being proved long afterward that on the night in question he had not only not been in the vicinity of the murder, but that he had been out of the city in a resort on the San Leandro Road. The unfortunate Gluck received life imprisonment in San Quentin, while the newspapers and the public held that it was a miscarriage of justice — that the death penalty should have been visited upon him.

Gluck entered San Quentin prison on April 17, 1929. He was then thirty-four years of age. And for three years and a half, much of the time in solitary confinement, he was left to meditate upon the injustice of man. It was during that period that his bitterness corroded home and he became a hater of all his kind. Three other things he did during the same period: he wrote his famous treatise, *Human Morals*, his remarkable brochure, *The Criminal Sane*, and he worked out his awful and monstrous scheme of revenge. It was an episode that had occurred in his electroplating establishment that suggested to him his unique weapon of revenge. As stated in his confession, he worked every detail out theoretically during his imprisonment, and was able, on his release, immediately to embark on his career of vengeance.

His release was sensational. Also it was miserably and criminally delayed by the soulless legal red tape then in vogue. On the night of February 1, 1932, Tim Haswell, a hold-up man, was shot during an attempted robbery by a citizen of Piedmont Heights. Tim Haswell lingered three days, during which time he not only confessed to the murder of Irene Tackley, but furnished conclusive proofs of the same. Bert Danniker, a convict dying of consumption in Folsom Prison, was implicated as accessory, and his confession followed. It is inconceivable to us of to-day — the bungling, dilatory processes of justice a generation ago. Emil Gluck was proved in February to be an innocent man, yet he was not released until the following October. For eight months, a greatly wronged man, he was compelled to undergo his unmerited punishment. This

was not conducive to sweetness and light, and we can well imagine how he ate his soul with bitterness during those dreary eight months.

He came back to the world in the fall of 1932, as usual a "feature" topic in all the newspapers. The papers, instead of expressing heartfelt regret, continued their old sensational persecution. One paper did more — the San Francisco Intelligencer. John Hartwell, its editor, elaborated an ingenious theory that got around the confessions of the two criminals and went to show that Gluck was responsible, after all, for the murder of Irene Tackley. Hartwell died. And Sherbourne died too, while Policeman Phillipps was shot in the leg and discharged from the Oakland police force.

The murder of Hartwell was long a mystery. He was alone in his editorial office at the time. The reports of the revolver were heard by the office boy, who rushed in to find Hartwell expiring in his chair. What puzzled the police was the fact, not merely that he had been shot with his own revolver, but that the revolver had been exploded in the drawer of his desk. The bullets had torn through the front of the drawer and entered his body. The police scouted the theory of suicide, murder was dismissed as absurd, and the blame was thrown upon the Eureka Smokeless Cartridge Company. Spontaneous explosion was the police explanation, and the chemists of the cartridge company were well bullied at the inquest. But what the police did not know was that across the street, in the Mercer Building, Room 633, rented by Emil Gluck, had been occupied by Emil Gluck at the very moment Hartwell's revolver so mysteriously exploded.

At the time, no connection was made between Hartwell's death and the death of William Sherbourne. Sherbourne had continued to live in the home he had built for Irene Tackley, and one morning in January, 1933, he was found dead. Suicide was the verdict of the coroner's inquest, for he had been shot by his own revolver. The curious thing that happened that night was the shooting of Policeman Phillipps on the sidewalk in front of Sherbourne's house. The policeman crawled to a police telephone on the corner and rang up for an ambulance. He claimed that some one had shot him from behind in the leg. The leg in question was so badly shattered by three '38 calibre bullets that amputation was necessary. But when the police discovered that the damage had been done by his own revolver, a great laugh went up, and he was charged with having been drunk. In spite of his denial of having touched a drop, and of his persistent assertion that the revolver had been in his hip pocket and that he had not laid a finger to it, he was discharged from the force. Emil Gluck's confession, six years later, cleared the unfortunate policeman of disgrace, and he is alive to-day and in good health, the recipient of a handsome pension from the city.

Emil Gluck, having disposed of his immediate enemies, now sought a wider field, though his enmity for newspaper men and for the police remained always active. The royalties on his ignition device for gasoline-engines had mounted up while he lay in prison, and year by year the earning power of his invention increased. He was independent, able to travel wherever he willed over the earth and to glut his monstrous appetite for revenge. He had become a monomaniac and an anarchist — not a philosophic anarchist, merely, but a violent anarchist. Perhaps the word is misused, and he

is better described as a nihilist, or an annihilist. It is known that he affiliated with none of the groups of terrorists. He operated wholly alone, but he created a thousandfold more terror and achieved a thousandfold more destruction than all the terrorist groups added together.

He signaled his departure from California by blowing up Fort Mason. In his confession he spoke of it as a little experiment — he was merely trying his hand. For eight years he wandered over the earth, a mysterious terror, destroying property to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars, and destroying countless lives. One good result of his awful deeds was the destruction he wrought among the terrorists themselves. Every time he did anything the terrorists in the vicinity were gathered in by the police dragnet, and many of them were executed. Seventeen were executed at Rome alone, following the assassination of the Italian King.

Perhaps the most world-amazing achievement of his was the assassination of the King and Queen of Portugal. It was their wedding day. All possible precautions had been taken against the terrorists, and the way from the cathedral, through Lisbon's streets, was double-banked with troops, while a squad of two hundred mounted troopers surrounded the carriage. Suddenly the amazing thing happened. The automatic rifles of the troopers began to go off, as well as the rifles, in the immediate vicinity, of the double-banked infantry. In the excitement the muzzles of the exploding rifles were turned in all directions. The slaughter was terrible — horses, troops, spectators, and the King and Queen, were riddled with bullets. To complicate the affair, in different parts of the crowd behind the foot-soldiers, two terrorists had bombs explode on their persons. These bombs they had intended to throw if they got the opportunity. But who was to know this? The frightful havoc wrought by the bursting bombs but added to the confusion; it was considered part of the general attack.

One puzzling thing that could not be explained away was the conduct of the troopers with their exploding rifles. It seemed impossible that they should be in the plot, yet there were the hundreds their flying bullets had slain, including the King and Queen. On the other hand, more baffling than ever was the fact that seventy per cent. of the troopers themselves had been killed or wounded. Some explained this on the ground that the loyal foot-soldiers, witnessing the attack on the royal carriage, had opened fire on the traitors. Yet not one bit of evidence to verify this could be drawn from the survivors, though many were put to the torture. They contended stubbornly that they had not discharged their rifles at all, but that their rifles had discharged themselves. They were laughed at by the chemists, who held that, while it was just barely probable that a single cartridge, charged with the new smokeless powder, might spontaneously explode, it was beyond all probability and possibility for all the cartridges in a given area, so charged, spontaneously to explode. And so, in the end, no explanation of the amazing occurrence was reached. The general opinion of the rest of the world was that the whole affair was a blind panic of the feverish Latins, precipitated, it was true, by the bursting of two terrorist bombs; and in this connection was recalled the laughable encounter of long years before between the Russian fleet and the English fishing boats.

And Emil Gluck chuckled and went his way. He knew. But how was the world to know? He had stumbled upon the secret in his old electroplating shop on Telegraph Avenue in the city of Oakland. It happened, at that time, that a wireless telegraph station was established by the Thurston Power Company close to his shop. In a short time his electroplating vat was put out of order. The vat-wiring had many bad joints, and, on investigation, Gluck discovered minute welds at the joints in the wiring. These, by lowering the resistance, had caused an excessive current to pass through the solution, "boiling" it and spoiling the work. But what had caused the welds? was the question in Gluck's mind. His reasoning was simple. Before the establishment of the wireless station, the vat had worked well. Not until after the establishment of the wireless station had the vat been ruined. Therefore the wireless station had been the cause. But how? He quickly answered the question. If an electric discharge was capable of operating a coherer across three thousand miles of ocean, then, certainly, the electric discharges from the wireless station four hundred feet away could produce coherer effects on the bad joints in the vat-wiring.

Gluck thought no more about it at the time. He merely re-wired his vat and went on electroplating. But afterwards, in prison, he remembered the incident, and like a flash there came into his mind the full significance of it. He saw in it the silent, secret weapon with which to revenge himself on the world. His great discovery, which died with him, was control over the direction and scope of the electric discharge. At the time, this was the unsolved problem of wireless telegraphy — as it still is to-day — but Emil Gluck, in his prison cell, mastered it. And, when he was released, he applied it. It was fairly simple, given the directing power that was his, to introduce a spark into the powder-magazines of a fort, a battleship, or a revolver. And not alone could he thus explode powder at a distance, but he could ignite conflagrations. The great Boston fire was started by him — quite by accident, however, as he stated in his confession, adding that it was a pleasing accident and that he had never had any reason to regret it.

It was Emil Gluck that caused the terrible German-American War, with the loss of 800,000 lives and the consumption of almost incalculable treasure. It will be remembered that in 1939, because of the Pickard incident, strained relations existed between the two countries. Germany, though aggrieved, was not anxious for war, and, as a peace token, sent the Crown Prince and seven battleships on a friendly visit to the United States. On the night of February 15, the seven warships lay at anchor in the Hudson opposite New York City. And on that night Emil Gluck, alone, with all his apparatus on board, was out in a launch. This launch, it was afterwards proved, was bought by him from the Ross Turner Company, while much of the apparatus he used that night had been purchased from the Columbia Electric Works. But this was not known at the time. All that was known was that the seven battleships blew up, one after another, at regular four-minute intervals. Ninety per cent. of the crews and officers, along with the Crown Prince, perished. Many years before, the American battleship Maine had been blown up in the harbour of Havana, and war with Spain had immediately followed —

though there has always existed a reasonable doubt as to whether the explosion was due to conspiracy or accident. But accident could not explain the blowing up of the seven battleships on the Hudson at four-minute intervals. Germany believed that it had been done by a submarine, and immediately declared war. It was six months after Gluck's confession that she returned the Philippines and Hawaii to the United States.

In the meanwhile Emil Gluck, the malevolent wizard and arch-hater, travelled his whirlwind path of destruction. He left no traces. Scientifically thorough, he always cleaned up after himself. His method was to rent a room or a house, and secretly to install his apparatus — which apparatus, by the way, he so perfected and simplified that it occupied little space. After he had accomplished his purpose he carefully removed the apparatus. He bade fair to live out a long life of horrible crime.

The epidemic of shooting of New York City policemen was a remarkable affair. It became one of the horror mysteries of the time. In two short weeks over a hundred policemen were shot in the legs by their own revolvers. Inspector Jones did not solve the mystery, but it was his idea that finally outwitted Gluck. On his recommendation the policemen ceased carrying revolvers, and no more accidental shootings occurred.

It was in the early spring of 1940 that Gluck destroyed the Mare Island navy-yard. From a room in Vallejo he sent his electric discharges across the Vallejo Straits to Mare Island. He first played his flashes on the battleship Maryland. She lay at the dock of one of the mine-magazines. On her forward deck, on a huge temporary platform of timbers, were disposed over a hundred mines. These mines were for the defence of the Golden Gate. Any one of these mines was capable of destroying a dozen battleships, and there were over a hundred mines. The destruction was terrific, but it was only Gluck's overture. He played his flashes down the Mare Island shore, blowing up five torpedo boats, the torpedo station, and the great magazine at the eastern end of the island. Returning westward again, and scooping in occasional isolated magazines on the high ground back from the shore, he blew up three cruisers and the battleships Oregon, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Florida — the latter had just gone into dry-dock, and the magnificent dry-dock was destroyed along with her.

It was a frightful catastrophe, and a shiver of horror passed through the land. But it was nothing to what was to follow. In the late fall of that year Emil Gluck made a clean sweep of the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Florida. Nothing escaped. Forts, mines, coast defences of all sorts, torpedo stations, magazines — everything went up. Three months afterward, in midwinter, he smote the north shore of the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to Greece in the same stupefying manner. A wail went up from the nations. It was clear that human agency was behind all this destruction, and it was equally clear, through Emil Gluck's impartiality, that the destruction was not the work of any particular nation. One thing was patent, namely, that whoever was the human behind it all, that human was a menace to the world. No nation was safe. There was no defence against this unknown and all-powerful foe. Warfare was futile — nay, not merely futile but itself the very essence of the peril. For a twelve-month the manufacture of powder ceased, and all soldiers and sailors were withdrawn from all fortifications and war

vessels. And even a world-disarmament was seriously considered at the Convention of the Powers, held at The Hague at that time.

And then Silas Bannerman, a secret service agent of the United States, leaped into world-fame by arresting Emil Gluck. At first Bannerman was laughed at, but he had prepared his case well, and in a few weeks the most sceptical were convinced of Emil Gluck's guilt. The one thing, however, that Silas Bannerman never succeeded in explaining, even to his own satisfaction, was how first he came to connect Gluck with the atrocious crimes. It is true, Bannerman was in Vallejo, on secret government business, at the time of the destruction of Mare Island; and it is true that on the streets of Vallejo Emil Gluck was pointed out to him as a queer crank; but no impression was made at the time. It was not until afterward, when on a vacation in the Rocky Mountains and when reading the first published reports of the destruction along the Atlantic Coast, that suddenly Bannerman thought of Emil Gluck. And on the instant there flashed into his mind the connection between Gluck and the destruction. It was only an hypothesis, but it was sufficient. The great thing was the conception of the hypothesis, in itself an act of unconscious cerebration — a thing as unaccountable as the flashing, for instance, into Newton's mind of the principle of gravitation.

The rest was easy. Where was Gluck at the time of the destruction along the Atlantic sea-board? was the question that formed in Bannerman's mind. By his own request he was put upon the case. In no time he ascertained that Gluck had himself been up and down the Atlantic Coast in the late fall of 1940. Also he ascertained that Gluck had been in New York City during the epidemic of the shooting of police officers. Where was Gluck now? was Bannerman's next query. And, as if in answer, came the wholesale destruction along the Mediterranean. Gluck had sailed for Europe a month before — Bannerman knew that. It was not necessary for Bannerman to go to Europe. By means of cable messages and the co-operation of the European secret services, he traced Gluck's course along the Mediterranean and found that in every instance it coincided with the blowing up of coast defences and ships. Also, he learned that Gluck had just sailed on the Green Star liner *Plutonic* for the United States.

The case was complete in Bannerman's mind, though in the interval of waiting he worked up the details. In this he was ably assisted by George Brown, an operator employed by the Wood's System of Wireless Telegraphy. When the *Plutonic* arrived off Sandy Hook she was boarded by Bannerman from a Government tug, and Emil Gluck was made a prisoner. The trial and the confession followed. In the confession Gluck professed regret only for one thing, namely, that he had taken his time. As he said, had he dreamed that he was ever to be discovered he would have worked more rapidly and accomplished a thousand times the destruction he did. His secret died with him, though it is now known that the French Government managed to get access to him and offered him a billion francs for his invention wherewith he was able to direct and closely to confine electric discharges. "What!" was Gluck's reply — "to sell to you that which would enable you to enslave and maltreat suffering Humanity?" And though the war departments of the nations have continued to experiment in their secret laboratories,

they have so far failed to light upon the slightest trace of the secret. Emil Gluck was executed on December 4, 1941, and so died, at the age of forty-six, one of the world's most unfortunate geniuses, a man of tremendous intellect, but whose mighty powers, instead of making toward good, were so twisted and warped that he became the most amazing of criminals.

— Culled from Mr. A. G. Burnside's "Eccentricities of Crime," by kind permission of the publishers, Messrs. Holiday and Whitsund.

The Eternity of Forms

A strange life has come to an end in the death of Mr. Sedley Crayden, of Crayden Hill.

Mild, harmless, he was the victim of a strange delusion that kept him pinned, night and day, in his chair for the last two years of his life. The mysterious death, or, rather, disappearance, of his elder brother, James Crayden, seems to have preyed upon his mind, for it was shortly after that event that his delusion began to manifest itself.

Mr. Crayden never vouchsafed any explanation of his strange conduct. There was nothing the matter with him physically; and, mentally, the alienists found him normal in every way save for his one remarkable idiosyncrasy. His remaining in his chair was purely voluntary, an act of his own will. And now he is dead, and the mystery remains unsolved.

— Extract from the Newton Courier-Times.

Briefly, I was Mr. Sedley Crayden's confidential servant and valet for the last eight months of his life. During that time he wrote a great deal in a manuscript that he kept always beside him, except when he drowsed or slept, at which times he invariably locked it in a desk drawer close to his hand.

I was curious to read what the old gentleman wrote, but he was too cautious and cunning. I never got a peep at the manuscript. If he were engaged upon it when I attended on him, he covered the top sheet with a large blotter. It was I who found him dead in his chair, and it was then that I took the liberty of abstracting the manuscript. I was very curious to read it, and I have no excuses to offer.

After retaining it in my secret possession for several years, and after ascertaining that Mr. Crayden left no surviving relatives, I have decided to make the nature of the manuscript known. It is very long, and I have omitted nearly all of it, giving only the more lucid fragments. It bears all the earmarks of a disordered mind, and various experiences are repeated over and over, while much is so vague and incoherent as to defy comprehension. Nevertheless, from reading it myself, I venture to predict that if an excavation is made in the main basement, somewhere in the vicinity of the foundation of the great chimney, a collection of bones will be found which should very closely resemble those which James Crayden once clothed in mortal flesh.

— Statement of Rudolph Heckler.

Here follows the excerpts from the manuscript, made and arranged by Rudolph Heckler:

I never killed my brother. Let this be my first word and my last. Why should I kill him? We lived together in unbroken harmony for twenty years. We were old men, and

the fires and tempers of youth had long since burned out. We never disagreed even over the most trivial things. Never was there such amity as ours. We were scholars. We cared nothing for the outside world. Our companionship and our books were all-satisfying. Never were there such talks as we held. Many a night we have sat up till two and three in the morning, conversing, weighing opinions and judgments, referring to authorities — in short, we lived at high and friendly intellectual altitudes.

He disappeared. I suffered a great shock. Why should he have disappeared? Where could he have gone? It was very strange. I was stunned. They say I was very sick for weeks. It was brain fever. This was caused by his inexplicable disappearance. It was at the beginning of the experience I hope here to relate, that he disappeared.

How I have endeavoured to find him. I am not an excessively rich man, yet have I offered continually increasing rewards. I have advertised in all the papers, and sought the aid of all the detective bureaus. At the present moment, the rewards I have out aggregate over fifty thousand dollars.

They say he was murdered. They also say murder will out. Then I say, why does not his murder come out? Who did it? Where is he? Where is Jim? My Jim?

We were so happy together. He had a remarkable mind, a most remarkable mind, so firmly founded, so widely informed, so rigidly logical, that it was not at all strange that we agreed in all things. Dissension was unknown between us. Jim was the most truthful man I have ever met. In this, too, we were similar, as we were similar in our intellectual honesty. We never sacrificed truth to make a point. We had no points to make, we so thoroughly agreed. It is absurd to think that we could disagree on anything under the sun.

I wish he would come back. Why did he go? Who can ever explain it? I am lonely now, and depressed with grave forebodings — frightened by terrors that are of the mind and that put at naught all that my mind has ever conceived. Form is mutable. This is the last word of positive science. The dead do not come back. This is incontrovertible. The dead are dead, and that is the end of it, and of them. And yet I have had experiences here — here, in this very room, at this very desk, that — But wait. Let me put it down in black and white, in words simple and unmistakable. Let me ask some questions. Who mislays my pen? That is what I desire to know. Who uses up my ink so rapidly? Not I. And yet the ink goes.

The answer to these questions would settle all the enigmas of the universe. I know the answer. I am not a fool. And some day, if I am plagued too desperately, I shall give the answer myself. I shall give the name of him who mislays my pen and uses up my ink. It is so silly to think that I could use such a quantity of ink. The servant lies. I know.

I have got me a fountain pen. I have always disliked the device, but my old stub had to go. I burned it in the fireplace. The ink I keep under lock and key. I shall see if I cannot put a stop to these lies that are being written about me. And I have other plans. It is not true that I have recanted. I still believe that I live in a mechanical universe. It has not been proved otherwise to me, for all that I have peered over his shoulder

and read his malicious statement to the contrary. He gives me credit for no less than average stupidity. He thinks I think he is real. How silly. I know he is a brain-figment, nothing more.

There are such things as hallucinations. Even as I looked over his shoulder and read, I knew that this was such a thing. If I were only well it would be interesting. All my life I have wanted to experience such phenomena. And now it has come to me. I shall make the most of it. What is imagination? It can make something where there is nothing. How can anything be something where there is nothing? How can anything be something and nothing at the same time? I leave it for the metaphysicians to ponder. I know better. No scholastics for me. This is a real world, and everything in it is real. What is not real, is not. Therefore he is not. Yet he tries to fool me into believing that he is ... when all the time I know he has no existence outside of my own brain cells.

I saw him to-day, seated at the desk, writing. It gave me quite a shock, because I had thought he was quite dispelled. Nevertheless, on looking steadily, I found that he was not there — the old familiar trick of the brain. I have dwelt too long on what has happened. I am becoming morbid, and my old indigestion is hinting and muttering. I shall take exercise. Each day I shall walk for two hours.

It is impossible. I cannot exercise. Each time I return from my walk, he is sitting in my chair at the desk. It grows more difficult to drive him away. It is my chair. Upon this I insist. It was his, but he is dead and it is no longer his. How one can be befooled by the phantoms of his own imagining! There is nothing real in this apparition. I know it. I am firmly grounded with my fifty years of study. The dead are dead.

And yet, explain one thing. To-day, before going for my walk, I carefully put the fountain pen in my pocket before leaving the room. I remember it distinctly. I looked at the clock at the time. It was twenty minutes past ten. Yet on my return there was the pen lying on the desk. Some one had been using it. There was very little ink left. I wish he would not write so much. It is disconcerting.

There was one thing upon which Jim and I were not quite agreed. He believed in the eternity of the forms of things. Therefore, entered in immediately the consequent belief in immortality, and all the other notions of the metaphysical philosophers. I had little patience with him in this. Painstakingly I have traced to him the evolution of his belief in the eternity of forms, showing him how it has arisen out of his early infatuation with logic and mathematics. Of course, from that warped, squinting, abstract view-point, it is very easy to believe in the eternity of forms.

I laughed at the unseen world. Only the real was real, I contended, and what one did not perceive, was not, could not be. I believed in a mechanical universe. Chemistry and physics explained everything. "Can no being be?" he demanded in reply. I said that his question was but the major promise of a fallacious Christian Science syllogism. Oh, believe me, I know my logic, too. But he was very stubborn. I never had any patience with philosophic idealists.

Once, I made to him my confession of faith. It was simple, brief, unanswerable. Even as I write it now I know that it is unanswerable. Here it is. I told him: "I assert,

with Hobbes, that it is impossible to separate thought from matter that thinks. I assert, with Bacon, that all human understanding arises from the world of sensations. I assert, with Locke, that all human ideas are due to the functions of the senses. I assert, with Kant, the mechanical origin of the universe, and that creation is a natural and historical process. I assert, with Laplace, that there is no need of the hypothesis of a creator. And, finally, I assert, because of all the foregoing, that form is ephemeral. Form passes. Therefore we pass.”

I repeat, it was unanswerable. Yet did he answer with Paley’s notorious fallacy of the watch. Also, he talked about radium, and all but asserted that the very existence of matter had been exploded by these later-day laboratory researches. It was childish. I had not dreamed he could be so immature.

How could one argue with such a man? I then asserted the reasonableness of all that is. To this he agreed, reserving, however, one exception. He looked at me, as he said it, in a way I could not mistake. The inference was obvious. That he should be guilty of so cheap a quip in the midst of a serious discussion, astounded me.

The eternity of forms. It is ridiculous. Yet is there a strange magic in the words. If it be true, then has he not ceased to exist. Then does he exist. This is impossible.

I have ceased exercising. As long as I remain in the room, the hallucination does not bother me. But when I return to the room after an absence, he is always there, sitting at the desk, writing. Yet I dare not confide in a physician. I must fight this out by myself.

He grows more importunate. To-day, consulting a book on the shelf, I turned and found him again in the chair. This is the first time he has dared do this in my presence. Nevertheless, by looking at him steadily and sternly for several minutes, I compelled him to vanish. This proves my contention. He does not exist. If he were an eternal form I could not make him vanish by a mere effort of my will.

This is getting damnable. To-day I gazed at him for an entire hour before I could make him leave. Yet it is so simple. What I see is a memory picture. For twenty years I was accustomed to seeing him there at the desk. The present phenomenon is merely a recrudescence of that memory picture — a picture which was impressed countless times on my consciousness.

I gave up to-day. He exhausted me, and still he would not go. I sat and watched him hour after hour. He takes no notice of me, but continually writes. I know what he writes, for I read it over his shoulder. It is not true. He is taking an unfair advantage.

Query: He is a product of my consciousness; is it possible, then, that entities may be created by consciousness?

We did not quarrel. To this day I do not know how it happened. Let me tell you. Then you will see. We sat up late that never-to-be-forgotten last night of his existence. It was the old, old discussion — the eternity of forms. How many hours and how many nights we had consumed over it!

On this night he had been particularly irritating, and all my nerves were screaming. He had been maintaining that the human soul was itself a form, an eternal form, and that the light within his brain would go on forever and always. I took up the poker.

“Suppose,” I said, “I should strike you dead with this?”

“I would go on,” he answered.

“As a conscious entity?” I demanded.

“Yes, as a conscious entity,” was his reply. “I should go on, from plane to plane of higher existence, remembering my earth-life, you, this very argument — ay, and continuing the argument with you.”

It was only argument. I swear it was only argument. I never lifted a hand. How could I? He was my brother, my elder brother, Jim.

I cannot remember. I was very exasperated. He had always been so obstinate in this metaphysical belief of his. The next I knew, he was lying on the hearth. Blood was running. It was terrible. He did not speak. He did not move. He must have fallen in a fit and struck his head. I noticed there was blood on the poker. In falling he must have struck upon it with his head. And yet I fail to see how this can be, for I held it in my hand all the time. I was still holding it in my hand as I looked at it.

It is an hallucination. That is a conclusion of common sense. I have watched the growth of it. At first it was only in the dimmest light that I could see him sitting in the chair. But as the time passed, and the hallucination, by repetition, strengthened, he was able to appear in the chair under the strongest lights. That is the explanation. It is quite satisfactory.

I shall never forget the first time I saw it. I had dined alone downstairs. I never drink wine, so that what happened was eminently normal. It was in the summer twilight that I returned to the study. I glanced at the desk. There he was, sitting. So natural was it, that before I knew I cried out “Jim!” Then I remembered all that had happened. Of course it was an hallucination. I knew that. I took the poker and went over to it. He did not move nor vanish. The poker cleaved through the non-existent substance of the thing and struck the back of the chair. Fabric of fancy, that is all it was. The mark is there on the chair now where the poker struck. I pause from my writing and turn and look at it — press the tips of my fingers into the indentation.

He did continue the argument. I stole up to-day and looked over his shoulder. He was writing the history of our discussion. It was the same old nonsense about the eternity of forms. But as I continued to read, he wrote down the practical test I had made with the poker. Now this is unfair and untrue. I made no test. In falling he struck his head on the poker.

Some day, somebody will find and read what he writes. This will be terrible. I am suspicious of the servant, who is always peeping and peering, trying to see what I write. I must do something. Every servant I have had is curious about what I write.

Fabric of fancy. That is all it is. There is no Jim who sits in the chair. I know that. Last night, when the house was asleep, I went down into the cellar and looked carefully at the soil around the chimney. It was untampered with. The dead do not rise up.

Yesterday morning, when I entered the study, there he was in the chair. When I had dispelled him, I sat in the chair myself all day. I had my meals brought to me. And thus I escaped the sight of him for many hours, for he appears only in the chair. I was weary, but I sat late, until eleven o'clock. Yet, when I stood up to go to bed, I looked around, and there he was. He had slipped into the chair on the instant. Being only fabric of fancy, all day he had resided in my brain. The moment it was unoccupied, he took up his residence in the chair. Are these his boasted higher planes of existence — his brother's brain and a chair? After all, was he not right? Has his eternal form become so attenuated as to be an hallucination? Are hallucinations real entities? Why not? There is food for thought here. Some day I shall come to a conclusion upon it.

He was very much disturbed to-day. He could not write, for I had made the servant carry the pen out of the room in his pocket. But neither could I write.

The servant never sees him. This is strange. Have I developed a keener sight for the unseen? Or rather does it not prove the phantom to be what it is — a product of my own morbid consciousness?

He has stolen my pen again. Hallucinations cannot steal pens. This is unanswerable. And yet I cannot keep the pen always out of the room. I want to write myself.

I have had three different servants since my trouble came upon me, and not one has seen him. Is the verdict of their senses right? And is that of mine wrong? Nevertheless, the ink goes too rapidly. I fill my pen more often than is necessary. And furthermore, only to-day I found my pen out of order. I did not break it.

I have spoken to him many times, but he never answers. I sat and watched him all morning. Frequently he looked at me, and it was patent that he knew me.

By striking the side of my head violently with the heel of my hand, I can shake the vision of him out of my eyes. Then I can get into the chair; but I have learned that I must move very quickly in order to accomplish this. Often he fools me and is back again before I can sit down.

It is getting unbearable. He is a jack-in-the-box the way he pops into the chair. He does not assume form slowly. He pops. That is the only way to describe it. I cannot stand looking at him much more. That way lies madness, for it compels me almost to believe in the reality of what I know is not. Besides, hallucinations do not pop.

Thank God he only manifests himself in the chair. As long as I occupy the chair I am quit of him.

My device for dislodging him from the chair by striking my head, is failing. I have to hit much more violently, and I do not succeed perhaps more than once in a dozen trials. My head is quite sore where I have so repeatedly struck it. I must use the other hand.

My brother was right. There is an unseen world. Do I not see it? Am I not cursed with the seeing of it all the time? Call it a thought, an idea, anything you will, still it is there. It is unescapable. Thoughts are entities. We create with every act of thinking. I have created this phantom that sits in my chair and uses my ink. Because I have

created him is no reason that he is any the less real. He is an idea; he is an entity: ergo, ideas are entities, and an entity is a reality.

Query: If a man, with the whole historical process behind him, can create an entity, a real thing, then is not the hypothesis of a Creator made substantial? If the stuff of life can create, then it is fair to assume that there can be a He who created the stuff of life. It is merely a difference of degree. I have not yet made a mountain nor a solar system, but I have made a something that sits in my chair. This being so, may I not some day be able to make a mountain or a solar system?

All his days, down to to-day, man has lived in a maze. He has never seen the light. I am convinced that I am beginning to see the light — not as my brother saw it, by stumbling upon it accidentally, but deliberately and rationally. My brother is dead. He has ceased. There is no doubt about it, for I have made another journey down into the cellar to see. The ground was untouched. I broke it myself to make sure, and I saw what made me sure. My brother has ceased, yet have I recreated him. This is not my old brother, yet it is something as nearly resembling him as I could fashion it. I am unlike other men. I am a god. I have created.

Whenever I leave the room to go to bed, I look back, and there is my brother sitting in the chair. And then I cannot sleep because of thinking of him sitting through all the long night-hours. And in the morning, when I open the study door, there he is, and I know he has sat there the night long.

I am becoming desperate from lack of sleep. I wish I could confide in a physician.

Blessed sleep! I have won to it at last. Let me tell you. Last night I was so worn that I found myself dozing in my chair. I rang for the servant and ordered him to bring blankets. I slept. All night was he banished from my thoughts as he was banished from my chair. I shall remain in it all day. It is a wonderful relief.

It is uncomfortable to sleep in a chair. But it is more uncomfortable to lie in bed, hour after hour, and not sleep, and to know that he is sitting there in the cold darkness.

It is no use. I shall never be able to sleep in a bed again. I have tried it now, numerous times, and every such night is a horror. If I could but only persuade him to go to bed! But no. He sits there, and sits there — I know he does — while I stare and stare up into the blackness and think and think, continually think, of him sitting there. I wish I had never heard of the eternity of forms.

The servants think I am crazy. That is but to be expected, and it is why I have never called in a physician.

I am resolved. Henceforth this hallucination ceases. From now on I shall remain in the chair. I shall never leave it. I shall remain in it night and day and always.

I have succeeded. For two weeks I have not seen him. Nor shall I ever see him again. I have at last attained the equanimity of mind necessary for philosophic thought. I wrote a complete chapter to-day.

It is very wearisome, sitting in a chair. The weeks pass, the months come and go, the seasons change, the servants replace each other, while I remain. I only remain. It is a strange life I lead, but at least I am at peace.

He comes no more. There is no eternity of forms. I have proved it. For nearly two years now, I have remained in this chair, and I have not seen him once. True, I was severely tried for a time. But it is clear that what I thought I saw was merely hallucination. He never was. Yet I do not leave the chair. I am afraid to leave the chair.

Even Unto Death

IT might have been due to mere coincidence, it might have been because there are undreamed-of bonds between the quick and the dead, and it might have been that Bat Morganston felt a blind consciousness of the future, when he turned suddenly to Frona Payne and asked, "Even unto death?"

Frona Payne was startled for the moment. Her shallow nature would not permit her to understand the strength of a strong man's love; such things had no place in her fickle standard. Yet she knew men well enough to repress her inclination to smile; so she looked up to him with her serious child's eyes, placing a hand on each brawny shoulder, and answered: "Even unto death, Bat, dear."

And as he crushed her to him, half doubting, he passionately cried, "If it should happen so, even in death I shall claim you, and no mortal man shall come between."

"How absurd," she thought as she freed herself and watched him untangling his dogs. And a handsome fellow he was as he waded among the fierce brutes, pulling here and shoving there, cuffing right and left, and dragging them over and under the frozen traces till the team stood clear. Nipped by the intense cold to a tender pink, his smooth-shaven face told a plain tale of strength and indomitability. His hair, falling about his shoulders in thick masses of silky brown, was probably more responsible for winning the woman's affections than all the rest of him put together. yet when men ran their eyes up and down his six foot two of brawn, they declared him a man, from his beaded moccasins to the crown of his wolf-skin cap. But then, they were men.

She kissed him once, twice and yet a third time, in her shy, trusting way; then he broke out the sled with the gee-pole, "mushed-up" the dogs as only a dog-driver can, and swung down the hill to the main river trail. The meridian sun, shouldering over the snowy summits to the south, turned the tiny frost-particles to scintillating gems, and through this dazzling gossamer Bat Morganston disappeared on his journey down the Yukon to Forty Mile. Down there he was accounted a king, in virtue of the rich dirt which was his after the dreary years he had spent in the darkness of the Artic circle. Dawson had no claims upon him. He did not own a foot of gravel in the district, nor was he smitten with its inhabitants — the Che-cha-quas that had rushed in like jackals and spoiled the good times when men were men and every man a brother. In fact, the only reason for his presence, and a most unstable one at that, was Frona. He had harnessed his dogs and run up on the ice to renew the pledged of the previous summer, and to plead for an early date. Well, they were to be married in June, and he was returning to the management of his miners with a light heart. June! — the clean-up promised to be rich; he would sell out; and then, the States, Paris, the world!

Of course, he doubted — most men do when they leave a pretty woman behind; but ere he had reached Forty Mile he no longer mistrusted, and by the time he froze his lungs on a moose-hunt and died a month later, he had attained a state of blissful optimism.

Frona waved him good-bye, and also with a light heart, turned back to her father's cabin; but then, she had no doubts at all. They were to be married in June. That was all settled. And it was no unpleasant prospect. To tell the truth, she thought she would rather like it. Men thought a great deal of him, and it was a match not to be ashamed of. Besides, he was rich. People who should know said he could at any time clean up half a million, and if his American Creek interests turned out anywhere near as reported, he would be a second MacDonald. Now this meant a great deal, for MacDonald was the richest miner in the North, and the most conservative guessers varied by several millions in the appraisal of his wealth.

Now be it known that the sin Frona Payne committed was a sin of deed, not fact. There were no mail teams between Forty Mile and Dawson, and as Bat Morganston's mines were still a hundred miles into the frozen wilderness from Forty Mile, no news of his death came up the river. And since he had agreed to write only on the highly improbable contingency of a stray traveler passing his diggings, she thought nothing of his silence. To all intents, so far as she was concerned, he was alive. So the sin she committed was of a verity a sin of deed.

By no method may a woman's soul be analyzed, by no scales may a woman's motive be weighed; so no reason can be given for Frona Payne giving her heart and hand to Jack Crellin within three months of her farewell to Bat Morganston. True, Jack Crellin was a Circle City king, possessed of some of the choicest Birch Creek claims; but the men who had made the country did not rate him highly, and his only admirers were to be found among the sycophantic tenderfeet who generously helped him scatter his yellow dust. Perhaps it was the way he had about him, and perhaps it was the impulsive affinity of two shallow souls; but be it what it may, they agreed to marry each other in June, and to journey on down to Circle City and set up housekeeping after the primitive manner of the Northland.

The Yukon broke early, and soon after that important event, the river steamer, Cassiar, captained by her brother, was scheduled to sail. The Cassiar had the mingled honor and misfortune to be both the treasure ship and the hospital ship of the year. In her strong boxes she carried five millions of gold, in her staterooms ten score of crippled and diseased. And there were also Lower Country traders and kings, returning from their winter labors or pleasures at Dawson. Among these — a little anticipation of the event — were listed Mr. and Mrs. Jack Crellin. But when the sick and heart-weary lifted their voices to heaven at the cruel delay, and the gold shippers waxed clamorous, the Cassiar was forced to sail before her time, and Mr. and Mrs. Jack Crellin were yet man and maid.

"Never mind, Frona," her brother said; "come aboard and I'll take charge of you. Father Mahan takes passage at Forty Mile, and you'll be snugly one before we say good-bye at Circle City."

Plimsol marks, boiler inspectors and protesting boards of underwriters, not yet having penetrated the dismal dominions of the North, the Cassiar cast of her lines, with passengers, freight and chattels packed like badly assorted sardines. Wolf-dogs, whose work began and ceased with the snow, and who grew high-stomached with summer idleness, rioted over the steamer from stem to stern or killed each other on the slightest provocation. Stalwart Stick Indians of the Upper River regions lightened their heavy money pouches in brave endeavors to best the white man at his games of chance, or outraged their vitals with the whisky he sold at thirty dollars the bottle. There were squat Mongolian-featured Malemute and Inuit wanderers from the Great Delta two thousand miles away; not among the whites was the jangle of nationalities less pronounced. The nations of the world had sent their sons to the North, and the tongues they spoke were many. In short, the brother of Frona Payne commanded a floating Babel, commanded and guided it unerringly through uncharted wilderness upon the breast of a howling flood — for the mighty Yukon had raised its sullen voice and roared its anger from mountain rim to mountain rim. Nine months of snow was passing between its banks in as many days, and the journey of the sea was long.

At Forty Mile more passengers and freight were crowded aboard. Among the pilgrims was Father Mahan, and in the baggage was an unpainted pine box, corresponding in size to the conventional last tenement of man. The rush of life has little heed for death, so this box was piled precariously upon a pyramid of freight on the Cassiar's deck. But Bat Morganston, having lain till the moment of shipment in a comfortable ice cave, did not care. Nobody cared. There were no mourners, save a huge wolf-dog, to whom the taste of his master's lash was still sweet. He crept aboard unnoticed, and ere the lines were cast off had taken up his accustomed vigil on the heap of freight by his master's side. He was such a vicious brute, and had such a fearful way of baring his fangs that the other canine passengers gave him a wide berth, choosing to leave him alone with his dead.

The cabins were crowded with the sick, so the marriage began on the stifling deck. It was near midnight, but the sun, red-disked and somber, slanted its oblique rays from juts above the northern sky-line. Frona Payne and Jack Crellin stood side by side. Father Mahan began the service. From aft came the sound of scuffling among half a dozen drunken gamblers; but in the main the human cargo had crowded about the center of interest. And also the dogs.

Still, all would have been well had not a Labrador dog sought a coign of vantage among the freight. He had traveled countless journeys, was a veteran of a dozen famines and a thousand fights, and knew not fear. The truculent front of the dog which guarded the pine box interested him. He drew in, his naked fangs shining like jeweled ivory. They closed with snap and snarl, the carelessly piled freight tottering beneath them.

At this moment Father Mahan blessed the two, which were now one, and Jack Crellin solemnly added, "Even unto death."

"Even unto death," Frona Payne repeated, and her mind leaped back to the other man who had spoken those words. For the instant she felt genuine sorrow and remorse

for what she had done. And at that instant the dogs shut their jaws in the death grip, and the long pine box poised on the edge of its pyramid. her husband jerked her from beneath it as it fell, end on. There was a crash and splintering; the cover fell away; and Bat Morganston, on his feet, erect, just as in life, with the sun glinting on his silky brown locks, swept forward.

It happened very quickly. Some say that his lips parted in a fearful smile, that he flung his arms about Frona Payne and held her till they fell together to the deck. This would seem impossible, seeing that the man was dead; but there are those who swear that these things were done. However, Frona Payne shrieked terribly as they drew her from beneath the body of her jilted lover, nor did her shrieking cease till land was made at Circle City. And Bat Morganston's words were true, for today, if one should care to journey over to the hills which lie beyond Circle City, he will see, side by side, a cabin and a grave. In the one dwells Frona Payne; in the other Bat Morganston. They are waiting for each other till their fetters shall fall away and the Trump of Doom break the silence of the North.

The Faith of Men

TELL you what we'll do; we'll shake for it."

"That suits me," said the second man, turning, as he spoke, to the Indian that was mending snow-shoes in a corner of the cabin. "Here, you Billebedam, take a run down to Oleson's cabin like a good fellow, and tell him we want to borrow his dice box."

This sudden request in the midst of a council on wages of men, wood, and grub surprised Billebedam. Besides, it was early in the day, and he had never known white men of the calibre of Pentfield and Hutchinson to dice and play till the day's work was done. But his face was impassive as a Yukon Indian's should be, as he pulled on his mittens and went out the door.

Though eight o'clock, it was still dark outside, and the cabin was lighted by a tallow candle thrust into an empty whisky bottle. It stood on the pine-board table in the middle of a disarray of dirty tin dishes. Tallow from innumerable candles had dripped down the long neck of the bottle and hardened into a miniature glacier. The small room, which composed the entire cabin, was as badly littered as the table; while at one end, against the wall, were two bunks, one above the other, with the blankets turned down just as the two men had crawled out in the morning.

Lawrence Pentfield and Corry Hutchinson were millionaires, though they did not look it. There seemed nothing unusual about them, while they would have passed muster as fair specimens of lumbermen in any Michigan camp. But outside, in the darkness, where holes yawned in the ground, were many men engaged in windlassing muck and gravel and gold from the bottoms of the holes where other men received fifteen dollars per day for scraping it from off the bedrock. Each day thousands of dollars' worth of gold were scraped from bedrock and windlassed to the surface, and it all belonged to Pentfield and Hutchinson, who took their rank among the richest kings of Bonanza.

Pentfield broke the silence that followed on Billebedam's departure by heaping the dirty plates higher on the table and drumming a tattoo on the cleared space with his knuckles. Hutchinson snuffed the smoky candle and reflectively rubbed the soot from the wick between thumb and forefinger.

"By Jove, I wish we could both go out!" he abruptly exclaimed. "That would settle it all."

Pentfield looked at him darkly.

"If it weren't for your cursed obstinacy, it'd be settled anyway. All you have to do is get up and go. I'll look after things, and next year I can go out."

"Why should I go? I've no one waiting for me—"

“Your people,” Pentfield broke in roughly.

“Like you have,” Hutchinson went on. “A girl, I mean, and you know it.”

Pentfield shrugged his shoulders gloomily. “She can wait, I guess.”

“But she’s been waiting two years now.”

“And another won’t age her beyond recognition.”

“That’d be three years. Think of it, old man, three years in this end of the earth, this falling-off place for the damned!” Hutchinson threw up his arm in an almost articulate groan.

He was several years younger than his partner, not more than twenty-six, and there was a certain wistfulness in his face that comes into the faces of men when they yearn vainly for the things they have been long denied. This same wistfulness was in Pentfield’s face, and the groan of it was articulate in the heave of his shoulders.

“I dreamed last night I was in Zinkand’s,” he said. “The music playing, glasses clinking, voices humming, women laughing, and I was ordering eggs—yes, sir, eggs, fried and boiled and poached and scrambled, and in all sorts of ways, and downing them as fast as they arrived.”

“I’d have ordered salads and green things,” Hutchinson criticized hungrily, “with a big, rare, Porterhouse, and young onions and radishes,—the kind your teeth sink into with a crunch.”

“I’d have followed the eggs with them, I guess, if I hadn’t awakened,” Pentfield replied.

He picked up a trail-scarred banjo from the floor and began to strum a few wandering notes. Hutchinson winced and breathed heavily.

“Quit it!” he burst out with sudden fury, as the other struck into a gaily lifting swing. “It drives me mad. I can’t stand it”

Pentfield tossed the banjo into a bunk and quoted:-

“Hear me babble what the weakest won’t confess-

I am Memory and Torment—I am Town!

I am all that ever went with evening dress!”

The other man winced where he sat and dropped his head forward on the table. Pentfield resumed the monotonous drumming with his knuckles. A loud snap from the door attracted his attention. The frost was creeping up the inside in a white sheet, and he began to hum:-

“The flocks are folded, boughs are bare,

The salmon takes the sea;

And oh, my fair, would I somewhere

Might house my heart with thee.”

Silence fell and was not again broken till Billebedam arrived and threw the dice box on the table.

“Um much cold,” he said. “Oleson um speak to me, um say um Yukon freeze last night.”

"Hear that, old man!" Pentfield cried, slapping Hutchinson on the shoulder. "Whoever wins can be hitting the trail for God's country this time tomorrow morning!"

He picked up the box, briskly rattling the dice.

"What'll it be?"

"Straight poker dice," Hutchinson answered. "Go on and roll them out."

Pentfield swept the dishes from the table with a crash and rolled out the five dice. Both looked tragedy. The shake was without a pair and five-spot high.

"A stiff!" Pentfield groaned.

After much deliberating Pentfield picked up all the five dice and put them in the box.

"I'd shake to the five if I were you," Hutchinson suggested.

"No, you wouldn't, not when you see this," Pentfield replied, shaking out the dice.

Again they were without a pair, running this time in unbroken sequence from two to six.

"A second stiff!" he groaned. "No use your shaking, Corry. You can't lose."

The other man gathered up the dice without a word, rattled them, rolled them out on the table with a flourish, and saw that he had likewise shaken a six-high stiff.

"Tied you, anyway, but I'll have to do better than that," he said, gathering in four of them and shaking to the six. "And here's what beats you!"

But they rolled out deuce, tray, four, and five—a stiff still and no better nor worse than Pentfield's throw.

Hutchinson sighed.

"Couldn't happen once in a million times," said.

"Nor in a million lives," Pentfield added, catching up the dice and quickly throwing them out. Three fives appeared, and, after much delay, he was rewarded by a fourth five on the second shake. Hutchinson seemed to have lost his last hope.

But three sixes turned up on his first shake. A great doubt rose in the other's eyes, and hope returned into his. He had one more shake. Another six and he would go over the ice to salt water and the States.

He rattled the dice in the box, made as though to cast them, hesitated, and continued rattle them.

"Go on! Go on! Don't take all night about it!" Pentfield cried sharply, bending his nails on the table, so tight was the clutch with which he strove to control himself.

The dice rolled forth, an upturned six meeting their eyes. Both men sat staring at it. There was a long silence. Hutchinson shot a covert glance at his partner, who, still more covertly, caught it, and pursed up his lips in an attempt to advertise his unconcern.

Hutchinson laughed as he got up on his feet. It was a nervous, apprehensive laugh. It was a case where it was more awkward to win than lose. He walked over to his partner, who whirled upon him fiercely:-

"Now you just shut up, Corry! I know all you're going to say—that you'd rather stay in and let me go, and all that; so don't say it. You've your own people in Detroit to

see, and that's enough. Besides, you can do for me the very thing I expected to do if I went out."

"And that is--?"

Pentfield read the full question in his partner's eyes, and answered:-

"Yes, that very thing. You can bring her in to me. The only difference will be a Dawson wedding instead of a San Franciscan one."

"But, man alike!" Corry Hutchinson objected "how under the sun can I bring her in? We're not exactly brother and sister, seeing that I have not even met her, and it wouldn't be just the proper thing, you know, for us to travel together. Of course, it would be all right--you and I know that; but think of the looks of it, man!"

Pentfield swore under his breath, consigning the looks of it to a less frigid region than Alaska.

"Now, if you'll just listen and not get astride that high horse of yours so blamed quick," his partner went on, "you'll see that the only fair thing under the circumstances is for me to let you go out this year. Next year is only a year away, and then I can take my fling."

Pentfield shook his head, though visibly swayed by the temptation.

"It won't do, Corry, old man. I appreciate your kindness and all that, but it won't do. I'd be ashamed every time I thought of you slaving away in here in my place."

A thought seemed suddenly to strike him. Burrowing into his bunk and disrupting it in his eagerness, he secured a writing-pad and pencil, and sitting down at the table, began to write with swiftness and certitude.

"Here," he said, thrusting the scrawled letter into his partner's hand. "You just deliver that and everything'll be all right."

Hutchinson ran his eye over it and laid it down.

"How do you know the brother will be willing to make that beastly trip in here?" he demanded.

"Oh, he'll do it for me--and for his sister," Pentfield replied. "You see, he's tenderfoot, and I wouldn't trust her with him alone. But with you along it will be an easy trip and a safe one. As soon as you get out, you'll go to her and prepare her. Then you can take your run east to your own people, and in the spring she and her brother'll be ready to start with you. You'll like her, I know, right from the jump; and from that, you'll know her as soon as you lay eyes on her."

So saying he opened the back of his watch and exposed a girl's photograph pasted on the inside of the case. Corry Hutchinson gazed at it with admiration welling up in his eyes.

"Mabel is her name," Pentfield went on. "And it's just as well you should know how to find the house. Soon as you strike 'Frisco, take a cab, and just say, 'Holmes's place, Myrdon Avenue'--I doubt if the Myrdon Avenue is necessary. The cabby'll know where Judge Holmes lives."

"And say," Pentfield continued, after a pause, "it won't be a bad idea for you to get me a few little things which a--er--"

“A married man should have in his business,” Hutchinson blurted out with a grin. Pentfield grinned back.

“Sure, napkins and tablecloths and sheets and pillowslips, and such things. And you might get a good set of china. You know it’ll come hard for her to settle down to this sort of thing. You can freight them in by steamer around by Bering Sea. And, I say, what’s the matter with a piano?”

Hutchinson seconded the idea heartily. His reluctance had vanished, and he was warming up to his mission.

“By Jove! Lawrence,” he said at the conclusion of the council, as they both rose to their feet, “I’ll bring back that girl of yours in style. I’ll do the cooking and take care of the dogs, and all that brother’ll have to do will be to see to her comfort and do for her whatever I’ve forgotten. And I’ll forget damn little, I can tell you.”

The next day Lawrence Pentfield shook hands with him for the last time and watched him, running with his dogs, disappear up the frozen Yukon on his way to salt water and the world. Pentfield went back to his Bonanza mine, which was many times more dreary than before, and faced resolutely into the long winter. There was work to be done, men to superintend, and operations to direct in burrowing after the erratic pay streak; but his heart was not in the work. Nor was his heart in any work till the tiered logs of a new cabin began to rise on the hill behind the mine. It was a grand cabin, warmly built and divided into three comfortable rooms. Each log was hand-hewed and squared—an expensive whim when the axemen received a daily wage of fifteen dollars; but to him nothing could be too costly for the home in which Mabel Holmes was to live.

So he went about with the building of the cabin, singing, “And oh, my fair, would I somewhere might house my heart with thee!” Also, he had a calendar pinned on the wall above the table, and his first act each morning was to check off the day and to count the days that were left ere his partner would come booming down the Yukon ice in the spring. Another whim of his was to permit no one to sleep in the new cabin on the hill. It must be as fresh for her occupancy as the square-hewed wood was fresh; and when it stood complete, he put a padlock on the door. No one entered save himself, and he was wont to spend long hours there, and to come forth with his face strangely radiant and in his eyes a glad, warm light.

In December he received a letter from Corry Hutchinson. He had just seen Mabel Holmes. She was all she ought to be, to be Lawrence Pentfield’s wife, he wrote. He was enthusiastic, and his letter sent the blood tingling through Pentfield’s veins. Other letters followed, one on the heels of another, and sometimes two or three together when the mail lumped up. And they were all in the same tenor. Corry had just come from Myrdon Avenue; Corry was just going to Myrdon Avenue; or Corry was at Myrdon Avenue. And he lingered on and on in San Francisco, nor even mentioned his trip to Detroit.

Lawrence Pentfield began to think that his partner was a great deal in the company of Mabel Holmes for a fellow who was going east to see his people. He even caught

himself worrying about it at times, though he would have worried more had he not known Mabel and Corry so well. Mabel's letters, on the other hand, had a great deal to say about Corry. Also, a thread of timidity that was near to disinclination ran through them concerning the trip in over the ice and the Dawson marriage. Pentfield wrote back heartily, laughing at her fears, which he took to be the mere physical ones of danger and hardship rather than those bred of maidenly reserve.

But the long winter and tedious wait, following upon the two previous long winters, were telling upon him. The superintendence of the men and the pursuit of the pay streak could not break the irk of the daily round, and the end of January found him making occasional trips to Dawson, where he could forget his identity for a space at the gambling tables. Because he could afford to lose, he won, and "Pentfield's luck" became a stock phrase among the faro players.

His luck ran with him till the second week in February. How much farther it might have run is conjectural; for, after one big game, he never played again.

It was in the Opera House that it occurred, and for an hour it had seemed that he could not place his money on a card without making the card a winner. In the lull at the end of a deal, while the game-keeper was shuffling the deck, Nick Inwood the owner of the game, remarked, apropos of nothing:-

"I say, Pentfield, I see that partner of yours has been cutting up monkey-shines on the outside."

"Trust Corry to have a good time," Pentfield had answered; "especially when he has earned it."

"Every man to his taste," Nick Inwood laughed; "but I should scarcely call getting married a good time."

"Corry married!" Pentfield cried, incredulous and yet surprised out of himself for the moment.

"Sure," Inwood said. "I saw it in the 'Frisco paper that came in over the ice this morning."

"Well, and who's the girl?" Pentfield demanded, somewhat with the air of patient fortitude with which one takes the bait of a catch and is aware at the time of the large laugh bound to follow at his expense.

Nick Inwood pulled the newspaper from his pocket and began looking it over, saying:-

"I haven't a remarkable memory for names, but it seems to me it's something like Mabel-Mabel-oh yes, here it-'Mabel Holmes, daughter of Judge Holmes,'-whoever he is."

Lawrence Pentfield never turned a hair, though he wondered how any man in the North could know her name. He glanced coolly from face to face to note any vagrant signs of the game that was being played upon him, but beyond a healthy curiosity the faces betrayed nothing. Then he turned to the gambler and said in cold, even tones:-

"Inwood, I've got an even five hundred here that says the print of what you have just said is not in that paper."

The gambler looked at him in quizzical surprise. "Go 'way, child. I don't want your money."

"I thought so," Pentfield sneered, returning to the game and laying a couple of bets.

Nick Inwood's face flushed, and, as though doubting his senses, he ran careful eyes over the print of a quarter of a column. Then he turned on Lawrence Pentfield.

"Look here, Pentfield," he said, in a quiet, nervous manner; "I can't allow that, you know."

"Allow what?" Pentfield demanded brutally.

"You implied that I lied."

"Nothing of the sort," came the reply. "I merely implied that you were trying to be clumsily witty."

"Make your bets, gentlemen," the dealer protested.

"But I tell you it's true," Nick Inwood insisted.

"And I have told you I've five hundred that says it's not in that paper," Pentfield answered, at the same time throwing a heavy sack of dust on the table.

"I am sorry to take your money," was the retort, as Inwood thrust the newspaper into Pentfield's hand.

Pentfield saw, though he could not quite bring himself to believe. Glancing through the headline, "Young Lochinvar came out of the North," and skimming the article until the names of Mabel Holmes and Corry Hutchinson, coupled together, leaped squarely before his eyes, he turned to the top of the page. It was a San Francisco paper.

"The money's yours, Inwood," he remarked, with a short laugh. "There's no telling what that partner of mine will do when he gets started."

Then he returned to the article and read it word for word, very slowly and very carefully. He could no longer doubt. Beyond dispute, Corry Hutchinson had married Mabel Holmes. "One of the Bonanza kings," it described him, "a partner with Lawrence Pentfield (whom San Francisco society has not yet forgotten), and interested with that gentleman in other rich, Klondike properties." Further, and at the end, he read, "It is whispered that Mr. and Mrs. Hutchinson will, after a brief trip east to Detroit, make their real honeymoon journey into the fascinating Klondike country."

"I'll be back again; keep my place for me," Pentfield said, rising to his feet and taking his sack, which meantime had hit the blower and came back lighter by five hundred dollars.

He went down the street and bought a Seattle paper. It contained the same facts, though somewhat condensed. Corry and Mabel were indubitably married. Pentfield returned to the Opera House and resumed his seat in the game. He asked to have the limit removed.

"Trying to get action," Nick Inwood laughed, as he nodded assent to the dealer. "I was going down to the A. C. store, but now I guess I'll stay and watch you do your worst."

This Lawrence Pentfield did at the end of two hours' plunging, when the dealer bit the end off a fresh cigar and struck a match as he announced that the bank was broken.

Pentfield cashed in for forty thousand, shook hands with Nick Inwood, and stated that it was the last time he would ever play at his game or at anybody's else's.

No one knew nor guessed that he had been hit, much less hit hard. There was no apparent change in his manner. For a week he went about his work much as he had always done, when he read an account of the marriage in a Portland paper. Then he called in a friend to take charge of his mine and departed up the Yukon behind his dogs. He held to the Salt Water trail till White River was reached, into which he turned. Five days later he came upon a hunting camp of the White River Indians. In the evening there was a feast, and he sat in honour beside the chief; and next morning he headed his dogs back toward the Yukon. But he no longer travelled alone. A young squaw fed his dogs for him that night and helped to pitch camp. She had been mauled by a bear in her childhood and suffered from a slight limp. Her name was Lashka, and she was diffident at first with the strange white man that had come out of the Unknown, married her with scarcely a look or word, and now was carrying her back with him into the Unknown.

But Lashka's was better fortune than falls to most Indian girls that mate with white men in the Northland. No sooner was Dawson reached than the barbaric marriage that had joined them was re-solemnized, in the white man's fashion, before a priest. From Dawson, which to her was all a marvel and a dream, she was taken directly to the Bonanza claim and installed in the square-hewed cabin on the hill.

The nine days' wonder that followed arose not so much out of the fact of the squaw whom Lawrence Pentfield had taken to bed and board as out of the ceremony that had legalized the tie. The properly sanctioned marriage was the one thing that passed the community's comprehension. But no one bothered Pentfield about it. So long as a man's vagaries did no special hurt to the community, the community let the man alone, nor was Pentfield barred from the cabins of men who possessed white wives. The marriage ceremony removed him from the status of squaw-man and placed him beyond moral reproach, though there were men that challenged his taste where women were concerned.

No more letters arrived from the outside. Six sledloads of mails had been lost at the Big Salmon. Besides, Pentfield knew that Corry and his bride must by that time have started in over the trail. They were even then on their honeymoon trip—the honeymoon trip he had dreamed of for himself through two dreary years. His lip curled with bitterness at the thought; but beyond being kinder to Lashka he gave no sign.

March had passed and April was nearing its end, when, one spring morning, Lashka asked permission to go down the creek several miles to Siwash Pete's cabin. Pete's wife, a Stewart River woman, had sent up word that something was wrong with her baby, and Lashka, who was pre-eminently a mother-woman and who held herself to be truly wise in the matter of infantile troubles, missed no opportunity of nursing the children of other women as yet more fortunate than she.

Pentfield harnessed his dogs, and with Lashka behind took the trail down the creek bed of Bonanza. Spring was in the air. The sharpness had gone out of the bite of

the frost and though snow still covered the land, the murmur and trickling of water told that the iron grip of winter was relaxing. The bottom was dropping out of the trail, and here and there a new trail had been broken around open holes. At such a place, where there was not room for two sleds to pass, Pentfield heard the jingle of approaching bells and stopped his dogs.

A team of tired-looking dogs appeared around the narrow bend, followed by a heavily-loaded sled. At the gee-pole was a man who steered in a manner familiar to Pentfield, and behind the sled walked two women. His glance returned to the man at the gee-pole. It was Corry. Pentfield got on his feet and waited. He was glad that Lashka was with him. The meeting could not have come about better had it been planned, he thought. And as he waited he wondered what they would say, what they would be able to say. As for himself there was no need to say anything. The explaining was all on their side, and he was ready to listen to them.

As they drew in abreast, Corry recognized him and halted the dogs. With a "Hello, old man," he held out his hand.

Pentfield shook it, but without warmth or speech. By this time the two women had come up, and he noticed that the second one was Dora Holmes. He doffed his fur cap, the flaps of which were flying, shook hands with her, and turned toward Mabel. She swayed forward, splendid and radiant, but faltered before his outstretched hand. He had intended to say, "How do you do, Mrs. Hutchinson?"—but somehow, the Mrs. Hutchinson had choked him, and all he had managed to articulate was the "How do you do?"

There was all the constraint and awkwardness in the situation he could have wished. Mabel betrayed the agitation appropriate to her position, while Dora, evidently brought along as some sort of peacemaker, was saying:-

"Why, what is the matter, Lawrence?"

Before he could answer, Corry plucked him by the sleeve and drew him aside.

"See here, old man, what's this mean?" Corry demanded in a low tone, indicating Lashka with his eyes.

"I can hardly see, Corry, where you can have any concern in the matter," Pentfield answered mockingly.

But Corry drove straight to the point.

"What is that squaw doing on your sled? A nasty job you've given me to explain all this away. I only hope it can be explained away. Who is she? Whose squaw is she?"

Then Lawrence Pentfield delivered his stroke, and he delivered it with a certain calm elation of spirit that seemed somewhat to compensate for the wrong that had been done him.

"She is my squaw," he said; "Mrs. Pentfield, if you please."

Corry Hutchinson gasped, and Pentfield left him and returned to the two women. Mabel, with a worried expression on her face, seemed holding herself aloof. He turned to Dora and asked, quite genially, as though all the world was sunshine:-"How did you stand the trip, anyway? Have any trouble to sleep warm?"

“And, how did Mrs. Hutchinson stand it?” he asked next, his eyes on Mabel.

“Oh, you dear ninny!” Dora cried, throwing her arms around him and hugging him. “Then you saw it, too! I thought something was the matter, you were acting so strangely.”

“I—I hardly understand,” he stammered.

“It was corrected in next day’s paper,” Dora chattered on. “We did not dream you would see it. All the other papers had it correctly, and of course that one miserable paper was the very one you saw!”

“Wait a moment! What do you mean?” Pentfield demanded, a sudden fear at his heart, for he felt himself on the verge of a great gulf.

But Dora swept volubly on.

“Why, when it became known that Mabel and I were going to Klondike, EVERY OTHER WEEK said that when we were gone, it would be lovely on Myrdon Avenue, meaning, of course, lonely.”

“Then—“

“I am Mrs. Hutchinson,” Dora answered. “And you thought it was Mabel all the time—“

“Precisely the way of it,” Pentfield replied slowly. “But I can see now. The reporter got the names mixed. The Seattle and Portland paper copied.”

He stood silently for a minute. Mabel’s face was turned toward him again, and he could see the glow of expectancy in it. Corry was deeply interested in the ragged toe of one of his moccasins, while Dora was stealing sidelong glances at the immobile face of Lashka sitting on the sled. Lawrence Pentfield stared straight out before him into a dreary future, through the grey vistas of which he saw himself riding on a sled behind running dogs with lame Lashka by his side.

Then he spoke, quite simply, looking Mabel in the eyes.

“I am very sorry. I did not dream it. I thought you had married Corry. That is Mrs. Pentfield sitting on the sled over there.”

Mabel Holmes turned weakly toward her sister, as though all the fatigue of her great journey had suddenly descended on her. Dora caught her around the waist. Corry Hutchinson was still occupied with his moccasins. Pentfield glanced quickly from face to face, then turned to his sled.

“Can’t stop here all day, with Pete’s baby waiting,” he said to Lashka.

The long whip-lash hissed out, the dogs sprang against the breast bands, and the sled lurched and jerked ahead.

“Oh, I say, Corry,” Pentfield called back, “you’d better occupy the old cabin. It’s not been used for some time. I’ve built a new one on the hill.”

The Feathers of the Sun

I

It was the island of Fitu-Iva — the last independent Polynesian stronghold in the South Seas. Three factors conduced to Fitu-Iva's independence. The first and second were its isolation and the warlikeness of its population. But these would not have saved it in the end had it not been for the fact that Japan, France, Great Britain, Germany, and the United States discovered its desirableness simultaneously. It was like gamins scrambling for a penny. They got in one another's way. The war vessels of the five Powers cluttered Fitu-Iva's one small harbour. There were rumours of war and threats of war. Over its morning toast all the world read columns about Fitu-Iva. As a Yankee blue jacket epitomized it at the time, they all got their feet in the trough at once.

So it was that Fitu-Iva escaped even a joint protectorate, and King Tulifau, otherwise Tui Tulifau, continued to dispense the high justice and the low in the frame-house palace built for him by a Sydney trader out of California redwood. Not only was Tui Tulifau every inch a king, but he was every second a king. When he had ruled fifty-eight years and five months, he was only fifty-eight years and three months old. That is to say, he had ruled over five million seconds more than he had breathed, having been crowned two months before he was born.

He was a kingly king, a royal figure of a man, standing six feet and a half, and, without being excessively fat, weighing three hundred and twenty pounds. But this was not unusual for Polynesian "chief stock." Sepeli, his queen, was six feet three inches and weighed two hundred and sixty, while her brother, Uiliami, who commanded the army in the intervals of resignation from the premiership, topped her by an inch and notched her an even half-hundredweight. Tui Tulifau was a merry soul, a great feaster and drinker. So were all his people merry souls, save in anger, when, on occasion, they could be guilty even of throwing dead pigs at those who made them wroth. Nevertheless, on occasion, they could fight like Maoris, as piratical sandalwood traders and Blackbirders in the old days learned to their cost.

II

Grief's schooner, the Cantani, had passed the Pillar Rocks at the entrance two hours before and crept up the harbour to the whispering flutters of a breeze that could not make up its mind to blow. It was a cool, starlight evening, and they lolled about the poop waiting till their snail's pace would bring them to the anchorage. Willie Smee, the supercargo, emerged from the cabin, conspicuous in his shore clothes. The mate glanced at his shirt, of the finest and whitest silk, and giggled significantly.

"Dance, to-night, I suppose?" Grief observed.

“No,” said the mate. “It’s Taitua. Willie’s stuck on her.”

“Catch me,” the supercargo disclaimed.

“Then she’s stuck on you, and it’s all the same,” the mate went on. “You won’t be ashore half an hour before you’ll have a flower behind your ear, a wreath on your head, and your arm around Taitua.”

“Simple jealousy,” Willie Smee sniffed. “You’d like to have her yourself, only you can’t.”

“I can’t find shirts like that, that’s why. I’ll bet you half a crown you won’t sail from Fitu-Iva with that shirt.”

“And if Taitua doesn’t get it, it’s an even break Tui Tulifau does,” Grief warned. “Better not let him spot that shirt, or it’s all day with it.”

“That’s right,” Captain Boig agreed, turning his head from watching the house lights on the shore. “Last voyage he fined one of my Kanakas out of a fancy belt and sheath-knife.” He turned to the mate. “You can let go any time, Mr. Marsh. Don’t give too much slack. There’s no sign of wind, and in the morning we may shift opposite the copra-sheds.”

A minute later the anchor rumbled down. The whaleboat, already hoisted out, lay alongside, and the shore-going party dropped into it. Save for the Kanakas, who were all bent for shore, only Grief and the supercargo were in the boat. At the head of the little coral-stone pier Willie Smee, with an apologetic gurgle, separated from his employer and disappeared down an avenue of palms. Grief turned in the opposite direction past the front of the old mission church. Here, among the graves on the beach, lightly clad in ahu’s and lava-lavas, flower-crowned and garlanded, with great phosphorescent hibiscus blossoms in their hair, youths and maidens were dancing. Farther on, Grief passed the long, grass-built himine house, where a few score of the elders sat in long rows chanting the old hymns taught them by forgotten missionaries. He passed also the palace of Tui Tulifau, where, by the lights and sounds, he knew the customary revelry was going on. For of the happy South Sea isles, Fitu-Iva was the happiest. They feasted and frolicked at births and deaths, and the dead and the unborn were likewise feasted.

Grief held steadily along the Broom Road, which curved and twisted through a lush growth of flowers and fern-like algarobas. The warm air was rich with perfume, and overhead, outlined against the stars, were fruit-burdened mangoes, stately avocado trees, and slender-tufted palms. Every here and there were grass houses. Voices and laughter rippled through the darkness. Out on the water flickering lights and soft-voiced choruses marked the fishers returning from the reef.

At last Grief stepped aside from the road, stumbling over a pig that grunted indignantly. Looking through an open door, he saw a stout and elderly native sitting on a heap of mats a dozen deep. From time to time, automatically, he brushed his naked legs with a cocoa-nut-fibre fly-flicker. He wore glasses, and was reading methodically in what Grief knew to be an English Bible. For this was Ieremia, his trader, so named from the prophet Jeremiah.

Ieremia was lighter-skinned than the Fitu-Ivans, as was natural in a full-blooded Samoan. Educated by the missionaries, as lay teacher he had served their cause well over in the cannibal atolls to the westward. As a reward, he had been sent to the paradise of Fitu-Iva, where all were or had been good converts, to gather in the backsliders. Unfortunately, Ieremia had become too well educated. A stray volume of Darwin, a nagging wife, and a pretty Fitu-Ivan widow had driven him into the ranks of the backsliders. It was not a case of apostasy. The effect of Darwin had been one of intellectual fatigue. What was the use of trying to understand this vastly complicated and enigmatical world, especially when one was married to a nagging woman? As Ieremia slackened in his labours, the mission board threatened louder and louder to send him back to the atolls, while his wife's tongue grew correspondingly sharper. Tui Tulifau was a sympathetic monarch, whose queen, on occasions when he was particularly drunk, was known to beat him. For political reasons — the queen belonging to as royal stock as himself and her brother commanding the army — Tui Tulifau could not divorce her, but he could and did divorce Ieremia, who promptly took up with commercial life and the lady of his choice. As an independent trader he had failed, chiefly because of the disastrous patronage of Tui Tulifau. To refuse credit to that merry monarch was to invite confiscation; to grant him credit was certain bankruptcy. After a year's idleness on the beach, Ieremia had become David Grief's trader, and for a dozen years his service had been honourable and efficient, for Grief had proven the first man who successfully refused credit to the king or who collected when it had been accorded.

Ieremia looked gravely over the rims of his glasses when his employer entered, gravely marked the place in the Bible and set it aside, and gravely shook hands.

"I am glad you came in person," he said.

"How else could I come?" Grief laughed.

But Ieremia had no sense of humour, and he ignored the remark.

"The commercial situation on the island is damn bad," he said with great solemnity and an unctuous mouthing of the many-syllabled words. "My ledger account is shocking."

"Trade bad?"

"On the contrary. It has been excellent. The shelves are empty, exceedingly empty. But — —" His eyes glistened proudly. "But there are many goods remaining in the storehouse; I have kept it carefully locked."

"Been allowing Tui Tulifau too much credit?"

"On the contrary. There has been no credit at all. And every old account has been settled up."

"I don't follow you, Ieremia," Grief confessed. "What's the joke? — shelves empty, no credit, old accounts all square, storehouse carefully locked — what's the answer?"

Ieremia did not reply immediately. Reaching under the rear corner of the mats, he drew forth a large cash-box. Grief noted and wondered that it was not locked. The Samoan had always been fastidiously cautious in guarding cash. The box seemed filled with paper money. He skinned off the top note and passed it over.

“There is the answer.”

Grief glanced at a fairly well executed banknote. “The First Royal Bank of Fitu-Iva will pay to bearer on demand one pound sterling,” he read. In the centre was the smudged likeness of a native face. At the bottom was the signature of Tui Tulifau, and the signature of Fulualea, with the printed information appended, “Chancellor of the Exchequer.”

“Who the deuce is Fulualea?” Grief demanded. “It’s Fijian, isn’t it? — meaning the feathers of the sun?”

“Just so. It means the feathers of the sun. Thus does this base interloper caption himself. He has come up from Fiji to turn Fitu-Iva upside down — that is, commercially.”

“Some one of those smart Levuka boys, I suppose?”

Ieremia shook his head sadly. “No, this low fellow is a white man and a scoundrel. He has taken a noble and high-sounding Fijian name and dragged it in the dirt to suit his nefarious purposes. He has made Tui Tulifau drunk. He has made him very drunk. He has kept him very drunk all the time. In return, he has been made Chancellor of the Exchequer and other things. He has issued this false paper and compelled the people to receive it. He has levied a store tax, a copra tax, and a tobacco tax. There are harbour dues and regulations, and other taxes. But the people are not taxed — only the traders. When the copra tax was levied, I lowered the purchasing price accordingly. Then the people began to grumble, and Feathers of the Sun passed a new law, setting the old price back and forbidding any man to lower it. Me he fined two pounds and five pigs, it being well known that I possessed five pigs. You will find them entered in the ledger. Hawkins, who is trader for the Fulcrum Company, was fined first pigs, then gin, and, because he continued to make loud conversation, the army came and burned his store. When I declined to sell, this Feathers of the Sun fined me once more and promised to burn the store if again I offended. So I sold all that was on the shelves, and there is the box full of worthless paper. I shall be chagrined if you pay me my salary in paper, but it would be just, no more than just. Now, what is to be done?”

Grief shrugged his shoulders. “I must first see this Feathers of the Sun and size up the situation.”

“Then you must see him soon,” Ieremia advised. “Else he will have an accumulation of many fines against you. Thus does he absorb all the coin of the realm. He has it all now, save what has been buried in the ground.”

III

On his way back along the Broom Road, under the lighted lamps that marked the entrance to the palace grounds, Grief encountered a short, rotund gentleman, in unstarched ducks, smooth-shaven and of florid complexion, who was just emerging. Something about his tentative, saturated gait was familiar. Grief knew it on the instant. On the beaches of a dozen South Sea ports had he seen it before.

“Of all men, Cornelius Deasy!” he cried.

“If it ain’t Grief himself, the old devil,” was the return greeting, as they shook hands.

"If you'll come on board I've some choice smoky Irish," Grief invited.

Cornelius threw back his shoulders and stiffened.

"Nothing doin', Mr. Grief. 'Tis Fulualea I am now. No blarneyin' of old times for me. Also, and by the leave of his gracious Majesty King Tulifau, 'tis Chancellor of the Exchequer I am, an' Chief Justice I am, save in moments of royal sport when the king himself chooses to toy with the wheels of justice."

Grief whistled his amazement. "So you're Feathers of the Sun!"

"I prefer the native idiom," was the correction. "Fulualea, an' it please you. Not forgettin' old times, Mr. Grief, it sorrows the heart of me to break you the news. You'll have to pay your legitimate import duties same as any other trader with mind intent on robbin' the gentle Polynesian savage on coral isles implanted. — — Where was I? Ah! I remember. You've violated the regulations. With malice intent have you entered the port of Fitu-Iva after sunset without sidelights burnin'. Don't interrupt. With my own eyes did I see you. For which offence are you fined the sum of five pounds. Have you any gin? 'Tis a serious offence. Not lightly are the lives of the mariners of our commodious port to be risked for the savin' of a penny'orth of oil. Did I ask: have you any gin? 'Tis the harbour master that asks."

"You've taken a lot on your shoulders," Grief grinned.

"'Tis the white man's burden. These rapscallion traders have been puttin' it all over poor Tui Tulif, the best-hearted old monarch that ever sat a South Sea throne an' mopped grog-root from the imperial calabash. 'Tis I, Cornelius — Fulualea, rather — that am here to see justice done. Much as I dislike the doin' of it, as harbour master 'tis my duty to find you guilty of breach of quarantine."

"Quarantine?"

"'Tis the rulin' of the port doctor. No intercourse with the shore till the ship is passed. What dire calamity to the confidin' native if chicken pox or whoopin' cough was aboard of you! Who is there to protect the gentle, confidin' Polynesian? I, Fulualea, the Feathers of the Sun, on my high mission."

"Who in hell is the port doctor?" Grief queried.

"'Tis me, Fulualea. Your offence is serious. Consider yourself fined five cases of first-quality Holland gin."

Grief laughed heartily. "We'll compromise, Cornelius. Come aboard and have a drink."

The Feathers of the Sun waved the proffer aside grandly. "'Tis bribery. I'll have none of it — me faithful to my salt. And wherefore did you not present your ship's papers? As chief of the custom house you are fined five pounds and two more cases of gin."

"Look here, Cornelius. A joke's a joke, but this one has gone far enough. This is not Levuka. I've half a mind to pull your nose for you. You can't buck me."

The Feathers of the Sun retreated unsteadily and in alarm.

"Lay no violence on me," he threatened. "You're right. This is not Levuka. And by the same token, with Tui Tulifau and the royal army behind me, buck you is just the thing I can and will. You'll pay them fines promptly, or I'll confiscate your vessel."

You're not the first. What does that Chink pearl-buyer, Peter Gee, do but slip into harbour, violatin' all regulations an' makin' rough house for the matter of a few paltry fines. No; he wouldn't pay 'em, and he's on the beach now thinkin' it over."

"You don't mean to say — —"

"Sure an' I do. In the high exercise of office I seized his schooner. A fifth of the loyal army is now in charge on board of her. She'll be sold this day week. Some ten tons of shell in the hold, and I'm wonderin' if I can trade it to you for gin. I can promise you a rare bargain. How much gin did you say you had?"

"Still more gin, eh?"

"An' why not? 'Tis a royal souse is Tui Tulifau. Sure it keeps my wits workin' overtime to supply him, he's that amazin' liberal with it. The whole gang of hanger-on chiefs is perpetually loaded to the guards. It's disgraceful. Are you goin' to pay them fines, Mr. Grief, or is it to harsher measures I'll be forced?"

Grief turned impatiently on his heel.

"Cornelius, you're drunk. Think it over and come to your senses. The old rollicking South Sea days are gone. You can't play tricks like that now."

"If you think you're goin' on board, Mr. Grief, I'll save you the trouble. I know your kind, I foresaw your stiff-necked stubbornness. An' it's forestalled you are. 'Tis on the beach you'll find your crew. The vessel's seized."

Grief turned back on him in the half-belief still that he was joking. Fulualea again retreated in alarm. The form of a large man loomed beside him in the darkness.

"Is it you, Uiliami?" Fulualea crooned. "Here is another sea pirate. Stand by me with the strength of thy arm, O Herculean brother."

"Greeting, Uiliami," Grief said. "Since when has Fitu-Iva come to be run by a Levuka beachcomber? He says my schooner has been seized. Is it true?"

"It is true," Uiliami boomed from his deep chest. "Have you any more silk shirts like Willie Smee's? Tui Tulifau would like such a shirt. He has heard of it."

"'Tis all the same," Fulualea interrupted. "Shirts or schooners, the king shall have them."

"Rather high-handed, Cornelius," Grief murmured. "It's rank piracy. You seized my vessel without giving me a chance."

"A chance is it? As we stood here, not five minutes gone, didn't you refuse to pay your fines?"

"But she was already seized."

"Sure, an' why not? Didn't I know you'd refuse? 'Tis all fair, an' no injustice done — Justice, the bright, particular star at whose shining altar Cornelius Deasy — or Fulualea, 'tis the same thing — ever worships. Get thee gone, Mr. Trader, or I'll set the palace guards on you. Uiliami, 'tis a desperate character, this trader man. Call the guards."

Uiliami blew the whistle suspended on his broad bare chest by a cord of cocoanut sennit. Grief reached out an angry hand for Cornelius, who titubated into safety behind

Uiliami's massive bulk. A dozen strapping Polynesians, not one under six feet, ran down the palace walk and ranged behind their commander.

"Get thee gone, Mr. Trader," Cornelius ordered. "The interview is terminated. We'll try your several cases in the mornin'. Appear promptly at the palace at ten o'clock to answer to the followin' charges, to wit: breach of the peace; seditious and treasonable utterance; violent assault on the chief magistrate with intent to cut, wound, maim, an' bruise; breach of quarantine; violation of harbour regulations; and gross breakage of custom house rules. In the mornin', fellow, in the mornin', justice shall be done while the breadfruit falls. And the Lord have mercy on your soul."

III

Before the hour set for the trial Grief, accompanied by Peter Gee, won access to Tui Tulifau. The king, surrounded by half a dozen chiefs, lay on mats under the shade of the avocados in the palace compound. Early as was the hour, palace maids were industriously serving squarefaces of gin. The king was glad to see his old friend Davida, and regretful that he had run foul of the new regulations. Beyond that he steadfastly avoided discussion of the matter in hand. All protests of the expropriated traders were washed away in proffers of gin. "Have a drink," was his invariable reply, though once he unbosomed himself enough to say that Feathers of the Sun was a wonderful man. Never had palace affairs been so prosperous. Never had there been so much money in the treasury, nor so much gin in circulation. "Well pleased am I with Fulualea," he concluded. "Have a drink."

"We've got to get out of this pronto," Grief whispered to Peter Gee a few minutes later, "or we'll be a pair of boiled owls. Also, I am to be tried for arson, or heresy, or leprosy, or something, in a few minutes, and I must control my wits."

As they withdrew from the royal presence, Grief caught a glimpse of Sepeli, the queen. She was peering out at her royal spouse and his fellow tipplers, and the frown on her face gave Grief his cue. Whatever was to be accomplished must be through her.

In another shady corner of the big compound Cornelius was holding court. He had been at it early, for when Grief arrived the case of Willie Smee was being settled. The entire royal army, save that portion in charge of the seized vessels, was in attendance.

"Let the defendant stand up," said Cornelius, "and receive the just and merciful sentence of the Court for licentious and disgraceful conduct unbecomin' a supercargo. The defendant says he has no money. Very well. The Court regrets it has no calaboose. In lieu thereof, and in view of the impoverished condition of the defendant, the Court fines said defendant one white silk shirt of the same kind, make and quality at present worn by defendant."

Cornelius nodded to several of the soldiers, who led the supercargo away behind an avocado tree. A minute later he emerged, minus the garment in question, and sat down beside Grief.

"What have you been up to?" Grief asked.

"Blessed if I know. What crimes have you committed?"

“Next case,” said Cornelius in his most extra-legal tones. “David Grief, defendant, stand up. The Court has considered the evidence in the case, or cases, and renders the following judgment, to wit: — Shut up!” he thundered at Grief, who had attempted to interrupt. “I tell you the evidence has been considered, deeply considered. It is no wish of the Court to lay additional hardship on the defendant, and the Court takes this opportunity to warn the defendant that he is liable for contempt. For open and wanton violation of harbour rules and regulations, breach of quarantine, and disregard of shipping laws, his schooner, the Cantani, is hereby declared confiscated to the Government of Fitu-Iva, to be sold at public auction, ten days from date, with all appurtenances, fittings, and cargo thereunto pertaining. For the personal crimes of the defendant, consisting of violent and turbulent conduct and notorious disregard of the laws of the realm, he is fined in the sum of one hundred pounds sterling and fifteen cases of gin. I will not ask you if you have anything to say. But will you pay? That is the question.”

Grief shook his head.

“In the meantime,” Cornelius went on, “consider yourself a prisoner at large. There is no calaboose in which to confine you. And finally, it has come to the knowledge of the Court, that at an early hour of this morning, the defendant did wilfully and deliberately send Kanakas in his employ out on the reef to catch fish for breakfast. This is distinctly an infringement of the rights of the fisherfolk of Fitu-Iva. Home industries must be protected. This conduct of the defendant is severely reprehended by the Court, and on any repetition of the offence the offender and offenders, all and sundry, shall be immediately put to hard labour on the improvement of the Broom Road. The court is dismissed.”

As they left the compound, Peter Gee nudged Grief to look where Tui Tulifau reclined on the mats. The supercargo’s shirt, stretched and bulged, already encased the royal fat.

IV

“The thing is clear,” said Peter Gee, at a conference in Ieremia’s house. “Deasy has about gathered in all the coin. In the meantime he keeps the king going on the gin he’s captured, on our vessels. As soon as he can maneuver it he’ll take the cash and skin out on your craft or mine.”

“He is a low fellow,” Ieremia declared, pausing in the polishing of his spectacles. “He is a scoundrel and a blackguard. He should be struck by a dead pig, by a particularly dead pig.”

“The very thing,” said Grief. “He shall be struck by a dead pig. Ieremia, I should not be surprised if you were the man to strike him with the dead pig. Be sure and select a particularly dead one. Tui Tulifau is down at the boat house broaching a case of my Scotch. I’m going up to the palace to work kitchen politics with the queen. In the meantime you get a few things on your shelves from the store-room. I’ll lend you some, Hawkins. And you, Peter, see the German store. Start in all of you, selling for paper. Remember, I’ll back the losses. If I’m not mistaken, in three days we’ll have a

national council or a revolution. You, Ieremia, start messengers around the island to the fishers and farmers, everywhere, even to the mountain goat-hunters. Tell them to assemble at the palace three days from now.”

“But the soldiers,” Ieremia objected.

“I’ll take care of them. They haven’t been paid for two months. Besides, Uiliami is the queen’s brother. Don’t have too much on your shelves at a time. As soon as the soldiers show up with paper, stop selling.”

“Then will they burn the stores,” said Ieremia.

“Let them. King Tulifau will pay for it if they do.”

“Will he pay for my shirt?” Willie Smee demanded.

“That is purely a personal and private matter between you and Tui Tulifau,” Grief answered.

“It’s beginning to split up the back,” the supercargo lamented. “I noticed that much this morning when he hadn’t had it on ten minutes. It cost me thirty shillings and I only wore it once.”

“Where shall I get a dead pig?” Ieremia asked.

“Kill one, of course,” said Grief. “Kill a small one.”

“A small one is worth ten shillings.”

“Then enter it in your ledger under operating expenses.” Grief paused a moment. “If you want it particularly dead, it would be well to kill it at once.”

V

“You have spoken well, Davida,” said Queen Sepeli. “This Fulualea has brought a madness with him, and Tui Tulifau is drowned in gin. If he does not grant the big council, I shall give him a beating. He is easy to beat when he is in drink.”

She doubled up her fist, and such were her Amazonian proportions and the determination in her face that Grief knew the council would be called. So akin was the Fitu-Ivan tongue to the Samoan that he spoke it like a native.

“And you, Uiliami,” he said, “have pointed out that the soldiers have demanded coin and refused the paper Fulualea has offered them. Tell them to take the paper and see that they be paid to-morrow.”

“Why trouble?” Uiliami objected. “The king remains happily drunk. There is much money in the treasury. And I am content. In my house are two cases of gin and much goods from Hawkins’s store.”

“Excellent pig, O my brother!” Sepeli erupted. “Has not Davida spoken? Have you no ears? When the gin and the goods in your house are gone, and no more traders come with gin and goods, and Feathers of the Sun has run away to Levuka with all the cash money of Fitu-Iva, what then will you do? Cash money is silver and gold, but paper is only paper. I tell you the people are grumbling. There is no fish in the palace. Yams and sweet potatoes seem to have fled from the soil, for they come not. The mountain dwellers have sent no wild goat in a week. Though Feathers of the Sun compels the traders to buy copra at the old price, the people sell not, for they will have none of the paper money. Only to-day have I sent messengers to twenty houses.

There are no eggs. Has Feathers of the Sun put a blight upon the hens? I do not know. All I know is that there are no eggs. Well it is that those who drink much eat little, else would there be a palace famine. Tell your soldiers to receive their pay. Let it be in his paper money.”

“And remember,” Grief warned, “though there be selling in the stores, when the soldiers come with their paper it will be refused. And in three days will be the council, and Feathers of the Sun will be as dead as a dead pig.”

VI

The day of the council found the population of the island crowded into the capital. By canoe and whaleboat, on foot and donkey-back, the five thousand inhabitants of Fitu-Iva had trooped in. The three intervening days had had their share of excitement. At first there had been much selling from the sparse shelves of the traders. But when the soldiers appeared, their patronage was declined and they were told to go to Fulualea for coin. “Says it not so on the face of the paper,” the traders demanded, “that for the asking the coin will be given in exchange?”

Only the strong authority of Uiliami had prevented the burning of the traders’ houses. As it was, one of Grief’s copra-sheds went up in smoke and was duly charged by Ieremia to the king’s account. Ieremia himself had been abused and mocked, and his spectacles broken. The skin was off Willie Smee’s knuckles. This had been caused by three boisterous soldiers who violently struck their jaws thereon in quick succession. Captain Boig was similarly injured. Peter Gee had come off undamaged, because it chanced that it was bread-baskets and not jaws that struck him on the fists.

Tui Tulifau, with Sepeli at his side and surrounded by his convivial chiefs, sat at the head of the council in the big compound. His right eye and jaw were swollen as if he too had engaged in assaulting somebody’s fist. It was palace gossip that morning that Sepeli had administered a conjugal beating. At any rate, her spouse was sober, and his fat bulged spiritlessly through the rips in Willie Smee’s silk shirt. His thirst was prodigious, and he was continually served with young drinking nuts. Outside the compound, held back by the army, was the mass of the common people. Only the lesser chiefs, village maids, village beaux, and talking men with their staffs of office were permitted inside. Cornelius Deasy, as befitted a high and favoured official, sat near to the right hand of the king. On the left of the queen, opposite Cornelius and surrounded by the white traders he was to represent, sat Ieremia. Bereft of his spectacles, he peered short-sightedly across at the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

In turn, the talking man of the windward coast, the talking man of the leeward coast, and the talking man of the mountain villages, each backed by his group of lesser talking men and chiefs, arose and made oration. What they said was much the same. They grumbled about the paper money. Affairs were not prosperous. No more copra was being smoked. The people were suspicious. To such a pass had things come that all people wanted to pay their debts and no one wanted to be paid. Creditors made a practice of running away from debtors. The money was cheap. Prices were going up and commodities were getting scarce. It cost three times the ordinary price to

buy a fowl, and then it was tough and like to die of old age if not immediately sold. The outlook was gloomy. There were signs and omens. There was a plague of rats in some districts. The crops were bad. The custard apples were small. The best-bearing avocado on the windward coast had mysteriously shed all its leaves. The taste had gone from the mangoes. The plantains were eaten by a worm. The fish had forsaken the ocean and vast numbers of tiger-sharks appeared. The wild goats had fled to inaccessible summits. The poi in the poi-pits had turned bitter. There were rumblings in the mountains, night-walking of spirits; a woman of Punta-Puna had been struck speechless, and a five-legged she-goat had been born in the village of Eiho. And that all was due to the strange money of Fulualea was the firm conviction of the elders in the village councils assembled.

Uiliami spoke for the army. His men were discontented and mutinous. Though by royal decree the traders were bidden accept the money, yet did they refuse it. He would not say, but it looked as if the strange money of Fulualea had something to do with it.

Jeremia, as talking man of the traders, next spoke. When he arose, it was noticeable that he stood with legs spraddled over a large grass basket. He dwelt upon the cloth of the traders, its variety and beauty and durability, which so exceeded the Fitu-Ivan wet-pounded tapa, fragile and coarse. No one wore tapa any more. Yet all had worn tapa, and nothing but tapa, before the traders came. There was the mosquito-netting, sold for a song, that the cleverest Fitu-Ivan net-weaver could not duplicate in a thousand years. He enlarged on the incomparable virtues of rifles, axes, and steel fishhooks, down through needles, thread and cotton fish-lines to white flour and kerosene oil.

He expounded at length, with firstlies and secondlies and all minor subdivisions of argument, on organization, and order, and civilization. He contended that the trader was the bearer of civilization, and that the trader must be protected in his trade else he would not come. Over to the westward were islands which would not protect the traders. What was the result? The traders would not come, and the people were like wild animals. They wore no clothes, no silk shirts (here he peered and blinked significantly at the king), and they ate one another.

The queer paper of the Feathers of the Sun was not money. The traders knew what money was, and they would not receive it. If Fitu-Iva persisted in trying to make them receive it they would go away and never come back. And then the Fitu-Ivans, who had forgotten how to make tapa, would run around naked and eat one another.

Much more he said, talking a solid hour, and always coming back to what their dire condition would be when the traders came no more. "And in that day," he perorated, "how will the Fitu-Ivan be known in the great world? Kai-kanak* will men call him. 'Kiakanak! Kai-kanak!'"

* Man-eater.

Tui Tulifau spoke briefly. The case had been presented, he said, for the people, the army, and the traders. It was now time for Feathers of the Sun to present his side. It could not be denied that he had wrought wonders with his financial system. "Many

times has he explained to me the working of his system," Tui Tulif au concluded. "It is very simple. And now he will explain it to you."

It was a conspiracy of the white traders, Cornelius contended. Ieremia was right so far as concerned the manifold blessings of white flour and kerosene oil. Fitu-Iva did not want to become kai-kanak. Fitu-Iva wanted civilization; it wanted more and more civilization. Now that was the very point, and they must follow him closely. Paper money was an earmark of higher civilization. That was why he, the Feathers of the Sun, had introduced it. And that was why the traders opposed it. They did not want to see Fitu-Iva civilized. Why did they come across the far ocean stretches with their goods to Fitu-Iva? He, the Feathers of the Sun, would tell them why, to their faces, in grand council assembled. In their own countries men were too civilized to let the traders make the immense profits that they made out of the Fitu-Ivans. If the Fitu-Ivans became properly civilized, the trade of the traders would be gone. In that day every Fitu-Ivan could become a trader if he pleased.

That was why the white traders fought the system of paper money, that he, the Feathers of the Sun, had brought. Why was he called the Feathers of the Sun? Because he was the Light-Bringer from the World Beyond the Sky. The paper money was the light. The robbing white traders could not flourish in the light. Therefore they fought the light.

He would prove it to the good people of Fitu-Iva, and he would prove it out of the mouths of his enemies. It was a well-known fact that all highly civilized countries had paper-money systems. He would ask Ieremia if this was not so.

Ieremia did not answer.

"You see," Cornelius went on, "he makes no answer. He cannot deny what is true. England, France, Germany, America, all the great Papalangi countries, have the paper-money system. It works. From century to century it works. I challenge you, Ieremia, as an honest man, as one who was once a zealous worker in the Lord's vineyard, I challenge you to deny that in the great Papalangi countries the system works."

Ieremia could not deny, and his fingers played nervously with the fastening of the basket on his knees.

"You see, it is as I have said," Cornelius continued. "Ieremia agrees that it is so. Therefore, I ask you, all good people of Fitu-Iva, if a system is good for the Papalangi countries, why is it not good for Fitu-Iva?"

"It is not the same!" Ieremia cried. "The paper of the Feathers of the Sun is different from the paper of the great countries."

That Cornelius had been prepared for this was evident. He held up a Fitu-Ivan note that was recognized by all.

"What is that?" he demanded.

"Paper, mere paper," was Ieremia's reply.

"And that?"

This time Cornelius held up a Bank of England note.

"It is the paper money of the English," he explained to the Council, at the same time extending it for Ieremia to examine. "Is it not true, Ieremia, that it is paper money of the English?"

Ieremia nodded reluctantly.

"You have said that the paper money of Fitu-Iva was paper, now how about this of the English? What is it?... You must answer like a true man... All wait for your answer, Ieremia."

"It is — it is — —" the puzzled Ieremia began, then spluttered helplessly, the fallacy beyond his penetration.

"Paper, mere paper," Cornelius concluded for him, imitating his halting utterance.

Conviction sat on the faces of all. The king clapped his hands admiringly and murmured, "It is most clear, very clear."

"You see, he himself acknowledges it." Assured triumph was in Deasy's voice and bearing. "He knows of no difference. There is no difference. 'Tis the very image of money. 'Tis money itself."

In the meantime Grief was whispering in Ieremia's ear, who nodded and began to speak.

"But it is well known to all the Papalangi that the English Government will pay coin money for the paper."

Deasy's victory was now absolute. He held aloft a Fitu-Ivan note.

"Is it not so written on this paper as well?"

Again Grief whispered.

"That Fitu-Iva will pay coin money?" asked Ieremia

"It is so written."

A third time Grief prompted.

"On demand?" asked Ieremia.

"On demand," Cornelius assured him.

"Then I demand coin money now," said Ieremia, drawing a small package of notes from the pouch at his girdle.

Cornelius scanned the package with a quick, estimating eye.

"Very well," he agreed. "I shall give you the coin money now. How much?"

"And we will see the system work," the king proclaimed, partaking in his Chancellor's triumph.

"You have heard! — He will give coin money now!" Ieremia cried in a loud voice to the assemblage.

At the same time he plunged both hands in the basket and drew forth many packages of Fitu-Ivan notes. It was noticed that a peculiar odour was adrift about the council.

"I have here," Ieremia announced, "one thousand and twenty-eight pounds twelve shillings and sixpence. Here is a sack to put the coin money in."

Cornelius recoiled. He had not expected such a sum, and everywhere about the council his uneasy eyes showed him chiefs and talking men drawing out bundles of

notes. The army, its two months' pay in its hands, pressed forward to the edge of the council, while behind it the populace, with more money, invaded the compound.

"'Tis a run on the bank you've precipitated," he said reproachfully to Grief.

"Here is the sack to put the coin money in," Ieremia urged.

"It must be postponed," Cornelius said desperately, "'Tis not in banking hours."

Ieremia flourished a package of money. "Nothing of banking hours is written here. It says on demand, and I now demand."

"Let them come to-morrow, O Tui Tulifau," Cornelius appealed to the king. "They shall be paid to-morrow."

Tui Tulifau hesitated, but his spouse glared at him, her brawny arm tensing as the fist doubled into a redoubtable knot, Tui Tulifau tried to look away, but failed. He cleared his throat nervously.

"We will see the system work," he decreed. "The people have come far."

"'Tis good money you're asking me to pay out," Deasy muttered in a low voice to the king.

Sepeli caught what he said, and grunted so savagely as to startle the king, who involuntarily shrank away from her.

"Forget not the pig," Grief whispered to Ieremia, who immediately stood up.

With a sweeping gesture he stilled the babel of voices that was beginning to rise.

"It was an ancient and honourable custom of Fitu-Iva," he said, "that when a man was proved a notorious evildoer his joints were broken with a club and he was staked out at low water to be fed upon alive by the sharks. Unfortunately, that day is past. Nevertheless another ancient and honourable custom remains with us. You all know what it is. When a man is a proven thief and liar he shall be struck with a dead pig."

His right hand went into the basket, and, despite the lack of his spectacles, the dead pig that came into view landed accurately on Deasy's neck. With such force was it thrown that the Chancellor, in his sitting position, toppled over sidewise. Before he could recover, Sepeli, with an agility unexpected of a woman who weighed two hundred and sixty pounds, had sprung across to him. One hand clutched his shirt collar, the other hand brandished the pig, and amid the vast uproar of a delighted kingdom she royally swatted him.

There remained nothing for Tui Tulifau but to put a good face on his favourite's disgrace, and his mountainous fat lay back on the mats and shook in a gale of Gargantuan laughter.

When Sepeli dropped both pig and Chancellor, a talking man from the windward coast picked up the carcass. Cornelius was on his feet and running, when the pig caught him on the legs and tripped him. The people and the army, with shouts and laughter, joined in the sport.

Twist and dodge as he would, everywhere the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer was met or overtaken by the flying pig. He scuttled like a frightened rabbit in and out among the avocados and the palms. No hand was laid upon him, and his tormentors

made way before him, but ever they pursued, and ever the pig flew as fast as hands could pick it up.

As the chase died away down the Broom Road, Grief led the traders to the royal treasury, and the day was well over ere the last Fitu-Ivan bank note had been redeemed with coin.

VII

Through the mellow cool of twilight a man paddled out from a clump of jungle to the Cantani. It was a leaky and abandoned dugout, and he paddled slowly, desisting from time to time in order to bale. The Kanaka sailors giggled gleefully as he came alongside and painfully drew himself over the rail. He was bedraggled and filthy, and seemed half-dazed.

“Could I speak a word with you, Mr. Grief?” he asked sadly and humbly.

“Sit to leeward and farther away,” Grief answered. “A little farther away. That’s better.”

Cornelius sat down on the rail and held his head in both his hands.

“Tis right,” he said. “I’m as fragrant as a recent battlefield. My head aches to burstin’. My neck is fair broken. The teeth are loose in my jaws. There’s nests of hornets buzzin’ in my ears. My medulla oblongata is dislocated. I’ve been through earthquake and pestilence, and the heavens have rained pigs.” He paused with a sigh that ended in a groan. “Tis a vision of terrible death. One that the poets never dreamed. To be eaten by rats, or boiled in oil, or pulled apart by wild horses — that would be unpleasant. But to be beaten to death with a dead pig!” He shuddered at the awfulness of it. “Sure it transcends the human imagination.”

Captain Boig sniffed audibly, moved his canvas chair farther to windward, and sat down again.

“I hear you’re runnin’ over to Yap, Mr. Grief,” Cornelius went on. “An’ two things I’m wantin’ to beg of you: a passage an’ the nip of the old smoky I refused the night you landed.”

Grief clapped his hands for the black steward and ordered soap and towels.

“Go for’ard, Cornelius, and take a scrub first,” he said. “The boy will bring you a pair of dungarees and a shirt. And by the way, before you go, how was it we found more coin in the treasury than paper you had issued?”

“Twas the stake of my own I’d brought with me for the adventure.”

“We’ve decided to charge the demurrage and other expenses and loss to Tui Tulifau,” Grief said. “So the balance we found will be turned over to you. But ten shillings must be deducted.”

“For what?”

“Do you think dead pigs grow on trees? The sum of ten shillings for that pig is entered in the accounts.”

Cornelius bowed his assent with a shudder.

“Sure it’s grateful I am it wasn’t a fifteen-shilling pig or a twenty-shilling one.”

Finis

OR

Morganson's Finish

It was the last of Morganson's bacon. In all his life he had never pampered his stomach. In fact, his stomach had been a sort of negligible quantity that bothered him little, and about which he thought less. But now, in the long absence of wonted delights, the keen yearning of his stomach was tickled hugely by the sharp, salty bacon.

His face had a wistful, hungry expression. The cheeks were hollow, and the skin seemed stretched a trifle tightly across the cheek-bones. His pale blue eyes were troubled. There was that in them that showed the haunting imminence of something terrible. Doubt was in them, and anxiety and foreboding. The thin lips were thinner than they were made to be, and they seemed to hunger towards the polished frying-pan.

He sat back and drew forth a pipe. He looked into it with sharp scrutiny, and tapped it emptily on his open palm. He turned the hair-seal tobacco pouch inside out and dusted the lining, treasuring carefully each flake and mite of tobacco that his efforts gleaned. The result was scarce a thimbleful. He searched in his pockets, and brought forward, between thumb and forefinger, tiny pinches of rubbish. Here and there in this rubbish were crumbs of tobacco. These he segregated with microscopic care, though he occasionally permitted small particles of foreign substance to accompany the crumbs to the hoard in his palm. He even deliberately added small, semi-hard woolly fluffs, that had come originally from the coat lining, and that had lain for long months in the bottoms of the pockets.

At the end of fifteen minutes he had the pipe part filled. He lighted it from the camp fire, and sat forward on the blankets, toasting his moccasined feet and smoking parsimoniously. When the pipe was finished he sat on, brooding into the dying flame of the fire. Slowly the worry went out of his eyes and resolve came in. Out of the chaos of his fortunes he had finally achieved a way. But it was not a pretty way. His face had become stern and wolfish, and the thin lips were drawn very tightly.

With resolve came action. He pulled himself stiffly to his feet and proceeded to break camp. He packed the rolled blankets, the frying-pan, rifle, and axe on the sled, and passed a lashing around the load. Then he warmed his hands at the fire and pulled on his mittens. He was foot-sore, and limped noticeably as he took his place at the head of the sled. When he put the looped haul-rope over his shoulder, and leant his weight against it to start the sled, he winced. His flesh was galled by many days of contact with the haul-rope.

The trail led along the frozen breast of the Yukon. At the end of four hours he came around a bend and entered the town of Minto. It was perched on top of a high earth

bank in the midst of a clearing, and consisted of a road house, a saloon, and several cabins. He left his sled at the door and entered the saloon.

"Enough for a drink?" he asked, laying an apparently empty gold sack upon the bar. The barkeeper looked sharply at it and him, then set out a bottle and a glass.

"Never mind the dust," he said.

"Go on and take it," Morganson insisted.

The barkeeper held the sack mouth downward over the scales and shook it, and a few flakes of gold dust fell out. Morganson took the sack from him, turned it inside out, and dusted it carefully.

"I thought there was half-a-dollar in it," he said.

"Not quite," answered the other, "but near enough. I'll get it back with the down weight on the next comer."

Morganson shyly poured the whisky into the glass, partly filling it.

"Go on, make it a man's drink," the barkeeper encouraged.

Morganson tilted the bottle and filled the glass to the brim. He drank the liquor slowly, pleasuring in the fire of it that bit his tongue, sank hotly down his throat, and with warm, gentle caresses permeated his stomach.

"Scurvy, eh?" the barkeeper asked.

"A touch of it," he answered. "But I haven't begun to swell yet. Maybe I can get to Dyea and fresh vegetables, and beat it out."

"Kind of all in, I'd say," the other laughed sympathetically. "No dogs, no money, and the scurvy. I'd try spruce tea if I was you."

At the end of half-an-hour, Morganson said good-bye and left the saloon. He put his galled shoulder to the haul-rope and took the river-trail south. An hour later he halted. An inviting swale left the river and led off to the right at an acute angle. He left his sled and limped up the swale for half a mile. Between him and the river was three hundred yards of flat ground covered with cottonwoods. He crossed the cottonwoods to the bank of the Yukon. The trail went by just beneath, but he did not descend to it. South toward Selkirk he could see the trail widen its sunken length through the snow for over a mile. But to the north, in the direction of Minto, a tree-covered out-jut in the bank a quarter of a mile away screened the trail from him.

He seemed satisfied with the view and returned to the sled the way he had come. He put the haul-rope over his shoulder and dragged the sled up the swale. The snow was unpacked and soft, and it was hard work. The runners clogged and stuck, and he was panting severely ere he had covered the half-mile. Night had come on by the time he had pitched his small tent, set up the sheet-iron stove, and chopped a supply of firewood. He had no candles, and contented himself with a pot of tea before crawling into his blankets.

In the morning, as soon as he got up, he drew on his mittens, pulled the flaps of his cap down over his ears, and crossed through the cottonwoods to the Yukon. He took his rifle with him. As before, he did not descend the bank. He watched the empty trail for an hour, beating his hands and stamping his feet to keep up the circulation,

then returned to the tent for breakfast. There was little tea left in the canister — half a dozen drawings at most; but so meagre a pinch did he put in the teapot that he bade fair to extend the lifetime of the tea indefinitely. His entire food supply consisted of half-a-sack of flour and a part-full can of baking powder. He made biscuits, and ate them slowly, chewing each mouthful with infinite relish. When he had had three he called a halt. He debated a while, reached for another biscuit, then hesitated. He turned to the part sack of flour, lifted it, and judged its weight.

“I’m good for a couple of weeks,” he spoke aloud.

“Maybe three,” he added, as he put the biscuits away.

Again he drew on his mittens, pulled down his ear-flaps, took the rifle, and went out to his station on the river bank. He crouched in the snow, himself unseen, and watched. After a few minutes of inaction, the frost began to bite in, and he rested the rifle across his knees and beat his hands back and forth. Then the sting in his feet became intolerable, and he stepped back from the bank and tramped heavily up and down among the trees. But he did not tramp long at a time. Every several minutes he came to the edge of the bank and peered up and down the trail, as though by sheer will he could materialise the form of a man upon it. The short morning passed, though it had seemed century-long to him, and the trail remained empty.

It was easier in the afternoon, watching by the bank. The temperature rose, and soon the snow began to fall — dry and fine and crystalline. There was no wind, and it fell straight down, in quiet monotony. He crouched with eyes closed, his head upon his knees, keeping his watch upon the trail with his ears. But no whining of dogs, churning of sleds, nor cries of drivers broke the silence. With twilight he returned to the tent, cut a supply of firewood, ate two biscuits, and crawled into his blankets. He slept restlessly, tossing about and groaning; and at midnight he got up and ate another biscuit.

Each day grew colder. Four biscuits could not keep up the heat of his body, despite the quantities of hot spruce tea he drank, and he increased his allowance, morning and evening, to three biscuits. In the middle of the day he ate nothing, contenting himself with several cups of excessively weak real tea. This programme became routine. In the morning three biscuits, at noon real tea, and at night three biscuits. In between he drank spruce tea for his scurvy. He caught himself making larger biscuits, and after a severe struggle with himself went back to the old size.

On the fifth day the trail returned to life. To the south a dark object appeared, and grew larger. Morganson became alert. He worked his rifle, ejecting a loaded cartridge from the chamber, by the same action replacing it with another, and returning the ejected cartridge into the magazine. He lowered the trigger to half-cock, and drew on his mitten to keep the trigger-hand warm. As the dark object came nearer he made it out to be a man, without dogs or sled, travelling light. He grew nervous, cocked the trigger, then put it back to half-cock again. The man developed into an Indian, and Morganson, with a sigh of disappointment, dropped the rifle across his knees. The Indian went on past and disappeared towards Minto behind the out-jutting clump of trees.

But Morganson conceived an idea. He changed his crouching spot to a place where cottonwood limbs projected on either side of him. Into these with his axe he chopped two broad notches. Then in one of the notches he rested the barrel of his rifle and glanced along the sights. He covered the trail thoroughly in that direction. He turned about, rested the rifle in the other notch, and, looking along the sights, swept the trail to the clump of trees behind which it disappeared.

He never descended to the trail. A man travelling the trail could have no knowledge of his lurking presence on the bank above. The snow surface was unbroken. There was no place where his tracks left the main trail.

As the nights grew longer, his periods of daylight watching of the trail grew shorter. Once a sled went by with jingling bells in the darkness, and with sullen resentment he chewed his biscuits and listened to the sounds. Chance conspired against him. Faithfully he had watched the trail for ten days, suffering from the cold all the prolonged torment of the damned, and nothing had happened. Only an Indian, travelling light, had passed in. Now, in the night, when it was impossible for him to watch, men and dogs and a sled loaded with life, passed out, bound south to the sea and the sun and civilisation.

So it was that he conceived of the sled for which he waited. It was loaded with life, his life. His life was fading, fainting, gasping away in the tent in the snow. He was weak from lack of food, and could not travel of himself. But on the sled for which he waited were dogs that would drag him, food that would fan up the flame of his life, money that would furnish sea and sun and civilisation. Sea and sun and civilisation became terms interchangeable with life, his life, and they were loaded there on the sled for which he waited. The idea became an obsession, and he grew to think of himself as the rightful and deprived owner of the sled-load of life.

His flour was running short, and he went back to two biscuits in the morning and two biscuits at night. Because, of this his weakness increased and the cold bit in more savagely, and day by day he watched by the dead trail that would not live for him. At last the scurvy entered upon its next stage. The skin was unable longer to cast off the impurity of the blood, and the result was that the body began to swell. His ankles grew puffy, and the ache in them kept him awake long hours at night. Next, the swelling jumped to his knees, and the sum of his pain was more than doubled.

Then there came a cold snap. The temperature went down and down — forty, fifty, sixty degrees below zero. He had no thermometer, but this he knew by the signs and natural phenomena understood by all men in that country — the crackling of water thrown on the snow, the swift sharpness of the bite of the frost, and the rapidity with which his breath froze and coated the canvas walls and roof of the tent. Vainly he fought the cold and strove to maintain his watch on the bank. In his weak condition he was an easy prey, and the frost sank its teeth deep into him before he fled away to the tent and crouched by the fire. His nose and cheeks were frozen and turned black, and his left thumb had frozen inside the mitten. He concluded that he would escape with the loss of the first joint.

Then it was, beaten into the tent by the frost, that the trail, with monstrous irony, suddenly teemed with life. Three sleds went by the first day, and two the second. Once, during each day, he fought his way out to the bank only to succumb and retreat, and each of the two times, within half-an-hour after he retreated, a sled went by.

The cold snap broke, and he was able to remain by the bank once more, and the trail died again. For a week he crouched and watched, and never life stirred along it, not a soul passed in or out. He had cut down to one biscuit night and morning, and somehow he did not seem to notice it. Sometimes he marvelled at the way life remained in him. He never would have thought it possible to endure so much.

When the trail fluttered anew with life it was life with which he could not cope. A detachment of the North-West police went by, a score of them, with many sleds and dogs; and he cowered down on the bank above, and they were unaware of the menace of death that lurked in the form of a dying man beside the trail.

His frozen thumb gave him a great deal of trouble. While watching by the bank he got into the habit of taking his mitten off and thrusting the hand inside his shirt so as to rest the thumb in the warmth of his arm-pit. A mail carrier came over the trail, and Morganson let him pass. A mail carrier was an important person, and was sure to be missed immediately.

On the first day after his last flour had gone it snowed. It was always warm when the snow fell, and he sat out the whole eight hours of daylight on the bank, without movement, terribly hungry and terribly patient, for all the world like a monstrous spider waiting for its prey. But the prey did not come, and he hobbled back to the tent through the darkness, drank quarts of spruce tea and hot water, and went to bed.

The next morning circumstance eased its grip on him. As he started to come out of the tent he saw a huge bull-moose crossing the swale some four hundred yards away. Morganson felt a surge and bound of the blood in him, and then went unaccountably weak. A nausea overpowered him, and he was compelled to sit down a moment to recover. Then he reached for his rifle and took careful aim. The first shot was a hit: he knew it; but the moose turned and broke for the wooded hillside that came down to the swale. Morganson pumped bullets wildly among the trees and brush at the fleeing animal, until it dawned upon him that he was exhausting the ammunition he needed for the sled-load of life for which he waited.

He stopped shooting, and watched. He noted the direction of the animal's flight, and, high up on the hillside in an opening among the trees, saw the trunk of a fallen pine. Continuing the moose's flight in his mind he saw that it must pass the trunk. He resolved on one more shot, and in the empty air above the trunk he aimed and steadied his wavering rifle. The animal sprang into his field of vision, with lifted forelegs as it took the leap. He pulled the trigger. With the explosion the moose seemed to somersault in the air. It crashed down to earth in the snow beyond and flurried the snow into dust.

Morganson dashed up the hillside — at least he started to dash up. The next he knew he was coming out of a faint and dragging himself to his feet. He went up more

slowly, pausing from time to time to breathe and to steady his reeling senses. At last he crawled over the trunk. The moose lay before him. He sat down heavily upon the carcase and laughed. He buried his face in his mittened hands and laughed some more.

He shook the hysteria from him. He drew his hunting knife and worked as rapidly as his injured thumb and weakness would permit him. He did not stop to skin the moose, but quartered it with its hide on. It was a Klondike of meat.

When he had finished he selected a piece of meat weighing a hundred pounds, and started to drag it down to the tent. But the snow was soft, and it was too much for him. He exchanged it for a twenty-pound piece, and, with many pauses to rest, succeeded in getting it to the tent. He fried some of the meat, but ate sparingly. Then, and automatically, he went out to his crouching place on the bank. There were sled-tracks in the fresh snow on the trail. The sled-load of life had passed by while he had been cutting up the moose.

But he did not mind. He was glad that the sled had not passed before the coming of the moose. The moose had changed his plans. Its meat was worth fifty cents a pound, and he was but little more than three miles from Minto. He need no longer wait for the sled-load of life. The moose was the sled-load of life. He would sell it. He would buy a couple of dogs at Minto, some food and some tobacco, and the dogs would haul him south along the trail to the sea, the sun, and civilisation.

He felt hungry. The dull, monotonous ache of hunger had now become a sharp and insistent pang. He hobbled back to the tent and fried a slice of meat. After that he smoked two whole pipefuls of dried tea leaves. Then he fried another slice of moose. He was aware of an unwonted glow of strength, and went out and chopped some firewood. He followed that up with a slice of meat. Teased on by the food, his hunger grew into an inflammation. It became imperative every little while to fry a slice of meat. He tried smaller slices and found himself frying oftener.

In the middle of the day he thought of the wild animals that might eat his meat, and he climbed the hill, carrying along his axe, the haul rope, and a sled lashing. In his weak state the making of the cache and storing of the meat was an all-afternoon task. He cut young saplings, trimmed them, and tied them together into a tall scaffold. It was not so strong a cache as he would have desired to make, but he had done his best. To hoist the meat to the top was heart-breaking. The larger pieces defied him until he passed the rope over a limb above, and, with one end fast to a piece of meat, put all his weight on the other end.

Once in the tent, he proceeded to indulge in a prolonged and solitary orgy. He did not need friends. His stomach and he were company. Slice after slice and many slices of meat he fried and ate. He ate pounds of the meat. He brewed real tea, and brewed it strong. He brewed the last he had. It did not matter. On the morrow he would be buying tea in Minto. When it seemed he could eat no more, he smoked. He smoked all his stock of dried tea leaves. What of it? On the morrow he would be smoking tobacco. He knocked out his pipe, fried a final slice, and went to bed. He had eaten so much

he seemed bursting, yet he got out of his blankets and had just one more mouthful of meat.

In the morning he awoke as from the sleep of death. In his ears were strange sounds. He did not know where he was, and looked about him stupidly until he caught sight of the frying-pan with the last piece of meat in it, partly eaten. Then he remembered all, and with a quick start turned his attention to the strange sounds. He sprang from the blankets with an oath. His scurvy-ravaged legs gave under him and he winced with the pain. He proceeded more slowly to put on his moccasins and leave the tent.

From the cache up the hillside arose a confused noise of snapping and snarling, punctuated by occasional short, sharp yelps. He increased his speed at much expense of pain, and cried loudly and threateningly. He saw the wolves hurrying away through the snow and underbrush, many of them, and he saw the scaffold down on the ground. The animals were heavy with the meat they had eaten, and they were content to slink away and leave the wreckage.

The way of the disaster was clear to him. The wolves had scented his cache. One of them had leapt from the trunk of the fallen tree to the top of the cache. He could see marks of the brute's paws in the snow that covered the trunk. He had not dreamt a wolf could leap so far. A second had followed the first, and a third and fourth, until the flimsy scaffold had gone down under their weight and movement.

His eyes were hard and savage for a moment as he contemplated the extent of the calamity; then the old look of patience returned into them, and he began to gather together the bones well picked and gnawed. There was marrow in them, he knew; and also, here and there, as he sifted the snow, he found scraps of meat that had escaped the maws of the brutes made careless by plenty.

He spent the rest of the morning dragging the wreckage of the moose down the hillside. In addition, he had at least ten pounds left of the chunk of meat he had dragged down the previous day.

"I'm good for weeks yet," was his comment as he surveyed the heap.

He had learnt how to starve and live. He cleaned his rifle and counted the cartridges that remained to him. There were seven. He loaded the weapon and hobbled out to his crouching-place on the bank. All day he watched the dead trail. He watched all the week, but no life passed over it.

Thanks to the meat he felt stronger, though his scurvy was worse and more painful. He now lived upon soup, drinking endless gallons of the thin product of the boiling of the moose bones. The soup grew thinner and thinner as he cracked the bones and boiled them over and over; but the hot water with the essence of the meat in it was good for him, and he was more vigorous than he had been previous to the shooting of the moose.

It was in the next week that a new factor entered into Morganson's life. He wanted to know the date. It became an obsession. He pondered and calculated, but his conclusions were rarely twice the same. The first thing in the morning and the last thing at night, and all day as well, watching by the trail, he worried about it. He awoke at night and

lay awake for hours over the problem. To have known the date would have been of no value to him; but his curiosity grew until it equalled his hunger and his desire to live. Finally it mastered him, and he resolved to go to Minto and find out.

It was dark when he arrived at Minto, but this served him. No one saw him arrive. Besides, he knew he would have moonlight by which to return. He climbed the bank and pushed open the saloon door. The light dazzled him. The source of it was several candles, but he had been living for long in an unlighted tent. As his eyes adjusted themselves, he saw three men sitting around the stove. They were trail-travellers — he knew it at once; and since they had not passed in, they were evidently bound out. They would go by his tent next morning.

The barkeeper emitted a long and marvelling whistle.

“I thought you was dead,” he said.

“Why?” Morganson asked in a faltering voice.

He had become unused to talking, and he was not acquainted with the sound of his own voice. It seemed hoarse and strange.

“You’ve been dead for more’n two months, now,” the barkeeper explained. “You left here going south, and you never arrived at Selkirk. Where have you been?”

“Chopping wood for the steamboat company,” Morganson lied unsteadily.

He was still trying to become acquainted with his own voice. He hobbled across the floor and leant against the bar. He knew he must lie consistently; and while he maintained an appearance of careless indifference, his heart was beating and pounding furiously and irregularly, and he could not help looking hungrily at the three men by the stove. They were the possessors of life — his life.

“But where in hell you been keeping yourself all this time?” the barkeeper demanded.

“I located across the river,” he answered. “I’ve got a mighty big stack of wood chopped.”

The barkeeper nodded. His face beamed with understanding.

“I heard sounds of chopping several times,” he said. “So that was you, eh? Have a drink?”

Morganson clutched the bar tightly. A drink! He could have thrown his arms around the man’s legs and kissed his feet. He tried vainly to utter his acceptance; but the barkeeper had not waited and was already passing out the bottle.

“But what did you do for grub?” the latter asked. “You don’t look as if you could chop wood to keep yourself warm. You look terribly bad, friend.”

Morganson yearned towards the delayed bottle and gulped dryly.

“I did the chopping before the scurvy got bad,” he said. “Then I got a moose right at the start. I’ve been living high all right. It’s the scurvy that’s run me down.”

He filled the glass, and added, “But the spruce tea’s knocking it, I think.”

“Have another,” the barkeeper said.

The action of the two glasses of whisky on Morganson’s empty stomach and weak condition was rapid. The next he knew he was sitting by the stove on a box, and it seemed as though ages had passed. A tall, broad-shouldered, black-whiskered man was

paying for drinks. Morganson's swimming eyes saw him drawing a greenback from a fat roll, and Morganson's swimming eyes cleared on the instant. They were hundred-dollar bills. It was life! His life! He felt an almost irresistible impulse to snatch the money and dash madly out into the night.

The black-whiskered man and one of his companions arose.

"Come on, Oleson," the former said to the third one of the party, a fair-haired, ruddy-faced giant.

Oleson came to his feet, yawning and stretching.

"What are you going to bed so soon for?" the barkeeper asked plaintively. "It's early yet."

"Got to make Selkirk to-morrow," said he of the black whiskers.

"On Christmas Day!" the barkeeper cried.

"The better the day the better the deed," the other laughed.

As the three men passed out of the door it came dimly to Morganson that it was Christmas Eve. That was the date. That was what he had come to Minto for. But it was overshadowed now by the three men themselves, and the fat roll of hundred-dollar bills.

The door slammed.

"That's Jack Thompson," the barkeeper said. "Made two millions on Bonanza and Sulphur, and got more coming. I'm going to bed. Have another drink first."

Morganson hesitated.

"A Christmas drink," the other urged. "It's all right. I'll get it back when you sell your wood."

Morganson mastered his drunkenness long enough to swallow the whisky, say good night, and get out on the trail. It was moonlight, and he hobbled along through the bright, silvery quiet, with a vision of life before him that took the form of a roll of hundred-dollar bills.

He awoke. It was dark, and he was in his blankets. He had gone to bed in his moccasins and mittens, with the flaps of his cap pulled down over his ears. He got up as quickly as his crippled condition would permit, and built the fire and boiled some water. As he put the spruce-twigs into the teapot he noted the first glimmer of the pale morning light. He caught up his rifle and hobbled in a panic out to the bank. As he crouched and waited, it came to him that he had forgotten to drink his spruce tea. The only other thought in his mind was the possibility of John Thompson changing his mind and not travelling Christmas Day.

Dawn broke and merged into day. It was cold and clear. Sixty below zero was Morganson's estimate of the frost. Not a breath stirred the chill Arctic quiet. He sat up suddenly, his muscular tensivity increasing the hurt of the scurvy. He had heard the far sound of a man's voice and the faint whining of dogs. He began beating his hands back and forth against his sides. It was a serious matter to bare the trigger hand to sixty degrees below zero, and against that time he needed to develop all the warmth of which his flesh was capable.

They came into view around the outjutting clump of trees. To the fore was the third man whose name he had not learnt. Then came eight dogs drawing the sled. At the front of the sled, guiding it by the gee-pole, walked John Thompson. The rear was brought up by Oleson, the Swede. He was certainly a fine man, Morganson thought, as he looked at the bulk of him in his squirrel-skin parka. The men and dogs were silhouetted sharply against the white of the landscape. They had the seeming of two dimension, cardboard figures that worked mechanically.

Morganson rested his cocked rifle in the notch in the tree. He became abruptly aware that his fingers were cold, and discovered that his right hand was bare. He did not know that he had taken off the mitten. He slipped it on again hastily. The men and dogs drew closer, and he could see their breaths spouting into visibility in the cold air. When the first man was fifty yards away, Morganson slipped the mitten from his right hand. He placed the first finger on the trigger and aimed low. When he fired the first man whirled half around and went down on the trail.

In the instant of surprise, Morganson pulled the trigger on John Thompson — too low, for the latter staggered and sat down suddenly on the sled. Morganson raised his aim and fired again. John Thompson sank down backward along the top of the loaded sled.

Morganson turned his attention to Oleson. At the same time that he noted the latter running away towards Minto he noted that the dogs, coming to where the first man's body blocked the trail, had halted. Morganson fired at the fleeing man and missed, and Oleson swerved. He continued to swerve back and forth, while Morganson fired twice in rapid succession and missed both shots. Morganson stopped himself just as he was pulling the trigger again. He had fired six shots. Only one more cartridge remained, and it was in the chamber. It was imperative that he should not miss his last shot.

He held his fire and desperately studied Oleson's flight. The giant was grotesquely curving and twisting and running at top speed along the trail, the tail of his parka flapping smartly behind. Morganson trained his rifle on the man and with a swaying action followed his erratic flight. Morganson's finger was getting numb. He could scarcely feel the trigger. "God help me," he breathed a prayer aloud, and pulled the trigger. The running man pitched forward on his face, rebounded from the hard trail, and slid along, rolling over and over. He threshed for a moment with his arms and then lay quiet.

Morganson dropped his rifle (worthless now that the last cartridge was gone) and slid down the bank through the soft snow. Now that he had sprung the trap, concealment of his lurking-place was no longer necessary. He hobbled along the trail to the sled, his fingers making involuntary gripping and clutching movements inside the mittens.

The snarling of the dogs halted him. The leader, a heavy dog, half Newfoundland and half Hudson Bay, stood over the body of the man that lay on the trail, and menaced Morganson with bristling hair and bared fangs. The other seven dogs of the

team were likewise bristling and snarling. Morganson approached tentatively, and the team surged towards him. He stopped again and talked to the animals, threatening and cajoling by turns. He noticed the face of the man under the leader's feet, and was surprised at how quickly it had turned white with the ebb of life and the entrance of the frost. John Thompson lay back along the top of the loaded sled, his head sunk in a space between two sacks and his chin tilted upwards, so that all Morganson could see was the black beard pointing skyward.

Finding it impossible to face the dogs Morganson stepped off the trail into the deep snow and floundered in a wide circle to the rear of the sled. Under the initiative of the leader, the team swung around in its tangled harness. Because of his crippled condition, Morganson could move only slowly. He saw the animals circling around on him and tried to retreat. He almost made it, but the big leader, with a savage lunge, sank its teeth into the calf of his leg. The flesh was slashed and torn, but Morganson managed to drag himself clear.

He cursed the brutes fiercely, but could not cow them. They replied with neck-bristling and snarling, and with quick lunges against their breastbands. He remembered Oleson, and turned his back upon them and went along the trail. He scarcely took notice of his lacerated leg. It was bleeding freely; the main artery had been torn, but he did not know it.

Especially remarkable to Morganson was the extreme pallor of the Swede, who the preceding night had been so ruddy-faced. Now his face was like white marble. What with his fair hair and lashes he looked like a carved statue rather than something that had been a man a few minutes before. Morganson pulled off his mittens and searched the body. There was no money-belt around the waist next to the skin, nor did he find a gold-sack. In a breast pocket he lit on a small wallet. With fingers that swiftly went numb with the frost, he hurried through the contents of the wallet. There were letters with foreign stamps and postmarks on them, and several receipts and memorandum accounts, and a letter of credit for eight hundred dollars. That was all. There was no money.

He made a movement to start back toward the sled, but found his foot rooted to the trail. He glanced down and saw that he stood in a fresh deposit of frozen red. There was red ice on his torn pants leg and on the moccasin beneath. With a quick effort he broke the frozen clutch of his blood and hobbled along the trail to the sled. The big leader that had bitten him began snarling and lunging, and was followed in this conduct by the whole team.

Morganson wept weakly for a space, and weakly swayed from one side to the other. Then he brushed away the frozen tears that gemmed his lashes. It was a joke. Malicious chance was having its laugh at him. Even John Thompson, with his heaven-aspiring whiskers, was laughing at him.

He prowled around the sled demented, at times weeping and pleading with the brutes for his life there on the sled, at other times raging impotently against them.

Then calmness came upon him. He had been making a fool of himself. All he had to do was to go to the tent, get the axe, and return and brain the dogs. He'd show them.

In order to get to the tent he had to go wide of the sled and the savage animals. He stepped off the trail into the soft snow. Then he felt suddenly giddy and stood still. He was afraid to go on for fear he would fall down. He stood still for a long time, balancing himself on his crippled legs that were trembling violently from weakness. He looked down and saw the snow reddening at his feet. The blood flowed freely as ever. He had not thought the bite was so severe. He controlled his giddiness and stooped to examine the wound. The snow seemed rushing up to meet him, and he recoiled from it as from a blow. He had a panic fear that he might fall down, and after a struggle he managed to stand upright again. He was afraid of that snow that had rushed up to him.

Then the white glimmer turned black, and the next he knew he was awakening in the snow where he had fallen. He was no longer giddy. The cobwebs were gone. But he could not get up. There was no strength in his limbs. His body seemed lifeless. By a desperate effort he managed to roll over on his side. In this position he caught a glimpse of the sled and of John Thompson's black beard pointing skyward. Also he saw the lead dog licking the face of the man who lay on the trail. Morganson watched curiously. The dog was nervous and eager. Sometimes it uttered short, sharp yelps, as though to arouse the man, and surveyed him with ears cocked forward and wagging tail. At last it sat down, pointed its nose upward, and began to howl. Soon all the team was howling.

Now that he was down, Morganson was no longer afraid. He had a vision of himself being found dead in the snow, and for a while he wept in self-pity. But he was not afraid. The struggle had gone out of him. When he tried to open his eyes he found that the wet tears had frozen them shut. He did not try to brush the ice away. It did not matter. He had not dreamed death was so easy. He was even angry that he had struggled and suffered through so many weary weeks. He had been bullied and cheated by the fear of death. Death did not hurt. Every torment he had endured had been a torment of life. Life had defamed death. It was a cruel thing.

But his anger passed. The lies and frauds of life were of no consequence now that he was coming to his own. He became aware of drowsiness, and felt a sweet sleep stealing upon him, balmy with promises of easement and rest. He heard faintly the howling of the dogs, and had a fleeting thought that in the mastering of his flesh the frost no longer bit. Then the light and the thought ceased to pulse beneath the tear-gemmed eyelids, and with a tired sigh of comfort he sank into sleep.

Flush of Gold

LON McFANE was a bit grumpy, what of losing his tobacco pouch, or else he might have told me, before we got to it, something about the cabin at Surprise Lake. All day, turn and turn about, we had spelled each other at going to the fore and breaking trail for the dogs. It was heavy snowshoe work, and did not tend to make a man voluble, yet Lon McFane might have found breath enough at noon, when we stopped to boil coffee, with which to tell me. But he didn't. Surprise Lake? it was Surprise Cabin to me. I had never heard of it before. I confess I was a bit tired. I had been looking for Lon to stop and make camp any time for an hour; but I had too much pride to suggest making camp or to ask him his intentions; and yet he was my man, lured at a handsome wage to mush my dogs for me and to obey my commands. I guess I was a bit grumpy myself. He said nothing, and I was resolved to ask nothing, even if we tramped on all night.

We came upon the cabin abruptly. For a week of trail we had met no one, and, in my mind, there had been little likelihood of meeting any one for a week to come. And yet there it was, right before my eyes, a cabin, with a dim light in the window and smoke curling up from the chimney.

"Why didn't you tell me — " I began, but was interrupted by Lon, who muttered

— "Surprise Lake — it lies up a small feeder half a mile on. It's only a pond."

"Yes, but the cabin — who lives in it?"

"A woman," was the answer, and the next moment Lon had rapped on the door, and a woman's voice bade him enter.

"Have you seen Dave recently?" she asked.

"Nope," Lon answered carelessly. "I've been in the other direction, down Circle City way. Dave's up Dawson way, ain't he?"

The woman nodded, and Lon fell to unharnessing the dogs, while I unlashed the sled and carried the camp outfit into the cabin. The cabin was a large, one-room affair, and the woman was evidently alone in it. She pointed to the stove, where water was already boiling, and Lon set about the preparation of supper, while I opened the fish-bag and fed the dogs. I looked for Lon to introduce us, and was vexed that he did not, for they were evidently old friends.

"You are Lon McFane, aren't you?" I heard her ask him. "Why, I remember you now. The last time I saw you it was on a steamboat, wasn't it? I remember . . . "

Her speech seemed suddenly to be frozen by the spectacle of dread which, I knew, from the tenor I saw mounting in her eyes, must be on her inner vision. To my aston-

ishment, Lon was affected by her words and manner. His face showed desperate, for all his voice sounded hearty and genial, as he said —

“The last time we met was at Dawson, Queen’s Jubilee, or Birthday, or something — don’t you remember? — the canoe races in the river, and the obstacle races down the main street?”

The terror faded out of her eyes and her whole body relaxed. “Oh, yes, I do remember,” she said. “And you won one of the canoe races.”

“How’s Dave been makin’ it lately? Strikin’ it as rich as ever, I suppose?” Lon asked, with apparent irrelevance.

She smiled and nodded, and then, noticing that I had unlashd the bed roll, she indicated the end of the cabin where I might spread it. Her own bunk, I noticed, was made up at the opposite end.

“I thought it was Dave coming when I heard your dogs,” she said.

After that she said nothing, contenting herself with watching Lon’s cooking operations, and listening the while as for the sound of dogs along the trail. I lay back on the blankets and smoked and watched. Here was mystery; I could make that much out, but no more could I make out. Why in the deuce hadn’t Lon given me the tip before we arrived? I looked at her face, unnoticed by her, and the longer I looked the harder it was to take my eyes away. It was a wonderfully beautiful face, unearthly, I may say, with a light in it or an expression or something “that was never on land or sea.” Fear and terror had completely vanished, and it was a placidly beautiful face — if by “placid” one can characterize that intangible and occult something that I cannot say was a radiance or a light any more than I can say it was an expression.

Abruptly, as if for the first time, she became aware of my presence.

“Have you seen Dave recently?” she asked me. It was on the tip of my tongue to say “Dave who?” when Lon coughed in the smoke that arose from the sizzling bacon. The bacon might have caused that cough, but I took it as a hint and left my question unasked. “No, I haven’t,” I answered. “I’m new in this part of the country — ”

“But you don’t mean to say,” she interrupted, “that you’ve never heard of Dave — of Big Dave Walsh?”

“You see,” I apologised, “I’m new in the country. I’ve put in most of my time in the Lower Country, down Nome way.”

“Tell him about Dave,” she said to Lon.

Lon seemed put out, but he began in that hearty, genial manner that I had noticed before. It seemed a shade too hearty and genial, and it irritated me.

“Oh, Dave is a fine man,” he said. “He’s a man, every inch of him, and he stands six feet four in his socks. His word is as good as his bond. The man lies who ever says Dave told a lie, and that man will have to fight with me, too, as well — if there’s anything left of him when Dave gets done with him. For Dave is a fighter. Oh, yes, he’s a scrapper from way back. He got a grizzly with a ‘38 popgun. He got clawed some, but he knew what he was doin’. He went into the cave on purpose to get that grizzly. ‘Fraid of nothing. Free an’ easy with his money, or his last shirt an’ match

when out of money. Why, he drained Surprise Lake here in three weeks an' took out ninety thousand, didn't he?" She flushed and nodded her head proudly. Through his recital she had followed every word with keenest interest. "An' I must say," Lon went on, "that I was disappointed sore on not meeting Dave here to-night."

Lon served supper at one end of the table of whip-sawed spruce, and we fell to eating. A howling of the dogs took the woman to the door. She opened it an inch and listened.

"Where is Dave Walsh?" I asked, in an undertone.

"Dead," Lon answered. "In hell, maybe. I don't know. Shut up."

"But you just said that you expected to meet him here to-night," I challenged.

"Oh, shut up, can't you," was Lon's reply, in the same cautious undertone.

The woman had closed the door and was returning, and I sat and meditated upon the fact that this man who told me to shut up received from me a salary of two hundred and fifty dollars a month and his board.

Lon washed the dishes, while I smoked and watched the woman. She seemed more beautiful than ever — strangely and weirdly beautiful, it is true. After looking at her steadfastly for five minutes, I was compelled to come back to the real world and to glance at Lon McFane. This enabled me to know, without discussion, that the woman, too, was real. At first I had taken her for the wife of Dave Walsh; but if Dave Walsh were dead, as Lon had said, then she could be only his widow.

It was early to bed, for we faced a long day on the morrow; and as Lon crawled in beside me under the blankets, I ventured a question.

"That woman's crazy, isn't she?"

"Crazy as a loon," he answered.

And before I could formulate my next question, Lon McFane, I swear, was off to sleep. He always went to sleep that way — just crawled into the blankets, closed his eyes, and was off, a demure little heavy breathing rising on the air. Lon never snored.

And in the morning it was quick breakfast, feed the dogs, load the sled, and hit the trail. We said good-bye as we pulled out, and the woman stood in the doorway and watched us off. I carried the vision of her unearthly beauty away with me, just under my eyelids, and all I had to do, any time, was to close them and see her again. The way was unbroken, Surprise Lake being far off the travelled trails, and Lon and I took turn about at beating down the feathery snow with our big, webbed shoes so that the dogs could travel. "But you said you expected to meet Dave Walsh at the cabin," trembled on the tip of my tongue a score of times. I did not utter it. I could wait until we knocked off in the middle of the day. And when the middle of the day came, we went right on, for, as Lon explained, there was a camp of moose hunters at the forks of the Teelee, and we could make there by dark. But we didn't make there by dark, for Bright, the lead-dog, broke his shoulder-blade, and we lost an hour over him before we shot him. Then, crossing a timber jam on the frozen bed of the Teelee, the sled suffered a wrenching capsizing, and it was a case of make camp and repair the runner. I cooked supper and fed the dogs while Lon made the repairs, and together we got in

the night's supply of ice and firewood. Then we sat on our blankets, our moccasins steaming on upended sticks before the fire, and had our evening smoke.

"You didn't know her?" Lon queried suddenly. I shook my head.

"You noticed the colour of her hair and eyes and her complexion, well, that's where she got her name — she was like the first warm glow of a golden sunrise. She was called Flush of Gold. Ever heard of her?"

Somewhere I had a confused and misty remembrance of having heard the name, yet it meant nothing to me. "Flush of Gold," I repeated; "sounds like the name of a dance-house girl." Lon shook his head. "No, she was a good woman, at least in that sense, though she sinned greatly just the same."

"But why do you speak always of her in the past tense, as though she were dead?"

"Because of the darkness on her soul that is the same as the darkness of death. The Flush of Gold that I knew, that Dawson knew, and that Forty Mile knew before that, is dead. That dumb, lunatic creature we saw last night was not Flush of Gold."

"And Dave?" I queried.

"He built that cabin," Lon answered, "He built it for her . . . and for himself. He is dead. She is waiting for him there. She half believes he is not dead. But who can know the whim of a crazed mind? Maybe she wholly believes he is not dead. At any rate, she waits for him there in the cabin he built. Who would rouse the dead? Then who would rouse the living that are dead? Not I, and that is why I let on to expect to meet Dave Walsh there last night. I'll bet a stack that I'd a been more surprised than she if I HAD met him there last night."

"I do not understand," I said. "Begin at the beginning, as a white man should, and tell me the whole tale."

And Lon began. "Victor Chauvet was an old Frenchman — born in the south of France. He came to California in the days of gold. He was a pioneer. He found no gold, but, instead, became a maker of bottled sunshine — in short, a grape-grower and wine-maker. Also, he followed gold excitements. That is what brought him to Alaska in the early days, and over the Chilcoot and down the Yukon long before the Carmack strike. The old town site of Ten Mile was Chauvet's. He carried the first mail into Arctic City. He staked those coal-mines on the Porcupine a dozen years ago. He grubstaked Loftus into the Nippennuck Country. Now it happened that Victor Chauvet was a good Catholic, loving two things in this world, wine and woman. Wine of all kinds he loved, but of woman, only one, and she was the mother of Marie Chauvet."

Here I groaned aloud, having meditated beyond self-control over the fact that I paid this man two hundred and fifty dollars a month.

"What's the matter now?" he demanded.

"Matter?" I complained. "I thought you were telling the story of Flush of Gold. I don't want a biography of your old French wine-bibber."

Lon calmly lighted his pipe, took one good puff, then put the pipe aside. "And you asked me to begin at the beginning," he said.

"Yes," said I; "the beginning."

“And the beginning of Flush of Gold is the old French wine-bibber, for he was the father of Marie Chauvet, and Marie Chauvet was the Flush of Gold. What more do you want? Victor Chauvet never had much luck to speak of. He managed to live, and to get along, and to take good care of Marie, who resembled the one woman he had loved. He took very good care of her. Flush of Gold was the pet name he gave her. Flush of Gold Creek was named after her — Flush of Gold town site, too. The old man was great on town sites, only he never landed them.

“Now, honestly,” Lon said, with one of his lightning changes, “you’ve seen her, what do you think of her — of her looks, I mean? How does she strike your beauty sense?”

“She is remarkably beautiful,” I said. “I never saw anything like her in my life. In spite of the fact, last night, that I guessed she was mad, I could not keep my eyes off of her. It wasn’t curiosity. It was wonder, sheer wonder, she was so strangely beautiful.”

“She was more strangely beautiful before the darkness fell upon her,” Lon said softly. “She was truly the Flush of Cold. She turned all men’s hearts . . . and heads. She recalls, with an effort, that I once won a canoe race at Dawson — I, who once loved her, and was told by her of her love for me. It was her beauty that made all men love her. She’d ‘a’ got the apple from Paris, on application, and there wouldn’t have been any Trojan War, and to top it off she’d have thrown Paris down. And now she lives in darkness, and she who was always fickle, for the first time is constant — and constant to a shade, to a dead man she does not realize is dead.

“And this is the way it was. You remember what I said last night of Dave Walsh — Big Dave Walsh? He was all that I said, and more, many times more. He came into this country in the late eighties — that’s a pioneer for you. He was twenty years old then. He was a young bull. When he was twenty-five he could lift clear of the ground thirteen fifty-pound sacks of flour. At first, each fall of the year, famine drove him out. It was a lone land in those days. No river steamboats, no grub, nothing but salmon bellies and rabbit tracks. But after famine chased him out three years, he said he’d had enough of being chased; and the next year he stayed. He lived on straight meat when he was lucky enough to get it; he ate eleven dogs that winter; but he stayed. And the next winter he stayed, and the next. He never did leave the country again. He was a bull, a great bull. He could kill the strongest man in the country with hard work. He could outpack a Chilcat Indian, he could outpaddle a Stick, and he could travel all day with wet feet when the thermometer registered fifty below zero, and that’s going some, I tell you, for vitality. You’d freeze your feet at twenty-five below if you wet them and tried to keep on.

“Dave Walsh was a bull for strength. And yet he was soft and easy-natured. Anybody could do him, the latest short-horn in camp could lie his last dollar out of him. ‘But it doesn’t worry me,’ he had a way of laughing off his softness; ‘it doesn’t keep me awake nights.’ Now don’t get the idea that he had no backbone. You remember about the bear he went after with the popgun. When it came to fighting Dave was the blamest ever. He was the limit, if by that I may describe his unlimitedness when he got into action, he was easy and kind with the weak, but the strong had to give trail when he

went by. And he was a man that men liked, which is the finest word of all, a man's man.

"Dave never took part in the big stampede to Dawson when Carmack made the Bonanza strike. You see, Dave was just then over on Mammon Creek strikin' it himself. He discovered Mammon Creek. Cleaned eighty-four thousand up that winter, and opened up the claim so that it promised a couple of hundred thousand for the next winter. Then, summer bein' on and the ground sloshy, he took a trip up the Yukon to Dawson to see what Carmack's strike looked like. And there he saw Flush of Gold. I remember the night. I shall always remember. It was something sudden, and it makes one shiver to think of a strong man with all the strength withered out of him by one glance from the soft eyes of a weak, blond, female creature like Flush of Gold. It was at her dad's cabin, old Victor Chauvet's. Some friend had brought Dave along to talk over town sites on Mammon Creek. But little talking did he do, and what he did was mostly gibberish. I tell you the sight of Flush of Gold had sent Dave clean daffy. Old Victor Chauvet insisted after Dave left that he had been drunk. And so he had. He was drunk, but Flush of Gold was the strong drink that made him so.

"That settled it, that first glimpse he caught of her. He did not start back down the Yukon in a week, as he had intended. He lingered on a month, two months, all summer. And we who had suffered understood, and wondered what the outcome would be. Undoubtedly, in our minds, it seemed that Flush of Gold had met her master. And why not? There was romance sprinkled all over Dave Walsh. He was a Mammon King, he had made the Mammon Creek strike; he was an old sour dough, one of the oldest pioneers in the land — men turned to look at him when he went by, and said to one another in awed undertones, 'There goes Dave Walsh.' And why not? He stood six feet four; he had yellow hair himself that curled on his neck; and he was a bull — a yellow-maned bull just turned thirty-one.

"And Flush of Gold loved him, and, having danced him through a whole summer's courtship, at the end their engagement was made known. The fall of the year was at hand, Dave had to be back for the winter's work on Mammon Creek, and Flush of Gold refused to be married right away. Dave put Dusky Burns in charge of the Mammon Creek claim, and himself lingered on in Dawson. Little use. She wanted her freedom a while longer; she must have it, and she would not marry until next year. And so, on the first ice, Dave Walsh went alone down the Yukon behind his dogs, with the understanding that the marriage would take place when he arrived on the first steamboat of the next year.

Now Dave was as true as the Pole Star, and she was as false as a magnetic needle in a cargo of loadstone. Dave was as steady and solid as she was fickle and fly-away, and in some way Dave, who never doubted anybody, doubted her. It was the jealousy of his love, perhaps, and maybe it was the message ticked off from her soul to his; but at any rate Dave was worried by fear of her inconstancy. He was afraid to trust her till the next year, he had so to trust her, and he was pretty well beside himself. Some of it I got from old Victor Chauvet afterwards, and from all that I have pieced

together I conclude that there was something of a scene before Dave pulled north with his dogs. He stood up before the old Frenchman, with Flush of Gold beside him, and announced that they were plighted to each other. He was very dramatic, with fire in his eyes, old Victor said. He talked something about ‘until death do us part’; and old Victor especially remembered that at one place Dave took her by the shoulder with his great paw and almost shook her as he said: ‘Even unto death are you mine, and I would rise from the grave to claim you.’ Old Victor distinctly remembered those words ‘Even unto death are you mine, and I would rise from the grave to claim you.’ And he told me afterwards that Flush of Gold was pretty badly frightened, and that he afterwards took Dave to one side privately and told him that that wasn’t the way to hold Flush of Gold — that he must humour her and gentle her if he wanted to keep her.

“There is no discussion in my mind but that Flush of Gold was frightened. She was a savage herself in her treatment of men, while men had always treated her as a soft and tender and too utterly-utter something that must not be hurt. She didn’t know what harshness was. . . until Dave Walsh, standing his six feet four, a big bull, gripped her and pawed her and assured her that she was his until death, and then some. And besides, in Dawson, that winter, was a music-player — one of those macaroni-eating, greasy-tenor-Eye-talian-dago propositions — and Flush of Gold lost her heart to him. Maybe it was only fascination — I don’t know. Sometimes it seems to me that she really did love Dave Walsh. Perhaps it was because he had frightened her with that even-unto-death, rise-from-the-grave stunt of his that she in the end inclined to the dago music-player. But it is all guesswork, and the facts are, sufficient. He wasn’t a dago; he was a Russian count — this was straight; and he wasn’t a professional piano-player or anything of the sort. He played the violin and the piano, and he sang — sang well — but it was for his own pleasure and for the pleasure of those he sang for. He had money, too — and right here let me say that Flush of Gold never cared a rap for money. She was fickle, but she was never sordid.

“But to be getting along. She was plighted to Dave, and Dave was coming up on the first steamboat to get her — that was the summer of ‘98, and the first steamboat was to be expected the middle of June. And Flush of Gold was afraid to throw Dave down and face him afterwards. It was all planned suddenly. The Russian music-player, the Count, was her obedient slave. She planned it, I know. I learned as much from old Victor afterwards. The Count took his orders from her, and caught that first steamboat down. It was the Golden Rocket. And so did Flush of Gold catch it. And so did I. I was going to Circle City, and I was flabbergasted when I found Flush of Gold on board. I didn’t see her name down on the passenger list. She was with the Count fellow all the time, happy and smiling, and I noticed that the Count fellow was down on the list as having his wife along. There it was, stateroom, number, and all. The first I knew that he was married, only I didn’t see anything of the wife . . . unless Flush of Gold was so counted. I wondered if they’d got married ashore before starting. There’d been talk

about them in Dawson, you see, and bets had been laid that the Count fellow had cut Dave out.

“I talked with the purser. He didn’t know anything more about it than I did; he didn’t know Flush of Gold, anyway, and besides, he was almost rushed to death. You know what a Yukon steamboat is, but you can’t guess what the Golden Rocket was when it left Dawson that June of 1898. She was a hummer. Being the first steamer out, she carried all the scurvy patients and hospital wrecks. Then she must have carried a couple of millions of Klondike dust and nuggets, to say nothing of a packed and jammed passenger list, deck passengers galore, and bucks and squaws and dogs without end. And she was loaded down to the guards with freight and baggage. There was a mountain of the same on the fore-lower-deck, and each little stop along the way added to it. I saw the box come aboard at Teelee Portage, and I knew it for what it was, though I little guessed the joker that was in it. And they piled it on top of everything else on the fore-lower-deck, and they didn’t pile it any too securely either. The mate expected to come back to it again, and then forgot about it. I thought at the time that there was something familiar about the big husky dog that climbed over the baggage and freight and lay down next to the box. And then we passed the Glendale, bound up for Dawson. As she saluted us, I thought of Dave on board of her and hurrying to Dawson to Flush of Gold. I turned and looked at her where she stood by the rail. Her eyes were bright, but she looked a bit frightened by the sight of the other steamer, and she was leaning closely to the Count fellow as for protection. She needn’t have leaned so safely against him, and I needn’t have been so sure of a disappointed Dave Walsh arriving at Dawson. For Dave Walsh wasn’t on the Glendale. There were a lot of things I didn’t know, but was soon to know — for instance, that the pair were not yet married. Inside half an hour preparations for the marriage took place. What of the sick men in the main cabin, and of the crowded condition of the Golden Rocket, the likeliest place for the ceremony was found forward, on the lower deck, in an open space next to the rail and gang-plank and shaded by the mountain of freight with the big box on top and the sleeping dog beside it. There was a missionary on board, getting off at Eagle City, which was the next step, so they had to use him quick. That’s what they’d planned to do, get married on the boat.

“But I’ve run ahead of the facts. The reason Dave Walsh wasn’t on the Glendale was because he was on the Golden Rocket. It was this way. After loiterin’ in Dawson on account of Flush of Gold, he went down to Mammon Creek on the ice. And there he found Dusky Burns doing so well with the claim, there was no need for him to be around. So he put some grub on the sled, harnessed the dogs, took an Indian along, and pulled out for Surprise Lake. He always had a liking for that section. Maybe you don’t know how the creek turned out to be a four-flusher; but the prospects were good at the time, and Dave proceeded to build his cabin and hers. That’s the cabin we slept in. After he finished it, he went off on a moose hunt to the forks of the Teelee, takin’ the Indian along.

“And this is what happened. Came on a cold snap. The juice went down forty, fifty, sixty below zero. I remember that snap — I was at Forty Mile; and I remember the very day. At eleven o’clock in the morning the spirit thermometer at the N. A. T. & T. Company’s store went down to seventy-five below zero. And that morning, near the forks of the Teelee, Dave Walsh was out after moose with that blessed Indian of his. I got it all from the Indian afterwards — we made a trip over the ice together to Dyea. That morning Mr. Indian broke through the ice and wet himself to the waist. Of course he began to freeze right away. The proper thing was to build a fire. But Dave Walsh was a bull. It was only half a mile to camp, where a fire was already burning. What was the good of building another? He threw Mr. Indian over his shoulder — and ran with him — half a mile — with the thermometer at seventy-five below. You know what that means. Suicide. There’s no other name for it. Why, that buck Indian weighed over two hundred himself, and Dave ran half a mile with him. Of course he froze his lungs. Must have frozen them near solid. It was a tomfool trick for any man to do. And anyway, after lingering horribly for several weeks, Dave Walsh died.

“The Indian didn’t know what to do with the corpse. Ordinarily he’d have buried him and let it go at that. But he knew that Dave Walsh was a big man, worth lots of money, a hi-yu skookum chief. Likewise he’d seen the bodies of other hi-yu skookums carted around the country like they were worth something. So he decided to take Dave’s body to Forty Mile, which was Dave’s headquarters. You know how the ice is on the grass roots in this country — well, the Indian planted Dave under a foot of soil — in short, he put Dave on ice. Dave could have stayed there a thousand years and still been the same old Dave. You understand — just the same as a refrigerator. Then the Indian brings over a whipsaw from the cabin at Surprise Lake and makes lumber enough for the box. Also, waiting for the thaw, he goes out and shoots about ten thousand pounds of moose. This he keeps on ice, too. Came the thaw. The Teelee broke. He built a raft and loaded it with the meat, the big box with Dave inside, and Dave’s team of dogs, and away they went down the Teelee.

“The raft got caught on a timber jam and hung up two days. It was scorching hot weather, and Mr. Indian nearly lost his moose meat. So when he got to Teelee Portage he figured a steamboat would get to Forty Mile quicker than his raft. He transferred his cargo, and there you are, fore-lower deck of the Golden Rocket, Flush of Gold being married, and Dave Walsh in his big box casting the shade for her. And there’s one thing I clean forgot. No wonder I thought the husky dog that came aboard at Teelee Portage was familiar. It was Pee-lat, Dave Walsh’s lead-dog and favourite — a terrible fighter, too. He was lying down beside the box.

“Flush of Gold caught sight of me, called me over, shook hands with me, and introduced me to the Count. She was beautiful. I was as mad for her then as ever. She smiled into my eyes and said I must sign as one of the witnesses. And there was no refusing her. She was ever a child, cruel as children are cruel. Also, she told me she was in possession of the only two bottles of champagne in Dawson — or that had been in Dawson the night before; and before I knew it I was scheduled to drink her and the

Count's health. Everybody crowded round, the captain of the steamboat, very prominent, trying to ring in on the wine, I guess. It was a funny wedding. On the upper deck the hospital wrecks, with various feet in the grave, gathered and looked down to see. There were Indians all jammed in the circle, too, big bucks, and their squaws and kids, to say nothing of about twenty-five snarling wolf-dogs. The missionary lined the two of them up and started in with the service. And just then a dog-fight started, high up on the pile of freight — Pee-lat lying beside the big box, and a white-haired brute belonging to one of the Indians. The fight wasn't explosive at all. The brutes just snarled at each other from a distance — tapping at each other long-distance, you know, saying dast and dassent, dast and dassent. The noise was rather disturbing, but you could hear the missionary's voice above it.

"There was no particularly easy way of getting at the two dogs, except from the other side of the pile. But nobody was on that side—everybody watching the ceremony, you see. Even then everything might have been all right if the captain hadn't thrown a club at the dogs. That was what precipitated everything. As I say, if the captain hadn't thrown that club, nothing might have happened.

"The missionary had just reached the point where he was saying 'In sickness and in health,' and 'Till death us do part.' And just then the captain threw the club. I saw the whole thing. It landed on Pee-lat, and at that instant the white brute jumped him. The club caused it. Their two bodies struck the box, and it began to slide, its lower end tilting down. It was a long oblong box, and it slid down slowly until it reached the perpendicular, when it came down on the run. The onlookers on that side the circle had time to get out from under. Flush of Gold and the Count, on the opposite side of the circle, were facing the box; the missionary had his back to it. The box must have fallen ten feet straight up and down, and it hit end on.

"Now mind you, not one of us knew that Dave Walsh was dead. We thought he was on the Glendale, bound for Dawson. The missionary had edged off to one side, and so Flush of Gold faced the box when it struck. It was like in a play. It couldn't have been better planned. It struck on end, and on the right end; the whole front of the box came off; and out swept Dave Walsh on his feet, partly wrapped in a blanket, his yellow hair flying and showing bright in the sun. Right out of the box, on his feet, he swept upon Flush of Gold. She didn't know he was dead, but it was unmistakable, after hanging up two days on a timber jam, that he was rising all right from the dead to claim her. Possibly that is what she thought. At any rate, the sight froze her. She couldn't move. She just sort of wilted and watched Dave Walsh coming for her! And he got her. It looked almost as though he threw his arms around her, but whether or not this happened, down to the deck they went together. We had to drag Dave Walsh's body clear before we could get hold of her. She was in a faint, but it would have been just as well if she had never come out of that faint; for when she did, she fell to screaming the way insane people do. She kept it up for hours, till she was exhausted. Oh, yes, she recovered. You saw her last night, and know how much recovered she is. She is not violent, it is true, but she lives in darkness. She believes that she is waiting

for Dave Walsh, and so she waits in the cabin he built for her. She is no longer fickle. It is nine years now that she has been faithful to Dave Walsh, and the outlook is that she'll be faithful to him to the end."

Lon McFane pulled down the top of the blankets and prepared to crawl in.

"We have her grub hauled to her each year," he added, "and in general keep an eye on her. Last night was the first time she ever recognized me, though."

"Who are the we?" I asked.

"Oh," was the answer, "the Count and old Victor Chauvet and me. Do you know, I think the Count is the one to be really sorry for. Dave Walsh never did know that she was false to him. And she does not suffer. Her darkness is merciful to her."

I lay silently under the blankets for the space of a minute.

"Is the Count still in the country?" I asked.

But there was a gentle sound of heavy breathing, and I knew Lon McFane was asleep.

A Flutter in Eggs

IT was in the A. C. Company's big store at Dawson, on a morning of crisp frost, that Lucille Arral beckoned Smoke Bellew over to the dry-goods counter. The clerk had gone on an expedition into the storerooms, and, despite the huge, red-hot stoves, Lucille had drawn on her mittens again.

Smoke obeyed her call with alacrity. The man did not exist in Dawson who would not have been flattered by the notice of Lucille Arral, the singing soubrette of the tiny stock company that performed nightly at the Palace Opera House.

"Things are dead," she complained, with pretty petulance, as soon as they had shaken hands. "There hasn't been a stampede for a week. That masked ball Skiff Mitchell was going to give us has been postponed. There's no dust in circulation. There's always standing-room now at the Opera House. And there hasn't been a mail from the Outside for two whole weeks. In short, this burg has crawled into its cave and gone to sleep. We've got to do something. It needs livening—and you and I can do it. We can give it excitement if anybody can. I've broken with Wild Water, you know."

Smoke caught two almost simultaneous visions. One was of Joy Gastell; the other was of himself, in the midst of a bleak snow-stretch, under a cold arctic moon, being pot-shotted with accurateness and dispatch by the aforesaid Wild Water. Smoke's reluctance at raising excitement with the aid of Lucille Arral was too patent for her to miss.

"I'm not thinking what you are thinking at all, thank you," she chided, with a laugh and a pout. "When I throw myself at your head you'll have to have more eyes and better ones than you have now to see me."

"Men have died of heart disease at the sudden announcement of good fortune," he murmured in the unveracious gladness of relief.

"Liar," she retorted graciously. "You were more scared to death than anything else. Now take it from me, Mr. Smoke Bellew, I'm not going to make love to you, and if you dare to make love to me, Wild Water will take care of your case. You know HIM. Besides, I—I haven't really broken with him."

"Go on with your puzzles," he jeered. "Maybe I can start guessing what you're driving at after a while."

"There's no guessing, Smoke. I'll give it to you straight. Wild Water thinks I've broken with him, don't you see?"

"Well, have you, or haven't you?"

"I haven't—there! But it's between you and me in confidence. He thinks I have. I made a noise like breaking with him, and he deserved it, too."

"Where do I come in, stalking-horse or fall-guy?"

"Neither. You make a pot of money, we put across the laugh on Wild Water and cheer Dawson up, and, best of all, and the reason for it all, he gets disciplined. He needs it. He's—well, the best way to put it is, he's too turbulent. Just because he's a big husky, because he owns more rich claims than he can keep count of—"

"And because he's engaged to the prettiest little woman in Alaska," Smoke interpolated.

"Yes, and because of that, too, thank you, is no reason for him to get riotous. He broke out last night again. Sowed the floor of the M. & M. with gold-dust. All of a thousand dollars. Just opened his poke and scattered it under the feet of the dancers. You've heard of it, of course."

"Yes; this morning. I'd like to be the sweeper in that establishment. But still I don't get you. Where do I come in?"

"Listen. He was too turbulent. I broke our engagement, and he's going around making a noise like a broken heart. Now we come to it. I like eggs."

"They're off!" Smoke cried in despair. "Which way? Which way?"

"Wait."

"But what have eggs and appetite got to do with it?" he demanded.

"Everything, if you'll only listen."

"Listening, listening," he chanted.

"Then for Heaven's sake listen. I like eggs. There's only a limited supply of eggs in Dawson."

"Sure. I know that, too. Slavovitch's restaurant has most of them. Ham and one egg, three dollars. Ham and two eggs, five dollars. That means two dollars an egg, retail. And only the swells and the Arrals and the Wild Waters can afford them."

"He likes eggs, too," she continued. "But that's not the point. I like them. I have breakfast every morning at eleven o'clock at Slavovitch's. I invariably eat two eggs." She paused impressively. "Suppose, just suppose, somebody corners eggs."

She waited, and Smoke regarded her with admiring eyes, while in his heart he backed with approval Wild Water's choice of her.

"You're not following," she said.

"Go on," he replied. "I give up. What's the answer?"

"Stupid! You know Wild Water. When he sees I'm languishing for eggs, and I know his mind like a book, and I know how to languish, what will he do?"

"You answer it. Go on."

"Why, he'll just start stampeding for the man that's got the corner in eggs. He'll buy the corner, no matter what it costs. Picture: I come into Slavovitch's at eleven o'clock. Wild Water will be at the next table. He'll make it his business to be there. 'Two eggs, shirred,' I'll say to the waiter. 'Sorry, Miss Arral,' the waiter will say; 'they ain't no more eggs.' Then up speaks Wild Water, in that big bear voice of his, 'Waiter, six eggs, soft boiled.' And the waiter says, 'Yes, sir,' and the eggs are brought. Picture: Wild Water looks sideways at me, and I look like a particularly indignant icicle and

summon the waiter. 'Sorry, Miss Arral,' he says, 'but them eggs is Mr. Wild Water's. You see, Miss, he owns 'em.' Picture: Wild Water, triumphant, doing his best to look unconscious while he eats his six eggs.

"Another picture: Slavovitch himself bringing two shirred eggs to me and saying, 'Compliments of Mr. Wild Water, Miss.' What can I do? What can I possibly do but smile at Wild Water, and then we make up, of course, and he'll consider it cheap if he has been compelled to pay ten dollars for each and every egg in the corner."

"Go on, go on," Smoke urged. "At what station do I climb onto the choo-choo cars, or at what water-tank do I get thrown off?"

"Ninny! You don't get thrown off. You ride the egg-train straight into the Union Depot. You make that corner in eggs. You start in immediately, to-day. You can buy every egg in Dawson for three dollars and sell out to Wild Water at almost any advance. And then, afterward, we'll let the inside history come out. The laugh will be on Wild Water. His turbulence will be some subdued. You and I share the glory of it. You make a pile of money. And Dawson wakes up with a grand ha! ha! Of course—if—if you think the speculation too risky, I'll put up the dust for the corner."

This last was too much for Smoke. Being only a mere mortal Western man, with queer obsessions about money and women, he declined with scorn the proffer of her dust.

"Hey! Shorty!" Smoke called across the main street to his partner, who was trudging along in his swift, slack-jointed way, a naked bottle with frozen contents conspicuously tucked under his arm. Smoke crossed over.

"Where have you been all morning? Been looking for you everywhere."

"Up to Doc's," Shorty answered, holding out the bottle. "Something's wrong with Sally. I seen last night, at feedin'-time, the hair on her tail an' flanks was fallin' out. The Doc says—"

"Never mind that," Smoke broke in impatiently. "What I want—"

"What's eatin' you?" Shorty demanded in indignant astonishment. "An' Sally gettin' naked bald in this crimpy weather! I tell you that dog's sick. Doc says—"

"Let Sally wait. Listen to me—"

"I tell you she can't wait. It's cruelty to animals. She'll be frost-bit. What are you in such a fever about anyway? Has that Monte Cristo strike proved up?"

"I don't know, Shorty. But I want you to do me a favor."

"Sure," Shorty said gallantly, immediately appeased and acquiescent. "What is it? Let her rip. Me for you."

"I want you to buy eggs for me—"

"Sure, an' Floridy water an' talcum powder, if you say the word. An' poor Sally sheddin' something scand'lous! Look here, Smoke, if you want to go in for high livin' you go an' buy your own eggs. Beans an' bacon's good enough for me."

"I am going to buy, but I want you to help me to buy. Now, shut up, Shorty. I've got the floor. You go right straight to Slavovitch's. Pay as high as three dollars, but buy all he's got."

“Three dollars!” Shorty groaned. “An’ I heard tell only yesterday that he’s got all of seven hundred in stock! Twenty-one hundred dollars for hen-fruit! Say, Smoke, I tell you what. You run right up and see the Doc. He’ll tend to your case. An’ he’ll only charge you an ounce for the first prescription. So-long, I gotta to be pullin’ my freight.”

He started off, but Smoke caught his partner by the shoulder, arresting his progress and whirling him around.

“Smoke, I’d sure do anything for you,” Shorty protested earnestly. “If you had a cold in the head an’ was layin’ with both arms broke, I’d set by your bedside, day an’ night, an’ wipe your nose for you. But I’ll be everlastin’ly damned if I’ll squander twenty-one hundred good iron dollars on hen-fruit for you or any other two-legged man.”

“They’re not your dollars, but mine, Shorty. It’s a deal I have on. What I’m after is to corner every blessed egg in Dawson, in the Klondike, on the Yukon. You’ve got to help me out. I haven’t the time to tell you of the inwardness of the deal. I will afterward, and let you go half on it if you want to. But the thing right now is to get the eggs. Now you hustle up to Slavovitch’s and buy all he’s got.”

“But what’ll I tell ‘m? He’ll sure know I ain’t goin’ to eat ‘em.”

“Tell him nothing. Money talks. He sells them cooked for two dollars. Offer him up to three for them uncooked. If he gets curious, tell him you’re starting a chicken ranch. What I want is the eggs. And then keep on; nose out every egg in Dawson and buy it. Understand? Buy it! That little joint across the street from Slavovitch’s has a few. Buy them. I’m going over to Klondike City. There’s an old man there, with a bad leg, who’s broke and who has six dozen. He’s held them all winter for the rise, intending to get enough out of them to pay his passage back to Seattle. I’ll see he gets his passage, and I’ll get the eggs. Now hustle. And they say that little woman down beyond the sawmill who makes moccasins has a couple of dozen.”

“All right, if you say so, Smoke. But Slavovitch seems the main squeeze. I’ll just get an iron-bound option, black an’ white, an’ gather in the scatterin’ first.”

“All right. Hustle. And I’ll tell you the scheme tonight.”

But Shorty flourished the bottle. “I’m goin’ to doctor up Sally first. The eggs can wait that long. If they ain’t all eaten, they won’t be eaten while I’m takin’ care of a poor sick dog that’s saved your life an’ mine more ‘n once.”

Never was a market cornered more quickly. In three days every known egg in Dawson, with the exception of several dozen, was in the hands of Smoke and Shorty. Smoke had been more liberal in purchasing. He unblushingly pleaded guilty to having given the old man in Klondike City five dollars apiece for his seventy-two eggs. Shorty had bought most of the eggs, and he had driven bargains. He had given only two dollars an egg to the woman who made moccasins, and he prided himself that he had come off fairly well with Slavovitch, whose seven hundred and fifteen eggs he had bought at a flat rate of two dollars and a half. On the other hand, he grumbled because the little restaurant across the street had held him up for two dollars and seventy-five cents for a paltry hundred and thirty-four eggs.

The several dozen not yet gathered in were in the hands of two persons. One, with whom Shorty was dealing, was an Indian woman who lived in a cabin on the hill back of the hospital.

"I'll get her to-day," Shorty announced next morning. "You wash the dishes, Smoke. I'll be back in a jiffy, if I don't bust myself a-shovin' dust at her. Gimme a man to deal with every time. These blamed women—it's something sad the way they can hold out on a buyer. The only way to get 'em is sellin'. Why, you'd think them eggs of hern was solid nuggets."

In the afternoon, when Smoke returned to the cabin, he found Shorty squatted on the floor, rubbing ointment into Sally's tail, his countenance so expressionless that it was suspicious.

"What luck?" Shorty asked carelessly, after several minutes had passed.

"Nothing doing," Smoke answered. "How did you get on with the squaw?"

Shorty cocked his head triumphantly toward a tin pail of eggs on the table. "Seven dollars a clatter, though," he confessed, after another minute of silent rubbing.

"I offered ten dollars finally," Smoke said, "and then the fellow told me he'd already sold his eggs. Now that looks bad, Shorty. Somebody else is in the market. Those twenty-eight eggs are liable to cause us trouble. You see, the success of the corner consists in holding every last—"

He broke off to stare at his partner. A pronounced change was coming over Shorty—one of agitation masked by extreme deliberation. He closed the salve-box, wiped his hands slowly and thoroughly on Sally's furry coat, stood up, went over to the corner and looked at the thermometer, and came back again. He spoke in a low, toneless, and super-polite voice.

"Do you mind kindly just repeating over how many eggs you said the man didn't sell to you?" he asked.

"Twenty-eight."

"Hum," Shorty communed to himself, with a slight duck of the head of careless acknowledgment. Then he glanced with slumbering anger at the stove. "Smoke, we'll have to dig up a new stove. That fire-box is burned plumb into the oven so it blacks the biscuits."

"Let the fire-box alone," Smoke commanded, "and tell me what's the matter."

"Matter? An' you want to know what's the matter? Well, kindly please direct them handsome eyes of yourn at that there pail settin' on the table. See it?"

Smoke nodded.

"Well, I want to tell you one thing, just one thing. They's just exactly, preecisely, nor nothin' more or anythin' less'n twenty-eight eggs in the pail, an' they cost, every dangd last one of 'em, just exactly seven great big round iron dollars a throw. If you stand in cryin' need of any further items of information, I'm willin' and free to impart."

"Go on," Smoke requested.

"Well, that geezer you was dickerin' with is a big buck Indian. Am I right?"

Smoke nodded, and continued to nod to each question.

“He’s got one cheek half gone where a bald-face grizzly swatted him. Am I right? He’s a dog-trader—right, eh? His name is Scar-Face Jim. That’s so, ain’t it? D’ye get my drift?”

“You mean we’ve been bidding—?”

“Against each other. Sure thing. That squaw’s his wife, an’ they keep house on the hill back of the hospital. I could ‘a’ got them eggs for two a throw if you hadn’t butted in.”

“And so could I,” Smoke laughed, “if you’d kept out, blame you! But it doesn’t amount to anything. We know that we’ve got the corner. That’s the big thing.”

Shorty spent the next hour wrestling with a stub of a pencil on the margin of a three-year-old newspaper, and the more interminable and hieroglyphic grew his figures the more cheerful he became.

“There she stands,” he said at last. “Pretty? I guess yes. Lemme give you the totals. You an’ me has right now in our possession exactly nine hundred an’ seventy-three eggs. They cost us exactly two thousand, seven hundred an’ sixty dollars, reckonin’ dust at sixteen an ounce an’ not countin’ time. An’ now listen to me. If we stick up Wild Water for ten dollars a egg we stand to win, clean net an’ all to the good, just exactly six thousand nine hundred and seventy dollars. Now that’s a book-makin’ what is, if anybody should ride up on a dog-sled an’ ask you. An’ I’m in half on it! Put her there, Smoke. I’m that thankful I’m sure droolin’ gratitude. Book-makin’! Say, I’d sooner run with the chicks than the ponies any day.”

At eleven that night Smoke was routed from sound sleep by Shorty, whose fur parka exhaled an atmosphere of keen frost and whose hand was extremely cold in its contact with Smoke’s cheek.

“What is it now?” Smoke grumbled. “Rest of Sally’s hair fallen out?”

“Nope. But I just had to tell you the good news. I seen Slavovitch. Or Slavovitch seen me, I guess, because he started the seance. He says to me: ‘Shorty, I want to speak to you about them eggs. I’ve kept it quiet. Nobody knows I sold ’em to you. But if you’re speculatin’, I can put you wise to a good thing.’ An’ he did, too, Smoke. Now what’d you guess that good thing is?”

“Go on. Name it.”

“Well, maybe it sounds incredible, but that good thing was Wild Water Charley. He’s lookin’ to buy eggs. He goes around to Slavovitch an’ offers him five dollars an egg, an’ before he quits he’s offerin’ eight. An’ Slavovitch ain’t got no eggs. Last thing Wild Water says to Slavovitch is that he’ll beat the head offen him if he ever finds out Slavovitch has eggs cached away somewheres. Slavovitch had to tell ‘m he’d sold the eggs, but that the buyer was secret.

“Slavovitch says to let him say the word to Wild Water who’s got the eggs. ‘Shorty,’ he says to me, ‘Wild Water’ll come a-runnin’. You can hold him up for eight dollars.’ ‘Eight dollars, your grandmother,’ I says. ‘He’ll fall for ten before I’m done with him.’ Anyway, I told Slavovitch I’d think it over and let him know in the mornin’. Of course we’ll let ‘m pass the word on to Wild Water. Am I right?”

“You certainly are, Shorty. First thing in the morning tip off Slavovitch. Have him tell Wild Water that you and I are partners in the deal.”

Five minutes later Smoke was again aroused by Shorty.

“Say! Smoke! Oh, Smoke!”

“Yes?”

“Not a cent less than ten a throw. Do you get that?”

“Sure thing—all right,” Smoke returned sleepily.

In the morning Smoke chanced upon Lucille Arral again at the dry-goods counter of the A. C. Store.

“It’s working,” he jubilated. “It’s working. Wild Water’s been around to Slavovitch, trying to buy or bully eggs out of him. And by this time Slavovitch has told him that Shorty and I own the corner.”

Lucille Arral’s eyes sparkled with delight. “I’m going to breakfast right now,” she cried. “And I’ll ask the waiter for eggs, and be so plaintive when there aren’t any as to melt a heart of stone. And you know Wild Water’s been around to Slavovitch, trying to buy the corner if it costs him one of his mines. I know him. And hold out for a stiff figure. Nothing less than ten dollars will satisfy me, and if you sell for anything less, Smoke, I’ll never forgive you.”

That noon, up in their cabin, Shorty placed on the table a pot of beans, a pot of coffee, a pan of sourdough biscuits, a tin of butter and a tin of condensed cream, a smoking platter of moose-meat and bacon, a plate of stewed dried peaches, and called: “Grub’s ready. Take a slant at Sally first.”

Smoke put aside the harness on which he was sewing, opened the door, and saw Sally and Bright spiritedly driving away a bunch of foraging sled-dogs that belonged to the next cabin. Also he saw something else that made him close the door hurriedly and dash to the stove. The frying-pan, still hot from the moose-meat and bacon, he put back on the front lid. Into the frying-pan he put a generous dab of butter, then reached for an egg, which he broke and dropped spluttering into the pan. As he reached for a second egg, Shorty gained his side and clutched his arm in an excited grip.

“Hey! What you doin’?” he demanded.

“Frying eggs,” Smoke informed him, breaking the second one and throwing off Shorty’s detaining hand. “What’s the matter with your eyesight? Did you think I was combing my hair?”

“Don’t you feel well?” Shorty queried anxiously, as Smoke broke a third egg and dexterously thrust him back with a stiff-arm jolt on the breast. “Or are you just plain loco? That’s thirty dollars’ worth of eggs already.”

“And I’m going to make it sixty dollars’ worth,” was the answer, as Smoke broke the fourth. “Get out of the way, Shorty. Wild Water’s coming up the hill, and he’ll be here in five minutes.”

Shorty sighed vastly with commingled comprehension and relief, and sat down at the table. By the time the expected knock came at the door, Smoke was facing him across the table, and, before each, was a plate containing three hot, fried eggs.

“Come in!” Smoke called.

Wild Water Charley, a strapping young giant just a fraction of an inch under six feet in height and carrying a clean weight of one hundred and ninety pounds, entered and shook hands.

“Set down an’ have a bite, Wild Water,” Shorty invited. “Smoke, fry him some eggs. I’ll bet he ain’t scooped an egg in a coon’s age.”

Smoke broke three more eggs into the hot pan, and in several minutes placed them before his guest, who looked at them with so strange and strained an expression that Shorty confessed afterward his fear that Wild Water would slip them into his pocket and carry them away.

“Say, them swells down in the States ain’t got nothin’ over us in the matter of eats,” Shorty gloated. “Here’s you an’ me an’ Smoke gettin’ outside ninety dollars’ worth of eggs an’ not battin’ an eye.”

Wild Water stared at the rapidly disappearing eggs and seemed petrified.

“Pitch in an’ eat,” Smoke encouraged.

“They—they ain’t worth no ten dollars,” Wild Water said slowly.

Shorty accepted the challenge. “A thing’s worth what you can get for it, ain’t it?” he demanded.

“Yes, but—“

“But nothin’. I’m tellin’ you what we can get for ‘em. Ten a throw, just like that. We’re the egg trust, Smoke an’ me, an’ don’t you forget it. When we say ten a throw, ten a throw goes.” He mopped his plate with a biscuit. “I could almost eat a couple more,” he sighed, then helped himself to the beans.

“You can’t eat eggs like that,” Wild Water objected. “It—it ain’t right.”

“We just dote on eggs, Smoke an’ me,” was Shorty’s excuse.

Wild Water finished his own plate in a half-hearted way and gazed dubiously at the two comrades. “Say, you fellows can do me a great favor,” he began tentatively. “Sell me, or lend me, or give me, about a dozen of them eggs.”

“Sure,” Smoke answered. “I know what a yearning for eggs is myself. But we’re not so poor that we have to sell our hospitality. They’ll cost you nothing—“ Here a sharp kick under the table admonished him that Shorty was getting nervous. “A dozen, did you say, Wild Water?”

Wild Water nodded.

“Go ahead, Shorty,” Smoke went on. “Cook them up for him. I can sympathize. I’ve seen the time myself when I could eat a dozen, straight off the bat.”

But Wild Water laid a restraining hand on the eager Shorty as he explained. “I don’t mean cooked. I want them with the shells on.”

“So that you can carry ‘em away?”

“That’s the idea.”

“But that ain’t hospitality,” Shorty objected. “It’s—it’s tradin’.”

Smoke nodded concurrence. “That’s different, Wild Water. I thought you just wanted to eat them. You see, we went into this for a speculation.”

The dangerous blue of Wild Water's eyes began to grow more dangerous. "I'll pay you for them," he said sharply. "How much?"

"Oh, not a dozen," Smoke replied. "We couldn't sell a dozen. We're not retailers; we're speculators. We can't break our own market. We've got a hard and fast corner, and when we sell out it's the whole corner or nothing."

"How many have you got, and how much do you want for them?"

"How many have we, Shorty?" Smoke inquired.

Shorty cleared his throat and performed mental arithmetic aloud. "Lemme see. Nine hundred an' seventy-three minus nine, that leaves nine hundred an' sixty-two. An' the whole shootin'-match, at ten a throw, will tote up just about nine thousand six hundred an' twenty iron dollars. Of course, Wild Water, we're playin' fair, an' it's money back for bad ones, though they ain't none. That's one thing I never seen in the Klondike—a bad egg. No man's fool enough to bring in a bad egg."

"That's fair," Smoke added. "Money back for the bad ones, Wild Water. And there's our proposition—nine thousand six hundred and twenty dollars for every egg in the Klondike."

"You might play them up to twenty a throw an' double your money," Shorty suggested.

Wild Water shook his head sadly and helped himself to the beans. "That would be too expensive, Shorty. I only want a few. I'll give you ten dollars for a couple of dozen. I'll give you twenty—but I can't buy 'em all."

"All or none," was Smoke's ultimatum.

"Look here, you two," Wild Water said in a burst of confidence. "I'll be perfectly honest with you, an' don't let it go any further. You know Miss Arral an' I was engaged. Well, she's broken everything off. You know it. Everybody knows it. It's for her I want them eggs."

"Huh!" Shorty jeered. "It's clear an' plain why you want 'em with the shells on. But I never thought it of you."

"Thought what?"

"It's low-down mean, that's what it is," Shorty rushed on, virtuously indignant. "I wouldn't wonder somebody filled you full of lead for it, an' you'd deserve it, too."

Wild Water began to flame toward the verge of one of his notorious Berserker rages. His hands clenched until the cheap fork in one of them began to bend, while his blue eyes flashed warning sparks. "Now look here, Shorty, just what do you mean? If you think anything underhanded—"

"I mean what I mean," Shorty retorted doggedly, "an' you bet your sweet life I don't mean anything underhanded. Overhand's the only way to do it. You can't throw 'em any other way."

"Throw what?"

"Eggs, prunes, baseballs, anything. But Wild Water, you're makin' a mistake. They ain't no crowd ever sat at the Opey House that'll stand for it. Just because she's a actress is no reason you can publicly lambaste her with hen-fruit."

For the moment it seemed that Wild Water was going to burst or have apoplexy. He gulped down a mouthful of scalding coffee and slowly recovered himself.

"You're in wrong, Shorty," he said with cold deliberation. "I'm not going to throw eggs at her. Why, man," he cried, with growing excitement, "I want to give them eggs to her, on a platter, shirred—that's the way she likes 'em."

"I knowed I was wrong," Shorty cried generously, "I knowed you couldn't do a low-down trick like that."

"That's all right, Shorty," Wild Water forgave him. "But let's get down to business. You see why I want them eggs. I want 'em bad."

"Do you want 'em ninety-six hundred an' twenty dollars' worth?" Shorty queried.

"It's a hold-up, that's what it is," Wild Water declared irately.

"It's business," Smoke retorted. "You don't think we're peddling eggs for our health, do you?"

"Aw, listen to reason," Wild Water pleaded. "I only want a couple of dozen. I'll give you twenty apiece for 'em. What do I want with all the rest of them eggs? I've went years in this country without eggs, an' I guess I can keep on managin' without 'em somehow."

"Don't get het up about it," Shorty counseled. "If you don't want 'em, that settles it. We ain't a-forcin' 'em on you."

"But I do want 'em," Wild Water complained.

"Then you know what they'll cost you—ninety-six hundred an' twenty dollars, an' if my figurin's wrong, I'll treat."

"But maybe they won't turn the trick," Wild Water objected. "Maybe Miss Arral's lost her taste for eggs by this time."

"I should say Miss Arral's worth the price of the eggs," Smoke put in quietly.

"Worth it!" Wild Water stood up in the heat of his eloquence. "She's worth a million dollars. She's worth all I've got. She's worth all the dust in the Klondike." He sat down, and went on in a calmer voice. "But that ain't no call for me to gamble ten thousand dollars on a breakfast for her. Now I've got a proposition. Lend me a couple of dozen of them eggs. I'll turn 'em over to Slavovitch. He'll feed 'em to her with my compliments. She ain't smiled to me for a hundred years. If them eggs gets a smile for me, I'll take the whole boiling off your hands."

"Will you sign a contract to that effect?" Smoke said quickly; for he knew that Lucille Arral had agreed to smile.

Wild Water gasped. "You're almighty swift with business up here on the hill," he said, with a hint of a snarl.

"We're only accepting your own proposition," Smoke answered.

"All right—bring on the paper—make it out, hard and fast," Wild Water cried in the anger of surrender.

Smoke immediately wrote out the document, wherein Wild Water agreed to take every egg delivered to him at ten dollars per egg, provided that the two dozen advanced to him brought about a reconciliation with Lucille Arral.

Wild Water paused, with uplifted pen, as he was about to sign. "Hold on," he said. "When I buy eggs I buy good eggs."

"They ain't a bad egg in the Klondike," Shorty snorted.

"Just the same, if I find one bad egg you've got to come back with the ten I paid for it."

"That's all right," Smoke placated. "It's only fair."

"An' every bad egg you come back with I'll eat," Shorty declared.

Smoke inserted the word "good" in the contract, and Wild Water sullenly signed, received the trial two dozen in a tin pail, pulled on his mittens, and opened the door.

"Good-by, you robbers," he growled back at them, and slammed the door.

Smoke was a witness to the play next morning in Slavovitch's. He sat, as Wild Water's guest, at the table adjoining Lucille Arral's. Almost to the letter, as she had forecast it, did the scene come off.

"Haven't you found any eggs yet?" she murmured plaintively to the waiter.

"No, ma'am," came the answer. "They say somebody's cornered every egg in Dawson. Mr. Slavovitch is trying to buy a few just especially for you. But the fellow that's got the corner won't let loose."

It was at this juncture that Wild Water beckoned the proprietor to him, and, with one hand on his shoulder, drew his head down. "Look here, Slavovitch," Wild Water whispered hoarsely, "I turned over a couple of dozen eggs to you last night. Where are they?"

"In the safe, all but that six I have all thawed and ready for you any time you sing out."

"I don't want 'em for myself," Wild Water breathed in a still lower voice. "Shir 'em up and present 'em to Miss Arral there."

"I'll attend to it personally myself," Slavovitch assured him.

"An' don't forget—compliments of me," Wild Water concluded, relaxing his detaining clutch on the proprietor's shoulder.

Pretty Lucille Arral was gazing forlornly at the strip of breakfast bacon and the tinned mashed potatoes on her plate when Slavovitch placed before her two shirred eggs.

"Compliments of Mr. Wild Water," they at the next table heard him say.

Smoke acknowledged to himself that it was a fine bit of acting—the quick, joyous flash in the face of her, the impulsive turn of the head, the spontaneous forerunner of a smile that was only checked by a superb self-control which resolutely drew her face back so that she could say something to the restaurant proprietor.

Smoke felt the kick of Wild Water's moccasined foot under the table.

"Will she eat 'em?—that's the question—will she eat 'em?" the latter whispered agonizingly.

And with sidelong glances they saw Lucille Arral hesitate, almost push the dish from her, then surrender to its lure.

"I'll take them eggs," Wild Water said to Smoke. "The contract holds. Did you see her? Did you see her! She almost smiled. I know her. It's all fixed. Two more eggs to-morrow an' she'll forgive an' make up. If she wasn't here I'd shake hands, Smoke, I'm that grateful. You ain't a robber; you're a philanthropist."

Smoke returned jubilantly up the hill to the cabin, only to find Shorty playing solitaire in black despair. Smoke had long since learned that whenever his partner got out the cards for solitaire it was a warning signal that the bottom had dropped out of the world.

"Go 'way, don't talk to me," was the first rebuff Smoke received.

But Shorty soon thawed into a freshet of speech.

"It's all off with the big Swede," he groaned. "The corner's busted. They'll be sellin' sherry an' egg in all the saloons to-morrow at a dollar a flip. They ain't no starvin' orphan child in Dawson that won't be wrappin' its tummy around eggs. What d'ye think I run into?—a geezer with three thousan' eggs—d'ye get me? Three thousan', an' just freighted in from Forty Mile."

"Fairy stories," Smoke doubted.

"Fairy hell! I seen them eggs. Gautereaux's his name—a whackin' big, blue-eyed French-Canadian husky. He asked for you first, then took me to the side and jabbed me straight to the heart. It was our cornerin' eggs that got him started. He knowed about them three thousan' at Forty Mile an' just went an' got 'em. 'Show 'em to me,' I says. An' he did. There was his dog-teams, an' a couple of Indian drivers, restin' down the bank where they'd just pulled in from Forty Mile. An' on the sleds was soap-boxes—teeny wooden soap-boxes.

"We took one out behind a ice-jam in the middle of the river an' busted it open. Eggs!—full of 'em, all packed in sawdust. Smoke, you an' me lose. We've been gamblin'. D'ye know what he had the gall to say to me?—that they was all ourn at ten dollars a egg. D'ye know what he was doin' when I left his cabin?—drawin' a sign of eggs for sale. Said he'd give us first choice, at ten a throw, till 2 P. M., an' after that, if we didn't come across, he'd bust the market higher'n a kite. Said he wasn't no business man, but that he knowed a good thing when he seen it—meanin' you an' me, as I took it."

"It's all right," Smoke said cheerfully. "Keep your shirt on an' let me think a moment. Quick action and team play is all that's needed. I'll get Wild Water here at two o'clock to take delivery of eggs. You buy that Gautereaux's eggs. Try and make a bargain. Even if you pay ten dollars apiece for them, Wild Water will take them off our hands at the same price. If you can get them cheaper, why, we make a profit as well. Now go to it. Have them here by not later than two o'clock. Borrow Colonel Bowie's dogs and take our team. Have them here by two sharp."

"Say, Smoke," Shorty called, as his partner started down the hill. "Better take an umbrella. I wouldn't be none surprised to see the weather rainin' eggs before you get back."

Smoke found Wild Water at the M. & M., and a stormy half-hour ensued.

"I warn you we've picked up some more eggs," Smoke said, after Wild Water had agreed to bring his dust to the cabin at two o'clock and pay on delivery.

"You're luckier at finding eggs than me," Wild Water admitted. "Now, how many eggs have you got now?—an' how much dust do I tote up the hill?"

Smoke consulted his notebook. "As it stands now, according to Shorty's figures, we've three thousand nine hundred and sixty-two eggs. Multiply by ten—"

"Forty thousand dollars!" Wild Water bellowed. "You said there was only something like nine hundred eggs. It's a stickup! I won't stand for it!"

Smoke drew the contract from his pocket and pointed to the PAY ON DELIVERY. "No mention is made of the number of eggs to be delivered. You agreed to pay ten dollars for every egg we delivered to you. Well, we've got the eggs, and a signed contract is a signed contract. Honestly, though, Wild Water, we didn't know about those other eggs until afterward. Then we had to buy them in order to make our corner good."

For five long minutes, in choking silence, Wild Water fought a battle with himself, then reluctantly gave in.

"I'm in bad," he said brokenly. "The landscape's fair sproutin' eggs. An' the quicker I get out the better. There might come a landslide of 'em. I'll be there at two o'clock. But forty thousand dollars!"

"It's only thirty-nine thousand six hundred an' twenty," Smoke corrected. "It'll weigh two hundred pounds," Wild Water raved on. "I'll have to freight it up with a dog-team."

"We'll lend you our teams to carry the eggs away," Smoke volunteered.

"But where'll I cache 'em? Never mind. I'll be there. But as long as I live I'll never eat another egg. I'm full sick of 'em."

At half-past one, doubling the dog-teams for the steep pitch of the hill, Shorty arrived with Gautereaux's eggs. "We dang near double our winnings," Shorty told Smoke, as they piled the soap-boxes inside the cabin. "I holds 'm down to eight dollars, an' after he cussed loco in French he falls for it. Now that's two dollars clear profit to us for each egg, an' they're three thousan' of 'em. I paid 'm in full. Here's the receipt."

While Smoke got out the gold-scales and prepared for business, Shorty devoted himself to calculation.

"There's the figgers," he announced triumphantly. "We win twelve thousan' nine hundred an' seventy dollars. An' we don't do Wild Water no harm. He wins Miss Arral. Besides, he gets all them eggs. It's sure a bargain-counter all around. Nobody loses."

"Even Gautereaux's twenty-four thousand to the good," Smoke laughed, "minus, of course, what the eggs and the freighting cost him. And if Wild Water plays the corner, he may make a profit out of the eggs himself."

Promptly at two o'clock, Shorty, peeping, saw Wild Water coming up the hill. When he entered he was brisk and businesslike. He took off his big bearskin coat, hung it on a nail, and sat down at the table.

"Bring on them eggs, you pirates," he commenced. "An' after this day, if you know what's good for you, never mention eggs to me again."

They began on the miscellaneous assortment of the original corner, all three men counting. When two hundred had been reached, Wild Water suddenly cracked an egg on the edge of the table and opened it deftly with his thumbs.

“Hey! Hold on!” Shorty objected.

“It’s my egg, ain’t it?” Wild Water snarled. “I’m paying ten dollars for it, ain’t I? But I ain’t buying no pig in a poke. When I cough up ten bucks an egg I want to know what I’m gettin’.”

“If you don’t like it, I’ll eat it,” Shorty volunteered maliciously.

Wild Water looked and smelled and shook his head. “No, you don’t, Shorty. That’s a good egg. Gimme a pail. I’m goin’ to eat it myself for supper.”

Thrice again Wild Water cracked good eggs experimentally and put them in the pail beside him.

“Two more than you figgered, Shorty,” he said at the end of the count. “Nine hundred an’ sixty-four, not sixty-two.”

“My mistake,” Shorty acknowledged handsomely. “We’ll throw ’em in for good measure.”

“Guess you can afford to,” Wild Water accepted grimly. “Pass the batch. Nine thousand six hundred an’ twenty dollars. I’ll pay for it now. Write a receipt, Smoke.”

“Why not count the rest,” Smoke suggested, “and pay all at once?”

Wild Water shook his head. “I’m no good at figgers. One batch at a time an’ no mistakes.”

Going to his fur coat, from each of the side pockets he drew forth two sacks of dust, so rotund and long that they resembled bologna sausages. When the first batch had been paid for, there remained in the gold-sacks not more than several hundred dollars.

A soap-box was carried to the table, and the count of the three thousand began. At the end of one hundred, Wild Water struck an egg sharply against the edge of the table. There was no crack. The resultant sound was like that of the striking of a sphere of solid marble.

“Frozen solid,” he remarked, striking more sharply.

He held the egg up, and they could see the shell powdered to minute fragments along the line of impact.

“Huh!” said Shorty. “It ought to be solid, seein’ it has just been freighted up from Forty Mile. It’ll take an ax to bust it.”

“Me for the ax,” said Wild Water.

Smoke brought the ax, and Wild Water, with the clever hand and eye of the woodsman, split the egg cleanly in half. The appearance of the egg’s interior was anything but satisfactory. Smoke felt a premonitory chill. Shorty was more valiant. He held one of the halves to his nose.

“Smells all right,” he said.

“But it looks all wrong,” Wild Water contended. “An’ how can it smell when the smell’s frozen along with the rest of it? Wait a minute.”

He put the two halves into a frying-pan and placed the latter on the front lid of the hot stove. Then the three men, with distended, questing nostrils, waited in silence. Slowly an unmistakable odor began to drift through the room. Wild Water forbore to speak, and Shorty remained dumb despite conviction.

“Throw it out,” Smoke cried, gasping.

“What’s the good?” asked Wild Water. “We’ve got to sample the rest.”

“Not in this cabin.” Smoke coughed and conquered a qualm. “Chop them open, and we can test by looking at them. Throw it out, Shorty—Throw it out! Phew! And leave the door open!”

Box after box was opened; egg after egg, chosen at random, was chopped in two; and every egg carried the same message of hopeless, irremediable decay.

“I won’t ask you to eat ‘em, Shorty,” Wild Water jeered, “an’ if you don’t mind, I can’t get outa here too quick. My contract called for GOOD eggs. If you’ll loan me a sled an’ team I’ll haul them good ones away before they get contaminated.”

Smoke helped in loading the sled. Shorty sat at the table, the cards laid before him for solitaire.

“Say, how long you been holdin’ that corner?” was Wild Water’s parting gibe.

Smoke made no reply, and, with one glance at his absorbed partner, proceeded to fling the soap boxes out into the snow.

“Say, Shorty, how much did you say you paid for that three thousand?” Smoke queried gently.

“Eight dollars. Go ‘way. Don’t talk to me. I can figger as well as you. We lose seventeen thousan’ on the flutter, if anybody should ride up on a dog-sled an’ ask you. I figgered that out while waitin’ for the first egg to smell.”

Smoke pondered a few minutes, then again broke silence. “Say, Shorty. Forty thousand dollars gold weighs two hundred pounds. Wild Water borrowed our sled and team to haul away his eggs. He came up the hill without a sled. Those two sacks of dust in his coat pockets weighed about twenty pounds each. The understanding was cash on delivery. He brought enough dust to pay for the good eggs. He never expected to pay for those three thousand. He knew they were bad. Now how did he know they were bad? What do you make of it, anyway?”

Shorty gathered the cards, started to shuffle a new deal, then paused. “Huh! That ain’t nothin’. A child could answer it. We lose seventeen thousan’. Wild Water wins seventeen thousan’. Them eggs of Gautereaux’s was Wild Water’s all the time. Anything else you’re curious to know?”

“Yes. Why in the name of common sense didn’t you find out whether those eggs were good before you paid for them?”

“Just as easy as the first question. Wild Water swung the bunco game timed to seconds. I hadn’t no time to examine them eggs. I had to hustle to get ‘em here for delivery. An’ now, Smoke, lemme ask you one civil question. What did you say was the party’s name that put this egg corner idea into your head?”

Shorty had lost the sixteenth consecutive game of solitaire, and Smoke was casting about to begin the preparation of supper, when Colonel Bowie knocked at the door, handed Smoke a letter, and went on to his own cabin.

“Did you see his face?” Shorty raved. “He was almost bustin’ to keep it straight. It’s the big ha! ha! for you an’ me, Smoke. We won’t never dast show our faces again in Dawson.”

The letter was from Wild Water, and Smoke read it aloud:

Dear Smoke and Shorty: I write to ask, with compliments of the season, your presence at a supper to-night at Slavovitch’s joint. Miss Arral will be there and so will Gautereaux. Him and me was pardners down at Circle five years ago. He is all right and is going to be best man. About them eggs. They come into the country four years back. They was bad when they come in. They was bad when they left California. They always was bad. They stopped at Carluk one winter, and one winter at Nutlik, and last winter at Forty Mile, where they was sold for storage. And this winter I guess they stop at Dawson. Don’t keep them in a hot room. Lucille says to say you and her and me has sure made some excitement for Dawson. And I say the drinks is on you, and that goes.

Respectfully your friend,

W. W.

“Well? What have you got to say?” Smoke queried. “We accept the invitation, of course?”

“I got one thing to say,” Shorty answered. “An’ that is Wild Water won’t never suffer if he goes broke. He’s a good actor—a gosh-blamed good actor. An’ I got another thing to say: my figgers is all wrong. Wild Water wins seventeen thousan’ all right, but he wins more ‘n that. You an’ me has made him a present of every good egg in the Klondike—nine hundred an’ sixty-four of ‘em, two thrown in for good measure. An’ he was that ornery, mean cussed that he packed off the three opened ones in the pail. An’ I got a last thing to say. You an’ me is legitimate prospectors an’ practical gold-miners. But when it comes to fi-nance we’re sure the fattest suckers that ever fell for the get-rich-quick bunco. After this it’s you an’ me for the high rocks an’ tall timber, an’ if you ever mention eggs to me we dissolve pardnership there an’ then. Get me?”

The “Francis Spaight”

A TRUE TALE RETOLD

THE Francis Spaight was running before it solely under a mizzentopsail, when the thing happened. It was not due to carelessness so much as to the lack of discipline of the crew and to the fact that they were indifferent seamen at best. The man at the wheel in particular, a Limerick man, had had no experience with salt water beyond that of rafting timber on the Shannon between the Quebec vessels and the shore. He was afraid of the huge seas that rose out of the murk astern and bore down upon him, and he was more given to cowering away from their threatened impact than he was to meeting their blows with the wheel and checking the ship’s rush to broach to.

It was three in the morning when his unseamanlike conduct precipitated the catastrophe. At sight of a sea far larger than its fellows, he crouched down, releasing his hands from the spokes. The Francis Spaight sheered as her stern lifted on the sea, receiving the full fling of the cap on her quarter. The next instant she was in the trough, her leerrail buried till the ocean was level with her hatch-combings, sea after sea breaking over her weather rail and sweeping what remained exposed of the deck with icy deluges.

The men were out of hand, helpless and hopeless, stupid in their bewilderment and fear, and resolute only in that they would not obey orders. Some wailed, others clung silently in the weather shrouds, and still others muttered prayers or shrieked vile imprecations; and neither captain nor mate could get them to bear a hand at the pumps or at setting patches of sails to bring the vessel up to the wind and sea. Inside the hour the ship was over on her beam ends, the lubberly cowards climbing up her side and hanging on in the rigging. When she went over, the mate was caught and drowned in the after-cabin, as were two sailors who had sought refuge in the forecabin.

The mate had been the ablest man on board, and the captain was now scarcely less helpless than his men. Beyond cursing them for their worthlessness, he did nothing; and it remained for a man named Mahoney, a Belfast man, and a boy, O'Brien, of Limerick, to cut away the fore and main masts. This they did at great risk on the perpendicular wall of the wreck, sending the mizzenmast overside along in the general crash. The Francis Spaight righted, and it was well that she was lumber laden, else she would have sunk, for she was already waterlogged. The mainmast, still fast by the shrouds, beat like a thunderous sledge-hammer against the ship's side, every stroke bringing groans from the men.

Day dawned on the savage ocean, and in the cold gray light all that could be seen of the Francis Spaight emerging from the sea were the poop, the shattered mizzenmast, and a ragged line of bulwarks. It was midwinter in the North Atlantic, and the wretched men were half-dead from cold. But there was no place where they could find rest. Every sea breached clean over the wreck, washing away the salt incrustations from their bodies and depositing fresh incrustations. The cabin under the poop was awash to the knees, but here at least was shelter from the chill wind, and here the survivors congregated, standing upright, holding on by the cabin furnishings, and leaning against one another for support.

In vain Mahoney strove to get the men to take turns in watching aloft from the mizzenmast for any chance vessel. The icy gale was too much for them, and they preferred the shelter of the cabin. O'Brien, the boy, who was only fifteen, took turns with Mahoney on the freezing perch. It was the boy, at three in the afternoon, who called down that he had sighted a sail. This did bring them from the cabin, and they crowded the poop rail and weather mizzen shrouds as they watched the strange ship. But its course did not lie near, and when it disappeared below the skyline, they returned shivering to the cabin, not one offering to relieve the watch at the masthead.

By the end of the second day, Mahoney and O'Brien gave up their attempt, and thereafter the vessel drifted in the gale uncared for and without a lookout. There were thirteen alive, and for seventy-two hours they stood knee-deep in the sloshing water on the cabin floor, half-frozen, without food, and with but three bottles of wine shared among them. All food and fresh water were below, and there was no getting at such supplies in the water-logged condition of the wreck. As the days went by, no food whatever passed their lips. Fresh water, in small quantities, they were able to obtain by holding a cover of a tureen under the saddle of the mizzenmast. But the rain fell infrequently, and they were hard put. When it rained, they also soaked their handkerchiefs, squeezing them out into their mouths or into their shoes. As the wind and sea went down, they were even able to mop the exposed portions of the deck that were free from brine and so add to their water supply. But food they had none, and no way of getting it, though sea-birds flew repeatedly overhead.

In the calm weather that followed the gale, after having remained on their feet for ninety-six hours, they were able to find dry planks in the cabin on which to lie. But the long hours of standing in the salt water had caused sores to form on their legs. These sores were extremely painful. The slightest contact or scrape caused severe anguish, and in their weak condition and crowded situation they were continually hurting one another in this manner. Not a man could move about without being followed by volleys of abuse, curses, and groans. So great was their misery that the strong oppressed the weak, shoving them aside from the dry planks to shift for themselves in the cold and wet. The boy, O'Brien, was specially maltreated. Though there were three other boys, it was O'Brien who came in for most of the abuse. There was no explaining it, except on the ground that his was a stronger and more dominant spirit than those of the other boys, and that he stood up more for his rights, resenting the petty injustices that were meted out to all the boys by the men. Whenever O'Brien came near the men in search of a dry place to sleep, or merely moved about, he was kicked and cuffed away. In return, he cursed them for their selfish brutishness, and blows and kicks and curses were rained upon him. Miserable as were all of them, he was thus made far more miserable; and it was only the flame of life, unusually strong in him, that enabled him to endure.

As the days went by and they grew weaker, their peevishness and ill-temper increased, which, in turn, increased the ill-treatment and sufferings of O'Brien. By the sixteenth day all hands were far gone with hunger, and they stood together in small groups, talking in undertones and occasionally glancing at O'Brien. It was at high noon that the conference came to a head. The captain was the spokesman. All were collected on the poop.

"Men," the captain began, "we have been a long time without food—two weeks and two days it is, though it seems more like two years and two months. We can't hang out much longer. It is beyond human nature to go on hanging out with nothing in our stomachs. There is a serious question to consider: whether it is better for all to die, or

for one to die. We are standing with our feet in our graves. If one of us dies, the rest may live until a ship is sighted. What say you?"

Michael Behane, the man who had been at the wheel when the Francis Spaight broached to, called out that it was well. The others joined in the cry.

"Let it be one of the b'ys!" cried Sullivan, a Tarbert man, glancing at the same time significantly at O'Brien.

"It is my opinion," the captain went on, "that it will be a good deed for one of us to die for the rest."

"A good deed! A good deed!" the men interjected.

"And it is my opinion that 'tis best for one of the boys to die. They have no families to support, nor would they be considered so great a loss to their friends as those who have wives and children."

"'Tis right." "Very right." "Very fit it should be done," the men muttered one to another.

But the four boys cried out against the injustice of it.

"Our lives is just as dear to us as the rest iv yez," O'Brien protested. "An' our famblies, too. As for wives an' childer, who is there savin' meself to care for me old mother that's a widow, as you know well, Michael Behane, that comes from Limerick? 'Tis not fair. Let the lots be drawn between all of us, men and b'ys."

Mahoney was the only man who spoke in favor of the boys, declaring that it was the fair thing for all to share alike. Sullivan and the captain insisted on the drawing of lots being confined to the boys. There were high words, in the midst of which Sullivan turned upon O'Brien, snarling:—

"'Twould be a good deed to put you out of the way. You deserve it. 'Twould be the right way to serve you, an' serve you we will."

He started toward O'Brien, with intent to lay hands on him and proceed at once with the killing, while several others likewise shuffled toward him and reached for him. He stumbled backwards to escape them, at the same time crying that he would submit to the drawing of the lots among the boys.

The captain prepared four sticks of different lengths and handed them to Sullivan.

"You're thinkin' the drawin'll not be fair," the latter sneered to O'Brien. "So it's yerself 'll do the drawin'."

To this O'Brien agreed. A handkerchief was tied over his eyes, blindfolding him, and he knelt down on the deck with his back to Sullivan.

"Whoever you name for the shortest stick'll die," the captain said.

Sullivan held up one of the sticks. The rest were concealed in his hand so that no one could see whether it was the short stick or not.

"An' whose stick will it be?" Sullivan demanded.

"For little Johnny Sheehan," O'Brien answered.

Sullivan laid the stick aside. Those who looked could not tell if it were the fatal one. Sullivan held up another stick.

"Whose will it be?"

"For George Burns," was the reply.

The stick was laid with the first one, and a third held up.

"An' whose is this wan?"

"For myself," said O'Brien.

With a quick movement, Sullivan threw the four sticks together. No one had seen.

"Tis for yourself ye've drawn it," Sullivan announced.

"A good deed," several of the men muttered.

O'Brien was very quiet. He arose to his feet, took the bandage off, and looked around.

"Where is ut?" he demanded. "The short stick? The wan for me?"

The captain pointed to the four sticks lying on the deck.

"How do you know the stick was mine?" O'Brien questioned. "Did you see ut, Johnny Sheehan?"

Johnny Sheehan, who was the youngest of the boys, did not answer.

"Did you see ut?" O'Brien next asked Mahoney.

"No, I didn't see ut."

The men were muttering and growling.

"Twas a fair drawin'," Sullivan said. "Ye had yer chanct en' ye lost, that's all iv ut."

"A fair drawin'," the captain added. "Didn't I behold it myself? The stick was yours, O'Brien, an' ye may as well get ready. Where's the cook? Gorman, come here. Fetch the tureen cover, some of ye. Gorman, do your duty like a man."

"But how'll I do it?" the cook demanded. He was a weak-eyed, weakchinned, indecisive man.

" 'Tis a damned murder!" O'Brien cried out.

"I'll have none of ut," Mahoney announced. "Not a bite shall pass me lips."

"Then 'tis yer share for better men than yerself," Sullivan sneered. "Go on with yer duty, cook."

" 'Tis not me duty, the killin' of b'ys," Gorman protested irresolutely.

"If yez don't make mate for us, we'll be makin' mate of yerself," Behane threatened. "Somebody must die, an' as well you as another."

Johnny Sheehan began to cry. O'Brien listened anxiously. His face was pale. His lips trembled, and at times his whole body shook.

"I signed on as cook," Gorman enounced. "An' cook I wud if galley there was. But I'll not lay me hand to murder. 'Tis not in the articles. I'm the cook—

"An' cook ye'll be for wan minute more only," Sullivan said grimly, at the same moment gripping the cook's head from behind and bending it back till the windpipe and jugular were stretched taut. "Where's yer knife, Mike? Pass it along."

At the touch of the steel, Gorman whimpered.

"I'll do ut, if yez'll hold the b'y."

The pitiable condition of the cook seemed in some fashion to nerve up O'Brien.

"It's all right, Gorman," he said. "Go on with ut. 'Tis meself knows yer not wantin' to do ut. It's all right, sir"—this to the captain, who had laid a hand heavily on his arm. "Ye won't have to hold me, sir. I'll stand still."

"Stop yer blitherin', an' go an' get the tureen cover,' Behane commanded Johnny Sheehan, at the same time dealing him a heavy cuff alongside the head.

The boy, who was scarcely more than a child, fetched the cover. He crawled and tottered along the deck, so weak was he from hunger. The tears still ran down his cheeks. Behane took the cover from him, at the same time administering another cuff.

O'Brien took off his coat and bared his right arm. His under lip still trembled, but he held a tight grip on himself. The captain's penknife was opened and passed to Gorman.

"Mahoney, tell me mother what happened to me, if ever ye get back," O'Brien requested.

Mahoney nodded.

" 'Tis black murder, black an' damned," he said. "The b'y's flesh'll do none iv yez anny good. Mark me words. Ye'll not profit by it none iv yez."

"Get ready," the captain ordered. "You, Sullivan, hold the cover—that's it—close up. Spill nothing. It's precious stuff."

Gorman made an effort. The knife was dull. He was weak. Besides, his hand was shaking so violently that he nearly dropped the knife. The three boys were crouched apart, in a huddle, crying and sobbing. With the exception of Mahoney, the men were gathered about the victim, craning their necks to see.

"Be a man, Gorman," the captain cautioned.

The wretched cook was seized with a spasm of resolution, sawing back and forth with the blade on O'Brien's wrist. The veins were severed. Sullivan held the tureen cover close underneath. The cut veins gaped wide, but no ruddy flood gushed forth. There was no blood at all. The veins were dry and empty. No one spoke. The grim and silent figures swayed in unison with each heave of the ship. Every eye was turned fixedly upon that inconceivable and monstrous thing, the dry veins of a creature that was alive.

" 'Tis a warnin'," Mahoney cried. "Lave the b'y alone. Mark me words. His death'll do none iv yez anny good."

"Try at the elbow—the left elbow, 'tis nearer the heart," the captain said finally, in a dim and husky voice that was unlike his own.

"Give me the knife," O'Brien said roughly, taking it out of the cook's hand. "I can't be lookin' at ye puttin' me to hurt."

Quite coolly he cut the vein at the left elbow, but, like the cook, he failed to bring blood.

"This is all iv no use," Sullivan said. " 'Tis better to put him out iv his misery by bleedin' him at the throat."

The strain had been too much for the lad.

"Don't be coin' ut," he cried. "There'll be no blood in me throat. Give me a little time. 'Tis cold an' weak I am. Be lettin' me lay down an' slape a bit. Then I'll be warm an' the blood'll flow."

" 'Tis no use," Sullivan objected. "As if ye cud be slapin' at a time like this. Ye'll not slape, and ye'll not warm up. Look at ye now. You've an ague."

"I was sick at Limerick wan night," O'Brien hurried on, "'an' the dochtor cudn't bleed me. But after slapin' a few hours an' gettin' warm in bed the blood came freely. It's God's truth I'm tellin' yez. Don't be murderin' me!"

"His veins are open now," the captain said. " 'Tis no use leavin' him in his pain. Do it now en' tee done with it."

They started to reach for O'Brien, but he backed away.

"I'll be the death iv yez!" he screamed. "Take yer hands off iv me, Sullivan! I'll come back! I'll haunt yez! Wakin' or slapin', I'll haunt yez till you die!"

" 'Tis disgraceful!" yelled Behane. "If the short stick'd teen mine, I'd a-let me mates cut the head off iv me an' died happy."

Sullivan leaped in and caught the unhappy lad by the hair. The rest of the men followed. O'Brien kicked and struggled, snarling and snapping at the hands that clutched him from every side. Little Johnny Sheehan broke out into wild screaming, but the men took no notice of him. O'Brien was bent backward to the deck, the tureen cover under his neck. Gorman was shoved forward. Some one had thrust a large sheath-knife into his hand.

"Do yer duty! Do yer duty!" the men cried.

The cook bent over, but he caught the boy's eye and faltered.

"If ye don't, I'll kill ye with me own hands," Behane shouted.

From every side a torrent of abuse and threats poured in upon the cook. Still he hung back.

"Maybe there'll be more blood in his veins than O'Brien's," Sullivan suggested significantly.

Behane caught Gorman by the hair and twisted his head back, while Sullivan attempted to take possession of the sheath-knife. But Gorman clung to it desperately.

"Lave go, an' I'll do ut!" he screamed frantically. "Don't be cuttin' me throat! I'll do the deed! I'll do the deed!"

"See that you do it, then," the captain threatened him.

Gorman allowed himself to be shoved forward. He looked at the boy, closed his eyes, and muttered a prayer. Then, without opening his eyes, he did the deed that had been appointed him. O'Brien emitted a shriek that sank swiftly to a gurgling sob. The men held him till his struggles ceased, when he was laid upon the deck. They were eager and impatient, and with oaths and threats they urged Gorman to hurry with the preparation of the meal.

"Lave ut, you bloody butchers," Mahoney said quietly. "Lave ut, I tell yez. Ye'll not be needin' anny iv ut now. 'Tis as I said: ye'll not be profitin' by the lad's blood. Empty ut overside, Behane. Empty ut overside."

Behane, still holding the tureen cover in both his hands, glanced to windward. He walked to the rail and threw the cover and contents into the sea. A full-rigged ship was bearing down upon them a short mile away. So occupied had they been with the deed just committed, that none had had eyes for a lookout. All hands watched her coming on—the brightly coppered forefoot parting the water like a golden knife, the headsails flapping lazily and emptily at each downward surge, and the towering canvas tiers dipping and courtesying with each stately swing of the sea. No man spoke.

As she hove to, a cable length away, the captain of the Francis Spaight bestirred himself and ordered a tarpaulin to be thrown over O'Brien's corpse. A boat was lowered from the stranger's side and began to pull toward them. John Gorman laughed. He laughed softly at first, but he accompanied each stroke of the oars with spasmodically increasing glee. It was this maniacal laughter that greeted the rescue boat as it hauled alongside and the first officer clambered on board.

“Frisco Kid’s” Story

WHO am I? Why I’m de “Frisco Kid.” An wot do I do? I’m on de “road,” see! Say, youze ain’t got nothin’ agin me, have yer, mister? Cos if yer has, I’ll chase meself off, fer I’m pretty good at pacin’. No, you hasn’t? Well, den I guess it’s all square. Yer see I took yer fer a fly cop, an’ I’m onto meself fer a jigger w’en it comes to dem people.

Wot! A quarter? Dat’s very kind in yer, mister. Now I’s solid fer me bed an’ a bowl of java in de mornin’. Yer wants ter ast me a few questions? Den fire away. I’s yer red hot tamale.

A kid wid curley golden hair an’ fair complexshun, an’ ‘bout de size of me? Well, I guess I seed stacks like’m, but I never took pertic’lar notiss, dough if I spots’m, I’ll put yer on. W’en did he stray away, an’ wot’s his monica? I mean wot’s his name? Yer see we all travels by monicas on de road. Charley wuz his handle? Say! did he wear his hair middlin’ long like a girl’s an’ hail from Frisco? Den I guess I knowed’m onst. Say! if I tells yer all I knows about’m, yer won’t give me de cross hop, will yer? Didn’t he sport a little hoop — Hoop? — O’ I see yer a gentleman, an’ don’t talk like me and de people I travel wid. I mean a ring, a gold un, set wid little red rubies? — I guess dat’s wot yer calls’m. An’ a locket? Yes, I knows de locket too. It opens an’ shuts, an’ dere’s a little pitcher of a lady on one side an’ some hair, yaller hair like his, only diffrent, on de other. Do I know w’ere dey is? Yer jest bet I do — here dey is. I allus wore dem roun’ my neck since he — Say! Leave go! Don’t squeeze me arm like dat. Yer hurts, yer do, an’ wot der yer tink I am? A cheap guy?

Yer wants ter know w’ere he is? Den jes’ take it easy, an’ don’t get leary and grab me like dat again, an’ I’ll tell yer all I knows.

Yer see it wuz dis way. Las’ year ‘bout dis time, me’n and my pal, “Leary Joe,” come down to Sacramento to work de fair. Well, one hot day — an’ it wuz a scorcher — Leary Joe got to sloppin’ up on white line, an wuz orioide. Den I takes’m to bed, an’ not knowin’ wot to do wid meself, took a stroll. I wuz mopin’ down de main-drag, I mean de main street, w’en I bumped up gainst de kid wid de yaller hair. He was wid four er five hobos, an’ w’en I seed his good togs, an’ hoop an’ gold ticker, I tumbled to wot de gang wuz up to. So I t’ought I’d snare’m meself, an’ I up an’ sez, jest like we wuz ol’ fren’s, “Say, kid, w’ere yer ben all day? Come on; let’s go swimmin’.” Yer see, I tought I’d like ter get a finger in de pie meself.

I guess he didn’t kinder like de tuff looks of de crowd, an’ de swimmin’ got his eye, so he gives de push de shake and does de swift sneak. An’ yer ough’to seen de gang. Dey’d liked ter a chewed me up an’ pushed me nose in, only dey dassant, cos dey wer’ afraid of me pal, Leary Joe, fer he wuz de swiftest scrapper on de drag.

Well, we went swimmin'. On de way I found dat de kid'd run away from home an' jest hit de road. So I ast 'm if he wanted ter travel wid me an' my pal! Leary Joe, cos if he did, we were willin' an' he said — Yes." Somehow, I cudn't tell why, I kinder took ter dat kid. He wuz so pritty an' innisent like, jest as if he wuz a girl. An' if I cussed, he'd kinder blush an' wudn't look at me fer a long while. An' den I tumbled dat he had good people an' wuzn't ust to swearin'. An' jest like yer, he wuz allus callin' me down, cos he didn't understand de words I talked, an' den I'd cut de rag short an' tell'm wot dey ment. But he wuz smart, I tell yer; yer didn't have ter give 'm de drop more'n onst to make 'm tumble.

Well, we moped up above de railroad bridge an' undrest on a san'bar w'ere a lot other road-kids, wot I knowed, wuz in swimmin'. Say! it wuz a sight ter see dat yaller-haired kid's clo's. Right down ter de skin dey wuz as fine as fine cud be. A good 'eal better'n I ever wore.

At first, de road-kids, wuz fer guyin' 'm, but I blufft 'm wid der stiff lip, an' dey let up an' wuz very kind ter 'm. It wuz a picnic ter see dat kid. He wuz so funny an' diffrent from de rest of de push. He wuz so innisent an' trustin' like. Why, he guv me his hoop ter wear fer 'm, cos he wuz leary dat it'd slip off'n his finger in de water. An' w'en he took his locket off'n his neck an' put it in his pocket, curius like, I took it ter see wot it wuz like, an' if it wuz snide. But it wuz eighteen K., an' den I kep' it, so de odder kids cudn't swipe it.

Well, we had lots of joy, an' so did de kid, dough he cudn't swim a stroke. Bime'by we all cum out an' lay on de sand in de sun 'cept 'm, an' he said in, foolin' 'round in de shaller places. Pritty quick I got ter jokin' wid 'm, an' I can see 'm now wid his han's claspt behind his head, an' his pritty face all smiles an' laffin', an' his yaller hair flyin' ev'ry way, like a girl's. He wuz walkin' out backwards from de san'bar.

All of a sudden like, he struck a hole an' went down. We wuz all in de water like a shot, but he never cum up any more. Yer see, he struck de undertow an' wuz sucked down. Well, bime'by we all got out an' sat in der san' kinder solem' like fer a long while. Yer see, it wuz hard ter see a poor innisent kid like dat get drownded, even dough we hadn't knowed 'm very long.

Pritty soon, after a while, de "Punk Kid" goes up an' takes de ticker, I mean watch, sayin' fer an excuse like, "Mine's broke." But he didn't need ter 'polygize, fer up goes de "Miget Kid" an' takes his coat, an' de "Cooley Kid" his shirt, an' so on, till dere wuz nothin' left but his kicks, I mean shoes, w'ich I took, coz mine wuz no good. Den we piles up our ole rags in place of his good 'uns, an' drest.

De "Orator Kid" went an' gave de coroner de tip, an' den run out of de office, so dey cudn't pinch 'm. An' w'en de coroner cum down, all drest up fine, an' took de clo's, he said kinder offhand like, w'en he saw de poor, mis'rable rags: "It's only a tramp kid, anyhow."

Well' t'ree days went by, an' den dey foun' de poor little kid way down de river, an' w'en he wuz at de morgue, I went an' took a look at 'm.

Wot? Yer say, why didn't I 'dentify 'm? Well, yer see it wuz dis way: "Leary Joe" an' me wuz goin' ter pull out nex' day, an' I didn't wanter be held fer de inquest, an' besides, dey might ast me some curius questions 'bout wot became of his good togs and jewelry.

Wot? Yu're not cryin', are yer, mister? Well, yu're de funniest guy I ever seen. O! I tumbles now. Yer wuz de kid's ole man. Den I'm sorry fer yer, an' here's my hand on it.

Wot? Five big cart-wheels! I'm much obliged, mister, an' I guess yu'd better keep de hoop an' locket, cos dey belongs ter yer anyways. Well, I must be sayin' "So long," cos here cums my pal Leary Joe, an' we're goin' out on dat freight over dere. Dere she whistles now, an' I must be movin'. Cum on, Leary Joe, an' take de second, she's nice an' clean, an' we can have a good snooze.

The “Fuzziness” of Hoockla-Heen

HOOCKLA-HEEN half-crouched, half-knelt in the tall, dank grass. Not a motion passed over him, yet he had been there a long, long hour. In his hands he held a slender bow, with bone-barbed arrow strung in place; and he would have seemed turned to stone had it not been for the look of eagle alertness in his face. In fact, he was never more alive than at that very moment. His nostrils gave him full report of the green and growing things, of the budded willows and quaking aspens down by the edge of the low bank, of the great red raspberries thickly studding the bushes at his back, and over to the right, a dozen paces away and well hidden, he knew there must be a clump of the bright-colored but poisonous snake-flower.

His senses told him many things. He felt the moisture of the grass creeping and soaking through his moosehide trousers and chilling his knees, and by its breath on his brow he knew that the light breeze was hauling slowly around in the pale wake of the moon. And of the low hum of sound which rose from the land, his ears distinguished each component part — the rustling of the leaves and grasses, the calls of birds and squirrels and wild fowl, and the myriad noises of a vast insect life.

But chief of all was one sound which made his face grow tense with expectancy. Just before him a tangle of sticks and poles, laid together in rude order, dammed the swampy stream and formed a shallow pond. Through a break in the dam the water gurgled noisily. That, however, was not the sound which held him. From above he heard the faint, sharp slap of some object upon the earth, followed by the plump of a body into water. Then silence settled down again, and he stared steadily at the break through which the water slipped away.

But as he waited a new sound disturbed him. From far below came the low whine of a dog, and once the crackle of a broken twig. And although he felt vexation at this, his face gave no sign, while he centered his whole consciousness in his one sense of hearing. From above there came a low splashing, nearer than before, and from below the crackle of another breaking twig, likewise nearer.

It was if these approaching sounds were running a race, and he wished the one from the water to win. And win it did, for a ripple broke the surface of the pond and a small log floated into the opening in the dam. Shoving it along, he could make out a large, ratlike head, with little, round ears laid back and nearly lost in hair.

Hoockla-Heen bent his bow noiselessly and waited. The animal pushed and shoved at the log, trying to block the opening. Failing in this, it crawled cautiously out on the dam, exposing three feet and more of body, covered with fur of heavy chestnut-brown. A crackle of twigs from below, and the animal rose suspiciously on its hind legs to

listen. Then it was that Hooekla-Heen felt the thrill of achievement, the consciousness of having done and done well, as the arrow sped through the moonlight, singing its shrill song and transfixing the animal, which knew its end in the sound.

The boy, for Hooekla-Heen could boast but twelve years, sprang upright and called out joyously. A like call came from below and a tremendous crashing of underbrush answered him; and as he stooped and lifted the beaver by its broad, flat tail, another boy broke out of the bushes and waded to him through the grass.

“And hast thou got that old gray nose at last?” the newcomer questioned, excitedly.

“Aye,” Hooekla-Heen made answer, coldly, hiding his exultation under an impassive mask. “Aye, old gray nose, and small thanks to thee, Klanik, who flounder over the ground like a blind bull moose and make much noise.”

“I came softly,” the other boy replied, a little hurt by the censure.

“Yes, with a whining dog.”

“Broken Tooth would follow me, but I sent him back,” said Klanik. “Did you know,” he went on, eagerly, “that the tribe is to journey down to see these white men of the Yukon?”

Upon that, Hooekla-Heen danced gleefully up and down. Klanik joined hands with him, and they circled round and round till, in sheer excess of joy, the dance was turned into a wrestling bout, and they were panting and straining to the utmost. Klanik finally slipped on the beaver’s tail, and Hooekla-Heen, profiting by the advantage, forced him suddenly backward and pressed his shoulders into the soggy ground. Then they sprang to their feet, laughing, and started down the trail to camp with the burden of the beaver shared between them.

On the way Klanik told of what had taken place at the council. Kootznaloo, one of their bravest hunters, had wandered off the previous fall, and after a long absence had returned with incredible tales of the white men. He had gone down the White River farther than the tribe had ever ventured; he had gone to the great Yukon, and the wonderful city of Dawson. At the council he had spoken of the many furs the tribe possessed, of how highly furs were esteemed by the white men, and of his plan for the tribe to go down to Dawson and trade these furs for immense wealth in guns and blankets and scarlet cloths.

But Ya-Koo, the maker of medicine, had opposed him. As they all knew, he, too, had been among the white men once upon a time, and he could tell that the white men were very bad. This Kootznaloo denied; the white men were very good, he said, in token whereof had he not returned with a fine new gun?

So the discussion waged to and fro. Many who had never seen white men had agreed with Kootznaloo. Moreover, all of them were anxious to possess fine new guns like his. Hooekla-Heen’s father, Kow-Whi, who was chief, had also declared in favor of Kootznaloo’s project; and Ya-Koo, though he was medicine-man to the tribe, had been forced to give in. In two days, it had been decided, now that summer was come and the rivers running free, the whole tribe, men, women and children, would load their canoes and depart for the wonder city.

For some time after Klanik had finished telling of what occurred at the council the boys walked on in silence. The Klanik spoke again, gravely: "It is not to be believed that these white men are white, all over white — face, hands, everything."

"Aye," Hoockla-Heen answered, absently, "and their eyes are of the color of summer skies when there are no clouds."

Klanik looked at him curiously, for Klanik knew many strange things concerning Hoockla-Heen of which Hoockla-Heen himself was ignorant — things which Kow-Whi and Ya-Koo had commanded should never be spoken.

But Hoockla-Heen went on: "And their womenkind are fair and soft, and their hair is yellow, quite yellow, and often I remember —

He stopped suddenly and looked into the curious eyes of his chum.

"What dost thou remember?" Klanik queried, gently. "Thou hast never seen the white men and their womenkind."

"I remember — "

"Truly art thou Hoockla-Heen, the dreamer."

"Aye, I dream." Hoockla-Heen shook his head sadly. "Surely, I dream."

He put his hand before him as if to dispel some vision, and after that, till camp was reached, there was silence between them. But when Hoockla-Heen crept into his furs and pulled the bearskin over him, he could not close his eyes, and sleep was far from him. It was the old sickness, com-ta-nitch-i-wyan, come back to him again — the dream-sickness which he had thought outgrown. It was the sickness which, when a little boy, had made the children draw away from him in fear, and the tears come into the eyes of the squaws when they looked upon him. The dream-sickness — how it had made his childhood miserable!

Of course all men dreamed, and even the wolf-dogs; but they dreamed with their eyes shut, when they slept, and he had dreamed with eyes wide open, broad awake. And the men dreamed about things they knew, about hunting and fishing; but he had dreamed about things he did not know, and which nobody else knew. Haunting memories of things he could not express had come to him; and it seemed, if only he could think back, that all would be clear, only, try as he would, he could not think back.

At such times he felt very much as he did when he was sick of the river fever, and his head was dizzy, his eyes trembling and watery, and his fingers felt twice their natural size, strangely large and fuzzy. Ah, that was it, the very word — fuzzy! That was the way his head felt when he tried to think back.

Then, as he gradually outgrew and forgot it, the dream-sickness had left him. The medicine-man, Ya-Koo, had made public incantation over him, and besought the bad spirits to depart from him, and privately he told him to think back no more, lest misfortune should fall upon him. And he had obeyed, and the thing had gone from him. But now it had come back again. Was there ever such an unhappy boy? He clenched his hands passionately, and for hours stared blindly into the blackness above him.

Chief Kow-Whi's canoe led the procession of the tribe, and with him were Hooekla-Heen and Klanik. All day they had been sweeping down the Yukon, rounding one great bend after another, but they had not landed. They passed one place early in the day where men, white men, were firing off their guns excitedly. Kootznaloo paddled alongside Kow-Whi's canoe and explained that he thought it must be a custom of the white men, although he had never seen the like during the time he spent among them. But after a brief deliberation, not being sure that it was merely a custom, they decided not to venture in, but to run on to Dawson.

And all day Hooekla-Heen had had attacks of the dream-sickness; and when he had looked a long way off at the white men discharging their guns, he had suffered from an especially severe attack. The fuzziness had been almost overpowering. He was also worried by a feeling that something was going to happen — what he did not know.

He tried to tell Klanik about it, but Klanik had retorted, "Don't be a baby; nothing'll eat you." After that he kept quiet, although he was sure that he was not afraid. Instead, he was very anxious that the thing should happen whatever it was.

At midday the flotilla swung along a series of mighty bluffs and rounded an abrupt turn. Here the Klondike emptied its swollen flood into the Yukon, and here, suddenly, without warning, Dawson burst upon their astonished eyes.

As far as they could see, from river rim to mountain side, was a sea of tents and cabins. And this sea of dwellings spilled over the river rim and down into the water, where the bank was lined for a mile and a half with boats — boats, three and four deep, and scows, dories, canoes and huge rafts, all heaped high with provisions and the possessions of men. The suddenness and the vastness of it took away the breath of the old chief, Kow-Whi, and he could only gaze in speechless wonder.

Hooekla-Heen was almost suffocating with fuzziness. He reached up hurriedly and held his head with both hands. Oh, if he could only understand! What did it all mean?

Klanik cried out sharply to him for missing stroke with his paddle, and with an effort of will he controlled himself. They drove in close to the shore and by the barracks, where were the Northwest mounted police and where the British banner floated.

Hooekla-Heen pointed to it and said, "That is a flag."

"How dost thou know, dreamer?" Klanik demanded.

But Hooekla-Heen did not hear. They were drifting past a great barge loaded with huge animals, as large as a large moose. The sight frightened the women, and several of the canoes sheered out into the stream to give it a wide berth.

"And what manner of animal is that?" Klanik asked, mischievously.

"That is —" Hooekla-Heen hesitated a moment, and then went on confidently, "That is a horse."

"Truly, agreed Kootznaloo, whose canoe was alongside, "those be horses. I have seen them before, and they are harmless. But how dost thou know, O Hooekla-Heen?"

Hooekla-Heen shook his head and bent to his paddle as the canoes whirled in to a landing. When all had been made fast, they climbed the steep bank and came upon an open space among the houses. Flags were flying everywhere, but flags different from

the one which floated over the barracks; and everywhere were men, firing guns and revolvers into the air and shouting like mad.

A great crowd filled the open space, and as the wide-eyed Indians took up their position on the outskirts the noise died away, and in the center, on a heap of lumber, a man rose and began to speak. Very often he pointed to a flag which flew above his head, and every little while he was interrupted by clappings of hands and great rolling shouts and volleys of gun-shots. At such times he would pause and drink water from a glass which stood on a box beside him.

“Oh! oh!” Hooekla-Heen cried, striving to clutch at the phantoms which were fluttering through his mind.

“Strange-looking boy, that, for an Indian,” remarked a man in a draggled mackinaw jacket, who now and then pulled out a writing-pad and took down notes.

Hooekla-Heen glanced quickly at him, although he did not understand what had been said; but as he looked at him the dream-sickness came over him violently.

The man’s companion, clad in a lieutenant’s uniform of the mounted police, took the cigar from his lips and exclaimed, “by Jove, he’s no — — ”

But just then a red-headed boy touched a lighted punk to a string which braided together hundreds of small red tubes. These he threw to the ground. At once there was a tremendous flashing and spluttering and banging, and the Indians, Ya-Koo leading, surged backward in terror.

Hooekla-Heen alone stood his ground. A sudden lightness came upon him, as when the fog rises from the earth and all things shine clear and bright in the sun. The fuzziness had left him. “Firecrackers! he cried, dancing into the exploding mass. “Firecrackers! The Fourth of July! Hurrah! Hurrah!”

When the last cracker had gone off he came to himself, startled and blushing under his tanned skin. He looked timidly about him. His tribespeople had come back and were regarding him curiously. Kow-Whi, however, was looking straight before him, a sad expression on his face. But the lieutenant and the man who made notes had stepped up to him.

“What’s your name?” the lieutenant demanded, seizing him by the arm.

“Jimmy,” he answered, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Then the fuzzy sensation came back to him, and he fell to wondering why he had spoken that strange word. He did not know what the man had said. And what did Jimmy mean, anyway? Why had he spoken it?

“Jimmy what?” the lieutenant asked.

Hooekla-Heen shook his head. He did not understand the white man’s speech. Besides, his tribespeople were pressing round him excitedly, and Ya-Koo was plucking at his sleeve for him to come away.

“How old are you?”

Again he shook his head, this time adding, “White River,” as if it might help.

“Yes, um White River,” Kottznaloo corroborated, glad of the chance to play interpreter. “Um White River, ‘way up.”

“White River, eh?” the lieutenant repeated, in sudden surprise. Then turning to his companion, “How old do you make him out, Dawes?”

Dawes considered, “Twelve or thirteen, I should judge.”

The lieutenant pondered audibly: “Summer of ‘91 — winter of ‘92 — four years and eight make twelve — ” He broke off suddenly, then cried out, “Dawes! Dawes! It’s the kid, sure! Hold him! As you love me, hold him tight!”

Before Hooekla-Heen could realize what was happening, the lieutenant had jerked open his squirrel-skin shirt, the soft leather tearing down under his grasp. Ya-Koo tried to come between, but the lieutenant thrust him roughly back. There was a murmuring and a snarl from the tribespeople, a flashing of knives from the sheaths and a clicking of rusting guns. But Kow-Whi quieted them with a sharp word of command.

“Look at that! White, eh?” The lieutenant pointed at Hooekla-Heen’s naked chest.

Dawes looked carefully and shook his head. “Pretty black, I should judge.”

“Oh, that’s the sun!” the lieutenant exclaimed, impatiently, at the same time ripping and tearing away at the shirt. “Under the arms, man! Under the arms, where it’s untouched!”

“It is white!” Dawes cried, with sudden conviction. “What shall we do?”

“Do! I’ll show you!” The lieutenant beckoned to the red-headed boy, who was looking on with huge interest. “Hey, you, boy! Run and fetch Jim McDermott. He’s right over there in that bunch of men. I saw him not five minutes ago.”

The red-headed boy darted off, and Hooekla-Heen watched him go, wondering at it all, and yet aware, that the thing which was to happen was happening.

Kootznaloo was jabbering excitedly to the lieutenant, who was nodding his head to every word and interjecting short, sharp questions.

“But I say, you know, I say, old man, what’s up?” Dawes interrupted, pulling out his writing pad and poised his pencil.

“McDermott, Jim McDermott!” the lieutenant answered hastily. “Old-timer in the country. A bonanza king, worth a couple of millions at least. Used to be an agent for the P. C. C. Company. In ‘94 came in with his kid and a party from the west coast of Alaska. The wife was to come in the following year by the regular way. Unknown country. First white people to come over it, and the last. Frightful time. Nearly starved to death. In fact, two did. They, being the weakest, were the very ones left in charge of McDermott’s boy while McDermott and the others pushed out after game. I heard him tell the story once, how, after three days, when he had got a moose and returned, he found the two men stiff and cold and the boy missing.”

“The boy missing?” Dawes’s pencil was suspended in mid-air.

“Yes, missing; and never a sign. The camp was close by the river, and McDermott figured that the boy must have crawled to the bank and fallen in. Seems now, though, that some Indian must have landed from a canoe, found the two dead men, and carried the living boy away with him. Of course McDermott never dreamed of such an outcome — but here he is now.”

Hooekla-Heen followed the lieutenant's eyes, and saw a tall, dark-bearded man. And wonder! Oh, wonder! Clothed in flesh and blood, it was one of the phantoms of his dreams! He felt suddenly very light again, and the fuzziness went from him.

"Da-da!" he cried; "O da-da!" and flung himself into the man's arms.

Then followed ten minutes of confusion, everybody explaining at once. Hooekla-Heen remembered nothing except that once or twice the man he had called "Da-da" stooped and kissed him, and that his clutch upon his hand kept growing tighter and tighter. Then the man said something to him and started to lead him away, still clutching his hand; but Hooekla-Heen did not understand, and stopped.

The man spoke to Kootznaloo, who said to Hooekla-Heen, "This man takes you to see a woman, white woman."

"Ask him if her hair be yellow," Hooekla-Heen commanded.

And when Kootznaloo had interpreted it, the man's face grew bright with gladness, and he stooped and kissed Hooekla-Heen again and yet again.

Kow-Whi was standing apart, silent, his eyes fixed steadily before him, as if he saw nothing of what was taking place. There was a dignity and nobleness about his demeanor, and withal a sadness which the dullest could read.

Hooekla-Heen turned his head and then ran back to him, his eyes filling with tears. There he hesitated, in doubt, looking first to one man and then the other.

"Tell him, and them, that they will see the boy again," McDermott ordered Kootznaloo to say. "And tell them that he shall always remember them, and they are welcome ever to a place by my fire and his. And further, that due reward, and great reward, shall be given."

The thing had happened. It was all right to Hooekla-Heen that he should go up the hill holding this tall, dark-bearded man by the hand. For he knew he was going to see the woman, fair and soft, the woman he often remembered, whose hair was yellow.

A Goboto Night

I

At Goboto the traders come off their schooners and the planters drift in from far, wild coasts, and one and all they assume shoes, white duck trousers, and various other appearances of civilization. At Goboto mail is received, bills are paid, and newspapers, rarely more than five weeks old, are accessible; for the little island, belted with its coral reefs, affords safe anchorage, is the steamer port of call, and serves as the distributing point for the whole wide-scattered group.

Life at Goboto is heated, unhealthy, and lurid, and for its size it asserts the distinction of more cases of acute alcoholism than any other spot in the world. Guvutu, over in the Solomons, claims that it drinks between drinks. Goboto does not deny this. It merely states, in passing, that in the Goboton chronology no such interval of time is known. It also points out its import statistics, which show a far larger per capita consumption of spiritous liquors. Guvutu explains this on the basis that Goboto does a larger business and has more visitors. Goboto retorts that its resident population is smaller and that its visitors are thirstier. And the discussion goes on interminably, principally because of the fact that the disputants do not live long enough to settle it.

Goboto is not large. The island is only a quarter of a mile in diameter, and on it are situated an admiralty coal-shed (where a few tons of coal have lain untouched for twenty years), the barracks for a handful of black labourers, a big store and warehouse with sheet-iron roofs, and a bungalow inhabited by the manager and his two clerks. They are the white population. An average of one man out of the three is always to be found down with fever. The job at Goboto is a hard one. It is the policy of the company to treat its patrons well, as invading companies have found out, and it is the task of the manager and clerks to do the treating. Throughout the year traders and recruiters arrive from far, dry cruises, and planters from equally distant and dry shores, bringing with them magnificent thirsts. Goboto is the mecca of sprees, and when they have spread they go back to their schooners and plantations to recuperate.

Some of the less hardy require as much as six months between visits. But for the manager and his assistants there are no such intervals. They are on the spot, and week by week, blown in by monsoon or southeast trade, the schooners come to anchor, cargo'd with copra, ivory nuts, pearl-shell, hawksbill turtle, and thirst.

It is a very hard job at Goboto. That is why the pay is twice that on other stations, and that is why the company selects only courageous and intrepid men for this particular station. They last no more than a year or so, when the wreckage of them is shipped back to Australia, or the remains of them are buried in the sand across on

the windward side of the islet. Johnny Bassett, almost the legendary hero of Goboto, broke all records. He was a remittance man with a remarkable constitution, and he lasted seven years. His dying request was duly observed by his clerks, who pickled him in a cask of trade-rum (paid for out of their own salaries) and shipped him back to his people in England. Nevertheless, at Goboto, they tried to be gentlemen. For that matter, though something was wrong with them, they were gentlemen, and had been gentlemen. That was why the great unwritten rule of Goboto was that visitors should put on pants and shoes. Breech-clouts, lava-lavas, and bare legs were not tolerated. When Captain Jensen, the wildest of the Blackbirders though descended from old New York Knickerbocker stock, surged in, clad in loin-cloth, undershirt, two belted revolvers and a sheath-knife, he was stopped at the beach. This was in the days of Johnny Bassett, ever a stickler in matters of etiquette. Captain Jensen stood up in the sternsheets of his whaleboat and denied the existence of pants on his schooner. Also, he affirmed his intention of coming ashore. They of Goboto nursed him back to health from a bullet-hole through his shoulder, and in addition handsomely begged his pardon, for no pants had they found on his schooner. And finally, on the first day he sat up, Johnny Bassett kindly but firmly assisted his guest into a pair of pants of his own. This was the great precedent. In all the succeeding years it had never been violated. White men and pants were undivorce-able. Only niggers ran naked. Pants constituted caste.

II

On this night things were, with one exception, in nowise different from any other night. Seven of them, with glimmering eyes and steady legs, had capped a day of Scotch with swivel-sticked cocktails and sat down to dinner. Jacketed, trousered, and shod, they were: Jerry McMurtrey, the manager; Eddy Little and Jack Andrews, clerks; Captain Stapler, of the recruiting ketch Merry; Darby Shryleton, planter from Tito-Ito; Peter Gee, a half-caste Chinese pearl-buyer who ranged from Ceylon to the Paumotus, and Alfred Deacon, a visitor who had stopped off from the last steamer. At first wine was served by the black servants to those that drank it, though all quickly shifted back to Scotch and soda, pickling their food as they ate it, ere it went into their calcined, pickled stomachs.

Over their coffee, they heard the rumble of an anchor-chain through a hawse-pipe, tokening the arrival of a vessel.

"It's David Grief," Peter Gee remarked.

"How do you know?" Deacon demanded truculently, and then went on to deny the half-caste's knowledge. "You chaps put on a lot of side over a new chum. I've done some sailing myself, and this naming a craft when its sail is only a blur, or naming a man by the sound of his anchor—it's—it's unadulterated poppycock."

Peter Gee was engaged in lighting a cigarette, and did not answer.

"Some of the niggers do amazing things that way," McMurtrey interposed tactfully.

As with the others, this conduct of their visitor jarred on the manager. From the moment of Peter Gee's arrival that afternoon Deacon had manifested a tendency to pick on him. He had disputed his statements and been generally rude.

"Maybe it's because Peter's got Chink blood in him," had been Andrews' hypothesis. "Deacon's Australian, you know, and they're daffy down there on colour."

"I fancy that's it," McMurtrey had agreed. "But we can't permit any bullying, especially of a man like Peter Gee, who's whiter than most white men."

In this the manager had been in nowise wrong. Peter Gee was that rare creature, a good as well as clever Eurasian. In fact, it was the stolid integrity of the Chinese blood that toned the recklessness and licentiousness of the English blood which had run in his father's veins. Also, he was better educated than any man there, spoke better English as well as several other tongues, and knew and lived more of their own ideals of gentlemanness than they did themselves. And, finally, he was a gentle soul. Violence he deprecated, though he had killed men in his time. Turbulence he abhorred.

He always avoided it as he would the plague.

Captain Stapler stepped in to help McMurtrey:

"I remember, when I changed schooners and came into Altman, the niggers knew right off the bat it was me. I wasn't expected, either, much less to be in another craft. They told the trader it was me. He used the glasses, and wouldn't believe them. But they did know. Told me afterward they could see it sticking out all over the schooner that I was running her."

Deacon ignored him, and returned to the attack on the pearl-buyer.

"How do you know from the sound of the anchor that it was this whatever-you-called-him man?" he challenged.

"There are so many things that go to make up such a judgment," Peter Gee answered. "It's very hard to explain. It would require almost a text book."

"I thought so," Deacon sneered. "Explanation that doesn't explain is easy."

"Who's for bridge?" Eddy Little, the second clerk, interrupted, looking up expectantly and starting to shuffle. "You'll play, won't you, Peter?"

"If he does, he's a bluffer," Deacon cut back. "I'm getting tired of all this poppycock. Mr. Gee, you will favour me and put yourself in a better light if you tell how you know who that man was that just dropped anchor. After that I'll play you piquet."

"I'd prefer bridge," Peter answered. "As for the other thing, it's something like this: By the sound it was a small craft—no square-rigger. No whistle, no siren, was blown—again a small craft. It anchored close in—still again a small craft, for steamers and big ships must drop hook outside the middle shoal. Now the entrance is tortuous. There is no recruiting nor trading captain in the group who dares to run the passage after dark. Certainly no stranger would. There were two exceptions. The first was Margonville. But he was executed by the High Court at Fiji. Remains the other exception, David Grief. Night or day, in any weather, he runs the passage. This is well known to all. A possible factor, in case Grief were somewhere else, would be some young dare-devil of a skipper. In this connection, in the first place, I don't know of any, nor does anybody

else. In the second place, David Grief is in these waters, cruising on the Gunga, which is shortly scheduled to leave here for Karo-Karo. I spoke to Grief, on the Gunga, in Sandfly Passage, day before yesterday. He was putting a trader ashore on a new station. He said he was going to call in at Babo, and then come on to Goboto. He has had ample time to get here. I have heard an anchor drop. Who else than David Grief can it be? Captain Donovan is skipper of the Gunga, and him I know too well to believe that he'd run in to Goboto after dark unless his owner were in charge. In a few minutes David Grief will enter through that door and say, 'In Guvutu they merely drink between drinks.' I'll wager fifty pounds he's the man that enters and that his words will be, 'In Guvutu they merely drink between drinks.' Deacon was for the moment crushed. The sullen blood rose darkly in his face.

"Well, he's answered you," McMurtrey laughed genially. "And I'll back his bet myself for a couple of sovereigns."

"Bridge! Who's going to take a hand?" Eddy Little cried impatiently. "Come on, Peter!"

"The rest of you play," Deacon said. "He and I are going to play piquet."

"I'd prefer bridge," Peter Gee said mildly.

"Don't you play piquet?"

The pearl-buyer nodded.

"Then come on. Maybe I can show I know more about that than I do about anchors."

"Oh, I say—" McMurtrey began.

"You can play bridge," Deacon shut him off. "We prefer piquet."

Reluctantly, Peter Gee was bullied into a game that he knew would be unhappy.

"Only a rubber," he said, as he cut for deal.

"For how much?" Deacon asked.

Peter Gee shrugged his shoulders. "As you please."

"Hundred up—five pounds a game?"

Peter Gee agreed.

"With the lurch double, of course, ten pounds?"

"All right," said Peter Gee.

At another table four of the others sat in at bridge. Captain Stapler, who was no card-player, looked on and replenished the long glasses of Scotch that stood at each man's right hand. McMurtrey, with poorly concealed apprehension, followed as well as he could what went on at the piquet table. His fellow Englishmen as well were shocked by the behaviour of the Australian, and all were troubled by fear of some untoward act on his part. That he was working up his animosity against the half-caste, and that the explosion might come any time, was apparent to all.

"I hope Peter loses," McMurtrey said in an undertone.

"Not if he has any luck," Andrews answered. "He's a wizard at piquet. I know by experience."

That Peter Gee was lucky was patent from the continual badgering of Deacon, who filled his glass frequently. He had lost the first game, and, from his remarks, was losing the second, when the door opened and David Grief entered.

"In Guvutu they merely drink between drinks," he remarked casually to the assembled company, ere he gripped the manager's hand. "Hello, Mac! Say, my skipper's down in the whaleboat. He's got a silk shirt, a tie, and tennis shoes, all complete, but he wants you to send a pair of pants down. Mine are too small, but yours will fit him. Hello, Eddy! How's that ngari-ngari? You up, Jock? The miracle has happened. No one down with fever, and no one remarkably drunk." He sighed, "I suppose the night is young yet. Hello, Peter! Did you catch that big squall an hour after you left us? We had to let go the second anchor."

While he was being introduced to Deacon, McMurtrey dispatched a house-boy with the pants, and when Captain Donovan came in it was as a white man should—at least in Goboto.

Deacon lost the second game, and an outburst heralded the fact. Peter Gee devoted himself to lighting a cigarette and keeping quiet.

"What?—are you quitting because you're ahead?" Deacon demanded.

Grief raised his eyebrows questioningly to McMurtrey, who frowned back his own disgust.

"It's the rubber," Peter Gee answered.

"It takes three games to make a rubber. It's my deal. Come on!"

Peter Gee acquiesced, and the third game was on.

"Young whelp—he needs a lacing," McMurtrey muttered to Grief. "Come on, let us quit, you chaps. I want to keep an eye on him. If he goes too far I'll throw him out on the beach, company instructions or no."

"Who is he?" Grief queried.

"A left-over from last steamer. Company's orders to treat him nice. He's looking to invest in a plantation. Has a ten-thousand-pound letter of credit with the company. He's got 'all-white Australia' on the brain. Thinks because his skin is white and because his father was once Attorney-General of the Commonwealth that he can be a cur. That's why he's picking on Peter, and you know Peter's the last man in the world to make trouble or incur trouble. Damn the company. I didn't engage to wet-nurse its infants with bank accounts. Come on, fill your glass, Grief. The man's a blighter, a blithering blighter."

"Maybe he's only young," Grief suggested.

"He can't contain his drink—that's clear." The manager glared his disgust and wrath. "If he raises a hand to Peter, so help me, I'll give him a licking myself, the little overgrown cad!"

The pearl-buyer pulled the pegs out of the cribbage board on which he was scoring and sat back. He had won the third game. He glanced across to Eddy Little, saying:

"I'm ready for the bridge, now."

"I wouldn't be a quitter," Deacon snarled.

“Oh, really, I’m tired of the game,” Peter Gee assured him with his habitual quietness.

“Come on and be game,” Deacon bullied. “One more. You can’t take my money that way. I’m out fifteen pounds. Double or quits.”

McMurtrey was about to interpose, but Grief restrained him with his eyes.

“If it positively is the last, all right,” said Peter Gee, gathering up the cards. “It’s my deal, I believe. As I understand it, this final is for fifteen pounds. Either you owe me thirty or we quit even?”

“That’s it, chappie. Either we break even or I pay you thirty.”

“Getting blooded, eh?” Grief remarked, drawing up a chair.

The other men stood or sat around the table, and Deacon played again in bad luck. That he was a good player was clear. The cards were merely running against him. That he could not take his ill luck with equanimity was equally clear. He was guilty of sharp, ugly curses, and he snapped and growled at the imperturbable half-caste. In the end Peter Gee counted out, while Deacon had not even made his fifty points. He glowered speechlessly at his opponent.

“Looks like a lurch,” said Grief.

“Which is double,” said Peter Gee.

“There’s no need your telling me,” Deacon snarled. “I’ve studied arithmetic. I owe you forty-five pounds. There, take it!”

The way in which he flung the nine five-pound notes on the table was an insult in itself. Peter Gee was even quieter, and flew no signals of resentment.

“You’ve got fool’s luck, but you can’t play cards, I can tell you that much,” Deacon went on. “I could teach you cards.”

The half-caste smiled and nodded acquiescence as he folded up the money.

“There’s a little game called casino—I wonder if you ever heard of it?—a child’s game.”

“I’ve seen it played,” the half-caste murmured gently.

“What’s that?” snapped Deacon. “Maybe you think you can play it?”

“Oh, no, not for a moment. I’m afraid I haven’t head enough for it.”

“It’s a bully game, casino,” Grief broke in pleasantly. “I like it very much.”

Deacon ignored him.

“I’ll play you ten quid a game—thirty-one points out,” was the challenge to Peter Gee. “And I’ll show you how little you know about cards. Come on! Where’s a full deck?”

“No, thanks,” the half-caste answered. “They are waiting for me in order to make up a bridge set.”

“Yes, come on,” Eddy Little begged eagerly. “Come on, Peter, let’s get started.”

“Afraid of a little game like casino,” Deacon girded. “Maybe the stakes are too high. I’ll play you for pennies—or farthings, if you say so.”

The man’s conduct was a hurt and an affront to all of them. McMurtrey could stand it no longer.

“Now hold on, Deacon. He says he doesn’t want to play. Let him alone.”

Deacon turned raging upon his host; but before he could blurt out his abuse, Grief had stepped into the breach.

"I'd like to play casino with you," he said.

"What do you know about it?"

"Not much, but I'm willing to learn."

"Well, I'm not teaching for pennies to-night."

"Oh, that's all right," Grief answered. "I'll play for almost any sum—within reason, of course."

Deacon proceeded to dispose of this intruder with one stroke.

"I'll play you a hundred pounds a game, if that will do you any good."

Grief beamed his delight. "That will be all right, very right. Let us begin. Do you count sweeps?"

Deacon was taken aback. He had not expected a Goboton trader to be anything but crushed by such a proposition.

"Do you count sweeps?" Grief repeated.

Andrews had brought him a new deck, and he was throwing out the joker.

"Certainly not," Deacon answered. "That's a sissy game."

"I'm glad," Grief coincided. "I don't like sissy games either."

"You don't, eh? Well, then, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll play for five hundred pounds a game."

Again Deacon was taken aback.

"I'm agreeable," Grief said, beginning to shuffle. "Cards and spades go out first, of course, and then big and little casino, and the aces in the bridge order of value. Is that right?"

"You're a lot of jokers down here," Deacon laughed, but his laughter was strained. "How do I know you've got the money?"

"By the same token I know you've got it. Mac, how's my credit with the company?"

"For all you want," the manager answered.

"You personally guarantee that?" Deacon demanded.

"I certainly do," McMurtrey said. "Depend upon it, the company will honour his paper up and past your letter of credit."

"Low deals," Grief said, placing the deck before Deacon on the table.

The latter hesitated in the midst of the cut and looked around with querulous misgiving at the faces of the others. The clerks and captains nodded.

"You're all strangers to me," Deacon complained. "How am I to know? Money on paper isn't always the real thing."

Then it was that Peter Gee, drawing a wallet from his pocket and borrowing a fountain pen from McMurtrey, went into action.

"I haven't gone to buying yet," the half-caste explained, "so the account is intact. I'll just indorse it over to you, Grief. It's for fifteen thousand. There, look at it."

Deacon intercepted the letter of credit as it was being passed across the table. He read it slowly, then glanced up at McMurtrey.

"Is that right?"

"Yes. It's just the same as your own, and just as good. The company's paper is always good."

Deacon cut the cards, won the deal, and gave them a thorough shuffle. But his luck was still against him, and he lost the game.

"Another game," he said. "We didn't say how many, and you can't quit with me a loser. I want action."

Grief shuffled and passed the cards for the cut.

"Let's play for a thousand," Deacon said, when he had lost the second game. And when the thousand had gone the way of the two five hundred bets he proposed to play for two thousand.

"That's progression," McMurtrey warned, and was rewarded by a glare from Deacon. But the manager was insistent. "You don't have to play progression, Grief, unless you're foolish."

"Who's playing this game?" Deacon flamed at his host; and then, to Grief: "I've lost two thousand to you. Will you play for two thousand?"

Grief nodded, the fourth game began, and Deacon won. The manifest unfairness of such betting was known to all of them. Though he had lost three games out of four, Deacon had lost no money. By the child's device of doubling his wager with each loss, he was bound, with the first game he won, no matter how long delayed, to be even again.

He now evinced an unspoken desire to stop, but Grief passed the deck to be cut.

"What?" Deacon cried. "You want more?"

"Haven't got anything yet," Grief murmured whimsically, as he began the deal. "For the usual five hundred, I suppose?"

The shame of what he had done must have tingled in Deacon, for he answered, "No, we'll play for a thousand. And say! Thirty-one points is too long. Why not twenty-one points out—if it isn't too rapid for you?"

"That will make it a nice, quick, little game," Grief agreed.

The former method of play was repeated. Deacon lost two games, doubled the stake, and was again even. But Grief was patient, though the thing occurred several times in the next hour's play. Then happened what he was waiting for—a lengthening in the series of losing games for Deacon. The latter doubled to four thousand and lost, doubled to eight thousand and lost, and then proposed to double to sixteen thousand.

Grief shook his head. "You can't do that, you know. You're only ten thousand credit with the company."

"You mean you won't give me action?" Deacon asked hoarsely. "You mean that with eight thousand of my money you're going to quit?"

Grief smiled and shook his head.

"It's robbery, plain robbery," Deacon went on. "You take my money and won't give me action."

“No, you’re wrong. I’m perfectly willing to give you what action you’ve got coming to you. You’ve got two thousand pounds of action yet.”

“Well, we’ll play it,” Deacon took him up. “You cut.”

The game was played in silence, save for irritable remarks and curses from Deacon. Silently the onlookers filled and sipped their long Scotch glasses. Grief took no notice of his opponent’s outbursts, but concentrated on the game. He was really playing cards, and there were fifty-two in the deck to be kept track of, and of which he did keep track. Two thirds of the way through the last deal he threw down his hand.

“Cards put me out,” he said. “I have twenty-seven.”

“If you’ve made a mistake,” Deacon threatened, his face white and drawn.

“Then I shall have lost. Count them.”

Grief passed over his stack of takings, and Deacon, with trembling fingers, verified the count. He half shoved his chair back from the table and emptied his glass. He looked about him at unsympathetic faces.

“I fancy I’ll be catching the next steamer for Sydney,” he said, and for the first time his speech was quiet and without bluster.

As Grief told them afterward: “Had he whined or raised a roar I wouldn’t have given him that last chance. As it was, he took his medicine like a man, and I had to do it.”

Deacon glanced at his watch, simulated a weary yawn, and started to rise.

“Wait,” Grief said. “Do you want further action?”

The other sank down in his chair, strove to speak, but could not, licked his dry lips, and nodded his head.

“Captain Donovan here sails at daylight in the Gunga for Karo-Karo,” Grief began with seeming irrelevance. “Karo-Karo is a ring of sand in the sea, with a few thousand cocoa-nut trees. Pandanus grows there, but they can’t grow sweet potatoes nor taro. There are about eight hundred natives, a king and two prime ministers, and the last three named are the only ones who wear any clothes. It’s a sort of God-forsaken little hole, and once a year I send a schooner up from Goboto. The drinking water is brackish, but old Tom Butler has survived on it for a dozen years. He’s the only white man there, and he has a boat’s crew of five Santa Cruz boys who would run away or kill him if they could. That is why they were sent there. They can’t run away. He is always supplied with the hard cases from the plantations. There are no missionaries. Two native Samoan teachers were clubbed to death on the beach when they landed several years ago.

“Naturally, you are wondering what it is all about. But have patience. As I have said, Captain Donovan sails on the annual trip to Karo-Karo at daylight to-morrow. Tom Butler is old, and getting quite helpless. I’ve tried to retire him to Australia, but he says he wants to remain and die on Karo-Karo, and he will in the next year or so. He’s a queer old codger. Now the time is due for me to send some white man up to take the work off his hands. I wonder how you’d like the job. You’d have to stay two years.

“Hold on! I’ve not finished. You’ve talked frequently of action this evening. There’s no action in betting away what you’ve never sweated for. The money you’ve lost to me was left you by your father or some other relative who did the sweating. But two years of work as trader on Karo-Karo would mean something. I’ll bet the ten thousand I’ve won from you against two years of your time. If you win, the money’s yours. If you lose, you take the job at Karo-Karo and sail at daylight. Now that’s what might be called real action. Will you play?”

Deacon could not speak. His throat lumped and he nodded his head as he reached for the cards.

“One thing more,” Grief said. “I can do even better. If you lose, two years of your time are mine—naturally without wages. Nevertheless, I’ll pay you wages. If your work is satisfactory, if you observe all instructions and rules, I’ll pay you five thousand pounds a year for two years. The money will be deposited with the company, to be paid to you, with interest, when the time expires. Is that all right?”

“Too much so,” Deacon stammered. “You are unfair to yourself. A trader only gets ten or fifteen pounds a month.”

“Put it down to action, then,” Grief said, with an air of dismissal. “And before we begin, I’ll jot down several of the rules. These you will repeat aloud every morning during the two years—if you lose. They are for the good of your soul. When you have repeated them aloud seven hundred and thirty Karo-Karo mornings I am confident they will be in your memory to stay. Lend me your pen, Mac. Now, let’s see—“

He wrote steadily and rapidly for some minutes, then proceeded to read the matter aloud:

“I must always remember that one man is as good as another, save and except when he thinks he is better.

“No matter how drunk I am I must not fail to be a gentleman. A gentleman is a man who is gentle. Note: It would be better not to get drunk.

“When I play a man’s game with men, I must play like a man.

“A good curse, rightly used and rarely, is an efficient thing. Too many curses spoil the cursing. Note: A curse cannot change a card sequence nor cause the wind to blow.

“There is no license for a man to be less than a man. Ten thousand pounds cannot purchase such a license.”

At the beginning of the reading Deacon’s face had gone white with anger. Then had arisen, from neck to forehead, a slow and terrible flush that deepened to the end of the reading.

“There, that will be all,” Grief said, as he folded the paper and tossed it to the centre of the table. “Are you still ready to play the game?”

“I deserve it,” Deacon muttered brokenly. “I’ve been an ass. Mr. Gee, before I know whether I win or lose, I want to apologize. Maybe it was the whiskey, I don’t know, but I’m an ass, a cad, a bounder—everything that’s rotten.”

He held out his hand, and the half-caste took it beamingly.

"I say, Grief," he blurted out, "the boy's all right. Call the whole thing off, and let's forget it in a final nightcap."

Grief showed signs of debating, but Deacon cried:

"No; I won't permit it. I'm not a quitter. If it's Karo-Karo, it's Karo-Karo. There's nothing more to it."

"Right," said Grief, as he began the shuffle. "If he's the right stuff to go to Karo-Karo, Karo-Karo won't do him any harm."

The game was close and hard. Three times they divided the deck between them and "cards" was not scored. At the beginning of the fifth and last deal, Deacon needed three points to go out, and Grief needed four. "Cards" alone would put Deacon out, and he played for "cards". He no longer muttered or cursed, and played his best game of the evening. Incidentally he gathered in the two black aces and the ace of hearts.

"I suppose you can name the four cards I hold," he challenged, as the last of the deal was exhausted and he picked up his hand.

Grief nodded.

"Then name them."

"The knave of spades, the deuce of spades, the tray of hearts, and the ace of diamonds," Grief answered.

Those behind Deacon and looking at his hand made no sign. Yet the naming had been correct.

"I fancy you play casino better than I," Deacon acknowledged. "I can name only three of yours, a knave, an ace, and big casino."

"Wrong. There aren't five aces in the deck. You've taken in three and you hold the fourth in your hand now."

"By Jove, you're right," Deacon admitted. "I did scoop in three. Anyway, I'll make 'cards' on you. That's all I need."

"I'll let you save little casino—" Grief paused to calculate. "Yes, and the ace as well, and still I'll make 'cards' and go out with big casino. Play."

"No 'cards' and I win!" Deacon exulted as the last of the hand was played. "I go out on little casino and the four aces. 'Big casino' and 'spades' only bring you to twenty."

Grief shook his head. "Some mistake, I'm afraid."

"No," Deacon declared positively. "I counted every card I took in. That's the one thing I was correct on. I've twenty-six, and you've twenty-six."

"Count again," Grief said.

Carefully and slowly, with trembling fingers, Deacon counted the cards he had taken. There were twenty-five. He reached over to the corner of the table, took up the rules Grief had written, folded them, and put them in his pocket. Then he emptied his glass, and stood up. Captain Donovan looked at his watch, yawned, and also arose.

"Going aboard, Captain?" Deacon asked.

"Yes," was the answer. "What time shall I send the whaleboat for you?"

"I'll go with you now. We'll pick up my luggage from the Billy as we go by, I was sailing on her for Babo in the morning."

Deacon shook hands all around, after receiving a final pledge of good luck on Karo-Karo.

“Does Tom Butler play cards?” he asked Grief.

“Solitaire,” was the answer.

“Then I’ll teach him double solitaire.” Deacon turned toward the door, where Captain Donovan waited, and added with a sigh, “And I fancy he’ll skin me, too, if he plays like the rest of you island men.”

The God of His Fathers

On every hand stretched the forest primeval,—the home of noisy comedy and silent tragedy. Here the struggle for survival continued to wage with all its ancient brutality. Briton and Russian were still to overlap in the Land of the Rainbow's End—and this was the very heart of it—nor had Yankee gold yet purchased its vast domain. The wolf-pack still clung to the flank of the cariboo-herd, singling out the weak and the big with calf, and pulling them down as remorselessly as were it a thousand, thousand generations into the past. The sparse aborigines still acknowledged the rule of their chiefs and medicine men, drove out bad spirits, burned their witches, fought their neighbors, and ate their enemies with a relish which spoke well of their bellies. But it was at the moment when the stone age was drawing to a close. Already, over unknown trails and chartless wildernesses, were the harbingers of the steel arriving,—fair-faced, blue-eyed, indomitable men, incarnations of the unrest of their race. By accident or design, single-handed and in twos and threes, they came from no one knew whither, and fought, or died, or passed on, no one knew whence. The priests raged against them, the chiefs called forth their fighting men, and stone clashed with steel; but to little purpose. Like water seeping from some mighty reservoir, they trickled through the dark forests and mountain passes, threading the highways in bark canoes, or with their moccasined feet breaking trail for the wolf-dogs. They came of a great breed, and their mothers were many; but the fur-clad denizens of the Northland had this yet to learn. So many an unsung wanderer fought his last and died under the cold fire of the aurora, as did his brothers in burning sands and reeking jungles, and as they shall continue to do till in the fulness of time the destiny of their race be achieved.

It was near twelve. Along the northern horizon a rosy glow, fading to the west and deepening to the east, marked the unseen dip of the midnight sun. The gloaming and the dawn were so commingled that there was no night,—simply a wedding of day with day, a scarcely perceptible blending of two circles of the sun. A kildee timidly chirped good-night; the full, rich throat of a robin proclaimed good-morrow. From an island on the breast of the Yukon a colony of wild fowl voiced its interminable wrongs, while a loon laughed mockingly back across a still stretch of river.

In the foreground, against the bank of a lazy eddy, birch-bark canoes were lined two and three deep. Ivory-bladed spears, bone-barbed arrows, buckskin-thonged bows, and simple basket-woven traps bespoke the fact that in the muddy current of the river the salmon-run was on. In the background, from the tangle of skin tents and drying frames, rose the voices of the fisher folk. Bucks skylarked with bucks or flirted with the maidens, while the older squaws, shut out from this by virtue of having fulfilled the end

of their existence in reproduction, gossiped as they braided rope from the green roots of trailing vines. At their feet their naked progeny played and squabbled, or rolled in the muck with the tawny wolf-dogs.

To one side of the encampment, and conspicuously apart from it, stood a second camp of two tents. But it was a white man's camp. If nothing else, the choice of position at least bore convincing evidence of this. In case of offence, it commanded the Indian quarters a hundred yards away; of defence, a rise to the ground and the cleared intervening space; and last, of defeat, the swift slope of a score of yards to the canoes below. From one of the tents came the petulant cry of a sick child and the crooning song of a mother. In the open, over the smouldering embers of a fire, two men held talk.

"Eh? I love the church like a good son. Bien! So great a love that my days have been spent in fleeing away from her, and my nights in dreaming dreams of reckoning. Look you!" The half-breed's voice rose to an angry snarl. "I am Red River born. My father was white—as white as you. But you are Yankee, and he was British bred, and a gentleman's son. And my mother was the daughter of a chief, and was a man. Ay, and one had to look the second time to see what manner of blood ran in my veins; for I lived with the whites, and was one of them, and my father's heart beat in me. It happened there was a maiden—white—who looked on me with kind eyes. Her father had much land and many horses; also he was a big man among his people, and his blood was the blood of the French. He said the girl knew not her own mind, and talked overmuch with her, and became wroth that such things should be.

"But she knew her mind, for we came quick before the priest. And quicker had come her father, with lying words, false promises, know not what; so that the priest stiffened his neck and would not make us that we might live one with the other. As at the beginning it was the church which would not bless my birth, so now it was the church which refused me marriage and put the blood of men upon my hands. Bien! Thus have I cause to love the church. So I struck the priest on his woman's mouth, and we took swift horses, the girl and I, to Fort Pierre, where was a minister of good heart. But hot on our trail was her father, and brothers, and other men he had gathered to him. And we fought, our horses on the run, till I emptied three saddles and the rest drew off and went on to Fort Pierre. Then we took east, the girl and I, to the hills and forests, and we lived one with the other, and we were not married,—the work of the good church which I love like a son.

"But mark you, for this is the strangeness of woman, the way of which no man may understand. One of the saddles I emptied was that of her father's, and the hoofs of those who came behind had pounded him into the earth. This we saw, the girl and I, and this I had forgot had she not remembered. And in the quiet of the evening, after the day's hunt were done, it came between us, and in the silence of the night when we lay beneath the stars and should have been one. It was there always. She never spoke, but it sat by our fire and held us ever apart. She tried to put it aside, but at such

times it would rise up till I could read it in the look of her eyes, in the very intake of her breath.

“So in the end she bore me a child, a woman-child, and died. Then I went among my mother’s people, that it might nurse at a warm breast and live. But my hands were wet with the blood of men, look you, because of the church, wet with the blood of men. And the Riders of the North came for me, but my mother’s brother, who was then chief in his own right, hid me and gave me horses and food. And we went away, my woman-child and I, even to the Hudson Bay Country, where white men were few and the questions they asked not many. And I worked for the company as a hunter, as a guide, as a driver of dogs, till my woman-child was become a woman, tall, and slender, and fair to the eye. “You know the winter, long and lonely, breeding evil thoughts and bad deeds. The Chief Factor was a hard man, and bold. And he was not such that a woman would delight in looking upon. But he cast eyes upon my woman-child who was become a woman. Mother of God! he sent me away on a long trip with the dogs, that he might—you understand, he was a hard man and without heart. She was most white, and her soul was white, and a good woman, and—well, she died.

“It was bitter cold the night of my return, and I had been away months, and the dogs were limping sore when I came to the fort. The Indians and breeds looked on me in silence, and I felt the fear of knew not what, but I said nothing till the dogs were fed and I had eaten as a man with work before him should. Then I spoke up, demanding the word, and they shrank from me, afraid of my anger and what I should do; but the story came out, the pitiful story, word for word and act for act, and they marvelled that I should be so quiet.

“When they had done I went to the Factor’s house, calmer than now in the telling of it. He had been afraid and called upon the breeds to help him; but they were not pleased with the deed, and had left him to lie on the bed he had made. So he had fled to the house of the priest. Thither I followed. But when I was come to that place, the priest stood in my way, and spoke soft words, and said a man in anger should go neither to the right nor left, but straight to God. I asked by the right of a father’s wrath that he give me past, but he said only over his body, and besought with me to pray. Look you, it was the church, always the church; for I passed over his body and sent the Factor to meet my woman-child before his god, which is a bad god, and the god of the white men.

“Then was there hue and cry, for word was sent to the station below, and I came away. Through the Land of the Great Slave, down the Valley of the Mackenzie to the never-opening ice, over the White Rockies, past the Great Curve of the Yukon, even to this place did come. And from that day to this, yours is the first face of my father’s people I have looked upon. May it be the last! These people, which are my people, are a simple folk, and I have been raised to honor among them. My word is their law, and their priests but do my bidding, else would I not suffer them. When I speak for them I speak for myself. We ask to be let alone. We do not want your kind. If we permit you to sit by our fires, after you will come your church, your priests, and your gods. And

know this, for each white man who comes to my village, him will I make deny his god. You are the first, and I give you grace. So it were well you go, and go quickly."

"I am not responsible for my brothers," the second man spoke up, filling his pipe in a meditative manner. Hay Stockard was at times as thoughtful of speech as he was wanton of action; but only at times.

"But I know your breed," responded the other. "Your brothers are many, and it is you and yours who break the trail for them to follow. In time they shall come to possess the land, but not in my time. Already, have I heard, are they on the head-reaches of the Great River, and far away below are the Russians."

Hay Stockard lifted his head with a quick start. This was startling geographical information. The Hudson Bay post at Fort Yukon had other notions concerning the course of the river, believing it to flow into the Arctic.

"Then the Yukon empties into Bering Sea?" he asked.

"I do not know, but below there are Russians, many Russians. Which is neither here nor there. You may go on and see for yourself; you may go back to your brothers; but up the Koyukuk you shall not go while the priests and fighting men do my bidding. Thus do I command, I, Baptiste the Red, whose word is law and who am head man over this people."

"And should I not go down to the Russians, or back to my brothers?"

"Then shall you go swift-footed before your god, which is a bad god, and the god of the white men."

The red sun shot up above the northern skyline, dripping and bloody. Baptiste the Red came to his feet, nodded curtly, and went back to his camp amid the crimson shadows and the singing of the robins.

Hay Stockard finished his pipe by the fire, picturing in smoke and coal the unknown upper reaches of the Koyukuk, the strange stream which ended here its arctic travels and merged its waters with the muddy Yukon flood. Somewhere up there, if the dying words of a shipwrecked sailorman who had made the fearful overland journey were to be believed, and if the vial of golden grains in his pouch attested to anything,—somewhere up there, in that home of winter, stood the Treasure House of the North. And as keeper of the gate, Baptiste the Red, English half-breed and renegade, barred the way.

"Bah!" He kicked the embers apart and rose to his full height, arms lazily outstretched, facing the flushing north with careless soul.

Hay Stockard swore, harshly, in the rugged monosyllables of his mother tongue. His wife lifted her gaze from the pots and pans, and followed his in a keen scrutiny of the river. She was a woman of the Teslin Country, wise in the ways of her husband's vernacular when it grew intensive. From the slipping of a snowshoe thong to the forefront of sudden death, she could gauge occasion by the pitch and volume of his blasphemy. So she knew the present occasion merited attention. A long canoe, with paddles flashing back the rays of the westering sun, was crossing the current from above and urging in for the eddy. Hay Stockard watched it intently. Three men rose and dipped, rose and

dipped, in rhythmical precision; but a red bandanna, wrapped about the head of one, caught and held his eye.

“Bill!” he called. “Oh, Bill!”

A shambling, loose-jointed giant rolled out of one of the tents, yawning and rubbing the sleep from his eyes. Then he sighted the strange canoe and was wide awake on the instant.

“By the jumping Methuselah! That damned sky-pilot!”

Hay Stockard nodded his head bitterly, half-reached for his rifle, then shrugged his shoulders.

“Pot-shot him,” Bill suggested, “and settle the thing out of hand. He ‘ll spoil us sure if we don’t.” But the other declined this drastic measure and turned away, at the same time bidding the woman return to her work, and calling Bill back from the bank. The two Indians in the canoe moored it on the edge of the eddy, while its white occupant, conspicuous by his gorgeous head-gear, came up the bank.

“Like Paul of Tarsus, I give you greeting. Peace be unto you and grace before the Lord.”

His advances were met sullenly, and without speech. “To you, Hay Stockard, blasphemer and Philistine, greeting. In your heart is the lust of Mammon, in your mind cunning devils, in your tent this woman whom you live with in adultery; yet of these divers sins, even here in the wilderness, I, Sturges Owen, apostle to the Lord, bid you to repent and cast from you your iniquities.”

“Save your cant! Save your cant!” Hay Stockard broke in testily. “You ‘ll need all you ‘ve got, and more, for Red Baptiste over yonder.”

He waved his hand toward the Indian camp, where the half-breed was looking steadily across, striving to make out the new-comers. Sturges Owen, disseminator of light and apostle to the Lord, stepped to the edge of the steep and commanded his men to bring up the camp outfit. Stockard followed him.

“Look here,” he demanded, plucking the missionary by the shoulder and twirling him about. “Do you value your hide?”

“My life is in the Lord’s keeping, and I do but work in His vineyard,” he replied solemnly.

“Oh, stow that! Are you looking for a job of martyrship?”

“If He so wills.”

“Well, you ‘ll find it right here, but I ‘m going to give you some advice first. Take it or leave it. If you stop here, you ‘ll be cut off in the midst of your labors. And not you alone, but your men, Bill, my wife—“

“Who is a daughter of Belial and hearkeneth not to the true Gospel.”

“And myself. Not only do you bring trouble upon yourself, but upon us. I was frozen in with you last winter, as you will well recollect, and I know you for a good man and a fool. If you think it your duty to strive with the heathen, well and good; but do exercise some wit in the way you go about it. This man, Red Baptiste, is no Indian. He comes of our common stock, is as bull-necked as I ever dared be, and as wild a

fanatic the one way as you are the other. When you two come together, hell 'll be to pay, and I don't care to be mixed up in it. Understand? So take my advice and go away. If you go down-stream, you 'll fall in with the Russians. There 's bound to be Greek priests among them, and they 'll see you safe through to Bering Sea,—that 's where the Yukon empties,—and from there it won't be hard to get back to civilization. Take my word for it and get out of here as fast as God 'll let you."

"He who carries the Lord in his heart and the Gospel in his hand hath no fear of the machinations of man or devil," the missionary answered stoutly. "I will see this man and wrestle with him. One backslider returned to the fold is a greater victory than a thousand heathen. He who is strong for evil can be as mighty for good, witness Saul when he journeyed up to Damascus to bring Christian captives to Jerusalem. And the voice of the Saviour came to him, crying, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' And therewith Paul arrayed himself on the side of the Lord, and thereafter was most mighty in the saving of souls. And even as thou, Paul of Tarsus, even so do I work in the vineyard of the Lord, bearing trials and tribulations, scoffs and sneers, stripes and punishments, for His dear sake."

"Bring up the little bag with the tea and a kettle of water," he called the next instant to his boatmen; "not forgetting the haunch of cariboo and the mixing-pan." When his men, converts by his own hand, had gained the bank, the trio fell to their knees, hands and backs burdened with camp equipage, and offered up thanks for their passage through the wilderness and their safe arrival. Hay Stockard looked upon the function with sneering disapproval, the romance and solemnity of it lost to his matter-of-fact soul. Baptiste the Red, still gazing across, recognized the familiar postures, and remembered the girl who had shared his star-roofed couch in the hills and forests, and the woman-child who lay somewhere by bleak Hudson's Bay.

"Confound it, Baptiste, couldn't think of it. Not for a moment. Grant that this man is a fool and of small use in the nature of things, but still, you know, I can't give him up."

Hay Stockard paused, striving to put into speech the rude ethics of his heart.

"He 's worried me, Baptiste, in the past and now, and caused me all manner of troubles; but can't you see, he 's my own breed—white—and—and—why, I couldn't buy my life with his, not if he was a nigger."

"So be it," Baptiste the Red made answer. "I have given you grace and choice. I shall come presently, with my priests and fighting men, and either shall I kill you, or you deny your god. Give up the priest to my pleasure, and you shall depart in peace. Otherwise your trail ends here. My people are against you to the babies. Even now have the children stolen away your canoes." He pointed down to the river. Naked boys had slipped down the water from the point above, cast loose the canoes, and by then had worked them into the current. When they had drifted out of rifle-shot they clambered over the sides and paddled ashore.

"Give me the priest, and you may have them back again. Come! Speak your mind, but without haste."

Stockard shook his head. His glance dropped to the woman of the Teslin Country with his boy at her breast, and he would have wavered had he not lifted his eyes to the men before him.

"I am not afraid," Sturges Owen spoke up. "The Lord bears me in his right hand, and alone am I ready to go into the camp of the unbeliever. It is not too late. Faith may move mountains. Even in the eleventh hour may I win his soul to the true righteousness."

"Trip the beggar up and make him fast," Bill whispered hoarsely in the ear of his leader, while the missionary kept the floor and wrestled with the heathen. "Make him hostage, and bore him if they get ugly."

"No," Stockard answered. "I gave him my word that he could speak with us unmolested. Rules of warfare, Bill; rules of warfare. He's been on the square, given us warning, and all that, and—why, damn it, man, I can't break my word!"

"He 'll keep his, never fear."

"Don't doubt it, but I won't let a half-breed outdo me in fair dealing. Why not do what he wants,—give him the missionary and be done with it?"

"N-no," Bill hesitated doubtfully.

"Shoe pinches, eh?"

Bill flushed a little and dropped the discussion. Baptiste the Red was still waiting the final decision. Stockard went up to him.

"It 's this way, Baptiste. I came to your village minded to go up the Koyukuk. I intended no wrong. My heart was clean of evil. It is still clean. Along comes this priest, as you call him. I didn't bring him here. He 'd have come whether I was here or not. But now that he is here, being of my people, I 've got to stand by him. And 'm going to. Further, it will be no child's play. When you have done, your village will be silent and empty, your people wasted as after a famine. True, we will be gone; likewise the pick of your fighting men—"

"But those who remain shall be in peace, nor shall the word of strange gods and the tongues of strange priests be buzzing in their ears."

Both men shrugged their shoulders and turned away, the half-breed going back to his own camp. The missionary called his two men to him, and they fell into prayer. Stockard and Bill attacked the few standing pines with their axes, felling them into convenient breastworks. The child had fallen asleep, so the woman placed it on a heap of furs and lent a hand in fortifying the camp. Three sides were thus defended, the steep declivity at the rear precluding attack from that direction. When these arrangements had been completed, the two men stalked into the open, clearing away, here and there, the scattered underbrush. From the opposing camp came the booming of war-drums and the voices of the priests stirring the people to anger.

"Worst of it is they 'll come in rushes," Bill complained as they walked back with shouldered axes.

"And wait till midnight, when the light gets dim for shooting."

“Can’t start the ball a-rolling too early, then.” Bill exchanged the axe for a rifle, and took a careful rest. One of the medicine-men, towering above his tribesmen, stood out distinctly. Bill drew a bead on him.

“All ready?” he asked.

Stockard opened the ammunition box, placed the woman where she could reload in safety, and gave the word. The medicine-man dropped. For a moment there was silence, then a wild howl went up and a flight of bone arrows fell short.

“I ‘d like to take a look at the beggar,” Bill remarked, throwing a fresh shell into place. “I ‘ll swear I drilled him clean between the eyes.”

“Didn’t work.” Stockard shook his head gloomily. Baptiste had evidently quelled the more warlike of his followers, and instead of precipitating an attack in the bright light of day, the shot had caused a hasty exodus, the Indians drawing out of the village beyond the zone of fire.

In the full tide of his proselyting fervor, borne along by the hand of God, Sturges Owen would have ventured alone into the camp of the unbeliever, equally prepared for miracle or martyrdom; but in the waiting which ensued, the fever of conviction died away gradually, as the natural man asserted itself. Physical fear replaced spiritual hope; the love of life, the love of God. It was no new experience. He could feel his weakness coming on, and knew it of old time. He had struggled against it and been overcome by it before. He remembered when the other men had driven their paddles like mad in the van of a roaring ice-flood, how, at the critical moment, in a panic of worldly terror, he had dropped his paddle and besought wildly with his God for pity. And there were other times. The recollection was not pleasant. It brought shame to him that his spirit should be so weak and his flesh so strong. But the love of life! the love of life! He could not strip it from him. Because of it had his dim ancestors perpetuated their line; because of it was he destined to perpetuate his. His courage, if courage it might be called, was bred of fanaticism. The courage of Stockard and Bill was the adherence to deep-rooted ideals. Not that the love of life was less, but the love of race tradition more; not that they were unafraid to die, but that they were brave enough not to live at the price of shame.

The missionary rose, for the moment swayed by the mood of sacrifice. He half crawled over the barricade to proceed to the other camp, but sank back, a trembling mass, wailing: “As the spirit moves! As the spirit moves! Who am I that I should set aside the judgments of God? Before the foundations of the world were all things written in the book of life. Worm that I am, shall I erase the page or any portion thereof? As God wills, so shall the spirit move!”

Bill reached over, plucked him to his feet, and shook him, fiercely, silently. Then he dropped the bundle of quivering nerves and turned his attention to the two converts. But they showed little fright and a cheerful alacrity in preparing for the coming passage at arms.

Stockard, who had been talking in undertones with the Teslin woman, now turned to the missionary.

“Fetch him over here,” he commanded of Bill.

“Now,” he ordered, when Sturges Owen had been duly deposited before him, “make us man and wife, and be lively about it.” Then he added apologetically to Bill: “No telling how it ‘s to end, so I just thought I ‘d get my affairs straightened up.”

The woman obeyed the behest of her white lord. To her the ceremony was meaningless. By her lights she was his wife, and had been from the day they first foregathered. The converts served as witnesses. Bill stood over the missionary, prompting him when he stumbled. Stockard put the responses in the woman’s mouth, and when the time came, for want of better, ringed her finger with thumb and forefinger of his own.

“Kiss the bride!” Bill thundered, and Sturges Owen was too weak to disobey.

“Now baptize the child!”

“Neat and tidy,” Bill commented.

“Gathering the proper outfit for a new trail,” the father explained, taking the boy from the mother’s arms. “I was grub-staked, once, into the Cascades, and had everything in the kit except salt. Never shall forget it. And if the woman and the kid cross the divide to-night they might as well be prepared for pot-luck. A long shot, Bill, between ourselves, but nothing lost if it misses.”

A cup of water served the purpose, and the child was laid away in a secure corner of the barricade. The men built the fire, and the evening meal was cooked.

The sun hurried round to the north, sinking closer to the horizon. The heavens in that quarter grew red and bloody. The shadows lengthened, the light dimmed, and in the sombre recesses of the forest life slowly died away. Even the wild fowl in the river softened their raucous chatter and feigned the nightly farce of going to bed. Only the tribesmen increased their clamor, war-drums booming and voices raised in savage folk songs. But as the sun dipped they ceased their tumult. The rounded hush of midnight was complete. Stockard rose to his knees and peered over the logs. Once the child wailed in pain and disconcerted him. The mother bent over it, but it slept again. The silence was interminable, profound. Then, of a sudden, the robins burst into full-throated song. The night had passed.

A flood of dark figures boiled across the open. Arrows whistled and bow-thongs sang. The shrill-tongued rifles answered back. A spear, and a mighty cast, transfixed the Teslin woman as she hovered above the child. A spent arrow, diving between the logs, lodged in the missionary’s arm.

There was no stopping the rush. The middle distance was cumbered with bodies, but the rest surged on, breaking against and over the barricade like an ocean wave. Sturges Owen fled to the tent, while the men were swept from their feet, buried beneath the human tide. Hay Stockard alone regained the surface, flinging the tribesmen aside like yelping curs. He had managed to seize an axe. A dark hand grasped the child by a naked foot, and drew it from beneath its mother. At arm’s length its puny body circled through the air, dashing to death against the logs. Stockard clove the man to the chin and fell to clearing space. The ring of savage faces closed in, raining upon him spear-thrusts and bone-barbed arrows. The sun shot up, and they swayed back and

forth in the crimson shadows. Twice, with his axe blocked by too deep a blow, they rushed him; but each time he flung them clear. They fell underfoot and he trampled dead and dying, the way slippery with blood. And still the day brightened and the robins sang. Then they drew back from him in awe, and he leaned breathless upon his axe.

“Blood of my soul!” cried Baptiste the Red. “But thou art a man. Deny thy god, and thou shalt yet live.”

Stockard swore his refusal, feebly but with grace.

“Behold! A woman!” Sturges Owen had been brought before the half-breed.

Beyond a scratch on the arm, he was uninjured, but his eyes roved about him in an ecstasy of fear. The heroic figure of the blasphemer, bristling with wounds and arrows, leaning defiantly upon his axe, indifferent, indomitable, superb, caught his wavering vision. And he felt a great envy of the man who could go down serenely to the dark gates of death. Surely Christ, and not he, Sturges Owen, had been moulded in such manner. And why not he? He felt dimly the curse of ancestry, the feebleness of spirit which had come down to him out of the past, and he felt an anger at the creative force, symbolize it as he would, which had formed him, its servant, so weakly. For even a stronger man, this anger and the stress of circumstance were sufficient to breed apostasy, and for Sturges Owen it was inevitable. In the fear of man’s anger he would dare the wrath of God. He had been raised up to serve the Lord only that he might be cast down. He had been given faith without the strength of faith; he had been given spirit without the power of spirit. It was unjust.

“Where now is thy god?” the half-breed demanded.

“I do not know.” He stood straight and rigid, like a child repeating a catechism.

“Hast thou then a god at all?” “I had.”

“And now?”

“No.”

Hay Stockard swept the blood from his eyes and laughed. The missionary looked at him curiously, as in a dream. A feeling of infinite distance came over him, as though of a great remove. In that which had transpired, and which was to transpire, he had no part. He was a spectator—at a distance, yes, at a distance. The words of Baptiste came to him faintly:—

“Very good. See that this man go free, and that no harm befall him. Let him depart in peace. Give him a canoe and food. Set his face toward the Russians, that he may tell their priests of Baptiste the Red, in whose country there is no god.”

They led him to the edge of the steep, where they paused to witness the final tragedy. The half-breed turned to Hay Stockard.

“There is no god,” he prompted.

The man laughed in reply. One of the young men poised a war-spear for the cast.

“Hast thou a god?”

“Ay, the God of my fathers.”

He shifted the axe for a better grip. Baptiste the Red gave the sign, and the spear hurtled full against his breast. Sturges Owen saw the ivory head stand out beyond his back, saw the man sway, laughing, and snap the shaft short as he fell upon it. Then he went down to the river, that he might carry to the Russians the message of Baptiste the Red, in whose country there was no god.

Goliah

In 1924 — to be precise, on the morning of January 3 — the city of San Francisco awoke to read in one of its daily papers a curious letter, which had been received by Walter Bassett and which had evidently been written by some crank. Walter Bassett was the greatest captain of industry west of the Rockies, and was one of the small group that controlled the nation in everything but name. As such, he was the recipient of lucubrations from countless cranks; but this particular lucubration was so different from the average ruck of similar letters that, instead of putting it into the waste-basket, he had turned it over to a reporter. It was signed “Goliah,” and the superscription gave his address as “Palgrave Island.” The letter was as follows:?

“Mr. Walter Bassett,

DEAR SIR:

“I am inviting you, with nine of your fellow-captains of industry, to visit me here on my island for the purpose of considering plans for the reconstruction of society upon a more rational basis. Up to the present, social evolution has been a blind and aimless, blundering thing. The time has come for a change. Man has risen from the vitalized slime of the primeval sea to the mastery of matter; but he has not yet mastered society. Man is to-day as much the slave to his collective stupidity, as a hundred thousand generations ago he was a slave to matter.

“There are two theoretical methods whereby man may become the master of society, and make of society an intelligent and efficacious device for the pursuit and capture of happiness and laughter. The first theory advances the proposition that no government can be wiser or better than the people that compose that government; that reform and development must spring from the individual; that in so far as the individuals become wiser and better, by that much will their government become wiser and better; in short, that the majority of individuals must become wiser and better, before their government becomes wiser and better. The mob, the political convention, the abysmal brutality and stupid ignorance of all concourses of people, give the lie to this theory. In a mob the collective intelligence and mercy is that of the least intelligent and most brutal members that compose the mob. On the other hand, a thousand passengers will surrender themselves to the wisdom and discretion of the captain, when their ship is in a storm on the sea. In such matter, he is the wisest and most experienced among them.

“The second theory advances the proposition that the majority of the people are not pioneers, that they are weighted down by the inertia of the established; that the government that is representative of them represents only their feebleness, and futility,

and brutishness; that this blind thing called government is not the serf of their wills, but that they are the serfs of it; in short, speaking always of the great mass, that they do not make government, but that government makes them, and that government is and has been a stupid and awful monster, misbegotten of the glimmerings of intelligence that come from the inertia-crushed mass.

“Personally, I incline to the second theory. Also, I am impatient., For a hundred thousand generations, from the first social groups of our savage forebears, government has remained a monster. To-day, the inertia-crushed mass has less laughter in it than ever before. In spite of man’s mastery of matter, human suffering and misery and degradation mar the fair world.

“Wherefore I have decided to step in and become captain of this world-ship for a while. I have the intelligence and the wide vision of the skilled expert. Also, I have the power. I shall be obeyed. The men of all the world shall perform my bidding and make governments so that they shall become laughter-producers. These modelled governments I have in mind shall not make the people happy, wise, and noble by decree; but they shall give opportunity for the people to become happy, wise, and noble.

“I have spoken. I have invited you, and nine of your fellow captains, to confer with me. On March third the yacht Energon will sail from San Francisco. You are requested to be on board the night before. This is serious. The affairs of the world must be handled for a time by a strong hand. Mine is that strong hand. If you fail to obey my summons, you will die. Candidly, I do not expect that you will obey. But your death for failure to obey will cause obedience on the part of those I subsequently summon. You will have served a purpose. And please remember that I have no unscientific sentimentality about the value of human life. I carry always in the background of my consciousness the innumerable billions of lives that are to laugh and be happy in future aeons on the earth.

“Yours for the reconstruction of society, Goliah.”

The publication of this letter did not cause even local amusement. Men might have smiled to themselves as they read it, but it was so palpably the handiwork of a crank that it did not merit discussion. Interest did not arouse till next morning. An Associated Press despatch to the Eastern states, followed by interviews by eager-nosed reporters, had brought out the names of the other nine captains of industry who had received similar letters but who had not thought the matter of sufficient importance to be made public. But the interest aroused was mild, and it would have died out quickly had not Gabberton cartooned a chronic presidential aspirant as ” Goliah.” Then came the song that was sung hilariously from sea to sea, with the refrain, “Goliah will catch you if you don’t watch out.”

The weeks passed and the incident was forgotten. Walter Bassett had forgotten it likewise; but on the evening of February 22, he was called to the telephone by the Collector of the Port. “I just wanted to tell you,” said the latter, “that the yacht Energon has arrived and gone to anchor in the stream off Pier Seven.”

What happened that night Walter Bassett has never divulged. But it is known that he rode down in his auto to the water front, chartered one of Crowley's launches, and was put aboard the strange yacht. It is further known that when he, returned to the shore, three hours later, he immediately despatched a sheaf of telegrams to his nine fellow captains of industry who had received letters from Goliah. These telegrams were similarly worded, and read: "The yacht Energon has arrived. There is something in this. I advise you to come."

Bassett was laughed at for his pains. It was a huge laugh that went up (for his telegrams had been made public), and the popular song on Goliah revived and became more popular than ever. Goliah and Bassett were cartooned and lampooned unmercifully, the former, as the Old Man of the Sea, riding on the latter's neck. The laugh tittered and rippled through clubs and social circles, was restrainedly merry in the editorial columns, and broke out in loud guffaws in the comic weeklies. There was a serious side as well, and Bassett's sanity was gravely questioned by many, and especially by his business associates.

Bassett had ever been a short-tempered man, and after he sent the second sheaf of telegrams to his brother captains, and had been laughed at again, he remained silent. In this second sheaf, he had said: "Come, I implore you. As you value your life, come." He arranged all his business affairs for an absence, and on the night of March 2 went on board the Energon. The latter, properly cleared, sailed next morning. And next morning the newsboys in every city and town were crying "Extra."

In the slang of the day, Goliah had delivered the goods. The nine captains of industry who had failed to accept his invitation were dead. A sort of violent disintegration of the tissues was the report of the various autopsies held on the bodies of the slain millionaires; yet the surgeons and physicians (the most highly skilled in the land had participated) would not venture the opinion that the men had been slain. Much less would they venture the conclusion, "at the hands of parties unknown." It was all too mysterious. They were stunned. Their scientific credulity broke down. They had no warrant in the whole domain of science for believing that an anonymous person on Palgrave Island had murdered the poor gentlemen.

One thing was quickly learned, however; namely, that Palgrave Island was no myth. It was charted and well known to all navigators, lying on the line of 160 west longitude, right at its intersection by the tenth parallel north latitude, and only a few miles away from Diana Shoal. Like Midway and Fanning, Palgrave Island was isolated, volcanic and coral in formation. Furthermore, it was uninhabited. A survey ship, in 1887, had visited the place and reported the existence of several springs and of a good harbor that was very dangerous of approach. And, that was all that was known of the tiny speck of land that was soon to have focussed on it the awed attention of the world.

Goliah remained silent till March 24, On the morning of that day, the newspapers published his second letter, copies of which had been received by the ten chief politicians of the United States — ten leading men in the political world who were con-

ventionally known as “statesmen.” The letter, with the same superscription as before, was as follows: ?

“DEAR SIR:

“I have spoken in no uncertain tone. I must be obeyed. You may consider this an invitation or a summons; but if you still wish to tread this earth and laugh, you will be aboard the yacht *Energon*, in San Francisco harbor, not later than the evening of April 5. It is my wish and my will that you confer with me here on Palgrave Island in the matter of reconstructing society upon some rational basis.

“Do not misunderstand me, when I tell you that I am one with a theory. I want to see that theory work, and therefore I call upon your cooperation. In this theory of mine, lives are but pawns; I deal with quantities of lives. I am after laughter, and those that stand in the way of laughter must perish. The game is big. There are fifteen hundred million human lives to-day on the planet. What is your single life against them — It is as naught, in my theory. And remember that mine is the power. Remember that I am a scientist, and that one life, or one million of lives, mean nothing to me as arrayed against the countless billions of billions of the lives of the generations to come. It is for their laughter that I seek to reconstruct society now; and against them your own meagre little life is a paltry thing indeed.

“Whoso has power can command his fellows. By virtue of that military device known as the phalanx, Alexander conquered his bit of the world. By virtue of that chemical device, gunpowder, Cortes with his several hundred cutthroats conquered the empire of the Montezumas. Now I am in possession of a device that is all my own. In the course of a century not more than half a dozen fundamental discoveries or inventions are made. I have made such an invention. The possession of it gives me the mastery of the world. I shall use this invention, not for commercial exploitation, but for the good of humanity. For that purpose I want help — willing agents, obedient hands; and I am strong enough to compel the service. I am taking the shortest way, though I am in no hurry. I shall not clutter my speed with haste.

“The incentive of material gain developed man from the savage to the semi-barbarian he is to-day. This incentive has been a useful device for the development of the human; but it has now fulfilled its function and is ready to be cast aside into the scrap-heap of rudimentary vestiges such as gills in the throat and belief in the divine right of kings. Of course you do not think so; but I do not see that that will prevent you from aiding me to fling the anachronism into the scrap-heap. For I tell you now that the time has come when mere food and shelter and similar sordid things shall be automatic, as free and easy and involuntary of access as the air. I shall make them automatic, what of my discovery and the power that discovery gives me. And with food and shelter automatic, the incentive of material gain passes away from the world forever. With food and shelter automatic, the higher incentives will universally obtain — the spiritual, aesthetic, and intellectual incentives that will tend to develop and make beautiful and noble body, mind, and spirit. Then all the world will be dominated by happiness and laughter. It will be the reign of universal laughter.

“Yours for that day, “GOLIAH.?”

Still the world would not believe. The ten politicians were at Washington, so that they did not have the opportunity of being convinced that Bassett had had, and not one of them took the trouble to journey out to San Francisco to make the opportunity. As for Goliah, he was hailed by the newspapers as another Tom Lawson with a panacea; and there were specialists in mental disease who, by analysis of Goliah’s letters, proved conclusively that he was a lunatic.

The yacht *Energion* arrived in the harbor of San Francisco on the afternoon of April 5, and Bassett came ashore. But the *Energion* did not sail next day, for not one of the ten summoned politicians had elected to make the journey to Palgrave Island. The newsboys, however, called “Extra” that day in all the cities. The ten politicians were dead. The yacht, lying peacefully at anchor in the harbor, became the centre of excited interest. She was surrounded by a flotilla of launches and rowboats, and many tugs and steamboats ran excursions to her. While the rabble was firmly kept off, the proper authorities and even reporters were permitted to board her. The mayor of San Francisco and the chief of police reported that nothing suspicious was to be seen upon her, and the port authorities announced that her papers were correct and in order in every detail. Many photographs and columns of descriptive matter were run in the newspapers.

The crew was reported to be composed principally of Scandinavians, — fair-haired, blue-eyed Swedes, Norwegians afflicted with the temperamental melancholy of their race, stolid Russian Finns, and a slight sprinkling of Americans and English. It was noted that there was nothing mercurial and flyaway about them. They seemed weighty men, oppressed by a sad and stolid bovine-sort of integrity. A sober seriousness and enormous certitude characterized all of them. They appeared men without nerves and without fear, as though upheld by some overwhelming power or carried in the hollow of some superhuman hand. The captain, a sad-eyed, strong-featured American, was cartooned in the papers as “Gloomy Gus” (the pessimistic hero, of the comic supplement).

Some sea-captain recognized the *Energion* as the yacht *Scud*, once owned by Merivale of the New York Yacht Club. With this clew it was soon ascertained that the *Scud* had disappeared several years before. The agent who sold her reported the purchaser to be merely another agent, a man he had seen neither before nor since. The yacht had been reconstructed at Duffey’s Shipyard in New Jersey. The change in her name and registry occurred at that time and had been legally executed. Then the *Energion* had disappeared in the shroud of mystery.

In the meantime, Bassett was going crazy—at least his friends and business associates said so. He kept away from, his vast business enterprises and said that he must hold his hands until the other masters of the world could join with him in the reconstruction of society — proof indubitable that Goliah’s bee had entered his bonnet. To reporters he had little to say. He was not at liberty, he said, to relate what he had seen on Palgrave Island; but he could assure them that the matter was serious, the most serious thing

that had ever happened. His final word was that the world was on the verge of a turnover, for good or ill he did not know, but, one way or the other, he was absolutely convinced that the turnover was coming. As for business, business could go hang. He had seen things, he had, and that was all there was to it.

There was a great telegraphing, during this period, between the local Federal officials and the state and war departments at Washington. A secret attempt was made late one afternoon to board the Energon and place the captain under arrest — the Attorney General having given the opinion that the captain could be held for the murder of the ten “statesmen.” The government launch was seen to leave Meigg’s Wharf and steer for the Energon, and that was the last ever seen of the launch and the men on board of it. The government tried to keep the affair hushed up, but the cat was slipped out of the bag by the families of the missing men and the papers were filled with monstrous versions of the affair.

The government now proceeded to extreme measures. The battleship Alaska was ordered to capture the strange yacht, or, failing that, to sink her. These were secret instructions; but thousands of eyes, from the water front and from the shipping in the harbor, witnessed what happened that afternoon. The battleship got under way and steamed slowly toward the Energon. At half a mile distant the battleship blew up — simply blew up, that was all, her shattered frame sinking to the bottom of the bay, a riff-raff of wreckage and a few survivors strewn the surface. Among the survivors was a young lieutenant who had had charge of the wireless on board the Alaska. The reporters got hold of him first, and he talked. No sooner had the Alaska got under way, he said, than a I message was received from the Energon. It was in the international code, and it was a warning to the Alaska to come no nearer than half a mile. He had sent the message, through the speaking tube, immediately to the captain. He did not know anything more, except that the Energon twice repeated the message and that five minutes afterward the explosion occurred. The captain of the Alaska had perished with his ship, and nothing more was to be learned.

The Energon, however, promptly hoisted anchor and cleared out to sea. A great clamor was raised by the papers; the government was charged with cowardice and vacillation in its dealings with a mere pleasure yacht and a lunatic who called himself “Goliah,” and immediate and decisive action was demanded. Also, a great cry went up about the loss of life, especially the wanton killing of the ten “statesmen.” Goliah promptly replied. In fact, so prompt was his reply that the experts in wireless telegraphy announced that, since it was impossible to send wireless messages so great a distance, Goliah was in their very midst and not on Palgrave Island. Goliah’s letter was delivered to the Associated Press by a messenger boy who had been engaged on the street. The letter was as follows: ?

“What are a few paltry lives — In your insane wars you destroy millions of lives and think nothing of it. In your fratricidal commercial struggle you kill countless babes, women, and men, and you triumphantly call the shambles ‘individualism.’ I call it anarchy. I am going to put a stop to your wholesale destruction of human beings. I

want laughter, not slaughter. Those of you who stand in the way of laughter will get slaughter.

“Your government is trying to delude you into believing that the destruction of the Alaska was an accident. Know here and now that it was by my orders that the Alaska was destroyed. In a few short months, all battleships on all seas will be destroyed or flung to the scrap-heap, and all nations shall disarm; fortresses shall be dismantled, armies disbanded, and warfare shall cease from the earth. Mine is the power. I am the will of God. The whole world shall be in vassalage to me, but it shall be a vassalage of peace.

“I am “GOLIAH.”

“Blow Palgrave Island out of the water!” was the head-line retort of the newspapers. The government was of the same frame of mind, and the assembling of the fleets began. Walter Bassett broke out in ineffectual protest, but was swiftly silenced by the threat of a lunacy commission. Goliah remained silent. Against Palgrave Island five great fleets were hurled — the Asiatic Squadron, the South Pacific Squadron, the North Pacific Squadron, the Caribbean Squadron, and half of the North Atlantic Squadron, the two latter coming through the Panama Canal.

“I have the honor to report that we sighted Palgrave Island on the evening of April 29,” ran the report of Captain Johnson, of the battleship North Dakota to the Secretary of the Navy. “The Asiatic Squadron was delayed and did not arrive until the morning of April 30. A council of the admirals was held, and it was decided to attack early, next morning. The destroyer, Swift VII, crept in, unmolested, and reported no warlike preparations on the island. It noted several small merchant steamers in the harbor, and the existence of a small village in a hopelessly exposed position that could be swept by our fire.

“It had been decided that all the vessels should rush in, scattered, upon the island, opening fire at three miles, and continuing to the edge of the reef, there to retain loose formation and engage. Palgrave Island repeatedly warned us, by wireless, in the international code, to keep outside the ten-mile limit; but no heed was paid to the warnings.

“The North Dakota did not take part in the movement of the morning of May 1. This was due to a slight accident of the preceding night that temporarily disabled our steering-gear. The morning of May 1 broke clear and calm. There was a slight breeze from the southwest that quickly died away. The North Dakota lay twelve miles off the island. At the signal the squadrons charged in upon the island, from all sides, at full speed. Our wireless receiver continued to tick off warnings from the island. The ten-mile limit was passed, and nothing happened. I watched through my glasses. At five miles nothing happened; at four miles nothing happened; at three miles, the New York, in the lead on our side of the island, opened fire. She fired only one shot. Then she blew up. The rest of the vessels never fired a shot. They began to blow up, everywhere, before our eyes. Several swerved about and started back, but they failed to escape. The destroyer, Dart XXX, nearly made the ten-mile limit when she blew up. She was the

last survivor. No harm came to the North Dakota, and that night, the steering-gear being repaired, I gave orders to sail for San Francisco.”

To say that the United States was stunned is but to expose the inadequacy of language. The whole world was stunned. It confronted that blight of the human brain, the unprecedented. Human endeavor was a jest, a monstrous futility, when a lunatic on a lonely island, who owned a yacht and an exposed village, could destroy five of the proudest fleets of Christendom. And how had he done it? Nobody knew. The scientists lay down in the dust of the common road and wailed and gibbered. They did not know. Military experts committed suicide by scores. The mighty fabric of warfare they had fashioned was a gossamer veil rent asunder by a miserable lunatic. It was, too much for their sanity. Mere human reason could not withstand the shock. As the savage is crushed by the sleight-of-hand of the witch-doctor, so was the world crushed by the magic of Goliah. How did he do it — It was the awful face of the Unknown upon which the world gazed and by which it was frightened out of the memory of its proudest achievements.

But all the world was not stunned. There was the invariable exception — the Island Empire of Japan. Drunken with the wine of success deep-quauffed, without superstition and without faith in aught but its own ascendant star, laughing at the wreckage of science and mad with pride of race, it went forth upon the way of war. America’s fleets had been destroyed. From the battlements of heaven the multitudinous ancestral shades of Japan leaned down. The opportunity, God-given, had come. The Mikado was in truth a brother to the gods.

The war-monsters of Japan were loosed in mighty fleets. The Philippines were gathered in as a child gathers a nosegay. It took longer for the battleships to travel to Hawaii, to Panama, and to the Pacific Coast. The United States was panic-stricken, and there arose the powerful party of dishonorable peace. In the midst of the clamor the Energon arrived in San Francisco Bay and Goliah spoke once more. There was a little brush as the Energon came in, and a few explosions of magazines occurred along the war-tunnelled hills as the coast defences went to smash. Also, the blowing up of the submarine mines in the Golden Gate made a remarkably fine display. Goliah’s message to the people of San Francisco, dated as usual from Palgrave Island, was published in the papers. It ran: ?

“Peace? Peace be with you. You shall have peace. I have spoken to this purpose before. And give you me peace. Leave my yacht Energon alone. Commit one overt act against her and not one stone in San Francisco shall stand upon another.

“To-morrow let all good citizens go I o out upon the hills that slope down to the sea. Go with music and laughter and garlands. Make festival for the new age that is dawning. Be like children upon your hills, and witness the passing of war. Do not miss the opportunity. It is your last chance to behold what henceforth you will be compelled to seek in museums of antiquities.

“I promise you a merry day,
” GOLIAH.”

The madness of magic was in the air. With the people it was as if all their gods had crashed and the heavens still stood. Order and law had passed away from the universe; but the sun still shone, the wind still blew, the flowers still bloomed — that was the amazing thing about it. That water should continue to run downhill was a miracle. All the stabilities of the human mind and human achievement were crumbling. The one stable thing that remained was, Goliah, a madman on an island. And so it was that the whole population of San Francisco went forth next day in colossal frolic upon the hills that overlooked the sea. Brass bands and banners went forth, brewery wagons and Sunday-school picnics — all the strange heterogeneous groupings of swarming metropolitan life.

On the sea-rim rose the smoke from the funnels of a hundred hostile vessels of war, all converging upon the helpless, undefended, Golden Gate. And not all undefended, for out through the Golden Gate moved the Energon, a tiny toy of white, rolling like a straw in the stiff sea on the bar where a strong ebb-tide ran in the teeth of the summer sea-breeze. But the Japanese were cautious. Their thirty and forty-thousand-ton battleships slowed down half a dozen miles offshore and maneuvered in ponderous evolutions, while tiny scout-boats (lean, six-funneled destroyers) ran in, cutting blackly the flashing sea like so many sharks. But, compared with the Energon, they were leviathans. Compared with them, the Energon was as the sword of the archangel Michael, and they the forerunners of the hosts of hell.

But the flashing of the sword, the good people of San Francisco, gathered on her hills, never saw. Mysterious, invisible, it cleaved the air and smote the mightiest blows of combat the world had ever witnessed. The good people of San Francisco saw little and understood less. They saw only a million and a half of tons of brine-cleaving, thunder-flinging fabrics hurled skyward and smashed back in ruin to sink into the sea. It was all over in five minutes. Remained upon the wide expanse of sea only the Energon, rolling white and toy-like on the bar.

Goliah spoke to the Mikado and the Elder Statesmen. It was only an ordinary cable message, despatched from San Francisco by the captain of the Energon, but it was of sufficient moment to cause the immediate withdrawal of Japan from the Philippines and of her surviving fleets from the sea. Japan the sceptical was converted. She had felt the weight of Goliah's arm. And meekly she obeyed when Goliah commanded her to dismantle her war vessels, and to turn the metal into useful appliances for the arts of peace. In all the ports, navy-yards, machine-shops, and foundries of Japan tens of thousands of brown-skinned artisans converted the war-monsters into myriads of useful things, such as ploughshares (Goliah insisted on ploughshares), gasolene engines, bridge-trusses, telephone and telegraph wires, steel rails, locomotives, and rolling stock for railways. It was a world-penance for a world to see, and paltry indeed it made appear that earlier penance, barefooted in the snow, of an emperor to a pope for daring to squabble over temporal power.

Goliah's next summons was to the ten leading scientists of the United States. This time there was no hesitancy in obeying. The savants were ludicrously prompt, some

of them waiting in San Francisco for weeks so as not to miss the scheduled sailing-date. They departed on the Energon on June 15; and while they were on the sea, on the way to Palgrave Island, Goliah performed another spectacular feat. Germany and France were preparing to fly at each other's throats. Goliah commanded peace. They ignored the command, tacitly agreeing to fight it out on land where it seemed safer for the belligerently inclined. Goliah set the date of June 19 for the cessation of hostile preparations. Both countries mobilized their armies on June 18, and hurled them at the common frontier. And on June 19, Goliah struck. All generals, war-secretaries, and jingo-leaders in the two countries died on that day; and that day two vast armies, undirected, like strayed sheep, walked over each other's frontiers and fraternized. But the great German war lord had escaped — it was learned, afterward, by hiding in the huge safe where were stored the secret archives of his empire. And when he emerged he was a very penitent war lord, and like the Mikado of Japan he was set to work beating his sword-blades into ploughshares and pruning-hooks.

But in the escape of the German Emperor was discovered a great significance. The scientists of the world plucked up courage, got back their nerve. One thing was conclusively evident — Goliah's power was not magic. Law still reigned in the universe. Goliah's power had limitations, else had the German Emperor not escaped by secretly hiding in a steel safe. Many learned articles on the subject appeared in the magazines.

The ten scientists arrived back from Palgrave Island on July 6. Heavy platoons of police protected them from the reporters. No, they had not seen Goliah, they said in the one official interview that was vouchsafed; but they had talked with him, and they had seen things. They were not permitted to state definitely all that they had seen and heard, but they could say that the world was about to be revolutionized. Goliah was in the possession of a tremendous discovery that placed all the world at his mercy, and it was a good thing for the world that Goliah, was merciful. The ten scientists proceeded directly to Washington on a special train, where, for days, they were closeted with the heads of government, while the nation hung breathless on the outcome.

But the outcome was a long time in arriving. From Washington the President issued commands to the masters and leading figures of the nation. Everything was secret. Day by day deputations of bankers, railway lords, captains of industry, and Supreme Court justices arrived; and when they arrived they remained. The weeks dragged on, and then, on August 25, began the famous issuance of proclamations. Congress and the Senate cooperated with the President in this, while the Supreme Court justices gave their sanction and the money lords and the captains of industry agreed. War was declared upon the capitalist masters of the nation. Martial law was declared over, the whole United States. The supreme power was vested in the President.

In one day, child-labor in the whole country was abolished. It was done by decree, and the United States was prepared with its army to enforce its decrees. In the same day all women factory workers were dismissed to their homes, and all the sweatshops were closed. "But we cannot make profits!" wailed the petty capitalists. "Fools!" was the retort of Goliah. "As if the meaning of life were profits! Give up your businesses and

your profit-mongering.”” But there is nobody to buy our ,business!” they wailed. “Buy and sell-is that all. the meaning life has for you?” replied Goliah., “You have nothing to sell. Turn over your little cut-throating, anarchistic businesses to the government so that they may be rationally organized and operated.” And the next day, by decree, the government began taking possession of all factories, shops, mines, ships, railroads, and producing lands.

The nationalization of the means of production and distribution went on apace. Here and there’ were sceptical capitalists of moment. They were made prisoners and haled to Palgrave Island, and when they returned they always acquiesced in what the government was doing. A little later the journey to Palgrave Island became unnecessary. When objection was made, the reply of the officials was: — ” Goliah has spoken” — which was another way of saying, “He must be obeyed.”

The captains of industry became heads of departments. It was found that civil engineers, for instance, worked just as well in government employ as, before, they had worked in private employ. It was found that men of high executive ability could not violate their nature. They could not escape exercising their executive ability, any more than a crab could escape crawling or a bird could escape flying. And so it was that all the splendid force of the men who had previously worked for themselves was now put to work for the good of society. The half-dozen great railway chief’s cooperated in the organizing of a national system of railways that was amazingly efficacious. Never again was there such a thing ‘as a car shortage. These chiefs were not the Wall Street railway magnates, but they were the men who formerly had done the real work while in the employ of the Wall Street magnates.

Wall Street was dead. There was no more buying and selling and speculating. Nobody had anything to buy or sell. There was nothing in which to speculate. ” Put the stock gamblers to work,” said Goliah; give those that are young and that so desire, a chance to learn useful trades.” “Put the drummers, and salesmen, and advertising agents, and real estate agents to work,” said Goliah; and by hundreds of thousands the erstwhile useless middlemen and parasites went into useful occupations. The four hundred thousand idle gentlemen of the country who had lived upon incomes were likewise put to work. Then there were a lot of helpless men in high places who were cleared out, the remarkable thing about this being that they were cleared out by their own fellows. Of this class were the professional politicians, whose wisdom and power consisted of manipulating machine politics and of grafting, There was no longer any graft. Since there were no private interests to purchase special privileges, no bribes were offered to legislators, and legislators for the first time legislated for the people, The result was that men who were efficient, not in corruption, but in direction, found their way into the legislatures.

With this rational organization of society amazing results were brought about. The national day’s work was eight hours, and yet production. increased. In spite of the great permanent improvements and of the immense amount of energy consumed in systematizing the competitive chaos of society, production doubled and tripled upon

itself. The standard of living increased, and still consumption could not keep up with production. The maximum working age was decreased to fifty years, to forty-nine years, and to forty-eight years. The minimum working age went up from sixteen years to eighteen years. The eight-hour day became a seven-hour day, and in a few months the national working day was reduced to five hours.

In the meantime glimmerings were being caught, not of the identity of Goliah, but of how he had worked and prepared for his assuming control of the world. Little things leaked out, clues were followed up, apparently unrelated things were pieced together. Strange stories of blacks stolen from Africa were remembered, of Chinese and Japanese contract coolies who had mysteriously disappeared, of lonely South Sea Islands raided and their inhabitants carried away; stories of yachts and merchant steamers, mysteriously purchased, that had disappeared and the descriptions of which remotely tallied with the crafts that had carried the Orientals and Africans and islanders away. Where had Goliah got the sinews of war? was the question. And the surmised answer was: By exploiting these stolen laborers. It was they that lived in the exposed village on Palgrave Island. It was the product of their toil that had purchased the yachts and merchant steamers was, and Goliah continued to awe and rule the world.

One of the uses of Energon was in wireless telegraphy. It was by its means that Goliah was able to communicate with his agents all over the world. At that time the apparatus required by an agent was so clumsy that it could not be packed in anything less than a fair-sized steamer trunk. To-day, thanks to the improvements of Hendsoll, the perfected apparatus can be carried in a coat pocket.

It was in December, 1924, that Goliah sent out his famous "Christmas Letter," part of the text of which, is here given: ?

"So far, while I have kept the rest of the nations from each other's throats, I have devoted myself particularly to the United States. Now I have not given to the people of the United States a rational social organization. What I have done has been to compel them to make that organization themselves. There is more laughter in the United States these days, and there is more sense. Food and shelter are no longer obtained by the anarchistic methods of so-called individualism, but are now well nigh automatic. And the beauty of it is that the people of the United States, have achieved all this for themselves. I did not achieve it, for them. I repeat, they achieved it for themselves. All that I did was to put the fear of death in the hearts of the few that sat in the high places and obstructed the coming of rationality and laughter. The fear of death made those in the high places get out of the way, that was all, and gave the intelligence of man a chance to realize itself socially.

"In the year that is to come I shall devote myself to the rest of the world. I shall put the fear of death in the hearts of all that sit in the high places in all the nations. And they will do as they have done in the United States — get down out of the high places and give the intelligence of man a chance for social rationality. All the nations shall tread the path the United States is now on.

“And when all the nations are well along on that path, I shall have something else for them. But first they must travel that path for themselves. They must demonstrate that the intelligence of mankind to-day, with the mechanical energy now at its disposal, is capable of organizing society so that food and shelter be made automatic, labor be reduced to a three-hour day, and joy and laughter be made universal. And when that is accomplished, not by me but by the intelligence of mankind, then I shall make a present to the world of a new mechanical energy. This is my discovery. This Energon is nothing more nor less than the cosmic energy that resides in the solar rays. When it is harnessed by mankind it will do the work of the world. There will be no more multitudes of miners slaving out their lives in the bowels of the earth, no more sooty firemen and greasy engineers. All may dress in white, if they so will. The work of life will have become play and young and old will be the children of joy, and the business of living will become joy; and they will compete, one with another, in achieving ethical concepts and spiritual heights, in fashioning pictures and songs, and stories, in statecraft and beauty craft, in the sweat and the endeavor of the wrestler and the runner and the player of games — all will compete, not for sordid coin and base material reward, but for the joy that shall be theirs in the development and vigor of flesh and in the development and keenness of spirit. All will be joy-smiths, and their task shall be to beat out laughter from the ringing anvil of life.

“And now one word for the immediate future. On New Year’s Day all nations shall disarm, all fortresses and war-ships shall be dismantled, and all armies shall be disbanded.

“GOLIAH.”

On New Year’s Day all the world disarmed. The millions of soldiers and sailors and workmen in the standing armies, in the navies, and in the countless arsenals, machine-shops, and factories for the manufacture of war machinery, were dismissed to their homes. These many millions of men, as well as their costly war machinery, had hitherto been supported on the back of labor. They now went into useful occupations, and the released labor giant heaved a mighty sigh of relief. The policing of the world was left to the peace officers and was purely social, whereas war had been distinctly anti-social.

Ninety per cent of the crimes against society had, been crimes against private property. With the passing of private property, at least in the means of production, and with the organization of industry that gave every man a chance, the crimes against private property practically ceased. The police forces everywhere were reduced repeatedly and again and again. Nearly all occasional and habitual criminals ceased voluntarily from their depredations. There was no longer any ‘need for them to commit crime. They merely changed with changing conditions. A smaller number of criminals was put into hospitals and cured. And the remnant of the hopelessly criminal and degenerate was segregated. And the courts in, all countries were likewise, decreased in number again and again. Ninety-five per cent of all civil cases had been squabbles over property, conflicts of, property-rights, lawsuits, contests of wills, breaches of contract, bankrupt-

cies, etc. With the passing of private property, this ninety-five per cent of the cases that cluttered the courts also passed. The courts became shadows, attenuated ghosts, rudimentary vestiges of the anarchistic times that had preceded the coming of Goliah.

The year 1925 was a lively year in the world's history. Goliah ruled the world with a strong hand. Kings and emperors journeyed to Palgrave Island, saw the wonders of Engon, and went away, with the fear of death in their hearts, to abdicate thrones and crowns and hereditary licenses. When Goliah spoke to politicians (so-called "statesmen"), they obeyed . . . or died. He dictated universal reforms, dissolved refractory parliaments, and to the great conspiracy that was formed of mutinous money lords and captains of industry he sent his destroying angels. "The time is past for fooling," he told them. "You are anachronisms. You stand in the way of humanity. To the scrapheap with you." To those that protested, and they were many, he said: "This is no time for logomachy. You can argue for centuries. It is what you have done in the past. I have no, time for argument. Get out of the way."

With the exception of putting a stop to war, and of indicating the broad general plan, Goliah did nothing. By putting the fear of death into the hearts of those that sat in the high places and obstructed progress, Goliah made the opportunity for the unshackled intelligence of the best social thinkers of the world to exert itself. Goliah left all the multitudinous details of reconstruction to these social thinkers. He wanted them to prove that they were able to do it, and they proved it. It was due to their initiative that the white plague was stamped out from the world. It was due to them, and in spite of a deal of protesting from the sentimentalists', that all the extreme, hereditary inefficients were segregated and denied marriage.

Goliah had nothing whatever to do with the instituting Of the colleges of invention. This idea originated practically simultaneously in the minds of thousands of social thinkers. The time was ripe for the realization of the idea, and everywhere arose the splendid institutions of invention. For the first time the ingenuity of man was loosed upon the problem of simplifying life, instead of upon the making of money-earning devices. The affairs of life, such, as house-cleaning, dish and window-washing, dust-removing, and scrubbing and clothes-washing, and all the endless sordid and necessary details, were simplified by invention until they became automatic. We of to-day cannot realize the barbarously filthy and slavish lives of those that lived prior to 1925.

The international government of the world was another idea that sprang simultaneously into the minds of thousands. The successful realization of this idea was a surprise to many, but as a surprise it was nothing to that received by the mildly protestant sociologists and biologists when irrefutable facts exploded the doctrine of Malthus. With leisure and joy in the world; with an immensely (higher standard of living; and with the enormous spaciousness of opportunity for recreation, development, and pursuit of beauty and nobility and all the higher attributes, the birth-rate fell, and fell astoundingly. People ceased breeding like cattle. And better, than that, it was immediately noticeable that a higher average of children was being born. The doctrine of Malthus

was knocked into a cocked hat — or flung to the scrap-heap, as Goliah would have put it.

All that Goliah had predicted that the intelligence of mankind could accomplish with the mechanical energy at its disposal, came to pass. Human dissatisfaction practically disappeared. The elderly people were the great grumblers; but when they were honorably pensioned by society, as they passed the age limit for work, the great majority ceased grumbling. They found themselves better off in their idle old days under the new regime, enjoying vastly more pleasures and comforts than they had in their busy and toilsome youth under the old regime. The younger generation had easily adapted itself to the changed order, and the very young had never known anything else. The sum of human happiness had increased enormously. The world had become gay and sane. Even the old fogies of professors of sociology, who had opposed with might and main the coming of the new regime, made no complaint. They were a score of times better remunerated than in the old days, and they were not worked nearly so hard. Besides, they were busy revising sociology and writing new text-books on the subject. Here and there, it is true, there were atavisms, men who yearned for the flesh-pots and cannibal-feasts of the old alleged “individualism,” creatures long of teeth and savage of claw who wanted to prey upon their fellow-men; but they were looked upon as diseased, and were treated in hospitals. A small remnant, however, proved incurable, and was confined in asylums and denied marriage. Thus there was no progeny to inherit their atavistic tendencies.

As the years went by, Goliah dropped out of the running of the world. There was nothing for him to run. The-world was running itself, and doing it smoothly and beautifully. In 1937, Goliah made his long-promised present of Energon to the world. He himself had devised a thousand ways in which the little giant should do the work of the world — all of which he made public at the same time. But instantly the colleges of invention seized upon Energon and utilized it in a hundred thousand additional ways. In fact, as Goliah confessed in his letter of March, 1938, the colleges of invention cleared up several puzzling features of Energon that had baffled him during the preceding years. With the introduction of the use of Energon the two-hour work-day was cut down almost to nothing. As Goliah had predicted, work indeed became play. And, so tremendous was man’s productive capacity, due to Energon and the rational social utilization of it, that the humblest citizen enjoyed leisure and time and opportunity for an immensely greater abundance of living than had the most favored under the old anarchistic system.

Nobody had ever seen Goliah, and all peoples began to clamor for their savior to appear. While the world did not minimize his discovery of Energon, it was decided that greater than that was his wide social vision. He was a superman, a scientific superman; and the curiosity of the world to see him had become well-nigh unbearable. It was in 1941, after much hesitancy on his part, that he finally emerged from Palgrave island. He arrived on June 6 in San Francisco, and for the first time, since his retirement to Palgrave Island, the world looked upon his face. And the world was disappointed.

Its imagination had been touched. An heroic figure had been made out of Goliath. He was the man, or the demigod, rather, who had turned the planet over. The deeds of Alexander, Caesar, Genghis Khan, and Napoleon were as the play of babes alongside his colossal achievements.

And ashore in San Francisco and through its streets stepped and rode a little old man, sixty-five years of age, well preserved, with a pink-and-white complexion and a bald spot on his head the size of an apple. He was short-sighted and wore spectacles. But when the spectacles were removed, his were quizzical blue eyes like a child's, filled with mild wonder at the world. Also his eyes had a way of twinkling, accompanied by a screwing up of the face, as if he laughed at the huge joke he had played upon the world, trapping it, in spite of itself, into happiness and laughter.

For a scientific superman and world tyrant, he had remarkable weaknesses. He loved sweets, and was inordinately fond of salted almonds and salted pecans, especially of the latter. He always carried a paper bag of them in his pocket, and he had a way of saying frequently that the chemism of his nature demanded such fare. Perhaps his most astonishing failing was cats. He had an ineradicable aversion to that-domestic animal. It will be remembered that he fainted dead away with sudden fright, while speaking in, Brotherhood Palace, when the janitor's cat walked out upon the stage and brushed against his legs.

But no sooner had he revealed himself to the world than he was identified. Old-time friends had no difficulty in recognizing him as Percival Stultz, the German-American who, in 1898, had worked in the Union Iron Works, and who, for two years at that time, had been secretary of Branch 369 of the International Brotherhood of Machinists. It was in 1901, then twenty-five years of age, that he had taken special scientific courses at the University of California, at the same time supporting himself by soliciting what was then known as "life insurance." His records as a student are preserved in the university museum, and they are unenviable. He is remembered by the professors he sat under chiefly for his absentmindedness. Undoubtedly, even then, he was catching glimpses of the wide visions that later were to be his.

His naming himself "Goliath" and shrouding himself in mystery was his little joke, he later explained. As Goliath, or any other thing like that, he said, he was able to touch the imagination of the world and turn it over; but as Percival Stultz, wearing side-whiskers and spectacles, and weighing one hundred and eighteen pounds, he would have been unable to turn over a pecan — "not even a salted pecan."

But the world quickly got over its disappointment in his personal appearance and antecedents. It knew him and revered him as the master-mind of the ages; and it loved him for himself, for his quizzical shortsighted eyes and the inimitable way in which he screwed up his face when he laughed; it loved him for his simplicity and comradeship and warm humanness, and for his fondness for salted pecans and his aversion to cats. And to-day, in the wonder-city of Asgard, rises in awful beauty that monument to him that dwarfs the pyramids and all the monstrous blood-stained monuments of antiquity. And on that monument, as all know, is inscribed in imperishable bronze the prophecy

and the fulfillment: "ALL WILL BE JOY-SMITHS, AND THEIR TASK SHALL BE TO BEAT OUT LAUGHTER FROM THE RINGING ANVIL OF LIFE."

Good-Bye, Jack!

Hawaii is a queer place. Everything socially is what I may call topsy-turvy. Not but what things are correct. They are almost too much so. But still things are sort of upside down. The most ultra-exclusive set there is the "Missionary Crowd." It comes with rather a shock to learn that in Hawaii the obscure martyrdom-seeking missionary sits at the head of the table of the moneyed aristocracy. But it is true. The humble New Englanders who came out in the third decade of the nineteenth century, came for the lofty purpose of teaching the kanakas the true religion, the worship of the one only genuine and undeniable God. So well did they succeed in this, and also in civilizing the kanaka, that by the second or third generation he was practically extinct. This being the fruit of the seed of the Gospel, the fruit of the seed of the missionaries (the sons and the grandsons) was the possession of the islands themselves,—of the land, the ports, the town sites, and the sugar plantations: The missionary who came to give the bread of life remained to gobble up the whole heathen feast.

But that is not the Hawaiian queerness I started out to tell. Only one cannot speak of things Hawaiian without mentioning the missionaries. There is Jack Kersdale, the man I wanted to tell about; he came of missionary stock. That is, on his grandmother's side. His grandfather was old Benjamin Kersdale, a Yankee trader, who got his start for a million in the old days by selling cheap whiskey and square-face gin. There's another queer thing. The old missionaries and old traders were mortal enemies. You see, their interests conflicted. But their children made it up by intermarrying and dividing the island between them.

Life in Hawaii is a song. That's the way Stoddard put it in his "Hawaii Noi":-

"Thy life is music—Fate the notes prolong!

Each isle a stanza, and the whole a song."

And he was right. Flesh is golden there. The native women are sun-ripe Junos, the native men bronzed Apollos. They sing, and dance, and all are flower-bejewelled and flower-crowned. And, outside the rigid "Missionary Crowd," the white men yield to the climate and the sun, and no matter how busy they may be, are prone to dance and sing and wear flowers behind their ears and in their hair. Jack Kersdale was one of these fellows. He was one of the busiest men I ever met. He was a several-times millionaire. He was a sugar-king, a coffee planter, a rubber pioneer, a cattle rancher, and a promoter of three out of every four new enterprises launched in the islands. He was a society man, a club man, a yachtsman, a bachelor, and withal as handsome a man as was ever doted upon by mammas with marriageable daughters. Incidentally, he had finished his education at Yale, and his head was crammed fuller with vital statistics and scholarly information concerning Hawaii Nei than any other islander I ever encountered. He turned off an immense amount of work, and he sang and danced and put flowers in his hair as immensely as any of the idlers.

He had grit, and had fought two duels—both, political—when he was no more than a raw youth essaying his first adventures in politics. In fact, he played a most creditable and courageous part in the last revolution, when the native dynasty was overthrown; and he could not have been over sixteen at the time. I am pointing out that he was no coward, in order that you may appreciate what happens later on. I've seen him in the breaking yard at the Haleakala Ranch, conquering a four-year-old brute that for two years had defied the pick of Von Tempsky's cow-boys. And I must tell of one other thing. It was down in Kona,—or up, rather, for the Kona people scorn to live at less than a thousand feet elevation. We were all on the lanai of Doctor Goodhue's bungalow. I was talking with Dottie Fairchild when it happened. A big centipede—it was seven inches, for we measured it afterwards—fell from the rafters overhead squarely into her coiffure. I confess, the hideousness of it paralysed me. I couldn't move. My mind refused to work. There, within two feet of me, the ugly venomous devil was writhing in her hair. It threatened at any moment to fall down upon her exposed shoulders—we had just come out from dinner.

“What is it?” she asked, starting to raise her hand to her head.

“Don't!” I cried. “Don't!”

“But what is it?” she insisted, growing frightened by the fright she read in my eyes and on my stammering lips.

My exclamation attracted Kersdale's attention. He glanced our way carelessly, but in that glance took in everything. He came over to us, but without haste.

“Please don't move, Dottie,” he said quietly.

He never hesitated, nor did he hurry and make a bungle of it.

“Allow me,” he said.

And with one hand he caught her scarf and drew it tightly around her shoulders so that the centipede could not fall inside her bodice. With the other hand—the right—he reached into her hair, caught the repulsive abomination as near as he was able by the nape of the neck, and held it tightly between thumb and forefinger as he withdrew it from her hair. It was as horrible and heroic a sight as man could wish to see. It made my flesh crawl. The centipede, seven inches of squirming legs, writhed and twisted and dashed itself about his hand, the body twining around the fingers and the legs digging into the skin and scratching as the beast endeavoured to free itself. It bit him twice—I saw it—though he assured the ladies that he was not harmed as he dropped it upon the walk and stamped it into the gravel. But I saw him in the surgery five minutes afterwards, with Doctor Goodhue scarifying the wounds and injecting permanganate of potash. The next morning Kersdale's arm was as big as a barrel, and it was three weeks before the swelling went down.

All of which has nothing to do with my story, but which I could not avoid giving in order to show that Jack Kersdale was anything but a coward. It was the cleanest exhibition of grit I have ever seen. He never turned a hair. The smile never left his lips. And he dived with thumb and forefinger into Dottie Fairchild's hair as gaily as if it had been a box of salted almonds. Yet that was the man I was destined to see stricken

with a fear a thousand times more hideous even than the fear that was mine when I saw that writhing abomination in Dottie Fairchild's hair, dangling over her eyes and the trap of her bodice.

I was interested in leprosy, and upon that, as upon every other island subject, Kersdale had encyclopedic knowledge. In fact, leprosy was one of his hobbies. He was an ardent defender of the settlement at Molokai, where all the island lepers were segregated. There was much talk and feeling among the natives, fanned by the demagogues, concerning the cruelties of Molokai, where men and women, not alone banished from friends and family, were compelled to live in perpetual imprisonment until they died. There were no reprieves, no commutations of sentences. "Abandon hope" was written over the portal of Molokai.

"I tell you they are happy there," Kersdale insisted. "And they are infinitely better off than their friends and relatives outside who have nothing the matter with them. The horrors of Molokai are all poppycock. I can take you through any hospital or any slum in any of the great cities of the world and show you a thousand times worse horrors. The living death! The creatures that once were men! Bosh! You ought to see those living deaths racing horses on the Fourth of July. Some of them own boats. One has a gasoline launch. They have nothing to do but have a good time. Food, shelter, clothes, medical attendance, everything, is theirs. They are the wards of the Territory. They have a much finer climate than Honolulu, and the scenery is magnificent. I shouldn't mind going down there myself for the rest of my days. It is a lovely spot."

So Kersdale on the joyous leper. He was not afraid of leprosy. He said so himself, and that there wasn't one chance in a million for him or any other white man to catch it, though he confessed afterward that one of his school chums, Alfred Starter, had contracted it, gone to Molokai, and there died.

"You know, in the old days," Kersdale explained, "there was no certain test for leprosy. Anything unusual or abnormal was sufficient to send a fellow to Molokai. The result was that dozens were sent there who were no more lepers than you or I. But they don't make that mistake now. The Board of Health tests are infallible. The funny thing is that when the test was discovered they immediately went down to Molokai and applied it, and they found a number who were not lepers. These were immediately deported. Happy to get away? They wailed harder at leaving the settlement than when they left Honolulu to go to it. Some refused to leave, and really had to be forced out. One of them even married a leper woman in the last stages and then wrote pathetic letters to the Board of Health, protesting against his expulsion on the ground that no one was so well able as he to take care of his poor old wife."

"What is this infallible test?" I demanded.

"The bacteriological test. There is no getting away from it. Doctor Hervey—he's our expert, you know—was the first man to apply it here. He is a wizard. He knows more about leprosy than any living man, and if a cure is ever discovered, he'll be that discoverer. As for the test, it is very simple. They have succeeded in isolating the bacillus leprae and studying it. They know it now when they see it. All they do is to

snip a bit of skin from the suspect and subject it to the bacteriological test. A man without any visible symptoms may be chock full of the leprosy bacilli.”

“Then you or I, for all we know,” I suggested, “may be full of it now.”

Kersdale shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

“Who can say? It takes seven years for it to incubate. If you have any doubts go and see Doctor Hervey. He’ll just snip out a piece of your skin and let you know in a jiffy.”

Later on he introduced me to Dr. Hervey, who loaded me down with Board of Health reports and pamphlets on the subject, and took me out to Kalihi, the Honolulu receiving station, where suspects were examined and confirmed lepers were held for deportation to Molokai. These deportations occurred about once a month, when, the last good-byes said, the lepers were marched on board the little steamer, the Noeau, and carried down to the settlement.

One afternoon, writing letters at the club, Jack Kersdale dropped in on me.

“Just the man I want to see,” was his greeting. “I’ll show you the saddest aspect of the whole situation—the lepers wailing as they depart for Molokai. The Noeau will be taking them on board in a few minutes. But let me warn you not to let your feelings be harrowed. Real as their grief is, they’d wail a whole sight harder a year hence if the Board of Health tried to take them away from Molokai. We’ve just time for a whiskey and soda. I’ve a carriage outside. It won’t take us five minutes to get down to the wharf.”

To the wharf we drove. Some forty sad wretches, amid their mats, blankets, and luggage of various sorts, were squatting on the stringer piece. The Noeau had just arrived and was making fast to a lighter that lay between her and the wharf. A Mr. McVeigh, the superintendent of the settlement, was overseeing the embarkation, and to him I was introduced, also to Dr. Georges, one of the Board of Health physicians whom I had already met at Kalihi. The lepers were a woebegone lot. The faces of the majority were hideous—too horrible for me to describe. But here and there I noticed fairly good-looking persons, with no apparent signs of the fell disease upon them. One, I noticed, a little white girl, not more than twelve, with blue eyes and golden hair. One cheek, however, showed the leprous bloat. On my remarking on the sadness of her alien situation among the brown-skinned afflicted ones, Doctor Georges replied:-

“Oh, I don’t know. It’s a happy day in her life. She comes from Kauai. Her father is a brute. And now that she has developed the disease she is going to join her mother at the settlement. Her mother was sent down three years ago—a very bad case.”

“You can’t always tell from appearances,” Mr. McVeigh explained. That man there, that big chap, who looks the pink of condition, with nothing the matter with him, I happen to know has a perforating ulcer in his foot and another in his shoulder-blade. Then there are others—there, see that girl’s hand, the one who is smoking the cigarette. See her twisted fingers. That’s the anaesthetic form. It attacks the nerves. You could cut her fingers off with a dull knife, or rub them off on a nutmeg-grater, and she would not experience the slightest sensation.”

“Yes, but that fine-looking woman, there,” I persisted; “surely, surely, there can’t be anything the matter with her. She is too glorious and gorgeous altogether.”

“A sad case,” Mr. McVeigh answered over his shoulder, already turning away to walk down the wharf with Kersdale.

She was a beautiful woman, and she was pure Polynesian. From my meagre knowledge of the race and its types I could not but conclude that she had descended from old chief stock. She could not have been more than twenty-three or four. Her lines and proportions were magnificent, and she was just beginning to show the amplitude of the women of her race.

“It was a blow to all of us,” Dr. Georges volunteered. “She gave herself up voluntarily, too. No one suspected. But somehow she had contracted the disease. It broke us all up, I assure you. We’ve kept it out of the papers, though. Nobody but us and her family knows what has become of her. In fact, if you were to ask any man in Honolulu, he’d tell you it was his impression that she was somewhere in Europe. It was at her request that we’ve been so quiet about it. Poor girl, she has a lot of pride.”

“But who is she?” I asked. “Certainly, from the way you talk about her, she must be somebody.”

“Did you ever hear of Lucy Mokunui?” he asked.

“Lucy Mokunui?” I repeated, haunted by some familiar association. I shook my head. “It seems to me I’ve heard the name, but I’ve forgotten it.”

“Never heard of Lucy Mokunui! The Hawaiian nightingale! I beg your pardon. Of course you are a malahini, {1} and could not be expected to know. Well, Lucy Mokunui was the best beloved of Honolulu—of all Hawaii, for that matter.”

“You say WAS,” I interrupted.

“And I mean it. She is finished.” He shrugged his shoulders pityingly. “A dozen haoles—I beg your pardon, white men—have lost their hearts to her at one time or another. And I’m not counting in the ruck. The dozen I refer to were haoles of position and prominence.”

“She could have married the son of the Chief Justice if she’d wanted to. You think she’s beautiful, eh? But you should hear her sing. Finest native woman singer in Hawaii Nei. Her throat is pure silver and melted sunshine. We adored her. She toured America first with the Royal Hawaiian Band. After that she made two more trips on her own—concert work.”

“Oh!” I cried. “I remember now. I heard her two years ago at the Boston Symphony. So that is she. I recognize her now.”

I was oppressed by a heavy sadness. Life was a futile thing at best. A short two years and this magnificent creature, at the summit of her magnificent success, was one of the leper squad awaiting deportation to Molokai. Henley’s lines came into my mind:-

“The poor old tramp explains his poor old ulcers;

Life is, I think, a blunder and a shame.”

I recoiled from my own future. If this awful fate fell to Lucy Mokunui, what might my lot not be?—or anybody’s lot? I was thoroughly aware that in life we are in the

midst of death—but to be in the midst of living death, to die and not be dead, to be one of that draft of creatures that once were men, aye, and women, like Lucy Mokunui, the epitome of all Polynesian charms, an artist as well, and well beloved of men-. I am afraid I must have betrayed my perturbation, for Doctor Georges hastened to assure me that they were very happy down in the settlement.

It was all too inconceivably monstrous. I could not bear to look at her. A short distance away, behind a stretched rope guarded by a policeman, were the lepers' relatives and friends. They were not allowed to come near. There were no last embraces, no kisses of farewell. They called back and forth to one another—last messages, last words of love, last reiterated instructions. And those behind the rope looked with terrible intensity. It was the last time they would behold the faces of their loved ones, for they were the living dead, being carted away in the funeral ship to the graveyard of Molokai.

Doctor Georges gave the command, and the unhappy wretches dragged themselves to their feet and under their burdens of luggage began to stagger across the lighter and aboard the steamer. It was the funeral procession. At once the wailing started from those behind the rope. It was blood-curdling; it was heart-rending. I never heard such woe, and I hope never to again. Kersdale and McVeigh were still at the other end of the wharf, talking earnestly—politics, of course, for both were head-over-heels in that particular game. When Lucy Mokunui passed me, I stole a look at her. She WAS beautiful. She was beautiful by our standards, as well—one of those rare blossoms that occur but once in generations. And she, of all women, was doomed to Molokai. She straight on board, and aft on the open deck where the lepers huddled by the rail, wailing now, to their dear ones on shore.

The lines were cast off, and the Noeau began to move away from the wharf. The wailing increased. Such grief and despair! I was just resolving that never again would I be a witness to the sailing of the Noeau, when McVeigh and Kersdale returned. The latter's eyes were sparkling, and his lips could not quite hide the smile of delight that was his. Evidently the politics they had talked had been satisfactory. The rope had been flung aside, and the lamenting relatives now crowded the stringer piece on either side of us.

"That's her mother," Doctor Georges whispered, indicating an old woman next to me, who was rocking back and forth and gazing at the steamer rail out of tear-blinded eyes. I noticed that Lucy Mokunui was also wailing. She stopped abruptly and gazed at Kersdale. Then she stretched forth her arms in that adorable, sensuous way that Olga Nethersole has of embracing an audience. And with arms outspread, she cried:

"Good-bye, Jack! Good-bye!"

He heard the cry, and looked. Never was a man overtaken by more crushing fear. He reeled on the stringer piece, his face went white to the roots of his hair, and he seemed to shrink and wither away inside his clothes. He threw up his hands and groaned, "My God! My God!" Then he controlled himself by a great effort.

"Good-bye, Lucy! Good-bye!" he called.

And he stood there on the wharf, waving his hands to her till the Noeau was clear away and the faces lining her after-rail were vague and indistinct.

"I thought you knew," said McVeigh, who had been regarding him curiously. "You, of all men, should have known. I thought that was why you were here."

"I know now," Kersdale answered with immense gravity. "Where's the carriage?"

He walked rapidly—half-ran—to it. I had to half-run myself to keep up with him.

"Drive to Doctor Hervey's," he told the driver. "Drive as fast as you can."

He sank down in a seat, panting and gasping. The pallor of his face had increased. His lips were compressed and the sweat was standing out on his forehead and upper lip. He seemed in some horrible agony.

"For God's sake, Martin, make those horses go!" he broke out suddenly. "Lay the whip into them!—do you hear?—lay the whip into them!"

"They'll break, sir," the driver remonstrated.

"Let them break," Kersdale answered. "I'll pay your fine and square you with the police. Put it to them. That's right. Faster! Faster!"

"And I never knew, I never knew," he muttered, sinking back in the seat and with trembling hands wiping the sweat away.

The carriage was bouncing, swaying and lurching around corners at such a wild pace as to make conversation impossible. Besides, there was nothing to say. But I could hear him muttering over and over, "And I never knew. I never knew."

The Great Interrogation

To say the least, Mrs. Sayther's career in Dawson was meteoric. She arrived in the spring, with dog sleds and French-Canadian voyageurs, blazed gloriously for a brief month, and departed up the river as soon as it was free of ice. Now womanless Dawson never quite understood this hurried departure, and the local Four Hundred felt aggrieved and lonely till the Nome strike was made and old sensations gave way to new. For it had delighted in Mrs. Sayther, and received her wide-armed. She was pretty, charming, and, moreover, a widow. And because of this she at once had at heel any number of Eldorado Kings, officials, and adventuring younger sons, whose ears were yearning for the frou-frou of a woman's skirts.

The mining engineers revered the memory of her husband, the late Colonel Sayther, while the syndicate and promoter representatives spoke awesomely of his deals and manipulations; for he was known down in the States as a great mining man, and as even a greater one in London. Why his widow, of all women, should have come into the country, was the great interrogation. But they were a practical breed, the men of the Northland, with a wholesome disregard for theories and a firm grip on facts. And to not a few of them Karen Sayther was a most essential fact. That she did not regard the matter in this light, is evidenced by the neatness and celerity with which refusal and proposal tallied off during her four weeks' stay. And with her vanished the fact, and only the interrogation remained.

To the solution, Chance vouchsafed one clew. Her last victim, Jack Coughran, having fruitlessly laid at her feet both his heart and a five-hundred-foot creek claim on Bonanza, celebrated the misfortune by walking all of a night with the gods. In the mid-watch of this night he happened to rub shoulders with Pierre Fontaine, none other than head man of Karen Sayther's voyageurs. This rubbing of shoulders led to recognition and drinks, and ultimately involved both men in a common muddle of inebriety.

"Heh?" Pierre Fontaine later on gurgled thickly. "Vot for Madame Sayther mak visitation to thees country? More better you spik wit her. I know no t'ing 'tall, only all de tam her ask one man's name. 'Pierre,' her spik wit me; 'Pierre, you moos' find thees mans, and I gif you mooch—one thousand dollar you find thees mans.' Thees mans? Ah, oui. Thees man's name—vot you call—Daveed Payne. Oui, m'sieu, Daveed Payne. All de tam her spik das name. And all de tam I look rount vaire mooch, work lak hell, but no can find das dam mans, and no get one thousand dollar 'tall. By dam!

"Heh? Ah, oui. One tam dose mens vot come from Circle City, dose mens know thees mans. Him Birch Creek, dey spik. And madame? Her say 'Bon!' and look happy lak anyt'ing. And her spik wit me. 'Pierre,' her spik, 'harness de dogs. We go queek.

We find thees mans I gif you one thousand dollar more.’ And I say, ‘Oui, queek! Allons, madame!’

“For sure, I t’ink, das two thousand dollar mine. Bully boy! Den more mens come from Circle City, and dey say no, das thees mans, Daveed Payne, come Dawson leel tam back. So madame and I go not ‘tall.

“Oui, m’sieu. Thees day madame spik. ‘Pierre,’ her spik, and gif me five hundred dollar, ‘go buy poling-boat. To-morrow we go up de river.’ Ah, oui, to-morrow, up de river, and das dam Sitka Charley mak me pay for de poling-boat five hundred dollar. Dam!”

Thus it was, when Jack Coughran unburdened himself next day, that Dawson fell to wondering who was this David Payne, and in what way his existence bore upon Karen Sayther’s. But that very day, as Pierre Fontaine had said, Mrs. Sayther and her barbaric crew of voyageurs towed up the east bank to Klondike City, shot across to the west bank to escape the bluffs, and disappeared amid the maze of islands to the south.

II

“Oui, madame, thees is de place. One, two, t’ree island below Stuart River. Thees is t’ree island.”

As he spoke, Pierre Fontaine drove his pole against the bank and held the stern of the boat against the current. This thrust the bow in, till a nimble breed climbed ashore with the painter and made fast.

“One leel tam, madame, I go look see.”

A chorus of dogs marked his disappearance over the edge of the bank, but a minute later he was back again.

“Oui, madame, thees is de cabin. I mak investigation. No can find mans at home. But him no go vaire far, vaire long, or him no leave dogs. Him come queek, you bet!”

“Help me out, Pierre. I’m tired all over from the boat. You might have made it softer, you know.”

From a nest of furs amidships, Karen Sayther rose to her full height of slender fairness. But if she looked lily-frail in her elemental environment, she was belied by the grip she put upon Pierre’s hand, by the knotting of her woman’s biceps as it took the weight of her body, by the splendid effort of her limbs as they held her out from the perpendicular bank while she made the ascent. Though shapely flesh clothed delicate frame, her body was a seat of strength.

Still, for all the careless ease with which she had made the landing, there was a warmer color than usual to her face, and a perceptibly extra beat to her heart. But then, also, it was with a certain reverent curiousness that she approached the cabin, while the Hush on her cheek showed a yet riper mellowness.

“Look, see!” Pierre pointed to the scattered chips by the woodpile. “Him fresh—two, t’ree day, no more.”

Mrs. Sayther nodded. She tried to peer through the small window, but it was made of greased parchment which admitted light while it blocked vision. Failing this, she

went round to the door, half lifted the rude latch to enter, but changed her mind and let it fall back into place. Then she suddenly dropped on one knee and kissed the rough-hewn threshold. If Pierre Fontaine saw, he gave no sign, and the memory in the time to come was never shared. But the next instant, one of the boatmen, placidly lighting his pipe, was startled by an unwonted harshness in his captain's voice.

"Hey! You! Le Goire! You mak'm soft more better," Pierre commanded. "Plenty bear-skin; plenty blanket. Dam!"

But the nest was soon after disrupted, and the major portion tossed up to the crest of the shore, where Mrs. Sayther lay down to wait in comfort.

Reclining on her side, she looked out and over the wide-stretching Yukon. Above the mountains which lay beyond the further shore, the sky was murky with the smoke of unseen forest fires, and through this the afternoon sun broke feebly, throwing a vague radiance to earth, and unreal shadows. To the sky-line of the four quarters—spruce-shrouded islands, dark waters, and ice-scarred rocky ridges—stretched the immaculate wilderness. No sign of human existence broke the solitude; no sound the stillness. The land seemed bound under the unreality of the unknown, wrapped in the brooding mystery of great spaces.

Perhaps it was this which made Mrs. Sayther nervous; for she changed her position constantly, now to look up the river, now down, or to scan the gloomy shores for the half-hidden mouths of back channels. After an hour or so the boatmen were sent ashore to pitch camp for the night, but Pierre remained with his mistress to watch.

"Ah! him come thees tam," he whispered, after a long silence, his gaze bent up the river to the head of the island.

A canoe, with a paddle flashing on either side, was slipping down the current. In the stern a man's form, and in the bow a woman's, swung rhythmically to the work. Mrs. Sayther had no eyes for the woman till the canoe drove in closer and her bizarre beauty peremptorily demanded notice. A close-fitting blouse of moose-skin, fantastically beaded, outlined faithfully the well-rounded lines of her body, while a silken kerchief, gay of color and picturesquely draped, partly covered great masses of blue-black hair. But it was the face, cast belike in copper bronze, which caught and held Mrs. Sayther's fleeting glance. Eyes, piercing and black and large, with a traditionary hint of obliqueness, looked forth from under clear-stencilled, clean-arching brows. Without suggesting cadaverousness, though high-boned and prominent, the cheeks fell away and met in a mouth, thin-lipped and softly strong. It was a face which advertised the dimmest trace of ancient Mongol blood, a reversion, after long centuries of wandering, to the parent stem. This effect was heightened by the delicately aquiline nose with its thin trembling nostrils, and by the general air of eagle wildness which seemed to characterize not only the face but the creature herself. She was, in fact, the Tartar type modified to idealization, and the tribe of Red Indian is lucky that breeds such a unique body once in a score of generations.

Dipping long strokes and strong, the girl, in concert with the man, suddenly whirled the tiny craft about against the current and brought it gently to the shore. Another

instant and she stood at the top of the bank, heaving up by rope, hand under hand, a quarter of fresh-killed moose. Then the man followed her, and together, with a swift rush, they drew up the canoe. The dogs were in a whining mass about them, and as the girl stooped among them caressingly, the man's gaze fell upon Mrs. Sayther, who had arisen. He looked, brushed his eyes unconsciously as though his sight were deceiving him, and looked again.

"Karen," he said simply, coming forward and extending his hand, "I thought for the moment I was dreaming. I went snow-blind for a time, this spring, and since then my eyes have been playing tricks with me."

Mrs. Sayther, whose flush had deepened and whose heart was urging painfully, had been prepared for almost anything save this coolly extended hand; but she tactfully curbed herself and grasped it heartily with her own.

"You know, Dave, I threatened often to come, and I would have, too, only—only—"

"Only I didn't give the word." David Payne laughed and watched the Indian girl disappearing into the cabin.

"Oh, I understand, Dave, and had I been in your place I'd most probably have done the same. But I have come—now."

"Then come a little bit farther, into the cabin and get something to eat," he said genially, ignoring or missing the feminine suggestion of appeal in her voice. "And you must be tired too. Which way are you travelling? Up? Then you wintered in Dawson, or came in on the last ice. Your camp?" He glanced at the voyageurs circled about the fire in the open, and held back the door for her to enter.

"I came up on the ice from Circle City last winter," he continued, "and settled down here for a while. Am prospecting some on Henderson Creek, and if that fails, have been thinking of trying my hand this fall up the Stuart River."

"You aren't changed much, are you?" she asked irrelevantly, striving to throw the conversation upon a more personal basis.

"A little less flesh, perhaps, and a little more muscle. How did YOU mean?"

But she shrugged her shoulders and peered through the dim light at the Indian girl, who had lighted the fire and was frying great chunks of moose meat, alternated with thin ribbons of bacon.

"Did you stop in Dawson long?" The man was whittling a stave of birchwood into a rude axe-handle, and asked the question without raising his head.

"Oh, a few days," she answered, following the girl with her eyes, and hardly hearing. "What were you saying? In Dawson? A month, in fact, and glad to get away. The arctic male is elemental, you know, and somewhat strenuous in his feelings."

"Bound to be when he gets right down to the soil. He leaves convention with the spring bed at borne. But you were wise in your choice of time for leaving. You'll be out of the country before mosquito season, which is a blessing your lack of experience will not permit you to appreciate."

"I suppose not. But tell me about yourself, about your life. What kind of neighbors have you? Or have you any?"

While she queried she watched the girl grinding coffee in the corner of a flower sack upon the hearthstone. With a steadiness and skill which predicated nerves as primitive as the method, she crushed the imprisoned berries with a heavy fragment of quartz. David Payne noted his visitor's gaze, and the shadow of a smile drifted over his lips.

"I did have some," he replied. "Missourian chaps, and a couple of Cornishmen, but they went down to Eldorado to work at wages for a grubstake."

Mrs. Sayther cast a look of speculative regard upon the girl. "But of course there are plenty of Indians about?"

"Every mother's son of them down to Dawson long ago. Not a native in the whole country, barring Winapie here, and she's a Koyokuk lass,—comes from a thousand miles or so down the river."

Mrs. Sayther felt suddenly faint; and though the smile of interest in no wise waned, the face of the man seemed to draw away to a telescopic distance, and the tiered logs of the cabin to whirl drunkenly about. But she was bidden draw up to the table, and during the meal discovered time and space in which to find herself. She talked little, and that principally about the land and weather, while the man wandered off into a long description of the difference between the shallow summer diggings of the Lower Country and the deep winter diggings of the Upper Country.

"You do not ask why I came north?" she asked. "Surely you know." They had moved back from the table, and David Payne had returned to his axe-handle. "Did you get my letter?"

"A last one? No, I don't think so. Most probably it's trailing around the Birch Creek Country or lying in some trader's shack on the Lower River. The way they run the mails in here is shameful. No order, no system, no—"

"Don't be wooden, Dave! Help me!" She spoke sharply now, with an assumption of authority which rested upon the past. "Why don't you ask me about myself? About those we knew in the old times? Have you no longer any interest in the world? Do you know that my husband is dead?"

"Indeed, I am sorry. How long—"

"David!" She was ready to cry with vexation, but the reproach she threw into her voice eased her.

"Did you get any of my letters? You must have got some of them, though you never answered."

"Well, I didn't get the last one, announcing, evidently, the death of your husband, and most likely others went astray; but I did get some. I—er—read them aloud to Winapie as a warning—that is, you know, to impress upon her the wickedness of her white sisters. And I—er—think she profited by it. Don't you?"

She disregarded the sting, and went on. "In the last letter, which you did not receive, I told, as you have guessed, of Colonel Sayther's death. That was a year ago. I also said that if you did not come out to me, I would go in to you. And as I had often promised, I came."

"I know of no promise."

"In the earlier letters?"

"Yes, you promised, but as I neither asked nor answered, it was unratified. So I do not know of any such promise. But I do know of another, which you, too, may remember. It was very long ago." He dropped the axe-handle to the floor and raised his head. "It was so very long ago, yet I remember it distinctly, the day, the time, every detail. We were in a rose garden, you and I,—your mother's rose garden. All things were budding, blossoming, and the sap of spring was in our blood. And I drew you over—it was the first—and kissed you full on the lips. Don't you remember?"

"Don't go over it, Dave, don't! I know every shameful line of it. How often have I wept! If you only knew how I have suffered—"

"You promised me then—ay, and a thousand times in the sweet days that followed. Each look of your eyes, each touch of your hand, each syllable that fell from your lips, was a promise. And then—how shall I say?—there came a man. He was old—old enough to have begotten you—and not nice to look upon, but as the world goes, clean. He had done no wrong, followed the letter of the law, was respectable. Further, and to the point, he possessed some several paltry mines,—a score; it does not matter: and he owned a few miles of lands, and engineered deals, and clipped coupons. He—"

"But there were other things," she interrupted, "I told you. Pressure—money matters—want—my people—trouble. You understood the whole sordid situation. I could not help it. It was not my will. I was sacrificed, or I sacrificed, have it as you wish. But, my God! Dave, I gave you up! You never did ME justice. Think what I have gone through!"

"It was not your will? Pressure? Under high heaven there was no thing to will you to this man's bed or that."

"But I cared for you all the time," she pleaded.

"I was unused to your way of measuring love. I am still unused. I do not understand."

"But now! now!"

"We were speaking of this man you saw fit to marry. What manner of man was he? Wherein did he charm your soul? What potent virtues were his? True, he had a golden grip,—an almighty golden grip. He knew the odds. He was versed in cent per cent. He had a narrow wit and excellent judgment of the viler parts, whereby he transferred this man's money to his pockets, and that man's money, and the next man's. And the law smiled. In that it did not condemn, our Christian ethics approved. By social measure he was not a bad man. But by your measure, Karen, by mine, by ours of the rose garden, what was he?"

"Remember, he is dead."

"The fact is not altered thereby. What was he? A great, gross, material creature, deaf to song, blind to beauty, dead to the spirit. He was fat with laziness, and flabby-cheeked, and the round of his belly witnessed his gluttony—"

"But he is dead. It is we who are now—now! now! Don't you hear? As you say, I have been inconstant. I have sinned. Good. But should not you, too, cry peccavi? If I have broken promises, have not you? Your love of the rose garden was of all time, or so you said. Where is it now?"

"It is here! now!" he cried, striking his breast passionately with clenched hand. "It has always been."

"And your love was a great love; there was none greater," she continued; "or so you said in the rose garden. Yet it is not fine enough, large enough, to forgive me here, crying now at your feet?"

The man hesitated. His mouth opened; words shaped vainly on his lips. She had forced him to bare his heart and speak truths which he had hidden from himself. And she was good to look upon, standing there in a glory of passion, calling back old associations and warmer life. He turned away his head that he might not see, but she passed around and fronted him.

"Look at me, Dave! Look at me! I am the same, after all. And so are you, if you would but see. We are not changed."

Her hand rested on his shoulder, and his had half-passed, roughly, about her, when the sharp crackle of a match startled him to himself. Winapie, alien to the scene, was lighting the slow wick of the slush lamp. She appeared to start out against a background of utter black, and the flame, flaring suddenly up, lighted her bronze beauty to royal gold.

"You see, it is impossible," he groaned, thrusting the fair-haired woman gently from him. "It is impossible," he repeated. "It is impossible."

"I am not a girl, Dave, with a girl's illusions," she said softly, though not daring to come back to him. "It is as a woman that I understand. Men are men. A common custom of the country. I am not shocked. I divined it from the first. But—ah!—it is only a marriage of the country—not a real marriage?"

"We do not ask such questions in Alaska," he interposed feebly.

"I know, but—"

"Well, then, it is only a marriage of the country—nothing else."

"And there are no children?"

"No."

"Nor—"

"No, no; nothing—but it is impossible."

"But it is not." She was at his side again, her hand touching lightly, caressingly, the sunburned back of his. "I know the custom of the land too well. Men do it every day. They do not care to remain here, shut out from the world, for all their days; so they give an order on the P. C. C. Company for a year's provisions, some money in hand, and the girl is content. By the end of that time, a man—" She shrugged her shoulders. "And so with the girl here. We will give her an order upon the company, not for a year, but for life. What was she when you found her? A raw, meat-eating savage; fish in summer, moose in winter, feasting in plenty, starving in famine. But for you that is what she would have remained. For your coming she was happier; for your going, surely, with a life of comparative splendor assured, she will be happier than if you had never been."

"No, no," he protested. "It is not right."

“Come, Dave, you must see. She is not your kind. There is no race affinity. She is an aborigine, sprung from the soil, yet close to the soil, and impossible to lift from the soil. Born savage, savage she will die. But we—you and I—the dominant, evolved race—the salt of the earth and the masters thereof! We are made for each other. The supreme call is of kind, and we are of kind. Reason and feeling dictate it. Your very instinct demands it. That you cannot deny. You cannot escape the generations behind you. Yours is an ancestry which has survived for a thousand centuries, and for a hundred thousand centuries, and your line must not stop here. It cannot. Your ancestry will not permit it. Instinct is stronger than the will. The race is mightier than you. Come, Dave, let us go. We are young yet, and life is good. Come.”

Winapie, passing out of the cabin to feed the dogs, caught his attention and caused him to shake his head and weakly to reiterate. But the woman’s hand slipped about his neck, and her cheek pressed to his. His bleak life rose up and smote him,—the vain struggle with pitiless forces; the dreary years of frost and famine; the harsh and jarring contact with elemental life; the aching void which mere animal existence could not fill. And there, seduction by his side, whispering of brighter, warmer lands, of music, light, and joy, called the old times back again. He visioned it unconsciously. Faces rushed in upon him; glimpses of forgotten scenes, memories of merry hours; strains of song and trills of laughter—

“Come, Dave, Come. I have for both. The way is soft.” She looked about her at the bare furnishings of the cabin. “I have for both. The world is at our feet, and all joy is ours. Come! come!”

She was in his arms, trembling, and he held her tightly. He rose to his feet . . . But the snarling of hungry dogs, and the shrill cries of Winapie bringing about peace between the combatants, came muffled to his ear through the heavy logs. And another scene flashed before him. A struggle in the forest,—a bald-face grizzly, broken-legged, terrible; the snarling of the dogs and the shrill cries of Winapie as she urged them to the attack; himself in the midst of the crush, breathless, panting, striving to hold off red death; broken-backed, entrail-ripped dogs howling in impotent anguish and desecrating the snow; the virgin white running scarlet with the blood of man and beast; the bear, ferocious, irresistible, crunching, crunching down to the core of his life; and Winapie, at the last, in the thick of the frightful muddle, hair flying, eyes flashing, fury incarnate, passing the long hunting knife again and again—Sweat started to his forehead. He shook off the clinging woman and staggered back to the wall. And she, knowing that the moment had come, but unable to divine what was passing within him, felt all she had gained slipping away.

“Dave! Dave!” she cried. “I will not give you up! I will not give you up! If you do not wish to come, we will stay. I will stay with you. The world is less to me than are you. I will be a Northland wife to you. I will cook your food, feed your dogs, break trail for you, lift a paddle with you. I can do it. Believe me, I am strong.”

Nor did he doubt it, looking upon her and holding her off from him; but his face had grown stern and gray, and the warmth had died out of his eyes.

"I will pay off Pierre and the boatmen, and let them go. And I will stay with you, priest or no priest, minister or no minister; go with you, now, anywhere! Dave! Dave! Listen to me! You say I did you wrong in the past—and I did—let me make up for it, let me atone. If I did not rightly measure love before, let me show that I can now."

She sank to the floor and threw her arms about his knees, sobbing. "And you DO care for me. You DO care for me. Think! The long years I have waited, suffered! You can never know!" He stooped and raised her to her feet.

"Listen," he commanded, opening the door and lifting her bodily outside. "It cannot be. We are not alone to be considered. You must go. I wish you a safe journey. You will find it tougher work when you get up by the Sixty Mile, but you have the best boatmen in the world, and will get through all right. Will you say good-by?"

Though she already had herself in hand, she looked at him hopelessly. "If—if—if Winapie should—" She quavered and stopped.

But he grasped the unspoken thought, and answered, "Yes." Then struck with the enormity of it, "It cannot be conceived. There is no likelihood. It must not be entertained."

"Kiss me," she whispered, her face lighting. Then she turned and went away.

"Break camp, Pierre," she said to the boatman, who alone had remained awake against her return. "We must be going."

By the firelight his sharp eyes scanned the woe in her face, but he received the extraordinary command as though it were the most usual thing in the world. "Oui, madame," he assented. "Which way? Dawson?"

"No," she answered, lightly enough; "up; out; Dyea."

Whereat he fell upon the sleeping voyageurs, kicking them, grunting, from their blankets, and buckling them down to the work, the while his voice, vibrant with action, shrilling through all the camp. In a trice Mrs. Sayther's tiny tent had been struck, pots and pans were being gathered up, blankets rolled, and the men staggering under the loads to the boat. Here, on the banks, Mrs. Sayther waited till the luggage was made ship-shape and her nest prepared.

"We line up to de head of de island," Pierre explained to her while running out the long tow rope. "Den we tak to das back channel, where de water not queek, and I t'ink we mak good tam."

A scuffling and pattering of feet in the last year's dry grass caught his quick ear, and he turned his head. The Indian girl, circled by a bristling ring of wolf dogs, was coming toward them. Mrs. Sayther noted that the girl's face, which had been apathetic throughout the scene in the cabin, had now quickened into blazing and wrathful life.

"What you do my man?" she demanded abruptly of Mrs. Sayther. "Him lay on bunk, and him look bad all the time. I say, 'What the matter, Dave? You sick?' But him no say nothing. After that him say, 'Good girl Winapie, go way. I be all right bimeby.' What you do my man, eh? I think you bad woman."

Mrs. Sayther looked curiously at the barbarian woman who shared the life of this man, while she departed alone in the darkness of night.

"I think you bad woman," Winapie repeated in the slow, methodical way of one who gropes for strange words in an alien tongue. "I think better you go way, no come no more. Eh? What you think? I have one man. I Indian girl. You 'Merican woman. You good to see. You find plenty men. Your eyes blue like the sky. Your skin so white, so soft."

Coolly she thrust out a brown forefinger and pressed the soft cheek of the other woman. And to the eternal credit of Karen Sayther, she never flinched. Pierre hesitated and half stepped forward; but she motioned him away, though her heart welled to him with secret gratitude. "It's all right, Pierre," she said. "Please go away."

He stepped back respectfully out of earshot, where he stood grumbling to himself and measuring the distance in springs.

"Um white, um soft, like baby." Winapie touched the other cheek and withdrew her hand. "Bimeby mosquito come. Skin get sore in spot; um swell, oh, so big; um hurt, oh, so much. Plenty mosquito; plenty spot. I think better you go now before mosquito come. This way," pointing down the stream, "you go St. Michael's; that way," pointing up, "you go Dyea. Better you go Dyea. Good-by."

And that which Mrs. Sayther then did, caused Pierre to marvel greatly. For she threw her arms around the Indian girl, kissed her, and burst into tears.

"Be good to him," she cried. "Be good to him."

Then she slipped half down the face of the bank, called back "Good-by," and dropped into the boat amidships. Pierre followed her and cast off. He shoved the steering oar into place and gave the signal. Le Goire lifted an old French chanson; the men, like a row of ghosts in the dim starlight, bent their backs to the tow line; the steering oar cut the black current sharply, and the boat swept out into the night.

The Grilling of Loren Ellery

THE bon Dieu, in His inscrutable wisdom, had seen fit to place two women's souls within two fairly beautiful bodies, and to cause them to love each other dearly. He had likewise deemed it discretionary to create them sister and sister, that this affection might bloom rich and full, nor fall a prey to the deadly germs ordinarily sown in the course of feminine existence. Having done these things, it is evident He rested from His labors, leaving these two creatures to whirl of chance.

Chance behaved sanely for a long while; but, having permitted them to gain womanhood in each other's companionship, it flung them apart by half the girth of a Western State, and caused them to dwell in separate places, one in a smoky metropolis by the seaboard, and one in a great valley where meridians were as common as pebbles in a gravel bank. Chance also brought many strange things into their lives, and last of all, a man. And this man came well recommended, with moral probity, business integrity, healthy bank books, unqualified letters of credit and introduction, and looks. He became great friends with Ernestine, who lived in the city by the sea, and thought he thought much of her. After they had come to know each other well, Lute, whom an imbecile ancestor had classified as Luella, and who lived in the valley, came on a visit to her sister Ernestine. And the man, who may be known as Loren Ellery, came to know her likewise.

"And what do you think of Lute?" Ernestine, who was the elder, asked one day, after her sister's visit had terminated in a climacteric of sisterly love, kisses, admonitions, and promises.

"Now, Erna," Ellery answered — he had long since taken unto himself this prerogative of address; "it's this way: Lute's a fine girl. There's no mistaking it. She is bright, good looking, with vim and go about her, and a glorious colour. But her brightness is of a different order from yours, as are her looks, her vivacity, her complexion. You understand. She's a pretty little witch and all that, but — " Here he threw the proper expression into his eyes and gazed upon his interlocutor just the correct number of instants to be thoroughly effective, and resumed: "But she could never be to me what you are. I like her, but in a different way from you. I admire her, but not as I admire you. I can respect her, and I might have loved her had you and I never met. As it is — "

Ernestine said "Oh!" afterward. and they both felt a high satisfaction with themselves, each other, and things in general and particular.

After some time Chance, with his accustomed arch manipulation of his human dice, tossed a man with a mine across Loren Ellery's path. And according to the affinity

which exists between men possessing natural capital and men possessing industrial capital, these two foregathered for cooperative exploitation and mutual benefit. In the course of the deal Loren Ellery, not desiring to be mulcted by the Western Gentile, hired a mining expert and went to investigate the pretensions of the hole in the ground. It so happened that the mine lay among the outjutting spurs of the mountains which fringed the rim of the valley where Lute lived and moved.

Naturally, society being limited, and travellers rare, she and Ellery met, and they saw much of each other. So pleasurable did he find her company that he dallied, day by day, and postponed the date of his return. And as he took liberties with time, so did his tongue with him, till he said to Lute things which he should not have said, and which he had said before.

"It's something like this, Lute," he said one day, as they drank iced tea on her long, shaded piazza and thus strove to adapt themselves more comfortably to their torrid environment. "It's something like this, you see, now that sister of yours is a jolly nice girl, clever and all that. Not the slightest doubt in the world of it. She's got looks and health, and complexion, and all that sort of stuff. You understand. She's just the kind of a girl to carry most fellows away, fall in love with her on the jump, but —" and here he expressed that "but" in a mild pantomime, rendered more effective by long practice, and went on: "But she never could be to me what you are. She is pretty, but so are you, and in a different way. She may appeal to most men, but not to me as you can. In short, I like your sister, but there is no similarity between that and my affection for you. I can admire her and respect her, and it might have been I could have loved her had I not met you. As it is — tell me, Lute dear, tell me you understand."

As this repetition of stereotyped niceties is an infirmity from which all masculines suffer to greater or less extent, and which, in like measure, gives pleasure to all feminines, it can be considered no great evil; and evil things would not have resulted from it had not the bon Dieu made Lute's a very confiding nature and Chance sent her down on another visit to the seaboard city.

In the meantime Ellery was prevented from changing the trend of events by catching the mining fever and going off to the outjutting spurs to explore more holes in the ground.

No matter how slightly and carefully some women lift the lids of their hearts in confidence, like the box of Pandora, the contents thereof are likely to fly out to the last little particle. Lute happened to be such a creature, and it also happened that Ernestine had acquired a certain knack necessary to draw from her her maiden secrets.

The night they remained awake, and talked so long, Lute's intentions were to divulge, oh, such a little bit of the case; but gradually, insensibly, she drifted on, giving notice to more and more, till suddenly Ernestine's ears caught the concatenation of familiar phrases, and her "What's that?" precipitated affairs. Then a reciprocal relation attached itself to their confidences, and they weighed and balanced their respective merits and demerits as interpreted by the protean-tongued Loren Ellery. After that,

and the immediate pangs of chagrin and personal affront had passed, they laughed and fell asleep in each other's arms, as sisters should.

Loren Ellery unconcernedly staged and trailed it through the mountains, descending deep shafts and winding through deviously constructed man burrows, learning the ways of the Western man and his habitat, and adding to his vocabulary the nomenclature of the mines and the idiom of the frontier. And he had become quite Western himself, don't you know, and quite proud of his attainments and his mineral properties by the time of the fall of the year, when he returned to the city and betook himself to a certain residence and sent up his card. He had asked for Ernestine, but incidentally it so happened that Lute aided her sister in receiving him.

Conversation picked its sinuous thread through the unctuous nothings and polite inanities of impersonal small talk; Ellery contriving, in his subtle way, to convey to each that his interest had not dwindled, and all went well. Words flowed easily, naturally, without jar or premonition of coming discord.

"Ah, what a striking young man," Ellery murmured, in a lull, gazing admiringly upon a portrait suspended from the wall opposite him. "And may I ask whose it is?"

"My cousin George," Ernestine informed him; "the one in the navy I think I told you about."

"And is he not a handsome chap?" he continued.

"Indeed he is," authenticated Ernestine.

"Ah?"

"But not like his brother Herman," Lute chimed in.

"An extremely nice young man," Ernestine continued, "with a vim and go about him, and energy and manliness."

"Yes, I dare say," Ellery put in, absently, puzzling over the vague familiarity of the phrases.

"And yet so different from his brother," came back from Lute's side of the duet.

"Isn't it funny," from Ernestine; "he's just the kind of a man girls lose their hearts to, yet —"

"I could not love him as I would Herman," Lute interpolated, taking up her portion of the measure.

"How strange!" Ellery was beginning to fall a victim to decidedly definite suspicions.

"An estimable young man —"

"Whom I could like —"

"But not as I could his brother —"

"Whom I could admire —"

"But not as Herman —"

Ellery knew they were grilling him and smiled vacuously.

"Whom I can respect —"

"And might have loved —"

"Had I not met —"

"His brother Herman —"

“And who — why, Mr. Ellery,” Ernestine broke off, as innocently as she did abruptly; “you are not going? And so soon?”

“Most charming time, I assure you,” Ellery had glanced at his watch and risen to his feet, a barely discernible colour in his cheeks, but managing to hold himself in hand. “So nice to see you girls again, don’t you know; but I must be moving on.”

“But won’t you stay just a moment and have some tea?” Ernestine made a half move to strike the bell.

“Really, I would like to, ever so much.” He was methodically edging to the door the while he spoke. “Had no idea it was so late, time flew so; but I must meet a man with a prospectus — this mining, you know, is so deucedly distracting.”

“Then good-bye, Mr. Ellery.” Ernestine’s larynx was delicately vibrant with disappointment as she finally extended her hand. “You must come again — ”

“And see our cousin George — ”

“And his brother Herman — ”

“He’s just as he is in his picture, and I know you will like him — ”

“But different from the way you will like his brother Herm — ”

But Loren Ellery, fearing an attack of primordial passion, fled incontinently down the stairs.

Grit of Women

A wolfish head, wistful-eyed and frost-rimmed, thrust aside the tent-flaps.

“Hi! Chook! Siwash! Chook, you limb of Satan!” chorused the protesting inmates. Bettles rapped the dog sharply with a tin plate, and it withdrew hastily. Louis Savoy refastened the flaps, kicked a frying-pan over against the bottom, and warmed his hands. It was very cold without. Forty-eight hours gone, the spirit thermometer had burst at sixty-eight below, and since that time it had grown steadily and bitterly colder. There was no telling when the snap would end. And it is poor policy, unless the gods will it, to venture far from a stove at such times, or to increase the quantity of cold atmosphere one must breathe. Men sometimes do it, and sometimes they chill their lungs. This leads up to a dry, hacking cough, noticeably irritable when bacon is being fried. After that, somewhere along in the spring or summer, a hole is burned in the frozen muck. Into this a man’s carcass is dumped, covered over with moss, and left with the assurance that it will rise on the crack of Doom, wholly and frigidly intact. For those of little faith, sceptical of material integration on that fateful day, no fitter country than the Klondike can be recommended to die in. But it is not to be inferred from this that it is a fit country for living purposes.

It was very cold without, but it was not over-warm within. The only article which might be designated furniture was the stove, and for this the men were frank in displaying their preference. Upon half of the floor pine boughs had been cast; above this were spread the sleeping-furs, beneath lay the winter’s snowfall. The remainder of the floor was moccasin-packed snow, littered with pots and pans and the general impedimenta of an Arctic camp. The stove was red and roaring hot, but only a bare three feet away lay a block of ice, as sharp-edged and dry as when first quarried from the creek bottom. The pressure of the outside cold forced the inner heat upward. Just above the stove, where the pipe penetrated the roof, was a tiny circle of dry canvas; next, with the pipe always as centre, a circle of steaming canvas; next a damp and moisture-exuding ring; and finally, the rest of the tent, sidewalls and top, coated with a half-inch of dry, white, crystal-encrusted frost.

“Oh! OH! OH!” A young fellow, lying asleep in the furs, bearded and wan and weary, raised a moan of pain, and without waking increased the pitch and intensity of his anguish. His body half-lifted from the blankets, and quivered and shrank spasmodically, as though drawing away from a bed of nettles.

“Roll’m over!” ordered Bettles. “He’s crampin’.”

And thereat, with pitiless good-will, he was pitched upon and rolled and thumped and pounded by half-a-dozen willing comrades.

“Damn the trail,” he muttered softly, as he threw off the robes and sat up. “I’ve run across country, played quarter three seasons hand-running, and hardened myself in all manner of ways; and then I pilgrim it into this God-forsaken land and find myself an effeminate Athenian without the simplest rudiments of manhood!” He hunched up to the fire and rolled a cigarette. “Oh, I’m not whining. I can take my medicine all right, all right; but I’m just decently ashamed of myself, that’s all. Here I am, on top of a dirty thirty miles, as knocked up and stiff and sore as a pink-tea degenerate after a five-mile walk on a country turn-pike. Bah! It makes me sick! Got a match?” “Don’t git the tantrums, youngster.” Bettles passed over the required fire-stick and waxed patriarchal. “Ye’ve gotter ‘low some for the breakin’-in. Sufferin’ cracky! don’t I recollect the first time I hit the trail! Stiff? I’ve seen the time it’d take me ten minutes to git my mouth from the waterhole an’ come to my feet—every jint crackin’ an’ kickin’ fit to kill. Cramp? In sech knots it’d take the camp half a day to untangle me. You’re all right, for a cub, any ye’ve the true sperrit. Come this day year, you’ll walk all us old bucks into the ground any time. An’ best in your favor, you hain’t got that streak of fat in your make-up which has sent many a husky man to the bosom of Abraham afore his right and proper time.”

“Streak of fat?”

“Yep. Comes along of bulk. ‘T ain’t the big men as is the best when it comes to the trail.”

“Never heard of it.”

“Never heered of it, eh? Well, it’s a dead straight, open-an’-shut fact, an’ no gittin’ round. Bulk’s all well enough for a mighty big effort, but ‘thout stayin’ powers it ain’t worth a continental whoop; an’ stayin’ powers an’ bulk ain’t runnin’ mates. Takes the small, wiry fellows when it comes to gittin’ right down an’ hangin’ on like a lean-jowled dog to a bone. Why, hell’s fire, the big men they ain’t in it!”

“By gar!” broke in Louis Savoy, “dat is no, vot you call, josh! I know one mans, so vaire beeg like ze buffalo. Wit him, on ze Sulphur Creek stampede, go one small mans, Lon McFane. You know dat Lon McFane, dat leetle Irisher wit ze red hair and ze grin. An’ dey walk an’ walk an’ walk, all ze day long an’ ze night long. And beeg mans, him become vaire tired, an’ lay down mooch in ze snow. And leetle mans keek beeg mans, an’ him cry like, vot you call—ah! vot you call ze kid. And leetle mans keek an’ keek an’ keek, an’ bime by, long time, long way, keek beeg mans into my cabin. Tree days ‘fore him crawl out my blankets. Nevaire I see beeg squaw like him. No nevaire. Him haf vot you call ze streak of fat. You bet.”

“But there was Axel Gunderson,” Prince spoke up. The great Scandinavian, with the tragic events which shadowed his passing, had made a deep mark on the mining engineer. “He lies up there, somewhere.” He swept his hand in the vague direction of the mysterious east.

“Biggest man that ever turned his heels to Salt Water, or run a moose down with sheer grit,” supplemented Bettles; “but he’s the prove-the-rule exception. Look at his woman, Unga,—tip the scales at a hundred an’ ten, clean meat an’ nary ounce to spare.

She'd bank grit 'gainst his for all there was in him, an' see him, an' go him better if it was possible. Nothing over the earth, or in it, or under it, she wouldn't 'a' done."

"But she loved him," objected the engineer.

"'T ain't that. It—"

"Look you, brothers," broke in Sitka Charley from his seat on the grub-box. "Ye have spoken of the streak of fat that runs in big men's muscles, of the grit of women and the love, and ye have spoken fair; but I have in mind things which happened when the land was young and the fires of men apart as the stars. It was then I had concern with a big man, and a streak of fat, and a woman. And the woman was small; but her heart was greater than the beef-heart of the man, and she had grit. And we traveled a weary trail, even to the Salt Water, and the cold was bitter, the snow deep, the hunger great. And the woman's love was a mighty love—no more can man say than this."

He paused, and with the hatchet broke pieces of ice from the large chunk beside him. These he threw into the gold pan on the stove, where the drinking-water thawed. The men drew up closer, and he of the cramps sought greater comfort vainly for his stiffened body.

"Brothers, my blood is red with Siwash, but my heart is white. To the faults of my fathers I owe the one, to the virtues of my friends the other. A great truth came to me when I was yet a boy. I learned that to your kind and you was given the earth; that the Siwash could not withstand you, and like the caribou and the bear, must perish in the cold. So I came into the warm and sat among you, by your fires, and behold, I became one of you, I have seen much in my time. I have known strange things, and bucked big, on big trails, with men of many breeds. And because of these things, I measure deeds after your manner, and judge men, and think thoughts. Wherefore, when I speak harshly of one of your own kind, I know you will not take it amiss; and when I speak high of one of my father's people, you will not take it upon you to say, 'Sitka Charley is Siwash, and there is a crooked light in his eyes and small honor to his tongue.' Is it not so?"

Deep down in throat, the circle vouchsafed its assent.

"The woman was Passuk. I got her in fair trade from her people, who were of the Coast and whose Chilcat totem stood at the head of a salt arm of the sea. My heart did not go out to the woman, nor did I take stock of her looks. For she scarce took her eyes from the ground, and she was timid and afraid, as girls will be when cast into a stranger's arms whom they have never seen before. As I say, there was no place in my heart for her to creep, for I had a great journey in mind, and stood in need of one to feed my dogs and to lift a paddle with me through the long river days. One blanket would cover the twain; so I chose Passuk.

"Have I not said I was a servant to the Government? If not, it is well that ye know. So I was taken on a warship, sleds and dogs and evaporated foods, and with me came Passuk. And we went north, to the winter ice-rim of Bering Sea, where we were landed,—myself, and Passuk, and the dogs. I was also given moneys of the Government, for I was its servant, and charts of lands which the eyes of man had never dwelt

upon, and messages. These messages were sealed, and protected shrewdly from the weather, and I was to deliver them to the whale-ships of the Arctic, ice-bound by the great Mackenzie. Never was there so great a river, forgetting only our own Yukon, the Mother of all Rivers.

“All of which is neither here nor there, for my story deals not with the whale-ships, nor the berg-bound winter I spent by the Mackenzie. Afterward, in the spring, when the days lengthened and there was a crust to the snow, we came south, Passuk and I, to the Country of the Yukon. A weary journey, but the sun pointed out the way of our feet. It was a naked land then, as I have said, and we worked up the current, with pole and paddle, till we came to Forty Mile. Good it was to see white faces once again, so we put into the bank. And that winter was a hard winter. The darkness and the cold drew down upon us, and with them the famine. To each man the agent of the Company gave forty pounds of flour and twenty of bacon. There were no beans. And, the dogs howled always, and there were flat bellies and deep-lined faces, and strong men became weak, and weak men died. There was also much scurvy.

“Then came we together in the store one night, and the empty shelves made us feel our own emptiness the more. We talked low, by the light of the fire, for the candles had been set aside for those who might yet gasp in the spring. Discussion was held, and it was said that a man must go forth to the Salt Water and tell to the world our misery. At this all eyes turned to me, for it was understood that I was a great traveler. ‘It is seven hundred miles,’ said I, ‘to Haines Mission by the sea, and every inch of it snowshoe work. Give me the pick of your dogs and the best of your grub, and I will go. And with me shall go Passuk.’

“To this they were agreed. But there arose one, Long Jeff, a Yankee-man, big-boned and big-muscled. Also his talk was big. He, too, was a mighty traveler, he said, born to the snowshoe and bred up on buffalo milk. He would go with me, in case I fell by the trail, that he might carry the word on to the Mission. I was young, and I knew not Yankee-men. How was I to know that big talk betokened the streak of fat, or that Yankee-men who did great things kept their teeth together? So we took the pick of the dogs and the best of the grub, and struck the trail, we three,—Passuk, Long Jeff, and I.

“Well, ye have broken virgin snow, labored at the gee-pole, and are not unused to the packed river-jams; so I will talk little of the toil, save that on some days we made ten miles, and on others thirty, but more often ten. And the best of the grub was not good, while we went on stint from the start. Likewise the pick of the dogs was poor, and we were hard put to keep them on their legs. At the White River our three sleds became two sleds, and we had only come two hundred miles. But we lost nothing; the dogs that left the traces went into the bellies of those that remained.

“Not a greeting, not a curl of smoke, till we made Pelly. Here I had counted on grub; and here I had counted on leaving Long Jeff, who was whining and trail-sore. But the factor’s lungs were wheezing, his eyes bright, his cache nigh empty; and he showed us the empty cache of the missionary, also his grave with the rocks piled high to keep off

the dogs. There was a bunch of Indians there, but babies and old men there were none, and it was clear that few would see the spring.

“So we pulled on, light-stomached and heavy-hearted, with half a thousand miles of snow and silence between us and Haines Mission by the sea. The darkness was at its worst, and at midday the sun could not clear the sky-line to the south. But the ice-jams were smaller, the going better; so I pushed the dogs hard and traveled late and early. As I said at Forty Mile, every inch of it was snow-shoe work. And the shoes made great sores on our feet, which cracked and scabbed but would not heal. And every day these sores grew more grievous, till in the morning, when we girded on the shoes, Long Jeff cried like a child. I put him at the fore of the light sled to break trail, but he slipped off the shoes for comfort. Because of this the trail was not packed, his moccasins made great holes, and into these holes the dogs wallowed. The bones of the dogs were ready to break through their hides, and this was not good for them. So I spoke hard words to the man, and he promised, and broke his word. Then I beat him with the dog-whip, and after that the dogs wallowed no more. He was a child, what of the pain and the streak of fat.

“But Passuk. While the man lay by the fire and wept, she cooked, and in the morning helped lash the sleds, and in the evening to unlash them. And she saved the dogs. Ever was she to the fore, lifting the webbed shoes and making the way easy. Passuk—how shall I say?—I took it for granted that she should do these things, and thought no more about it. For my mind was busy with other matters, and besides, I was young in years and knew little of woman. It was only on looking back that I came to understand.

“And the man became worthless. The dogs had little strength in them, but he stole rides on the sled when he lagged behind. Passuk said she would take the one sled, so the man had nothing to do. In the morning I gave him his fair share of grub and started him on the trail alone. Then the woman and I broke camp, packed the sleds, and harnessed the dogs. By midday, when the sun mocked us, we would overtake the man, with the tears frozen on his cheeks, and pass him. In the night we made camp, set aside his fair share of grub, and spread his furs. Also we made a big fire, that he might see. And hours afterward he would come limping in, and eat his grub with moans and groans, and sleep. He was not sick, this man. He was only trail-sore and tired, and weak with hunger. But Passuk and I were trail-sore and tired, and weak with hunger; and we did all the work and he did none. But he had the streak of fat of which our brother Bettles has spoken. Further, we gave the man always his fair share of grub.

“Then one day we met two ghosts journeying through the Silence. They were a man and a boy, and they were white. The ice had opened on Lake Le Barge, and through it had gone their main outfit. One blanket each carried about his shoulders. At night they built a fire and crouched over it till morning. They had a little flour. This they stirred in warm water and drank. The man showed me eight cups of flour—all they had, and Pelly, stricken with famine, two hundred miles away. They said, also, that there was an Indian behind; that they had whacked fair, but that he could not keep up. I did not believe they had whacked fair, else would the Indian have kept up. But I could give

them no grub. They strove to steal a dog—the fattest, which was very thin—but I shoved my pistol in their faces and told them begone. And they went away, like drunken men, through the Silence toward Pelly.

“I had three dogs now, and one sled, and the dogs were only bones and hair. When there is little wood, the fire burns low and the cabin grows cold. So with us. With little grub the frost bites sharp, and our faces were black and frozen till our own mothers would not have known us. And our feet were very sore. In the morning, when I hit the trail, I sweated to keep down the cry when the pain of the snowshoes smote me. Passuk never opened her lips, but stepped to the fore to break the way. The man howled.

“The Thirty Mile was swift, and the current ate away the ice from beneath, and there were many air-holes and cracks, and much open water. One day we came upon the man, resting, for he had gone ahead, as was his wont, in the morning. But between us was open water. This he had passed around by taking to the rim-ice where it was too narrow for a sled. So we found an ice-bridge. Passuk weighed little, and went first, with a long pole crosswise in her hands in chance she broke through. But she was light, and her shoes large, and she passed over. Then she called the dogs. But they had neither poles nor shoes, and they broke through and were swept under by the water. I held tight to the sled from behind, till the traces broke and the dogs went on down under the ice. There was little meat to them, but I had counted on them for a week’s grub, and they were gone.

“The next morning I divided all the grub, which was little, into three portions. And I told Long Jeff that he could keep up with us, or not, as he saw fit; for we were going to travel light and fast. But he raised his voice and cried over his sore feet and his troubles, and said harsh things against comradeship. Passuk’s feet were sore, and my feet were sore—ay, sorer than his, for we had worked with the dogs; also, we looked to see. Long Jeff swore he would die before he hit the trail again; so Passuk took a fur robe, and I a cooking pot and an axe, and we made ready to go. But she looked on the man’s portion, and said, ‘It is wrong to waste good food on a baby. He is better dead.’ I shook my head and said no—that a comrade once was a comrade always. Then she spoke of the men of Forty Mile; that they were many men and good; and that they looked to me for grub in the spring. But when I still said no, she snatched the pistol from my belt, quick, and as our brother Bettles has spoken, Long Jeff went to the bosom of Abraham before his time. I chided Passuk for this; but she showed no sorrow, nor was she sorrowful. And in my heart I knew she was right.”

Sitka Charley paused and threw pieces of ice into the gold pan on the stove. The men were silent, and their backs chilled to the sobbing cries of the dogs as they gave tongue to their misery in the outer cold.

“And day by day we passed in the snow the sleeping-places of the two ghosts—Passuk and I—and we knew we would be glad for such ere we made Salt Water. Then we came to the Indian, like another ghost, with his face set toward Pelly. They had not whacked up fair, the man and the boy, he said, and he had had no flour for three days. Each night he boiled pieces of his moccasins in a cup, and ate them. He did not have much

moccasins left. And he was a Coast Indian, and told us these things through Passuk, who talked his tongue. He was a stranger in the Yukon, and he knew not the way, but his face was set to Pelly. How far was it? Two sleeps? ten? a hundred—he did not know, but he was going to Pelly. It was too far to turn back; he could only keep on.

“He did not ask for grub, for he could see we, too, were hard put. Passuk looked at the man, and at me, as though she were of two minds, like a mother partridge whose young are in trouble. So I turned to her and said, ‘This man has been dealt unfair. Shall I give him of our grub a portion?’ I saw her eyes light, as with quick pleasure; but she looked long at the man and at me, and her mouth drew close and hard, and she said, ‘No. The Salt Water is afar off, and Death lies in wait. Better it is that he take this stranger man and let my man Charley pass.’ So the man went away in the Silence toward Pelly. That night she wept. Never had I seen her weep before. Nor was it the smoke of the fire, for the wood was dry wood. So I marveled at her sorrow, and thought her woman’s heart had grown soft at the darkness of the trail and the pain.

“Life is a strange thing. Much have I thought on it, and pondered long, yet daily the strangeness of it grows not less, but more. Why this longing for Life? It is a game which no man wins. To live is to toil hard, and to suffer sore, till Old Age creeps heavily upon us and we throw down our hands on the cold ashes of dead fires. It is hard to live. In pain the babe sucks his first breath, in pain the old man gasps his last, and all his days are full of trouble and sorrow; yet he goes down to the open arms of Death, stumbling, falling, with head turned backward, fighting to the last. And Death is kind. It is only Life, and the things of Life that hurt. Yet we love Life, and we hate Death. It is very strange.

“We spoke little, Passuk and I, in the days which came. In the night we lay in the snow like dead people, and in the morning we went on our way, walking like dead people. And all things were dead. There were no ptarmigan, no squirrels, no snowshoe rabbits,—nothing. The river made no sound beneath its white robes. The sap was frozen in the forest. And it became cold, as now; and in the night the stars drew near and large, and leaped and danced; and in the day the sun-dogs mocked us till we saw many suns, and all the air flashed and sparkled, and the snow was diamond dust. And there was no heat, no sound, only the bitter cold and the Silence. As I say, we walked like dead people, as in a dream, and we kept no count of time. Only our faces were set to Salt Water, our souls strained for Salt Water, and our feet carried us toward Salt Water. We camped by the Tahkeena, and knew it not. Our eyes looked upon the White Horse, but we saw it not. Our feet trod the portage of the Canyon, but they felt it not. We felt nothing. And we fell often by the way, but we fell, always, with our faces toward Salt Water.

“Our last grub went, and we had shared fair, Passuk and I, but she fell more often, and at Caribou Crossing her strength left her. And in the morning we lay beneath the one robe and did not take the trail. It was in my mind to stay there and meet Death hand-in-hand with Passuk; for I had grown old, and had learned the love of woman. Also, it was eighty miles to Haines Mission, and the great Chilcoot, far above

the timber-line, reared his storm-swept head between. But Passuk spoke to me, low, with my ear against her lips that I might hear. And now, because she need not fear my anger, she spoke her heart, and told me of her love, and of many things which I did not understand.

“And she said: ‘You are my man, Charley, and I have been a good woman to you. And in all the days I have made your fire, and cooked your food, and fed your dogs, and lifted paddle or broken trail, I have not complained. Nor did I say that there was more warmth in the lodge of my father, or that there was more grub on the Chilcat. When you have spoken, I have listened. When you have ordered, I have obeyed. Is it not so, Charley?’

“And I said: ‘Ay, it is so.’

“And she said: ‘When first you came to the Chilcat, nor looked upon me, but bought me as a man buys a dog, and took me away, my heart was hard against you and filled with bitterness and fear. But that was long ago. For you were kind to me, Charley, as a good man is kind to his dog. Your heart was cold, and there was no room for me; yet you dealt me fair and your ways were just. And I was with you when you did bold deeds and led great ventures, and I measured you against the men of other breeds, and I saw you stood among them full of honor, and your word was wise, your tongue true. And I grew proud of you, till it came that you filled all my heart, and all my thought was of you. You were as the midsummer sun, when its golden trail runs in a circle and never leaves the sky. And whatever way I cast my eyes I beheld the sun. But your heart was ever cold, Charley, and there was no room.’

“And I said: ‘It is so. It was cold, and there was no room. But that is past. Now my heart is like the snowfall in the spring, when the sun has come back. There is a great thaw and a bending, a sound of running waters, and a budding and sprouting of green things. And there is drumming of partridges, and songs of robins, and great music, for the winter is broken, Passuk, and I have learned the love of woman.’

“She smiled and moved for me to draw her closer. And she said, ‘I am glad.’ After that she lay quiet for a long time, breathing softly, her head upon my breast. Then she whispered: ‘The trail ends here, and I am tired. But first I would speak of other things. In the long ago, when I was a girl on the Chilcat, I played alone among the skin bales of my father’s lodge; for the men were away on the hunt, and the women and boys were dragging in the meat. It was in the spring, and I was alone. A great brown bear, just awake from his winter’s sleep, hungry, his fur hanging to the bones in flaps of leanness, shoved his head within the lodge and said, “Oof!” My brother came running back with the first sled of meat. And he fought the bear with burning sticks from the fire, and the dogs in their harnesses, with the sled behind them, fell upon the bear. There was a great battle and much noise. They rolled in the fire, the skin bales were scattered, the lodge overthrown. But in the end the bear lay dead, with the fingers of my brother in his mouth and the marks of his claws upon my brother’s face. Did you mark the Indian by the Pelly trail, his mitten which had no thumb, his hand

which he warmed by our fire? He was my brother. And I said he should have no grub. And he went away in the Silence without grub.'

"This, my brothers, was the love of Passuk, who died in the snow, by the Caribou Crossing. It was a mighty love, for she denied her brother for the man who led her away on weary trails to a bitter end. And, further, such was this woman's love, she denied herself. Ere her eyes closed for the last time she took my hand and slipped it under her squirrel-skin parka to her waist. I felt there a well-filled pouch, and learned the secret of her lost strength. Day by day we had shared fair, to the last least bit; and day by day but half her share had she eaten. The other half had gone into the well-filled pouch.

"And she said: 'This is the end of the trail for Passuk; but your trail, Charley, leads on and on, over the great Chilcoot, down to Haines Mission and the sea. And it leads on and on, by the light of many suns, over unknown lands and strange waters, and it is full of years and honors and great glories. It leads you to the lodges of many women, and good women, but it will never lead you to a greater love than the love of Passuk.'

"And I knew the woman spoke true. But a madness came upon me, and I threw the well-filled pouch from me, and swore that my trail had reached an end, till her tired eyes grew soft with tears, and she said: 'Among men has Sitka Charley walked in honor, and ever has his word been true. Does he forget that honor now, and talk vain words by the Caribou Crossing? Does he remember no more the men of Forty Mile, who gave him of their grub the best, of their dogs the pick? Ever has Passuk been proud of her man. Let him lift himself up, gird on his snow-shoes, and begone, that she may still keep her pride.'

"And when she grew cold in my arms I arose, and sought out the well-filled pouch, and girt on my snowshoes, and staggered along the trail; for there was a weakness in my knees, and my head was dizzy, and in my ears there was a roaring, and a flashing of fire upon my eyes. The forgotten trails of boyhood came back to me. I sat by the full pots of the potlach feast, and raised my voice in song, and danced to the chanting of the men and maidens and the booming of the walrus drums. And Passuk held my hand and walked by my side. When I laid down to sleep, she waked me. When I stumbled and fell, she raised me. When I wandered in the deep snow, she led me back to the trail. And in this wise, like a man bereft of reason, who sees strange visions and whose thoughts are light with wine, I came to Haines Mission by the sea."

Sitka Charley threw back the tent-flaps. It was midday. To the south, just clearing the bleak Henderson Divide, poised the cold-disked sun. On either hand the sun-dogs blazed. The air was a gossamer of glittering frost. In the foreground, beside the trail, a wolf-dog, bristling with frost, thrust a long snout heavenward and mourned.

The Handsome Cabin Boy

“And the dapper young fellow was — ”

“None other than the veiled woman, of course.”

“O, pshaw!” I cried. “That’s well enough for a Sunday newspaper, but in real life people are not so easily misled.”

“Look at the authentic instances — women serving as soldiers, sailors, scouts — ”

“Bosh!”

“Why, there’s my little brother Bob, as clever an impersonator — ”

“Bosh!”

“People are fooled every day and — ”

“Stuff and nonsense,” I said. “Any one but a ninny should penetrate such a make-up at a glance. I don’t think much of a fellow who can’t tell a man from a woman. Catch me napping that way.”

“I’ll catch you,” cried Jack.

“I like that,” was my reply.

“I’ll wager I fool you within six months.”

“Done! For how much?”

“The loser to foot a supper; the setting, ordering, and inviting of the same to be at the winner’s discretion.”

“Done!”

We shook hands, and the fellows crowded round with all sorts of advice and persiflage. Thus was the seed sown, out of which was to spring the never-to-be-forgotten romance of “The Handsome Cabin Boy.”

The succeeding fortnight found me in solitary grandeur aboard my schooner yacht Falcon, bound for a short cruise to Honolulu. We had hardly sunk the Farralone Light, when my suspicions were aroused. From the cook to the sailing-master complaints began to pour in about the new cabin boy. They held he was willing enough, but worthless. At the last moment, Billy, the old boy, had left us in the lurch, and my agent, to whom all such matters were entrusted, had hastily procured the present incumbent.

As they said, he was willing enough, but — in short, he was ignorant of his duties and totally unfit for such a position. Yet he tried so hard that everybody was drawn toward him. And he was such a handsome lad. Dark-eyed, rosy-cheeked, with a delicate olive complexion and an exquisite oval — small wonder that he recalled to my mind the bet with Jack Haliday. And then, for the slender lad of fifteen or sixteen that he

appeared, there was a vague, insinuating fullness about the figure, which did not fail to corroborate my suspicions.

But I held my hush and awaited confirmation. This came sooner than I expected. The sailing-master and myself were on the poop, one noon, with our sextants, bent on shooting the sun. The lad came up the companionway with a pan of soot and ashes; he had just cleaned the cabin stove. Instead of going to the lee, he stepped to the weather rail and let fly the refuse. And fly it did — backwards, of course, and all over us.

Digging a handful out of his eyes, the sailing-master grabbed the young rascal by the arm. Now Nelson was a rough son of the sea, and had a mellifluous command of the vernacular which serves for emphasis to those who sail the same. He shook him up and down and cursed him with as virile a combination of English and Scandinavian oaths as was ever my luck to hear.

The boy lost his wits and began to cry. Picking up the pan, he started for the cabin, but just opposite me, reeled and toppled over. I caught him before he could fall, and — well, my arm had strayed in forbidden pastures too often to be mistaken now.

“Why, you’re a girl!” I cried.

The man at the wheel began to snicker, so I hurried her below to save her from confusion before the men. There she cried, and sobbed, and carried on, till I was almost as distracted myself, in my efforts to soothe her. At last she calmed down.

“O, sir,” she began, “I hope you won’t be angry with me. I — he — Mr. — ”

“It’s Jack Haliday’s doing, isn’t it?” I interrupted.

“Yes, sir.”

“Then you know all about the bet, and you’ll have to testify that I discovered your — er — identity.”

“Yes, sir, and he’ll be angry because I lost. Boo — hoo — oo — ”

“O, you did very well.” I thought she needed a little cheering. “The cook would never have discovered — say! how the deuce — you’ll have to change your — ”

It was indeed embarrassing for both of us. And that blundering cook had never tumbled! I called him into the cabin.

“Tell off that German deck boy to help you,” I ordered. “And go to your room and pack up Miss — er — ”

“E — E — Eastman,” sobbed the disconsolate bundle on the floor.

“And pack up Miss Eastman’s belongings. Take them to the spare state-room, and make everything comfortable. I’ll see you get extra pay for this trip. Go! Don’t stand there all day!” I could not help laughing at his round-eyed wonder.

“I don’t know what to do in the way of suitable clothes,” I said, as she entered her new berth in the wake of a trim little sea-chest.

“That’s all right, sir,” she replied, between her sobs. “I b — brought some dresses along.”

“Strike me blind!” cried the cook, as the door shut. “O, I beg your pardon, sir; but do you mean to tell me, sir, that he’s a — a she? Think of it! — and me a married man! What’ll my wife say?”

Though I tried to explain that there was no necessity of his wife knowing, he wandered away to the galley, more woe-begone, if anything, than the poor creature who had caused his distress. Still, I could sympathize with him, realizing as I did, my own false position, and knowing how the sailors must be haw-hawing among themselves.

Dinner was sent into her, and it was not till next morning that she showed herself. And then it was a demure little maid, for all her short brown locks. It seemed a pity they had been clipped for the sake of a paltry bet.

“What will your people say?” I asked, in the course of explanations. “Do they know?”

“My brother does. I came with his consent.”

“Your brother’s a scoundrel and ought to be horse-whipped. It’s disgraceful, to say the least.”

“How?”

This was a poser. How? I began to comprehend the mess Jack Haliday had got me into. How? What innocence!

“You must have been brought up in a convent,” I said bluntly.

“Yes, sir; I went to the Sacred Heart until a year ago.”

Worse and worse — it was no light responsibility thus thrust upon me. I finally wormed her story from her. She had lost her mother during her childhood, and her father, a small tradesman, had educated her at the Convent of the Sacred Heart. Things had gone from bad to worse with him, and when he died, she and her brother were left penniless. To curtail the story: they had become protégés of Haliday’s. She had shown an aptitude for the stage, and Haliday encouraged her, prophesying that some day the metropolitan vaudeville would open its arms to a soubrette of no mean ability.

“And when he asked this favor of me,” she concluded, “what could I do? Refuse, after all he had done for me?”

Well, the yacht took on new life. Strange how this chit of a child, this girl of sixteen, brightened things up! She became the idol of all hands and even Nelson apologized — first time the stubborn dog ever did such a thing, I’ll wager. She could play the piano fairly well, and though her voice was not strong and had no register, her singing was sweet indeed.

When we arrived at Honolulu, I was for making arrangements to send her back by steamer; but the guileless creature would not hear of it, and looked so miserable when I insisted, that I gave in. Besides, nobody knew us. And she — why, she had no conception of evil, and to undeceive her was a task beyond my power. I supplied her with funds, and she soon had a stunning array of gowns and other female fripperies. Then we took in the concerts of the Hawaiian Band, made long drives into the country, and visited many places of interest and recreation. We had a delightful time; but the best of good things must end, and a month later found us off the Golden Gate. To-morrow we should be in San-Francisco.

To-morrow — I half sighed as I lighted a cigar, and glanced at her state-room door. What were her dreams, I wondered. Then I thought of my long, lonely cruises. How bright this one had been! Life took on new possibilities, as I began to realize some

of its hitherto unknown charms — charms which my benedict friends never ceased to dwell upon. How she had changed things! A neatly turned ankle on the cabin stairs, a twinkling slipper along the deck, a girl's light laughter, a song at twilight, a — in short, the ineffable something of a woman's presence. I was startled at the thought. Let me see: sixteen — twenty-six; nineteen — twenty-nine; no, that would be too long to wait, eighteen — twenty-eight — that's it. And not such a disparity after all. Two years! What would not two years do? Development, the rounding of that mind — aye, and that form, already so rich of promise. Two years, and then —

“Eight bells!”

The clamor of changing watch had destroyed the fairy pictures; so I tossed away my cigar and went to bed.

Jack Haliday and the whole crowd were at the club-house pier to meet us. Evidently, the lookout of the Merchants' Exchange had telegraphed our arrival off the Heads the previous night. They trooped aboard in a body, and I trembled for Miss Eastman. However, Clara, as I had come to call her, faced the ordeal bravely. The subdued expectancy and smothered giggles angered me. Jack Haliday opened the ball at once.

“I say, you know, about that supper — ”

“What about it?” I asked sharply.

“Well, I've made all the plans, but I thought it better to submit them to you. You might make a few suggestions, you know.”

“You've made all the plans!” I shouted. “I have an idea that the ordering of this supper belongs to me.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” Everybody began to laugh.

“Hope you had a pleasant trip, Miss Eastman,” he said, turning to her.

“O, I did,” she assured him, though I could see her lips were trembling.

“How did you discover it?” he asked, addressing me.

“Why she fainted in my arms, and — ”

“ho! ho! He! he! he!” the crowd fairly roared, and I beamed triumphantly on my discomfited opponent.

“Was he angry?” continued the imperturbable Haliday.

“No,” Clara replied, “he was real nice. And when we got to Honolulu he wanted to send me home on the steamer, but I wouldn't let him. Then we had a gorgeous time — bought me candy and gloves, took me buggy riding, and — ”

With this the crowd went mad. They slapped Jack on the shoulder, poked him in the ribs, and hugged each other in ecstasies of glee.

“Why, you ninny!” Jack cried. “That's my brother Bob.”

“Impossible,” I rejoined. “Why, when she fainted in my arms, I — ”

At this juncture speech failed me, for the modest Miss Eastman turned a couple of back-flips, came up smiling, thrust a hand into her maidenly bosom and drew forth — heavens! — a couple of pneumatic cushions, the kind used by football players.

It were needless for me to tell how I led the stampede to the club-house; how the supper came off, with Bob Haliday at the head of the table; or how, to this day, the

mere mention of "The Handsome Cabin Boy" arouses a certain choler which I can never hope to overcome.

The Hanging of Cultus George

THE way led steeply up through deep, powdery snow that was unmarred by sled-track or moccasin impression. Smoke, in the lead, pressed the fragile crystals down under his fat, short snow-shoes. The task required lungs and muscle, and he flung himself into it with all his strength. Behind, on the surface he packed, strained the string of six dogs, the steam-jets of their breathing attesting their labor and the lowness of the temperature. Between the wheel-dog and the sled toiled Shorty, his weight divided between the guiding gee-pole and the haul, for he was pulling with the dogs. Every half-hour he and Smoke exchanged places, for the snow-shoe work was even more arduous than that of the gee-pole.

The whole outfit was fresh and strong. It was merely hard work being efficiently done—the breaking of a midwinter trail across a divide. On this severe stretch, ten miles a day they called a decent stint. They kept in condition, but each night crawled well tired into their sleeping-furs. This was their sixth day out from the lively camp of Mucluc on the Yukon. In two days, with the loaded sled, they had covered the fifty miles of packed trail up Moose Creek. Then had come the struggle with the four feet of untouched snow that was really not snow, but frost-crystals, so lacking in cohesion that when kicked it flew with the thin hissing of granulated sugar. In three days they had wallowed thirty miles up Minnow Creek and across the series of low divides that separate the several creeks flowing south into Siwash River; and now they were breasting the big divide, past the Bald Buttes, where the way would lead them down Porcupine Creek to the middle reaches of Milk River. Higher up Milk River, it was fairly rumored, were deposits of copper. And this was their goal—a hill of pure copper, half a mile to the right and up the first creek after Milk River issued from a deep gorge to flow across a heavily timbered stretch of bottom. They would know it when they saw it. One-Eyed McCarthy had described it with sharp definiteness. It was impossible to miss it—unless McCarthy had lied.

Smoke was in the lead, and the small scattered spruce-trees were becoming scarcer and smaller, when he saw one, dead and bone-dry, that stood in their path. There was no need for speech. His glance to Shorty was acknowledged by a stentorian “Whoa!” The dogs stood in the traces till they saw Shorty begin to undo the sled-lashings and Smoke attack the dead spruce with an ax; whereupon the animals dropped in the snow and curled into balls, the bush of each tail curved to cover four padded feet and an ice-rimmed muzzle.

The men worked with the quickness of long practice. Gold-pan, coffee-pot, and cooking-pail were soon thawing the heaped frost-crystals into water. Smoke extracted

a stick of beans from the sled. Already cooked, with a generous admixture of cubes of fat pork and bacon, the beans had been frozen into this portable immediacy. He chopped off chunks with an ax, as if it were so much firewood, and put them into the frying-pan to thaw. Solidly frozen sourdough biscuits were likewise placed to thaw. In twenty minutes from the time they halted, the meal was ready to eat.

“About forty below,” Shorty mumbled through a mouthful of beans. “Say—I hope it don’t get colder—or warmer, neither. It’s just right for trail breaking.”

Smoke did not answer. His own mouth full of beans, his jaws working, he had chanced to glance at the lead-dog, lying half a dozen feet away. That gray and frosty wolf was gazing at him with the infinite wistfulness and yearning that glimmers and hazes so often in the eyes of Northland dogs. Smoke knew it well, but never got over the unfathomable wonder of it. As if to shake off the hypnotism, he set down his plate and coffee-cup, went to the sled, and began opening the dried-fish sack.

“Hey!” Shorty expostulated. “What ‘r’ you doin’?”

“Breaking all law, custom, precedent, and trail usage,” Smoke replied. “I’m going to feed the dogs in the middle of the day—just this once. They’ve worked hard, and that last pull to the top of the divide is before them. Besides, Bright there has been talking to me, telling me all untellable things with those eyes of his.”

Shorty laughed skeptically. “Go on an’ spoil ‘em. Pretty soon you’ll be manicurin’ their nails. I’d recommend cold cream and electric massage—it’s great for sled-dogs. And sometimes a Turkish bath does ‘em fine.”

“I’ve never done it before,” Smoke defended. “And I won’t again. But this once I’m going to. It’s just a whim, I guess.”

“Oh, if it’s a hunch, go to it.” Shorty’s tones showed how immediately he had been mollified. “A man’s always got to follow his hunches.”

“It isn’t a hunch, Shorty. Bright just sort of got on my imagination for a couple of twists. He told me more in one minute with those eyes of his than I could read in the books in a thousand years. His eyes were acrawl with the secrets of life. They were just squirming and wriggling there. The trouble is I almost got them, and then I didn’t. I’m no wiser than I was before, but I was near them.” He paused and then added, “I can’t tell you, but that dog’s eyes were just spilling over with cues to what life is, and evolution, and star-dust, and cosmic sap, and all the rest—everything.”

“Boiled down into simple American, you got a hunch,” Shorty insisted.

Smoke finished tossing the dried salmon, one to each dog, and shook his head.

“I tell you yes,” Shorty argued. “Smoke, it’s a sure hunch. Something’s goin’ to happen before the day is out. You’ll see. And them dried fish’ll have a bearin’.”

“You’ve got to show me,” said Smoke.

“No, I ain’t. The day’ll take care of itself an’ show you. Now listen to what I’m tellin’ you. I got a hunch myself out of your hunch. I’ll bet eleven ounces against three ornery toothpicks I’m right. When I get a hunch I ain’t a-scared to ride it.”

“You bet the toothpicks, and I’ll bet the ounces,” Smoke returned.

"Nope. That'd be plain robbery. I win. I know a hunch when it tickles me. Before the day's out somethin' 'll happen, an' them fish'll have a meanin'."

"Hell," said Smoke, dismissing the discussion contemptuously.

"An' it'll be hell," Shorty came back. "An' I'll take three more toothpicks with you on them same odds that it'll be sure-enough hell."

"Done," said Smoke.

"I win," Shorty exulted. "Chicken-feather toothpicks for mine."

An hour later they cleared the divide, dipped down past the Bald Buttes through a sharp elbow-canyon, and took the steep open slope that dropped into Porcupine Creek. Shorty, in the lead, stopped abruptly, and Smoke whoaed the dogs. Beneath them, coming up, was a procession of humans, scattered and dragged, a quarter of a mile long.

"They move like it was a funeral," Shorty noted.

"They've no dogs," said Smoke.

"Yep; there's a couple of men pullin' on a sled."

"See that fellow fall down? There's something the matter, Shorty, and there must be two hundred of them."

"Look at 'em stagger as if they was soused. There goes another."

"It's a whole tribe. There are children there."

"Smoke, I win," Shorty proclaimed. "A hunch is a hunch, an' you can't beat it. There she comes. Look at her!—surgin' up like a lot of corpses."

The mass of Indians, at sight of the two men, had raised a weird cry of joy and accelerated its pace.

"They're sure tolerable woozy," commented Shorty. "See 'em fallin' down in lumps and bunches."

"Look at the face of that first one," Smoke said. "It's starvation—that's what's the matter with them. They've eaten their dogs."

"What'll we do? Run for it?"

"And leave the sled and dogs?" Smoke demanded reproachfully.

"They'll sure eat us if we don't. They look hungry enough for it. Hello, old skeeziks. What's wrong with you? Don't look at that dog that way. No cookin'-pot for him—savvy?"

The forerunners were arriving and crowding about them, moaning and plainting in an unfamiliar jargon. To Smoke the picture was grotesque and horrible. It was famine unmistakable. Their faces, hollow-cheeked and skin-stretched, were so many death's-heads. More and more arrived and crowded about, until Smoke and Shorty were hemmed in by the wild crew. Their ragged garments of skin and fur were cut and slashed away, and Smoke knew the reason for it when he saw a wizened child on a squaw's back that sucked and chewed a strip of filthy fur. Another child he observed steadily masticating a leather thong.

"Keep off there!—keep back!" Shorty yelled, falling back on English after futile attempts with the little Indian he did know.

Bucks and squaws and children tottered and swayed on shaking legs and continued to surge in, their mad eyes swimming with weakness and burning with ravenous desire. A woman, moaning, staggered past Shorty and fell with spread and grasping arms on the sled. An old man followed her, panting and gasping, with trembling hands striving to cast off the sled lashings, and get at the grub-sacks beneath. A young man, with a naked knife, tried to rush in, but was flung back by Smoke. The whole mass pressed in upon them, and the fight was on.

At first Smoke and Shorty shoved and thrust and threw back. Then they used the butt of the dog-whip and their fists on the food-mad crowd. And all this against a background of moaning and wailing women and children. Here and there, in a dozen places, the sled-lashings were cut. Men crawled in on their bellies, regardless of a rain of kicks and blows, and tried to drag out the grub. These had to be picked up bodily and flung back. And such was their weakness that they fell continually, under the slightest pressures or shoves. Yet they made no attempt to injure the two men who defended the sled.

It was the utter weakness of the Indians that saved Smoke and Shorty from being overborne. In five minutes the wall of up-standing, on-struggling Indians had been changed to heaps of fallen ones that moaned and gibbered in the snow, and cried and sniveled as their staring, swimming eyes focused on the grub that meant life to them and that brought the slaver to their lips. And behind it all arose the wailing of the women and children.

“Shut up! Oh, shut up!” Shorty yelled, thrusting his fingers into his ears and breathing heavily from his exertions. “Ah, you would, would you!” was his cry as he lunged forward and kicked a knife from the hand of a man who, bellying through the snow, was trying to stab the lead-dog in the throat.

“This is terrible,” Smoke muttered.

“I’m all het up,” Shorty replied, returning from the rescue of Bright. “I’m real sweaty. An’ now what ‘r’ we goin’ to do with this ambulance outfit?”

Smoke shook his head, and then the problem was solved for him. An Indian crawled forward, his one eye fixed on Smoke instead of on the sled, and in it Smoke could see the struggle of sanity to assert itself. Shorty remembered having punched the other eye, which was already swollen shut. The Indian raised himself on his elbow and spoke.

“Me Carluk. Me good Siwash. Me savvy Boston man plenty. Me plenty hungry. All people plenty hungry. All people no savvy Boston man. Me savvy. Me eat grub now. All people eat grub now. We buy ‘m grub. Got ‘m plenty gold. No got ‘m grub. Summer, salmon no come Milk River. Winter, caribou no come. No grub. Me make ‘m talk all people. Me tell ‘em plenty Boston man come Yukon. Boston man have plenty grub. Boston man like ‘m gold. We take ‘m gold, go Yukon, Boston man give ‘m grub. Plenty gold. Me savvy Boston man like ‘m gold.”

He began fumbling with wasted fingers at the draw-string of a pouch he took from his belt.

"Too much make 'm noise," Shorty broke in distractedly. "You tell 'm squaw, you tell 'm papoose, shut 'm up mouth."

Carluk turned and addressed the wailing women. Other bucks, listening, raised their voices authoritatively, and slowly the squaws stilled, and quieted the children near to them. Carluk paused from fumbling the draw-string and held up his fingers many times.

"Him people make 'm die," he said.

And Smoke, following the count, knew that seventy-five of the tribe had starved to death.

"Me buy 'm grub," Carluk said, as he got the pouch open and drew out a large chunk of heavy metal. Others were following his example, and on every side appeared similar chunks. Shorty stared.

"Great Jeminey!" he cried. "Copper! Raw, red copper! An' they think it's gold!"

"Him gold," Carluk assured them confidently, his quick comprehension having caught the gist of Shorty's exclamation.

"And the poor devils banked everything on it," Smoke muttered. "Look at it. That chunk there weighs forty pounds. They've got hundreds of pounds of it, and they've carried it when they didn't have strength enough to drag themselves. Look here, Shorty. We've got to feed them."

"Huh! Sounds easy. But how about statistics? You an' me has a month's grub, which is six meals times thirty, which is one hundred an' eighty meals. Here's two hundred Indians, with real, full-grown appetites. How the blazes can we give 'm one meal even?"

"There's the dog-grub," Smoke answered. "A couple of hundred pounds of dried salmon ought to help out. We've got to do it. They've pinned their faith on the white man, you know."

"Sure, an' we can't throw 'm down," Shorty agreed. "An' we got two nasty jobs cut out for us, each just about twicet as nasty as the other. One of us has got to make a run of it to Mucluc an' raise a relief. The other has to stay here an' run the hospital an' most likely be eaten. Don't let it slip your noodle that we've been six days gettin' here; an' travelin' light, an' all played out, it can't be made back in less 'n three days."

For a minute Smoke pondered the miles of the way they had come, visioning the miles in terms of time measured by his capacity for exertion. "I can get there to-morrow night," he announced.

"All right," Shorty acquiesced cheerfully. "An' I'll stay an' be eaten."

"But I'm going to take one fish each for the dogs," Smoke explained, "and one meal for myself."

"An' you'll sure need it if you make Mucluc to-morrow night."

Smoke, through the medium of Carluk, stated the program. "Make fires, long fires, plenty fires," he concluded. "Plenty Boston man stop Mucluc. Boston man much good. Boston man plenty grub. Five sleeps I come back plenty grub. This man, his name Shorty, very good friend of mine. He stop here. He big boss-savvy?"

Carluk nodded and interpreted.

“All grub stop here. Shorty, he give ‘m grub. He boss-savvy?”

Carluk interpreted, and nods and guttural cries of agreement proceeded from the men.

Smoke remained and managed until the full swing of the arrangement was under way. Those who were able, crawled or staggered in the collecting of firewood. Long, Indian fires were built that accommodated all. Shorty, aided by a dozen assistants, with a short club handy for the rapping of hungry knuckles, plunged into the cooking. The women devoted themselves to thawing snow in every utensil that could be mustered. First, a tiny piece of bacon was distributed all around, and, next, a spoonful of sugar to cloy the edge of their razor appetites. Soon, on a circle of fires drawn about Shorty, many pots of beans were boiling, and he, with a wrathful eye for what he called renigers, was frying and apportioning the thinnest of flapjacks.

“Me for the big cookin’,” was his farewell to Smoke. “You just keep a-hikin’. Trot all the way there an’ run all the way back. It’ll take you to-day an’ to-morrow to get there, and you can’t be back inside of three days more. To-morrow they’ll eat the last of the dog-fish, an’ then there’ll be nary a scrap for three days. You gotta keep a-comin’, Smoke. You gotta keep a-comin’.”

Though the sled was light, loaded only with six dried salmon, a couple of pounds of frozen beans and bacon, and a sleeping-robe, Smoke could not make speed. Instead of riding the sled and running the dogs, he was compelled to plod at the gee-pole. Also, a day of work had already been done, and the freshness and spring had gone out of the dogs and himself. The long arctic twilight was on when he cleared the divide and left the Bald Buttes behind.

Down the slope better time was accomplished, and often he was able to spring on the sled for short intervals and get an exhausting six-mile clip out of the animals. Darkness caught him and fooled him in a wide-valleyed, nameless creek. Here the creek wandered in broad horseshoe curves through the flats, and here, to save time, he began short-cutting the flats instead of keeping to the creek-bed. And black dark found him back on the creek-bed feeling for the trail. After an hour of futile searching, too wise to go farther astray, he built a fire, fed each dog half a fish, and divided his own ration in half. Rolled in his robe, ere quick sleep came he had solved the problem. The last big flat he had short-cut was the one that occurred at the forks of the creek. He had missed the trail by a mile. He was now on the main stream and below where his and Shorty’s trail crossed the valley and climbed through a small feeder to the low divide on the other side.

At the first hint of daylight he got under way, breakfastless, and wallowed a mile upstream to pick up the trail. And breakfastless, man and dogs, without a halt, for eight hours held back transversely across the series of small creeks and low divides and down Minnow Creek. By four in the afternoon, with darkness fast-set about him, he emerged on the hard-packed, running trail of Moose Creek. Fifty miles of it would end the journey. He called a rest, built a fire, threw each dog its half-salmon, and thawed

and ate his pound of beans. Then he sprang on the sled, yelled, "Mush!" and the dogs went out strongly against their breast-bands.

"Hit her up, you huskies!" he cried. "Mush on! Hit her up for grub! And no grub short of Mucluc! Dig in, you wolves! Dig in!"

Midnight had gone a quarter of an hour in the Annie Mine. The main room was comfortably crowded, while roaring stoves, combined with lack of ventilation, kept the big room unsanitarily warm. The click of chips and the boisterous play at the craps-table furnished a monotonous background of sound to the equally monotonous rumble of men's voices where they sat and stood about and talked in groups and twos and threes. The gold-weighers were busy at their scales, for dust was the circulating medium, and even a dollar drink of whiskey at the bar had to be paid for to the weighers.

The walls of the room were of tiered logs, the bark still on, and the chinking between the logs, plainly visible, was arctic moss. Through the open door that led to the dance-room came the rollicking strains of a Virginia reel, played by a piano and a fiddle. The drawing of Chinese lottery had just taken place, and the luckiest player, having cashed at the scales, was drinking up his winnings with half a dozen cronies. The faro-and roulette-tables were busy and quiet. The draw-poker and stud-poker tables, each with its circle of onlookers, were equally quiet. At another table, a serious, concentrated game of Black Jack was on. Only from the craps-table came noise, as the man who played rolled the dice, full sweep, down the green amphitheater of a table in pursuit of his elusive and long-delayed point. Ever he cried: "Oh! you Joe Cotton! Come a four! Come a Joe! Little Joe! Bring home the bacon, Joe! Joe, you Joe, you!"

Cultus George, a big strapping Circle City Indian, leaned distantly and dourly against the log wall. He was a civilized Indian, if living like a white man connotes civilization; and he was sorely offended, though the offense was of long standing. For years he had done a white man's work, had done it alongside of white men, and often had done it better than they did. He wore the same pants they wore, the same hearty woolens and heavy shirts. He sported as good a watch as they, parted his short hair on the side, and ate the same food—bacon, beans, and flour; and yet he was denied their greatest diversion and reward; namely, whiskey. Cultus George was a money-earner. He had staked claims, and bought and sold claims. He had been grub-staked, and he had accorded grub-stakes. Just now he was a dog-musher and freighter, charging twenty-eight cents a pound for the winter haul from Sixty Mile to Mucluc—and for bacon thirty-three cents, as was the custom. His poke was fat with dust. He had the price of many drinks. Yet no barkeeper would serve him. Whiskey, the hottest, swiftest, completest gratifier of civilization, was not for him. Only by subterranean and cowardly and expensive ways could he get a drink. And he resented this invidious distinction, as he had resented it for years, deeply. And he was especially thirsty and resentful this night, while the white men he had so sedulously emulated he hated more bitterly than ever before. The white men would graciously permit him to lose his gold across their

gaming-tables, but for neither love nor money could he obtain a drink across their bars. Wherefore he was very sober, and very logical, and logically sullen.

The Virginia reel in the dance-room wound to a wild close that interfered not with the three camp drunkards who snored under the piano. "All couples promenade to the bar!" was the caller's last cry as the music stopped. And the couples were so promenading through the wide doorway into the main room—the men in furs and moccasins, the women in soft fluffy dresses, silk stockings, and dancing-slippers—when the double storm-doors were thrust open, and Smoke Bellew staggered wearily in.

Eyes centered on him, and silence began to fall. He tried to speak, pulled off his mittens (which fell dangling from their cords), and clawed at the frozen moisture of his breath which had formed in fifty miles of running. He halted irresolutely, then went over and leaned his elbow on the end of the bar.

Only the man at the craps-table, without turning his head, continued to roll the dice and to cry: "Oh! you Joe! Come on, you Joe!" The gamekeeper's gaze, fixed on Smoke, caught the player's attention, and he, too, with suspended dice, turned and looked.

"What's up, Smoke?" Matson, the owner of the Annie Mine, demanded.

With a last effort, Smoke clawed his mouth free. "I got some dogs out there—dead beat," he said huskily. "Somebody go and take care of them, and I'll tell you what's the matter."

In a dozen brief sentences, he outlined the situation. The craps-player, his money still lying on the table and his slippery Joe Cotton still uncaptured, had come over to Smoke, and was now the first to speak.

"We gotta do something. That's straight. But what? You've had time to think. What's your plan? Spit it out."

"Sure," Smoke assented. "Here's what I've been thinking. We've got to hustle light sleds on the jump. Say a hundred pounds of grub on each sled. The driver's outfit and dog-grub will fetch it up fifty more. But they can make time. Say we start five of these sleds pronto—best running teams, best mushers and trail-eaters. On the soft trail the sleds can take the lead turn about. They've got to start at once. At the best, by the time they can get there, all those Indians won't have had a scrap to eat for three days. And then, as soon as we've got those sleds off we'll have to follow up with heavy sleds. Figure it out yourself. Two pounds a day is the very least we can decently keep those Indians traveling on. That's four hundred pounds a day, and, with the old people and the children, five days is the quickest time we can bring them into Mucluc. Now what are you going to do?"

"Take up a collection to buy all the grub," said the craps-player.

"I'll stand for the grub," Smoke began impatiently.

"Nope," the other interrupted. "This ain't your treat. We're all in. Fetch a wash-basin somebody. It won't take a minute. An' here's a starter."

He pulled a heavy gold-sack from his pocket, untied the mouth, and poured a stream of coarse dust and nuggets into the basin. A man beside him caught his hand up with

a jerk and an oath, elevating the mouth of the sack so as to stop the run of the dust. To a casual eye, six or eight ounces had already run into the basin.

“Don’t be a hawg,” cried the second man. “You ain’t the only one with a poke. Gimme a chance at it.”

“Huh!” sneered the craps-player. “You’d think it was a stampede, you’re so goshdanged eager about it.”

Men crowded and jostled for the opportunity to contribute, and when they were satisfied, Smoke hefted the heavy basin with both hands and grinned.

“It will keep the whole tribe in grub for the rest of the winter,” he said. “Now for the dogs. Five light teams that have some run in them.”

A dozen teams were volunteered, and the camp, as a committee of the whole, bickered and debated, accepted and rejected.

“Huh! Your dray-horses!” Long Bill Haskell was told.

“They can pull,” he bristled with hurt pride.

“They sure can,” he was assured. “But they can’t make time for sour apples. They’ve got theirs cut out for them bringing up the heavy loads.”

As fast as a team was selected, its owner, with half a dozen aids, departed to harness up and get ready.

One team was rejected because it had come in tired that afternoon. One owner contributed his team, but apologetically exposed a bandaged ankle that prevented him from driving it. This team Smoke took, overriding the objection of the crowd that he was played out.

Long Bill Haskell pointed out that while Fat Olsen’s team was a crackerjack, Fat Olsen himself was an elephant. Fat Olsen’s two hundred and forty pounds of heartiness was indignant. Tears of anger came into his eyes, and his Scandinavian explosions could not be stopped until he was given a place in the heavy division, the craps-player jumping at the chance to take out Olsen’s light team.

Five teams were accepted and were being harnessed and loaded, but only four drivers had satisfied the committee of the whole.

“There’s Cultus George,” some one cried. “He’s a trail-eater, and he’s fresh and rested.”

All eyes turned upon the Indian, but his face was expressionless, and he said nothing.

“You’ll take a team,” Smoke said to him.

Still the big Indian made no answer. As with an electric thrill, it ran through all of them that something untoward was impending. A restless shifting of the group took place, forming a circle in which Smoke and Cultus George faced each other. And Smoke realized that by common consent he had been made the representative of his fellows in what was taking place, in what was to take place. Also, he was angered. It was beyond him that any human creature, a witness to the scramble of volunteers, should hang back. For another thing, in what followed, Smoke did not have Cultus George’s point of view—did not dream that the Indian held back for any reason save the selfish, mercenary one.

“Of course you will take a team,” Smoke said.

“How much?” Cultus George asked.

A snarl, spontaneous and general, grated in the throats and twisted the mouths of the miners. At the same moment, with clenched fists or fingers crooked to grip, they pressed in on the offender.

“Wait a bit, boys,” Smoke cried. “Maybe he doesn’t understand. Let me explain it to him. Look here, George. Don’t you see, nobody is charging anything. They’re giving everything to save two hundred Indians from starving to death.” He paused, to let it sink home.

“How much?” said Cultus George.

“Wait, you fellows! Now listen, George. We don’t want you to make any mistake. These starving people are your kind of people. They’re another tribe, but they’re Indians just the same. Now you’ve seen what the white men are doing—coughing up their dust, giving their dogs and sleds, falling over one another to hit the trail. Only the best men can go with the first sleds. Look at Fat Olsen there. He was ready to fight because they wouldn’t let him go. You ought to be mighty proud because all men think you are a number-one musher. It isn’t a case of how much, but how quick.”

“How much?” said Cultus George.

“Kill him!” “Bust his head!” “Tar and feathers!” were several of the cries in the wild medley that went up, the spirit of philanthropy and good fellowship changed to brute savagery on the instant.

In the storm-center Cultus George stood imperturbable, while Smoke thrust back the fiercest and shouted:

“Wait! Who’s running this?” The clamor died away. “Fetch a rope,” he added quietly.

Cultus George shrugged his shoulders, his face twisting tensely in a sullen and incredulous grin. He knew this white-man breed. He had toiled on trail with it and eaten its flour and bacon and beans too long not to know it. It was a law-abiding breed. He knew that thoroughly. It always punished the man who broke the law. But he had broken no law. He knew its law. He had lived up to it. He had neither murdered, stolen, nor lied. There was nothing in the white man’s law against charging a price and driving a bargain. They all charged a price and drove bargains. He was doing nothing more than that, and it was the thing they had taught him. Besides, if he wasn’t good enough to drink with them, then he was not good enough to be charitable with them, nor to join them in any other of their foolish diversions.

Neither Smoke nor any man there glimpsed what lay in Cultus George’s brain, behind his attitude and prompting his attitude. Though they did not know it, they were as beclouded as he in the matter of mutual understanding. To them, he was a selfish brute; to him, they were selfish brutes.

When the rope was brought, Long Bill Haskell, Fat Olsen, and the craps-player, with much awkwardness and angry haste, got the slip-noose around the Indian’s neck and rove the rope over a rafter. At the other end of the dangling thing a dozen men tailed on, ready to hoist away.

Nor had Cultus George resisted. He knew it for what it was—bluff. The whites were strong on bluff. Was not draw-poker their favorite game? Did they not buy and sell and make all bargains with bluff? Yes; he had seen a white man do business with a look on his face of four aces and in his hand a busted straight.

“Wait,” Smoke commanded. “Tie his hands. We don’t want him climbing.”

More bluff, Cultus George decided, and passively permitted his hands to be tied behind his back.

“Now it’s your last chance, George,” said Smoke. “Will you take out the team?”

“How much?” said Cultus George.

Astounded at himself that he should be able to do such a thing, and at the same time angered by the colossal selfishness of the Indian, Smoke gave the signal. Nor was Cultus George any less astounded when he felt the noose tighten with a jerk and swing him off the floor. His stolidity broke on the instant. On his face, in quick succession, appeared surprise, dismay, and pain.

Smoke watched anxiously. Having never been hanged himself, he felt a tyro at the business. The body struggled convulsively, the tied hands strove to burst the bonds, and from the throat came unpleasant noises of strangulation. Suddenly Smoke held up his hand.

“Slack away” he ordered.

Grumbling at the shortness of the punishment, the men on the rope lowered Cultus George to the floor. His eyes were bulging, and he was tottery on his feet, swaying from side to side and still making a fight with his hands. Smoke divined what was the matter, thrust violent fingers between the rope and the neck, and brought the noose slack with a jerk. With a great heave of the chest, Cultus George got his first breath.

“Will you take that team out?” Smoke demanded.

Cultus George did not answer. He was too busy breathing.

“Oh, we white men are hogs,” Smoke filled in the interval, resentful himself at the part he was compelled to play. “We’d sell our souls for gold, and all that; but once in a while we forget about it and turn loose and do something without a thought of how much there is in it. And when we do that, Cultus George, watch out. What we want to know now is: Are you going to take out that team?”

Cultus George debated with himself. He was no coward. Perhaps this was the extent of their bluff, and if he gave in now he was a fool. And while he debated, Smoke suffered from secret worry lest this stubborn aborigine would persist in being hanged.

“How much?” said Cultus George.

Smoke started to raise his hand for the signal.

“Me go,” Cultus George said very quickly, before the rope could tighten.

“An’ when that rescue expedition found me,” Shorty told it in the Annie Mine, “that ornery Cultus George was the first in, beatin’ Smoke’s sled by three hours, an’ don’t you forget it, Smoke comes in second at that. Just the same, it was about time, when I heard Cultus George a-yellin’ at his dogs from the top of the divide, for those blamed Siwashes had ate my moccasins, my mitts, the leather lacin’s, my knife-sheath, an’

some of 'em was beginnin' to look mighty hungry at me—me bein' better nourished, you see.

“An' Smoke? He was near dead. He hustled around a while, helpin' to start a meal for them two hundred sufferin' Siwashes; an' then he fell asleep, settin' on his haunches, thinkin' he was feedin' snow into a thawin'-pail. I fixed him my bed, an' dang me if I didn't have to help him into it, he was that give out. Sure I win the toothpicks. Didn't them dogs just naturally need the six salmon Smoke fed 'em at the noonin'?”

The Heathen

I MET him first in a hurricane; and though we had gone through the hurricane on the same schooner, it was not until the schooner had gone to pieces under us that I first laid eyes on him. Without doubt I had seen him with the rest of the kanaka crew on board, but I had not consciously been aware of his existence, for the *Petite Jeanne* was rather overcrowded. In addition to her eight or ten kanaka seamen, her white captain, mate, and supercargo, and her six cabin passengers, she sailed from Rangiroa with something like eighty-five deck passengers—Paumotans and Tahitians, men, women, and children each with a trade box, to say nothing of sleeping mats, blankets, and clothes bundles.

The pearling season in the Paumotus was over, and all hands were returning to Tahiti. The six of us cabin passengers were pearl buyers. Two were Americans, one was Ah Choon (the whitest Chinese I have ever known), one was a German, one was a Polish Jew, and I completed the half dozen.

It had been a prosperous season. Not one of us had cause for complaint, nor one of the eighty-five deck passengers either. All had done well, and all were looking forward to a rest-off and a good time in Papeete.

Of course, the *Petite Jeanne* was overloaded. She was only seventy tons, and she had no right to carry a tithe of the mob she had on board. Beneath her hatches she was crammed and jammed with pearl shell and copra. Even the trade room was packed full with shell. It was a miracle that the sailors could work her. There was no moving about the decks. They simply climbed back and forth along the rails.

In the night time they walked upon the sleepers, who carpeted the deck, I'll swear, two deep. Oh! And there were pigs and chickens on deck, and sacks of yams, while every conceivable place was festooned with strings of drinking cocoanuts and bunches of bananas. On both sides, between the fore and main shrouds, guys had been stretched, just low enough for the foreboom to swing clear; and from each of these guys at least fifty bunches of bananas were suspended.

It promised to be a messy passage, even if we did make it in the two or three days that would have been required if the southeast trades had been blowing fresh. But they weren't blowing fresh. After the first five hours the trade died away in a dozen or so gasping fans. The calm continued all that night and the next day—one of those glaring, glassy, calms, when the very thought of opening one's eyes to look at it is sufficient to cause a headache.

The second day a man died—an Easter Islander, one of the best divers that season in the lagoon. Smallpox—that is what it was; though how smallpox could come on board,

when there had been no known cases ashore when we left Rangiroa, is beyond me. There it was, though—smallpox, a man dead, and three others down on their backs.

There was nothing to be done. We could not segregate the sick, nor could we care for them. We were packed like sardines. There was nothing to do but rot and die—that is, there was nothing to do after the night that followed the first death. On that night, the mate, the supercargo, the Polish Jew, and four native divers sneaked away in the large whale boat. They were never heard of again. In the morning the captain promptly scuttled the remaining boats, and there we were.

That day there were two deaths; the following day three; then it jumped to eight. It was curious to see how we took it. The natives, for instance, fell into a condition of dumb, stolid fear. The captain—Oudouse, his name was, a Frenchman—became very nervous and voluble. He actually got the twitches. He was a large fleshy man, weighing at least two hundred pounds, and he quickly became a faithful representation of a quivering jelly-mountain of fat.

The German, the two Americans, and myself bought up all the Scotch whiskey, and proceeded to stay drunk. The theory was beautiful—namely, if we kept ourselves soaked in alcohol, every smallpox germ that came into contact with us would immediately be scorched to a cinder. And the theory worked, though I must confess that neither Captain Oudouse nor Ah Choon were attacked by the disease either. The Frenchman did not drink at all, while Ah Choon restricted himself to one drink daily.

It was a pretty time. The sun, going into northern declination, was straight overhead. There was no wind, except for frequent squalls, which blew fiercely for from five minutes to half an hour, and wound up by deluging us with rain. After each squall, the awful sun would come out, drawing clouds of steam from the soaked decks.

The steam was not nice. It was the vapor of death, freighted with millions and millions of germs. We always took another drink when we saw it going up from the dead and dying, and usually we took two or three more drinks, mixing them exceptionally stiff. Also, we made it a rule to take an additional several each time they hove the dead over to the sharks that swarmed about us.

We had a week of it, and then the whiskey gave out. It is just as well, or I shouldn't be alive now. It took a sober man to pull through what followed, as you will agree when I mention the little fact that only two men did pull through. The other man was the heathen—at least, that was what I heard Captain Oudouse call him at the moment I first became aware of the heathen's existence. But to come back.

It was at the end of the week, with the whiskey gone, and the pearl buyers sober, that I happened to glance at the barometer that hung in the cabin companionway. Its normal register in the Paumotus was 29.90, and it was quite customary to see it vacillate between 29.85 and 30.00, or even 30.05; but to see it as I saw it, down to 29.62, was sufficient to sober the most drunken pearl buyer that ever incinerated smallpox microbes in Scotch whiskey.

I called Captain Oudouse's attention to it, only to be informed that he had watched it going down for several hours. There was little to do, but that little he did very well,

considering the circumstances. He took off the light sails, shortened right down to storm canvas, spread life lines, and waited for the wind. His mistake lay in what he did after the wind came. He hove to on the port tack, which was the right thing to do south of the Equator, if—and there was the rub—if one were not in the direct path of the hurricane.

We were in the direct path. I could see that by the steady increase of the wind and the equally steady fall of the barometer. I wanted him to turn and run with the wind on the port quarter until the barometer ceased falling, and then to heave to. We argued till he was reduced to hysteria, but budge he would not. The worst of it was that I could not get the rest of the pearl buyers to back me up. Who was I, anyway, to know more about the sea and its ways than a properly qualified captain? was what was in their minds, I knew.

Of course, the sea rose with the wind frightfully; and I shall never forget the first three seas the *Petite Jeanne* shipped. She had fallen off, as vessels do at times when hove to, and the first sea made a clean breach. The life lines were only for the strong and well, and little good were they even for them when the women and children, the bananas and cocoanuts, the pigs and trade boxes, the sick and the dying, were swept along in a solid, screeching, groaning mass.

The second sea filled the *Petite Jeanne's* decks flush with the rails; and, as her stern sank down and her bow tossed skyward, all the miserable dunnage of life and luggage poured aft. It was a human torrent. They came head first, feet first, sidewise, rolling over and over, twisting, squirming, writhing, and crumpling up. Now and again one caught a grip on a stanchion or a rope; but the weight of the bodies behind tore such grips loose.

One man I noticed fetch up, head on and square on, with the starboard bitt. His head cracked like an egg. I saw what was coming, sprang on top of the cabin, and from there into the mainsail itself. Ah Choon and one of the Americans tried to follow me, but I was one jump ahead of them. The American was swept away and over the stern like a piece of chaff. Ah Choon caught a spoke of the wheel, and swung in behind it. But a strapping Raratonga vahine (woman)—she must have weighed two hundred and fifty—brought up against him, and got an arm around his neck. He clutched the kanaka steersman with his other hand; and just at that moment the schooner flung down to starboard.

The rush of bodies and sea that was coming along the port runway between the cabin and the rail turned abruptly and poured to starboard. Away they went—vahine, Ah Choon, and steersman; and I swear I saw Ah Choon grin at me with philosophic resignation as he cleared the rail and went under.

The third sea—the biggest of the three—did not do so much damage. By the time it arrived nearly everybody was in the rigging. On deck perhaps a dozen gasping, half-drowned, and half-stunned wretches were rolling about or attempting to crawl into safety. They went by the board, as did the wreckage of the two remaining boats. The other pearl buyers and myself, between seas, managed to get about fifteen women and

children into the cabin, and battened down. Little good it did the poor creatures in the end.

Wind? Out of all my experience I could not have believed it possible for the wind to blow as it did. There is no describing it. How can one describe a nightmare? It was the same way with that wind. It tore the clothes off our bodies. I say tore them off, and I mean it. I am not asking you to believe it. I am merely telling something that I saw and felt. There are times when I do not believe it myself. I went through it, and that is enough. One could not face that wind and live. It was a monstrous thing, and the most monstrous thing about it was that it increased and continued to increase.

Imagine countless millions and billions of tons of sand. Imagine this sand tearing along at ninety, a hundred, a hundred and twenty, or any other number of miles per hour. Imagine, further, this sand to be invisible, impalpable, yet to retain all the weight and density of sand. Do all this, and you may get a vague inkling of what that wind was like.

Perhaps sand is not the right comparison. Consider it mud, invisible, impalpable, but heavy as mud. Nay, it goes beyond that. Consider every molecule of air to be a mudbank in itself. Then try to imagine the multitudinous impact of mudbanks. No; it is beyond me. Language may be adequate to express the ordinary conditions of life, but it cannot possibly express any of the conditions of so enormous a blast of wind. It would have been better had I stuck by my original intention of not attempting a description.

I will say this much: The sea, which had risen at first, was beaten down by that wind. 'more: it seemed as if the whole ocean had been sucked up in the maw of the hurricane, and hurled on through that portion of space which previously had been occupied by the air.

Of course, our canvas had gone long before. But Captain Oudouse had on the *Petite Jeanne* something I had never before seen on a South Sea schooner—a sea anchor. It was a conical canvas bag, the mouth of which was kept open by a huge loop of iron. The sea anchor was bridled something like a kite, so that it bit into the water as a kite bites into the air, but with a difference. The sea anchor remained just under the surface of the ocean in a perpendicular position. A long line, in turn, connected it with the schooner. As a result, the *Petite Jeanne* rode bow on to the wind and to what sea there was.

The situation really would have been favorable had we not been in the path of the storm. True, the wind itself tore our canvas out of the gaskets, jerked out our topmasts, and made a raffle of our running gear, but still we would have come through nicely had we not been square in front of the advancing storm center. That was what fixed us. I was in a state of stunned, numbed, paralyzed collapse from enduring the impact of the wind, and I think I was just about ready to give up and die when the center smote us. The blow we received was an absolute lull. There was not a breath of air. The effect on one was sickening.

Remember that for hours we had been at terrific muscular tension, withstanding the awful pressure of that wind. And then, suddenly, the pressure was removed. I know that I felt as though I was about to expand, to fly apart in all directions. It seemed as if every atom composing my body was repelling every other atom and was on the verge of rushing off irresistibly into space. But that lasted only for a moment. Destruction was upon us.

In the absence of the wind and pressure the sea rose. It jumped, it leaped, it soared straight toward the clouds. Remember, from every point of the compass that inconceivable wind was blowing in toward the center of calm. The result was that the seas sprang up from every point of the compass. There was no wind to check them. They popped up like corks released from the bottom of a pail of water. There was no system to them, no stability. They were hollow, maniacal seas. They were eighty feet high at the least. They were not seas at all. They resembled no sea a man had ever seen.

They were splashes, monstrous splashes—that is all. Splashes that were eighty feet high. Eighty! They were more than eighty. They went over our mastheads. They were spouts, explosions. They were drunken. They fell anywhere, anyhow. They jostled one another; they collided. They rushed together and collapsed upon one another, or fell apart like a thousand waterfalls all at once. It was no ocean any man had ever dreamed of, that hurricane center. It was confusion thrice confounded. It was anarchy. It was a hell pit of sea water gone mad.

The Petite Jeanne? I don't know. The heathen told me afterwards that he did not know. She was literally torn apart, ripped wide open, beaten into a pulp, smashed into kindling wood, annihilated. When I came to I was in the water, swimming automatically, though I was about two-thirds drowned. How I got there I had no recollection. I remembered seeing the Petite Jeanne fly to pieces at what must have been the instant that my own consciousness was buffeted out of me. But there I was, with nothing to do but make the best of it, and in that best there was little promise. The wind was blowing again, the sea was much smaller and more regular, and I knew that I had passed through the center. Fortunately, there were no sharks about. The hurricane had dissipated the ravenous horde that had surrounded the death ship and fed off the dead.

It was about midday when the Petite Jeanne went to pieces, and it must have been two hours afterwards when I picked up with one of her hatch covers. Thick rain was driving at the time; and it was the merest chance that flung me and the hatch cover together. A short length of line was trailing from the rope handle; and I knew that I was good for a day, at least, if the sharks did not return. Three hours later, possibly a little longer, sticking close to the cover, and with closed eyes, concentrating my whole soul upon the task of breathing in enough air to keep me going and at the same time of avoiding breathing in enough water to drown me, it seemed to me that I heard voices. The rain had ceased, and wind and sea were easing marvelously. Not twenty feet away from me, on another hatch cover were Captain Oudouse and the heathen. They were

fighting over the possession of the cover—at least, the Frenchman was. “Païen noir!” I heard him scream, and at the same time I saw him kick the kanaka.

Now, Captain Oudouse had lost all his clothes, except his shoes, and they were heavy brogans. It was a cruel blow, for it caught the heathen on the mouth and the point of the chin, half stunning him. I looked for him to retaliate, but he contented himself with swimming about forlornly a safe ten feet away. Whenever a fling of the sea threw him closer, the Frenchman, hanging on with his hands, kicked out at him with both feet. Also, at the moment of delivering each kick, he called the kanaka a black heathen.

“For two centimes I’d come over there and drown you, you white beast!” I yelled.

The only reason I did not go was that I felt too tired. The very thought of the effort to swim over was nauseating. So I called to the kanaka to come to me, and proceeded to share the hatch cover with him. Otoo, he told me his name was (pronounced o-to-o); also, he told me that he was a native of Bora Bora, the most westerly of the Society Group. As I learned afterward, he had got the hatch cover first, and, after some time, encountering Captain Oudouse, had offered to share it with him, and had been kicked off for his pains.

And that was how Otoo and I first came together. He was no fighter. He was all sweetness and gentleness, a love creature, though he stood nearly six feet tall and was muscled like a gladiator. He was no fighter, but he was also no coward. He had the heart of a lion; and in the years that followed I have seen him run risks that I would never dream of taking. What I mean is that while he was no fighter, and while he always avoided precipitating a row, he never ran away from trouble when it started. And it was “Ware shoal!” when once Otoo went into action. I shall never forget what he did to Bill King. It occurred in German Samoa. Bill King was hailed the champion heavyweight of the American Navy. He was a big brute of a man, a veritable gorilla, one of those hard-hitting, rough-housing chaps, and clever with his fists as well. He picked the quarrel, and he kicked Otoo twice and struck him once before Otoo felt it to be necessary to fight. I don’t think it lasted four minutes, at the end of which time Bill King was the unhappy possessor of four broken ribs, a broken forearm, and a dislocated shoulder blade. Otoo knew nothing of scientific boxing. He was merely a manhandler; and Bill King was something like three months in recovering from the bit of manhandling he received that afternoon on Apia beach.

But I am running ahead of my yarn. We shared the hatch cover between us. We took turn and turn about, one lying flat on the cover and resting, while the other, submerged to the neck, merely held on with his hands. For two days and nights, spell and spell, on the cover and in the water, we drifted over the ocean. Towards the last I was delirious most of the time; and there were times, too, when I heard Otoo babbling and raving in his native tongue. Our continuous immersion prevented us from dying of thirst, though the sea water and the sunshine gave us the prettiest imaginable combination of salt pickle and sunburn.

In the end, Otoo saved my life; for I came to lying on the beach twenty feet from the water, sheltered from the sun by a couple of cocoanut leaves. No one but Otoo could have dragged me there and stuck up the leaves for shade. He was lying beside me. I went off again; and the next time I came round, it was cool and starry night, and Otoo was pressing a drinking cocoanut to my lips.

We were the sole survivors of the *Petite Jeanne*. Captain Oudouse must have succumbed to exhaustion, for several days later his hatch cover drifted ashore without him. Otoo and I lived with the natives of the atoll for a week, when we were rescued by the French cruiser and taken to Tahiti. In the meantime, however, we had performed the ceremony of exchanging names. In the South Seas such a ceremony binds two men closer together than blood brotherhood. The initiative had been mine; and Otoo was rapturously delighted when I suggested it.

"It is well," he said, in Tahitian. "For we have been mates together for two days on the lips of Death."

"But death stuttered," I smiled.

"It was a brave deed you did, master," he replied, "and Death was not vile enough to speak."

"Why do you 'master' me?" I demanded, with a show of hurt feelings. "We have exchanged names. To you I am Otoo. To me you are Charley. And between you and me, forever and forever, you shall be Charley, and I shall be Otoo. It is the way of the custom. And when we die, if it does happen that we live again somewhere beyond the stars and the sky, still shall you be Charley to me, and I Otoo to you."

"Yes, master," he answered, his eyes luminous and soft with joy.

"There you go!" I cried indignantly.

"What does it matter what my lips utter?" he argued. "They are only my lips. But I shall think Otoo always. Whenever I think of myself, I shall think of you. Whenever men call me by name, I shall think of you. And beyond the sky and beyond the stars, always and forever, you shall be Otoo to me. Is it well, master?"

I hid my smile, and answered that it was well.

We parted at Papeete. I remained ashore to recuperate; and he went on in a cutter to his own island, Bora Bora. Six weeks later he was back. I was surprised, for he had told me of his wife, and said that he was returning to her, and would give over sailing on far voyages.

"Where do you go, master?" he asked, after our first greetings.

I shrugged my shoulders. It was a hard question.

"All the world," was my answer—"all the world, all the sea, and all the islands that are in the sea."

"I will go with you," he said simply. "My wife is dead."

I never had a brother; but from what I have seen of other men's brothers, I doubt if any man ever had a brother that was to him what Otoo was to me. He was brother and father and mother as well. And this I know: I lived a straighter and better man because of Otoo. I cared little for other men, but I had to live straight in Otoo's eyes.

Because of him I dared not tarnish myself. He made me his ideal, compounding me, I fear, chiefly out of his own love and worship and there were times when I stood close to the steep pitch of hell, and would have taken the plunge had not the thought of Otoo restrained me. His pride in me entered into me, until it became one of the major rules in my personal code to do nothing that would diminish that pride of his.

Naturally, I did not learn right away what his feelings were toward me. He never criticized, never censured; and slowly the exalted place I held in his eyes dawned upon me, and slowly I grew to comprehend the hurt I could inflict upon him by being anything less than my best.

For seventeen years we were together; for seventeen years he was at my shoulder, watching while I slept, nursing me through fever and wounds—ay, and receiving wounds in fighting for me. He signed on the same ships with me; and together we ranged the Pacific from Hawaii to Sydney Head, and from Torres Straits to the Galapagos. We blackbirded from the New Hebrides and the Line Islands over to the westward clear through the Louisiades, New Britain, New Ireland, and New Hanover. We were wrecked three times—in the Gilberts, in the Santa Cruz group, and in the Fijis. And we traded and salvaged wherever a dollar promised in the way of pearl and pearl shell, copra, beche-de-mer, hawkbill turtle shell, and stranded wrecks.

It began in Papeete, immediately after his announcement that he was going with me over all the sea, and the islands in the midst thereof. There was a club in those days in Papeete, where the pearl-ers, traders, captains, and riffraff of South Sea adventurers forgathered. The play ran high, and the drink ran high; and I am very much afraid that I kept later hours than were becoming or proper. No matter what the hour was when I left the club, there was Otoo waiting to see me safely home.

At first I smiled; next I chided him. Then I told him flatly that I stood in need of no wet-nursing. After that I did not see him when I came out of the club. Quite by accident, a week or so later, I discovered that he still saw me home, lurking across the street among the shadows of the mango trees. What could I do? I know what I did do.

Insensibly I began to keep better hours. On wet and stormy nights, in the thick of the folly and the fun, the thought would persist in coming to me of Otoo keeping his dreary vigil under the dripping mangoes. Truly, he made a better man of me. Yet he was not strait-laced. And he knew nothing of common Christian morality. All the people on Bora Bora were Christians; but he was a heathen, the only unbeliever on the island, a gross materialist, who believed that when he died he was dead. He believed merely in fair play and square dealing. Petty meanness, in his code, was almost as serious as wanton homicide; and I do believe that he respected a murderer more than a man given to small practices.

Concerning me, personally, he objected to my doing anything that was hurtful to me. Gambling was all right. He was an ardent gambler himself. But late hours, he explained, were bad for one's health. He had seen men who did not take care of themselves die of fever. He was no teetotaler, and welcomed a stiff nip any time when it was wet work in

the boats. On the other hand, he believed in liquor in moderation. He had seen many men killed or disgraced by square-face or Scotch.

Otoo had my welfare always at heart. He thought ahead for me, weighed my plans, and took a greater interest in them than I did myself. At first, when I was unaware of this interest of his in my affairs, he had to divine my intentions, as, for instance, at Papeete, when I contemplated going partners with a knavish fellow-countryman on a guano venture. I did not know he was a knave. Nor did any white man in Papeete. Neither did Otoo know, but he saw how thick we were getting, and found out for me, and without my asking him. Native sailors from the ends of the seas knock about on the beach in Tahiti; and Otoo, suspicious merely, went among them till he had gathered sufficient data to justify his suspicions. Oh, it was a nice history, that of Randolph Waters. I couldn't believe it when Otoo first narrated it; but when I sheeted it home to Waters he gave in without a murmur, and got away on the first steamer to Aukland.

At first, I am free to confess, I couldn't help resenting Otoo's poking his nose into my business. But I knew that he was wholly unselfish; and soon I had to acknowledge his wisdom and discretion. He had his eyes open always to my main chance, and he was both keen-sighted and far-sighted. In time he became my counselor, until he knew more of my business than I did myself. He really had my interest at heart more than I did. 'mine was the magnificent carelessness of youth, for I preferred romance to dollars, and adventure to a comfortable billet with all night in. So it was well that I had some one to look out for me. I know that if it had not been for Otoo, I should not be here today.

Of numerous instances, let me give one. I had had some experience in blackbirding before I went pearling in the Paumotus. Otoo and I were on the beach in Samoa—we really were on the beach and hard aground—when my chance came to go as recruiter on a blackbird brig. Otoo signed on before the mast; and for the next half-dozen years, in as many ships, we knocked about the wildest portions of Melanesia. Otoo saw to it that he always pulled stroke-oar in my boat. Our custom in recruiting labor was to land the recruiter on the beach. The covering boat always lay on its oars several hundred feet off shore, while the recruiter's boat, also lying on its oars, kept afloat on the edge of the beach. When I landed with my trade goods, leaving my steering sweep apeak, Otoo left his stroke position and came into the stern sheets, where a Winchester lay ready to hand under a flap of canvas. The boat's crew was also armed, the Sniders concealed under canvas flaps that ran the length of the gunwales.

While I was busy arguing and persuading the woolly-headed cannibals to come and labor on the Queensland plantations Otoo kept watch. And often and often his low voice warned me of suspicious actions and impending treachery. Sometimes it was the quick shot from his rifle, knocking a nigger over, that was the first warning I received. And in my rush to the boat his hand was always there to jerk me flying aboard. Once, I remember, on Santa Anna, the boat grounded just as the trouble began. The covering boat was dashing to our assistance, but the several score of savages would have wiped

us out before it arrived. Otoo took a flying leap ashore, dug both hands into the trade goods, and scattered tobacco, beads, tomahawks, knives, and calicoes in all directions.

This was too much for the woolly-heads. While they scrambled for the treasures, the boat was shoved clear, and we were aboard and forty feet away. And I got thirty recruits off that very beach in the next four hours.

The particular instance I have in mind was on Malaita, the most savage island in the easterly Solomons. The natives had been remarkably friendly; and how were we to know that the whole village had been taking up a collection for over two years with which to buy a white man's head? The beggars are all head-hunters, and they especially esteem a white man's head. The fellow who captured the head would receive the whole collection. As I say, they appeared very friendly; and on this day I was fully a hundred yards down the beach from the boat. Otoo had cautioned me; and, as usual when I did not heed him, I came to grief.

The first I knew, a cloud of spears sailed out of the mangrove swamp at me. At least a dozen were sticking into me. I started to run, but tripped over one that was fast in my calf, and went down. The woolly-heads made a run for me, each with a long-handled, fantail tomahawk with which to hack off my head. They were so eager for the prize that they got in one another's way. In the confusion, I avoided several hacks by throwing myself right and left on the sand.

Then Otoo arrived—Otoo the manhandler. In some way he had got hold of a heavy war club, and at close quarters it was a far more efficient weapon than a rifle. He was right in the thick of them, so that they could not spear him, while their tomahawks seemed worse than useless. He was fighting for me, and he was in a true Berserker rage. The way he handled that club was amazing.

Their skulls squashed like overripe oranges. It was not until he had driven them back, picked me up in his arms, and started to run, that he received his first wounds. He arrived in the boat with four spear thrusts, got his Winchester, and with it got a man for every shot. Then we pulled aboard the schooner, and doctored up.

Seventeen years we were together. He made me. I should today be a supercargo, a recruiter, or a memory, if it had not been for him.

"You spend your money, and you go out and get more," he said one day. "It is easy to get money now. But when you get old, your money will be spent, and you will not be able to go out and get more. I know, master. I have studied the way of white men. On the beaches are many old men who were young once, and who could get money just like you. Now they are old, and they have nothing, and they wait about for the young men like you to come ashore and buy drinks for them.

"The black boy is a slave on the plantations. He gets twenty dollars a year. He works hard. The overseer does not work hard.

He rides a horse and watches the black boy work. He gets twelve hundred dollars a year. I am a sailor on the schooner. I get fifteen dollars a month. That is because I am a good sailor. I work hard. The captain has a double awning, and drinks beer out of long bottles. I have never seen him haul a rope or pull an oar. He gets one hundred

and fifty dollars a month. I am a sailor. He is a navigator. ‘master, I think it would be very good for you to know navigation.’”

Otoo spurred me on to it. He sailed with me as second mate on my first schooner, and he was far prouder of my command than I was myself. Later on it was:

“The captain is well paid, master; but the ship is in his keeping, and he is never free from the burden. It is the owner who is better paid—the owner who sits ashore with many servants and turns his money over.”

“True, but a schooner costs five thousand dollars—an old schooner at that,” I objected. “I should be an old man before I saved five thousand dollars.”

“There be short ways for white men to make money,” he went on, pointing ashore at the cocoanut-fringed beach.

We were in the Solomons at the time, picking up a cargo of ivory nuts along the east coast of Guadalcanar.

“Between this river mouth and the next it is two miles,” he said.

“The flat land runs far back. It is worth nothing now. Next year—who knows?—or the year after, men will pay much money for that land. The anchorage is good. Big steamers can lie close up. You can buy the land four miles deep from the old chief for ten thousand sticks of tobacco, ten bottles of square-face, and a Snider, which will cost you, maybe, one hundred dollars. Then you place the deed with the commissioner; and the next year, or the year after, you sell and become the owner of a ship.”

I followed his lead, and his words came true, though in three years, instead of two. Next came the grasslands deal on Guadalcanar—twenty thousand acres, on a governmental nine hundred and ninety-nine years’ lease at a nominal sum. I owned the lease for precisely ninety days, when I sold it to a company for half a fortune. Always it was Otoo who looked ahead and saw the opportunity. He was responsible for the salving of the Doncaster—bought in at auction for a hundred pounds, and clearing three thousand after every expense was paid. He led me into the Savaii plantation and the cocoa venture on Upolu.

We did not go seafaring so much as in the old days. I was too well off. I married, and my standard of living rose; but Otoo remained the same old-time Otoo, moving about the house or trailing through the office, his wooden pipe in his mouth, a shilling undershirt on his back, and a four-shilling lava-lava about his loins. I could not get him to spend money. There was no way of repaying him except with love, and God knows he got that in full measure from all of us. The children worshipped him; and if he had been spoilable, my wife would surely have been his undoing.

The children! He really was the one who showed them the way of their feet in the world practical. He began by teaching them to walk. He sat up with them when they were sick. One by one, when they were scarcely toddlers, he took them down to the lagoon, and made them into amphibians. He taught them more than I ever knew of the habits of fish and the ways of catching them. In the bush it was the same thing. At seven, Tom knew more woodcraft than I ever dreamed existed. At six, Mary went over the Sliding Rock without a quiver, and I have seen strong men balk at that feat.

And when Frank had just turned six he could bring up shillings from the bottom in three fathoms.

“My people in Bora Bora do not like heathen—they are all Christians; and I do not like Bora Bora Christians,” he said one day, when I, with the idea of getting him to spend some of the money that was rightfully his, had been trying to persuade him to make a visit to his own island in one of our schooners—a special voyage which I had hoped to make a record breaker in the matter of prodigal expense.

I say one of our schooners, though legally at the time they belonged to me. I struggled long with him to enter into partnership.

“We have been partners from the day the Petite Jeanne went down,” he said at last. “But if your heart so wishes, then shall we become partners by the law. I have no work to do, yet are my expenses large. I drink and eat and smoke in plenty—it costs much, I know. I do not pay for the playing of billiards, for I play on your table; but still the money goes. Fishing on the reef is only a rich man’s pleasure. It is shocking, the cost of hooks and cotton line. Yes; it is necessary that we be partners by the law. I need the money. I shall get it from the head clerk in the office.”

So the papers were made out and recorded. A year later I was compelled to complain.

“Charley,” said I, “you are a wicked old fraud, a miserly skinflint, a miserable land crab. Behold, your share for the year in all our partnership has been thousands of dollars. The head clerk has given me this paper. It says that in the year you have drawn just eighty-seven dollars and twenty cents.”

“Is there any owing me?” he asked anxiously.

“I tell you thousands and thousands,” I answered.

His face brightened, as with an immense relief.

“It is well,” he said. “See that the head clerk keeps good account of it. When I want it, I shall want it, and there must not be a cent missing.

“If there is,,” he added fiercely, after a pause, “it must come out of the clerk’s wages.”

And all the time, as I afterwards learned, his will, drawn up by Carruthers, and making me sole beneficiary, lay in the American consul’s safe.

But the end came, as the end must come to all human associations.

It occurred in the Solomons, where our wildest work had been done in the wild young days, and where we were once more—principally on a holiday, incidentally to look after our holdings on Florida Island and to look over the pearling possibilities of the Mboli Pass. We were lying at Savo, having run in to trade for curios.

Now, Savo is alive with sharks. The custom of the woolly-heads of burying their dead in the sea did not tend to discourage the sharks from making the adjacent waters a hangout. It was my luck to be coming aboard in a tiny, overloaded, native canoe, when the thing capsized. There were four woolly-heads and myself in it, or rather, hanging to it. The schooner was a hundred yards away.

I was just hailing for a boat when one of the woolly-heads began to scream. Holding on to the end of the canoe, both he and that portion of the canoe were dragged under several times. Then he loosed his clutch and disappeared. A shark had got him.

The three remaining niggers tried to climb out of the water upon the bottom of the canoe. I yelled and cursed and struck at the nearest with my fist, but it was no use. They were in a blind funk. The canoe could barely have supported one of them. Under the three it upended and rolled sidewise, throwing them back into the water.

I abandoned the canoe and started to swim toward the schooner, expecting to be picked up by the boat before I got there. One of the niggers elected to come with me, and we swam along silently, side by side, now and again putting our faces into the water and peering about for sharks. The screams of the man who stayed by the canoe informed us that he was taken. I was peering into the water when I saw a big shark pass directly beneath me. He was fully sixteen feet in length. I saw the whole thing. He got the woolly-head by the middle, and away he went, the poor devil, head, shoulders, and arms out of the water all the time, screeching in a heart-rending way. He was carried along in this fashion for several hundred feet, when he was dragged beneath the surface.

I swam doggedly on, hoping that that was the last unattached shark. But there was another. Whether it was one that had attacked the natives earlier, or whether it was one that had made a good meal elsewhere, I do not know. At any rate, he was not in such haste as the others. I could not swim so rapidly now, for a large part of my effort was devoted to keeping track of him. I was watching him when he made his first attack. By good luck I got both hands on his nose, and, though his momentum nearly shoved me under, I managed to keep him off. He veered clear, and began circling about again. A second time I escaped him by the same manoeuvre. The third rush was a miss on both sides. He sheered at the moment my hands should have landed on his nose, but his sandpaper hide (I had on a sleeveless undershirt) scraped the skin off one arm from elbow to shoulder.

By this time I was played out, and gave up hope. The schooner was still two hundred feet away. My face was in the water, and I was watching him manoeuvre for another attempt, when I saw a brown body pass between us. It was Otoo.

"Swim for the schooner, master!" he said. And he spoke gayly, as though the affair was a mere lark. "I know sharks. The shark is my brother."

I obeyed, swimming slowly on, while Otoo swam about me, keeping always between me and the shark, foiling his rushes and encouraging me.

"The davit tackle carried away, and they are rigging the falls," he explained, a minute or so later, and then went under to head off another attack.

By the time the schooner was thirty feet away I was about done for. I could scarcely move. They were heaving lines at us from on board, but they continually fell short. The shark, finding that it was receiving no hurt, had become bolder. Several times it nearly got me, but each time Otoo was there just the moment before it was too late. Of course, Otoo could have saved himself any time. But he stuck by me.

"Good-by, Charley! I'm finished!" I just managed to gasp.

I knew that the end had come, and that the next moment I should throw up my hands and go down.

But Otoo laughed in my face, saying:

“I will show you a new trick. I will make that shark feel sick!”

He dropped in behind me, where the shark was preparing to come at me.

“A little more to the left!” he next called out. “There is a line there on the water. To the left, master—to the left!”

I changed my course and struck out blindly. I was by that time barely conscious. As my hand closed on the line I heard an exclamation from on board. I turned and looked. There was no sign of Otoo. The next instant he broke surface. Both hands were off at the wrist, the stumps spouting blood.

“Otoo!” he called softly. And I could see in his gaze the love that thrilled in his voice.

Then, and then only, at the very last of all our years, he called me by that name.

“Good-by, Otoo!” he called.

Then he was dragged under, and I was hauled aboard, where I fainted in the captain’s arms.

And so passed Otoo, who saved me and made me a man, and who saved me in the end. We met in the maw of a hurricane, and parted in the maw of a shark, with seventeen intervening years of comradeship, the like of which I dare to assert has never befallen two men, the one brown and the other white. If Jehovah be from His high place watching every sparrow fall, not least in His kingdom shall be Otoo, the one heathen of Bora Bora.

The Hobo and the Fairy

He lay on his back. So heavy was his sleep that the stamp of hoofs and cries of the drivers from the bridge that crossed the creek did not rouse him. Wagon after wagon, loaded high with grapes, passed the bridge on the way up the valley to the winery, and the coming of each wagon was like the explosion of sound and commotion in the lazy quiet of the afternoon.

But the man was undisturbed. His head had slipped from the folded newspaper, and the straggling, unkempt hair was matted with the foxtails and burrs of the dry grass on which it lay. He was not a pretty sight. His mouth was open, disclosing a gap in the upper row where several teeth at some time had been knocked out. He breathed stertorously, at times grunting and moaning with the pain of his sleep. Also, he was very restless, tossing his arms about, making jerky, half-convulsive movements, and at times rolling his head from side to side in the burrs. This restlessness seemed occasioned partly by some internal discomfort, and partly by the sun that streamed down on his face and by the flies that buzzed and lighted and crawled upon the nose and cheeks and eyelids. There was no other place for them to crawl, for the rest of the face was covered with matted beard, slightly grizzled, but greatly dirt-stained and weather-discolored.

The cheek-bones were blotched with the blood congested by the debauch that was evidently being slept off. This, too, accounted for the persistence with which the flies clustered around the mouth, lured by the alcohol-laden exhalations. He was a powerfully built man, thick-necked, broad-shouldered, with sinewy wrists and toil-distorted hands. Yet the distortion was not due to recent toil, nor were the callouses other than ancient that showed under the dirt of the one palm upturned. From time to time this hand clenched tightly and spasmodically into a fist, large, heavy-boned and wicked-looking.

The man lay in the dry grass of a tiny glade that ran down to the tree-fringed bank of the stream. On either side of the glade was a fence, of the old stake-and-rider type, though little of it was to be seen, so thickly was it overgrown by wild blackberry bushes, scrubby oaks and young madrono trees. In the rear, a gate through a low paling fence led to a snug, squat bungalow, built in the California Spanish style and seeming to have been compounded directly from the landscape of which it was so justly a part. Neat and trim and modestly sweet was the bungalow, redolent of comfort and repose, telling with quiet certitude of some one that knew, and that had sought and found.

Through the gate and into the glade came as dainty a little maiden as ever stepped out of an illustration made especially to show how dainty little maidens may be. Eight

years she might have been, and, possibly, a trifle more, or less. Her little waist and little black-stockinged calves showed how delicately fragile she was; but the fragility was of mould only. There was no hint of anemia in the clear, healthy complexion nor in the quick, tripping step. She was a little, delicious blond, with hair spun of gossamer gold and wide blue eyes that were but slightly veiled by the long lashes. Her expression was of sweetness and happiness; it belonged by right to any face that sheltered in the bungalow.

She carried a child's parasol, which she was careful not to tear against the scrubby branches and bramble bushes as she sought for wild poppies along the edge of the fence. They were late poppies, a third generation, which had been unable to resist the call of the warm October sun.

Having gathered along one fence, she turned to cross to the opposite fence. Midway in the glade she came upon the tramp. Her startle was merely a startle. There was no fear in it. She stood and looked long and curiously at the forbidding spectacle, and was about to turn back when the sleeper moved restlessly and rolled his hand among the burrs. She noted the sun on his face, and the buzzing flies; her face grew solicitous, and for a moment she debated with herself. Then she tiptoed to his side, interposed the parasol between him and the sun, and brushed away the flies. After a time, for greater ease, she sat down beside him.

An hour passed, during which she occasionally shifted the parasol from one tired hand to the other. At first the sleeper had been restless, but, shielded from the flies and the sun, his breathing became gentler and his movements ceased. Several times, however, he really frightened her. The first was the worst, coming abruptly and without warning. "Christ! How deep! How deep!" the man murmured from some profound of dream. The parasol was agitated; but the little girl controlled herself and continued her self-appointed ministrations.

Another time it was a gritting of teeth, as of some intolerable agony. So terribly did the teeth crunch and grind together that it seemed they must crush into fragments. A little later he suddenly stiffened out. The hands clenched and the face set with the savage resolution of the dream. The eyelids trembled from the shock of the fantasy, seemed about to open, but did not. Instead, the lips muttered:

"No; no! And once more no. I won't peach." The lips paused, then went on. "You might as well tie me up, warden, and cut me to pieces. That's all you can get outa me—blood. That's all of you-uns has ever got outa me in this hole."

After this outburst the man slept gently on, while the little girl still held the parasol aloft and looked down with a great wonder at the frowsy, unkempt creature, trying to reconcile it with the little part of life that she knew. To her ears came the cries of men, the stamp of hoofs on the bridge, and the creak and groan of wagons heavy laden. It was a breathless California Indian summer day. Light fleeces of cloud drifted in the azure sky, but to the west heavy cloud banks threatened with rain. A bee droned lazily by. From farther thickets came the calls of quail, and from the fields the songs of meadow larks. And oblivious to it all slept Ross Shanklin—Ross Shanklin, the tramp

and outcast, ex-convict 4379, the bitter and unbreakable one who had defied all keepers and survived all brutalities.

Texas-born, of the old pioneer stock that was always tough and stubborn, he had been unfortunate. At seventeen years of age he had been apprehended for horse stealing. Also, he had been convicted of stealing seven horses which he had not stolen, and he had been sentenced to fourteen years' imprisonment. This was severe under any circumstances, but with him it had been especially severe, because there had been no prior convictions against him. The sentiment of the people who believed him guilty had been that two years was adequate punishment for the youth, but the county attorney, paid according to the convictions he secured, had made seven charges against him and earned seven fees. Which goes to show that the county attorney valued twelve years of Ross Shanklin's life at less than a few dollars.

Young Ross Shanklin had toiled terribly in jail; he had escaped, more than once; and he had been caught and sent back to toil in other and various jails. He had been triced up and lashed till he fainted had been revived and lashed again. He had been in the dungeon ninety days at a time. He had experienced the torment of the straightjacket. He knew what the humming bird was. He had been farmed out as a chattel by the state to the contractors. He had been trailed through swamps by bloodhounds. Twice he had been shot. For six years on end he had cut a cord and a half of wood each day in a convict lumber camp. Sick or well, he had cut that cord and a half or paid for it under a whip-lash knotted and pickled.

And Ross Shanklin had not sweetened under the treatment. He had sneered, and raved, and defied. He had seen convicts, after the guards had manhandled them, crippled in body for life, or left to maunder in mind to the end of their days. He had seen convicts, even his own cell mate, goaded to murder by their keepers, go to the gallows reviling God. He had been in a break in which eleven of his kind were shot down. He had been through a mutiny, where, in the prison yard, with gatling guns trained upon them, three hundred convicts had been disciplined with pick handles wielded by brawny guards.

He had known every infamy of human cruelty, and through it all he had never been broken. He had resented and fought to the last, until, embittered and bestial, the day came when he was discharged. Five dollars were given him in payment for the years of his labor and the flower of his manhood. And he had worked little in the years that followed. Work he hated and despised. He tramped, begged and stole, lied or threatened as the case might warrant, and drank to besottedness whenever he got the chance.

The little girl was looking at him when he awoke. Like a wild animal, all of him was awake the instant he opened his eyes. The first he saw was the parasol, strangely obtruded between him and the sky. He did not start nor move, though his whole body seemed slightly to tense. His eyes followed down the parasol handle to the tight-clutched little fingers, and along the arm to the child's face. Straight and unblinking he looked into her eyes, and she, returning the look, was chilled and frightened by his

glittering eyes, cold and harsh, withal bloodshot, and with no hint in them of the warm humanness she had been accustomed to see and feel in human eyes. They were the true prison eyes—the eyes of a man who had learned to talk little, who had forgotten almost how to talk.

“Hello,” he said finally, making no effort to change his position. “What game are you up to!”

His voice was gruff and husky, and at first it had been harsh; but it had softened queerly in a feeble attempt at forgotten kindness.

“How do you do?” she said. “I’m not playing. The sun was on your face, and mamma says one oughtn’t to sleep in the sun.”

The sweet clearness of her child’s voice was pleasant to him, and he wondered why he had never noticed it in children’s voices before. He sat up slowly and stared at her. He felt that he ought to say something, but speech with him was a reluctant thing.

“I hope you slept well,” she said gravely.

“I sure did,” he answered, never taking his eyes from her, amazed at the fairness and delicacy of her. “How long was you holdin’ that contraption up over me?”

“O-oh,” she debated with herself, “a long, long time. I thought you would never wake up.”

“And I thought you was a fairy when I first seen you.”

He felt elated at his contribution to the conversation.

“No, not a fairy,” she smiled.

He thrilled in a strange, numb way at the immaculate whiteness of her small even teeth.

“I was just the good Samaritan,” she added.

“I reckon I never heard of that party.”

He was cudgelling his brains to keep the conversation going. Never having been at close quarters with a child since he was man-grown, he found it difficult.

“What a funny man not to know about the good Samaritan. Don’t you remember? A certain man went down to Jericho—”

“I reckon I’ve been there,” he interrupted.

“I knew you were a traveler!” she cried, clapping her hands. “Maybe you saw the exact spot.”

“What spot?”

“Why, where he fell among thieves and was left half dead. And then the good Samaritan went to him, and bound up his wounds, and poured in oil and wine—was that olive oil, do you think?”

He shook his head slowly.

“I reckon you got me there. Olive oil is something the dagoes cooks with. I never heard of it for busted heads.”

She considered his statement for a moment.

“Well,” she announced, “we use olive oil in our cooking, so we must be dagoes. I never knew what they were before. I thought it was slang.”

“And the Samaritan dumped oil on his head,” the tramp muttered reminiscently. “Seems to me I recollect a sky pilot sayin’ something about that old gent. D’ye know, I’ve been looking for him off ’n on all my life, and never scared up hide nor hair of him. They ain’t no more Samaritans.”

“Wasn’t I one!” she asked quickly.

He looked at her steadily, with a great curiosity and wonder. Her ear, by a movement exposed to the sun, was transparent. It seemed he could almost see through it. He was amazed at the delicacy of her coloring, at the blue of her eyes, at the dazzle of the sun-touched golden hair. And he was astounded by her fragility. It came to him that she was easily broken. His eye went quickly from his huge, gnarled paw to her tiny hand in which it seemed to him he could almost see the blood circulate. He knew the power in his muscles, and he knew the tricks and turns by which men use their bodies to ill-treat men. In fact, he knew little else, and his mind for the time ran in its customary channel. It was his way of measuring the beautiful strangeness of her. He calculated a grip, and not a strong one, that could grind her little fingers to pulp. He thought of fist blows he had given to men’s heads, and received on his own head, and felt that the least of them could shatter hers like an egg-shell. He scanned her little shoulders and slim waist, and knew in all certitude that with his two hands he could rend her to pieces.

“Wasn’t I one?” she insisted again.

He came back to himself with a shock—or away from himself, as the case happened. He was loath that the conversation should cease.

“What?” he answered. “Oh, yes; you bet you was a Samaritan, even if you didn’t have no olive oil.” He remembered what his mind had been dwelling on, and asked, “But ain’t you afraid?”

“Of ... of me?” he added lamely.

She laughed merrily.

“Mamma says never to be afraid of anything. She says that if you’re good, and you think good of other people, they’ll be good, too.”

“And you was thinkin’ good of me when you kept the sun off,” he marveled.

“But it’s hard to think good of bees and nasty crawly things,” she confessed.

“But there’s men that is nasty and crawly things,” he argued.

“Mamma says no. She says there’s good in everyone.

“I bet you she locks the house up tight at night just the same,” he proclaimed triumphantly.

“But she doesn’t. Mamma isn’t afraid of anything. That’s why she lets me play out here alone when I want. Why, we had a robber once. Mamma got right up and found him. And what do you think! He was only a poor hungry man. And she got him plenty to eat from the pantry, and afterward she got him work to do.”

Ross Shanklin was stunned. The vista shown him of human nature was unthinkable. It had been his lot to live in a world of suspicion and hatred, of evil-believing and evil-doing. It had been his experience, slouching along village streets at nightfall, to

see little children, screaming with fear, run from him to their mothers. He had even seen grown women shrink aside from him as he passed along the sidewalk.

He was aroused by the girl clapping her hands as she cried out:

"I know what you are! You're an open air crank. That's why you were sleeping here in the grass."

He felt a grim desire to laugh, but repressed it.

"And that's what tramps are—open air cranks," she continued. "I often wondered. Mamma believes in the open air. I sleep on the porch at night. So does she. This is our land. You must have climbed the fence. Mamma lets me when I put on my climbers—they're bloomers, you know. But you ought to be told something. A person doesn't know when they snore because they're asleep. But you do worse than that. You grit your teeth. That's bad. Whenever you are going to sleep you must think to yourself, 'I won't grit my teeth, I won't grit my teeth,' over and over, just like that, and by and by you'll get out of the habit.

"All bad things are habits. And so are all good things. And it depends on us what kind our habits are going to be. I used to pucker my eyebrows—wrinkle them all up, but mamma said I must overcome that habit. She said that when my eyebrows were wrinkled it was an advertisement that my brain was wrinkled inside, and that it wasn't good to have wrinkles in the brain. And then she smoothed my eyebrows with her hand and said I must always think smooth—inside, and smooth outside. And do you know, it was easy. I haven't wrinkled my brows for ever so long. I've heard about filling teeth by thinking. But I don't believe that. Neither does mamma."

She paused rather out of breath. Nor did he speak. Her flow of talk had been too much for him. Also, sleeping drunkenly, with open mouth, had made him very thirsty. But, rather than lose one precious moment, he endured the torment of his scorching throat and mouth. He licked his dry lips and struggled for speech.

"What is your name?" he managed at last.

"Joan."

She looked her own question at him, and it was not necessary to voice it.

"Mine is Ross Shanklin," he volunteered, for the first time in forgotten years giving his real name.

"I suppose you've traveled a lot."

"I sure have, but not as much as I might have wanted to."

"Papa always wanted to travel, but he was too busy at the office. He never could get much time. He went to Europe once with mamma. That was before I was born. It takes money to travel."

Ross Shanklin did not know whether to agree with this statement or not.

"But it doesn't cost tramps much for expenses," she took the thought away from him. "Is that why you tramp?"

He nodded and licked his lips.

“Mamma says it’s too bad that men must tramp to look for work. But there’s lots of work now in the country. All the farmers in the valley are trying to get men. Have you been working?”

He shook his head, angry with himself that he should feel shame at the confession when his savage reasoning told him he was right in despising work. But this was followed by another thought. This beautiful little creature was some man’s child. She was one of the rewards of work.

“I wish I had a little girl like you,” he blurted out, stirred by a sudden consciousness of passion for paternity. “I’d work my hands off. I ... I’d do anything.”

She considered his case with fitting gravity.

“Then you aren’t married?”

“Nobody would have me.”

“Yes, they would, if ...”

She did not turn up her nose, but she favored his dirt and rags with a look of disapprobation he could not mistake.

“Go on,” he half-shouted. “Shoot it into me. If I was washed—if I wore good clothes—if I was respectable—if I had a job and worked regular—if I wasn’t what I am.”

To each statement she nodded.

“Well, I ain’t that kind,” he rushed on. “I’m no good. I’m a tramp. I don’t want to work, that’s what. And I like dirt.”

Her face was eloquent with reproach as she said, “Then you were only making believe when you wished you had a little girl like me?”

This left him speechless, for he knew, in all the depths of his new-found passion, that that was just what he did want.

With ready tact, noting his discomfort, she sought to change the subject.

“What do you think of God?” she asked. “I ain’t never met him. What do you think about him?”

His reply was evidently angry, and she was frank in her disapproval.

“You are very strange,” she said. “You get angry so easily. I never saw anybody before that got angry about God, or work, or being clean.”

“He never done anything for me,” he muttered resentfully. He cast back in quick review of the long years of toil in the convict camps and mines. “And work never done anything for me neither.”

An embarrassing silence fell.

He looked at her, numb and hungry with the stir of the father-love, sorry for his ill temper, puzzling his brain for something to say. She was looking off and away at the clouds, and he devoured her with his eyes. He reached out stealthily and rested one grimy hand on the very edge of her little dress. It seemed to him that she was the most wonderful thing in the world. The quail still called from the coverts, and the harvest sounds seemed abruptly to become very loud. A great loneliness oppressed him.

“I’m ... I’m no good,” he murmured huskily and repentantly.

But, beyond a glance from her blue eyes, she took no notice. The silence was more embarrassing than ever. He felt that he could give the world just to touch with his lips that hem of her dress where his hand rested. But he was afraid of frightening her. He fought to find something to say, licking his parched lips and vainly attempting to articulate something, anything.

“This ain’t Sonoma Valley,” he declared finally. “This is fairy land, and you’re a fairy. Mebbe I’m asleep and dreaming. I don’t know. You and me don’t know how to talk together, because, you see, you’re a fairy and don’t know nothing but good things, and I’m a man from the bad, wicked world.”

Having achieved this much, he was left gasping for ideas like a stranded fish.

“And you’re going to tell me about the bad, wicked world,” she cried, clapping her hands. “I’m just dying to know.”

He looked at her, startled, remembering the wreckage of womanhood he had encountered on the sunken ways of life. She was no fairy. She was flesh and blood, and the possibilities of wreckage were in her as they had been in him even when he lay at his mother’s breast. And there was in her eagerness to know.

“Nope,” he said lightly, “this man from the bad, wicked world ain’t going to tell you nothing of the kind. He’s going to tell you of the good things in that world. He’s going to tell you how he loved hosses when he was a shaver, and about the first hoss he straddled, and the first hoss he owned. Hosses ain’t like men. They’re better. They’re clean—clean all the way through and back again. And, little fairy, I want to tell you one thing—there sure ain’t nothing in the world like when you’re settin’ a tired hoss at the end of a long day, and when you just speak, and that tired animal lifts under you willing and hustles along. Hosses! They’re my long suit. I sure dote on hosses. Yep. I used to be a cowboy once.”

She clapped her hands in the way that tore so delightfully to his heart, and her eyes were dancing, as she exclaimed:

“A Texas cowboy! I always wanted to see one! I heard papa say once that cowboys are bow-legged. Are you?”

“I sure was a Texas cowboy,” he answered. “But it was a long time ago. And I’m sure bow-legged. You see, you can’t ride much when you’re young and soft without getting the legs bent some. Why, I was only a three-year-old when I begun. He was a three-year-old, too, fresh-broken. I led him up alongside the fence, dumb to the top rail, and dropped on. He was a pinto, and a real devil at bucking, but I could do anything with him. I reckon he knowed I was only a little shaver. Some hosses knows lots more ’n’ you think.”

For half an hour Ross Shanklin rambled on with his horse reminiscences, never unconscious for a moment of the supreme joy that was his through the touch of his hand on the hem of her dress. The sun dropped slowly into the cloud bank, the quail called more insistently, and empty wagon after empty wagon rumbled back across the bridge. Then came a woman’s voice.

“Joan! Joan!” it called. “Where are you, dear?”

The little girl answered, and Ross Shanklin saw a woman, clad in a soft, clinging gown, come through the gate from the bungalow. She was a slender, graceful woman, and to his charmed eyes she seemed rather to float along than walk like ordinary flesh and blood.

“What have you been doing all afternoon?” the woman asked, as she came up.

“Talking, mamma,” the little girl replied. “I’ve had a very interesting time.”

Ross Shanklin scrambled to his feet and stood watchfully and awkwardly. The little girl took the mother’s hand, and she, in turn, looked at him frankly and pleasantly, with a recognition of his humanness that was a new thing to him. In his mind ran the thought: the woman who ain’t afraid. Not a hint was there of the timidity he was accustomed to seeing in women’s eyes. And he was quite aware, and never more so, of his bleary-eyed, forbidding appearance.

“How do you do?” she greeted him sweetly and naturally.

“How do you do, ma’am,” he responded, unpleasantly conscious of the huskiness and rawness of his voice.

“And did you have an interesting time, too!” she smiled.

“Yes, ma’am. I sure did. I was just telling your little girl about bosses.”

“He was a cowboy, once, mamma,” she cried.

The mother smiled her acknowledgment to him, and looked fondly down at the little girl. The thought that came into Ross Shanklin’s mind was the awfulness of the crime if any one should harm either of the wonderful pair. This was followed by the wish that some terrible danger should threaten, so that he could fight, as he well knew how, with all his strength and life, to defend them.

“You’ll have to come along, dear,” the mother said. “It’s growing late.” She looked at Ross Shanklin hesitantly. “Would you care to have something to eat?”

“No, ma’am, thanking you kindly just the same. I ... I ain’t hungry.”

“Then say good-bye, Joan,” she counselled.

“Good-bye.” The little girl held out her hand, and her eyes lighted roguishly. “Good-bye, Mr. Man from the bad, wicked world.”

To him, the touch of her hand as he pressed it in his was the capstone of the whole adventure.

“Good-bye, little fairy,” he mumbled. “I reckon I got to be pullin’ along.”

But he did not pull along. He stood staring after his vision until it vanished through the gate. The day seemed suddenly empty. He looked about him irresolutely, then climbed the fence, crossed the bridge, and slouched along the road. He was in a dream. He did not note his feet nor the way they led him. At times he stumbled in the dust-filled ruts.

A mile farther on, he aroused at the crossroads. Before him stood the saloon. He came to a stop and stared at it, licking his lips. He sank his hand into his pants pocket and fumbled a solitary dime. “God!” he muttered. “God!” Then, with dragging, reluctant feet, went on along the road.

He came to a big farm. He knew it must be big, because of the bigness of the house and the size and number of the barns and outbuildings. On the porch, in shirt sleeves, smoking a cigar, keen-eyed and middle-aged, was the farmer.

“What’s the chance for a job!” Ross Shanklin asked.

The keen eyes scarcely glanced at him.

“A dollar a day and grub,” was the answer.

Ross Shanklin swallowed and braced himself.

“I’ll pick grapes all right, or anything. But what’s the chance for a steady job? You’ve got a big ranch here. I know hosses. I was born on one. I can drive team, ride, plough, break, do anything that anybody ever done with hosses.”

The other looked him over with an appraising, incredulous eye.

“You don’t look it,” was the judgment.

“I know I don’t. Give me a chance. That’s all. I’ll prove it.”

The farmer considered, casting an anxious glance at the cloud bank into which the sun had sunk.

“I’m short a teamster, and I’ll give you the chance to make good. Go and get supper with the hands.”

Ross Shanklin’s voice was very husky, and he spoke with an effort.

“All right. I’ll make good. Where can I get a drink of water and wash up?”

The House of Mapuhi

Despite the heavy clumsiness of her lines, the Aorai handled easily in the light breeze, and her captain ran her well in before he hove to just outside the suck of the surf. The atoll of Hikueru lay low on the water, a circle of pounded coral sand a hundred yards wide, twenty miles in circumference, and from three to five feet above high-water mark. On the bottom of the huge and glassy lagoon was much pearl shell, and from the deck of the schooner, across the slender ring of the atoll, the divers could be seen at work. But the lagoon had no entrance for even a trading schooner. With a favoring breeze cutters could win in through the tortuous and shallow channel, but the schooners lay off and on outside and sent in their small boats.

The Aorai swung out a boat smartly, into which sprang half a dozen brown-skinned sailors clad only in scarlet loincloths. They took the oars, while in the stern sheets, at the steering sweep, stood a young man garbed in the tropic white that marks the European. The golden strain of Polynesia betrayed itself in the sun-gilt of his fair skin and cast up golden sheens and lights through the glimmering blue of his eyes. Raoul he was, Alexandre Raoul, youngest son of Marie Raoul, the wealthy quarter-caste, who owned and managed half a dozen trading schooners similar to the Aorai. Across an eddy just outside the entrance, and in and through and over a boiling tide-rip, the boat fought its way to the mirrored calm of the lagoon. Young Raoul leaped out upon the white sand and shook hands with a tall native. The man's chest and shoulders were magnificent, but the stump of a right arm, beyond the flesh of which the age-whitened bone projected several inches, attested the encounter with a shark that had put an end to his diving days and made him a fawner and an intriguer for small favors.

"Have you heard, Alec?" were his first words. "Mapuhi has found a pearl—such a pearl. Never was there one like it ever fished up in Hikueru, nor in all the Paumotus, nor in all the world. Buy it from him. He has it now. And remember that I told you first. He is a fool and you can get it cheap. Have you any tobacco?"

Straight up the beach to a shack under a pandanus tree Raoul headed. He was his mother's supercargo, and his business was to comb all the Paumotus for the wealth of copra, shell, and pearls that they yielded up.

He was a young supercargo, it was his second voyage in such capacity, and he suffered much secret worry from his lack of experience in pricing pearls. But when Mapuhi exposed the pearl to his sight he managed to suppress the startle it gave him, and to maintain a careless, commercial expression on his face. For the pearl had struck him a blow. It was large as a pigeon egg, a perfect sphere, of a whiteness that reflected opalescent lights from all colors about it. It was alive. Never had he seen anything like

it. When Mapuhi dropped it into his hand he was surprised by the weight of it. That showed that it was a good pearl. He examined it closely, through a pocket magnifying glass. It was without flaw or blemish. The purity of it seemed almost to melt into the atmosphere out of his hand. In the shade it was softly luminous, gleaming like a tender moon. So translucently white was it, that when he dropped it into a glass of water he had difficulty in finding it. So straight and swiftly had it sunk to the bottom that he knew its weight was excellent.

“Well, what do you want for it?” he asked, with a fine assumption of nonchalance.

“I want—” Mapuhi began, and behind him, framing his own dark face, the dark faces of two women and a girl nodded concurrence in what he wanted. Their heads were bent forward, they were animated by a suppressed eagerness, their eyes flashed avariciously.

“I want a house,” Mapuhi went on. “It must have a roof of galvanized iron and an octagon-drop-clock. It must be six fathoms long with a porch all around. A big room must be in the centre, with a round table in the middle of it and the octagon-drop-clock on the wall. There must be four bedrooms, two on each side of the big room, and in each bedroom must be an iron bed, two chairs, and a washstand. And back of the house must be a kitchen, a good kitchen, with pots and pans and a stove. And you must build the house on my island, which is Fakarava.”

“Is that all?” Raoul asked incredulously.

“There must be a sewing machine,” spoke up Tefara, Mapuhi’s wife.

“Not forgetting the octagon-drop-clock,” added Nauri, Mapuhi’s mother.

“Yes, that is all,” said Mapuhi.

Young Raoul laughed. He laughed long and heartily. But while he laughed he secretly performed problems in mental arithmetic. He had never built a house in his life, and his notions concerning house building were hazy. While he laughed, he calculated the cost of the voyage to Tahiti for materials, of the materials themselves, of the voyage back again to Fakarava, and the cost of landing the materials and of building the house. It would come to four thousand French dollars, allowing a margin for safety—four thousand French dollars were equivalent to twenty thousand francs. It was impossible. How was he to know the value of such a pearl? Twenty thousand francs was a lot of money—and of his mother’s money at that.

“Mapuhi,” he said, “you are a big fool. Set a money price.”

But Mapuhi shook his head, and the three heads behind him shook with his.

“I want the house,” he said. “It must be six fathoms long with a porch all around—”

“Yes, yes,” Raoul interrupted. “I know all about your house, but it won’t do. I’ll give you a thousand Chili dollars.”

The four heads chorused a silent negative.

“And a hundred Chili dollars in trade.”

“I want the house,” Mapuhi began.

“What good will the house do you?” Raoul demanded. “The first hurricane that comes along will wash it away. You ought to know.

Captain Raffy says it looks like a hurricane right now.”

“Not on Fakarava,” said Mapuhi. “The land is much higher there. On this island, yes. Any hurricane can sweep Hikueru. I will have the house on Fakarava. It must be six fathoms long with a porch all around—“

And Raoul listened again to the tale of the house. Several hours he spent in the endeavor to hammer the house obsession out of Mapuhi’s mind; but Mapuhi’s mother and wife, and Ngakura, Mapuhi’s daughter, bolstered him in his resolve for the house. Through the open doorway, while he listened for the twentieth time to the detailed description of the house that was wanted, Raoul saw his schooner’s second boat draw up on the beach. The sailors rested on the oars, advertising haste to be gone. The first mate of the Aorai sprang ashore, exchanged a word with the one-armed native, then hurried toward Raoul. The day grew suddenly dark, as a squall obscured the face of the sun. Across the lagoon Raoul could see approaching the ominous line of the puff of wind.

“Captain Raffy says you’ve got to get to hell outa here,” was the mate’s greeting. “If there’s any shell, we’ve got to run the risk of picking it up later on—so he says. The barometer’s dropped to twenty-nine-seventy.”

The gust of wind struck the pandanus tree overhead and tore through the palms beyond, flinging half a dozen ripe coconuts with heavy thuds to the ground. Then came the rain out of the distance, advancing with the roar of a gale of wind and causing the water of the lagoon to smoke in driven windrows. The sharp rattle of the first drops was on the leaves when Raoul sprang to his feet.

“A thousand Chili dollars, cash down, Mapuhi,” he said. “And two hundred Chili dollars in trade.”

“I want a house—“ the other began.

“Mapuhi!” Raoul yelled, in order to make himself heard. “You are a fool!”

He flung out of the house, and, side by side with the mate, fought his way down the beach toward the boat. They could not see the boat. The tropic rain sheeted about them so that they could see only the beach under their feet and the spiteful little waves from the lagoon that snapped and bit at the sand. A figure appeared through the deluge. It was Huru-Huru, the man with the one arm.

“Did you get the pearl?” he yelled in Raoul’s ear.

“Mapuhi is a fool!” was the answering yell, and the next moment they were lost to each other in the descending water.

Half an hour later, Huru-Huru, watching from the seaward side of the atoll, saw the two boats hoisted in and the Aorai pointing her nose out to sea. And near her, just come in from the sea on the wings of the squall, he saw another schooner hove to and dropping a boat into the water. He knew her. It was the OROHENA, owned by Toriki, the half-caste trader, who served as his own supercargo and who doubtlessly was even then in the stern sheets of the boat. Huru-Huru chuckled. He knew that Mapuhi owed Toriki for trade goods advanced the year before.

The squall had passed. The hot sun was blazing down, and the lagoon was once more a mirror. But the air was sticky like mucilage, and the weight of it seemed to burden the lungs and make breathing difficult.

“Have you heard the news, Toriki?” Huru-Huru asked. “Mapuhi has found a pearl. Never was there a pearl like it ever fished up in Hikueru, nor anywhere in the Paumotus, nor anywhere in all the world. Mapuhi is a fool. Besides, he owes you money. Remember that I told you first. Have you any tobacco?”

And to the grass shack of Mapuhi went Toriki. He was a masterful man, withal a fairly stupid one. Carelessly he glanced at the wonderful pearl—glanced for a moment only; and carelessly he dropped it into his pocket.

“You are lucky,” he said. “It is a nice pearl. I will give you credit on the books.”

“I want a house,” Mapuhi began, in consternation. “It must be six fathoms—”

“Six fathoms your grandmother!” was the trader’s retort. “You want to pay up your debts, that’s what you want. You owed me twelve hundred dollars Chili. Very well; you owe them no longer. The amount is squared. Besides, I will give you credit for two hundred Chili. If, when I get to Tahiti, the pearl sells well, I will give you credit for another hundred—that will make three hundred. But mind, only if the pearl sells well. I may even lose money on it.”

Mapuhi folded his arms in sorrow and sat with bowed head. He had been robbed of his pearl. In place of the house, he had paid a debt. There was nothing to show for the pearl.

“You are a fool,” said Tefara.

“You are a fool,” said Nauri, his mother. “Why did you let the pearl into his hand?”

“What was I to do?” Mapuhi protested. “I owed him the money. He knew I had the pearl. You heard him yourself ask to see it. I had not told him. He knew. Somebody else told him. And I owed him the money.”

“Mapuhi is a fool,” mimicked Ngakura.

She was twelve years old and did not know any better. Mapuhi relieved his feelings by sending her reeling from a box on the ear; while Tefara and Nauri burst into tears and continued to upbraid him after the manner of women.

Huru-Huru, watching on the beach, saw a third schooner that he knew heave to outside the entrance and drop a boat. It was the Hira, well named, for she was owned by Levy, the German Jew, the greatest pearl buyer of them all, and, as was well known, Hira was the Tahitian god of fishermen and thieves.

“Have you heard the news?” Huru-Huru asked, as Levy, a fat man with massive asymmetrical features, stepped out upon the beach. “Mapuhi has found a pearl. There was never a pearl like it in Hikueru, in all the Paumotus, in all the world. Mapuhi is a fool. He has sold it to Toriki for fourteen hundred Chili—I listened outside and heard. Toriki is likewise a fool. You can buy it from him cheap. Remember that I told you first. Have you any tobacco?”

“Where is Toriki?”

“In the house of Captain Lynch, drinking absinthe. He has been there an hour.”

And while Levy and Toriki drank absinthe and chattered over the pearl, Huru-Huru listened and heard the stupendous price of twenty-five thousand francs agreed upon.

It was at this time that both the OROHENA and the Hira, running in close to the shore, began firing guns and signalling frantically. The three men stepped outside in time to see the two schooners go hastily about and head off shore, dropping mainsails and flying jibs on the run in the teeth of the squall that heeled them far over on the whitened water. Then the rain blotted them out.

“They’ll be back after it’s over,” said Toriki. “We’d better be getting out of here.”

“I reckon the glass has fallen some more,” said Captain Lynch.

He was a white-bearded sea-captain, too old for service, who had learned that the only way to live on comfortable terms with his asthma was on Hikueru. He went inside to look at the barometer.

“Great God!” they heard him exclaim, and rushed in to join him at staring at a dial, which marked twenty-nine-twenty.

Again they came out, this time anxiously to consult sea and sky. The squall had cleared away, but the sky remained overcast. The two schooners, under all sail and joined by a third, could be seen making back. A veer in the wind induced them to slack off sheets, and five minutes afterward a sudden veer from the opposite quarter caught all three schooners aback, and those on shore could see the boom-tackles being slacked away or cast off on the jump. The sound of the surf was loud, hollow, and menacing, and a heavy swell was setting in. A terrible sheet of lightning burst before their eyes, illuminating the dark day, and the thunder rolled wildly about them.

Toriki and Levy broke into a run for their boats, the latter ambling along like a panic-stricken hippopotamus. As their two boats swept out the entrance, they passed the boat of the Aorai coming in. In the stern sheets, encouraging the rowers, was Raoul. Unable to shake the vision of the pearl from his mind, he was returning to accept Mapuhi’s price of a house.

He landed on the beach in the midst of a driving thunder squall that was so dense that he collided with Huru-Huru before he saw him.

“Too late,” yelled Huru-Huru. “Mapuhi sold it to Toriki for fourteen hundred Chili, and Toriki sold it to Levy for twenty-five thousand francs. And Levy will sell it in France for a hundred thousand francs. Have you any tobacco?”

Raoul felt relieved. His troubles about the pearl were over. He need not worry any more, even if he had not got the pearl. But he did not believe Huru-Huru. Mapuhi might well have sold it for fourteen hundred Chili, but that Levy, who knew pearls, should have paid twenty-five thousand francs was too wide a stretch. Raoul decided to interview Captain Lynch on the subject, but when he arrived at that ancient mariner’s house, he found him looking wide-eyed at the barometer.

“What do you read it?” Captain Lynch asked anxiously, rubbing his spectacles and staring again at the instrument.

“Twenty-nine-ten,” said Raoul. “I have never seen it so low before.”

"I should say not!" snorted the captain. "Fifty years boy and man on all the seas, and I've never seen it go down to that. Listen!"

They stood for a moment, while the surf rumbled and shook the house. Then they went outside. The squall had passed. They could see the Aorai lying becalmed a mile away and pitching and tossing madly in the tremendous seas that rolled in stately procession down out of the northeast and flung themselves furiously upon the coral shore. One of the sailors from the boat pointed at the mouth of the passage and shook his head. Raoul looked and saw a white anarchy of foam and surge.

"I guess I'll stay with you tonight, Captain," he said; then turned to the sailor and told him to haul the boat out and to find shelter for himself and fellows.

"Twenty-nine flat," Captain Lynch reported, coming out from another look at the barometer, a chair in his hand.

He sat down and stared at the spectacle of the sea. The sun came out, increasing the sultriness of the day, while the dead calm still held. The seas continued to increase in magnitude.

"What makes that sea is what gets me," Raoul muttered petulantly.

"There is no wind, yet look at it, look at that fellow there!"

Miles in length, carrying tens of thousands of tons in weight, its impact shook the frail atoll like an earthquake. Captain Lynch was startled.

"Gracious!" he bellowed, half rising from his chair, then sinking back.

"But there is no wind," Raoul persisted. "I could understand it if there was wind along with it."

"You'll get the wind soon enough without worryin' for it," was the grim reply.

The two men sat on in silence. The sweat stood out on their skin in myriads of tiny drops that ran together, forming blotches of moisture, which, in turn, coalesced into rivulets that dripped to the ground. They panted for breath, the old man's efforts being especially painful. A sea swept up the beach, licking around the trunks of the cocoanuts and subsiding almost at their feet.

"Way past high water mark," Captain Lynch remarked; "and I've been here eleven years." He looked at his watch. "It is three o'clock."

A man and woman, at their heels a motley following of brats and curs, trailed disconsolately by. They came to a halt beyond the house, and, after much irresolution, sat down in the sand. A few minutes later another family trailed in from the opposite direction, the men and women carrying a heterogeneous assortment of possessions. And soon several hundred persons of all ages and sexes were congregated about the captain's dwelling. He called to one new arrival, a woman with a nursing babe in her arms, and in answer received the information that her house had just been swept into the lagoon.

This was the highest spot of land in miles, and already, in many places on either hand, the great seas were making a clean breach of the slender ring of the atoll and surging into the lagoon. Twenty miles around stretched the ring of the atoll, and in no

place was it more than fifty fathoms wide. It was the height of the diving season, and from all the islands around, even as far as Tahiti, the natives had gathered.

"There are twelve hundred men, women, and children here," said Captain Lynch. "I wonder how many will be here tomorrow morning."

"But why don't it blow?—that's what I want to know," Raoul demanded.

"Don't worry, young man, don't worry; you'll get your troubles fast enough."

Even as Captain Lynch spoke, a great watery mass smote the atoll.

The sea water churned about them three inches deep under the chairs. A low wail of fear went up from the many women. The children, with clasped hands, stared at the immense rollers and cried piteously. Chickens and cats, wading perturbedly in the water, as by common consent, with flight and scramble took refuge on the roof of the captain's house. A Paumotan, with a litter of new-born puppies in a basket, climbed into a cocoanut tree and twenty feet above the ground made the basket fast. The mother floundered about in the water beneath, whining and yelping.

And still the sun shone brightly and the dead calm continued. They sat and watched the seas and the insane pitching of the Aorai. Captain Lynch gazed at the huge mountains of water sweeping in until he could gaze no more. He covered his face with his hands to shut out the sight; then went into the house.

"Twenty-eight-sixty," he said quietly when he returned.

In his arm was a coil of small rope. He cut it into two-fathom lengths, giving one to Raoul and, retaining one for himself, distributed the remainder among the women with the advice to pick out a tree and climb.

A light air began to blow out of the northeast, and the fan of it on his cheek seemed to cheer Raoul up. He could see the Aorai trimming her sheets and heading off shore, and he regretted that he was not on her. She would get away at any rate, but as for the atoll—A sea breached across, almost sweeping him off his feet, and he selected a tree. Then he remembered the barometer and ran back to the house. He encountered Captain Lynch on the same errand and together they went in.

"Twenty-eight-twenty," said the old mariner. "It's going to be fair hell around here—what was that?"

The air seemed filled with the rush of something. The house quivered and vibrated, and they heard the thrumming of a mighty note of sound. The windows rattled. Two panes crashed; a draught of wind tore in, striking them and making them stagger. The door opposite banged shut, shattering the latch. The white door knob crumbled in fragments to the floor. The room's walls bulged like a gas balloon in the process of sudden inflation. Then came a new sound like the rattle of musketry, as the spray from a sea struck the wall of the house. Captain Lynch looked at his watch. It was four o'clock. He put on a coat of pilot cloth, unhooked the barometer, and stowed it away in a capacious pocket. Again a sea struck the house, with a heavy thud, and the light building tilted, twisted, quarter around on its foundation, and sank down, its floor at an angle of ten degrees.

Raoul went out first. The wind caught him and whirled him away. He noted that it had hauled around to the east. With a great effort he threw himself on the sand, crouching and holding his own. Captain Lynch, driven like a wisp of straw, sprawled over him. Two of the Aorai's sailors, leaving a cocoanut tree to which they had been clinging, came to their aid, leaning against the wind at impossible angles and fighting and clawing every inch of the way.

The old man's joints were stiff and he could not climb, so the sailors, by means of short ends of rope tied together, hoisted him up the trunk, a few feet at a time, till they could make him fast, at the top of the tree, fifty feet from the ground. Raoul passed his length of rope around the base of an adjacent tree and stood looking on. The wind was frightful. He had never dreamed it could blow so hard. A sea breached across the atoll, wetting him to the knees ere it subsided into the lagoon. The sun had disappeared, and a lead-colored twilight settled down. A few drops of rain, driving horizontally, struck him. The impact was like that of leaden pellets. A splash of salt spray struck his face. It was like the slap of a man's hand. His cheeks stung, and involuntary tears of pain were in his smarting eyes. Several hundred natives had taken to the trees, and he could have laughed at the bunches of human fruit clustering in the tops. Then, being Tahitian-born, he doubled his body at the waist, clasped the trunk of his tree with his hands, pressed the soles of his feet against the near surface of the trunk, and began to walk up the tree. At the top he found two women, two children, and a man. One little girl clasped a housecat in her arms.

From his eyrie he waved his hand to Captain Lynch, and that doughty patriarch waved back. Raoul was appalled at the sky. It had approached much nearer—in fact, it seemed just over his head; and it had turned from lead to black. Many people were still on the ground grouped about the bases of the trees and holding on. Several such clusters were praying, and in one the Mormon missionary was exhorting. A weird sound, rhythmical, faint as the faintest chirp of a far cricket, enduring but for a moment, but in the moment suggesting to him vaguely the thought of heaven and celestial music, came to his ear. He glanced about him and saw, at the base of another tree, a large cluster of people holding on by ropes and by one another. He could see their faces working and their lips moving in unison. No sound came to him, but he knew that they were singing hymns.

Still the wind continued to blow harder. By no conscious process could he measure it, for it had long since passed beyond all his experience of wind; but he knew somehow, nevertheless, that it was blowing harder. Not far away a tree was uprooted, flinging its load of human beings to the ground. A sea washed across the strip of sand, and they were gone. Things were happening quickly. He saw a brown shoulder and a black head silhouetted against the churning white of the lagoon. The next instant that, too, had vanished. Other trees were going, falling and criss-crossing like matches. He was amazed at the power of the wind. His own tree was swaying perilously, one woman was wailing and clutching the little girl, who in turn still hung on to the cat.

The man, holding the other child, touched Raoul's arm and pointed. He looked and saw the Mormon church careering drunkenly a hundred feet away. It had been torn from its foundations, and wind and sea were heaving and shoving it toward the lagoon. A frightful wall of water caught it, tilted it, and flung it against half a dozen cocoanut trees. The bunches of human fruit fell like ripe cocoanuts. The subsiding wave showed them on the ground, some lying motionless, others squirming and writhing. They reminded him strangely of ants. He was not shocked. He had risen above horror. Quite as a matter of course he noted the succeeding wave sweep the sand clean of the human wreckage. A third wave, more colossal than any he had yet seen, hurled the church into the lagoon, where it floated off into the obscurity to leeward, half-submerged, reminding him for all the world of a Noah's ark.

He looked for Captain Lynch's house, and was surprised to find it gone. Things certainly were happening quickly. He noticed that many of the people in the trees that still held had descended to the ground. The wind had yet again increased. His own tree showed that. It no longer swayed or bent over and back. Instead, it remained practically stationary, curved in a rigid angle from the wind and merely vibrating. But the vibration was sickening. It was like that of a tuning-fork or the tongue of a jew's-harp. It was the rapidity of the vibration that made it so bad. Even though its roots held, it could not stand the strain for long. Something would have to break.

Ah, there was one that had gone. He had not seen it go, but there it stood, the remnant, broken off half-way up the trunk. One did not know what happened unless he saw it. The mere crashing of trees and wails of human despair occupied no place in that mighty volume of sound. He chanced to be looking in Captain Lynch's direction when it happened. He saw the trunk of the tree, half-way up, splinter and part without noise. The head of the tree, with three sailors of the Aorai and the old captain sailed off over the lagoon. It did not fall to the ground, but drove through the air like a piece of chaff. For a hundred yards he followed its flight, when it struck the water. He strained his eyes, and was sure that he saw Captain Lynch wave farewell.

The House of Pride

Percival Ford wondered why he had come. He did not dance. He did not care much for army people. Yet he knew them all—gliding and revolving there on the broad lanai of the Seaside, the officers in their fresh-starched uniforms of white, the civilians in white and black, and the women bare of shoulders and arms. After two years in Honolulu the Twentieth was departing to its new station in Alaska, and Percival Ford, as one of the big men of the Islands, could not help knowing the officers and their women.

But between knowing and liking was a vast gulf. The army women frightened him just a little. They were in ways quite different from the women he liked best—the elderly women, the spinsters and the bespectacled maidens, and the very serious women of all ages whom he met on church and library and kindergarten committees, who came meekly to him for contributions and advice. He ruled those women by virtue of his superior mentality, his great wealth, and the high place he occupied in the commercial baronage of Hawaii. And he was not afraid of them in the least. Sex, with them, was not obtrusive. Yes, that was it. There was in them something else, or more, than the assertive grossness of life. He was fastidious; he acknowledged that to himself; and these army women, with their bare shoulders and naked arms, their straight-looking eyes, their vitality and challenging femaleness, jarred upon his sensibilities.

Nor did he get on better with the army men, who took life lightly, drinking and smoking and swearing their way through life and asserting the essential grossness of flesh no less shamelessly than their women. He was always uncomfortable in the company of the army men. They seemed uncomfortable, too. And he felt, always, that they were laughing at him up their sleeves, or pitying him, or tolerating him. Then, too, they seemed, by mere contiguity, to emphasize a lack in him, to call attention to that in them which he did not possess and which he thanked God he did not possess. Faugh! They were like their women!

In fact, Percival Ford was no more a woman's man than he was a man's man. A glance at him told the reason. He had a good constitution, never was on intimate terms with sickness, nor even mild disorders; but he lacked vitality. His was a negative organism. No blood with a ferment in it could have nourished and shaped that long and narrow face, those thin lips, lean cheeks, and the small, sharp eyes. The thatch of hair, dust-coloured, straight and sparse, advertised the niggard soil, as did the nose, thin, delicately modelled, and just hinting the suggestion of a beak. His meagre blood had denied him much of life, and permitted him to be an extremist in one thing only, which thing was righteousness. Over right conduct he pondered and agonized, and

that he should do right was as necessary to his nature as loving and being loved were necessary to commoner clay.

He was sitting under the algaroba trees between the lanai and the beach. His eyes wandered over the dancers and he turned his head away and gazed seaward across the mellow-sounding surf to the Southern Cross burning low on the horizon. He was irritated by the bare shoulders and arms of the women. If he had a daughter he would never permit it, never. But his hypothesis was the sheerest abstraction. The thought process had been accompanied by no inner vision of that daughter. He did not see a daughter with arms and shoulders. Instead, he smiled at the remote contingency of marriage. He was thirty-five, and, having had no personal experience of love, he looked upon it, not as mythical, but as bestial. Anybody could marry. The Japanese and Chinese coolies, toiling on the sugar plantations and in the rice-fields, married. They invariably married at the first opportunity. It was because they were so low in the scale of life. There was nothing else for them to do. They were like the army men and women. But for him there were other and higher things. He was different from them—from all of them. He was proud of how he happened to be. He had come of no petty love-match. He had come of lofty conception of duty and of devotion to a cause. His father had not married for love. Love was a madness that had never perturbed Isaac Ford. When he answered the call to go to the heathen with the message of life, he had had no thought and no desire for marriage. In this they were alike, his father and he. But the Board of Missions was economical. With New England thrift it weighed and measured and decided that married missionaries were less expensive per capita and more efficacious. So the Board commanded Isaac Ford to marry. Furthermore, it furnished him with a wife, another zealous soul with no thought of marriage, intent only on doing the Lord's work among the heathen. They saw each other for the first time in Boston. The Board brought them together, arranged everything, and by the end of the week they were married and started on the long voyage around the Horn.

Percival Ford was proud that he had come of such a union. He had been born high, and he thought of himself as a spiritual aristocrat. And he was proud of his father. It was a passion with him. The erect, austere figure of Isaac Ford had burned itself upon his pride. On his desk was a miniature of that soldier of the Lord. In his bedroom hung the portrait of Isaac Ford, painted at the time when he had served under the Monarchy as prime minister. Not that Isaac Ford had coveted place and worldly wealth, but that, as prime minister, and, later, as banker, he had been of greater service to the missionary cause. The German crowd, and the English crowd, and all the rest of the trading crowd, had sneered at Isaac Ford as a commercial soul-saver; but he, his son, knew different. When the natives, emerging abruptly from their feudal system, with no conception of the nature and significance of property in land, were letting their broad acres slip through their fingers, it was Isaac Ford who had stepped in between the trading crowd and its prey and taken possession of fat, vast holdings. Small wonder the trading crowd did not like his memory. But he had never looked upon his enormous wealth as his own. He had considered himself God's steward. Out of the revenues he

had built schools, and hospitals, and churches. Nor was it his fault that sugar, after the slump, had paid forty per cent; that the bank he founded had prospered into a railroad; and that, among other things, fifty thousand acres of Oahu pasture land, which he had bought for a dollar an acre, grew eight tons of sugar to the acre every eighteen months. No, in all truth, Isaac Ford was an heroic figure, fit, so Percival Ford thought privately, to stand beside the statue of Kamehameha I. in front of the Judiciary Building. Isaac Ford was gone, but he, his son, carried on the good work at least as inflexibly if not as masterfully.

He turned his eyes back to the lanai. What was the difference, he asked himself, between the shameless, grass-girdled hula dances and the décollete dances of the women of his own race? Was there an essential difference? or was it a matter of degree?

As he pondered the problem a hand rested on his shoulder.

“Hello, Ford, what are you doing here? Isn’t this a bit festive?”

“I try to be lenient, Dr. Kennedy, even as I look on,” Percival Ford answered gravely. “Won’t you sit down?”

Dr. Kennedy sat down, clapping his palms sharply. A white-clad Japanese servant answered swiftly.

Scotch and soda was Kennedy’s order; then, turning to the other, he said:-

“Of course, I don’t ask you.”

“But I will take something,” Ford said firmly. The doctor’s eyes showed surprise, and the servant waited. “Boy, a lemonade, please.”

The doctor laughed at it heartily, as a joke on himself, and glanced at the musicians under the hau tree.

“Why, it’s the Aloha Orchestra,” he said. “I thought they were with the Hawaiian Hotel on Tuesday nights. Some rumpus, I guess.”

His eyes paused for a moment, and dwelt upon the one who was playing a guitar and singing a Hawaiian song to the accompaniment of all the instruments.

His face became grave as he looked at the singer, and it was still grave as he turned it to his companion.

“Look here, Ford, isn’t it time you let up on Joe Garland? I understand you are in opposition to the Promotion Committee’s sending him to the States on this surf-board proposition, and I’ve been wanting to speak to you about it. I should have thought you’d be glad to get him out of the country. It would be a good way to end your persecution of him.”

“Persecution?” Percival Ford’s eyebrows lifted interrogatively.

“Call it by any name you please,” Kennedy went on. “You’ve hounded that poor devil for years. It’s not his fault. Even you will admit that.”

“Not his fault?” Percival Ford’s thin lips drew tightly together for the moment. “Joe Garland is dissolute and idle. He has always been a wastrel, a profligate.”

“But that’s no reason you should keep on after him the way you do. I’ve watched you from the beginning. The first thing you did when you returned from college and

found him working on the plantation as outside luna was to fire him—you with your millions, and he with his sixty dollars a month.”

“Not the first thing,” Percival Ford said judicially, in a tone he was accustomed to use in committee meetings. “I gave him his warning. The superintendent said he was a capable luna. I had no objection to him on that ground. It was what he did outside working hours. He undid my work faster than I could build it up. Of what use were the Sunday schools, the night schools, and the sewing classes, when in the evenings there was Joe Garland with his infernal and eternal tum-tumming of guitar and ukulele, his strong drink, and his hula dancing? After I warned him, I came upon him—I shall never forget it—came upon him, down at the cabins. It was evening. I could hear the hula songs before I saw the scene. And when I did see it, there were the girls, shameless in the moonlight and dancing—the girls upon whom I had worked to teach clean living and right conduct. And there were three girls there, I remember, just graduated from the mission school. Of course I discharged Joe Garland. I know it was the same at Hilo. People said I went out of my way when I persuaded Mason and Fitch to discharge him. But it was the missionaries who requested me to do so. He was undoing their work by his reprehensible example.”

“Afterwards, when he got on the railroad, your railroad, he was discharged without cause,” Kennedy challenged.

“Not so,” was the quick answer. “I had him into my private office and talked with him for half an hour.”

“You discharged him for inefficiency?”

“For immoral living, if you please.”

Dr. Kennedy laughed with a grating sound. “Who the devil gave it to you to be judge and jury? Does landlordism give you control of the immortal souls of those that toil for you? I have been your physician. Am I to expect tomorrow your ukase that I give up Scotch and soda or your patronage? Bah! Ford, you take life too seriously. Besides, when Joe got into that smuggling scrape (he wasn’t in your employ, either), and he sent word to you, asked you to pay his fine, you left him to do his six months’ hard labour on the reef. Don’t forget, you left Joe Garland in the lurch that time. You threw him down, hard; and yet I remember the first day you came to school—we boarded, you were only a day scholar—you had to be initiated. Three times under in the swimming tank—you remember, it was the regular dose every new boy got. And you held back. You denied that you could swim. You were frightened, hysterical—“

“Yes, I know,” Percival Ford said slowly. “I was frightened. And it was a lie, for I could swim . . . And I was frightened.”

“And you remember who fought for you? who lied for you harder than you could lie, and swore he knew you couldn’t swim? Who jumped into the tank and pulled you out after the first under and was nearly drowned for it by the other boys, who had discovered by that time that you COULD swim?”

“Of course I know,” the other rejoined coldly. “But a generous act as a boy does not excuse a lifetime of wrong living.”

“He has never done wrong to you?—personally and directly, I mean?”

“No,” was Percival Ford’s answer. “That is what makes my position impregnable. I have no personal spite against him. He is bad, that is all. His life is bad—“

“Which is another way of saying that he does not agree with you in the way life should be lived,” the doctor interrupted.

“Have it that way. It is immaterial. He is an idler—“

“With reason,” was the interruption, “considering the jobs out of which you have knocked him.”

“He is immoral—“

“Oh, hold on now, Ford. Don’t go harping on that. You are pure New England stock. Joe Garland is half Kanaka. Your blood is thin. His is warm. Life is one thing to you, another thing to him. He laughs and sings and dances through life, genial, unselfish, childlike, everybody’s friend. You go through life like a perambulating prayer-wheel, a friend of nobody but the righteous, and the righteous are those who agree with you as to what is right. And after all, who shall say? You live like an anchorite. Joe Garland lives like a good fellow. Who has extracted the most from life? We are paid to live, you know. When the wages are too meagre we throw up the job, which is the cause, believe me, of all rational suicide. Joe Garland would starve to death on the wages you get from life. You see, he is made differently. So would you starve on his wages, which are singing, and love—“

“Lust, if you will pardon me,” was the interruption.

Dr. Kennedy smiled.

“Love, to you, is a word of four letters and a definition which you have extracted from the dictionary. But love, real love, dewy and palpitant and tender, you do not know. If God made you and me, and men and women, believe me He made love, too. But to come back. It’s about time you quit hounding Joe Garland. It is not worthy of you, and it is cowardly. The thing for you to do is to reach out and lend him a hand.”

“Why I, any more than you?” the other demanded. “Why don’t you reach him a hand?”

“I have. I’m reaching him a hand now. I’m trying to get you not to down the Promotion Committee’s proposition of sending him away. I got him the job at Hilo with Mason and Fitch. I’ve got him half a dozen jobs, out of every one of which you drove him. But never mind that. Don’t forget one thing—and a little frankness won’t hurt you—it is not fair play to saddle another fault on Joe Garland; and you know that you, least of all, are the man to do it. Why, man, it’s not good taste. It’s positively indecent.”

“Now I don’t follow you,” Percival Ford answered. “You’re up in the air with some obscure scientific theory of heredity and personal irresponsibility. But how any theory can hold Joe Garland irresponsible for his wrongdoings and at the same time hold me personally responsible for them—more responsible than any one else, including Joe Garland—is beyond me.”

"It's a matter of delicacy, I suppose, or of taste, that prevents you from following me," Dr. Kennedy snapped out. "It's all very well, for the sake of society, tacitly to ignore some things, but you do more than tacitly ignore."

"What is it, pray, that I tacitly ignore!"

Dr. Kennedy was angry. A deeper red than that of constitutional Scotch and soda suffused his face, as he answered:

"Your father's son."

"Now just what do you mean?"

"Damn it, man, you can't ask me to be plainer spoken than that. But if you will, all right—Isaac Ford's son—Joe Garland—your brother."

Percival Ford sat quietly, an annoyed and shocked expression on his face. Kennedy looked at him curiously, then, as the slow minutes dragged by, became embarrassed and frightened.

"My God!" he cried finally, "you don't mean to tell me that you didn't know!"

As in answer, Percival Ford's cheeks turned slowly grey.

"It's a ghastly joke," he said; "a ghastly joke."

The doctor had got himself in hand.

"Everybody knows it," he said. "I thought you knew it. And since you don't know it, it's time you did, and I'm glad of the chance of setting you straight. Joe Garland and you are brothers—half-brothers."

"It's a lie," Ford cried. "You don't mean it. Joe Garland's mother was Eliza Kunilio." (Dr. Kennedy nodded.) "I remember her well, with her duck pond and taro patch. His father was Joseph Garland, the beach-comber." (Dr. Kennedy shook his head.) "He died only two or three years ago. He used to get drunk. There's where Joe got his dissoluteness. There's the heredity for you."

"And nobody told you," Kennedy said wonderingly, after a pause.

"Dr. Kennedy, you have said something terrible, which I cannot allow to pass. You must either prove or, or . . ."

"Prove it yourself. Turn around and look at him. You've got him in profile. Look at his nose. That's Isaac Ford's. Yours is a thin edition of it. That's right. Look. The lines are fuller, but they are all there."

Percival Ford looked at the Kanaka half-breed who played under the hau tree, and it seemed, as by some illumination, that he was gazing on a wraith of himself. Feature after feature flashed up an unmistakable resemblance. Or, rather, it was he who was the wraith of that other full-muscled and generously moulded man. And his features, and that other man's features, were all reminiscent of Isaac Ford. And nobody had told him. Every line of Isaac Ford's face he knew. Miniatures, portraits, and photographs of his father were passing in review through his mind, and here and there, over and again, in the face before him, he caught resemblances and vague hints of likeness. It was devil's work that could reproduce the austere features of Isaac Ford in the loose and sensuous features before him. Once, the man turned, and for one flashing instant

it seemed to Percival Ford that he saw his father, dead and gone, peering at him out of the face of Joe Garland.

"It's nothing at all," he could faintly hear Dr. Kennedy saying, "They were all mixed up in the old days. You know that. You've seen it all your life. Sailors married queens and begat princesses and all the rest of it. It was the usual thing in the Islands."

"But not with my father," Percival Ford interrupted.

"There> you are." Kennedy shrugged his shoulders. "Cosmic sap and smoke of life. Old Isaac Ford was straitlaced and all the rest, and I know there's no explaining it, least of all to himself. He understood it no more than you do. Smoke of life, that's all. And don't forget one thing, Ford. There was a dab of unruly blood in old Isaac Ford, and Joe Garland inherited it—all of it, smoke of life and cosmic sap; while you inherited all of old Isaac's ascetic blood. And just because your blood is cold, well-ordered, and well-disciplined, is no reason that you should frown upon Joe Garland. When Joe Garland undoes the work you do, remember that it is only old Isaac Ford on both sides, undoing with one hand what he does with the other. You are Isaac Ford's right hand, let us say; Joe Garland is his left hand."

Percival Ford made no answer, and in the silence Dr. Kennedy finished his forgotten Scotch and soda. From across the grounds an automobile hooted imperatively.

"There's the machine," Dr. Kennedy said, rising. "I've got to run. I'm sorry I've shaken you up, and at the same time I'm glad. And know one thing, Isaac Ford's dab of unruly blood was remarkably small, and Joe Garland got it all. And one other thing. If your father's left hand offend you, don't smite it off. Besides, Joe is all right. Frankly, if I could choose between you and him to live with me on a desert isle, I'd choose Joe."

Little bare-legged children ran about him, playing, on the grass; but Percival Ford did not see them. He was gazing steadily at the singer under the hau tree. He even changed his position once, to get closer. The clerk of the Seaside went by, limping with age and dragging his reluctant feet. He had lived forty years on the Islands. Percival Ford beckoned to him, and the clerk came respectfully, and wondering that he should be noticed by Percival Ford.

"John," Ford said, "I want you to give me some information. Won't you sit down?"

The clerk sat down awkwardly, stunned by the unexpected honour. He blinked at the other and mumbled, "Yes, sir, thank you."

"John, who is Joe Garland?"

The clerk stared at him, blinked, cleared his throat, and said nothing.

"Go on," Percival Ford commanded.

"Who is he?"

"You're joking me, sir," the other managed to articulate.

"I spoke to you seriously."

The clerk recoiled from him.

"You don't mean to say you don't know?" he questioned, his question in itself the answer.

"I want to know."

“Why, he’s—“ John broke off and looked about him helplessly. “Hadn’t you better ask somebody else? Everybody thought you knew. We always thought . . . “

“Yes, go ahead.”

“We always thought that that was why you had it in for him.”

Photographs and miniatures of Isaac Ford were trooping through his son’s brain, and ghosts of Isaac Ford seemed in the air about him. “I wish you good night, sir,” he could hear the clerk saying, and he saw him beginning to limp away.

“John,” he called abruptly.

John came back and stood near him, blinking and nervously moistening his lips.

“You haven’t told me yet, you know.”

“Oh, about Joe Garland?”

“Yes, about Joe Garland. Who is he?”

“He’s your brother, sir, if I say it who shouldn’t.”

<“Thank you, John. Good night.”

“And you didn’t know?” the old man queried, content to linger, now that the crucial point was past.

“Thank you, John. Good night,” was the response.

“Yes, sir, thank you, sir. I think it’s going to rain. Good night, sir.”

Out of the clear sky, filled only with stars and moonlight, fell a rain so fine and attenuated as to resemble a vapour spray. Nobody minded it; the children played on, running bare-legged over the grass and leaping into the sand; and in a few minutes it was gone. In the south-east, Diamond Head, a black blot, sharply defined, silhouetted its crater-form against the stars. At sleepy intervals the surf flung its foam across the sands to the grass, and far out could be seen the black specks of swimmers under the moon. The voices of the singers, singing a waltz, died away; and in the silence, from somewhere under the trees, arose the laugh of a woman that was a love-cry. It startled Percival Ford, and it reminded him of Dr. Kennedy’s phrase. Down by the outrigger canoes, where they lay hauled out on the sand, he saw men and women, Kanakas, reclining languorously, like lotus-eaters, the women in white holokus; and against one such holoku he saw the dark head of the steersman of the canoe resting upon the woman’s shoulder. Farther down, where the strip of sand widened at the entrance to the lagoon, he saw a man and woman walking side by side. As they drew near the light lanai, he saw the woman’s hand go down to her waist and disengage a girdling arm. And as they passed him, Percival Ford nodded to a captain he knew, and to a major’s daughter. Smoke of life, that was it, an ample phrase. And again, from under the dark algaroba tree arose the laugh of a woman that was a love-cry; and past his chair, on the way to bed, a bare-legged youngster was led by a chiding Japanese nurse-maid. The voices of the singers broke softly and meltingly into an Hawaiian love-song, and officers and women, with encircling arms, were gliding and whirling on the lanai; and once again the woman laughed under the algaroba trees.

And Percival Ford knew only disapproval of it all. He was irritated by the love-laugh of the woman, by the steersman with pillowed head on the white holoku, by

the couples that walked on the beach, by the officers and women that danced, and by the voices of the singers singing of love, and his brother singing there with them under the hau tree. The woman that laughed especially irritated him. A curious train of thought was aroused. He was Isaac Ford's son, and what had happened with Isaac Ford might happen with him. He felt in his cheeks the faint heat of a blush at the thought, and experienced a poignant sense of shame. He was appalled by what was in his blood. It was like learning suddenly that his father had been a leper and that his own blood might bear the taint of that dread disease. Isaac Ford, the austere soldier of the Lord—the old hypocrite! What difference between him and any beach-comber? The house of pride that Percival Ford had builded was tumbling about his ears.

The hours passed, the army people laughed and danced, the native orchestra played on, and Percival Ford wrestled with the abrupt and overwhelming problem that had been thrust upon him. He prayed quietly, his elbow on the table, his head bowed upon his hand, with all the appearance of any tired onlooker. Between the dances the army men and women and the civilians fluttered up to him and buzzed conventionally, and when they went back to the lanai he took up his wrestling where he had left it off.

He began to patch together his shattered ideal of Isaac Ford, and for cement he used a cunning and subtle logic. It was of the sort that is compounded in the brain laboratories of egotists, and it worked. It was incontrovertible that his father had been made of finer clay than those about him; but still, old Isaac had been only in the process of becoming, while he, Percival Ford, had become. As proof of it, he rehabilitated his father and at the same time exalted himself. His lean little ego waxed to colossal proportions. He was great enough to forgive. He glowed at the thought of it. Isaac Ford had been great, but he was greater, for he could forgive Isaac Ford and even restore him to the holy place in his memory, though the place was not quite so holy as it had been. Also, he applauded Isaac Ford for having ignored the outcome of his one step aside. Very well, he, too, would ignore it.

The dance was breaking up. The orchestra had finished "Aloha Oe" and was preparing to go home. Percival Ford clapped his hands for the Japanese servant.

"You tell that man I want to see him," he said, pointing out Joe Garland. "Tell him to come here, now."

Joe Garland approached and halted respectfully several paces away, nervously fingering the guitar which he still carried. The other did not ask him to sit down.

"You are my brother," he said.

"Why, everybody knows that," was the reply, in tones of wonderment.

"Yes, so I understand," Percival Ford said dryly. "But I did not know it till this evening."

The half-brother waited uncomfortably in the silence that followed, during which Percival Ford coolly considered his next utterance.

"You remember that first time I came to school and the boys ducked me?" he asked. "Why did you take my part?"

The half-brother smiled bashfully.

"Because you knew?"

"Yes, that was why."

"But I didn't know," Percival Ford said in the same dry fashion.

"Yes," the other said.

Another silence fell. Servants were beginning to put out the lights on the lanai.

"You know . . . now," the half-brother said simply.

Percival Ford frowned. Then he looked the other over with a considering eye.

"How much will you take to leave the Islands and never come back?" he demanded.

"And never come back?" Joe Garland faltered. "It is the only land I know. Other lands are cold. I do not know other lands. I have many friends here. In other lands there would not be one voice to say, 'Aloha, Joe, my boy.'"

"I said never to come back," Percival Ford reiterated. "The Alameda sails tomorrow for San Francisco."

Joe Garland was bewildered.

"But why?" he asked. "You know now that we are brothers."

"That is why," was the retort. "As you said yourself, everybody knows. I will make it worth your while."

All awkwardness and embarrassment disappeared from Joe Garland. Birth and station were bridged and reversed.

"You want me to go?" he demanded.

"I want you to go and never come back," Percival Ford answered.

And in that moment, flashing and fleeting, it was given him to see his brother tower above him like a mountain, and to feel himself dwindle and dwarf to microscopic insignificance. But it is not well for one to see himself truly, nor can one so see himself for long and live; and only for that flashing moment did Percival Ford see himself and his brother in true perspective. The next moment he was mastered by his meagre and insatiable ego.

"As I said, I will make it worth your while. You will not suffer. I will pay you well."

"All right," Joe Garland said. "I'll go."

He started to turn away.

"Joe," the other called. "You see my lawyer tomorrow morning. Five hundred down and two hundred a month as long as you stay away."

"You are very kind," Joe Garland answered softly. "You are too kind. And anyway, I guess I don't want your money. I go tomorrow on the Alameda."

He walked away, but did not say goodbye.

Percival Ford clapped his hands.

"Boy," he said to the Japanese, "a lemonade."

And over the lemonade he smiled long and contentedly to himself.

The Hussy

THERE are some stories that have to be true-the sort that cannot be fabricated by a ready fiction-reckoner. And by the same token there are some men with stories to tell who cannot be doubted. Such a man was Julian Jones. Although I doubt if the average reader of this will believe the story Julian Jones told me. Nevertheless I believe it. So thoroughly am I convinced of its verity that I am willing, nay, eager, to invest capital in the enterprise and embark personally on the adventure to a far land.

It was in the Australian Building at the Panama Pacific Exposition that I met him. I was standing before an exhibit of facsimiles of the record nuggets which had been discovered in the goldfields of the Antipodes. Knobbed, misshapen and massive, it was as difficult to believe that they were not real gold as it was to believe the accompanying statistics of their weights and values.

"That's what those kangaroo-hunters call a nugget," boomed over my shoulder directly at the largest of the specimens.

I turned and looked up into the dim blue eyes of Julian Jones. I looked up, for he stood something like six feet four inches in height. His hair, a wispy, sandy yellow, seemed as dimmed and faded as his eyes. It may have been the sun which had washed out his colouring; at least his face bore the evidence of a prodigious and ardent sun-burn which had long since faded to yellow. As his eyes turned from the exhibit and focussed on mine I noted a queer look in them as of one who vainly tries to recall some fact of supreme importance.

"What's the matter with it as a nugget?" I demanded.

The remote, indwelling expression went out of his eyes as he boomed

"Why, its size."

"It does seem large," I admitted. "But there's no doubt it's authentic. The Australian Government would scarcely dare-"

"Large!" he interrupted, with a sniff and a sneer.

"Largest ever discovered-" I started on.

"Ever discovered!" His dim eyes smouldered hotly as he proceeded. "Do you think that every lump of gold ever discovered has got into the newspapers and encyclopedias?"

"Well," I replied judicially, "if there's one that hasn't, I don't see how we're to know about it. If a really big nugget, or nugget-finder, elects to blush unseen-"

"But it didn't," he broke in quickly. "I saw it with my own eyes, and, besides, I'm too tanned to blush anyway. I'm a railroad man and I've been in the tropics a lot.

Why, I used to be the colour of mahogany-real old mahogany, and have been taken for a blue-eyed Spaniard more than once-

It was my turn to interrupt, and I did.

"Was that nugget bigger than those in there, Mr.-er-?"

"Jones, Julian Jones is my name."

He dug into an inner pocket and produced an envelope addressed to such a person, care of General Delivery, San Francisco; and I, in turn, presented him with my card.

"Pleased to know you, sir," he said, extending his hand, his voice booming as if accustomed to loud noises or wide spaces. "Of course I've heard of you, seen your picture in the papers, and all that, and, though I say it that shouldn't, I want to say that I didn't care a rap about those articles you wrote on Mexico. You're wrong, all wrong. You make the mistake of all Gringos in thinking a Mexican is a white man. He ain't. None of them ain't-Greasers, Spiggoties, Latin-Americans and all the rest of the cattle. Why, sir, they don't think like we think, or reason, or act. Even their multiplication table is different. You think seven times seven is forty-nine; but not them. They work it out different. And white isn't white to them, either. Let me give you an example. Buying coffee retail for house-keeping in one-pound or ten-pound lots-

"How big was that nugget you referred to?" I queried firmly. "As big as the biggest of those?"

"Bigger," he said quietly. "Bigger than the whole blamed exhibit of them put together, and then some." He paused and regarded me with a steadfast gaze. "I don't see no reason why I shouldn't go into the matter with you. You've got a reputation a man ought to be able to trust, and I've read you've done some tall skylarking yourself in out-of-the-way places. I've been browsing around with an eye open for some one to go in with me on the proposition."

"You can trust me," I said.

And here I am, blazing out into print with the whole story just as he told it to me as we sat on a bench by the lagoon before the Palace of Fine Arts with the cries of the sea gulls in our ears. Well, he should have kept his appointment with me. But I anticipate.

As we started to leave the building and hunt for a seat, a small woman, possibly thirty years of age, with a washed-out complexion of the farmer's wife sort, darted up to him in a bird-like way, for all the world like the darting veering gulls over our heads and fastened herself to his arm with the accuracy and dispatch and inevitableness of a piece of machinery.

"There you go!" she shrilled. "A-trottin' right off and never givin' me a thought."

I was formally introduced to her. It was patent that she had never heard of me, and she surveyed me bleakly with shrewd black eyes, set close together and as beady and restless as a bird's.

"You ain't goin' to tell him about that hussy?" she complained.

“Well, now, Sarah, this is business, you see,” he argued plaintively. “I’ve been lookin’ for a likely man this long while, and now that he’s shown up it seems to me I got a right to give him the hang of what happened.”

The small woman made no reply, but set her thin lips in a needle-like line. She gazed straight before her at the Tower of Jewels with so austere an expression that no glint of refracted sunlight could soften it. We proceeded slowly to the lagoon, managed to obtain an unoccupied seat, and sat down with mutual sighs of relief as we released our weights from our tortured sightseeing feet.

“One does get so mortal weary,” asserted the small woman, almost defiantly.

Two swans waddled up from the mirroring water and investigated us. When their suspicions of our niggardliness or lack of peanuts had been confirmed, Jones half-turned his back on his life-partner and gave me his story.

“Ever been in Ecuador? Then take my advice-and don’t. Though I take that back, for you and me might be hitting it for there together if you can rustle up the faith in me and the backbone in yourself for the trip. Well, anyway, it ain’t so many years ago that I came ambling in there on a rusty, foul-bottomed, tramp collier from Australia, forty-three days from land to land. Seven knots was her speed when everything favoured, and we’d had a two weeks’ gale to the north’ard of New Zealand, and broke our engines down for two days off Pitcairn Island.

“I was no sailor on her. I’m a locomotive engineer. But I’d made friends with the skipper at Newcastle an’ come along as his guest for as far as Guayaquil. You see, I’d heard wages was ‘way up on the American railroad runnin’ from that place over the Andes to Quito. Now Guayaquil-“

“Is a fever-hole,” I interpolated.

Julian Jones nodded.

“Thomas Nast died there of it within a month after he landed.-He was our great American cartoonist,” I added.

“Don’t know him,” Julian Jones said shortly. “But I do know he wasn’t the first to pass out by a long shot. Why, look you the way I found it. The pilot grounds is sixty miles down the river. ‘How’s the fever?’ said I to the pilot who came aboard in the early morning. ‘See that Hamburg barque,’ said he, pointing to a sizable ship at anchor. ‘Captain and fourteen men dead of it already, and the cook and two men dying right now, and they’re the last left of her.’

“And by jinks he told the truth. And right then they were dying forty a day in Guayaquil of Yellow Jack. But that was nothing, as I was to find out. Bubonic plague and small-pox were raging, while dysentery and pneumonia were reducing the population, and the railroad was raging worst of all. I mean that. For them that insisted in riding on it, it was more dangerous than all the other diseases put together.

“When we dropped anchor off Guayaquil half a dozen skippers from other steamers came on board to warn our skipper not to let any of his crew or officers go ashore except the ones he wanted to lose. A launch came off for me from Duran, which is on the other side of the river and is the terminal of the railroad. And it brought off a man

that soared up the gangway three jumps at a time he was that eager to get aboard. When he hit the deck he hadn't time to speak to any of us. He just leaned out over the rail and shook his fist at Duran and shouted: 'I beat you to it! I beat you to it!'

"'Who'd you beat to it, friend?' I asked. 'The railroad,' he said, as he unbuckled the straps and took off a big '44 Colt's automatic from where he wore it handy on his left side under his coat, 'I staved as long as I agreed-three months-and it didn't get me. I was a conductor.'

"And that was the railroad I was to work for. All of which was nothing to what he told me in the next few minutes. The road ran from sea level at Duran up to twelve thousand feet on Chimborazo and down to ten thousand at Quito on the other side the range. And it was so dangerous that the trains didn't run nights. The through passengers had to get off and sleep in the towns at night while the train waited for daylight. And each train carried a guard of Ecuatoriano soldiers which was the most dangerous of all. They were supposed to protect the train crews, but whenever trouble started they unlimbered their rifles and joined the mob. You see, whenever a train wreck occurred, the first cry of the spiggoties was 'Kill the Gringos!' They always did that, and proceeded to kill the train crew and whatever chance Gringo passengers that'd escaped being killed in the accident. Which is their kind of arithmetic, which I told you a while back as being different from ours.

"Shucks! Before the day was out I was to find out for myself that that ex-conductor wasn't lying. It was over at Duran. I was to take my run on the first division out to Quito, for which place I was to start next morning-only one through train running every twenty-four hours. It was the afternoon of my first day, along about four o'clock, when the boilers of the GOVERNOR HANCOCK exploded and she sank in sixty feet of water alongside the dock. She was the big ferry boat that carried the railroad passengers across the river to Guayaquil. It was a bad accident, but it was the cause of worse that followed. By half-past four, big trainloads began to arrive. It was a feast day and they'd run an excursion up country but of Guayaquil, and this was the crowd coming back.

"And the crowd-there was five thousand of them-wanted to get ferried across, and the ferry was at the bottom of the river, which wasn't our fault. But by the Spiggoty arithmetic, it was. 'Kill the Gringos!' shouts one of them. And right there the beans were spilled. Most of us got away by the skin of our teeth. I raced on the heels of the Master Mechanic, carrying one of his babies for him, for the locomotives that was just pulling out. You see, way down there away from everywhere they just got to save their locomotives in times of trouble, because, without them, a railroad can't be run. Half a dozen American wives and as many children were crouching on the cab floors along with the rest of us when we pulled out; and the Ecuatoriano soldiers, who should have been protecting our lives and property, turned loose with their rifles and must have given us all of a thousand rounds before we got out of range.

"We camped up country and didn't come back to clean up until next day. It was some cleaning. Every flat-car, box-car, coach, asthmatic switch engine, and even hand-

car that mob of Spiggoties had shoved off the dock into sixty feet of water on top of the GOVERNOR HANCOCK. They'd burnt the round house, set fire to the coal bunkers, and made a scandal of the repair shops. Oh, yes, and there were three of our fellows they'd got that we had to bury mighty quick. It's hot weather all the time down there."

Julian Jones came to a full pause and over his shoulder studied the straight-before-her gaze and forbidding expression of his wife's face.

"I ain't forgotten the nugget," he assured me.

"Nor the hussy," the little woman snapped, apparently at the mud-hens paddling on the surface of the lagoon.

"I've been travelling toward the nugget right along--"

"There was never no reason for you to stay in that dangerous country," his wife snapped in on him.

"Now, Sarah," he appealed. "I was working for you right along." And to me he explained: "The risk was big, but so was the pay. Some months I earned as high as five hundred gold. And here was Sarah waiting for me back in Nebraska--"

"An' us engaged two years," she complained to the Tower of Jewels.

"-What of the strike, and me being blacklisted, and getting typhoid down in Australia, and everything," he went on. "And luck was with me on that railroad. Why, I saw fellows fresh from the States pass out, some of them not a week on their first run. If the diseases and the railroad didn't get them, then it was the Spiggoties got them. But it just wasn't my fate, even that time I rode my engine down to the bottom of a forty-foot washout. I lost my fireman; and the conductor and the Superintendent of Rolling Stock (who happened to be running down to Duran to meet his bride) had their heads knifed off by the Spiggoties and paraded around on poles. But I lay snug as a bug under a couple of feet of tender coal, and they thought I'd headed for tall timber-lay there a day and a night till the excitement cooled down. Yes, I was lucky. The worst that happened to me was I caught a cold once, and another time had a carbuncle. But the other fellows! They died like flies, what of Yellow Jack, pneumonia, the Spiggoties, and the railroad. The trouble was I didn't have much chance to pal with them. No sooner'd I get some intimate with one of them he'd up and die--all but a fireman named Andrews, and he went loco for keeps.

"I made good on my job from the first, and lived in Quito in a 'dobe house with whacking big Spanish tiles on the roof that I'd rented. And I never had much trouble with the Spiggoties, what of letting them sneak free rides in the tender or on the cowcatcher. Me throw them off? Never! I took notice, when Jack Harris put off a bunch of them, that I attended his funeral MUY PRONTO--"

"Speak English," the little woman beside him snapped.

"Sarah just can't bear to tolerate me speaking Spanish," he apologized. "It gets so on her nerves that I promised not to. Well, as I was saying, the goose hung high and everything was going hunky-dory, and I was piling up my wages to come north to Nebraska and marry Sarah, when I run on to Vahna--"

"The hussy!" Sarah hissed.

“Now, Sarah,” her towering giant of a husband begged, “I just got to mention her or I can’t tell about the nugget.-It was one night when I was taking a locomotive-no train-down to Amato, about thirty miles from Quito. Seth Manners was my fireman. I was breaking him in to engineer for himself, and I was letting him run the locomotive while I sat up in his seat meditating about Sarah here. I’d just got a letter from her, begging as usual for me to come home and hinting as usual about the dangers of an unmarried man like me running around loose in a country full of señoritas and fandangos. Lord! If she could only a-seen them. Positive frights, that’s what they are, their faces painted white as corpses and their lips red as-as some of the train wrecks I’ve helped clean up.

“It was a lovely April night, not a breath of wind, and a tremendous big moon shining right over the top of Chimborazo.-Some mountain that. The railroad skirted it twelve thousand feet above sea level, and the top of it ten thousand feet higher than that.

“Mebbe I was drowsing, with Seth running the engine; but he slammed on the brakes so sudden hard that I darn near went through the cab window.

“‘What the-‘ I started to yell, and ‘Holy hell,’ Seth says, as both of us looked at what was on the track. And I agreed with Seth entirely in his remark. It was an Indian girl-and take it from me, Indians ain’t Spiggoties by any manner of means. Seth had managed to fetch a stop within twenty feet of her, and us bowling down hill at that! But the girl. She-“

I saw the form of Mrs. Julian Jones stiffen, although she kept her gaze fixed balefully upon two mud-hens that were prowling along the lagoon shallows below us. “The hussy!” she hissed, once and implacably. Jones had stopped at the sound, but went on immediately.

“She was a tall girl, slim and slender, you know the kind, with black hair, remarkably long hanging, down loose behind her, as she stood there no more afraid than nothing, her arms spread out to stop the engine. She was wearing a slimpsy sort of garment wrapped around her that wasn’t cloth but ocelot skins, soft and dappled, and silky. It was all she had on-“

“The hussy!” breathed Mrs. Jones.

But Mr. Jones went on, making believe that he was unaware of the interruption.

“‘Hell of a way to stop a locomotive,’ I complained at Seth, as I climbed down on to the right of way. I walked past our engine and up to the girl, and what do you think? Her eyes were shut tight. She was trembling that violent that you would see it by the moonlight. And she was barefoot, too.

“‘What’s the row?’ I said, none too gentle. She gave a start, seemed to come out of her trance, and opened her eyes. Say! They were big and black and beautiful. Believe me, she was some looker-“

“The hussy!” At which hiss the two mud-hens veered away a few feet. But Jones was getting himself in hand, and didn’t even blink.

“‘What are you stopping this locomotive for?’ I demanded in Spanish. Nary an answer. She stared at me, then at the snorting engine and then burst into tears, which you’ll admit is uncommon behaviour for an Indian woman.

“‘If you try to get rides that way,’ I slung at her in Spiggoty Spanish (which they tell me is some different from regular Spanish), ‘you’ll be taking one smeared all over our cowcatcher and headlight, and it’ll be up to my fireman to scrape you off.’

“My Spiggoty Spanish wasn’t much to brag on, but I could see she understood, though she only shook her head and wouldn’t speak. But great Moses, she was some looker-“

I glanced apprehensively at Mrs. Jones, who must have caught me out of the tail of her eye, for she muttered: “If she hadn’t been do you think he’d a-taken her into his house to live?”

“Now hold on, Sarah,” he protested. “That ain’t fair. Besides, I’m telling this.-Next thing, Seth yells at me, ‘Goin’ to stay here all night?’

“‘Come on,’ I said to the girl, ‘and climb on board. But next time you want a ride don’t flag a locomotive between stations.’ She followed along; but when I got to the step and turned to give her a lift-up, she wasn’t there. I went forward again. Not a sign of her. Above and below was sheer cliff, and the track stretched ahead a hundred yards clear and empty. And then I spotted her, crouched down right against the cowcatcher, that close I’d almost stepped on her. If we’d started up, we’d have run over her in a second. It was all so nonsensical, I never could make out her actions. Maybe she was trying to suicide. I grabbed her by the wrist and jerked her none too gentle to her feet. And she came along all right. Women do know when a man means business.”

I glanced from this Goliath to his little, bird-eyed spouse, and wondered if he had ever tried to mean business with her.

“Seth kicked at first, but I boosted her into the cab and made her sit up beside me-“

“And I suppose Seth was busy running the engine,” Mrs. Jones observed.

“I was breaking him in, wasn’t I?” Mr. Jones protested. “So we made the run into Amato. She’d never opened her mouth once, and no sooner’d the engine stopped than she’d jumped to the ground and was gone. Just like that. Not a thank you kindly. Nothing.

“But next morning when we came to pull out for Quito with a dozen flat cars loaded with rails, there she was in the cab waiting for us; and in the daylight I could see how much better a looker she was than the night before.

“‘Huh! she’s adopted you,’ Seth grins. And it looked like it. She just stood there and looked at me-at us-like a loving hound dog that you love, that you’ve caught with a string of sausages inside of him, and that just knows you ain’t going to lift a hand to him. ‘Go chase yourself!’ I told her PRONTO.” (Mrs. Jones her proximity noticeable with a wince at the Spanish word.) “You see, Sarah, I’d no use for her, even at the start.”

Mrs. Jones stiffened. Her lips moved soundlessly, but I knew to what syllables.

“And what made it hardest was Seth jeering at me. ‘You can’t shake her that way,’ he said. ‘You saved her life-‘ ‘I didn’t,’ I said sharply; ‘it was you.’ ‘But she thinks you did, which is the same thing,’ he came back at me. ‘And now she belongs to you. Custom of the country, as you ought to know.’”

“Heathenish,” said Mrs. Jones, and though her steady gaze was set upon the Tower of Jewels I knew she was making no reference to its architecture.

“‘She’s come to do light housekeeping for you,’ Seth grinned. I let him rave, though afterwards I kept him throwing in the coal too fast to work his mouth very much. Why, say, when I got to the spot where I picked her up, and stopped the train for her to get off, she just flopped down on her knees, got a hammerlock with her arms around my knees, and cried all over my shoes. What was I to do?”

With no perceptible movement that I was aware of, Mrs. Jones advertised her certitude of knowledge of what SHE would have done.

“And the moment we pulled into Quito, she did what she’d done before—vanished. Sarah never believes me when I say how relieved I felt to be quit of her. But it was not to be. I got to my ‘dobe house and managed a cracking fine dinner my cook had ready for me. She was mostly Spiggoty and half Indian, and her name was Paloma.—Now, Sarah, haven’t I told you she was older’n a grandmother, and looked more like a buzzard than a dove? Why, I couldn’t bear to eat with her around where I could look at her. But she did make things comfortable, and she was some economical when it came to marketing.

“That afternoon, after a big long siesta, what’d I find in the kitchen, just as much at home as if she belonged there, but that blamed Indian girl. And old Paloma was squatting at the girl’s feet and rubbing the girl’s knees and legs like for rheumatism, which I knew the girl didn’t have from the way I’d sized up the walk of her, and keeping time to the rubbing with a funny sort of gibberish chant. And I let loose right there and then. As Sarah knows, I never could a-bear women around the house—young, unmarried women, I mean. But it was no go! Old Paloma sided with the girl, and said if the girl went she went, too. Also, she called me more kinds of a fool than the English language has accommodation for. You’d like the Spanish lingo, Sarah, for expressing yourself in such ways, and you’d have liked old Paloma, too. She was a good woman, though she didn’t have any teeth and her face could kill a strong man’s appetite in the cradle.

“I gave in. I had to. Except for the excuse that she needed Vahna’s help around the house (which she didn’t at all), old Paloma never said why she stuck up for the girl. Anyway, Vahna was a quiet thing, never in the way. And she never gadded. Just sat in-doors jabbering with Paloma and helping with the chores. But I wasn’t long in getting on to that she was afraid of something. She would look up, that anxious it hurt, whenever anybody called, like some of the boys to have a gas or a game of pedro. I tried to worm it out of Paloma what was worrying the girl, but all the old woman did was to look solemn and shake her head like all the devils in hell was liable to precipitate a visit on us.

“And then one day Vahna had a visitor. I’d just come in from a run and was passing the time of day with her-I had to be polite, even if she had butted in on me and come to live in my house for keeps-when I saw a queer expression come into her eyes. In the doorway stood an Indian boy. He looked like her, but was younger and slimmer. She took him into the kitchen and they must have had a great palaver, for he didn’t leave until after dark. Inside the week he came back, but I missed him. When I got home, Paloma put a fat nugget of gold into my hand, which Vahna had sent him for. The blamed thing weighed all of two pounds and was worth more than five hundred dollars. She explained that Vahna wanted me to take it to pay for her keep. And I had to take it to keep peace in the house.

“Then, after a long time, came another visitor. We were sitting before the fire-“

“Him and the hussy,” quoth Mrs. Jones.

“And Paloma,” he added quickly.

“Him and his cook and his light housekeeper sitting by the fire,” she amended.

“Oh, I admit Vahna did like me a whole heap,” he asserted recklessly, then modified with a pang of caution: “A heap more than was good for her, seeing that I had no inclination her way.

“Well, as I was saying, she had another visitor. He was a lean, tall, white-headed old Indian, with a beak on him like an eagle. He walked right in without knocking. Vahna gave a little cry that was half like a yelp and half like a gasp, and flumped down on her knees before me, pleading to me with deer’s eyes and to him with the eyes of a deer about to be killed that don’t want to be killed. Then, for a minute that seemed as long as a life-time, she and the old fellow glared at each other. Paloma was the first to talk, in his own lingo, for he talked back to her. But great Moses, if he wasn’t the high and mighty one! Paloma’s old knees were shaking, and she cringed to him like a hound dog. And all this in my own house! I’d have thrown him out on his neck, only he was so old.

“If the things he said to Vahna were as terrible as the way he looked! Say! He just spit words at her! But Paloma kept whimpering and butting in, till something she said got across, because his face relaxed. He condescended to give me the once over and fired some question at Vahna. She hung her head, and looked foolish, and blushed, and then replied with a single word and a shake of the head. And with that he just naturally turned on his heel and beat it. I guess she’d said ‘No.’

“For some time after that Vahna used to fluster up whenever she saw me. Then she took to the kitchen for a spell. But after a long time she began hanging around the big room again. She was still mighty shy, but she’d keep on following me about with those big eyes of hers-“

“The hussy!” I heard plainly. But Julian Jones and I were pretty well used to it by this time.

“I don’t mind saying that I was getting some interested myself-oh, not in the way Sarah never lets up letting me know she thinks. That two-pound nugget was what

had me going. If Vahna'd put me wise to where it came from, I could say good-bye to railroading and hit the high places for Nebraska and Sarah.

"And then the beans were spilled . . . by accident. Come a letter from Wisconsin. My Aunt Eliza 'd died and up and left me her big farm. I let out a whoop when I read it; but I could have canned my joy, for I was jobbed out of it by the courts and lawyers afterward-not a cent to me, and I'm still paying 'm in instalments.

"But I didn't know, then; and I prepared to pull back to God's country. Paloma got sore, and Vahna got the weeps. 'Don't go! Don't go!' That was her song. But I gave notice on my job, and wrote a letter to Sarah here-didn't I, Sarah?

"That night, sitting by the fire like at a funeral, Vahna really loosened up for the first time.

"'Don't go,' she says to me, with old Paloma nodding agreement with her. 'I'll show you where my brother got the nugget, if you don't go.' 'Too late,' said I. And I told her why.

"And told her about me waiting for you back in Nebraska," Mrs. Jones observed in cold, passionless tones.

"Now, Sarah, why should I hurt a poor Indian girl's feelings? Of course I didn't.

"Well, she and Paloma talked Indian some more, and then Vahna says: 'If you stay, I'll show you the biggest nugget that is the father of all other nuggets.' 'How big?' I asked. 'As big as me?' She laughed. 'Bigger than you,' she says, 'much, much bigger.' 'They don't grow that way,' I said. But she said she'd seen it and Paloma backed her up. Why, to listen to them you'd have thought there was millions in that one nugget. Paloma 'd never seen it herself, but she'd heard about it. A secret of the tribe which she couldn't share, being only half Indian herself."

Julian Jones paused and heaved a sigh.

"And they kept on insisting until I fell for--"

"The hussy," said Mrs. Jones, pert as a bird, at the ready instant.

"'No; for the nugget. What of Aunt Eliza's farm I was rich enough to quit railroading, but not rich enough to turn my back on big money-and I just couldn't help believing them two women. Gee! I could be another Vanderbilt, or J. P. Morgan. That's the way I thought; and I started in to pump Vahna. But she wouldn't give down. 'You come along with me,' she says. 'We can be back here in a couple of weeks with all the gold the both of us can carry.' 'We'll take a burro, or a pack-train of burros,' was my suggestion. But nothing doing. And Paloma agreed with her. It was too dangerous. The Indians would catch us.

"The two of us pulled out when the nights were moonlight. We travelled only at night, and laid up in the days. Vahna wouldn't let me light a fire, and I missed my coffee something fierce. We got up in the real high mountains of the main Andes, where the snow on one pass gave us some trouble; but the girl knew the trails, and, though we didn't waste any time, we were a full week getting there. I know the general trend of our travel, because I carried a pocket compass; and the general trend is all I need to get there again, because of that peak. There's no mistaking it. There ain't another

peak like it in the world. Now, I'm not telling you its particular shape, but when you and I head out for it from Quito I'll take you straight to it.

"It's no easy thing to climb, and the person doesn't live that can climb it at night. We had to take the daylight to it, and didn't reach the top till after sunset. Why, I could take hours and hours telling you about that last climb, which I won't. The top was flat as a billiard table, about a quarter of an acre in size, and was almost clean of snow. Vahna told me that the great winds that usually blew, kept the snow off of it.

"We were winded, and I got mountain sickness so bad that I had to stretch out for a spell. Then, when the moon come up, I took a prowl around. It didn't take long, and I didn't catch a sight or a smell of anything that looked like gold. And when I asked Vahna, she only laughed and clapped her hands. Meantime my mountain sickness tuned up something fierce, and I sat down on a big rock to wait for it to ease down.

"'Come on, now,' I said, when I felt better. 'Stop your fooling and tell me where that nugget is.' 'It's nearer to you right now than I'll ever get,' she answered, her big eyes going sudden wistful. 'All you Gringos are alike. Gold is the love of your heart, and women don't count much.'

"I didn't say anything. That was no time to tell her about Sarah here. But Vahna seemed to shake off her depressed feelings, and began to laugh and tease again. 'How do you like it?' she asked. 'Like what?' 'The nugget you're sitting on.'

"I jumped up as though it was a red-hot stove. And all it was was a rock. I felt nay heart sink. Either she had gone clean loco or this was her idea of a joke. Wrong on both counts. She gave me the hatchet and told me to take a hack at the boulder, which I did, again and again, for yellow spots sprang up from under every blow. By the great Moses! it was gold! The whole blamed boulder!"

Jones rose suddenly to his full height and flung out his long arms, his face turned to the southern skies. The movement shot panic into the heart of a swan that had drawn nearer with amiably predatory designs. Its consequent abrupt retreat collided it with a stout old lady, who squealed and dropped her bag of peanuts. Jones sat down and resumed.

"Gold, I tell you, solid gold and that pure and soft that I chopped chips out of it. It had been coated with some sort of rain-proof paint or lacquer made out of asphalt or something. No wonder I'd taken it for a rock. It was ten feet long, all of five feet through, and tapering to both ends like an egg. Here. Take a look at this."

From his pocket he drew and opened a leather case, from which he took an object wrapped in tissue-paper. Unwrapping it, he dropped into my hand a chip of pure soft gold, the size of a ten-dollar gold-piece. I could make out the greyish substance on one side with which it had been painted.

"I chopped that from one end of the thing," Jones went on, replacing the chip in its paper and leather case. "And lucky I put it in my pocket. For right at my back came one loud word-more like a croak than a word, in my way of thinking. And there was that lean old fellow with the eagle beak that had dropped in on us one night. And there was about thirty Indians with him-all slim young fellows.

“Vahna’d flopped down and begun whimpering, but I told her, ‘Get up and make friends with them for me.’ ‘No, no,’ she cried. ‘This is death. Good-bye, AMIGO-“

Here Mrs. Jones winced, and her husband abruptly checked the particular flow of his narrative.

“‘Then get up and fight along with me,’ I said to her. And she did. She was some hellion, there on the top of the world, clawing and scratching tooth and nail-a regular she cat. And I wasn’t idle, though all I had was that hatchet and my long arms. But they were too many for me, and there was no place for me to put my back against a wall. When I come to, minutes after they’d cracked me on the head-here, feel this.”

Removing his hat, Julian Jones guided my finger tips through his thatch of sandy hair until they sank into an indentation. It was fully three inches long, and went into the bone itself of the skull.

“When I come to, there was Vahna spread-eagled on top of the nugget, and the old fellow with a beak jabbering away solemnly as if going through some sort of religious exercises. In his hand he had a stone knife-you know, a thin, sharp sliver of some obsidian-like stuff same as they make arrow-heads out of. I couldn’t lift a hand, being held down, and being too weak besides. And-well, anyway, that stone knife did for her, and me they didn’t even do the honour of killing there on top their sacred peak. They chucked me off of it like so much carrion.

“And the buzzards didn’t get me either. I can see the moonlight yet, shining on all those peaks of snow, as I went down. Why, sir, it was a five-hundred-foot fall, only I didn’t make it. I went into a big snow-drift in a crevice. And when I come to (hours after I know, for it was full day when I next saw the sun), I found myself in a regular snow-cave or tunnel caused by the water from the melting snow running along the ledge. In fact, the stone above actually overhung just beyond where I first landed. A few feet more to the side, either way, and I’d almost be going yet. It was a straight miracle, that’s what it was.

“But I paid for it. It was two years and over before I knew what happened. All I knew was that I was Julian Jones and that I’d been blacklisted in the big strike, and that I was married to Sarah here. I mean that. I didn’t know anything in between, and when Sarah tried to talk about it, it gave me pains in the head. I mean my head was queer, and I knew it was queer.

“And then, sitting on the porch of her father’s farmhouse back in Nebraska one moonlight evening, Sarah came out and put that gold chip into my hand. Seems she’d just found it in the torn lining of the trunk I’d brought back from Ecuador-I who for two years didn’t even know I’d been to Ecuador, or Australia, or anything! Well, I just sat there looking at the chip in the moonlight, and turning it over and over and figuring what it was and where it’d come from, when all of a sudden there was a snap inside my head as if something had broken, and then I could see Vahna spread-eagled on that big nugget and the old fellow with the beak waving the stone knife, and . . . and everything. That is, everything that had happened from the time I first left Nebraska to when I crawled to the daylight out of the snow after they had chucked me off the

mountain-top. But everything that'd happened after that I'd clean forgotten. When Sarah said I was her husband, I wouldn't listen to her. Took all her family and the preacher that'd married us to convince me.

"Later on I wrote to Seth Manners. The railroad hadn't killed him yet, and he pieced out a lot for me. I'll show you his letters. I've got them at the hotel. One day, he said, making his regular run, I crawled out on to the track. I didn't stand upright, I just crawled. He took me for a calf, or a big dog, at first. I wasn't anything human, he said, and I didn't know him or anything. As near as I can make out, it was ten days after the mountain-top to the time Seth picked me up. What I ate I don't know. Maybe I didn't eat. Then it was doctors at Quito, and Paloma nursing me (she must have packed that gold chip in my trunk), until they found out I was a man without a mind, and the railroad sent me back to Nebraska. At any rate, that's what Seth writes me. Of myself, I don't know. But Sarah here knows. She corresponded with the railroad before they shipped me and all that."

Mrs. Jones nodded affirmation of his words, sighed and evidenced unmistakable signs of eagerness to go.

"I ain't been able to work since," her husband continued. "And I ain't been able to figure out how to get back that big nugget. Sarah's got money of her own, and she won't let go a penny--"

"He won't get down to THAT country no more!" she broke forth.

"But, Sarah, Vahna's dead-you know that," Julian Jones protested.

"I don't know anything about anything," she answered decisively, "except that THAT country is no place for a married man."

Her lips snapped together, and she fixed an unseeing stare across to where the afternoon sun was beginning to glow into sunset. I gazed for a moment at her face, white, plump, tiny, and implacable, and gave her up.

"How do you account for such a mass of gold being there?" I queried of Julian Jones. "A solid-gold meteor that fell out of the sky?"

"Not for a moment." He shook his head. "It was carried there by the Indians."

"Up a mountain like that-and such enormous weight and size!" I objected.

"Just as easy," he smiled. "I used to be stumped by that proposition myself, after I got my memory back. Now how in Sam Hill-' I used to begin, and then spend hours figuring at it. And then when I got the answer I felt downright idiotic, it was that easy." He paused, then announced: "They didn't."

"But you just-said they did."

"They did and they didn't," was his enigmatic reply. "Of course they never carried that monster nugget up there. What they did was to carry up its contents."

He waited until he saw enlightenment dawn in my face.

"And then of course melted all the gold, or welded it, or smelted it, all into one piece. You know the first Spaniards down there, under a leader named Pizarro, were a gang of robbers and cut-throats. They went through the country like the hoof-and-mouth disease, and killed the Indians off like cattle. You see, the Indians had lots of gold.

Well, what the Spaniards didn't get, the surviving Indians hid away in that one big chunk on top the mountain, and it's been waiting there ever since for me-and for you, if you want to go in on it."

And here, by the Lagoon of the Palace of Fine Arts, ended my acquaintance with Julian Jones. On my agreeing to finance the adventure, he promised to call on me at my hotel next morning with the letters of Seth Manners and the railroad, and conclude arrangements. But he did not call. That evening I telephoned his hotel and was informed by the clerk that Mr. Julian Jones and wife had departed in the early afternoon, with their baggage.

Can Mrs. Jones have rushed him back and hidden him away in Nebraska? I remember that as we said good-bye, there was that in her smile that recalled the vulpine complacency of Mona Lisa, the Wise.

A Hyperborean Brew

THOMAS Stevens's veracity may have been indeterminate as x , and his imagination the imagination of ordinary men increased to the n th power, but this, at least, must be said: never did he deliver himself of word nor deed that could be branded as a lie outright... He may have played with probability, and verged on the extremest edge of possibility, but in his tales the machinery never creaked. That he knew the Northland like a book, not a soul can deny. That he was a great traveller, and had set foot on countless unknown trails, many evidences affirm. Outside of my own personal knowledge, I knew men that had met him everywhere, but principally on the confines of Nowhere. There was Johnson, the ex-Hudson Bay Company factor, who had housed him in a Labrador factory until his dogs rested up a bit, and he was able to strike out again. There was McMahan, agent for the Alaska Commercial Company, who had run across him in Dutch Harbor, and later on, among the outlying islands of the Aleutian group. It was indisputable that he had guided one of the earlier United States surveys, and history states positively that in a similar capacity he served the Western Union when it attempted to put through its trans-Alaskan and Siberian telegraph to Europe. Further, there was Joe Lamson, the whaling captain, who, when ice-bound off the mouth of the Mackenzie, had had him, come aboard after tobacco.

This last touch proves Thomas Stevens's identity conclusively. His quest for tobacco was perennial and untiring. Ere we became fairly acquainted, I learned to greet him with one hand, and pass the pouch with the other. But the night I met him in John O'Brien's Dawson saloon, his head was wreathed in a nimbus of fifty-cent cigar smoke, and instead of my pouch he demanded my sack. We were standing by a faro table, and forthwith he tossed it upon the "high card." "Fifty," he said, and the gamekeeper nodded. The "high card" turned, and he handed back my sack, called for a "tab," and drew me over to the scales, where the weigher nonchalantly cashed him out fifty dollars in dust.

"And now we'll drink," he said; and later, at the bar, when he lowered his glass: "Reminds me of a little brew I had up Tattarat way. No, you have no knowledge of the place, nor is it down on the charts. But it's up by the rim of the Arctic Sea, not so many hundred miles from the American line, and all of half a thousand God-forsaken souls live there, giving and taking in marriage, and starving and dying in-between-whiles. Explorers have overlooked them, and you will not find them in the census of 1890. A whale-ship was pinched there once, but the men, who had made shore over the ice, pulled out for the south and were never heard of.

“But it was a great brew we had, Moosu and I,” he added a moment later, with just the slightest suspicion of a sigh.

I knew there were big deeds and wild doings behind that sigh, so I haled him into a corner, between a roulette outfit and a poker layout, and waited for his tongue to thaw.

“Had one objection to Moosu,” he began, cocking his head meditatively—“one objection, and only one. He was an Indian from over on the edge of the Chippewyan country, but the trouble was, he’d picked up a smattering of the Scriptures. Been campmate a season with a renegade French Canadian who’d studied for the church. Moosu’d never seen applied Christianity, and his head was crammed with miracles, battles, and dispensations, and what not he didn’t understand. Otherwise he was a good sort, and a handy man on trail or over a fire.

“We’d had a hard time together and were badly knocked out when we plumped upon Tattarat. Lost outfits and dogs crossing a divide in a fall blizzard, and our bellies clove to our backs and our clothes were in rags when we crawled into the village. They weren’t much surprised at seeing us—because of the whalemens—and gave us the meanest shack in the village to live in, and the worst of their leavings to live on. What struck me at the time as strange was that they left us strictly alone. But Moosu explained it.

“‘Shaman sick tumtum,’ he said, meaning the shaman, or medicine man, was jealous, and had advised the people to have nothing to do with us. From the little he’d seen of the whalemens, he’d learned that mine was a stronger race, and a wiser; so he’d only behaved as shamans have always behaved the world over. And before I get done, you’ll see how near right he was.

“‘These people have a law,’ said Moosu: ‘Whoso eats of meat must hunt. We be awkward, you and I, O master, in the weapons of this country; nor can we string bows nor fling spears after the manner approved. Wherefore the shaman and Tummasook, who is chief, have put their heads together, and it has been decreed that we work with the women and children in dragging in the meat and tending the wants of the hunters.’

“‘And this is very wrong,’ I made to answer; ‘for we be better men, Moosu, than these people who walk in darkness. Further, we should rest and grow strong, for the way south is long, and on that trail the weak cannot prosper.’

“‘But we have nothing,’ he objected, looking about him at the rotten timbers of the igloo, the stench of the ancient walrus meat that had been our supper disgusting his nostrils. ‘And on this fare we cannot thrive. We have nothing save the bottle of “painkiller,” which will not fill emptiness, so we must bend to the yoke of the unbeliever and become hewers of wood and drawers of water. And there be good things in this place, the which we may not have. Ah, master, never has my nose lied to me, and I have followed it to secret caches and among the fur-bales of the igloos. Good provender did these people extort from the poor whalemens, and this provender has wandered into few hands. The woman Ipsukuk, who dwelleth in the far end of the village next the igloo of the chief, possesseth much flour and sugar, and even have my eyes told me of molasses smeared on her face. And in the igloo of Tummasook, the chief, there be

tea—have I not seen the old pig guzzling? And the shaman owneth a caddy of “Star” and two buckets of prime smoking. And what have we? Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!’

“But I was stunned by the word he brought of the tobacco, and made l no answer.

“And Moosu, what of his own desire, broke silence: ‘And there be Tukeliketa, daughter of a big hunter and wealthy man. A likely girl. Indeed, a very nice girl.’

“I figured hard during the night while Moosu snored, for I could not bear the thought of the tobacco so near which I could not smoke. True, as he had said, we had nothing. But the way became clear to me, and in the morning I said to him: ‘Go thou cunningly abroad, after thy fashion, and procure me some sort of bone, crooked like a gooseneck, and hollow. Also, walk humbly, but have eyes awake to the lay of pots and pans and cooking contrivances. And remember, mine is the white man’s wisdom, and do what I have bid you, with sureness and despatch.’

“While he was away I placed the whale-oil cooking lamp in the middle of the igloo, and moved the mangy sleeping furs back that I might have room. Then I took apart his gun and put the barrel by handy, and afterward braided many wicks from the cotton that the women gather wild in the summer. When he came back, it was with the bone I had commanded, and with news that in the igloo of Tummasook there was a five-gallon kerosene can and a big copper kettle. So I said he had done well and we would tarry through the day. And when midnight was near I made harangue to him.

“‘This chief, this Tummasook, hath a copper kettle, likewise a kero-sene can.’ I put a rock, smooth and wave-washed, in Moosu’s hand. ‘The camp is hushed and the stars are winking. Go thou, creep into the chief’s igloo softly, and smite him thus upon the belly, and hard. And let the meat and good grub of the days to come put strength into shine arm. There will be uproar and outcry, and the village will come hot afoot. But be thou unafraid. Veil thy movements and lose thy form in the obscurity of the night and the confusion of men. And when the woman Ipsukuk is anigh thee,—she who smeareth her face with molasses,—do thou smite her likewise, and whosoever else that possesseth flour and cometh to thy hand. Then do thou lift thy voice in pain and double up with clasped hands, and make outcry in token that thou, too, I hast felt the visitation of the night. And in this way shall we achieve honor and great possessions, and the caddy of “Star” and the prime smoking, and thy Tukeliketa, who is a likely maiden.’

“When he had departed on this errand, I bided patiently in the shack, and the tobacco seemed very near. Then there was a cry of affright in the night, that became an uproar and assailed the sky. I seized the ‘painkiller’ and ran forth. There was much noise, and a wailing among the women, and fear sat heavily on all. Tummasook and the woman Ipsukuk rolled on the ground in pain, and with them there were divers others, also Moosu. I thrust aside those that cluttered the way of my feet, and put the mouth of the bottle to Moosu’s lips. And straight-way he became well and ceased his howling. Whereat there was a great clamor for the bottle from the others so stricken. But I made harangue, and ere they tasted and were made well I had mulcted Tummasook of his copper kettle and kerosene can, and the woman Ipsukuk of her sugar and molasses, and the other sick ones of goodly measures of flour. The shaman glowered wickedly at

the people around my knees, though he poorly concealed the wonder that lay beneath. But I held my head high, and Moosu groaned beneath the loot as he followed my heels to the shack.

“There I set to work. In Tummasook’s copper kettle I mixed three quarts of wheat flour with five of molasses, and to this I added of water I twenty quarts. Then I placed the kettle near the lamp, that it might sour in the warmth and grow strong. Moosu understood, and said my wisdom passed understanding and was greater than Solomon’s, who he had heard was a wise man of old time. The kerosene can I set over the lamp, and to its nose I affixed a snout, and into the snout the bone that was like a gooseneck. I sent Moosu without to pound ice, while I connected the barrel of his gun with the gooseneck, and midway on the barrel I piled the ice he had pounded. And at the far end of the gun barrel, beyond the pan of ice, I placed a small iron pot. When the brew was strong enough (and it was two days ere it could stand on its own legs), I filled the kerosene can with it, and lighted the wicks I had braided.

“Now that all was ready, I spoke to Moosu. ‘Go forth,’ I said, ‘to the chief men of the village, and give them greeting, and bid them come into my igloo and sleep the night away with me and the gods.’

“The brew was singing merrily when they began shoving aside the skin flap and crawling in, and I was heaping cracked ice on the gun barrel. Out of the priming hole at the far end, drip, drip, drip into the iron pot fell the liquor—hooch, you know. But they’d never seen the like, and giggled nervously when I made harangue about its virtues. As I talked I noted the jealousy in the shaman’s eye, so when I had done, I placed him side by side with Tummasook and the woman Ipsukuk. Then I gave them to drink, and their eyes watered and their stomachs warmed, till from being afraid they reached greedily for more; and when I had them well started, I turned to the others. Tummasook made a brag about how he had once killed a polar bear, and in the vigor of his pantomime nearly slew his mother’s brother. But nobody heeded. The woman Ipsukuk fell to weeping for a son lost long years ago in the ice, and the shaman made incantation and prophecy. So it went, and before morning they were all on the floor, sleeping soundly with the gods.

“The story tells itself, does it not? The news of the magic potion spread. It was too marvellous for utterance. Tongues could tell but a tithe of the miracles it performed. It eased pain, gave surcease to sorrow, brought back old memories, dead faces, and forgotten dreams. It was a fire that ate through all the blood, and, burning, burned not. It stoutened the heart, stiffened the back, and made men more than men. It revealed the future, and gave visions and prophecy. It brimmed with wisdom and unfolded secrets. There was no end of the things it could do, and soon there was a clamoring on all hands to sleep with the gods. They brought their warmest furs, their strongest dogs, their best meats; but I sold the hooch with discretion, and only those were favored that brought flour and molasses and sugar. And such stores poured in that I set Moosu to build a cache to hold them, for there was soon no space in the igloo. Ere three days had passed Tummasook had gone bankrupt. The shaman, who was never more than

half drunk after the first night, watched me closely and hung on for the better part of the week. But before ten days were gone even the woman Ipsukuk exhausted her provisions, and went home weak and tottery.

“But Moosu complained. ‘O master,’ he said, ‘we have laid by great wealth in molasses and sugar and flour, but our shack is yet mean, our clothes thin, and our sleeping furs mangy. There is a call of the belly for meat the stench of which offends not the stars, and for tea such as Tummasook guzzles, and there is a great yearning for the tobacco of Neewak, who is shaman and who plans to destroy us. I have flour until I am sick, and sugar and molasses without stint, yet is the heart of Moosu sore and his bed empty.’

“‘Peace!’ I answered, ‘thou art weak of understanding and a fool. Walk softly and wait, and we will grasp it all. But grasp now, and we grasp little, and in the end it will be nothing. Thou art a child in the way of the white man’s wisdom. Hold thy tongue and watch, and I will show you the way my brothers do overseas, and, so doing, gather to themselves the riches of the earth. It is what is called “business,” and what cost thou know about business?’

“But the next day he came in breathless. ‘O master, a strange thing happeneth in the igloo of Neewak, the shaman; wherefore we are lost, and we have neither worn the warm furs nor tasted the good tobacco, what of your madness for the molasses and flour. Go thou and witness whilst I watch by the brew.’

“So I went to the igloo of Neewak. And behold, he had made his own still, fashioned cunningly after mine. And as he beheld me he could ill conceal his triumph. For he was a man of parts, and his sleep with the gods when in my igloo had not been sound.

“But I was not disturbed, for I knew what I knew, and when I returned to my own igloo, I descanted to Moosu and said: ‘Happily the property right obtains amongst this people, who otherwise have been blessed with but few of the institutions of men. And because of this respect for property shall you and I wax fat, and, further, we shall introduce amongst them new institutions that other peoples have worked out through great travail and suffering.’

“But Moosu understood dimly, till the shaman came forth, with eyes I flashing and a threatening note in his voice, and demanded to trade with Ime. ‘For look you,’ he cried, ‘there be of flour and molasses none in all Ithe village. The like have you gathered with a shrewd hand from my people, who have slept with your gods and who now have nothing save large heads, and weak knees, and a thirst for cold water that they cannot quench. This is not good, and my voice has power among them; so it were well that we trade, you and I, even as you have traded with them, for molasses and flour.’

“And I made answer: ‘This be good talk, and wisdom abideth in thy mouth. We will trade. For this much of flour and molasses givest thou me the caddy of “Star” and the two buckets of smoking.’

“And Moosu groaned, and when the trade was made and the shaman departed, he upbraided me: ‘Now, because of thy madness, are we, indeed, lost! Neewak maketh hooch on his own account, and when the ‘time is ripe, he will command the people

to drink of no hooch but his hooch. And in this way are we undone, and our goods worthless, and 'our igloo mean, and the bed of Moosu cold and empty!'

"And I answered: 'By the body of the wolf, say I, thou art a fool, and thy fathers before thee, and thy children after thee, down to the last generation. Thy wisdom is worse than no wisdom and shine eyes blinded to business, of which I have spoken and whereof thou knowest nothing. Go, thou son of a thousand fools, and drink of the hooch that Neewak brews in his igloo, and thank thy gods that thou hast a white man's wisdom to make soft the bed thou liest in. Go! and when thou hast drunken, return with the taste still on thy lips, that I may know.'

"And two days after, Neewak sent greeting and invitation to his igloo. Moosu went, but I sat alone, with the song of the still in my ears, and the air thick with the shaman's tobacco; for trade was slack that night, and no one dropped in but Angeit, a young hunter that had faith in me. Later, Moosu came back, his speech thick with chuckling and his eyes wrinkling with laughter.

"'Thou art a great man,' he said. 'Thou art a great man, O master, and because of thy greatness thou wilt not condemn Moosu, thy servant, who oftentimes doubts and cannot be made to understand.'

"'And wherefore now?' I demanded. 'Hast thou drunk overmuch? And are they sleeping sound in the igloo of Neewak, the shaman?'

"'Nay, they are angered and sore of body, and Chief Tummasook has thrust his thumbs in the throat of Neewak, and sworn by the bones of his ancestors to look upon his face no more. For behold! I went to the igloo, and the brew simmered and bubbled, and the steam journeyed through the gooseneck even as thy steam, and even as shine it became water where it met the ice, and dropped into the pot at the far end. And Neewak gave us to drink, and lo, it was not like shine, for there was no bite to the tongue nor tingling to the eyeballs, and of a truth it was water. So we drank, and we drank overmuch; yet did we sit with cold hearts and solemn. And Neewak was perplexed and a cloud came on his brow. And he took Tummasook and Ipsukuk alone of all the company and sat them apart, and bade them drink and drink and drink. And they drank and drank and drank, and yet sat solemn and cold, till Tummasook arose in wrath and demanded back the furs and the tea he had paid. And Ipsukuk raised her voice, thin and angry. And the company demanded back what they had given, and there was a great commotion.'

"'Does the son of a dog deem me a whale?' demanded Tummasook, shoving back the skin flap and standing erect, his face black and his brows angry.

"'Wherefore I am filled, like a fish-bladder, to bursting, till I can scarce walk, what of the weight within me? Lalah! I have drunken as never before, yet are my eyes clear, my knees strong, my hand steady.'

"'The shaman cannot send us to sleep with the gods,' the people complained, stringing in and joining us, 'and only in thy igloo may the thing be done.'

"'So I laughed to myself as I passed the hooch around and the guests made merry. For in the flour I had traded to Neewak I had mixed much soda that I had got from

the woman Ipsukuk. So how could his brew ferment when the soda kept it sweet? Or his hooch be hooch when it would not sour?

“After that our wealth flowed in without let or hindrance. Furs we had without number, and the fancy work of the women, all of the chief’s tea, and no end of meat. One day Moosu retold for my benefit, and sadly mangled, the story of Joseph in Egypt, but from it I got an idea, and soon I had half the tribe at work building me great meat caches. And of all they hunted I got the lion’s share and stored it away. Nor was Moosu idle. He made himself a pack of cards from birch bark, and taught Neewak the way to play seven-up. He also inveigled the father of Tukeliketa into the game. And one day he married the maiden, and the next day he moved into the shaman’s house, which was the finest in the village. The fall of Neewak was complete, for he lost all his possessions, his walrus-hide drums, his incantation tools—everything. And in the end he became a hewer of wood and drawer of water at the beck and call of Moosu. And Moosu—he set himself up as shaman, or high priest, and out of his garbled Scripture created new gods and made incantation before strange altars.

“And I was well pleased, for I thought it good that church and state go hand in hand, and I had certain plans of my own concerning the state. Events were shaping as I had foreseen. Good temper and smiling faces had vanished from the village. The people were morose and sullen. There were quarrels and fighting, and things were in an uproar night and day. Moosu’s cards were duplicated and the hunters fell to gambling among themselves. Tummasook beat his wife horribly, and his mother’s brother objected and smote him with a tusk of walrus till he cried aloud in the night and was shamed before the people. Also, amid such diversions no hunting was done, and famine fell upon the land. The nights were long and dark, and without meat no hooch could be bought; so they murmured against the chief. This I had played for, and when they were well and hungry, I summoned the whole village, made a great harangue, posed as patriarch, and fed the famishing. Moosu made harangue likewise, and because of this and the thing I had done I was made chief. Moosu, who had the ear of God and decreed his judgments, anointed me with whale blubber, and right blubberly he did it, not understanding the ceremony. And between us we interpreted to the people the new theory of the divine right of kings. There was hooch galore, and meat and feasting, and they took kindly to the new order.

“So you see, O man, I have sat in the high places, and worn the purple, and ruled populations. And I might yet be a king had the tobacco held out, or had Moosu been more fool and less knave. For he cast eyes upon Esanetuk, eldest daughter to Tummasook, and I objected.

“ ‘O brother,’ he explained, ‘thou hast seen fit to speak of introducing new institutions amongst this people, and I have listened to thy words and gained wisdom thereby. Thou rulest by the God-given right, and by the God-given right I marry.’

“I noted that he ‘brothered’ me, and was angry and put my foot down. But he fell back upon the people and made incantations for three days, in which all hands joined; and then, speaking with the voice of God, he decreed polygamy by divine fiat. But

he was shrewd, for he limited the number of wives by a property qualification, and because of which he, above all men, was favored by his wealth. Nor could I fail to admire, though it was plain that power had turned his head, and he would not be satisfied till all the power and all the wealth rested in his own hands. So he became swollen with pride, forgot it was I that had placed him there, and made preparations to destroy me.

“But it was interesting, for the beggar was working out in his own way an evolution of primitive society. Now I, by virtue of the hooch monopoly, drew a revenue in which I no longer permitted him to share. So he meditated for a while and evolved a system of ecclesiastical taxation. He laid tithes upon the people, harangued about fat firstlings and such things, and twisted whatever twisted texts he had ever heard to serve his purpose. Even this I bore in silence, but when he instituted what may be likened to a graduated income tax, I rebelled, and blindly, for this was what he worked for. Thereat, he appealed to the people, I and they, envious of my great wealth and well taxed themselves, up-held him. ‘Why should we pay,’ they asked, ‘and not you? Does not I the voice of God speak through the lips of Moosu, the shaman?’ So I yielded. But at the same time I raised the price of hooch, and lo, he was not a whit behind me in raising my taxes.

“Then there was open war. I made a play for Neewak and Tum-masook, because of the traditionary rights they possessed; but Moosu won out by creating a priesthood and giving them both high office. The problem of authority presented itself to him, and he worked it out as it has often been worked before. There was my mistake. I should have been made shaman, and he chief, but I saw it too late, and in the clash of spiritual and temporal power I was bound to be worsted. A controversy waged, but it quickly became one-sided. The people that he had anointed me, and it was clear to them that the source of my authority lay, not in me, but in Moosu. Only a few faithful ones clung to me, chief among whom Angeit was; while he headed the popular party and set whispers afloat that I had it in mind to overthrow him and set up my own gods, which were most unrighteous gods. And in this the clever rascal had anticipated me, for it was just what I had intended—forsake my kingship, you see, and fight spiritual with spiritual. So he frightened the people with the iniquities of my peculiar gods—especially the one he named ‘Biz-e-Nass’—and nipped the scheme in the bud.

“Now, it happened that Kluktu, youngest daughter to Tummasook, had caught my fancy, and I likewise hers. So I made overtures, but the ex-chief refused bluntly—after I had paid the purchase price—and informed me that she was set aside for Moosu. This was too much, and I was half of a mind to go to his igloo and slay him with my naked hands; but I recollected that the tobacco was near gone, and went home laughing. The next day he made incantation, and distorted the miracle of the loaves and fishes till it became prophecy, and I, reading between the lines, saw that it was aimed at the wealth of meat stored in my caches. The people also read between the lines, and, as he did not urge them to go on the hunt, they remained at home, and few caribou or bear were brought in.

“But I had plans of my own, seeing that not only the tobacco but the flour and molasses were near gone. And further, I felt it my duty to prove the white man’s wisdom and bring sore distress to Moosu, who had waxed high-stomached, what of the power I had given him. So that night I went to my meat caches and toiled mightily, and it was noted next day that all the dogs of the village were lazy. No one suspected, and I toiled thus every night, and the dogs grew fat and fatter, and the people lean and leaner. They grumbled and demanded the fulfilment of prophecy, but Moosu restrained them, waiting for their hunger to grow yet greater. Nor did he dream, to the very last, of the trick I had been playing on the empty caches.

“When all was ready, I sent Angeit, and the faithful ones whom I had fed privily, through the village to call assembly. And the tribe gathered on a great space of beaten snow before my door, with the meat caches towering stilt-legged in the rear. Moosu came also, standing on the inner edge of the circle opposite me, confident that I had some scheme afoot, and prepared at the first break to down me. But I arose, giving him salutation before all men.

“‘O Moosu, thou blessed of God,’ I began, ‘doubtless thou hast wondered in that I have called this convocation together; and doubtless, because of my many foolishnesses, art thou prepared for rash sayings and rash doings. Not so. It has been said, that those the gods would destroy they first make mad. And I have been indeed mad. I have crossed thy will, and scoffed at thy authority, and done divers evil and wanton things. Wherefore, last night a vision was vouchsafed me, and I have seen the wickedness of my ways. And thou stoodst forth like a shining star, with brows aflame, and I knew in mine own heart thy greatness. I saw all things clearly. I knew that thou didst command the ear of God, and that when you spoke he listened. And I remembered that whatever of the good deeds that I had done, I had done through the grace of God, and the grace of Moosu.

“‘Yes, my children,’ I cried, turning to the people, ‘whatever right I have done, and whatever good I have done, have been because of the counsel of Moosu. When I listened to him, affairs prospered; when I closed my ears, and acted according to my folly, things came to folly. By his advice it was that I laid my store of meat, and in time of darkness fed the famishing. By his grace it was that I was made chief. And what have I done with my chiefship? Let me tell you. I have done nothing. My head was turned with power, and I deemed myself greater than Moosu, and, behold, I have come to grief. My rule has been unwise, and the gods are angered. Lo, ye are pinched with famine, and the mothers are dry-breasted, and the little babies cry through the long nights. Nor do I, who have hardened my heart against Moosu, know what shall be done, nor in what manner of way grub shall be had.’

“At this there was nodding and laughing, and the people put their heads together and I knew they whispered of the loaves and fishes. I went on hastily. ‘So I was made aware of my foolishness and of Moosu’s wisdom; of my own unfitness and of Moosu’s fitness. And because of this, being no longer mad, I make acknowledgment and rectify evil. I did cast unrighteous eyes upon Kluktu, and lo, she was sealed to Moosu. Yet

is she mine, for did I not pay to Tummasook the goods of purchase? But I am well unworthy of her, and she shall go from the igloo of her father to the igloo of Moosu. Can the moon shine in the sunshine? And further, Tummasook shall keep the goods of purchase, and she be a free gift to Moosu, whom God hath ordained her rightful lord.

“And further yet, because I have used my wealth unwisely, and I to oppress ye, O my children, do I make gifts of the kerosene can to Moosu, and the gooseneck, and the gun barrel, and the copper kettle. Therefore, I can gather to me no more possessions, and when ye are athirst for hooch, he will quench ye and without robbery. For he is a great man, and God speaketh through his lips.

“And yet further, my heart is softened, and I have repented me of my madness. I, who am a fool and a son of fools; I, who am the slave of the bad god Biz-e-Nass; I, who see thy empty bellies and know not wherewith to fill them—why shall I be chief, and sit above thee, and rule to shine own destruction? Why should I do this, which is not good? But Moosu, who is shaman, and who is wise above men, is so made that he can rule with a soft hand and justly. And because of the things I have related do I make abdication and give my chiefship to Moosu, who alone knoweth how ye may be fed in this day when there be no meat in the land.’

“At this there was a great clapping of hands, and the people cried, ‘Kloshe! Kloshe!’ which means, ‘good.’ I had seen the wonder-worry in Moosu’s eyes; for he could not understand, and was fearful of my white man’s wisdom. I had met his wishes all along the line, and even antici-pated some; and standing there, selfshorn of all my power, he knew the time did not favor to stir the people against me.

“Before they could disperse I made announcement that while the still went to Moosu, whatever hooch I possessed went to the people. Moosu tried to protest at this, for never had we permitted more than a handful to be drunk at a time; but they cried, ‘Kloshe! Kloshe!’ and made festival before my door. And while they waxed uproarious without, as the liquor went to their heads, I held council within with Angeit and the faithful ones. I set them the tasks they were to do, and put into their mouths the words they were to say. Then I slipped away to a place back in the woods where I had two sleds, well loaded, with teams of dogs that were not overfed. Spring was at hand, you see, and there was a crust to the snow; so it was the best time to take the way south. Moreover, the tobacco was gone. There I waited, for I had nothing to fear. Did they bestir themselves on my trail, their dogs were too fat, and themselves too lean, to overtake me; also, I deemed their bestirring would be of an order for which I had made due preparation.

“First came a faithful one, running, and after him another. ‘O master,’ the first cried breathless, ‘there be great confusion in the village, and no man knoweth his own mind, and they be of many minds. Everybody hath drunken overmuch, and some be stringing bows, and some be quarrelling one with another. Never was there such a trouble.’

“And the second one: ‘And I did as thou biddest, O master, whispering shrewd words in thirsty ears, and raising memories of the things that were of old time. The woman Ipsukuk waileth her poverty and the wealth that no longer is hers. And Tummasook thinketh himself once again chief, and the people are hungry and rage up and down.’

“And a third one: ‘And Neewak hath overthrown the altars of Moosu, and maketh incantation before the time-honored and ancient gods. And all the people remember the wealth that ran down their throats, and which they possess no more. And first, Esanetuk, who be sick tumtum, fought with Kluktu, and there was much noise. And next, being daughters of the one mother, did they fight with Tukeliketa. And after that did they three fall upon Moosu, like wind-squalls, from every hand, till he ran forth from the igloo, and the people mocked him. For a man who cannot command his womankind is a fool.’

“Then came Angeit: ‘Great trouble hath befallen Moosu, O master, for I have whispered to advantage, till the people came to Moosu, saying they were hungry and demanding the fulfilment of prophecy. And there was a loud shout of “Itlwillie! Itlwillie!” (Meat.) So he cried peace to his womenfolk, who were overwrought with anger and with hooch, and led the tribe even to thy meat caches. And he bade the men open them and be fed. And lo, the caches were empty. There was no meat. They stood without sound, the people being frightened, and in the silence I lifted my voice. “O Moosu, where is the meat? That there was meat we know. Did we not hunt it and drag it in from the hunt? And it were a lie to say one man hath eaten it; yet have we seen nor hide nor hair. Where is the meat, O Moosu ? Thou hast the ear of God. Where is the meat?”

““And the people cried, “Thou hast the ear of God. Where is the meat?” And they put their heads together and were afraid. Then I went among them, speaking fearsomely of the unknown things, of the dead that come and go like shadows and do evil deeds, till they cried aloud in terror and gathered all together, like little children afraid of the dark. Neewak made harangue, laying this evil that had come upon them at the door of Moosu. When he had done, there was a furious commotion, and they took spears in their hands, and tusks of walrus, and clubs, and stones from the beach. But Moosu ran away home, and because he had not drunken of hooch they could not catch him, and fell one over I another and made haste slowly. Even now they do howl without his igloo, and his womenfolk within, and what of the noise, he cannot make himself heard.’

““O Angeit, thou hast done well,’ I commended. ‘Go now, taking this empty sled and the lean dogs, and ride fast to the igloo of Moosu; and before the people, who are drunken, are aware, throw him quick upon the sled and bring him to me.’

“I waited and gave good advice to the faithful ones till Angeit returned. Moosu was on the sled, and I saw by the fingermarks on his face that his womankind had done well by him. But he tumbled off and fell in the snow at my feet, crying: ‘O master, thou wilt forgive Moosu, thy servant, for the wrong things he has done! Thou art a great man! Surely wilt thou forgive!’

“Call me “brother,” Moosu—call me “brother,”” I chided, lifting him to his feet with the toe of my moccasin. ‘Wilt thou evermore obey?’

“‘Yea, master,’ he whimpered, ‘evermore.’

“‘Then dispose thy body, so, across the sled.’ I shifted the dogwhip to my right hand. ‘And direct thy face downward, toward the snow. And make haste, for we journey south this day.’ And when he was well fixed I laid the lash upon him, reciting, at every stroke, the wrongs he had done me. ‘This, for thy disobedience in general—whack! And this for thy disobedience in particular—whack!! whack! And this for Esanetuk! And this for thy soul’s welfare! And this for the grace of thy authority! And this for Kluktu! And this for thy rights God-given! And this for thy fat firstlings! And this and this for thy income tax and thy loaves and fishes! And this for all thy disobedience! And this, finally, that thou mayest henceforth walk softly and with understanding! Now cease thy sniffing and get up! Gird on thy snowshoes and go to the fore and break trail for the dogs. Chook! Mush-on! Git!’”

Thomas Stevens smiled quietly to himself as he lighted his fifth cigar and sent curling smoke-rings ceilingward.

In a Far Country

WHEN a man journeys into a far country, he must be prepared to forget many of the things he has learned, and to acquire such customs as are inherent with existence in the new land; he must abandon the old ideals and the old gods, and oftentimes he must reverse the very codes by which his conduct has hitherto been shaped. To those who have the protean faculty of adaptability, the novelty of such change may even be a source of pleasure; but to those who happen to be hardened to the ruts in which they were created, the pressure of the altered environment is unbearable, and they chafe in body and in spirit under the new restrictions which they do not understand. This chafing is bound to act and react, producing divers evils and leading to various misfortunes. It were better for the man who cannot fit himself to the new groove to return to his own country; if he delay too long, he will surely die.

The man who turns his back upon the comforts of an elder civilization, to face the savage youth, the primordial simplicity of the North, may estimate success at an inverse ratio to the quantity and quality of his hopelessly fixed habits. He will soon discover, if he be a fit candidate, that the material habits are the less important. The exchange of such things as a dainty menu for rough fare, of the stiff leather shoe for the soft, shapeless moccasin, of the feather bed for a couch in the snow, is after all a very easy matter. But his pinch will come in learning properly to shape his mind's attitude toward all things, and especially toward his fellow man. For the courtesies of ordinary life, he must substitute unselfishness, forbearance, and tolerance. Thus, and thus only, can he gain that pearl of great price,—true comradeship. He must not say "Thank you;" he must mean it without opening his mouth, and prove it by responding in kind. In short, he must substitute the deed for the word, the spirit for the letter.

When the world rang with the tale of Arctic gold, and the lure of the North gripped the heartstrings of men, Carter Weatherbee threw up his snug clerkship, turned the half of his savings over to his wife, and with the remainder bought an outfit. There was no romance in his nature,—the bondage of commerce had crushed all that; he was simply tired of the ceaseless grind, and wished to risk great hazards in view of corresponding returns. Like many another fool, disdaining the old trails used by the Northland pioneers for a score of years, he hurried to Edmonton in the spring of the year; and there, unluckily for his soul's welfare, he allied himself with a party of men.

There was nothing unusual about this party, except its plans. Even its goal, like that of all other parties, was the Klondike. But the route it had mapped out to attain that goal took away the breath of the hardiest native, born and bred to the vicissitudes of the Northwest. Even Jacques Baptiste, born of a Chippewa woman and a renegade

voyageur (having raised his first whimpers in a deerskin lodge north of the sixty-fifth parallel, and had the same hushed by blissful sucks of raw tallow), was surprised. Though he sold his services to them and agreed to travel even to the never-opening ice, he shook his head ominously whenever his advice was asked.

Percy Cuthfert's evil star must have been in the ascendant, for he, too, joined this company of argonauts. He was an ordinary man, with a bank account as deep as his culture, which is saying a good deal. He had no reason to embark on such a venture,—no reason in the world, save that he suffered from an abnormal development of sentimentality. He mistook this for the true spirit of romance and adventure. Many another man has done the like, and made as fatal a mistake.

The first break-up of spring found the party following the ice-run of Elk River. It was an imposing fleet, for the outfit was large, and they were accompanied by a disreputable contingent of half-breed voyageurs with their women and children. Day in and day out, they labored with the bateaux and canoes, fought mosquitoes and other kindred pests, or sweated and swore at the portages. Severe toil like this lays a man naked to the very roots of his soul, and ere Lake Athabasca was lost in the south, each member of the party had hoisted his true colors.

The two shirks and chronic grumblers were Carter Weatherbee and Percy Cuthfert. The whole party complained less of its aches and pains than did either of them. Not once did they volunteer for the thousand and one petty duties of the camp. A bucket of water to be brought, an extra armful of wood to be chopped, the dishes to be washed and wiped, a search to be made through the outfit for some suddenly indispensable article,—and these two effete scions of civilization discovered sprains or blisters requiring instant attention. They were the first to turn in at night, with a score of tasks yet undone; the last to turn out in the morning, when the start should be in readiness before the breakfast was begun. They were the first to fall to at meal-time, the last to have a hand in the cooking; the first to dive for a slim delicacy, the last to discover they had added to their own another man's share. If they toiled at the oars, they slyly cut the water at each stroke and allowed the boat's momentum to float up the blade. They thought nobody noticed; but their comrades swore under their breaths and grew to hate them, while Jacques Baptiste sneered openly and damned them from morning till night. But Jacques Baptiste was no gentleman.

At the Great Slave, Hudson Bay dogs were purchased, and the fleet sank to the guards with its added burden of dried fish and pemmican. Then canoe and bateau answered to the swift current of the Mackenzie, and they plunged into the Great Barren Ground. Every likely-looking "feeder" was prospected, but the elusive "pay-dirt" danced ever to the north. At the Great Bear, overcome by the common dread of the Unknown Lands, their voyageurs began to desert, and Fort of Good Hope saw the last and bravest bending to the tow-lines as they bucked the current down which they had so treacherously glided. Jacques Baptiste alone remained. Had he not sworn to travel even to the never-opening ice?

The lying charts, compiled in main from hearsay, were now constantly consulted. And they felt the need of hurry, for the sun had already passed its northern solstice and was leading the winter south again. Skirting the shores of the bay, where the Mackenzie disembogues into the Arctic Ocean, they entered the mouth of the Little Peel River. Then began the arduous up-stream toil, and the two Incapables fared worse than ever. Tow-line and pole, paddle and tump-line, rapids and portages,—such tortures served to give the one a deep disgust for great hazards, and printed for the other a fiery text on the true romance of adventure. One day they waxed mutinous, and being vilely cursed by Jacques Baptiste, turned, as worms sometimes will. But the half-breed thrashed the twain, and sent them, bruised and bleeding, about their work. It was the first time either had been man-handled.

Abandoning their river craft at the head-waters of the Little Peel, they consumed the rest of the summer in the great portage over the Mackenzie watershed to the West Rat. This little stream fed the Porcupine, which in turn joined the Yukon where that mighty highway of the North countermarches on the Arctic Circle. But they had lost in the race with winter, and one day they tied their rafts to the thick eddy-ice and hurried their goods ashore. That night the river jammed and broke several times; the following morning it had fallen asleep for good.

“We can’t be more ‘n four hundred miles from the Yukon,” concluded Sloper, multiplying his thumb nails by the scale of the map. The council, in which the two Incapables had whined to excellent disadvantage, was drawing to a close. “Hudson Bay Post, long time ago. No use um now.” Jacques Baptiste’s father had made the trip for the Fur Company in the old days, incidentally marking the trail with a couple of frozen toes.

“Sufferin’ cracky!” cried another of the party. “No whites?”

“Nary white,” Sloper sententiously affirmed; “but it ‘s only five hundred more up the Yukon to Dawson. Call it a rough thousand from here.”

Weatherbee and Cuthfert groaned in chorus.

“How long ‘ll that take, Baptiste?”

The half-breed figured for a moment. “Workum like hell, no man play out, ten—twenty—forty—fifty days. Um babies come” (designating the Incapables), “no can tell. Mebbe when hell freeze over; mebbe not then.”

The manufacture of snowshoes and moccasins ceased. Somebody called the name of an absent member, who came out of an ancient cabin at the edge of the camp-fire and joined them. The cabin was one of the many mysteries which lurk in the vast recesses of the North. Built when and by whom, no man could tell. Two graves in the open, piled high with stones, perhaps contained the secret of those early wanderers. But whose hand had piled the stones?

The moment had come. Jacques Baptiste paused in the fitting of a harness and pinned the struggling dog in the snow. The cook made mute protest for delay, threw a handful of bacon into a noisy pot of beans, then came to attention. Sloper rose to his feet. His body was a ludicrous contrast to the healthy physiques of the Incapables. Yellow and weak, fleeing from a South American fever-hole, he had not broken his flight

across the zones, and was still able to toil with men. His weight was probably ninety pounds, with the heavy hunting-knife thrown in, and his grizzled hair told of a prime which had ceased to be. The fresh young muscles of either Weatherbee or Cuthfert were equal to ten times the endeavor of his; yet he could walk them into the earth in a day's journey. And all this day he had whipped his stronger comrades into venturing a thousand miles of the stiffest hardship man can conceive. He was the incarnation of the unrest of his race, and the old Teutonic stubbornness, dashed with the quick grasp and action of the Yankee, held the flesh in the bondage of the spirit.

"All those in favor of going on with the dogs as soon as the ice sets, say ay."

"Ay!" rang out eight voices,—voices destined to string a trail of oaths along many a hundred miles of pain.

"Contrary minded?"

"No!" For the first time the Incapables were united without some compromise of personal interests.

"And what are you going to do about it?" Weatherbee added belligerently.

"Majority rule! Majority rule!" clamored the rest of the party.

"I know the expedition is liable to fall through if you don't come," Sloper replied sweetly; "but I guess, if we try real hard, we can manage to do without you. What do you say, boys?"

The sentiment was cheered to the echo.

"But I say, you know," Cuthfert ventured apprehensively; "what 's a chap like me to do?"

"Ain't you coming with us?"

"No-o."

"Then do as you damn well please. We won't have nothing to say."

"Kind o' calkilate yuh might settle it with that canoodlin' pardner of yourn," suggested a heavy-going Westerner from the Dakotas, at the same time pointing out Weatherbee. "He 'll be shore to ask yuh what yur a-goin' to do when it comes to cookin' an' gatherin' the wood."

"Then we 'll consider it all arranged," concluded Sloper. "We 'll pull out to-morrow, if we camp within five miles,—just to get everything in running order and remember if we 've forgotten anything."

The sleds groaned by on their steel-shod runners, and the dogs strained low in the harnesses in which they were born to die. Jacques Baptiste paused by the side of Sloper to get a last glimpse of the cabin. The smoke curled up pathetically from the Yukon stove-pipe. The two Incapables were watching them from the doorway.

Sloper laid his hand on the other's shoulder.

"Jacques Baptiste, did you ever hear of the Kilkenny cats?"

The half-breed shook his head.

"Well, my friend and good comrade, the Kilkenny cats fought till neither hide, nor hair, nor yowl, was left. You understand?—till nothing was left. Very good. Now, these

two men don't like work. They won't work. We know that. They 'll be all alone in that cabin all winter,—a mighty long, dark winter. Kilkenny cats,—well?"

The Frenchman in Baptiste shrugged his shoulders, but the Indian in him was silent. Nevertheless, it was an eloquent shrug, pregnant with prophecy.

Things prospered in the little cabin at first. The rough badinage of their comrades had made Weatherbee and Cuthfert conscious of the mutual responsibility which had devolved upon them; besides, there was not so much work after all for two healthy men. And the removal of the cruel whip-hand, or in other words the bulldozing half-breed, had brought with it a joyous reaction. At first, each strove to outdo the other, and they performed petty tasks with an unction which would have opened the eyes of their comrades who were now wearing out bodies and souls on the Long Trail.

All care was banished. The forest, which shouldered in upon them from three sides, was an inexhaustible woodyard. A few yards from their door slept the Porcupine, and a hole through its winter robe formed a bubbling spring of water, crystal clear and painfully cold. But they soon grew to find fault with even that. The hole would persist in freezing up, and thus gave them many a miserable hour of ice-chopping. The unknown builders of the cabin had extended the side-logs so as to support a cache at the rear. In this was stored the bulk of the party's provisions. Food there was, without stint, for three times the men who were fated to live upon it. But the most of it was of the kind which built up brawn and sinew, but did not tickle the palate. True, there was sugar in plenty for two ordinary men; but these two were little else than children. They early discovered the virtues of hot water judiciously saturated with sugar, and they prodigally swam their flapjacks and soaked their crusts in the rich, white syrup. Then coffee and tea, and especially the dried fruits, made disastrous inroads upon it. The first words they had were over the sugar question. And it is a really serious thing when two men, wholly dependent upon each other for company, begin to quarrel.

Weatherbee loved to discourse blatantly on politics, while Cuthfert, who had been prone to clip his coupons and let the commonwealth jog on as best it might, either ignored the subject or delivered himself of startling epigrams. But the clerk was too obtuse to appreciate the clever shaping of thought, and this waste of ammunition irritated Cuthfert. He had been used to blinding people by his brilliancy, and it worked him quite a hardship, this loss of an audience. He felt personally aggrieved and unconsciously held his mutton-head companion responsible for it.

Save existence, they had nothing in common,—came in touch on no single point. Weatherbee was a clerk who had known naught but clerking all his life; Cuthfert was a master of arts, a dabbler in oils, and had written not a little. The one was a lower-class man who considered himself a gentleman, and the other was a gentleman who knew himself to be such. From this it may be remarked that a man can be a gentleman without possessing the first instinct of true comradeship. The clerk was as sensuous as the other was aesthetic, and his love adventures, told at great length and chiefly coined from his imagination, affected the supersensitive master of arts in the same way as so many whiffs of sewer gas. He deemed the clerk a filthy, uncultured brute, whose place

was in the muck with the swine, and told him so; and he was reciprocally informed that he was a milk-and-water sissy and a cad. Weatherbee could not have defined "cad" for his life; but it satisfied its purpose, which after all seems the main point in life.

Weatherbee flatted every third note and sang such songs as "The Boston Burglar" and "The Handsome Cabin Boy," for hours at a time, while Cuthfert wept with rage, till he could stand it no longer and fled into the outer cold. But there was no escape. The intense frost could not be endured for long at a time, and the little cabin crowded them—beds, stove, table, and all—into a space of ten by twelve. The very presence of either became a personal affront to the other, and they lapsed into sullen silences which increased in length and strength as the days went by. Occasionally, the flash of an eye or the curl of a lip got the better of them, though they strove to wholly ignore each other during these mute periods. And a great wonder sprang up in the breast of each, as to how God had ever come to create the other.

With little to do, time became an intolerable burden to them. This naturally made them still lazier. They sank into a physical lethargy which there was no escaping, and which made them rebel at the performance of the smallest chore. One morning when it was his turn to cook the common breakfast, Weatherbee rolled out of his blankets, and to the snoring of his companion, lighted first the slush-lamp and then the fire. The kettles were frozen hard, and there was no water in the cabin with which to wash. But he did not mind that. Waiting for it to thaw, he sliced the bacon and plunged into the hateful task of bread-making. Cuthfert had been slyly watching through his half-closed lids. Consequently there was a scene, in which they fervently blessed each other, and agreed, thenceforth, that each do his own cooking. A week later, Cuthfert neglected his morning ablutions, but none the less complacently ate the meal which he had cooked. Weatherbee grinned. After that the foolish custom of washing passed out of their lives.

As the sugar-pile and other little luxuries dwindled, they began to be afraid they were not getting their proper shares, and in order that they might not be robbed, they fell to gorging themselves. The luxuries suffered in this gluttonous contest, as did also the men. In the absence of fresh vegetables and exercise, their blood became impoverished, and a loathsome, purplish rash crept over their bodies. Yet they refused to heed the warning. Next, their muscles and joints began to swell, the flesh turning black, while their mouths, gums, and lips took on the color of rich cream. Instead of being drawn together by their misery, each gloated over the other's symptoms as the scurvy took its course.

They lost all regard for personal appearance, and for that matter, common decency. The cabin became a pigpen, and never once were the beds made or fresh pine boughs laid underneath. Yet they could not keep to their blankets, as they would have wished; for the frost was inexorable, and the fire box consumed much fuel. The hair of their heads and faces grew long and shaggy, while their garments would have disgusted a ragpicker. But they did not care. They were sick, and there was no one to see; besides, it was very painful to move about.

To all this was added a new trouble,—the Fear of the North. This Fear was the joint child of the Great Cold and the Great Silence, and was born in the darkness of December, when the sun dipped below the southern horizon for good. It affected them according to their natures. Weatherbee fell prey to the grosser superstitions, and did his best to resurrect the spirits which slept in the forgotten graves. It was a fascinating thing, and in his dreams they came to him from out of the cold, and snuggled into his blankets, and told him of their toils and troubles ere they died. He shrank away from the clammy contact as they drew closer and twined their frozen limbs about him, and when they whispered in his ear of things to come, the cabin rang with his frightened shrieks. Cuthfert did not understand,—for they no longer spoke,—and when thus awakened he invariably grabbed for his revolver. Then he would sit up in bed, shivering nervously, with the weapon trained on the unconscious dreamer. Cuthfert deemed the man going mad, and so came to fear for his life.

His own malady assumed a less concrete form. The mysterious artisan who had laid the cabin, log by log, had pegged a wind-vane to the ridge-pole. Cuthfert noticed it always pointed south, and one day, irritated by its steadfastness of purpose, he turned it toward the east. He watched eagerly, but never a breath came by to disturb it. Then he turned the vane to the north, swearing never again to touch it till the wind did blow. But the air frightened him with its unearthly calm, and he often rose in the middle of the night to see if the vane had veered,—ten degrees would have satisfied him. But no, it poised above him as unchangeable as fate. His imagination ran riot, till it became to him a fetich. Sometimes he followed the path it pointed across the dismal dominions, and allowed his soul to become saturated with the Fear. He dwelt upon the unseen and the unknown till the burden of eternity appeared to be crushing him. Everything in the Northland had that crushing effect,—the absence of life and motion; the darkness; the infinite peace of the brooding land; the ghastly silence, which made the echo of each heart-beat a sacrilege; the solemn forest which seemed to guard an awful, inexpressible something, which neither word nor thought could compass.

The world he had so recently left, with its busy nations and great enterprises, seemed very far away. Recollections occasionally obtruded,—recollections of marts and galleries and crowded thoroughfares, of evening dress and social functions, of good men and dear women he had known,—but they were dim memories of a life he had lived long centuries ago, on some other planet. This phantasm was the Reality. Standing beneath the wind-vane, his eyes fixed on the polar skies, he could not bring himself to realize that the Southland really existed, that at that very moment it was a-roar with life and action. There was no Southland, no men being born of women, no giving and taking in marriage. Beyond his bleak sky-line there stretched vast solitudes, and beyond these still vaster solitudes. There were no lands of sunshine, heavy with the perfume of flowers. Such things were only old dreams of paradise. The sunlands of the West and the spicelands of the East, the smiling Arcadias and blissful Islands of the Blest,—ha! ha! His laughter split the void and shocked him with its unwonted sound. There was no sun. This was the Universe, dead and cold and dark, and he its only citizen. Weatherbee?

At such moments Weatherbee did not count. He was a Caliban, a monstrous phantom, fettered to him for untold ages, the penalty of some forgotten crime.

He lived with Death among the dead, emasculated by the sense of his own insignificance, crushed by the passive mastery of the slumbering ages. The magnitude of all things appalled him. Everything partook of the superlative save himself,—the perfect cessation of wind and motion, the immensity of the snow-covered wilderness, the height of the sky and the depth of the silence. That wind-vane,—if it would only move. If a thunderbolt would fall, or the forest flare up in flame. The rolling up of the heavens as a scroll, the crash of Doom—anything, anything! But no, nothing moved; the Silence crowded in, and the Fear of the North laid icy fingers on his heart.

Once, like another Crusoe, by the edge of the river he came upon a track,—the faint tracery of a snowshoe rabbit on the delicate snow-crust. It was a revelation. There was life in the Northland. He would follow it, look upon it, gloat over it. He forgot his swollen muscles, plunging through the deep snow in an ecstasy of anticipation. The forest swallowed him up, and the brief midday twilight vanished; but he pursued his quest till exhausted nature asserted itself and laid him helpless in the snow. There he groaned and cursed his folly, and knew the track to be the fancy of his brain; and late that night he dragged himself into the cabin on hands and knees, his cheeks frozen and a strange numbness about his feet. Weatherbee grinned malevolently, but made no offer to help him. He thrust needles into his toes and thawed them out by the stove. A week later mortification set in.

But the clerk had his own troubles. The dead men came out of their graves more frequently now, and rarely left him, waking or sleeping. He grew to wait and dread their coming, never passing the twin cairns without a shudder. One night they came to him in his sleep and led him forth to an appointed task. Frightened into inarticulate horror, he awoke between the heaps of stones and fled wildly to the cabin. But he had lain there for some time, for his feet and cheeks were also frozen.

Sometimes he became frantic at their insistent presence, and danced about the cabin, cutting the empty air with an axe, and smashing everything within reach. During these ghostly encounters, Cuthfert huddled into his blankets and followed the madman about with a cocked revolver, ready to shoot him if he came too near. But, recovering from one of these spells, the clerk noticed the weapon trained upon him. His suspicions were aroused, and thenceforth he, too, lived in fear of his life. They watched each other closely after that, and faced about in startled fright whenever either passed behind the other's back. This apprehensiveness became a mania which controlled them even in their sleep. Through mutual fear they tacitly let the slush-lamp burn all night, and saw to a plentiful supply of bacon-grease before retiring. The slightest movement on the part of one was sufficient to arouse the other, and many a still watch their gazes countered as they shook beneath their blankets with fingers on the trigger-guards.

What with the Fear of the North, the mental strain, and the ravages of the disease, they lost all semblance of humanity, taking on the appearance of wild beasts, hunted and desperate. Their cheeks and noses, as an aftermath of the freezing, had turned

black. Their frozen toes had begun to drop away at the first and second joints. Every movement brought pain, but the fire box was insatiable, wringing a ransom of torture from their miserable bodies. Day in, day out, it demanded its food,—a veritable pound of flesh,—and they dragged themselves into the forest to chop wood on their knees. Once, crawling thus in search of dry sticks, unknown to each other they entered a thicket from opposite sides. Suddenly, without warning, two peering death's-heads confronted each other. Suffering had so transformed them that recognition was impossible. They sprang to their feet, shrieking with terror, and dashed away on their mangled stumps; and falling at the cabin door, they clawed and scratched like demons till they discovered their mistake.

Occasionally they lapsed normal, and during one of these sane intervals, the chief bone of contention, the sugar, had been divided equally between them. They guarded their separate sacks, stored up in the cache, with jealous eyes; for there were but a few cupfuls left, and they were totally devoid of faith in each other. But one day Cuthfert made a mistake. Hardly able to move, sick with pain, with his head swimming and eyes blinded, he crept into the cache, sugar canister in hand, and mistook Weatherbee's sack for his own.

January had been born but a few days when this occurred. The sun had some time since passed its lowest southern declination, and at meridian now threw flaunting streaks of yellow light upon the northern sky. On the day following his mistake with the sugar-bag, Cuthfert found himself feeling better, both in body and in spirit. As noontime drew near and the day brightened, he dragged himself outside to feast on the evanescent glow, which was to him an earnest of the sun's future intentions. Weatherbee was also feeling somewhat better, and crawled out beside him. They propped themselves in the snow beneath the moveless wind-vane, and waited.

The stillness of death was about them. In other climes, when nature falls into such moods, there is a subdued air of expectancy, a waiting for some small voice to take up the broken strain. Not so in the North. The two men had lived seeming aeons in this ghostly peace. They could remember no song of the past; they could conjure no song of the future. This unearthly calm had always been,—the tranquil silence of eternity.

Their eyes were fixed upon the north. Unseen, behind their backs, behind the towering mountains to the south, the sun swept toward the zenith of another sky than theirs. Sole spectators of the mighty canvas, they watched the false dawn slowly grow. A faint flame began to glow and smoulder. It deepened in intensity, ringing the changes of reddish-yellow, purple, and saffron. So bright did it become that Cuthfert thought the sun must surely be behind it,—a miracle, the sun rising in the north! Suddenly, without warning and without fading, the canvas was swept clean. There was no color in the sky. The light had gone out of the day. They caught their breaths in half-sobs. But lo! the air was a-glint with particles of scintillating frost, and there, to the north, the wind-vane lay in vague outline on the snow. A shadow! A shadow! It was exactly midday. They jerked their heads hurriedly to the south. A golden rim peeped over

the mountain's snowy shoulder, smiled upon them an instant, then dipped from sight again.

There were tears in their eyes as they sought each other. A strange softening came over them. They felt irresistibly drawn toward each other. The sun was coming back again. It would be with them to-morrow, and the next day, and the next. And it would stay longer every visit, and a time would come when it would ride their heaven day and night, never once dropping below the sky-line. There would be no night. The ice-locked winter would be broken; the winds would blow and the forests answer; the land would bathe in the blessed sunshine, and life renew. Hand in hand, they would quit this horrid dream and journey back to the Southland. They lurched blindly forward, and their hands met,—their poor maimed hands, swollen and distorted beneath their mittens.

But the promise was destined to remain unfulfilled. The Northland is the Northland, and men work out their souls by strange rules, which other men, who have not journeyed into far countries, cannot come to understand.

An hour later, Cuthfert put a pan of bread into the oven, and fell to speculating on what the surgeons could do with his feet when he got back. Home did not seem so very far away now. Weatherbee was rummaging in the cache. Of a sudden, he raised a whirlwind of blasphemy, which in turn ceased with startling abruptness. The other man had robbed his sugar-sack. Still, things might have happened differently, had not the two dead men come out from under the stones and hushed the hot words in his throat. They led him quite gently from the cache, which he forgot to close. That consummation was reached; that something they had whispered to him in his dreams was about to happen. They guided him gently, very gently, to the woodpile, where they put the axe in his hands. Then they helped him shove open the cabin door, and he felt sure they shut it after him,—at least he heard it slam and the latch fall sharply into place. And he knew they were waiting just without, waiting for him to do his task.

“Carter! I say, Carter!”

Percy Cuthfert was frightened at the look on the clerk's face, and he made haste to put the table between them.

Carter Weatherbee followed, without haste and without enthusiasm. There was neither pity nor passion in his face, but rather the patient, stolid look of one who has certain work to do and goes about it methodically.

“I say, what 's the matter?”

The clerk dodged back, cutting off his retreat to the door, but never opening his mouth.

“I say, Carter, I say; let 's talk. There 's a good chap.”

The master of arts was thinking rapidly, now, shaping a skillful flank movement on the bed where his Smith & Wesson lay. Keeping his eyes on the madman, he rolled backward on the bunk, at the same time clutching the pistol.

“Carter!”

The powder flashed full in Weatherbee's face, but he swung his weapon and leaped forward. The axe bit deeply at the base of the spine, and Percy Cuthfert felt all consciousness of his lower limbs leave him. Then the clerk fell heavily upon him, clutching him by the throat with feeble fingers. The sharp bite of the axe had caused Cuthfert to drop the pistol, and as his lungs panted for release, he fumbled aimlessly for it among the blankets. Then he remembered. He slid a hand up the clerk's belt to the sheath-knife; and they drew very close to each other in that last clinch.

Percy Cuthfert felt his strength leave him. The lower portion of his body was useless. The inert weight of Weatherbee crushed him,—crushed him and pinned him there like a bear under a trap. The cabin became filled with a familiar odor, and he knew the bread to be burning. Yet what did it matter? He would never need it. And there were all of six cupfuls of sugar in the cache,—if he had foreseen this he would not have been so saving the last several days. Would the wind-vane ever move? It might even be veering now. Why not? Had he not seen the sun to-day? He would go and see. No; it was impossible to move. He had not thought the clerk so heavy a man.

How quickly the cabin cooled! The fire must be out. The cold was forcing in. It must be below zero already, and the ice creeping up the inside of the door. He could not see it, but his past experience enabled him to gauge its progress by the cabin's temperature. The lower hinge must be white ere now. Would the tale of this ever reach the world? How would his friends take it? They would read it over their coffee, most likely, and talk it over at the clubs. He could see them very clearly. "Poor Old Cuthfert," they murmured; "not such a bad sort of a chap, after all." He smiled at their eulogies, and passed on in search of a Turkish bath. It was the same old crowd upon the streets. Strange, they did not notice his moosehide moccasins and tattered German socks! He would take a cab. And after the bath a shave would not be bad. No; he would eat first. Steak, and potatoes, and green things,—how fresh it all was! And what was that? Squares of honey, streaming liquid amber! But why did they bring so much? Ha! ha! he could never eat it all. Shine! Why certainly. He put his foot on the box. The bootblack looked curiously up at him, and he remembered his moosehide moccasins and went away hastily.

Hark! The wind-vane must be surely spinning. No; a mere singing in his ears. That was all,—a mere singing. The ice must have passed the latch by now. More likely the upper hinge was covered. Between the moss-chinked roof-poles, little points of frost began to appear. How slowly they grew! No; not so slowly. There was a new one, and there another. Two—three—four; they were coming too fast to count. There were two growing together. And there, a third had joined them. Why, there were no more spots. They had run together and formed a sheet.

Well, he would have company. If Gabriel ever broke the silence of the North, they would stand together, hand in hand, before the great White Throne. And God would judge them, God would judge them!

Then Percy Cuthfert closed his eyes and dropped off to sleep.

In the Forest of the North

A weary journey beyond the last scrub timber and straggling copses, into the heart of the Barrens where the niggard North is supposed to deny the Earth, are to be found great sweeps of forests and stretches of smiling land. But this the world is just beginning to know. The world's explorers have known it, from time to time, but hitherto they have never returned to tell the world.

The Barrens — well, they are the Barrens, the bad lands of the Arctic, the deserts of the Circle, the bleak and bitter home of the musk-ox and the lean plains wolf. So Avery Van Brunt found them, treeless and cheerless, sparsely clothed with moss and lichens, and altogether uninviting. At least so he found them till he penetrated to the white blank spaces on the map, and came upon undreamed-of rich spruce forests and unrecorded Eskimo tribes. It had been his intention, (and his bid for fame), to break up these white blank spaces and diversify them with the black markings of mountain-chains, sinks and basins, and sinuous river courses; and it was with added delight that he came to speculate upon the possibilities of timber belts and native villages.

Avery Van Brunt, or, in full distinction, Professor A. Van Brunt of the Geological Survey, was second in command of the expedition, and first in command of the sub-expedition which he had led on a side tour of some half a thousand miles up one of the branches of the Thelon and which he was now leading into one of his unrecorded villages. At his back plodded eight men, two of them French-Canadian voyageurs, and the remainder strapping Crees from Manitoba-way. He, alone, was full-blooded Saxon, and his blood was pounding fiercely through his veins to the traditions of his race. Clive and Hastings, Drake and Raleigh, Hengest and Horsa, walked with him. First of all men of his breed was he to enter this lone Northland village, and at the thought an exultancy came upon him, an exaltation, and his followers noted that his leg-weariness fell from him and that he insensibly quickened the pace.

The village emptied itself, and a motley crowd trooped out to meet him, men in the forefront, with bows and spears clutched menacingly, and women and children faltering timidly in the rear. Van Brunt lifted his right arm and made the universal peace sign, a sign which all peoples know, and the villagers answered in peace. But to his chagrin, a skin-clad man ran forward and thrust out his hand with a familiar "Hello." He was a bearded man, with cheeks and brow bronzed to copper-brown, and in him Van Brunt knew his kind.

"Who are you?" he asked, gripping the extended hand. "Andrée?"

"Who's Andrée?" the man asked back.

Van Brunt looked at him more sharply. "By George, you've been here some time."

“Five years,” the man answered, a dim flicker of pride in his eyes. “But come on, let’s talk.”

“Let them camp alongside of me,” he answered Van Brunt’s glance at his party. “Old Tantlatch will take care of them. Come on.”

He swung off in a long stride, Van Brunt following at his heels through the village. In irregular fashion, wherever the ground favored, the lodges of moose hide were pitched. Van Brunt ran his practised eye over them and calculated.

“Two hundred, not counting the young ones,” he summed up.

The man nodded. “Pretty close to it. But here’s where I live, out of the thick of it, you know — more privacy and all that. Sit down. I’ll eat with you when your men get something cooked up. I’ve forgotten what tea tastes like... Five years and never a taste or smell... Any tobacco?... Ah, thanks, and a pipe? Good. Now for a fire-stick and we’ll see if the weed has lost its cunning.”

He scratched the match with the painstaking care of the woodsman, cherished its young flame as though there were never another in all the world, and drew in the first mouthful of smoke. This he retained meditatively for a time, and blew out through his pursed lips slowly and caressingly. Then his face seemed to soften as he leaned back, and a soft blur to film his eyes. He sighed heavily, happily, with immeasurable content, and then said suddenly:

“God! But that tastes good!”

Van Brunt nodded sympathetically. “Five years, you say?”

“Five years.” The man sighed again. “And you, I presume, wish to know about it, being naturally curious, and this a sufficiently strange situation, and all that. But it’s not much. I came in from Edmonton after musk-ox, and like Pike and the rest of them, had my mischances, only I lost my party and outfit. Starvation, hardship, the regular tale, you know, sole survivor and all that, till I crawled into Tantlatch’s, here, on hand and knee.”

“Five years,” Van Brunt murmured retrospectively, as though turning things over in his mind.

“Five years on February last. I crossed the Great Slave early in May — ”

“And you are ... Fairfax?” Van Brunt interjected.

The man nodded.

“Let me see ... John, I think it is, John Fairfax.”

“How did you know?” Fairfax queried lazily, half-absorbed in curling smoke-spirals upward in the quiet air.

“The papers were full of it at the time. Prevanche — ”

“Prevanche!” Fairfax sat up, suddenly alert. “He was lost in the Smoke Mountains.”

“Yes, but he pulled through and came out.”

Fairfax settled back again and resumed his smoke-spirals. “I am glad to hear it,” he remarked reflectively. “Prevanche was a bully fellow if he did have ideas about head-straps, the beggar. And he pulled through? Well, I’m glad.”

Five years ... the phrase drifted recurrently through Van Brunt's thought, and somehow the face of Emily Southwithe seemed to rise up and take form before him. Five years ... A wedge of wild-fowl honked low overhead and at sight of the encampment veered swiftly to the north into the smouldering sun. Van Brunt could not follow them. He pulled out his watch. It was an hour past midnight. The northward clouds flushed bloodily, and rays of sombre-red shot southward, firing the gloomy woods with a lurid radiance. The air was in breathless calm, not a needle quivered, and the least sounds of the camp were distinct and clear as trumpet calls. The Crees and voyageurs felt the spirit of it and mumbled in dreamy undertones, and the cook unconsciously subdued the clatter of pot and pan. Somewhere a child was crying, and from the depths of the forest, like a silver thread, rose a woman's voice in mournful chant: "O-o-o-o-o-a-haa-ha-a-ha-aa-a-a, O-o-o-o-o-a-ha-a-ha-a."

Van Brunt shivered and rubbed the backs of his hands briskly.

"And they gave me up for dead?" his companion asked slowly.

"Well, you never came back, so your friends — "

"Promptly forgot." Fairfax laughed harshly, defiantly.

"Why didn't you come out?"

"Partly disinclination, I suppose, and partly because of circumstances over which I had no control. You see, Tantlatch, here, was down with a broken leg when I made his acquaintance, — a nasty fracture, — and I set it for him and got him into shape. I stayed some time, getting my strength back. I was the first white man he had seen, and of course I seemed very wise and showed his people no end of things. Coached them up in military tactics, among other things, so that they conquered the four other tribal villages, (which you have not yet seen), and came to rule the land. And they naturally grew to think a good deal of me, so much so that when I was ready to go they wouldn't hear of it. Were most hospitable, in fact. Put a couple of guards over me and watched me day and night. And then Tantlatch offered me inducements, — in a sense, inducements, — so to say, and as it didn't matter much one way or the other, I reconciled myself to remaining."

"I knew your brother at Freiburg. I am Van Brunt."

Fairfax reached forward impulsively and shook his hand. "You were Billy's friend, eh? Poor Billy! He spoke of you often."

"Rum meeting place, though," he added, casting an embracing glance over the primordial landscape and listening for a moment to the woman's mournful notes. "Her man was clawed by a bear, and she's taking it hard."

"Beastly life!" Van Brunt grimaced his disgust. "I suppose, after five years of it, civilization will be sweet? What do you say?"

Fairfax's face took on a stolid expression. "Oh, I don't know. At least they're honest folk and live according to their lights. And then they are amazingly simple. No complexity about them, no thousand and one subtle ramifications to every single emotion they experience. They love, fear, hate, are angered, or made happy, in common, ordinary, and unmistakable terms. It may be a beastly life, but at least it is easy to live."

No philandering, no dallying. If a woman likes you, she'll not be backward in telling you so. If she hates you, she'll tell you so, and then, if you feel inclined, you can beat her, but the thing is, she knows precisely what you mean, and you know precisely what she means. No mistakes, no misunderstandings. It has its charm, after civilization's fitful fever. Comprehend?"

"No, it's a pretty good life," he continued, after a pause; "good enough for me, and I intend to stay with it."

Van Brunt lowered his head in a musing manner, and an imperceptible smile played on his mouth. No philandering, no dallying, no misunderstanding. Fairfax also was taking it hard, he thought, just because Emily Southwaithe had been mistakenly clawed by a bear. And not a bad sort of a bear, either, was Carlton Southwaithe.

"But you are coming along with me," Van Brunt said deliberately.

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are."

"Life's too easy here, I tell you." Fairfax spoke with decision. "I understand everything, and I am understood. Summer and winter alternate like the sun flashing through the palings of a fence, the seasons are a blur of light and shade, and time slips by, and life slips by, and then ... a wailing in the forest, and the dark. Listen!"

He held up his hand, and the silver thread of the woman's sorrow rose through the silence and the calm. Fairfax joined in softly.

"O-o-o-o-o-a-haa-ha-a-ha-aa-a-a, O-o-o-o-o-a-ha-a-ha-a," he sang. "Can't you hear it? Can't you see it? The women mourning? the funeral chant? my hair white-locked and patriarchal? my skins wrapped in rude splendor about me? my hunting-spear by my side? And who shall say it is not well?"

Van Brunt looked at him coolly. "Fairfax, you are a damned fool. Five years of this is enough to knock any man, and you are in an unhealthy, morbid condition. Further, Carlton Southwaithe is dead."

Van Brunt filled his pipe and lighted it, the while watching slyly and with almost professional interest. Fairfax's eyes flashed on the instant, his fists clenched, he half rose up, then his muscles relaxed and he seemed to brood. Michael, the cook, signalled that the meal was ready, but Van Brunt motioned back to delay. The silence hung heavy, and he fell to analyzing the forest scents, the odors of mould and rotting vegetation, the resinous smells of pine cones and needles, the aromatic savors of many camp-smokes. Twice Fairfax looked up, but said nothing, and then:

"And ... Emily ...?"

"Three years a widow; still a widow."

Another long silence settled down, to be broken by Fairfax finally with a naïve smile. "I guess you're right, Van Brunt. I'll go along."

"I knew you would." Van Brunt laid his hand on Fairfax's shoulder. "Of course, one cannot know, but I imagine — for one in her position — she has had offers —"

"When do you start?" Fairfax interrupted.

“After the men have had some sleep. Which reminds me, Michael is getting angry, so come and eat.”

After supper, when the Crees and voyageurs had rolled into their blankets, snoring, the two men lingered by the dying fire. There was much to talk about, — wars and politics and explorations, the doings of men and the happening of things, mutual friends, marriages, deaths, — five years of history for which Fairfax clamored.

“So the Spanish fleet was bottled up in Santiago,” Van Brunt was saying, when a young woman stepped lightly before him and stood by Fairfax’s side. She looked swiftly into his face, then turned a troubled gaze upon Van Brunt.

“Chief Tantlatch’s daughter, sort of princess,” Fairfax explained, with an honest flush. “One of the inducements, in short, to make me stay. Thom, this is Van Brunt, friend of mine.”

Van Brunt held out his hand, but the woman maintained a rigid repose quite in keeping with her general appearance. Not a line of her face softened, not a feature unbent. She looked him straight in the eyes, her own piercing, questioning, searching.

“Precious lot she understands,” Fairfax laughed. “Her first introduction, you know. But as you were saying, with the Spanish fleet bottled up in Santiago?”

Thom crouched down by her husband’s side, motionless as a bronze statue, only her eyes flashing from face to face in ceaseless search. And Avery Van Brunt, as he talked on and on, felt a nervousness under the dumb gaze. In the midst of his most graphic battle descriptions, he would become suddenly conscious of the black eyes burning into him, and would stumble and flounder till he could catch the gait and go again. Fairfax, hands clasped round knees, pipe out, absorbed, spurred him on when he lagged, and repictured the world he thought he had forgotten.

One hour passed, and two, and Fairfax rose reluctantly to his feet. “And Cronje was cornered, eh? Well, just wait a moment till I run over to Tantlatch. He’ll be expecting you, and I’ll arrange for you to see him after breakfast. That will be all right, won’t it?”

He went off between the pines, and Van Brunt found himself staring into Thom’s warm eyes. Five years, he mused, and she can’t be more than twenty now. A most remarkable creature. Being Eskimo, she should have a little flat excuse for a nose, and lo, it is neither broad nor flat, but aquiline, with nostrils delicately and sensitively formed as any fine lady’s of a whiter breed — the Indian strain somewhere, be assured, Avery Van Brunt. And, Avery Van Brunt, don’t be nervous, she won’t eat you; she’s only a woman, and not a bad-looking one at that. Oriental rather than aborigine. Eyes large and fairly wide apart, with just the faintest hint of Mongol obliquity. Thom, you’re an anomaly. You’re out of place here among these Eskimos, even if your father is one. Where did your mother come from? or your grandmother? And Thom, my dear, you’re a beauty, a frigid, frozen little beauty with Alaskan lava in your blood, and please don’t look at me that way.

He laughed and stood up. Her insistent stare disconcerted him. A dog was prowling among the grub-sacks. He would drive it away and place them into safety against Fairfax's return. But Thom stretched out a detaining hand and stood up, facing him.

"You?" she said, in the Arctic tongue which differs little from Greenland to Point Barrow. "You?"

And the swift expression of her face demanded all for which "you" stood, his reason for existence, his presence there, his relation to her husband — everything.

"Brother," he answered in the same tongue, with a sweeping gesture to the south. "Brothers we be, your man and I."

She shook her head. "It is not good that you be here."

"After one sleep I go."

"And my man?" she demanded, with tremulous eagerness.

Van Brunt shrugged his shoulders. He was aware of a certain secret shame, of an impersonal sort of shame, and an anger against Fairfax. And he felt the warm blood in his face as he regarded the young savage. She was just a woman. That was all — a woman. The whole sordid story over again, over and over again, as old as Eve and young as the last new love-light.

"My man! My man! My man!" she was reiterating vehemently, her face passionately dark, and the ruthless tenderness of the Eternal Woman, the Mate-Woman, looking out at him from her eyes.

"Thom," he said gravely, in English, "you were born in the Northland forest, and you have eaten fish and meat, and fought with frost and famine, and lived simply all the days of your life. And there are many things, indeed not simple, which you do not know and cannot come to understand. You do not know what it is to long for the fleshpots afar, you cannot understand what it is to yearn for a fair woman's face. And the woman is fair, Thom, the woman is nobly fair. You have been woman to this man, and you have been your all, but your all is very little, very simple. Too little and too simple, and he is an alien man. Him you have never known, you can never know. It is so ordained. You held him in your arms, but you never held his heart, this man with his blurring seasons and his dreams of a barbaric end. Dreams and dream-dust, that is what he has been to you. You clutched at form and gripped shadow, gave yourself to a man and bedded with the wraith of a man. In such manner, of old, did the daughters of men whom the gods found fair. And, Thom, Thom, I should not like to be John Fairfax in the night-watches of the years to come, in the night-watches, when his eyes shall see, not the sun-gloried hair of the woman by his side, but the dark tresses of a mate forsaken in the forests of the North."

Though she did not understand, she had listened with intense attention, as though life hung on his speech. But she caught at her husband's name and cried out in Eskimo:

—
"Yes! Yes! Fairfax! My man!"

"Poor little fool, how could he be your man?"

But she could not understand his English tongue, and deemed that she was being trifled with. The dumb, insensate anger of the Mate-Woman flamed in her face, and it almost seemed to the man as though she crouched panther-like for the spring.

He cursed softly to himself and watched the fire fade from her face and the soft luminous glow of the appealing woman spring up, of the appealing woman who foregoes strength and panoplies herself wisely in her weakness.

"He is my man," she said gently. "Never have I known other. It cannot be that I should ever know other. Nor can it be that he should go from me."

"Who has said he shall go from thee?" he demanded sharply, half in exasperation, half in impotence.

"It is for thee to say he shall not go from me," she answered softly, a half-sob in her throat.

Van Brunt kicked the embers of the fire savagely and sat down.

"It is for thee to say. He is my man. Before all women he is my man. Thou art big, thou art strong, and behold, I am very weak. See, I am at thy feet. It is for thee to deal with me. It is for thee."

"Get up!" He jerked her roughly erect and stood up himself. "Thou art a woman. Wherefore the dirt is no place for thee, nor the feet of any man."

"He is my man."

"Then Jesus forgive all men!" Van Brunt cried out passionately.

"He is my man," she repeated monotonously, beseechingly.

"He is my brother," he answered.

"My father is Chief Tantlatch. He is a power over five villages. I will see that the five villages be searched for thy choice of all maidens, that thou mayest stay here by thy brother, and dwell in comfort."

"After one sleep I go."

"And my man?"

"Thy man comes now. Behold!"

From among the gloomy spruces came the light carolling of Fairfax's voice.

As the day is quenched by a sea of fog, so his song smote the light out of her face. "It is the tongue of his own people," she said; "the tongue of his own people."

She turned, with the free movement of a lithe young animal, and made off into the forest.

"It's all fixed," Fairfax called as he came up. "His regal highness will receive you after breakfast."

"Have you told him?" Van Brunt asked.

"No. Nor shall I tell him till we're ready to pull out."

Van Brunt looked with moody affection over the sleeping forms of his men.

"I shall be glad when we are a hundred leagues upon our way," he said.

Thom raised the skin-flap of her father's lodge. Two men sat with him, and the three looked at her with swift interest. But her face betokened nothing as she entered and took seat quietly, without speech. Tantlatch drummed with his knuckles on a

spear-heft across his knees, and gazed idly along the path of a sun-ray which pierced a lacing-hole and flung a glittering track across the murky atmosphere of the lodge. To his right, at his shoulder, crouched Chugungatte, the shaman. Both were old men, and the weariness of many years brooded in their eyes. But opposite them sat Keen, a young man and chief favorite in the tribe. He was quick and alert of movement, and his black eyes flashed from face to face in ceaseless scrutiny and challenge.

Silence reigned in the place. Now and again camp noises penetrated, and from the distance, faint and far, like the shadows of voices, came the wrangling of boys in thin shrill tones. A dog thrust his head into the entrance and blinked wolfishly at them for a space, the slaver dripping from his ivory-white fangs. After a time he growled tentatively, and then, awed by the immobility of the human figures, lowered his head and grovelled away backward. Tantlatch glanced apathetically at his daughter.

“And thy man, how is it with him and thee?”

“He sings strange songs,” Thom made answer, “and there is a new look on his face.”

“So? He hath spoken?”

“Nay, but there is a new look on his face, a new light in his eyes, and with the New-Comer he sits by the fire, and they talk and talk, and the talk is without end.”

Chugungatte whispered in his master’s ear, and Keen leaned forward from his hips.

“There be something calling him from afar,” she went on, “and he seems to sit and listen, and to answer, singing, in his own people’s tongue.”

Again Chugungatte whispered and Keen leaned forward, and Thom held her speech till her father nodded his head that she might proceed.

“It be known to thee, O Tantlatch, that the wild goose and the swan and the little ringed duck be born here in the low-lying lands. It be known that they go away before the face of the frost to unknown places. And it be known, likewise, that always do they return when the sun is in the land and the waterways are free. Always do they return to where they were born, that new life may go forth. The land calls to them and they come. And now there is another land that calls, and it is calling to my man, — the land where he was born, — and he hath it in mind to answer the call. Yet is he my man. Before all women is he my man.”

“Is it well, Tantlatch? Is it well?” Chugungatte demanded, with the hint of menace in his voice.

“Ay, it is well!” Keen cried boldly. “The land calls to its children, and all lands call their children home again. As the wild goose and the swan and the little ringed duck are called, so is called this Stranger Man who has lingered with us and who now must go. Also there be the call of kind. The goose mates with the goose, nor does the swan mate with the little ringed duck. It is not well that the swan should mate with the little ringed duck. Nor is it well that stranger men should mate with the women of our villages. Wherefore I say the man should go, to his own kind, in his own land.”

“He is my own man,” Thom answered, “and he is a great man.”

“Ay, he is a great man.” Chugungatte lifted his head with a faint recrudescence of youthful vigor. “He is a great man, and he put strength in thy arm, O Tantlatch, and

gave thee power, and made thy name to be feared in the land, to be feared and to be respected. He is very wise, and there be much profit in his wisdom. To him are we beholden for many things, — for the cunning in war and the secrets of the defence of a village and a rush in the forest, for the discussion in council and the undoing of enemies by word of mouth and the hard-sworn promise, for the gathering of game and the making of traps and the preserving of food, for the curing of sickness and mending of hurts of trail and fight. Thou, Tantlatch, wert a lame old man this day, were it not that the Stranger Man came into our midst and attended on thee. And ever, when in doubt on strange questions, have we gone to him, that out of his wisdom he might make things clear, and ever has he made things clear. And there be questions yet to arise, and needs upon his wisdom yet to come, and we cannot bear to let him go. It is not well that we should let him go.”

Tantlatch continued to drum on the spear-haft, and gave no sign that he had heard. Thom studied his face in vain, and Chugungatte seemed to shrink together and droop down as the weight of years descended upon him again.

“No man makes my kill.” Keen smote his breast a valorous blow. “I make my own kill. I am glad to live when I make my own kill. When I creep through the snow upon the great moose, I am glad. And when I draw the bow, so, with my full strength, and drive the arrow fierce and swift and to the heart, I am glad. And the meat of no man’s kill tastes as sweet as the meat of my kill. I am glad to live, glad in my own cunning and strength, glad that I am a doer of things, a doer of things for myself. Of what other reason to live than that? Why should I live if I delight not in myself and the things I do? And it is because I delight and am glad that I go forth to hunt and fish, and it is because I go forth to hunt and fish that I grow cunning and strong. The man who stays in the lodge by the fire grows not cunning and strong. He is not made happy in the eating of my kill, nor is living to him a delight. He does not live. And so I say it is well this Stranger Man should go. His wisdom does not make us wise. If he be cunning, there is no need that we be cunning. If need arise, we go to him for his cunning. We eat the meat of his kill, and it tastes unsweet. We merit by his strength, and in it there is no delight. We do not live when he does our living for us. We grow fat and like women, and we are afraid to work, and we forget how to do things for ourselves. Let the man go, O Tantlatch, that we may be men! I am Keen, a man, and I make my own kill!”

Tantlatch turned a gaze upon him in which seemed the vacancy of eternity. Keen waited the decision expectantly; but the lips did not move, and the old chief turned toward his daughter.

“That which be given cannot be taken away,” she burst forth. “I was but a girl when this Stranger Man, who is my man, came among us. And I knew not men, or the ways of men, and my heart was in the play of girls, when thou, Tantlatch, thou and none other, didst call me to thee and press me into the arms of the Stranger Man. Thou and none other, Tantlatch; and as thou didst give me to the man, so didst thou give

the man to me. He is my man. In my arms has he slept, and from my arms he cannot be taken.”

“It were well, O Tantlatch,” Keen followed quickly, with a significant glance at Thom, “it were well to remember that that which be given cannot be taken away.”

Chugungatte straightened up. “Out of thy youth, Keen, come the words of thy mouth. As for ourselves, O Tantlatch, we be old men and we understand. We, too, have looked into the eyes of women and felt our blood go hot with strange desires. But the years have chilled us, and we have learned the wisdom of the council, the shrewdness of the cool head and hand, and we know that the warm heart be overwarm and prone to rashness. We know that Keen found favor in thy eyes. We know that Thom was promised him in the old days when she was yet a child. And we know that the new days came, and the Stranger Man, and that out of our wisdom and desire for welfare was Thom lost to Keen and the promise broken.”

The old shaman paused, and looked directly at the young man.

“And be it known that I, Chugungatte, did advise that the promise be broken.”

“Nor have I taken other woman to my bed,” Keen broke in. “And I have builded my own fire, and cooked my own food, and ground my teeth in my loneliness.”

Chugungatte waved his hand that he had not finished. “I am an old man and I speak from understanding. It be good to be strong and grasp for power. It be better to forego power that good come out of it. In the old days I sat at thy shoulder, Tantlatch, and my voice was heard over all in the council, and my advice taken in affairs of moment. And I was strong and held power. Under Tantlatch I was the greatest man. Then came the Stranger Man, and I saw that he was cunning and wise and great. And in that he was wiser and greater than I, it was plain that greater profit should arise from him than from me. And I had thy ear, Tantlatch, and thou didst listen to my words, and the Stranger Man was given power and place and thy daughter, Thom. And the tribe prospered under the new laws in the new days, and so shall it continue to prosper with the Stranger Man in our midst. We be old men, we two, O Tantlatch, thou and I, and this be an affair of head, not heart. Hear my words, Tantlatch! Hear my words! The man remains!”

There was a long silence. The old chief pondered with the massive certitude of God, and Chugungatte seemed to wrap himself in the mists of a great antiquity. Keen looked with yearning upon the woman, and she, unnoting, held her eyes steadfastly upon her father’s face. The wolf-dog shoved the flap aside again, and plucking courage at the quiet, wormed forward on his belly. He sniffed curiously at Thom’s listless hand, cocked ears challengingly at Chugungatte, and hunched down upon his haunches before Tantlatch. The spear rattled to the ground, and the dog, with a frightened yell, sprang sideways, snapping in mid-air, and on the second leap cleared the entrance.

Tantlatch looked from face to face, pondering each one long and carefully. Then he raised his head, with rude royalty, and gave judgment in cold and even tones: “The man remains. Let the hunters be called together. Send a runner to the next village with word to bring on the fighting men. I shall not see the New-Comer. Do thou,

Chugungatte, have talk with him. Tell him he may go at once, if he would go in peace. And if fight there be, kill, kill, kill, to the last man; but let my word go forth that no harm befall our man, — the man whom my daughter hath wedded. It is well.”

Chugungatte rose and tottered out; Thom followed; but as Keen stooped to the entrance the voice of Tantlatch stopped him.

“Keen, it were well to hearken to my word. The man remains. Let no harm befall him.”

Because of Fairfax’s instructions in the art of war, the tribesmen did not hurl themselves forward boldly and with clamor. Instead, there was great restraint and self-control, and they were content to advance silently, creeping and crawling from shelter to shelter. By the river bank, and partly protected by a narrow open space, crouched the Crees and voyageurs. Their eyes could see nothing, and only in vague ways did their ears hear, but they felt the thrill of life which ran through the forest, the indistinct, indefinable movement of an advancing host.

“Damn them,” Fairfax muttered. “They’ve never faced powder, but I taught them the trick.”

Avery Van Brunt laughed, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and put it carefully away with the pouch, and loosened the hunting-knife in its sheath at his hip.

“Wait,” he said. “We’ll wither the face of the charge and break their hearts.”

“They’ll rush scattered if they remember my teaching.”

“Let them. Magazine rifles were made to pump. We’ll — good! First blood! Extra tobacco, Loon!”

Loon, a Cree, had spotted an exposed shoulder and with a stinging bullet apprised its owner of his discovery.

“If we can tease them into breaking forward,” Fairfax muttered, — “if we can only tease them into breaking forward.”

Van Brunt saw a head peer from behind a distant tree, and with a quick shot sent the man sprawling to the ground in a death struggle. Michael potted a third, and Fairfax and the rest took a hand, firing at every exposure and into each clump of agitated brush. In crossing one little swale out of cover, five of the tribesmen remained on their faces, and to the left, where the covering was sparse, a dozen men were struck. But they took the punishment with sullen steadiness, coming on cautiously, deliberately, without haste and without lagging.

Ten minutes later, when they were quite close, all movement was suspended, the advance ceased abruptly, and the quietness that followed was portentous, threatening. Only could be seen the green and gold of the woods, and undergrowth, shivering and trembling to the first faint puffs of the day-wind. The wan white morning sun mottled the earth with long shadows and streaks of light. A wounded man lifted his head and crawled painfully out of the swale, Michael following him with his rifle but forbearing to shoot. A whistle ran along the invisible line from left to right, and a flight of arrows arched through the air.

“Get ready,” Van Brunt commanded, a new metallic note in his voice. “Now!”

They broke cover simultaneously. The forest heaved into sudden life. A great yell went up, and the rifles barked back sharp defiance. Tribesmen knew their deaths in mid-leap, and as they fell, their brothers surged over them in a roaring, irresistible wave. In the forefront of the rush, hair flying and arms swinging free, flashing past the tree-trunks, and leaping the obstructing logs, came Thom. Fairfax sighted on her and almost pulled trigger ere he knew her.

“The woman! Don’t shoot!” he cried. “See! She is unarmed!”

The Crees never heard, nor Michael and his brother voyageur, nor Van Brunt, who was keeping one shell continuously in the air. But Thom bore straight on, unharmed, at the heels of a skin-clad hunter who had veered in before her from the side. Fairfax emptied his magazine into the men to right and left of her, and swung his rifle to meet the big hunter. But the man, seeming to recognize him, swerved suddenly aside and plunged his spear into the body of Michael. On the moment Thom had one arm passed around her husband’s neck, and twisting half about, with voice and gesture was splitting the mass of charging warriors. A score of men hurled past on either side, and Fairfax, for a brief instant’s space, stood looking upon her and her bronze beauty, thrilling, exulting, stirred to unknown depths, visioning strange things, dreaming, immortally dreaming. Snatches and scraps of old-world philosophies and new-world ethics floated through his mind, and things wonderfully concrete and woefully incongruous — hunting scenes, stretches of sombre forest, vastnesses of silent snow, the glittering of ballroom lights, great galleries and lecture halls, a fleeting shimmer of glistening test-tubes, long rows of book-lined shelves, the throb of machinery and the roar of traffic, a fragment of forgotten song, faces of dear women and old chums, a lonely watercourse amid upstanding peaks, a shattered boat on a pebbly strand, quiet moonlit fields, fat vales, the smell of hay...

A hunter, struck between the eyes with a rifle-ball, pitched forward lifeless, and with the momentum of his charge slid along the ground. Fairfax came back to himself. His comrades, those that lived, had been swept far back among the trees beyond. He could hear the fierce “Hia! Hia!” of the hunters as they closed in and cut and thrust with their weapons of bone and ivory. The cries of the stricken men smote him like blows. He knew the fight was over, the cause was lost, but all his race traditions and race loyalty impelled him into the welter that he might die at least with his kind.

“My man! My man!” Thom cried. “Thou art safe!”

He tried to struggle on, but her dead weight clogged his steps.

“There is no need! They are dead, and life be good!”

She held him close around the neck and twined her limbs about his till he tripped and stumbled, reeled violently to recover footing, tripped again, and fell backward to the ground. His head struck a jutting root, and he was half-stunned and could struggle but feebly. In the fall she had heard the feathered swish of an arrow darting past, and she covered his body with hers, as with a shield, her arms holding him tightly, her face and lips pressed upon his neck.

Then it was that Keen rose up from a tangled thicket a score of feet away. He looked about him with care. The fight had swept on and the cry of the last man was dying away. There was no one to see. He fitted an arrow to the string and glanced at the man and woman. Between her breast and arm the flesh of the man's side showed white. Keen bent the bow and drew back the arrow to its head. Twice he did so, calmly and for certainty, and then drove the bone-barbed missile straight home to the white flesh, gleaming yet more white in the dark-armed, dark-breasted embrace.

In the Time of Prince Charley

“YOU say you love me better than life — I don’t believe it.”

It is impossible to put to paper the faint, very faint. Highland accent — an accent which never ceased to charm my ear; and long, afterward, often roused me from my sleep, playing the responsive chords of memory like mellow strains from some old song.

“Better than life? No, no, it cannot be.”

“I would to God there were a test,” I answered, pressing her closer, till, with a sudden impulse, she touched my neck with her lips. “You have but to ask, and I fulfill.”

“Suppose, then, just suppose I ask you to be false to your duty?”

“Such would be asking more than life; ’twould be honor.”

“But would you?” she persisted. Her warm breath faded from neck as she raised her head and gazed into my eyes.

“Love would not ask it.”

“Suppose he were my father?”

Prince Charley her father! I smiled at the supposition, as I answered. “But you have no father. Still, I would not, could not. Now let me suppose. Suppose you were I, and I were you, and he my father.” (I did not dare mention the prisoner’s name, for she still thought him Roderick Mackenzie, the unfortunate merchant of Edinburgh.) “Suppose all this, and that I should ask of you such a favor?”

“Then would I say, ‘Yours to ask; mine to fulfill.’ O you men! Spendthrifts with vows and fine speeches! Yesterday you breathed the sweet phrases in some other lassie’s ear; to-morrow — aye, to-morrow, you may deem them fit for the first snoodless maid you meet.”

With glowing cheeks and flashing eyes, she sprang away and faced me. Her years in England and on the continent were flown, and the wild blood of her Highland ancestry sounded the charge. I could almost see the deadly claymore flashing above plaid and tartan, and hear the clangs of the gillies, charging with their chiefs, as I had seen and heard at Preston-Pans. For a moment Aline stood thus, then the fire eloquently melted to a luminous softness. Oh! the seductive abandon! At the instant I was so swayed that hell held no abyss too deep to venture. I had been so long in the field with drunken brawlers, an alien to the better parts of man or woman, that this clean, wholesome maid well-nigh carried me away. But I had gone through a hard school, untarnished, and though I loved her dearly, I could not besmirch my plume, even in giddy love-chatter — for such it was.

“O you men!” she went on. “You have passion and honor, but love, ah! love, — that is reserved for us. Passion and honor, our dearest hopes, our brightest dreams, are lost,

all lost, when we love — no, not lost, but bent to do love's bidding. When we love, we give all — body and soul — all we possess or ever hope to possess. As Raleigh spread his cloak in the mire, so would I my body, that he, for whom my heart beats, might tread upon it and pass over, dry-shod. O Griffith — you — I — ”

The high-strung creature broke down, bursting into a storm of tears on my shoulder. There she sobbed, till a knock from the inner chamber interrupted us. As I had dismissed Jeannie for the night, I must wait upon the prince myself; so I hastily kissed away her dear tears, and went to the door — and just in time, for I could hear my lieutenant's boots on the stairway.

It were meet that I here set down how I, Griffith Risingham, captain to our good king, George II, find myself protagonist (as my old tutor would say) in the scene just described — alternating between hysterical love rhapsodies and gaol duty; now wooing the daughter of a Highland wef, and again, tending the wants of my princely prisoner.

From '42 to '45 I had served on the Continent with the allied armies, now 't Germany and England, now of Holland, Austria and England. ur campaign in Flanders was brought to a close by the defeat of Fontenoy, when, because of the threatened French invasion and the Jacobin Prising in Scotland, King George summoned all his soldiers home.

Of a surety, three years of hard fighting merited a rest; but I was at once dispatched into Scotland with my troop, for the Highlands were aflame and Prince Charley was marching on Edinburgh. The very day I joined Cope came the miserable defeat of Preston-Pans, and my wearied troopers were scattered as chaff before the four winds of heaven. Whatever became of them I do not know, for I barely succeeded in collecting a remnant of five score.

Then came the retreat, then the advance, and the sun shone our arms at Culloden. Our soldiers fought like demons, and who Scottish line wavered and broke, they gave no quarter, lining the ways as far as Inverness with dead. From this slaughter I was deu, to the pursuit of the Pretender and the laying waste of the rebellious territory. With fire and sword we harried Prince Charley's steps, harking back to old scents from the false ones given us by the perfidious mountaineers. With thirty thousand pounds on his head, small wonder we failed to dally by the way.

By the middle of July, though my men were clamorous for hastened to join Campbell and Scot, who, with a thousand men, were rumored to have surrounded the prince. At the same time a little incident occurred, which was quickly noised abroad. A half score of my troopers, while beating up the desolate stretch of land known as the Braes of Glenmoriston, came upon a skulker whom they took to be the prince. In a trice they were speeding to Fort Augustus with his head, bent on receiving the thirty thousand pounds. In truth this poor devil was none other than Roderick Mackenzie, a strong Jacobin who was waiting a chance to escape overseas. In consequence of this report, the pursuit languished; and there were few, if any, of the men who had the Pretender surrounded, but believed him to be already taken. It was due to this and

his good fortune, that he slipped past the English campfires and headed for the Braes of Glenmoriston, in the hope of meeting Lochiel.

It was thus, of a drizzly afternoon, I encountered him. And no pleasant sight he was when one thought of his proud lineage. Little did this barefooted, bewhiskered renegade, in dirty shirt and ragged plaid, resemble Charles Edward, heir-apparent to the worse than worti crown of James II. He was heavily armed — a gun in his hand and dirk and pistol at his belt — but misery and hardship had broken his spirit, and he gave no trouble; and for private reasons, he so comported self that my troopers never learned his identity, believing him Roderick Mackenzie. Nor was I anxious that they should, for I recollected the treachery of the knaves who had fled to Fort Augustus with their bootless trophy instead of coming to me.

Leaving the pursuit to go on unchecked, I withdrew with my royal prisoner to Colin na Gaugh, a miserable fishing village of several hundred souls, situated on the mainland opposite the Isle of Skye. It was my intention to wait here the coming of the king's ship, Balmoral, which expected at any moment; for the Highlands were still smoldering, and in this way I deemed it easier to bring my prisoner to England.

The fishers stolidly eyed our entry, and naught but sullen brows and smothered curses served to greet us. Though the prince was unknown to them, they guessed him to be some Jacobin refugee, and sympathized accordingly. But as I looked over my sturdy lads, weather-beaten and battle-scarred by a dozen continental campaigns, I was sure little trouble would be given us; besides, I half forgave the poor devils, for our flag had never gone among them save with fire and sword and the plundering of a licentious soldiery. Verily, they had just cause for bitterness.

For all its dog-hole hovels, the town did a fair coastwise, and as I afterward learned, overseas trade. A very fair hostelry was the result, and in this I purposed quartering, after allotting my men among the villagers.

It was here I met Aline. As we rode up, a crowd about the door of the inn and a hubbub of voices gave sign of some unusual happening. The innkeeper's face was flushed with anger, while the strident tones of his wife rose higher and higher; but they could not drown the sharp voice of a Lowland woman, who gave her as good as she sent. Right well they fought with their tongues, cutting and thrusting with rare vigor. Red with shame, Aline was vainly trying to draw her duenna away — for such was this Lowland female with acrid tongue. I could see they were strangers, evidently in trouble, so I called a gillie to my stirrup for an explanation. With the aid of the prince, who was better versed in the outlandish gibberish, I learned that they had but lately come into these parts; that they were without money, nobody knew them, and the landlord was putting them out.

I sprang from my saddle. Aline was a lady — a lout could see that — and in trouble. My troopers cleared the street, while I so settled with the knavish landlord that his knees were knocking with fright when I finally dismissed him. Aline and her duenna, a Mrs. Saunders, quickly reinstated, and I was favored with the former's presence at

the table. She was a frank, winning lass, and threw herself completely on my honor, telling me all the circumstances of her trouble and about herself.

Her father was a certain Lord Kilmarnock, who had died across seas, in exile for the part his clan had played in a previous uprising. The latter part of her childhood had been spent in England; then she had joined her father. It was plain their peregrinations to the various foreign courts had rounded her education and polished her manners; but nevertheless, these sat quaintly upon her — and charmingly so, for never had I yet seen her like.

Her brother, a mere boy, who had been wholly reared abroad, had drawn his sword for the Stuarts and crossed with Prince Charley at the commencement of the rebellion. Torn with suspense for his safety, and the knowledge that he must be fleeing for his life somewhere in this bleak wilderness, had decided her. Thus her adventures had begun. First, she had gone through the military prisons; then, convinced that he was still at large and most likely in the neighborhood of the prince, she had taken passage on a lugger up the east coast to the Isle of Skye. Disappointed here, she crossed the mainland in a fishing boat and penetrated the fastnesses of Lochiel's territory. She had met this great chieftain, and he had treated her most courteously, advising her to try in the direction of Colin na Gaugh. He himself was in hiding and powerless to aid her.

Crossing the pass of Ben-Moidart, her servant was killed, and she was robbed of everything, even to her father's brooch, by a band knaves whose description seemed to tally with my soldiers who had run away with Roderick Mackenzie's head. She had managed to make Colin na Gaugh, and as to her trouble with the innkeeper, had I not witnessed it myself. Through all these vicissitudes, the faithful Mrs. Saunders had accompanied her; and by this voluble female she had been preserved more than once. Aline had kinsmen in England who were bound to help her, she said, and to them I promised to take her, at the same time thanking the gods for the privilege. She had given up finding her brother, who had doubtless already crossed the water, or else was in hiding with the prince. It was apparent she had not seen the prince abroad, or if she had, had forgotten his face.

So this is how Prince Charley, Aline and Mrs. Saunders, my lieutenant and myself, came to take up our abode in the same inn, the which was destined to lead to strange complications.

But a word of Julian Ramsay, my lieutenant. We had been in harness nearly a year now, yet I had not really come to know him. He was of good stock, a gentleman, a good soldier, and brave, but — well, it seemed he had mistaken his calling. He was too stiff, too good, too gloomy, for a camp life. In him the church would have found a wonderful servant. Withal, he was a clever swordsman and a handsome fellow, just the sort to break women's hearts; but his taciturnity and habitual coldness seemed to belie all this. In short, while we made our plans and discussed all moves together, we were not what could be called brothers-in-arms.

I was a little fearful of Aline at first, and was at a loss how to proceed. Hers was such a queer, quaint blend of girlish innocence and of woman's knowledge of the world.

But we soon fell into each other's ways, and a delightful tenderness began to mark our intercourse, — nay, we became very dear to each other, living only for the present, and shunning all thoughts of the future.

And the gods were propitious. Unexpectedly, Mrs. Saunders gave no trouble, having fallen into a deep study of the New Testament, from which she rarely emerged, save to thrill our blood with Calvinistic diatribes on the sins of the flesh and the woes of the spirit. As for the prince, he was a jolly good fellow, sympathizing with us in a fatherly way and playing the role of unfortunate merchant to perfection. Once, only, did we clash, and that, when he spoke of his good friend, Louis Quatorze, the advancement a soldier of my ability would gain in his service, and a possible fifty thousand pounds I might receive did I act with discretion. I am afraid I shut him up rather bluntly; but the next morning saw him more affable than ever, and he showed no sign of bearing me ill-will.

But Julian Ramsay bothered me not a little. He became sullen, his austerity increased, and he glowered blackly whenever he came upon Aline and myself together. Once I chanced upon him wrestling with the spirit; and the sight of the strong soldier, down on the floor, groaning wailing and raising his plaint to heaven, caused a strange fear to come over me. It is not good that a gentleman and a soldier to the king should take upon himself the work of the priest. Another time we had sharp words, for he took our inaction with a very ill grace, and was for heading the troop across the Highlands into England instead of waiting for the Balmoral.

One other thing I must mention, which occurred before the scene I have first described. One evening, returning from a visit to the rumored hiding place of Lochiel, I came upon Aline in conversation with stalwart-looking Highlander. I caught one fair sight of a bearded face and fierce black eyes. Before I could lay hands upon him he slipped away in the darkness, and though my troopers beat up the moor with care, they could get no sign of the knave.

I did not know what to think. At first I thought of treachery; but Aline frankly confessed, telling me the fellow had brought news of her brother from Lochiel, and that our appearance had frightened him away. On hearing this, I promised her, if she could get word to her brother, and if he came in, that I would do my best and was sure I could gain his pardon. I was safe in this, for I knew my high kinsman could command the power, and would, when I turned over my royal prisoner in England.

About the middle of September, word was brought by a fisherr of two French ships seen off Moidart, evidently waiting a chance to embark the prince. But so well had his identity been covered that I feared nothing, and several days later brought the Balmoral into harbor.

Since her outbreak, Aline had become more tender. Methinks she had grown sadder, too, though always had she a sweet smile and a loving word for me. I once found her in tears, and another time she wept upon my shoulder as though her heart were breaking. However, I attributed it to a girlish sentiment, which was natural, deeming her the sweeter for her pensiveness.

On the day we were to embark, news came that Lochiel was drawing to the coast in an attempt to get away on one of the French ships. He was said to have a large following, so I dispatched Ramsay with nearly the whole troop to intercept him, reserving but half a dozen men for the prince's guard.

Then Aline began to beg me not to go aboard till next morning, and so well did she plead for just one more quiet hour together, that I consented, having been informed by the captain of the Balmoral that the tide would not favor till high noon.

Early in the evening the innkeeper delivered a verbal message he had just received from a gillie belonging to Lochiel's clan. He said the messenger was a foolish, ignorant lad, so fearful of being carried away in the king's ship, that he had skurried off at once. The import was that Aline's brother, having received her word and resolved to come in, had fallen sick not over eight miles away, in the hut of one Dougald, a fisherman. She was overjoyed at the news, and I sent four of my lads to bring him in.

After a rubber of whist, the prince retired, leaving us to ourselves; and for a long while we sat in dreamy silence, pleasuring in the mere clasp of hands. Never before had I realized the sweet bliss of such a silence, and never again do I hope to enjoy the like. We heard the ship's bell strike again and again; but shortly after six bells, one of my remaining men stumbled up the stairway and knocked at the door. A beacon had been lighted on the great bluff back of Colin na Gaugh, and he had come to call my attention to it. It was a signal of some sort. As the disturbed times gave the smugglers the run of the coast, they were not to be thought of.

Perhaps half an hour later, I heard steps on the stairs. They could not have returned so soon, I thought; but before I could rise, Aline sprang into my arms in a frightened manner, almost as though she divined what was coming. I strove to put her aside, but she wound her arms about my neck. Even then I did not understand. It was the tread of many men. The door opened as I sprang to my feet, and I caught a glimpse of the black-bearded Highlander, of French uniforms, and the glint of candlelight on naked claymore and cutlass. I tried to tear Aline away, but she clung the closer, twining her limbs about mine and preventing me drawing my pistol.

"Don't hurt him!" she cried. "O don't hurt him!"

But I swore heavily, threw her against the table from where she still cried for them to not hurt me, and backed against the prince's door. The circle of steel drew closer. Though I saw no hope, I beat back the points fiercely, and would doubtless have left my body on the threshold had not the prince thrown open the door and laid me by the heels. Then the gang swept over me.

"O don't, please don't hurt him!" cried Aline again.

Then somebody clouted me over the head with the flat of a cutlass, and I was dragged to one side.

I was not badly stunned, for when I opened my eyes, the prince-just leaving, with a French officer and a chieftain on either hand. I was still so dazed I could not gain my feet. And well I had cause to be, for there, in the black-beard's arms, lips to lips,

nestled Aline. Only a second's space, then he put her down. She made as though to come to me, but he threw his arm about her waist and dragged her away.

The town was in an uproar, I could hear them beating to quarters on the Balmoral. Then came a roar of hoofs down the rocky street, the rattle of small-arms and clash of steel. Julian Ramsay had returned.

I staggered down the stairs into the inn-yard. In the bright moonlight I could see the last boat push off from the beach, and those on the shore raking them with a sharp fire. The Balmoral began to fire her six-pounders and lower her boats, but as far as we were concerned, the battle was over — over and lost!

“By the saints, you've done well! Where's Aline?”

Ramsay had come up, and the troopers were crowding round. I wiped away the blood which persisted in streaming into my eyes laughed, — aye, loud, and heartily, and bitterly. At another time I would have laid the flat of my sword across his priest's face for his insolence her, but now he could have wiped his bloody hands on her petticoat and I would still have laughed.

Half a score of prisoners, French sailors, and Lochiel's Highland were brought before me.

“Turn them loose,” I ordered.

“But — ,” expostulated Ramsay.

“Turn them loose,” I repeated.

“You'll reckon dear for this — .”

“By God! I'll have you know I'm captain here!” I burst out, th “Pshaw! Ha! Ha! Ha!”

The soldiers were perplexed, and several on the outskirts begai snicker an accompaniment to my mirth. Then two of them brougM Aline. Her lover had evidently lost her in the fight.

“Turn her loose,” I commanded.

They saluted and fell back, leaving her alone in the center of' circle with Ramsay and myself. I remember the scene perfectly; j pale face, Ramsay's flushed with anger, the ring of soldiers, and especially one, engaged in cinching his arm above a great slash on the wrist. He had paused with the knot half drawn, one end of the kerchief between his teeth, his eyes fixed upon me with an amused, expectant look. The blood ran down his saddle and dripped, dripped, on the soggy dirt between his horse's hoofs.

I was quite calm. The whole trick was clear now, from the innkeeper nutting her out of the house, to the bearded Highlander and the escape of Prince Charley. What would my high kinsman say? Thirty thousand pounds, a glorious chance for advancement, a sweetheart, honor — tricked of everything! Yet I was very calm, even curious of the outcome.

She stepped toward me, but I waved her back.

“Griffith — I — if I can explain — ”

“If you can explain!” I cried. “There shall come a day when Judas Iscariot shall explain away his thirty pieces of silver, and on that day, so may you your kisses. You told me once what you would do for a man's sake. I was a fool. I deemed myself that

man. So, you lay in my arms, breathed on me your caresses and your lies — pfaugh! you wanton!”

She took it quietly, but when my teeth cut that last, harsh word, she cried, “No! No! Not that!” and reeled softly, as about to fall.

Unwittingly, I stretched forth my arm to catch her, but Ramsay struck me back on the breast.

“Cur!” he said, meanwhile drawing her against him. “But lay your hand on her, and I will forget all things, save that you — ”

“Are your captain and a cur.” I was minded to pay him, but wished first my say. “Softly, softly, I pray you. So? Another lover? I wot not she wasted many hours on you; aye, perhaps my troopers, too. Hildgart! Come thou here.”

The huge fellow slipped from the saddle, strode awkwardly forward, and saluted with a foolish grin on his face.

“Knowest thou this woman? Hast listened to her devil-singing? Hast kissed light kisses from her lips? or rumbled her pretty hair with that bear’s paw of yours? Look closely, belike you may remember. No? trange, passing strange. Mayhap she overlooked you among so many braw lads. Begone, since thou dost not know her!”

So I had it in mind to say many bitter things and cut her harshly, for my heart was sore; but Ramsay hurled his cap in my face and bade me draw.

“As there is a God above, I am going to kill you, Griffith Risingham.”

So spoke Ramsay. He believed it; so did I. I fought carefully, drawing strange satisfaction from prolonging the game. There was nothing to live for. Death seemed even welcome. And he was a clever swordsman, taught in the Italian school. I had no hope, felt that I could not touch him.

The circle widened. Strive as I would, I failed to break his guard. Then I worked him round till the moon shone in his eyes; but he seemed not to mind it, as though sure of the outcome. Right carefully I watched his eyes, for I feared his Italian tricks. Then suddenly, piff! — his hand had not followed his eye, and I, misled, felt my ribs turn aside the steel. I knew I had met my master. It is the devil who can work hand eye apart.

Twice he pinked me sharply, and I grew weak, losing much blood. At last he worked me into the moonlight. I knew the end was at hand — a feint, a quick cross and engagement, then a twist, and the blade jerked from my hand. Up came his sword for the final pass. I caught a glimpse of Aline over his shoulder. She was praying. I noticed the trooper, with the knot half drawn and the kerchief still in his teeth.

But the gods loved me. His arm fell to his side; a stream of blood gushed from his mouth; and he sank down slowly, O so slowly. Then the circle began to fade away, to grow misty. The trooper drew the knot tight and doubled it. The show was over — the play-actors left the stage.

A year later found me in France on a secret mission. The real history of Prince Charley’s escape had never become known, and the days I held him at Colin na Gaugh, he was popularly supposed to have spent in the romantic refuge called the “Cage.” Nay,

I am told that to-day this place is still pointed out by the Scottish guides. So be it. My high kinsman never knew, and one more blunder may be accredited to history. On my return, the king saw fit to reward me for my services.

Julian Ramsay still sleeps in the bleak fisher-village. As I afterward learned, his death was due to a ball through the lungs, received in a fight on the beach, just before our duel. Poor devil! I was harsh and unjust to him and her that night. If he had loved her, he had kept his secret well. But a bitter heart says bitter things. As for her — I had not seen her again. My surgeon drove her away from me, and the troopers put her out of the inn.

Ah! if I could only forget her! And forgive her? I had forgiven her all but one. As I held my allegiance to King George above love, above all things, just so had she been true to her father, to the cause he died for, and to Prince Charley. I could understand and forgive that, but — that black-bearded Highlander lover! Ah, why could I not forget her? Why should I still dream of her, and hear her voice, and see her as in the old days?

So I picked my way along the dark street, forgetting my mission, musing over by-gones. It was early evening, and Paris still hummed with life.

I could see ahead of me another pedestrian, — a gentleman and a soldier, if I mistook not his carriage. He walked idly, and I soon overtook him. One glance and we knew each other. It was the Highlander, though his beard was gone.

“Ha! comrade!” he cried gayly in English, holding forth his hand.

“Comrade? Nay; I owe you too much for that,” I answered hotly. For I was wroth at this man, permitting, even for his prince, such liberty as he had to Aline.

“Not so,” was his reply; “’tis I am debtor, and to something like thirty thousand pounds. You lost that. So? — but such is war. Yet had you gained the heart’s desire, had you so willed.”

“In your teeth, your cast off tinsel toys!” I cried. “Your heart’s desires! In my country we do not bandy such things from man to man.” (As I wished, this seemed to cut him for he started and looked at me sharply.) “In my country, we treat our toys more wholesomely; but you — if you are a man, draw!”

“Strange, strange; I had not thought of that,” he mused, half aloud.

“Come,” I sneered; “or must I put the poltroon’s badge upon you?”

“Softly, softly; there is a new edict anent the duello, and Louis does not greatly favor foreign adventurers. Yet will I give you satisfaction; but first my affairs. On my honor, I meditate no wrong. Come with me, that I may say goodbye to one, near of kin. Then I will lead you to a quiet place, where all differences may be meetly settled.”

I nodded curtly, and we set off. This Highlander, without the Highland brogue, was no coward. And Aline — was he leading me to her that he might say good-bye? At last we came to broader streets and entered an old-fashioned stone house.

Pausing before a door on the second landing, he said, “I must have a few words with my servant. My sister will entertain you till my return.”

He pushed me in and closed the door. And there, bending over an embroidery frame, her face a little thinner, a little sadder than of yore, was Aline. I looked about, as though for a second person. was none.

What a fool I had been! Would she, could she ever forgive me?

An hour later he returned.

“Pardon my delay,” he said, advancing to me. “We will now step into the courtyard. A very quiet place, I assure you, and — ”

But the breach between the House of Stuart and the House of Hanover was forgotten in an embrace, such as is sometimes becoming between men.

In Yeddo Bay

SOMEWHERE along Theater Street he had lost it. He remembered being hustled somewhat roughly on the bridge over one of the canals that cross that busy thoroughfare. Possibly some slant-eyed, light-fingered pickpocket was even then enjoying the fifty-odd yen his purse had contained. And then again, he thought, he might have lost it himself, just lost it carelessly.

Hopelessly, and for the twentieth time, he searched in all his pockets for the missing purse. It was not there. His hand lingered in his empty hip-pocket, and he woefully regarded the voluble and vociferous restaurant-keeper, who insanely clamored: "Twenty-five sen! You pay now! Twenty-five sen!"

"But my purse!" the boy said. "I tell you I've lost it somewhere."

Whereupon the restaurant-keeper lifted his arms indignantly and shrieked: "Twenty-five sen! Twenty-five sen! You pay now!"

Quite a crowd had collected, and it was growing embarrassing for Alf Davis.

It was so ridiculous and petty, Alf thought. Such a disturbance about nothing! And, decidedly, he must be doing something. Thoughts of diving wildly through that forest of legs, and of striking out at whomsoever opposed him, flashed through his mind; but, as though divining his purpose, one of the waiters, a short and chunky chap with an evil-looking cast in one eye, seized him by the arm.

"You pay now! You pay now! Twenty-five sen!" yelled the proprietor, hoarse with rage.

Alf was red in the face, too, from mortification; but he resolutely set out on another exploration. He had given up the purse, pinning his last hope on stray coins. In the little change-pocket of his coat he found a ten-sen piece and five-copper sen; and remembering having recently missed a ten-sen piece, he cut the seam of the pocket and resurrected the coin from the depths of the lining. Twenty-five sen he held in his hand, the sum required to pay for the supper he had eaten. He turned them over to the proprietor, who counted them, grew suddenly calm, and bowed obsequiously — in fact, the whole crowd bowed obsequiously and melted away.

Alf Davis was a young sailor, just turned sixteen, on board the Annie Mine, an American sailing-schooner, which had run into Yokohama to ship its season's catch of skins to London. And in this, his second trip ashore, he was beginning to snatch his first puzzling glimpses of the Oriental mind. He laughed when the bowing and kotowing was over, and turned on his heel to confront another problem. How was he to get aboard ship? It was eleven o'clock at night, and there would be no ship's boats

ashore, while the outlook for hiring a native boatman, with nothing but empty pockets to draw upon, was not particularly inviting.

Keeping a sharp lookout for shipmates, he went down to the pier. At Yokohama there are no long lines of wharves. The shipping lies out at anchor, enabling a few hundred of the short-legged people to make a livelihood by carrying passengers to and from the shore.

A dozen sampan men and boys hailed Alf and offered their services. He selected the most favorable-looking one, an old and beneficent-appearing man with a withered leg. Alf stepped into his sampan and sat down. It was quite dark and he could not see what the old fellow was doing, though he evidently was doing nothing about shoving off and getting under way. At last he limped over and peered into Alf's face.

"Ten sen," he said.

"Yes, I know, ten sen," Alf answered carelessly. "But hurry up. American schooner."

"Ten sen. You pay now," the old fellow insisted.

Alf felt himself grow hot all over at the hateful words "pay now." "You take me to American schooner; then I pay," he said.

But the man stood up patiently before him, held out his hand, and said, "Ten sen. You pay now."

Alf tried to explain. He had no money. He had lost his purse. But he would pay. As soon as he got aboard the American schooner, then he would pay. No; he would not even go aboard the American schooner. He would call to his shipmates, and they would give the sampan man the ten sen first. After that he would go aboard. So it was all right, of course.

To all of which the beneficent-appearing old man replied: "You pay now. Ten sen." And, to make matters worse, the other sampan men squatted on the pier steps, listening.

Alf, chagrined and angry, stood up to step ashore. But the old fellow laid a detaining hand on his sleeve. "You give shirt now. I take you 'Merican schooner," he proposed.

Then it was that all of Alf's American independence flamed up in his breast. The Anglo-Saxon has a born dislike of being imposed upon, and to Alf this was sheer robbery! Ten sen was equivalent to six American cents, while his shirt, which was of good quality and was new, had cost him two dollars.

He turned his back on the man without a word, and went out to the end of the pier, the crowd, laughing with great gusto, following at his heels. The majority of them were heavy-set, muscular fellows, and the July night being one of sweltering heat, they were clad in the least possible raiment. The water-people of any race are rough and turbulent, and it struck Alf that to be out at midnight on a pier-end with such a crowd of wharfmen, in a big Japanese city, was not as safe as it might be.

One burly fellow, with a shock of black hair and ferocious eyes, came up. The rest shoved in after him to take part in the discussion.

"Give me shoes," the man said. "Give me shoes now. I take you 'Merican schooner."

Alf shook his head, whereat the crowd clamored that he accept the proposal. Now the Anglo-Saxon is so constituted that to brow-beat or bully him is the last way under the sun of getting him to do any certain thing. He will dare willingly, but he will not permit himself to be driven. So this attempt of the boatmen to force Alf only aroused all the dogged stubbornness of his race. The same qualities were in him that are in men who lead forlorn hopes; and there, under the stars, on the lonely pier, encircled by the jostling and shouldering gang, he resolved that he would die rather than submit to the indignity of being robbed of a single stitch of clothing. Not value, but principle, was at stake.

Then somebody thrust roughly against him from behind. He whirled about with flashing eyes, and the circle involuntarily gave ground. But the crowd was growing more boisterous. Each and every article of clothing he had on was demanded by one or another, and these demands were shouted simultaneously at the tops of very healthy lungs.

Alf had long since ceased to say anything, but he knew that the situation was getting dangerous, and that the only thing left to him was to get away. His face was set doggedly, his eyes glinted like points of steel, and his body was firmly and confidently poised. This air of determination sufficiently impressed the boatmen to make them give way before him when he started to walk toward the shore-end of the pier. But they trooped along beside him and behind him, shouting and laughing more noisily than ever. One of the youngsters, about Alf's size and build, impudently snatched his cap from his head; but before he could put it on his own head, Alf struck out from the shoulder, and sent the fellow rolling on the stones.

The cap flew out of his hand and disappeared among the many legs. Alf did some quick thinking; his sailor pride would not permit him to leave the cap in their hands. He followed in the direction it had sped, and soon found it under the bare foot of a stalwart fellow, who kept his weight stolidly upon it. Alf tried to get the cap out by a sudden jerk, but failed. He shoved against the man's leg, but the man only grunted. It was challenge direct, and Alf accepted it. Like a flash one leg was behind the man and Alf had thrust strongly with his shoulder against the fellow's chest. Nothing could save the man from the fierce vigorousness of the trick, and he was hurled over and backward.

Next, the cap was on Alf's head and his fists were up before him. Then he whirled about to prevent attack from behind, and all those in that quarter fled precipitately. This was what he wanted. None remained between him and the shore end. The pier was narrow. Facing them and threatening with his fist those who attempted to pass him on either side, he continued his retreat. It was exciting work, walking backward and at the same time checking that surging mass of men. But the dark-skinned peoples, the world over, have learned to respect the white man's fist; and it was the battles fought by many sailors, more than his own warlike front, that gave Alf the victory.

Where the pier adjoins the shore was the station of the harbor police, and Alf backed into the electric-lighted office, very much to the amusement of the dapper lieutenant

in charge. The sampan men, grown quiet and orderly, clustered like flies by the open door, through which they could see and hear what passed.

Alf explained his difficulty in few words, and demanded, as the privilege of a stranger in a strange land, that the lieutenant put him aboard in the police-boat. The lieutenant, in turn, who knew all the "rules and regulations" by heart, explained that the harbor police were not ferrymen, and that the police-boats had other functions to perform than that of transporting belated and penniless sailor-men to their ships. He also said he knew the sampan men to be natural-born robbers, but that so long as they robbed within the law he was powerless. It was their right to collect fares in advance, and who was he to command them to take a passenger and collect fare at the journey's end? Alf acknowledged the justice of his remarks, but suggested that while he could not command he might persuade. The lieutenant was willing to oblige, and went to the door, from where he delivered a speech to the crowd. But they, too, knew their rights, and, when the officer had finished, shouted in chorus their abominable "Ten sen! You pay now! You pay now!"

"You see, I can do nothing," said the lieutenant, who, by the way, spoke perfect English. "But I have warned them not to harm or molest you, so you will be safe, at least. The night is warm and half over. Lie down somewhere and to sleep. I would permit you to sleep here in the office, were it not against the rules and regulations."

Alf thanked him for his kindness and courtesy; but the sampan men had aroused all his pride of race and doggedness, and the problem could not be solved that way. To sleep out the night on the stones was an acknowledgment of defeat.

"The sampan men refuse to take me out?"

The lieutenant nodded.

"And you refuse to take me out?"

Again the lieutenant nodded.

"Well, then, it's not in the rules and regulations that you can prevent my taking myself out?"

The lieutenant was perplexed. "There is no boat," he said.

"That's not the question," Alf proclaimed hotly. "If I take myself out, everybody's satisfied and no harm done?"

"Yes; what you say is true," persisted the puzzled lieutenant. "But you cannot take yourself out."

"You just watch me," was the retort.

Down went Alf's cap on the office floor. Right and left he kicked off his low-cut shoes. Trousers and shirt followed.

"Remember," he said in ringing tones, "I, as a citizen of the United States, shall hold you, the city of Yokohama, and the government of Japan responsible for those clothes. Good night."

He plunged through the doorway, scattering the astounded boatmen to either side, and ran out on the pier. But they quickly recovered and ran after him, shouting with glee at the new phase the situation had taken on. It was a night long remembered

among the water-folk of Yokohama town. Straight to the end Alf ran, and, without pause, dived off cleanly and neatly into the water. He struck out with a lusty, single-overhand stroke till curiosity prompted him to halt for a moment. Out of the darkness, from where the pier should be, voices were calling to him.

He turned on his back, floated, and listened.

“All right! All right!” he could distinguish from the babel. “No pay now; pay bime by! Come back! Come back now; pay bime by!”

“No, thank you;” he called back. “No pay at all. Good night.”

Then he faced about in order to locate the Annie Mine. She was fully a mile away, and in the darkness it was no easy task to get her bearings. First, he settled upon a blaze of lights which he knew nothing but a man-of-war could make. That must be the United States war-ship Lancaster. Somewhere to the left and beyond should be the Annie Mine. But to the left he made out three lights close together. That could not be the schooner. For the moment he was confused. He rolled over on his back and shut his eyes, striving to construct a mental picture of the harbor as he had seen it in daytime. With a snort of satisfaction he rolled back again. The three lights evidently belonged to the big English tramp steamer. Therefore the schooner must lie somewhere between the three lights and the Lancaster. He gazed long and steadily, and there, very dim and low, but at the point he expected, burned a single light — the anchorlight of the Annie Mine.

And it was a fine swim under the starshine. The air was warm as the water, and the water as warm as tepid milk. The good salt taste of it was in his mouth, the tingling of it along his limbs; and the steady beat of his heart, heavy and strong, made him glad for living.

But beyond being glorious the swim was uneventful. On the right hand he passed the many-lighted Lancaster, on the left hand the English tramp, and ere long the Annie Mine loomed large above him. He grasped the hanging rope-ladder and drew himself noiselessly on deck. There was no one in sight. He saw a light in the galley, and knew that the captain’s son, who kept the lonely anchorwatch, was making coffee. Alf went forward to the forecandle. The men were snoring in their bunks, and in that confined space the heat seemed to him insufferable. So he put on a thin cotton shirt and a pair of dungaree trousers, tucked blanket and pillow under his arm, and went up on deck and out on the forecandle-head.

Hardly had he begun to doze when he was roused by a boat coming alongside and hailing the anchor-watch. It was the police-boat, and to Alf it was given to enjoy the excited conversation that ensued. Yes, the captain’s son recognized the clothes. They belonged to Alf Davis, one of the seamen. What had happened? No; Alf Davis had not come aboard. He was ashore. He was not ashore? Then he must be drowned. Here both the lieutenant and the captain’s son talked at the same time, and Alf could make out nothing. Then he heard them come forward and rouse out the crew. The crew grumbled sleepily and said that Alf Davis was not in the forecandle; whereupon the captain’s son

waxed indignant at the Yokohama police and their ways, and the lieutenant quoted rules and regulations in despairing accents.

Alf rose up from the fore-castle-head and extended his hand, saying:

“I guess I’ll take those clothes. Thank you for bringing them aboard so promptly.”

“I don’t see why he couldn’t have brought you aboard inside of them,” said the captain’s son.

And the police lieutenant said nothing, though he turned the clothes over somewhat sheepishly to their rightful owner.

The next day, when Alf started to go ashore, he found himself surrounded by shouting and gesticulating, though very respectful, sampan men, all extraordinarily anxious to have him for a passenger. Nor did the one he selected say, “You pay now,” when he entered his boat. When Alf prepared to step out on to the pier, he offered the man the customary ten sen. But the man drew himself up and shook his head.

“You all right,” he said. “You no pay. You never no pay. You bully boy and all right.”

And for the rest of the Annie Mine’s stay in port, the sampan men refused money at Alf Davis’s hand. Out of admiration for his pluck and independence, they had given him the freedom of the harbor.

The Inevitable White Man

The black will never understand the white, nor the white the black, as long as black is black and white is white.”

So said Captain Woodward. We sat in the parlor of Charley Roberts’ pub in Apia, drinking long Abu Hameds compounded and shared with us by the aforesaid Charley Roberts, who claimed the recipe direct from Stevens, famous for having invented the Abu Hamed at a time when he was spurred on by Nile thirst—the Stevens who was responsible for “With Kitchener to Kartoun,” and who passed out at the siege of Ladysmith.

Captain Woodward, short and squat, elderly, burned by forty years of tropic sun, and with the most beautiful liquid brown eyes I ever saw in a man, spoke from a vast experience. The crisscross of scars on his bald pate bespoke a tomahawk intimacy with the black, and of equal intimacy was the advertisement, front and rear, on the right side of his neck, where an arrow had at one time entered and been pulled clean through. As he explained, he had been in a hurry on that occasion—the arrow impeded his running—and he felt that he could not take the time to break off the head and pull out the shaft the way it had come in. At the present moment he was commander of the SAVAI, the big steamer that recruited labor from the westward for the German plantations on Samoa.

“Half the trouble is the stupidity of the whites,” said Roberts, pausing to take a swig from his glass and to curse the Samoan bar-boy in affectionate terms. “If the white man would lay himself out a bit to understand the workings of the black man’s mind, most of the messes would be avoided.”

“I’ve seen a few who claimed they understood niggers,” Captain Woodward retorted, “and I always took notice that they were the first to be kai-kai’d (eaten). Look at the missionaries in New Guinea and the New Hebrides—the martyr isle of Erromanga and all the rest. Look at the Austrian expedition that was cut to pieces in the Solomons, in the bush of Guadalcanar. And look at the traders themselves, with a score of years’ experience, making their brag that no nigger would ever get them, and whose heads to this day are ornamenting the rafters of the canoe houses. There was old Johnny Simons—twenty-six years on the raw edges of Melanesia, swore he knew the niggers like a book and that they’d never do for him, and he passed out at Marovo Lagoon, New Georgia, had his head sawed off by a black Mary (woman) and an old nigger with only one leg, having left the other leg in the mouth of a shark while diving for dynamited fish. There was Billy Watts, horrible reputation as a nigger killer, a man to scare the devil. I remember lying at Cape Little, New Ireland you know, when the niggers stole

half a case of trade-tobacco—cost him about three dollars and a half. In retaliation he turned out, shot six niggers, smashed up their war canoes and burned two villages. And it was at Cape Little, four years afterward, that he was jumped along with fifty Buku boys he had with him fishing *bêche-de-mer*. In five minutes they were all dead, with the exception of three boys who got away in a canoe. Don't talk to me about understanding the nigger. The white man's mission is to farm the world, and it's a big enough job cut out for him. What time has he got left to understand niggers anyway?"

"Just so," said Roberts. "And somehow it doesn't seem necessary, after all, to understand the niggers. In direct proportion to the white man's stupidity is his success in farming the world—"

"And putting the fear of God into the nigger's heart," Captain Woodward blurted out. "Perhaps you're right, Roberts. Perhaps it's his stupidity that makes him succeed, and surely one phase of his stupidity is his inability to understand the niggers. But there's one thing sure, the white has to run the niggers whether he understands them or not. It's inevitable. It's fate."

"And of course the white man is inevitable—it's the niggers' fate," Roberts broke in. "Tell the white man there's pearl shell in some lagoon infested by ten-thousand howling cannibals, and he'll head there all by his lonely, with half a dozen kanaka divers and a tin alarm clock for chronometer, all packed like sardines on a commodious, five-ton ketch. Whisper that there's a gold strike at the North Pole, and that same inevitable white-skinned creature will set out at once, armed with pick and shovel, a side of bacon, and the latest patent rocker—and what's more, he'll get there. Tip it off to him that there's diamonds on the red-hot ramparts of hell, and Mr. White Man will storm the ramparts and set old Satan himself to pick-and-shovel work. That's what comes of being stupid and inevitable."

"But I wonder what the black man must think of the—the inevitableness," I said.

Captain Woodward broke into quiet laughter. His eyes had a reminiscent gleam.

"I'm just wondering what the niggers of Malu thought and still must be thinking of the one inevitable white man we had on board when we visited them in the *DUCHESS*," he explained.

Roberts mixed three more Abu Hameds.

"That was twenty years ago. Saxtorph was his name. He was certainly the most stupid man I ever saw, but he was as inevitable as death. There was only one thing that chap could do, and that was shoot. I remember the first time I ran into him—right here in Apia, twenty years ago. That was before your time, Roberts. I was sleeping at Dutch Henry's hotel, down where the market is now. Ever heard of him? He made a tidy stake smuggling arms in to the rebels, sold out his hotel, and was killed in Sydney just six weeks afterward in a saloon row.

"But Saxtorph. One night I'd just got to sleep, when a couple of cats began to sing in the courtyard. It was out of bed and up window, water jug in hand. But just then I heard the window of the next room go up. Two shots were fired, and the window was closed. I fail to impress you with the celerity of the transaction. Ten seconds at

the outside. Up went the window, bang bang went the revolver, and down went the window. Whoever it was, he had never stopped to see the effect of his shots. He knew. Do you follow me?—he KNEW. There was no more cat concert, and in the morning there lay the two offenders, stone dead. It was marvelous to me. It still is marvelous. First, it was starlight, and Saxtorph shot without drawing a bead; next, he shot so rapidly that the two reports were like a double report; and finally, he knew he had hit his marks without looking to see.

“Two days afterward he came on board to see me. I was mate, then, on the *Duchess*, a whacking big one-hundred-and fifty-ton schooner, a blackbirder. And let me tell you that blackbirders were blackbirders in those days. There weren’t any government protection for US, either. It was rough work, give and take, if we were finished, and nothing said, and we ran niggers from every south sea island they didn’t kick us off from. Well, Saxtorph came on board, John Saxtorph was the name he gave. He was a sandy little man, hair sandy, complexion sandy, and eyes sandy, too. Nothing striking about him. His soul was as neutral as his color scheme. He said he was strapped and wanted to ship on board. Would go cabin boy, cook, supercargo, or common sailor. Didn’t know anything about any of the billets, but said that he was willing to learn. I didn’t want him, but his shooting had so impressed me that I took him as common sailor, wages three pounds per month.

“He was willing to learn all right, I’ll say that much. But he was constitutionally unable to learn anything. He could no more box the compass than I could mix drinks like Roberts here. And as for steering, he gave me my first gray hairs. I never dared risk him at the wheel when we were running in a big sea, while full-and-by and close-and-by were insoluble mysteries. Couldn’t ever tell the difference between a sheet and a tackle, simply couldn’t. The fore-throat-jig and the jib-jig were all one to him. Tell him to slack off the mainsheet, and before you know it, he’d drop the peak. He fell overboard three times, and he couldn’t swim. But he was always cheerful, never seasick, and he was the most willing man I ever knew. He was an uncommunicative soul. Never talked about himself. His history, so far as we were concerned, began the day he signed on the *DUCHESS*. Where he learned to shoot, the stars alone can tell. He was a Yankee—that much we knew from the twang in his speech. And that was all we ever did know.

“And now we begin to get to the point. We had bad luck in the New Hebrides, only fourteen boys for five weeks, and we ran up before the southeast for the Solomons. ‘malaita, then as now, was good recruiting ground, and we ran into Malu, on the northwestern corner. There’s a shore reef and an outer reef, and a mighty nervous anchorage; but we made it all right and fired off our dynamite as a signal to the niggers to come down and be recruited. In three days we got not a boy. The niggers came off to us in their canoes by hundreds, but they only laughed when we showed them beads and calico and hatchets and talked of the delights of plantation work in Samoa.

“On the fourth day there came a change. Fifty-odd boys signed on and were billeted in the main-hold, with the freedom of the deck, of course. And of course, looking back,

this wholesale signing on was suspicious, but at the time we thought some powerful chief had removed the ban against recruiting. The morning of the fifth day our two boats went ashore as usual—one to cover the other, you know, in case of trouble. And, as usual, the fifty niggers on board were on deck, loafing, talking, smoking, and sleeping. Saxtorph and myself, along with four other sailors, were all that were left on board. The two boats were manned with Gilbert Islanders. In the one were the captain, the supercargo, and the recruiter. In the other, which was the covering boat and which lay off shore a hundred yards, was the second mate. Both boats were well-armed, though trouble was little expected.

“Four of the sailors, including Saxtorph, were scraping the poop rail. The fifth sailor, rifle in hand, was standing guard by the water-tank just for’ard of the mainmast. I was for’ard, putting in the finishing licks on a new jaw for the fore-gaff. I was just reaching for my pipe where I had laid it down, when I heard a shot from shore. I straightened up to look. Something struck me on the back of the head, partially stunning me and knocking me to the deck. ‘my first thought was that something had carried away aloft; but even as I went down, and before I struck the deck, I heard the devil’s own tattoo of rifles from the boats, and twisting sidewise, I caught a glimpse of the sailor who was standing guard. Two big niggers were holding his arms, and a third nigger from behind was braining him with a tomahawk.

“I can see it now, the water-tank, the mainmast, the gang hanging on to him, the hatchet descending on the back of his head, and all under the blazing sunlight. I was fascinated by that growing vision of death. The tomahawk seemed to take a horribly long time to come down. I saw it land, and the man’s legs give under him as he crumpled. The niggers held him up by sheer strength while he was hacked a couple of times more. Then I got two more hacks on the head and decided that I was dead. So did the brute that was hacking me. I was too helpless to move, and I lay there and watched them removing the sentry’s head. I must say they did it slick enough. They were old hands at the business.

“The rifle firing from the boats had ceased, and I made no doubt that they were finished off and that the end had come to everything. It was only a matter of moments when they would return for my head. They were evidently taking the heads from the sailors aft. Heads are valuable on Malaita, especially white heads. They have the place of honor in the canoe houses of the salt-water natives. What particular decorative effect the bushmen get out of them I didn’t know, but they prize them just as much as the salt-water crowd.

“I had a dim notion of escaping, and I crawled on hands and knees to the winch, where I managed to drag myself to my feet. From there I could look aft and see three heads on top the cabin—the heads of three sailors I had given orders to for months. The niggers saw me standing, and started for me. I reached for my revolver, and found they had taken it. I can’t say that I was scared. I’ve been near to death several times, but it never seemed easier than right then. I was half-stunned, and nothing seemed to matter.

“The leading nigger had armed himself with a cleaver from the galley, and he grimaced like an ape as he prepared to slice me down. But the slice was never made. He went down on the deck all of a heap, and I saw the blood gush from his mouth. In a dim way I heard a rifle go off and continue to go off. Nigger after nigger went down. ‘my senses began to clear, and I noted that there was never a miss. Every time that the rifle went off a nigger dropped. I sat down on deck beside the winch and looked up. Perched in the crosstrees was Saxtorph. How he had managed it I can’t imagine, for he had carried up with him two Winchesters and I don’t know how many bandoliers of ammunition; and he was now doing the one only thing in this world that he was fitted to do.

“I’ve seen shooting and slaughter, but I never saw anything like that. I sat by the winch and watched the show. I was weak and faint, and it seemed to be all a dream. Bang, bang, bang, bang, went his rifle, and thud, thud, thud, thud, went the niggers to the deck. It was amazing to see them go down. After their first rush to get me, when about a dozen had dropped, they seemed paralyzed; but he never left off pumping his gun. By this time canoes and the two boats arrived from shore, armed with Sniders, and with Winchesters which they had captured in the boats. The fusillade they let loose on Saxtorph was tremendous. Luckily for him the niggers are only good at close range. They are not used to putting the gun to their shoulders. They wait until they are right on top of a man, and then they shoot from the hip. When his rifle got too hot, Saxtorph changed off. That had been his idea when he carried two rifles up with him.

“The astounding thing was the rapidity of his fire. Also, he never made a miss. If ever anything was inevitable, that man was. It was the swiftness of it that made the slaughter so appalling. The niggers did not have time to think. When they did manage to think, they went over the side in a rush, capsizing the canoes of course. Saxtorph never let up. The water was covered with them, and plump, plump, plump, he dropped his bullets into them. Not a single miss, and I could hear distinctly the thud of every bullet as it buried in human flesh.

“The niggers spread out and headed for the shore, swimming. The water was carpeted with bobbing heads, and I stood up, as in a dream, and watched it all—the bobbing heads and the heads that ceased to bob. Some of the long shots were magnificent. Only one man reached the beach, but as he stood up to wade ashore, Saxtorph got him. It was beautiful. And when a couple of niggers ran down to drag him out of the water, Saxtorph got them, too.

“I thought everything was over then, when I heard the rifle go off again. A nigger had come out of the cabin companion on the run for the rail and gone down in the middle of it. The cabin must have been full of them. I counted twenty. They came up one at a time and jumped for the rail. But they never got there. It reminded me of trapshooting. A black body would pop out of the companion, bang would go Saxtorph’s rifle, and down would go the black body. Of course, those below did not know what

was happening on deck, so they continued to pop out until the last one was finished off.

“Saxtorph waited a while to make sure, and then came down on deck. He and I were all that were left of the DUCHESS’S complement, and I was pretty well to the bad, while he was helpless now that the shooting was over. Under my direction he washed out my scalp wounds and sewed them up. A big drink of whiskey braced me to make an effort to get out. There was nothing else to do. All the rest were dead. We tried to get up sail, Saxtorph hoisting and I holding the turn. He was once more the stupid lubber. He couldn’t hoist worth a cent, and when I fell in a faint, it looked all up with us.

“When I came to, Saxtorph was sitting helplessly on the rail, waiting to ask me what he should do. I told him to overhaul the wounded and see if there were any able to crawl. He gathered together six. One, I remember, had a broken leg; but Saxtorph said his arms were all right. I lay in the shade, brushing the flies off and directing operations, while Saxtorph bossed his hospital gang. I’ll be blessed if he didn’t make those poor niggers heave at every rope on the pin-rails before he found the halyards. One of them let go the rope in the midst of the hoisting and slipped down to the deck dead; but Saxtorph hammered the others and made them stick by the job. When the fore and main were up, I told him to knock the shackle out of the anchor chain and let her go. I had had myself helped aft to the wheel, where I was going to make a shift at steering. I can’t guess how he did it, but instead of knocking the shackle out, down went the second anchor, and there we were doubly moored.

“In the end he managed to knock both shackles out and raise the staysail and jib, and the Duchess filled away for the entrance. Our decks were a spectacle. Dead and dying niggers were everywhere. They were wedged away some of them in the most inconceivable places. The cabin was full of them where they had crawled off the deck and cashed in. I put Saxtorph and his graveyard gang to work heaving them overside, and over they went, the living and the dead. The sharks had fat pickings that day. Of course our four murdered sailors went the same way. Their heads, however, we put in a sack with weights, so that by no chance should they drift on the beach and fall into the hands of the niggers.

“Our five prisoners I decided to use as crew, but they decided otherwise. They watched their opportunity and went over the side. Saxtorph got two in mid-air with his revolver, and would have shot the other three in the water if I hadn’t stopped him. I was sick of the slaughter, you see, and besides, they’d helped work the schooner out. But it was mercy thrown away, for the sharks got the three of them.

“I had brain fever or something after we got clear of the land. Anyway, the DUCHESS lay hove to for three weeks, when I pulled myself together and we jogged on with her to Sydney. Anyway those niggers of Malu learned the everlasting lesson that it is not good to monkey with a white man. In their case, Saxtorph was certainly inevitable.”

Charley Roberts emitted a long whistle and said:

“Well I should say so. But whatever became of Saxtorph?”

“He drifted into seal hunting and became a crackerjack. For six years he was high line of both the Victoria and San Francisco fleets. The seventh year his schooner was seized in Bering Sea by a Russian cruiser, and all hands, so the talk went, were slammed into the Siberian salt mines. At least I’ve never heard of him since.”

“Farming the world,” Roberts muttered. “Farming the world. Well here’s to them. Somebody’s got to do it—farm the world, I mean.”

Captain Woodward rubbed the criss-crosses on his bald head.

“I’ve done my share of it,” he said. “Forty years now. This will be my last trip. Then I’m going home to stay.”

“I’ll wager the wine you don’t,” Roberts challenged. “You’ll die in the harness, not at home.”

Captain Woodward promptly accepted the bet, but personally I think Charley Roberts has the best of it.

Jan, the Unrepentant

“For there’s never a law of God or man Runs north of Fifty-three.”

Jan rolled over, clawing and kicking. He was fighting hand and foot now, and he fought grimly, silently. Two of the three men who hung upon him, shouted directions to each other, and strove to curb the short, hairy devil who would not curb. The third man howled. His finger was between Jan’s teeth.

“Quit yer tantrums, Jan, an’ ease up!” panted Red Bill, getting a strangle-hold on Jan’s neck. “Why on earth can’t yeh hang decent and peaceable?”

But Jan kept his grip on the third man’s finger, and squirmed over the floor of the tent, into the pots and pans.

“Youah no gentleman, suh,” reproved Mr. Taylor, his body following his finger, and endeavoring to accommodate itself to every jerk of Jan’s head. “You hev killed Mistah Gordon, as brave and honorable a gentleman as ever hit the trail aftah the dogs. Youah a murderah, suh, and without honah.”

“An’ yer no comrade,” broke in Red Bill. “If you was, you’d hang ‘thout rampin’ around an’ roarin’. Come on, Jan, there’s a good fellow. Don’t give us no more trouble. Jes’ quit, an’ we’ll hang yeh neat and handy, an’ be done with it.”

“Steady, all!” Lawson, the sailorman, bawled. “Jam his head into the bean pot and batten down.”

“But my fingah, suh,” Mr. Taylor protested.

“Leggo with y’r finger, then! Always in the way!”

“But I can’t, Mistah Lawson. It’s in the critter’s gullet, and nigh chewed off as ‘t is.”

“Stand by for stays!” As Lawson gave the warning, Jan half lifted himself, and the struggling quartet floundered across the tent into a muddle of furs and blankets. In its passage it cleared the body of a man, who lay motionless, bleeding from a bullet-wound in the neck.

All this was because of the madness which had come upon Jan—the madness which comes upon a man who has stripped off the raw skin of earth and grovelled long in primal nakedness, and before whose eyes rises the fat vales of the homeland, and into whose nostrils steals the whiff of bay, and grass, and flower, and new-turned soil. Through five frigid years Jan had sown the seed. Stuart River, Forty Mile, Circle City, Koyokuk, Kotzebue, had marked his bleak and strenuous agriculture, and now it was Nome that bore the harvest,—not the Nome of golden beaches and ruby sands, but the Nome of ‘97, before Anvil City was located, or Eldorado District organized. John Gordon was a Yankee, and should have known better. But he passed the sharp word

at a time when Jan's blood-shot eyes blazed and his teeth gritted in torment. And because of this, there was a smell of saltpetre in the tent, and one lay quietly, while the other fought like a cornered rat, and refused to hang in the decent and peacable manner suggested by his comrades.

"If you will allow me, Mistah Lawson, befoah we go further in this rumpus, I would say it wah a good idea to pry this hyer varmint's teeth apart. Neither will he bite off, nor will he let go. He has the wisdom of the sarpint, suh, the wisdom of the sarpint."

"Lemme get the hatchet to him!" vociferated the sailor. "Lemme get the hatchet!" He shoved the steel edge close to Mr. Taylor's finger and used the man's teeth as a fulcrum. Jan held on and breathed through his nose, snorting like a grampus. "Steady, all! Now she takes it!"

"Thank you, suh; it is a powerful relief." And Mr. Taylor proceeded to gather into his arms the victim's wildly waving legs.

But Jan upreared in his Berserker rage; bleeding, frothing, cursing; five frozen years thawing into sudden hell. They swayed backward and forward, panted, sweated, like some cyclopean, many-legged monster rising from the lower deeps. The slush-lamp went over, drowned in its own fat, while the midday twilight scarce percolated through the dirty canvas of the tent.

"For the love of Gawd, Jan, get yer senses back!" pleaded Red Bill. "We ain't goin' to hurt yeh, 'r kill yeh, 'r anythin' of that sort. Jes' want to hang yeh, that's all, an' you a-messin' round an' rampagin' somethin' terrible. To think of travellin' trail together an' then bein' treated this-a way. Wouldn't 'bleeved it of yeh, Jan!"

"He's got too much steerage-way. Grab holt his legs, Taylor, and heave'm over!"

"Yes, suh, Mistah Lawson. Do you press youah weight above, after I give the word." The Kentuckian groped about him in the murky darkness. "Now, suh, now is the accepted time!"

There was a great surge, and a quarter of a ton of human flesh tottered and crashed to its fall against the side-wall. Pegs drew and guy-ropes parted, and the tent, collapsing, wrapped the battle in its greasy folds.

"Yer only makin' it harder fer yerself," Red Bill continued, at the same time driving both his thumbs into a hairy throat, the possessor of which he had pinned down. "You've made nuisance enough a' ready, an' it'll take half the day to get things straightened when we've strung yeh up."

"I'll thank you to leave go, suh," spluttered Mr. Taylor.

Red Bill grunted and loosed his grip, and the twain crawled out into the open. At the same instant Jan kicked clear of the sailor, and took to his heels across the snow.

"Hi! you lazy devils! Buck! Bright! Sic'm! Pull 'm down!" sang out Lawson, lunging through the snow after the fleeing man. Buck and Bright, followed by the rest of the dogs, outstripped him and rapidly overhauled the murderer.

There was no reason that these men should do this; no reason for Jan to run away; no reason for them to attempt to prevent him. On the one hand stretched the barren snow-land; on the other, the frozen sea. With neither food nor shelter, he could not run

far. All they had to do was to wait till he wandered back to the tent, as he inevitably must, when the frost and hunger laid hold of him. But these men did not stop to think. There was a certain taint of madness running in the veins of all of them. Besides, blood had been spilled, and upon them was the blood-lust, thick and hot. "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord, and He saith it in temperate climes where the warm sun steals away the energies of men. But in the Northland they have discovered that prayer is only efficacious when backed by muscle, and they are accustomed to doing things for themselves. God is everywhere, they have heard, but he flings a shadow over the land for half the year that they may not find him; so they grope in darkness, and it is not to be wondered that they often doubt, and deem the Decalogue out of gear.

Jan ran blindly, reckoning not of the way of his feet, for he was mastered by the verb "to live." To live! To exist! Buck flashed gray through the air, but missed. The man struck madly at him, and stumbled. Then the white teeth of Bright closed on his mackinaw jacket, and he pitched into the snow. TO LIVE! TO EXIST! He fought wildly as ever, the centre of a tossing heap of men and dogs. His left hand gripped a wolf-dog by the scruff of the back, while the arm was passed around the neck of Lawson. Every struggle of the dog helped to throttle the hapless sailor. Jan's right hand was buried deep in the curling tendrils of Red Bill's shaggy head, and beneath all, Mr. Taylor lay pinned and helpless. It was a deadlock, for the strength of his madness was prodigious; but suddenly, without apparent reason, Jan loosed his various grips and rolled over quietly on his back. His adversaries drew away a little, dubious and disconcerted. Jan grinned viciously.

"Mine friends," he said, still grinning, "you haf asked me to be politeful, und now I am politeful. Vot piziness vood you do mit me?"

"That's right, Jan. Be ca'm," soothed Red Bill. "I knowed you'd come to yer senses afore long. Jes' be ca'm now, an' we'll do the trick with neatness and despatch."

"Vot piziness? Vot trick?"

"The hangin'. An' yeh oughter thank yer lucky stars for havin' a man what knows his business. I've did it afore now, more'n once, down in the States, an' I can do it to a T."

"Hang who? Me?"

"Yep."

"Ha! ha! Shust hear der man speak foolishness! Gif me a hand, Bill, und I vill get up und be hung." He crawled stiffly to his feet and looked about him. "Herr Gott! listen to der man! He vood hang me! Ho! ho! ho! I tank not! Yes, I tank not!"

"And I tank yes, you swab," Lawson spoke up mockingly, at the same time cutting a sled-lashing and coiling it up with ominous care. "Judge Lynch holds court this day."

"Von liddle while." Jan stepped back from the proffered noose. "I haf somedings to ask und to make der great proposition. Kentucky, you know about der Shudge Lynch?"

"Yes, suh. It is an institution of free men and of gentlemen, and it is an ole one and time-honored. Corruption may wear the robe of magistracy, suh, but Judge Lynch can always be relied upon to give justice without court fees. I repeat, suh, without court

fees. Law may be bought and sold, but in this enlightened land justice is free as the air we breathe, strong as the licker we drink, prompt as—

“Cut it short! Find out what the beggar wants,” interrupted Lawson, spoiling the peroration.

“Vell, Kentucky, tell me dis: von man kill von odder man, Shudge Lynch hang dot man?”

“If the evidence is strong enough—yes, suh.”

“An’ the evidence in this here case is strong enough to hang a dozen men, Jan,” broke in Red Bill.

“Nefer you mind, Bill. I talk mit you next. Now von anodder ding I ask Kentucky. If Shudge Lynch hang not der man, vot den?”

“If Judge Lynch does not hang the man, then the man goes free, and his hands are washed clean of blood. And further, suh, our great and glorious constitution has said, to wit: that no man may twice be placed in jeopardy of his life for one and the same crime, or words to that effect.”

“Unt dey can’t shoot him, or hit him mit a club over der head alongside, or do nodings more mit him?”

“No, suh.”

“Goot! You hear vot Kentucky speaks, all you noddleheads? Now I talk mit Bill. You know der piziness, Bill, und you hang me up brown, eh? Vot you say?”

“‘Betcher life, an’, Jan, if yeh don’t give no more trouble ye’ll be almighty proud of the job. I’m a connesoor.”

“You haf der great head, Bill, und know somedings or two. Und you know two und one makes tree—ain’t it?”

Bill nodded.

“Und when you haf two dings, you haf not tree dings—ain’t it? Now you follow mit me close und I show you. It takes tree dings to hang. First ding, you haf to haf der man. Goot! I am der man. Second ding, you haf to haf der rope. Lawson haf der rope. Goot! Und tird ding, you haf to haf someding to tie der rope to. Sling your eyes over der landscape und find der tird ding to tie der rope to? Eh? Vot you say?”

Mechanically they swept the ice and snow with their eyes. It was a homogeneous scene, devoid of contrasts or bold contours, dreary, desolate, and monotonous,—the ice-packed sea, the slow slope of the beach, the background of low-lying hills, and over all thrown the endless mantle of snow. “No trees, no bluffs, no cabins, no telegraph poles, nothin’,” moaned Red Bill; “nothin’ respectable enough nor big enough to swing the toes of a five-foot man clear o’ the ground. I give it up.” He looked yearningly at that portion of Jan’s anatomy which joins the head and shoulders. “Give it up,” he repeated sadly to Lawson. “Throw the rope down. Gawd never intended this here country for livin’ purposes, an’ that’s a cold frozen fact.”

Jan grinned triumphantly. “I tank I go mit der tent und haf a smoke.”

“Ostensible y’r correct, Bill, me son,” spoke up Lawson; “but y’r a dummy, and you can lay to that for another cold frozen fact. Takes a sea farmer to learn you landsmen things. Ever hear of a pair of shears? Then clap y’r eyes to this.”

The sailor worked rapidly. From the pile of dunnage where they had pulled up the boat the preceding fall, he unearthed a pair of long oars. These he lashed together, at nearly right angles, close to the ends of the blades. Where the handles rested he kicked holes through the snow to the sand. At the point of intersection he attached two guy-ropes, making the end of one fast to a cake of beach-ice. The other guy he passed over to Red Bill. “Here, me son, lay holt o’ that and run it out.”

And to his horror, Jan saw his gallows rise in the air. “No! no!” he cried, recoiling and putting up his fists. “It is not goot! I vill not hang! Come, you noddleheads! I vill lick you, all together, von after der odder! I vill blay hell! I vill do eferydings! Und I vill die pefore I hang!”

The sailor permitted the two other men to clinch with the mad creature. They rolled and tossed about furiously, tearing up snow and tundra, their fierce struggle writing a tragedy of human passion on the white sheet spread by nature. And ever and anon a hand or foot of Jan emerged from the tangle, to be gripped by Lawson and lashed fast with rope-yarns. Pawing, clawing, blaspheming, he was conquered and bound, inch by inch, and drawn to where the inexorable shears lay like a pair of gigantic dividers on the snow. Red Bill adjusted the noose, placing the hangman’s knot properly under the left ear. Mr. Taylor and Lawson tailed onto the running-guy, ready at the word to elevate the gallows. Bill lingered, contemplating his work with artistic appreciation.

“Herr Gott! Vood you look at it!”

The horror in Jan’s voice caused the rest to desist. The fallen tent had uprisen, and in the gathering twilight it flapped ghostly arms about and titubated toward them drunkenly. But the next instant John Gordon found the opening and crawled forth.

“What the flaming—!” For the moment his voice died away in his throat as his eyes took in the tableau. “Hold on! I’m not dead!” he cried out, coming up to the group with stormy countenance.

“Allow me, Mistah Gordon, to congratulate you upon youah escape,” Mr. Taylor ventured. “A close shave, suh, a powahful close shave.”

“Congratulate hell! I might have been dead and rotten and no thanks to you, you—!” And thereat John Gordon delivered himself of a vigorous flood of English, terse, intensive, denunciative, and composed solely of expletives and adjectives.

“Simply creased me,” he went on when he had eased himself sufficiently. “Ever crease cattle, Taylor?”

“Yes, suh, many a time down in God’s country.”

“Just so. That’s what happened to me. Bullet just grazed the base of my skull at the top of the neck. Stunned me but no harm done.” He turned to the bound man. “Get up, Jan. I’m going to lick you to a standstill or you’re going to apologize. The rest of you lads stand clear.”

“I tank not. Shust tie me loose und you see,” replied Jan, the Unrepentant, the devil within him still unconquered. “Und after as I lick you, I take der rest of der noddleheads, von after der odder, altogedder!”

The Jokers of New Gibbon

I

I'm almost afraid to take you in to New Gibbon, David Grief said. It wasn't until you and the British gave me a free hand and let the place alone that any results were accomplished.

Wallenstein, the German Resident Commissioner from Bougainville, poured himself a long Scotch and soda and smiled.

We take off our hats to you, Mr. Grief, he said in perfectly good English. What you have done on the devil island is a miracle. And we shall continue not to interfere. It is a devil island, and old Koho is the big chief devil of them all. We never could bring him to terms. He is a liar, and he is no fool. He is a black Napoleon, a head-hunting, man-eating Talleyrand. I remember six years ago, when I landed there in the British cruiser. The niggers cleared out for the bush, of course, but we found several who couldn't get away. One was his latest wife. She had been hung up by one arm in the sun for two days and nights. We cut her down, but she died just the same. And staked out in the fresh running water, up to their necks, were three more women. All their bones were broken and their joints crushed. The process is supposed to make them tender for the eating. They were still alive. Their vitality was remarkable. One woman, the oldest, lingered nearly ten days. Well, that was a sample of Koho's diet. No wonder he's a wild beast. How you ever pacified him is our everlasting puzzlement.

I wouldn't call him exactly pacified, Grief answered. Though he comes in once in a while and eats out of the hand.

That's more than we accomplished with our cruisers. Neither the German nor the English ever laid eyes on him. You were the first.

No; McTavish was the first, Grief disclaimed.

Ah, yes, I remember him — the little, dried-up Scotchman. Wallenstein sipped his whiskey. He's called the Trouble-mender, isn't he?

Grief nodded.

And they say the screw you pay him is bigger than mine or the British Resident's?

I'm afraid it is, Grief admitted. You see, and no offence, he's really worth it. He spends his time wherever the trouble is. He is a wizard. He's the one who got me my lodgment on New Gibbon. He's down on Malaita now, starting a plantation for me.

The first?

There's not even a trading station on all Malaita. The recruiters still use covering boats and carry the old barbed wire above their rails. There's the plantation now. We'll be in in half an hour. He handed the binoculars to his guest. Those are the

boat-sheds to the left of the bungalow. Beyond are the barracks. And to the right are the copra-sheds. We dry quite a bit already. Old Koho's getting civilized enough to make his people bring in the nuts. There's the mouth of the stream where you found the three women softening.

The Wonder, wing-and-wing, was headed directly in for the anchorage. She rose and fell lazily over a glassy swell flawed here and there by catspaws from astern. It was the tail-end of the monsoon season, and the air was heavy and sticky with tropic moisture, the sky a florid, leaden muss of formless clouds. The rugged land was swathed with cloud-banks and squall wreaths, through which headlands and interior peaks thrust darkly. On one promontory a slant of sunshine blazed torridly, on another, scarcely a mile away, a squall was bursting in furious downpour of driving rain.

This was the dank, fat, savage island of New Gibbon, lying fifty miles to leeward of Choiseul. Geographically, it belonged to the Solomon Group. Politically, the dividing line of German and British influence cut it in half, hence the joint control by the two Resident Commissioners. In the case of New Gibbon, this control existed only on paper in the colonial offices of the two countries. There was no real control at all, and never had been. The *bêche de met* fishermen of the old days had passed it by. The sandalwood traders, after stern experiences, had given it up. The blackbirders had never succeeded in recruiting one labourer on the island, and, after the schooner Dorset had been cut off with all hands, they left the place severely alone. Later, a German company had attempted a cocoanut plantation, which was abandoned after several managers and a number of contract labourers had lost their heads. German cruisers and British cruisers had failed to get the savage blacks to listen to reason. Four times the missionary societies had essayed the peaceful conquest of the island, and four times, between sickness and massacre, they had been driven away. More cruisers, more pacifications, had followed, and followed fruitlessly. The cannibals had always retreated into the bush and laughed at the screaming shells. When the warships left it was an easy matter to rebuild the burned grass houses and set up the ovens in the old-fashioned way.

New Gibbon was a large island, fully one hundred and fifty miles long and half as broad. Its windward coast was iron-bound, without anchorages or inlets, and it was inhabited by scores of warring tribes — at least it had been, until Koho had arisen, like a Kamehameha, and, by force of arms and considerable statecraft, firmly welded the greater portion of the tribes into a confederation. His policy of permitting no intercourse with white men had been eminently right, so far as survival of his own people was concerned; and after the visit of the last cruiser he had had his own way until David Grief and McTavish the Troublemender landed on the deserted beach where once had stood the German bungalow and barracks and the various English mission-houses.

Followed wars, false peaces, and more wars. The wizened little Scotchman could make trouble as well as mend it, and, not content with holding the beach, he imported bushmen from Malaita and invaded the wild-pig runs of the interior jungle. He burned

villages until Koho wearied of rebuilding them, and when he captured Koho's eldest son he compelled a conference with the old chief. It was then that McTavish laid down the rate of head-exchange. For each head of his own people he promised to take ten of Koho's. After Koho had learned that the Scotchman was a man of his word, the first true peace was made. In the meantime McTavish had built the bungalow and barracks, cleared the jungle-land along the beach, and laid out the plantation. After that he had gone on his way to mend trouble on the atoll of Tasman, where a plague of black measles had broken out and been ascribed to Grief's plantation by the devil-devil doctors. Once, a year later, he had been called back again to straighten up New Gibbon; and Koho, after paying a forced fine of two hundred thousand cocoanuts, decided it was cheaper to keep the peace and sell the nuts. Also, the fires of his youth had burned down. He was getting old and limped of one leg where a Lee-Enfield bullet had perforated the calf.

II

I knew a chap in Hawaii, Grief said, superintendent of a sugar plantation, who used a hammer and a ten-penny nail.

They were sitting on the broad bungalow veranda, and watching Worth, the manager of New Gibbon, doctoring the sick squad. They were New Georgia boys, a dozen of them, and the one with the aching tooth had been put back to the last. Worth had just failed in his first attempt. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with one hand and waved the forceps with the other.

And broke more than one jaw, he asserted grimly.

Grief shook his head. Wallenstein smiled and elevated his brows.

He said not, at any rate, Grief qualified. He assured me, furthermore, that he always succeeded on the first trial.

I saw it done when I was second mate on a lime-juicer, Captain Ward spoke up. The old man used a caulking mallet and a steel marlin-spike. He took the tooth out with the first stroke, too, clean as a whistle.

Me for the forceps, Worth muttered grimly, inserting his own pair in the mouth of the black. As he pulled, the man groaned and rose in the air. Lend a hand, somebody, and hold him down, the manager appealed.

Grief and Wallenstein, on either side, gripped the black and held him. And he, in turn, struggled against them and clenched his teeth on the forceps. The group swayed back and forth. Such exertion, in the stagnant heat, brought the sweat out on all of them. The black sweated, too, but his was the sweat of excruciating pain. The chair on which he sat was overturned. Captain Ward paused in the act of pouring himself a drink, and called encouragement. Worth pleaded with his assistants to hang on, and hung on himself, twisting the tooth till it crackled and then attempting a straightaway pull.

Nor did any of them notice the little black man who limped up the steps and stood looking on. Koho was a conservative. His fathers before him had worn no clothes, and neither did he, not even a g-string. The many empty perforations in nose and lips

and ears told of decorative passions long since dead. The holes on both ear-lobes had been torn out, but their size was attested by the strips of withered flesh that hung down and swept his shoulders. He cared now only for utility, and in one of the half dozen minor holes in his right ear he carried a short clay pipe. Around his waist was buckled a cheap trade-belt, and between the imitation leather and the naked skin was thrust the naked blade of a long knife. Suspended from the belt was his bamboo betel-nut and lime box. In his hand was a short-barrelled, large-bore Snider rifle. He was indescribably filthy, and here and there marred by scars, the worst being the one left by the Lee-Enfield bullet, which had withered the calf to half the size of its mate. His shrunken mouth showed that few teeth were left to serve him. Face and body were shrunken and withered, but his black, bead-like eyes, small and close together, were very bright, withal they were restless and querulous, and more like a monkey's than a man's.

He looked on, grinning like a shrewd little ape. His joy in the torment of the patient was natural, for the world he lived in was a world of pain. He had endured his share of it, and inflicted far more than his share on others. When the tooth parted from its locked hold in the jaw and the forceps raked across the other teeth and out of the mouth with a nerve-rasping sound, old Koho's eyes fairly sparkled, and he looked with glee at the poor black, collapsed on the veranda floor and groaning terribly as he held his head in both his hands.

I think he's going to faint, Grief said, bending over the victim. Captain Ward, give him a drink, please. You'd better take one yourself, Worth; you're shaking like a leaf.

And I think I'll take one, said Wallenstein, wiping the sweat from his face. His eye caught the shadow of Koho on the floor and followed it up to the old chief himself. Hello! who's this?

Hello, Koho! Grief said genially, though he knew better than to offer to shake hands.

It was one of Koho's tambos, given him by the devil-devil doctors when he was born, that never was his flesh to come in contact with the flesh of a white man. Worth and Captain Ward, of the Wonder, greeted Koho, but Worth frowned at sight of the Snider, for it was one of his tambos that no visiting bushman should carry a weapon on the plantation. Rifles had a nasty way of going off at the hip under such circumstances. The manager clapped his hands, and a black house-boy, recruited from San Cristobal, came running. At a sign from Worth, he took the rifle from the visitor's hand and carried it inside the bungalow.

Koho, Grief said, introducing the German Resident, this big fella marster belong Bougainville-my word, big fella marster too much.

Koho, remembering the visits of the various German cruisers, smiled with a light of unpleasant reminiscence in his eyes.

Don't shake hands with him, Wallenstein, Grief warned. Tambo, you know. Then to Koho, My word, you get 'm too much fat stop along you. Bime by you marry along new fella Mary, eh?

Too old fella me, Koho answered, with a weary shake of the head. Me no like 'm Mary. Me no like 'm kai-kai (food). Close up me die along altogether. He stole a significant glance at Worth, whose head was tilted back to a long glass. Me like 'm rum.

Grief shook his head.

Tambo along black fella.

He black fella no tambo, Koho retorted, nodding toward the groaning labourer.

He fella sick, Grief explained.

Me fella sick.

You fella big liar, Grief laughed. Rum tambo, all the time tambo. Now, Koho, we have big fella talk along this big fella marster.

And he and Wallenstein and the old chief sat down on the veranda to confer about affairs of state. Koho was complimented on the peace he had kept, and he, with many protestations of his aged decrepitude, swore peace again and everlasting. Then was discussed the matter of starting a German plantation twenty miles down the coast. The land, of course, was to be bought from Koho, and the price was arranged in terms of tobacco, knives, beads, pipes, hatchets, porpoise teeth and shell-money — in terms of everything except rum. While the talk went on, Koho, glancing through the window, could see Worth mixing medicines and placing bottles back in the medicine cupboard. Also, he saw the manager complete his labours by taking a drink of Scotch. Koho noted the bottle carefully. And, though he hung about for an hour after the conference was over, there was never a moment when some one or another was not in the room. When Grief and Worth sat down to a business talk, Koho gave it up.

Me go along schooner, he announced, then turned and limped out.

How are the mighty fallen, Grief laughed. To think that used to be Koho, the fiercest red-handed murderer in the Solomons, who defied all his life two of the greatest world powers. And now he's going aboard to try and cadge Denby for a drink.

III

For the last time in his life the supercargo of the Wonder perpetrated a practical joke on a native. He was in the main cabin, checking off the list of goods being landed in the whaleboats, when Koho limped down the companionway and took a seat opposite him at the table.

Close up me die along altogether, was the burden of the old chief's plaint. All the delights of the flesh had forsaken him. Me no like 'm Mary. Me no like 'm kai-kai. Me too much sick fella. Me close up finish. A long, sad pause, in which his face expressed unutterable concern for his stomach, which he patted gingerly and with an assumption of pain. Belly belong me too much sick. Another pause, which was an invitation to Denby to make suggestions. Then followed a long, weary, final sigh, and a Me like 'm rum.

Denby laughed heartlessly. He had been cadged for drinks before by the old cannibal, and the sternest tambo Grief and McTavish had laid down was the one forbidding alcohol to the natives of New Gibbon.

The trouble was that Koho had acquired the taste. In his younger days he had learned the delights of drunkenness when he cut off the schooner Dorset, but unfortunately he had learned it along with all his tribesmen, and the supply had not held out long. Later, when he led his naked warriors down to the destruction of the German plantation, he was wiser, and he appropriated all the liquors for his sole use. The result had been a gorgeous mixed drunk, on a dozen different sorts of drink, ranging from beer doctored with quinine to absinthe and apricot brandy. The drunk had lasted for months, and it had left him with a thirst that would remain with him until he died. Predisposed toward alcohol, after the way of savages, all the chemistry of his flesh clamoured for it. This craving was to him expressed in terms of tingling and sensation, of maggots crawling warmly and deliciously in his brain, of good feeling, and well being, and high exultation. And in his barren old age, when women and feasting were a weariness, and when old hates had smouldered down, he desired more and more the revivifying fire that came liquid out of bottles — out of all sorts of bottles — for he remembered them well. He would sit in the sun for hours, occasionally drooling, in mournful contemplation of the great orgy which had been his when the German plantation was cleaned out.

Denby was sympathetic. He sought out the old chief's symptoms and offered him dyspeptic tablets from the medicine chest, pills, and a varied assortment of harmless tabloids and capsules. But Koho steadfastly declined. Once, when he cut the Dorset off, he had bitten through a capsule of quinine; in addition, two of his warriors had partaken of a white powder and laid down and died very violently in a very short time. No; he did not believe in drugs. But the liquids from bottles, the cool-flaming youth-givers and warm-glowing dream-makers. No wonder the white men valued them so highly and refused to dispense them.

Rum he good fella, he repeated over and over, plaintively and with the weary patience of age.

And then Denby made his mistake and played his joke. Stepping around behind Koho, he unlocked the medicine closet and took out a four-ounce bottle labelled essence of mustard. As he made believe to draw the cork and drink of the contents, in the mirror on the fore-and bulkhead he glimpsed Koho, twisted half around, intently watching him. Denby smacked his lips and cleared his throat appreciatively as he replaced the bottle. Neglecting to relock the medicine closet, he returned to his chair, and, after a decent interval, went on deck. He stood beside the companionway and listened. After several moments the silence below was broken by a fearful, wheezing, propulsive, strangling cough. He smiled to himself and returned leisurely down the companionway. The bottle was back on the shelf where it belonged, and the old man sat in the same position. Denby marvelled at his iron control. Mouth and lips and tongue, and all sensitive membranes, were a blaze of fire. He gasped and nearly coughed several times, while involuntary tears brimmed in his eyes and ran down his cheeks. An ordinary man would have coughed and strangled for half an hour. But old Koho's face was grimly composed. It dawned on him that a trick had been played, and into his eyes came an

expression of hatred and malignancy so primitive, so abysmal, that it sent the chills up and down Denby's spine. Koho arose proudly.

Me go along, he said. You sing out one fella boat stop along me.

IV

Having seen Grief and Worth start for a ride over the plantation, Wallenstein sat down in the big living-room and with gun-oil and old rags proceeded to take apart and clean his automatic pistol. On the table beside him stood the inevitable bottle of Scotch and numerous soda bottles. Another bottle, part full, chanced to stand there. It was also labelled Scotch, but its content was liniment which Worth had mixed for the horses and neglected to put away.

As Wallenstein worked, he glanced through the window and saw Koho coming up the compound path. He was limping very rapidly, but when he came along the veranda and entered the room his gait was slow and dignified. He sat down and watched the gun-cleaning. Though mouth and lips and tongue were afire, he gave no sign. At the end of five minutes he spoke.

Rum he good fella. Me like 'm rum.

Wallenstein smiled and shook his head, and then it was that his perverse imp suggested what was to be his last joke on a native. The similarity of the two bottles was the real suggestion. He laid his pistol parts on the table and mixed himself a long drink. Standing as he did between Koho and the table, he interchanged the two bottles, drained his glass, made as if to search for something, and left the room. From outside he heard the surprised splutter and cough; but when he returned the old chief sat as before. The liniment in the bottle, however, was lower, and it still oscillated.

Koho stood up, clapped his hands, and, when the house-boy answered, signed that he desired his rifle. The boy fetched the weapon, and according to custom preceded the visitor down the pathway. Not until outside the gate did the boy turn the rifle over to its owner. Wallenstein, chuckling to himself, watched the old chief limp along the beach in the direction of the river.

A few minutes later, as he put his pistol together, Wallenstein heard the distant report of a gun. For the instant he thought of Koho, then dismissed the conjecture from his mind. Worth and Grief had taken shotguns with them, and it was probably one of their shots at a pigeon. Wallenstein lounged back in his chair, chuckled, twisted his yellow mustache, and dozed. He was aroused by the excited voice of Worth, crying out:

Ring the big fella bell! Ring plenty too much! Ring like hell!

Wallenstein gained the veranda in time to see the manager jump his horse over the low fence of the compound and dash down the beach after Grief, who was riding madly ahead. A loud crackling and smoke rising through the cocoanut trees told the story. The boat-houses and the barracks were on fire. The big plantation bell was ringing wildly as the German Resident ran down the beach, and he could see whaleboats hastily putting off from the schooner.

Barracks and boat-houses, grass-thatched and like tinder, were wrapped in flames. Grief emerged from the kitchen, carrying a naked black child by the leg. Its head was missing.

The cook's in there, he told Worth. Her head's gone, too. She was too heavy, and I had to clear out.

It was my fault, Wallenstein said. Old Koho did it. But I let him take a drink of Worth's horse liniment.

I guess he's headed for the bush, Worth said, springing astride his horse and starting. Oliver is down there by the river. Hope he didn't get him.

The manager galloped away through the trees. A few minutes later, as the charred wreck of the barracks crashed in, they heard him calling and followed. On the edge of the river bank they came upon him. He still sat on his horse, very white-faced, and gazed at something on the ground. It was the body of Oliver, the young assistant manager, though it was hard to realize it, for the head was gone. The black labourers, breathless from their run in from the fields, were now crowding around, and under Grief's direction they improvised a litter for the dead man.

Wallenstein was afflicted with paroxysms of true German sorrow and contrition. The tears were frankly in his eyes by the time he ceased from lamenting and began to swear. The wrath that flared up was as truly German as the oaths, and when he tried to seize Worth's shotgun a fleck of foam had appeared on his lips.

None of that, Grief commanded sternly. Straighten up, Wallenstein. Don't be a fool.

But are you going to let him escape? the German cried wildly.

He has escaped. The bush begins right here at the river. You can see where he waded across. He's in the wild-pig runs already. It would be like the needle in the haystack, and if we followed him some of his young men would get us. Besides, the runs are all man-trapped — you know, staked pits, poisoned thorns, and the rest. McTavish and his bushmen are the only fellows who can negotiate the runs, and three of his men were lost that way the last time. Come on back to the house. You'll hear the conches to-night, and the war-drums, and all merry hell break loose. They won't rush us, but keep all the boys close up to the house, Mr. Worth. Come on!

As they returned along the path they came upon a black who whimpered and cried vociferously.

Shut up mouth belong you! Worth shouted. What name you make 'm noise?

Him fella Koho finish along two fella bullamacow, the black answered, drawing a forefinger significantly across his throat.

He's knifed the cows, Grief said. That means no more milk for some time for you, Worth. I'll see about sending a couple up from Ugi.

Wallenstein proved inconsolable, until Denby, coming ashore, confessed to the dose of essence of mustard. Thereat the German Resident became even cheerful, though he twisted his yellow mustache up more fiercely and continued to curse the Solomons with oaths culled from four languages.

Next morning, visible from the masthead of the Wonder, the bush was alive with signal-smokes. From promontory to promontory, and back through the solid jungle, the smoke-pillars curled and puffed and talked. Remote villages on the higher peaks, beyond the farthest raids McTavish had ever driven, joined in the troubled conversation. From across the river persisted a bedlam of conches; while from everywhere, drifting for miles along the quiet air, came the deep, booming reverberations of the great war-drums — huge tree trunks, hollowed by fire and carved with tools of stone and shell.

You're all right as long as you stay close, Grief told his manager. I've got to get along to Guvutu. They won't come out in the open and attack you. Keep the work-gangs close. Stop the clearing till this blows over. They'll get any detached gangs you send out. And, whatever you do, don't be fooled into going into the bush after Koho. If you do, he'll get you. All you've got to do is wait for McTavish. I'll send him up with a bunch of his Malaita bushmen. He's the only man who can go inside. Also, until he comes, I'll leave Denby with you. You don't mind, do you, Mr. Denby? I'll send McTavish up with the Wanda, and you can go back on her and rejoin the Wonder. Captain Ward can manage without you for a trip.

It was just what I was going to volunteer, Denby answered. I never dreamed all this muss would be kicked up over a joke. You see, in a way I consider myself responsible for it.

So am I responsible, Wallenstein broke in.

But I started it, the supercargo urged.

Maybe you did, but I carried it along.

And Koho finished it, Grief said.

At any rate, I, too, shall remain, said the German.

I thought you were coming to Guvutu with me, Grief protested.

I was. But this is my jurisdiction, partly, and I have made a fool of myself in it completely. I shall remain and help get things straight again.

V

At Guvutu, Grief sent full instructions to McTavish by a recruiting ketch which was just starting for Malaita. Captain Ward sailed in the Wonder for the Santa Cruz Islands; and Grief, borrowing a whaleboat and a crew of black prisoners from the British Resident, crossed the channel to Guadalcanar, to examine the grass lands back of Penduffryn.

Three weeks later, with a free sheet and a lusty breeze, he threaded the coral patches and surged up the smooth water to Guvutu anchorage. The harbour was deserted, save for a small ketch which lay close in to the shore reef. Grief recognized it as the Wanda. She had evidently just got in by the Tulagi Passage, for her black crew was still at work furling the sails. As he rounded alongside, McTavish himself extended a hand to help him over the rail.

What's the matter? Grief asked. Haven't you started yet?

McTavish nodded. And got back. Everything's all right on board.

How's New Gibbon?

All there, the last I saw of it, barrin' a few inconsequential frills that a good eye could make out lacking from the landscape.

He was a cold flame of a man, small as Koho, and as dried up, with a mahogany complexion and small, expressionless blue eyes that were more like gimlet-points than the eyes of a Scotchman. Without fear, without enthusiasm, impervious to disease and climate and sentiment, he was lean and bitter and deadly as a snake. That his present sour look boded ill news, Grief was well aware.

Spit it out! he said. What's happened?

'Tis a thing severely to be condemned, a damned shame, this joking with heathen niggers, was the reply. Also, 'tis very expensive. Come below, Mr. Grief. You'll be better for the information with a long glass in your hand. After you.

How did you settle things? his employer demanded as soon as they were seated in the cabin.

The little Scotchman shook his head. There was nothing to settle. It all depends how you look at it. The other way would be to say it was settled, entirely settled, mind you, before I got there.

But the plantation, man? The plantation?

No plantation. All the years of our work have gone for naught.'Tis back where we started, where the missionaries started, where the Germans started — and where they finished. Not a stone stands on another at the landing pier. The houses are black ashes. Every tree is hacked down, and the wild pigs are rooting out the yams and sweet potatoes. Those boys from New Georgia, a fine bunch they were, five score of them, and they cost you a pretty penny. Not one is left to tell the tale.

He paused and began fumbling in a large locker under the companion-steps.

But Worth? And Denby? And Wallenstein?

That's what I'm telling you. Take a look.

McTavish dragged out a sack made of rice matting and emptied its contents on the floor. David Grief pulled himself together with a jerk, for he found himself gazing fascinated at the heads of the three men he had left at New Gibbon. The yellow mustache of Wallenstein had lost its fierce curl and drooped and wilted on the upper lip.

I don't know how it happened, the Scotchman's voice went on drearily. But I surmise they went into the bush after the old devil.

And where is Koho? Grief asked.

Back in the bush and drunk as a lord. That's how I was able to recover the heads. He was too drunk to stand. They lugged him on their backs out of the village when I rushed it. And if you'll relieve me of the heads, I'll be well obliged. He paused and sighed. I suppose they'll have regular funerals over them and put them in the ground. But in my way of thinking they'd make excellent curios. Any respectable museum would pay a hundred quid apiece. Better have another drink. You're looking a bit pale — There, put that down you, and if you'll take my advice, Mr. Grief, I would say, set

your face sternly against any joking with the niggers. It always makes trouble, and it is a very expensive divertissement.

Just Meat

He strolled to the corner and glanced up and down the intersecting street, but saw nothing save the oases of light shed by the street lamps at the successive crossings. Then he strolled back the way he had come. He was a shadow of a man sliding noiselessly and without undue movement through the semi-darkness. Also he was very alert, like a wild animal in the jungle, keenly perceptive and receptive. The movement of another in the darkness about him would need to have been more shadowy than he to have escaped him.

In addition to the running advertisement of the state of affairs carried to him by his senses, he had a subtler perception, a feel, of the atmosphere around him. He knew that the house in front of which he paused for a moment contained children. Yet by no willed effort of perception did he have this knowledge. For that matter, he was not even aware that he knew, so occult was the impression. Yet, did a moment arise in which action, in relation to that house, were imperative, he would have acted on the assumption that it contained children. He was not aware of all that he knew about the neighborhood.

In the same way, he knew not how, he knew that no danger threatened in the footfalls that came up the cross street. Before he saw the walker, he knew him for a belated pedestrian hurrying home. The walker came into view at the crossing and disappeared on up the street. The man that watched noted a light that flared up in the window of a house on the corner, and as it died down he knew it for an expiring match. This was conscious identification of familiar phenomena, and through his mind flitted the thought, "Wanted to know what time." In another house one room was lighted. The light burned dimly and steadily and he had the feel that it was a sick-room.

He was especially interested in a house across the street in the middle of the block. To this house he paid most attention. No matter what way he looked, nor what way he walked, his looks and his steps always returned to it. Except for an open window above the porch, there was nothing unusual about the house. Nothing came in nor out. Nothing happened. There were no lighted windows, nor had lights appeared and disappeared in any of the windows. Yet it was the central point of his consideration. He rallied to it each time after a divination of the state of the neighborhood.

Despite his feel of things, he was not confident. He was supremely conscious of the precariousness of his situation. Though unperturbed by the footfalls of the chance pedestrian, he was as keyed up and sensitive and ready to be startled as any timorous deer. He was aware of the possibility of other intelligences prowling about in the darkness—intelligences similar to his own in movement, perception, and divination.

Far down the street he caught a glimpse of something that moved. And he knew it was no late home-goer, but menace and danger. He whistled twice to the house across the street, then faded away shadow-like to the corner and around the corner. Here he paused and looked about him carefully. Reassured, he peered back around the corner and studied the object that moved and that was coming nearer. He had divined aright. It was a policeman.

The man went down the cross street to the next corner, from the shelter of which he watched the corner he had just left. He saw the policeman pass by, going straight on up the street. He paralleled the policeman's course, and from the next corner again watched him go by; then he returned the way he had come. He whistled once to the house across the street, and after a time whistled once again. There was reassurance in the whistle, just as there had been warning in the previous double whistle.

He saw a dark bulk outline itself on the roof of the porch and slowly descend a pillar. Then it came down the steps, passed through the small iron gate, and went down the sidewalk, taking on the form of a man. He that watched kept on his own side the street and moved on abreast to the corner, where he crossed over and joined the other. He was quite small alongside the man he accosted.

"How'd you make out, Matt?" he asked.

The other grunted indistinctly, and walked on in silence a few steps.

"I reckon I landed the goods," he said.

Jim chuckled in the darkness, and waited for further information. The blocks passed by under their feet, and he grew impatient.

"Well, how about them goods?" he asked. "What kind of a haul you make, anyway?"

"I was too busy to figger it out, but it's fat. I can tell you that much Jim, it's fat. I don't cast to think how fat it is. Wait till we get to the room."

Jim looked at him keenly under the street lamp of the next crossing and saw that his face was a trifle grim and that he carried his left arm peculiarly.

"What's the matter with your arm?" he demanded.

"The little cuss bit me. Hope I don't get hydrophoby. Folks gets hydrophoby from manbite sometimes, don't they?"

"Gave you a fight, eh?" Jim asked encouragingly.

The other grunted.

"You're harder'n hell to get information from," Jim burst out irritably. "Tell us about it. You ain't goin' to lose money just a-tellin' a guy."

"I guess I choked him some," came the answer. Then, by way of explanation, "He woke up on me."

"You did it neat. I never heard a sound."

"Jim," the other said with seriousness, "it's a hangin' matter. I fixed 'm. I had to. He woke up on me. You an' me's got to do some layin' low for a spell."

Jim gave a low whistle of comprehension.

"Did you hear me whistle?" he asked suddenly.

"Sure. I was all done. I was just comin' out."

"It was a bull. But he wasn't on a little bit. Went right by an' kept a-paddin' the hoof out a sight. Then I come back an' gave you the whittle. What made you take so long after that?"

"I was waitin' to make sure," Matt explained. "I was mighty glad when I heard you whistle again. It's hard work waitin'. I just sat there an' thought an' thought . . . oh, all kinds of things. It's remarkable what a fellow'll think about. And then there was a darn cat that kept movin' around the house an' botherin' me with its noises."

"An' it's fat!" Jim exclaimed irrelevantly and with joy.

"I'm sure tellin' you, Jim, it's fat. I'm plum' anxious for another look at 'em."

Unconsciously the two men quickened their pace. Yet they did not relax from their caution. Twice they changed their course in order to avoid policemen, and they made very sure that they were not obvious when they dived into the dark hallway of a cheap rooming house down town.

Not until they had gained their own room on the top floor did they scratch a match. While Jim lighted a lamp, Matt locked the door and throw the bolts into place. As he turned, he noticed that his partner was waiting expectantly. Matt smiled to himself at the other's eagerness.

"Them search-lights is all right," he said, drawing forth a small pocket electric lamp and examining it. "But we got to get a new battery. It's runnin' pretty weak. I thought once or twice it'd leave me in the dark. Funny arrangements in that house. I near got lost. His room was on the left, an' that fooled me some."

"I told you it was on the left," Jim interrupted.

"You told me it was on the right," Matt went on. "I guess I know what you told me, an' there's the map you drew."

Fumbling in his vest pocket, he drew out a folded slip of paper. As he unfolded it, Jim bent over and looked.

"I did make a mistake," he confessed.

"You sure did. It got me guessin' some for a while."

"But it don't matter now," Jim cried. "Let's see what you got."

"It does matter," Matt retorted. "It matters a lot . . . to me. I've got to run all the risk. I put my head in the trap while you stay on the street. You got to get on to yourself an' be more careful. All right, I'll show you."

He dipped loosely into his trousers pocket and brought out a handful of small diamonds. He spilled them out in a blazing stream on the greasy table. Jim let out a great oath.

"That's nothing," Matt said with triumphant complacency. "I ain't begun yet."

From one pocket after another he continued bringing forth the spoil. There were many diamonds wrapped in chamois skin that were larger than those in the first handful. From one pocket he brought out a handful of very small cut gems.

"Sun dust," he remarked, as he spilled them on the table in a space by themselves. Jim examined them.

"Just the same, they retail for a couple of dollars each," he said. "Is that all?"

“Ain’t it enough ?” the other demanded in an aggrieved tone.

“Sure it is,” Jim answered with unqualified approval. “Better’n I expected. I wouldn’t take a cent less than ten thousan’ for the bunch.”

“Ten thousan’,” Matt sneered. “They’re worth twic’t that, an’ I don’t know anything about joolery, either. Look at that big boy!”

He picked it out from the sparkling heap and held it near to the lamp with the air of an expert, weighing and judging.

“Worth a thousan’ all by its lonely,” was Jim’s quicker judgment.

“A thousan’ your grandmother,” was Matt’s scornful rejoinder. “‘You couldn’t buy it for three.”

“Wake me up! I’m dreamin’!” The sparkle of the gems was in Jim’s eyes, and he began sorting out the larger diamonds and examining them. “We’re rich men, Matt—we’ll be regular swells.”

“It’ll take years to get rid of ‘em,” was Matt’s more practical thought.

“But think how we’ll live! Nothin’ to do but spend the money an go on gettin’ rid of ‘em.”

Matt’s eyes were beginning to sparkle, though sombrely, as his phlegmatic nature woke up.

“I told you I didn’t cast think how fat it was,” he murmured in a low voice.

“What a killin’! What a killin’!” was the other’s more ecstatic utterance.

“I almost forgot,” Matt said, thrusting his hand into his inside coat pocket.

A string of large pearls emerged from wrappings of tissue paper and chamois skin. Jim scarcely glanced at them.

“They’re worth money,” he said, and returned to the diamonds.

A silence fell on the two men. Jim played with the gems, running them through his fingers, sorting them into piles, and spreading them out flat and wide. He was a slender, wizened man, nervous, irritable, high-strung, and anaemic—a typical child of the gutter, with unbeautiful twisted features, small-eyed, with face and mouth perpetually and feverishly hungry, brutish in a catlike way, stamped to the core with degeneracy.

Matt did not finger the diamonds. He sat with chin on hands and elbows on table, blinking heavily at the blazing array. He was in every way a contrast to the other. No city had bred him. He was heavy-muscled and hairy, gorilla-like in strength and aspect. For him there was no unseen world. His eyes were full and wide apart, and there seemed in them a certain bold brotherliness. They inspired confidence. But a closer inspection would have shown that his eyes were just a trifle too full, just a shade too wide apart. He exceeded, spilled over the limits of normality, and his features told lies about the man beneath.

“The bunch is worth fifty thousan’,” Jim remarked suddenly.

“A hundred thousan’,” Matt said.

The silence returned and endured a long time, to be broken again by him.

“What in hell was he coin’ with ‘em all at the house?—that’s what I want to know. I’d a-thought he’d kept ‘em in the safe down at the store.”

Matt had just been considering the vision of the throttled man as he had last looked upon him in the dim light of the electric lantern; but he did not start at the mention of him.

“There’s no tellin’,” he answered. “He might a-ben gettin’ ready to chuck his pardner. He might a-pulled out in the mornin’ for parts unknown, if we hadn’t happened along. I guess there’s just as many thieves among honest men as there is among thieves. You read about such things in the papers, Jim. Pardners is always knifin’ each other.”

A queer, nervous look came in the other’s eyes. Matt did not betray that he noted it, though he said:—

“What was you thinkin’ about, Jim?”

Jim was a trifle awkward for the moment.

“Nothin’,” he answered. “Only I was thinkin’ just how funny it was—all them jools at his house. What made you ask?”

“Nothin’. I was just wonderin’, that was all.”

The silence settled down, broken by an occasional low and nervous giggle on the part of Jim. He was overcome by the spread of gems. It was not that he felt their beauty. He was unaware that they were beautiful | in themselves. But in them his swift imagination visioned the joys of life they would buy, and all the desires and appetites of his diseased mind and sickly flesh were tickled by the promise they extended. He builded wondrous, orgy-haunted castles out of their brilliant fires, and was appalled at what he builded. Then it was that he giggled. It was all too impossible to be real. And yet there they blazed on the table before him, fanning the flame of the lust of him, and he giggled again.

“I guess we might as well count ‘em,” Matt said suddenly, tearing himself away from his own visions. “You watch me an’ see that it’s square, because you an’ me has got to be on the square, Jim. Understand?”

Jim did not like this, and betrayed it in his eyes, while Matt did not like what he saw in his partner’s eyes

“Understand?” Matt repeated, almost menacingly.

“Ain’t we always teen square?” the other replied, on the defensive, what of the treachery already whispering in him.

“It don’t cost nothin’, bein’ square in hard times,” Matt retorted. “It’s bein’ square in prosperity that counts. When we ain’t got nothing we can’t help bein’ square. We’re prosperous now, an’ we’ve got to be business men—honest business men. Understand?”

“That’s the talk for me,” Jim approved, but deep down in the meagre soul of him,—and in spite of him,—wanton and lawless thoughts were stirring like chained beasts.

Matt stepped to the food shelf behind the two-burner kerosene cooking stove. He emptied the tea from a paper bag, and from a second bag emptied some red peppers. Returning to the table with the bags, he put into them the two sizes of small diamonds. Then he counted the large gems and wrapped them in their tissue paper and chamois skin.

“Hundred an’ forty-seven good-sized ones,” was his inventory “twenty real big ones; two big boys and one whopper; an’ a couple of fistfuls of teeny ones an’ dust.”

He looked at Jim.

“Correct,” was the response.

He wrote the count out on a slip of memorandum paper, and made a copy of it, giving one slip to his partner and retaining the other.

“Just for reference,” he said.

Again he had recourse to the food shelf, where he emptied the sugar from a large paper bag. Into this he thrust the diamonds, large small, wrapped it up in a bandana handkerchief, and stowed it away under his pillow. Then he sat down on the edge of the bed and took off his shoes.

“An’ you think they’re worth a hundred thousan’?” Jim asked, pausing and looking up from the unlacing of his shoe.

“Sure,” was the answer. “I seen a dance-house girl down in Arizona once, with some big sparklers on her. They wasn’t real. She said if they was she wouldn’t be dancin’. Said they’d be worth all of fifty thousan’, an’ she didn’t have a dozen of ’em all told.”

“Who’d work for a livin’?” Jim triumphantly demanded. “Pick an’ shovel work!” he sneered. “Work like a dog all my life, an’ save all my wages, an’ I wouldn’t have half as much as we got to-night.”

“Dish washin’s about your measure, an’ you couldn’t get more’n twenty a month an’ board. Your figgers is ‘way off, but your point is well taken. Let them that likes it, work. I rode range for thirty a month when I was young an’ foolish. Well, I’m older, an’ I ain’t ridin’ range.”

He got into bed on one side. Jim put out the light and followed him in the other side.

‘How’s your arm feel?’ Jim queried amiably.

Such concern was unusual, and Matt noted it, and replied:—

‘I guess there’s no danger of hydrophoby. What made you ask?’

Jim felt in himself a guilty stir, and under his breath he cursed the other’s way of asking disagreeable questions; but aloud he answered:—

Nothin’, only you seemed scared of it at first. What are you goin’ to do with your share, Matt?”

Buy a cattle ranch in Arizona an’ set down an’ pay other men to ride range for me. There’s some several I’d like to see askin’ for a job from me, damn them! An’ now you shut your face, Jim. It’ll be some time before I buy that ranch. Just now I’m goin’ to sleep.”

But Jim lay long awake, nervous and twitching, rolling about restlessly and rolling himself wide awake every time he dozed. The diamonds still blazed under his eyelids, and the fire of them hurt. Matt, in spite of his heavy nature, slept lightly, like a wild animal alert in its sleep; and Jim noticed, every time he moved, that his partner’s body moved sufficiently to show that it had received the impression and that it was trembling on the verge of awakening. For that matter, Jim did not know whether or

not, frequently, the other was awake. Once, quietly, betokening complete consciousness, Matt said to him: "Aw, go to sleep, Jim. Don't worry about them jools. They'll keep." And Jim had thought that at that particular moment Matt had been surely asleep.

In the late morning Matt was awake with Jim's first movement, and thereafter he awoke and dozed with him until midday, when they got up together and began dressing.

"I'm goin' out to get a paper an' some bread," Matt said. "You boil the coffee."

As Jim listened, unconsciously his gaze left Matt's face and roved to the pillow, beneath which was the bundle wrapped in the bandana handkerchief. On the instant Matt's face became like a wild beast's.

"Look here, Jim," he snarled. "You've got to play square. If you do me dirt, I'll fix you. Understand? I'd eat you, Jim. You know that. I'd bite right into your throat an' eat you like that much beefsteak."

His sunburned skin was black with the surge of blood in it, and his tobacco-stained teeth were exposed by the snarling lips. Jim shivered and involuntarily cowered. There was death in the man he looked at. Only the night before that black-faced man had killed another with his hands, and it had not hurt his sleep. And in his own heart Jim was aware of a sneaking guilt, of a train of thought that merited all that was threatened.

Matt passed out, leaving him still shivering. Then a hatred twisted his own face, and he softly hurled savage curses at the door. He remembered the jewels, and hastened to the bed, feeling under the pillow for the bandana bundle. He crushed it with his fingers to make certain that it still contained the diamonds. Assured that Matt had not carried them away, he looked toward the kerosene stove with a guilty start. Then he hurriedly lighted it, filled the coffee-pot at the sink, and put it over the flame.

The coffee was boiling when Matt returned, and while the latter cut the bread and put a slice of butter on the table, Jim poured out the coffee. It was not until he sat down and had taken a few sips of the coffee, that Matt pulled out the morning paper from his pocket.

"We was way off," he said. "I told you I didn't dast figger out how fat it was. Look at that."

He pointed to the head-lines on the first page.

"SWIFT NEMESIS ON BUJANNOFF'S TRACK," they read.

"MURDERED IN HIS SLEEP AFTER ROBBING HIS PARTNER."

"There you have it!" Matt cried. "He robbed his partner—robbed him like a dirty thief."

"Half a million of jewels missin'," Jim read aloud. He put the paper down and stared at Matt. "That's what I told you," the latter said. "What in hell do we know about jools? Half a million!—an' the best I could figger it was a hundred thousan'. Go on an' read the rest of it."

They read on silently, their heads side by side, the untouched coffee growing cold; and ever and anon one or the other burst forth with some salient printed fact.

"I'd like to see Metzner's face when he opened the safe at the store this mornin'," Jim gloated.

"He hit the high places right away for Bujannoff's house," Matt explained. "Go on an' read."

"Was to have sailed last night at ten on the Sajoda for the South Seas—steamship delayed by extra freight—"

"That's why we caught 'm in bed," Matt interrupted. "It was just luck—like pickin' a fifty-to-one winner."

"Sajoda sailed at six this mornin'—"

He didn't catch her," Matt said. "I saw his alarm-clock was set at five. That'd given 'm plenty of time . . . only I come along an' put the kibosh on his time. Go on."

"Adolph Metzner in despair—the famous Haythorne pearl necklace—magnificently assorted pearls—valued by experts at from fifty to seventy thousand dollars."

Jim broke off to swear vilely and solemnly, concluding with, "Those damn oyster-eggs worth all that money!"

He licked his lips and added, "They was beauties an' no mistake."

"Big Brazilian gem," he read on. "Eighty thousand dollars—many valuable gems of the first water—several thousand small diamonds well worth forty thousand'."

"What you don't know about jools is worth knowin'," Matt smiled good-humoredly.

"Theory of the sleuths," Jim read. "Thieves must have known—cleverly kept watch on Bujannoff's actions—must have learned his plan and trailed him to his house with the fruits of his robbery—"

"Clever—hell!" Matt broke out. "That's the way reputations is made. . .in the noospapers. How'd we know he was robbin' his pardner?"

"Anyway, we've got the goods," Jim grinned. "Let's look at 'em again."

He assured himself that the door was locked and bolted, while Matt brought out the bundle in the bandana and opened it on the table.

"Ain't they beauties, though!" Jim exclaimed at sight of the pearls; and for a time he had eyes only for them. "Accordin' to the experts, worth from fifty to seventy thousand dollars."

"An' women like them things," Matt commented. "An' they'll do everything to get 'em—sell themselves, commit murder, anything."

"Just like you an' me."

"Not on your life," Matt retorted. "I'll commit murder for 'em, but nor their own sakes, but for sake of what they'll get me. That's the difference. Women want the jools for themselves, an' I want the jools for the women an' such things they'll get me."

"Lucky that men an' women don't want the same things," Jim remarked.

"That's what makes commerce," Matt agreed; "people wantin' different things."

In the middle of the afternoon Jim went out to buy food. While he was gone, Matt cleared the table of the jewels, wrapping them up as before and putting them under the pillow. Then he lighted the kerosene stove and started to boil water for the coffee. A few minutes later Jim returned.

“Most surprising,” he remarked. “Streets, an’ stores, an’ people just like they always was. Nothin’ changed. An’ me walkin’ along through it all a millionaire. Nobody looked at me an’ guessed it.”

Matt grunted unsympathetically. He had little comprehension of the lighter whims and fancies of his partner’s imagination.

“Did you get a porterhouse?” he demanded.

“Sure, en’ en inch thick. It’s a peach. Look at it.”

He unwrapped the steak and held it up for the other’s inspection. Then he made the coffee and set the table, while Matt fried the steak.

“Don’t put on too much of them red peppers,” Jim warned. “I ain’t used to your Mexican cookin’. You always season too hot.”

Matt grunted a laugh and went on with his cooking. Jim poured out the coffee, but first, into the nicked china cup, he emptied a powder he had carried in his vest pocket wrapped in a rice-paper. He had turned his back for the moment on his partner, but he did not dare to glance around at him. Matt placed a newspaper on the table, and on the newspaper set the hot frying-pan. He cut the steak in half, and served Jim and himself.

“Eat her while she’s hot,” he counselled, and with knife and fork set the example.

“She’s a dandy,” was Jim’s judgment, after his first mouthful. “But I tell you one thing straight. I’m never goin’ to visit you on that Arizona ranch, so you needn’t ask me.”

“What’s the matter now?” Matt asked.

“Hell’s the matter,” was the answer. “The Mexican cookin’ on your ranch’d be too much for me. If I’ve got hell a-comin’ in the next life, I’m not goin’ to torment my insides in this one. Damned peppers!”

He smiled, expelled his breath forcibly to cool his burning mouth, drank some coffee, and went on eating the steak.

“What do you think about the next life anyway, Matt?” he asked a little later, while secretly he wondered why the other had not yet touched his coffee.

“Ain’t no next life,” Matt answered, pausing from the steak to take his first sip of coffee. “Nor heaven nor hell, nor nothin’. You get all that’s comin’ right here in this life.”

“An’ afterward?” Jim queried out of his morbid curiosity, for he knew that he looked upon a man that was soon to die. “An’ afterward?” he repeated.

“Did you ever see a man two weeks dead?” the other asked.

Jim shook his head.

“Well, I have. He was like this beefsteak you an’ me is eatin’. It was once steer cavortin’ over the landscape. But now it’s just meat. That’s all, just meat. An’ that’s what you an’ me an’ all people come to—meat.”

Matt gulped down the whole cup of coffee, and refilled the cup.

“Are you scared to die?” he asked.

Jim shook his head. “What’s the use? I don’t die anyway. I pass on an’ live again—”

To go stealin', an' Iyin' an' snivellin' through another life, an' go on that way forever an' ever an' ever?" Matt sneered.

"Maybe I'll improve," Jim suggested hopefully. "Maybe stealin' won't be necessary in the life to come."

He ceased abruptly, and stared straight before him, a frightened expression on his face.

"What's the matter?" Matt demanded.

"Nothin'. I was just wonderin'"—Jim returned to himself with an effort—"about this dyin', that was all."

But he could not shake off the fright that had startled him. It was as if an unseen thing of gloom had passed him by, casting upon him the intangible shadow of its presence. He was aware of a feeling of foreboding. Something ominous was about to happen. Calamity hovered in the air. He gazed fixedly across the table at the other man. He could not understand. Was it that he had blundered and poisoned himself? No Matt had the nicked cup, and he had certainly put the poison in the nicked cup.

It was all his own imagination, was his next thought. It had played him tricks before. Fool! Of course it was. Of course something was about to happen, but it was about to happen to Matt. Had not Matt drunk the whole cup of coffee?

Jim brightened up and finished his steak, sopping bread in the gravy when the meat was gone.

"When I was a kid—" he began, but broke off abruptly.

Again the unseen thing of gloom had fluttered, and his being was vibrant with premonition of impending misfortune. He felt a disruptive influence at work in the flesh of him, and in all his muscles there was a seeming that they were about to begin to twitch. He sat back suddenly, and as suddenly leaned forward with his elbows on the table. A tremor ran dimly through the muscles of his body. It was like the first rustling of leaves before the oncoming of wind. He clenched his teeth. It came again, a spasmodic tensing of his muscles. He knew panic at the revolt within his being. His muscles no longer recognized his mastery over them. Again they spasmodically tensed, despite the will of him, for he had willed that they should not tense. This was revolution within himself, this was anarchy; and the terror of impotence rushed up in him as his flesh gripped and seemed to seize him in a clutch, chills running up and down his back and sweat starting on his brow. He glanced about the room, and all the details of it smote him with a strange sense of familiarity. It was as though he had just returned from a long journey. He looked across the table at his partner. Matt was watching him and smiling. An expression of horror spread over Jim's face.

"My God, Matt!" he screamed. "You ain't doped me?"

Matt smiled and continued to watch him. In the paroxysm that followed, Jim did not become unconscious. His muscles tensed and twitched and knotted, hurting him and crushing him in their savage grip. And in the midst of it all, it came to him that Matt was acting queerly. He was travelling the same road. The smile had gone from his face, and there was on it an intent expression, as if he were listening to some inner

tale of himself and trying to divine the message. Matt got up and walked across the room and back again, then sat down.

"You did this, Jim," he said quietly.

"But I didn't think you'd try to fix me," Jim answered reproachfully.

"Oh, I fixed you all right," Matt said, with teeth close together and shivering body. "What did you give me?"

"Strychnine."

"Same as I gave you," Matt volunteered. "It's a hell of a mess, ain't it?"

"You're Iyin', Matt," Jim pleaded. "You ain't doped me, have you?"

"I sure did, Jim; an' I didn't overdose you, neither. I cooked it in as neat as you please in your half the porterhouse.—Hold on! Where're you goin'?"

Jim had made a dash for the door, and was throwing back the bolts. Matt sprang in between and shoved him away.

"Drug store," Jim panted. "Drug store."

"No you don't. You'll stay right here. There ain't goin' to be any runnin' out an' makin' a poison play on the street—not with all them jools reposin' under the pillow. Savve? Even if you didn't die, you'd be in the hands of the police with a whole lot of explanations comin'. Emeetics is the stuff for poison. I'm just as bad bit as you, an' I'm goin' to take a emetic. That's all they'd give you at a drug store, anyway."

He thrust Jim back into the middle of the room and shot the bolts into place. As he went across the floor to the food shelf, he passed one hand over his brow and flung off the beaded sweat. It splattered audibly on the floor. Jim watched agonizedly as Matt got the mustard-can and a cup and ran for the sink. He stirred a cupful of mustard and water and drank it down. Jim had followed him and was reaching with trembling hands for the empty cup. Again Matt shoved him away. As he mixed a second cupful, he demanded:—

"D'you think one cup'll do for me ? You can wait till I'm done."

Jim started to totter toward the door, but Matt checked him.

"If you monkey with that door, I'll twist your neck. Savve? You can take yours when I'm done. An' if it saves you, I'll twist your neck, anyway. You ain't got no chance, nowhow. I told you many times what you'd get if you did me dirt."

But you did me dirt, too," Jim articulated with an effort.

Matt was drinking the second cupful, and did not answer. The sweat had got into Jim's eyes, and he could scarcely see his way to the table, where he got a cup for himself. But Matt was mixing a third cupful, and, as before, thrust him away.

"I told you to wait till I was done," Matt growled. "Get outa my way."

And Jim supported his twitching body by holding on to the sink, the while he yearned toward the yellowish concoction that stood for life. It was by sheer will that he stood and clung to the sink. His flesh strove to double him up and bring him to the floor. Matt drank the third cupful, and with difficulty managed to get to a chair and sit down. His first paroxysm was passing. The spasms that afflicted him were dying away. This good effect he ascribed to the mustard and water. He was safe, at any rate.

He wiped the sweat from his face, and, in the interval of calm, found room for curiosity. He looked at his partner.

A spasm had shaken the mustard can out of Jim's hands, and the contents were spilled upon the floor. He stooped to scoop some of the mustard into the cup, and the succeeding spasm doubled him upon the floor. Matt smiled.

"Stay with it," he encouraged. "It's the stuff all right. It's fixed me up."

Jim heard him and turned toward him a stricken face, twisted with suffering and pleading. Spasm now followed spasm till he was in convulsions, rolling on the floor and yellowing his face and hair in mustard.

Matt laughed hoarsely at the sight, but the laugh broke midway. A tremor had run through his body. A new paroxysm was beginning. He arose and staggered across to the sink, where, with probing forefinger, he vainly strove to assist the action of the emetic. In the end, he clung to the sink as Jim had clung, filled with the horror of going down to the floor.

The other's paroxysm had passed, and he sat up, weak and fainting, too weak to rise, his forehead dripping, his lips flecked with a foam made yellow by the mustard in which he had rolled. He rubbed his eyes with his knuckles, and groans that were like whines came from his throat.

"What are you sniffin' about?" Matt demanded out of his agony. "All you got to do is die. An' when you die you're dead."

"I . . . ain't . . . sniffin' . . . it's . . . the . . . mustard . . . stingin' my . . . eyes," Jim panted with desperate slowness.

It was his last successful attempt at speech. Thereafter he babbled incoherently, pawing the air with shaking arms till a fresh convulsion stretched him on the floor.

Matt struggled back to the chair, and, doubled up on it, with his arms clasped about his knees, he fought with his disintegrating flesh. He came out of the convulsion cool and weak. He looked to see how it went with the other, and saw him lying motionless.

He tried to soliloquize, to be facetious, to have his last grim laugh at life, but his lips made only incoherent sounds. The thought came to him that the emetic had failed, and that nothing remained but the drugstore. He looked toward the door and drew himself to his feet. There he saved himself from falling by clutching the chair. Another paroxysm had begun. And in the midst of the paroxysm, with his body and all the parts of it flying apart and writhing and twisting back again into knots, he clung to the chair and shoved it before him across the floor. The last shreds of his will were leaving him when he gained the door. He turned the key and shot back one bolt. He fumbled for the second bolt, but failed. Then he leaned his weight against the door and slid down gently to the floor.

The Kanaka Surf

The tourist women, under the hau tree arbour that lines the Moana hotel beach, gasped when Lee Barton and his wife Ida emerged from the bath-house. And as the pair walked past them and down to the sand, they continued to gasp. Not that there was anything about Lee Barton provocative of gasps. The tourist women were not of the sort to gasp at sight of a mere man's swimming-suited body, no matter with what swelling splendour of line and muscle such body was invested. Nevertheless, trainers and conditioners of men would have drawn deep breaths of satisfaction at contemplation of the physical spectacle of him. But they would not have gasped in the way the women did, whose gasps were indicative of moral shock.

Ida Barton was the cause of their perturbation and disapproval. They disapproved, seriously so, at the first instant's glimpse of her. They thought—such ardent self-deceivers were they—that they were shocked by her swimming suit. But Freud has pointed out how persons, where sex is involved, are prone sincerely to substitute one thing for another thing, and to agonize over the substituted thing as strenuously as if it were the real thing.

Ida Barton's swimming suit was a very nice one, as women's suits go. Of thinnest of firm-woven black wool, with white trimmings and a white belt-line, it was high-throated, short-sleeved, and brief-skirted. Brief as was the skirt, the leg-tights were no less brief. Yet on the beach in front of the adjacent Outrigger Club, and entering and leaving the water, a score of women, not provoking gasping notice, were more daringly garbed. Their men's suits, as brief of leg-tights and skirts, fitted them as snugly, but were sleeveless after the way of men's suits, the arm-holes deeply low-cut and in-cut, and, by the exposed armpits, advertiseful that the wearers were accustomed to 1916 décollete.

So it was not Ida Barton's suit, although the women deceived themselves into thinking it was. It was, first of all, say her legs; or, first of all, say the totality of her, the sweet and brilliant jewel of her femininity bursting upon them. Dowager, matron, and maid, conserving their soft-fat muscles or protecting their hot-house complexions in the shade of the hau-tree arbour, felt the immediate challenge of her. She was menace as well, an affront of superiority in their own chosen and variously successful game of life.

But they did not say it. They did not permit themselves to think it. They thought it was the suit, and said so to one another, ignoring the twenty women more daringly clad but less perilously beautiful. Could one have winnowed out of the souls of these disapproving ones what lay at bottom of their condemnation of her suit, it would have

been found to be the sex-jealous thought: THAT NO WOMAN, SO BEAUTIFUL AS THIS ONE, SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO SHOW HER BEAUTY. It was not fair to them. What chance had they in the conquering of males with so dangerous a rival in the foreground?

They were justified. As Stanley Patterson said to his wife, where the two of them lolled wet in the sand by the tiny fresh-water stream that the Bartons waded in order to gain the Outrigger Club beach:

“Lord god of models and marvels, behold them! My dear, did you ever see two such legs on one small woman! Look at the roundness and taperingness. They’re boy’s legs. I’ve seen featherweights go into the ring with legs like those. And they’re all-woman’s legs, too. Never mistake them in the world. The arc of the front line of that upper leg! And the balanced adequate fullness at the back! And the way the opposing curves slender in to the knee that IS a knee! Makes my fingers itch. Wish I had some clay right now.”

“It’s a true human knee,” his wife concurred, no less breathlessly; for, like her husband, she was a sculptor. “Look at the joint of it working under the skin. It’s got form, and blessedly is not covered by a bag of fat.” She paused to sigh, thinking of her own knees. “It’s correct, and beautiful, and dainty. Charm! If ever I beheld the charm of flesh, it is now. I wonder who she is.”

Stanley Patterson, gazing ardently, took up his half of the chorus.

“Notice that the round muscle-pads on the inner sides that make most women appear knock-kneed are missing. They’re boy’s legs, firm and sure—“

“And sweet woman’s legs, soft and round,” his wife hastened to balance. “And look, Stanley! See how she walks on the balls of her feet. It makes her seem light as swan’s down. Each step seems just a little above the earth, and each other step seems just a little higher above until you get the impression she is flying, or just about to rise and begin flying . . . “

So Stanley and Mrs. Patterson. But they were artists, with eyes therefore unlike the next batteries of human eyes Ida Barton was compelled to run, and that laired on the Outrigger lanais (verandas) and in the hau-tree shade of the closely adjoining seaside. The majority of the Outrigger audience was composed, not of tourist guests, but of club members and old-timers in Hawaii. And even the old-times women gasped.

“It’s positively indecent,” said Mrs. Hanley Black to her husband, herself a too-stout-in-the-middle matron of forty-five, who had been born in the Hawaiian islands, and who had never heard of Ostend.

Hanley Black surveyed his wife’s criminal shapelessness and voluminousness of antediluvian, New-England swimming dress with a withering, contemplative eye. They had been married a sufficient number of years for him frankly to utter his judgment.

“That strange woman’s suit makes your own look indecent. You appear as a creature shameful, under a grotesqueness of apparel striving to hide some secret awfulness.”

“She carries her body like a Spanish dancer,” Mrs. Patterson said to her husband, for the pair of them had waded the little stream in pursuit of the vision.

"By George, she does," Stanley Patterson concurred. "Reminds me of Estrellita. Torso just well enough forward, slender waist, not too lean in the stomach, and with muscles like some lad boxer's armouring that stomach to fearlessness. She has to have them to carry herself that way and to balance the back muscles. See that muscled curve of the back! It's Estrellita's."

"How tall would you say?" his wife queried.

"There she deceives," was the appraised answer. "She might be five-feet-one, or five-feet-three or four. It's that way she has of walking that you described as almost about to fly."

"Yes, that's it," Mrs. Patterson concurred. "It's her energy, her seemingness of being on tip toe with rising vitality."

Stanley Patterson considered for a space.

"That's it," he enounced. "She IS a little thing. I'll give her five-two in her stockings. And I'll weigh her a mere one hundred and ten, or eight, or fifteen at the outside."

"She won't weigh a hundred and ten," his wife declared with conviction.

"And with her clothes on, plus her carriage (which is builded of her vitality and will), I'll wager she'd never impress any one with her smallness."

"I know her type," his wife nodded. "You meet her out, and you have the sense that, while not exactly a fine large woman, she's a whole lot larger than the average. And now, age?"

"I'll give you best there," he parried.

"She might be twenty-five, she might be twenty-eight . . ."

But Stanley Patterson had impolitely forgotten to listen.

"It's not her legs alone," he cried on enthusiastically. "It's the all of her. Look at the delicacy of that forearm. And the swell of line to the shoulder. And that biceps! It's alive. Dollars to drowned kittens she can flex a respectable knot of it . . ."

No woman, much less an Ida Barton, could have been unconscious of the effect she was producing along Waikiki Beach. Instead of making her happy in the small vanity way, it irritated her.

"The cats," she laughed to her husband. "And to think I was born here an almost even third of a century ago! But they weren't nasty then. Maybe because there weren't any tourists. Why, Lee, I learned to swim right here on this beach in front of the Outrigger. We used to come out with daddy for vacations and for week-ends and sort of camp out in a grass house that stood right where the Outrigger ladies serve tea now. And centipedes fell out of the thatch on us, while we slept, and we all ate poi and opihi and raw aku, and nobody wore much of anything for the swimming and squidding, and there was no real road to town. I remember times of big rain when it was so flooded we had to go in by canoe, out through the reef and in by Honolulu Harbour."

"Remember," Lee Barton added, "it was just about that time that the youngster that became me arrived here for a few weeks' stay on our way around. I must have seen you on the beach at that very time—one of the kiddies that swam like fishes. Why, merciful me, the women here were all riding cross-saddle, and that was long before

the rest of the social female world outgrew its immodesty and came around to sitting simultaneously on both sides of a horse. I learned to swim on the beach here at that time myself. You and I may even have tried body-surfing on the same waves, or I may have splashed a handful of water into your mouth and been rewarded by your sticking out your tongue at me—“

Interrupted by an audible gasp of shock from a spinster-appearing female sunning herself hard by and angularly in the sand in a swimming suit monstrously unbeautiful, Lee Barton was aware of an involuntary and almost perceptible stiffening on the part of his wife.

“I smile with pleasure,” he told her. “It serves only to make your valiant little shoulders the more valiant. It may make you self-conscious, but it likewise makes you absurdly self-confident.”

For, be it known in advance, Lee Barton was a super-man and Ida Barton a super-woman—or at least they were personalities so designated by the cub book-reviewers, flat-floor men and women, and scholastically emasculated critics, who from across the dreary levels of their living can descry no glorious humans over-topping their horizons. These dreary folk, echoes of the dead past and importunate and self-elected pall-bearers for the present and future, proxy-livers of life and vicarious sensualists that they are in a eunuch sort of way, insist, since their own selves, environments, and narrow agitations of the quick are mediocre and commonplace, that no man or woman can rise above the mediocre and commonplace.

Lacking gloriousness in themselves, they deny gloriousness to all mankind; too cowardly for whimsy and derring-do, they assert whimsy and derring-do ceased at the very latest no later than the middle ages; flickering little tapers themselves, their feeble eyes are dazzled to unseeingness of the flaming conflagrations of other souls that illumine their skies. Possessing power in no greater quantity than is the just due of pygmies, they cannot conceive of power greater in others than in themselves. In those days there were giants; but, as their mouldy books tell them, the giants are long since passed, and only the bones of them remain. Never having seen the mountains, there are no mountains.

In the mud of their complacently perpetuated barnyard pond, they assert that no bright-browed, bright-apparelled shining figures can be outside of fairy books, old histories, and ancient superstitions. Never having seen the stars, they deny the stars. Never having glimpsed the shining ways nor the mortals that tread them, they deny the existence of the shining ways as well as the existence of the high-bright mortals who adventure along the shining ways. The narrow pupils of their eyes the centre of the universe, they image the universe in terms of themselves, of their meagre personalities make pitiful yardsticks with which to measure the high-bright souls, saying: “Thus long are all souls, and no longer; it is impossible that there should exist greater-statured souls than we are, and our gods know that we are great of stature.”

But all, or nearly all on the beach, forgave Ida Barton her suit and form when she took the water. A touch of her hand on her husband’s arm, indication and challenge

in her laughing face, and the two ran as one for half a dozen paces and leapt as one from the hard-wet sand of the beach, their bodies describing flat arches of flight ere the water was entered.

There are two surfs at Waikiki: the big, bearded man surf that roars far out beyond the diving-stage; the smaller, gentler, wahine, or woman, surf that breaks upon the shore itself. Here is a great shallowness, where one may wade a hundred or several hundred feet to get beyond depth. Yet, with a good surf on outside, the wahine surf can break three or four feet, so that, close in against the shore, the hard-sand bottom may be three feet or three inches under the welter of surface foam. To dive from the beach into this, to fly into the air off racing feet, turn in mid-flight so that heels are up and head is down, and, so to enter the water head-first, requires wisdom of waves, timing of waves, and a trained deftness in entering such unstable depths of water with pretty, unapprehensive, head-first cleavage, while at the same time making the shallowest possible of dives.

It is a sweet, and pretty, and daring trick, not learned in a day, nor learned at all without many a milder bump on the bottom or close shave of fractured skull or broken neck. Here, on the spot where the Bartons so beautifully dived, two days before a Stanford track athlete had broken his neck. His had been an error in timing the rise and subsidence of a wahine wave.

“A professional,” Mrs. Hanley Black sneered to her husband at Ida Barton’s feat.

“Some vaudeville tank girl,” was one of the similar remarks with which the women in the shade complacently reassured one another—finding, by way of the weird mental processes of self-illusion, a great satisfaction in the money caste-distinction between one who worked for what she ate and themselves who did not work for what they ate.

It was a day of heavy surf on Waikiki. In the wahine surf it was boisterous enough for good swimmers. But out beyond, in the kanaka, or man, surf, no one ventured. Not that the score or more of young surf-riders loafing on the beach could not venture there, or were afraid to venture there; but because their biggest outrigger canoes would have been swamped, and their surf-boards would have been overwhelmed in the too-immense over-topple and down-fall of the thundering monsters. They themselves, most of them, could have swum, for man can swim through breakers which canoes and surf-boards cannot surmount; but to ride the backs of the waves, rise out of the foam to stand full length in the air above, and with heels winged with the swiftness of horses to fly shoreward, was what made sport for them and brought them out from Honolulu to Waikiki.

The captain of Number Nine canoe, himself a charter member of the Outrigger and a many-times medallist in long-distance swimming, had missed seeing the Bartons take the water, and first glimpsed them beyond the last festoon of bathers clinging to the life-lines. From then on, from his vantage of the upstairs lanai, he kept his eyes on them. When they continued out past the steel diving-stage where a few of the hardest divers disported, he muttered vexedly under his breath “damned malahinis!”

Now malahini means new-comer, tender-foot; and, despite the prettiness of their stroke, he knew that none except malahinis would venture into the racing channel beyond the diving-stage. Hence the vexation of the captain of Number Nine. He descended to the beach, with a low word here and there picked a crew of the strongest surfers, and returned to the lanai with a pair of binoculars. Quite casually, the crew, six of them, carried Number Nine to the water's edge, saw paddles and everything in order for a quick launching, and lolled about carelessly on the sand. They were guilty of not advertising that anything untoward was afoot, although they did steal glances up to their captain straining through the binoculars.

What made the channel was the fresh-water stream. Coral cannot abide fresh water. What made the channel race was the immense shoreward surf-fling of the sea. Unable to remain flung up on the beach, pounded ever back toward the beach by the perpetual shoreward rush of the kanaka surf, the up-piled water escaped to the sea by way of the channel and in the form of under-tow along the bottom under the breakers. Even in the channel the waves broke big, but not with the magnificent bigness of terror as to right and left. So it was that a canoe or a comparatively strong swimmer could dare the channel. But the swimmer must be a strong swimmer indeed, who could successfully buck the current in. Wherefore the captain of Number Nine continued his vigil and his muttered damnation of malahinis, disgustedly sure that these two malahinis would compel him to launch Number Nine and go after them when they found the current too strong to swim in against. As for himself, caught in their predicament, he would have veered to the left toward Diamond Head and come in on the shoreward fling of the kanaka surf. But then, he was no one other than himself, a bronze. Hercules of twenty-two, the whitest blond man ever burned to mahogany brown by a sub-tropic sun, with body and lines and muscles very much resembling the wonderful ones of Duke Kahanamoku. In a hundred yards the world champion could invariably beat him a second flat; but over a distance of miles he could swim circles around the champion.

No one of the many hundreds on the beach, with the exception of till captain and his crew, knew that the Bartons had passed beyond the diving-stage. All who had watched them start to swim out had taken for granted that they had joined the others on the stage.

The captain suddenly sprang upon the railing of the lanai, held on to a pillar with one hand, and again picked up the two specks of heads through the glasses. His surprise was verified. The two fools had veered out of the channel toward Diamond Head, and were directly seaward of the kanaka surf. Worse, as he looked, they were starting to come in through the kanaka surf.

He glanced down quickly to the canoe, and even as he glanced, and as the apparently loafing members quietly arose and took their places by the canoe for the launching, he achieved judgment. Before the canoe could get abreast in the channel, all would be over with the man and woman. And, granted that it could get abreast of them, the moment it ventured into the kanaka surf it would be swamped, and a sorry chance

would the strongest swimmer of them have of rescuing a person pounding to pulp on the bottom under the smashes of the great bearded ones.

The captain saw the first kanaka wave, large of itself, but small among its fellows, lift seaward behind the two speck-swimmers. Then he saw them strike a crawl-stroke, side by side, faces downward, full-lengths out-stretched on surface, their feet sculling like propellers and their arms flailing in rapid over-hand strokes, as they spurted speed to approximate the speed of the overtaking wave, so that, when overtaken, they would become part of the wave, and travel with it instead of being left behind it. Thus, if they were coolly skilled enough to ride outstretched on the surface and the forward face of the crest instead of being flung and crumpled or driven head-first to bottom, they would dash shoreward, not propelled by their own energy, but by the energy of the wave into which they had become incorporated.

And they did it! "SOME swimmers!" the captain of Number Nine made announcement to himself under his breath. He continued to gaze eagerly. The best of swimmers could hold such a wave for several hundred feet. But could they? If they did, they would be a third of the way through the perils they had challenged. But, not unexpected by him, the woman failed first, her body not presenting the larger surfaces that her husband's did. At the end of seventy feet she was overwhelmed, being driven downward and out of sight by the tons of water in the over-topple. Her husband followed and both appeared swimming beyond the wave they had lost.

The captain saw the next wave first. "If they try to body-surf on that, good night," he muttered; for he knew the swimmer did not live who would tackle it. Beardless itself, it was father of all bearded ones, a mile long, rising up far out beyond where the others rose, towering its solid bulk higher and higher till it blotted out the horizon, and was a giant among its fellows ere its beard began to grow as it thinned its crest to the over-curl.

But it was evident that the man and woman knew big water. No racing stroke did they make in advance of the wave. The captain inwardly applauded as he saw them turn and face the wave and wait for it. It was a picture that of all on the beach he alone saw, wonderfully distinct and vivid in the magnification of the binoculars. The wall of the wave was truly a wall, mounting, ever mounting, and thinning, far up, to a transparency of the colours of the setting sun shooting athwart all the green and blue of it. The green thinned to lighter green that merged blue even as he looked. But it was a blue gem-brilliant with innumerable sparkle-points of rose and gold flashed through it by the sun. On and up, to the sprouting beard of growing crest, the colour orgy increased until it was a kaleidoscopic effervescence of transfusing rainbows.

Against the face of the wave showed the heads of the man and woman like two sheer specks. Specks they were, of the quick, adventuring among the blind elemental forces, daring the titanic buffets of the sea. The weight of the down-fall of that father of waves, even then imminent above their heads, could stun a man or break the fragile bones of a woman. The captain of Number Nine was unconscious that he was holding his breath. He was oblivious of the man. It was the woman. Did she lose her head or

courage, or misplay her muscular part for a moment, she could be hurled a hundred feet by that giant buffet and left wrenched, helpless, and breathless to be pulped on the coral bottom and sucked out by the undertow to be battered on by the fish-sharks too cowardly to take their human meat alive.

Why didn't they dive deep, and with plenty of time, the captain wanted to know, instead of waiting till the last tick of safety and the first tick of peril were one? He saw the woman turn her head and laugh to the man, and his head turn in response. Above them, overhanging them, as they mounted the body of the wave, the beard, creaming white, then frothing into rose and gold, tossed upward into a spray of jewels. The crisp off-shore trade-wind caught the beard's fringes and blew them backward and upward yards and yards into the air. It was then, side by side, and six feet apart, that they dived straight under the over-curl even then disintegrating to chaos and falling. Like insects disappearing into the convolutions of some gorgeous gigantic orchid, so they disappeared, as beard and crest and spray and jewels, in many tons, crashed and thundered down just where they had disappeared the moment before, but where they were no longer.

Beyond the wave they had gone through, they finally showed, side by side, still six feet apart, swimming shoreward with a steady stroke until the next wave should make them body-surf it or face and pierce it. The captain of Number Nine waved his hand to his crew in dismissal, and sat down on the lanai railing, feeling vaguely tired and still watching the swimmers through his glasses.

"Whoever and whatever they are," he murmured, "they aren't malahinis. They simply can't be malahinis."

Not all days, and only on rare days, is the surf heavy at Waikiki; and, in the days that followed, Ida and Lee Barton, much in evidence on the beach and in the water, continued to arouse disparaging interest in the breasts of the tourist ladies, although the Outrigger captains ceased from worrying about them in the water. They would watch the pair swim out and disappear in the blue distance, and they might, or might not, chance to see them return hours afterward. The point was that the captains did not bother about their returning, because they knew they would return.

The reason for this was that they were not malahinis. They belonged. In other words, or, rather, in the potent Islands-word, they were kamaaina. Kamaaina men and women of forty remembered Lee Barton from their childhood days, when, in truth, he had been a malahini, though a very young specimen. Since that time, in the course of various long stays, he had earned the kamaaina distinction.

As for Ida Barton, young matrons of her own age (privily wondering how she managed to keep her figure) met her with arms around and hearty Hawaiian kisses. Grandmothers must have her to tea and reminiscence in old gardens of forgotten houses which the tourist never sees. Less than a week after her arrival, the aged Queen Liliuokalani must send for her and chide her for neglect. And old men, on cool and balmy lanais, toothlessly maundered to her about Grandpa Captain Wilton, of before their time, but whose wild and lusty deeds and pranks, told them by their fathers, they remembered

with gusto—Grandpa Captain Wilton, or David Wilton, or “All Hands” as the Hawaiians of that remote day had affectionately renamed him. All Hands, ex-Northwest trader, the godless, beach-combing, clipper-shipless and ship-wrecked skipper who had stood on the beach at Kailua and welcomed the very first of missionaries, off the brig Thaddeus, in the year 1820, and who, not many years later, made a scandalous runaway marriage with one of their daughters, quieted down and served the Kamehamehas long and conservatively as Minister of the Treasury and Chief of the Customs, and acted as intercessor and mediator between the missionaries on one side and the beach-combing crowd, the trading crowd, and the Hawaiian chiefs on the variously shifting other side.

Nor was Lee Barton neglected. In the midst of the dinners and lunches, the luaus (Hawaiian feasts) and poi-suppers, and swims and dances in aloha (love) to both of them, his time and inclination were claimed by the crowd of lively youngsters of old Kohala days who had come to know that they possessed digestions and various other internal functions, and who had settled down to somewhat of sedateness, who roistered less, and who played bridge much, and went to baseball often. Also, similarly oriented, was the old poker crowd of Lee Barton’s younger days, which crowd played for more consistent stakes and limits, while it drank mineral water and orange juice and timed the final round of “Jacks” never later than midnight.

Appeared, through all the rout of entertainment, Sonny Grandison, Hawaii-born, Hawaii-prominent, who, despite his youthful forty-one years, had declined the proffered governorship of the Territory. Also, he had ducked Ida Barton in the surf at Waikiki a quarter of a century before, and, still earlier, vacationing on his father’s great Lakanaii cattle ranch, had hair-raisingly initiated her, and various other tender tots of five to seven years of age, into his boys’ band, “The Cannibal Head-Hunters” or “The Terrors of Lakanaii.” Still farther, his Grandpa Grandison and her Grandpa Wilton had been business and political comrades in the old days.

Educated at Harvard, he had become for a time a world-wandering scientist and social favourite. After serving in the Philippines, he had accompanied various expeditions through Malaysia, South America, and Africa in the post of official entomologist. At forty-one he still retained his travelling commission from the Smithsonian Institution, while his friends insisted that he knew more about sugar “bugs” than the expert entomologists employed by him and his fellow sugar planters in the Experiment Station. Bulking large at home, he was the best-known representative of Hawaii abroad. It was the axiom among travelled Hawaii folk, that wherever over the world they might mention they were from Hawaii, the invariable first question asked of them was: “And do you know Sonny Grandison?”

In brief, he was a wealthy man’s son who had made good. His father’s million he inherited he had increased to ten millions, at the same time keeping up his father’s benefactions and endowments and overshadowing them with his own.

But there was still more to him. A ten years’ widower, without issue, he was the most eligible and most pathetically sought-after marriageable man in all Hawaii. A clean-and-strong-featured brunette, tall, slenderly graceful, with the lean runner’s stomach,

always fit as a fiddle, a distinguished figure in any group, the greying of hair over his temples (in juxtaposition to his young-textured skin and bright vital eyes) made him appear even more distinguished. Despite the social demands upon his time, and despite his many committee meetings, and meetings of boards of directors and political conferences, he yet found time and space to captain the Lakanaii polo team to more than occasional victory, and on his own island of Lakanaii vied with the Baldwins of Maui in the breeding and importing of polo ponies.

Given a markedly strong and vital man and woman, when a second equally markedly strong and vital man enters the scene, the peril of a markedly strong and vital triangle of tragedy becomes imminent. Indeed, such a triangle of tragedy may be described, in the terminology of the flat-floor folk, as “super” and “impossible.” Perhaps, since within himself originated the desire and the daring, it was Sonny Grandison who first was conscious of the situation, although he had to be quick to anticipate the sensing intuition of a woman like Ida Barton. At any rate, and undebatable, the last of the three to attain awareness was Lee Barton, who promptly laughed away what was impossible to laugh away.

His first awareness, he quickly saw, was so belated that half his hosts and hostesses were already aware. Casting back, he realized that for some time any affair to which he and his wife were invited found Sonny Grandison likewise invited. Wherever the two had been, the three had been. To Kahuku or to Haleiwa, to Ahuimanu, or to Kaneohe for the coral gardens, or to Koko Head for a picnicking and a swimming, somehow it invariably happened that Ida rode in Sonny’s car or that both rode in somebody’s car. Dances, luaus, dinners, and outings were all one; the three of them were there.

Having become aware, Lee Barton could not fail to register Ida’s note of happiness ever rising when in the same company with Sonny Grandison, and her willingness to ride in the same cars with him, to dance with him, or to sit out dances with him. Most convincing of all, was Sonny Grandison himself. Forty-one, strong, experienced, his face could no more conceal what he felt than could be concealed a lad of twenty’s ordinary lad’s love. Despite the control and restraint of forty years, he could no more mask his soul with his face than could Lee Barton, of equal years, fail to read that soul through so transparent a face. And often, to other women, talking, when the topic of Sonny came up, Lee Barton heard Ida express her fondness for Sonny, or her almost too-eloquent appreciation of his polo-playing, his work in the world, and his general all-rightness of achievement.

About Sonny’s state of mind and heart Lee had no doubt. It was patent enough for the world to read. But how about Ida, his own dozen-years’ wife of a glorious love-match? He knew that woman, ever the mysterious sex, was capable any time of unguessed mystery. Did her frank comradeliness with Grandison token merely frank comradeliness and childhood contacts continued and recrudesced into adult years? or did it hide, in woman’s subtler and more secretive ways, a beat of heart and return of feeling that might even out-balance what Sonny’s face advertised?

Lee Barton was not happy. A dozen years of utmost and post-nuptial possession of his wife had proved to him, so far as he was concerned, that she was his one woman in the world, and that the woman was unborn, much less unglimped, who could for a moment compete with her in his heart, his soul, and his brain. Impossible of existence was the woman who could lure him away from her, much less over-bid her in the myriad, continual satisfactions she rendered him.

Was this, then, he asked himself, the dreaded contingency of all fond Benedicts, to be her first "affair?" He tormented himself with the ever iterant query, and, to the astonishment of the reformed Kohala poker crowd of wise and middle-aged youngsters as well as to the reward of the keen scrutiny of the dinner-giving and dinner-attending women, he began to drink King William instead of orange juice, to bully up the poker limit, to drive of nights his own car more than rather recklessly over the Pali and Diamond Head roads, and, ere dinner or lunch or after, to take more than an average man's due of old-fashioned cocktails and Scotch highs.

All the years of their marriage she had been ever complaisant toward him in his card-playing. This complaisance, to him, had become habitual. But now that doubt had arisen, it seemed to him that he noted an eagerness in her countenancing of his poker parties. Another point he could not avoid noting was that Sonny Grandison was missed by the poker and bridge crowds. He seemed to be too busy. Now where was Sonny, while he, Lee Barton, was playing? Surely not always at committee and boards of directors meetings. Lee Barton made sure of this. He easily learned that at such times Sonny was more than usually wherever Ida chanced to be—at dances, or dinners, or moonlight swimming parties, or, the very afternoon he had flatly pleaded rush of affairs as an excuse not to join Lee and Langhorne Jones and Jack Holstein in a bridge battle at the Pacific Club—that afternoon he had played bridge at Dora Niles' home with three women, one of whom was Ida.

Returning, once, from an afternoon's inspection of the great dry-dock building at Pearl Harbour, Lee Barton, driving his machine against time, in order to have time to dress for dinner, passed Sonny's car; and Sonny's one passenger, whom he was taking home, was Ida. One night, a week later, during which interval he had played no cards, he came home at eleven from a stag dinner at the University Club, just preceding Ida's return from the Alstone poi supper and dance. And Sonny had driven her home. Major Fanklin and his wife had first been dropped off by them, they mentioned, at Fort Shafter, on the other side of town and miles away from the beach.

Lee Barton, after all mere human man, as a human man unfailingly meeting Sonny in all friendliness, suffered poignantly in secret. Not even Ida dreamed that he suffered; and she went her merry, careless, laughing way, secure in her own heart, although a trifle perplexed at her husband's increase in number of pre-dinner cocktails.

Apparently, as always, she had access to almost all of him; but now she did not have access to his unguessable torment, nor to the long parallel columns of mental book-keeping running their totalling balances from moment to moment, day and night, in his brain. In one column were her undoubtable spontaneous expressions of her usual love

and care for him, her many acts of comfort-serving and of advice-asking and advice-obeying. In another column, in which the items increasingly were entered, were her expressions and acts which he could not but classify as dubious. Were they what they seemed? Or were they of duplicity compounded, whether deliberately or unconsciously? The third column, longest of all, totalling most in human heart-appraisements, was filled with items relating directly or indirectly to her and Sonny Grandison. Lee Barton did not deliberately do this book-keeping. He could not help it. He would have liked to avoid it. But in his fairly ordered mind the items of entry, of themselves and quite beyond will on his part, took their places automatically in their respective columns.

In his distortion of vision, magnifying apparently trivial detail which half the time he felt he magnified, he had recourse to MacIlwaine, to whom he had once rendered a very considerable service. MacIlwaine was chief of detectives. "Is Sonny Grandison a womaning man?" Barton had demanded. MacIlwaine had said nothing. "Then he is a womaning man," had been Barton's declaration. And still the chief of detectives had said nothing.

Briefly afterward, ere he destroyed it as so much dynamite, Lee Barton went over the written report. Not bad, not really bad, was the summarization; but not too good after the death of his wife ten years before. That had been a love-match almost notorious in Honolulu society, because of the completeness of infatuation, not only before, but after marriage, and up to her tragic death when her horse fell with her a thousand feet off Nahiku Trail. And not for a long time afterward, MacIlwaine stated, had Grandison been guilty of interest in any woman. And whatever it was, it had been unvaryingly decent. Never a hint of gossip or scandal; and the entire community had come to accept that he was a one-woman man, and would never marry again. What small affairs MacIlwaine had jotted down he insisted that Sonny Grandison did not dream were known by another person outside the principals themselves.

Barton glanced hurriedly, almost shamedly, at the several names and incidents, and knew surprise ere he committed the document to the flames. At any rate, Sonny had been most discreet. As he stared at the ashes, Barton pondered how much of his own younger life, from his bachelor days, resided in old MacIlwaine's keeping. Next, Barton found himself blushing, to himself, at himself. If MacIlwaine knew so much of the private lives of community figures, then had not he, her husband and protector and shielder, planted in MacIlwaine's brain a suspicion of Ida?

"Anything on your mind?" Lee asked his wife that evening, as he stood holding her wrap while she put the last touches to her dressing.

This was in line with their old and successful compact of frankness, and he wondered, while he waited her answer, why he had refrained so long from asking her.

"No," she smiled. "Nothing particular. Afterwards . . . perhaps . . ."

She became absorbed in gazing at herself in the mirror, while she dabbed some powder on her nose and dabbed it off again.

"You know my way, Lee," she added, after the pause. "It takes me time to gather things together in my own way—when there are things to gather; but when I do, you

always get them. And often there's nothing in them after all, I find, and so you are saved the nuisance of them."

She held out her arms for him to place the wrap about her—her valiant little arms that were so wise and steel-like in battling with the breakers, and that yet were such just mere-woman's arms, round and warm and white, delicious as a woman's arms should be, with the canny muscles, masking under soft-roundness of contour and fine smooth skin, capable of being flexed at will by the will of her.

He pondered her, with a grievous hurt and yearning of appreciation—so delicate she seemed, so porcelain-fragile that a strong man could snap her in the crook of his arm.

"We must hurry!" she cried, as he lingered in the adjustment of the flimsy wrap over her flimsy-prettiness of gown. "We'll be late. And if it showers up Nuuanu, putting the curtains up will make us miss the second dance."

He made a note to observe with whom she danced that second dance, as she preceded him across the room to the door; while at the same time he pleased his eye in what he had so often named to himself as the spirit-proud flesh-proud walk of her.

"You don't feel I'm neglecting you in my too-much poker?" he tried again, by indirection.

"Mercy, no! You know I just love you to have your card orgies. They're tonic for you. And you're so much nicer about them, so much more middle-aged. Why, it's almost years since you sat up later than one."

It did not shower up Nuuanu, and every overhead star was out in a clear trade-wind sky. In time at the Inchkeeps' for the second dance, Lee Barton observed that his wife danced it with Grandison—which, of itself, was nothing unusual, but which became immediately a registered item in Barton's mental books.

An hour later, depressed and restless, declining to make one of a bridge foursome in the library and escaping from a few young matrons, he strolled out into the generous grounds. Across the lawn, at the far edge, he came upon the hedge of night-blooming cereus. To each flower, opening after dark and fading, wilting, perishing with the dawn, this was its one night of life. The great, cream-white blooms, a foot in diameter and more, lily-like and wax-like, white beacons of attraction in the dark, penetrating and seducing the night with their perfume, were busy and beautiful with their brief glory of living.

But the way along the hedge was populous with humans, two by two, male and female, stealing out between the dances or strolling the dances out, while they talked in low soft voices and gazed upon the wonder of flower-love. From the lanai drifted the love-caressing strains of "Hanalei" sung by the singing boys. Vaguely Lee Barton remembered—perhaps it was from some Maupassant story—the abbe, obsessed by the theory that behind all things were the purposes of God and perplexed so to interpret the night, who discovered at the last that the night was ordained for love.

The unanimity of the night as betrayed by flowers and humans was a hurt to Barton. He circled back toward the house along a winding path that skirted within the edge of shadow of the monkey-pods and algaroba trees. In the obscurity, where his path curved

away into the open again, he looked across a space of a few feet where, on another path in the shadow, stood a pair in each other's arms. The impassioned low tones of the man had caught his ear and drawn his eyes, and at the moment of his glance, aware of his presence, the voice ceased, and the two remained immobile, furtive, in each other's arms.

He continued his walk, sombered by the thought that in the gloom of the trees was the next progression from the openness of the sky over those who strolled the night-flower hedge. Oh, he knew the game when of old no shadow was too deep, no ruse of concealment too furtive, to veil a love moment. After all, humans were like flowers, he meditated. Under the radiance from the lighted lanai, ere entering the irritating movement of life again to which he belonged, he paused to stare, scarcely seeing, at a flaunt of display of scarlet double-hibiscus blooms. And abruptly all that he was suffering, all that he had just observed, from the night-blooming hedge and the two-by-two love-murmuring humans to the pair like thieves in each other's arms, crystallized into a parable of life enunciated by the day-blooming hibiscus upon which he gazed, now at the end of its day. Bursting into its bloom after the dawn, snow-white, warming to pink under the hours of sun, and quickening to scarlet with the dark from which its beauty and its being would never emerge, it seemed to him that it epitomized man's life and passion.

What further connotations he might have drawn he was never to know; for from behind, in the direction of the algarobas and monkey-pods, came Ida's unmistakable serene and merry laugh. He did not look, being too afraid of what he knew he would see, but retreated hastily, almost stumbling, up the steps to the lanai. Despite that he knew what he was to see, when he did turn his head and beheld his wife and Sonny, the pair he had seen thieving in the dark, he went suddenly dizzy, and paused, supporting himself with a hand against a pillar, and smiling vacuously at the grouped singing boys who were pulsing the sensuous night into richer sensuousness with their honi kaua wiki-wiki refrain.

The next moment he had wet his lips with his tongue, controlled his face and flesh, and was bantering with Mrs. Inchkeep. But he could not waste time, or he would have to encounter the pair he could hear coming up the steps behind him.

"I feel as if I had just crossed the Great Thirst," he told his hostess, "and that nothing less than a high-ball will preserve me."

She smiled permission and nodded toward the smoking lanai, where they found him talking sugar politics with the oldsters when the dance began to break up.

Quite a party of half a dozen machines were starting for Waikiki, and he found himself billeted to drive the Leslies and Burnstons home, though he did not fail to note that Ida sat in the driver's seat with Sonny in Sonny's car. Thus, she was home ahead of him and brushing her hair when he arrived. The parting of bed-going was usual, on the face of it, although he was almost rigid in his successful effort for casualness as he remembered whose lips had pressed hers last before his.

Was, then, woman the utterly unmoral creature as depicted by the German pessimists? he asked himself, as he tossed under his reading lamp, unable to sleep or read. At the end of an hour he was out of bed, and into his medicine case. Five grains of opium he took straight. An hour later, afraid of his thoughts and the prospect of a sleepless night, he took another grain. At one-hour intervals he twice repeated the grain dosage. But so slow was the action of the drug that dawn had broken ere his eyes closed.

At seven he was awake again, dry-mouthed, feeling stupid and drowsy, yet incapable of dozing off for more than several minutes at a time. He abandoned the idea of sleep, ate breakfast in bed, and devoted himself to the morning papers and the magazines. But the drug effect held, and he continued briefly to doze through his eating and reading. It was the same when he showered and dressed, and, though the drug had brought him little forgetfulness during the night, he felt grateful for the dreaming lethargy with which it possessed him through the morning.

It was when his wife arose, her serene and usual self, and came in to him, smiling and roguish, delectable in her kimono, that the whim-madness of the opium in his system seized upon him. When she had clearly and simply shown that she had nothing to tell him under their ancient compact of frankness, he began building his opium lie. Asked how he had slept, he replied:

“Miserably. Twice I was routed wide awake with cramps in my feet. I was almost too afraid to sleep again. But they didn’t come back, though my feet are sorer than blazes.”

“Last year you had them,” she reminded him.

“Maybe it’s going to become a seasonal affliction,” he smiled. “They’re not serious, but they’re horrible to wake up to. They won’t come again till to-night, if they come at all, but in the meantime I feel as if I had been bastinadoed.”

In the afternoon of the same day, Lee and Ida Barton made their shallow dive from the Outrigger beach, and went on, at a steady stroke, past the diving-stage to the big water beyond the Kanaka Surf. So quiet was the sea that when, after a couple of hours, they turned and lazily started shoreward through the Kanaka Surf they had it all to themselves. The breakers were not large enough to be exciting, and the last languid surf-boarders and canoeists had gone in to shore. Suddenly, Lee turned over on his back.

“What is it?” Ida called from twenty feet away.

“My foot-cramp,” he answered calmly, though the words were twisted out through clenched jaws of control.

The opium still had its dreamy way with him, and he was without excitement. He watched her swimming toward him with so steady and unperturbed a stroke that he admired her own self-control, although at the same time doubt stabbed him with the thought that it was because she cared so little for him, or, rather, so much immediately more for Grandison.

“Which foot?” she asked, as she dropped her legs down and began treading water beside him.

“The left one—ouch! Now it’s both of them.”

He doubled his knees, as if involuntarily raised his head and chest forward out of the water, and sank out of sight in the down-wash of a scarcely cresting breaker. Under no more than a brief several seconds, he emerged spluttering and stretched out on his back again.

Almost he grinned, although he managed to turn the grin into a pain-grimace, for his simulated cramp had become real. At least in one foot it had, and the muscles convulsed painfully.

“The right is the worst,” he muttered, as she evinced her intention of laying hands on his cramp and rubbing it out. “But you’d better keep away. I’ve had cramps before, and I know I’m liable to grab you if these get any worse.”

Instead, she laid her hands on the hard-knotted muscles, and began to rub and press and bend.

“Please,” he gritted through his teeth. “You must keep away. Just let me lie out here—I’ll bend the ankle and toe-joints in the opposite ways and make it pass. I’ve done it before and know how to work it.”

She released him, remaining close beside him and easily treading water, her eyes upon his face to judge the progress of his own attempt at remedy. But Lee Barton deliberately bent joints and tensed muscles in the directions that would increase the cramp. In his bout the preceding year with the affliction, he had learned, lying in bed and reading when seized, to relax and bend the cramps away without even disturbing his reading. But now he did the thing in reverse, intensifying the cramp, and, to his startled delight, causing it to leap into his right calf. He cried out with anguish, apparently lost control of himself, attempted to sit up, and was washed under by the next wave.

He came up, spluttered, spread-eagled on the surface, and had his knotted calf gripped by the strong fingers of both Ida’s small hands.

“It’s all right,” she said, while she worked. “No cramp like this lasts very long.”

“I didn’t know it could be so savage,” he groaned. “If only it doesn’t go higher! It makes one feel so helpless.”

He gripped the biceps of both her arms in a sudden spasm, attempting to climb out upon her as a drowning man might try to climb out on an oar and sinking her down under him. In the struggle under water, before he permitted her to wrench clear, her rubber cap was torn off, and her hairpins pulled out, so that she came up gasping for air and half-blinded by her wet-clinging hair. Also, he was certain he had surprised her into taking in a quantity of water.

“Keep away!” he warned, as he spread-eagled with acted desperateness.

But her fingers were deep into the honest pain-wrack of his calf, and in her he could observe no reluctance of fear.

“It’s creeping up,” he grunted through tight teeth, the grunt itself a half-controlled groan.

He stiffened his whole right leg, as with another spasm, hurting his real minor cramps, but flexing the muscles of his upper leg into the seeming hardness of cramp.

The opium still worked in his brain, so that he could play-act cruelly, while at the same time he appraised and appreciated her stress of control and will that showed in her drawn face, and the terror of death in her eyes, with beyond it and behind it, in her eyes and through her eyes, the something more of the spirit of courage, and higher thought, and resolution.

Still further, she did not enunciate so cheap a surrender as, “I’ll die with you.” Instead, provoking his admiration, she did say, quietly: “Relax. Sink until only your lips are out. I’ll support your head. There must be a limit to cramp. No man ever died of cramp on land. Then in the water no strong swimmer should die of cramp. It’s bound to reach its worst and pass. We’re both strong swimmers and cool-headed—“

He distorted his face and deliberately dragged her under. But when they emerged, still beside him, supporting his head as she continued to tread water, she was saying:

“Relax. Take it easy. I’ll hold your head up. Endure it. Live through it. Don’t fight it. Make yourself slack—slack in your mind; and your body will slack. Yield. Remember how you taught me to yield to the undertow.”

An unusually large breaker for so mild a surf curled overhead, and he climbed out on her again, sinking both of them under as the wave-crest over-fell and smashed down.

“Forgive me,” he mumbled through pain clenched teeth, as they drew in their first air again. “And leave me.” He spoke jerkily, with pain-filled pauses between his sentences. “There is no need for both of us to drown. I’ve got to go. It will be in my stomach, at any moment, and then I’ll drag you under, and be unable to let go of you. Please, please, dear, keep away. One of us is enough. You’ve plenty to live for.”

She looked at him in reproach so deep that the last vestige of the terror of death was gone from her eyes. It was as if she had said, and more than if she had said: “I have only you to live for.”

Then Sonny did not count with her as much as he did!—was Barton’s exultant conclusion. But he remembered her in Sonny’s arms under the monkey-pods and determined on further cruelty. Besides, it was the lingering opium in him that suggested this cruelty. Since he had undertaken this acid test, urged the poppy juice, then let it be a real acid test.

He doubled up and went down, emerged, and apparently strove frantically to stretch out in the floating position. And she did not keep away from him.

“It’s too much!” he groaned, almost screamed. “I’m losing my grip. I’ve got to go. You can’t save me. Keep away and save yourself.”

But she was to him, striving to float his mouth clear of the salt, saying: “It’s all right. It’s all right. The worst is right now. Just endure it a minute more, and it will begin to ease.”

He screamed out, doubled, seized her, and took her down with him. And he nearly did drown her, so well did he play-act his own drowning. But never did she lose her head nor succumb to the fear of death so dreadfully imminent. Always, when she got her head out, she strove to support him while she panted and gasped encouragement in terms of: "Relax . . . Relax . . . Slack . . . Slack out . . . At any time . . . now . . . you'll pass . . . the worst . . . No matter how much it hurts . . . it will pass . . . You're easier now . . . aren't you?"

And then he would put her down again, going from bad to worse—in his ill-treatment of her; making her swallow pints of salt water, secure in the knowledge that it would not definitely hurt her. Sometimes they came up for brief emergencies, for gasping seconds in the sunshine on the surface, and then were under again, dragged under by him, rolled and tumbled under by the curling breakers.

Although she struggled and tore herself from his grips, in the times he permitted her freedom she did not attempt to swim away from him, but, with fading strength and reeling consciousness, invariably came to him to try to save him. When it was enough, in his judgment, and more than enough, he grew quieter, left her released, and stretched out on the surface.

"A-a-h," he sighed long, almost luxuriously, and spoke with pauses for breath. "It is passing. It seems like heaven. My dear, I'm water-logged, yet the mere absence of that frightful agony makes my present state sheerest bliss."

She tried to gasp a reply, but could not.

"I'm all right," he assured her. "Let us float and rest up. Stretch out, yourself, and get your wind back."

And for half an hour, side by side, on their backs, they floated in the fairly placid Kanaka Surf. Ida Barton was the first to announce recovery by speaking first.

"And how do you feel now, man of mine?" she asked.

"I feel as if I'd been run over by a steam-roller," he replied. "And you, poor darling?"

"I feel I'm the happiest woman in the world. I'm so happy I could almost cry, but I'm too happy even for that. You had me horribly frightened for a time. I thought I was to lose you."

Lee Barton's heart pounded up. Never a mention of losing herself. This, then, was love, and all real love, proved true—the great love that forgot self in the loved one.

"And I'm the proudest man in the world," he told her; "because my wife is the bravest woman in the world."

"Brave!" she repudiated. "I love you. I never knew how much, how really much, I loved you as when I was losing you. And now let's work for shore. I want you all alone with me, your arms around me, while I tell you all you are to me and shall always be to me."

In another half-hour, swimming strong and steadily, they landed on the beach and walked up the hard wet sand among the sand-loafers and sun-baskers.

"What were the two of you doing out there?" queried one of the Outrigger captains. "Cutting up?"

“Cutting up,” Ida Barton answered with a smile.

“We’re the village cut-ups, you know,” was Lee Barton’s assurance.

That evening, the evening’s engagement cancelled, found the two, in a big chair, in each other’s arms.

“Sonny sails to-morrow noon,” she announced casually and irrelevant to anything in the conversation. “He’s going out to the Malay Coast to inspect what’s been done with that lumber and rubber company of his.”

“First I’ve heard of his leaving us,” Lee managed to say, despite his surprise.

“I was the first to hear of it,” she added. “He told me only last night.”

“At the dance?”

She nodded.

“Rather sudden, wasn’t it?”

“Very sudden.” Ida withdrew herself from her husband’s arms and sat up. “And I want to talk to you about Sonny. I’ve never had a real secret from you before. I didn’t intend ever to tell you. But it came to me to-day, out in the Kanaka Surf, that if we passed out, it would be something left behind us unsaid.”

She paused, and Lee, half-anticipating what was coming, did nothing to help her, save to girdle and press her hand in his.

“Sonny rather lost his . . . his head over me,” she faltered. “Of course, you must have noticed it. And . . . and last night, he wanted me to run away with him. Which isn’t my confession at all . . . “

Still Lee Barton waited.

“My confession,” she resumed, “is that I wasn’t the least bit angry with him—only sorrowful and regretful. My confession is that I rather slightly, only rather more than slightly, lost my own head. That was why I was kind and gentle to him last night. I am no fool. I knew it was due. And—oh, I know, I’m just a feeble female of vanity compounded—I was proud to have such a man swept off his feet by me, by little me. I encouraged him. I have no excuse. Last night would not have happened had I not encouraged him. And I, and not he, was the sinner last night when he asked me. And I told him no, impossible, as you should know why without my repeating it to you. And I was maternal to him, very much maternal. I let him take me in his arms, let myself rest against him, and, for the first time because it was to be the for-ever last time, let him kiss me and let myself kiss him. You . . . I know you understand . . . it was his renunciation. And I didn’t love Sonny. I don’t love him. I have loved you, and you only, all the time.”

She waited, and felt her husband’s arm pass around her shoulder and under her own arm, and yielded to his drawing down of her to him.

“You did have me worried more than a bit,” he admitted, “until I was afraid I was going to lose you. And . . . “ He broke off in patent embarrassment, then gripped the idea courageously. “Oh, well, you know you’re my one woman. Enough said.”

She fumbled the match-box from his pocket and struck a match to enable him to light his long-extinct cigar.

“Well,” he said, as the smoke curled about them, “knowing you as I know you, and ALL of you, all I can say is that I’m sorry for Sonny for what he’s missed—awfully sorry for him, but equally glad for me. And . . . one other thing: five years hence I’ve something to tell you, something rich, something ridiculously rich, and all about me and the foolishness of me over you. Five years. Is it a date?”

“I shall keep it if it is fifty years,” she sighed, as she nestled closer to him.

Keesh, Son of Keesh

“Thus will I give six blankets, warm and double; six files, large and hard; six Hudson Bay knives, keen-edged and long; two canoes, the work of Mogum, The Maker of Things; ten dogs, heavy-shouldered and strong in the harness; and three guns — the trigger of one be broken, but it is a good gun and can doubtless be mended.”

Keesh paused and swept his eyes over the circle of intent faces. It was the time of the Great Fishing, and he was bidding to Gnob for Su-Su his daughter. The place was the St. George Mission by the Yukon, and the tribes had gathered for many a hundred miles. From north, south, east, and west they had come, even from Tozikakat and far Tana-naw.

“And further, O Gnob, thou art chief of the Tana-naw; and I, Keesh, the son of Keesh, am chief of the Thlunget. Wherefore, when my seed springs from the loins of thy daughter, there shall be a friendship between the tribes, a great friendship, and Tana-naw and Thlunget shall be brothers of the blood in the time to come. What I have said I will do, that will I do. And how is it with you, O Gnob, in this matter?”

Gnob nodded his head gravely, his gnarled and age-twisted face inscrutably masking the soul that dwelt behind. His narrow eyes burned like twin coals through their narrow slits, as he piped in a high-cracked voice, “But that is not all.”

“What more?” Keesh demanded. “Have I not offered full measure? Was there ever yet a Tana-naw maiden who fetched so great a price? Then name her!”

An open snicker passed round the circle, and Keesh knew that he stood in shame before these people.

“Nay, nay, good Keesh, thou dost not understand.” Gnob made a soft, stroking gesture. “The price is fair. It is a good price. Nor do I question the broken trigger. But that is not all. What of the man?”

“Ay, what of the man?” the circle snarled.

“It is said,” Gnob’s shrill voice piped, “it is said that Keesh does not walk in the way of his fathers. It is said that he has wandered into the dark, after strange gods, and that he is become afraid.”

The face of Keesh went dark. “It is a lie!” he thundered. “Keesh is afraid of no man!”

“It is said,” old Gnob piped on, “that he has harkened to the speech of the white man up at the Big House, and that he bends head to the white man’s god, and, moreover, that blood is displeasing to the white man’s god.”

Keesh dropped his eyes, and his hands clenched passionately. The savage circle laughed derisively, and in the ear of Gnob whispered Madwan, the shaman, high-priest of the tribe and maker of medicine.

The shaman poked among the shadows on the rim of the firelight and roused up a slender young boy, whom he brought face to face with Keesh; and in the hand of Keesh he thrust a knife.

Gnob leaned forward. "Keesh! O Keesh! Darest thou to kill a man? Behold! This be Kitz-noo, a slave. Strike, O Keesh, strike with the strength of thy arm!"

The boy trembled and waited the stroke. Keesh looked at him, and thoughts of Mr. Brown's higher morality floated through his mind, and strong upon him was a vision of the leaping flames of Mr. Brown's particular brand of hell-fire. The knife fell to the ground, and the boy sighed and went out beyond the firelight with shaking knees. At the feet of Gnob sprawled a wolf-dog, which bared its gleaming teeth and prepared to spring after the boy. But the shaman ground his foot into the brute's body, and so doing, gave Gnob an idea.

"And then, O Keesh, what wouldst thou do, should a man do this thing to you?" — as he spoke, Gnob held a ribbon of salmon to White Fang, and when the animal attempted to take it, smote him sharply on the nose with a stick. "And afterward, O Keesh, wouldst thou do thus?" — White Fang was cringing back on his belly and fawning to the hand of Gnob.

"Listen!" — leaning on the arm of Madwan, Gnob had risen to his feet. "I am very old, and because I am very old I will tell thee things. Thy father, Keesh, was a mighty man. And he did love the song of the bowstring in battle, and these eyes have beheld him cast a spear till the head stood out beyond a man's body. But thou art unlike. Since thou left the Raven to worship the Wolf, thou art become afraid of blood, and thou makest thy people afraid. This is not good. For behold, when I was a boy, even as Kitz-noo there, there was no white man in all the land. But they came, one by one, these white men, till now they are many. And they are a restless breed, never content to rest by the fire with a full belly and let the morrow bring its own meat. A curse was laid upon them, it would seem, and they must work it out in toil and hardship."

Keesh was startled. A recollection of a hazy story told by Mr. Brown of one Adam, of old time, came to him, and it seemed that Mr. Brown had spoken true.

"So they lay hands upon all they behold, these white men, and they go everywhere and behold all things. And ever do more follow in their steps, so that if nothing be done they will come to possess all the land and there will be no room for the tribes of the Raven. Wherefore it is meet that we fight with them till none are left. Then will we hold the passes and the land, and perhaps our children and our children's children shall flourish and grow fat. There is a great struggle to come, when Wolf and Raven shall grapple; but Keesh will not fight, nor will he let his people fight. So it is not well that he should take to him my daughter. Thus have I spoken, I, Gnob, chief of the Tana-naw."

"But the white men are good and great," Keesh made answer. "The white men have taught us many things. The white men have given us blankets and knives and guns, such as we have never made and never could make. I remember in what manner we lived before they came. I was unborn then, but I have it from my father. When we

went on the hunt we must creep so close to the moose that a spear-cast would cover the distance. To-day we use the white man's rifle, and farther away than can a child's cry be heard. We ate fish and meat and berries — there was nothing else to eat — and we ate without salt. How many be there among you who care to go back to the fish and meat without salt?"

It would have sunk home, had not Madwan leaped to his feet ere silence could come. "And first a question to thee, Keesh. The white man up at the Big House tells you that it is wrong to kill. Yet do we not know that the white men kill? Have we forgotten the great fight on the Koyokuk? or the great fight at Nuklukyeto, where three white men killed twenty of the Tozikakats? Do you think we no longer remember the three men of the Tana-naw that the white man Macklewrath killed? Tell me, O Keesh, why does the Shaman Brown teach you that it is wrong to fight, when all his brothers fight?"

"Nay, nay, there is no need to answer," Gnob piped, while Keesh struggled with the paradox. "It is very simple. The Good Man Brown would hold the Raven tight whilst his brothers pluck the feathers." He raised his voice. "But so long as there is one Tana-naw to strike a blow, or one maiden to bear a man-child, the Raven shall not be plucked!"

Gnob turned to a husky young man across the fire. "And what sayest thou, Makamuk, who art brother to Su-Su?"

Makamuk came to his feet. A long face-scar lifted his upper lip into a perpetual grin which belied the glowing ferocity of his eyes. "This day," he began with cunning irrelevance, "I came by the Trader Macklewrath's cabin. And in the door I saw a child laughing at the sun. And the child looked at me with the Trader Macklewrath's eyes, and it was frightened. The mother ran to it and quieted it. The mother was Ziska, the Thlunget woman."

A snarl of rage rose up and drowned his voice, which he stilled by turning dramatically upon Keesh with outstretched arm and accusing finger.

"So? You give your women away, you Thlunget, and come to the Tana-naw for more? But we have need of our women, Keesh; for we must breed men, many men, against the day when the Raven grapples with the Wolf."

Through the storm of applause, Gnob's voice shrilled clear. "And thou, Nossabok, who art her favorite brother?"

The young fellow was slender and graceful, with the strong aquiline nose and high brows of his type; but from some nervous affliction the lid of one eye drooped at odd times in a suggestive wink. Even as he arose it so drooped and rested a moment against his cheek. But it was not greeted with the accustomed laughter. Every face was grave. "I, too, passed by the Trader Macklewrath's cabin," he rippled in soft, girlish tones, wherein there was much of youth and much of his sister. "And I saw Indians with the sweat running into their eyes and their knees shaking with weariness — I say, I saw Indians groaning under the logs for the store which the Trader Macklewrath is to build. And with my eyes I saw them chopping wood to keep the Shaman Brown's Big House warm through the frost of the long nights. This be squaw work. Never shall

the Tana-naw do the like. We shall be blood brothers to men, not squaws; and the Thlunget be squaws."

A deep silence fell, and all eyes centred on Keesh. He looked about him carefully, deliberately, full into the face of each grown man. "So," he said passionlessly. And "So," he repeated. Then turned on his heel without further word and passed out into the darkness.

Wading among sprawling babies and bristling wolf-dogs, he threaded the great camp, and on its outskirts came upon a woman at work by the light of a fire. With strings of bark stripped from the long roots of creeping vines, she was braiding rope for the Fishing. For some time, without speech, he watched her deft hands bringing law and order out of the unruly mass of curling fibres. She was good to look upon, swaying there to her task, strong-limbed, deep-chested, and with hips made for motherhood. And the bronze of her face was golden in the flickering light, her hair blue-black, her eyes jet.

"O Su-Su," he spoke finally, "thou hast looked upon me kindly in the days that have gone and in the days yet young — "

"I looked kindly upon thee for that thou wert chief of the Thlunget," she answered quickly, "and because thou wert big and strong."

"Ay — "

"But that was in the old days of the Fishing," she hastened to add, "before the Shaman Brown came and taught thee ill things and led thy feet on strange trails."

"But I would tell thee the — "

She held up one hand in a gesture which reminded him of her father. "Nay, I know already the speech that stirs in thy throat, O Keesh, and I make answer now. It so happeneth that the fish of the water and the beasts of the forest bring forth after their kind. And this is good. Likewise it happeneth to women. It is for them to bring forth their kind, and even the maiden, while she is yet a maiden, feels the pang of the birth, and the pain of the breast, and the small hands at the neck. And when such feeling is strong, then does each maiden look about her with secret eyes for the man — for the man who shall be fit to father her kind. So have I felt. So did I feel when I looked upon thee and found thee big and strong, a hunter and fighter of beasts and men, well able to win meat when I should eat for two, well able to keep danger afar off when my helplessness drew nigh. But that was before the day the Shaman Brown came into the land and taught thee — "

"But it is not right, Su-Su. I have it on good word — "

"It is not right to kill. I know what thou wouldst say. Then breed thou after thy kind, the kind that does not kill; but come not on such quest among the Tana-naw. For it is said in the time to come, that the Raven shall grapple with the Wolf. I do not know, for this be the affair of men; but I do know that it is for me to bring forth men against that time."

"Su-Su," Keesh broke in, "thou must hear me — "

“A man would beat me with a stick and make me hear,” she sneered. “But thou ... here!” She thrust a bunch of bark into his hand. “I cannot give thee myself, but this, yes. It looks fittest in thy hands. It is squaw work, so braid away.”

He flung it from him, the angry blood pounding a muddy path under his bronze.

“One thing more,” she went on. “There be an old custom which thy father and mine were not strangers to. When a man falls in battle, his scalp is carried away in token. Very good. But thou, who have forsworn the Raven, must do more. Thou must bring me, not scalps, but heads, two heads, and then will I give thee, not bark, but a brave-beaded belt, and sheath, and long Russian knife. Then will I look kindly upon thee once again, and all will be well.”

“So,” the man pondered. “So.” Then he turned and passed out through the light.

“Nay, O Keesh!” she called after him. “Not two heads, but three at least!”

But Keesh remained true to his conversion, lived uprightly, and made his tribes-people obey the gospel as propounded by the Rev. Jackson Brown. Through all the time of the Fishing he gave no heed to the Tana-naw, nor took notice of the sly things which were said, nor of the laughter of the women of the many tribes. After the Fishing, Gnob and his people, with great store of salmon, sun-dried and smoke-cured, departed for the Hunting on the head reaches of the Tana-naw. Keesh watched them go, but did not fail in his attendance at Mission service, where he prayed regularly and led the singing with his deep bass voice.

The Rev. Jackson Brown delighted in that deep bass voice, and because of his sterling qualities deemed him the most promising convert. Macklewrath doubted this. He did not believe in the efficacy of the conversion of the heathen, and he was not slow in speaking his mind. But Mr. Brown was a large man, in his way, and he argued it out with such convincingness, all of one long fall night, that the trader, driven from position after position, finally announced in desperation, “Knock out my brains with apples, Brown, if I don’t become a convert myself, if Keesh holds fast, true blue, for two years!” Mr. Brown never lost an opportunity, so he clinched the matter on the spot with a virile hand-grip, and thenceforth the conduct of Keesh was to determine the ultimate abiding-place of Macklewrath’s soul.

But there came news one day, after the winter’s rime had settled down over the land sufficiently for travel. A Tana-naw man arrived at the St. George Mission in quest of ammunition and bringing information that Su-Su had set eyes on Nee-Koo, a nervy young hunter who had bid brilliantly for her by old Gnob’s fire. It was at about this time that the Rev. Jackson Brown came upon Keesh by the wood-trail which leads down to the river. Keesh had his best dogs in the harness, and shoved under the sled-lashings was his largest and finest pair of snow-shoes.

“Where goest thou, O Keesh? Hunting?” Mr. Brown asked, falling into the Indian manner.

Keesh looked him steadily in the eyes for a full minute, then started up his dogs. Then again, turning his deliberate gaze upon the missionary, he answered, “No; I go to hell.”

In an open space, striving to burrow into the snow as though for shelter from the appalling desolateness, huddled three dreary lodges. Ringed all about, a dozen paces away, was the sombre forest. Overhead there was no keen, blue sky of naked space, but a vague, misty curtain, pregnant with snow, which had drawn between. There was no wind, no sound, nothing but the snow and silence. Nor was there even the general stir of life about the camp; for the hunting party had run upon the flank of the caribou herd and the kill had been large. Thus, after the period of fasting had come the plenitude of feasting, and thus, in broad daylight, they slept heavily under their roofs of moosehide.

By a fire, before one of the lodges, five pairs of snow-shoes stood on end in their element, and by the fire sat Su-Su. The hood of her squirrel-skin parka was about her hair, and well drawn up around her throat; but her hands were unmittened and nimbly at work with needle and sinew, completing the last fantastic design on a belt of leather faced with bright scarlet cloth. A dog, somewhere at the rear of one of the lodges, raised a short, sharp bark, then ceased as abruptly as it had begun. Once, her father, in the lodge at her back, gurgled and grunted in his sleep. "Bad dreams," she smiled to herself. "He grows old, and that last joint was too much."

She placed the last bead, knotted the sinew, and replenished the fire. Then, after gazing long into the flames, she lifted her head to the harsh crunch-crunch of a moc-casined foot against the flinty snow granules. Keesh was at her side, bending slightly forward to a load which he bore upon his back. This was wrapped loosely in a soft-tanned moosehide, and he dropped it carelessly into the snow and sat down. They looked at each other long and without speech.

"It is a far fetch, O Keesh," she said at last, "a far fetch from St. George Mission by the Yukon."

"Ay," he made answer, absently, his eyes fixed keenly upon the belt and taking note of its girth. "But where is the knife?" he demanded.

"Here." She drew it from inside her parka and flashed its naked length in the firelight. "It is a good knife."

"Give it me!" he commanded.

"Nay, O Keesh," she laughed. "It may be that thou wast not born to wear it."

"Give it me!" he reiterated, without change of tone. "I was so born."

But her eyes, glancing coquettishly past him to the moosehide, saw the snow about it slowly reddening. "It is blood, Keesh?" she asked.

"Ay, it is blood. But give me the belt and the long Russian knife."

She felt suddenly afraid, but thrilled when he took the belt roughly from her, thrilled to the roughness. She looked at him softly, and was aware of a pain at the breast and of small hands clutching her throat.

"It was made for a smaller man," he remarked grimly, drawing in his abdomen and clasping the buckle at the first hole.

Su-Su smiled, and her eyes were yet softer. Again she felt the soft hands at her throat. He was good to look upon, and the belt was indeed small, made for a smaller man; but what did it matter? She could make many belts.

“But the blood?” she asked, urged on by a hope new-born and growing. “The blood, Keesh? Is it ... are they ... heads?”

“Ay.”

“They must be very fresh, else would the blood be frozen.”

“Ay, it is not cold, and they be fresh, quite fresh.”

“Oh, Keesh!” Her face was warm and bright. “And for me?”

“Ay; for thee.”

He took hold of a corner of the hide, flirited it open, and rolled the heads out before her.

“Three,” he whispered savagely; “nay, four at least.”

But she sat transfixed. There they lay — the soft-featured Nee-Koo; the gnarled old face of Gnob; Makamuk, grinning at her with his lifted upper lip; and lastly, Nossabok, his eyelid, up to its old trick, drooped on his girlish cheek in a suggestive wink. There they lay, the firelight flashing upon and playing over them, and from each of them a widening circle dyed the snow to scarlet.

Thawed by the fire, the white crust gave way beneath the head of Gnob, which rolled over like a thing alive, spun around, and came to rest at her feet. But she did not move. Keesh, too, sat motionless, his eyes unblinking, centred steadfastly upon her.

Once, in the forest, an overburdened pine dropped its load of snow, and the echoes reverberated hollowly down the gorge; but neither stirred. The short day had been waning fast, and darkness was wrapping round the camp when White Fang trotted up toward the fire. He paused to reconnoitre, but not being driven back, came closer. His nose shot swiftly to the side, nostrils a-tremble and bristles rising along the spine; and straight and true, he followed the sudden scent to his master’s head. He sniffed it gingerly at first and licked the forehead with his red lolling tongue. Then he sat abruptly down, pointed his nose up at the first faint star, and raised the long wolf-howl.

This brought Su-Su to herself. She glanced across at Keesh, who had unsheathed the Russian knife and was watching her intently. His face was firm and set, and in it she read the law. Slipping back the hood of her parka, she bared her neck and rose to her feet. There she paused and took a long look about her, at the rimming forest, at the faint stars in the sky, at the camp, at the snow-shoes in the snow — a last long comprehensive look at life. A light breeze stirred her hair from the side, and for the space of one deep breath she turned her head and followed it around until she met it full-faced.

Then she thought of her children, ever to be unborn, and she walked over to Keesh and said, “I am ready.”

The King of Mazy May

A STORY OF THE KLONDIKE

WALT MASTERS is not a very large boy, but there is manliness in his make-up, and he himself, although he does not know a great deal that most boys know, knows much that other boys do not know. He has never seen a train of cars or an elevator in his life, and for that matter, he has never once looked upon a corn-field, a plow, a cow, or even a chicken. He has never had a pair of shoes on his feet, or gone to a picnic or a party, or talked to a girl. But he has seen the sun at midnight, watched the ice-jams on one of the mightiest of rivers, and played beneath the northern lights, the one white child in thousands of square miles of frozen wilderness.

Walt has walked all the fourteen years of his life in sun-tanned, moose-hide mocasins, and he can go to the Indian camps and "talk big" with the men, and trade calico and beads with them for their precious furs. He can make bread without baking-powder, yeast or hops, shoot a moose at three hundred yards, and drive the wild wolf-dogs fifty miles a day on the packed trail.

Last of all, he has a good heart, and is not afraid of the darkness and loneliness, of man or beast or thing. His father is a good man, strong and brave, and Walt is growing up like him.

Walt was born a thousand miles or so down the Yukon, in a trading-post below the Ramparts. After his mother died, his father and he came on up the river, step by step, from camp to camp, till now they are settled down on the Mazy May Creek in the Klondike country. Last year they and several others had spent much toil and time on the Mazy May, and endured great hardships; the creek, in turn, was just beginning to show up its richness and to reward them for their heavy labor. But with the news of their discoveries, strange men began to come and go through the short days and long nights, and many unjust things they did to the men who had worked so long upon the creek.

Si Hartman had gone away on a moose-hunt, to return and find new stakes driven and his claim jumped. George Lukens and his brother had lost their claims in a like manner, having delayed too long on the way to Dawson to record them. In short, it was an old story, and quite a number of the earnest, industrious prospectors had suffered similar losses.

But Walt Masters's father had recorded his claim at the start, so Walt had nothing to fear, now that his father had gone on a short trip up the White River prospecting for quartz. Walt was well able to stay by himself in the cabin, cook his three meals a day, and look after things. Not only did he look after his father's claim, but he had

agreed to keep an eye on the adjoining one of Loren Hall, who had started for Dawson to record it.

Loren Hall was an old man, and he had no dogs, so he had to travel very slowly. After he had been gone some time, word came up the river that he had broken through the ice at Rosebud Creek, and frozen his feet so badly that he would not be able to travel for a couple of weeks. Then Walt Masters received the news that old Loren was nearly all right again, and about to move on afoot for Dawson, as fast as a weakened man could.

Walt was worried, however; the claim was liable to be jumped at any moment because of this delay, and a fresh stampede had started in on the Mazy May. He did not like the looks of the newcomers, and one day, when five of them came by with crack dog-teams and the lightest of camping outfits, he could see that they were prepared to make speed, and resolved to keep an eye on them. So he locked up the cabin and followed them, being at the same time careful to remain hidden.

He had not watched them long before he was sure that they were professional stampeders, bent on jumping all the claims in sight. Walt crept along the snow at the rim of the creek and saw them change many stakes, destroy old ones, and set up new ones.

In the afternoon, with Walt always trailing on their heels, they came back down on the creek, unharnessed their dogs, and went into camp within two claims of his cabin. When he saw them make preparations to cook, he hurried home to get something to eat himself, and then hurried back. He crept so close that he could hear them talking quite plainly, and by pushing the underbrush aside he could catch occasional glimpses of them. They had finished eating and were smoking around the fire.

"The creek is all right, boys," a large, black-bearded man, evidently the leader, said, "and I think the best thing we can do is to pull out to-night. The dogs can follow the trail; besides, it's going to be moonlight. What say you?"

"But it's going to be beastly cold," objected one of the party. "It's forty below zero now."

"An' sure, can't ye keep warm by jumpin' on the sleds an' runnin' after the dogs?" cried an Irishman. "An' who wouldn't? The creek as rich as a United States mint! Faith, it's an ilegant chanst to be getting' a run fer yer money! An' if ye don't run, it's mebbe you'll not get the money at all, at all."

"That's it," said the leader. "If we can get to Dawson and record, we're rich men; and there is no telling who's been sneaking along in our tracks, watching us, and perhaps now off to give the alarm. The thing for us to do is to rest the dogs a bit, and then hit the trail as hard as we can. What do you say?"

Evidently the men had agreed with their leader, for Walt Masters could hear nothing but the rattle of the tin dishes which were being washed. Peering out cautiously, he could see the leader studying a piece of paper. Walt knew what it was at a glance — a list of all the unrecorded claims on Mazy May. Any man could get these lists by applying to the gold commissioner at Dawson.

“Thirty-two,” the leader said, lifting his face to the men. “Thirty-two isn’t recorded, and this is thirty-three. Come on; let’s take a look at it. I saw somebody working on it when we came up this morning.”

Three of the men went with him, leaving one to remain in camp. Walt crept carefully after them till they came to Loren Hall’s shaft. One of the men went down and built a fire on the bottom to thaw out the frozen gravel, while the others built another fire on the dump and melted water in a couple of gold-pans. This they poured into a piece of canvas stretched between two logs, used by Loren Hall in which to wash his gold.

In a short time a couple of buckets of dirt were sent up by the man in the shaft, and Walt could see the others grouped anxiously about their leader as he proceeded to wash it. When this was finished, they stared at the broad streak of black sand and yellow gold-grains on the bottom of the pan, and one of them called excitedly for the man who had remained in camp to come. Loren Hall had struck it rich, and his claim was not yet recorded. It was plain that they were going to jump it.

Walt lay in the snow, thinking rapidly. He was only a boy, but in the face of the threatened injustice against old lame Loren Hall he felt that he must do something. He waited and watched, with his mind made up, till he saw the men began to square up new stakes. Then he crawled away till out of hearing, and broke into a run for the camp of the stampedeers. Walt’s father had taken their own dogs with him prospecting, and the boy knew how impossible it was for him to undertake the seventy miles to Dawson without the aid of dogs.

Gaining the camp, he picked out, with an experienced eye, the easiest running sled and started to harness up the stampedeers’ dogs. There were three teams of six each, and from there he chose ten of the best. Realizing how necessary it was to have a good head-dog, he strove to discover a leader amongst them; but he had little time in which to do it, for he could hear the voices of the returning men. By the time the team was in shape and everything ready, the claim-jumpers came into sight in an open place not more than a hundred yards from the trail, which ran down the bed of the creek. They cried out to him, but he gave no heed, grabbing up one of their fur sleeping-ropes which lay loosely in the snow, and leaping upon the sled.

“Mush! Hi! Mush on!” he cried to the animals, snapping the keen-lashed whip among them.

The dogs sprang against the yoke-straps, and the sled jerked under way so suddenly as to almost throw him off. Then it curved into the creek, poising perilously on one runner. He was almost breathless with suspense, when it finally righted with a bound and sprang ahead again. The creek bank was high and he could not see, although he could hear the cries of the men and knew they were running to cut him off. He did not dare to think what would happen if they caught him; he only clung to the sled, his heart beating wildly, and watched the snow-rim of the bank above him.

Suddenly, over this snow-rim came the flying body of the Irishman, who had leaped straight for the sled in a desperate attempt to capture it; but he was an instant too late. Striking on the very rear of it, he was thrown from his feet, backward, into the

snow. Yet, with the quickness of a cat, he had clutched the end of the sled with one hand, turned over, and was dragging behind on his breast, swearing at the boy and threatening all kinds of terrible things if he did not stop the dogs; but Walt cracked him sharply across the knuckles with the butt of the dog-whip till he let go.

It was eight miles from Walt's claim to the Yukon — eight very crooked miles, for the creek wound back and forth like a snake, "tying knots in itself," as George Lukens said. And because it was so crooked, the dogs could not get up their best speed, while the sled ground heavily on its side against the curves, now to the right, now to the left.

Travellers who had come up and down the Mazy May on foot, with packs on their backs, had declined to go around all the bends, and instead had made short cuts across the narrow necks of creek bottom. Two of his pursuers had gone back to harness the remaining dogs, but the others took advantage of these short cuts, running on foot, and before he knew it they had almost overtaken him.

"Halt!" they cried after him. "Stop, or we'll shoot!"

But Walt only yelled the harder at the dogs, and dashed round the bend with a couple of revolver bullets singing after him. At the next bend they had drawn up closer still, and the bullets struck uncomfortably near to him; but at this point the Mazy May straightened out and ran for half a mile as the crow flies. Here the dogs stretched out in their long wolf-swing, and the stampeders, quickly winded, slowed down and waited for their own sled to come up.

Looking over his shoulder, Walt reasoned that they had not given up the chase for good, and that they would soon be after him again. So he wrapped the fur robe about him to shut out the stinging air, and lay flat on the empty sled, encouraging the dogs, as he well knew how.

At last, twisting abruptly between two river islands, he came upon the might Yukon sweeping grandly to the north. He could not see from bank to bank, and in the quick-falling twilight it loomed a great white sea of frozen stillness. There was not a sound, save the breathing of the dogs, and the churn of the steel-shod sled.

No snow had fallen for several weeks, and the traffic had packed the main-river trail till it was hard and glassy as glare ice. Over this the sled flew along, and the dogs kept the trail fairly well, although Walt quickly discovered that he had made a mistake in choosing the leader. As they were driven in single file, without reins, he had to guide them by his voice, and it was evident that the head-dog had never learned the meaning of "gee" and "haw." He hugged the inside of the curves too closely, often forcing his comrades behind him into the soft snow, while several times he thus capsized the sled.

There was no wind, but the speed at which he travelled created a bitter blast, and with the thermometer down to forty below, this bit through fur and flesh to the very bones. Aware that if he remained constantly upon the sled he would freeze to death, and knowing the practice of Arctic travellers, Walt shortened up one of the lashing-thongs, and whenever he felt chilled, seized hold of it, jumped off, and ran behind

till warmth was restored. Then he would climb on and rest till the process had to be repeated.

Looking back he could see the sled of his pursuers, drawn by eight dogs, rising and falling over the ice hummocks like a boat in a seaway. The Irishman and the black-bearded leader were with it, taking turns in running and riding.

Night fell, and in the blackness of the first hour or so, Walt toiled desperately with his dogs. On account of the poor lead-dog, they were constantly floundering off the beaten track into the soft snow, and the sled was as often riding on its side or top as it was in the proper way. This work and strain tried his strength sorely. Had he not been in such haste he could have avoided much of it, but he feared the stampeders would creep up in the darkness and overtake him. However, he could hear them occasionally yelling to their dogs, and knew from the sounds that they were coming up very slowly.

When the moon rose he was off Sixty Mile, and Dawson was only fifty miles away. He was almost exhausted, and breathed a sigh of relief as he climbed on the sled again. Looking back, he saw his enemies had crawled up within four hundred yards. At this space they remained, a black speck of motion on the white river-beast. Strive as they would, they could not shorten this distance, and strive as he would he could not increase it.

He had now discovered the proper lead-dog, and he knew he could easily run away from them if he could only change the bad leader for the good one. But this was impossible, for a moment's delay, at the speed they were running, would bring the men behind upon him.

When he got off the mouth of Rosebud Creek, just as he was topping a rise, the ping of a bullet on the ice beside him, and the report of a gun, told him that they were this time shooting at him with a rifle. And from then on, as he cleared the summit of each ice-jam, he stretched flat on the leaping sled till the rifle-shot from the rear warned him that he was safe till the next ice-jam.

Now it is very hard to lie on a moving sled, jumping and plunging and yawing like a boat before the wind, and to shoot through the deceiving moonlight at an object four hundred yards away on another moving sled performing equally wild antics. So it is not to be wondered at that the black-bearded leader did not hit him.

After several hours of this, during which, perhaps, a score of bullets had struck about him, their ammunition began to give out and their fire slackened. They took greater care, and only whipped a shot at him at the most favorable opportunities. He was also beginning to leave them behind, the distance slowly increasing to six hundred yards.

Lifting clear on the crest of a great jam off Indian River, Walt Masters met his first accident. A bullet sang past his ears, and struck the bad lead-dog.

The poor brute plunged in a heap, with the rest of the team on top of him.

Like a flash, Walt was by the leader. Cutting the traces with his hunting knife, he dragged the dying animal to one side and straightened out the team.

He glanced back. The other sled was coming up like an express-train. With half the dogs still over their traces, he cried, "Mush on!" and leaped upon the sled just as the pursuing team dashed abreast of him.

The Irishman was just preparing to spring for him, — they were so sure they had him that they did not shoot, — when Walt turned fiercely upon them with his whip.

He struck at their faces, and men must save their faces with their hands. So there was not shooting just then. Before they could recover from the hot rain of blows, Walt reached out from his sled, catching their wheel-dog by the fore legs in midspring, and throwing him heavily. This brought the whole team into a snarl, capsizing the sled and tangling his enemies up beautifully.

Away Walt flew, the runners of his sled fairly screaming as they bounded over the frozen surface. And what had seemed an accident, proved to be a blessing in disguise. The proper lead-dog was now to the fore, and he stretched low to the trail and whined with joy as he jerked his comrades along.

By the time he reached Ainslie's Creek, seventeen miles from Dawson, Walt had left his pursuers, a tiny speck, far behind. At Monte Cristo Island, he could no longer see them. And at Swede Creek, just as daylight was silvering the pines, he ran plump into the camp of old Loren Hall.

Almost as quick as it takes to tell it, Loren had his sleeping-furs rolled up, and had joined Walt on the sled. They permitted the dogs to travel more slowly, as there was no sign of the chase in the rear, and just as they pulled up at the gold commissioner's office in Dawson, Walt, who had kept his eyes open to the last, fell asleep.

And because of what Walt Masters did on this night, the men of the Yukon have become very proud of him, and always speak of him now as the King of Mazy May.

The King of the Greeks

Big Alec had never been captured by the fish patrol. It was his boast that no man could take him alive, and it was his history that of the many men who had tried to take him dead none had succeeded. It was also history that at least two patrolmen who had tried to take him dead had died themselves. Further, no man violated the fish laws more systematically and deliberately than Big Alec.

He was called "Big Alec" because of his gigantic stature. His height was six feet three inches, and he was correspondingly broad-shouldered and deep-chested. He was splendidly muscled and hard as steel, and there were innumerable stories in circulation among the fisher-folk concerning his prodigious strength. He was as bold and dominant of spirit as he was strong of body, and because of this he was widely known by another name, that of "The King of the Greeks." The fishing population was largely composed of Greeks, and they looked up to him and obeyed him as their chief. And as their chief, he fought their fights for them, saw that they were protected, saved them from the law when they fell into its clutches, and made them stand by one another and himself in time of trouble.

In the old days, the fish patrol had attempted his capture many disastrous times and had finally given it over, so that when the word was out that he was coming to Benicia, I was most anxious to see him. But I did not have to hunt him up. In his usual bold way, the first thing he did on arriving was to hunt us up. Charley Le Grant and I at the time were under a patrol-man named Carmintel, and the three of us were on the Reindeer, preparing for a trip, when Big Alec stepped aboard. Carmintel evidently knew him, for they shook hands in recognition. Big Alec took no notice of Charley or me.

"I've come down to fish sturgeon a couple of months," he said to Carmintel.

His eyes flashed with challenge as he spoke, and we noticed the patrolman's eyes drop before him.

"That's all right, Alec," Carmintel said in a low voice. "I'll not bother you. Come on into the cabin, and we'll talk things over," he added.

When they had gone inside and shut the doors after them, Charley winked with slow deliberation at me. But I was only a youngster, and new to men and the ways of some men, so I did not understand. Nor did Charley explain, though I felt there was something wrong about the business.

Leaving them to their conference, at Charley's suggestion we boarded our skiff and pulled over to the Old Steamboat Wharf, where Big Alec's ark was lying. An ark is a house-boat of small though comfortable dimensions, and is as necessary to the Upper

Bay fisherman as are nets and boats. We were both curious to see Big Alec's ark, for history said that it had been the scene of more than one pitched battle, and that it was riddled with bullet-holes.

We found the holes (stopped with wooden plugs and painted over), but there were not so many as I had expected. Charley noted my look of disappointment, and laughed; and then to comfort me he gave an authentic account of one expedition which had descended upon Big Alec's floating home to capture him, alive preferably, dead if necessary. At the end of half a day's fighting, the patrolmen had drawn off in wrecked boats, with one of their number killed and three wounded. And when they returned next morning with reinforcements they found only the mooring-stakes of Big Alec's ark; the ark itself remained hidden for months in the fastnesses of the Suisun tules.

"But why was he not hanged for murder?" I demanded. "Surely the United States is powerful enough to bring such a man to justice."

"He gave himself up and stood trial," Charley answered. "It cost him fifty thousand dollars to win the case, which he did on technicalities and with the aid of the best lawyers in the state. Every Greek fisherman on the river contributed to the sum. Big Alec levied and collected the tax, for all the world like a king. The United States may be all-powerful, my lad, but the fact remains that Big Alec is a king inside the United States, with a country and subjects all his own."

"But what are you going to do about his fishing for sturgeon? He's bound to fish with a 'Chinese line.'"

Charley shrugged his shoulders. "We'll see what we will see," he said enigmatically.

Now a "Chinese line" is a cunning device invented by the people whose name it bears. By a simple system of floats, weights, and anchors, thousands of hooks, each on a separate leader, are suspended at a distance of from six inches to a foot above the bottom. The remarkable thing about such a line is the hook. It is barbless, and in place of the barb, the hook is filed long and tapering to a point as sharp as that of a needle. These hoods are only a few inches apart, and when several thousand of them are suspended just above the bottom, like a fringe, for a couple of hundred fathoms, they present a formidable obstacle to the fish that travel along the bottom.

Such a fish is the sturgeon, which goes rooting along like a pig, and indeed is often called "pig-fish." Pricked by the first hook it touches, the sturgeon gives a startled leap and comes into contact with half a dozen more hooks. Then it threshes about wildly, until it receives hook after hook in its soft flesh; and the hooks, straining from many different angles, hold the luckless fish fast until it is drowned. Because no sturgeon can pass through a Chinese line, the device is called a trap in the fish laws; and because it bids fair to exterminate the sturgeon, it is branded by the fish laws as illegal. And such a line, we were confident, Big Alec intended setting, in open and flagrant violation of the law.

Several days passed after the visit of Big Alec, during which Charley and I kept a sharp watch on him. He towed his ark around the Solano Wharf and into the big bight at Turner's Shipyard. The bight we knew to be good ground for sturgeon, and there

we felt sure the King of the Greeks intended to begin operations. The tide circled like a mill-race in and out of this bight, and made it possible to raise, lower, or set a Chinese line only at slack water. So between the tides Charley and I made it a point for one or the other of us to keep a lookout from the Solano Wharf.

On the fourth day I was lying in the sun behind the stringer-piece of the wharf, when I saw a skiff leave the distant shore and pull out into the bight. In an instant the glasses were at my eyes and I was following every movement of the skiff. There were two men in it, and though it was a good mile away, I made out one of them to be Big Alec; and ere the skiff returned to shore I made out enough more to know that the Greek had set his line.

“Big Alec has a Chinese line out in the bight off Turner’s Shipyard,” Charley Le Grant said that afternoon to Carmintel.

A fleeting expression of annoyance passed over the patrolman’s face, and then he said, “Yes?” in an absent way, and that was all.

Charley bit his lip with suppressed anger and turned on his heel.

“Are you game, my lad?” he said to me later on in the evening, just as we finished washing down the Reindeer’s decks and were preparing to turn in.

A lump came up in my throat, and I could only nod my head.

“Well, then,” and Charley’s eyes glittered in a determined way, “we’ve got to capture Big Alec between us, you and I, and we’ve got to do it in spite of Carmintel. Will you lend a hand?”

“It’s a hard proposition, but we can do it,” he added after a pause.

“Of course we can,” I supplemented enthusiastically.

And then he said, “Of course we can,” and we shook hands on it and went to bed.

But it was no easy task we had set ourselves. In order to convict a man of illegal fishing, it was necessary to catch him in the act with all the evidence of the crime about him—the hooks, the lines, the fish, and the man himself. This meant that we must take Big Alec on the open water, where he could see us coming and prepare for us one of the warm receptions for which he was noted.

“There’s no getting around it,” Charley said one morning. “If we can only get alongside it’s an even toss, and there’s nothing left for us but to try and get alongside. Come on, lad.”

We were in the Columbia River salmon boat, the one we had used against the Chinese shrimp-catchers. Slack water had come, and as we dropped around the end of the Solano Wharf we saw Big Alec at work, running his line and removing the fish.

“Change places,” Charley commanded, “and steer just astern of him as though you’re going into the shipyard.”

I took the tiller, and Charley sat down on a thwart amidships, placing his revolver handily beside him.

“If he begins to shoot,” he cautioned, “get down in the bottom and steer from there, so that nothing more than your hand will be exposed.”

I nodded, and we kept silent after that, the boat slipping gently through the water and Big Alec growing nearer and nearer. We could see him quite plainly, gaffing the sturgeon and throwing them into the boat while his companion ran the line and cleared the hooks as he dropped them back into the water. Nevertheless, we were five hundred yards away when the big fisherman hailed us.

“Here! You! What do you want?” he shouted.

“Keep going,” Charley whispered, “just as though you didn’t hear him.”

The next few moments were very anxious ones. The fisherman was studying us sharply, while we were gliding up on him every second.

“You keep off if you know what’s good for you!” he called out suddenly, as though he had made up his mind as to who and what we were. “If you don’t, I’ll fix you!”

He brought a rifle to his shoulder and trained it on me.

“Now will you keep off?” he demanded.

I could hear Charley groan with disappointment. “Keep off,” he whispered; “it’s all up for this time.”

I put up the tiller and eased the sheet, and the salmon boat ran off five or six points. Big Alec watched us till we were out of range, when he returned to his work.

“You’d better leave Big Alec alone,” Carmintel said, rather sourly, to Charley that night.

“So he’s been complaining to you, has he?” Charley said significantly.

Carmintel flushed painfully. “You’d better leave him alone, I tell you,” he repeated. “He’s a dangerous man, and it won’t pay to fool with him.”

“Yes,” Charley answered softly; “I’ve heard that it pays better to leave him alone.”

This was a direct thrust at Carmintel, and we could see by the expression of his face that it sank home. For it was common knowledge that Big Alec was as willing to bribe as to fight, and that of late years more than one patrolman had handled the fisherman’s money.

“Do you mean to say-“ Carmintel began, in a bullying tone.

But Charley cut him off shortly. “I mean to say nothing,” he said. “You heard what I said, and if the cap fits, why-“

He shrugged his shoulders, and Carmintel glowered at him, speechless.

“What we want is imagination,” Charley said to me one day, when we had attempted to creep upon Big Alec in the gray of dawn and had been shot at for our trouble.

And thereafter, and for many days, I cudgelled my brains trying to imagine some possible way by which two men, on an open stretch of water, could capture another who knew how to use a rifle and was never to be found without one. Regularly, every slack water, without slyness, boldly and openly in the broad day, Big Alec was to be seen running his line. And what made it particularly exasperating was the fact that every fisherman, from Benicia to Vallejo knew that he was successfully defying us. Carmintel also bothered us, for he kept us busy among the shad-fishers of San Pablo, so that we had little time to spare on the King of the Greeks. But Charley’s wife and

children lived at Benicia, and we had made the place our headquarters, so that we always returned to it.

“I’ll tell you what we can do,” I said, after several fruitless weeks had passed; “we can wait some slack water till Big Alec has run his line and gone ashore with the fish, and then we can go out and capture the line. It will put him to time and expense to make another, and then we’ll figure to capture that too. If we can’t capture him, we can discourage him, you see.”

Charley saw, and said it wasn’t a bad idea. We watched our chance, and the next low-water slack, after Big Alec had removed the fish from the line and returned ashore, we went out in the salmon boat. We had the bearings of the line from shore marks, and we knew we would have no difficulty in locating it. The first of the flood tide was setting in, when we ran below where we thought the line was stretched and dropped over a fishing-boat anchor. Keeping a short rope to the anchor, so that it barely touched the bottom, we dragged it slowly along until it stuck and the boat fetched up hard and fast.

“We’ve got it,” Charley cried. “Come on and lend a hand to get it in.”

Together we hove up the rope till the anchor I came in sight with the sturgeon line caught across one of the flukes. Scores of the murderous-looking hooks flashed into sight as we cleared the anchor, and we had just started to run along the line to the end where we could begin to lift it, when a sharp thud in the boat startled us. We looked about, but saw nothing and returned to our work. An instant later there was a similar sharp thud and the gunwale splintered between Charley’s body and mine.

“That’s remarkably like a bullet, lad,” he said reflectively. “And it’s a long shot Big Alec’s making.”

“And he’s using smokeless powder,” he concluded, after an examination of the mile-distant shore. “That’s why we can’t hear the report.”

I looked at the shore, but could see no sign of Big Alec, who was undoubtedly hidden in some rocky nook with us at his mercy. A third bullet struck the water, glanced, passed singing over our heads, and struck the water again beyond.

“I guess we’d better get out of this,” Charley remarked coolly. “What do you think, lad?”

I thought so, too, and said we didn’t want the line anyway. Whereupon we cast off and hoisted the spritsail. The bullets ceased at once, and we sailed away, unpleasantly confident that Big Alec was laughing at our discomfiture.

And more than that, the next day on the fishing wharf, where we were inspecting nets, he saw fit to laugh and sneer at us, and this before all the fishermen. Charley’s face went black with anger; but beyond promising Big Alec that in the end he would surely land him behind the bars, he controlled himself and said nothing. The King of the Greeks made his boast that no fish patrol had ever taken him or ever could take him, and the fishermen cheered him and said it was true. They grew excited, and it looked like trouble for a while; but Big Alec asserted his kingship and quelled them.

Carmintel also laughed at Charley, and dropped sarcastic remarks, and made it hard for him. But Charley refused to be angered, though he told me in confidence that he intended to capture Big Alec if it took all the rest of his life to accomplish it.

"I don't know how I'll do it," he said, "but do it I will, as sure as I am Charley Le Grant. The idea will come to me at the right and proper time, never fear."

And at the right time it came, and most unexpectedly. Fully a month had passed, and we were constantly up and down the river, and down and up the bay, with no spare moments to devote to the particular fisherman who ran a Chinese line in the bight of Turner's Shipyard. We had called in at Selby's Smelter one afternoon, while on patrol work, when all unknown to us our opportunity happened along. It appeared in the guise of a helpless yacht loaded with seasick people, so we could hardly be expected to recognize it as the opportunity. It was a large sloop-yacht, and it was helpless inasmuch as the trade-wind was blowing half a gale and there were no capable sailors aboard.

From the wharf at Selby's we watched with careless interest the lubberly manoeuvre performed of bringing the yacht to anchor, and the equally lubberly manoeuvre of sending the small boat ashore. A very miserable-looking man in draggled ducks, after nearly swamping the boat in the heavy seas, passed us the painter and climbed out. He staggered about as though the wharf were rolling, and told us his troubles, which were the troubles of the yacht. The only rough-weather sailor aboard, the man on whom they all depended, had been called back to San Francisco by a telegram, and they had attempted to continue the cruise alone. The high wind and big seas of San Pablo Bay had been too much for them; all hands were sick, nobody knew anything or could do anything; and so they had run in to the smelter either to desert the yacht or to get somebody to bring it to Benicia. In short, did we know of any sailors who would bring the yacht into Benicia?

Charley looked at me. The Reindeer was lying in a snug place. We had nothing on hand in the way of patrol work till midnight. With the wind then blowing, we could sail the yacht into Benicia in a couple of hours, have several more hours ashore, and come back to the smelter on the evening train.

"All right, captain," Charley said to the disconsolate yachtsman, who smiled in sickly fashion at the title.

"I'm only the owner," he explained.

We rowed him aboard in much better style than he had come ashore, and saw for ourselves the helplessness of the passengers. There were a dozen men and women, and all of them too sick even to appear grateful at our coming. The yacht was rolling savagely, broad on, and no sooner had the owner's feet touched the deck than he collapsed and joined, the others. Not one was able to bear a hand, so Charley and I between us cleared the badly tangled running gear, got up sail, and hoisted anchor.

It was a rough trip, though a swift one. The Carquinez Straits were a welter of foam and smother, and we came through them wildly before the wind, the big mainsail alternately dipping and flinging its boom skyward as we tore along. But the people did not mind. They did not mind anything. Two or three, including the owner, sprawled

in the cockpit, shuddering when the yacht lifted and raced and sank dizzily into the trough, and between-whiles regarding the shore with yearning eyes. The rest were huddled on the cabin floor among the cushions. Now and again some one groaned, but for the most part they were as limp as so many dead persons.

As the bight at Turner's Shipyard opened out, Charley edged into it to get the smoother water. Benicia was in view, and we were bowling along over comparatively easy water, when a speck of a boat danced up ahead of us, directly in our course. It was low-water slack. Charley and I looked at each other. No word was spoken, but at once the yacht began a most astonishing performance, veering and yawing as though the greenest of amateurs was at the wheel. It was a sight for sailormen to see. To all appearances, a runaway yacht was careering madly over the bight, and now and again yielding a little bit to control in a desperate effort to make Benicia.

The owner forgot his seasickness long enough to look anxious. The speck of a boat grew larger and larger, till we could see Big Alec and his partner, with a turn of the sturgeon line around a cleat, resting from their labor to laugh at us. Charley pulled his sou'wester over his eyes, and I followed his example, though I could not guess the idea he evidently had in mind and intended to carry into execution.

We came foaming down abreast of the skiff, so close that we could hear above the wind the voices of Big Alec and his mate as they shouted at us with all the scorn that professional watermen feel for amateurs, especially when amateurs are making fools of themselves.

We thundered on past the fishermen, and nothing had happened. Charley grinned at the disappointment he saw in my face, and then shouted:

"Stand by the main-sheet to jibe!"

He put the wheel hard over, and the yacht whirled around obediently. The main-sheet slacked and dipped, then shot over our heads after the boom and tautened with a crash on the traveller. The yacht heeled over almost on her beam ends, and a great wail went up from the seasick passengers as they swept across the cabin floor in a tangled mass and piled into a heap in the starboard bunks.

But there was no time for them. The yacht, completing the manoeuvre, headed into the wind with slatting canvas, and righted to an even keel. We were still plunging ahead, and directly in our path was the skiff. I saw Big Alec dive overboard and his mate leap for our bowsprit.

Then came the crash as we struck the boat, and a series of grinding bumps as it passed under our bottom.

"That fixes his rifle," I heard Charley mutter, as he sprang upon the deck to look for Big Alec somewhere astern.

The wind and sea quickly stopped our forward movement, and we began to drift backward over the spot where the skiff had been. Big Alec's black head and swarthy face popped up within arm's reach; and all unsuspecting and very angry with what he took to be the clumsiness of amateur sailors, he was hauled aboard. Also he was out of breath, for he had dived deep and stayed down long to escape our keel.

The next instant, to the perplexity and consternation of the owner, Charley was on top of Big Alec in the cockpit, and I was helping bind him with gaskets. The owner was dancing excitedly about and demanding an explanation, but by that time Big Alec's partner had crawled aft from the bowsprit and was peering apprehensively over the rail into the cockpit. Charley's arm shot around his neck and the man landed on his back beside Big Alec.

"More gaskets!" Charley shouted, and I made haste to supply them.

The wrecked skiff was rolling sluggishly a short distance to windward, and I trimmed the sheets while Charley took the wheel and steered for it.

"These two men are old offenders," he explained to the angry owner; "and they are most persistent violators of the fish and game laws. You have seen them caught in the act, and you may expect to be subpoenaed as witness for the state when the trial comes off."

As he spoke he rounded alongside the skiff. It had been torn from the line, a section of which was dragging to it. He hauled in forty or fifty feet with a young sturgeon still fast in a tangle of barbless hooks, slashed that much of the line free with his knife, and tossed it into the cockpit beside the prisoners.

"And there's the evidence, Exhibit A, for the people," Charley continued. "Look it over carefully so that you may identify it in the court-room with the time and place of capture."

And then, in triumph, with no more veering and yawing, we sailed into Benicia, the King of the Greeks bound hard and fast in the cockpit, and for the first time in his life a prisoner of the fish patrol.

A Klondike Christmas

Mouth of the Stuart River,
North West Territory,
December 25, 1897.

My dearest Mother:—

Here we are, all safe and sound, and snugly settled down in winter quarters.

Have received no letters yet, so you can imagine how we long to hear from home. We are in the shortest days of the year, and the sun no longer rises, even at twelve o'clock.

Uncle Hiram and Mr. Carter have gone to Dawson to record some placer claims and to get the mail, if there is any. They took the dogs and sled with them, as they had to travel on the ice. We did expect them home for Christmas dinner, but I guess George and I will have to eat alone.

I am to be cook, so you can be sure that we'll have a jolly dinner. We will begin with the staples first. There will be fried bacon, baked beans, bread raised from sour-dough, and —

He seemed perplexed, and after dubiously scratching his head a couple of times, laid down the pen. Once or twice, he tried to go on, but eventually gave it up, his face assuming a very disgusted expression. He was a robust young fellow of eighteen or nineteen, and the merry twinkle which lurked in his eyes gave the lie to his counterfeited displeasure.

It was a snug little cabin in which he sat. Built of unbarked logs, measuring not more than ten by twelve feet on the inside, and heated by a roaring Yukon-stove, it seemed more homelike to him than any house he had ever lived in, except — of course, always the one, real home.

Two bunks, table and stove, occupied two-thirds of the room, but every inch of space was utilized. Revolvers, rifles, hunting-knives, belts and clothes, hung from three of the walls in picturesque confusion; the remaining one being hidden by a set of shelves, which held all their cooking utensils. Though already eleven o'clock in the morning, a sort of twilight prevailed outside, while it would have been quite dark within, if it had not been for the slush-lamp. This was merely a shallow, tin cup, filled with bacon grease. A piece of cotton caulking served for a wick; the heat of the flame melting the grease as fast as required.

He leaned his elbows on the table and became absorbed in a deep scrutiny of the lamp. He was really not interested in it, and did not even know he was looking at it, so intent was he in trying to discover what else there could possibly be for dinner.

The door was thrown open at this moment, and a stalwart young fellow entered with a rush of cold air, kicking off his snow shoes at the threshold.

“‘Bout time for dinner, isn’t it?” he asked gruffly, as he took off his mittens. But his brother Clarence had just discovered that “bacon,” “beans” and “bread” all began with “b,” and did not reply. George’s face was covered with ice, so he contented himself with holding it over the stove to thaw. The rattle of the icy chunks on the sheet-iron was getting monotonous, when Clarence deigned to reply by asking a question.

“What’s ‘b’ stand for?”

“Bad, of course,” was the prompt answer.

“Just what I thought,” and he sighed with great solemnity.

“But how about the dinner? You’re cook. It’s time to begin. What have you been doing? Oh! Writing! Let’s see.”

His jaw fell when he got to “bacon, beans and bread,” and he said; “It won’t do to write home that that’s all we’ve got for Christmas dinner. It would make them worry, you know. Say, haven’t we some dried apples?”

“Half a cup. Not enough for a pie.”

“They’ll swell, you ninny. Sit down and add apple pie to that list of yours. And say dumplings, too, while you’re at it. We can make a stagger at them — put two pieces of apple in two lumps of dough and boil them. Never say die. We’ll make them think we’re living like princes when they read that.”

Clarence did as directed, and then sat with such a look of query on his face as to make George nervous and doubtful.

“Pretty slim after all,” he mused. “Let’s see if we can’t find something else — bread, flapjacks and — and — why flour-gravy, of course.”

“We can bake, and boil, and fry the beans,” Clarence suggested; “but what’s to be done with the bacon except to fry it, I can’t see.”

“Why parboil it; that makes another course, nine altogether. How much more do you want, anyway?” And then to change the subject, “How cold do you think it is?”

Clarence critically studied the ice which had crept far up the cracks in the door, and then gave his judgment; “Past fifty.”

“The spirit thermometer gives sixty-five, and it’s still falling.” George could not prevent an exultant ring in his voice, though if he had been asked why, he would not have known.

“And water freezes at thirty-two degrees above zero,” Clarence began to calculate. “That makes ninety-seven degrees of frost. Phew! Wouldn’t that open the eyes of the folks at home!”

So, like the two boys that they were, they temporarily forgot their monotonous fare in an exciting discussion of the whys and wherefores of cold. But when one is afflicted with a healthy appetite he can not escape from it very long at a time, and at twelve o’clock they set about cooking their slender meal.

George went into the cache for bacon, and begun to rummage about in odd places to see what he could find. Now the cache, or place where their food was stored to keep

it away from the perpetually-hungry native dogs, was built onto the back of the cabin. Clarence heard the racket he was making, and when he began to cheer and cry out "Eureka! Eureka!" he ran out to see what had happened.

"Manna! brother mine! Manna! dropped from the clouds for the starving children of Israel!" he cried, waving a large can above his head. "Mock-turtle soup. Found it in the tool box," he went on, as they carried it into the cabin.

True enough; it was a quart-can of specially prepared and very rich mock-turtle soup. They sang and danced and were as jubilant as though they had found a gold mine. Clarence added the item to the bill of fare in his letter, while George strove to divide it up into two items, or even more. He showed a special aptitude for this kind of work; but how many tempting dishes he would have finally succeeded in evolving out of it, shall never be known, for at that moment they heard a dog team pull up the river bank before the cabin.

The next instant the door opened, and two strangers came in. They were grotesque sights. Their heads were huge balls of ice, with little holes where their mouths should have been, through which they breathed. Unable to open their mouths or speak, they shook hands with the boys and headed for the stove. Clarence and George exchanged glances and watched their strange visitors curiously.

"Wal, it's jes' this way," one of them began, as he shook the remaining chunks of ice from his whiskers; "me an' my pard ha' ben nigh on two months, now, over on the Mazy May, with nothin' to eat but straight meat. Nary flour, nary beans, nary bacon. So me an' him sorto' talked it over, an' figgered it out. At last I sez, 'Wot yeh say, Jim? Let's cross the divide an' strike some camp on the Yukon, an' git some civilized grub again? Git a reg'lar Christmas dinner? An' he sez 'I'll go yeh, by gum.' An' here we be. How air yeh off fer meat? Got a hundred pound or so, on the sled outside."

Just as Clarence and George were assuring him that he was heartily welcome, the other man tore away the last hindrance to his speech, and broke in; "Say, lads; yeh haint got a leetle bit o' bread yeh might spare. I'm thet hungry fer jes' a leetle bit —"

"Yeh jes' shet up, Jim!" cried his partner indignantly. "Ye'd make these kids think yeh might be starvin'. Haint yeh had all yeh wanted to eat?"

"Yes," was the gloomy reply; "but nothin' but straight meat."

However, Clarence put an end to the discussion by setting the table with sour-dough bread and cold bacon, having first made them promise not to spoil their appetites for the dinner. The poor fellows handled the heavy bread reverently, and went into ecstasies of delight over it. Then they went out, unharnessed the dogs, and brought some magnificent pieces of moose meat in with them. The boys' mouths watered at the sight, for they were longing for it just as much as the others longed for the bread.

"Porterhouse moose-steak," whispered George; "tenderloin, sirloin and round; liver and bacon; rib-roast of moose, moose stew and fried sweet breads. Hurry, Clarence, and add them to the bill of fare."

“Now don’t bother me. I’m cook, and I’m going to boss this dinner, so you obey orders. Take a piece of that meat and go down to the cabin on the next island. They’d give most anything for it, so see that you make a good trade.”

The hungry strangers sat on the bunk and watched proceedings with satisfied countenances, while Clarence mixed and kneaded the dough for a baking of bread. In a short time George returned, with one cup of dried apples and five prunes. Yet they were all disappointed at his failure to get sugar. But the dinner already promised to be such a grand affair that they could readily forego such trifling matter as sweets.

Just as Clarence was shortening the pie-dough with bacon grease, a second sled pulled up at the door, and another stranger entered. A vivid picture he made, as he stood for an instant in the doorway. Though his eyebrows and lashes were matted with ice, his face was clean-shaven, and hence, free from it. From his beaded moccasins to his great gauntleted mittens and wolf-skin cap from Siberia, every article of wearing apparel proclaimed him to be one of the “Eldorado Kings,” or millionaire mine-owners of Dawson.

He was a pleasant man to look at, though his heavy jaw and steel-blue eyes gave notice of a firm, indomitable will. About his waist was clasped a leather belt, in which reposed two large Colt’s revolvers and a hunting-knife, while in his hand, besides the usual dog whip, he carried a smokeless rifle of the largest bore and latest pattern. They wondered at this, for men in the Klondike rarely go armed, and then because of necessity.

His story was soon told. His own team of seven dogs, the finest in the country and for which he had recently refused five thousand dollars, had been stolen five days before. He had found the clue, and discovered that the thieves had started out of the country on the ice. He had borrowed a team of dogs from a friend and taken their trail.

They marvelled at his speed, for he had left Dawson at midnight, having traveled the seventy-five miles in twelve hours. He wished to rest the animals and take a few hours sleep, before going on with the chase. He was sure of overtaking them, he said, for they had foolishly started with an eighteen-inch sled, while the regular, trail Yukon-sleds were only sixteen inches wide. Thus, they had to break trail constantly for one of the runners, while his was already broken.

They recognized the party he was after, and assured him that he was certain to catch them in another twelve hours’ run. Then he was made welcome and invited to dinner. To their surprise, when he returned from unhitching and feeding his dogs he brought several pounds of sugar and two cans of condensed milk.

“Thought you fellows, up river here, would be out of luxuries,” he said, as he threw them upon the table; “and as I wanted to travel light, I brought them along, intending to trade for beans and flour whenever I got a chance. No, never mind thanks. I’m going to eat dinner with you. Call me when it’s ready.” And he climbed into one of the bunks, falling asleep a moment later.

“I say, Jim. Thet’s travelin’, aint it?” said the Man from Mazy May, with as much pride as though he had done it himself. “Seventy-five mile in twelve hours, an’ thet

cold he wa'nt able to ride more'n half the time. Bet ye'd be petered clean out if yeh done the like o' thet."

"Maybe yeh think I can't travel," his partner replied. But before he could tell what a wonderful traveler he was, their dogs and the dogs of the new arrival started a fight, and had to be separated.

At last the dinner was ready, and just as they were calling the "Eldorado King," Uncle Hiram and Mr. Carter arrived.

"Not an ounce of sugar or can of milk to be bought in Dawson," he said. But his jaw dropped as he caught sight of the sugar and milk on the table, and he sheepishly held up a quart-can of strained honey as his contribution.

This addition necessitated a change in the bill of fare; so when they finally sat down, the first course of mock-turtle soup was followed by hot cakes and honey. While one after another the delicacies of "civilized grub," as they called it, appeared, the eyes of the Men from Mazy May opened wider and wider, and speech seemed to fail them.

But one more surprise was in store for them. They heard a jingle of bells, and another ice-covered traveler entered and claimed their hospitality. The new-comer was an Associated Press reporter, on his way to Dawson from the United States. His first question was concerning the where-abouts of a Mr. Hiram Donaldson, "said to be camped on the Yukon near the mouth of the Stuart River." On Uncle Hiram being pointed out to him, the reporter handed him a letter of introduction from the Mining Syndicate which he, Mr. Donaldson, was representing. Nor was this all. A fat package of letters was also passed over — the longed-for letters from home.

"By gum! This do beat all," said the Man from Mazy May, after a place had been made for the last arrival. But his partner had his mouth so full of apple dumpling that he could only roll his eyes in approval.

"I know what 'b' stands for." whispered George across the table to Clarence.

"So do I. It stands for 'Bully' with a big 'B'."

Koolau the Leper

“Because we are sick they take away our liberty. We have obeyed the law. We have done no wrong. And yet they would put us in prison. Molokai is a prison. That you know. Niuli, there, his sister was sent to Molokai seven years ago. He has not seen her since. Nor will he ever see her. She must stay there until she dies. This is not her will. It is not Niuli’s will. It is the will of the white men who rule the land. And who are these white men?”

“We know. We have it from our fathers and our fathers’ fathers. They came like lambs, speaking softly. Well might they speak softly, for we were many and strong, and all the islands were ours. As I say, they spoke softly. They were of two kinds. The one kind asked our permission, our gracious permission, to preach to us the word of God. The other kind asked our permission, our gracious permission, to trade with us. That was the beginning. Today all the islands are theirs, all the land, all the cattle—everything is theirs. They that preached the word of God and they that preached the word of Rum have fore-gathered and become great chiefs. They live like kings in houses of many rooms, with multitudes of servants to care for them. They who had nothing have everything, and if you, or I, or any Kanaka be hungry, they sneer and say, ‘Well, why don’t you work? There are the plantations.’”

Koolau paused. He raised one hand, and with gnarled and twisted fingers lifted up the blazing wreath of hibiscus that crowned his black hair. The moonlight bathed the scene in silver. It was a night of peace, though those who sat about him and listened had all the seeming of battle-wrecks. Their faces were leonine. Here a space yawned in a face where should have been a nose, and there an arm-stump showed where a hand had rotted off. They were men and women beyond the pale, the thirty of them, for upon them had been placed the mark of the beast.

They sat, flower-garlanded, in the perfumed, luminous night, and their lips made uncouth noises and their throats rasped approval of Koolau’s speech. They were creatures who once had been men and women. But they were men and women no longer. They were monsters—in face and form grotesque caricatures of everything human. They were hideously maimed and distorted, and had the seeming of creatures that had been racked in millenniums of hell. Their hands, when they possessed them, were like harpy claws. Their faces were the misfits and slips, crushed and bruised by some mad god at play in the machinery of life. Here and there were features which the mad god had smeared half away, and one woman wept scalding tears from twin pits of horror, where her eyes once had been. Some were in pain and groaned from their chests. Others coughed, making sounds like the tearing of tissue. Two were idiots, more like

huge apes marred in the making, until even an ape were an angel. They mowed and gibbered in the moonlight, under crowns of drooping, golden blossoms. One, whose bloated ear-lobe flapped like a fan upon his shoulder, caught up a gorgeous flower of orange and scarlet and with it decorated the monstrous ear that flip-flapped with his every movement.

And over these things Koolau was king. And this was his kingdom,—a flower-throttled gorge, with beetling cliffs and crags, from which floated the blattings of wild goats. On three sides the grim walls rose, festooned in fantastic draperies of tropic vegetation and pierced by cave-entrances—the rocky lairs of Koolau’s subjects. On the fourth side the earth fell away into a tremendous abyss, and, far below, could be seen the summits of lesser peaks and crags, at whose bases foamed and rumbled the Pacific surge. In fine weather a boat could land on the rocky beach that marked the entrance of Kalalau Valley, but the weather must be very fine. And a cool-headed mountaineer might climb from the beach to the head of Kalalau Valley, to this pocket among the peaks where Koolau ruled; but such a mountaineer must be very cool of head, and he must know the wild-goat trails as well. The marvel was that the mass of human wreckage that constituted Koolau’s people should have been able to drag its helpless misery over the giddy goat-trails to this inaccessible spot.

“Brothers,” Koolau began.

But one of the mowing, apelike travesties emitted a wild shriek of madness, and Koolau waited while the shrill cachination was tossed back and forth among the rocky walls and echoed distantly through the pulseless night.

“Brothers, is it not strange? Ours was the land, and behold, the land is not ours. What did these preachers of the word of God and the word of Rum give us for the land? Have you received one dollar, as much as one dollar, any one of you, for the land? Yet it is theirs, and in return they tell us we can go to work on the land, their land, and that what we produce by our toil shall be theirs. Yet in the old days we did not have to work. Also, when we are sick, they take away our freedom.”

“Who brought the sickness, Koolau?” demanded Kiloliana, a lean and wiry man with a face so like a laughing faun’s that one might expect to see the cloven hoofs under him. They were cloven, it was true, but the cleavages were great ulcers and livid putrefactions. Yet this was Kiloliana, the most daring climber of them all, the man who knew every goat-trail and who had led Koolau and his wretched followers into the recesses of Kalalau.

“Ay, well questioned,” Koolau answered. “Because we would not work the miles of sugar-cane where once our horses pastured, they brought the Chinese slaves from overseas. And with them came the Chinese sickness—that which we suffer from and because of which they would imprison us on Molokai. We were born on Kauai. We have been to the other islands, some here and some there, to Oahu, to Maui, to Hawaii, to Honolulu. Yet always did we come back to Kauai. Why did we come back? There must be a reason. Because we love Kauai. We were born here. Here we have lived. And here shall we die—unless—unless—there be weak hearts amongst us. Such we do not want.

They are fit for Molokai. And if there be such, let them not remain. Tomorrow the soldiers land on the shore. Let the weak hearts go down to them. They will be sent swiftly to Molokai. As for us, we shall stay and fight. But know that we will not die. We have rifles. You know the narrow trails where men must creep, one by one. I, alone, Koolau, who was once a cowboy on Niihau, can hold the trail against a thousand men. Here is Kapalei, who was once a judge over men and a man with honour, but who is now a hunted rat, like you and me. Hear him. He is wise.”

Kapalei arose. Once he had been a judge. He had gone to college at Punahou. He had sat at meat with lords and chiefs and the high representatives of alien powers who protected the interests of traders and missionaries. Such had been Kapalei. But now, as Koolau had said, he was a hunted rat, a creature outside the law, sunk so deep in the mire of human horror that he was above the law as well as beneath it. His face was featureless, save for gaping orifices and for the lidless eyes that burned under hairless brows.

“Let us not make trouble,” he began. “We ask to be left alone. But if they do not leave us alone, then is the trouble theirs and the penalty. My fingers are gone, as you see.” He held up his stumps of hands that all might see. “Yet have I the joint of one thumb left, and it can pull a trigger as firmly as did its lost neighbour in the old days. We love Kauai. Let us live here, or die here, but do not let us go to the prison of Molokai. The sickness is not ours. We have not sinned. The men who preached the word of God and the word of Rum brought the sickness with the coolie slaves who work the stolen land. I have been a judge. I know the law and the justice, and I say to you it is unjust to steal a man’s land, to make that man sick with the Chinese sickness, and then to put that man in prison for life.”

“Life is short, and the days are filled with pain,” said Koolau. “Let us drink and dance and be happy as we can.”

From one of the rocky lairs calabashes were produced and passed round. The calabashes were filled with the fierce distillation of the root of the ti-plant; and as the liquid fire coursed through them and mounted to their brains, they forgot that they had once been men and women, for they were men and women once more. The woman who wept scalding tears from open eye-pits was indeed a woman apulse with life as she plucked the strings of an ukulele and lifted her voice in a barbaric love-call such as might have come from the dark forest-depths of the primeval world. The air tingled with her cry, softly imperious and seductive. Upon a mat, timing his rhythm to the woman’s song Kiloliana danced. It was unmistakable. Love danced in all his movements, and, next, dancing with him on the mat, was a woman whose heavy hips and generous breast gave the lie to her disease-corroded face. It was a dance of the living dead, for in their disintegrating bodies life still loved and longed. Ever the woman whose sightless eyes ran scalding tears chanted her love-cry, ever the dancers of love danced in the warm night, and ever the calabashes went around till in all their brains were maggots crawling of memory and desire. And with the woman on the mat danced a slender maid whose face was beautiful and unmarred, but whose twisted arms that

rose and fell marked the disease's ravage. And the two idiots, gibbering and mouthing strange noises, danced apart, grotesque, fantastic, travesty love as they themselves had been travestied by life.

But the woman's love-cry broke midway, the calabashes were lowered, and the dancers ceased, as all gazed into the abyss above the sea, where a rocket flared like a wan phantom through the moonlit air.

"It is the soldiers," said Koolau. "Tomorrow there will be fighting. It is well to sleep and be prepared."

The lepers obeyed, crawling away to their lairs in the cliff, until only Koolau remained, sitting motionless in the moonlight, his rifle across his knees, as he gazed far down to the boats landing on the beach.

The far head of Kalalau Valley had been well chosen as a refuge. Except Kiloliana, who knew back-trails up the precipitous walls, no man could win to the gorge save by advancing across a knife-edged ridge. This passage was a hundred yards in length. At best, it was a scant twelve inches wide. On either side yawned the abyss. A slip, and to right or left the man would fall to his death. But once across he would find himself in an earthly paradise. A sea of vegetation laved the landscape, pouring its green billows from wall to wall, dripping from the cliff-lips in great vine-masses, and flinging a spray of ferns and air-plants in to the multitudinous crevices. During the many months of Koolau's rule, he and his followers had fought with this vegetable sea. The choking jungle, with its riot of blossoms, had been driven back from the bananas, oranges, and mangoes that grew wild. In little clearings grew the wild arrowroot; on stone terraces, filled with soil scrapings, were the taro patches and the melons; and in every open space where the sunshine penetrated were papaia trees burdened with their golden fruit.

Koolau had been driven to this refuge from the lower valley by the beach. And if he were driven from it in turn, he knew of gorges among the jumbled peaks of the inner fastnesses where he could lead his subjects and live. And now he lay with his rifle beside him, peering down through a tangled screen of foliage at the soldiers on the beach. He noted that they had large guns with them, from which the sunshine flashed as from mirrors. The knife-edged passage lay directly before him. Crawling upward along the trail that led to it he could see tiny specks of men. He knew they were not the soldiers, but the police. When they failed, then the soldiers would enter the game.

He affectionately rubbed a twisted hand along his rifle barrel and made sure that the sights were clean. He had learned to shoot as a wild-cattle hunter on Niihau, and on that island his skill as a marksman was unforgotten. As the toiling specks of men grew nearer and larger, he estimated the range, judged the deflection of the wind that swept at right angles across the line of fire, and calculated the chances of overshooting marks that were so far below his level. But he did not shoot. Not until they reached the beginning of the passage did he make his presence known. He did not disclose himself, but spoke from the thicket.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"We want Koolau, the leper," answered the man who led the native police, himself a blue-eyed American.

"You must go back," Koolau said.

He knew the man, a deputy sheriff, for it was by him that he had been harried out of Niihau, across Kauai, to Kalalau Valley, and out of the valley to the gorge.

"Who are you?" the sheriff asked.

"I am Koolau, the leper," was the reply.

"Then come out. We want you. Dead or alive, there is a thousand dollars on your head. You cannot escape."

Koolau laughed aloud in the thicket.

"Come out!" the sheriff commanded, and was answered by silence.

He conferred with the police, and Koolau saw that they were preparing to rush him.

"Koolau," the sheriff called. "Koolau, I am coming across to get you."

"Then look first and well about you at the sun and sea and sky, for it will be the last time you behold them."

"That's all right, Koolau," the sheriff said soothingly. "I know you're a dead shot. But you won't shoot me. I have never done you any wrong."

Koolau grunted in the thicket.

"I say, you know, I've never done you any wrong, have I?" the sheriff persisted.

"You do me wrong when you try to put me in prison," was the reply. "And you do me wrong when you try for the thousand dollars on my head. If you will live, stay where you are."

"I've got to come across and get you. I'm sorry. But it is my duty."

"You will die before you get across."

The sheriff was no coward. Yet was he undecided. He gazed into the gulf on either side and ran his eyes along the knife-edge he must travel. Then he made up his mind.

"Koolau," he called.

But the thicket remained silent.

"Koolau, don't shoot. I am coming."

The sheriff turned, gave some orders to the police, then started on his perilous way. He advanced slowly. It was like walking a tight rope. He had nothing to lean upon but the air. The lava rock crumbled under his feet, and on either side the dislodged fragments pitched downward through the depths. The sun blazed upon him, and his face was wet with sweat. Still he advanced, until the halfway point was reached.

"Stop!" Koolau commanded from the thicket. "One more step and I shoot."

The sheriff halted, swaying for balance as he stood poised above the void. His face was pale, but his eyes were determined. He licked his dry lips before he spoke.

"Koolau, you won't shoot me. I know you won't."

He started once more. The bullet whirled him half about. On his face was an expression of querulous surprise as he reeled to the fall. He tried to save himself by throwing his body across the knife-edge; but at that moment he knew death. The next moment the knife-edge was vacant. Then came the rush, five policemen, in single file, with

superb steadiness, running along the knife-edge. At the same instant the rest of the posse opened fire on the thicket. It was madness. Five times Koolau pulled the trigger, so rapidly that his shots constituted a rattle. Changing his position and crouching low under the bullets that were biting and singing through the bushes, he peered out. Four of the police had followed the sheriff. The fifth lay across the knife-edge still alive. On the farther side, no longer firing, were the surviving police. On the naked rock there was no hope for them. Before they could clamber down Koolau could have picked off the last man. But he did not fire, and, after a conference, one of them took off a white undershirt and waved it as a flag. Followed by another, he advanced along the knife-edge to their wounded comrade. Koolau gave no sign, but watched them slowly withdraw and become specks as they descended into the lower valley.

Two hours later, from another thicket, Koolau watched a body of police trying to make the ascent from the opposite side of the valley. He saw the wild goats flee before them as they climbed higher and higher, until he doubted his judgment and sent for Kiloliana, who crawled in beside him.

“No, there is no way,” said Kiloliana.

“The goats?” Koolau questioned.

“They come over from the next valley, but they cannot pass to this. There is no way. Those men are not wiser than goats. They may fall to their deaths. Let us watch.”

“They are brave men,” said Koolau. “Let us watch.”

Side by side they lay among the morning-glories, with the yellow blossoms of the hau dropping upon them from overhead, watching the motes of men toil upward, till the thing happened, and three of them, slipping, rolling, sliding, dashed over a cliff-lip and fell sheer half a thousand feet.

Kiloliana chuckled.

“We will be bothered no more,” he said.

“They have war guns,” Koolau made answer. “The soldiers have not yet spoken.”

In the drowsy afternoon, most of the lepers lay in their rock dens asleep. Koolau, his rifle on his knees, fresh-cleaned and ready, dozed in the entrance to his own den. The maid with the twisted arms lay below in the thicket and kept watch on the knife-edge passage. Suddenly Koolau was startled wide awake by the sound of an explosion on the beach. The next instant the atmosphere was incredibly rent asunder. The terrible sound frightened him. It was as if all the gods had caught the envelope of the sky in their hands and were ripping it apart as a woman rips apart a sheet of cotton cloth. But it was such an immense ripping, growing swiftly nearer. Koolau glanced up apprehensively, as if expecting to see the thing. Then high up on the cliff overhead the shell burst in a fountain of black smoke. The rock was shattered, the fragments falling to the foot of the cliff.

Koolau passed his hand across his sweaty brow. He was terribly shaken. He had had no experience with shell-fire, and this was more dreadful than anything he had imagined.

“One,” said Kapahei, suddenly bethinking himself to keep count.

A second and a third shell flew screaming over the top of the wall, bursting beyond view. Kapahei methodically kept the count. The lepers crowded into the open space before the caves. At first they were frightened, but as the shells continued their flight overhead the leper folk became reassured and began to admire the spectacle.

The two idiots shrieked with delight, prancing wild antics as each air-tormenting shell went by. Koolau began to recover his confidence. No damage was being done. Evidently they could not aim such large missiles at such long range with the precision of a rifle.

But a change came over the situation. The shells began to fall short. One burst below in the thicket by the knife-edge. Koolau remembered the maid who lay there on watch, and ran down to see. The smoke was still rising from the bushes when he crawled in. He was astounded. The branches were splintered and broken. Where the girl had lain was a hole in the ground. The girl herself was in shattered fragments. The shell had burst right on her.

First peering out to make sure no soldiers were attempting the passage, Koolau started back on the run for the caves. All the time the shells were moaning, whining, screaming by, and the valley was rumbling and reverberating with the explosions. As he came in sight of the caves, he saw the two idiots cavorting about, clutching each other's hands with their stumps of fingers. Even as he ran, Koolau saw a spout of black smoke rise from the ground, near to the idiots. They were flung apart bodily by the explosion. One lay motionless, but the other was dragging himself by his hands toward the cave. His legs trailed out helplessly behind him, while the blood was pouring from his body. He seemed bathed in blood, and as he crawled he cried like a little dog. The rest of the lepers, with the exception of Kapahei, had fled into the caves.

"Seventeen," said Kapahei. "Eighteen," he added.

This last shell had fairly entered into one of the caves. The explosion caused the caves to empty. But from the particular cave no one emerged. Koolau crept in through the pungent, acrid smoke. Four bodies, frightfully mangled, lay about. One of them was the sightless woman whose tears till now had never ceased.

Outside, Koolau found his people in a panic and already beginning to climb the goat-trail that led out of the gorge and on among the jumbled heights and chasms. The wounded idiot, whining feebly and dragging himself along on the ground by his hands, was trying to follow. But at the first pitch of the wall his helplessness overcame him and he fell back.

"It would be better to kill him," said Koolau to Kapahei, who still sat in the same place.

"Twenty-two," Kapahei answered. "Yes, it would be a wise thing to kill him. Twenty-three—twenty-four."

The idiot whined sharply when he saw the rifle levelled at him. Koolau hesitated, then lowered the gun.

"It is a hard thing to do," he said.

"You are a fool, twenty-six, twenty-seven," said Kapahei. "Let me show you."

He arose, and with a heavy fragment of rock in his hand, approached the wounded thing. As he lifted his arm to strike, a shell burst full upon him, relieving him of the necessity of the act and at the same time putting an end to his count.

Koolau was alone in the gorge. He watched the last of his people drag their crippled bodies over the brow of the height and disappear. Then he turned and went down to the thicket where the maid had been killed. The shell-fire still continued, but he remained; for far below he could see the soldiers climbing up. A shell burst twenty feet away. Flattening himself into the earth, he heard the rush of the fragments above his body. A shower of hau blossoms rained upon him. He lifted his head to peer down the trail, and sighed. He was very much afraid. Bullets from rifles would not have worried him, but this shell-fire was abominable. Each time a shell shrieked by he shivered and crouched; but each time he lifted his head again to watch the trail.

At last the shells ceased. This, he reasoned, was because the soldiers were drawing near. They crept along the trail in single file, and he tried to count them until he lost track. At any rate, there were a hundred or so of them—all come after Koolau the leper. He felt a fleeting prod of pride. With war guns and rifles, police and soldiers, they came for him, and he was only one man, a crippled wreck of a man at that. They offered a thousand dollars for him, dead or alive. In all his life he had never possessed that much money. The thought was a bitter one. Kapahei had been right. He, Koolau, had done no wrong. Because the haoles wanted labour with which to work the stolen land, they had brought in the Chinese coolies, and with them had come the sickness. And now, because he had caught the sickness, he was worth a thousand dollars—but not to himself. It was his worthless carcass, rotten with disease or dead from a bursting shell, that was worth all that money.

When the soldiers reached the knife-edged passage, he was prompted to warn them. But his gaze fell upon the body of the murdered maid, and he kept silent. When six had ventured on the knife-edge, he opened fire. Nor did he cease when the knife-edge was bare. He emptied his magazine, reloaded, and emptied it again. He kept on shooting. All his wrongs were blazing in his brain, and he was in a fury of vengeance. All down the goat-trail the soldiers were firing, and though they lay flat and sought to shelter themselves in the shallow inequalities of the surface, they were exposed marks to him. Bullets whistled and thudded about him, and an occasional ricochet sang sharply through the air. One bullet ploughed a crease through his scalp, and a second burned across his shoulder-blade without breaking the skin.

It was a massacre, in which one man did the killing. The soldiers began to retreat, helping along their wounded. As Koolau picked them off he became aware of the smell of burnt meat. He glanced about him at first, and then discovered that it was his own hands. The heat of the rifle was doing it. The leprosy had destroyed most of the nerves in his hands. Though his flesh burned and he smelled it, there was no sensation.

He lay in the thicket, smiling, until he remembered the war guns. Without doubt they would open upon him again, and this time upon the very thicket from which he had inflicted the danger. Scarcely had he changed his position to a nook behind a small

shoulder of the wall where he had noted that no shells fell, than the bombardment recommenced. He counted the shells. Sixty more were thrown into the gorge before the war-guns ceased. The tiny area was pitted with their explosions, until it seemed impossible that any creature could have survived. So the soldiers thought, for, under the burning afternoon sun, they climbed the goat-trail again. And again the knife-edged passage was disputed, and again they fell back to the beach.

For two days longer Koolau held the passage, though the soldiers contented themselves with flinging shells into his retreat. Then Pahau, a leper boy, came to the top of the wall at the back of the gorge and shouted down to him that Kiloliana, hunting goats that they might eat, had been killed by a fall, and that the women were frightened and knew not what to do. Koolau called the boy down and left him with a spare gun with which to guard the passage. Koolau found his people disheartened. The majority of them were too helpless to forage food for themselves under such forbidding circumstances, and all were starving. He selected two women and a man who were not too far gone with the disease, and sent them back to the gorge to bring up food and mats. The rest he cheered and consoled until even the weakest took a hand in building rough shelters for themselves.

But those he had dispatched for food did not return, and he started back for the gorge. As he came out on the brow of the wall, half a dozen rifles cracked. A bullet tore through the fleshy part of his shoulder, and his cheek was cut by a sliver of rock where a second bullet smashed against the cliff. In the moment that this happened, and he leaped back, he saw that the gorge was alive with soldiers. His own people had betrayed him. The shell-fire had been too terrible, and they had preferred the prison of Molokai.

Koolau dropped back and unslung one of his heavy cartridge-belts. Lying among the rocks, he allowed the head and shoulders of the first soldier to rise clearly into view before pulling trigger. Twice this happened, and then, after some delay, in place of a head and shoulders a white flag was thrust above the edge of the wall.

“What do you want?” he demanded.

“I want you, if you are Koolau the leper,” came the answer.

Koolau forgot where he was, forgot everything, as he lay and marvelled at the strange persistence of these haoles who would have their will though the sky fell in. Aye, they would have their will over all men and all things, even though they died in getting it. He could not but admire them, too, what of that will in them that was stronger than life and that bent all things to their bidding. He was convinced of the hopelessness of his struggle. There was no gainsaying that terrible will of the haoles. Though he killed a thousand, yet would they rise like the sands of the sea and come upon him, ever more and more. They never knew when they were beaten. That was their fault and their virtue. It was where his own kind lacked. He could see, now, how the handful of the preachers of God and the preachers of Rum had conquered the land. It was because-

“Well, what have you got to say? Will you come with me?”

It was the voice of the invisible man under the white flag. There he was, like any haole, driving straight toward the end determined.

"Let us talk," said Koolau.

The man's head and shoulders arose, then his whole body. He was a smooth-faced, blue-eyed youngster of twenty-five, slender and natty in his captain's uniform. He advanced until halted, then seated himself a dozen feet away.

"You are a brave man," said Koolau wonderingly. "I could kill you like a fly."

"No, you couldn't," was the answer.

"Why not?"

"Because you are a man, Koolau, though a bad one. I know your story. You kill fairly."

Koolau grunted, but was secretly pleased.

"What have you done with my people?" he demanded. "The boy, the two women, and the man?"

"They gave themselves up, as I have now come for you to do."

Koolau laughed incredulously.

"I am a free man," he announced. "I have done no wrong. All I ask is to be left alone. I have lived free, and I shall die free. I will never give myself up."

"Then your people are wiser than you," answered the young captain. "Look—they are coming now."

Koolau turned and watched the remnant of his band approach. Groaning and sighing, a ghastly procession, it dragged its wretchedness past. It was given to Koolau to taste a deeper bitterness, for they hurled imprecations and insults at him as they went by; and the panting hag who brought up the rear halted, and with skinny, harpy-claws extended, shaking her snarling death's head from side to side, she laid a curse upon him. One by one they dropped over the lip-edge and surrendered to the hiding soldiers.

"You can go now," said Koolau to the captain. "I will never give myself up. That is my last word. Good-bye."

The captain slipped over the cliff to his soldiers. The next moment, and without a flag of truce, he hoisted his hat on his scabbard, and Koolau's bullet tore through it. That afternoon they shelled him out from the beach, and as he retreated into the high inaccessible pockets beyond, the soldiers followed him.

For six weeks they hunted him from pocket to pocket, over the volcanic peaks and along the goat-trails. When he hid in the lantana jungle, they formed lines of beaters, and through lantana jungle and guava scrub they drove him like a rabbit. But ever he turned and doubled and eluded. There was no cornering him. When pressed too closely, his sure rifle held them back and they carried their wounded down the goat-trails to the beach. There were times when they did the shooting as his brown body showed for a moment through the underbrush. Once, five of them caught him on an exposed goat-trail between pockets. They emptied their rifles at him as he limped and climbed along his dizzy way. Afterwards they found bloodstains and knew that he was wounded. At the end of six weeks they gave up. The soldiers and police returned to Honolulu,

and Kalalau Valley was left to him for his own, though head-hunters ventured after him from time to time and to their own undoing.

Two years later, and for the last time, Koolau crawled into a thicket and lay down among the ti-leaves and wild ginger blossoms. Free he had lived, and free he was dying. A slight drizzle of rain began to fall, and he drew a ragged blanket about the distorted wreck of his limbs. His body was covered with an oilskin coat. Across his chest he laid his Mauser rifle, lingering affectionately for a moment to wipe the dampness from the barrel. The hand with which he wiped had no fingers left upon it with which to pull the trigger.

He closed his eyes, for, from the weakness in his body and the fuzzy turmoil in his brain, he knew that his end was near. Like a wild animal he had crept into hiding to die. Half-conscious, aimless and wandering, he lived back in his life to his early manhood on Niihau. As life faded and the drip of the rain grew dim in his ears it seemed to him that he was once more in the thick of the horse-breaking, with raw colts rearing and bucking under him, his stirrups tied together beneath, or charging madly about the breaking corral and driving the helping cowboys over the rails. The next instant, and with seeming naturalness, he found himself pursuing the wild bulls of the upland pastures, roping them and leading them down to the valleys. Again the sweat and dust of the branding pen stung his eyes and bit his nostrils.

All his lusty, whole-bodied youth was his, until the sharp pangs of impending dissolution brought him back. He lifted his monstrous hands and gazed at them in wonder. But how? Why? Why should the wholeness of that wild youth of his change to this? Then he remembered, and once again, and for a moment, he was Koolau, the leper. His eyelids fluttered wearily down and the drip of the rain ceased in his ears. A prolonged trembling set up in his body. This, too, ceased. He half-lifted his head, but it fell back. Then his eyes opened, and did not close. His last thought was of his Mauser, and he pressed it against his chest with his folded, fingerless hands.

The Law of Life

OLD KOSKOOSH listened greedily. Though his sight had long since faded, his hearing was still acute, and the slightest sound penetrated to the glimmering intelligence which yet abode behind the withered forehead, but which no longer gazed forth upon the things of the world. Ah! that was Sit-cum-to-ha, shrilly anathematizing the dogs as she cuffed and beat them into the harnesses. Sit-cum-to-ha was his daughter's daughter, but she was too busy to waste a thought upon her broken grandfather, sitting alone there in the snow, forlorn and helpless. Camp must be broken. The long trail waited while the short day refused to linger. Life called her, and the duties of life, not death. And he was very close to death now.

The thought made the old man panicky for the moment, and he stretched forth a palsied hand which wandered tremblingly over the small heap of dry wood beside him. Reassured that it was indeed there, his hand returned to the shelter of his mangy furs, and he again fell to listening. The sulky crackling of half-frozen hides told him that the chief's moose-skin lodge had been struck, and even then was being rammed and jammed into portable compass. The chief was his son, stalwart and strong, head man of the tribesmen, and a mighty hunter. As the women toiled with the camp luggage, his voice rose, chiding them for their slowness. Old Koskoosh strained his ears. It was the last time he would hear that voice. There went Geehow's lodge! And Tusken's! Seven, eight, nine; only the shaman's could be still standing. There! They were at work upon it now. He could hear the shaman grunt as he piled it on the sled. A child whimpered, and a woman soothed it with soft, crooning gutturals. Little Koo-tee, the old man thought, a fretful child, and not overstrong. It would die soon, perhaps, and they would burn a hole through the frozen tundra and pile rocks above to keep the wolverines away. Well, what did it matter? A few years at best, and as many an empty belly as a full one. And in the end, Death waited, ever-hungry and hungriest of them all.

What was that? Oh, the men lashing the sleds and drawing tight the thongs. He listened, who would listen no more. The whip-lashes snarled and bit among the dogs. Hear them whine! How they hated the work and the trail! They were off! Sled after sled churned slowly away into the silence. They were gone. They had passed out of his life, and he faced the last bitter hour alone. No. The snow crunched beneath a moccasin; a man stood beside him; upon his head a hand rested gently. His son was good to do this thing. He remembered other old men whose sons had not waited after the tribe. But his son had. He wandered away into the past, till the young man's voice brought him back.

"Is it well with you?" he asked.

And the old man answered, "It is well."

"There be wood beside you," the younger man continued, "and the fire burns bright. The morning is gray, and the cold has broken. It will snow presently. Even now is it snowing."

"My voice is become like an old woman's."

"Ay, even now is it snowing."

"The tribesmen hurry. Their bales are heavy, and their bellies flat with lack of feasting. The trail is long and they travel fast. go now. It is well?"

"It is well. I am as a last year's leaf, clinging lightly to the stem. The first breath that blows, and I fall. My voice is become like an old woman's. My eyes no longer show me the way of my feet, and my feet are heavy, and I am tired. It is well."

He bowed his head in content till the last noise of the complaining snow had died away, and he knew his son was beyond recall. Then his hand crept out in haste to the wood. It alone stood between him and the eternity that yawned in upon him. At last the measure of his life was a handful of fagots. One by one they would go to feed the fire, and just so, step by step, death would creep upon him. When the last stick had surrendered up its heat, the frost would begin to gather strength. First his feet would yield, then his hands; and the numbness would travel, slowly, from the extremities to the body. His head would fall forward upon his knees, and he would rest. It was easy. All men must die.

He did not complain. It was the way of life, and it was just. He had been born close to the earth, close to the earth had he lived, and the law thereof was not new to him. It was the law of all flesh. Nature was not kindly to the flesh. She had no concern for that concrete thing called the individual. Her interest lay in the species, the race. This was the deepest abstraction old Koskoosh's barbaric mind was capable of, but he grasped it firmly. He saw it exemplified in all life. The rise of the sap, the bursting greenness of the willow bud, the fall of the yellow leaf—in this alone was told the whole history. But one task did Nature set the individual. Did he not perform it, he died. Did he perform it, it was all the same, he died. Nature did not care; there were plenty who were obedient, and it was only the obedience in this matter, not the obedient, which lived and lived always. The tribe of Koskoosh was very old. The old men he had known when a boy, had known old men before them. Therefore it was true that the tribe lived, that it stood for the obedience of all its members, way down into the forgotten past, whose very resting-places were unremembered. They did not count; they were episodes. They had passed away like clouds from a summer sky. He also was an episode, and would pass away. Nature did not care. To life she set one task, gave one law. To perpetuate was the task of life, its law was death. A maiden was a good creature to look upon, full-breasted and strong, with spring to her step and light in her eyes. But her task was yet before her. The light in her eyes brightened, her step quickened, she was now bold with the young men, now timid, and she gave them of her own unrest. And ever she grew fairer and yet fairer to look upon, till some

hunter, able no longer to withhold himself, took her to his lodge to cook and toil for him and to become the mother of his children. And with the coming of her offspring her looks left her. Her limbs dragged and shuffled, her eyes dimmed and bleared, and only the little children found joy against the withered cheek of the old squaw by the fire. Her task was done. But a little while, on the first pinch of famine or the first long trail, and she would be left, even as he had been left, in the snow, with a little pile of wood. Such was the law. He placed a stick carefully upon the fire and resumed his meditations. It was the same everywhere, with all things. The mosquitoes vanished with the first frost. The little tree-squirrel crawled away to die. When age settled upon the rabbit it became slow and heavy, and could no longer outfoot its enemies. Even the big bald-face grew clumsy and blind and quarrelsome, in the end to be dragged down by a handful of yelping huskies. He remembered how he had abandoned his own father on an upper reach of the Klondike one winter, the winter before the missionary came with his talk-books and his box of medicines. Many a time had Koskoosh smacked his lips over the recollection of that box, though now his mouth refused to moisten. The "painkiller" had been especially good. But the missionary was a bother after all, for he brought no meat into the camp, and he ate heartily, and the hunters grumbled. But he chilled his lungs on the divide by the Mayo, and the dogs afterwards nosed the stones away and fought over his bones.

"through the long darkness the children wailed and died."

Koskoosh placed another stick on the fire and harked back deeper into the past. There was the time of the Great Famine, when the old men crouched empty-bellied to the fire, and let fall from their lips dim traditions of the ancient day when the Yukon ran wide open for three winters, and then lay frozen for three summers. He had lost his mother in that famine. In the summer the salmon run had failed, and the tribe looked forward to the winter and the coming of the caribou. Then the winter came, but with it there were no caribou. Never had the like been known, not even in the lives of the old men. But the caribou did not come, and it was the seventh year, and the rabbits had not replenished, and the dogs were naught but bundles of bones. And through the long darkness the children wailed and died, and the women, and the old men; and not one in ten of the tribe lived to meet the sun when it came back in the spring. That was a famine!

But he had seen times of plenty, too, when the meat spoiled on their hands, and the dogs were fat and worthless with overeating—times when they let the game go unkilld, and the women were fertile, and the lodges were cluttered with sprawling men-children and women-children. Then it was the men became high-stomached, and revived ancient quarrels, and crossed the divides to the south to kill the Pellys, and to the west that they might sit by the dead fires of the Tananas. He remembered, when a boy, during a time of plenty, when he saw a moose pulled down by the wolves. Zing-ha lay with him in the snow and watched—Zing-ha, who later became the craftiest of hunters, and who, in the end, fell through an air-hole on the Yukon. They found him, a month afterward, just as he had crawled halfway out and frozen stiff to the ice.

But the moose. Zing-ha and he had gone out that day to play at hunting after the manner of their fathers. On the bed of the creek they struck the fresh track of a moose, and with it the tracks of many wolves. "An old one," Zing-ha, who was quicker at reading the sign, said—"an old one who cannot keep up with the herd. The wolves have cut him out from his brothers, and they will never leave him." And it was so. It was their way. By day and by night, never resting, snarling on his heels, snapping at his nose, they would stay by him to the end. How Zing-ha and he felt the blood-lust quicken! The finish would be a sight to see!

Eager-footed, they took the trail, and even he, Koskoosh, slow of sight and an unversed tracker, could have followed it blind, it was so wide. Hot were they on the heels of the chase, reading the grim tragedy, fresh-written, at every step. Now they came to where the moose had made a stand. Thrice the length of a grown man's body, in every direction, had the snow been stamped about and uptossed. In the midst were the deep impressions of the splay-hoofed game, and all about, everywhere, were the lighter footmarks of the wolves. Some, while their brothers harried the kill, had lain to one side and rested. The full-stretched impress of their bodies in the snow was as perfect as though made the moment before. One wolf had been caught in a wild lunge of the maddened victim and trampled to death. A few bones, well picked, bore witness.

Again, they ceased the uplift of their snowshoes at a second stand. Here the great animal had fought desperately. Twice had he been dragged down, as the snow attested, and twice had he shaken his assailants clear and gained footing once more. He had done his task long since, but none the less was life dear to him. Zing-ha said it was a strange thing, a moose once down to get free again; but this one certainly had. The shaman would see signs and wonders in this when they told him.

And yet again, they come to where the moose had made to mount the bank and gain the timber. But his foes had laid on from behind, till he reared and fell back upon them, crushing two deep into the snow. It was plain the kill was at hand, for their brothers had left them untouched. Two more stands were hurried past, brief in time-length and very close together. The trail was red now, and the clean stride of the great beast had grown short and slovenly. Then they heard the first sounds of the battle—not the full-throated chorus of the chase, but the short, snappy bark which spoke of close quarters and teeth to flesh. Crawling up the wind, Zing-ha bellied it through the snow, and with him crept he, Koskoosh, who was to be chief of the tribesmen in the years to come. Together they shoved aside the under branches of a young spruce and peered forth. It was the end they saw.

The picture, like all of youth's impressions, was still strong with him, and his dim eyes watched the end played out as vividly as in that far-off time. Koskoosh marvelled at this, for in the days which followed, when he was a leader of men and a head of councillors, he had done great deeds and made his name a curse in the mouths of the Pellys, to say naught of the strange white man he had killed, knife to knife, in open fight.

For long he pondered on the days of his youth, till the fire died down and the frost bit deeper. He replenished it with two sticks this time, and gauged his grip on life by what remained. If Sit-cum-to-ha had only remembered her grandfather, and gathered a larger armful, his hours would have been longer. It would have been easy. But she was ever a careless child, and honored not her ancestors from the time the Beaver, son of the son of Zing-ha, first cast eyes upon her. Well, what mattered it? Had he not done likewise in his own quick youth? For a while he listened to the silence. Perhaps the heart of his son might soften, and he would come back with the dogs to take his old father on with the tribe to where the caribou ran thick and the fat hung heavy upon them.

He strained his ears, his restless brain for the moment stilled. Not a stir, nothing. He alone took breath in the midst of the great silence. It was very lonely. Hark! What was that? A chill passed over his body. The familiar, long-drawn howl broke the void, and it was close at hand. Then on his darkened eyes was projected the vision of the moose—the old bull moose—the torn flanks and bloody sides, the riddled mane, and the great branching horns, down low and tossing to the last. He saw the flashing forms of gray, the gleaming eyes, the lolling tongues, the slavered fangs. And he saw the inexorable circle close in till it became a dark point in the midst of the stamped snow.

A cold muzzle thrust against his cheek, and at its touch his soul leaped back to the present. His hand shot into the fire and dragged out a burning faggot. Overcome for the nonce by his hereditary fear of man, the brute retreated, raising a prolonged call to his brothers; and greedily they answered, till a ring of crouching, jaw-slobbered gray was stretched round about. The old man listened to the drawing in of this circle. He waved his brand wildly, and sniffs turned to snarls; but the panting brutes refused to scatter. Now one wormed his chest forward, dragging his haunches after, now a second, now a third; but never a one drew back. Why should he cling to life? he asked, and dropped the blazing stick into the snow. It sizzled and went out. The circle grunted uneasily, but held its own. Again he saw the last stand of the old bull moose, and Koskoosh dropped his head wearily upon his knees. What did it matter after all? Was it not the law of life?

The League of the Old Men

At the Barracks a man was being tried for his life. He was an old man, a native from the Whitefish River, which empties into the Yukon below Lake Le Barge. All Dawson was wrought up over the affair, and likewise the Yukon-dwellers for a thousand miles up and down. It has been the custom of the land-robbing and sea-robbing Anglo-Saxon to give the law to conquered peoples, and oftentimes this law is harsh. But in the case of Imber the law for once seemed inadequate and weak. In the mathematical nature of things, equity did not reside in the punishment to be accorded him. The punishment was a foregone conclusion, there could be no doubt of that; and though it was capital, Imber had but one life, while the tale against him was one of scores.

In fact, the blood of so many was upon his hands that the killings attributed to him did not permit of precise enumeration. Smoking a pipe by the trailside or lounging around the stove, men made rough estimates of the numbers that had perished at his hand. They had been whites, all of them, these poor murdered people, and they had been slain singly, in pairs, and in parties. And so purposeless and wanton had been these killings, that they had long been a mystery to the mounted police, even in the time of the captains, and later, when the creeks realized, and a governor came from the Dominion to make the land pay for its prosperity. But more mysterious still was the coming of Imber to Dawson to give himself up. It was in the late spring, when the Yukon was growling and writhing under its ice, that the old Indian climbed painfully up the bank from the river trail and stood blinking on the main street. Men who had witnessed his advent, noted that he was weak and tottery, and that he staggered over to a heap of cabin-logs and sat down. He sat there a full day, staring straight before him at the unceasing tide of white men that flooded past. Many a head jerked curiously to the side to meet his stare, and more than one remark was dropped anent the old Siwash with so strange a look upon his face. No end of men remembered afterward that they had been struck by his extraordinary figure, and forever afterward prided themselves upon their swift discernment of the unusual.

But it remained for Dickensen, Little Dickensen, to be the hero of the occasion. Little Dickensen had come into the land with great dreams and a pocketful of cash; but with the cash the dreams vanished, and to earn his passage back to the States he had accepted a clerical position with the brokerage firm of Holbrook and Mason. Across the street from the office of Holbrook and Mason was the heap of cabin-logs upon which Imber sat. Dickensen looked out of the window at him before he went to lunch; and when he came back from lunch he looked out of the window, and the old Siwash was still there.

Dickensen continued to look out of the window, and he, too, forever afterward prided himself upon his swiftness of discernment. He was a romantic little chap, and he likened the immobile old heathen to the genius of the Siwash race, gazing calm-eyed upon the hosts of the invading Saxon. The hours swept along, but Imber did not vary his posture, did not by a hair's-breadth move a muscle; and Dickensen remembered the man who once sat upright on a sled in the main street where men passed to and fro. They thought the man was resting, but later, when they touched him, they found him stiff and cold, frozen to death in the midst of the busy street. To undouble him, that he might fit into a coffin, they had been forced to lug him to a fire and thaw him out a bit. Dickensen shivered at the recollection.

Later on, Dickensen went out on the sidewalk to smoke a cigar and cool off; and a little later Emily Travis happened along. Emily Travis was dainty and delicate and rare, and whether in London or Klondike she gowned herself as befitted the daughter of a millionaire mining engineer. Little Dickensen deposited his cigar on an outside window ledge where he could find it again, and lifted his hat.

They chatted for ten minutes or so, when Emily Travis, glancing past Dickensen's shoulder, gave a startled little scream. Dickensen turned about to see, and was startled, too. Imber had crossed the street and was standing there, a gaunt and hungry-looking shadow, his gaze riveted upon the girl.

"What do you want?" Little Dickensen demanded, tremulously plucky.

Imber grunted and stalked up to Emily Travis. He looked her over, keenly and carefully, every square inch of her. Especially did he appear interested in her silky brown hair, and in the color of her cheek, faintly sprayed and soft, like the downy bloom of a butterfly wing. He walked around her, surveying her with the calculating eye of a man who studies the lines upon which a horse or a boat is builded. In the course of his circuit the pink shell of her ear came between his eye and the westering sun, and he stopped to contemplate its rosy transparency. Then he returned to her face and looked long and intently into her blue eyes. He grunted and laid a hand on her arm midway between the shoulder and elbow. With his other hand he lifted her forearm and doubled it back. Disgust and wonder showed in his face, and he dropped her arm with a contemptuous grunt. Then he muttered a few guttural syllables, turned his back upon her, and addressed himself to Dickensen.

Dickensen could not understand his speech, and Emily Travis laughed. Imber turned from one to the other, frowning, but both shook their heads. He was about to go away, when she called out:

"Oh, Jimmy! Come here!"

Jimmy came from the other side of the street. He was a big, hulking Indian clad in approved white-man style, with an Eldorado king's sombrero on his head. He talked with Imber, haltingly, with throaty spasms. Jimmy was a Sitkan, possessed of no more than a passing knowledge of the interior dialects.

"Him Whitefish man," he said to Emily Travis. "Me savve um talk no very much. Him want to look see chief white man."

“The Governor,” suggested Dickensen.

Jimmy talked some more with the Whitefish man, and his face went grave and puzzled.

“I t’ink um want Cap’n Alexander,” he explained. “Him say um kill white man, white woman, white boy, plenty kill um white people. Him want to die.”

“Insane, I guess,” said Dickensen.

“What you call dat?” queried Jimmy.

Dickensen thrust a finger figuratively inside his head and imparted a rotary motion thereto.

“Mebbe so, mebbe so,” said Jimmy, returning to Imber, who still demanded the chief man of the white men.

A mounted policeman (unmounted for Klondike service) joined the group and heard Imber’s wish repeated. He was a stalwart young fellow, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, legs cleanly built and stretched wide apart, and tall though Imber was, he towered above him by half a head. His eyes were cool, and gray, and steady, and he carried himself with the peculiar confidence of power that is bred of blood and tradition. His splendid masculinity was emphasized by his excessive boyishness,—he was a mere lad,—and his smooth cheek promised a blush as willingly as the cheek of a maid.

Imber was drawn to him at once. The fire leaped into his eyes at sight of a sabre slash that scarred his cheek. He ran a withered hand down the young fellow’s leg and caressed the swelling thew. He smote the broad chest with his knuckles, and pressed and prodded the thick muscle-pads that covered the shoulders like a cuirass. The group had been added to by curious passers-by—husky miners, mountaineers, and frontiersmen, sons of the long-legged and broad-shouldered generations. Imber glanced from one to another, then he spoke aloud in the Whitefish tongue.

“What did he say?” asked Dickensen.

“Him say um all the same one man, dat p’liceman,” Jimmy interpreted.

Little Dickensen was little, and what of Miss Travis, he felt sorry for having asked the question. The policeman was sorry for him and stepped into the breach. “I fancy there may be something in his story. I’ll take him up to the captain for examination. Tell him to come along with me, Jimmy.”

Jimmy indulged in more throaty spasms, and Imber grunted and looked satisfied.

“But ask him what he said, Jimmy, and what he meant when he took hold of my arm.”

So spoke Emily Travis, and Jimmy put the question and received the answer.

“Him say you no afraid,” said Jimmy.

Emily Travis looked pleased.

“Him say you no skookum, no strong, all the same very soft like little baby. Him break you, in um two hands, to little pieces. Him t’ink much funny, very strange, how you can be mother of men so big, so strong, like dat p’liceman.”

Emily Travers kept her eyes up and unfaltering, but her cheeks were sprayed with scarlet. Little Dickens blushed and was quite embarrassed. The policeman's face blazed with his boy's blood.

"Come along, you," he said gruffly, setting his shoulder to the crowd and forcing a way.

Thus it was that Imber found his way to the Barracks, where he made full and voluntary confession, and from the precincts of which he never emerged.

Imber looked very tired. The fatigue of hopelessness and age was in his face. His shoulders drooped depressingly, and his eyes were lack-lustre. His mop of hair should have been white, but sun and weatherbeat had burned and bitten it so that it hung limp and lifeless and colorless. He took no interest in what went on around him. The courtroom was jammed with the men of the creeks and trails, and there was an ominous note in the rumble and grumble of their low-pitched voices, which came to his ears like the growl of the sea from deep caverns.

He sat close by a window, and his apathetic eyes rested now and again on the dreary scene without. The sky was overcast, and a gray drizzle was falling. It was flood-time on the Yukon. The ice was gone, and the river was up in the town. Back and forth on the main street, in canoes and poling-boats, passed the people that never rested. Often he saw these boats turn aside from the street and enter the flooded square that marked the Barracks' parade-ground. Sometimes they disappeared beneath him, and he heard them jar against the house-logs and their occupants scramble in through the window. After that came the slush of water against men's legs as they waded across the lower room and mounted the stairs. Then they appeared in the doorway, with doffed hats and dripping sea-boots, and added themselves to the waiting crowd.

And while they centred their looks on him, and in grim anticipation enjoyed the penalty he was to pay, Imber looked at them, and mused on their ways, and on their Law that never slept, but went on unceasing, in good times and bad, in flood and famine, through trouble and terror and death, and which would go on unceasing, it seemed to him, to the end of time. A man rapped sharply on a table, and the conversation droned away into silence. Imber looked at the man. He seemed one in authority, yet Imber divined the square-browed man who sat by a desk farther back to be the one chief over them all and over the man who had rapped. Another man by the same table uprose and began to read aloud from many fine sheets of paper. At the top of each sheet he cleared his throat, at the bottom moistened his fingers. Imber did not understand his speech, but the others did, and he knew that it made them angry. Sometimes it made them very angry, and once a man cursed him, in single syllables, stinging and tense, till a man at the table rapped him to silence.

For an interminable period the man read. His monotonous, sing-song utterance lured Imber to dreaming, and he was dreaming deeply when the man ceased. A voice spoke to him in his own Whitefish tongue, and he roused up, without surprise, to look upon the face of his sister's son, a young man who had wandered away years ago to make his dwelling with the whites.

“Thou dost not remember me,” he said by way of greeting.

“Nay,” Imber answered. “Thou art Howkan who went away. Thy mother be dead.”

“She was an old woman,” said Howkan.

But Imber did not hear, and Howkan, with hand upon his shoulder, roused him again.

“I shall speak to thee what the man has spoken, which is the tale of the troubles thou hast done and which thou hast told, O fool, to the Captain Alexander. And thou shalt understand and say if it be true talk or talk not true. It is so commanded.”

Howkan had fallen among the mission folk and been taught by them to read and write. In his hands he held the many fine sheets from which the man had read aloud, and which had been taken down by a clerk when Imber first made confession, through the mouth of Jimmy, to Captain Alexander. Howkan began to read. Imber listened for a space, when a wonderment rose up in his face and he broke in abruptly.

“That be my talk, Howkan. Yet from thy lips it comes when thy ears have not heard.”

Howkan smirked with self-appreciation. His hair was parted in the middle. “Nay, from the paper it comes, O Imber. Never have my ears heard. From the paper it comes, through my eyes, into my head, and out of my mouth to thee. Thus it comes.”

“Thus it comes? It be there in the paper?” Imber’s voice sank in whisperful awe as he crackled the sheets ‘twixt thumb and finger and stared at the charactery scrawled thereon. “It be a great medicine, Howkan, and thou art a worker of wonders.”

“It be nothing, it be nothing,” the young man responded carelessly and pridefully. He read at hazard from the document: “In that year, before the break of the ice, came an old man, and a boy who was lame of one foot. These also did I kill, and the old man made much noise—“

“It be true,” Imber interrupted breathlessly. “He made much noise and would not die for a long time. But how dost thou know, Howkan? The chief man of the white men told thee, mayhap? No one beheld me, and him alone have I told.” Howkan shook his head with impatience. “Have I not told thee it be there in the paper, O fool?”

Imber stared hard at the ink-scrawled surface. “As the hunter looks upon the snow and says, Here but yesterday there passed a rabbit; and here by the willow scrub it stood and listened, and heard, and was afraid; and here it turned upon its trail; and here it went with great swiftiness, leaping wide; and here, with greater swiftiness and wider leapings, came a lynx; and here, where the claws cut deep into the snow, the lynx made a very great leap; and here it struck, with the rabbit under and rolling belly up; and here leads off the trail of the lynx alone, and there is no more rabbit,—as the hunter looks upon the markings of the snow and says thus and so and here, dost thou, too, look upon the paper and say thus and so and here be the things old Imber hath done?”

“Even so,” said Howkan. “And now do thou listen, and keep thy woman’s tongue between thy teeth till thou art called upon for speech.”

Thereafter, and for a long time, Howkan read to him the confession, and Imber remained musing and silent. At the end, he said:

“It be my talk, and true talk, but I am grown old, Howkan, and forgotten things come back to me which were well for the head man there to know. First, there was the man who came over the Ice Mountains, with cunning traps made of iron, who sought the beaver of the Whitefish. Him I slew. And there were three men seeking gold on the Whitefish long ago. Them also I slew, and left them to the wolverines. And at the Five Fingers there was a man with a raft and much meat.”

At the moments when Imber paused to remember, Howkan translated and a clerk reduced to writing. The courtroom listened stolidly to each unadorned little tragedy, till Imber told of a red-haired man whose eyes were crossed and whom he had killed with a remarkably long shot.

“Hell,” said a man in the forefront of the onlookers. He said it soulfully and sorrowfully. He was red-haired. “Hell,” he repeated. “That was my brother Bill.” And at regular intervals throughout the session, his solemn “Hell” was heard in the courtroom; nor did his comrades check him, nor did the man at the table rap him to order.

Imber’s head drooped once more, and his eyes went dull, as though a film rose up and covered them from the world. And he dreamed as only age can dream upon the colossal futility of youth.

Later, Howkan roused him again, saying: “Stand up, O Imber. It be commanded that thou tellest why you did these troubles, and slew these people, and at the end journeyed here seeking the Law.”

Imber rose feebly to his feet and swayed back and forth. He began to speak in a low and faintly rumbling voice, but Howkan interrupted him.

“This old man, he is damn crazy,” he said in English to the square-browed man. “His talk is foolish and like that of a child.”

“We will hear his talk which is like that of a child,” said the square-browed man. “And we will hear it, word for word, as he speaks it. Do you understand?”

Howkan understood, and Imber’s eyes flashed, for he had witnessed the play between his sister’s son and the man in authority. And then began the story, the epic of a bronze patriot which might well itself be wrought into bronze for the generations unborn. The crowd fell strangely silent, and the square-browed judge leaned head on hand and pondered his soul and the soul of his race. Only was heard the deep tones of Imber, rhythmically alternating with the shrill voice of the interpreter, and now and again, like the bell of the Lord, the wondering and meditative “Hell” of the red-haired man.

“I am Imber of the Whitefish people.” So ran the interpretation of Howkan, whose inherent barbarism gripped hold of him, and who lost his mission culture and venerated civilization as he caught the savage ring and rhythm of old Imber’s tale. “My father was Otsbaok, a strong man. The land was warm with sunshine and gladness when I was a boy. The people did not hunger after strange things, nor hearken to new voices, and the ways of their fathers were their ways. The women found favor in the eyes of the young men, and the young men looked upon them with content. Babes hung at

the breasts of the women, and they were heavy-hipped with increase of the tribe. Men were men in those days. In peace and plenty, and in war and famine, they were men.

“At that time there was more fish in the water than now, and more meat in the forest. Our dogs were wolves, warm with thick hides and hard to the frost and storm. And as with our dogs so with us, for we were likewise hard to the frost and storm. And when the Pellys came into our land we slew them and were slain. For we were men, we Whitefish, and our fathers and our fathers’ fathers had fought against the Pellys and determined the bounds of the land.

“As I say, with our dogs, so with us. And one day came the first white man. He dragged himself, so, on hand and knee, in the snow. And his skin was stretched tight, and his bones were sharp beneath. Never was such a man, we thought, and we wondered of what strange tribe he was, and of its land. And he was weak, most weak, like a little child, so that we gave him a place by the fire, and warm furs to lie upon, and we gave him food as little children are given food.

“And with him was a dog, large as three of our dogs, and very weak. The hair of this dog was short, and not warm, and the tail was frozen so that the end fell off. And this strange dog we fed, and bedded by the fire, and fought from it our dogs, which else would have killed him. And what of the moose meat and the sun-dried salmon, the man and dog took strength to themselves; and what of the strength they became big and unafraid. And the man spoke loud words and laughed at the old men and young men, and looked boldly upon the maidens. And the dog fought with our dogs, and for all of his short hair and softness slew three of them in one day.

“When we asked the man concerning his people, he said, ‘I have many brothers,’ and laughed in a way that was not good. And when he was in his full strength he went away, and with him went Noda, daughter to the chief. First, after that, was one of our bitches brought to pup. And never was there such a breed of dogs,—big-headed, thick-jawed, and short-haired, and helpless. Well do I remember my father, Otsbaok, a strong man. His face was black with anger at such helplessness, and he took a stone, so, and so, and there was no more helplessness. And two summers after that came Noda back to us with a man-child in the hollow of her arm.

“And that was the beginning. Came a second white man, with short-haired dogs, which he left behind him when he went. And with him went six of our strongest dogs, for which, in trade, he had given Koo-So-Tee, my mother’s brother, a wonderful pistol that fired with great swiftness six times. And Koo-So-Tee was very big, what of the pistol, and laughed at our bows and arrows. ‘Woman’s things,’ he called them, and went forth against the bald-face grizzly, with the pistol in his hand. Now it be known that it is not good to hunt the bald-face with a pistol, but how were we to know? and how was Koo-So-Tee to know? So he went against the bald-face, very brave, and fired the pistol with great swiftness six times; and the bald-face but grunted and broke in his breast like it were an egg, and like honey from a bee’s nest dripped the brains of Koo-So-Tee upon the ground. He was a good hunter, and there was no one to bring meat to his squaw and children. And we were bitter, and we said, ‘That which for the

white men is well, is for us not well.' And this be true. There be many white men and fat, but their ways have made us few and lean.

"Came the third white man, with great wealth of all manner of wonderful foods and things. And twenty of our strongest dogs he took from us in trade. Also, what of presents and great promises, ten of our young hunters did he take with him on a journey which fared no man knew where. It is said they died in the snow of the Ice Mountains where man has never been, or in the Hills of Silence which are beyond the edge of the earth. Be that as it may, dogs and young hunters were seen never again by the Whitefish people.

"And more white men came with the years, and ever, with pay and presents, they led the young men away with them. And sometimes the young men came back with strange tales of dangers and toils in the lands beyond the Pellys, and sometimes they did not come back. And we said: 'If they be unafraid of life, these white men, it is because they have many lives; but we be few by the Whitefish, and the young men shall go away no more.' But the young men did go away; and the young women went also; and we were very wroth.

"It be true, we ate flour, and salt pork, and drank tea which was a great delight; only, when we could not get tea, it was very bad and we became short of speech and quick of anger. So we grew to hunger for the things the white men brought in trade. Trade! trade! all the time was it trade! One winter we sold our meat for clocks that would not go, and watches with broken guts, and files worn smooth, and pistols without cartridges and worthless. And then came famine, and we were without meat, and two score died ere the break of spring.

"'Now are we grown weak,' we said; 'and the Pellys will fall upon us, and our bounds be overthrown.' But as it fared with us, so had it fared with the Pellys, and they were too weak to come against us.

"My father, Otsbaok, a strong man, was now old and very wise. And he spoke to the chief, saying: 'Behold, our dogs be worthless. No longer are they thick-furred and strong, and they die in the frost and harness. Let us go into the village and kill them, saving only the wolf ones, and these let us tie out in the night that they may mate with the wild wolves of the forest. Thus shall we have dogs warm and strong again.'

"And his word was harkened to, and we Whitefish became known for our dogs, which were the best in the land. But known we were not for ourselves. The best of our young men and women had gone away with the white men to wander on trail and river to far places. And the young women came back old and broken, as Noda had come, or they came not at all. And the young men came back to sit by our fires for a time, full of ill speech and rough ways, drinking evil drinks and gambling through long nights and days, with a great unrest always in their hearts, till the call of the white men came to them and they went away again to the unknown places. And they were without honor and respect, jeering the old-time customs and laughing in the faces of chief and shamans.

“As I say, we were become a weak breed, we Whitefish. We sold our warm skins and furs for tobacco and whiskey and thin cotton things that left us shivering in the cold. And the coughing sickness came upon us, and men and women coughed and sweated through the long nights, and the hunters on trail spat blood upon the snow. And now one, and now another, bled swiftly from the mouth and died. And the women bore few children, and those they bore were weak and given to sickness. And other sicknesses came to us from the white men, the like of which we had never known and could not understand. Smallpox, likewise measles, have I heard these sicknesses named, and we died of them as die the salmon in the still eddies when in the fall their eggs are spawned and there is no longer need for them to live.

“And yet, and here be the strangeness of it, the white men come as the breath of death; all their ways lead to death, their nostrils are filled with it; and yet they do not die. Theirs the whiskey, and tobacco, and short-haired dogs; theirs the many sicknesses, the smallpox and measles, the coughing and mouth-bleeding; theirs the white skin, and softness to the frost and storm; and theirs the pistols that shoot six times very swift and are worthless. And yet they grow fat on their many ills, and prosper, and lay a heavy hand over all the world and tread mightily upon its peoples. And their women, too, are soft as little babes, most breakable and never broken, the mothers of men. And out of all this softness, and sickness, and weakness, come strength, and power, and authority. They be gods, or devils, as the case may be. I do not know. What do I know, I, old Imber of the Whitefish? Only do I know that they are past understanding, these white men, far-wanderers and fighters over the earth that they be.

“As I say, the meat in the forest became less and less. It be true, the white man’s gun is most excellent and kills a long way off; but of what worth the gun, when there is no meat to kill? When I was a boy on the Whitefish there was moose on every hill, and each year came the caribou uncountable. But now the hunter may take the trail ten days and not one moose gladden his eyes, while the caribou uncountable come no more at all. Small worth the gun, I say, killing a long way off, when there be nothing to kill.

“And I, Imber, pondered upon these things, watching the while the Whitefish, and the Pellys, and all the tribes of the land, perishing as perished the meat of the forest. Long I pondered. I talked with the shamans and the old men who were wise. I went apart that the sounds of the village might not disturb me, and I ate no meat so that my belly should not press upon me and make me slow of eye and ear. I sat long and sleepless in the forest, wide-eyed for the sign, my ears patient and keen for the word that was to come. And I wandered alone in the blackness of night to the river bank, where was wind-moaning and sobbing of water, and where I sought wisdom from the ghosts of old shamans in the trees and dead and gone.

“And in the end, as in a vision, came to me the short-haired and detestable dogs, and the way seemed plain. By the wisdom of Otsbaok, my father and a strong man, had the blood of our own wolf-dogs been kept clean, wherefore had they remained warm of hide and strong in the harness. So I returned to my village and made oration

to the men. 'This be a tribe, these white men,' I said. 'A very large tribe, and doubtless there is no longer meat in their land, and they are come among us to make a new land for themselves. But they weaken us, and we die. They are a very hungry folk. Already has our meat gone from us, and it were well, if we would live, that we deal by them as we have dealt by their dogs.'

"And further oration I made, counselling fight. And the men of the Whitefish listened, and some said one thing, and some another, and some spoke of other and worthless things, and no man made brave talk of deeds and war. But while the young men were weak as water and afraid, watched that the old men sat silent, and that in their eyes fires came and went. And later, when forest and made more talk. And now we were agreed, and we remembered the good young days, and the free land, and the times of plenty, and the gladness and sunshine; and we called ourselves brothers, and swore great secrecy, and a mighty oath to cleanse the land of the evil breed that had come upon it. It be plain we were fools, but how were we to know, we old men of the Whitefish?

"And to hearten the others, I did the first deed. I kept guard upon the Yukon till the first canoe came down. In it were two white men, and when I stood upright upon the bank and raised my hand they changed their course and drove in to me. And as the man in the bow lifted his head, so, that he might know wherefore I wanted him, my arrow sang through the air straight to his throat, and he knew. The second man, who held paddle in the stern, had his rifle half to his shoulder when the first of my three spear-casts smote him.

"'These be the first,' I said, when the old men had gathered to me. 'Later we will bind together all the old men of all the tribes, and after that the young men who remain strong, and the work will become easy.'

"And then the two dead white men we cast into the river. And of the canoe, which was a very good canoe, we made a fire, and a fire, also, of the things within the canoe. But first we looked at the things, and they were pouches of leather which we cut open with our knives. And inside these pouches were many papers, like that from which thou has read, O Howkan, with markings on them which we marvelled at and could not understand. Now, I am become wise, and I know them for the speech of men as thou hast told me."

A whisper and buzz went around the courtroom when Howkan finished interpreting the affair of the canoe, and one man's voice spoke up: "That was the lost '91 mail, Peter James and Delaney bringing it in and last spoken at Le Barge by Matthews going out." The clerk scratched steadily away, and another paragraph was added to the history of the North.

"There be little more," Imber went on slowly. "It be there on the paper, the things we did. We were old men, and we did not understand. Even I, Imber, do not now understand. Secretly we slew, and continued to slay, for with our years we were crafty and we had learned the swiftness of going without haste. When white men came among us with black looks and rough words, and took away six of the young men with irons

binding them helpless, we knew we must slay wider and farther. And one by one we old men departed up river and down to the unknown lands. It was a brave thing. Old we were, and unafraid, but the fear of far places is a terrible fear to men who are old.

“So we slew, without haste and craftily. On the Chilcoot and in the Delta we slew, from the passes to the sea, wherever the white men camped or broke their trails. It be true, they died, but it was without worth. Ever did they come over the mountains, ever did they grow and grow, while we, being old, became less and less. I remember, by the Caribou Crossing, the camp of a white man. He was a very little white man, and three of the old men came upon him in his sleep. And the next day I came upon the four of them. The white man alone still breathed, and there was breath in him to curse me once and well before he died.

“And so it went, now one old man, and now another. Sometimes the word reached us long after of how they died, and sometimes it did not reach us. And the old men of the other tribes were weak and afraid, and would not join with us. As I say, one by one, till I alone was left. I am Imber, of the Whitefish people. My father was Otsbaok, a strong man. There are no Whitefish now. Of the old men I am the last. The young men and young women are gone away, some to live with the Pellys, some with the Salmons, and more with the white men. I am very old, and very tired, and it being vain fighting the Law, as thou sayest, Howkan, I am come seeking the Law.”

“O Imber, thou art indeed a fool,” said Howkan. But Imber was dreaming. The square-browed judge likewise dreamed, and all his race rose up before him in a mighty phantasmagoria—his steel-shod, mail-clad race, the lawgiver and world-maker among the families of men. He saw it dawn red-flickering across the dark forests and sullen seas; he saw it blaze, bloody and red, to full and triumphant noon; and down the shaded slope he saw the blood-red sands dropping into night. And through it all he observed the Law, pitiless and potent, ever unswerving and ever ordaining, greater than the motes of men who fulfilled it or were crushed by it, even as it was greater than he, his heart speaking for softness.

The Leopard Man's Story

HE had a dreamy, far-away look in his eyes, and his sad, insistent voice, gentle-spoken as a maid's, seemed the placid embodiment of some deep-seated melancholy. He was the Leopard Man, but he did not look it. His business in life, whereby he lived, was to appear in a cage of performing leopards before vast audiences, and to thrill those audiences by certain exhibitions of nerve for which his employers rewarded him on a scale commensurate with the thrills he produced.

As I say, he did not look it. He was narrow-hipped, narrow-shouldered, and anaemic, while he seemed not so much oppressed by gloom as by a sweet and gentle sadness, the weight of which was as sweetly and gently borne. For an hour I had been trying to get a story out of him, but he appeared to lack imagination. To him there was no romance in his gorgeous career, no deeds of daring, no thrills — nothing but a gray sameness and infinite boredom.

Lions? Oh, yes! he had fought with them. It was nothing. All you had to do was to stay sober. Anybody could whip a lion to a standstill with an ordinary stick. He had fought one for half an hour once. Just hit him on the nose every time he rushed, and when he got artful and rushed with his head down, why, the thing to do was to stick out your leg. When he grabbed at the leg you drew it back and hit him on the nose again. That was all.

With the far-away look in his eyes and his soft flow of words he showed me his scars. There were many of them, and one recent one where a tigress had reached for his shoulder and gone down to the bone. I could see the neatly mended rents in the coat he had on. His right arm, from the elbow down, looked as though it had gone through a threshing machine, what of the ravage wrought by claws and fangs. But it was nothing, he said, only the old wounds bothered him somewhat when rainy weather came on.

Suddenly his face brightened with a recollection, for he was really as anxious to give me a story as I was to get it.

"I suppose you've heard of the lion-tamer who was hated by another man?" he asked.

He paused and looked pensively at a sick lion in the cage opposite.

"Got the toothache," he explained. "Well, the lion-tamer's big play to the audience was putting his head in a lion's mouth. The man who hated him attended every performance in the hope sometime of seeing that lion crunch down. He followed the show about all over the country. The years went by and he grew old, and the lion-tamer grew old, and the lion grew old. And at last one day, sitting in a front seat, he saw

what he had waited for. The lion crunched down, and there wasn't any need to call a doctor."

The Leopard Man glanced casually over his finger nails in a manner which would have been critical had it not been so sad.

"Now, that's what I call patience," he continued, "and it's my style. But it was not the style of a fellow I knew. He was a little, thin, sawed-off, sword-swallowing and juggling Frenchman. De Ville, he called himself, and he had a nice wife. She did trapeze work and used to dive from under the roof into a net, turning over once on the way as nice as you please.

"De Ville had a quick temper, as quick as his hand, and his hand was as quick as the paw of a tiger. One day, because the ring-master called him a frog-eater, or something like that and maybe a little worse, he shoved him against the soft pine background he used in his knife-throwing act, so quick the ring-master didn't have time to think, and there, before the audience, De Ville kept the air on fire with his knives, sinking them into the wood all around the ring-master so close that they passed through his clothes and most of them bit into his skin.

"The clowns had to pull the knives out to get him loose, for he was pinned fast. So the word went around to watch out for De Ville, and no one dared be more than barely civil to his wife. And she was a sly bit of baggage, too, only all hands were afraid of De Ville.

"But there was one man, Wallace, who was afraid of nothing. He was the lion-tamer, and he had the self-same trick of putting his head into the lion's mouth. He'd put it into the mouths of any of them, though he preferred Augustus, a big, good-natured beast who could always be depended upon.

"As I was saying, Wallace — 'King' Wallace we called him — was afraid of nothing alive or dead. He was a king and no mistake. I've seen him drunk, and on a wager go into the cage of a lion that'd turned nasty, and without a stick beat him to a finish. Just did it with his fist on the nose.

"Madame de Ville — "

At an uproar behind us the Leopard Man turned quietly around. It was a divided cage, and a monkey, poking through the bars and around the partition, had had its paw seized by a big gray wolf who was trying to pull it off by main strength. The arm seemed stretching out longer end longer like a thick elastic, and the unfortunate monkey's mates were raising a terrible din. No keeper was at hand, so the Leopard Man stepped over a couple of paces, dealt the wolf a sharp blow on the nose with the light cane he carried, and returned with a sadly apologetic smile to take up his unfinished sentence as though there had been no interruption.

" — looked at King Wallace and King Wallace looked at her, while De Ville looked black. We warned Wallace, but it was no use. He laughed at us, as he laughed at De Ville one day when he shoved De Ville's head into a bucket of paste because he wanted to fight.

“De Ville was in a pretty mess —I helped to scrape him off; but he was cool as a cucumber and made no threats at all. But I saw a glitter in his eyes which I had seen often in the eyes of wild beasts, and I went out of my way to give Wallace a final warning. He laughed, but he did not look so much in Madame de Ville’s direction after that.

“Several months passed by. Nothing had happened and I was beginning to think it all a scare over nothing. We were West by that time, showing in ‘Frisco. It was during the afternoon performance, and the big tent was filled with women and children, when I went looking for Red Denny, the head canvas-man, who had walked off with my pocket-knife.

“Passing by one of the dressing tents I glanced in through a hole in the canvas to see if I could locate him. He wasn’t there, but directly in front of me was King Wallace, in tights, waiting for his turn to go on with his cage of performing lions. He was watching with much amusement a quarrel between a couple of trapeze artists. All the rest of the people in the dressing tent were watching the same thing, with the exception of De Ville whom I noticed staring at Wallace with undisguised hatred. Wallace and the rest were all too busy following the quarrel to notice this or what followed.

“But I saw it through the hole in the canvas. De Ville drew his handkerchief from his pocket, made as though to mop the sweat from his face with it (it was a hot day), and at the same time walked past Wallace’s back. The look troubled me at the time, for not only did I see hatred in it, but I saw triumph as well.

“‘De Ville will bear watching,’ I said to myself, and I really breathed easier when I saw him go out the entrance to the circus grounds and board an electric car for down town. A few minutes later I was in the big tent, where I had overhauled Red Denny. King Wallace was doing his turn and holding the audience spellbound. He was in a particularly vicious mood, and he kept the lions stirred up till they were all snarling, that is, all of them except old Augustus, and he was just too fat and lazy and old to get stirred up over anything.

“Finally Wallace cracked the old lion’s knees with his whip and got him into position. Old Augustus, blinking good-naturedly, opened his mouth and in popped Wallace’s head. Then the jaws came together, CRUNCH, just like that.”

The Leopard Man smiled in a sweetly wistful fashion, and the far-away look came into his eyes.

“And that was the end of King Wallace,” he went on in his sad, low voice. “After the excitement cooled down I watched my chance and bent over and smelled Wallace’s head. Then I sneezed.”

“It . . . it was . . .?” I queried with halting eagerness.

“Snuff — that De Ville dropped on his hair in the dressing tent. Old Augustus never meant to do it. He only sneezed.”

A Lesson in Heraldry

SHE was such a demure little creature. Sobriety had marked her for his own, while her limpid blue eyes were twin founts of sincerity. And she was so fragile. On the street, the casual passerby turned for a second look, likening her to a little lost angel or an embryonic St. Cecelia. And well he might, so evanescent did she appear — a delicate dewdrop, ready to vanish with the first stray sunbeam. At school, she was a paragon, astonishing the instructors with her insatiable thirst for knowledge. Her playmates looked up to her with certain vague awe, suspending ruder sorts of play when she came among them; while the rowdiest boy, after five minutes in her presence, was reduced to a forced silence, verging very close to a condition of frozen idiocy.

And she was grown up, having drifted, years before her time, from the nursery to her mother's tea table. There she dabbled in the stereotyped conventionalities and unctious nothings, till her mother's feminine visitors were petrified at her precocity. The ordinary gossip and petty scandal of such circles were dropped on her appearance, the conversation leaping to the opposite extreme, and the atmosphere she radiated had a most wonderful effect on such visitors as happened to be of the masculine gender. Old General Wetherbee visibly trembled whenever he took her hands in his, and stooping, gazed into her saintly eyes. Spiteful people intimated approaching palsy, but this must not be credited; for did he not yield to her gentle missionary efforts, and forswear and abjure, for all time, the solace of his Havana. And did he not keep his word, incidentally enduring the tortures of the damned?

In short, Mabel Armitage, for all her twelve years, was taken seriously and correspondingly stirred all who knew her. She seemed too delicate, too good, too angelic, for this world. She was an apotheosis of all that was best, a radiant, celestial creature — one who would have surprised no one, had she followed in the footsteps of Elijah and taken her rightful seat among the elect. Even Cap Drake, intimate with her from birth, believed this; which goes to show how little knowledge of our fellow beings may penetrate our understandings.

Her father was possessed of numerous minute wrinkles at the corner of either eye. It may have been because of this, and it might have been due to the innate perversity of things; but deep down in this innocent child's heart there lived a devil — a devil which sometimes issued forth, and under divers guises, perturbed men's souls greatly.

Now, Cap Drake was numbered among her most devoted subjects, serving as prime minister to her in a sort of unofficial way. He happened to be possessed of a vast erudition, and she had also constituted him the final court of appeal, referring to him the myriad debatable questions which constantly arose in her pursuit of knowledge.

her brother Bobbie, who had appeared before this court at various times, seditiously and openly proclaimed collusion between the queen and the chief magistrate; others held that he but loyally bent to her imperial ukase; but be this as it may, one thing was certain — Cap Drake never had known to render a verdict which did not doubly fortify her position or throw her assailants into utter confusion. In thus conniving at her many victories, he often found himself hard put; he then had recourse to the most amazing sophistries, weaving a mesh of audacious fallacy which so paralyzed their understandings that they always capitulated on the spot.

But this really pardonable lapse from the straight and narrow path bred in Cap Drake a consequent infirmity. He grew able to tell the most astounding whoopers, with an unfaltering tongue, and a face which fairly shone with genial sincerity. All well and good, till one day, yielding to a traitorous impulse, he confided to the queen certain zoological wonders, yet unknown to science, whose habitat was the unexplored jungland of Africa. Still well and good, had not the trusting Mabel proceeded to electrify both her class and teacher with the lurid tale. Its Munchausen-like simplicity and earnestness took them aback, and they pleaded for further information. Mabel keenly felt the atmosphere of suspended judgment, and vouched for the authority, though loyally withholding that authority's name; for she had begun to fear her faithful prime minister had imposed upon her. And when she went home that afternoon, sadder and wiser, it was with the laudable intention of bringing about, in some way, her erring servant's discomfiture.

Cap Drake came for an early tea, feeling very much at peace with himself and the world in general. Looking into the library, he found Mabel deep in her composition book, and refrained from the customary quiz on the little happenings of the day. Later, at table, the conversation turned upon national banners, and he found himself, as usual, officiating as the final court of appeal.

"But Mabel," Bobby blurted out, "you're wrong, way wrong. There's only one Union, isn't there? The American Union, you know, and that's why the Union Jack's an American flag."

"Isn't the Union Jack the flag of the English, Cappy?" Mabel appealed.

"Why yes, Mabel, it is. It stands for the United Kingdom, the Union, as Bobbie calls it, of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Yes, Mabel, you're right."

"And what do the stripes mean?" asked Mabel.

"The stripes? Let me see — . Now the stars stand for the number of states, don't they?" he was maneuvering for time, and inwardly wondering what they did mean.

Mabel acquiesced silently.

"And for every state that's added, another star is placed in the blue field."

Again Mabel nodded.

"And how many states are there?"

"Forty-four," she volunteered.

"No; forty-five," asserted Bobbie.

"Look here, Sis; there's Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont — "

Cap Drake withdrew from the controversy in haste, congratulating himself upon his cleverness; and during the rest of the tea he talked politics most assiduously with Mr. Armitage. Of course, there could be no interrupting, but Mabel had found her cue, and an hour later she captured him with his cigar on the veranda.

“What do the stripes mean, Cappy?”

“The stripes? Oh, yes, we were talking about flags, weren’t we? Which reminds me of the banner we captured on the Little Round Top. It was very amusing, and — ”

And he proceeded to spin out wartime reminiscences till twilight came on, and they went within. Mabel was in no hurry, however, while he forgot it all in a rubber of cribbage. But the corner wrinkles of Mr. Armitage’s eyes had become more manifest, and though Mabel did not know, he was taking huge interest in the proceedings. And the rubber could not last all evening.

“Cappy, what do the stripes mean?”

The deuce take it, that question again! Such a little thing — surely he had learned and forgotten it years ago. How annoying! And Mabel was such a hyper-sensitive little creature, with such an insatiable appetite for facts — why, she was liable to worry herself sick over it. Yet he must crawl out somehow. He cast a helpless glance in the direction of Mr. Armitage; but that gentleman was deeply engrossed in what was evidently a very amusing magazine article. Mrs. Armitage was busy resurrecting old favorites from amongst a great mass of sheet music.

“The stripes?”

Cap Drake gazed at her so absently and so long, that Mabel felt it incumbent upon her to repeat the question.

“Oh! now I remember!” he cried, his face brightening up hypocritically. “Flags, wasn’t it? Come over on the sofa and I’ll tell you all about it. It’s a deep subject, a very deep subject.” he shook his head profoundly. “In the old Roman Republic, before Christ, you know, the soldiers used to carry a handful of hay on the end of a pole. And before that, the soldier who slew Cyrus, the great Persian king, was highly honored when his comrades allowed him to carry a golden cock at the head of the army. Thus, you see, there were no real banners in those days, but — ”

And in this wise, Cap Drake proceeded, mopping his perspiring forehead and racking his brain for more data upon the detestable subject. Mabel did not interrupt; but he saw her azure eyes fixed upon him in mute approach, and he could have sworn she was ready for tears.

“But, Cappy, the stripes?” she interjected, softly, once, and thereat he plunged into a description of the flags borne by the knights of William the Conqueror, as portrayed in the Bayeux tapestry. After exhausting that he took up the oriflamme of France, and from there to the fleurs-de-lis, regained his scattered wits by relating a long legend of the days of chivalry. As he described the blue imperial standard, with its yellow eagle and golden bees, he managed to get to his feet, and with the tricolor of the Revolution he gained the door.

“Why so early?” asked Mrs. Armitage. “I’ll sing the ‘Garden of Sleep’ if you stay, and you know you’ll forego anything for the sake of that.”

“No, I’d rather not, thank you. A slight headache to-night, and —” He paused almost in terror as his eyes fell on Mabel, and saw her lips beginning to form “The stripes, Cappy?” and he said good-night very abruptly and hurried down the hall. Instead of going to his room he stole to the library, where he did contract a headache in an hour of bootless rummaging. He discovered two atlases which contained color-symphonies of the flags of all nations, but not a line could he find on the subject in hand. A reference to the encyclopaedia developed the fact that the one volume which was sure to hold the secret, “Dan-Fra” was missing. Then he went to bed.

“Cappy! O Cappy!”

Mabel knelt before his door, having floated down the hallway more angel-like than ever in her snowy nightdress, her delicate face framed in an aureole of unbound gold. Mr. Armitage had ensconced himself in the curtained oriel at the head of the stairs.

It was a very timid little knock, and there was a pitiful quaver to her voice. Cap Drake groaned and sat up.

“Won’t you tell me what the stripes mean, Cappy? Oh, won’t you tell me, Cappy? I’ve tried ever so hard, but I can’t go to bed till I know.”

“The stripes?” — in muffled syllables from the further side of the door. “Hadn’t you better go back to bed?”

“Tell me, Cappy, and then I will. It bothers me so I can’t go to sleep till you tell me.”

“Well — er — really, I don’t know.” Having at last taken the bull by the horns he felt somewhat relieved. At least no more circumlocution was necessary.

“I’ll never believe it, Cappy: no, never!”

“Perhaps they have no meaning?”

“Yes they have. I know they have, and so do you. And you just won’t tell me, and I think you’re too mean for anything — there, now!”

“But, Mabel, I tell you I don’t know. I’d tell you if I did — you know I would but I honestly don’t. I’ll find out to-morrow for you. Now go down-stairs, there’s a good girl.”

“O Cappy, don’t be cruel. I — I’m going to cry.”

Cap Drake bespoke his agony in certain intensive adjectives, unmentionable and shocking, save in the mouths of pious divines. But he smothered them deep down in his larynx and resolutely shut his lips. Then the heavy silence of the night settled down upon them, broken by disconsolate sobs and pathetic chokings from Mabel’s side of the door. There was also suppressed laughter from the direction of the oriel; but Cap Drake did not hear that.

A long silence.

He wonders if she has gone, and ventures “Good-night, Mabel.”

She responds with a miserable little wail.

He has recourse to more intensive adjectives, strikes a light and begins to dress.

He opened the door cautiously and saw at his feet the woeful little creature, in rumbled white, sobbing convulsively. There had been a great deal of the woman born into Cap Drake, and, though he was now jogging down the shadowy slope of life in single blessedness, it had never been stunted nor held back in its growth as is the case with most men similarly circumstanced. So he took her into his arms, in much the same way he had done a memorable twelve years ago, and carried her down-stairs to the nursery. And there he soothed her, and held her hand in his till midnight chimed and her honest blue eyes were veiled in slumber. Then he softly kissed the saintly forehead and went upstairs, feeling somewhat soothed, yet deeming himself very much of a brute.

The next day when Mr. Lennon, the head bookkeeper, in response to Cap Drake's call stepped into the inner office, he expected nothing less than a consultation on an important business interest then at issue. A glance at his employer's clouded countenance convinced him that this was so.

"Mr. Lennon, do you happen to — a — "

Mr. Lennon shaped his austere features into their best judicial expression. It must, indeed, be important,

"Mr. Lennon, do you — I say, what do the stripes mean, any way?"

To his everlasting credit, the bookkeeper relaxed never a muscle, but, as he afterward confided to the copying clerk, "You could have knocked me over with a feather."

"The stripes, sir? I hardly understand." At the same time a haunting suspicion crossed his mind that it was one of those new-fangled business college notions introduced by his latest assistant.

"The stripes in the American flag?"

"Oh! Well, the stars mean — "

"Dash the stars! The stripes, man! the stripes!"

But whatever recollection — if recollection he ever had — was dissipated by his employer's purple forehead, and he respired in a relieved sort of way when he regained the cooler atmosphere of the counting-room. Then the first-assistant was called in, and finally, when the establishment was exhausted, the office boy was dispatched on a mission to Judge Parker's office, and the typewriter detailed to finish the morning, and if needs be, the day, in the reference department of the near-by library.

Cap Drake took a much earlier train home than was his wont on Saturday afternoons, armed with a huge bunch of violets, and the solution of that most momentous of problems — the significance of the stripes in the American banner. Mabel was not personally in evidence, but she apparently had just come in, for her school books lay upon the reading stand in the library. Among other things, he had taken it upon himself to be her literary mentor; so he at once buried himself in her composition book, pausing with a start at her most recent production. It was very interesting; he skimmed down the page without noticing her entry, and when the bunch of violets had fallen to the floor, read on regardless.

He gasped in an apoplectic manner as he turned the page and read: "The United States flag has silver stars on a blue field, and red stripes on a white ground. For every state a star is added. The number of stripes never change. There are thirteen stripes, counting the white ones, too. And there were thirteen original states — "

He looked up and saw her for the first time. "When did you write this?" he asked.

Her blue eyes, with their usual expression of wondering innocence, never faltered. "Yesterday. Don't you remember when you came into the library and saw how busy I was? And Miss Storrs said it was excellent, and made me read it out before all the class, and — "

But Cap Drake never heard. He was at the telephone endeavoring to get the switch on Red 17.

"Anywhere to-night?" he asked her, while waiting on Central's pleasure.

Mabel shook her head, her wide-eyed wonder deepening.

"Well, you're going with me."

"That's all right," he added. "I'll fix it with your mother."

"Red 17? — Yes — How are the box seats? — Yes — Two — yes; t, w, o, two — All right — thank you."

Li-Wan, the Fair

“The sun sinks, Canim, and the heat of the day is gone!”

So called Li Wan to the man whose head was hidden beneath the squirrel-skin robe, but she called softly, as though divided between the duty of waking him and the fear of him awake. For she was afraid of this big husband of hers, who was like unto none of the men she had known. The moose-meat sizzled uneasily, and she moved the frying-pan to one side of the red embers. As she did so she glanced warily at the two Hudson Bay dogs dripping eager slaver from their scarlet tongues and following her every movement. They were huge, hairy fellows, crouched to leeward in the thin smoke-wake of the fire to escape the swarming myriads of mosquitoes. As Li Wan gazed down the steep to where the Klondike flung its swollen flood between the hills, one of the dogs bellied its way forward like a worm, and with a deft, catlike stroke of the paw dipped a chunk of hot meat out of the pan to the ground. But Li Wan caught him from out the tail of her eye, and he sprang back with a snap and a snarl as she rapped him over the nose with a stick of firewood.

“Nay, Olo,” she laughed, recovering the meat without removing her eye from him. “Thou art ever hungry, and for that thy nose leads thee into endless troubles.”

But the mate of Olo joined him, and together they defied the woman. The hair on their backs and shoulders bristled in recurrent waves of anger, and the thin lips writhed and lifted into ugly wrinkles, exposing the flesh-tearing fangs, cruel and menacing. Their very noses serrulated and shook in brute passion, and they snarled as the wolves snarl, with all the hatred and malignity of the breed impelling them to spring upon the woman and drag her down.

“And thou, too, Bash, fierce as thy master and never at peace with the hand that feeds thee! This is not thy quarrel, so that be thine! and that!”

As she cried, she drove at them with the firewood, but they avoided the blows and refused to retreat. They separated and approached her from either side, crouching low and snarling. Li Wan had struggled with the wolf-dog for mastery from the time she toddled among the skin-bales of the teepee, and she knew a crisis was at hand. Bash had halted, his muscles stiff and tense for the spring; Olo was yet creeping into striking distance.

Grasping two blazing sticks by the charred ends, she faced the brutes. The one held back, but Bash sprang, and she met him in mid-air with the flaming weapon. There were sharp yelps of pain and swift odors of burning hair and flesh as he rolled in the dirt and the woman ground the fiery embers into his mouth. Snapping wildly, he flung himself sidewise out of her reach and in a frenzy of fear scrambled for safety. Olo, on

the other side, had begun his retreat, when Li Wan reminded him of her primacy by hurling a heavy stick of wood into his ribs. Then the pair retreated under a rain of firewood, and on the edge of the camp fell to licking their wounds and whimpering by turns and snarling.

Li Wan blew the ashes off the meat and sat down again. Her heart had not gone up a beat, and the incident was already old, for this was the routine of life. Canim had not stirred during the disorder, but instead had set up a lusty snoring.

“Come, Canim!” she called. “The heat of the day is gone, and the trail waits for our feet.”

The squirrel-skin robe was agitated and cast aside by a brown arm. Then the man’s eyelids fluttered and drooped again.

“His pack is heavy,” she thought, “and he is tired with the work of the morning.”

A mosquito stung her on the neck, and she daubed the unprotected spot with wet clay from a ball she had convenient to hand. All morning, toiling up the divide and enveloped in a cloud of the pests, the man and woman had plastered themselves with the sticky mud, which, drying in the sun, covered their faces with masks of clay. These masks, broken in divers places by the movement of the facial muscles, had constantly to be renewed, so that the deposit was irregular of depth and peculiar of aspect.

Li Wan shook Canim gently but with persistence till he roused and sat up. His first glance was to the sun, and after consulting the celestial timepiece he hunched over to the fire and fell-to ravenously on the meat. He was a large Indian fully six feet in height, deep-chested and heavy-muscled, and his eyes were keener and vested with greater mental vigor than the average of his kind. The lines of will had marked his face deeply, and this, coupled with a sternness and primitiveness, advertised a native indomitability, unswerving of purpose, and prone, when thwarted, to sullen cruelty.

“To-morrow, Li Wan, we shall feast.” He sucked a marrow-bone clean and threw it to the dogs. “We shall have flapjacks fried in bacon grease, and sugar, which is more toothsome — ”

“Flapjacks?” she questioned, mouthing the word curiously.

“Ay,” Canim answered with superiority; “and I shall teach you new ways of cookery. Of these things I speak you are ignorant, and of many more things besides. You have lived your days in a little corner of the earth and know nothing. But I,” — he straightened himself and looked at her pridefully, — “I am a great traveller, and have been all places, even among the white people, and I am versed in their ways, and in the ways of many peoples. I am not a tree, born to stand in one place always and know not what there be over the next hill; for I am Canim, the Canoe, made to go here and there and to journey and quest up and down the length and breadth of the world.”

She bowed her head humbly. “It is true. I have eaten fish and meat and berries all my days and lived in a little corner of the earth. Nor did I dream the world was so large until you stole me from my people and I cooked and carried for you on the endless trails.” She looked up at him suddenly. “Tell me, Canim, does this trail ever end?”

"Nay," he answered. "My trail is like the world; it never ends. My trail is the world, and I have travelled it since the time my legs could carry me, and I shall travel it until I die. My father and my mother may be dead, but it is long since I looked upon them, and I do not care. My tribe is like your tribe. It stays in the one place — which is far from here, — but I care naught for my tribe, for I am Canim, the Canoe!"

"And must I, Li Wan, who am weary, travel always your trail until I die?"

"You, Li Wan, are my wife, and the wife travels the husband's trail wheresoever it goes. It is the law. And were it not the law, yet would it be the law of Canim, who is lawgiver unto himself and his."

She bowed her head again, for she knew no other law than that man was the master of woman.

"Be not in haste," Canim cautioned her, as she began to strap the meagre camp outfit to her pack. "The sun is yet hot, and the trail leads down and the footing is good."

She dropped her work obediently and resumed her seat.

Canim regarded her with speculative interest. "You do not squat on your hams like other women," he remarked.

"No," she answered. "It never came easy. It tires me, and I cannot take my rest that way."

"And why is it your feet point not straight before you?"

"I do not know, save that they are unlike the feet of other women."

A satisfied light crept into his eyes, but otherwise he gave no sign.

"Like other women, your hair is black; but have you ever noticed that it is soft and fine, softer and finer than the hair of other women?"

"I have noticed," she answered shortly, for she was not pleased at such cold analysis of her sex-deficiencies.

"It is a year, now, since I took you from your people," he went on, "and you are nigh as shy and afraid of me as when first I looked upon you. How does this thing be?"

Li Wan shook her head. "I am afraid of you, Canim, you are so big and strange. And further, before you looked upon me even, I was afraid of all the young men. I do not know ... I cannot say ... only it seemed, somehow, as though I should not be for them, as though ..."

"Ay," he encouraged, impatient at her faltering.

"As though they were not my kind."

"Not your kind?" he demanded slowly. "Then what is your kind?"

"I do not know, I ..." She shook her head in a bewildered manner. "I cannot put into words the way I felt. It was strangeness in me. I was unlike other maidens, who sought the young men slyly. I could not care for the young men that way. It would have been a great wrong, it seemed, and an ill deed."

"What is the first thing you remember?" Canim asked with abrupt irrelevance.

"Pow-Wah-Kaan, my mother."

"And naught else before Pow-Wah-Kaan?"

“Naught else.”

But Canim, holding her eyes with his, searched her secret soul and saw it waver.

“Think, and think hard, Li Wan!” he threatened.

She stammered, and her eyes were piteous and pleading, but his will dominated her and wrung from her lips the reluctant speech.

“But it was only dreams, Canim, ill dreams of childhood, shadows of things not real, visions such as the dogs, sleeping in the sun-warmth, behold and whine out against.”

“Tell me,” he commanded, “of the things before Pow-Wah-Kaan, your mother.”

“They are forgotten memories,” she protested. “As a child I dreamed awake, with my eyes open to the day, and when I spoke of the strange things I saw I was laughed at, and the other children were afraid and drew away from me. And when I spoke of the things I saw to Pow-Wah-Kaan, she chided me and said they were evil; also she beat me. It was a sickness, I believe, like the falling-sickness that comes to old men; and in time I grew better and dreamed no more. And now ... I cannot remember” — she brought her hand in a confused manner to her forehead — “they are there, somewhere, but I cannot find them, only ...”

“Only,” Canim repeated, holding her.

“Only one thing. But you will laugh at its foolishness, it is so unreal.”

“Nay, Li Wan. Dreams are dreams. They may be memories of other lives we have lived. I was once a moose. I firmly believe I was once a moose, what of the things I have seen in dreams, and heard.”

Strive as he would to hide it, a growing anxiety was manifest, but Li Wan, groping after the words with which to paint the picture, took no heed.

“I see a snow-tramped space among the trees,” she began, “and across the snow the sign of a man where he has dragged himself heavily on hand and knee. And I see, too, the man in the snow, and it seems I am very close to him when I look. He is unlike real men, for he has hair on his face, much hair, and the hair of his face and head is yellow like the summer coat of the weasel. His eyes are closed, but they open and search about. They are blue like the sky, and look into mine and search no more. And his hand moves, slow, as from weakness, and I feel ...”

“Ay,” Canim whispered hoarsely. “You feel — ?”

“No! no!” she cried in haste. “I feel nothing. Did I say ‘feel’? I did not mean it. It could not be that I should mean it. I see, and I see only, and that is all I see — a man in the snow, with eyes like the sky, and hair like the weasel. I have seen it many times, and always it is the same — a man in the snow — ”

“And do you see yourself?” he asked, leaning forward and regarding her intently. “Do you ever see yourself and the man in the snow?”

“Why should I see myself? Am I not real?”

His muscles relaxed and he sank back, an exultant satisfaction in his eyes which he turned from her so that she might not see.

“I will tell you, Li Wan,” he spoke decisively; “you were a little bird in some life before, a little moose-bird, when you saw this thing, and the memory of it is with you

yet. It is not strange. I was once a moose, and my father's father afterward became a bear — so said the shaman, and the shaman cannot lie. Thus, on the Trail of the Gods we pass from life to life, and the gods know only and understand. Dreams and the shadows of dreams be memories, nothing more, and the dog, whining asleep in the sun-warmth, doubtless sees and remembers things gone before. Bash, there, was a warrior once. I do firmly believe he was once a warrior."

Canim tossed a bone to the brute and got upon his feet. "Come, let us begone. The sun is yet hot, but it will get no cooler."

"And these white people, what are they like?" Li Wan made bold to ask.

"Like you and me," he answered, "only they are less dark of skin. You will be among them ere the day is dead."

Canim lashed the sleeping-robe to his one-hundred-and-fifty-pound pack, smeared his face with wet clay, and sat down to rest till Li Wan had finished loading the dogs. Olo cringed at sight of the club in her hand, and gave no trouble when the bundle of forty pounds and odd was strapped upon him. But Bash was aggrieved and truculent, and could not forbear to whimper and snarl as he was forced to receive the burden. He bristled his back and bared his teeth as she drew the straps tight, the while throwing all the malignancy of his nature into the glances shot at her sideways and backward. And Canim chuckled and said, "Did I not say he was once a very great warrior?"

"These furs will bring a price," he remarked as he adjusted his head-strap and lifted his pack clear of the ground. "A big price. The white men pay well for such goods, for they have no time to hunt and are soft to the cold. Soon shall we feast, Li Wan, as you have feasted never in all the lives you have lived before."

She grunted acknowledgment and gratitude for her lord's condescension, slipped into the harness, and bent forward to the load.

"The next time I am born, I would be born a white man," he added, and swung off down the trail which dived into the gorge at his feet.

The dogs followed close at his heels, and Li Wan brought up the rear. But her thoughts were far away, across the Ice Mountains to the east, to the little corner of the earth where her childhood had been lived. Ever as a child, she remembered, she had been looked upon as strange, as one with an affliction. Truly she had dreamed awake and been scolded and beaten for the remarkable visions she saw, till, after a time, she had outgrown them. But not utterly. Though they troubled her no more waking, they came to her in her sleep, grown woman that she was, and many a night of nightmare was hers, filled with fluttering shapes, vague and meaningless. The talk with Canim had excited her, and down all the twisted slant of the divide she harked back to the mocking fantasies of her dreams.

"Let us take breath," Canim said, when they had tapped midway the bed of the main creek.

He rested his pack on a jutting rock, slipped the head-strap, and sat down. Li Wan joined him, and the dogs sprawled panting on the ground beside them. At their feet

rippled the glacial drip of the hills, but it was muddy and discolored, as if soiled by some commotion of the earth.

“Why is this?” Li Wan asked.

“Because of the white men who work in the ground. Listen!” He held up his hand, and they heard the ring of pick and shovel, and the sound of men’s voices. “They are made mad by gold, and work without ceasing that they may find it. Gold? It is yellow and comes from the ground, and is considered of great value. It is also a measure of price.”

But Li Wan’s roving eyes had called her attention from him. A few yards below and partly screened by a clump of young spruce, the tiered logs of a cabin rose to meet its overhanging roof of dirt. A thrill ran through her, and all her dream-phantoms roused up and stirred about uneasily.

“Canim,” she whispered in an agony of apprehension. “Canim, what is that?”

“The white man’s teepee, in which he eats and sleeps.”

She eyed it wistfully, grasping its virtues at a glance and thrilling again at the unaccountable sensations it aroused. “It must be very warm in time of frost,” she said aloud, though she felt that she must make strange sounds with her lips.

She felt impelled to utter them, but did not, and the next instant Canim said, “It is called a cabin.”

Her heart gave a great leap. The sounds! the very sounds! She looked about her in sudden awe. How should she know that strange word before ever she heard it? What could be the matter? And then with a shock, half of fear and half of delight, she realized that for the first time in her life there had been sanity and significance in the promptings of her dreams.

“Cabin” she repeated to herself. “Cabin.” An incoherent flood of dream-stuff welled up and up till her head was dizzy and her heart seemed bursting. Shadows, and looming bulks of things, and unintelligible associations fluttered and whirled about, and she strove vainly with her consciousness to grasp and hold them. For she felt that there, in that welter of memories, was the key of the mystery; could she but grasp and hold it, all would be clear and plain —

O Canim! O Pow-Wah-Kaan! O shades and shadows, what was that?

She turned to Canim, speechless and trembling, the dream-stuff in mad, overwhelming riot. She was sick and fainting, and could only listen to the ravishing sounds which proceeded from the cabin in a wonderful rhythm.

“Hum, fiddle,” Canim vouchsafed.

But she did not hear him, for in the ecstasy she was experiencing, it seemed at last that all things were coming clear. Now! now! she thought. A sudden moisture swept into her eyes, and the tears trickled down her cheeks. The mystery was unlocking, but the faintness was overpowering her. If only she could hold herself long enough! If only — but the landscape bent and crumpled up, and the hills swayed back and forth across the sky as she sprang upright and screamed, “Daddy! Daddy!” Then the sun reeled, and darkness smote her, and she pitched forward limp and headlong among the rocks.

Canim looked to see if her neck had been broken by the heavy pack, grunted his satisfaction, and threw water upon her from the creek. She came to slowly, with choking sobs, and sat up.

"It is not good, the hot sun on the head," he ventured.

And she answered, "No, it is not good, and the pack bore upon me hard."

"We shall camp early, so that you may sleep long and win strength," he said gently. "And if we go now, we shall be the quicker to bed."

Li Wan said nothing, but tottered to her feet in obedience and stirred up the dogs. She took the swing of his pace mechanically, and followed him past the cabin, scarce daring to breathe. But no sounds issued forth, though the door was open and smoke curling upward from the sheet-iron stovepipe.

They came upon a man in the bend of the creek, white of skin and blue of eye, and for a moment Li Wan saw the other man in the snow. But she saw dimly, for she was weak and tired from what she had undergone. Still, she looked at him curiously, and stopped with Canim to watch him at his work. He was washing gravel in a large pan, with a circular, tilting movement; and as they looked, giving a deft flirt, he flashed up the yellow gold in a broad streak across the bottom of the pan.

"Very rich, this creek," Canim told her, as they went on. "Sometime I will find such a creek, and then I shall be a big man."

Cabins and men grew more plentiful, till they came to where the main portion of the creek was spread out before them. It was the scene of a vast devastation. Everywhere the earth was torn and rent as though by a Titan's struggles. Where there were no upthrown mounds of gravel, great holes and trenches yawned, and chasms where the thick rime of the earth had been peeled to bed-rock. There was no worn channel for the creek, and its waters, dammed up, diverted, flying through the air on giddy flumes, trickling into sinks and low places, and raised by huge water-wheels, were used and used again a thousand times. The hills had been stripped of their trees, and their raw sides gored and perforated by great timber-slides and prospect holes. And over all, like a monstrous race of ants, was flung an army of men — mud-covered, dirty, dishevelled men, who crawled in and out of the holes of their digging, crept like big bugs along the flumes, and toiled and sweated at the gravel-heaps which they kept in constant unrest — men, as far as the eye could see, even to the rims of the hilltops, digging, tearing, and scouring the face of nature.

Li Wan was appalled at the tremendous upheaval. "Truly, these men are mad," she said to Canim.

"Small wonder. The gold they dig after is a great thing," he replied. "It is the greatest thing in the world."

For hours they threaded the chaos of greed, Canim eagerly intent, Li Wan weak and listless. She knew she had been on the verge of disclosure, and she felt that she was still on the verge of disclosure, but the nervous strain she had undergone had tired her, and she passively waited for the thing, she knew not what, to happen. From every hand her senses snatched up and conveyed to her innumerable impressions, each

of which became a dull excitation to her jaded imagination. Somewhere within her, responsive notes were answering to the things without, forgotten and undreamed-of correspondences were being renewed; and she was aware of it in an incurious way, and her soul was troubled, but she was not equal to the mental exultation necessary to transmute and understand. So she plodded wearily on at the heels of her lord, content to wait for that which she knew, somewhere, somehow, must happen.

After undergoing the mad bondage of man, the creek finally returned to its ancient ways, all soiled and smirched from its toil, and coiled lazily among the broad flats and timbered spaces where the valley widened to its mouth. Here the "pay" ran out, and men were loth to loiter with the lure yet beyond. And here, as Li Wan paused to prod Olo with her staff, she heard the mellow silver of a woman's laughter.

Before a cabin sat a woman, fair of skin and rosy as a child, dimpling with glee at the words of another woman in the doorway. But the woman who sat shook about her great masses of dark, wet hair which yielded up its dampness to the warm caresses of the sun.

For an instant Li Wan stood transfixed. Then she was aware of a blinding flash, and a snap, as though something gave way; and the woman before the cabin vanished, and the cabin and the tall spruce timber, and the jagged sky-line, and Li Wan saw another woman, in the shine of another sun, brushing great masses of black hair, and singing as she brushed. And Li Wan heard the words of the song, and understood, and was a child again. She was smitten with a vision, wherein all the troublesome dreams merged and became one, and shapes and shadows took up their accustomed round, and all was clear and plain and real. Many pictures jostled past, strange scenes, and trees, and flowers, and people; and she saw them and knew them all.

"When you were a little bird, a little moose-bird," Canim said, his eyes upon her and burning into her.

"When I was a little moose-bird," she whispered, so faint and low he scarcely heard. And she knew she lied, as she bent her head to the strap and took the swing of the trail.

And such was the strangeness of it, the real now became unreal. The mile tramp and the pitching of camp by the edge of the stream seemed like a passage in a nightmare. She cooked the meat, fed the dogs, and unlashed the packs as in a dream, and it was not until Canim began to sketch his next wandering that she became herself again.

"The Klondike runs into the Yukon," he was saying; "a mighty river, mightier than the Mackenzie, of which you know. So we go, you and I, down to Fort o' Yukon. With dogs, in time of winter, it is twenty sleeps. Then we follow the Yukon away into the west — one hundred sleeps, two hundred — I have never heard. It is very far. And then we come to the sea. You know nothing of the sea, so let me tell you. As the lake is to the island, so the sea is to the land; all the rivers run to it, and it is without end. I have seen it at Hudson Bay; I have yet to see it in Alaska. And then we may take a great canoe upon the sea, you and I, Li Wan, or we may follow the land into the

south many a hundred sleeps. And after that I do not know, save that I am Canim, the Canoe, wanderer and far-journeyer over the earth!"

She sat and listened, and fear ate into her heart as she pondered over this plunge into the illimitable wilderness. "It is a weary way," was all she said, head bowed on knee in resignation.

Then it was a splendid thought came to her, and at the wonder of it she was all aglow. She went down to the stream and washed the dried clay from her face. When the ripples died away, she stared long at her mirrored features; but sun and weather-beat had done their work, and, what of roughness and bronze, her skin was not soft and dimpled as a child's. But the thought was still splendid and the glow unabated as she crept in beside her husband under the sleeping-robe.

She lay awake, staring up at the blue of the sky and waiting for Canim to sink into the first deep sleep. When this came about, she wormed slowly and carefully away, tucked the robe around him, and stood up. At her second step, Bash growled savagely. She whispered persuasively to him and glanced at the man. Canim was snoring profoundly. Then she turned, and with swift, noiseless feet sped up the back trail.

Mrs. Evelyn Van Wyck was just preparing for bed. Bored by the duties put upon her by society, her wealth, and widowed blessedness, she had journeyed into the Northland and gone to housekeeping in a cosy cabin on the edge of the diggings. Here, aided and abetted by her friend and companion, Myrtle Giddings, she played at living close to the soil, and cultivated the primitive with refined abandon.

She strove to get away from the generations of culture and parlor selection, and sought the earth-grip her ancestors had forfeited. Likewise she induced mental states which she fondly believed to approximate those of the stone-folk, and just now, as she put up her hair for the pillow, she was indulging her fancy with a palaeolithic wooing. The details consisted principally of cave-dwellings and cracked marrow-bones, intersprinkled with fierce carnivora, hairy mammoths, and combats with rude flaked knives of flint; but the sensations were delicious. And as Evelyn Van Wyck fled through the sombre forest aisles before the too arduous advances of her slant-browed, skin-clad wooer, the door of the cabin opened, without the courtesy of a knock, and a skin-clad woman, savage and primitive, came in.

"Mercy!"

With a leap that would have done credit to a cave-woman, Miss Giddings landed in safety behind the table. But Mrs. Van Wyck held her ground. She noticed that the intruder was laboring under a strong excitement, and cast a swift glance backward to assure herself that the way was clear to the bunk, where the big Colt's revolver lay beneath a pillow.

"Greeting, O Woman of the Wondrous Hair," said Li Wan.

But she said it in her own tongue, the tongue spoken in but a little corner of the earth, and the women did not understand.

"Shall I go for help?" Miss Giddings quavered.

"The poor creature is harmless, I think," Mrs. Van Wyck replied. "And just look at her skin-clothes, ragged and trail-worn and all that. They are certainly unique. I shall buy them for my collection. Get my sack, Myrtle, please, and set up the scales."

Li Wan followed the shaping of the lips, but the words were unintelligible, and then, and for the first time, she realized, in a moment of suspense and indecision, that there was no medium of communication between them.

And at the passion of her dumbness she cried out, with arms stretched wide apart, "O Woman, thou art sister of mine!"

The tears coursed down her cheeks as she yearned toward them, and the break in her voice carried the sorrow she could not utter. But Miss Giddings was trembling, and even Mrs. Van Wyck was disturbed.

"I would live as you live. Thy ways are my ways, and our ways be one. My husband is Canim, the Canoe, and he is big and strange, and I am afraid. His trail is all the world and never ends, and I am weary. My mother was like you, and her hair was as thine, and her eyes. And life was soft to me then, and the sun warm."

She knelt humbly, and bent her head at Mrs. Van Wyck's feet. But Mrs. Van Wyck drew away, frightened at her vehemence.

Li Wan stood up, panting for speech. Her dumb lips could not articulate her overmastering consciousness of kind.

"Trade? you trade?" Mrs. Van Wyck questioned, slipping, after the fashion of the superior peoples, into pigeon tongue.

She touched Li Wan's ragged skins to indicate her choice, and poured several hundreds of gold into the blower. She stirred the dust about and trickled its yellow lustre temptingly through her fingers. But Li Wan saw only the fingers, milk-white and shapely, tapering daintily to the rosy, jewel-like nails. She placed her own hand alongside, all work-worn and calloused, and wept.

Mrs. Van Wyck misunderstood. "Gold," she encouraged. "Good gold! You trade? You changee for changee?" And she laid her hand again on Li Wan's skin garments.

"How much? You sell? How much?" she persisted, running her hand against the way of the hair so that she might make sure of the sinew-thread seam.

But Li Wan was deaf as well, and the woman's speech was without significance. Dismay at her failure sat upon her. How could she identify herself with these women? For she knew they were of the one breed, blood-sisters among men and the women of men. Her eyes roved wildly about the interior, taking in the soft draperies hanging around, the feminine garments, the oval mirror, and the dainty toilet accessories beneath. And the things haunted her, for she had seen like things before; and as she looked at them her lips involuntarily formed sounds which her throat trembled to utter. Then a thought flashed upon her, and she steadied herself. She must be calm. She must control herself, for there must be no misunderstanding this time, or else, — and she shook with a storm of suppressed tears and steadied herself again.

She put her hand on the table. "Table," she clearly and distinctly enunciated. "Table," she repeated.

She looked at Mrs. Van Wyck, who nodded approbation. Li Wan exulted, but brought her will to bear and held herself steady. "Stove" she went on. "Stove."

And at every nod of Mrs. Van Wyck, Li Wan's excitement mounted. Now stumbling and halting, and again in feverish haste, as the recrudescence of forgotten words was fast or slow, she moved about the cabin, naming article after article. And when she paused finally, it was in triumph, with body erect and head thrown back, expectant, waiting.

"Cat," Mrs. Van Wyck, laughing, spelled out in kindergarten fashion. "I — see — the — cat — catch — the — rat."

Li Wan nodded her head seriously. They were beginning to understand her at last, these women. The blood flushed darkly under her bronze at the thought, and she smiled and nodded her head still more vigorously.

Mrs. Van Wyck turned to her companion. "Received a smattering of mission education somewhere, I fancy, and has come to show it off."

"Of course," Miss Giddings tittered. "Little fool! We shall lose our sleep with her vanity."

"All the same I want that jacket. If it is old, the workmanship is good — a most excellent specimen." She returned to her visitor. "Changee for changee? You! Changee for changee? How much? Eh? How much, you?"

"Perhaps she'd prefer a dress or something," Miss Giddings suggested.

Mrs. Van Wyck went up to Li Wan and made signs that she would exchange her wrapper for the jacket. And to further the transaction, she took Li Wan's hand and placed it amid the lace and ribbons of the flowing bosom, and rubbed the fingers back and forth so they might feel the texture. But the jewelled butterfly which loosely held the fold in place was insecurely fastened, and the front of the gown slipped to the side, exposing a firm white breast, which had never known the lip-clasp of a child.

Mrs. Van Wyck coolly repaired the mischief; but Li Wan uttered a loud cry, and ripped and tore at her skin-shirt till her own breast showed firm and white as Evelyn Van Wyck's. Murmuring inarticulately and making swift signs, she strove to establish the kinship.

"A half-breed," Mrs. Van Wyck commented. "I thought so from her hair."

Miss Giddings made a fastidious gesture. "Proud of her father's white skin. It's beastly! Do give her something, Evelyn, and make her go."

But the other woman sighed. "Poor creature, I wish I could do something for her."

A heavy foot crunched the gravel without. Then the cabin door swung wide, and Canim stalked in. Miss Giddings saw a vision of sudden death, and screamed; but Mrs. Van Wyck faced him composedly.

"What do you want?" she demanded.

"How do?" Canim answered suavely and directly, pointing at the same time to Li Wan. "Um my wife."

He reached out for her, but she waved him back.

"Speak, Canim! Tell them that I am — "

“Daughter of Pow-Wah-Kaan? Nay, of what is it to them that they should care? Better should I tell them thou art an ill wife, given to creeping from thy husband’s bed when sleep is heavy in his eyes.”

Again he reached out for her, but she fled away from him to Mrs. Van Wyck, at whose feet she made frenzied appeal, and whose knees she tried to clasp. But the lady stepped back and gave permission with her eyes to Canim. He gripped Li Wan under the shoulders and raised her to her feet. She fought with him, in a madness of despair, till his chest was heaving with the exertion, and they had reeled about over half the room.

“Let me go, Canim,” she sobbed.

But he twisted her wrist till she ceased to struggle. “The memories of the little moose-bird are overstrong and make trouble,” he began.

“I know! I know!” she broke in. “I see the man in the snow, and as never before I see him crawl on hand and knee. And I, who am a little child, am carried on his back. And this is before Pow-Wah-Kaan and the time I came to live in a little corner of the earth.”

“You know,” he answered, forcing her toward the door; “but you will go with me down the Yukon and forget.”

“Never shall I forget! So long as my skin is white shall I remember!” She clutched frantically at the door-post and looked a last appeal to Mrs. Evelyn Van Wyck.

“Then will I teach thee to forget, I, Canim, the Canoe!”

As he spoke he pulled her fingers clear and passed out with her upon the trail.

Like Argus of the Ancient Times

IT was the summer of 1897, and there was trouble in the Tarwater family. Grandfather Tarwater, after remaining properly subdued and crushed for a quiet decade, had broken out again. This time it was the Klondike fever. His first and one unvarying symptom of such attacks was song. One chant only he raised, though he remembered no more than the first stanza and but three lines of that. And the family knew his feet were itching and his brain was tingling with the old madness, when he lifted his hoarse-cracked voice, now falsetto-cracked, in:

Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this modern Greece,
Tum-tum, tum-tum, tum, tum, tum-tum,
To shear the Golden Fleece.

Ten years earlier he had lifted the chant, sung to the air of the “Doxology,” when afflicted with the fever to go gold-mining in Patagonia. The multitudinous family had sat upon him, but had had a hard time doing it. When all else had failed to shake his resolution, they had applied lawyers to him, with the threat of getting out guardianship papers and of confining him in the state asylum for the insane—which was reasonable for a man who had, a quarter of a century before, speculated away all but ten meagre acres of a California principality, and who had displayed no better business acumen ever since.

The application of lawyers to John Tarwater was like the application of a mustard plaster. For, in his judgment, they were the gentry, more than any other, who had skinned him out of the broad Tarwater acres. So, at the time of his Patagonian fever, the very thought of so drastic a remedy was sufficient to cure him. He quickly demonstrated he was not crazy by shaking the fever from him and agreeing not to go to Patagonia.

Next, he demonstrated how crazy he really was, by deeding over to his family, unsolicited, the ten acres on Tarwater Flat, the house, barn, outbuildings, and water-rights. Also did he turn over the eight hundred dollars in bank that was the long-saved salvage of his wrecked fortune. But for this the family found no cause for committal to the asylum, since such committal would necessarily invalidate what he had done.

“Grandfather is sure peeved,” said Mary, his oldest daughter, herself a grandmother, when her father quit smoking.

All he had retained for himself was a span of old horses, a mountain buckboard, and his one room in the crowded house. Further, having affirmed that he would be beholden to none of them, he got the contract to carry the United States mail, twice a week, from Kelterville up over Tarwater Mountain to Old Almaden—which was a sporadically

worked quick-silver mine in the upland cattle country. With his old horses it took all his time to make the two weekly round trips. And for ten years, rain or shine, he had never missed a trip. Nor had he failed once to pay his week's board into Mary's hand. This board he had insisted on, in the convalescence from his Patagonian fever, and he had paid it strictly, though he had given up tobacco in order to be able to do it.

"Huh!" he confided to the ruined water wheel of the old Tarwater Mill, which he had built from the standing timber and which had ground wheat for the first settlers. "Huh! They'll never put me in the poor farm so long as I support myself. And without a penny to my name it ain't likely any lawyer fellows'll come snoopin' around after me."

And yet, precisely because of these highly rational acts, it was held that John Tarwater was mildly crazy!

The first time he had lifted the chant of "Like Argus of the Ancient Times," had been in 1849, when, twenty-two years' of age, violently attacked by the Californian fever, he had sold two hundred and forty Michigan acres, forty of it cleared, for the price of four yoke of oxen, and a wagon, and had started across the Plains.

"And we turned off at Fort Hall, where the Oregon emigration went north'ard, and swung south for Californy," was his way of concluding the narrative of that arduous journey. And Bill Ping and me used to rope grizzlies out of the underbrush of Cache Slough in the Sacramento Valley."

Years of freighting and mining had followed, and, with a stake gleaned from the Merced placers, he satisfied the land-hunger of his race and time by settling in Sonoma County.

During the ten years of carrying the mail across Tarwater Township, up Tarwater Valley, and over Tarwater Mountain, most all of which land had once been his, he had spent his time dreaming of winning back that land before he died. And now, his huge gaunt form more erect than it had been for years, with a glinting of blue fires in his small and close-set eyes, he was lifting his ancient chant again.

"There he goes now-listen to him," said William Tarwater.

"Nobody at home," laughed Harris Topping, day labourer, husband of Annie Tarwater, and father of her nine children.

The kitchen door opened to admit the old man, returning from feeding his horses. The song had ceased from his lips; but Mary was irritable from a burnt hand and a grandchild whose stomach refused to digest properly diluted cows' milk.

"Now there ain't no use you carryin' on that way, father," she tackled him. "The time's past for you to cut and run for a place like the Klondike, and singing won't buy you nothing."

"Just the same," he answered quietly. "I bet I could go to that Klondike place and pick up enough gold to buy back the Tarwater lands."

"Old fool!" Annie contributed.

"You couldn't buy them back for less'n three hundred thousand and then some," was William's effort at squelching him.

"Then I could pick up three hundred thousand, and then some, if I was only there," the old man retorted placidly.

"Thank God you can't walk there, or you'd be startin', I know," Mary cried. "Ocean travel costs money."

"I used to have money," her father said humbly.

"Well, you ain't got any now-so forget it," William advised. "Them times is past, like roping bear with Bill Ping. There ain't no more bear."

"Just the same--"

But Mary cut him off. Seizing the day's paper from the kitchen table, she flourished it savagely under her aged progenitor's nose.

"What do those Klondikers say? There it is in cold print. Only the young and robust can stand the Klondike. It's worse than the north pole. And they've left their dead a-plenty there themselves. Look at their pictures. You're forty years older 'n the oldest of them."

John Tarwater did look, but his eyes strayed to other photographs on the highly sensational front page.

"And look at the photys of them nuggets they brought down," he said. "I know gold. Didn't I gopher twenty thousand outa the Merced? And wouldn't it a-ben a hundred thousand if that cloudburst hadn't busted my wing-dam? Now if I was only in the Klondike--"

"Crazy as a loon," William sneered in open aside to the rest.

"A nice way to talk to your father," Old Man Tarwater censured mildly. "My father'd have walloped the tar out of me with a single-tree if I'd spoke to him that way."

"But you ARE crazy, father--" William began.

"Reckon you're right, son. And that's where my father wasn't crazy. He'd a-done it."

"The old man's been reading some of them magazine articles about men who succeeded after forty," Annie jibed.

"And why not, daughter?" he asked. "And why can't a man succeed after he's seventy? I was only seventy this year. And mebbe I could succeed if only I could get to the Klondike--"

"Which you ain't going to get to," Mary shut him off.

"Oh, well, then," he sighed, "seein's I ain't, I might just as well go to bed."

He stood up, tall, gaunt, great-boned and gnarled, a splendid ruin of a man. His ragged hair and whiskers were not grey but snowy white, as were the tufts of hair that stood out on the backs of his huge bony fingers. He moved toward the door, opened it, sighed, and paused with a backward look.

"Just the same," he murmured plaintively, "the bottoms of my feet is itching something terrible."

Long before the family stirred next morning, his horses fed and harnessed by lantern light, breakfast cooked and eaten by lamp light, Old Man Tarwater was off and away down Tarwater Valley on the road to Kelterville. Two things were unusual about this

usual trip which he had made a thousand and forty times since taking the mail contract. He did not drive to Kelterville, but turned off on the main road south to Santa Rosa. Even more remarkable than this was the paper-wrapped parcel between his feet. It contained his one decent black suit, which Mary had been long reluctant to see him wear any more, not because it was shabby, but because, as he guessed what was at the back of her mind, it was decent enough to bury him in.

And at Santa Rosa, in a second-hand clothes shop, he sold the suit outright for two dollars and a half. From the same obliging shopman he received four dollars for the wedding ring of his long-dead wife. The span of horses and the wagon he disposed of for seventy-five dollars, although twenty-five was all he received down in cash. Chancing to meet Alton Granger on the street, to whom never before had he mentioned the ten dollars loaned him in '74, he reminded Alton Granger of the little affair, and was promptly paid. Also, of all unbelievable men to be in funds, he so found the town drunkard for whom he had bought many a drink in the old and palmy days. And from him John Tarwater borrowed a dollar. Finally, he took the afternoon train to San Francisco.

A dozen days later, carrying a half-empty canvas sack of blankets and old clothes, he landed on the beach of Dyea in the thick of the great Klondike Rush. The beach was screaming bedlam. Ten thousand tons of outfit lay heaped and scattered, and twice ten thousand men struggled with it and clamoured about it. Freight, by Indian-back, over Chilcoot to Lake Linderman, had jumped from sixteen to thirty cents a pound, which latter was a rate of six hundred dollars a ton. And the sub-arctic winter gloomed near at hand. All knew it, and all knew that of the twenty thousand of them very few would get across the passes, leaving the rest to winter and wait for the late spring thaw.

Such the beach old John Tarwater stepped upon; and straight across the beach and up the trail toward Chilcoot he headed, cackling his ancient chant, a very Grandfather Argus himself, with no outfit worry in the world, for he did not possess any outfit. That night he slept on the flats, five miles above Dyea, at the head of canoe navigation. Here the Dyea River became a rushing mountain torrent, plunging out of a dark canyon from the glaciers that fed it far above.

And here, early next morning, he beheld a little man weighing no more than a hundred, staggering along a foot-log under all of a hundred pounds of flour strapped on his back. Also, he beheld the little man stumble off the log and fall face-downward in a quiet eddy where the water was two feet deep and proceed quietly to drown. It was no desire of his to take death so easily, but the flour on his back weighed as much as he and would not let him up.

"Thank you, old man," he said to Tarwater, when the latter had dragged him up into the air and ashore.

While he unlaced his shoes and ran the water out, they had further talk. Next, he fished out a ten-dollar gold-piece and offered it to his rescuer.

Old Tarwater shook his head and shivered, for the ice-water had wet him to his knees.

“But I reckon I wouldn’t object to settin’ down to a friendly meal with you.”

“Ain’t had breakfast?” the little man, who was past forty and who had said his name was Anson, queried with a glance frankly curious.

“Nary bite,” John Tarwater answered.

“Where’s your outfit? Ahead?”

“Nary outfit.”

“Expect to buy your grub on the Inside?”

“Nary a dollar to buy it with, friend. Which ain’t so important as a warm bite of breakfast right now.”

In Anson’s camp, a quarter of a mile on, Tarwater found a slender, red-whiskered young man of thirty cursing over a fire of wet willow wood. Introduced as Charles, he transferred his scowl and wrath to Tarwater, who, genially oblivious, devoted himself to the fire, took advantage of the chill morning breeze to create a draught which the other had left stupidly blocked by stones, and soon developed less smoke and more flame. The third member of the party, Bill Wilson, or Big Bill as they called him, came in with a hundred-and-forty-pound pack; and what Tarwater esteemed to be a very rotten breakfast was dished out by Charles. The mush was half cooked and mostly burnt, the bacon was charred carbon, and the coffee was unspeakable.

Immediately the meal was wolfed down the three partners took their empty pack-straps and headed down trail to where the remainder of their outfit lay at the last camp a mile away. And old Tarwater became busy. He washed the dishes, foraged dry wood, mended a broken pack-strap, put an edge on the butcher-knife and camp-axe, and repacked the picks and shovels into a more carryable parcel.

What had impressed him during the brief breakfast was the sort of awe in which Anson and Big Bill stood of Charles. Once, during the morning, while Anson took a breathing spell after bringing in another hundred-pound pack, Tarwater delicately hinted his impression.

“You see, it’s this way,” Anson said. “We’ve divided our leadership. We’ve got specialities. Now I’m a carpenter. When we get to Lake Linderman, and the trees are chopped and whipsawed into planks, I’ll boss the building of the boat. Big Bill is a logger and miner. So he’ll boss getting out the logs and all mining operations. Most of our outfit’s ahead. We went broke paying the Indians to pack that much of it to the top of Chilcoot. Our last partner is up there with it, moving it along by himself down the other side. His name’s Liverpool, and he’s a sailor. So, when the boat’s built, he’s the boss of the outfit to navigate the lakes and rapids to Klondike.

“And Charles-this Mr. Crayton-what might his speciality be?” Tarwater asked.

“He’s the business man. When it comes to business and organization he’s boss.”

“Hum,” Tarwater pondered. “Very lucky to get such a bunch of specialities into one outfit.”

“More than luck,” Anson agreed. “It was all accident, too. Each of us started alone. We met on the steamer coming up from San Francisco, and formed the party.-Well, I got to be goin’. Charles is liable to get kicking because I ain’t packin’ my share’ just

the same, you can't expect a hundred-pound man to pack as much as a hundred-and-sixty-pounder."

"Stick around and cook us something for dinner," Charles, on his next load in and noting the effects of the old man's handiness, told Tarwater.

And Tarwater cooked a dinner that was a dinner, washed the dishes, had real pork and beans for supper, and bread baked in a frying-pan that was so delectable than the three partners nearly foundered themselves on it. Supper dishes washed, he cut shavings and kindling for a quick and certain breakfast fire, showed Anson a trick with foot-gear that was invaluable to any hiker, sang his "Like Argus of the Ancient Times," and told them of the great emigration across the Plains in Forty-nine.

"My goodness, the first cheerful and hearty-like camp since we hit the beach," Big Bill remarked as he knocked out his pipe and began pulling off his shoes for bed.

"Kind of made things easy, boys, eh?" Tarwater queried genially.

All nodded. "Well, then, I got a proposition, boys. You can take it or leave it, but just listen kindly to it. You're in a hurry to get in before the freeze-up. Half the time is wasted over the cooking by one of you that he might be puttin' in packin' outfit. If I do the cookin' for you, you all'll get on that much faster. Also, the cookin' 'll be better, and that'll make you pack better. And I can pack quite a bit myself in between times, quite a bit, yes, sir, quite a bit."

Big Bill and Anson were just beginning to nod their heads in agreement, when Charles stopped them.

"What do you expect of us in return?" he demanded of the old man.

"Oh, I leave it up to the boys."

"That ain't business," Charles reprimanded sharply. "You made the proposition. Now finish it."

"Well, it's this way--"

"You expect us to feed you all winter, eh?" Charles interrupted.

"No, siree, I don't. All I reckon is a passage to Klondike in your boat would be mighty square of you."

"You haven't an ounce of grub, old man. You'll starve to death when you get there."

"I've been feedin' some long time pretty successful," Old Tarwater replied, a whimsical light in his eyes. "I'm seventy, and ain't starved to death never yet."

"Will you sign a paper to the effect that you shift for yourself as soon as you get to Dawson?" the business one demanded.

"Oh, sure," was the response.

Again Charles checked his two partners' expressions of satisfaction with the arrangement.

"One other thing, old man. We're a party of four, and we all have a vote on questions like this. Young Liverpool is ahead with the main outfit. He's got a say so, and he isn't here to say it."

"What kind of a party might he be?" Tarwater inquired.

"He's a rough-neck sailor, and he's got a quick, bad temper."

“Some turbulent,” Anson contributed.

“And the way he can cuss is simply God-awful,” Big Bill testified.

“But he’s square,” Big Bill added.

Anson nodded heartily to this appraisal.

“Well, boys,” Tarwater summed up, “I set out for Californy and I got there. And I’m going to get to Klondike. Ain’t a thing can stop me, ain’t a thing. I’m going to get three hundred thousand outa the ground, too. Ain’t a thing can stop me, ain’t a thing, because I just naturally need the money. I don’t mind a bad temper so long’s the boy is square. I’ll take my chance, an’ I’ll work along with you till we catch up with him. Then, if he says no to the proposition, I reckon I’ll lose. But somehow I just can’t see ‘m sayin’ no, because that’d mean too close up to freeze-up and too late for me to find another chance like this. And, as I’m sure going to get to Klondike, it’s just plumb impossible for him to say no.”

Old John Tarwater became a striking figure on a trail unusually replete with striking figures. With thousands of men, each back-tripping half a ton of outfit, retracing every mile of the trail twenty times, all came to know him and to hail him as “Father Christmas.” And, as he worked, ever he raised his chant with his age-falsetto voice. None of the three men he had joined could complain about his work. True, his joints were stiff—he admitted to a trifle of rheumatism. He moved slowly, and seemed to creak and crackle when he moved; but he kept on moving. Last into the blankets at night, he was first out in the morning, so that the other three had hot coffee before their one before-breakfast pack. And, between breakfast and dinner and between dinner and supper, he always managed to back-trip for several packs himself. Sixty pounds was the limit of his burden, however. He could manage seventy-five, but he could not keep it up. Once, he tried ninety, but collapsed on the trail and was seriously shaky for a couple of days afterward.

Work! On a trail where hard-working men learned for the first time what work was, no man worked harder in proportion to his strength than Old Tarwater. Driven desperately on by the near-thrust of winter, and lured madly on by the dream of gold, they worked to their last ounce of strength and fell by the way. Others, when failure made certain, blew out their brains. Some went mad, and still others, under the irk of the man-destroying strain, broke partnerships and dissolved life-time friendships with fellows just as good as themselves and just as strained and mad.

Work! Old Tarwater could shame them all, despite his creaking and crackling and the nasty hacking cough he had developed. Early and late, on trail or in camp beside the trail he was ever in evidence, ever busy at something, ever responsive to the hail of “Father Christmas.” Weary back-trippers would rest their packs on a log or rock alongside of where he rested his, and would say: “Sing us that song of yourn, dad, about Forty-Nine.” And, when he had wheezingly complied, they would arise under their loads, remark that it was real heartening, and hit the forward trail again.

“If ever a man worked his passage and earned it,” Big Bill confided to his two partners, “that man’s our old Skeeziicks.”

“You bet,” Anson confirmed. “He’s a valuable addition to the party, and I, for one, ain’t at all disagreeable to the notion of making him a regular partner-“

“None of that!” Charles Crayton cut in. “When we get to Dawson we’re quit of him-that’s the agreement. We’d only have to bury him if we let him stay on with us. Besides, there’s going to be a famine, and every ounce of grub’ll count. Remember, we’re feeding him out of our own supply all the way in. And if we run short in the pinch next year, you’ll know the reason. Steamboats can’t get up grub to Dawson till the middle of June, and that’s nine months away.”

“Well, you put as much money and outfit in as the rest of us,” Big Bill conceded, “and you’ve a say according.”

“And I’m going to have my say,” Charles asserted with increasing irritability. “And it’s lucky for you with your fool sentiments that you’ve got somebody to think ahead for you, else you’d all starve to death. I tell you that famine’s coming. I’ve been studying the situation. Flour will be two dollars a pound, or ten, and no sellers. You mark my words.”

Across the rubble-covered flats, up the dark canyon to Sheep Camp, past the overhanging and ever-threatening glaciers to the Scales, and from the Scales up the steep pitches of ice-scoured rock where packers climbed with hands and feet, Old Tarwater camp-cooked and packed and sang. He blew across Chilcoot Pass, above timberline, in the first swirl of autumn snow. Those below, without firewood, on the bitter rim of Crater Lake, heard from the driving obscurity above them a weird voice chanting:

“Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this modern Greece,
Tum-tum, tum-tum, tum, tum, tum-tum,
To shear the Golden Fleece.”

And out of the snow flurries they saw appear a tall, gaunt form, with whiskers of flying white that blended with the storm, bending under a sixty-pound pack of camp dunnage.

“Father Christmas!” was the hail. And then: “Three rousing cheers for Father Christmas!”

Two miles beyond Crater Lake lay Happy Camp-so named because here was found the uppermost fringe of the timber line, where men might warm themselves by fire again. Scarcely could it be called timber, for it was a dwarf rock-spruce that never raised its loftiest branches higher than a foot above the moss, and that twisted and grovelled like a pig-vegetable under the moss. Here, on the trail leading into Happy Camp, in the first sunshine of half a dozen days, Old Tarwater rested his pack against a huge boulder and caught his breath. Around this boulder the trail passed, laden men toiling slowly forward and men with empty pack-straps limping rapidly back for fresh loads. Twice Old Tarwater essayed to rise and go on, and each time, warned by his shakiness, sank back to recover more strength. From around the boulder he heard voices in greeting, recognized Charles Crayton’s voice, and realized that at last they had met up with Young Liverpool. Quickly, Charles plunged into business, and

Tarwater heard with great distinctness every word of Charles' unflattering description of him and the proposition to give him passage to Dawson.

"A dam fool proposition," was Liverpool's judgment, when Charles had concluded. "An old granddad of seventy! If he's on his last legs, why in hell did you hook up with him? If there's going to be a famine, and it looks like it, we need every ounce of grub for ourselves. We only out-fitted for four, not five."

"It's all right," Tarwater heard Charles assuring the other. "Don't get excited. The old codger agreed to leave the final decision to you when we caught up with you. All you've got to do is put your foot down and say no."

"You mean it's up to me to turn the old one down, after your encouraging him and taking advantage of his work clear from Dyea here?"

"It's a hard trail, Liverpool, and only the men that are hard will get through," Charles strove to palliate.

"And I'm to do the dirty work?" Liverpool complained, while Tarwater's heart sank.

"That's just about the size of it," Charles said. "You've got the deciding."

Then old Tarwater's heart uprose again as the air was rent by a cyclone of profanity, from the midst of which crackled sentences like:-"Dirty skunks! . . . See you in hell first! . . . My mind's made up! . . . Hell's fire and corruption! . . . The old codger goes down the Yukon with us, stack on that, my hearty! . . . Hard? You don't know what hard is unless I show you! . . . I'll bust the whole outfit to hell and gone if any of you try to side-track him! . . . Just try to side-track him, that is all, and you'll think the Day of Judgment and all God's blastingness has hit the camp in one chunk!"

Such was the invigoratingness of Liverpool's flow of speech that, quite without consciousness of effort, the old man arose easily under his load and strode on toward Happy Camp.

From Happy Camp to Long Lake, from Long Lake to Deep Lake, and from Deep Lake up over the enormous hog-back and down to Linderman, the man-killing race against winter kept on. Men broke their hearts and backs and wept beside the trail in sheer exhaustion. But winter never faltered. The fall gales blew, and amid bitter soaking rains and ever-increasing snow flurries, Tarwater and the party to which he was attached piled the last of their outfit on the beach.

There was no rest. Across the lake, a mile above a roaring torrent, they located a patch of spruce and built their saw-pit. Here, by hand, with an inadequate whipsaw, they sawed the spruce-trunks into lumber. They worked night and day. Thrice, on the night-shift, underneath in the saw-pit, Old Tarwater fainted. By day he cooked as well, and, in the betweenwhiles, helped Anson in the building of the boat beside the torrent as the green planks came down.

The days grew shorter. The wind shifted into the north and blew unending gales. In the mornings the weary men crawled from their blankets and in their socks thawed out their frozen shoes by the fire Tarwater always had burning for them. Ever arose the increasing tale of famine on the Inside. The last grub steamboats up from Bering Sea were stalled by low water at the beginning of the Yukon Flats hundreds of miles

north of Dawson. In fact, they lay at the old Hudson Bay Company's post at Fort Yukon inside the Arctic Circle. Flour in Dawson was up to two dollars a pound, but no one would sell. Bonanza and Eldorado Kings, with money to burn, were leaving for the Outside because they could buy no grub. Miners' Committees were confiscating all grub and putting the population on strict rations. A man who held out an ounce of grub was shot like a dog. A score had been so executed already.

And, under a strain which had broken so many younger men, Old Tarwater began to break. His cough had become terrible, and had not his exhausted comrades slept like the dead, he would have kept them awake nights. Also, he began to take chills, so that he dressed up to go to bed. When he had finished so dressing, not a rag of garment remained in his clothes bag. All he possessed was on his back and swathed around his gaunt old form.

"Geel!" said Big Bill. "If he puts all he's got on now, when it ain't lower than twenty above, what'll he do later on when it goes down to fifty and sixty below?"

They lined the rough-made boat down the mountain torrent, nearly losing it a dozen times, and rowed across the south end of Lake Linderman in the thick of a fall blizzard. Next morning they planned to load and start, squarely into the teeth of the north, on their perilous traverse of half a thousand miles of lakes and rapids and box canyons. But before he went to bed that night, Young Liverpool was out over the camp. He returned to find his whole party asleep. Rousing Tarwater, he talked with him in low tones.

"Listen, dad," he said.-"You've got a passage in our boat, and if ever a man earned a passage you have. But you know yourself you're pretty well along in years, and your health right now ain't exciting. If you go on with us you'll croak surer'n hell.-Now wait till I finish, dad. The price for a passage has jumped to five hundred dollars. I've been throwing my feet and I've hustled a passenger. He's an official of the Alaska Commercial and just has to get in. He's bid up to six hundred to go with me in our boat. Now the passage is yours. You sell it to him, poke the six hundred into your jeans, and pull South for California while the goin's good. You can be in Dyea in two days, and in California in a week more. What d'ye say?"

Tarwater coughed and shivered for a space, ere he could get freedom of breath for speech.

"Son," he said, "I just want to tell you one thing. I drove my four yoke of oxen across the Plains in Forty-nine and lost nary a one. I drove them plumb to Californy, and I freighted with them afterward out of Sutter's Fort to American Bar. Now I'm going to Klondike. Ain't nothing can stop me, ain't nothing at all. I'm going to ride that boat, with you at the steering sweep, clean to Klondike, and I'm going to shake three hundred thousand out of the moss-roots. That being so, it's contrary to reason and common sense for me to sell out my passage. But I thank you kindly, son, I thank you kindly."

The young sailor shot out his hand impulsively and gripped the old man's.

“By God, dad!” he cried. “You’re sure going to go then. You’re the real stuff.” He looked with undisguised contempt across the sleepers to where Charles Crayton snored in his red beard. “They don’t seem to make your kind any more, dad.”

Into the north they fought their way, although old-timers, coming out, shook their heads and prophesied they would be frozen in on the lakes. That the freeze-up might come any day was patent, and delays of safety were no longer considered. For this reason, Liverpool decided to shoot the rapid stream connecting Linderman to Lake Bennett with the fully loaded boat. It was the custom to line the empty boats down and to portage the cargoes across. Even then many empty boats had been wrecked. But the time was past for such precaution.

“Climb out, dad,” Liverpool commanded as he prepared to swing from the bank and enter the rapids.

Old Tarwater shook his white head.

“I’m sticking to the outfit,” he declared. “It’s the only way to get through. You see, son, I’m going to Klondike. If I stick by the boat, then the boat just naturally goes to Klondike, too. If I get out, then most likely you’ll lose the boat.”

“Well, there’s no use in overloading,” Charles announced, springing abruptly out on the bank as the boat cast off.

“Next time you wait for my orders!” Liverpool shouted ashore as the current gripped the boat. “And there won’t be any more walking around rapids and losing time waiting to pick you up!”

What took them ten minutes by river, took Charles half an hour by land, and while they waited for him at the head of Lake Bennett they passed the time of day with several dilapidated old-timers on their way out. The famine news was graver than ever. The North-west Mounted Police, stationed at the foot of Lake Marsh where the gold-rushers entered Canadian territory, were refusing to let a man past who did not carry with him seven hundred pounds of grub. In Dawson City a thousand men, with dog-teams, were waiting the freeze-up to come out over the ice. The trading companies could not fill their grub-contracts, and partners were cutting the cards to see which should go and which should stay and work the claims.

“That settles it,” Charles announced, when he learned of the action of the mounted police on the boundary. “Old Man, you might as well start back now.”

“Climb aboard!” Liverpool commanded. “We’re going to Klondike, and old dad is going along.”

A shift of gale to the south gave them a fair wind down Lake Bennett, before which they ran under a huge sail made by Liverpool. The heavy weight of outfit gave such ballast that he cracked on as a daring sailor should when moments counted. A shift of four points into the south-west, coming just at the right time as they entered upon Caribou Crossing, drove them down that connecting link to lakes Tagish and Marsh. In stormy sunset and twilight-they made the dangerous crossing of Great Windy Arm, wherein they beheld two other boat-loads of gold-rushers capsize and drown.

Charles was for beaching for the night, but Liverpool held on, steering down Tagish by the sound of the surf on the shoals and by the occasional shore-fires that advertised wrecked or timid argonauts. At four in the morning, he aroused Charles. Old Tarwater, shiveringly awake, heard Liverpool order Crayton aft beside him at the steering-sweep, and also heard the one-sided conversation.

“Just listen, friend Charles, and keep your own mouth shut,” Liverpool began. “I want you to get one thing into your head and keep it there: OLD DAD’S GOING BY THE POLICE. UNDERSTAND? HE’S GOING BY. When they examine our outfit, old dad’s got a fifth share in it, savvee? That’ll put us all ‘way under what we ought to have, but we can bluff it through. Now get this, and get it hard: THERE AIN’T GOING TO BE ANY FALL-DOWN ON THIS BLUFF-“

“If you think I’d give away on the old codger-“ Charles began indignantly.

“You thought that,” Liverpool checked him, “because I never mentioned any such thing. Now-get me and get me hard: I don’t care what you’ve been thinking. It’s what you’re going to think. We’ll make the police post some time this afternoon, and we’ve got to get ready to pull the bluff without a hitch, and a word to the wise is plenty.”

“If you think I’ve got it in my mind-“ Charles began again.

“Look here,” Liverpool shut him off. “I don’t know what’s in your mind. I don’t want to know. I want you to know what’s in my mind. If there’s any slip-up, if old dad gets turned back by the police, I’m going to pick out the first quiet bit of landscape and take you ashore on it. And then I’m going to beat you up to the Queen’s taste. Get me, and get me hard. It ain’t going to be any half-way beating, but a real, two-legged, two-fisted, he-man beating. I don’t expect I’ll kill you, but I’ll come damn near to half-killing you.”

“But what can I do?” Charles almost whimpered.

“Just one thing,” was Liverpool’s final word. “You just pray. You pray so hard that old dad gets by the police that he does get by. That’s all. Go back to your blankets.”

Before they gained Lake Le Barge, the land was sheeted with snow that would not melt for half a year. Nor could they lay their boat at will against the bank, for the rim-ice was already forming. Inside the mouth of the river, just ere it entered Lake Le Barge, they found a hundred storm-bound boats of the argonauts. Out of the north, across the full sweep of the great lake, blew an unending snow gale. Three mornings they put out and fought it and the cresting seas it drove that turned to ice as they fell in-board. While the others broke their hearts at the oars, Old Tarwater managed to keep up just sufficient circulation to survive by chopping ice and throwing it overboard.

Each day for three days, beaten to helplessness, they turned tail on the battle and ran back into the sheltering river. By the fourth day, the hundred boats had increased to three hundred, and the two thousand argonauts on board knew that the great gale heralded the freeze-up of Le Barge. Beyond, the rapid rivers would continue to run for days, but unless they got beyond, and immediately, they were doomed to be frozen in for six months to come.

“This day we go through,” Liverpool announced. “We turn back for nothing. And those of us that dies at the oars will live again and go on pulling.”

And they went through, winning half the length of the lake by nightfall and pulling on through all the night hours as the wind went down, falling asleep at the oars and being rapped awake by Liverpool, toiling on through an age-long nightmare while the stars came out and the surface of the lake turned to the unruffledness of a sheet of paper and froze skin-ice that tinkled like broken glass as their oar-blades shattered it.

As day broke clear and cold, they entered the river, with behind them a sea of ice. Liverpool examined his aged passenger and found him helpless and almost gone. When he rounded the boat to against the rim-ice to build a fire and warm up Tarwater inside and out, Charles protested against such loss of time.

“This ain’t business, so don’t you come horning in,” Liverpool informed him. “I’m running the boat trip. So you just climb out and chop firewood, and plenty of it. I’ll take care of dad. You, Anson, make a fire on the bank. And you, Bill, set up the Yukon stove in the boat. Old dad ain’t as young as the rest of us, and for the rest of this voyage he’s going to have a fire on board to sit by.”

All of which came to pass; and the boat, in the grip of the current, like a river steamer with smoke rising from the two joints of stove-pipe, grounded on shoals, hung up on split currents, and charged rapids and canyons, as it drove deeper into the Northland winter. The Big and Little Salmon rivers were throwing mush-ice into the main river as they passed, and, below the riffles, anchor-ice arose from the river bottom and coated the surface with crystal scum. Night and day the rim-ice grew, till, in quiet places, it extended out a hundred yards from shore. And Old Tarwater, with all his clothes on, sat by the stove and kept the fire going. Night and day, not daring to stop for fear of the imminent freeze-up, they dared to run, an increasing mushiness of ice running with them.

“What ho, old hearty?” Liverpool would call out at times.

“Cheer O,” Old Tarwater had learned to respond.

“What can I ever do for you, son, in payment?” Tarwater, stoking the fire, would sometimes ask Liverpool, beating now one released hand and now the other as he fought for circulation where he steered in the freezing stern-sheets.

“Just break out that regular song of yours, old Forty-Niner,” was the invariable reply.

And Tarwater would lift his voice in the cackling chant, as he lifted it at the end, when the boat swung in through driving cake-ice and moored to the Dawson City bank, and all waterfront Dawson pricked its ears to hear the triumphant paean:

Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this modern Greece,
Tum-tum, tum-tum, tum, tum, tum-tum,
To shear the Golden Fleece,

Charles did it, but he did it so discreetly that none of his party, least of all the sailor, ever learned of it. He saw two great open barges being filled up with men, and,

on inquiry, learned that these were grubless ones being rounded up and sent down the Yukon by the Committee of Safety. The barges were to be towed by the last little steamboat in Dawson, and the hope was that Fort Yukon, where lay the stranded steamboats, would be gained before the river froze. At any rate, no matter what happened to them, Dawson would be relieved of their grub-consuming presence. So to the Committee of Safety Charles went, privily to drop a flea in its ear concerning Tarwater's grubless, moneyless, and aged condition. Tarwater was one of the last gathered in, and when Young Liverpool returned to the boat, from the bank he saw the barges in a run of cake-ice, disappearing around the bend below Moose-hide Mountain.

Running in cake-ice all the way, and several times escaping jams in the Yukon Flats, the barges made their hundreds of miles of progress farther into the north and froze up cheek by jowl with the grub-fleet. Here, inside the Arctic Circle, Old Tarwater settled down to pass the long winter. Several hours' work a day, chopping firewood for the steamboat companies, sufficed to keep him in food. For the rest of the time there was nothing to do but hibernate in his log cabin.

Warmth, rest, and plenty to eat, cured his hacking cough and put him in as good physical condition as was possible for his advanced years. But, even before Christmas, the lack of fresh vegetables caused scurvy to break out, and disappointed adventurer after disappointed adventurer took to his bunk in abject surrender to this culminating misfortune. Not so Tarwater. Even before the first symptoms appeared on him, he was putting into practice his one prescription, namely, exercise. From the junk of the old trading post he resurrected a number of rusty traps, and from one of the steamboat captains he borrowed a rifle.

Thus equipped, he ceased from wood-chopping, and began to make more than a mere living. Nor was he downhearted when the scurvy broke out on his own body. Ever he ran his trap-lines and sang his ancient chant. Nor could the pessimist shake his surety of the three hundred thousand of Alaskan gold he as going to shake out of the moss-roots.

"But this ain't gold-country," they told him.

"Gold is where you find it, son, as I should know who was mining before you was born, 'way back in Forty-Nine," was his reply. "What was Bonanza Creek but a moose-pasture? No miner'd look at it; yet they washed five-hundred-dollar pans and took out fifty million dollars. Eldorado was just as bad. For all you know, right under this here cabin, or right over the next hill, is millions just waiting for a lucky one like me to come and shake it out."

At the end of January came his disaster. Some powerful animal that he decided was a bob-cat, managing to get caught in one of his smaller traps, dragged it away. A heavy snow-fall put a stop midway to his pursuit, losing the trail for him and losing himself. There were but several hours of daylight each day between the twenty hours of intervening darkness, and his efforts in the grey light and continually falling snow succeeded only in losing him more thoroughly. Fortunately, when winter snow falls in the Northland the thermometer invariably rises; so, instead of the customary forty and

fifty and even sixty degrees below zero, the temperature remained fifteen below. Also, he was warmly clad and had a full matchbox. Further to mitigate his predicament, on the fifth day he killed a wounded moose that weighed over half a ton. Making his camp beside it on a spruce-bottom, he was prepared to last out the winter, unless a searching party found him or his scurvy grew worse.

But at the end of two weeks there had been no sign of search, while his scurvy had undeniably grown worse. Against his fire, banked from outer cold by a shelter-wall of spruce-boughs, he crouched long hours in sleep and long hours in waking. But the waking hours grew less, becoming semi-waking or half-dreaming hours as the process of hibernation worked their way with him. Slowly the sparkle point of consciousness and identity that was John Tarwater sank, deeper and deeper, into the profounds of his being that had been compounded ere man was man, and while he was becoming man, when he, first of all animals, regarded himself with an introspective eye and laid the beginnings of morality in foundations of nightmare peopled by the monsters of his own ethic-thwarted desires.

Like a man in fever, waking to intervals of consciousness, so Old Tarwater awoke, cooked his moose-meat, and fed the fire; but more and more time he spent in his torpor, unaware of what was day-dream and what was sleep-dream in the content of his unconsciousness. And here, in the unforgettable crypts of man's unwritten history, unthinkable and unrealizable, like passages of nightmare or impossible adventures of lunacy, he encountered the monsters created of man's first morality that ever since have vexed him into the spinning of fantasies to elude them or do battle with them.

In short, weighted by his seventy years, in the vast and silent loneliness of the North, Old Tarwater, as in the delirium of drug or anaesthetic, recovered within himself, the infantile mind of the child-man of the early world. It was in the dusk of Death's fluttery wings that Tarwater thus crouched, and, like his remote forebear, the child-man, went to myth-making, and sun-heroizing, himself hero-maker and the hero in quest of the immemorable treasure difficult of attainment.

Either must he attain the treasure-for so ran the inexorable logic of the shadow-land of the unconscious-or else sink into the all-devouring sea, the blackness eater of the light that swallowed to extinction the sun each night . . . the sun that arose ever in rebirth next morning in the east, and that had become to man man's first symbol of immortality through rebirth. All this, in the deeps of his unconsciousness (the shadowy western land of descending light), was the near dusk of Death down into which he slowly ebbed.

But how to escape this monster of the dark that from within him slowly swallowed him? Too deep-sunk was he to dream of escape or feel the prod of desire to escape. For him reality had ceased. Nor from within the darkened chamber of himself could reality recrudescence. His years were too heavy upon him, the debility of disease and the lethargy and torpor of the silence and the cold were too profound. Only from without could reality impact upon him and reawake within him an awareness of reality. Otherwise he

would ooze down through the shadow-realm of the unconscious into the all-darkness of extinction.

But it came, the smash of reality from without, crashing upon his ear drums in a loud, explosive snort. For twenty days, in a temperature that had never risen above fifty below, no breath of wind had blown movement, no slightest sound had broken the silence. Like the smoker on the opium couch refocusing his eyes from the spacious walls of dream to the narrow confines of the mean little room, so Old Tarwater stared vague-eyed before him across his dying fire, at a huge moose that stared at him in startlement, dragging a wounded leg, manifesting all signs of extreme exhaustion; it, too, had been straying blindly in the shadow-land, and had wakened to reality only just ere it stepped into Tarwater's fire.

He feebly slipped the large fur mitten lined with thickness of wool from his right hand. Upon trial he found the trigger finger too numb for movement. Carefully, slowly, through long minutes, he worked the bare hand inside his blankets, up under his fur PARKA, through the chest openings of his shirts, and into the slightly warm hollow of his left arm-pit. Long minutes passed ere the finger could move, when, with equal slowness of caution, he gathered his rifle to his shoulder and drew bead upon the great animal across the fire.

At the shot, of the two shadow-wanderers, the one reeled downward to the dark and the other reeled upward to the light, swaying drunkenly on his scurvy-ravaged legs, shivering with nervousness and cold, rubbing swimming eyes with shaking fingers, and staring at the real world all about him that had returned to him with such sickening suddenness. He shook himself together, and realized that for long, how long he did not know, he had bedded in the arms of Death. He spat, with definite intention, heard the spittle crackle in the frost, and judged it must be below and far below sixty below. In truth, that day at Fort Yukon, the spirit thermometer registered seventy-five degrees below zero, which, since freezing-point is thirty-two above, was equivalent to one hundred and seven degrees of frost.

Slowly Tarwater's brain reasoned to action. Here, in the vast alone, dwelt Death. Here had come two wounded moose. With the clearing of the sky after the great cold came on, he had located his bearings, and he knew that both wounded moose had trailed to him from the east. Therefore, in the east, were men-whites or Indians he could not tell, but at any rate men who might stand by him in his need and help moor him to reality above the sea of dark.

He moved slowly, but he moved in reality, girding himself with rifle, ammunition, matches, and a pack of twenty pounds of moose-meat. Then, an Argus rejuvenated, albeit lame of both legs and tottery, he turned his back on the perilous west and limped into the sun-arising, re-birthing east. . . .

Days later-how many days later he was never to know-dreaming dreams and seeing visions, cackling his old gold-chant of Forty-Nine, like one drowning and swimming feebly to keep his consciousness above the engulfing dark, he came out upon the snow-slope to a canyon and saw below smoke rising and men who ceased from work to gaze

at him. He tottered down the hill to them, still singing; and when he ceased from lack of breath they called him variously: Santa Claus, Old Christmas, Whiskers, the Last of the Mohicans, and Father Christmas. And when he stood among them he stood very still, without speech, while great tears welled out of his eyes. He cried silently, a long time, till, as if suddenly bethinking himself, he sat down in the snow with much creaking and crackling of his joints, and from this low vantage point toppled sidewise and fainted calmly and easily away.

In less than a week Old Tarwater was up and limping about the housework of the cabin, cooking and dish-washing for the five men of the creek. Genuine sourdoughs (pioneers) they were, tough and hard-bitten, who had been buried so deeply inside the Circle that they did not know there was a Klondike Strike. The news he brought them was their first word of it. They lived on an almost straight-meat diet of moose, caribou, and smoked salmon, eked out with wild berries and somewhat succulent wild roots they had stocked up with in the summer. They had forgotten the taste of coffee, made fire with a burning glass, carried live fire-sticks with them wherever they travelled, and in their pipes smoked dry leaves that bit the tongue and were pungent to the nostrils.

Three years before, they had prospected from the head-reaches of the Koyokuk northward and clear across to the mouth of the Mackenzie on the Arctic Ocean. Here, on the whaleships, they had beheld their last white men and equipped themselves with the last white man's grub, consisting principally of salt and smoking tobacco. Striking south and west on the long traverse to the junction of the Yukon and Porcupine at Fort Yukon, they had found gold on this creek and remained over to work the ground.

They hailed the advent of Tarwater with joy, never tired of listening to his tales of Forty-Nine, and rechristened him Old Hero. Also, with tea made from spruce needles, with concoctions brewed from the inner willow bark, and with sour and bitter roots and bulbs from the ground, they dosed his scurvy out of him, so that he ceased limping and began to lay on flesh over his bony framework. Further, they saw no reason at all why he should not gather a rich treasure of gold from the ground.

"Don't know about all of three hundred thousand," they told him one morning, at breakfast, ere they departed to their work, "but how'd a hundred thousand do, Old Hero? That's what we figure a claim is worth, the ground being badly spotted, and we've already staked your location notices."

"Well, boys," Old Tarwater answered, "and thanking you kindly, all I can say is that a hundred thousand will do nicely, and very nicely, for a starter. Of course, I ain't goin' to stop till I get the full three hundred thousand. That's what I come into the country for."

They laughed and applauded his ambition and reckoned they'd have to hunt a richer creek for him. And Old Hero reckoned that as the spring came on and he grew spryer, he'd have to get out and do a little snooping around himself.

"For all anybody knows," he said, pointing to a hillside across the creek bottom, "the moss under the snow there may be plumb rooted in nugget gold."

He said no more, but as the sun rose higher and the days grew longer and warmer, he gazed often across the creek at the definite bench-formation half way up the hill. And, one day, when the thaw was in full swing, he crossed the stream and climbed to the bench. Exposed patches of ground had already thawed an inch deep. On one such patch he stopped, gathered a bunch of moss in his big gnarled hands, and ripped it out by the roots. The sun smouldered on dully glistening yellow. He shook the handful of moss, and coarse nuggets, like gravel, fell to the ground. It was the Golden Fleece ready for the shearing.

Not entirely unremembered in Alaskan annals is the summer stampede of 1898 from Fort Yukon to the bench diggings of Tarwater Hill. And when Tarwater sold his holdings to the Bowdie interests for a sheer half-million and faced for California, he rode a mule over a new-cut trail, with convenient road houses along the way, clear to the steamboat landing at Fort Yukon.

At the first meal on the ocean-going steamship out of St. Michaels, a waiter, greyish-haired, pain-ravaged of face, scurvy-twisted of body, served him. Old Tarwater was compelled to look him over twice in order to make certain he was Charles Crayton.

“Got it bad, eh, son?” Tarwater queried.

“Just my luck,” the other complained, after recognition and greeting. “Only one of the party that the scurvy attacked. I’ve been through hell. The other three are all at work and healthy, getting grub-stake to prospect up White River this winter. Anson’s earning twenty-five a day at carpentering, Liverpool getting twenty logging for the saw-mill, and Big Bill’s getting forty a day as chief sawyer. I tried my best, and if it hadn’t been for scurvy . . .”

“Sure, son, you done your best, which ain’t much, you being naturally irritable and hard from too much business. Now I’ll tell you what. You ain’t fit to work crippled up this way. I’ll pay your passage with the captain in kind remembrance of the voyage you gave me, and you can lay up and take it easy the rest of the trip. And what are your circumstances when you land at San Francisco?”

Charles Crayton shrugged his shoulders.

“Tell you what,” Tarwater continued. “There’s work on the ranch for you till you can start business again.”

“I could manage your business for you-“ Charles began eagerly.

“No, siree,” Tarwater declared emphatically. “But there’s always post-holes to dig, and cordwood to chop, and the climate’s fine . . .”

Tarwater arrived home a true prodigal grandfather for whom the fatted calf was killed and ready. But first, ere he sat down at table, he must stroll out and around. And sons and daughters of his flesh and of the law needs must go with him fulsomely eating out of the gnarled old hand that had half a million to disburse. He led the way, and no opinion he slyly uttered was preposterous or impossible enough to draw dissent from his following. Pausing by the ruined water wheel which he had built from the standing timber, his face beamed as he gazed across the stretches of Tarwater Valley, and on and up the far heights to the summit of Tarwater Mountain-now all his again.

A thought came to him that made him avert his face and blow his nose in order to hide the twinkle in his eyes. Still attended by the entire family, he strolled on to the dilapidated barn. He picked up an age-weathered single-tree from the ground.

“William,” he said. “Remember that little conversation we had just before I started to Klondike? Sure, William, you remember. You told me I was crazy. And I said my father’d have walloped the tar out of me with a single-tree if I’d spoke to him that way.”

“Aw, but that was only foolin’,” William temporized.

William was a grizzled man of forty-five, and his wife and grown sons stood in the group, curiously watching Grandfather Tarwater take off his coat and hand it to Mary to hold.

“William-come here,” he commanded imperatively.

No matter how reluctantly, William came.

“Just a taste, William, son, of what my father give me often enough,” Old Tarwater crooned, as he laid on his son’s back and shoulders with the single-tree. “Observe, I ain’t hitting you on the head. My father had a gosh-wollickin’ temper and never drew the line at heads when he went after tar.-Don’t jerk your elbows back that way! You’re likely to get a crack on one by accident. And just tell me one thing, William, son: is there nary notion in your head that I’m crazy?”

“No!” William yelped out in pain, as he danced about. “You ain’t crazy, father of course you ain’t crazy!”

“You said it,” Old Tarwater remarked sententiously, tossing the single-tree aside and starting to struggle into his coat.

“Now let’s all go in and eat.”

A Little Account

WITH SWITHIN HALL

I

With a last long scrutiny at the unbroken circle of the sea, David Grief swung out of the cross-trees and slowly and dejectedly descended the ratlines to the deck.

“Leu-Leu Atoll is sunk, Mr. Snow,” he said to the anxious-faced young mate. “If there is anything in navigation, the atoll is surely under the sea, for we’ve sailed clear over it twice — or the spot where it ought to be. It’s either that or the chronometer’s gone wrong, or I’ve forgotten my navigation.”

“It must be the chronometer, sir,” the mate reassured his owner. “You know I made separate sights and worked them up, and that they agreed with yours.”

“Yes,” Grief muttered, nodding glumly, “and where your Summer lines crossed, and mine, too, was the dead centre of Leu-Leu Atoll. It must be the chronometer — slipped a cog or something.”

He made a short pace to the rail and back, and cast a troubled eye at the Uncle Toby’s wake. The schooner, with a fairly strong breeze on her quarter, was logging nine or ten knots.

“Better bring her up on the wind, Mr. Snow. Put her under easy sail and let her work to windward on two-hour legs. It’s thickening up, and I don’t imagine we can get a star observation to-night; so we’ll just hold our weather position, get a latitude sight to-morrow, and run Leu-Leu down on her own latitude. That’s the way all the old navigators did.”

Broad of beam, heavily sparred, with high freeboard and bluff, Dutchy bow, the Uncle Toby was the slowest, tubbiest, safest, and most fool-proof schooner David Grief possessed. Her run was in the Banks and Santa Cruz groups and to the northwest among the several isolated atolls where his native traders collected copra, hawksbill turtle, and an occasional ton of pearl shell. Finding the skipper down with a particularly bad stroke of fever, Grief had relieved him and taken the Uncle Toby on her semi-annual run to the atolls. He had elected to make his first call at Leu-Leu, which lay farthest, and now found himself lost at sea with a chronometer that played tricks.

II

No stars showed that night, nor was the sun visible next day. A stuffy, sticky calm obtained, broken by big wind-squalls and heavy downpours. From fear of working too far to windward, the Uncle Toby was hove to, and four days and nights of cloud-hidden sky followed. Never did the sun appear, and on the several occasions that stars broke through they were too dim and fleeting for identification. By this time it was patent

to the veriest tyro that the elements were preparing to break loose. Grief, coming on deck from consulting the barometer, which steadfastly remained at 29.90, encountered Jackie-Jackie, whose face was as brooding and troublous as the sky and air. Jackie-Jackie, a Tongan sailor of experience, served as a sort of bosun and semi-second mate over the mixed Kanaka crew.

“Big weather he come, I think,” he said. “I see him just the same before maybe five, six times.”

Grief nodded. “Hurricane weather, all right, Jackie-Jackie. Pretty soon barometer go down—bottom fall out.”

“Sure,” the Tongan concurred. “He goin’ to blow like hell.”

Ten minutes later Snow came on deck.

“She’s started,” he said; “29.85, going down and pumping at the same time. It’s stinking hot—don’t you notice it?” He brushed his forehead with his hands. “It’s sickening. I could lose my breakfast without trying.”

Jackie-Jackie grinned. “Just the same me. Everything inside walk about. Always this way before big blow. But Uncle Toby all right. He go through anything.”

“Better rig that storm-trysail on the main, and a storm-jib,” Grief said to the mate. “And put all the reefs into the working canvas before you furl down. No telling what we may need. Put on double gaskets while you’re about it.”

In another hour, the sultry oppressiveness steadily increasing and the stark calm still continuing, the barometer had fallen to 29.70. The mate, being young, lacked the patience of waiting for the portentous. He ceased his restless pacing, and waved his arms.

“If she’s going to come let her come!” he cried. “There’s no use shilly-shallying this way! Whatever the worst is, let us know it and have it! A pretty pickle—lost with a crazy chronometer and a hurricane that won’t blow!”

The cloud-mussed sky turned to a vague copper colour, and seemed to glow as the inside of a huge heated caldron. Nobody remained below. The native sailors formed in anxious groups amidships and for’ard, where they talked in low voices and gazed apprehensively at the ominous sky and the equally ominous sea that breathed in long, low, oily undulations.

“Looks like petroleum mixed with castor oil,” the mate grumbled, as he spat his disgust overside. “My mother used to dose me with messes like that when I was a kid. Lord, she’s getting black!”

The lurid coppery glow had vanished, and the sky thickened and lowered until the darkness was as that of a late twilight. David Grief, who well knew the hurricane rules, nevertheless reread the “Laws of Storms,” screwing his eyes in the faint light in order to see the print. There was nothing to be done save wait for the wind, so that he might know how he lay in relation to the fast-flying and deadly centre that from somewhere was approaching out of the gloom.

It was three in the afternoon, and the glass had sunk to 29:45, when the wind came. They could see it on the water, darkening the face of the sea, crisping tiny whitecaps

as it rushed along. It was merely a stiff breeze, and the Uncle Toby, filling away under her storm canvas till the wind was abeam, slogged along at a four-knot gait.

“No weight to that,” Snow sneered. “And after such grand preparation!”

“Pickaninny wind,” Jackie-Jackie agreed. “He grow big man pretty quick, you see.”

Grief ordered the foresail put on, retaining the reefs, and the Uncle Toby mended her pace in the rising breeze. The wind quickly grew to man’s size, but did not stop there. It merely blew hard, and harder, and kept on blowing harder, advertising each increase by lulls followed by fierce, freshening gusts. Ever it grew, until the Uncle Toby’s rail was more often pressed under than not, while her waist boiled with foaming water which the scuppers could not carry off. Grief studied the barometer, still steadily falling.

“The centre is to the southward,” he told Snow, “and we’re running across its path and into it. Now we’ll turn about and run the other way. That ought to bring the glass up. Take in the foresail—it’s more than she can carry already—and stand by to wear her around.”

The maneuver was accomplished, and through the gloom that was almost that of the first darkness of evening the Uncle Toby turned and raced madly north across the face of the storm.

“It’s nip and tuck,” Grief confided to the mate a couple of hours later. “The storm’s swinging a big curve—there’s no calculating that curve—and we may win across or the centre may catch us. Thank the Lord, the glass is holding its own. It all depends on how big the curve is. The sea’s too big for us to keep on. Heave her to! She’ll keep working along out anyway.”

“I thought I knew what wind was,” Snow shouted in his owner’s ear next morning. “This isn’t wind. It’s something unthinkable. It’s impossible. It must reach ninety or a hundred miles an hour in the gusts. That don’t mean anything. How could I ever tell it to anybody? I couldn’t. And look at that sea! I’ve run my Easting down, but I never saw anything like that.”

Day had come, and the sun should have been up an hour, yet the best it could produce was a sombre semi-twilight. The ocean was a stately procession of moving mountains. A third of a mile across yawned the valleys between the great waves. Their long slopes, shielded somewhat from the full fury of the wind, were broken by systems of smaller whitecapping waves, but from the high crests of the big waves themselves the wind tore the whitecaps in the forming. This spume drove masthead high, and higher, horizontally, above the surface of the sea.

“We’re through the worst,” was Grief’s judgment. “The glass is coming along all the time. The sea will get bigger as the wind eases down. I’m going to turn in. Watch for shifts in the wind. They’ll be sure to come. Call me at eight bells.”

By mid-afternoon, in a huge sea, with the wind after its last shift no more than a stiff breeze, the Tongan bosun sighted a schooner bottom up. The Uncle Toby’s drift took them across the bow and they could not make out the name; but before night they picked up with a small, round-bottom, double-ender boat, swamped but with

white lettering visible on its bow. Through the binoculars, Gray made out: Emily L No. 3.

“A sealing schooner,” Grief said. “But what a sealer’s doing in these waters is beyond me.”

“Treasure-hunters, maybe?” Snow speculated. “The Sophie Sutherland and the Herman were sealers, you remember, chartered out of San Francisco by the chaps with the maps who can always go right to the spot until they get there and don’t.”

III

After a giddy night of grand and lofty tumbling, in which, over a big and dying sea, without a breath of wind to steady her, the Uncle Toby rolled every person on board sick of soul, a light breeze sprang up and the reefs were shaken out. By midday, on a smooth ocean floor, the clouds thinned and cleared and sights of the sun were obtained. Two degrees and fifteen minutes south, the observation gave them. With a broken chronometer longitude was out of the question.

“We’re anywhere within five hundred and a thousand miles along that latitude line,” Grief remarked, as he and the mate bent over the chart.

“Leu-Leu is to the south’ard somewhere, and this section of ocean is all blank. There is neither an island nor a reef by which we can regulate the chronometer. The only thing to do—“

“Land ho, skipper!” the Tongan called down the companionway.

Grief took a quick glance at the empty blank of the chart, whistled his surprise, and sank back feebly in a chair.

“It gets me,” he said. “There can’t be land around here. We never drifted or ran like that. The whole voyage has been crazy. Will you kindly go up, Mr. Snow, and see what’s ailing Jackie.”

“It’s land all right,” the mate called down a minute afterward. “You can see it from the deck—tops of cocoanuts—an atoll of some sort. Maybe it’s Leu-Leu after all.”

Grief shook his head positively as he gazed at the fringe of palms, only the tops visible, apparently rising out of the sea.

“Haul up on the wind, Mr. Snow, close-and-by, and we’ll take a look. We can just reach past to the south, and if it spreads off in that direction we’ll hit the southwest corner.”

Very near must palms be to be seen from the low deck of a schooner, and, slowly as the Uncle Toby sailed, she quickly raised the low land above the sea, while more palms increased the definition of the atoll circle.

“She’s a beauty,” the mate remarked. “A perfect circle... Looks as if it might be eight or nine miles across... Wonder if there’s an entrance to the lagoon... Who knows? Maybe it’s a brand new find.”

They coasted up the west side of the atoll, making short tacks in to the surf-pounded coral rock and out again. From the masthead, across the palm-fringe, a Kanaka announced the lagoon and a small island in the middle.

“I know what you’re thinking,” Grief said to his mate.

Snow, who had been muttering and shaking his head, looked up with quick and challenging incredulity.

“You’re thinking the entrance will be on the northwest.” Grief went on, as if reciting.

“Two cable lengths wide, marked on the north by three separated cocoanuts, and on the south by pandanus trees. Eight miles in diameter, a perfect circle, with an island in the dead centre.”

“I was thinking that,” Snow acknowledged.

“And there’s the entrance opening up just where it ought to be—“

“And the three palms,” Snow almost whispered, “and the pandanus trees. If there’s a windmill on the island, it’s it—Swithin Hall’s island. But it can’t be. Everybody’s been looking for it for the last ten years.”

“Hall played you a dirty trick once, didn’t he?” Grief queried.

Snow nodded. “That’s why I’m working for you. He broke me flat. It was downright robbery. I bought the wreck of the Cascade, down in Sydney, out of a first instalment of a legacy from home.”

“She went on Christmas Island, didn’t she?”

“Yes, full tilt, high and dry, in the night. They saved the passengers and mails. Then I bought a little island schooner, which took the rest of my money, and I had to wait the final payment by the executors to fit her out. What did Swithin Hall do—he was at Honolulu at the time—but make a straightaway run for Christmas Island. Neither right nor title did he have. When I got there, the hull and engines were all that was left of the Cascade. She had had a fair shipment of silk on board, too. And it wasn’t even damaged. I got it afterward pretty straight from his supercargo. He cleared something like sixty thousand dollars.”

Snow shrugged his shoulders and gazed bleakly at the smooth surface of the lagoon, where tiny wavelets danced in the afternoon sun.

“The wreck was mine. I bought her at public auction. I’d gambled big, and I’d lost. When I got back to Sydney, the crew, and some of the tradesmen who’d extended me credit, libelled the schooner. I pawned my watch and sextant, and shovelled coal one spell, and finally got a billet in the New Hebrides on a screw of eight pounds a month. Then I tried my luck as independent trader, went broke, took a mate’s billet on a recruiter down to Tanna and over to Fiji, got a job as overseer on a German plantation back of Apia, and finally settled down on the Uncle Toby.”

“Have you ever met Swithin Hall?”

Snow shook his head.

“Well, you’re likely to meet him now. There’s the windmill.”

In the centre of the lagoon, as they emerged from the passage, they opened a small, densely wooded island, among the trees of which a large Dutch windmill showed plainly.

“Nobody at home from the looks of it,” Grief said, “or you might have a chance to collect.”

The mate’s face set vindictively, and his fists clenched.

"Can't touch him legally. He's got too much money now. But I can take sixty thousand dollars' worth out of his hide. I hope he is at home."

"Then I hope he is, too," Grief said, with an appreciative smile. "You got the description of his island from Bau-Oti, I suppose?"

"Yes, as pretty well everybody else has. The trouble is that Bau-Oti can't give latitude or longitude. Says they sailed a long way from the Gilberts—that's all he knows. I wonder what became of him."

"I saw him a year ago on the beach at Tahiti. Said he was thinking about shipping for a cruise through the Paumotus. Well, here we are, getting close in. Heave the lead, Jackie-Jackie. Stand by to let go, Mr. Snow. According to Bau-Oti, anchorage three hundred yards off the west shore in nine fathoms, coral patches to the southeast. There are the patches. What do you get, Jackie?"

"Nine fathom."

"Let go, Mr. Snow."

The Uncle Toby swung to her chain, head-sails ran down, and the Kanaka crew sprang to fore and main-halyards and sheets.

IV

The whaleboat laid alongside the small, coral-stone landing-pier, and David Grief and his mate stepped ashore.

"You'd think the place deserted," Grief said, as they walked up a sanded path to the bungalow. "But I smell a smell that I've often smelled. Something doing, or my nose is a liar. The lagoon is carpeted with shell. They're rotting the meat out not a thousand miles away. Get that whiff?"

Like no bungalow in the tropics was this bungalow of Swithin Hall. Of mission architecture, when they had entered through the unlatched screen door they found decoration and furniture of the same mission style. The floor of the big living-room was covered with the finest Samoan mats. There were couches, window seats, cozy corners, and a billiard table. A sewing table, and a sewing-basket, spilling over with sheer linen in the French embroidery of which stuck a needle, tokened a woman's presence. By screen and veranda the blinding sunshine was subdued to a cool, dim radiance. The sheen of pearl push-buttons caught Grief's eye.

"Storage batteries, by George, run by the windmill!" he exclaimed as he pressed the buttons. "And concealed lighting!"

Hidden bowls glowed, and the room was filled with diffused golden light. Many shelves of books lined the walls. Grief fell to running over their titles. A fairly well-read man himself, for a sea-adventurer, he glimpsed a wide-ness of range and catholicity of taste that were beyond him. Old friends he met, and others that he had heard of but never read. There were complete sets of Tolstoy, Turgenieff, and Gorky; of Cooper and Mark Twain; of Hugo, and Zola, and Sue; and of Flaubert, De Maupassant, and Paul de Koch. He glanced curiously at the pages of Metchnikoff, Weininger, and Schopenhauer, and wonderingly at those of Ellis, Lydston, Krafft-Ebbing, and Forel.

Woodruff's "Expansion of Races" was in his hands when Snow returned from further exploration of the house.

"Enamelled bath-tub, separate room for a shower, and a sitz-bath!" he exclaimed. "Fitted up for a king! And I reckon some of my money went to pay for it. The place must be occupied. I found fresh-opened butter and milk tins in the pantry, and fresh turtle-meat hanging up. I'm going to see what else I can find."

Grief, too, departed, through a door that led out of the opposite end of the living-room. He found himself in a self-evident woman's bedroom. Across it, he peered through a wire-mesh door into a screened and darkened sleeping porch. On a couch lay a woman asleep. In the soft light she seemed remarkably beautiful in a dark Spanish way. By her side, opened and face downward, a novel lay on a chair. From the colour in her cheeks, Grief concluded that she had not been long in the tropics. After the one glimpse he stole softly back, in time to see Snow entering the living-room through the other door. By the naked arm he was clutching an age-wrinkled black who grinned in fear and made signs of dumbness.

"I found him snoozing in a little kennel out back," the mate said. "He's the cook, I suppose. Can't get a word out of him. What did you find?"

"A sleeping princess. S-sh! There's somebody now."

"If it's Hall," Snow muttered, clenching his fist.

Grief shook his head. "No rough-house. There's a woman here. And if it is Hall, before we go I'll maneuver a chance for you to get action."

The door opened, and a large, heavily built man entered. In his belt was a heavy, long-barrelled Colt's. One quick, anxious look he gave them, then his face wreathed in a genial smile and his hand was extended.

"Welcome, strangers. But if you don't mind my asking, how, by all that's sacred, did you ever manage to find my island?"

"Because we were out of our course," Grief answered, shaking hands.

"My name's Hall, Swithin Hall," the other said, turning to shake Snow's hand. "And I don't mind telling you that you're the first visitors I've ever had."

"And this is your secret island that's had all the beaches talking for years?" Grief answered. "Well, I know the formula now for finding it."

"How's that?" Hall asked quickly.

"Smash your chronometer, get mixed up with a hurricane, and then keep your eyes open for cocoanuts rising out of the sea."

"And what is your name?" Hall asked, after he had laughed perfunctorily.

"Anstey-Phil Anstey," Grief answered promptly. "Bound on the Uncle Toby from the Gilberts to New Guinea, and trying to find my longitude. This is my mate, Mr. Gray, a better navigator than I, but who has lost his goat just the same to the chronometer."

Grief did not know his reason for lying, but he had felt the prompting and succumbed to it. He vaguely divined that something was wrong, but could not place his finger on it. Swithin Hall was a fat, round-faced man, with a laughing lip and laughter-wrinkles in the corners of his eyes. But Grief, in his early youth, had learned how

deceptive this type could prove, as well as the deceptiveness of blue eyes that screened the surface with fun and hid what went on behind.

“What are you doing with my cook?—lost yours and trying to shanghai him?” Hall was saying. “You’d better let him go, if you’re going to have any supper. My wife’s here, and she’ll be glad to meet you—dinner, she calls it, and calls me down for misnaming it, but I’m old fashioned. My folks always ate dinner in the middle of the day. Can’t get over early training. Don’t you want to wash up? I do. Look at me. I’ve been working like a dog—out with the diving crew—shell, you know. But of course you smelt it.”

V

Snow pleaded charge of the schooner, and went on board. In addition to his repugnance at breaking salt with the man who had robbed him, it was necessary for him to impress the in-violableness of Grief’s lies on the Kanaka crew. By eleven o’clock Grief came on board, to find his mate waiting up for him.

“There’s something doing on Swithin Hall’s island,” Grief said, shaking his head. “I can’t make out what it is, but I get the feel of it. What does Swithin Hall look like?”

Snow shook his head.

“That man ashore there never bought the books on the shelves,” Grief declared with conviction. “Nor did he ever go in for concealed lighting. He’s got a surface flow of suavity, but he’s rough as a hoof-rasp underneath. He’s an oily bluff. And the bunch he’s got with him—Watson and Gorman their names are; they came in after you left—real sea-dogs, middle-aged, marred and battered, tough as rusty wrought-iron nails and twice as dangerous; real ugly customers, with guns in their belts, who don’t strike me as just the right sort to be on such comradely terms with Swithin Hall. And the woman! She’s a lady. I mean it. She knows a whole lot of South America, and of China, too. I’m sure she’s Spanish, though her English is natural. She’s travelled. We talked bull-fights. She’s seen them in Guayaquil, in Mexico, in Seville. She knows a lot about sealskins.

“Now here’s what bothers me. She knows music. I asked her if she played. And he’s fixed that place up like a palace. That being so, why hasn’t he a piano for her? Another thing: she’s quick and lively and he watches her whenever she talks. He’s on pins and needles, and continually breaking in and leading the conversation. Say, did you ever hear that Swithin Hall was married?”

“Bless me, I don’t know,” the mate replied. “Never entered my head to think about it.”

“He introduced her as Mrs. Hall. And Watson and Gorman call him Hall. They’re a precious pair, those two men. I don’t understand it at all.”

“What are you going to do about it?” Snow asked.

“Oh, hang around a while. There are some books ashore there I want to read. Suppose you send that topmast down in the morning and generally overhaul. We’ve been through a hurricane, you know. Set up the rigging while you’re about it. Get things pretty well adrift, and take your time.”

VI

The next day Grief's suspicions found further food. Ashore early, he strolled across the little island to the barracks occupied by the divers.

They were just boarding the boats when he arrived, and it struck him that for Kanakas they behaved more like chain-gang prisoners. The three white men were there, and Grief noted that each carried a rifle. Hall greeted him jovially enough, but Gorman and Watson scowled as they grunted curt good mornings.

A moment afterward one of the Kanakas, as he bent to place his oar, favoured Grief with a slow, deliberate wink. The man's face was familiar, one of the thousands of native sailors and divers he had encountered drifting about in the island trade.

"Don't tell them who I am," Grief said, in Tahitian. "Did you ever sail for me?"

The man's head nodded and his mouth opened, but before he could speak he was suppressed by a savage "Shut up!" from Watson, who was already in the sternsheets.

"I beg pardon," Grief said. "I ought to have known better."

"That's all right," Hall interposed. "The trouble is they're too much talk and not enough work. Have to be severe with them, or they wouldn't get enough shell to pay their grub."

Grief nodded sympathetically. "I know them. Got a crew of them myself—the lazy swine. Got to drive them like niggers to get a half-day's work out of them."

"What was you sayin' to him?" Gorman blurted in bluntly.

"I was asking how the shell was, and how deep they were diving."

"Thick," Hall took over the answering. "We're working now in about ten fathom. It's right out there, not a hundred yards off. Want to come along?"

Half the day Grief spent with the boats, and had lunch in the bungalow. In the afternoon he loafed, taking a siesta in the big living-room, reading some, and talking for half an hour with Mrs. Hall. After dinner, he played billiards with her husband. It chanced that Grief had never before encountered Swithin Hall, yet the latter's fame as an expert at billiards was the talk of the beaches from Levuka to Honolulu. But the man Grief played with this night proved most indifferent at the game. His wife showed herself far cleverer with the cue.

When he went on board the Uncle Toby Grief routed Jackie-Jackie out of bed. He described the location of the barracks, and told the Tongan to swim softly around and have talk with the Kanakas. In two hours Jackie-Jackie was back. He shook his head as he stood dripping before Grief.

"Very funny t'ing," he reported. "One white man stop all the time. He has big rifle. He lay in water and watch. Maybe twelve o'clock, other white man come and take rifle. First white man go to bed. Other man stop now with rifle. No good. Me cannot talk with Kanakas. Me come back."

"By George!" Grief said to Snow, after the Tongan had gone back to his bunk. "I smell something more than shell. Those three men are standing watches over their Kanakas. That man's no more Swithin Hall than I am."

Snow whistled from the impact of a new idea.

"I've got it!" he cried.

“And I’ll name it,” Grief retorted, “It’s in your mind that the Emily L. was their schooner?”

“Just that. They’re raising and rotting the shell, while she’s gone for more divers, or provisions, or both.”

“And I agree with you.” Grief glanced at the cabin clock and evinced signs of bed-going. “He’s a sailor. The three of them are. But they’re not island men. They’re new in these waters.”

Again Snow whistled.

“And the Emily L. is lost with all hands,” he said. “We know that. They’re marooned here till Swithin Hall comes. Then he’ll catch them with all the shell.”

“Or they’ll take possession of his schooner.”

“Hope they do!” Snow muttered vindictively. “Somebody ought to rob him. Wish I was in their boots. I’d balance off that sixty thousand.”

VII

A week passed, during which time the Uncle Toby was ready for sea, while Grief managed to allay any suspicion of him by the shore crowd.

Even Gorman and Watson accepted him at his self-description. Throughout the week Grief begged and badgered them for the longitude of the island.

“You wouldn’t have me leave here lost,” he finally urged. “I can’t get a line on my chronometer without your longitude.”

Hall laughingly refused.

“You’re too good a navigator, Mr. Anstey, not to fetch New Guinea or some other high land.”

“And you’re too good a navigator, Mr. Hall,” Grief replied, “not to know that I can fetch your island any time by running down its latitude.”

On the last evening, ashore, as usual, to dinner, Grief got his first view of the pearls they had collected. Mrs. Hall, waxing enthusiastic, had asked her husband to bring forth the “pretties,” and had spent half an hour showing them to Grief. His delight in them was genuine, as well as was his surprise that they had made so rich a haul.

“The lagoon is virgin,” Hall explained. “You saw yourself that most of the shell is large and old. But it’s funny that we got most of the valuable pearls in one small patch in the course of a week. It was a little treasure house. Every oyster seemed filled—seed pearls by the quart, of course, but the perfect ones, most of that bunch there, came out of the small patch.”

Grief ran his eye over them and knew their value ranged from one hundred to a thousand dollars each, while the several selected large ones went far beyond.

“Oh, the pretties! the pretties!” Mrs. Hall cried, bending forward suddenly and kissing them.

A few minutes later she arose to say good-night.

“It’s good-bye,” Grief said, as he took her hand. “We sail at daylight.”

“So suddenly!” she cried, while Grief could not help seeing the quick light of satisfaction in her husband’s eyes.

“Yes,” Grief continued. “All the repairs are finished. I can’t get the longitude of your island out of your husband, though I’m still in hopes he’ll relent.”

Hall laughed and shook his head, and, as his wife left the room, proposed a last farewell nightcap. They sat over it, smoking and talking.

“What do you estimate they’re worth?” Grief asked, indicating the spread of pearls on the table. “I mean what the pearl-buyers would give you in open market?”

“Oh, seventy-five or eighty thousand,” Hall said carelessly.

“I’m afraid you’re underestimating. I know pearls a bit. Take that biggest one. It’s perfect. Not a cent less than five thousand dollars. Some multimillionaire will pay double that some day, when the dealers have taken their whack. And never minding the seed pearls, you’ve got quarts of baroques there. And baroques are coming into fashion. They’re picking up and doubling on themselves every year.”

Hall gave the trove of pearls a closer and longer scrutiny, estimating the different parcels and adding the sum aloud.

“You’re right,” he admitted. “They’re worth a hundred thousand right now.”

“And at what do you figure your working expenses?” Grief went on. “Your time, and your two men’s, and the divers’?”

“Five thousand would cover it.”

“Then they stand to net you ninety-five thousand?”

“Something like that. But why so curious?”

“Why, I was just trying—” Grief paused and drained his glass. “Just trying to reach some sort of an equitable arrangement. Suppose I should give you and your people a passage to Sydney and the five thousand dollars—or, better, seven thousand five hundred. You’ve worked hard.”

Without commotion or muscular movement the other man became alert and tense. His round-faced geniality went out like the flame of a snuffed candle. No laughter clouded the surface of the eyes, and in their depths showed the hard, dangerous soul of the man. He spoke in a low, deliberate voice.

“Now just what in hell do you mean by that?”

Grief casually relighted his cigar.

“I don’t know just how to begin,” he said. “The situation is—er—is embarrassing for you. You see, I’m trying to be fair. As I say, you’ve worked hard. I don’t want to confiscate the pearls. I want to pay you for your time and trouble, and expense.”

Conviction, instantaneous and absolute, froze on the other’s face.

“And I thought you were in Europe,” he muttered. Hope flickered for a moment. “Look here, you’re joking me. How do I know you’re Swithin Hall?”

Grief shrugged his shoulders. “Such a joke would be in poor taste, after your hospitality. And it is equally in poor taste to have two Swithin Halls on the island.”

“Since you’re Swithin Hall, then who the deuce am I? Do you know that, too?”

“No,” Grief answered airily. “But I’d like to know.”

“Well, it’s none of your business.”

"I grant it. Your identity is beside the point. Besides, I know your schooner, and I can find out who you are from that."

"What's her name?"

"The Emily L."

"Correct. I'm Captain Raffy, owner and master."

"The seal-poacher? I've heard of you. What under the sun brought you down here on my preserves?"

"Needed the money. The seal herds are about finished."

"And the out-of-the-way places of the world are better policed, eh?"

"Pretty close to it. And now about this present scrape, Mr. Hall. I can put up a nasty fight. What are you going to do about it?"

"What I said. Even better. What's the Emily L. worth?"

"She's seen her day. Not above ten thousand, which would be robbery. Every time she's in a rough sea I'm afraid she'll jump her ballast through her planking."

"She has jumped it, Captain Raffy. I sighted her bottom-up after the blow. Suppose we say she was worth seven thousand five hundred. I'll pay over to you fifteen thousand and give you a passage. Don't move your hands from your lap." Grief stood up, went over to him, and took his revolver. "Just a necessary precaution, Captain. Now you'll go on board with me. I'll break the news to Mrs. Raffy afterward, and fetch her out to join you."

"You're behaving handsomely, Mr. Hall, I must say," Captain Raffy volunteered, as the whaleboat came alongside the Uncle Toby. "But watch out for Gorman and Watson. They're ugly customers. And, by the way, I don't like to mention it, but you've seen my wife. I've given her four or five pearls. Watson and Gorman were willing."

"Say no more, Captain. Say no more. They shall remain hers. Is that you, Mr. Snow? Here's a friend I want you to take charge of—Captain Raffy. I'm going ashore for his wife."

VIII

David Grief sat writing at the library table in the bungalow living-room. Outside, the first pale of dawn was showing. He had had a busy night. Mrs. Raffy had taken two hysterical hours to pack her and Captain Raffy's possessions. Gorman had been caught asleep, but Watson, standing guard over the divers, had shown fight. Matters did not reach the shooting stage, but it was only after it had been demonstrated to him that the game was up that he consented to join his companions on board. For temporary convenience, he and Gorman were shackled in the mate's room, Mrs. Raffy was confined in Grief's, and Captain Raffy made fast to the cabin table.

Grief finished the document and read over what he had written:

To Swithin Hall,

for pearls taken from his lagoon (estimated) \$100,000

To Herbert Snow, paid in full for salvage from
steamship Cascade in pearls (estimated) \$60,000

To Captain Raffy, salary and expenses for

collecting pearls 7,500

To Captain Raffy, reimbursement for schooner Emily L., lost in hurricane 7,500

To Mrs. Raffy, for good will, five fair pearls (estimated) 1,100

To passage to Sydney, four persons, at \$120. 480

To white lead for painting Swithin Hall's two whaleboats 9

To Swithin Hall, balance in pearls (estimated) which are to be found in drawer of library table 23,411

\$100,000–\$100,000

Grief signed and dated, paused, and added at the bottom:

P. S.—Still owing to Swithin Hall three books, borrowed from library: Hudson's "Law of Psychic Phenomena," Zola's "Paris," and Mahan's "Problem of Asia." These books, or full value, can be collected of said David Grieffs Sydney office.

He shut off the electric light, picked up the bundle of books, carefully latched the front door, and went down to the waiting whaleboat.

The Little Man

“I WISHT you wasn’t so set in your ways,” Shorty demurred. “I’m sure scairt of that glacier. No man ought to tackle it by his lonely.”

Smoke laughed cheerfully, and ran his eye up the glistening face of the tiny glacier that filled the head of the valley. “Here it is August already, and the days have been getting shorter for two months,” he epitomized the situation. “You know quartz, and I don’t. But I can bring up the grub, while you keep after that mother lode. So-long. I’ll be back by to-morrow evening.”

He turned and started.

“I got a hunch something’s goin’ to happen,” Shorty pleaded after him.

But Smoke’s reply was a bantering laugh. He held on down the little valley, occasionally wiping the sweat from his forehead, the while his feet crushed through ripe mountain raspberries and delicate ferns that grew beside patches of sun-sheltered ice.

In the early spring he and Shorty had come up the Stewart River and launched out into the amazing chaos of the region where Surprise Lake lay. And all of the spring and half of the summer had been consumed in futile wanderings, when, on the verge of turning back, they caught their first glimpse of the baffling, gold-bottomed sheet of water which had lured and fooled a generation of miners. Making their camp in the old cabin which Smoke had discovered on his previous visit, they had learned three things: first, heavy nugget gold was carpeted thickly on the lake bottom; next, the gold could be dived for in the shallower portions, but the temperature of the water was man-killing; and, finally, the draining of the lake was too stupendous a task for two men in the shorter half of a short summer. Undeterred, reasoning from the coarseness of the gold that it had not traveled far, they had set out in search of the mother lode. They had crossed the big glacier that frowned on the southern rim and devoted themselves to the puzzling maze of small valleys and canyons beyond, which, by most unmountainlike methods, drained, or had at one time drained, into the lake.

The valley Smoke was descending gradually widened after the fashion of any normal valley; but, at the lower end, it pinched narrowly between high precipitous walls and abruptly stopped in a cross wall. At the base of this, in a welter of broken rock, the streamlet disappeared, evidently finding its way out underground. Climbing the cross wall, from the top Smoke saw the lake beneath him. Unlike any mountain lake he had ever seen, it was not blue. Instead, its intense peacock-green tokened its shallowness. It was this shallowness that made its draining feasible. All about arose jumbled mountains, with ice-scarred peaks and crags, grotesquely shaped and grouped. All was topsyturvy and unsystematic—a Dore nightmare. So fantastic and impossible was it that it affected

Smoke as more like a cosmic landscape-joke than a rational portion of earth's surface. There were many glaciers in the canyons, most of them tiny, and, as he looked, one of the larger ones, on the north shore, calved amid thunders and splashings. Across the lake, seemingly not more than half a mile, but, as he well knew, five miles away, he could see the bunch of spruce-trees and the cabin. He looked again to make sure, and saw smoke clearly rising from the chimney. Somebody else had surprised themselves into finding Surprise Lake, was his conclusion, as he turned to climb the southern wall.

From the top of this he came down into a little valley, flower-floored and lazy with the hum of bees, that behaved quite as a reasonable valley should, in so far as it made legitimate entry on the lake. What was wrong with it was its length—scarcely a hundred yards; its head a straight up-and-down cliff of a thousand feet, over which a stream pitched itself in descending veils of mist.

And here he encountered more smoke, floating lazily upward in the warm sunshine beyond an outjut of rock. As he came around the corner he heard a light, metallic tap-tapping and a merry whistling that kept the beat. Then he saw the man, an upturned shoe between his knees, into the sole of which he was driving hob-spikes.

"Hello!" was the stranger's greeting, and Smoke's heart went out to the man in ready liking. "Just in time for a snack. There's coffee in the pot, a couple of cold flapjacks, and some jerky."

"I'll go you if I lose," was Smoke's acceptance, as he sat down. "I've been rather skimped on the last several meals, but there's oodles of grub over in the cabin."

"Across the lake? That's what I was heading for."

"Seems Surprise Lake is becoming populous," Smoke complained, emptying the coffee-pot.

"Go on, you're joking, aren't you?" the man said, astonishment painted on his face.

Smoke laughed. "That's the way it takes everybody. You see those high ledges across there to the northwest? There's where I first saw it. No warning. Just suddenly caught the view of the whole lake from there. I'd given up looking for it, too."

"Same here," the other agreed. "I'd headed back and was expecting to fetch the Stewart last night, when out I popped in sight of the lake. If that's it, where's the Stewart? And where have I been all the time? And how did you come here? And what's your name?"

"Bellew. Kit Bellew."

"Oh! I know you." The man's eyes and face were bright with a joyous smile, and his hand flashed eagerly out to Smoke's. "I've heard all about you."

"Been reading police-court news, I see," Smoke sparred modestly.

"Nope." The man laughed and shook his head. "Merely recent Klondike history. I might have recognized you if you'd been shaved. I watched you putting it all over the gambling crowd when you were bucking roulette in the Elkhorn. My name's Carson—Andy Carson; and I can't begin to tell you how glad I am to meet up with you."

He was a slender man, wiry with health, with quick black eyes and a magnetism of camaraderie.

“And this is Surprise Lake?” he murmured incredulously.

“It certainly is.”

“And its bottom’s buttered with gold?”

“Sure. There’s some of the churning.” Smoke dipped in his overalls pocket and brought forth half a dozen nuggets. “That’s the stuff. All you have to do is go down to bottom, blind if you want to, and pick up a handful. Then you’ve got to run half a mile to get up your circulation.”

“Well, gosh-dash my dingbats, if you haven’t beaten me to it,” Carson swore whimsically, but his disappointment was patent. “An’ I thought I’d scooped the whole ca-boodle. Anyway, I’ve had the fun of getting here.”

“Fun!” Smoke cried. “Why, if we can ever get our hands on all that bottom, we’ll make Rockefeller look like thirty cents.”

“But it’s yours,” was Carson’s objection.

“Nothing to it, my friend. You’ve got to realize that no gold deposit like it has been discovered in all the history of mining. It will take you and me and my partner and all the friends we’ve got to lay our hands on it. All Bonanza and Eldorado, dumped together, wouldn’t be richer than half an acre down here. The problem is to drain the lake. It will take millions. And there’s only one thing I’m afraid of. There’s so much of it that if we fail to control the output it will bring about the demonetization of gold.”

“And you tell me—” Carson broke off, speechless and amazed.

“And glad to have you. It will take a year or two, with all the money we can raise, to drain the lake. It can be done. I’ve looked over the ground. But it will take every man in the country that’s willing to work for wages. We’ll need an army, and we need right now decent men in on the ground floor. Are you in?”

“Am I in? Don’t I look it? I feel so much like a millionaire that I’m real timid about crossing that big glacier. Couldn’t afford to break my neck now. Wish I had some more of those hob-spikes. I was just hammering the last in when you came along. How’s yours? Let’s see.”

Smoke held up his foot.

“Worn smooth as a skating-rink!” Carson cried. “You’ve certainly been hiking some. Wait a minute, and I’ll pull some of mine out for you.”

But Smoke refused to listen. “Besides,” he said, “I’ve got about forty feet of rope cached where we take the ice. My partner and I used it coming over. It will be a cinch.”

It was a hard, hot climb. The sun blazed dazzlingly on the ice-surface, and with streaming pores they panted from the exertion. There were places, criss-crossed by countless fissures and crevasses, where an hour of dangerous toil advanced them no more than a hundred yards. At two in the afternoon, beside a pool of water bedded in the ice, Smoke called a halt.

“Let’s tackle some of that jerky,” he said. “I’ve been on short allowance, and my knees are shaking. Besides, we’re across the worst. Three hundred yards will fetch us to the rocks, and it’s easy going, except for a couple of nasty fissures and one bad one

that heads us down toward the bulge. There's a weak ice-bridge there, but Shorty and I managed it."

Over the jerky, the two men got acquainted, and Andy Carson unbosomed himself of the story of his life. "I just knew I'd find Surprise Lake," he mumbled in the midst of mouthfuls. "I had to. I missed the French Hill Benches, the Big Skookum, and Monte Cristo, and then it was Surprise Lake or bust. And here I am. My wife knew I'd strike it. I've got faith enough, but hers knocks mine galleywest. She's a corker, a crackerjack-dead game, grit to her finger-ends, never-say-die, a fighter from the drop of the hat, the one woman for me, true blue and all the rest. Take a look at that."

He sprung open his watch, and on the inside cover Smoke saw the small, pasted photograph of a bright-haired woman, framed on either side by the laughing face of a child.

"Boys?" he queried.

"Boy and girl," Carson answered proudly. "He's a year and a half older." He sighed. "They might have been some grown, but we had to wait. You see, she was sick. Lungs. But she put up a fight. What'd we know about such stuff? I was clerking, railroad clerk, Chicago, when we got married. Her folks were tuberculous. Doctors didn't know much in those days. They said it was hereditary. All her family had it. Caught it from each other, only they never guessed it. Thought they were born with it. Fate. She and I lived with them the first couple of years. I wasn't afraid. No tuberculosis in my family. And I got it. That set me thinking. It was contagious. I caught it from breathing their air.

"We talked it over, she and I. Then I jumped the family doctor and consulted an up-to-date expert. He told me what I'd figured out for myself, and said Arizona was the place for us. We pulled up stakes and went down—no money, nothing. I got a job sheep-herding, and left her in town—a lung town. It was filled to spilling with lungers.

"Of course, living and sleeping in the clean open, I started right in to mend. I was away months at a time. Every time I came back, she was worse. She just couldn't pick up. But we were learning. I jerked her out of that town, and she went to sheep-herding with me. In four years, winter and summer, cold and heat, rain, snow, and frost, and all the rest, we never slept under a roof, and we were moving camp all the time. You ought to have seen the change—brown as berries, lean as Indians, tough as rawhide. When we figured we were cured, we pulled out for San Francisco. But we were too previous. By the second month we both had slight hemorrhages. We flew the coop back to Arizona and the sheep. Two years more of it. That fixed us. Perfect cure. All her family's dead. Wouldn't listen to us.

"Then we jumped cities for keeps. Knocked around on the Pacific coast and southern Oregon looked good to us. We settled in the Rogue River Valley—apples. There's a big future there, only nobody knows it. I got my land—on time, of course—for forty an acre. Ten years from now it'll be worth five hundred.

"We've done some almighty hustling. Takes money, and we hadn't a cent to start with, you know—had to build a house and barn, get horses and plows, and all the rest.

She taught school two years. Then the boy came. But we've got it. You ought to see those trees we planted—a hundred acres of them, almost mature now. But it's all been outgo, and the mortgage working overtime. That's why I'm here. She'd 'a' come along only for the kids and the trees. She's handlin' that end, and here I am, a gosh-danged expensive millionaire—in prospect.”

He looked happily across the sun-dazzle on the ice to the green water of the lake along the farther shore, took a final look at the photograph, and murmured:

“She's some woman, that. She's hung on. She just wouldn't die, though she was pretty close to skin and bone all wrapped around a bit of fire when she went out with the sheep. Oh, she's thin now. Never will be fat. But it's the prettiest thinness I ever saw, and when I get back, and the trees begin to bear, and the kids get going to school, she and I are going to do Paris. I don't think much of that burg, but she's just hankered for it all her life.”

“Well, here's the gold that will take you to Paris,” Smoke assured him. “All we've got to do is to get our hands on it.”

Carson nodded with glistening eyes. “Say—that farm of ours is the prettiest piece of orchard land on all the Pacific coast. Good climate, too. Our lungs will never get touched again there. Ex-lungers have to be almighty careful, you know. If you're thinking of settling, well, just take a peep in at our valley before you settle, that's all. And fishing! Say!—did you ever get a thirty-five-pound salmon on a six-ounce rod? Some fight, bo', some fight!”

“I'm lighter than you by forty pounds,” Carson said. “Let me go first.”

They stood on the edge of the crevasse. It was enormous and ancient, fully a hundred feet across, with sloping, age-eaten sides instead of sharp-angled rims. At this one place it was bridged by a huge mass of pressure-hardened snow that was itself half ice. Even the bottom of this mass they could not see, much less the bottom of the crevasse. Crumbling and melting, the bridge threatened imminent collapse. There were signs where recent portions had broken away, and even as they studied it a mass of half a ton dislodged and fell.

“Looks pretty bad,” Carson admitted with an ominous head-shake. “And it looks much worse than if I wasn't a millionaire.”

“But we've got to tackle it,” Smoke said. “We're almost across. We can't go back. We can't camp here on the ice all night. And there's no other way. Shorty and I explored for a mile up. It was in better shape, though, when we crossed.”

“It's one at a time, and me first.” Carson took the part coil of rope from Smoke's hand. “You'll have to cast off. I'll take the rope and the pick. Gimme your hand so I can slip down easy.”

Slowly and carefully he lowered himself the several feet to the bridge, where he stood, making final adjustments for the perilous traverse. On his back was his pack outfit. Around his neck, resting on his shoulders, he coiled the rope, one end of which was still fast to his waist.

"I'd give a mighty good part of my millions right now for a bridge-construction gang," he said, but his cheery, whimsical smile belied the words. Also, he added, "It's all right; I'm a cat."

The pick, and the long stick he used as an alpenstock, he balanced horizontally after the manner of a rope-walker. He thrust one foot forward tentatively, drew it back, and steeled himself with a visible, physical effort.

"I wish I was flat broke," he smiled up. "If ever I get out of being a millionaire this time, I'll never be one again. It's too uncomfortable."

"It's all right," Smoke encouraged. "I've been over it before. Better let me try it first."

"And you forty pounds to the worse," the little man flashed back. "I'll be all right in a minute. I'm all right now." And this time the nerving-up process was instantaneous. "Well, here goes for Rogue River and the apples," he said, as his foot went out, this time to rest carefully and lightly while the other foot was brought up and past. Very gently and circumspectly he continued on his way until two-thirds of the distance was covered. Here he stopped to examine a depression he must cross, at the bottom of which was a fresh crack. Smoke, watching, saw him glance to the side and down into the crevasse itself, and then begin a slight swaying.

"Keep your eyes up!" Smoke commanded sharply. "Now! Go on!"

The little man obeyed, nor faltered on the rest of the journey. The sun-eroded slope of the farther edge of the crevasse was slippery, but not steep, and he worked his way up to a narrow ledge, faced about, and sat down.

"Your turn," he called across. "But just keep a-coming and don't look down. That's what got my goat. Just keep a-coming, that's all. And get a move on. It's almighty rotten."

Balancing his own stick horizontally, Smoke essayed the passage. That the bridge was on its last legs was patent. He felt a jar under foot, a slight movement of the mass, and a heavier jar. This was followed by a single sharp crackle. Behind him he knew something was happening. If for no other reason, he knew it by the strained, tense face of Carson. From beneath, thin and faint, came the murmur of running water, and Smoke's eyes involuntarily wavered to a glimpse of the shimmering depths. He jerked them back to the way before him. Two-thirds over, he came to the depression. The sharp edges of the crack, but slightly touched by the sun, showed how recent it was. His foot was lifted to make the step across, when the crack began slowly widening, at the same time emitting numerous sharp snaps. He made the step quickly, increasing the stride of it, but the worn nails of his shoe skated on the farther slope of the depression. He fell on his face, and without pause slipped down and into the crack, his legs hanging clear, his chest supported by the stick which he had managed to twist crosswise as he fell.

His first sensation was the nausea caused by the sickening up-leap of his pulse; his first idea was of surprise that he had fallen no farther. Behind him was crackling and jar and movement to which the stick vibrated. From beneath, in the heart of the glacier,

came the soft and hollow thunder of the dislodged masses striking bottom. And still the bridge, broken from its farthest support and ruptured in the middle, held, though the portion he had crossed tilted downward at a pitch of twenty degrees. He could see Carson, perched on his ledge, his feet braced against the melting surface, swiftly recoiling the rope from his shoulders to his hand.

“Wait!” he cried. “Don’t move, or the whole shooting-match will come down.”

He calculated the distance with a quick glance, took the bandana from his neck and tied it to the rope, and increased the length by a second bandana from his pocket. The rope, manufactured from sled-lashings and short lengths of plaited rawhide knotted together, was both light and strong. The first cast was lucky as well as deft, and Smoke’s fingers clutched it. He evidenced a hand-over-hand intention of crawling out of the crack. But Carson, who had refastened the rope around his own waist, stopped him.

“Make it fast around yourself as well,” he ordered.

“If I go I’ll take you with me,” Smoke objected.

The little man became very peremptory.

“You shut up,” he ordered. “The sound of your voice is enough to start the whole thing going.”

“If I ever start going—“ Smoke began.

“Shut up! You ain’t going to ever start going. Now do what I say. That’s right—under the shoulders. Make it fast. Now! Start! Get a move on, but easy as you go. I’ll take in the slack. You just keep a-coming. That’s it. Easy. Easy.”

Smoke was still a dozen feet away when the final collapse of the bridge began. Without noise, but in a jerky way, it crumbled to an increasing tilt.

“Quick!” Carson called, coiling in hand-over-hand on the slack of the rope which Smoke’s rush gave him.

When the crash came, Smoke’s fingers were clawing into the hard face of the wall of the crevasse, while his body dragged back with the falling bridge. Carson, sitting up, feet wide apart and braced, was heaving on the rope. This effort swung Smoke in to the side wall, but it jerked Carson out of his niche. Like a cat, he faced about, clawing wildly for a hold on the ice and slipping down. Beneath him, with forty feet of taut rope between them, Smoke was clawing just as wildly; and ere the thunder from below announced the arrival of the bridge, both men had come to rest. Carson had achieved this first, and the several pounds of pull he was able to put on the rope had helped bring Smoke to a stop.

Each lay in a shallow niche, but Smoke’s was so shallow that, tense with the strain of flattening and sticking, nevertheless he would have slid on had it not been for the slight assistance he took from the rope. He was on the verge of a bulge and could not see beneath him. Several minutes passed, in which they took stock of the situation and made rapid strides in learning the art of sticking to wet and slippery ice. The little man was the first to speak.

“Gee!” he said; and, a minute later, “If you can dig in for a moment and slack on the rope, I can turn over. Try it.”

Smoke made the effort, then rested on the rope again. “I can do it,” he said. “Tell me when you’re ready. And be quick.”

“About three feet down is holding for my heels,” Carson said. “It won’t take a moment. Are you ready?”

“Go on.”

It was hard work to slide down a yard, turn over and sit up; but it was even harder for Smoke to remain flattened and maintain a position that from instant to instant made a greater call upon his muscles. As it was, he could feel the almost perceptible beginning of the slip when the rope tightened and he looked up into his companion’s face. Smoke noted the yellow pallor of sun-tan forsaken by the blood, and wondered what his own complexion was like. But when he saw Carson, with shaking fingers, fumble for his sheath-knife, he decided the end had come. The man was in a funk and was going to cut the rope.

“Don’t m-mind m-m-me,” the little man chattered. “I ain’t scared. It’s only my nerves, gosh-dang them. I’ll b-b-be all right in a minute.”

And Smoke watched him, doubled over, his shoulders between his knees, shivering and awkward, holding a slight tension on the rope with one hand while with the other he hacked and gouged holes for his heels in the ice.

“Carson,” he breathed up to him, “you’re some bear, some bear.”

The answering grin was ghastly and pathetic. “I never could stand height,” Carson confessed. “It always did get me. Do you mind if I stop a minute and clear my head? Then I’ll make those heel-holds deeper so I can heave you up.”

Smoke’s heart warmed. “Look here, Carson. The thing for you to do is to cut the rope. You can never get me up, and there’s no use both of us being lost. You can make it out with your knife.”

“You shut up!” was the hurt retort. “Who’s running this?”

And Smoke could not help but see that anger was a good restorative for the other’s nerves. As for himself, it was the more nerve-racking strain, lying plastered against the ice with nothing to do but strive to stick on.

A groan and a quick cry of “Hold on!” warned him. With face pressed against the ice, he made a supreme sticking effort, felt the rope slacken, and knew Carson was slipping toward him. He did not dare look up until he felt the rope tighten and knew the other had again come to rest.

“Gee, that was a near go,” Carson chattered. “I came down over a yard. Now you wait. I’ve got to dig new holds. If this danged ice wasn’t so melty we’d be hunky-dory.”

Holding the few pounds of strain necessary for Smoke with his left hand, the little man jabbed and chopped at the ice with his right. Ten minutes of this passed.

“Now, I’ll tell you what I’ve done,” Carson called down. “I’ve made heel-holds and hand-holes for you alongside of me. I’m going to heave the rope in slow and easy, and

you just come along sticking an' not too fast. I'll tell you what, first of all. I'll take you on the rope and you worry out of that pack. Get me?"

Smoke nodded, and with infinite care unbuckled his pack-straps. With a wriggle of the shoulders he dislodged the pack, and Carson saw it slide over the bulge and out of sight.

"Now, I'm going to ditch mine," he called down. "You just take it easy and wait."

Five minutes later the upward struggle began. Smoke, after drying his hands on the insides of his arm-sleeves, clawed into the climb-bellied, and clung, and stuck, and plastered-sustained and helped by the pull of the rope. Alone, he could not have advanced. Despite his muscles, because of his forty pounds' handicap, he could not cling as did Carson. A third of the way up, where the pitch was steeper and the ice less eroded, he felt the strain on the rope decreasing. He moved slower and slower. Here was no place to stop and remain. His most desperate effort could not prevent the stop, and he could feel the down-slip beginning.

"I'm going," he called up.

"So am I," was the reply, gritted through Carson's teeth.

"Then cast loose."

Smoke felt the rope tauten in a futile effort, then the pace quickened, and as he went past his previous lodgment and over the bulge the last glimpse he caught of Carson he was turned over, with madly moving hands and feet striving to overcome the downward draw. To Smoke's surprise, as he went over the bulge, there was no sheer fall. The rope restrained him as he slid down a steeper pitch, which quickly eased until he came to a halt in another niche on the verge of another bulge. Carson was now out of sight, ensconced in the place previously occupied by Smoke.

"Gee!" he could hear Carson shiver. "Gee!"

An interval of quiet followed, and then Smoke could feel the rope agitated.

"What are you doing?" he called up.

"Making more hand-and foot-holds," came the trembling answer. "You just wait. I'll have you up here in a jiffy. Don't mind the way I talk. I'm just excited. But I'm all right. You wait and see."

"You're holding me by main strength," Smoke argued. "Soon or late, with the ice melting, you'll slip down after me. The thing for you to do is to cut loose. Hear me! There's no use both of us going. Get that? You're the biggest little man in creation, but you've done your best. You cut loose."

"You shut up. I'm going to make holes this time deep enough to haul up a span of horses."

"You've held me up long enough," Smoke urged. "Let me go."

"How many times have I held you up?" came the truculent query.

"Some several, and all of them too many. You've been coming down all the time."

"And I've been learning the game all the time. I'm going on holding you up until we get out of here. Savvy? When God made me a light-weight I guess he knew what he was about. Now, shut up. I'm busy."

Several silent minutes passed. Smoke could hear the metallic strike and hack of the knife and occasional dribbles of ice slid over the bulge and came down to him. Thirsty, clinging on hand and foot, he caught the fragments in his mouth and melted them to water, which he swallowed.

He heard a gasp that slid into a groan of despair, and felt a slackening of the rope that made him claw. Immediately the rope tightened again. Straining his eyes in an upward look along the steep slope, he stared a moment, then saw the knife, point first, slide over the verge of the bulge and down upon him. He tucked his cheek to it, shrank from the pang of cut flesh, tucked more tightly, and felt the knife come to rest.

"I'm a slob," came the wail down the crevasse.

"Cheer up, I've got it," Smoke answered.

"Say! Wait! I've a lot of string in my pocket. I'll drop it down to you, and you send the knife up."

Smoke made no reply. He was battling with a sudden rush of thought.

"Hey! You! Here comes the string. Tell me when you've got it."

A small pocket-knife, weighted on the end of the string, slid down the ice. Smoke got it, opened the larger blade by a quick effort of his teeth and one hand, and made sure that the blade was sharp. Then he tied the sheath-knife to the end of the string.

"Haul away!" he called.

With strained eyes he saw the upward progress of the knife. But he saw more—a little man, afraid and indomitable, who shivered and chattered, whose head swam with giddiness, and who mastered his qualms and distresses and played a hero's part. Not since his meeting with Shorty had Smoke so quickly liked a man. Here was a proper meat-eater, eager with friendliness, generous to destruction, with a grit that shaking fear could not shake. Then, too, he considered the situation cold-bloodedly. There was no chance for two. Steadily, they were sliding into the heart of the glacier, and it was his greater weight that was dragging the little man down. The little man could stick like a fly. Alone, he could save himself.

"Bully for us!" came the voice from above, down and across the bulge of ice. "Now we'll get out of here in two shakes."

The awful struggle for good cheer and hope in Carson's voice decided Smoke.

"Listen to me," he said steadily, vainly striving to shake the vision of Joy Gastell's face from his brain. "I sent that knife up for you to get out with. Get that? I'm going to chop loose with the jack-knife. It's one or both of us. Get that?"

"Two or nothing," came the grim but shaky response. "If you'll hold on a minute—"

"I've held on for too long now. I'm not married. I have no adorable thin woman nor kids nor apple-trees waiting for me. Get me? Now, you hike up and out of that!"

"Wait! For God's sake, wait!" Carson screamed down. "You can't do that! Give me a chance to get you out. Be calm, old horse. We'll make the turn. You'll see. I'm going to dig holds that'll lift a house and barn."

Smoke made no reply. Slowly and gently, fascinated by the sight, he cut with the knife until one of the three strands popped and parted.

“What are you doing?” Carson cried desperately. “If you cut, I’ll never forgive you—never. I tell you it’s two or nothing. We’re going to get out. Wait! For God’s sake!”

And Smoke, staring at the parted strand, five inches before his eyes, knew fear in all its weakness. He did not want to die; he recoiled from the shimmering abyss beneath him, and his panic brain urged all the preposterous optimism of delay. It was fear that prompted him to compromise.

“All right,” he called up. “I’ll wait. Do your best. But I tell you, Carson, if we both start slipping again I’m going to cut.”

“Huh! Forget it. When we start, old horse, we start up. I’m a porous plaster. I could stick here if it was twice as steep. I’m getting a sizable hole for one heel already. Now, you hush, and let me work.”

The slow minutes passed. Smoke centered his soul on the dull hurt of a hang-nail on one of his fingers. He should have clipped it away that morning—it was hurting then—he decided; and he resolved, once clear of the crevasse, that it should immediately be clipped. Then, with short focus, he stared at the hang-nail and the finger with a new comprehension. In a minute, or a few minutes at best, that hang-nail, that finger, cunningly jointed and efficient, might be part of a mangled carcass at the bottom of the crevasse. Conscious of his fear, he hated himself. Bear-eaters were made of sterner stuff. In the anger of self-revolt he all but hacked at the rope with his knife. But fear made him draw back the hand and to stick himself again, trembling and sweating, to the slippery slope. To the fact that he was soaking wet by contact with the thawing ice he tried to attribute the cause of his shivering; but he knew, in the heart of him, that it was untrue.

A gasp and a groan and an abrupt slackening of the rope, warned him. He began to slip. The movement was very slow. The rope tightened loyally, but he continued to slip. Carson could not hold him, and was slipping with him. The digging toe of his farther-extended foot encountered vacancy, and he knew that it was over the straight-away fall. And he knew, too, that in another moment his falling body would jerk Carson’s after it.

Blindly, desperately, all the vitality and life-love of him beaten down in a flashing instant by a shuddering perception of right and wrong, he brought the knife-edge across the rope, saw the strands part, felt himself slide more rapidly, and then fall.

What happened then, he did not know. He was not unconscious, but it happened too quickly, and it was unexpected. Instead of falling to his death, his feet almost immediately struck in water, and he sat violently down in water that splashed coolingly on his face. His first impression was that the crevasse was shallower than he had imagined and that he had safely fetched bottom. But of this he was quickly disabused. The opposite wall was a dozen feet away. He lay in a basin formed in an out-jut of the ice-wall by melting water that dribbled and trickled over the bulge above and fell sheer down a distance of a dozen feet. This had hollowed out the basin. Where he sat the water was two feet deep, and it was flush with the rim. He peered over the rim

and looked down the narrow chasm hundreds of feet to the torrent that foamed along the bottom.

“Oh, why did you?” he heard a wail from above.

“Listen,” he called up. “I’m perfectly safe, sitting in a pool of water up to my neck. And here’s both our packs. I’m going to sit on them. There’s room for a half-dozen here. If you slip, stick close and you’ll land. In the meantime you hike up and get out. Go to the cabin. Somebody’s there. I saw the smoke. Get a rope, or anything that will make rope, and come back and fish for me.”

“Honest!” came Carson’s incredulous voice.

“Cross my heart and hope to die. Now, get a hustle on, or I’ll catch my death of cold.”

Smoke kept himself warm by kicking a channel through the rim with the heel of his shoe. By the time he had drained off the last of the water, a faint call from Carson announced that he had reached the top.

After that Smoke occupied himself with drying his clothes. The late afternoon sun beat warmly in upon him, and he wrung out his garments and spread them about him. His match-case was water-proof, and he manipulated and dried sufficient tobacco and rice-paper to make cigarettes.

Two hours later, perched naked on the two packs and smoking, he heard a voice above that he could not fail to identify.

“Oh, Smoke! Smoke!”

“Hello, Joy Gastell!” he called back. “Where’d you drop from?”

“Are you hurt?”

“Not even any skin off!”

“Father’s paying the rope down now. Do you see it?”

“Yes, and I’ve got it,” he answered. “Now, wait a couple of minutes, please.”

“What’s the matter?” came her anxious query, after several minutes. “Oh, I know, you’re hurt.”

“No, I’m not. I’m dressing.”

“Dressing?”

“Yes. I’ve been in swimming. Now! Ready? Hoist away!”

He sent up the two packs on the first trip, was consequently rebuked by Joy Gastell, and on the second trip came up himself.

Joy Gastell looked at him with glowing eyes, while her father and Carson were busy coiling the rope. “How could you cut loose in that splendid way?” she cried. “It was—it was glorious, that’s all.”

Smoke waved the compliment away with a deprecatory hand.

“I know all about it,” she persisted. “Carson told me. You sacrificed yourself to save him.”

“Nothing of the sort,” Smoke lied. “I could see that swimming-pool right under me all the time.”

Local Color

I DO not see why you should not turn this immense amount of unusual information to account," I told him. "Unlike most men equipped with similar knowledge, YOU have expression. Your style is — "

"Is sufficiently — er — journalese?" he interrupted suavely.

"Precisely! You could turn a pretty penny."

But he interlocked his fingers meditatively, shrugged his shoulders, and dismissed the subject.

"I have tried it. It does not pay."

"It was paid for and published," he added, after a pause. "And I was also honored with sixty days in the Hobo."

"The Hobo?" I ventured.

"The Hobo — " He fixed his eyes on my Spencer and ran along the titles while he cast his definition. "The Hobo, my dear fellow, is the name for that particular place of detention in city and county jails wherein are assembled tramps, drunks, beggars, and the riff-raff of petty offenders. The word itself is a pretty one, and it has a history. Hautbois — there's the French of it. haut, meaning high, and bois, wood. In English it becomes hautboy, a wooden musical instrument of two-foot tone, I believe, played with a double reed, an oboe, in fact. You remember in 'Henry IV' —

"The case of a treble hautboy

Was a mansion for him, a court.'

From this to ho-boy is but a step, and for that matter the English used the terms interchangeably. But — and mark you, the leap paralyzes one — crossing the Western Ocean, in New York City, hautboy, or ho-boy, becomes the name by which the night-scavenger is known. In a way one understands its being born of the contempt for wandering players and musical fellows. But see the beauty of it! the burn and the brand! The night-scavenger, the pariah, the miserable, the despised, the man without caste! And in its next incarnation, consistently and logically, it attaches itself to the American outcast, namely, the tramp. Then, as others have mutilated its sense, the tramp mutilates its form, and ho-boy becomes exultantly hobo. Wherefore, the large stone and brick cells, lined with double and triple-tiered bunks, in which the Law is wont to incarcerate him, he calls the Hobo. Interesting, isn't it?"

And I sat back and marvelled secretly at this encyclopaedic-minded man, this Leith Clay-Randolph, this common tramp who made himself at home in my den, charmed such friends as gathered at my small table, outshone me with his brilliance and his

manners, spent my spending money, smoked my best cigars, and selected from my ties and studs with a cultivated and discriminating eye.

He absently walked over to the shelves and looked into Loria's "Economic Foundation of Society."

"I like to talk with you," he remarked. "You are not indifferently schooled. You've read the books, and your economic interpretation of history, as you choose to call it" (this with a sneer), "eminently fits you for an intellectual outlook on life. But your sociologic judgments are vitiated by your lack of practical knowledge. Now I, who know the books, pardon me, somewhat better than you, know life, too. I have lived it, naked, taken it up in both my hands and looked at it, and tasted it, the flesh and the blood of it, and, being purely an intellectual, I have been biased by neither passion nor prejudice. All of which is necessary for clear concepts, and all of which you lack. Ah! a really clever passage. Listen!"

And he read aloud to me in his remarkable style, paralleling the text with a running criticism and commentary, lucidly wording involved and lumbering periods, casting side and cross lights upon the subject, introducing points the author had blundered past and objections he had ignored, catching up lost ends, flinging a contrast into a paradox and reducing it to a coherent and succinctly stated truth — in short, flashing his luminous genius in a blaze of fire over pages erstwhile dull and heavy and lifeless.

It is long since that Leith Clay-Randolph (note the hyphenated surname) knocked at the back door of Idlewild and melted the heart of Gunda. Now Gunda was cold as her Norway hills, though in her least frigid moods she was capable of permitting especially nice-looking tramps to sit on the back stoop and devour lone crusts and forlorn and forsaken chops. But that a tatterdemalion out of the night should invade the sanctity of her kitchen-kingdom and delay dinner while she set a place for him in the warmest corner, was a matter of such moment that the Sunflower went to see. Ah, the Sunflower, of the soft heart and swift sympathy! Leith Clay-Randolph threw his glamour over her for fifteen long minutes, whilst I brooded with my cigar, and then she fluttered back with vague words and the suggestion of a cast-off suit I would never miss.

"Surely I shall never miss it," I said, and I had in mind the dark gray suit with the pockets draggled from the freighting of many books — books that had spoiled more than one day's fishing sport.

"I should advise you, however," I added, "to mend the pockets first."

But the Sunflower's face clouded. "N — o," she said, "the black one."

"The black one!" This explosively, incredulously. "I wear it quite often. I — I intended wearing it to-night."

"You have two better ones, and you know I never liked it, dear," the Sunflower hurried on. "Besides, it's shiny — "

"Shiny!"

"It — it soon will be, which is just the same, and the man is really estimable. He is nice and refined, and I am sure he — "

"Has seen better days."

"Yes, and the weather is raw and beastly, and his clothes are threadbare. And you have many suits — "

"Five," I corrected, "counting in the dark gray fishing outfit with the draggled pockets."

"And he has none, no home, nothing — "

"Not even a Sunflower," — putting my arm around her, — "wherefore he is deserving of all things. Give him the black suit, dear — nay, the best one, the very best one. Under high heaven for such lack there must be compensation!"

"You are a dear!" And the Sunflower moved to the door and looked back alluringly. "You are a perfect dear."

And this after seven years, I marvelled, till she was back again, timid and apologetic.

"I — I gave him one of your white shirts. He wore a cheap horrid cotton thing, and I knew it would look ridiculous. And then his shoes were so slipshod, I let him have a pair of yours, the old ones with the narrow caps — "

"Old ones!"

"Well, they pinched horribly, and you know they did."

It was ever thus the Sunflower vindicated things.

And so Leith Clay-Randolph came to Idlewild to stay, how long I did not dream. Nor did I dream how often he was to come, for he was like an erratic comet. Fresh he would arrive, and cleanly clad, from grand folk who were his friends as I was his friend, and again, weary and worn, he would creep up the brier-rose path from the Montanas or Mexico. And without a word, when his wanderlust gripped him, he was off and away into that great mysterious underworld he called "The Road."

"I could not bring myself to leave until I had thanked you, you of the open hand and heart," he said, on the night he donned my good black suit.

And I confess I was startled when I glanced over the top of my paper and saw a lofty-browed and eminently respectable-looking gentleman, boldly and carelessly at ease. The Sunflower was right. He must have known better days for the black suit and white shirt to have effected such a transformation. Involuntarily I rose to my feet, prompted to meet him on equal ground. And then it was that the Clay-Randolph glamour descended upon me. He slept at Idlewild that night, and the next night, and for many nights. And he was a man to love. The Son of Anak, otherwise Rufus the Blue-Eyed, and also plebeianly known as Tots, rioted with him from brier-rose path to farthest orchard, scalped him in the haymow with barbaric yells, and once, with pharisaic zeal, was near to crucifying him under the attic roof beams. The Sunflower would have loved him for the Son of Anak's sake, had she not loved him for his own. As for myself, let the Sunflower tell, in the times he elected to be gone, of how often I wondered when Leith would come back again, Leith the Lovable. Yet he was a man of whom we knew nothing. Beyond the fact that he was Kentucky-born, his past was a blank. He never spoke of it. And he was a man who prided himself upon his utter divorce of reason from emotion. To him the world spelled itself out in problems. I

charged him once with being guilty of emotion when roaring round the den with the Son of Anak pickaback. Not so, he held. Could he not cuddle a sense-delight for the problem's sake?

He was elusive. A man who intermingled nameless argot with polysyllabic and technical terms, he would seem sometimes the veriest criminal, in speech, face, expression, everything; at other times the cultured and polished gentleman, and again, the philosopher and scientist. But there was something glimmering; there which I never caught — flashes of sincerity, of real feeling, I imagined, which were sped ere I could grasp; echoes of the man he once was, possibly, or hints of the man behind the mask. But the mask he never lifted, and the real man we never knew.

“But the sixty days with which you were rewarded for your journalism?” I asked. “Never mind Loria. Tell me.”

“Well, if I must.” He flung one knee over the other with a short laugh.

“In a town that shall be nameless,” he began, “in fact, a city of fifty thousand, a fair and beautiful city wherein men slave for dollars and women for dress, an idea came to me. My front was prepossessing, as fronts go, and my pockets empty. I had in recollection a thought I once entertained of writing a reconciliation of Kant and Spencer. Not that they are reconcilable, of course, but the room offered for scientific satire — ”

I waved my hand impatiently, and he broke off.

“I was just tracing my mental states for you, in order to show the genesis of the action,” he explained. “However, the idea came. What was the matter with a tramp sketch for the daily press? The Irreconcilability of the Constable and the Tramp, for instance? So I hit the drag (the drag, my dear fellow, is merely the street), or the high places, if you will, for a newspaper office. The elevator whisked me into the sky, and Cerberus, in the guise of an anaemic office boy, guarded the door. Consumption, one could see it at a glance; nerve, Irish, colossal; tenacity, undoubted; dead inside the year.

“‘Pale youth,’ quoth I, ‘I pray thee the way to the sanctum-sanctorum, to the Most High Cock-a-lorum.’

“He deigned to look at me, scornfully, with infinite weariness.

“‘G’wan an’ see the janitor. I don’t know nothin’ about the gas.’

“‘Nay, my lily-white, the editor.’

“‘Wich editor?’ he snapped like a young bullterrier. ‘Dramatic? Sportin’? Society? Sunday? Weekly? Daily? Telegraph? Local? News? Editorial? Wich?’

“Which, I did not know. ‘The Editor,’ I proclaimed stoutly. ‘The only Editor.’

“‘Aw, Spargo!’ he sniffed.

“‘Of course, Spargo,’ I answered. ‘Who else?’

“‘Gimme yer card,’ says he.

“‘My what?’

“‘Yer card — Say! Wot’s yer business, anyway?’

“And the anaemic Cerberus sized me up with so insolent an eye that I reached over and took him out of his chair. I knocked on his meagre chest with my fore knuckle, and fetched forth a weak, gaspy cough; but he looked at me unflinchingly, much like a defiant sparrow held in the hand.

“‘I am the census-taker Time,’ I boomed in sepulchral tones. ‘Beware lest I knock too loud.’

“‘Oh, I don’t know,’ he sneered.

“Whereupon I rapped him smartly, and he choked and turned purplish.

“‘Well, whatcher want?’ he wheezed with returning breath.

“‘I want Spargo, the only Spargo.’

“‘Then leave go, an’ I’ll glide an’ see.’

“‘No you don’t, my lily-white.’ And I took a tighter grip on his collar. ‘No bouncers in mine, understand! I’ll go along.’”

Leith dreamily surveyed the long ash of his cigar and turned to me. “Do you know, Anak, you can’t appreciate the joy of being the buffoon, playing the clown. You couldn’t do it if you wished. Your pitiful little conventions and smug assumptions of decency would prevent. But simply to turn loose your soul to every whimsicality, to play the fool unafraid of any possible result, why, that requires a man other than a householder and law-respecting citizen.

“However, as I was saying, I saw the only Spargo. He was a big, beefy, red-faced personage, full-jowled and double-chinned, sweating at his desk in his shirt-sleeves. It was August, you know. He was talking into a telephone when I entered, or swearing rather, I should say, and the while studying me with his eyes. When he hung up, he turned to me expectantly.

“‘You are a very busy man,’ I said.

“He jerked a nod with his head, and waited.

“‘And after all, is it worth it?’ I went on. ‘What does life mean that it should make you sweat? What justification do you find in sweat? Now look at me. I toil not, neither do I spin — ’

“‘Who are you? What are you?’ he bellowed with a suddenness that was, well, rude, tearing the words out as a dog does a bone.

“‘A very pertinent question, sir,’ I acknowledged. ‘First, I am a man; next, a down-trodden American citizen. I am cursed with neither profession, trade, nor expectations. Like Esau, I am pottageless. My residence is everywhere; the sky is my coverlet. I am one of the dispossessed, a sansculotte, a proletarian, or, in simpler phraseology addressed to your understanding, a tramp.’

“‘What the hell — ?’

“‘Nay, fair sir, a tramp, a man of devious ways and strange lodgements and multifarious — ’

“‘Quit it!’ he shouted. ‘What do you want?’

“‘I want money.’

“He started and half reached for an open drawer where must have reposed a revolver, then bethought himself and growled, ‘This is no bank.’

“‘Nor have I checks to cash. But I have, sir, an idea, which, by your leave and kind assistance, I shall transmute into cash. In short, how does a tramp sketch, done by a tramp to the life, strike you? Are you open to it? Do your readers hunger for it? Do they crave after it? Can they be happy without it?’

“I thought for a moment that he would have apoplexy, but he quelled the unruly blood and said he liked my nerve. I thanked him and assured him I liked it myself. Then he offered me a cigar and said he thought he’d do business with me.

“‘But mind you,’ he said, when he had jabbed a bunch of copy paper into my hand and given me a pencil from his vest pocket, ‘mind you, I won’t stand for the high and flighty philosophical, and I perceive you have a tendency that way. Throw in the local color, wads of it, and a bit of sentiment perhaps, but no slumgullion about political economy nor social strata or such stuff. Make it concrete, to the point, with snap and go and life, crisp and crackling and interesting — tumble?’

“And I tumbled and borrowed a dollar.

“‘Don’t forget the local color!’ he shouted after me through the door.

“And, Anak, it was the local color that did for me.

“The anaemic Cerberus grinned when I took the elevator. ‘Got the bounce, eh?’

“‘Nay, pale youth, so lily-white,’ I chortled, waving the copy paper; ‘not the bounce, but a detail. I’ll be City Editor in three months, and then I’ll make you jump.’

“And as the elevator stopped at the next floor down to take on a pair of maids, he strolled over to the shaft, and without frills or verbiage consigned me and my detail to perdition. But I liked him. He had pluck and was unafraid, and he knew, as well as I, that death clutched him close.”

“But how could you, Leith,” I cried, the picture of the consumptive lad strong before me, “how could you treat him so barbarously?”

Leith laughed dryly. “My dear fellow, how often must I explain to you your confusions? Orthodox sentiment and stereotyped emotion master you. And then your temperament! You are really incapable of rational judgments. Cerberus? Pshaw! A flash expiring, a mote of fading sparkle, a dim-pulsing and dying organism — pouf! a snap of the fingers, a puff of breath, what would you? A pawn in the game of life. Not even a problem. There is no problem in a stillborn babe, nor in a dead child. They never arrived. Nor did Cerberus. Now for a really pretty problem — ”

“But the local color?” I prodded him.

“That’s right,” he replied. “Keep me in the running. Well, I took my handful of copy paper down to the railroad yards (for local color), dangled my legs from a side-door Pullman, which is another name for a box-car, and ran off the stuff. Of course I made it clever and brilliant and all that, with my little unanswerable slings at the state and my social paradoxes, and withal made it concrete enough to dissatisfy the average citizen.

“From the tramp standpoint, the constabulary of the township was particularly rotten, and I proceeded to open the eyes of the good people. It is a proposition, mathematically demonstrable, that it costs the community more to arrest, convict, and confine its tramps in jail, than to send them as guests, for like periods of time, to the best hotel. And this I developed, giving the facts and figures, the constable fees and the mileage, and the court and jail expenses. Oh, it was convincing, and it was true; and I did it in a lightly humorous fashion which fetched the laugh and left the sting. The main objection to the system, I contended, was the defraudment and robbery of the tramp. The good money which the community paid out for him should enable him to riot in luxury instead of rotting in dungeons. I even drew the figures so fine as to permit him not only to live in the best hotel but to smoke two twenty-five-cent cigars and indulge in a ten-cent shine each day, and still not cost the taxpayers so much as they were accustomed to pay for his conviction and jail entertainment. And, as subsequent events proved, it made the taxpayers wince.

“One of the constables I drew to the life; nor did I forget a certain Sol Glenhart, as rotten a police judge as was to be found between the seas. And this I say out of a vast experience. While he was notorious in local trampdom, his civic sins were not only not unknown but a crying reproach to the townspeople. Of course I refrained from mentioning name or habitat, drawing the picture in an impersonal, composite sort of way, which none the less blinded no one to the faithfulness of the local color.

“Naturally, myself a tramp, the tenor of the article was a protest against the maltreatment of the tramp. Cutting the taxpayers to the pits of their purses threw them open to sentiment, and then in I tossed the sentiment, lumps and chunks of it. Trust me, it was excellently done, and the rhetoric—say I Just listen to the tail of my peroration:

“‘So, as we go mooching along the drag, with a sharp lamp out for John Law, we cannot help remembering that we are beyond the pale; that our ways are not their ways; and that the ways of John Law with us are different from his ways with other men. Poor lost souls, wailing for a crust in the dark, we know full well our helplessness and ignominy. And well may we repeat after a stricken brother over-seas: “Our pride it is to know no spur of pride.” Man has forgotten us; God has forgotten us; only are we remembered by the harpies of justice, who prey upon our distress and coin our sighs and tears into bright shining dollars.’

“Incidentally, my picture of Sol Glenhart, the police judge, was good. A striking likeness, and unmistakable, with phrases tripping along like this: ‘This crook-nosed, gross-bodied harpy’; ‘this civic sinner, this judicial highwayman’; ‘possessing the morals of the Tenderloin and an honor which thieves’ honor puts to shame’; ‘who compounds criminality with shyster-sharks, and in atonement railroads the unfortunate and impetuous to rotting cells,’ — and so forth and so forth, style sophomoric and devoid of the dignity and tone one would employ in a dissertation on ‘Surplus Value,’ or ‘The Fallacies of Marxism,’ but just the stuff the dear public likes.

“‘Humph!’ grunted Spargo when I put the copy in his fist. ‘Swift gait you strike, my man.’

“I fixed a hypnotic eye on his vest pocket, and he passed out one of his superior cigars, which I burned while he ran through the stuff. Twice or thrice he looked over the top of the paper at me, searchingly, but said nothing till he had finished.

“‘Where’d you work, you pencil-pusher?’ he asked.

“‘My maiden effort,’ I simpered modestly, scraping one foot and faintly simulating embarrassment.

“‘Maiden hell! What salary do you want?’

“‘Nay, nay,’ I answered. ‘No salary in mine, thank you most to death. I am a free down-trodden American citizen, and no man shall say my time is his.’

“‘Save John Law,’ he chuckled.

“‘Save John Law,’ said I.

“‘How did you know I was bucking the police department?’ he demanded abruptly.

“‘I didn’t know, but I knew you were in training,’ I answered. ‘Yesterday morning a charitably inclined female presented me with three biscuits, a piece of cheese, and a funereal slab of chocolate cake, all wrapped in the current Clarion, wherein I noted an unholy glee because the Cowbell’s candidate for chief of police had been turned down. Likewise I learned the municipal election was at hand, and put two and two together. Another mayor, and the right kind, means new police commissioners; new police commissioners means new chief of police; new chief of police means Cowbell’s candidate; ergo, your turn to play.’

“He stood up, shook my hand, and emptied his plethoric vest pocket. I put them away and puffed on the old one.

“‘You’ll do,’ he jubilated. ‘This stuff’ (patting my copy) ‘is the first gun of the campaign. You’ll touch off many another before we’re done. I’ve been looking for you for years. Come on in on the editorial.’

“But I shook my head.

“‘Come, now!’ he admonished sharply. ‘No shenanagan! The Cowbell must have you. It hungers for you, craves after you, won’t be happy till it gets you. What say?’

“In short, he wrestled with me, but I was bricks, and at the end of half an hour the only Spargo gave it up.

“‘Remember,’ he said, ‘any time you reconsider, I’m open. No matter where you are, wire me and I’ll send the ducats to come on at once.’

“I thanked him, and asked the pay for my copy — dope, he called it.

“‘Oh, regular routine,’ he said. ‘Get it the first Thursday after publication.’

“‘Then I’ll have to trouble you for a few scad until — ’

“He looked at me and smiled. ‘Better cough up, eh?’

“‘Sure,’ I said. ‘Nobody to identify me, so make it cash.’

“And cash it was made, thirty plunks (a plunk is a dollar, my dear Anak), and I pulled my freight . . . eh? — oh, departed.

“‘Pale youth,’ I said to Cerberus, ‘I am bounced.’ (He grinned with pallid joy.) ‘And in token of the sincere esteem I bear you, receive this little — ’ (His eyes flushed and

he threw up one hand, swiftly, to guard his head from the expected blow) — 'this little memento.'

"I had intended to slip a fiver into his hand, but for all his surprise, he was too quick for me.

"Aw, keep yer dirt,' he snarled.

"I like you still better,' I said, adding a second fiver. 'You grow perfect. But you must take it.'

"He backed away growling, but I caught him round the neck, roughed what little wind he had out of him, and left him doubled up with the two fives in his pocket. But hardly had the elevator started, when the two coins tinkled on the roof and fell down between the car and the shaft. As luck had it, the door was not closed, and I put out my hand and caught them. The elevator boy's eyes bulged.

"It's a way I have,' I said, pocketing them.

"Some bloke's dropped 'em down the shaft,' he whispered, awed by the circumstance.

"It stands to reason,' said I.

"I'll take charge of 'em,' he volunteered.

"Nonsense!"

"You'd better turn 'em over,' he threatened, 'or I stop the works.'

"Pshaw!"

"And stop he did, between floors.

"Young man,' I said, 'have you a mother?' (He looked serious, as though regretting his act! and further to impress him I rolled up my right sleeve with greatest care.) 'Are you prepared to die?' (I got a stealthy crouch on, and put a cat-foot forward.) 'But a minute, a brief minute, stands between you and eternity.' (Here I crooked my right hand into a claw and slid the other foot up.) 'Young man, young man,' I trumpeted, 'in thirty seconds I shall tear your heart dripping from your bosom and stoop to hear you shriek in hell.'

"It fetched him. He gave one whoop, the car shot down, and I was on the drag. You see, Anak, it's a habit I can't shake off of leaving vivid memories behind. No one ever forgets me.

"I had not got to the corner when I heard a familiar voice at my shoulder:

"Hello, Cinders! Which way?"

"It was Chi Slim, who had been with me once when I was thrown off a freight in Jacksonville. 'Couldn't see 'em fer cinders,' he described it, and the monica stuck by me... Monica? From monos. The tramp nickname.

"Bound south,' I answered. 'And how's Slim?"

"Bum. Bulls is horstile.'

"Where's the push?"

"At the hang-out. I'll put you wise.'

"Who's the main guy?"

"Me, and don't yer ferget it."

The lingo was rippling from Leith's lips, but perforce I stopped him. "Pray translate. Remember, I am a foreigner."

"Certainly," he answered cheerfully. "Slim is in poor luck. Bull means policeman. He tells me the bulls are hostile. I ask where the push is, the gang he travels with. By putting me wise he will direct me to where the gang is hanging out. The main guy is the leader. Slim claims that distinction.

"Slim and I hiked out to a neck of woods just beyond town, and there was the push, a score of husky hobos, charmingly located on the bank of a little purling stream.

"'Come on, you mugs!' Slim addressed them. 'Throw yer feet! Here's Cinders, an' we must do 'em proud.'

"All of which signifies that the hobos had better strike out and do some lively begging in order to get the wherewithal to celebrate my return to the fold after a year's separation. But I flashed my dough and Slim sent several of the younger men off to buy the booze. Take my word for it, Anak, it was a blow-out memorable in Trampdom to this day. It's amazing the quantity of booze thirty plunks will buy, and it is equally amazing the quantity of booze outside of which twenty stiffs will get. Beer and cheap wine made up the card, with alcohol thrown in for the blowed-in-the-glass stiffs. It was great — an orgy under the sky, a contest of beaker-men, a study in primitive beastliness. To me there is something fascinating in a drunken man, and were I a college president I should institute P.G. psychology courses in practical drunkenness. It would beat the books and compete with the laboratory.

"All of which is neither here nor there, for after sixteen hours of it, early next morning, the whole push was copped by an overwhelming array of constables and carted off to jail. After breakfast, about ten o'clock, we were lined upstairs into court, limp and spiritless, the twenty of us. And there, under his purple panoply, nose crooked like a Napoleonic eagle and eyes glittering and beady, sat Sol Glenhart.

"'John Ambrose!' the clerk called out, and Chi Slim, with the ease of long practice, stood up.

"'Vagrant, your Honor,' the bailiff volunteered, and his Honor, not deigning to look at the prisoner, snapped, 'Ten days,' and Chi Slim sat down.

"And so it went, with the monotony of clockwork, fifteen seconds to the man, four men to the minute, the mugs bobbing up and down in turn like marionettes. The clerk called the name, the bailiff the offence, the judge the sentence, and the man sat down. That was all. Simple, eh? Superb!

"Chi Slim nudged me. 'Give'm a spiel, Cinders. You kin do it.'

"I shook my head.

"'G'wan,' he urged. 'Give 'm a ghost story The mugs'll take it all right. And you kin throw yer feet fer tobacco for us till we get out.'

"'L. C. Randolph!' the clerk called.

"I stood up, but a hitch came in the proceedings. The clerk whispered to the judge, and the bailiff smiled.

“‘You are a newspaper man, I understand, Mr. Randolph?’ his Honor remarked sweetly.

“‘It took me by surprise, for I had forgotten the Cowbell in the excitement of succeeding events, and I now saw myself on the edge of the pit I had digged.

“‘That’s yer graft. Work it,’ Slim prompted.

“‘It’s all over but the shouting,’ I groaned back, but Slim, unaware of the article, was puzzled.

“‘Your Honor,’ I answered, ‘when I can get work, that is my occupation.’

“‘You take quite an interest in local affairs, I see.’ (Here his Honor took up the morning’s Cowbell and ran his eye up and down a column I knew was mine.) ‘Color is good,’ he commented, an appreciative twinkle in his eyes; ‘pictures excellent, characterized by broad, Sargent-like effects. Now this . . . this judge you have depicted . . . you, ah, draw from life, I presume?’

“‘Rarely, your I Honor,’ I answered. ‘Composites, ideals, rather . . . er, types, I may say.’

“‘But you have color, sir, unmistakable color,’ he continued.

“‘That is splashed on afterward,’ I explained.

“‘This judge, then, is not modelled from life, as one might be led to believe?’

“‘No, your Honor.’

“‘Ah, I see, merely a type of judicial wickedness?’

“‘Nay, more, your Honor,’ I said boldly, ‘an ideal.’

“‘Splashed with local color afterward? Ha! Good! And may I venture to ask how much you received for this bit of work?’

“‘Thirty dollars, your Honor.’

“‘Hum, good!’ And his tone abruptly changed. ‘Young man, local color is a bad thing. I find you guilty of it and sentence you to thirty days’ imprisonment, or, at your pleasure, impose a fine of thirty dollars.’

“‘Alas!’ said I, ‘I spent the thirty dollars in riotous living.’

“‘And thirty days more for wasting your substance.’

“‘Next case!’ said his Honor to the clerk.

“‘Slim was stunned. ‘Gee!’ he whispered. ‘Gee the push gets ten days and you get sixty. Gee!’”

Leith struck a match, lighted his dead cigar, and opened the book on his knees. “‘Returning to the original conversation, don’t you find, Anak, that though Loria handles the bipartition of the revenues with scrupulous care, he yet omits one important factor, namely — ”

“‘Yes,’ I said absently; ‘yes.’”

Lost Face

It was the end. Subienkow had travelled a long trail of bitterness and horror, homing like a dove for the capitals of Europe, and here, farther away than ever, in Russian America, the trail ceased. He sat in the snow, arms tied behind him, waiting the torture. He stared curiously before him at a huge Cossack, prone in the snow, moaning in his pain. The men had finished handling the giant and turned him over to the women. That they exceeded the fiendishness of the men, the man's cries attested.

Subienkow looked on, and shuddered. He was not afraid to die. He had carried his life too long in his hands, on that weary trail from Warsaw to Nulato, to shudder at mere dying. But he objected to the torture. It offended his soul. And this offence, in turn, was not due to the mere pain he must endure, but to the sorry spectacle the pain would make of him. He knew that he would pray, and beg, and entreat, even as Big Ivan and the others that had gone before. This would not be nice. To pass out bravely and cleanly, with a smile and a jest—ah! that would have been the way. But to lose control, to have his soul upset by the pangs of the flesh, to screech and gibber like an ape, to become the veriest beast—ah, that was what was so terrible.

There had been no chance to escape. From the beginning, when he dreamed the fiery dream of Poland's independence, he had become a puppet in the hands of Fate. From the beginning, at Warsaw, at St. Petersburg, in the Siberian mines, in Kamtchatka, on the crazy boats of the fur-thieves, Fate had been driving him to this end. Without doubt, in the foundations of the world was graved this end for him—for him, who was so fine and sensitive, whose nerves scarcely sheltered under his skin, who was a dreamer, and a poet, and an artist. Before he was dreamed of, it had been determined that the quivering bundle of sensitiveness that constituted him should be doomed to live in raw and howling savagery, and to die in this far land of night, in this dark place beyond the last boundaries of the world.

He sighed. So that thing before him was Big Ivan—Big Ivan the giant, the man without nerves, the man of iron, the Cossack turned freebooter of the seas, who was as phlegmatic as an ox, with a nervous system so low that what was pain to ordinary men was scarcely a tickle to him. Well, well, trust these Nulato Indians to find Big Ivan's nerves and trace them to the roots of his quivering soul. They were certainly doing it. It was inconceivable that a man could suffer so much and yet live. Big Ivan was paying for his low order of nerves. Already he had lasted twice as long as any of the others.

Subienkow felt that he could not stand the Cossack's sufferings much longer. Why didn't Ivan die? He would go mad if that screaming did not cease. But when it did

cease, his turn would come. And there was Yakaga awaiting him, too, grinning at him even now in anticipation—Yakaga, whom only last week he had kicked out of the fort, and upon whose face he had laid the lash of his dog-whip. Yakaga would attend to him. Doubtlessly Yakaga was saving for him more refined tortures, more exquisite nerve-racking. Ah! that must have been a good one, from the way Ivan screamed. The squaws bending over him stepped back with laughter and clapping of hands. Subienkow saw the monstrous thing that had been perpetrated, and began to laugh hysterically. The Indians looked at him in wonderment that he should laugh. But Subienkow could not stop.

This would never do. He controlled himself, the spasmodic twitchings slowly dying away. He strove to think of other things, and began reading back in his own life. He remembered his mother and his father, and the little spotted pony, and the French tutor who had taught him dancing and sneaked him an old worn copy of Voltaire. Once more he saw Paris, and dreary London, and gay Vienna, and Rome. And once more he saw that wild group of youths who had dreamed, even as he, the dream of an independent Poland with a king of Poland on the throne at Warsaw. Ah, there it was that the long trail began. Well, he had lasted longest. One by one, beginning with the two executed at St. Petersburg, he took up the count of the passing of those brave spirits. Here one had been beaten to death by a jailer, and there, on that bloodstained highway of the exiles, where they had marched for endless months, beaten and maltreated by their Cossack guards, another had dropped by the way. Always it had been savagery—brutal, bestial savagery. They had died—of fever, in the mines, under the knout. The last two had died after the escape, in the battle with the Cossacks, and he alone had won to Kamtchatka with the stolen papers and the money of a traveller he had left lying in the snow.

It had been nothing but savagery. All the years, with his heart in studios, and theatres, and courts, he had been hemmed in by savagery. He had purchased his life with blood. Everybody had killed. He had killed that traveller for his passports. He had proved that he was a man of parts by duelling with two Russian officers on a single day. He had had to prove himself in order to win to a place among the fur-thieves. He had had to win to that place. Behind him lay the thousand-years-long road across all Siberia and Russia. He could not escape that way. The only way was ahead, across the dark and icy sea of Bering to Alaska. The way had led from savagery to deeper savagery. On the scurvy-rotten ships of the fur-thieves, out of food and out of water, buffeted by the interminable storms of that stormy sea, men had become animals. Thrice he had sailed east from Kamtchatka. And thrice, after all manner of hardship and suffering, the survivors had come back to Kamtchatka. There had been no outlet for escape, and he could not go back the way he had come, for the mines and the knout awaited him.

Again, the fourth and last time, he had sailed east. He had been with those who first found the fabled Seal Islands; but he had not returned with them to share the wealth of furs in the mad orgies of Kamtchatka. He had sworn never to go back. He knew that to win to those dear capitals of Europe he must go on. So he had changed

ships and remained in the dark new land. His comrades were Slavonian hunters and Russian adventurers, Mongols and Tartars and Siberian aborigines; and through the savages of the new world they had cut a path of blood. They had massacred whole villages that refused to furnish the fur-tribute; and they, in turn, had been massacred by ships' companies. He, with one Finn, had been the sole survivor of such a company. They had spent a winter of solitude and starvation on a lonely Aleutian isle, and their rescue in the spring by another fur-ship had been one chance in a thousand.

But always the terrible savagery had hemmed him in. Passing from ship to ship, and ever refusing to return, he had come to the ship that explored south. All down the Alaska coast they had encountered nothing but hosts of savages. Every anchorage among the beetling islands or under the frowning cliffs of the mainland had meant a battle or a storm. Either the gales blew, threatening destruction, or the war canoes came off, manned by howling natives with the war-paint on their faces, who came to learn the bloody virtues of the sea-rovers' gunpowder. South, south they had coasted, clear to the myth-land of California. Here, it was said, were Spanish adventurers who had fought their way up from Mexico. He had had hopes of those Spanish adventurers. Escaping to them, the rest would have been easy—a year or two, what did it matter more or less—and he would win to Mexico, then a ship, and Europe would be his. But they had met no Spaniards. Only had they encountered the same impregnable wall of savagery. The denizens of the confines of the world, painted for war, had driven them back from the shores. At last, when one boat was cut off and every man killed, the commander had abandoned the quest and sailed back to the north.

The years had passed. He had served under Tebenkoff when Michaelovski Redoubt was built. He had spent two years in the Kuskokwim country. Two summers, in the month of June, he had managed to be at the head of Kotzebue Sound. Here, at this time, the tribes assembled for barter; here were to be found spotted deerskins from Siberia, ivory from the Diomedes, walrus skins from the shores of the Arctic, strange stone lamps, passing in trade from tribe to tribe, no one knew whence, and, once, a hunting-knife of English make; and here, Subienkow knew, was the school in which to learn geography. For he met Eskimos from Norton Sound, from King Island and St. Lawrence Island, from Cape Prince of Wales, and Point Barrow. Such places had other names, and their distances were measured in days.

It was a vast region these trading savages came from, and a vaster region from which, by repeated trade, their stone lamps and that steel knife had come. Subienkow bullied, and cajoled, and bribed. Every far-journeyer or strange tribesman was brought before him. Perils unaccountable and unthinkable were mentioned, as well as wild beasts, hostile tribes, impenetrable forests, and mighty mountain ranges; but always from beyond came the rumour and the tale of white-skinned men, blue of eye and fair of hair, who fought like devils and who sought always for furs. They were to the east—far, far to the east. No one had seen them. It was the word that had been passed along.

It was a hard school. One could not learn geography very well through the medium of strange dialects, from dark minds that mingled fact and fable and that measured

distances by "sleeps" that varied according to the difficulty of the going. But at last came the whisper that gave Subienkow courage. In the east lay a great river where were these blue-eyed men. The river was called the Yukon. South of Michaelovski Redoubt emptied another great river which the Russians knew as the Kwikpak. These two rivers were one, ran the whisper.

Subienkow returned to Michaelovski. For a year he urged an expedition up the Kwikpak. Then arose Malakoff, the Russian half-breed, to lead the wildest and most ferocious of the hell's broth of mongrel adventurers who had crossed from Kamtchatka. Subienkow was his lieutenant. They threaded the mazes of the great delta of the Kwikpak, picked up the first low hills on the northern bank, and for half a thousand miles, in skin canoes loaded to the gunwales with trade-goods and ammunition, fought their way against the five-knot current of a river that ran from two to ten miles wide in a channel many fathoms deep. Malakoff decided to build the fort at Nulato. Subienkow urged to go farther. But he quickly reconciled himself to Nulato. The long winter was coming on. It would be better to wait. Early the following summer, when the ice was gone, he would disappear up the Kwikpak and work his way to the Hudson Bay Company's posts. Malakoff had never heard the whisper that the Kwikpak was the Yukon, and Subienkow did not tell him.

Came the building of the fort. It was enforced labour. The tiered walls of logs arose to the sighs and groans of the Nulato Indians. The lash was laid upon their backs, and it was the iron hand of the freebooters of the sea that laid on the lash. There were Indians that ran away, and when they were caught they were brought back and spread-eagled before the fort, where they and their tribe learned the efficacy of the knout. Two died under it; others were injured for life; and the rest took the lesson to heart and ran away no more. The snow was flying ere the fort was finished, and then it was the time for furs. A heavy tribute was laid upon the tribe. Blows and lashings continued, and that the tribute should be paid, the women and children were held as hostages and treated with the barbarity that only the fur-thieves knew.

Well, it had been a sowing of blood, and now was come the harvest. The fort was gone. In the light of its burning, half the fur-thieves had been cut down. The other half had passed under the torture. Only Subienkow remained, or Subienkow and Big Ivan, if that whimpering, moaning thing in the snow could be called Big Ivan. Subienkow caught Yakaga grinning at him. There was no gainsaying Yakaga. The mark of the lash was still on his face. After all, Subienkow could not blame him, but he disliked the thought of what Yakaga would do to him. He thought of appealing to Makamuk, the head-chief; but his judgment told him that such appeal was useless. Then, too, he thought of bursting his bonds and dying fighting. Such an end would be quick. But he could not break his bonds. Caribou thongs were stronger than he. Still devising, another thought came to him. He signed for Makamuk, and that an interpreter who knew the coast dialect should be brought.

"Oh, Makamuk," he said, "I am not minded to die. I am a great man, and it were foolishness for me to die. In truth, I shall not die. I am not like these other carrion."

He looked at the moaning thing that had once been Big Ivan, and stirred it contemptuously with his toe.

"I am too wise to die. Behold, I have a great medicine. I alone know this medicine. Since I am not going to die, I shall exchange this medicine with you."

"What is this medicine?" Makamuk demanded.

"It is a strange medicine."

Subienkow debated with himself for a moment, as if loth to part with the secret.

"I will tell you. A little bit of this medicine rubbed on the skin makes the skin hard like a rock, hard like iron, so that no cutting weapon can cut it. The strongest blow of a cutting weapon is a vain thing against it. A bone knife becomes like a piece of mud; and it will turn the edge of the iron knives we have brought among you. What will you give me for the secret of the medicine?"

"I will give you your life," Makamuk made answer through the interpreter.

Subienkow laughed scornfully.

"And you shall be a slave in my house until you die."

The Pole laughed more scornfully.

"Untie my hands and feet and let us talk," he said.

The chief made the sign; and when he was loosed Subienkow rolled a cigarette and lighted it.

"This is foolish talk," said Makamuk. "There is no such medicine. It cannot be. A cutting edge is stronger than any medicine."

The chief was incredulous, and yet he wavered. He had seen too many deviltries of fur-thieves that worked. He could not wholly doubt.

"I will give you your life; but you shall not be a slave," he announced.

"More than that."

Subienkow played his game as coolly as if he were bartering for a foxskin.

"It is a very great medicine. It has saved my life many times. I want a sled and dogs, and six of your hunters to travel with me down the river and give me safety to one day's sleep from Michaelovski Redoubt."

"You must live here, and teach us all of your deviltries," was the reply.

Subienkow shrugged his shoulders and remained silent. He blew cigarette smoke out on the icy air, and curiously regarded what remained of the big Cossack.

"That scar!" Makamuk said suddenly, pointing to the Pole's neck, where a livid mark advertised the slash of a knife in a Kamtchatkan brawl. "The medicine is not good. The cutting edge was stronger than the medicine."

"It was a strong man that drove the stroke." (Subienkow considered.) "Stronger than you, stronger than your strongest hunter, stronger than he."

Again, with the toe of his moccasin, he touched the Cossack—a grisly spectacle, no longer conscious—yet in whose dismembered body the pain-racked life clung and was loth to go.

"Also, the medicine was weak. For at that place there were no berries of a certain kind, of which I see you have plenty in this country. The medicine here will be strong."

"I will let you go down river," said Makamuk; "and the sled and the dogs and the six hunters to give you safety shall be yours."

"You are slow," was the cool rejoinder. "You have committed an offence against my medicine in that you did not at once accept my terms. Behold, I now demand more. I want one hundred beaver skins." (Makamuk sneered.)

"I want one hundred pounds of dried fish." (Makamuk nodded, for fish were plentiful and cheap.) "I want two sleds—one for me and one for my furs and fish. And my rifle must be returned to me. If you do not like the price, in a little while the price will grow."

Yakaga whispered to the chief.

"But how can I know your medicine is true medicine?" Makamuk asked.

"It is very easy. First, I shall go into the woods—"

Again Yakaga whispered to Makamuk, who made a suspicious dissent.

"You can send twenty hunters with me," Subienkow went on. "You see, I must get the berries and the roots with which to make the medicine. Then, when you have brought the two sleds and loaded on them the fish and the beaver skins and the rifle, and when you have told off the six hunters who will go with me—then, when all is ready, I will rub the medicine on my neck, so, and lay my neck there on that log. Then can your strongest hunter take the axe and strike three times on my neck. You yourself can strike the three times."

Makamuk stood with gaping mouth, drinking in this latest and most wonderful magic of the fur-thieves.

"But first," the Pole added hastily, "between each blow I must put on fresh medicine. The axe is heavy and sharp, and I want no mistakes."

"All that you have asked shall be yours," Makamuk cried in a rush of acceptance. "Proceed to make your medicine."

Subienkow concealed his elation. He was playing a desperate game, and there must be no slips. He spoke arrogantly.

"You have been slow. My medicine is offended. To make the offence clean you must give me your daughter."

He pointed to the girl, an unwholesome creature, with a cast in one eye and a bristling wolf-tooth. Makamuk was angry, but the Pole remained imperturbable, rolling and lighting another cigarette.

"Make haste," he threatened. "If you are not quick, I shall demand yet more."

In the silence that followed, the dreary northland scene faded before him, and he saw once more his native land, and France, and, once, as he glanced at the wolf-toothed girl, he remembered another girl, a singer and a dancer, whom he had known when first as a youth he came to Paris.

"What do you want with the girl?" Makamuk asked.

"To go down the river with me." Subienkow glanced over her critically. "She will make a good wife, and it is an honour worthy of my medicine to be married to your blood."

Again he remembered the singer and dancer and hummed aloud a song she had taught him. He lived the old life over, but in a detached, impersonal sort of way, looking at the memory-pictures of his own life as if they were pictures in a book of anybody's life. The chief's voice, abruptly breaking the silence, startled him

"It shall be done," said Makamuk. "The girl shall go down the river with you. But be it understood that I myself strike the three blows with the axe on your neck."

"But each time I shall put on the medicine," Subienkow answered, with a show of ill-concealed anxiety.

"You shall put the medicine on between each blow. Here are the hunters who shall see you do not escape. Go into the forest and gather your medicine."

Makamuk had been convinced of the worth of the medicine by the Pole's rapacity. Surely nothing less than the greatest of medicines could enable a man in the shadow of death to stand up and drive an old-woman's bargain.

"Besides," whispered Yakaga, when the Pole, with his guard, had disappeared among the spruce trees, "when you have learned the medicine you can easily destroy him."

"But how can I destroy him?" Makamuk argued. "His medicine will not let me destroy him."

"There will be some part where he has not rubbed the medicine," was Yakaga's reply. "We will destroy him through that part. It may be his ears. Very well; we will thrust a spear in one ear and out the other. Or it may be his eyes. Surely the medicine will be much too strong to rub on his eyes."

The chief nodded. "You are wise, Yakaga. If he possesses no other devil-things, we will then destroy him."

Subienkow did not waste time in gathering the ingredients for his medicine, he selected whatsoever came to hand such as spruce needles, the inner bark of the willow, a strip of birch bark, and a quantity of moss-berries, which he made the hunters dig up for him from beneath the snow. A few frozen roots completed his supply, and he led the way back to camp.

Makamuk and Yakaga crouched beside him, noting the quantities and kinds of the ingredients he dropped into the pot of boiling water.

"You must be careful that the moss-berries go in first," he explained.

"And—oh, yes, one other thing—the finger of a man. Here, Yakaga, let me cut off your finger."

But Yakaga put his hands behind him and scowled.

"Just a small finger," Subienkow pleaded.

"Yakaga, give him your finger," Makamuk commanded.

"There be plenty of fingers lying around," Yakaga grunted, indicating the human wreckage in the snow of the score of persons who had been tortured to death.

"It must be the finger of a live man," the Pole objected.

"Then shall you have the finger of a live man." Yakaga strode over to the Cossack and sliced off a finger.

“He is not yet dead,” he announced, flinging the bloody trophy in the snow at the Pole’s feet. “Also, it is a good finger, because it is large.”

Subienkow dropped it into the fire under the pot and began to sing. It was a French love-song that with great solemnity he sang into the brew.

“Without these words I utter into it, the medicine is worthless,” he explained. “The words are the chiefest strength of it. Behold, it is ready.”

“Name the words slowly, that I may know them,” Makamuk commanded.

“Not until after the test. When the axe flies back three times from my neck, then will I give you the secret of the words.”

“But if the medicine is not good medicine?” Makamuk queried anxiously.

Subienkow turned upon him wrathfully.

“My medicine is always good. However, if it is not good, then do by me as you have done to the others. Cut me up a bit at a time, even as you have cut him up.” He pointed to the Cossack. “The medicine is now cool. Thus, I rub it on my neck, saying this further medicine.”

With great gravity he slowly intoned a line of the “Marseillaise,” at the same time rubbing the villainous brew thoroughly into his neck.

An outcry interrupted his play-acting. The giant Cossack, with a last resurgence of his tremendous vitality, had arisen to his knees. Laughter and cries of surprise and applause arose from the Nulatos, as Big Ivan began flinging himself about in the snow with mighty spasms.

Subienkow was made sick by the sight, but he mastered his qualms and made believe to be angry.

“This will not do,” he said. “Finish him, and then we will make the test. Here, you, Yakaga, see that his noise ceases.”

While this was being done, Subienkow turned to Makamuk.

“And remember, you are to strike hard. This is not baby-work. Here, take the axe and strike the log, so that I can see you strike like a man.”

Makamuk obeyed, striking twice, precisely and with vigour, cutting out a large chip.

“It is well.” Subienkow looked about him at the circle of savage faces that somehow seemed to symbolize the wall of savagery that had hemmed him about ever since the Czar’s police had first arrested him in Warsaw. “Take your axe, Makamuk, and stand so. I shall lie down. When I raise my hand, strike, and strike with all your might. And be careful that no one stands behind you. The medicine is good, and the axe may bounce from off my neck and right out of your hands.”

He looked at the two sleds, with the dogs in harness, loaded with furs and fish. His rifle lay on top of the beaver skins. The six hunters who were to act as his guard stood by the sleds.”

“Where is the girl?” the Pole demanded. “Bring her up to the sleds before the test goes on.”

When this had been carried out, Subienkow lay down in the snow, resting his head on the log like a tired child about to sleep. He had lived so many dreary years that he was indeed tired.

“I laugh at you and your strength, O Makamuk,” he said. “Strike, and strike hard.”

He lifted his hand. Makamuk swung the axe, a broadaxe for the squaring of logs. The bright steel flashed through the frosty air, poised for a perceptible instant above Makamuk’s head, then descended upon Subienkow’s bare neck. Clear through flesh and bone it cut its way, biting deeply into the log beneath. The amazed savages saw the head bounce a yard away from the blood-spouting trunk.

There was a great bewilderment and silence, while slowly it began to dawn in their minds that there had been no medicine. The fur-thief had outwitted them. Alone, of all their prisoners, he had escaped the torture. That had been the stake for which he played. A great roar of laughter went up. Makamuk bowed his head in shame. The fur-thief had fooled him. He had lost face before all his people. Still they continued to roar out their laughter. Makamuk turned, and with bowed head stalked away. He knew that thenceforth he would be no longer known as Makamuk. He would be Lost Face; the record of his shame would be with him until he died; and whenever the tribes gathered in the spring for the salmon, or in the summer for the trading, the story would pass back and forth across the camp-fires of how the fur-thief died peaceably, at a single stroke, by the hand of Lost Face.

“Who was Lost Face?” he could hear, in anticipation, some insolent young buck demand, “Oh, Lost Face,” would be the answer, “he who once was Makamuk in the days before he cut off the fur-thief’s head.”

The Lost Poacher

“But they won’t take excuses. You’re across the line, and that’s enough. They’ll take you. In you go, Siberia and the salt-mines. And as for Uncle Sam, why, what’s he to know about it? Never a word will get back to the States. ‘The Mary Thomas,’ the papers will say, ‘the Mary Thomas lost with all hands. Probably in a typhoon in the Japanese seas.’ That’s what the papers will say, and people, too. In you go, Siberia and the salt-mines. Dead to the world and kith and kin, though you live fifty years.”

In such manner John Lewis, commonly known as the “sea-lawyer,” settled the matter out of hand.

It was a serious moment in the fore-castle of the Mary Thomas. No sooner had the watch below begun to talk the trouble over, than the watch on deck came down and joined them. As there was no wind, every hand could be spared with the exception of the man at the wheel, and he remained only for the sake of discipline. Even “Bub” Russell, the cabin-boy, had crept forward to hear what was going on.

However, it was a serious moment, as the grave faces of the sailors bore witness. For the three preceding months the Mary Thomas sealing schooner had hunted the seal pack along the coast of Japan and north to Bering Sea. Here, on the Asiatic side of the sea, they were forced to give over the chase, or rather, to go no farther; for beyond, the Russian cruisers patrolled forbidden ground, where the seals might breed in peace.

A week before she had fallen into a heavy fog accompanied by calm. Since then the fog-bank had not lifted, and the only wind had been light airs and catspaws. This in itself was not so bad, for the sealing schooners are never in a hurry so long as they are in the midst of the seals; but the trouble lay in the fact that the current at this point bore heavily to the north. Thus the Mary Thomas had unwittingly drifted across the line, and every hour she was penetrating, unwillingly, farther and farther into the dangerous waters where the Russian bear kept guard.

How far she had drifted no man knew. The sun had not been visible for a week, nor the stars, and the captain had been unable to take observations in order to determine his position. At any moment a cruiser might swoop down and hale the crew away to Siberia. The fate of other poaching seal-hunters was too well known to the men of the Mary Thomas, and there was cause for grave faces.

“Mine friends,” spoke up a German boat-steerer, “it vas a pad piziness. Shust as ve make a big catch, und all honest, somedings go wrong, und der Russians nab us, dake our skins and our schooner, und send us mit der anarchists to Siberia. Ach! a pretty pad piziness!”

“Yes, that’s where it hurts,” the sea lawyer went on. “Fifteen hundred skins in the salt piles, and all honest, a big pay-day coming to every man Jack of us, and then to be captured and lose it all! it’d be different if we’d been poaching, but it’s all honest work in open water.”

“But if we haven’t done anything wrong, they can’t do anything to us, can they?” Bub queried.

“It strikes me as ‘ow it ain’t the proper thing for a boy o’ your age shovin’ in when ‘is elders is talkin’,” protested an English sailor, from over the edge of his bunk.

“Oh, that’s all right, Jack,” answered the sea-lawyer. “He’s a perfect right to. Ain’t he just as liable to lose his wages as the rest of us?”

“Wouldn’t give thruppence for them!” Jack sniffed back. He had been planning to go home and see his family in Chelsea when he was paid Off, and he was now feeling rather blue over the highly possible loss, not only of his pay, but of his liberty.

“How are they to know?” the sea-lawyer asked in answer to Bub’s previous question. “Here we are in forbidden water. How do they know but what we came here of our own accord? Here we are, fifteen hundred skins in the hold. How do they know whether we got them in open water or in the closed sea? Don’t you see, Bub, the evidence is all against us. If you caught a man with his pockets full of apples like those which grow on your tree, and if you caught him in your tree besides, what’d you think if he told you he couldn’t help it, and had just been sort of blown there, and that anyway those apples came from some other tree — what’d you think, eh?”

Bub saw it clearly when put in that light, and shook his head despondently.

“You’d rather be dead than go to Siberia,” one of the boat-pullers said. “They put you into the salt-mines and work you till you die. Never see daylight again. Why, I’ve heard tell of one fellow that was chained to his mate, and that mate died. And they were both chained together! And if they send you to the quicksilver mines you get salivated. I’d rather be hung than salivated.”

“Wot’s salivated?” Jack asked, suddenly sitting up in his bunk at the hint of fresh misfortunes.

“Why, the quicksilver gets into your blood; I think that’s the way. And your gums all swell like you had the scurvy, only worse, and your teeth get loose in your jaws. And big ulcers form, and then you die horrible. The strongest man can’t last long a-mining quicksilver.”

“A pad piziness,” the boat-steerer reiterated, dolorously, in the silence which followed. “A pad piziness. I vish I was in Yokohama. Eh? Vot vas dot?”

The vessel had suddenly heeled over. The decks were aslant. A tin pannikin rolled down the inclined plane, rattling and banging. From above came the slapping of canvas and the quivering rat-tat-tat of the after leech of the loosely stretched foresail. Then the mate’s voice sang down the hatch, “All hands on deck and make sail!”

Never had such summons been answered with more enthusiasm. The calm had broken. The wind had come which was to carry them south into safety. With a wild cheer all sprang on deck. Working with mad haste, they flung out topsails, flying jibs

and stay-sails. As they worked, the fog-bank lifted and the black vault of heaven, bespangled with the old familiar stars, rushed into view. When all was ship-shape, the Mary Thomas was lying gallantly over on her side to a beam wind and plunging ahead due south.

“Steamer’s lights ahead on the port bow, sir!” cried the lookout from his station on the fore-castle-head. There was excitement in the man’s voice.

The captain sent Bub below for his night-glasses. Everybody crowded to the lee-rail to gaze at the suspicious stranger, which already began to loom up vague and indistinct. In those unfrequented waters the chance was one in a thousand that it could be anything else than a Russian patrol. The captain was still anxiously gazing through the glasses, when a flash of flame left the stranger’s side, followed by the loud report of a cannon. The worst fears were confirmed. It was a patrol, evidently firing across the bows of the Mary Thomas in order to make her heave to.

“Hard down with your helm!” the captain commanded the steersman, all the life gone out of his voice. Then to the crew, “Back over the jib and foresail! Run down the flying jib! Clew up the foretopsail! And aft here and swing on to the main-sheet!”

The Mary Thomas ran into the eye of the wind, lost headway, and fell to curtesying gravely to the long seas rolling up from the west.

The cruiser steamed a little nearer and lowered a boat. The sealers watched in heart-broken silence. They could see the white bulk of the boat as it was slacked away to the water, and its crew sliding aboard. They could hear the creaking of the davits and the commands of the officers. Then the boat sprang away under the impulse of the oars, and came toward them. The wind had been rising, and already the sea was too rough to permit the frail craft to lie alongside the tossing schooner; but watching their chance, and taking advantage of the boarding ropes thrown to them, an officer and a couple of men clambered aboard. The boat then sheered off into safety and lay to its oars, a young midshipman, sitting in the stern and holding the yoke-lines, in charge.

The officer, whose uniform disclosed his rank as that of second lieutenant in the Russian navy, went below with the captain of the Mary Thomas to look at the ship’s papers. A few minutes later he emerged, and upon his sailors removing the hatch-covers, passed down into the hold with a lantern to inspect the salt piles. It was a goodly heap which confronted him — fifteen hundred fresh skins, the season’s catch; and under the circumstances he could have had but one conclusion.

“I am very sorry,” he said, in broken English to the sealing captain, when he again came on deck, “but it is my duty, in the name of the tsar, to seize your vessel as a poacher caught with fresh skins in the closed sea. The penalty, as you may know, is confiscation and imprisonment.”

The captain of the Mary Thomas shrugged his shoulders in seeming indifference, and turned away. Although they may restrain all outward show, strong men, under unmerited misfortune, are sometimes very close to tears. Just then the vision of his little California home, and of the wife and two yellow-haired boys, was strong upon

him, and there was a strange, choking sensation in his throat, which made him afraid that if he attempted to speak he would sob instead.

And also there was upon him the duty he owed his men. No weakness before them, for he must be a tower of strength to sustain them in misfortune. He had already explained to the second lieutenant, and knew the hopelessness of the situation. As the sea-lawyer had said, the evidence was all against him. So he turned aft, and fell to pacing up and down the poop of the vessel over which he was no longer commander.

The Russian officer now took temporary charge. He ordered more of his men aboard, and had all the canvas clewed up and furled snugly away. While this was being done, the boat plied back and forth between the two vessels, passing a heavy hawser, which was made fast to the great towing-bitts on the schooner's fore-castle-head. During all this work the sealers stood about in sullen groups. It was madness to think of resisting, with the guns of a man-of-war not a biscuit-toss away, — but they refused to lend a hand, preferring instead to maintain a gloomy silence.

Having accomplished his task, the lieutenant ordered all but four of his men back into the boat. Then the midshipman, a lad of sixteen, looking strangely mature and dignified in his uniform and sword, came aboard to take command of the captured sealer. Just as the lieutenant prepared to depart, his eyes chanced to alight upon Bub. Without a word of warning, he seized him by the arm and dropped him over the rail into the waiting boat; and then, with a parting wave of his hand, he followed him.

It was only natural that Bub should be frightened at this unexpected happening. All the terrible stories he had heard of the Russians served to make him fear them, and now returned to his mind with double force. To be captured by them was bad enough, but to be carried off by them, away from his comrades, was a fate of which he had not dreamed.

“Be a good boy, Bub,” the captain called to him, as the boat drew away from the Mary Thomas's side, “and tell the truth!”

“Aye, aye, sir!” he answered, bravely enough by all outward appearance. He felt a certain pride of race, and was ashamed to be a coward before these strange enemies, these wild Russian bears.

“Und be politeful!” the German boat-steerer added, his rough voice lifting across the water like a fog-horn.

Bub waved his hand in farewell, and his mates clustered along the rail as they answered with a cheering shout. He found room in the sternsheets, where he fell to regarding the lieutenant. He didn't look so wild or bearish, after all — very much like other men, Bub concluded, and the sailors were much the same as all other man-of-war's men he had ever known. Nevertheless, as his feet struck the steel deck of the cruiser, he felt as if he had entered the portals of a prison.

For a few minutes he was left unheeded. The sailors hoisted the boat up, and swung it in on the davits. Then great clouds of black smoke poured out of the funnels, and they were under way — to Siberia, Bub could not help but think. He saw the Mary

Thomas swing abruptly into line as she took the pressure from the hawser, and her side-lights, red and green, rose and fell as she was towed through the sea.

Bub's eyes dimmed at the melancholy sight, but — but just then the lieutenant came to take him down to the commander, and he straightened up and set his lips firmly, as if this were a very commonplace affair and he were used to being sent to Siberia every day in the week. The cabin in which the commander sat was like a palace compared to the humble fittings of the *Mary Thomas*, and the commander himself, in gold lace and dignity, was a most august personage, quite unlike the simple man who navigated his schooner on the trail of the seal pack.

Bub now quickly learned why he had been brought aboard, and in the prolonged questioning which followed, told nothing but the plain truth. The truth was harmless; only a lie could have injured his cause. He did not know much, except that they had been sealing far to the south in open water, and that when the calm and fog came down upon them, being close to the line, they had drifted across. Again and again he insisted that they had not lowered a boat or shot a seal in the week they had been drifting about in the forbidden sea; but the commander chose to consider all that he said to be a tissue of falsehoods, and adopted a bullying tone in an effort to frighten the boy. He threatened and cajoled by turns, but failed in the slightest to shake Bub's statements, and at last ordered him out of his presence.

By some oversight, Bub was not put in anybody's charge, and wandered up on deck unobserved. Sometimes the sailors, in passing, bent curious glances upon him, but otherwise he was left strictly alone. Nor could he have attracted much attention, for he was small, the night dark, and the watch on deck intent on its own business. Stumbling over the strange decks, he made his way aft where he could look upon the side-lights of the *Mary Thomas*, following steadily in the rear.

For a long while he watched, and then lay down in the darkness close to where the hawser passed over the stern to the captured schooner. Once an officer came up and examined the straining rope to see if it were chafing, but Bub cowered away in the shadow undiscovered. This, however, gave him an idea which concerned the lives and liberties of twenty-two men, and which was to avert crushing sorrow from more than one happy home many thousand miles away.

In the first place, he reasoned, the crew were all guiltless of any crime, and yet were being carried relentlessly away to imprisonment in Siberia — a living death, he had heard, and he believed it implicitly. In the second place, he was a prisoner, hard and fast, with no chance of escape. In the third, it was possible for the twenty-two men on the *Mary Thomas* to escape. The only thing which bound them was a fourinch hawser. They dared not cut it at their end, for a watch was sure to be maintained upon it by their Russian captors; but at this end, ah! at his end

Bub did not stop to reason further. Wriggling close to the hawser, he opened his jack-knife and went to work. The blade was not very sharp, and he sawed away, rope-yarn by rope-yarn, the awful picture of the solitary Siberian exile he must endure growing clearer and more terrible at every stroke. Such a fate was bad enough to undergo with

one's comrades, but to face it alone seemed frightful. And besides, the very act he was performing was sure to bring greater punishment upon him.

In the midst of such somber thoughts, he heard footsteps approaching. He wriggled away into the shadow. An officer stopped where he had been working, half-stooped to examine the hawser, then changed his mind and straightened up. For a few minutes he stood there, gazing at the lights of the captured schooner, and then went forward again.

Now was the time! Bub crept back and went on sawing. Now two parts were severed. Now three. But one remained. The tension upon this was so great that it readily yielded. Splash! The freed end went overboard. He lay quietly, his heart in his mouth, listening. No one on the cruiser but himself had heard.

He saw the red and green lights of the Mary Thomas grow dimmer and dimmer. Then a faint hallo came over the water from the Russian prize crew. Still nobody heard. The smoke continued to pour out of the cruiser's funnels, and her propellers throbbed as mightily as ever.

What was happening on the Mary Thomas? Bub could only surmise; but of one thing he was certain: his comrades would assert themselves and overpower the four sailors and the midshipman. A few minutes later he saw a small flash, and straining his ears heard the very faint report of a pistol. Then, A joy! both the red and green lights suddenly disappeared. The Mary Thomas was retaken!

Just as an officer came aft, Bub crept forward, and hid away in one of the boats. Not an instant too soon. The alarm was given. Loud voices rose in command. The cruiser altered her course. An electric search-light began to throw its white rays across the sea, here, there, everywhere; but in its flashing path no tossing schooner was revealed.

Bub went to sleep soon after that, nor did he wake till the gray of dawn. The engines were pulsing monotonously, and the water, splashing noisily, told him the decks were being washed down. One sweeping glance, and he saw that they were alone on the expanse of ocean. The Mary Thomas had escaped. As he lifted his head, a roar of laughter went up from the sailors. Even the officer, who ordered him taken below and locked up, could not quite conceal the laughter in his eyes. Bub thought often in the days of confinement which followed, that they were not very angry with him for what he had done.

He was not far from right. There is a certain innate nobility deep down in the hearts of all men, which forces them to admire a brave act, even if it is performed by an enemy. The Russians were in nowise different from other men. True, a boy had outwitted them; but they could not blame him, and they were sore puzzled as to what to do with him. It would never do to take a little mite like him in to represent all that remained of the lost poacher.

So, two weeks later, a United States man-of-war, steaming out of the Russian port of Vladivostok, was signaled by a Russian cruiser. A boat passed between the two ships, and a small boy dropped over the rail upon the deck of the American vessel. A

week later he was put ashore at Hakodate, and after some telegraphing, his fare was paid on the railroad to Yokohama.

From the depot he hurried through the quaint Japanese streets to the harbor, and hired a sampan boatman to put him aboard a certain vessel whose familiar rigging had quickly caught his eye. Her gaskets were Off, her sails unfurled; she was just starting back to the United States. As he came closer, a crowd of sailors sprang upon the forecastle head, and the windlass-bars rose and fell as the anchor was torn from its muddy bottom.

“Yankee ship come down the ribber!” the sea-lawyer’s voice rolled out as he led the anchor song.

“Pull, my bully boys, pull!” roared back the old familiar chorus, the men’s bodies lifting and bending to the rhythm.

Bub Russell paid the boatman and stepped on deck. The anchor was forgotten. A mighty cheer went up from the men, and almost before he could catch his breath he was on the shoulders of the captain, surrounded by his mates, and endeavoring to answer twenty questions to the second.

The next day a schooner hove to off a Japanese fishing village, sent ashore four sailors and a little midshipman, and sailed away. These men did not talk English, but they had money and quickly made their way to Yokohama. From that day the Japanese village folk never heard anything more about them, and they are still a much-talked-of mystery. As the Russian government never said anything about the incident, the United States is still ignorant of the whereabouts of the lost poacher, nor has she ever heard, officially, of the way in which some of her citizens “shanghaied” five subjects of the tsar. Even nations have secrets sometimes.

Love of Life

“This out of all will remain —
They have lived and have tossed:
So much of the game will be gain,
Though the gold of the dice has been lost.”

THEY limped painfully down the bank, and once the foremost of the two men staggered among the rough-strewn rocks. They were tired and weak, and their faces had the drawn expression of patience which comes of hardship long endured. They were heavily burdened with blanket packs which were strapped to their shoulders. Headstraps, passing across the forehead, helped support these packs. Each man carried a rifle. They walked in a stooped posture, the shoulders well forward, the head still farther forward, the eyes bent upon the ground.

“I wish we had just about two of them cartridges that’s layin’ in that cache of ours,” said the second man.

His voice was utterly and drearily expressionless. He spoke without enthusiasm; and the first man, limping into the milky stream that foamed over the rocks, vouchsafed no reply.

The other man followed at his heels. They did not remove their foot-gear, though the water was icy cold—so cold that their ankles ached and their feet went numb. In places the water dashed against their knees, and both men staggered for footing.

The man who followed slipped on a smooth boulder, nearly fell, but recovered himself with a violent effort, at the same time uttering a sharp exclamation of pain. He seemed faint and dizzy and put out his free hand while he reeled, as though seeking support against the air. When he had steadied himself he stepped forward, but reeled again and nearly fell. Then he stood still and looked at the other man, who had never turned his head.

The man stood still for fully a minute, as though debating with himself. Then he called out:

“I say, Bill, I’ve sprained my ankle.”

Bill staggered on through the milky water. He did not look around. The man watched him go, and though his face was expressionless as ever, his eyes were like the eyes of a wounded deer.

The other man limped up the farther bank and continued straight on without looking back. The man in the stream watched him. His lips trembled a little, so that the rough thatch of brown hair which covered them was visibly agitated. His tongue even strayed out to moisten them.

“Bill!” he cried out. It was the pleading cry of a strong man in distress, but Bill’s head did not turn. The man watched him go, limping grotesquely and lurching forward with stammering gait up the slow slope toward the soft sky-line of the low-lying hill. He watched him go till he passed over the crest and disappeared. Then he turned his gaze and slowly took in the circle of the world that remained to him now that Bill was gone.

Near the horizon the sun was smouldering dimly, almost obscured by formless mists and vapors, which gave an impression of mass and density without outline or tangibility. The man pulled out his watch, the while resting his weight on one leg. It was four o’clock, and as the season was near the last of July or first of August,—he did not know the precise date within a week or two,—he knew that the sun roughly marked the northwest. He looked to the south and knew that somewhere beyond those bleak hills lay the Great Bear Lake; also, he knew that in that direction the Arctic Circle cut its forbidding way across the Canadian Barrens. This stream in which he stood was a feeder to the Coppermine River, which in turn flowed north and emptied into Coronation Gulf and the Arctic Ocean. He had never been there, but he had seen it, once, on a Hudson Bay Company chart.

Again his gaze completed the circle of the world about him. It was not a heartening spectacle. Everywhere was soft sky-line. The hills were all low-lying. There were no trees, no shrubs, no grasses—naught but a tremendous and terrible desolation that sent fear swiftly dawning into his eyes.

“Bill!” he whispered, once and twice; “Bill!”

He cowered in the midst of the milky water, as though the vastness were pressing in upon him with overwhelming force, brutally crushing him with its complacent awfulness. He began to shake as with an ague-fit, till the gun fell from his hand with a splash. This served to rouse him. He fought with his fear and pulled himself together, groping in the water and recovering the weapon. He hitched his pack farther over on his left shoulder, so as to take a portion of its weight from off the injured ankle. Then he proceeded, slowly and carefully, wincing with pain, to the bank.

He did not stop. With a desperation that was madness, unmindful of the pain, he hurried up the slope to the crest of the hill over which his comrade had disappeared—more grotesque and comical by far than that limping, jerking comrade. But at the crest he saw a shallow valley, empty of life. He fought with his fear again, overcame it, hitched the pack still farther over on his left shoulder, and lurched on down the slope.

The bottom of the valley was soggy with water, which the thick moss held, sponge-like, close to the surface. This water squirted out from under his feet at every step, and each time he lifted a foot the action culminated in a sucking sound as the wet moss reluctantly released its grip. He picked his way from muskeg to muskeg, and followed the other man’s footsteps along and across the rocky ledges which thrust like islets through the sea of moss.

Though alone, he was not lost. Farther on he knew he would come to where dead spruce and fir, very small and weazened, bordered the shore of a little lake, the titchin-

nichilie, in the tongue of the country, the "land of little sticks." And into that lake flowed a small stream, the water of which was not milky. There was rush-grass on that stream—this he remembered well—but no timber, and he would follow it till its first trickle ceased at a divide. He would cross this divide to the first trickle of another stream, flowing to the west, which he would follow until it emptied into the river Dease, and here he would find a cache under an upturned canoe and piled over with many rocks. And in this cache would be ammunition for his empty gun, fish-hooks and lines, a small net—all the utilities for the killing and snaring of food. Also, he would find flour,—not much,—a piece of bacon, and some beans.

Bill would be waiting for him there, and they would paddle away south down the Dease to the Great Bear Lake. And south across the lake they would go, ever south, till they gained the Mackenzie. And south, still south, they would go, while the winter raced vainly after them, and the ice formed in the eddies, and the days grew chill and crisp, south to some warm Hudson Bay Company post, where timber grew tall and generous and there was grub without end.

These were the thoughts of the man as he strove onward. But hard as he strove with his body, he strove equally hard with his mind, trying to think that Bill had not deserted him, that Bill would surely wait for him at the cache. He was compelled to think this thought, or else there would not be any use to strive, and he would have lain down and died. And as the dim ball of the sun sank slowly into the northwest he covered every inch—and many times—of his and Bill's flight south before the downcoming winter. And he conned the grub of the cache and the grub of the Hudson Bay Company post over and over again. He had not eaten for two days; for a far longer time he had not had all he wanted to eat. Often he stooped and picked pale muskeg berries, put them into his mouth, and chewed and swallowed them. A muskeg berry is a bit of seed enclosed in a bit of water. In the mouth the water melts away and the seed chews sharp and bitter. The man knew there was no nourishment in the berries, but he chewed them patiently with a hope greater than knowledge and defying experience.

At nine o'clock he stubbed his toe on a rocky ledge, and from sheer weariness and weakness staggered and fell. He lay for some time, without movement, on his side. Then he slipped out of the pack-straps and clumsily dragged himself into a sitting posture. It was not yet dark, and in the lingering twilight he groped about among the rocks for shreds of dry moss. When he had gathered a heap he built a fire,—a smouldering, smudgy fire,—and put a tin pot of water on to boil.

He unwrapped his pack and the first thing he did was to count his matches. There were sixty-seven. He counted them three times to make sure. He divided them into several portions, wrapping them in oil paper, disposing of one bunch in his empty tobacco pouch, of another bunch in the inside band of his battered hat, of a third bunch under his shirt on the chest. This accomplished, a panic came upon him, and he unwrapped them all and counted them again. There were still sixty-seven.

He dried his wet foot-gear by the fire. The moccasins were in soggy shreds. The blanket socks were worn through in places, and his feet were raw and bleeding. His

ankle was throbbing, and he gave it an examination. It had swollen to the size of his knee. He tore a long strip from one of his two blankets and bound the ankle tightly. He tore other strips and bound them about his feet to serve for both moccasins and socks. Then he drank the pot of water, steaming hot, wound his watch, and crawled between his blankets.

He slept like a dead man. The brief darkness around midnight came and went. The sun arose in the northeast—at least the day dawned in that quarter, for the sun was hidden by gray clouds.

At six o'clock he awoke, quietly lying on his back. He gazed straight up into the gray sky and knew that he was hungry. As he rolled over on his elbow he was startled by a loud snort, and saw a bull caribou regarding him with alert curiosity. The animal was not more than fifty feet away, and instantly into the man's mind leaped the vision and the savor of a caribou steak sizzling and frying over a fire. Mechanically he reached for the empty gun, drew a bead, and pulled the trigger. The bull snorted and leaped away, his hoofs rattling and clattering as he fled across the ledges.

The man cursed and flung the empty gun from him. He groaned aloud as he started to drag himself to his feet. It was a slow and arduous task. His joints were like rusty hinges. They worked harshly in their sockets, with much friction, and each bending or unbending was accomplished only through a sheer exertion of will. When he finally gained his feet, another minute or so was consumed in straightening up, so that he could stand erect as a man should stand.

He crawled up a small knoll and surveyed the prospect. There were no trees, no bushes, nothing but a gray sea of moss scarcely diversified by gray rocks, gray lakelets, and gray streamlets. The sky was gray. There was no sun nor hint of sun. He had no idea of north, and he had forgotten the way he had come to this spot the night before. But he was not lost. He knew that. Soon he would come to the land of the little sticks. He felt that it lay off to the left somewhere, not far—possibly just over the next low hill.

He went back to put his pack into shape for travelling. He assured himself of the existence of his three separate parcels of matches, though he did not stop to count them. But he did linger, debating, over a squat moose-hide sack. It was not large. He could hide it under his two hands. He knew that it weighed fifteen pounds,—as much as all the rest of the pack,—and it worried him. He finally set it to one side and proceeded to roll the pack. He paused to gaze at the squat moose-hide sack. He picked it up hastily with a defiant glance about him, as though the desolation were trying to rob him of it; and when he rose to his feet to stagger on into the day, it was included in the pack on his back.

He bore away to the left, stopping now and again to eat muskeg berries. His ankle had stiffened, his limp was more pronounced, but the pain of it was as nothing compared with the pain of his stomach. The hunger pangs were sharp. They gnawed and gnawed until he could not keep his mind steady on the course he must pursue to

gain the land of little sticks. The muskeg berries did not allay this gnawing, while they made his tongue and the roof of his mouth sore with their irritating bite.

He came upon a valley where rock ptarmigan rose on whirring wings from the ledges and muskegs. Ker-ker-ker was the cry they made. He threw stones at them, but could not hit them. He placed his pack on the ground and stalked them as a cat stalks a sparrow. The sharp rocks cut through his pants' legs till his knees left a trail of blood; but the hurt was lost in the hurt of his hunger. He squirmed over the wet moss, saturating his clothes and chilling his body; but he was not aware of it, so great was his fever for food. And always the ptarmigan rose, whirring, before him, till their ker-ker-ker became a mock to him, and he cursed them and cried aloud at them with their own cry.

Once he crawled upon one that must have been asleep. He did not see it till it shot up in his face from its rocky nook. He made a clutch as startled as was the rise of the ptarmigan, and there remained in his hand three tail-feathers. As he watched its flight he hated it, as though it had done him some terrible wrong. Then he returned and shouldered his pack.

As the day wore along he came into valleys or swales where game was more plentiful. A band of caribou passed by, twenty and odd animals, tantalizingly within rifle range. He felt a wild desire to run after them, a certitude that he could run them down. A black fox came toward him, carrying a ptarmigan in his mouth. The man shouted. It was a fearful cry, but the fox, leaping away in fright, did not drop the ptarmigan.

Late in the afternoon he followed a stream, milky with lime, which ran through sparse patches of rush-grass. Grasping these rushes firmly near the root, he pulled up what resembled a young onion-sprout no larger than a shingle-nail. It was tender, and his teeth sank into it with a crunch that promised deliciously of food. But its fibers were tough. It was composed of stringy filaments saturated with water, like the berries, and devoid of nourishment. He threw off his pack and went into the rush-grass on hands and knees, crunching and munching, like some bovine creature.

He was very weary and often wished to rest—to lie down and sleep; but he was continually driven on—not so much by his desire to gain the land of little sticks as by his hunger. He searched little ponds for frogs and dug up the earth with his nails for worms, though he knew in spite that neither frogs nor worms existed so far north.

He looked into every pool of water vainly, until, as the long twilight came on, he discovered a solitary fish, the size of a minnow, in such a pool. He plunged his arm in up to the shoulder, but it eluded him. He reached for it with both hands and stirred up the milky mud at the bottom. In his excitement he fell in, wetting himself to the waist. Then the water was too muddy to admit of his seeing the fish, and he was compelled to wait until the sediment had settled.

The pursuit was renewed, till the water was again muddied. But he could not wait. He unstrapped the tin bucket and began to bale the pool. He baled wildly at first, splashing himself and flinging the water so short a distance that it ran back into the pool. He worked more carefully, striving to be cool, though his heart was pounding

against his chest and his hands were trembling. At the end of half an hour the pool was nearly dry. Not a cupful of water remained. And there was no fish. He found a hidden crevice among the stones through which it had escaped to the adjoining and larger pool—a pool which he could not empty in a night and a day. Had he known of the crevice, he could have closed it with a rock at the beginning and the fish would have been his.

Thus he thought, and crumpled up and sank down upon the wet earth. At first he cried softly to himself, then he cried loudly to the pitiless desolation that ringed him around; and for a long time after he was shaken by great dry sobs.

He built a fire and warmed himself by drinking quarts of hot water, and made camp on a rocky ledge in the same fashion he had the night before. The last thing he did was to see that his matches were dry and to wind his watch. The blankets were wet and clammy. His ankle pulsed with pain. But he knew only that he was hungry, and through his restless sleep he dreamed of feasts and banquets and of food served and spread in all imaginable ways.

He awoke chilled and sick. There was no sun. The gray of earth and sky had become deeper, more profound. A raw wind was blowing, and the first flurries of snow were whitening the hilltops. The air about him thickened and grew white while he made a fire and boiled more water. It was wet snow, half rain, and the flakes were large and soggy. At first they melted as soon as they came in contact with the earth, but ever more fell, covering the ground, putting out the fire, spoiling his supply of moss-fuel.

This was a signal for him to strap on his pack and stumble onward, he knew not where. He was not concerned with the land of little sticks, nor with Bill and the cache under the upturned canoe by the river Dease. He was mastered by the verb “to eat.” He was hunger-mad. He took no heed of the course he pursued, so long as that course led him through the swale bottoms. He felt his way through the wet snow to the watery muskeg berries, and went by feel as he pulled up the rush-grass by the roots. But it was tasteless stuff and did not satisfy. He found a weed that tasted sour and he ate all he could find of it, which was not much, for it was a creeping growth, easily hidden under the several inches of snow.

He had no fire that night, nor hot water, and crawled under his blanket to sleep the broken hunger-sleep. The snow turned into a cold rain. He awakened many times to feel it falling on his upturned face. Day came—a gray day and no sun. It had ceased raining. The keenness of his hunger had departed. Sensibility, as far as concerned the yearning for food, had been exhausted. There was a dull, heavy ache in his stomach, but it did not bother him so much. He was more rational, and once more he was chiefly interested in the land of little sticks and the cache by the river Dease.

He ripped the remnant of one of his blankets into strips and bound his bleeding feet. Also, he recinched the injured ankle and prepared himself for a day of travel. When he came to his pack, he paused long over the squat moose-hide sack, but in the end it went with him.

The snow had melted under the rain, and only the hilltops showed white. The sun came out, and he succeeded in locating the points of the compass, though he knew now that he was lost. Perhaps, in his previous days' wanderings, he had edged away too far to the left. He now bore off to the right to counteract the possible deviation from his true course.

Though the hunger pangs were no longer so exquisite, he realized that he was weak. He was compelled to pause for frequent rests, when he attacked the muskeg berries and rush-grass patches. His tongue felt dry and large, as though covered with a fine hairy growth, and it tasted bitter in his mouth. His heart gave him a great deal of trouble. When he had travelled a few minutes it would begin a remorseless thump, thump, thump, and then leap up and away in a painful flutter of beats that choked him and made him go faint and dizzy.

In the middle of the day he found two minnows in a large pool. It was impossible to bale it, but he was calmer now and managed to catch them in his tin bucket. They were no longer than his little finger, but he was not particularly hungry. The dull ache in his stomach had been growing duller and fainter. It seemed almost that his stomach was dozing. He ate the fish raw, masticating with painstaking care, for the eating was an act of pure reason. While he had no desire to eat, he knew that he must eat to live.

In the evening he caught three more minnows, eating two and saving the third for breakfast. The sun had dried stray shreds of moss, and he was able to warm himself with hot water. He had not covered more than ten miles that day; and the next day, travelling whenever his heart permitted him, he covered no more than five miles. But his stomach did not give him the slightest uneasiness. It had gone to sleep. He was in a strange country, too, and the caribou were growing more plentiful, also the wolves. Often their yelps drifted across the desolation, and once he saw three of them slinking away before his path.

Another night; and in the morning, being more rational, he untied the leather string that fastened the squat moose-hide sack. From its open mouth poured a yellow stream of coarse gold-dust and nuggets. He roughly divided the gold in halves, caching one half on a prominent ledge, wrapped in a piece of blanket, and returning the other half to the sack. He also began to use strips of the one remaining blanket for his feet. He still clung to his gun, for there were cartridges in that cache by the river Dease. This was a day of fog, and this day hunger awoke in him again. He was very weak and was afflicted with a giddiness which at times blinded him. It was no uncommon thing now for him to stumble and fall; and stumbling once, he fell squarely into a ptarmigan nest. There were four newly hatched chicks, a day old—little specks of pulsating life no more than a mouthful; and he ate them ravenously, thrusting them alive into his mouth and crunching them like egg-shells between his teeth. The mother ptarmigan beat about him with great outcry. He used his gun as a club with which to knock her over, but she dodged out of reach. He threw stones at her and with one chance shot broke a wing. Then she fluttered away, running, trailing the broken wing, with him in pursuit.

The little chicks had no more than whetted his appetite. He hopped and bobbed clumsily along on his injured ankle, throwing stones and screaming hoarsely at times; at other times hopping and bobbing silently along, picking himself up grimly and patiently when he fell, or rubbing his eyes with his hand when the giddiness threatened to overpower him.

The chase led him across swampy ground in the bottom of the valley, and he came upon footprints in the soggy moss. They were not his own—he could see that. They must be Bill's. But he could not stop, for the mother ptarmigan was running on. He would catch her first, then he would return and investigate.

He exhausted the mother ptarmigan; but he exhausted himself. She lay panting on her side. He lay panting on his side, a dozen feet away, unable to crawl to her. And as he recovered she recovered, fluttering out of reach as his hungry hand went out to her. The chase was resumed. Night settled down and she escaped. He stumbled from weakness and pitched head foremost on his face, cutting his cheek, his pack upon his back. He did not move for a long while; then he rolled over on his side, wound his watch, and lay there until morning.

Another day of fog. Half of his last blanket had gone into foot-wrappings. He failed to pick up Bill's trail. It did not matter. His hunger was driving him too compellingly—only—he wondered if Bill, too, were lost. By midday the irk of his pack became too oppressive. Again he divided the gold, this time merely spilling half of it on the ground. In the afternoon he threw the rest of it away, there remaining to him only the half-blanket, the tin bucket, and the rifle.

An hallucination began to trouble him. He felt confident that one cartridge remained to him. It was in the chamber of the rifle and he had overlooked it. On the other hand, he knew all the time that the chamber was empty. But the hallucination persisted. He fought it off for hours, then threw his rifle open and was confronted with emptiness. The disappointment was as bitter as though he had really expected to find the cartridge.

He plodded on for half an hour, when the hallucination arose again. Again he fought it, and still it persisted, till for very relief he opened his rifle to unconvince himself. At times his mind wandered farther afield, and he plodded on, a mere automaton, strange conceits and whimsicalities gnawing at his brain like worms. But these excursions out of the real were of brief duration, for ever the pangs of the hunger-bite called him back. He was jerked back abruptly once from such an excursion by a sight that caused him nearly to faint. He reeled and swayed, doddering like a drunken man to keep from falling. Before him stood a horse. A horse! He could not believe his eyes. A thick mist was in them, intershot with sparkling points of light. He rubbed his eyes savagely to clear his vision, and beheld, not a horse, but a great brown bear. The animal was studying him with bellicose curiosity.

The man had brought his gun halfway to his shoulder before he realized. He lowered it and drew his hunting-knife from its beaded sheath at his hip. Before him was meat and life.

He ran his thumb along the edge of his knife. It was sharp. The point was sharp. He would fling himself upon the bear and kill it. But his heart began its warning thump, thump, thump. Then followed the wild upward leap and tattoo of flutters, the pressing as of an iron band about his forehead, the creeping of the dizziness into his brain.

His desperate courage was evicted by a great surge of fear. In his weakness, what if the animal attacked him? He drew himself up to his most imposing stature, gripping the knife and staring hard at the bear. The bear advanced clumsily a couple of steps, reared up, and gave vent to a tentative growl. If the man ran, he would run after him; but the man did not run. He was animated now with the courage of fear. He, too, growled, savagely, terribly, voicing the fear that is to life germane and that lies twisted about life's deepest roots.

The bear edged away to one side, growling menacingly, himself appalled by this mysterious creature that appeared upright and unafraid. But the man did not move. He stood like a statue till the danger was past, when he yielded to a fit of trembling and sank down into the wet moss.

He pulled himself together and went on, afraid now in a new way. It was not the fear that he should die passively from lack of food, but that he should be destroyed violently before starvation had exhausted the last particle of the endeavor in him that made toward surviving. There were the wolves. Back and forth across the desolation drifted their howls, weaving the very air into a fabric of menace that was so tangible that he found himself, arms in the air, pressing it back from him as it might be the walls of a wind-blown tent.

Now and again the wolves, in packs of two and three, crossed his path. But they sheered clear of him. They were not in sufficient numbers, and besides they were hunting the caribou, which did not battle, while this strange creature that walked erect might scratch and bite.

In the late afternoon he came upon scattered bones where the wolves had made a kill. The debris had been a caribou calf an hour before, squawking and running and very much alive. He contemplated the bones, clean-picked and polished, pink with the cell-life in them which had not yet died. Could it possibly be that he might be that ere the day was done! Such was life, eh? A vain and fleeting thing. It was only life that pained. There was no hurt in death. To die was to sleep. It meant cessation, rest. Then why was he not content to die?

But he did not moralize long. He was squatting in the moss, a bone in his mouth, sucking at the shreds of life that still dyed it faintly pink. The sweet meaty taste, thin and elusive almost as a memory, maddened him. He closed his jaws on the bones and crunched. Sometimes it was the bone that broke, sometimes his teeth. Then he crushed the bones between rocks, pounded them to a pulp, and swallowed them. He pounded his fingers, too, in his haste, and yet found a moment in which to feel surprise at the fact that his fingers did not hurt much when caught under the descending rock.

Came frightful days of snow and rain. He did not know when he made camp, when he broke camp. He travelled in the night as much as in the day. He rested wherever

he fell, crawled on whenever the dying life in him flickered up and burned less dimly. He, as a man, no longer strove. It was the life in him, unwilling to die, that drove him on. He did not suffer. His nerves had become blunted, numb, while his mind was filled with weird visions and delicious dreams.

But ever he sucked and chewed on the crushed bones of the caribou calf, the least remnants of which he had gathered up and carried with him. He crossed no more hills or divides, but automatically followed a large stream which flowed through a wide and shallow valley. He did not see this stream nor this valley. He saw nothing save visions. Soul and body walked or crawled side by side, yet apart, so slender was the thread that bound them.

He awoke in his right mind, lying on his back on a rocky ledge. The sun was shining bright and warm. Afar off he heard the squawking of caribou calves. He was aware of vague memories of rain and wind and snow, but whether he had been beaten by the storm for two days or two weeks he did not know.

For some time he lay without movement, the genial sunshine pouring upon him and saturating his miserable body with its warmth. A fine day, he thought. Perhaps he could manage to locate himself. By a painful effort he rolled over on his side. Below him flowed a wide and sluggish river. Its unfamiliarity puzzled him. Slowly he followed it with his eyes, winding in wide sweeps among the bleak, bare hills, bleaker and barer and lower-lying than any hills he had yet encountered. Slowly, deliberately, without excitement or more than the most casual interest, he followed the course of the strange stream toward the sky-line and saw it emptying into a bright and shining sea. He was still unexcited. Most unusual, he thought, a vision or a mirage—more likely a vision, a trick of his disordered mind. He was confirmed in this by sight of a ship lying at anchor in the midst of the shining sea. He closed his eyes for a while, then opened them. Strange how the vision persisted! Yet not strange. He knew there were no seas or ships in the heart of the barren lands, just as he had known there was no cartridge in the empty rifle.

He heard a snuffle behind him—a half-choking gasp or cough. Very slowly, because of his exceeding weakness and stiffness, he rolled over on his other side. He could see nothing near at hand, but he waited patiently. Again came the snuffle and cough, and outlined between two jagged rocks not a score of feet away he made out the gray head of a wolf. The sharp ears were not pricked so sharply as he had seen them on other wolves; the eyes were bleared and bloodshot, the head seemed to droop limply and forlornly. The animal blinked continually in the sunshine. It seemed sick. As he looked it snuffled and coughed again.

This, at least, was real, he thought, and turned on the other side so that he might see the reality of the world which had been veiled from him before by the vision. But the sea still shone in the distance and the ship was plainly discernible. Was it reality, after all? He closed his eyes for a long while and thought, and then it came to him. He had been making north by east, away from the Dease Divide and into the Coppermine Valley. This wide and sluggish river was the Coppermine. That shining sea was the

Arctic Ocean. That ship was a whaler, strayed east, far east, from the mouth of the Mackenzie, and it was lying at anchor in Coronation Gulf. He remembered the Hudson Bay Company chart he had seen long ago, and it was all clear and reasonable to him.

He sat up and turned his attention to immediate affairs. He had worn through the blanket-wrappings, and his feet were shapeless lumps of raw meat. His last blanket was gone. Rifle and knife were both missing. He had lost his hat somewhere, with the bunch of matches in the band, but the matches against his chest were safe and dry inside the tobacco pouch and oil paper. He looked at his watch. It marked eleven o'clock and was still running. Evidently he had kept it wound.

He was calm and collected. Though extremely weak, he had no sensation of pain. He was not hungry. The thought of food was not even pleasant to him, and whatever he did was done by his reason alone. He ripped off his pants' legs to the knees and bound them about his feet. Somehow he had succeeded in retaining the tin bucket. He would have some hot water before he began what he foresaw was to be a terrible journey to the ship.

His movements were slow. He shook as with a palsy. When he started to collect dry moss, he found he could not rise to his feet. He tried again and again, then contented himself with crawling about on hands and knees. Once he crawled near to the sick wolf. The animal dragged itself reluctantly out of his way, licking its chops with a tongue which seemed hardly to have the strength to curl. The man noticed that the tongue was not the customary healthy red. It was a yellowish brown and seemed coated with a rough and half-dry mucus.

After he had drunk a quart of hot water the man found he was able to stand, and even to walk as well as a dying man might be supposed to walk. Every minute or so he was compelled to rest. His steps were feeble and uncertain, just as the wolf's that trailed him were feeble and uncertain; and that night, when the shining sea was blotted out by blackness, he knew he was nearer to it by no more than four miles.

Throughout the night he heard the cough of the sick wolf, and now and then the squawking of the caribou calves. There was life all around him, but it was strong life, very much alive and well, and he knew the sick wolf clung to the sick man's trail in the hope that the man would die first. In the morning, on opening his eyes, he beheld it regarding him with a wistful and hungry stare. It stood crouched, with tail between its legs, like a miserable and woe-begone dog. It shivered in the chill morning wind, and grinned dispiritedly when the man spoke to it in a voice that achieved no more than a hoarse whisper.

The sun rose brightly, and all morning the man tottered and fell toward the ship on the shining sea. The weather was perfect. It was the brief Indian Summer of the high latitudes. It might last a week. To-morrow or next day it might be gone.

In the afternoon the man came upon a trail. It was of another man, who did not walk, but who dragged himself on all fours. The man thought it might be Bill, but he thought in a dull, uninterested way. He had no curiosity. In fact, sensation and emotion had left him. He was no longer susceptible to pain. Stomach and nerves had gone to

sleep. Yet the life that was in him drove him on. He was very weary, but it refused to die. It was because it refused to die that he still ate muskeg berries and minnows, drank his hot water, and kept a wary eye on the sick wolf.

He followed the trail of the other man who dragged himself along, and soon came to the end of it—a few fresh-picked bones where the soggy moss was marked by the foot-pads of many wolves. He saw a squat moose-hide sack, mate to his own, which had been torn by sharp teeth. He picked it up, though its weight was almost too much for his feeble fingers. Bill had carried it to the last. Ha! ha! He would have the laugh on Bill. He would survive and carry it to the ship in the shining sea. His mirth was hoarse and ghastly, like a raven's croak, and the sick wolf joined him, howling lugubriously. The man ceased suddenly. How could he have the laugh on Bill if that were Bill; if those bones, so inky-white and clean, were Bill?

He turned away. Well, Bill had deserted him; but he would not take the gold, nor would he suck Bill's bones. Bill would have, though, had it been the other way around, he mused as he staggered on. He came to a pool of water. Stooping over in quest of minnows, he jerked his head back as though he had been stung. He had caught sight of his reflected face. So horrible was it that sensibility awoke long enough to be shocked. There were three minnows in the pool, which was too large to drain; and after several ineffectual attempts to catch them in the tin bucket he forbore. He was afraid, because of his great weakness, that he might fall in and drown. It was for this reason that he did not trust himself to the river astride one of the many drift-logs which lined its sand-spits.

That day he decreased the distance between him and the ship by three miles; the next day by two—for he was crawling now as Bill had crawled; and the end of the fifth day found the ship still seven miles away and him unable to make even a mile a day. Still the Indian Summer held on, and he continued to crawl and faint, turn and turn about; and ever the sick wolf coughed and wheezed at his heels. His knees had become raw meat like his feet, and though he padded them with the shirt from his back it was a red track he left behind him on the moss and stones. Once, glancing back, he saw the wolf licking hungrily his bleeding trail, and he saw sharply what his own end might be—unless—unless he could get the wolf. Then began as grim a tragedy of existence as was ever played—a sick man that crawled, a sick wolf that limped, two creatures dragging their dying carcasses across the desolation and hunting each other's lives.

Had it been a well wolf, it would not have mattered so much to the man; but the thought of going to feed the maw of that loathsome and all but dead thing was repugnant to him. He was finicky. His mind had begun to wander again, and to be perplexed by hallucinations, while his lucid intervals grew rarer and shorter.

He was awakened once from a faint by a wheeze close in his ear. The wolf leaped lamely back, losing its footing and falling in its weakness. It was ludicrous, but he was not amused. Nor was he even afraid. He was too far gone for that. But his mind was for the moment clear, and he lay and considered. The ship was no more than four miles away. He could see it quite distinctly when he rubbed the mists out of his eyes,

and he could see the white sail of a small boat cutting the water of the shining sea. But he could never crawl those four miles. He knew that, and was very calm in the knowledge. He knew that he could not crawl half a mile. And yet he wanted to live. It was unreasonable that he should die after all he had undergone. Fate asked too much of him. And, dying, he declined to die. It was stark madness, perhaps, but in the very grip of Death he defied Death and refused to die.

He closed his eyes and composed himself with infinite precaution. He steeled himself to keep above the suffocating languor that lapped like a rising tide through all the wells of his being. It was very like a sea, this deadly languor, that rose and rose and drowned his consciousness bit by bit. Sometimes he was all but submerged, swimming through oblivion with a faltering stroke; and again, by some strange alchemy of soul, he would find another shred of will and strike out more strongly.

Without movement he lay on his back, and he could hear, slowly drawing near and nearer, the wheezing intake and output of the sick wolf's breath. It drew closer, ever closer, through an infinitude of time, and he did not move. It was at his ear. The harsh dry tongue grated like sandpaper against his cheek. His hands shot out—or at least he willed them to shoot out. The fingers were curved like talons, but they closed on empty air. Swift and certitude require strength, and the man had not this strength.

The patience of the wolf was terrible. The man's patience was no less terrible. For half a day he lay motionless, fighting off unconsciousness and waiting for the thing that was to feed upon him and upon which he wished to feed. Sometimes the languid sea rose over him and he dreamed long dreams; but ever through it all, waking and dreaming, he waited for the wheezing breath and the harsh caress of the tongue.

He did not hear the breath, and he slipped slowly from some dream to the feel of the tongue along his hand. He waited. The fangs pressed softly; the pressure increased; the wolf was exerting its last strength in an effort to sink teeth in the food for which it had waited so long. But the man had waited long, and the lacerated hand closed on the jaw. Slowly, while the wolf struggled feebly and the hand clutched feebly, the other hand crept across to a grip. Five minutes later the whole weight of the man's body was on top of the wolf. The hands had not sufficient strength to choke the wolf, but the face of the man was pressed close to the throat of the wolf and the mouth of the man was full of hair. At the end of half an hour the man was aware of a warm trickle in his throat. It was not pleasant. It was like molten lead being forced into his stomach, and it was forced by his will alone. Later the man rolled over on his back and slept.

There were some members of a scientific expedition on the whale-ship *Bedford*. From the deck they remarked a strange object on the shore. It was moving down the beach toward the water. They were unable to classify it, and, being scientific men, they climbed into the whale-boat alongside and went ashore to see. And they saw something that was alive but which could hardly be called a man. It was blind, unconscious. It squirmed along the ground like some monstrous worm. Most of its

efforts were ineffectual, but it was persistent, and it writhed and twisted and went ahead perhaps a score of feet an hour.

Three weeks afterward the man lay in a bunk on the whale-ship Bedford, and with tears streaming down his wasted cheeks told who he was and what he had undergone. He also babbled incoherently of his mother, of sunny Southern California, and a home among the orange groves and flowers.

The days were not many after that when he sat at table with the scientific men and ship's officers. He gloated over the spectacle of so much food, watching it anxiously as it went into the mouths of others. With the disappearance of each mouthful an expression of deep regret came into his eyes. He was quite sane, yet he hated those men at meal-time. He was haunted by a fear that the food would not last. He inquired of the cook, the cabin-boy, the captain, concerning the food stores. They reassured him countless times; but he could not believe them, and pried cunningly about the lazarette to see with his own eyes.

It was noticed that the man was getting fat. He grew stouter with each day. The scientific men shook their heads and theorized. They limited the man at his meals, but still his girth increased and he swelled prodigiously under his shirt.

The sailors grinned. They knew. And when the scientific men set a watch on the man, they knew too. They saw him slouch for'ard after breakfast, and, like a mendicant, with outstretched palm, accost a sailor. The sailor grinned and passed him a fragment of sea biscuit. He clutched it avariciously, looked at it as a miser looks at gold, and thrust it into his shirt bosom. Similar were the donations from other grinning sailors. The scientific men were discreet. They let him alone. But they privily examined his bunk. It was lined with hardtack; the mattress was stuffed with hardtack; He was taking precautions against another possible famine—that was all. He would recover from it, the scientific men said; and he did, ere the Bedford's anchor rumbled down in San Francisco Bay.

The Madness of John Harned

I tell this for a fact. It happened in the bull-ring at Quito. I sat in the box with John Harned, and with Maria Valenzuela, and with Luis Cervillos. I saw it happen. I saw it all from first to last. I was on the steamer Ecuadore from Panama to Guayaquil. Maria Valenzuela is my cousin. I have known her always. She is very beautiful. I am a Spaniard – an Ecuadoriano, true, but I am descended from Pedro Patino, who was one of Pizarro’s captains. They were brave men. They were heroes. Did not Pizarro lead three hundred and fifty Spanish cavaliers and four thousand Indians into the far Cordilleras in search of treasure? And did not all the four thousand Indians and three hundred of the brave cavaliers die on that vain quest? But Pedro Patino did not die. He it was that lived to found the family of the Patino. I am Ecuadoriano, true, but I am Spanish. I am Manuel de Jesus Patino. I own many haciendas, and ten thousand Indians are my slaves, though the law says they are free men who work by freedom of contract. The law is a funny thing. We Ecuadorianos laugh at it. It is our law. We make it for ourselves. I am Manuel de Jesus Patino. Remember that name. It will be written some day in history. There are revolutions in Ecuador. We call them elections. It is a good joke is it not — ?what you call a pun?

John Harned was an American. I met him first at the Tivoli hotel in Panama. He had much money – this I have heard. He was going to Lima, but he met Maria Valenzuela in the Tivoli hotel. Maria Valenzuela is my cousin, and she is beautiful. It is true, she is the most beautiful woman in Ecuador. But also is she most beautiful in every country – in Paris, in Madrid, in New York, in Vienna. Always do all men look at her, and John Harned looked long at her at Panama. He loved her, that I know for a fact. She was Ecuadoriano, true – but she was of all countries; she was of all the world. She spoke many languages. She sang – ah! like an artiste. Her smile – wonderful, divine. Her eyes – ah! have I not seen men look in her eyes? They were what you English call amazing. They were promises of paradise. Men drowned themselves in her eyes.

Maria Valenzuela was rich – richer than I, who am accounted very rich in Ecuador. But John Harned did not care for her money. He had a heart – a funny heart. He was a fool. He did not go to Lima. He left the steamer at Guayaquil and followed her to Quito. She was coming home from Europe and other places. I do not see what she found in him, but she liked him. This I know for a fact, else he would not have followed her to Quito. She asked him to come. Well do I remember the occasion. She said:

“Come to Quito and I will show you the bullfight – brave, clever, magnificent!” But he said: “I go to Lima, not Quito. Such is my passage engaged on the steamer.”

“You travel for pleasure – no?” said Maria Valenzuela; and she looked at him as only Maria Valenzuela could look, her eyes warm with the promise.

And he came. No; he did not come for the bull-fight. He came because of what he had seen in her eyes. Women like Maria Valenzuela are born once in a hundred years. They are of no country and no time. They are what you call goddesses. Men fall down at their feet. They play with men and run them through their pretty fingers like sand. Cleopatra was such a woman they say; and so was Circe. She turned men into swine. Ha! ha! It is true – no?

It all came about because Maria Valenzuela said:

“You English people are – what shall I say — ?savage – no? You prize-fight. Two men each hit the other with their fists till their eyes are blinded and their noses are broken. Hideous! And the other men who look on cry out loudly and are made glad. It is barbarous – no?”

“But they are men,” said John Harned; “and they prize-fight out of desire. No one makes them prize-fight. They do it because they desire it more than anything else in the world.”

Maria Valenzuela – there was scorn in her smile as she said: “They kill each other often – is it not so? I have read it in the papers.”

“But the bull,” said John Harned.

“The bull is killed many times in the bull-fight, and the bull does not come into the ring out of desire. It is not fair to the bull. He is compelled to fight. But the man in the prize-fight – no; he is not compelled.”

“He is the more brute therefore,” said Maria Valenzuela.

“He is savage. He is primitive. He is animal. He strikes with his paws like a bear from a cave, and he is ferocious. But the bull-fight – ah! You have not seen the bullfight – no? The toreador is clever. He must have skill. He is modern. He is romantic. He is only a man, soft and tender, and he faces the wild bull in conflict. And he kills with a sword, a slender sword, with one thrust, so, to the heart of the great beast. It is delicious. It makes the heart beat to behold – the small man, the great beast, the wide level sand, the thousands that look on without breath; the great beast rushes to the attack, the small man stands like a statue; he does not move, he is unafraid, and in his hand is the slender sword flashing like silver in the sun; nearer and nearer rushes the great beast with its sharp horns, the man does not move, and then – so – the sword flashes, the thrust is made, to the heart, to the hilt, the bull falls to the sand and is dead, and the man is unhurt. It is brave. It is magnificent! Ah — !I could love the toreador. But the man of the prize-fight – he is the brute, the human beast, the savage primitive, the maniac that receives many blows in his stupid face and rejoices. Come to Quito and I will show you the brave sport of men, the toreador and the bull.”

But John Harned did not go to Quito for the bull-fight. He went because of Maria Valenzuela. He was a large man, more broad of shoulder than we Ecuadorianos, more tall, more heavy of limb and bone. True, he was larger of his own race. His eyes were blue, though I have seen them gray, and, sometimes, like cold steel. His features were

large, too – not delicate like ours, and his jaw was very strong to look at. Also, his face was smooth-shaven like a priest's. Why should a man feel shame for the hair on his face? Did not God put it there? Yes, I believe in God – I am not a pagan like many of you English. God is good. He made me an Ecuatoriano with ten thousand slaves. And when I die I shall go to God. Yes, the priests are right.

But John Harned. He was a quiet man. He talked always in a low voice, and he never moved his hands when he talked. One would have thought his heart was a piece of ice; yet did he have a streak of warm in his blood, for he followed Maria Valenzuela to Quito. Also, and for all that he talked low without moving his hands, he was an animal, as you shall see – the beast primitive, the stupid, ferocious savage of the long ago that dressed in wild skins and lived in the caves along with the bears and wolves.

Luis Cervallos is my friend, the best of Ecuatorianos. He owns three cacao plantations at Naranjito and Chobo. At Milagro is his big sugar plantation. He has large haciendas at Ambato and Latacunga, and down the coast is he interested in oil-wells. Also has he spent much money in planting rubber along the Guayas. He is modern, like the Yankee; and, like the Yankee, full of business. He has much money, but it is in many ventures, and ever he needs more money for new ventures and for the old ones. He has been everywhere and seen everything. When he was a very young man he was in the Yankee military academy what you call West Point. There was trouble. He was made to resign. He does not like Americans. But he did like Maria Valenzuela, who was of his own country. Also, he needed her money for his ventures and for his gold mine in Eastern Ecuador where the painted Indians live. I was his friend. It was my desire that he should marry Maria Valenzuela. Further, much of my money had I invested in his ventures, more so in his gold mine which was very rich but which first required the expense of much money before it would yield forth its riches. If Luis Cervallos married Maria Valenzuela I should have more money very immediately.

But John Harned followed Maria Valenzuela to Quito, and it was quickly clear to us – to Luis Cervallos and me that she looked upon John Harned with great kindness. It is said that a woman will have her will, but this is a case not in point, for Maria Valenzuela did not have her will – at least not with John Harned. Perhaps it would all have happened as it did, even if Luis Cervallos and I had not sat in the box that day at the bull-ring in Quito. But this I know: we DID sit in the box that day. And I shall tell you what happened.

The four of us were in the one box, guests of Luis Cervallos. I was next to the Presidente's box. On the other side was the box of General Jose Eliceo Salazar. With him were Joaquin Endara and Urcisino Castillo, both generals, and Colonel Jacinto Fierro and Captain Baltazar de Echeverria. Only Luis Cervallos had the position and the influence to get that box next to the Presidente. I know for a fact that the Presidente himself expressed the desire to the management that Luis Cervallos should have that box.

The band finished playing the national hymn of Ecuador. The procession of the toreadors was over. The Presidente nodded to begin. The bugles blew, and the bull

dashed in – you know the way, excited, bewildered, the darts in its shoulder burning like fire, itself seeking madly whatever enemy to destroy. The toreadors hid behind their shelters and waited. Suddenly they appeared forth, the capadores, five of them, from every side, their colored capes flinging wide. The bull paused at sight of such a generosity of enemies, unable in his own mind to know which to attack. Then advanced one of the capadors alone to meet the bull. The bull was very angry. With its fore-legs it pawed the sand of the arena till the dust rose all about it. Then it charged, with lowered head, straight for the lone capador.

It is always of interest, the first charge of the first bull. After a time it is natural that one should grow tired, trifle, that the keenness should lose its edge. But that first charge of the first bull! John Harned was seeing it for the first time, and he could not escape the excitement – the sight of the man, armed only with a piece of cloth, and of the bull rushing upon him across the sand with sharp horns, widespreading.

“See!” cried Maria Valenzuela. “Is it not superb?”

John Harned nodded, but did not look at her. His eyes were sparkling, and they were only for the bull-ring. The capador stepped to the side, with a twirl of the cape eluding the bull and spreading the cape on his own shoulders.

“What do you think?” asked Maria Venzuela. “Is it not a – what-you-call – sporting proposition – no?”

“It is certainly,” said John Harned. “It is very clever.”

She clapped her hands with delight. They were little hands. The audience applauded. The bull turned and came back. Again the capadore eluded him, throwing the cape on his shoulders, and again the audience applauded. Three times did this happen. The capadore was very excellent. Then he retired, and the other capadore played with the bull. After that they placed the banderillos in the bull, in the shoulders, on each side of the back-bone, two at a time. Then stepped forward Ordonez, the chief matador, with the long sword and the scarlet cape. The bugles blew for the death. He is not so good as Matestini. Still he is good, and with one thrust he drove the sword to the heart, and the bull doubled his legs under him and lay down and died. It was a pretty thrust, clean and sure; and there was much applause, and many of the common people threw their hats into the ring. Maria Valenzuela clapped her hands with the rest, and John Harned, whose cold heart was not touched by the event, looked at her with curiosity.

“You like it?” he asked.

“Always,” she said, still clapping her hands.

“From a little girl,” said Luis Cervillos. “I remember her first fight. She was four years old. She sat with her mother, and just like now she clapped her hands. She is a proper Spanish woman.

“You have seen it,” said Maria Valenzuela to John Harned, as they fastened the mules to the dead bull and dragged it out. “You have seen the bull-fight and you like it – no? What do you think?”

“I think the bull had no chance,” he said. “The bull was doomed from the first. The issue was not in doubt. Every one knew, before the bull entered the ring, that it was

to die. To be a sporting proposition, the issue must be in doubt. It was one stupid bull who had never fought a man against five wise men who had fought many bulls. It would be possibly a little bit fair if it were one man against one bull.”

“Or one man against five bulls,” said Maria Valenzuela; and we all laughed, and Luis Cervallos laughed loudest.

“Yes,” said John Harned, “against five bulls, and the man, like the bulls, never in the bull ring before –; a man like yourself, Senor Cervallos.”

“Yet we Spanish like the bull-fight,” said Luis Cervallos; and I swear the devil was whispering then in his ear, telling him to do that which I shall relate.

“Then must it be a cultivated taste,” John Harned made answer. “We kill bulls by the thousand every day in Chicago, yet no one cares to pay admittance to see.”

“That is butchery,” said I; “but this – ah, this is an art. It is delicate. It is fine. It is rare.”

“Not always,” said Luis Cervallos. “I have seen clumsy matadors, and I tell you it is not nice.”

He shuddered, and his face betrayed such what-you-call disgust, that I knew, then, that the devil was whispering and that he was beginning to play a part.

“Senor Harned may be right,” said Luis Cervallos. “It may not be fair to the bull. For is it not known to all of us that for twenty-four hours the bull is given no water, and that immediately before the fight he is permitted to drink his fill?”

“And he comes into the ring heavy with water?” said John Harned quickly; and I saw that his eyes were very gray and very sharp and very cold.

“It is necessary for the sport,” said Luis Cervallos. “Would you have the bull so strong that he would kill the toreadors?”

“I would that he had a fighting chance,” said John Harned, facing the ring to see the second bull come in.

It was not a good bull. It was frightened. It ran around the ring in search of a way to get out. The capadors stepped forth and flared their capes, but he refused to charge upon them.

“It is a stupid bull,” said Maria Valenzuela.

“I beg pardon,” said John Harned; “but it would seem to me a wise bull. He knows he must not fight man. See! He smells death there in the ring.”

True. The bull, pausing where the last one had died, was smelling the wet sand and snorting. Again he ran around the ring, with raised head, looking at the faces of the thousands that hissed him, that threw orange-peel at him and called him names. But the smell of blood decided him, and he charged a capador, so without warning that the man just escaped. He dropped his cape and dodged into the shelter. The bull struck the wall of the ring with a crash. And John Harned said, in a quiet voice, as though he talked to himself:

“I will give one thousand sucres to the lazar-house of Quito if a bull kills a man this day.”

“You like bulls?” said Maria Valenzuela with a smile.

"I like such men less," said John Harned. "A toreador is not a brave man. He surely cannot be a brave man. See, the bull's tongue is already out. He is tired and he has not yet begun."

"It is the water," said Luis Cervillos.

"Yes, it is the water," said John Harned. "Would it not be safer to hamstring the bull before he comes on?"

Maria Valenzuela was made angry by this sneer in John Harned's words. But Luis Cervillos smiled so that only I could see him, and then it broke upon my mind surely the game he was playing. He and I were to be banderilleros. The big American bull was there in the box with us. We were to stick the darts in him till he became angry, and then there might be no marriage with Maria Valenzuela. It was a good sport. And the spirit of bull-fighters was in our blood.

The bull was now angry and excited. The capadors had great game with him. He was very quick, and sometimes he turned with such sharpness that his hind legs lost their footing and he plowed the sand with his quarter. But he charged always the flung capes and committed no harm.

"He has no chance," said John Harned. "He is fighting wind."

"He thinks the cape is his enemy," explained Maria Valenzuela. "See how cleverly the capador deceives him."

"It is his nature to be deceived," said John Harned. "Wherefore he is doomed to fight wind. The toreadors know it, you know it, I know it – we all know from the first that he will fight wind. He only does not know it. It is his stupid beast-nature. He has no chance."

"It is very simple," said Luis Cervillos. "The bull shuts his eyes when he charges. Therefore — "

"The man steps, out of the way and the bull rushes by," Harned interrupted.

"Yes," said Luis Cervillos; "that is it. The bull shuts his eyes, and the man knows it."

"But cows do not shut their eyes," said John Harned. "I know a cow at home that is a Jersey and gives milk, that would whip the whole gang of them."

"But the toreadors do not fight cows," said I.

"They are afraid to fight cows," said John Harned.

"Yes," said Luis Cervillos, "they are afraid to fight cows. There would be no sport in killing toreadors."

"There would be some sport," said John Harned, "if a toreador were killed once in a while. When I become an old man, and mayhap a cripple, and should I need to make a living and be unable to do hard work, then would I become a bull-fighter. It is a light vocation for elderly gentlemen and pensioners."

"But see!" said Maria Valenzuela, as the bull charged bravely and the capador eluded it with a fling of his cape. "It requires skill so to avoid the beast."

"True," said John Harned. "But believe me, it requires a thousand times more skill to avoid the many and quick punches of a prize-fighter who keeps his eyes open and

strikes with intelligence. Furthermore, this bull does not want to fight. Behold, he runs away.”

It was not a good bull, for again it ran around the ring, seeking to find a way out.

“Yet these bulls are sometimes the most dangerous,” said Luis Cervillos. “It can never be known what they will do next. They are wise. They are half cow. The bull-fighters never like them — .See! He has turned!”

Once again, baffled and made angry by the walls of the ring that would not let him out, the bull was attacking his enemies valiantly.

“His tongue is hanging out,” said John Harned. “First, they fill him with water. Then they tire him out, one man and then another, persuading him to exhaust himself by fighting wind. While some tire him, others rest. But the bull they never let rest. Afterward, when he is quite tired and no longer quick, the matador sticks the sword into him.”

The time had now come for the banderillos. Three times one of the fighters endeavored to place the darts, and three times did he fail. He but stung the bull and maddened it. The banderillos must go in, you know, two at a time, into the shoulders, on each side the backbone and close to it. If but one be placed, it is a failure. The crowd hissed and called for Ordonez. And then Ordonez did a great thing. Four times he stood forth, and four times, at the first attempt, he stuck in the banderillos, so that eight of them, well placed, stood out of the back of the bull at one time. The crowd went mad, and a rain of hats and money fell on the sand of the ring

And just then the bull charged unexpectedly one of the capadors. The man slipped and lost his head. The bull caught him – fortunately, between his wide horns. And while the audience watched, breathless and silent, John Harned stood up and yelled with gladness. Alone, in that hush of all of us, John Harned yelled. And he yelled for the bull. As you see yourself, John Harned wanted the man killed. His was a brutal heart. This bad conduct made those angry that sat in the box of General Salazar, and they cried out against John Harned. And Urcisino Castillo told him to his face that he was a dog of a Gringo and other things. Only it was in Spanish, and John Harned did not understand. He stood and yelled, perhaps for the time of ten seconds, when the bull was enticed into charging the other capadors and the man arose unhurt.

“The bull has no chance,” John Harned said with sadness as he sat down. “The man was uninjured. They fooled the bull away from him.” Then he turned to Maria Valenzuela and said: “I beg your pardon. I was excited.”

She smiled and in reproof tapped his arm with her fan.

“It is your first bull-fight,” she said. “After you have seen more you will not cry for the death of the man. You Americans, you see, are more brutal than we. It is because of your prize-fighting. We come only to see the bull killed.”

“But I would the bull had some chance,” he answered. “Doubtless, in time, I shall cease to be annoyed by the men who take advantage of the bull.”

The bugles blew for the death of the bull. Ordonez stood forth with the sword and the scarlet cloth. But the bull had changed again, and did not want to fight. Ordonez

stamped his foot in the sand, and cried out, and waved the scarlet cloth. Then the bull charged, but without heart. There was no weight to the charge. It was a poor thrust. The sword struck a bone and bent. Ordonez took a fresh sword. The bull, again stung to fight, charged once more. Five times Ordonez essayed the thrust, and each time the sword went but part way in or struck bone. The sixth time, the sword went in to the hilt. But it was a bad thrust. The sword missed the heart and stuck out half a yard through the ribs on the opposite side. The audience hissed the matador. I glanced at John Harned. He sat silent, without movement; but I could see his teeth were set, and his hands were clenched tight on the railing of the box.

All fight was now out of the bull, and, though it was no vital thrust, he trotted lamely what of the sword that stuck through him, in one side and out the other. He ran away from the matador and the capadors, and circled the edge of the ring, looking up at the many faces.

“He is saying: ‘For God’s sake let me out of this; I don’t want to fight,’ “ said John Harned.

That was all. He said no more, but sat and watched, though sometimes he looked sideways at Maria Valenzuela to see how she took it. She was angry with the matador. He was awkward, and she had desired a clever exhibition.

The bull was now very tired, and weak from loss of blood, though far from dying. He walked slowly around the wall of the ring, seeking a way out. He would not charge. He had had enough. But he must be killed. There is a place, in the neck of a bull behind the horns, where the cord of the spine is unprotected and where a short stab will immediately kill. Ordonez stepped in front of the bull and lowered his scarlet cloth to the ground. The bull would not charge. He stood still and smelled the cloth, lowering his head to do so. Ordonez stabbed between the horns at the spot in the neck. The bull jerked his head up. The stab had missed. Then the bull watched the sword. When Ordonez moved the cloth on the ground, the bull forgot the sword and lowered his head to smell the cloth. Again Ordonez stabbed, and again he failed. He tried many times. It was stupid. And John Harned said nothing. At last a stab went home, and the bull fell to the sand, dead immediately, and the mules were made fast and he was dragged out.

“The Gringos say it is a cruel sport – no?” said Luis Cervillos. “That it is not humane. That it is bad for the bull. No?”

“No,” said John Harned. “The bull does not count for much. It is bad for those that look on. It is degrading to those that look on. It teaches them to delight in animal suffering. It is cowardly for five men to fight one stupid bull. Therefore those that look on learn to be cowards. The bull dies, but those that look on live and the lesson is learned. The bravery of men is not nourished by scenes of cowardice.”

Maria Valenzuela said nothing. Neither did she look at him. But she heard every word and her cheeks were white with anger. She looked out across the ring and fanned herself, but I saw that her hand trembled. Nor did John Harned look at her. He went on as though she were not there. He, too, was angry, coldly angry.

"It is the cowardly sport of a cowardly people," he said.

"Ah," said Luis Cervillos softly, "you think you understand us."

"I understand now the Spanish Inquisition," said John Harned. "It must have been more delightful than bull-fighting."

Luis Cervillos smiled but said nothing. He glanced at Maria Valenzuela, and knew that the bull-fight in the box was won. Never would she have further to do with the Gringo who spoke such words. But neither Luis Cervillos nor I was prepared for the outcome of the day. I fear we do not understand the Gringos. How were we to know that John Harned, who was so coldly angry, should go suddenly mad! But mad he did go, as you shall see. The bull did not count for much – he said so himself. Then why should the horse count for so much? That I cannot understand. The mind of John Harned lacked logic. That is the only explanation.

"It is not usual to have horses in the bull-ring at Quito," said Luis Cervillos, looking up from the program. "In Spain they always have them. But to-day, by special permission we shall have them. When the next bull comes on there will be horses and picadors-you know, the men who carry lances and ride the horses."

"The bull is doomed from the first," said John Harned. "Are the horses then likewise doomed!"

"They are blindfolded so that they may not see the bull," said Luis Cervillos. "I have seen many horses killed. It is a brave sight."

"I have seen the bull slaughtered," said John Harned "I will now see the horse slaughtered, so that I may understand more fully the fine points of this noble sport."

"They are old horses," said Luis Cervillos, "that are not good for anything else."

"I see," said John Harned.

The third bull came on, and soon against it were both capadors and picadors. One picador took his stand directly below us. I agree, it was a thin and aged horse he rode, a bag of bones covered with mangy hide.

"It is a marvel that the poor brute can hold up the weight of the rider," said John Harned. "And now that the horse fights the bull, what weapons has it?"

"The horse does not fight the bull," said Luis Cervillos.

"Oh," said John Harned, "then is the horse there to be gored? That must be why it is blindfolded, so that it shall not see the bull coming to gore it."

"Not quite so," said I. "The lance of the picador is to keep the bull from goring the horse."

"Then are horses rarely gored?" asked John Harned.

"No," said Luis Cervillos. "I have seen, at Seville, eighteen horses killed in one day, and the people clamored for more horses."

"Were they blindfolded like this horse?" asked John Harned.

"Yes," said Luis Cervillos.

After that we talked no more, but watched the fight. And John Harned was going mad all the time, and we did not know. The bull refused to charge the horse. And the horse stood still, and because it could not see it did not know that the capadors were

trying to make the bull charge upon it. The capadors teased the bull their capes, and when it charged them they ran toward the horse and into their shelters. At last the bull was angry, and it saw the horse before it.

"The horse does not know, the horse does not know," John Harned whispered to himself, unaware that he voiced his thought aloud.

The bull charged, and of course the horse knew nothing till the picador failed and the horse found himself impaled on the bull's horns from beneath. The bull was magnificently strong. The sight of its strength was splendid to see. It lifted the horse clear into the air; and as the horse fell to its side on the ground the picador landed on his feet and escaped, while the capadors lured the bull away. The horse was emptied of its essential organs. Yet did it rise to its feet screaming. It was the scream of the horse that did it, that made John Harned completely mad; for he, too, started to rise to his feet, I heard him curse low and deep. He never took his eyes from the horse, which, screaming, strove to run, but fell down instead and rolled on its back so that all its four legs were kicking in the air. Then the bull charged it and gored it again and again until it was dead.

John Harned was now on his feet. His eyes were no longer cold like steel. They were blue flames. He looked at Maria Valenzuela, and she looked at him, and in his face was a great loathing. The moment of his madness was upon him. Everybody was looking, now that the horse was dead; and John Harned was a large man and easy to be seen.

"Sit down," said Luis Cervillos, "or you will make a fool of yourself."

John Harned replied nothing. He struck out his fist. He smote Luis Cervillos in the face so that he fell like a dead man across the chairs and did not rise again. He saw nothing of what followed. But I saw much. Urcisino Castillo, leaning forward from the next box, with his cane struck John Harned full across the face. And John Harned smote him with his fist so that in falling he overthrew General Salazar. John Harned was now in what-you-call Berserker rage – no? The beast primitive in him was loose and roaring – the beast primitive of the holes and caves of the long ago.

"You came for a bull-fight," I heard him say, "And by God I'll show you a man-fight!"

It was a fight. The soldiers guarding the Presidente's box leaped across, but from one of them he took a rifle and beat them on their heads with it. From the other box Colonel Jacinto Fierro was shooting at him with a revolver. The first shot killed a soldier. This I know for a fact. I saw it. But the second shot struck John Harned in the side. Whereupon he swore, and with a lunge drove the bayonet of his rifle into Colonel Jacinto Fierro's body. It was horrible to behold. The Americans and the English are a brutal race. They sneer at our bull-fighting, yet do they delight in the shedding of blood. More men were killed that day because of John Harned than were ever killed in all the history of the bull-ring of Quito, yes, and of Guayaquil and all Ecuador.

It was the scream of the horse that did it, yet why did not John Harned go mad when the bull was killed? A beast is a beast, be it bull or horse. John Harned was mad. There is no other explanation. He was blood-mad, a beast himself. I leave it to your judgment. Which is worse – the goring of the horse by the bull, or the goring of

Colonel Jacinto Fierro by the bayonet in the hands of John Harned! And John Harned gored others with that bayonet. He was full of devils. He fought with many bullets in him, and he was hard to kill. And Maria Valenzuela was a brave woman. Unlike the other women, she did not cry out nor faint. She sat still in her box, gazing out across the bull-ring. Her face was white and she fanned herself, but she never looked around.

From all sides came the soldiers and officers and the common people bravely to subdue the mad Gringo. It is true – the cry went up from the crowd to kill all the Gringos. It is an old cry in Latin-American countries, what of the dislike for the Gringos and their uncouth ways. It is true, the cry went up. But the brave Ecuadorianos killed only John Harned, and first he killed seven of them. Besides, there were many hurt. I have seen many bull-fights, but never have I seen anything so abominable as the scene in the boxes when the fight was over. It was like a field of battle. The dead lay around everywhere, while the wounded sobbed and groaned and some of them died. One man, whom John Harned had thrust through the belly with the bayonet, clutched at himself with both his hands and screamed. I tell you for a fact it was more terrible than the screaming of a thousand horses.

No, Maria Valenzuela did not marry Luis Cervillos. I am sorry for that. He was my friend, and much of my money was invested in his ventures. It was five weeks before the surgeons took the bandages from his face. And there is a scar there to this day, on the cheek, under the eye. Yet John Harned struck him but once and struck him only with his naked fist. Maria Valenzuela is in Austria now. It is said she is to marry an Arch-Duke or some high nobleman. I do not know. I think she liked John Harned before he followed her to Quito to see the bull-fight. But why the horse? That is what I desire to know. Why should he watch the bull and say that it did not count, and then go immediately and most horribly mad because a horse screamed? There is no understanding the Gringos. They are barbarians.

The Mahatma's Little Joke

“TO me, it seems strange that in this age of reason, when the supernatural is rejected by normal minds and the church hastens to harmonize its teachings with those of science, that a sect or coterie of thinkers — brilliant ones, too — should attempt to foist upon the world such fantastic infractions of natural law.”

“But Charley, they do no such thing. While miracles of the adepts may seem infractions to the uninitiated, they themselves do not endorse them as such. As the wonders of to day would have been miracles to a past age, so do the marvels they produce, appear to science in its present stage. They merely contend that their so-called miracles are but the manifestations of eternal laws, too subtle for the present day physicists to grasp, but which, through ultimate evolution, they will some day not only accept but demonstrate.”

“With all respect to our friend, I still hold that their propositions are absurd, and that hypothetical possibilities, such as yours, may be carried beyond the limits of legitimate scientific speculation. For instance, take Madame Blavatsky's miracle of the plate. The set was of a peculiar make, no duplicates of which were to be found in all India. At a picnic lunch, having received an unforeseen addition to their number, they are one dish short. She calls the adepts — at that moment in the Himalayas or Thibet — to her aid. They project an intense psychic force across oceans and continents to Germany, where, in the factory, are to be found the only duplicates. There, with successful ascendancy of mind over matter, they break the cohesion which holds the molecules of a certain plate together; disintergrate the molecules to atoms, till it becomes merely a force or the extremest refinement of matter; and bring these vaporous constituents of the plate to India. All this time, which is in the twinkling of an eye, the manipulators have remained in their mountain fastnesses. When the disembodied plate arrives at the picnic ground, it reintegrates; each molecule resumes its old position relative to all companion molecules; and deposits itself under the bushes, where it is the next instant discovered by one of the party. If that is not the wildest of poppy-cock, I leave it to our friend, who is certainly deep enough in theosophic lore, to set me aright.”

The person thus addressed, a middle-aged gentleman, whose face combined the brooding wisdom of the Sphynx and the mysterious solemnity of a Monte Cristo, replied:

“You are right and you are wrong: right, by the glasses through which you view the phenomena of the universe; wrong, because of the narrow limitations inherent with such lenses. You acknowledge the philosophical axiom, that the finite cannot contemplate

the infinite? Then, as the finite evolves and increases its powers of reception and conception, the field of its contemplation widens; as witness the science of to day, which you have mentioned. Since this contemplative or conceptionate territory which the world at present enjoys is greater than that of the preceding century, may not the same difference be found between individuals existing contemporaneously? Thus, one hundred years ago, telegraphy was beyond practical conception; and thus, to day the disintegration and reintegration of form by psychic impulses, is beyond both yours and the popular conception. You consider it hypothetically unreasonable. But is your fiat absolute? Do you take upon yourself the infinite knowledge necessary to declare that such is infinitely impossible? Surely you would not be so egotistical. On this point, then, your only consistent attitude must be that of agnosticism — you do not know but would like to know. Do you follow me?”

“Yes,” returned Charley, “but such a passive position, long continued, is not compatible with my positive temperament: I inevitably slip into the illogical ratiocinations of skepticism. If I were to receive demonstrations, proofs, occasionally, I would not lapse. But there’s the rub — how am I to obtain them?”

“Perhaps I can aid you,” replied the mysterious personage. “I have profoundly studied the tenents and natural philosophy of esoteric Buddhism; nay, though this be a secret, I have not only served my adeptship in that weird brotherhood, but have become a full-fledged mahatma. It is in my power to convince you, and I shall so do if you are willing. Shall I tear your astral form from its sublunary habitation and send it gasping through the empyrean? But these celestial peregrinations are tiresome rot after all — can you not think of something original?”

“While I must confess that I never looked upon you in the light of a Heliobas the Second, I’ll take your word for it. There is nothing I would like better than to leave this mundane sphere for a space; to gaze from afar, upon this clayey habitation of mine; to — but I have it — best of all! Jack, you remember that little wish you uttered, sailing home yesterday?”

“What wish? You know they are legion. Was it that castle of mine in Spain? Or the Duchess — fond creature of my imagination?”

“No, no. Come back to earth. Can’t you recollect? Haydee and Dora, you and I?”

“Oh! the very thing!” Turning to the mahatma — “we may as well let you into our little secret: perhaps you can help us. Charley has a sister — an adorable creature — far prettier than her pretty name, Haydee, and as good as she is beautiful. I also have a sister, Dora, over whom Charley likewise raves. Charley and I like each other; but we love each other’s sister. We are not bashful — er — that is, we don’t know how exactly — ah — well, we don’t know each other’s sister as well as we should. Not that we are not well enough acquainted, but we don’t know the right way to go at it — you comprehend. Now if I were Charley, that is, if Charley were to propose to his sister, he would understand her so well that he would know just how to do it. The same is true of me and my sister. So if Charley and I could change places for awhile, we could carry off things swimmingly, then change back again, and hail for the wedding day!”

“Ah! I see,” interposed the mahatma. “What you would desire is that each proposes to the other’s sister by proxy, the brother of the girl proposed to, to be the proxy. I believe that I can arrange it. I have merely to separate your astral forms from your bodies; then to return them, each into the other’s corporosity. Thus: the spirit personality of Jack shall inhabit and actuate the material personality of Charley and vice a versa. Are you ready?”

“Ready for what?” in chorus.

“To be translated.”

The chums glanced at each other in surprise and trepidation, then burst into hearty laughter, while the mahatma regarded them with imperturbable expectancy. Their laughter died away and his solemnity begat a similar seriousness with them. Again he asked if they were ready, but this time received a skeptical affirmation.

The process was simple. Placing them side by side on a divan, he literally stared each in turn out of countenance, and incidentally, consciousness. What he then did was of a too esoteric nature to be revealed to the vulgar mind; but it was evident that he had succeeded, for with a smile of satisfaction he put on his gloves, took his hat and walking stick, and went down town, leaving them on deep slumber.

The shadows lengthened across the room and the afternoon had worn well along, before the stentorian breathing of the sleepers ceased. Awakening, they regarded each other with wondering eyes, each acutely susceptible to the fact that change had been accomplished.

“Who would have believed it,” cried Charley, “that we could so successfully swap souls!”

“That involves a doubt,” Jack replied, as he drew from his pocket and dubiously regarded a packet of pet cigarettes. “Which is the dominant factor? The body or the soul? If it is the latter, we have merely swapped bodies, and incidentally, clothes. By the way, take these cigarettes and feel in my pockets, or rather, in the pockets of my garments, which clothe my body, but which you now inhabit, and pass me my cigar case. I never could stand those coffin nails of yours.”

“Let’s trade the contents of our pockets at once.”

“No. I had not thought of it before, but it would be absurd. Think of me appearing at my — I mean your house — and every body taking me to be you, with all my things in your pockets. And vice a versa: think of yourself at my house, and considered by my family as myself, with all of your belongings in my pockets — O pshaw! This commingling of the first and second persons is too puzzling to allow perspicuity of diction; but you see my point I hope.”

“O yes, I can grasp it quickly as an abstraction, but fail in lucidity were I to attempt a concrete analysis. It is like the process of assigning the quantities of X and Y when constructing an equation. Let’s see if we can make a formula — one easy to remember:

X Jack’s soul

Y Charley’s soul

A Jack’s body

B Charley's body

Therefore X A Jack

and Y B Charley.

But Jack is now]] X A] A] B or X B

And Charley is]] Y B] B] A or Y A

"Do you now comprehend who and what you are, Jack?"

"O yes, and I'll never forget it. I am X A B A. And you are — "

"Y B A B."

"Well, since we have settled our identities, let's go home — here! that's my hat!"

"No, it is not. Don't you remember I am Y A and this is A's hat, or your body's hat, but your hat for you are X B and must take B's hat."

"Oh! I see."

And they awkwardly exchanged chapeaux, and as awkwardly descended the stairs; for at first it was quite difficult to navigate each other's bodies. Acquaintances who passed them on the street, thought that they were behaving rather strangely. For instance, Careleton, a friend of Charley's but unacquainted with Jack, was surprised when Charley passed him with a stoney stare, while Jack affably nodded.

Make Westing

Whatever you do, make westing! make westing!

— Sailing directions for Cape Horn.

FOR seven weeks the Mary Rogers had been between 50° south in the Atlantic and 50° south in the Pacific, which meant that for seven weeks she had been struggling to round Cape Horn. For seven weeks she had been either in dirt, or close to dirt, save once, and then, following upon six days of excessive dirt, which she had ridden out under the shelter of the redoubtable Tierra del Fuego coast, she had almost gone ashore during a heavy swell in the dead calm that had suddenly fallen. For seven weeks she had wrestled with the Cape Horn graybeards, and in return been buffeted and smashed by them. She was a wooden ship, and her ceaseless straining had opened her seams, so that twice a day the watch took its turn at the pumps.

The Mary Rogers was strained, the crew was strained, and big Dan Cullen, master, was likewise strained. Perhaps he was strained most of all, for upon him rested the responsibility of that titanic struggle. He slept most of the time in his clothes, though he rarely slept. He haunted the deck at night, a great, burly, robust ghost, black with the sunburn of thirty years of sea and hairy as an orang-utan. He, in turn, was haunted by one thought of action, a sailing direction for the Horn: Whatever you do, make westing! make westing! It was an obsession. He thought of nothing else, except, at times, to blaspheme God for sending such bitter weather.

Make westing! He hugged the Horn, and a dozen times lay hove to with the iron Cape bearing east-by-north, or north-north-east, a score of miles away. And each time the eternal west wind smote him back and he made easting. He fought gale after gale, south to 64° inside the antarctic drift-ice, and pledged his immortal soul to the Powers of Darkness for a bit of westing, for a slant to take him around. And he made easting. In despair, he had tried to make the passage through the Straits of Le Maire. Halfway through, the wind hauled to the north'ard of northwest, the glass dropped to 28.88, and he turned and ran before a gale of cyclonic fury, missing, by a hair's-breadth, piling up the Mary Rogers on the black-toothed rocks. Twice he had made west to the Diego Ramirez Rocks, one of the times saved between two snow-squalls by sighting the gravestones of ships a quarter of a mile dead ahead.

Blow! Captain Dan Cullen instanced all his thirty years at sea to prove that never had it blown so before. The Mary Rogers was hove to at the time he gave the evidence, and, to clinch it, inside half an hour the Mary Rogers was hove down to the hatches. Her new maintopsail and brand new spencer were blown away like tissue paper; and five sails, furlled and fast under double gaskets, were blown loose and stripped from

the yards. And before morning the Mary Rogers was hove down twice again, and holes were knocked in her bulwarks to ease her decks from the weight of ocean that pressed her down.

On an average of once a week Captain Dan Cullen caught glimpses of the sun. Once, for ten minutes, the sun shone at midday, and ten minutes afterward a new gale was piping up, both watches were shortening sail, and all was buried in the obscurity of a driving snow-squall. For a fortnight, once, Captain Dan Cullen was without a meridian or a chronometer sight. Rarely did he know his position within half of a degree, except when in sight of land; for sun and stars remained hidden behind the sky, and it was so gloomy that even at the best the horizons were poor for accurate observations. A gray gloom shrouded the world. The clouds were gray; the great driving seas were leaden gray; the smoking crests were a gray churning; even the occasional albatrosses were gray, while the snow-flurries were not white, but gray, under the sombre pall of the heavens.

Life on board the Mary Rogers was gray,—gray and gloomy. The faces of the sailors were blue-gray; they were afflicted with sea-cuts and sea-boils, and suffered exquisitely. They were shadows of men. For seven weeks, in the forecabin or on deck, they had not known what it was to be dry. They had forgotten what it was to sleep out a watch, and all watches it was, “All hands on deck!” They caught snatches of agonized sleep, and they slept in their oilskins ready for the everlasting call. So weak and worn were they that it took both watches to do the work of one. That was why both watches were on deck so much of the time. And no shadow of a man could shirk duty. Nothing less than a broken leg could enable a man to knock off work; and there were two such, who had been mauled and pulped by the seas that broke aboard.

One other man who was the shadow of a man was George Dorety. He was the only passenger on board, a friend of the firm, and he had elected to make the voyage for his health. But seven weeks of Cape Horn had not bettered his health. He gasped and panted in his bunk through the long, heaving nights; and when on deck he was so bundled up for warmth that he resembled a peripatetic old-clothes shop. At midday, eating at the cabin table in a gloom so deep that the swinging sea-lamps burned always, he looked as blue-gray as the sickest, saddest man for’ard. Nor did gazing across the table at Captain Dan Cullen, have any cheering effect upon him. Captain Cullen chewed and scowled and kept silent. The scowls were for God, and with every chew he reiterated the sole thought of his existence, which was make westing. He was a big, hairy brute, and the sight of him was not stimulating to the other’s appetite. He looked upon George Dorety as a Jonah, and told him so, once each meal, savagely transferring the scowl from God to the passenger and back again.

Nor did the mate prove a first aid to a languid appetite. Joshua Higgins by name, a seaman by profession and pull, but a pot-wolloper by capacity, he was a loose-jointed, sniffing creature, heartless and selfish and cowardly, without a soul, in fear of his life of Dan Cullen, and a bully over the sailors, who knew that behind the mate was Captain Cullen, the lawgiver and compeller, the driver and the destroyer, the incarnation of

a dozen bucko mates. In that wild weather at the southern end of the earth, Joshua Higgins ceased washing. His grimy face usually robbed George Dorety of what little appetite he managed to accumulate. Ordinarily this lavatorial dereliction would have caught Captain Cullen's eye and vocabulary, but in the present his mind was filled with making westing, to the exclusion of all other things not contributory thereto. Whether the mate's face was clean or dirty had no bearing upon westing. Later on, when 50 degrees south in the Pacific had been reached, Joshua Higgins would wash his face very abruptly. In the meantime, at the cabin table, where gray twilight alternated with lamplight while the lamps were being filled, George Dorety sat between the two men, one a tiger and the other a hyena, and wondered why God had made them. The second mate, Matthew Turner, was a true sailor and a man, but George Dorety did not have the solace of his company, for he ate by himself, solitary, when they had finished.

On Saturday morning, July 24, George Dorety awoke to a feeling of life and headlong movement. On deck he found the Mary Rogers running off before a howling southeaster. Nothing was set but the lower topsails and the foresail. It was all she could stand, yet she was making fourteen knots, as Mr. Turner shouted in Dorety's ear when he came on deck. And it was all westing. She was going around the Horn at last . . . if the wind held. Mr. Turner looked happy. The end of the struggle was in sight. But Captain Cullen did not look happy. He scowled at Dorety in passing. Captain Cullen did not want God to know that he was pleased with that wind. He had a conception of a malicious God, and believed in his secret soul that if God knew it was a desirable wind, God would promptly efface it and send a snorter from the west. So he walked softly before God, smothering his joy down under scowls and muttered curses, and, so, fooling God, for God was the only thing in the universe of which Dan Cullen was afraid.

All Saturday and Saturday night the Mary Rogers raced her westing. Persistently she logged her fourteen knots, so that by Sunday morning she had covered three hundred and fifty miles. If the wind held, she would make around. If it failed. and the snorter came from anywhere between southwest and north, back the Mary Rogers would be hurled and be no better off than she had been seven weeks before. And on Sunday morning the wind was failing. The big sea was going down and running smooth. Both watches were on deck setting sail after sail as fast as the ship could stand it. And now Captain Cullen went around brazenly before God, smoking a big cigar, smiling jubilantly, as if the failing wind delighted him, while down underneath he was raging against God for taking the life out of the blessed wind. Make westing! So he would, if God would only leave him alone. Secretly, he pledged himself anew to the Powers of Darkness, if they would let him make westing. He pledged himself so easily because he did not believe in the Powers of Darkness. He really believed only in God, though he did not know it. And in his inverted theology God was really the Prince of Darkness. Captain Cullen was a devil-worshipper, but he called the devil by another name, that was all.

At midday, after calling eight bells, Captain Cullen ordered the royals on. The men went aloft faster than they had gone in weeks. Not alone were they nimble because of the westing, but a benignant sun was shining down and limbering their stiff bodies. George Dorety stood aft, near Captain Cullen, less bundled in clothes than usual, soaking in the grateful warmth as he watched the scene. Swiftly and abruptly the incident occurred. There was a cry from the foreroyal-yard of "Man overboard!" Somebody threw a life buoy over the side, and at the same instant the second mate's voice came aft, ringing and peremptory:—

"Hard down your helm!"

The man at the wheel never moved a spoke. He knew better, for Captain Dan Cullen was standing alongside of him. He wanted to move a spoke, to move all the spokes, to grind the wheel down, hard down, for his comrade drowning in the sea. He glanced at Captain Dan Cullen, and Captain Dan Cullen gave no sign.

"Down! Hard down!" the second mate roared, as he sprang aft.

But he ceased springing and commanding, and stood still, when he saw Dan Cullen by the wheel. And big Dan Cullen puffed at his cigar and said nothing. Astern, and going astern fast, could be seen the sailor. He had caught the life buoy and was clinging to it. Nobody spoke. Nobody moved. The men aloft clung to the royal yards and watched with terror-stricken faces. And the Mary Rogers raced on, making her westing. A long, silent minute passed.

"Who was it?" Captain Cullen demanded.

"Mops, sir," eagerly answered the sailor at the wheel.

Mops topped a wave astern and disappeared temporarily in the trough. It was a large wave, but it was no graybeard. A small boat could live easily in such a sea, and in such a sea the Mary Rogers could easily come to. But she could not come to and make westing at the same time.

For the first time in all his years, George Dorety was seeing a real drama of life and death—a sordid little drama in which the scales balanced an unknown sailor named Mops against a few miles of longitude. At first he had watched the man astern, but now he watched big Dan Cullen, hairy and black, vested with power of life and death, smoking a cigar.

Captain Dan Cullen smoked another long, silent minute. Then he removed the cigar from his mouth. He glanced aloft at the spars of the Mary Rogers, and overside at the sea.

"Sheet home the royals!" he cried.

Fifteen minutes later they sat at table, in the cabin, with food served before them. On one side of George Dorety sat Dan Cullen, the tiger, on the other side, Joshua Higgins, the hyena. Nobody spoke. On deck the men were sheeting home the skysails. George Dorety could hear their cries, while a persistent vision haunted him of a man called Mops, alive and well, clinging to a life buoy miles astern in that lonely ocean. He glanced at Captain Cullen, and experienced a feeling of nausea, for the man was eating his food with relish, almost bolting it.

“Captain Cullen,” Dorety said, “you are in command of this ship, and it is not proper for me to comment now upon what you do. But I wish to say one thing. There is a hereafter, and yours will be a hot one.”

Captain Cullen did not even scowl. In his voice was regret as he said:—

“It was blowing a living gale. It was impossible to save the man.”

“He fell from the royal-yard,” Dorety cried hotly. “You were setting the royals at the time. Fifteen minutes afterward you were setting the skysails.”

“It was a living gale, wasn’t it, Mr. Higgins?” Captain Cullen said, turning to the mate.

“If you’d brought her to, it’d have taken the sticks out of her,” was the mate’s answer. “You did the proper thing, Captain Cullen. The man hadn’t a ghost of a show.”

George Dorety made no answer, and to the meal’s end no one spoke. After that, Dorety had his meals served in his stateroom. Captain Cullen scowled at him no longer, though no speech was exchanged between them, while the Mary Rogers sped north toward warmer latitudes. At the end of the week, Dan Cullen cornered Dorety on deck.

“What are you going to do when we get to ‘Frisco?” he demanded bluntly.

“I am going to swear out a warrant for your arrest,” Dorety answered quietly. “I am going to charge you with murder, and I am going to see you hanged for it.”

“You’re almighty sure of yourself,” Captain Cullen sneered, turning on his heel.

A second week passed, and one morning found George Dorety standing in the coach-house companionway at the for’ard end of the long poop, taking his first gaze around the deck. The Mary Rogers was reach-ing full-and-by, in a stiff breeze. Every sail was set and drawing, including the staysails. Captain Cullen strolled for’ard along the poop.

He strolled carelessly, glancing at the passenger out of the corner of his eye. Dorety was looking the other way, standing with head and shoulders outside the companionway, and only the back of his head was to be seen. Captain Cullen, with swift eye, embraced the mainstaysail-block and the head and estimated the distance. He glanced about him. Nobody was looking. Aft, Joshua Higgins, pacing up and down, had just turned his back and was going the other way. Captain Cullen bent over suddenly and cast the staysail-sheet off from its pin. The heavy block hurtled through the air, smashing Dorety’s head like an egg-shell and hurtling on and back and forth as the staysail whipped and slatted in the wind. Joshua Higgins turned around to see what had carried away, and met the full blast of the vilest portion of Captain Cullen’s profanity.

“I made the sheet fast myself,” whimpered the mate in the first lull, “with an extra turn to make sure. I remember it distinctly.”

“Made fast?” the Captain snarled back, for the benefit of the watch as it struggled to capture the flying sail before it tore to ribbons. “You couldn’t make your grandmother fast, you useless hell’s scullion. If you made that sheet fast with an extra turn, why in hell didn’t it stay fast? That’s what I want to know. Why in hell didn’t it stay fast?”

The mate whined inarticulately.

“Oh, shut up!” was the final word of Captain Cullen.

Half an hour later he was as surprised as any when the body of George Dorety was found inside the companionway on the floor. In the afternoon, alone in his room, he doctored up the log.

“Ordinary seaman, Karl Brun,” he wrote, “lost overboard from foreroyal-yard in a gale of wind. Was running at the time, and for the safety of the ship did not dare come up to the wind. Nor could a boat have lived in the sea that was running.”

On another page, he wrote:—

“Had often warned Mr. Dorety about the danger he ran because of his carelessness on deck. I told him, once, that some day he would get his head knocked off by a block. A carelessly fastened mainstaysail sheet was the cause of the accident, which was deeply to be regretted because Mr. Dorety was a favorite with all of us.”

Captain Dan Cullen read over his literary effort with admiration, blotted the page, and closed the log. He lighted a cigar and stared before him. He felt the Mary Rogers lift, and heel, and surge along, and knew that she was making nine knots. A smile of satisfaction slowly dawned on his black and hairy face. Well, anyway, he had made his westing and fooled God.

The Man on the Other Bank.

It was before Smoke Bellew staked the farcical town-site of Tra-Lee, made the historic corner of eggs that nearly broke Swiftwater Bill's bank account, or won the dog-team race down the Yukon for an even million dollars, that he and Shorty parted company on the Upper Klondike. Shorty's task was to return down the Klondike to Dawson to record some claims they had staked.

Smoke, with the dog-team, turned south. His quest was Surprise Lake and the mythical Two Cabins. His traverse was to cut the headwaters of the Indian River and cross the unknown region over the mountains to the Stewart River. Here, somewhere, rumour persisted, was Surprise Lake, surrounded by jagged mountains and glaciers, its bottom paved with raw gold. Old-timers, it was said, whose very names were forgotten in the frosts of earlier years, had dived into the icy waters of Surprise Lake and fetched lump-gold to the surface in both hands. At different times, parties of old-timers had penetrated the forbidding fastness and sampled the lake's golden bottom. But the water was too cold. Some died in the water, being pulled up dead. Others died later of consumption. And one who had gone down never did come up. All survivors had planned to return and drain the lake, yet none had ever gone back. Disaster always smote them. One man fell into an air-hole below Forty Mile; another was killed and eaten by his dogs; a third was crushed by a falling tree. And so the tale ran. Surprise Lake was a hoodoo; its location was unremembered; and the gold still paved its undrained bottom.

Two Cabins, no less mythical, was more definitely located. "Five sleeps," up the McQuestion River from the Stewart, stood two ancient cabins. So ancient were they that they must have been built before ever the first known gold-hunter had entered the Yukon Basin. Wandering moose-hunters, whom even Smoke had met and talked with, claimed to have found the two cabins in the old days, but to have sought vainly for the mine which those early adventurers must have worked.

"I wish you was goin' with me," Shorty said wistfully, at parting. "Just because you got the Indian bug ain't no reason for to go pokin' into trouble. They's no gettin' away from it, that's loco country you're bound for. The hoodoo's sure on it, from the first flip to the last call, judgin' from all you an' me has hearn tell about it."

"It's all right, Shorty," replied Smoke. "I'll make the round trip and be back in Dawson in six weeks. The Yukon trail is packed, and the first hundred miles or so of the Stewart ought to be packed. Old-timers from Henderson have told me a number of outfits went up last fall after the freeze-up. When I strike their trail I ought to hit her up forty or fifty miles a day. I'm likely to be back inside a month, once I get across."

“Yep, once you get acrost. But it’s the gettin’ acrost that worries me. Well, so long, Smoke. Keep your eyes open for that hoodoo, that’s all. An’ don’t be ashamed to turn back if you don’t kill any meat.”

A week later, Smoke found himself among the jumbled ranges south of Indian River. On the divide from the Klondike he had abandoned the sled and packed his wolf-dogs. The six big huskies each carried fifty pounds, and on his own back was an equal burden. Through the soft snow he led the way, packing it down under his snow-shoes, and behind, in single file, toiled the dogs.

He loved the life, the deep arctic winter, the silent wilderness, the unending snow-surface unpressed by the foot of any man. About him towered icy peaks unnamed and uncharted. No hunter’s camp-smoke, rising in the still air of the valleys, ever caught his eye. He, alone, moved through the brooding quiet of the untravelled wastes; nor was he oppressed by the solitude. He loved it all, the day’s toil, the bickering wolf-dogs, the making of the camp in the long twilight, the leaping stars overhead, and the flaming pageant of the aurora borealis.

Especially he loved his camp at the end of the day, and in it he saw a picture which he ever yearned to paint and which he knew he would never forget—a beaten place in the snow, where burned his fire; his bed, a couple of rabbit-skin robes spread on fresh-chopped spruce-boughs; his shelter, a stretched strip of canvas that caught and threw back the heat of the fire; the blackened coffee-pot and pail resting on a length of log, the moccasins propped on sticks to dry, the snow-shoes up-ended in the snow; and across the fire the wolf-dogs snuggling to it for the warmth, wistful and eager, furry and frost-rimed, with bushy tails curled protectingly over their feet; and all about, pressed backward but a space, the wall of encircling darkness.

At such times San Francisco, The Billow, and O’Hara seemed very far away, lost in a remote past, shadows of dreams that had never happened. He found it hard to believe that he had known any other life than this of the wild, and harder still was it for him to reconcile himself to the fact that he had once dabbled and dawdled in the Bohemian drift of city life. Alone, with no one to talk to, he thought much, and deeply, and simply. He was appalled by the wastage of his city years, by the cheapness, now, of the philosophies of the schools and books, of the clever cynicism of the studio and editorial room, of the cant of the business men in their clubs. They knew neither food, nor sleep, nor health; nor could they ever possibly know the sting of real appetite, the goodly ache of fatigue, nor the rush of mad strong blood that bit like wine through all one’s body as work was done.

And all the time this fine, wise, Spartan Northland had been here, and he had never known. What puzzled him was, that, with such intrinsic fitness, he had never heard the slightest calling whisper, had not himself gone forth to seek. But this, too, he solved in time.

“Look here, Yellow Face, I’ve got it clear!”

The dog addressed lifted first one forefoot and then the other with quick, appeasing movements, curled his bush of a tail about them again, and laughed across the fire.

“Herbert Spencer was nearly forty before he caught the vision of his greatest efficiency and desire. I’m none so slow. I didn’t have to wait till I was thirty to catch mine. Right here is my efficiency and desire. Almost, Yellow Face, do I wish I had been born a wolf-boy and been brother all my days to you and yours.”

For days he wandered through a chaos of canyons and divides which did not yield themselves to any rational topographical plan. It was as if they had been flung there by some cosmic joker. In vain he sought for a creek or feeder that flowed truly south toward the McQuestion and the Stewart. Then came a mountain storm that blew a blizzard across the riff-raff of high and shallow divides. Above timber-line, fireless, for two days, he struggled blindly to find lower levels. On the second day he came out upon the rim of an enormous palisade. So thickly drove the snow that he could not see the base of the wall, nor dared he attempt the descent. He rolled himself in his robes and huddled the dogs about him in the depths of a snow-drift, but did not permit himself to sleep.

In the morning, the storm spent, he crawled out to investigate. A quarter of a mile beneath him, beyond all mistake, lay a frozen, snow-covered lake. About it, on every side, rose jagged peaks. It answered the description. Blindly, he had found Surprise Lake.

“Well named,” he muttered, an hour later, as he came out upon its margin. A clump of aged spruce was the only woods. On his way to it, he stumbled upon three graves, snow-buried, but marked by hand-hewn head-posts and undecipherable writing. On the edge of the woods was a small ramshackle cabin. He pulled the latch and entered. In a corner, on what had once been a bed of spruce-boughs, still wrapped in mangy furs that had rotted to fragments, lay a skeleton. The last visitor to Surprise Lake, was Smoke’s conclusion, as he picked up a lump of gold as large as his doubled fist. Beside the lump was a pepper-can filled with nuggets of the size of walnuts, rough-surfaced, showing no signs of wash.

So true had the tale run that Smoke accepted without question that the source of the gold was the lake’s bottom. Under many feet of ice and inaccessible, there was nothing to be done, and at midday, from the rim of the palisade, he took a farewell look back and down at his find.

“It’s all right, Mr. Lake,” he said. “You just keep right on staying there. I’m coming back to drain you—if that hoodoo doesn’t catch me. I don’t know how I got here, but I’ll know by the way I go out.”

In a little valley, beside a frozen stream and under beneficent spruce trees, he built a fire four days later. Somewhere in that white anarchy he had left behind him was Surprise Lake—somewhere, he knew not where; for a hundred hours of driftage and struggle through blinding, driving snow had concealed his course from him, and he knew not in what direction lay BEHIND. It was as if he had just emerged from a nightmare. He was not sure whether four days or a week had passed. He had slept with the dogs, fought across a forgotten number of shallow divides, followed the windings of weird canyons that ended in pockets, and twice had managed to make a fire and

thaw out frozen moose-meat. And here he was, well-fed and well-camped. The storm had passed, and it had turned clear and cold. The lay of the land had again become rational. The creek he was on was natural in appearance, and tended as it should toward the southwest. But Surprise Lake was as lost to him as it had been to all its seekers in the past.

Half a day's journey down the creek brought him to the valley of a larger stream which he decided was the McQuestion. Here he shot a moose, and once again each wolf-dog carried a full fifty-pound pack of meat. As he turned down the McQuestion, he came upon a sled-trail. The late snows had drifted over, but underneath, it was well packed by travel. His conclusion was that two camps had been established on the McQuestion, and that this was the connecting trail. Evidently, Two Cabins had been found, and it was the lower camp, so he headed down the stream.

It was forty below zero when he camped that night, and he fell asleep wondering who were the men who had rediscovered the Two Cabins, and if he would fetch it next day. At the first hint of dawn he was under way, easily following the half-obliterated trail and packing the recent snow with his webbed shoes so that the dogs should not wallow.

And then it came, the unexpected, leaping out upon him on a bend of the river. It seemed to him that he heard and felt simultaneously. The crack of the rifle came from the right, and the bullet, tearing through and across the shoulders of his drill parka and woollen coat, pivoted him half around with the shock of its impact. He staggered on his twisted snow-shoes to recover balance, and heard a second crack of the rifle. This time it was a clean miss. He did not wait for more, but plunged across the snow for the sheltering trees of the bank a hundred feet away. Again and again the rifle cracked, and he was unpleasantly aware of a trickle of warm moisture down his back.

He climbed the bank, the dogs floundering behind, and dodged in among the trees and brush. Slipping out of his snow-shoes, he wallowed forward at full length and peered cautiously out. Nothing was to be seen. Whoever had shot at him was lying quiet among the trees of the opposite bank.

"If something doesn't happen pretty soon," he muttered at the end of half an hour, "I'll have to sneak away and build a fire or freeze my feet. Yellow Face, what'd you do, lying in the frost with circulation getting slack and a man trying to plug you?"

He crawled back a few yards, packed down the snow, danced a jig that sent the blood back into his feet, and managed to endure another half hour. Then, from down the river, he heard the unmistakable jingle of dog-bells. Peering out, he saw a sled round the bend. Only one man was with it, straining at the gee-pole and urging the dogs along. The effect on Smoke was one of shock, for it was the first human he had seen since he parted from Shorty three weeks before. His next thought was of the potential murderer concealed on the opposite bank.

Without exposing himself, Smoke whistled warningly. The man did not hear, and came on rapidly. Again, and more sharply, Smoke whistled. The man whoa'd his dogs, stopped, and had turned and faced Smoke when the rifle cracked. The instant after-

wards, Smoke fired into the wood in the direction of the sound. The man on the river had been struck by the first shot. The shock of the high velocity bullet staggered him. He stumbled awkwardly to the sled, half-falling, and pulled a rifle out from under the lashings. As he strove to raise it to his shoulder, he crumpled at the waist and sank down slowly to a sitting posture on the sled. Then, abruptly, as the gun went off aimlessly, he pitched backward and across a corner of the sled-load, so that Smoke could see only his legs and stomach.

From below came more jingling bells. The man did not move. Around the bend swung three sleds, accompanied by half a dozen men. Smoke cried warningly, but they had seen the condition of the first sled, and they dashed on to it. No shots came from the other bank, and Smoke, calling his dogs to follow, emerged into the open. There were exclamations from the men, and two of them, flinging off the mittens of their right hands, levelled their rifles at him.

“Come on, you red-handed murderer, you,” one of them, a black-bearded man, commanded. “An’ jest pitch that gun of yours in the snow.”

Smoke hesitated, then dropped his rifle and came up to them.

“Go through him, Louis, an’ take his weapons,” the black-bearded man ordered.

Louis was a French-Canadian voyageur, Smoke decided, as were four of the others. His search revealed only Smoke’s hunting knife, which was appropriated.

“Now, what have you got to say for yourself, stranger, before I shoot you dead?” the black-bearded man demanded.

“That you’re making a mistake if you think I killed that man,” Smoke answered.

A cry came from one of the voyageurs. He had quested along the trail and found Smoke’s tracks where he had left it to take refuge on the bank. The man explained the nature of his find.

“What’d you kill Joe Kinade for?” he of the black beard asked.

“I tell you I didn’t—“ Smoke began.

“Aw, what’s the good of talkin’? We got you red-handed. Right up there’s where you left the trail when you heard him comin’. You laid among the trees an’ bushwhacked him. A short shot. You couldn’t ‘a’ missed. Pierre, go an’ get that gun he dropped.”

“You might let me tell what happened,” Smoke objected.

“You shut up,” the man snarled at him. “I reckon your gun’ll tell the story.”

All the men examined Smoke’s rifle, ejecting and counting the cartridges, and examining the barrel at muzzle and breech.

“One shot,” Blackbeard concluded.

Pierre, with nostrils that quivered and distended like a deer’s, sniffed at the breech.

“Him one fresh shot,” he said.

“The bullet entered his back,” Smoke said. “He was facing me when he was shot. You see, it came from the other bank.”

Blackbeard considered this proposition for a scant second, and shook his head. “Nope. It won’t do. Turn him around to face the other bank—that’s how you whopped

him in the back. Some of you boys run up an' down the trail, and see if you can see any tracks making for the other bank."

Their report was that on that side the snow was unbroken. Not even a snow-shoe rabbit had crossed it. Blackbeard, bending over the dead man, straightened up, with a woolly, furry wad in his hand. Shredding this, he found imbedded in the center the bullet which had perforated the body. Its nose was spread to the size of a half dollar, its butt-end, steel-jacketed, was undamaged. He compared it with a cartridge from Smoke's belt.

"That's plain enough evidence, stranger, to satisfy a blind man. It's soft-nosed an' steel-jacketed; yours is soft-nosed and steel-jacketed. It's thirty-thirty; yours is thirty-thirty. It's manufactured by the J. and T. Arms Company; yours is manufactured by the J. and T. Arms Company. Now you come along, an' we'll go over to the bank an' see jest how you done it."

"I was bushwhacked myself," Smoke said. "Look at the hole in my parka."

While Blackbeard examined it, one of the voyageurs threw open the breech of the dead man's gun. It was patent to all that it had been fired once. The empty cartridge was still in the chamber.

"A damn shame poor Joe didn't get you," Blackbeard said bitterly. "But he did pretty well with a hole like that in him. Come on, you."

"Search the other bank first," Smoke urged.

"You shut up an' come on, an' let the facts do the talkin'."

They left the trail at the same spot he had, and followed it on up the bank and then in among the trees.

"Him dance that place keep him feet warm," Louis pointed out. "That place him crawl on belly. That place him put one elbow w'en him shoot."

"And by God there's the empty cartridge he done it with!" was Blackbeard's discovery. "Boys, there's only one thing to do—"

"You might ask me how I came to fire that shot," Smoke interrupted.

"An' I might knock your teeth into your gullet if you butt in again. You can answer them questions later on. Now, boys, we're decent an' law-abidin', an' we got to handle this right an' regular. How far do you reckon we've come, Pierre?"

"Twenty mile, I t'ink for sure."

"All right. We'll cache the outfit an' run him an' poor Joe back to Two Cabins. I reckon we've seen an' can testify to what'll stretch his neck."

It was three hours after dark when the dead man, Smoke, and his captors arrived at Two Cabins. By the starlight, Smoke could make out a dozen or more recently built cabins snuggling about a larger and older cabin on a flat by the river bank. Thrust inside this older cabin, he found it tenanted by a young giant of a man, his wife, and an old blind man. The woman, whom her husband called "Lucy," was herself a strapping creature of the frontier type. The old man, as Smoke learned afterwards, had been a trapper on the Stewart for years, and had gone finally blind the winter before. The camp of Two Cabins, he was also to learn, had been made the previous fall

by a dozen men who arrived in half as many poling-boats loaded with provisions. Here they had found the blind trapper, on the site of Two Cabins, and about his cabin they had built their own. Later arrivals, mushing up the ice with dog teams, had tripled the population. There was plenty of meat in camp, and good low-pay dirt had been discovered and was being worked.

In five minutes, all the men of Two Cabins were jammed into the room. Smoke, shoved off into a corner, ignored and scowled at, his hands and feet tied with thongs of moose-hide, looked on. Thirty-eight men he counted, a wild and husky crew, all frontiersmen of the States or voyageurs from Upper Canada. His captors told the tale over and over, each the center of an excited and wrathful group. There were mutterings of: "Lynch him now! Why wait?" And, once, a big Irishman was restrained only by force from rushing upon the helpless prisoner and giving him a beating.

It was while counting the men that Smoke caught sight of a familiar face. It was Breck, the man whose boat Smoke had run through the rapids. He wondered why the other did not come and speak to him, but himself gave no sign of recognition. Later, when with shielded face Breck passed him a significant wink, Smoke understood.

Blackbeard, whom Smoke heard called Eli Harding, ended the discussion as to whether or not the prisoner should be immediately lynched.

"Hold on," Harding roared. "Keep your shirts on. That man belongs to me. I caught him an' I brought him here. D'ye think I brought him all the way here to be lynched? Not on your life. I could 'a' done that myself when I found him. I brought him here for a fair an' impartial trial, an' by God, a fair an' impartial trial he's goin' to get. He's tied up safe an' sound. Chuck him in a bunk till morning, an' we'll hold the trial right here."

Smoke woke up. A draught that possessed all the rigidity of an icicle was boring into the front of his shoulders as he lay on his side facing the wall. When he had been tied into the bunk there had been no such draught, and now the outside air, driving into the heated atmosphere of the cabin with the pressure of fifty below zero, was sufficient advertisement that some one from without had pulled away the moss-chinking between the logs. He squirmed as far as his bonds would permit, then craned his neck forward until his lips just managed to reach the crack.

"Who is it?" he whispered.

"Breck," came the almost inaudible answer. "Be careful you don't make a noise. I'm going to pass a knife in to you."

"No good," Smoke said. "I couldn't use it. My hands are tied behind me and made fast to the leg of the bunk. Besides, you couldn't get a knife through that crack. But something must be done. Those fellows are of a temper to hang me, and, of course, you know I didn't kill that man."

"It wasn't necessary to mention it, Smoke. And if you did you had your reasons. Which isn't the point at all. I want to get you out of this. It's a tough bunch of men here. You've seen them. They're shut off from the world, and they make and enforce their own law—by miner's meeting, you know. They handled two men already—both

grub-thieves. One they hiked from camp without an ounce of grub and no matches. He made about forty miles and lasted a couple of days before he froze stiff. Two weeks ago they hiked the second man. They gave him his choice: no grub, or ten lashes for each day's ration. He stood for forty lashes before he fainted. And now they've got you, and every last one is convinced you killed Kinade."

"The man who killed Kinade shot at me, too. His bullet broke the skin on my shoulder. Get them to delay the trial till some one goes up and searches the bank where the murderer hid."

"No use. They take the evidence of Harding and the five Frenchmen with him. Besides, they haven't had a hanging yet, and they're keen for it. You see, things have been pretty monotonous. They haven't located anything big, and they got tired of hunting for Surprise Lake. They did some stampeding the first part of the winter, but they've got over that now. Scurvy is beginning to show up amongst them, too, and they're just ripe for excitement."

"And it looks like I'll furnish it," was Smoke's comment. "Say, Breck, how did you ever fall in with such a God-forsaken bunch?"

"After I got the claims at Squaw Creek opened up and some men to working, I came up here by way of the Stewart, hunting for Two Cabins. They'd beaten me to it, so I've been higher up the Stewart. Just got back yesterday out of grub."

"Find anything?"

"Nothing much. But I think I've got a hydraulic proposition that'll work big when the country's opened up. It's that, or a gold-dredger."

"Hold on," Smoke interrupted. "Wait a minute. Let me think."

He was very much aware of the snores of the sleepers as he pursued the idea that had flashed into his mind.

"Say, Breck, have they opened up the meat-packs my dogs carried?" he asked.

"A couple. I was watching. They put them in Harding's cache."

"Did they find anything?"

"Meat."

"Good. You've got to get into the brown-canvas pack that's patched with moose-hide. You'll find a few pounds of lumpy gold. You've never seen gold like it in the country, nor has anybody else. Here's what you've got to do. Listen."

A quarter of an hour later, fully instructed and complaining that his toes were freezing, Breck went away. Smoke, his own nose and one cheek frosted by proximity to the chink, rubbed them against the blankets for half an hour before the blaze and bite of the returning blood assured him of the safety of his flesh.

"My mind's made up right now. There ain't no doubt but what he killed Kinade. We heard the whole thing last night. What's the good of goin' over it again? I vote guilty."

In such fashion, Smoke's trial began. The speaker, a loose-jointed, hard-rock man from Colorado, manifested irritation and disgust when Harding set his suggestion aside, demanded the proceedings should be regular, and nominated one Shunk Wilson for

judge and chairman of the meeting. The population of Two Cabins constituted the jury, though, after some discussion, the woman, Lucy, was denied the right to vote on Smoke's guilt or innocence.

While this was going on, Smoke, jammed into a corner on a bunk, overheard a whispered conversation between Breck and a miner.

"You haven't fifty pounds of flour you'll sell?" Breck queried.

"You ain't got the dust to pay the price I'm askin'," was the reply.

"I'll give you two hundred."

The man shook his head.

"Three hundred. Three-fifty."

At four hundred, the man nodded, and said, "Come on over to my cabin an' weigh out the dust."

The two squeezed their way to the door, and slipped out. After a few minutes Breck returned alone.

Harding was testifying, when Smoke saw the door shoved open slightly, and in the crack appear the face of the man who had sold the flour. He was grimacing and beckoning emphatically to some one inside, who arose from near the stove and started to work toward the door.

"Where are you goin', Sam?" Shunk Wilson demanded.

"I'll be back in a jiffy," Sam explained. "I jes' got to go."

Smoke was permitted to question the witnesses, and he was in the middle of the cross-examination of Harding when from without came the whining of dogs in harness, and the grind and churn of sled-runners. Somebody near the door peeped out.

"It's Sam an' his pardner an' a dog-team hell-bent down the trail for Stewart River," the man reported.

Nobody spoke for a long half-minute, but men glanced significantly at one another, and a general restlessness pervaded the packed room. Out of the corner of his eye, Smoke caught a glimpse of Breck, Lucy, and her husband whispering together.

"Come on, you," Shunk Wilson said gruffly to Smoke. "Cut this questionin' short. We know what you're tryin' to prove—that the other bank wa'n't searched. The witness admits it. We admit it. It wa'n't necessary. No tracks led to that bank. The snow wa'n't broke."

"There was a man on the other bank just the same," Smoke insisted.

"That's too thin for skatin', young man. There ain't many of us on the McQuestion, an' we got every man accounted for."

"Who was the man you hiked out of camp two weeks ago?" Smoke asked.

"Alonzo Miramar. He was a Mexican. What's that grub-thief got to do with it?"

"Nothing, except that you haven't accounted for HIM, Mr. Judge."

"He went down the river, not up."

"How do you know where he went?"

"Saw him start."

"And that's all you know of what became of him?"

“No, it ain’t, young man. I know, we all know, he had four days’ grub an’ no gun to shoot meat with. If he didn’t make the settlement on the Yukon he’d croaked long before this.”

“I suppose you’ve got all the guns in this part of the country accounted for, too,” Smoke observed pointedly.

Shunk Wilson was angry. “You’d think I was the prisoner the way you slam questions into me. Now then, come on with the next witness. Where’s French Louis?”

While French Louis was shoving forward, Lucy opened the door.

“Where you goin’?” Shunk Wilson shouted.

“I reckon I don’t have to stay,” she answered defiantly. “I ain’t got no vote, an’ besides, my cabin’s so jammed up I can’t breathe.”

In a few minutes her husband followed. The closing of the door was the first warning the judge received of it.

“Who was that?” he interrupted Pierre’s narrative to ask.

“Bill Peabody,” somebody spoke up. “Said he wanted to ask his wife something and was coming right back.”

Instead of Bill, it was Lucy who re-entered, took off her furs, and resumed her place by the stove.

“I reckon we don’t need to hear the rest of the witnesses,” was Shunk Wilson’s decision, when Pierre had finished. “We already know they only can testify to the same facts we’ve already heard. Say, Sorensen, you go an’ bring Bill Peabody back. We’ll be votin’ a verdict pretty short. Now, stranger, you can get up an’ say your say concernin’ what happened. In the meantime, we’ll just be savin’ delay by passin’ around the two rifles, the ammunition, an’ the bullet that done the killin’.”

Midway in his story of how he had arrived in that part of the country, and at the point in his narrative where he described his own ambush and how he had fled to the bank, Smoke was interrupted by the indignant Shunk Wilson.

“Young man, what sense is there in you testifyin’ that way? You’re just takin’ up valuable time. Of course you got the right to lie to save your neck, but we ain’t goin’ to stand for such foolishness. The rifle, the ammunition, an’ the bullet that killed Joe Kinade is against you. What’s that? Open the door, somebody!”

The frost rushed in, taking form and substance in the heat of the room, while through the open door came the whining of dogs that decreased rapidly with distance.

“It’s Sorensen an’ Peabody,” some one cried, “a-throwin’ the whip into the dawgs an’ headin’ down river!”

“Now, what the hell—!” Shunk Wilson paused, with dropped jaw, and glared at Lucy. “I reckon you can explain, Mrs. Peabody.”

She tossed her head and compressed her lips, and Shunk Wilson’s wrathful and suspicious gaze passed on and rested on Breck.

“An’ I reckon that newcomer you’ve been chinning with could explain if HE had a mind to.”

Breck, now very uncomfortable, found all eyes centered on him.

“Sam was chewing the rag with him, too, before he hit out,” some one said.

“Look here, Mr. Breck,” Shunk Wilson continued. “You’ve been interruptin’ proceedings, and you got to explain the meanin’ of it. What was you chinnin’ about?”

Breck cleared his throat timidly and replied. “I was just trying to buy some grub.”

“What with?”

“Dust, of course.”

“Where’d you get it?”

Breck did not answer.

“He’s been snoopin’ around up the Stewart,” a man volunteered. “I run across his camp a week ago when I was huntin’. An’ I want to tell you he was almighty secretious about it.”

“The dust didn’t come from there,” Breck said. “That’s only a low-grade hydraulic proposition.”

“Bring your poke here an’ let’s see your dust,” Wilson commanded.

“I tell you it didn’t come from there.”

“Let’s see it, just the same.”

Breck made as if to refuse, but all about him were menacing faces. Reluctantly, he fumbled in his coat pocket. In the act of drawing forth a pepper-can, it rattled against what was evidently a hard object.

“Fetch it all out!” Shunk Wilson thundered.

And out came the big nugget, fist-size, yellow as no gold any onlooker had ever seen. Shunk Wilson gasped. Half a dozen, catching one glimpse, made a break for the door. They reached it at the same moment, and, with cursing and scuffling, jammed and pivoted through. The judge emptied the contents of the pepper-can on the table, and the sight of the rough lump-gold sent half a dozen more toward the door.

“Where are you goin’?” Eli Harding asked, as Shunk started to follow.

“For my dogs, of course.”

“Ain’t you goin’ to hang him?”

“It’d take too much time right now. He’ll keep till we get back, so I reckon this court is adjourned. This ain’t no place for lingerin’.”

Harding hesitated. He glanced savagely at Smoke, saw Pierre beckoning to Louis from the doorway, took one last look at the lump-gold on the table, and decided.

“No use you tryin’ to get away,” he flung back over his shoulder. “Besides, I’m goin’ to borrow your dogs.”

“What is it?—another one of them blamed stampedes?” the old blind trapper asked in a queer and petulant falsetto, as the cries of men and dogs and the grind of the sleds swept the silence of the room.

“It sure is,” Lucy answered. “An’ I never seen gold like it. Feel that, old man.”

She put the big nugget in his hand. He was but slightly interested.

“It was a good fur-country,” he complained, “before them danged miners come in an’ scared back the game.”

The door opened, and Breck entered. "Well," he said, "we four are all that are left in camp. It's forty miles to the Stewart by the cut-off I broke, and the fastest of them can't make the round trip in less than five or six days. But it's time you pulled out, Smoke, just the same."

Breck drew his hunting-knife across the other's bonds, and glanced at the woman. "I hope you don't object?" he said, with significant politeness.

"If there's goin' to be any shootin'," the blind man broke out, "I wish somebody'd take me to another cabin first."

"Go on, an' don't mind me," Lucy answered. "If I ain't good enough to hang a man, I ain't good enough to hold him."

Smoke stood up, rubbing his wrists where the thongs had impeded the circulation.

"I've got a pack all ready for you," Breck said. "Ten days' grub, blankets, matches, tobacco, an axe, and a rifle."

"Go to it," Lucy encouraged. "Hit the high places, stranger. Beat it as fast as God'll let you."

"I'm going to have a square meal before I start," Smoke said. "And when I start it will be up the McQuestion, not down. I want you to go along with me, Breck. We're going to search that other bank for the man that really did the killing."

"If you'll listen to me, you'll head down for the Stewart and the Yukon," Breck objected. "When this gang gets back from my low-grade hydraulic proposition, it will be seeing red."

Smoke laughed and shook his head.

"I can't jump this country, Breck. I've got interests here. I've got to stay and make good. I don't care whether you believe me or not, but I've found Surprise Lake. That's where that gold came from. Besides, they took my dogs, and I've got to wait to get them back. Also, I know what I'm about. There was a man hidden on that bank. He came pretty close to emptying his magazine at me."

Half an hour afterward, with a big plate of moose-steak before him and a big mug of coffee at his lips, Smoke half-started up from his seat. He had heard the sounds first. Lucy threw open the door.

"Hello, Spike; hello, Methody," she greeted the two frost-rimed men who were bending over the burden on their sled.

"We just come down from Upper Camp," one said, as the pair staggered into the room with a fur-wrapped object which they handled with exceeding gentleness. "An' this is what we found by the way. He's all in, I guess."

"Put him in the near bunk there," Lucy said. She bent over and pulled back the furs, disclosing a face composed principally of large, staring, black eyes, and of skin, dark and scabbed by repeated frost-bite, tightly stretched across the bones.

"If it ain't Alonzo!" she cried. "You pore, starved devil!"

"That's the man on the other bank," Smoke said in an undertone to Breck.

"We found it raidin' a cache that Harding must 'a' made," one of the men was explaining. "He was eatin' raw flour an' frozen bacon, an' when we got 'm he was cryin'"

an' squealin' like a hawg. Look at him! He's all starved, an' most of him frozen. He'll kick at any moment."

Half an hour later, when the furs had been drawn over the face of the still form in the bunk, Smoke turned to Lucy. "If you don't mind, Mrs. Peabody, I'll have another whack at that steak. Make it thick and not so well done. I'm a meat-eater, I am."

The Man With the Gash

Jacob Kent had suffered from cupidity all the days of his life. This, in turn, had engendered a chronic distrustfulness, and his mind and character had become so warped that he was a very disagreeable man to deal with. He was also a victim to somnambolic propensities, and very set in his ideas. He had been a weaver of cloth from the cradle, until the fever of Klondike had entered his blood and torn him away from his loom. His cabin stood midway between Sixty Mile Post and the Stuart River; and men who made it a custom to travel the trail to Dawson, likened him to a robber baron, perched in his fortress and exacting toll from the caravans that used his ill-kept roads. Since a certain amount of history was required in the construction of this figure, the less cultured wayfarers from Stuart River were prone to describe him after a still more primordial fashion, in which a command of strong adjectives was to be chiefly noted.

This cabin was not his, by the way, having been built several years previously by a couple of miners who had got out a raft of logs at that point for a grub-stake. They had been most hospitable lads, and, after they abandoned it, travelers who knew the route made it an object to arrive there at nightfall. It was very handy, saving them all the time and toil of pitching camp; and it was an unwritten rule that the last man left a neat pile of firewood for the next comer. Rarely a night passed but from half a dozen to a score of men crowded into its shelter. Jacob Kent noted these things, exercised squatter sovereignty, and moved in. Thenceforth, the weary travelers were mulcted a dollar per head for the privilege of sleeping on the floor, Jacob Kent weighing the dust and never failing to steal the down-weight. Besides, he so contrived that his transient guests chopped his wood for him and carried his water. This was rank piracy, but his victims were an easy-going breed, and while they detested him, they yet permitted him to flourish in his sins.

One afternoon in April he sat by his door,—for all the world like a predatory spider,—marvelling at the heat of the returning sun, and keeping an eye on the trail for prospective flies. The Yukon lay at his feet, a sea of ice, disappearing around two great bends to the north and south, and stretching an honest two miles from bank to bank. Over its rough breast ran the sled-trail, a slender sunken line, eighteen inches wide and two thousand miles in length, with more curses distributed to the linear foot than any other road in or out of all Christendom.

Jacob Kent was feeling particularly good that afternoon. The record had been broken the previous night, and he had sold his hospitality to no less than twenty-eight visitors. True, it had been quite uncomfortable, and four had snored beneath his bunk all night; but then it had added appreciable weight to the sack in which he kept his

gold dust. That sack, with its glittering yellow treasure, was at once the chief delight and the chief bane of his existence. Heaven and hell lay within its slender mouth. In the nature of things, there being no privacy to his one-roomed dwelling, he was tortured by a constant fear of theft. It would be very easy for these bearded, desperate-looking strangers to make away with it. Often he dreamed that such was the case, and awoke in the grip of nightmare. A select number of these robbers haunted him through his dreams, and he came to know them quite well, especially the bronzed leader with the gash on his right cheek. This fellow was the most persistent of the lot, and, because of him, he had, in his waking moments, constructed several score of hiding-places in and about the cabin. After a concealment he would breathe freely again, perhaps for several nights, only to collar the Man with the Gash in the very act of unearthing the sack. Then, on awakening in the midst of the usual struggle, he would at once get up and transfer the bag to a new and more ingenious crypt. It was not that he was the direct victim of these phantasms; but he believed in omens and thought-transference, and he deemed these dream-robbers to be the astral projection of real personages who happened at those particular moments, no matter where they were in the flesh, to be harboring designs, in the spirit, upon his wealth. So he continued to bleed the unfortunates who crossed his threshold, and at the same time to add to his trouble with every ounce that went into the sack.

As he sat sunning himself, a thought came to Jacob Kent that brought him to his feet with a jerk. The pleasures of life had culminated in the continual weighing and reweighing of his dust; but a shadow had been thrown upon this pleasant avocation, which he had hitherto failed to brush aside. His gold-scales were quite small; in fact, their maximum was a pound and a half,—eighteen ounces,—while his hoard mounted up to something like three and a third times that. He had never been able to weigh it all at one operation, and hence considered himself to have been shut out from a new and most edifying coign of contemplation. Being denied this, half the pleasure of possession had been lost; nay, he felt that this miserable obstacle actually minimized the fact, as it did the strength, of possession. It was the solution of this problem flashing across his mind that had just brought him to his feet. He searched the trail carefully in either direction. There was nothing in sight, so he went inside.

In a few seconds he had the table cleared away and the scales set up. On one side he placed the stamped disks to the equivalent of fifteen ounces, and balanced it with dust on the other. Replacing the weights with dust, he then had thirty ounces precisely balanced. These, in turn, he placed together on one side and again balanced with more dust. By this time the gold was exhausted, and he was sweating liberally. He trembled with ecstasy, ravished beyond measure. Nevertheless he dusted the sack thoroughly, to the last least grain, till the balance was overcome and one side of the scales sank to the table. Equilibrium, however, was restored by the addition of a pennyweight and five grains to the opposite side. He stood, head thrown back, transfixed. The sack was empty, but the potentiality of the scales had become immeasurable. Upon them he could weigh any amount, from the tiniest grain to pounds upon pounds. Mammon laid

hot fingers on his heart. The sun swung on its westering way till it flashed through the open doorway, full upon the yellow-burdened scales. The precious heaps, like the golden breasts of a bronze Cleopatra, flung back the light in a mellow glow. Time and space were not.

“Gawd blime me! but you ‘aye the makin’ of several quid there, ‘aven’t you?”

Jacob Kent wheeled about, at the same time reaching for his double-barrelled shotgun, which stood handy. But when his eyes lit on the intruder’s face, he staggered back dizzily. It was the face of the man with the gash!

The man looked at him curiously.

“Oh, that’s all right,” he said, waving his hand deprecatingly. “You needn’t think as I’ll ‘arm you or your blasted dust.

“You’re a rum ‘un, you are,” he added reflectively, as he watched the sweat pouring from off Kent’s face and the quavering of his knees.

“W’y don’t you pipe up an’ say somethin’?” he went on, as the other struggled for breath. “Wot’s gone wrong o’ your gaff? Anythink the matter?”

“W–w–where’d you get it?” Kent at last managed to articulate, raising a shaking forefinger to the ghastly scar which seamed the other’s cheek.

“Shipmate stove me down with a marlin-spike from the main-royal. An’ now as you ‘aye your figger’ead in trim, wot I want to know is, wot’s it to you? That’s wot I want to know–wot’s it to you? Gawd blime me! do it ‘urt you? Ain’t it smug enough for the likes o’ you? That’s wot I want to know!”

“No, no,” Kent answered, sinking upon a stool with a sickly grin. “I was just wondering.”

“Did you ever see the like?” the other went on truculently.

“No.”

“Ain’t it a beute?”

“Yes.” Kent nodded his head approvingly, intent on humoring this strange visitor, but wholly unprepared for the outburst which was to follow his effort to be agreeable.

“You blasted, bloomin’, burgoo-eatin’ son-of-a-sea-swab! Wot do you mean, a sayin’ the most onsigthly thing Gawd Almighty ever put on the face o’ man is a beute? Wot do you mean, you–“

And thereat this fiery son of the sea broke off into a string of Oriental profanity, mingling gods and devils, lineages and men, metaphors and monsters, with so savage a virility that Jacob Kent was paralyzed. He shrank back, his arms lifted as though to ward off physical violence. So utterly unnerved was he that the other paused in the mid-swing of a gorgeous peroration and burst into thunderous laughter.

“The sun’s knocked the bottom out o’ the trail,” said the Man with the Gash, between departing paroxysms of mirth. “An’ I only ‘ope as you’ll appreciate the hop-pertunity of consortin’ with a man o’ my mug. Get steam up in that fire-box o’ your’n. I’m goin’ to unrig the dogs an’ grub ‘em. An’ don’t be shy o’ the wood, my lad; there’s plenty more where that come from, and it’s you’ve got the time to sling an axe. An’

tote up a bucket o' water while you're about it. Lively! or I'll run you down, so 'elp me!"

Such a thing was unheard of. Jacob Kent was making the fire, chopping wood, packing water—doing menial tasks for a guest! When Jim Cardegee left Dawson, it was with his head filled with the iniquities of this roadside Shylock; and all along the trail his numerous victims had added to the sum of his crimes. Now, Jim Cardegee, with the sailor's love for a sailor's joke, had determined, when he pulled into the cabin, to bring its inmate down a peg or so. That he had succeeded beyond expectation he could not help but remark, though he was in the dark as to the part the gash on his cheek had played in it. But while he could not understand, he saw the terror it created, and resolved to exploit it as remorselessly as would any modern trader a choice bit of merchandise.

"Strike me blind, but you're a 'ustler," he said admiringly, his head cocked to one side, as his host bustled about. "You never 'ort to 'ave gone Klondiking. It's the keeper of a pub' you was laid out for. An' it's often as I 'ave 'eard the lads up an' down the river speak o' you, but I 'adn't no idea you was so jolly nice."

Jacob Kent experienced a tremendous yearning to try his shotgun on him, but the fascination of the gash was too potent. This was the real Man with the Gash, the man who had so often robbed him in the spirit. This, then, was the embodied entity of the being whose astral form had been projected into his dreams, the man who had so frequently harbored designs against his hoard; hence—there could be no other conclusion—this Man with the Gash had now come in the flesh to dispossess him. And that gash! He could no more keep his eyes from it than stop the beating of his heart. Try as he would, they wandered back to that one point as inevitably as the needle to the pole.

"Do it 'urt you?" Jim Cardegee thundered suddenly, looking up from the spreading of his blankets and encountering the rapt gaze of the other. "It strikes me as 'ow it 'ud be the proper thing for you to draw your jib, douse the glim, an' turn in, seein' as 'ow it worrits you. Jes' lay to that, you swab, or so 'elp me I'll take a pull on your peak-purchases!"

Kent was so nervous that it took three puffs to blow out the slush-lamp, and he crawled into his blankets without even removing his moccasins. The sailor was soon snoring lustily from his hard bed on the floor, but Kent lay staring up into the blackness, one hand on the shotgun, resolved not to close his eyes the whole night. He had not had an opportunity to secrete his five pounds of gold, and it lay in the ammunition box at the head of his bunk. But, try as he would, he at last dozed off with the weight of his dust heavy on his soul. Had he not inadvertently fallen asleep with his mind in such condition, the somnambule demon would not have been invoked, nor would Jim Cardegee have gone mining next day with a dish-pan.

The fire fought a losing battle, and at last died away, while the frost penetrated the mossy chinks between the logs and chilled the inner atmosphere. The dogs outside ceased their howling, and, curled up in the snow, dreamed of salmon-stocked heavens

where dog-drivers and kindred task-masters were not. Within, the sailor lay like a log, while his host tossed restlessly about, the victim of strange fantasies. As midnight drew near he suddenly threw off the blankets and got up. It was remarkable that he could do what he then did without ever striking a light. Perhaps it was because of the darkness that he kept his eyes shut, and perhaps it was for fear he would see the terrible gash on the cheek of his visitor; but, be this as it may, it is a fact that, unseeing, he opened his ammunition box, put a heavy charge into the muzzle of the shotgun without spilling a particle, rammed it down with double wads, and then put everything away and got back into bed.

Just as daylight laid its steel-gray fingers on the parchment window, Jacob Kent awoke. Turning on his elbow, he raised the lid and peered into the ammunition box. Whatever he saw, or whatever he did not see, exercised a very peculiar effect upon him, considering his neurotic temperament. He glanced at the sleeping man on the floor, let the lid down gently, and rolled over on his back. It was an unwonted calm that rested on his face. Not a muscle quivered. There was not the least sign of excitement or perturbation. He lay there a long while, thinking, and when he got up and began to move about, it was in a cool, collected manner, without noise and without hurry.

It happened that a heavy wooden peg had been driven into the ridge-pole just above Jim Cardegee's head. Jacob Kent, working softly, ran a piece of half-inch manila over it, bringing both ends to the ground. One end he tied about his waist, and in the other he rove a running noose. Then he cocked his shotgun and laid it within reach, by the side of numerous moose-hide thongs. By an effort of will he bore the sight of the scar, slipped the noose over the sleeper's head, and drew it taut by throwing back on his weight, at the same time seizing the gun and bringing it to bear.

Jim Cardegee awoke, choking, bewildered, staring down the twin wells of steel.

"Where is it?" Kent asked, at the same time slacking on the rope.

"You blasted-ugh--"

Kent merely threw back his weight, shutting off the other's wind.

"Bloomin'-Bur-ugh--"

"Where is it?" Kent repeated.

"Wot?" Cardegee asked, as soon as he had caught his breath.

"The gold-dust."

"Wot gold-dust?" the perplexed sailor demanded.

"You know well enough,--mine."

"Ain't seen nothink of it. Wot do ye take me for? A safe-deposit? Wot 'ave I got to do with it, any'ow?"

"Mebbe you know, and mebbe you don't know, but anyway, I'm going to stop your breath till you do know. And if you lift a hand, I'll blow your head off!"

"Vast heavin'!" Cardegee roared, as the rope tightened.

Kent eased away a moment, and the sailor, wriggling his neck as though from the pressure, managed to loosen the noose a bit and work it up so the point of contact was just under the chin.

“Well?” Kent questioned, expecting the disclosure.

But Cardegee grinned. “Go ahead with your ‘angin’, you bloomin’ old pot-wolloper!”

Then, as the sailor had anticipated, the tragedy became a farce. Cardegee being the heavier of the two, Kent, throwing his body backward and down, could not lift him clear of the ground. Strain and strive to the uttermost, the sailor’s feet still stuck to the floor and sustained a part of his weight. The remaining portion was supported by the point of contact just under his chin. Failing to swing him clear, Kent clung on, resolved to slowly throttle him or force him to tell what he had done with the hoard. But the Man with the Gash would not throttle. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, and at the end of that time, in despair, Kent let his prisoner down.

“Well,” he remarked, wiping away the sweat, “if you won’t hang you’ll shoot. Some men wasn’t born to be hanged, anyway.”

“An’ it’s a pretty mess as you’ll make o’ this ‘ere cabin floor.” Cardegee was fighting for time. “Now, look ‘ere, I’ll tell you wot we do; we’ll lay our ‘eads ‘longside an’ reason together. You’ve lost some dust. You say as ‘ow I know, an’ I say as ‘ow I don’t. Let’s get a hobservation an’ shape a course—“

“Vast heavin’!” Kent dashed in, maliciously imitating the other’s enunciation. “I’m going to shape all the courses of this shebang, and you observe; and if you do anything more, I’ll bore you as sure as Moses!”

“For the sake of my mother—“

“Whom God have mercy upon if she loves you. Ah! Would you?” He frustrated a hostile move on the part of the other by pressing the cold muzzle against his forehead. “Lay quiet, now! If you lift as much as a hair, you’ll get it.”

It was rather an awkward task, with the trigger of the gun always within pulling distance of the finger; but Kent was a weaver, and in a few minutes had the sailor tied hand and foot. Then he dragged him without and laid him by the side of the cabin, where he could overlook the river and watch the sun climb to the meridian.

“Now I’ll give you till noon, and then—“

“Wot?”

“You’ll be hitting the brimstone trail. But if you speak up, I’ll keep you till the next bunch of mounted police come by.”

“Well, Gawd blime me, if this ain’t a go! ‘Ere I be, innercent as a lamb, an’ ‘ere you be, lost all o’ your top ‘amper an’ out o’ your reckonin’, run me foul an’ goin’ to rake me into ‘ell-fire. You bloomin’ old pirut! You—“

Jim Cardegee loosed the strings of his profanity and fairly outdid himself. Jacob Kent brought out a stool that he might enjoy it in comfort. Having exhausted all the possible combinations of his vocabulary, the sailor quieted down to hard thinking, his eyes constantly gauging the progress of the sun, which tore up the eastern slope of the heavens with unseemly haste. His dogs, surprised that they had not long since been put to harness, crowded around him. His helplessness appealed to the brutes. They felt that something was wrong, though they knew not what, and they crowded about, howling their mournful sympathy.

“Chook! Mush-on! you Siwashes!” he cried, attempting, in a vermicular way, to kick at them, and discovering himself to be tottering on the edge of a declivity. As soon as the animals had scattered, he devoted himself to the significance of that declivity which he felt to be there but could not see. Nor was he long in arriving at a correct conclusion. In the nature of things, he figured, man is lazy. He does no more than he has to. When he builds a cabin he must put dirt on the roof. From these premises it was logical that he should carry that dirt no further than was absolutely necessary. Therefore, he lay upon the edge of the hole from which the dirt had been taken to roof Jacob Kent’s cabin. This knowledge, properly utilized, might prolong things, he thought; and he then turned his attention to the moose-hide thongs which bound him. His hands were tied behind him, and pressing against the snow, they were wet with the contact. This moistening of the raw-hide he knew would tend to make it stretch, and, without apparent effort, he endeavored to stretch it more and more.

He watched the trail hungrily, and when in the direction of Sixty Mile a dark speck appeared for a moment against the white background of an ice-jam, he cast an anxious eye at the sun. It had climbed nearly to the zenith. Now and again he caught the black speck clearing the hills of ice and sinking into the intervening hollows; but he dared not permit himself more than the most cursory glances for fear of rousing his enemy’s suspicion. Once, when Jacob Kent rose to his feet and searched the trail with care, Cardegee was frightened, but the dog-sled had struck a piece of trail running parallel with a jam, and remained out of sight till the danger was past.

“I’ll see you ‘ung for this,” Cardegee threatened, attempting to draw the other’s attention. “An’ you’ll rot in ‘ell, jes’ you see if you don’t.

“I say,” he cried, after another pause; “d’ye b’lieve in ghosts?” Kent’s sudden start made him sure of his ground, and he went on: “Now a ghost ‘as the right to ‘aunt a man wot don’t do wot he says; and you can’t shuffle me off till eight bells—wot I mean is twelve o’clock—can you? ‘Cos if you do, it’ll ‘appen as ‘ow I’ll ‘aunt you. D’ye ‘ear? A minute, a second too quick, an’ I’ll ‘aunt you, so ‘elp me, I will!”

Jacob Kent looked dubious, but declined to talk.

“‘Ow’s your chronometer? Wot’s your longitude? ‘Ow do you know as your time’s correct?” Cardegee persisted, vainly hoping to beat his executioner out of a few minutes. “Is it Barrack’s time you ‘ave, or is it the Company time? ‘Cos if you do it before the stroke o’ the bell, I’ll not rest. I give you fair warnin’. I’ll come back. An’ if you ‘aven’t the time, ‘ow will you know? That’s wot I want—‘ow will you tell?”

“I’ll send you off all right,” Kent replied. “Got a sun-dial here.”

“No good. Thirty-two degrees variation o’ the needle.”

“Stakes are all set.”

“‘Ow did you set ‘em? Compass?”

“No; lined them up with the North Star.”

“Sure?”

“Sure.”

Cardegee groaned, then stole a glance at the trail. The sled was just clearing a rise, barely a mile away, and the dogs were in full lope, running lightly.

“‘Ow close is the shadows to the line?”

Kent walked to the primitive timepiece and studied it. “Three inches,” he announced, after a careful survey.

“Say, jes’ sing out ‘eight bells’ afore you pull the gun, will you?”

Kent agreed, and they lapsed into silence. The thongs about Cardegee’s wrists were slowly stretching, and he had begun to work them over his hands.

“Say, ‘ow close is the shadows?”

“One inch.”

The sailor wriggled slightly to assure himself that he would topple over at the right moment, and slipped the first turn over his hands.

“‘Ow close?”

“Half an inch.” Just then Kent heard the jarring churn of the runners and turned his eyes to the trail. The driver was lying flat on the sled and the dogs swinging down the straight stretch to the cabin. Kent whirled back, bringing his rifle to shoulder.

“It ain’t eight bells yet!” Cardegee expostulated. “I’ll ‘aunt you, sure!”

Jacob Kent faltered. He was standing by the sun-dial, perhaps ten paces from his victim. The man on the sled must have seen that something unusual was taking place, for he had risen to his knees, his whip singing viciously among the dogs.

The shadows swept into line. Kent looked along the sights.

“Make ready!” he commanded solemnly. “Eight b-“

But just a fraction of a second too soon, Cardegee rolled backward into the hole. Kent held his fire and ran to the edge. Bang! The gun exploded full in the sailor’s face as he rose to his feet. But no smoke came from the muzzle; instead, a sheet of flame burst from the side of the barrel near its butt, and Jacob Kent went down. The dogs dashed up the bank, dragging the sled over his body, and the driver sprang off as Jim Cardegee freed his hands and drew himself from the hole.

“Jim!” The new-comer recognized him. “What’s the matter?”

“Wot’s the matter? Oh, nothink at all. It jest ‘appens as I do little things like this for my ‘ealth. Wot’s the matter, you bloomin’ idjit? Wot’s the matter, eh? Cast me loose or I’ll show you wot! ‘Urry up, or I’ll ‘olystone the decks with you!”

“Huh!” he added, as the other went to work with his sheath-knife. “Wot’s the matter? I want to know. Jes’ tell me that, will you, wot’s the matter? Hey?”

Kent was quite dead when they rolled him over. The gun, an old-fashioned, heavy-weighted muzzle-loader, lay near him. Steel and wood had parted company. Near the butt of the right-hand barrel, with lips pressed outward, gaped a fissure several inches in length. The sailor picked it up, curiously. A glittering stream of yellow dust ran out through the crack. The facts of the case dawned upon Jim Cardegee.

“Strike me standin’!” he roared; “‘ere’s a go! ‘Ere’s ‘is bloomin’ dust! Gawd blime me, an’ you, too, Charley, if you don’t run an’ get the dish-pan!”

The Marriage to Lit-Lit

When John Fox came into a country where whisky freezes solid and may be used as a paper-weight for a large part of the year, he came without the ideals and illusions that usually hamper the progress of more delicately nurtured adventurers. Born and reared on the frontier fringe of the United States, he took with him into Canada a primitive cast of mind, an elemental simplicity and grip on things, as it were, that insured him immediate success in his new career. From a mere servant of the Hudson Bay Company, driving a paddle with the voyageurs and carrying goods on his back across the portages, he swiftly rose to a Factorship and took charge of a trading post at Fort Angelus.

Here, because of his elemental simplicity, he took to himself a native wife, and, by reason of the connubial bliss that followed, he escaped the unrest and vain longings that curse the days of more fastidious men, spoil their work, and conquer them in the end. He lived contentedly, was at single purposes with the business he was set there to do, and achieved a brilliant record in the service of the Company. About this time his wife died, was claimed by her people, and buried with savage circumstance in a tin trunk in the top of a tree.

Two sons she had borne him, and when the Company promoted him, he journeyed with them still deeper into the vastness of the North-West Territory to a place called Sin Rock, where he took charge of a new post in a more important fur field. Here he spent several lonely and depressing months, eminently disgusted with the unprepossessing appearance of the Indian maidens, and greatly worried by his growing sons who stood in need of a mother's care. Then his eyes chanced upon Lit-lit.

"Lit-lit—well, she is Lit-lit," was the fashion in which he despairingly described her to his chief clerk, Alexander McLean.

McLean was too fresh from his Scottish upbringing—"not dry behind the ears yet," John Fox put it—to take to the marriage customs of the country. Nevertheless he was not averse to the Factor's imperilling his own immortal soul, and, especially, feeling an ominous attraction himself for Lit-lit, he was sombrely content to clinch his own soul's safety by seeing her married to the Factor.

Nor is it to be wondered that McLean's austere Scotch soul stood in danger of being thawed in the sunshine of Lit-lit's eyes. She was pretty, and slender, and willowy; without the massive face and temperamental stolidity of the average squaw. "Lit-lit," so called from her fashion, even as a child, of being fluttery, of darting about from place to place like a butterfly, of being inconsequent and merry, and of laughing as lightly as she darted and danced about.

Lit-lit was the daughter of Snettishane, a prominent chief in the tribe, by a half-breed mother, and to him the Factor fared casually one summer day to open negotiations of marriage. He sat with the chief in the smoke of a mosquito smudge before his lodge, and together they talked about everything under the sun, or, at least, everything that in the Northland is under the sun, with the sole exception of marriage. John Fox had come particularly to talk of marriage; Snettishane knew it, and John Fox knew he knew it, wherefore the subject was religiously avoided. This is alleged to be Indian subtlety. In reality it is transparent simplicity.

The hours slipped by, and Fox and Snettishane smoked interminable pipes, looking each other in the eyes with a guilelessness superbly histrionic. In the mid-afternoon McLean and his brother clerk, McTavish, strolled past, innocently uninterested, on their way to the river. When they strolled back again an hour later, Fox and Snettishane had attained to a ceremonious discussion of the condition and quality of the gunpowder and bacon which the Company was offering in trade. Meanwhile Lit-lit, divining the Factor's errand, had crept in under the rear wall of the lodge, and through the front flap was peeping out at the two logomachists by the mosquito smudge. She was flushed and happy-eyed, proud that no less a man than the Factor (who stood next to God in the Northland hierarchy) had singled her out, femininely curious to see at close range what manner of man he was. Sun glare on the ice, camp smoke, and weather beat had burned his face to a copper-brown, so that her father was as fair as he, while she was fairer. She was remotely glad of this, and more immediately glad that he was large and strong, though his great black beard half frightened her, it was so strange.

Being very young, she was unversed in the ways of men. Seventeen times she had seen the sun travel south and lose itself beyond the sky-line, and seventeen times she had seen it travel back again and ride the sky day and night till there was no night at all. And through these years she had been cherished jealously by Snettishane, who stood between her and all suitors, listening disdainfully to the young hunters as they bid for her hand, and turning them away as though she were beyond price. Snettishane was mercenary. Lit-lit was to him an investment. She represented so much capital, from which he expected to receive, not a certain definite interest, but an incalculable interest.

And having thus been reared in a manner as near to that of the nunnery as tribal conditions would permit, it was with a great and maidenly anxiety that she peeped out at the man who had surely come for her, at the husband who was to teach her all that was yet unlearned of life, at the masterful being whose word was to be her law, and who was to mete and bound her actions and comportment for the rest of her days.

But, peeping through the front flap of the lodge, flushed and thrilling at the strange destiny reaching out for her, she grew disappointed as the day wore along, and the Factor and her father still talked pompously of matters concerning other things and not pertaining to marriage things at all. As the sun sank lower and lower toward the north and midnight approached, the Factor began making unmistakable preparations

for departure. As he turned to stride away Lit-lit's heart sank; but it rose again as he halted, half turning on one heel.

"Oh, by the way, Snettishane," he said, "I want a squaw to wash for me and mend my clothes."

Snettishane grunted and suggested Wanidani, who was an old woman and toothless.

"No, no," interposed the Factor. "What I want is a wife. I've been kind of thinking about it, and the thought just struck me that you might know of some one that would suit."

Snettishane looked interested, whereupon the Factor retraced his steps, casually and carelessly to linger and discuss this new and incidental topic.

"Kattou?" suggested Snettishane.

"She has but one eye," objected the Factor.

"Laska?"

"Her knees be wide apart when she stands upright. Kips, your biggest dog, can leap between her knees when she stands upright."

"Senatee?" went on the imperturbable Snettishane.

But John Fox feigned anger, crying: "What foolishness is this? Am I old, that thou shouldst mate me with old women? Am I toothless? lame of leg? blind of eye? Or am I poor that no bright-eyed maiden may look with favour upon me? Behold! I am the Factor, both rich and great, a power in the land, whose speech makes men tremble and is obeyed!"

Snettishane was inwardly pleased, though his sphinx-like visage never relaxed. He was drawing the Factor, and making him break ground. Being a creature so elemental as to have room for but one idea at a time, Snettishane could pursue that one idea a greater distance than could John Fox. For John Fox, elemental as he was, was still complex enough to entertain several glimmering ideas at a time, which debarred him from pursuing the one as single-heartedly or as far as did the chief.

Snettishane calmly continued calling the roster of eligible maidens, which, name by name, as fast as uttered, were stamped ineligible by John Fox, with specified objections appended. Again he gave it up and started to return to the Fort. Snettishane watched him go, making no effort to stop him, but seeing him, in the end, stop himself.

"Come to think of it," the Factor remarked, "we both of us forgot Lit-lit. Now I wonder if she'll suit me?"

Snettishane met the suggestion with a mirthless face, behind the mask of which his soul grinned wide. It was a distinct victory. Had the Factor gone but one step farther, perforce Snettishane would himself have mentioned the name of Lit-lit, but—the Factor had not gone that one step farther.

The chief was non-committal concerning Lit-lit's suitability, till he drove the white man into taking the next step in order of procedure.

"Well," the Factor meditated aloud, "the only way to find out is to make a try of it." He raised his voice. "So I will give for Lit-lit ten blankets and three pounds of tobacco which is good tobacco."

Snettishane replied with a gesture which seemed to say that all the blankets and tobacco in all the world could not compensate him for the loss of Lit-lit and her manifold virtues. When pressed by the Factor to set a price, he coolly placed it at five hundred blankets, ten guns, fifty pounds of tobacco, twenty scarlet cloths, ten bottles of rum, a music-box, and lastly the good-will and best offices of the Factor, with a place by his fire.

The Factor apparently suffered a stroke of apoplexy, which stroke was successful in reducing the blankets to two hundred and in cutting out the place by the fire—an unheard-of condition in the marriages of white men with the daughters of the soil. In the end, after three hours more of chaffering, they came to an agreement. For Lit-lit Snettishane was to receive one hundred blankets, five pounds of tobacco, three guns, and a bottle of rum, goodwill and best offices included, which according to John Fox, was ten blankets and a gun more than she was worth. And as he went home through the wee sma' hours, the three-o'clock sun blazing in the due north-east, he was unpleasantly aware that Snettishane had bested him over the bargain.

Snettishane, tired and victorious, sought his bed, and discovered Lit-lit before she could escape from the lodge.

He grunted knowingly: "Thou hast seen. Thou has heard. Wherefore it be plain to thee thy father's very great wisdom and understanding. I have made for thee a great match. Heed my words and walk in the way of my words, go when I say go, come when I bid thee come, and we shall grow fat with the wealth of this big white man who is a fool according to his bigness."

The next day no trading was done at the store. The Factor opened whisky before breakfast, to the delight of McLean and McTavish, gave his dogs double rations, and wore his best moccasins. Outside the Fort preparations were under way for a POT-LATCH. Potlatch means "a giving," and John Fox's intention was to signalize his marriage with Lit-lit by a potlatch as generous as she was good-looking. In the afternoon the whole tribe gathered to the feast. Men, women, children, and dogs gorged to repletion, nor was there one person, even among the chance visitors and stray hunters from other tribes, who failed to receive some token of the bridegroom's largess.

Lit-lit, tearfully shy and frightened, was bedecked by her bearded husband with a new calico dress, splendidly beaded moccasins, a gorgeous silk handkerchief over her raven hair, a purple scarf about her throat, brass ear-rings and finger-rings, and a whole pint of pinchbeck jewellery, including a Waterbury watch. Snettishane could scarce contain himself at the spectacle, but watching his chance drew her aside from the feast.

"Not this night, nor the next night," he began ponderously, "but in the nights to come, when I shall call like a raven by the river bank, it is for thee to rise up from thy big husband, who is a fool, and come to me.

"Nay, nay," he went on hastily, at sight of the dismay in her face at turning her back upon her wonderful new life. "For no sooner shall this happen than thy big husband, who is a fool, will come wailing to my lodge. Then it is for thee to wail likewise, claiming

that this thing is not well, and that the other thing thou dost not like, and that to be the wife of the Factor is more than thou didst bargain for, only wilt thou be content with more blankets, and more tobacco, and more wealth of various sorts for thy poor old father, Snettishane. Remember well, when I call in the night, like a raven, from the river bank.”

Lit-lit nodded; for to disobey her father was a peril she knew well; and, furthermore, it was a little thing he asked, a short separation from the Factor, who would know only greater gladness at having her back. She returned to the feast, and, midnight being well at hand, the Factor sought her out and led her away to the Fort amid joking and outcry, in which the squaws were especially conspicuous.

Lit-lit quickly found that married life with the head-man of a fort was even better than she had dreamed. No longer did she have to fetch wood and water and wait hand and foot upon cantankerous menfolk. For the first time in her life she could lie abed till breakfast was on the table. And what a bed!—clean and soft, and comfortable as no bed she had ever known. And such food! Flour, cooked into biscuits, hot-cakes and bread, three times a day and every day, and all one wanted! Such prodigality was hardly believable.

To add to her contentment, the Factor was cunningly kind. He had buried one wife, and he knew how to drive with a slack rein that went firm only on occasion, and then went very firm. “Lit-lit is boss of this place,” he announced significantly at the table the morning after the wedding. “What she says goes. Understand?” And McLean and McTavish understood. Also, they knew that the Factor had a heavy hand.

But Lit-lit did not take advantage. Taking a leaf from the book of her husband, she at once assumed charge of his own growing sons, giving them added comforts and a measure of freedom like to that which he gave her. The two sons were loud in the praise of their new mother; McLean and McTavish lifted their voices; and the Factor bragged of the joys of matrimony till the story of her good behaviour and her husband’s satisfaction became the property of all the dwellers in the Sin Rock district.

Whereupon Snettishane, with visions of his incalculable interest keeping him awake of nights, thought it time to bestir himself. On the tenth night of her wedded life Lit-lit was awakened by the croaking of a raven, and she knew that Snettishane was waiting for her by the river bank. In her great happiness she had forgotten her pact, and now it came back to her with behind it all the childish terror of her father. For a time she lay in fear and trembling, loath to go, afraid to stay. But in the end the Factor won the silent victory, and his kindness plus his great muscles and square jaw, nerved her to disregard Snettishane’s call.

But in the morning she arose very much afraid, and went about her duties in momentary fear of her father’s coming. As the day wore along, however, she began to recover her spirits. John Fox, soundly berating McLean and McTavish for some petty dereliction of duty, helped her to pluck up courage. She tried not to let him go out of her sight, and when she followed him into the huge cache and saw him twirling and tossing great bales around as though they were feather pillows, she felt strengthened

in her disobedience to her father. Also (it was her first visit to the warehouse, and Sin Rock was the chief distributing point to several chains of lesser posts), she was astounded at the endlessness of the wealth there stored away.

This sight and the picture in her mind's eye of the bare lodge of Snettishane, put all doubts at rest. Yet she capped her conviction by a brief word with one of her step-sons. "White daddy good?" was what she asked, and the boy answered that his father was the best man he had ever known. That night the raven croaked again. On the night following the croaking was more persistent. It awoke the Factor, who tossed restlessly for a while. Then he said aloud, "Damn that raven," and Lit-lit laughed quietly under the blankets.

In the morning, bright and early, Snettishane put in an ominous appearance and was set to breakfast in the kitchen with Wanidani. He refused "squaw food," and a little later bearded his son-in-law in the store where the trading was done. Having learned, he said, that his daughter was such a jewel, he had come for more blankets, more tobacco, and more guns—especially more guns. He had certainly been cheated in her price, he held, and he had come for justice. But the Factor had neither blankets nor justice to spare. Whereupon he was informed that Snettishane had seen the missionary at Three Forks, who had notified him that such marriages were not made in heaven, and that it was his father's duty to demand his daughter back.

"I am good Christian man now," Snettishane concluded. "I want my Lit-lit to go to heaven."

The Factor's reply was short and to the point; for he directed his father-in-law to go to the heavenly antipodes, and by the scruff of the neck and the slack of the blanket propelled him on that trail as far as the door.

But Snettishane sneaked around and in by the kitchen, cornering Lit-lit in the great living-room of the Fort.

"Mayhap thou didst sleep over-sound last night when I called by the river bank," he began, glowering darkly.

"Nay, I was awake and heard." Her heart was beating as though it would choke her, but she went on steadily, "And the night before I was awake and heard, and yet again the night before."

And thereat, out of her great happiness and out of the fear that it might be taken from her, she launched into an original and glowing address upon the status and rights of woman—the first new-woman lecture delivered north of Fifty-three.

But it fell on unheeding ears. Snettishane was still in the dark ages. As she paused for breath, he said threateningly, "To-night I shall call again like the raven."

At this moment the Factor entered the room and again helped Snettishane on his way to the heavenly antipodes.

That night the raven croaked more persistently than ever. Lit-lit, who was a light sleeper, heard and smiled. John Fox tossed restlessly. Then he awoke and tossed about with greater restlessness. He grumbled and snorted, swore under his breath and over his breath, and finally flung out of bed. He groped his way to the great living-room,

and from the rack took down a loaded shot-gun—loaded with bird-shot, left therein by the careless McTavish.

The Factor crept carefully out of the Fort and down to the river. The croaking had ceased, but he stretched out in the long grass and waited. The air seemed a chilly balm, and the earth, after the heat of the day, now and again breathed soothingly against him. The Factor, gathered into the rhythm of it all, dozed off, with his head upon his arm, and slept.

Fifty yards away, head resting on knees, and with his back to John Fox, Snettishane likewise slept, gently conquered by the quietude of the night. An hour slipped by and then he awoke, and, without lifting his head, set the night vibrating with the hoarse gutturals of the raven call.

The Factor roused, not with the abrupt start of civilized man, but with the swift and comprehensive glide from sleep to waking of the savage. In the night-light he made out a dark object in the midst of the grass and brought his gun to bear upon it. A second croak began to rise, and he pulled the trigger. The crickets ceased from their sing-song chant, the wildfowl from their squabbling, and the raven croak broke midmost and died away in gasping silence.

John Fox ran to the spot and reached for the thing he had killed, but his fingers closed on a coarse mop of hair and he turned Snettishane's face upward to the starlight. He knew how a shotgun scattered at fifty yards, and he knew that he had peppered Snettishane across the shoulders and in the small of the back. And Snettishane knew that he knew, but neither referred to it.

"What dost thou here?" the Factor demanded. "It were time old bones should be in bed."

But Snettishane was stately in spite of the bird-shot burning under his skin.

"Old bones will not sleep," he said solemnly. "I weep for my daughter, for my daughter Lit-lit, who liveth and who yet is dead, and who goeth without doubt to the white man's hell."

"Weep henceforth on the far bank, beyond ear-shot of the Fort," said John Fox, turning on his heel, "for the noise of thy weeping is exceeding great and will not let one sleep of nights."

"My heart is sore," Snettishane answered, "and my days and nights be black with sorrow."

"As the raven is black," said John Fox.

"As the raven is black," Snettishane said.

Never again was the voice of the raven heard by the river bank. Lit-lit grows matronly day by day and is very happy. Also, there are sisters to the sons of John Fox's first wife who lies buried in a tree. Old Snettishane is no longer a visitor at the Fort, and spends long hours raising a thin, aged voice against the filial ingratitude of children in general and of his daughter Lit-lit in particular. His declining years are embittered by the knowledge that he was cheated, and even John Fox has withdrawn the assertion that the price for Lit-lit was too much by ten blankets and a gun.

The Master of Mystery

There was complaint in the village. The women chattered together with shrill, high-pitched voices. The men were glum and doubtful of aspect, and the very dogs wandered dubiously about, alarmed in vague ways by the unrest of the camp, and ready to take to the woods on the first outbreak of trouble. The air was filled with suspicion. No man was sure of his neighbor, and each was conscious that he stood in like unsureness with his fellows. Even the children were oppressed and solemn, and little Di Ya, the cause of it all, had been soundly thrashed, first by Hooniah, his mother, and then by his father, Bawn, and was now whimpering and looking pessimistically out upon the world from the shelter of the big overturned canoe on the beach.

And to make the matter worse, Scundoo, the shaman, was in disgrace, and his known magic could not be called upon to seek out the evil-doer. Forsooth, a month gone, he had promised a fair south wind so that the tribe might journey to the potlatch at Tonkin, where Taku Jim was giving away the savings of twenty years; and when the day came, lo, a grievous north wind blew, and of the first three canoes to venture forth, one was swamped in the big seas, and two were pounded to pieces on the rocks, and a child was drowned. He had pulled the string of the wrong bag, he explained, — a mistake. But the people refused to listen; the offerings of meat and fish and fur ceased to come to his door; and he sulked within — so they thought, fasting in bitter penance; in reality, eating generously from his well-stored cache and meditating upon the fickleness of the mob.

The blankets of Hooniah were missing. They were good blankets, of most marvellous thickness and warmth, and her pride in them was greatened in that they had been come by so cheaply. Ty-Kwan, of the next village but one, was a fool to have so easily parted with them. But then, she did not know they were the blankets of the murdered Englishman, because of whose take-off the United States cutter nosed along the coast for a time, while its launches puffed and snorted among the secret inlets. And not knowing that Ty-Kwan had disposed of them in haste so that his own people might not have to render account to the Government, Hooniah's pride was unshaken. And because the women envied her, her pride was without end and boundless, till it filled the village and spilled over along the Alaskan shore from Dutch Harbor to St. Mary's. Her totem had become justly celebrated, and her name known on the lips of men wherever men fished and feasted, what of the blankets and their marvellous thickness and warmth. It was a most mysterious happening, the manner of their going.

"I but stretched them up in the sun by the side-wall of the house," Hooniah disclaimed for the thousandth time to her Thlinget sisters. "I but stretched them up and

turned my back; for Di Ya, dough-thief and eater of raw flour that he is, with head into the big iron pot, overturned and stuck there, his legs waving like the branches of a forest tree in the wind. And I did but drag him out and twice knock his head against the door for riper understanding, and behold, the blankets were not!"

"The blankets were not!" the women repeated in awed whispers.

"A great loss," one added. A second, "Never were there such blankets." And a third, "We be sorry, Hooniah, for thy loss." Yet each woman of them was glad in her heart that the odious, dissension-breeding blankets were gone. "I but stretched them up in the sun," Hooniah began for the thousand and first time.

"Yea, yea," Bawn spoke up, wearied. "But there were no gossips in the village from other places. Wherefore it be plain that some of our own tribespeople have laid unlawful hand upon the blankets."

"How can that be, O Bawn?" the women chorussed indignantly. "Who should there be?"

"Then has there been witchcraft," Bawn continued stolidly enough, though he stole a sly glance at their faces.

"Witchcraft!" And at the dread word their voices hushed and each looked fearfully at each.

"Ay," Hooniah affirmed, the latent malignancy of her nature flashing into a moment's exultation. "And word has been sent to Klok-No-Ton, and strong paddles. Truly shall he be here with the afternoon tide."

The little groups broke up, and fear descended upon the village. Of all misfortune, witchcraft was the most appalling. With the intangible and unseen things only the shamans could cope, and neither man, woman, nor child could know, until the moment of ordeal, whether devils possessed their souls or not. And of all shamans, Klok-No-Ton, who dwelt in the next village, was the most terrible. None found more evil spirits than he, none visited his victims with more frightful tortures. Even had he found, once, a devil residing within the body of a three-months babe — a most obstinate devil which could only be driven out when the babe had lain for a week on thorns and briers. The body was thrown into the sea after that, but the waves tossed it back again and again as a curse upon the village, nor did it finally go away till two strong men were staked out at low tide and drowned.

And Hooniah had sent for this Klok-No-Ton. Better had it been if Scundoo, their own shaman, were undisgraced. For he had ever a gentler way, and he had been known to drive forth two devils from a man who afterward begat seven healthy children. But Klok-No-Ton! They shuddered with dire foreboding at thought of him, and each one felt himself the centre of accusing eyes, and looked accusingly upon his fellows — each one and all, save Sime, and Sime was a scoffer whose evil end was destined with a certitude his successes could not shake.

"Hoh! Hoh!" he laughed. "Devils and Klok-No-Ton! — than whom no greater devil can be found in Thlinket Land."

“Thou fool! Even now he cometh with witcheries and sorceries; so beware thy tongue, lest evil befall thee and thy days be short in the land!”

So spoke La-lah, otherwise the Cheater, and Sime laughed scornfully.

“I am Sime, unused to fear, unafraid of the dark. I am a strong man, as my father before me, and my head is clear. Nor you nor I have seen with our eyes the unseen evil things — ”

“But Scundoo hath,” La-lah made answer. “And likewise Klok-No-Ton. This we know.”

“How dost thou know, son of a fool?” Sime thundered, the choleric blood darkening his thick bull neck.

“By the word of their mouths — even so.”

Sime snorted. “A shaman is only a man. May not his words be crooked, even as thine and mine? Bah! Bah! And once more, bah! And this for thy shamans and thy shamans’ devils! and this! and this!”

And snapping his fingers to right and left, Sime strode through the on-lookers, who made over-zealous and fearsome way for him.

“A good fisher and strong hunter, but an evil man,” said one.

“Yet does he flourish,” speculated another.

“Wherefore be thou evil and flourish,” Sime retorted over his shoulder. “And were all evil, there would be no need for shamans. Bah! You children-afraid-of-the-dark!”

And when Klok-No-Ton arrived on the afternoon tide, Sime’s defiant laugh was unabated; nor did he forbear to make a joke when the shaman tripped on the sand in the landing. Klok-No-Ton looked at him sourly, and without greeting stalked straight through their midst to the house of Scundoo.

Of the meeting with Scundoo none of the tribespeople might know, for they clustered reverently in the distance and spoke in whispers while the masters of mystery were together.

“Greeting, O Scundoo!” Klok-No-Ton rumbled, wavering perceptibly from doubt of his reception.

He was a giant in stature, and towered massively above little Scundoo, whose thin voice floated upward like the faint far rasping of a cricket.

“Greeting, Klok-No-Ton,” he returned. “The day is fair with thy coming.”

“Yet it would seem ...” Klok-No-Ton hesitated.

“Yea, yea,” the little shaman put in impatiently, “that I have fallen on ill days, else would I not stand in gratitude to you in that you do my work.”

“It grieves me, friend Scundoo ...”

“Nay, I am made glad, Klok-No-Ton.”

“But will I give thee half of that which be given me.”

“Not so, good Klok-No-Ton,” murmured Scundoo, with a deprecatory wave of the hand. “It is I who am thy slave, and my days shall be filled with desire to befriend thee.”

“As I — ”

“As thou now befriendest me.”

“That being so, it is then a bad business, these blankets of the woman Hooniah?”

The big shaman blundered tentatively in his quest, and Scundoo smiled a wan, gray smile, for he was used to reading men, and all men seemed very small to him.

“Ever hast thou dealt in strong medicine,” he said. “Doubtless the evil-doer will be briefly known to thee.”

“Ay, briefly known when I set eyes upon him.” Again Klok-No-Ton hesitated. “Have there been gossips from other places?” he asked.

Scundoo shook his head. “Behold! Is this not a most excellent mucluc?”

He held up the foot-covering of sealskin and walrus hide, and his visitor examined it with secret interest.

“It did come to me by a close-driven bargain.”

Klok-No-Ton nodded attentively.

“I got it from the man La-lah. He is a remarkable man, and often have I thought ...”

“So?” Klok-No-Ton ventured impatiently.

“Often have I thought,” Scundoo concluded, his voice falling as he came to a full pause. “It is a fair day, and thy medicine be strong, Klok-No-Ton.”

Klok-No-Ton’s face brightened. “Thou art a great man, Scundoo, a shaman of shamans. I go now. I shall remember thee always. And the man La-lah, as you say, is a remarkable man.”

Scundoo smiled yet more wan and gray, closed the door on the heels of his departing visitor, and barred and double-barrèd it.

Sime was mending his canoe when Klok-No-Ton came down the beach, and he broke off from his work only long enough to ostentatiously load his rifle and place it near him.

The shaman noted the action and called out: “Let all the people come together on this spot! It is the word of Klok-No-Ton, devil-seeker and driver of devils!”

He had been minded to assemble them at Hooniah’s house, but it was necessary that all should be present, and he was doubtful of Sime’s obedience and did not wish trouble. Sime was a good man to let alone, his judgment ran, and withal, a bad one for the health of any shaman.

“Let the woman Hooniah be brought,” Klok-No-Ton commanded, glaring ferociously about the circle and sending chills up and down the spines of those he looked upon.

Hooniah waddled forward, head bent and gaze averted.

“Where be thy blankets?”

“I but stretched them up in the sun, and behold, they were not!” she whined.

“So?”

“It was because of Di Ya.”

“So?”

“Him have I beaten sore, and he shall yet be beaten, for that he brought trouble upon us who be poor people.”

“The blankets!” Klok-No-Ton bellowed hoarsely, foreseeing her desire to lower the price to be paid. “The blankets, woman! Thy wealth is known.”

“I but stretched them up in the sun,” she sniffled, “and we be poor people and have nothing.”

He stiffened suddenly, with a hideous distortion of the face, and Hooniah shrank back. But so swiftly did he spring forward, with in-turned eyeballs and loosened jaw, that she stumbled and fell down grovelling at his feet. He waved his arms about, wildly flagellating the air, his body writhing and twisting in torment. An epilepsy seemed to come upon him. A white froth flecked his lips, and his body was convulsed with shiverings and tremblings.

The women broke into a wailing chant, swaying backward and forward in abandonment, while one by one the men succumbed to the excitement till only Sime remained. He, perched upon his canoe, looked on in mockery; yet the ancestors whose seed he bore pressed heavily upon him, and he swore his strongest oaths that his courage might be cheered. Klok-No-Ton was horrible to behold. He had cast off his blanket and torn his clothes from him, so that he was quite naked, save for a girdle of eagle-claws about his thighs. Shrieking and yelling, his long black hair flying like a blot of night, he leaped frantically about the circle. A certain rude rhythm characterized his frenzy, and when all were under its sway, swinging their bodies in accord with his and venting their cries in unison, he sat bolt upright, with arm outstretched and long, talon-like finger extended. A low moaning, as of the dead, greeted this, and the people cowered with shaking knees as the dread finger passed them slowly by. For death went with it, and life remained with those who watched it go; and being rejected, they watched with eager intentness.

Finally, with a tremendous cry, the fateful finger rested upon La-lah. He shook like an aspen, seeing himself already dead, his household goods divided, and his widow married to his brother. He strove to speak, to deny, but his tongue clove to his mouth and his throat was sanded with an intolerable thirst. Klok-No-Ton seemed to half swoon away, now that his work was done; but he waited, with closed eyes, listening for the great blood-cry to go up — the great blood-cry, familiar to his ear from a thousand conjurations, when the tribespeople flung themselves like wolves upon the trembling victim. But only was there silence, then a low tittering, from nowhere in particular, which spread and spread until a vast laughter welled up to the sky.

“Wherefore?” he cried.

“Na! Na!” the people laughed. “Thy medicine be ill, O Klok-No-Ton!”

“It be known to all,” La-lah stuttered. “For eight weary months have I been gone afar with the Siwash sealers, and but this day am I come back to find the blankets of Hooniah gone ere I came!”

“It be true!” they cried with one accord. “The blankets of Hooniah were gone ere he came!”

“And thou shalt be paid nothing for thy medicine which is of no avail,” announced Hooniah, on her feet once more and smarting from a sense of ridiculousness.

But Klok-No-Ton saw only the face of Scundoo and its wan, gray smile, heard only the faint far cricket's rasping. "I got it from the man La-lah, and often have I thought," and, "It is a fair day and thy medicine be strong."

He brushed by Hooniah, and the circle instinctively gave way for him to pass. Sime flung a jeer from the top of the canoe, the women snickered in his face, cries of derision rose in his wake, but he took no notice, pressing onward to the house of Scundoo. He hammered on the door, beat it with his fists, and howled vile imprecations. Yet there was no response, save that in the lulls Scundoo's voice rose eerily in incantation. Klok-No-Ton raged about like a madman, but when he attempted to break in the door with a huge stone, murmurs arose from the men and women. And he, Klok-No-Ton, knew that he stood shorn of his strength and authority before an alien people. He saw a man stoop for a stone, and a second, and a bodily fear ran through him.

"Harm not Scundoo, who is a master!" a woman cried out.

"Better you return to your own village," a man advised menacingly.

Klok-No-Ton turned on his heel and went down among them to the beach, a bitter rage at his heart, and in his head a just apprehension for his defenceless back. But no stones were cast. The children swarmed mockingly about his feet, and the air was wild with laughter and derision, but that was all. Yet he did not breathe freely until the canoe was well out upon the water, when he rose up and laid a futile curse upon the village and its people, not forgetting to particularly specify Scundoo who had made a mock of him.

Ashore there was a clamor for Scundoo, and the whole population crowded his door, entreating and imploring in confused babel till he came forth and raised his hand.

"In that ye are my children I pardon freely," he said. "But never again. For the last time thy foolishness goes unpunished. That which ye wish shall be granted, and it be already known to me. This night, when the moon has gone behind the world to look upon the mighty dead, let all the people gather in the blackness before the house of Hooniah. Then shall the evil-doer stand forth and take his merited reward. I have spoken."

"It shall be death!" Bawn vociferated, "for that it hath brought worry upon us, and shame."

"So be it," Scundoo replied, and shut his door.

"Now shall all be made clear and plain, and content rest upon us once again," La-lah declaimed oracularly.

"Because of Scundoo, the little man," Sime sneered.

"Because of the medicine of Scundoo, the little man," La-lah corrected.

"Children of foolishness, these Thlinket people!" Sime smote his thigh a resounding blow. "It passeth understanding that grown women and strong men should get down in the dirt to dream-things and wonder tales."

"I am a travelled man," La-lah answered. "I have journeyed on the deep seas and seen signs and wonders, and I know that these things be so. I am La-lah — "

"The Cheater — "

“So called, but the Far-Journeyer right-named.”

“I am not so great a traveller — ” Sime began.

“Then hold thy tongue,” Bawn cut in, and they separated in anger.

When the last silver moonlight had vanished beyond the world, Scundoo came among the people huddled about the house of Hooniah. He walked with a quick, alert step, and those who saw him in the light of Hooniah’s slush-lamp noticed that he came empty-handed, without rattles, masks, or shaman’s paraphernalia, save for a great sleepy raven carried under one arm.

“Is there wood gathered for a fire, so that all may see when the work be done?” he demanded.

“Yea,” Bawn answered. “There be wood in plenty.”

“Then let all listen, for my words be few. With me have I brought Jelchs, the Raven, diviner of mystery and seer of things. Him, in his blackness, shall I place under the big black pot of Hooniah, in the blackest corner of her house. The slush-lamp shall cease to burn, and all remain in outer darkness. It is very simple. One by one shall ye go into the house, lay hand upon the pot for the space of one long intake of the breath, and withdraw again. Doubtless Jelchs will make outcry when the hand of the evil-doer is nigh him. Or who knows but otherwise he may manifest his wisdom. Are ye ready?”

“We be ready,” came the multi-voiced response.

“Then will I call the name aloud, each in his turn and hers, till all are called.”

Thereat La-lah was first chosen, and he passed in at once. Every ear strained, and through the silence they could hear his footsteps creaking across the rickety floor. But that was all. Jelchs made no outcry, gave no sign. Bawn was next chosen, for it well might be that a man should steal his own blankets with intent to cast shame upon his neighbors. Hooniah followed, and other women and children, but without result.

“Sime!” Scundoo called out.

“Sime!” he repeated.

But Sime did not stir.

“Art thou afraid of the dark?” La-lah, his own integrity being proved, demanded fiercely.

Sime chuckled. “I laugh at it all, for it is a great foolishness. Yet will I go in, not in belief in wonders, but in token that I am unafraid.”

And he passed in boldly, and came out still mocking.

“Some day shalt thou die with great suddenness,” La-lah whispered, righteously indignant.

“I doubt not,” the scoffer answered airily. “Few men of us die in our beds, what of the shamans and the deep sea.”

When half the villagers had safely undergone the ordeal, the excitement, because of its repression, was painfully intense. When two-thirds had gone through, a young woman, close on her first child-bed, broke down and in nervous shrieks and laughter gave form to her terror.

Finally the turn came for the last of all to go in, and nothing had happened. And Di Ya was the last of all. It must surely be he. Hooniah let out a lament to the stars, while the rest drew back from the luckless lad. He was half-dead from fright, and his legs gave under him so that he staggered on the threshold and nearly fell. Scundoo shoved him inside and closed the door. A long time went by, during which could be heard only the boy's weeping. Then, very slowly, came the creak of his steps to the far corner, a pause, and the creaking of his return. The door opened and he came forth. Nothing had happened, and he was the last.

"Let the fire be lighted," Scundoo commanded.

The bright flames rushed upward, revealing faces yet marked with vanishing fear, but also clouded with doubt.

"Surely the thing has failed," Hooniah whispered hoarsely.

"Yea," Bawn answered complacently. "Scundoo groweth old, and we stand in need of a new shaman."

"Where now is the wisdom of Jelchs?" Sime snickered in La-lah's ear.

La-lah brushed his brow in a puzzled manner and said nothing.

Sime threw his chest out arrogantly and strutted up to the little shaman. "Hoh! Hoh! As I said, nothing has come of it!"

"So it would seem, so it would seem," Scundoo answered meekly. "And it would seem strange to those unskilled in the affairs of mystery."

"As thou?" Sime queried audaciously.

"Mayhap even as I." Scundoo spoke quite softly, his eyelids drooping, slowly drooping, down, down, till his eyes were all but hidden. "So I am minded of another test. Let every man, woman, and child, now and at once, hold their hands well up above their heads!"

So unexpected was the order, and so imperatively was it given, that it was obeyed without question. Every hand was in the air.

"Let each look on the other's hands, and let all look," Scundoo commanded, "so that — "

But a noise of laughter, which was more of wrath, drowned his voice. All eyes had come to rest upon Sime. Every hand but his was black with soot, and his was guiltless of the smirch of Hooniah's pot.

A stone hurtled through the air and struck him on the cheek.

"It is a lie!" he yelled. "A lie! I know naught of Hooniah's blankets!"

A second stone gashed his brow, a third whistled past his head, the great blood-cry went up, and everywhere were people groping on the ground for missiles. He staggered and half sank down.

"It was a joke! Only a joke!" he shrieked. "I but took them for a joke!"

"Where hast thou hidden them?" Scundoo's shrill, sharp voice cut through the tumult like a knife.

"In the large skin-bale in my house, the one slung by the ridge-pole," came the answer. "But it was a joke, I say, only — "

Scundoo nodded his head, and the air went thick with flying stones. Sime's wife was crying silently, her head upon her knees; but his little boy, with shrieks and laughter, was flinging stones with the rest.

Hooniah came waddling back with the precious blankets. Scundoo stopped her.

"We be poor people and have little," she whimpered. "So be not hard upon us, O Scundoo."

The people ceased from the quivering stone-pile they had builded, and looked on.

"Nay, it was never my way, good Hooniah," Scundoo made answer, reaching for the blankets. "In token that I am not hard, these only shall I take."

"Am I not wise, my children?" he demanded.

"Thou art indeed wise, O Scundoo!" they cried in one voice.

And he went away into the darkness, the blankets around him, and Jelchs nodding sleepily under his arm.

Mauki

He weighed one hundred and ten pounds. His hair was kinky and negroid, and he was black. He was peculiarly black. He was neither blue-black nor purple-black, but plum-black. His name was Mauki, and he was the son of a chief. He had three tambos. Tambo is Melanesian for taboo, and is first cousin to that Polynesian word. Mauki's three tambos were as follows: First, he must never shake hands with a woman, nor have a woman's hand touch him or any of his personal belongings; secondly, he must never eat clams nor any food from a fire in which clams had been cooked; thirdly, he must never touch a crocodile, nor travel in a canoe that carried any part of a crocodile even if as large as a tooth.

Of a different black were his teeth, which were deep black, or, perhaps better, lamp-black. They had been made so in a single night, by his mother, who had compressed about them a powdered mineral which was dug from the landslide back of Port Adams. Port Adams is a salt-water village on Malaita, and Malaita is the most savage island in the Solomons—so savage that no traders or planters have yet gained a foothold on it; while, from the time of the earliest *bêche-de-mer* fishers and sandalwood traders down to the latest labor recruiters equipped with automatic rifles and gasolene engines, scores of white adventurers have been passed out by tomahawks and soft-nosed Snider bullets. So Malaita remains today, in the twentieth century, the stamping ground of the labor recruiters, who farm its coasts for laborers who engage and contract themselves to toil on the plantations of the neighboring and more civilized islands for a wage of thirty dollars a year. The natives of those neighboring and more civilized islands have themselves become too civilized to work on plantations.

Mauki's ears were pierced, not in one place, nor two places, but in a couple of dozen places. In one of the smaller holes he carried a clay pipe. The larger holes were too large for such use. The bowl of the pipe would have fallen through. In fact, in the largest hole in each ear he habitually wore round wooden plugs that were an even four inches in diameter. Roughly speaking, the circumference of said holes was twelve and one-half inches. Mauki was catholic in his tastes. In the various smaller holes he carried such things as empty rifle cartridges, horseshoe nails, copper screws, pieces of string, braids of sennit, strips of green leaf, and, in the cool of the day, scarlet hibiscus flowers. From which it will be seen that pockets were not necessary to his well-being. Besides, pockets were impossible, for his only wearing apparel consisted of a piece of calico several inches wide. A pocket knife he wore in his hair, the blade snapped down on a kinky lock. His

most prized possession was the handle of a china cup, which he suspended from a ring of turtle-shell, which, in turn, was passed through the partition-cartilage of his nose.

But in spite of embellishments, Mauki had a nice face. It was really a pretty face, viewed by any standard, and for a Melanesian it was a remarkably good-looking face. Its one fault was its lack of strength. It was softly effeminate, almost girlish. The features were small, regular, and delicate. The chin was weak, and the mouth was weak. There was no strength nor character in the jaws, forehead, and nose. In the eyes only could be caught any hint of the unknown quantities that were so large a part of his make-up and that other persons could not understand. These unknown quantities were pluck, pertinacity, fearlessness, imagination, and cunning; and when they found expression in some consistent and striking action, those about him were astounded.

Mauki's father was chief over the village at Port Adams, and thus, by birth a salt-water man, Mauki was half amphibian. He knew the way of the fishes and oysters, and the reef was an open book to him. Canoes, also, he knew. He learned to swim when he was a year old. At seven years he could hold his breath a full minute and swim straight down to bottom through thirty feet of water. And at seven years he was stolen by the bushmen, who cannot even swim and who are afraid of salt water. Thereafter Mauki saw the sea only from a distance, through rifts in the jungle and from open spaces on the high mountain sides. He became the slave of old Fanfoa, head chief over a score of scattered bush-villages on the range-lips of Malaita, the smoke of which, on calm mornings, is about the only evidence the seafaring white men have of the teeming interior population. For the whites do not penetrate Malaita. They tried it once, in the days when the search was on for gold, but they always left their heads behind to grin from the smoky rafters of the bushmen's huts.

When Mauki was a young man of seventeen, Fanfoa got out of tobacco. He got dreadfully out of tobacco. It was hard times in all his villages. He had been guilty of a mistake. Suo was a harbor so small that a large schooner could not swing at anchor in it. It was surrounded by mangroves that overhung the deep water. It was a trap, and into the trap sailed two white men in a small ketch. They were after recruits, and they possessed much tobacco and trade goods, to say nothing of three rifles and plenty of ammunition. Now there were no salt-water men living at Suo, and it was there that the bushmen could come down to the sea. The ketch did a splendid traffic. It signed on twenty recruits the first day. Even old Fanfoa signed on. And that same day the score of new recruits chopped off the two white men's head, killed the boat's crew, and burned the ketch. Thereafter, and for three months, there was tobacco and trade goods in plenty and to spare in all the bush villages. Then came the man-of-war that threw shells for miles into the hills, frightening the people out of their villages and into the deeper bush. Next the man-of-war sent landing parties ashore. The villages were all burned, along with the tobacco and trade stuff.

The cocoanuts and bananas were chopped down, the taro gardens uprooted, and the pigs and chickens killed.

It taught Fanfoa a lesson, but in the meantime he was out of tobacco. Also, his young men were too frightened to sign on with the recruiting vessels. That was why Fanfoa ordered his slave, Mauki, to be carried down and signed on for half a case of tobacco advance, along with knives, axes, calico, and beads, which he would pay for with his toil on the plantations. Mauki was sorely frightened when they brought him on board the schooner. He was a lamb led to the slaughter. White men were ferocious creatures. They had to be, or else they would not make a practice of venturing along the Malaita coast and into all harbors, two on a schooner, when each schooner carried from fifteen to twenty blacks as boat's crew, and often as high as sixty or seventy black recruits. In addition to this, there was always the danger of the shore population, the sudden attack and the cutting off of the schooner and all hands. Truly, white men must be terrible. Besides, they were possessed of such devil-devils—rifles that shot very rapidly many times, things of iron and brass that made the schooners go when there was no wind, and boxes that talked and laughed just as men talked and laughed.

Ay, and he had heard of one white man whose particular devil-devil was so powerful that he could take out all his teeth and put them back at will.

Down into the cabin they took Mauki. On deck, the one white man kept guard with two revolvers in his belt. In the cabin the other white man sat with a book before him, in which he inscribed strange marks and lines. He looked at Mauki as though he had been a pig or a fowl, glanced under the hollows of his arms, and wrote in the book. Then he held out the writing stick and Mauki just barely touched it with his hand, in so doing pledging himself to toil for three years on the plantations of the Moongleam Soap Company. It was not explained to him that the will of the ferocious white men would be used to enforce the pledge, and that, behind all, for the same use, was all the power and all the warships of Great Britain.

Other blacks there were on board, from unheard-of far places, and when the white man spoke to them, they tore the long feather from Mauki's hair, cut that same hair short, and wrapped about his waist a lava-lava of bright yellow calico.

After many days on the schooner, and after beholding more land and islands than he had ever dreamed of, he was landed on New Georgia, and put to work in the field clearing jungle and cutting cane grass. For the first time he knew what work was. Even as a slave to Fanfoa he had not worked like this. And he did not like work. It was up at dawn and in at dark, on two meals a day. And the food was tiresome. For weeks at a time they were given nothing but sweet potatoes to eat, and for weeks at a time it would be nothing but rice. He cut out the cocoanut from the shells day after day; and for long days and weeks he fed the fires that smoked the copra, till his eyes got sore and he was set to felling trees. He was a good axe-man, and later he was put in the bridge-building gang. Once, he was punished by being put in the road-building gang. At times he served as boat's crew in the whale boats, when they brought in copra from distant beaches or when the white men went out to dynamite fish.

Among other things he learned *bêche-de-mer* English, with which he could talk with all white men, and with all recruits who otherwise would have talked in a thousand

different dialects. Also, he learned certain things about the white men, principally that they kept their word. If they told a boy he was going to receive a stick of tobacco, he got it. If they told a boy they would knock seven bells out of him if he did a certain thing, when he did that thing, seven bells invariably were knocked out of him. Mauki did not know what seven bells were, but they occurred in *bêche-de-mer*, and he imagined them to be the blood and teeth that sometimes accompanied the process of knocking out seven bells. One other thing he learned: no boy was struck or punished unless he did wrong. Even when the white men were drunk, as they were frequently, they never struck unless a rule had been broken.

Mauki did not like the plantation. He hated work, and he was the son of a chief. Furthermore, it was ten years since he had been stolen from Port Adams by Fanfoa, and he was homesick. He was even homesick for the slavery under Fanfoa. So he ran away. He struck back into the bush, with the idea of working southward to the beach and stealing a canoe in which to go home to Port Adams.

But the fever got him, and he was captured and brought back more dead than alive.

A second time he ran away, in the company of two Malaita boys. They got down the coast twenty miles, and were hidden in the hut of a Malaita freeman, who dwelt in that village. But in the dead of night two white men came, who were not afraid of all the village people and who knocked seven bells out of the three runaways, tied them like pigs, and tossed them into the whale boat. But the man in whose house they had hidden—seven times seven bells must have been knocked out of him from the way the hair, skin, and teeth flew, and he was discouraged for the rest of his natural life from harboring runaway laborers.

For a year Mauki toiled on. Then he was made a house-boy, and had good food and easy times, with light work in keeping the house clean and serving the white men with whiskey and beer at all hours of the day and most hours of the night. He liked it, but he liked Port Adams more. He had two years longer to serve, but two years were too long for him in the throes of homesickness. He had grown wiser with his year of service, and, being now a house-boy, he had opportunity. He had the cleaning of the rifles, and he knew where the key to the store room was hung. He planned to escape, and one night ten Malaita boys and one boy from San Cristoval sneaked from the barracks and dragged one of the whale boats down to the beach. It was Mauki who supplied the key that opened the padlock on the boat, and it was Mauki who equipped the boat with a dozen Winchesters, an immense amount of ammunition, a case of dynamite with detonators and fuse, and ten cases of tobacco.

The northwest monsoon was blowing, and they fled south in the night time, hiding by day on detached and uninhabited islets, or dragging their whale boat into the bush on the large islands. Thus they gained Guadalcanar, skirted halfway along it, and crossed the Indispensable Straits to Florida Island. It was here that they killed the San Cristoval boy, saving his head and cooking and eating the rest of him. The Malaita coast was only twenty miles away, but the last night a strong current and baffling winds prevented them from gaining across. Daylight found them still several

miles from their goal. But daylight brought a cutter, in which were two white men, who were not afraid of eleven Malaita men armed with twelve rifles. Mauki and his companions were carried back to Tulagi, where lived the great white master of all the white men. And the great white master held a court, after which, one by one, the runaways were tied up and given twenty lashes each, and sentenced to a fine of fifteen dollars. They were sent back to New Georgia, where the white men knocked seven bells out of them all around and put them to work. But Mauki was no longer house-boy. He was put in the road-making gang. The fine of fifteen dollars had been paid by the white men from whom he had run away, and he was told that he would have to work it out, which meant six months' additional toil. Further, his share of the stolen tobacco earned him another year of toil.

Port Adams was now three years and a half away, so he stole a canoe one night, hid on the islets in Manning Straits, passed through the Straits, and began working along the eastern coast of Ysabel, only to be captured, two-thirds of the way along, by the white men on Meringe Lagoon. After a week, he escaped from them and took to the bush. There were no bush natives on Ysabel, only salt-water men, who were all Christians. The white men put up a reward of five-hundred sticks of tobacco, and every time Mauki ventured down to the sea to steal a canoe he was chased by the salt-water men. Four months of this passed, when, the reward having been raised to a thousand sticks, he was caught and sent back to New Georgia and the road-building gang. Now a thousand sticks are worth fifty dollars, and Mauki had to pay the reward himself, which required a year and eight months' labor. So Port Adams was now five years away.

His homesickness was greater than ever, and it did not appeal to him to settle down and be good, work out his four years, and go home. The next time, he was caught in the very act of running away. His case was brought before Mr. Haveby, the island manager of the Moongleam Soap Company, who adjudged him an incorrigible. The Company had plantations on the Santa Cruz Islands, hundreds of miles across the sea, and there it sent its Solomon Islands' incorrigibles. And there Mauki was sent, though he never arrived. The schooner stopped at Santa Anna, and in the night Mauki swam ashore, where he stole two rifles and a case of tobacco from the trader and got away in a canoe to Cristoval. Malaita was now to the north, fifty or sixty miles away. But when he attempted the passage, he was caught by a light gale and driven back to Santa Anna, where the trader clapped him in irons and held him against the return of the schooner from Santa Cruz. The two rifles the trader recovered, but the case of tobacco was charged up to Mauki at the rate of another year. The sum of years he now owed the Company was six.

On the way back to New Georgia, the schooner dropped anchor in Marau Sound, which lies at the southeastern extremity of Guadalcanar. Mauki swam ashore with handcuffs on his wrists and got away to the bush. The schooner went on, but the Moongleam trader ashore offered a thousand sticks, and to him Mauki was brought by the bushmen with a year and eight months tacked on to his account. Again, and

before the schooner called in, he got away, this time in a whale boat accompanied by a case of the trader's tobacco. But a northwest gale wrecked him upon Ugi, where the Christian natives stole his tobacco and turned him over to the Moongleam trader who resided there. The tobacco the natives stole meant another year for him, and the tale was now eight years and a half.

"We'll send him to Lord Howe," said Mr. Haveby. "Bunster is there, and we'll let them settle it between them. It will be a case, I imagine, of Mauki getting Bunster, or Bunster getting Mauki, and good riddance in either event."

If one leaves Meringe Lagoon, on Ysabel, and steers a course due north, magnetic, at the end of one hundred and fifty miles he will lift the pounded coral beaches of Lord Howe above the sea. Lord Howe is a ring of land some one hundred and fifty miles in circumference, several hundred yards wide at its widest, and towering in places to a height of ten feet above sea level. Inside this ring of sand is a mighty lagoon studded with coral patches. Lord Howe belongs to the Solomons neither geographically nor ethnologically. It is an atoll, while the Solomons are high islands; and its people and language are Polynesian, while the inhabitants of the Solomons are Melanesian.

Lord Howe has been populated by the westward Polynesian drift which continues to this day, big outrigger canoes being washed upon its beaches by the southeast trade. That there has been a slight Melanesian drift in the period of the northwest monsoon, is also evident.

Nobody ever comes to Lord Howe, or Ontong-Java as it is sometimes called. Thomas Cook & Son do not sell tickets to it, and tourists do not dream of its existence. Not even a white missionary has landed on its shore. Its five thousand natives are as peaceable as they are primitive. Yet they were not always peaceable. The Sailing Directions speak of them as hostile and treacherous. But the men who compile the Sailing Directions have never heard of the change that was worked in the hearts of the inhabitants, who, not many years ago, cut off a big bark and killed all hands with the exception of the second mate. The survivor carried the news to his brothers. The captains of three trading schooners returned with him to Lord Howe. They sailed their vessels right into the lagoon and proceeded to preach the white man's gospel that only white men shall kill white men and that the lesser breeds must keep hands off. The schooners sailed up and down the lagoon, harrying and destroying. There was no escape from the narrow sand-circle, no bush to which to flee. The men were shot down at sight, and there was no avoiding being sighted. The villages were burned, the canoes smashed, the chickens and pigs killed, and the precious cocoanut trees chopped down. For a month this continued, when the schooner sailed away; but the fear of the white man had been seared into the souls of the islanders and never again were they rash enough to harm one.

Max Bunster was the one white man on Lord Howe, trading in the pay of the ubiquitous Moongleam Soap Company. And the Company billeted him on Lord Howe, because, next to getting rid of him, it was the most out-of-the-way place to be found. That the Company did not get rid of him was due to the difficulty of finding another

man to take his place. He was a strapping big German, with something wrong in his brain. Semi-madness would be a charitable statement of his condition. He was a bully and a coward, and a thrice-bigger savage than any savage on the island.

Being a coward, his brutality was of the cowardly order. When he first went into the Company's employ, he was stationed on Savo. When a consumptive colonial was sent to take his place, he beat him up with his fists and sent him off a wreck in the schooner that brought him.

Mr. Haveby next selected a young Yorkshire giant to relieve Bunster. The Yorkshire man had a reputation as a bruiser and preferred fighting to eating. But Bunster wouldn't fight. He was a regular little lamb—for ten days, at the end of which time the Yorkshire man was prostrated by a combined attack of dysentery and fever. Then Bunster went for him, among other things getting him down and jumping on him a score or so of times. Afraid of what would happen when his victim recovered. Bunster fled away in a cutter to Guvutu, where he signaled himself by beating up a young Englishman already crippled by a Boer bullet through both hips.

Then it was that Mr. Haveby sent Bunster to Lord Howe, the falling-off place. He celebrated his landing by mopping up half a case of gin and by thrashing the elderly and wheezy mate of the schooner which had brought him. When the schooner departed, he called the kanakas down to the beach and challenged them to throw him in a wrestling bout, promising a case of tobacco to the one who succeeded. Three kanakas he threw, but was promptly thrown by a fourth, who, instead of receiving the tobacco, got a bullet through his lungs.

And so began Bunster's reign on Lord Howe. Three thousand people lived in the principal village; but it was deserted, even in broad day, when he passed through. Men, women, and children fled before him. Even the dogs and pigs got out of the way, while the king was not above hiding under a mat. The two prime ministers lived in terror of Bunster, who never discussed any moot subject, but struck out with his fists instead.

And to Lord Howe came Mauki, to toil for Bunster for eight long years and a half. There was no escaping from Lord Howe. For better or worse, Bunster and he were tied together. Bunster weighed two hundred pounds. Mauki weighed one hundred and ten. Bunster was a degenerate brute. But Mauki was a primitive savage. While both had wills and ways of their own.

Mauki had no idea of the sort of master he was to work for. He had had no warnings, and he had concluded as a matter of course that Bunster would be like other white men, a drinker of much whiskey, a ruler and a lawgiver who always kept his word and who never struck a boy undeserved. Bunster had the advantage. He knew all about Mauki, and gloated over the coming into possession of him. The last cook was suffering from a broken arm and a dislocated shoulder, so Bunster made Mauki cook and general house-boy.

And Mauki soon learned that there were white men and white men. On the very day the schooner departed he was ordered to buy a chicken from Samisee, the native Tongan missionary. But Samisee had sailed across the lagoon and would not be back

for three days. Mauki returned with the information. He climbed the steep stairway (the house stood on piles twelve feet above the sand), and entered the living room to report. The trader demanded the chicken. Mauki opened his mouth to explain the missionary's absence. But Bunster did not care for explanations. He struck out with his fist. The blow caught Mauki on the mouth and lifted him into the air. Clear through the doorway he flew, across the narrow veranda, breaking the top railing, and down to the ground.

His lips were a contused, shapeless mass, and his mouth was full of blood and broken teeth.

"That'll teach you that back talk don't go with me," the trader shouted, purple with rage, peering down at him over the broken railing.

Mauki had never met a white man like this, and he resolved to walk small and never offend. He saw the boat boys knocked about, and one of them put in irons for three days with nothing to eat for the crime of breaking a rowlock while pulling. Then, too, he heard the gossip of the village and learned why Bunster had taken a third wife—by force, as was well known. The first and second wives lay in the graveyard, under the white coral sand, with slabs of coral rock at head and feet. They had died, it was said, from beatings he had given them. The third wife was certainly ill-used, as Mauki could see for himself.

But there was no way by which to avoid offending the white man who seemed offended with life. When Mauki kept silent, he was struck and called a sullen brute. When he spoke, he was struck for giving back talk. When he was grave, Bunster accused him of plotting and gave him a thrashing in advance; and when he strove to be cheerful and to smile, he was charged with sneering at his lord and master and given a taste of stick. Bunster was a devil.

The village would have done for him, had it not remembered the lesson of the three schooners. It might have done for him anyway, if there had been a bush to which to flee. As it was, the murder of the white men, of any white man, would bring a man-of-war that would kill the offenders and chop down the precious cocoanut trees. Then there were the boat boys, with minds fully made up to drown him by accident at the first opportunity to capsize the cutter. Only Bunster saw to it that the boat did not capsize.

Mauki was of a different breed, and escape being impossible while Bunster lived, he was resolved to get the white man. The trouble was that he could never find a chance. Bunster was always on guard. Day and night his revolvers were ready to hand. He permitted nobody to pass behind his back, as Mauki learned after having been knocked down several times. Bunster knew that he had more to fear from the good-natured, even sweet-faced, Malaita boy than from the entire population of Lord Howe; and it gave added zest to the programme of torment he was carrying out. And Mauki walked small, accepted his punishments, and waited.

All other white men had respected his tambos, but not so Bunster.

Mauki's weekly allowance of tobacco was two sticks. Bunster passed them to his woman and ordered Mauki to receive them from her hand. But this could not be, and Mauki went without his tobacco. In the same way he was made to miss many a meal, and to go hungry many a day. He was ordered to make chowder out of the big clams that grew in the lagoon. This he could not do, for clams were tambo. Six times in succession he refused to touch the clams, and six times he was knocked senseless. Bunster knew that the boy would die first, but called his refusal mutiny, and would have killed him had there been another cook to take his place.

One of the trader's favorite tricks was to catch Mauki's kinky locks and bat his head against the wall. Another trick was to catch Mauki unawares and thrust the live end of a cigar against his flesh. This Bunster called vaccination, and Mauki was vaccinated a number of times a week. Once, in a rage, Bunster ripped the cup handle from Mauki's nose, tearing the hole clear out of the cartilage.

"Oh, what a mug!" was his comment, when he surveyed the damage he had wrought.

The skin of a shark is like sandpaper, but the skin of a ray fish is like a rasp. In the South Seas the natives use it as a wood file in smoothing down canoes and paddles. Bunster had a mitten made of ray fish skin. The first time he tried it on Mauki, with one sweep of the hand it fetched the skin off his back from neck to armpit. Bunster was delighted. He gave his wife a taste of the mitten, and tried it out thoroughly on the boat boys. The prime ministers came in for a stroke each, and they had to grin and take it for a joke.

"Laugh, damn you, laugh!" was the cue he gave.

Mauki came in for the largest share of the mitten. Never a day passed without a caress from it. There were times when the loss of so much cuticle kept him awake at night, and often the half-healed surface was raked raw afresh by the facetious Mr. Bunster. Mauki continued his patient wait, secure in the knowledge that sooner or later his time would come. And he knew just what he was going to do, down to the smallest detail, when the time did come.

One morning Bunster got up in a mood for knocking seven bells out of the universe. He began on Mauki, and wound up on Mauki, in the interval knocking down his wife and hammering all the boat boys. At breakfast he called the coffee slops and threw the scalding contents of the cup into Mauki's face. By ten o'clock Bunster was shivering with ague, and half an hour later he was burning with fever. It was no ordinary attack. It quickly became pernicious, and developed into black-water fever. The days passed, and he grew weaker and weaker, never leaving his bed. Mauki waited and watched, the while his skin grew intact once more. He ordered the boys to beach the cutter, scrub her bottom, and give her a general overhauling. They thought the order emanated from Bunster, and they obeyed. But Bunster at the time was lying unconscious and giving no orders. This was Mauki's chance, but still he waited.

When the worst was past, and Bunster lay convalescent and conscious, but weak as a baby, Mauki packed his few trinkets, including the china cup handle, into his trade

box. Then he went over to the village and interviewed the king and his two prime ministers.

“This fella Bunster, him good fella you like too much?” he asked.

They explained in one voice that they liked the trader not at all. The ministers poured forth a recital of all the indignities and wrongs that had been heaped upon them. The king broke down and wept. Mauki interrupted rudely.

“You savve me—me big fella marster my country. You no like m this fella white marster. Me no like m. Plenty good you put hundred cocoanut, two hundred cocoanut, three hundred cocoanut along cutter. Him finish, you go sleep m good fella. Altogether kanaka sleep m good fella. Bime by big fella noise along house, you no savve hear m that fella noise. You altogether sleep strong fella too much.”

In like manner Mauki interviewed the boat boys. Then he ordered Bunster’s wife to return to her family house. Had she refused, he would have been in a quandary, for his tambo would not have permitted him to lay hands on her.

The house deserted, he entered the sleeping room, where the trader lay in a doze. Mauki first removed the revolvers, then placed the ray fish mitten on his hand. Bunster’s first warning was a stroke of the mitten that removed the skin the full length of his nose.

“Good fella, eh?” Mauki grinned, between two strokes, one of which swept the forehead bare and the other of which cleaned off one side of his face. “Laugh, damn you, laugh.”

Mauki did his work thoroughly, and the kanakas, hiding in their houses, heard the “big fella noise” that Bunster made and continued to make for an hour or more.

When Mauki was done, he carried the boat compass and all the rifles and ammunition down to the cutter, which he proceeded to ballast with cases of tobacco. It was while engaged in this that a hideous, skinless thing came out of the house and ran screaming down the beach till it fell in the sand and mowed and gibbered under the scorching sun. Mauki looked toward it and hesitated. Then he went over and removed the head, which he wrapped in a mat and stowed in the stern locker of the cutter.

So soundly did the kanakas sleep through that long hot day that they did not see the cutter run out through the passage and head south, close-hauled on the southeast trade. Nor was the cutter ever sighted on that long tack to the shores of Ysabel, and during the tedious head-beat from there to Malaita. He landed at Port Adams with a wealth of rifles and tobacco such as no one man had ever possessed before. But he did not stop there. He had taken a white man’s head, and only the bush could shelter him. So back he went to the bush villages, where he shot old Fanfoa and half a dozen of the chief men, and made himself the chief over all the villages. When his father died, Mauki’s brother ruled in Port Adams, and joined together, salt-water men and bushmen, the resulting combination was the strongest of the ten score fighting tribes of Malaita.

More than his fear of the British government was Mauki’s fear of the all-powerful Moongleam Soap Company; and one day a message came up to him in the bush,

reminding him that he owed the Company eight and one-half years of labor. He sent back a favorable answer, and then appeared the inevitable white man, the captain of the schooner, the only white man during Mauki's reign, who ventured the bush and came out alive. This man not only came out, but he brought with him seven hundred and fifty dollars in gold sovereigns—the money price of eight years and a half of labor plus the cost price of certain rifles and cases of tobacco.

Mauki no longer weighs one hundred and ten pounds. His stomach is three times its former girth, and he has four wives. He has many other things—rifles and revolvers, the handle of a china cup, and an excellent collection of bushmen's heads. But more precious than the entire collection is another head, perfectly dried and cured, with sandy hair and a yellowish beard, which is kept wrapped in the finest of fibre lavas. When Mauki goes to war with villages beyond his realm, he invariably gets out this head, and alone in his grass palace, contemplates it long and solemnly. At such times the hush of death falls on the village, and not even a pickaninny dares make a noise. The head is esteemed the most powerful devil-devil on Malaita, and to the possession of it is ascribed all of Mauki's

The Meat

I.

Half the time the wind blew a gale, and Smoke Bellew staggered against it along the beach. In the gray of dawn a dozen boats were being loaded with the precious outfits packed across Chilcoot. They were clumsy, home-made boats, put together by men who were not boat-builders, out of planks they had sawed by hand from green spruce trees. One boat, already loaded, was just starting, and Kit paused to watch.

The wind, which was fair down the lake, here blew in squarely on the beach, kicking up a nasty sea in the shallows. The men of the departing boat waded in high rubber boots as they shoved it out toward deeper water. Twice they did this. Clambering aboard and failing to row clear, the boat was swept back and grounded. Kit noticed that the spray on the sides of the boat quickly turned to ice. The third attempt was a partial success. The last two men to climb in were wet to their waists, but the boat was afloat. They struggled awkwardly at the heavy oars, and slowly worked off shore. Then they hoisted a sail made of blankets, had it carried away in a gust, and were swept a third time back on the freezing beach.

Kit grinned to himself and went on. This was what he must expect to encounter, for he, too, in his new role of gentleman's man, was to start from the beach in a similar boat that very day.

Everywhere men were at work, and at work desperately, for the closing down of winter was so imminent that it was a gamble whether or not they would get across the great chain of lakes before the freeze-up. Yet, when Kit arrived at the tent of Messrs Sprague and Stine, he did not find them stirring.

By a fire, under the shelter of a tarpaulin, squatted a short, thick man smoking a brown-paper cigarette.

"Hello," he said. "Are you Mister Sprague's new man?"

As Kit nodded, he thought he had noted a shade of emphasis on the mister and the man, and he was sure of a hint of a twinkle in the corner of the eye.

"Well, I'm Doc Stine's man," the other went on. "I'm five feet two inches long, and my name's Shorty, Jack Short for short, and sometimes known as Johnny-on-the-Spot."

Kit put out his hand and shook.

"Were you raised on bear-meat?" he queried.

"Sure," was the answer; "though my first feedin' was buffalo-milk as near as I can remember. Sit down an' have some grub. The bosses ain't turned out yet."

And despite the one breakfast, Kit sat down under the tarpaulin and ate a second breakfast thrice as hearty. The heavy, purging toil of weeks had given him the stomach

and appetite of a wolf. He could eat anything, in any quantity, and be unaware that he possessed a digestion. Shorty he found voluble and pessimistic, and from him he received surprising tips concerning their bosses, and ominous forecasts of the expedition. Thomas Stanley Sprague was a budding mining engineer and the son of a millionaire. Doctor Adolph Stine was also the son of a wealthy father. And, through their fathers, both had been backed by an investing syndicate in the Klondike adventure.

“Oh, they’re sure made of money,” Shorty expounded. “When they hit the beach at Dyea, freight was seventy cents, but no Indians. There was a party from Eastern Oregon, real miners, that’d managed to get a team of Indians together at seventy cents. Indians had the straps on the outfit, three thousand pounds of it, when along comes Sprague and Stine. They offered eighty cents and ninety, and at a dollar a pound the Indians jumped the contract and took off their straps. Sprague and Stine came through, though it cost them three thousand, and the Oregon bunch is still on the beach. They won’t get through till next year.

“Oh, they are real hummers, your boss and mine, when it comes to sheddin’ the mazuma an’ never mindin’ other folks’ feelin’s. What did they do when they hit Linderman? The carpenters was just putting in the last licks on a boat they’d contracted to a ‘Frisco bunch for six hundred. Sprague and Stine slipped ‘em an even thousand, and they jumped their contract. It’s a good-lookin’ boat, but it’s jiggered the other bunch. They’ve got their outfit right here, but no boat. And they’re stuck for next year.

“Have another cup of coffee, and take it from me that I wouldn’t travel with no such outfit if I didn’t want to get to Klondike so blamed bad. They ain’t hearted right. They’d take the crape off the door of a house in mourning if they needed it in their business. Did you sign a contract?”

Kit shook his head.

“Then I’m sorry for you, pardner. They ain’t no grub in the country, and they’ll drop you cold as soon as they hit Dawson. Men are going to starve there this winter.”

“They agreed—“ Kit began.

“Verbal,” Shorty snapped him short. “It’s your say so against theirs, that’s all. Well, anyway—what’s your name, pardner?”

“Call me Smoke,” said Kit.

“Well, Smoke, you’ll have a run for your verbal contract just the same. This is a plain sample of what to expect. They can sure shed mazuma, but they can’t work, or turn out of bed in the morning. We should have been loaded and started an hour ago. It’s you an’ me for the big work. Pretty soon you’ll hear ‘em shoutin’ for their coffee—in bed, mind you, and they grown men. What d’ye know about boatin’ on the water? I’m a cowman and a prospector, but I’m sure tender-footed on water, an’ they don’t know punkins. What d’ye know?”

“Search me,” Kit answered, snuggling in closer under the tarpaulin as the snow whirled before a fiercer gust. “I haven’t been on a small boat since a boy. But I guess we can learn.”

A corner of the tarpaulin tore loose, and Shorty received a jet of driven snow down the back of his neck.

“Oh, we can learn all right,” he muttered wrathfully. “Sure we can. A child can learn. But it’s dollars to doughnuts we don’t even get started to-day.”

It was eight o’clock when the call for coffee came from the tent, and nearly nine before the two employers emerged.

“Hello,” said Sprague, a rosy-cheeked, well-fed young man of twenty-five. “Time we made a start, Shorty. You and—” Here he glanced interrogatively at Kit. “I didn’t quite catch your name last evening.”

“Smoke.”

“Well, Shorty, you and Mr Smoke had better begin loading the boat.”

“Plain Smoke—cut out the Mister,” Kit suggested.

Sprague nodded curtly and strolled away among the tents, to be followed by Doctor Stine, a slender, pallid young man.

Shorty looked significantly at his companion.

“Over a ton and a half of outfit, and they won’t lend a hand. You’ll see.”

“I guess it’s because we’re paid to do the work,” Kit answered cheerfully, “and we might as well buck in.”

To move three thousand pounds on the shoulders a hundred yards was no slight task, and to do it in half a gale, slushing through the snow in heavy rubber boots, was exhausting. In addition, there was the taking down of the tent and the packing of small camp equipage. Then came the loading. As the boat settled, it had to be shoved farther and farther out, increasing the distance they had to wade. By two o’clock it had all been accomplished, and Kit, despite his two breakfasts, was weak with the faintness of hunger. His knees were shaking under him. Shorty, in similar predicament, foraged through the pots and pans, and drew forth a big pot of cold boiled beans in which were imbedded large chunks of bacon. There was only one spoon, a long-handled one, and they dipped, turn and turn about, into the pot. Kit was filled with an immense certitude that in all his life he had never tasted anything so good.

“Lord, man,” he mumbled between chews, “I never knew what appetite was till I hit the trail.”

Sprague and Stine arrived in the midst of this pleasant occupation.

“What’s the delay?” Sprague complained. “Aren’t we ever going to get started?”

Shorty dipped in turn, and passed the spoon to Kit. Nor did either speak till the pot was empty and the bottom scraped.

“Of course we ain’t ben doin’ nothing,” Shorty said, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. “We ain’t ben doin’ nothing at all. And of course you ain’t had nothing to eat. It was sure careless of me.”

“Yes, yes,” Stine said quickly. “We ate at one of the tents—friends of ours.”

“Thought so,” Shorty grunted.

“But now that you’re finished, let us get started,” Sprague urged.

"There's the boat," said Shorty. "She's sure loaded. Now, just how might you be goin' about to get started?"

"By climbing aboard and shoving off. Come on."

They waded out, and the employers got on board, while Kit and Shorty shoved clear. When the waves lapped the tops of their boots they clambered in. The other two men were not prepared with the oars, and the boat swept back and grounded. Half a dozen times, with a great expenditure of energy, this was repeated.

Shorty sat down disconsolately on the gunwale, took a chew of tobacco, and questioned the universe, while Kit baled the boat and the other two exchanged unkind remarks.

"If you'll take my orders, I'll get her off," Sprague finally said.

The attempt was well intended, but before he could clamber on board he was wet to the waist.

"We've got to camp and build a fire," he said, as the boat grounded again. "I'm freezing."

"Don't be afraid of a wetting," Stine sneered. "Other men have gone off to-day wetter than you. Now I'm going to take her out."

This time it was he who got the wetting, and who announced with chattering teeth the need of a fire.

"A little splash like that," Sprague chattered spitefully. "We'll go on."

"Shorty, dig out my clothes-bag and make a fire," the other commanded.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," Sprague cried.

Shorty looked from one to the other, expectorated, but did not move.

"He's working for me, and I guess he obeys my orders," Stine retorted. "Shorty, take that bag ashore."

Shorty obeyed, and Sprague shivered in the boat. Kit, having received no orders, remained inactive, glad of the rest.

"A boat divided against itself won't float," he soliloquized.

"What's that?" Sprague snarled at him.

"Talking to myself—habit of mine," he answered.

His employer favoured him with a hard look, and sulked several minutes longer. Then he surrendered.

"Get out my bag, Smoke," he ordered, "and lend a hand with that fire. We won't get off till the morning now."

II.

Next day the gale still blew. Lake Linderman was no more than a narrow mountain gorge filled with water. Sweeping down from the mountains through this funnel, the wind was irregular, blowing great gusts at times and at other times dwindling to a strong breeze.

"If you give me a shot at it, I think I can get her off," Kit said, when all was ready for the start.

"What do you know about it?" Stine snapped at him.

“Search me,” Kit answered, and subsided.

It was the first time he had worked for wages in his life, but he was learning the discipline of it fast. Obediently and cheerfully he joined in various vain efforts to get clear of the beach.

“How would you go about it?” Sprague finally half-panted, half-whined at him.

“Sit down and get a good rest till a lull comes in the wind, and then buck in for all we’re worth.”

Simple as the idea was, he had been the first to evolve it; the first time it was applied it worked, and they hoisted a blanket to the mast and sped down the lake. Stine and Sprague immediately became cheerful. Shorty, despite his chronic pessimism, was always cheerful, and Kit was too interested to be otherwise. Sprague struggled with the steering sweep for a quarter of an hour, and then looked appealingly at Kit, who relieved him.

“My arms are fairly broken with the strain of it,” Sprague muttered apologetically.

“You never ate bear-meat, did you?” Kit asked sympathetically.

“What the devil do you mean?”

“Oh, nothing; I was just wondering.”

But behind his employer’s back Kit caught the approving grin of Shorty, who had already caught the whim of his simile.

Kit steered the length of Linderman, displaying an aptitude that caused both young men of money and disinclination for work to name him boat-steerer. Shorty was no less pleased, and volunteered to continue cooking and leave the boat work to the other.

Between Linderman and Lake Bennet was a portage. The boat, lightly loaded, was lined down the small but violent connecting stream, and here Kit learned a vast deal more about boats and water. But when it came to packing the outfit, Stine and Sprague disappeared, and their men spent two days of back-breaking toil in getting the outfit across. And this was the history of many miserable days of the trip—Kit and Shorty working to exhaustion, while their masters toiled not and demanded to be waited upon.

But the iron-bound arctic winter continued to close down, and they were held back by numerous and avoidable delays. At Windy Arm, Stine arbitrarily dispossessed Kit of the steering-sweep and within the hour wrecked the boat on a wave-beaten lee shore. Two days were lost here in making repairs, and the morning of the fresh start, as they came down to embark, on stern and bow, in large letters, was charcoaled ‘The Chechaquo.’

Kit grinned at the appropriateness of the invidious word.

“Huh!” said Shorty, when accused by Stine. “I can sure read and spell, an’ I know that Chechaquo means tenderfoot, but my education never went high enough to learn me to spell a jaw-breaker like that.”

Both employers looked daggers at Kit, for the insult rankled; nor did he mention that the night before, Shorty had besought him for the spelling of that particular word.

“That’s ‘most as bad as your bear-meat slam at ‘em,” Shorty confided later.

Kit chuckled. Along with the continuous discovery of his own powers had come an ever-increasing disapproval of the two masters. It was not so much irritation, which was always present, as disgust. He had got his taste of the meat, and liked it; but they were teaching him how not to eat it. Privily, he thanked God that he was not made as they. He came to dislike them to a degree that bordered on hatred. Their malingering bothered him less than their helpless inefficiency. Somewhere in him, old Isaac Bellew and all the rest of the hardy Bellews were making good.

“Shorty,” he said one day, in the usual delay of getting started, “I could almost fetch them a rap over the head with an oar and bury them in the river.”

“Same here,” Shorty agreed. “They’re not meat-eaters. They’re fish-eaters, and they sure stink.”

III.

They came to the rapids, first, the Box Canyon, and, several miles below, the White Horse. The Box Canyon was adequately named. It was a box, a trap. Once in it, the only way out was through. On either side arose perpendicular walls of rock. The river narrowed to a fraction of its width, and roared through this gloomy passage in a madness of motion that heaped the water in the centre into a ridge fully eight feet higher than at the rocky sides. This ridge, in turn, was crested with stiff, upstanding waves that curled over, yet remained each in its unvarying place. The Canyon was well feared, for it had collected its toll of dead from the passing gold-rushers.

Tying to the bank above, where lay a score of other anxious boats, Kit and his companions went ahead on foot to investigate. They crept to the brink and gazed down at the swirl of water. Sprague drew back shuddering.

“My God!” he exclaimed. “A swimmer hasn’t a chance in that.”

Shorty touched Kit significantly with his elbow and said in an undertone:

“Cold feet. Dollars to doughnuts they don’t go through.”

Kit scarcely heard. From the beginning of the boat trip he had been learning the stubbornness and inconceivable viciousness of the elements, and this glimpse of what was below him acted as a challenge.

“We’ve got to ride that ridge,” he said. “If we get off of it we’ll hit the walls—”

“And never know what hit us,” was Shorty’s verdict. “Can you swim, Smoke?”

“I’d wish I couldn’t if anything went wrong in there.”

“That’s what I say,” a stranger, standing alongside and peering down into the Canyon, said mournfully. “And I wish I were through it.”

“I wouldn’t sell my chance to go through,” Kit answered.

He spoke honestly, but it was with the idea of heartening the man. He turned to go back to the boat.

“Are you going to tackle it?” the man asked.

Kit nodded.

“I wish I could get the courage to,” the other confessed. “I’ve been here for hours. The longer I look, the more afraid I am. I am not a boatman, and I have only my

nephew with me, who is a young boy, and my wife. If you get through safely, will you run my boat through?"

Kit looked at Shorty, who delayed to answer.

"He's got his wife with him," Kit suggested. Nor had he mistaken his man.

"Sure," Shorty affirmed. "It was just that I was stopping to think about. I knew there was some reason I ought to do it."

Again they turned to go, but Sprague and Stine made no movement.

"Good luck, Smoke," Sprague called to him. "I'll—er—" He hesitated. "I'll just stay here and watch you."

"We need three men in the boat, two at the oars and one at the steering sweep," Kit said quietly.

Sprague looked at Stine.

"I'm damned if I do," said that gentleman. "If you're not afraid to stand here and look on, I'm not."

"Who's afraid?" Sprague demanded hotly.

Stine retorted in kind, and their two men left them in the thick of a squabble.

"We can do without them," Kit said to Shorty. "You take the bow with a paddle, and I'll handle the steering sweep. All you'll have to do is just to keep her straight. Once we're started, you won't be able to hear me, so just keep on keeping straight."

They cast off the boat and worked out to middle in the quickening current. From the Canyon came an ever-growing roar. The river sucked in to the entrance with the smoothness of molten glass, and here, as the darkening walls received them, Shorty took a chew of tobacco, and dipped his paddle. The boat leaped on the first crests of the ridge, and they were deafened by the uproar of wild water that reverberated from the narrow walls and multiplied itself. They were half-smothered with flying spray. At times Kit could not see his comrade at the bow. It was only a matter of two minutes, in which time they rode the ridge three-quarters of a mile, and emerged in safety and tied to the bank in the eddy below.

Shorty emptied his mouth of tobacco juice—he had forgotten to spit—and spoke.

"That was bear-meat," he exulted, "the real bear-meat. Say, we want a few, didn't we, Smoke, I don't mind tellin' you in confidence that before we started I was the gosh-dangdest scarest man this side of the Rocky-Mountains. Now I'm a bear-eater. Come on an' we'll run that other boat through."

Midway back, on foot, they encountered their employers, who had watched the passage from above.

"There comes the fish-eaters," said Shorty. "Keep to win'ward."

IV.

After running the strangers' boat through, whose name proved to be Breck, Kit and Shorty met his wife, a slender, girlish woman whose blue eyes were moist with gratitude. Breck himself tried to hand Kit fifty dollars, and then attempted it on Shorty.

"Stranger," was the latter's rejection, "I come into this country to make money outa the ground an' not outa my fellow critters."

Breck rummaged in his boat and produced a demijohn of whiskey. Shorty's hand half went out to it and stopped abruptly. He shook his head.

"There's that blamed White Horse right below, an' they say it's worse than the Box. I reckon I don't dast tackle any lightning."

Several miles below they ran in to the bank, and all four walked down to look at the bad water. The river, which was a succession of rapids, was here deflected toward the right bank by a rocky reef. The whole body of water, rushing crookedly into the narrow passage, accelerated its speed frightfully, and was upflung unto huge waves, white and wrathful. This was the dread Mane of the White Horse, and here an even heavier toll of dead had been exacted. On one side of the Mane was a corkscrew curl-over and suck-under, and on the opposite side was the big whirlpool. To go through, the Mane itself must be ridden.

"This plum rips the strings outa the Box," Shorty concluded.

As they watched, a boat took the head of the rapids above. It was a large boat, fully thirty feet long, laden with several tons of outfit and handled by six men. Before it reached the Mane it was plunging and leaping, at times almost hidden by the foam and spray.

Shorty shot a slow, sidelong glance at Kit, and said:

"She's fair smoking, and she hasn't hit the worst. They've hauled the oars in. There she takes it now. God! She's gone! No; there she is!"

Big as the boat was, it had been buried from sight in the flying smother between crests. The next moment, in the thick of the Mane, the boat leaped up a crest and into view. To Kit's amazement he saw the whole long bottom clearly outlined. The boat, for the fraction of an instant, was in the air, the men sitting idly in their places, all save one in the stern who stood at the steering sweep. Then came the downward plunge into the trough and a second disappearance. Three times the boat leaped and buried itself, then those on the bank saw its nose take the whirlpool as it slipped off the Mane. The steersman, vainly opposing with his full weight on the steering-gear, surrendered to the whirlpool and helped the boat to take the circle.

Three times it went around, each time so close to the rocks on which Kit and Shorty stood, that either could have leaped on board. The steersman, a man with a reddish beard of recent growth, waved his hand to them. The only way out of the whirlpool was by the Mane, and on the round the boat entered the Mane obliquely at its upper end. Possibly out of fear of the draw of the whirlpool, the steersman did not attempt to straighten out quickly enough. When he did, it was too late. Alternately in the air and buried, the boat angled the Mane and sucked into and down through the stiff wall of the corkscrew on the opposite side of the river. A hundred feet below, boxes and bales began to float up. Then appeared the bottom of the boat and the scattered heads of six men. Two managed to make the bank in the eddy below. The others were drawn under, and the general flotsam was lost to view, borne on by the swift current around the bend.

There was a long minute of silence. Shorty was the first to speak.

“Come on,” he said. “We might as well tackle it. My feet’ll get cold if I stay here any longer.”

“We’ll smoke some,” Kit grinned at him.

“And you’ll sure earn your name,” was the rejoinder. Shorty turned to their employers. “Comin’?” he queried.

Perhaps the roar of the water prevented them from hearing the invitation.

Shorty and Kit tramped back through a foot of snow to the head of the rapids and cast off the boat. Kit was divided between two impressions: one, of the caliber of his comrade, which served as a spur to him; the other, likewise a spur, was the knowledge that old Isaac Bellew, and all the other Bellews, had done things like this in their westward march of empire. What they had done, he could do. It was the meat, the strong meat, and he knew, as never before, that it required strong men to eat such meat.

“You’ve sure got to keep the top of the ridge,” Shorty shouted at him, the plug tobacco lifting to his mouth, as the boat quickened in the quickening current and took the head of the rapids.

Kit nodded, swayed his strength and weight tentatively on the steering oar, and headed the boat for the plunge.

Several minutes later, half-swamped and lying against the bank in the eddy below the White Horse, Shorty spat out a mouthful of tobacco juice and shook Kit’s hand.

“Meat! Meat!” Shorty chanted. “We eat it raw! We eat it alive!”

At the top of the bank they met Breck. His wife stood at a little distance. Kit shook his hand.

“I’m afraid your boat can’t make it,” he said. “It is smaller than ours and a bit cranky.”

The man pulled out a row of bills.

“I’ll give you each a hundred if you run it through.”

Kit looked out and up the tossing Mane of the White Horse. A long, gray twilight was falling, it was turning colder, and the landscape seemed taking on a savage bleakness.

“It ain’t that,” Shorty was saying. “We don’t want your money. Wouldn’t touch it nohow. But my pardner is the real meat with boats, and when he says yourn ain’t safe I reckon he knows what he’s talkin’ about.”

Kit nodded affirmation, and chanced to glance at Mrs Breck. Her eyes were fixed upon him, and he knew that if ever he had seen prayer in a woman’s eyes he was seeing it then. Shorty followed his gaze and saw what he saw. They looked at each other in confusion and did not speak. Moved by the common impulse, they nodded to each other and turned to the trail that led to the head of the rapids. They had not gone a hundred yards when they met Stine and Sprague coming down.

“Where are you going?” the latter demanded.

“To fetch that other boat through,” Shorty answered.

“No you’re not. It’s getting dark. You two are going to pitch camp.”

So huge was Kit’s disgust that he forebore to speak.

"He's got his wife with him," Shorty said.

"That's his lookout," Stine contributed.

"And Smoke's and mine," was Shorty's retort.

"I forbid you," Sprague said harshly. "Smoke, if you go another step I'll discharge you."

"And you, too, Shorty," Stine added.

"And a hell of a pickle you'll be in with us fired," Shorty replied. "How'll you get your blamed boat to Dawson? Who'll serve you coffee in your blankets and manicure your finger-nails? Come on, Smoke. They don't dast fire us. Besides, we've got agreements. It they fire us they've got to divvy up grub to last us through the winter."

Barely had they shoved Breck's boat out from the bank and caught the first rough water, when the waves began to lap aboard. They were small waves, but it was an earnest of what was to come. Shorty cast back a quizzical glance as he gnawed at his inevitable plug, and Kit felt a strange rush of warmth at his heart for this man who couldn't swim and who couldn't back out.

The rapids grew stiffer, and the spray began to fly. In the gathering darkness, Kit glimpsed the Mane and the crooked fling of the current into it. He worked into this crooked current, and felt a glow of satisfaction as the boat hit the head of the Mane squarely in the middle. After that, in the smother, leaping and burying and swamping, he had no clear impression of anything save that he swung his weight on the steering oar and wished his uncle were there to see. They emerged, breathless, wet through, and filled with water almost to the gunwale. Lighter pieces of baggage and outfit were floating inside the boat. A few careful strokes on Shorty's part worked the boat into the draw of the eddy, and the eddy did the rest till the boat softly touched against the bank. Looking down from above was Mrs Breck. Her prayer had been answered, and the tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"You boys have simply got to take the money," Breck called down to them.

Shorty stood up, slipped, and sat down in the water, while the boat dipped one gunwale under and righted again.

"Damn the money," said Shorty. "Fetch out that whiskey. Now that it's over I'm getting cold feet, an' I'm sure likely to have a chill."

V.

In the morning, as usual, they were among the last of the boats to start. Breck, despite his boating inefficiency, and with only his wife and nephew for crew, had broken camp, loaded his boat, and pulled out at the first streak of day. But there was no hurry in Stine and Sprague, who seemed incapable of realizing that the freeze-up might come at any time. They malingered, got in the way, delayed, and doubted the work of Kit and Shorty.

"I'm sure losing my respect for God, seein' as he must a-made them two mistakes in human form," was the latter's blasphemous way of expressing his disgust.

"Well, you're the real goods at any rate," Kit grinned back at him. "It makes me respect God the more just to look at you."

“He was sure goin’ some, eh?” was Shorty’s fashion of overcoming the embarrassment of the compliment.

The trail by water crossed Lake Le Barge. Here was no fast current, but a tideless stretch of forty miles which must be rowed unless a fair wind blew. But the time for fair wind was past, and an icy gale blew in their teeth out of the north. This made a rough sea, against which it was almost impossible to pull the boat. Added to their troubles was driving snow; also, the freezing of the water on their oar-blades kept one man occupied in chopping it off with a hatchet. Compelled to take their turn at the oars, Sprague and Stine patently loafed. Kit had learned how to throw his weight on an oar, but he noted that his employers made a seeming of throwing their weights and that they dipped their oars at a cheating angle.

At the end of three hours, Sprague pulled his oar in and said they would run back into the mouth of the river for shelter. Stine seconded him, and the several hard-won miles were lost. A second day, and a third, the same fruitless attempt was made. In the river mouth, the continually arriving boats from White Horse made a flotilla of over two hundred. Each day forty or fifty arrived, and only two or three won to the north-west short of the lake and did not come back. Ice was now forming in the eddies, and connecting from eddy to eddy in thin lines around the points. The freeze-up was very imminent.

“We could make it if they had the souls of clams,” Kit told Shorty, as they dried their moccasins by the fire on the evening of the third day. “We could have made it to-day if they hadn’t turned back. Another hour’s work would have fetched that west shore. They’re—they’re babes in the woods.”

“Sure,” Shorty agreed. He turned his moccasin to the flame and debated a moment. “Look here, Smoke. It’s hundreds of miles to Dawson. If we don’t want to freeze in here, we’ve got to do something. What d’ye say?”

Kit looked at him, and waited.

“We’ve got the immortal cinch on them two babes,” Shorty expounded. “They can give orders an’ shed mazuma, but, as you say, they’re plum babes. If we’re goin’ to Dawson, we got to take charge of this here outfit.”

They looked at each other.

“It’s a go,” said Kit, as his hand went out in ratification.

In the morning, long before daylight, Shorty issued his call.

“Come on!” he roared. “Tumble out, you sleepers! Here’s your coffee! Kick in to it! We’re goin’ to make a start!”

Grumbling and complaining, Stine and Sprague were forced to get under way two hours earlier than ever before. If anything, the gale was stiffer, and in a short time every man’s face was iced up, while the oars were heavy with ice. Three hours they struggled, and four, one man steering, one chopping ice, two toiling at the oars, and each taking his various turns. The north-west shore loomed nearer and nearer. The gale blew even harder, and at last Sprague pulled in his oar in token of surrender. Shorty sprang to it, though his relief had only begun.

“Chop ice,” he said, handing Sprague the hatchet.

“But what’s the use?” the other whined. “We can’t make it. We’re going to turn back.”

“We’re going on,” said Shorty. “Chop ice. An’ when you feel better you can spell me.”

It was heart-breaking toil, but they gained the shore, only to find it composed of surge-beaten rocks and cliffs, with no place to land.

“I told you so,” Sprague whimpered.

“You never peeped,” Shorty answered.

“We’re going back.”

Nobody spoke, and Kit held the boat into the seas as they skirted the forbidding shore. Sometimes they gained no more than a foot to the stroke, and there were times when two or three strokes no more than enabled them to hold their own. He did his best to hearten the two weaklings. He pointed out that the boats which had won to this shore had never come back. Perforce, he argued, they had found a shelter somewhere ahead. Another hour they laboured, and a second.

“If you fellows put into your oars some of that coffee you swig in your blankets, we’d make it,” was Shorty’s encouragement. “You’re just goin’ through the motions an’ not pullin’ a pound.”

A few minutes later Sprague drew in his oar.

“I’m finished,” he said, and there were tears in his voice.

“So are the rest of us,” Kit answered, himself ready to cry or to commit murder, so great was his exhaustion. “But we’re going on just the same.”

“We’re going back. Turn the boat around.”

“Shorty, if he won’t pull, take that oar yourself,” Kit commanded.

“Sure,” was the answer. “He can chop ice.”

But Sprague refused to give over the oar; Stine had ceased rowing, and the boat was drifting backward.

“Turn around, Smoke,” Sprague ordered.

And Kit, who never in his life had cursed any man, astonished himself.

“I’ll see you in hell, first,” he replied. “Take hold of that oar and pull.”

It is in moments of exhaustion that men lose all their reserves of civilization, and such a moment had come. Each man had reached the breaking-point. Sprague jerked off a mitten, drew his revolver, and turned it on his steersman. This was a new experience to Kit. He had never had a gun presented at him in his life. And now, to his surprise, it seemed to mean nothing at all. It was the most natural thing in the world.

“If you don’t put that gun up,” he said, “I’ll take it away and rap you over the knuckles with it.”

“If you don’t turn the boat around I’ll shoot you,” Sprague threatened.

Then Shorty took a hand. He ceased chopping ice and stood up behind Sprague.

“Go on an’ shoot,” said Shorty, wiggling the hatchet. “I’m just aching for a chance to brain you. Go on an’ start the festivities.”

"This is mutiny," Stine broke in. "You were engaged to obey orders."

Shorty turned on him.

"Oh, you'll get yours as soon as I finish with your pardner, you little hog-wallopin' snooper, you."

"Sprague," Kit said, "I'll give you just thirty seconds to put away that gun and get that oar out."

Sprague hesitated, gave a short hysterical laugh, put the revolver away and bent his back to the work.

For two hours more, inch by inch, they fought their way along the edge of the foaming rocks, until Kit feared he had made a mistake. And then, when on the verge of himself turning back, they came abreast of a narrow opening, not twenty feet wide, which led into a land-locked inclosure where the fiercest gusts scarcely flawed the surface. It was the haven gained by the boats of previous days. They landed on a shelving beach, and the two employers lay in collapse in the boat, while Kit and Shorty pitched the tent, built a fire, and started the cooking.

"What's a hog-walloping snooper, Shorty?" Kit asked.

"Blamed if I know," was the answer; "but he's one just the same."

The gale, which had been dying quickly, ceased at nightfall, and it came on clear and cold. A cup of coffee, set aside to cool and forgotten, a few minutes later was found coated with half an inch of ice. At eight o'clock, when Sprague and Stine, already rolled in their blankets, were sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, Kit came back from a look at the boat.

"It's the freeze-up, Shorty," he announced. "There's a skin of ice over the whole pond already."

"What are you going to do?"

"There's only one thing. The lake of course freezes first. The rapid current of the river may keep it open for days. This time to-morrow any boat caught in Lake Le Barge remains there until next year."

"You mean we got to get out to-night? Now?"

Kit nodded.

"Tumble out, you sleepers!" was Shorty's answer, couched in a roar, as he began casting off the guy-ropes of the tent.

The other two awoke, groaning with the pain of stiffened muscles and the pain of rousing from exhausted sleep.

"What time is it?" Stine asked.

"Half-past eight."

"It's dark yet," was the objection.

Shorty jerked out a couple of guy-ropes, and the tent began to sag.

"It's not morning," he said. "It's evening. Come on. The lake's freezin'. We got to get acrost."

Stine sat up, his face bitter and wrathful.

"Let it freeze. We're not going to stir."

“All right,” said Shorty. “We’re goin’ on with the boat.”

“You were engaged—“

“To take you to Dawson,” Shorty caught him up. “Well, we’re takin’ you, ain’t we?”

He punctuated his query by bringing half the tent down on top of them.

They broke their way through the thin ice in the little harbour, and came out on the lake, where the water, heavy and glassy, froze on their oars with every stroke. The water soon became like mush, clogging the stroke of the oars and freezing in the air even as it dripped. Later the surface began to form a skin, and the boat proceeded slower and slower.

Often, afterwards, when Kit tried to remember that night and failed to bring up aught but nightmare recollections, he wondered what must have been the sufferings of Stine and Sprague. His one impression of himself was that he struggled through biting frost and intolerable exertion for a thousand years more or less.

Morning found them stationary. Stine complained of frosted fingers, and Sprague of his nose, while the pain in Kit’s cheeks and nose told him that he, too, had been touched. With each accretion of daylight they could see farther, and far as they could see was icy surface. The water of the lake was gone. A hundred yards away was the shore of the north end. Shorty insisted that it was the opening of the river and that he could see water. He and Kit alone were able to work, and with their oars they broke the ice and forced the boat along. And at the last gasp of their strength they made the suck of the rapid river. One look back showed them several boats which had fought through the night and were hopelessly frozen in; then they whirled around a bend in a current running six miles an hour.

VI.

Day by day they floated down the swift river, and day by day the shore-ice extended farther out. When they made camp at nightfall, they chopped a space in the ice in which to lay the boat, and carried the camp outfit hundreds of feet to shore. In the morning, they chopped the boat out through the new ice and caught the current. Shorty set up the sheet-iron stove in the boat, and over this Stine and Sprague hung through the long, drifting hours. They had surrendered, no longer gave orders, and their one desire was to gain Dawson. Shorty, pessimistic, indefatigable, and joyous, at frequent intervals roared out the three lines of the first four-line stanza of a song he had forgotten. The colder it got the oftener he sang:

“Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this Modern Greece;
Tum-tum, tum-tum; tum-tum, tum-tum,
To shear the Golden Fleece.”

As they passed the mouths of the Hootalinqua and the Big and Little Salmon, they found these streams throwing mush-ice into the main Yukon. This gathered about the boat and attached itself, and at night they found themselves compelled to chop the boat out of the current. In the morning they chopped the boat back into the current.

The last night ashore was spent between the mouths of the White River and the Stewart. At daylight they found the Yukon, half a mile wide, running white from ice-rimmed bank to ice-rimmed bank. Shorty cursed the universe with less geniality than usual, and looked at Kit.

“We’ll be the last boat this year to make Dawson,” Kit said.

“But they ain’t no water, Smoke.”

“Then we’ll ride the ice down. Come on.”

Futilely protesting, Sprague and Stine were bundled on board. For half an hour, with axes, Kit and Shorty struggled to cut a way into the swift but solid stream. When they did succeed in clearing the shore-ice, the floating ice forced the boat along the edge for a hundred yards, tearing away half of one gunwale and making a partial wreck of it. Then they caught the current at the lower end of the bend that flung off-shore. They proceeded to work farther toward the middle. The stream was no longer composed of mush-ice but of hard cakes. In between the cakes only was mush-ice, that froze solidly as they looked at it. Shoving with the oars against the cakes, sometimes climbing out on the cakes in order to force the boat along, after an hour they gained the middle. Five minutes after they ceased their exertions, the boat was frozen in. The whole river was coagulating as it ran. Cake froze to cake, until at last the boat was the centre of a cake seventy-five feet in diameter. Sometimes they floated sidewise, sometimes stern-first, while gravity tore asunder the forming fetters in the moving mass, only to be manacled by faster-forming ones. While the hours passed, Shorty stoked the stove, cooked meals, and chanted his war song.

Night came, and after many efforts, they gave up the attempt to force the boat to shore, and through the darkness they swept helplessly onward.

“What if we pass Dawson?” Shorty queried.

“We’ll walk back,” Kit answered, “if we’re not crushed in a jam.”

The sky was clear, and in the light of the cold leaping stars they caught occasional glimpses of the loom of mountains on either hand. At eleven o’clock, from below, came a dull, grinding roar. Their speed began to diminish, and cakes of ice to up-end and crash and smash about them. The river was jamming. One cake, forced upward, slid across their cake and carried one side of the boat away. It did not sink, for its own cake still upbore it, but in a whirl they saw dark water show for an instant within a foot of them. Then all movement ceased. At the end of half an hour the whole river picked itself up and began to move. This continued for an hour, when again it was brought to rest by a jam. Once again it started, running swiftly and savagely, with a great grinding. Then they saw lights ashore, and, when abreast, gravity and the Yukon surrendered, and the river ceased for six months.

On the shore at Dawson, curious ones gathered to watch the river freeze, heard from out of the darkness the war-song of Shorty:

“Like Argus of the ancient times,

We leave this Modern Greece;

Tum-tum, tum-tum; tum-tum, tum-tum,

To shear the Golden Fleece.”

VII.

For three days Kit and Shorty laboured, carrying the ton and a half of outfit from the middle of the river to the log-cabin Stine and Sprague had bought on the hill overlooking Dawson. This work finished, in the warm cabin, as twilight was falling, Sprague motioned Kit to him. Outside the thermometer registered sixty-five below zero.

“Your full month isn’t up, Smoke,” Sprague said. “But here it is in full. I wish you luck.”

“How about the agreement?” Kit asked. “You know there’s a famine here. A man can’t get work in the mines even, unless he has his own grub. You agreed—“

“I know of no agreement,” Sprague interrupted. “Do you, Stine? We engaged you by the month. There’s your pay. Will you sign the receipt?”

Kit’s hands clenched, and for the moment he saw red. Both men shrank away from him. He had never struck a man in anger in his life, and he felt so certain of his ability to thrash Sprague that he could not bring himself to do it.

Shorty saw his trouble and interposed.

“Look here, Smoke, I ain’t travelin’ no more with a ornery outfit like this. Right here’s where I sure jump it. You an’ me stick together. Savve? Now, you take your blankets an’ hike down to the Elkhorn. Wait for me. I’ll settle up, collect what’s comin’, an’ give them what’s comin’. I ain’t no good on the water, but my feet’s on terry-fermy now an’ I’m sure goin’ to make smoke.”

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Half an hour afterwards Shorty appeared at the Elkhorn. From his bleeding knuckles and the skin off one cheek, it was evident that he had given Stine and Sprague what was coming.

“You ought to see that cabin,” he chuckled, as they stood at the bar. “Rough-house ain’t no name for it. Dollars to doughnuts nary one of ’em shows up on the street for a week. An’ now it’s all figgered out for you an’ me. Grub’s a dollar an’ a half a pound. They ain’t no work for wages without you have your own grub. Moose-meat’s sellin’ for two dollars a pound an’ they ain’t none. We got enough money for a month’s grub an’ ammunition, an’ we hike up the Klondike to the back country. If they ain’t no moose, we go an’ live with the Indians. But if we ain’t got five thousand pounds of meat six weeks from now, I’ll—I’ll sure go back an’ apologize to our bosses. Is it a go?”

Kit’s hand went out and they shook. Then he faltered.

“I don’t know anything about hunting,” he said.

Shorty lifted his glass.

“But you’re a sure meat-eater, an’ I’ll learn you.”

The Men of Forty-Mile

When Big Jim Belden ventured the apparently innocuous proposition that mush-ice was 'rather pecooliar,' he little dreamed of what it would lead to.

Neither did Lon McFane, when he affirmed that anchor-ice was even more so; nor did Bettles, as he instantly disagreed, declaring the very existence of such a form to be a bugaboo.

'An' ye'd be tellin' me this,' cried Lon, 'after the years ye've spint in the land! An' we atin' out the same pot this many's the day!' 'But the thing's agin reasin,' insisted Bettles.

'Look you, water's warmer than ice-' 'An' little the difference, once ye break through.'

'Still it's warmer, because it ain't froze. An' you say it freezes on the bottom?' 'Only the anchor-ice, David, only the anchor-ice. An' have ye niver drifted along, the water clear as glass, whin suddin, belike a cloud over the sun, the mushy-ice comes bubblin' up an' up till from bank to bank an' bind to bind it's drapin' the river like a first snowfall?' 'Unh, hunh! more'n once when I took a doze at the steering-oar. But it allus come out the nighest side-channel, an' not bubblin' up an' up.' 'But with niver a wink at the helm?'

'No; nor you. It's agin reason. I'll leave it to any man!' Bettles appealed to the circle about the stove, but the fight was on between himself and Lon McFane.

'Reason or no reason, it's the truth I'm tellin' ye. Last fall, a year gone, 'twas Sitka Charley and meself saw the sight, droppin' down the riffle ye'll remember below Fort Reliance. An' regular fall weather it was—the glint o' the sun on the golden larch an' the quakin' aspens; an' the glister of light on ivery ripple; an' beyand, the winter an' the blue haze of the North comin' down hand in hand. It's well ye know the same, with a fringe to the river an' the ice formin' thick in the eddies—an' a snap an' sparkle to the air, an' ye a-feelin' it through all yer blood, atakin' new lease of life with ivery suck of it. 'Tis then, me boy, the world grows small an' the wandtherlust lays ye by the heels.

'But it's meself as wandthers. As I was sayin', we a-paddlin', with niver a sign of ice, barrin' that by the eddies, when the Injun lifts his paddle an' sings out, "Lon McFane!

Look ye below!" So have I heard, but niver thought to see! As ye know, Sitka Charley, like meself, niver drew first breath in the land; so the sight was new. Then we drifted, with a head over ayther side, peerin' down through the sparkly water. For the world like the days I spint with the pearlers, watchin' the coral banks a-growin' the same as so many gardens under the sea.

There it was, the anchor-ice, clingin' an' clusterin' to ivery rock, after the manner of the white coral.

'But the best of the sight was to come. Just after clearin' the tail of the riffle, the water turns quick the color of milk, an' the top of it in wee circles, as when the graylin' rise in the spring, or there's a splatter of wet from the sky. 'Twas the anchor-ice comin' up. To the right, to the left, as far as iver a man cud see, the water was covered with the same.

An' like so much porridge it was, slickin' along the bark of the canoe, stickin' like glue to the paddles. It's many's the time I shot the self-same riffle before, and it's many's the time after, but niver a wink of the same have I seen. 'Twas the sight of a lifetime.' 'Do tell!' dryly commented Bettles. 'D'ye think I'd b'lieve such a yarn? I'd ruther say the glister of light'd gone to your eyes, and the snap of the air to your tongue.' 'Twas me own eyes that beheld it, an' if Sitka Charley was here, he'd be the lad to back me.' 'But facts is facts, an' they ain't no gettin' round 'em. It ain't in the nature of things for the water furtherest away from the air to freeze first.' 'But me own eyes-' 'Don't git het up over it,' admonished Bettles, as the quick Celtic anger began to mount.

'Then yer not after belavin' me?' 'Sence you're so blamed forehanded about it, no; I'd b'lieve nature first, and facts.'

'Is it the lie ye'd be givin' me?' threatened Lon. 'Ye'd better be askin' that Siwash wife of yours. I'll lave it to her, for the truth I spake.' Bettles flared up in sudden wrath. The Irishman had unwittingly wounded him; for his wife was the half-breed daughter of a Russian fur-trader, married to him in the Greek Mission of Nulato, a thousand miles or so down the Yukon, thus being of much higher caste than the common Siwash, or native, wife. It was a mere Northland nuance, which none but the Northland adventurer may understand.

'I reckon you kin take it that way,' was his deliberate affirmation.

The next instant Lon McFane had stretched him on the floor, the circle was broken up, and half a dozen men had stepped between.

Bettles came to his feet, wiping the blood from his mouth. 'It hain't new, this takin' and payin' of blows, and don't you never think but that this will be squared.' 'An' niver in me life did I take the lie from mortal man,' was the retort courteous. 'An' it's an avil day I'll not be to hand, waitin' an' willin' to help ye lift yer debts, barrin' no manner of way.'

'Still got that 38-55?' Lon nodded.

'But you'd better git a more likely caliber. Mine'll rip holes through you the size of walnuts.'

'Niver fear; it's me own slugs smell their way with soft noses, an' they'll spread like flapjacks against the coming out beyand. An' when'll I have the pleasure of waitin' on ye? The waterhole's a strikin' locality.' 'Tain't bad. Jest be there in an hour, and you won't set long on my coming.' Both men mittened and left the Post, their ears closed to the remonstrances of their comrades. It was such a little thing; yet with such men,

little things, nourished by quick tempers and stubborn natures, soon blossomed into big things.

Besides, the art of burning to bedrock still lay in the womb of the future, and the men of Forty-Mile, shut in by the long Arctic winter, grew high-stomached with overeating and enforced idleness, and became as irritable as do the bees in the fall of the year when the hives are overstocked with honey.

There was no law in the land. The mounted police was also a thing of the future. Each man measured an offense, and meted out the punishment inasmuch as it affected himself.

Rarely had combined action been necessary, and never in all the dreary history of the camp had the eighth article of the Decalogue been violated.

Big Jim Belden called an impromptu meeting. Scruff Mackenzie was placed as temporary chairman, and a messenger dispatched to solicit Father Roubeau's good offices. Their position was paradoxical, and they knew it. By the right of might could they interfere to prevent the duel; yet such action, while in direct line with their wishes, went counter to their opinions. While their rough-hewn, obsolete ethics recognized the individual prerogative of wiping out blow with blow, they could not bear to think of two good comrades, such as Bettles and McFane, meeting in deadly battle. Deeming the man who would not fight on provocation a dastard, when brought to the test it seemed wrong that he should fight.

But a scurry of moccasins and loud cries, rounded off with a pistol-shot, interrupted the discussion. Then the storm-doors opened and Malemute Kid entered, a smoking Colt's in his hand, and a merry light in his eye.

'I got him.' He replaced the empty shell, and added, 'Your dog, Scruff.' 'Yellow Fang?'

Mackenzie asked.

'No; the lop-eared one.' 'The devil! Nothing the matter with him.' 'Come out and take a look.' 'That's all right after all. Buess he's got 'em, too. Yellow Fang came back this morning and took a chunk out of him, and came near to making a widower of me.

Made a rush for Zarinska, but she whisked her skirts in his face and escaped with the loss of the same and a good roll in the snow. Then he took to the woods again.

Hope he don't come back. Lost any yourself?' 'One—the best one of the pack—Shookum.

Started amuck this morning, but didn't get very far. Ran foul of Sitka Charley's team, and they scattered him all over the street. And now two of them are loose, and raging mad; so you see he got his work in. The dog census will be small in the spring if we don't do something.'

'And the man census, too.' 'How's that? Who's in trouble now?' 'Oh, Bettles and Lon McFane had an argument, and they'll be down by the waterhole in a few minutes to settle it.' The incident was repeated for his benefit, and Malemute Kid, accustomed to an obedience which his fellow men never failed to render, took charge of the affair. His quickly formulated plan was explained, and they promised to follow his lead implicitly.

‘So you see,’ he concluded, ‘we do not actually take away their privilege of fighting; and yet I don’t believe they’ll fight when they see the beauty of the scheme. Life’s a game and men the gamblers. They’ll stake their whole pile on the one chance in a thousand.

‘Take away that one chance, and—they won’t play.’ He turned to the man in charge of the Post. ‘Storekeeper, weight out three fathoms of your best half-inch manila.

‘We’ll establish a precedent which will last the men of Forty-Mile to the end of time,’ he prophesied. Then he coiled the rope about his arm and led his followers out of doors, just in time to meet the principals.

‘What danged right’d he to fetch my wife in?’ thundered Bettles to the soothing overtures of a friend. ‘‘Twa’n’t called for,’ he concluded decisively. ‘‘Twa’n’t called for,’ he reiterated again and again, pacing up and down and waiting for Lon McFane.

And Lon McFane—his face was hot and tongue rapid as he flaunted insurrection in the face of the Church. ‘Then, father,’ he cried, ‘it’s with an aisy heart I’ll roll in me flamy blankets, the broad of me back on a bed of coals. Niver shall it be said that Lon McFane took a lie ‘twixt the teeth without iver liftin’ a hand! An’ I’ll not ask a blessin’. The years have been wild, but it’s the heart was in the right place.’ ‘But it’s not the heart, Lon,’

interposed Father Roubeau; ‘It’s pride that bids you forth to slay your fellow man.’ ‘Yer Frinch,’ Lon replied. And then, turning to leave him, ‘An’ will ye say a mass if the luck is against me?’ But the priest smiled, thrust his moccasined feet to the fore, and went out upon the white breast of the silent river. A packed trail, the width of a sixteeninch sled, led out to the waterhole. On either side lay the deep, soft snow. The men trod in single file, without conversation; and the black-stoled priest in their midst gave to the function the solemn aspect of a funeral. It was a warm winter’s day for Forty-Mile—a day in which the sky, filled with heaviness, drew closer to the earth, and the mercury sought the unwonted level of twenty below. But there was no cheer in the warmth. There was little air in the upper strata, and the clouds hung motionless, giving sullen promise of an early snowfall. And the earth, unresponsive, made no preparation, content in its hibernation.

When the waterhole was reached, Bettles, having evidently reviewed the quarrel during the silent walk, burst out in a final ‘‘Twa’n’t called for,’ while Lon McFane kept grim silence. Indignation so choked him that he could not speak.

Yet deep down, whenever their own wrongs were not uppermost, both men wondered at their comrades. They had expected opposition, and this tacit acquiescence hurt them. It seemed more was due them from the men they had been so close with, and they felt a vague sense of wrong, rebelling at the thought of so many of their brothers coming out, as on a gala occasion, without one word of protest, to see them shoot each other down. It appeared their worth had diminished in the eyes of the community. The proceedings puzzled them.

‘Back to back, David. An’ will it be fifty paces to the man, or double the quantity?’ ‘Fifty,’ was the sanguinary reply, grunted out, yet sharply cut.

But the new manila, not prominently displayed, but casually coiled about Malemute Kid's arm, caught the quick eye of the Irishman, and thrilled him with a suspicious fear.

'An' what are ye doin' with the rope?' 'Hurry up!' Malemute Kid glanced at his watch.

'I've a batch of bread in the cabin, and I don't want it to fall. Besides, my feet are getting cold.' The rest of the men manifested their impatience in various suggestive ways.

'But the rope, Kid' It's bran' new, an' sure yer bread's not that heavy it needs raisin' with the like of that?' Bettles by this time had faced around. Father Roubeau, the humor of the situation just dawning on him, hid a smile behind his mittened hand.

'No, Lon; this rope was made for a man.' Malemute Kid could be very impressive on occasion.

'What man?' Bettles was becoming aware of a personal interest.

'The other man.' 'An' which is the one ye'd mane by that?' 'Listen, Lon—and you, too, Bettles! We've been talking this little trouble of yours over, and we've come to one conclusion. We know we have no right to stop your fighting—' 'True for ye, me lad!' 'And we're not going to. But this much we can do, and shall do—make this the only duel in the history of Forty-Mile, set an example for every che-cha-qua that comes up or down the Yukon. The man who escapes killing shall be hanged to the nearest tree. Now, go ahead!'

Lon smiled dubiously, then his face lighted up. 'Pace her off, David—fifty paces, wheel, an' niver a cease firin' till a lad's down for good. 'Tis their hearts'll niver let them do the deed, an' it's well ye should know it for a true Yankee bluff.'

He started off with a pleased grin on his face, but Malemute Kid halted him.

'Lon! It's a long while since you first knew me?' 'Many's the day.' 'And you, Bettles?'

'Five year next June high water.' 'And have you once, in all that time, known me to break my word' Or heard of me breaking it?' Both men shook their heads, striving to fathom what lay beyond.

'Well, then, what do you think of a promise made by me?' 'As good as your bond,' from Bettles.

'The thing to safely sling yer hopes of heaven by,' promptly endorsed Lon McFane.

'Listen! I, Malemute Kid, give you my word—and you know what that meansthat the man who is not shot stretches rope within ten minutes after the shooting.' He stepped back as Pilate might have done after washing his hands.

A pause and a silence came over the men of Forty-Mile. The sky drew still closer, sending down a crystal flight of frost—little geometric designs, perfect, evanescent as a breath, yet destined to exist till the returning sun had covered half its northern journey.

Both men had led forlorn hopes in their time—led with a curse or a jest on their tongues, and in their souls an unswerving faith in the God of Chance. But that merciful deity had been shut out from the present deal. They studied the face of Malemute Kid,

but they studied as one might the Sphinx. As the quiet minutes passed, a feeling that speech was incumbent on them began to grow. At last the howl of a wolf-dog cracked the silence from the direction of Forty-Mile. The weird sound swelled with all the pathos of a breaking heart, then died away in a long-drawn sob.

‘Well I be danged!’ Bettles turned up the collar of his mackinaw jacket and stared about him helplessly.

‘It’s a gloryus game yer runnin’, Kid,’ cried Lon McFane. ‘All the percentage of the house an’ niver a bit to the man that’s buckin’. The Devil himself’d niver tackle such a cinch—and damned if I do.’ There were chuckles, throttled in gurgling throats, and winks brushed away with the frost which rimed the eyelashes, as the men climbed the ice-notched bank and started across the street to the Post. But the long howl had drawn nearer, invested with a new note of menace. A woman screamed round the corner. There was a cry of, ‘Here he comes!’ Then an Indian boy, at the head of half a dozen frightened dogs, racing with death, dashed into the crowd. And behind came Yellow Fang, a bristle of hair and a flash of gray. Everybody but the Yankee fled.

The Indian boy had tripped and fallen. Bettles stopped long enough to grip him by the slack of his furs, then headed for a pile of cordwood already occupied by a number of his comrades. Yellow Fang, doubling after one of the dogs, came leaping back. The fleeing animal, free of the rabies, but crazed with fright, whipped Bettles off his feet and flashed on up the street. Malemute Kid took a flying shot at Yellow Fang. The mad dog whirled a half airspring, came down on his back, then, with a single leap, covered half the distance between himself and Bettles.

But the fatal spring was intercepted. Lon McFane leaped from the woodpile, countering him in midair. Over they rolled, Lon holding him by the throat at arm’s length, blinking under the fetid slaver which sprayed his face. Then Bettles, revolver in hand and coolly waiting a chance, settled the combat.

‘’Twas a square game, Kid,’ Lon remarked, rising to his feet and shaking the snow from out his sleeves; ‘with a fair percentage to meself that bucked it.’ That night, while Lon McFane sought the forgiving arms of the Church in the direction of Father Roubeau’s cabin, Malemute Kid talked long to little purpose.

‘But would you,’ persisted Mackenzie, ‘supposing they had fought?’ ‘Have I ever broken my word?’ ‘No; but that isn’t the point. Answer the question. Would you?’ Malemute Kid straightened up. ‘Scruff, I’ve been asking myself that question ever since, and — ’

‘Well?’ ‘Well, as yet, I haven’t found the answer.’

The Mexican

NOBODY knew his history—they of the Junta least of all. He was their “little mystery,” their “big patriot,” and in his way he worked as hard for the coming Mexican Revolution as did they. They were tardy in recognizing this, for not one of the Junta liked him. The day he first drifted into their crowded, busy rooms, they all suspected him of being a spy—one of the bought tools of the Diaz secret service. Too many of the comrades were in civil an military prisons scattered over the United States, and others of them, in irons, were even then being taken across the border to be lined up against adobe walls and shot.

At the first sight the boy did not impress them favorably. Boy he was, not more than eighteen and not over large for his years. He announced that he was Felipe Rivera, and that it was his wish to work for the Revolution. That was all—not a wasted word, no further explanation. He stood waiting. There was no smile on his lips, no geniality in his eyes. Big dashing Paulino Vera felt an inward shudder. Here was something forbidding, terrible, inscrutable. There was something venomous and snakelike in the boy's black eyes. They burned like cold fire, as with a vast, concentrated bitterness. He flashed them from the faces of the conspirators to the typewriter which little Mrs. Sethby was industriously operating. His eyes rested on hers but an instant—she had chanced to look up—and she, too, sensed the nameless something that made her pause. She was compelled to read back in order to regain the swing of the letter she was writing.

Paulino Vera looked questioningly at Arrellano and Ramos, and questioningly they looked back and to each other. The indecision of doubt brooded in their eyes. This slender boy was the Unknown, vested with all the menace of the Unknown. He was unrecognizable, something quite beyond the ken of honest, ordinary revolutionists whose fiercest hatred for Diaz and his tyranny after all was only that of honest and ordinary patriots. Here was something else, they knew not what. But Vera, always the most impulsive, the quickest to act, stepped into the breach.

“Very well,” he said coldly. “You say you want to work for the Revolution. Take off your coat. Hang it over there. I will show you, come—where are the buckets and cloths. The floor is dirty. You will begin by scrubbing it, and by scrubbing the floors of the other rooms. The spittoons need to be cleaned. Then there are the windows.”

“Is it for the Revolution?” the boy asked.

“It is for the Revolution,” Vera answered.

Rivera looked cold suspicion at all of them, then proceeded to take off his coat.

“It is well,” he said.

And nothing more. Day after day he came to his work—sweeping, scrubbing, cleaning. He emptied the ashes from the stoves, brought up the coal and kindling, and lighted the fires before the most energetic one of them was at his desk.

Ah, ha! So that was it—the hand of Diaz showing through! To sleep in the rooms of the Junta meant access to their secrets, to the lists of names, to the addresses of comrades down on Mexican soil. The request was denied, and Rivera never spoke of it again. He slept they knew not where, and ate they knew not where nor how. Once, Arrellano offered him a couple of dollars. Rivera declined the money with a shake of the head. When Vera joined in and tried to press it upon him, he said:

“I am working for the Revolution.”

It takes money to raise a modern revolution. and always the Junta was pressed. The members starved and toiled, and the longest day was none too long, and yet there were times when it appeared as if the Revolution stood or fell on no more than the matter of a few dollars. Once, the first time, when the rent of the house was two months behind and the landlord was threatening dispossession, it was Felipe Rivera, the scrub-boy in the poor, cheap clothes, worn and threadbare, who laid sixty dollars in gold on May Sethby’s desk. There were other times. Three hundred letters, clicked out on the busy typewriters (appeals for assistance, for sanctions from the organized labor groups, requests for square news deals to the editors of newspapers, protests against the high-handed treatment of revolutionists by the United States courts), lay unmailed, awaiting postage. Vera’s watch had disappeared—the old-fashioned gold repeater that had been his father’s. Likewise had gone the plain gold band from May Sethby’s third finger. Things were desperate. Ramos and Arrellano pulled their long mustaches in despair. The letters must go off, and the Post Office allowed no credit to purchasers of stamps. Then it was that Rivera put on his hat and went out. When he came back he laid a thousand two-cent stamps on May Sethby’s desk.

“I wonder if it is the cursed gold of Diaz?” said Vera to the comrades.

They elevated their brows and could not decide. And Felipe Rivera, the scrubber for the Revolution, continued, as occasion arose, to lay down gold and silver for the Junta’s use.

And still they could not bring themselves to like him. They did not know him. His ways were not theirs. He gave no confidences. He repelled all probing. Youth that he was, they could never nerve themselves to dare to question him.

“A great and lonely spirit, perhaps, I do not know, I do not know,” Arrellano said helplessly.

“He is not human,” said Ramos.

“His soul has been seared,” said May Sethby. “Light and laughter have been burned out of him. He is like one dead, and yet he is fearfully alive.”

“He has been through hell,” said Vera. “No man could look like that who has not been through hell—and he is only a boy.”

Yet they could not like him. He never talked, never inquired, never suggested. He would stand listening, expressionless, a thing dead, save for his eyes, coldly burning,

while their talk of the Revolution ran high and warm. From face to face and speaker to speaker his eyes would turn, boring like gimlets of incandescent ice, disconcerting and perturbing.

“He is no spy,” Vera confided to May Sethby. “He is a patriot—mark me, the greatest patriot of us all. I know it, I feel it, here in my heart and head I feel it. But him I know not at all.”

“He has a bad temper,” said May Sethby.

“I know,” said Vera, with a shudder. “He has looked at me with those eyes of his. They do not love; they threaten; they are savage as a wild tiger’s. I know, if I should prove unfaithful to the Cause, that he would kill me. He has no heart. He is pitiless as steel, keen and cold as frost. He is like moonshine in a winter night when a man freezes to death on some lonely mountain top. I am not afraid of Diaz and all his killers; but this boy, of him am I afraid. I tell you true. I am afraid. He is the breath of death.”

Yet Vera it was who persuaded the others to give the first trust to Rivera. The line of communication between Los Angeles and Lower California had broken down. Three of the comrades had dug their own graves and been shot into them. Two more were United States prisoners in Los Angeles. Juan Alvarado, the Federal commander, was a monster. All their plans did he checkmate. They could no longer gain access to the active revolutionists, and the incipient ones, in Lower California.

Young Rivera was given his instructions and dispatched south. When he returned, the line of communication was reestablished, and Juan Alvarado was dead. He had been found in bed, a knife hilt-deep in his breast. This had exceeded Rivera’s instructions, but they of the Junta knew the times of his movements. They did not ask him. He said nothing. But they looked at one another and conjectured.

“I have told you,” said Vera. “Diaz has more to fear from this youth than from any man. He is implacable. He is the hand of God.”

The bad temper, mentioned by May Sethby, and sensed by them all, was evidenced by physical proofs. Now he appeared with a cut lip, a blackened cheek, or a swollen ear. It was patent that he brawled, somewhere in that outside world where he ate and slept, gained money, and moved in ways unknown to them. As the time passed, he had come to set type for the little revolutionary sheet they published weekly. There were occasions when he was unable to set type, when his knuckles were bruised and battered, when his thumbs were injured and helpless, when one arm or the other hung wearily at his side while his face was drawn with unspoken pain.

“A wastrel,” said Arrellano.

“A frequenter of low places,” said Ramos.

“But where does he get the money?” Vera demanded. “Only to-day, just now, have I learned that he paid the bill for white paper—one hundred and forty dollars.”

“There are his absences,” said May Sethby. “He never explains them.”

“We should set a spy upon him,” Ramos propounded.

"I should not care to be that spy," said Vera. "I fear you would never see me again, save to bury me. He has a terrible passion. Not even God would he permit to stand between him and the way of his passion."

"I feel like a child before him," Ramos confessed.

"To me he is power—he is the primitive, the wild wolf, the striking rattlesnake, the stinging centipede," said Arrellano.

"He is the Revolution incarnate," said Vera. "He is the flame and the spirit of it, the insatiable cry for vengeance that makes no cry but that slays noiselessly. He is a destroying angel in moving through the still watches of the night."

"I could weep over him," said May Sethby. "He knows nobody. He hates all people. Us he tolerates, for we are the way of his desire. He is alone. . . . lonely." Her voice broke in a half sob and there was dimness in her eyes.

Rivera's ways and times were truly mysterious. There were periods when they did not see him for a week at a time. Once, he was away a month. These occasions were always capped by his return, when, without advertisement or speech, he laid gold coins on May Sethby's desk. Again, for days and weeks, he spent all his time with the Junta. And yet again, for irregular periods, he would disappear through the heart of each day, from early morning until late afternoon. At such times he came early and remained late. Arrellano had found him at midnight, setting type with fresh swollen knuckles, or mayhap it was his lip, new-split, that still bled.

II

The time of the crisis approached. Whether or not the Revolution would be depended upon the Junta, and the Junta was hard-pressed. The need for money was greater than ever before, while money was harder to get. Patriots had given their last cent and now could give no more. Section gang laborers-fugitive peons from Mexico—were contributing half their scanty wages. But more than that was needed. The heart-breaking, conspiring, undermining toil of years approached fruition. The time was ripe. The Revolution hung on the balance. One shove more, one last heroic effort, and it would tremble across the scales to victory. They knew their Mexico. Once started, the Revolution would take care of itself. The whole Diaz machine would go down like a house of cards. The border was ready to rise. One Yankee, with a hundred I.W.W. men, waited the word to cross over the border and begin the conquest of Lower California. But he needed guns. And clear across to the Atlantic, the Junta in touch with them all and all of them needing guns, mere adventurers, soldiers of fortune, bandits, disgruntled American union men, socialists, anarchists, rough-necks, Mexican exiles, peons escaped from bondage, whipped miners from the bull-pens of Coeur d'Alene and Colorado who desired only the more vindictively to fight—all the flotsam and jetsam of wild spirits from the madly complicated modern world. And it was guns and ammunition, ammunition and guns—the unceasing and eternal cry.

Fling this heterogeneous, bankrupt, vindictive mass across the border, and the Revolution was on. The custom house, the northern ports of entry, would be captured. Diaz could not resist. He dared not throw the weight of his armies against them, for

he must hold the south. And through the south the flame would spread despite. The people would rise. The defenses of city after city would crumple up. State after state would totter down. And at last, from every side, the victorious armies of the Revolution would close in on the City of Mexico itself, Diaz's last stronghold.

But the money. They had the men, impatient and urgent, who would use the guns. They knew the traders who would sell and deliver the guns. But to culture the Revolution thus far had exhausted the Junta. The last dollar had been spent, the last resource and the last starving patriot milked dry, and the great adventure still trembled on the scales. Guns and ammunition! The ragged battalions must be armed. But how? Ramos lamented his confiscated estates. Arrellano wailed the spendthriftness of his youth. May Sethby wondered if it would have been different had they of the Junta been more economical in the past.

"To think that the freedom of Mexico should stand or fall on a few paltry thousands of dollars," said Paulino Vera.

Despair was in all their faces. Jose Amarillo, their last hope, a recent convert, who had promised money, had been apprehended at his hacienda in Chihuahua and shot against his own stable wall. The news had just come through.

Rivera, on his knees, scrubbing, looked up, with suspended brush, his bare arms flecked with soapy, dirty water.

"Will five thousand do it?" he asked.

They looked their amazement. Vera nodded and swallowed. He could not speak, but he was on the instant invested with a vast faith.

"Order the guns," Rivera said, and thereupon was guilty of the longest flow of words they had ever heard him utter. "The time is short. In three weeks I shall bring you the five thousand. It is well. The weather will be warmer for those who fight. Also, it is the best I can do."

Vera fought his faith. It was incredible. Too many fond hopes had been shattered since he had begun to play the revolution game. He believed this threadbare scrubber of the Revolution, and yet he dared not believe.

"You are crazy," he said.

"In three weeks," said Rivera. "Order the guns."

He got up, rolled down his sleeves, and put on his coat.

"Order the guns," he said.

"I am going now."

III

After hurrying and scurrying, much telephoning and bad language, a night session was held in Kelly's office. Kelly was rushed with business; also, he was unlucky. He had brought Danny Ward out from New York, arranged the fight for him with Billy Carthey, the date was three weeks away, and for two days now, carefully concealed from the sporting writers, Carthey had been lying up, badly injured. There was no one to take his place. Kelly had been burning the wires East to every eligible lightweight,

but they were tied up with dates and contracts. And now hope had revived, though faintly.

"You've got a hell of a nerve," Kelly addressed Rivera, after one look, as soon as they got together.

Hate that was malignant was in Rivera's eyes, but his face remained impassive.

"I can lick Ward," was all he said.

"How do you know? Ever see him fight?"

Rivera shook his head.

"He can beat you up with one hand and both eyes closed."

Rivera shrugged his shoulders.

"Haven't you got anything to say?" the fight promoter snarled.

"I can lick him."

"Who'd you ever fight, anyway!" Michael Kelly demanded. Michael was the promoter's brother, and ran the Yellowstone pool rooms where he made goodly sums on the fight game.

Rivera favored him with a bitter, unanswering stare.

The promoter's secretary, a distinctively sporty young man, sneered audibly.

"Well, you know Roberts," Kelly broke the hostile silence. "He ought to be here. I've sent for him. Sit down and wait, though from the looks of you, you haven't got a chance. I can't throw the public down with a bum fight. Ringside seats are selling at fifteen dollars, you know that."

When Roberts arrived, it was patent that he was mildly drunk. He was a tall, lean, slack-jointed individual, and his walk, like his talk, was a smooth and languid drawl.

Kelly went straight to the point.

"Look here, Roberts, you've been bragging you discovered this little Mexican. You know Carthey's broke his arm. Well, this little yellow streak has the gall to blow in to-day and say he'll take Carthey's place. What about it?"

"It's all right, Kelly," came the slow response. "He can put up a fight."

"I suppose you'll be sayin' next that he can lick Ward," Kelly snapped.

Roberts considered judicially.

"No, I won't say that. Ward's a top-notch and a ring general. But he can't hash-house Rivera in short order. I know Rivera. Nobody can get his goat. He ain't got a goat that I could ever discover. And he's a two-handed fighter. He can throw in the sleep-makers from any position."

"Never mind that. What kind of a show can he put up? You've been conditioning and training fighters all your life. I take off my hat to your judgment. Can he give the public a run for its money?"

"He sure can, and he'll worry Ward a mighty heap on top of it. You don't know that boy. I do. I discovered him. He ain't got a goat. He's a devil. He's a wizzy-wooz if anybody should ask you. He'll make Ward sit up with a show of local talent that'll make the rest of you sit up. I won't say he'll lick Ward, but he'll put up such a show that you'll all know he's a comer."

“All right.” Kelly turned to his secretary. “Ring up Ward. I warned him to show up if I thought it worth while. He’s right across at the Yellowstone, throwin’ chests and doing the popular.”

Kelly turned back to the conditioner. “Have a drink?”

Roberts sipped his highball and unburdened himself.

“Never told you how I discovered the little cuss. It was a couple of years ago he showed up out at the quarters. I was getting Prayne ready for his fight with Delaney. Prayne’s wicked. He ain’t got a tickle of mercy in his make-up. I chopped up his pardner’s something cruel, and I couldn’t find a willing boy that’d work with him. I’d noticed this little starved Mexican kid hanging around, and I was desperate. So I grabbed him, shoved on the gloves and put him in. He was tougher’n rawhide, but weak. And he didn’t know the first letter in the alphabet of boxing. Prayne chopped him to ribbons. But he hung on for two sickening rounds, when he fainted. Starvation, that was all. Battered! You couldn’t have recognized him. I gave him half a dollar and a square meal. You oughta seen him wolf it down. He hadn’t had the end of a bite for a couple of days. That’s the end of him, thinks I. But next day he showed up, stiff an’ sore, ready for another half and a square meal. And he done better as time went by. Just a born fighter, and tough beyond belief. He hasn’t a heart. He’s a piece of ice. And he never talked eleven words in a string since I know him. He saws wood and does his work.”

“I’ve seen ‘m,” the secretary said. “He’s worked a lot for you.”

“All the big little fellows has tried out on him,” Roberts answered. “And he’s learned from ‘em. I’ve seen some of them he could lick. But his heart wasn’t in it. I reckoned he never liked the game. He seemed to act that way.”

“He’s been fighting some before the little clubs the last few months,” Kelly said.

“Sure. But I don’t know what struck ‘m. All of a sudden his heart got into it. He just went out like a streak and cleaned up all the little local fellows. Seemed to want the money, and he’s won a bit, though his clothes don’t look it. He’s peculiar. Nobody knows his business. Nobody knows how he spends his time. Even when he’s on the job, he plumb up and disappears most of each day soon as his work is done. Sometimes he just blows away for weeks at a time. But he don’t take advice. There’s a fortune in it for the fellow that gets the job of managin’ him, only he won’t consider it. And you watch him hold out for the cash money when you get down to terms.”

It was at this stage that Danny Ward arrived. Quite a party it was. His manager and trainer were with him, and he breezed in like a gusty draught of geniality, good-nature, and all-conqueringness. Greetings flew about, a joke here, a retort there, a smile or a laugh for everybody. Yet it was his way, and only partly sincere. He was a good actor, and he had found geniality a most valuable asset in the game of getting on in the world. But down underneath he was the deliberate, cold-blooded fighter and business man. The rest was a mask. Those who knew him or trafficked with him said that when it came to brass tacks he was Danny-on-the-Spot. He was invariably present at all

business discussions, and it was urged by some that his manager was a blind whose only function was to serve as Danny's mouth-piece.

Rivera's way was different. Indian blood, as well as Spanish, was in his veins, and he sat back in a corner, silent, immobile, only his black eyes passing from face to face and noting everything.

"So that's the guy," Danny said, running an appraising eye over his proposed antagonist. "How de do, old chap."

Rivera's eyes burned venomously, but he made no sign of acknowledgment. He disliked all Gringos, but this Gringo he hated with an immediacy that was unusual even in him.

"Gawd!" Danny protested facetiously to the promoter. "You ain't expectin' me to fight a deaf mute." When the laughter subsided, he made another hit. "Los Angeles must be on the dink when this is the best you can scare up. What kindergarten did you get 'm from?"

"He's a good little boy, Danny, take it from me," Roberts defended. "Not as easy as he looks."

"And half the house is sold already," Kelly pleaded. "You'll have to take 'm on, Danny. It is the best we can do."

Danny ran another careless and unflattering glance over Rivera and sighed.

"I gotta be easy with 'm, I guess. If only he don't blow up."

Roberts snorted.

"You gotta be careful," Danny's manager warned. "No taking chances with a dub that's likely to sneak a lucky one across."

"Oh, I'll be careful all right, all right," Danny smiled. "I'll get in at the start an' nurse 'im along for the dear public's sake. What d' ye say to fifteen rounds, Kelly—an' then the hay for him?"

"That'll do," was the answer. "As long as you make it realistic."

"Then let's get down to biz." Danny paused and calculated. "Of course, sixty-five per cent of the gate receipts, same as with Carthey. But the split'll be different. Eighty will just about suit me." And to his manager, "That right?"

The manager nodded.

"Here, you, did you get that?" Kelly asked Rivera.

Rivera shook his head.

"Well, it is this way," Kelly exposted. "The purse'll be sixty-five per cent of the gate receipts. You're a dub, and an unknown. You and Danny split, twenty per cent goin' to you, an' eighty to Danny. That's fair, isn't it, Roberts?"

"Very fair, Rivera," Roberts agreed.

"You see, you ain't got a reputation yet."

"What will sixty-five per cent of the gate receipts be?" Rivera demanded.

"Oh, maybe five thousand, maybe as high as eight thousand," Danny broke in to explain. "Something like that. Your share'll come to something like a thousand or

sixteen hundred. Pretty good for takin' a licking from a guy with my reputation. What d' ye say?"

Then Rivera took their breaths away. "Winner takes all," he said with finality.

A dead silence prevailed.

"It's like candy from a baby," Danny's manager proclaimed.

Danny shook his head.

"I've been in the game too long," he explained.

"I'm not casting reflections on the referee, or the present company. I'm not sayin' nothing about book-makers an' frame-ups that sometimes happen. But what I do say is that it's poor business for a fighter like me. I play safe. There's no tellin'. Mebbe I break my arm, eh? Or some guy slips me a bunch of dope?" He shook his head solemnly. "Win or lose, eighty is my split. What d' ye say, Mexican?"

Rivera shook his head.

Danny exploded. He was getting down to brass tacks now.

"Why, you dirty little greaser! I've a mind to knock your block off right now."

Roberts drawled his body to interposition between hostilities.

"Winner takes all," Rivera repeated sullenly.

"Why do you stand out that way?" Danny asked.

"I can lick you," was the straight answer.

Danny half started to take off his coat. But, as his manager knew, it was a grand stand play. The coat did not come off, and Danny allowed himself to be placated by the group. Everybody sympathized with him. Rivera stood alone.

"Look here, you little fool," Kelly took up the argument. "You're nobody. We know what you've been doing the last few months—putting away little local fighters. But Danny is class. His next fight after this will be for the championship. And you're unknown. Nobody ever heard of you out of Los Angeles."

"They will," Rivera answered with a shrug, "after this fight."

"You think for a second you can lick me?" Danny blurted in.

Rivera nodded.

"Oh, come; listen to reason," Kelly pleaded. "Think of the advertising."

"I want the money," was Rivera's answer.

"You couldn't win from me in a thousand years," Danny assured him.

"Then what are you holdin' out for?" Rivera countered. "If the money's that easy, why don't you go after it?"

"I will, so help me!" Danny cried with abrupt conviction. "I'll beat you to death in the ring, my boy—you monkeyin' with me this way. Make out the articles, Kelly. Winner take all. Play it up in the sportin' columns. Tell 'em it's a grudge fight. I'll show this fresh kid a few."

Kelly's secretary had begun to write, when Danny interrupted.

"Hold on!" He turned to Rivera.

"Weights?"

"Ringside," came the answer.

“Not on your life, Fresh Kid. If winner takes all, we weigh in at ten A.M.”

“And winner takes all?” Rivera queried.

Danny nodded. That settled it. He would enter the ring in his full ripeness of strength.

“Weigh in at ten,” Rivera said.

The secretary’s pen went on scratching.

“It means five pounds,” Roberts complained to Rivera.

“You’ve given too much away. You’ve thrown the fight right there. Danny’ll lick you sure. He’ll be as strong as a bull. You’re a fool. You ain’t got the chance of a dewdrop in hell.”

Rivera’s answer was a calculated look of hatred. Even this Gringo he despised, and him had he found the whitest Gringo of them all.

IV

Barely noticed was Rivera as he entered the ring. Only a very slight and very scattering ripple of half-hearted hand-clapping greeted him. The house did not believe in him. He was the lamb led to slaughter at the hands of the great Danny. Besides, the house was disappointed. It had expected a rushing battle between Danny Ward and Billy Carthey, and here it must put up with this poor little tyro. Still further, it had manifested its disapproval of the change by betting two, and even three, to one on Danny. And where a betting audience’s money is, there is its heart.

The Mexican boy sat down in his corner and waited. The slow minutes lagged by. Danny was making him wait. It was an old trick, but ever it worked on the young, new fighters. They grew frightened, sitting thus and facing their own apprehensions and a callous, tobacco-smoking audience. But for once the trick failed. Roberts was right. Rivera had no goat. He, who was more delicately coordinated, more finely nerved and strung than any of them, had no nerves of this sort. The atmosphere of foredoomed defeat in his own corner had no effect on him. His handlers were Gringos and strangers. Also they were scrubs—the dirty driftage of the fight game, without honor, without efficiency. And they were chilled, as well, with certitude that theirs was the losing corner.

“Now you gotta be careful,” Spider Hagerty warned him. Spider was his chief second. “Make it last as long as you can—them’s my instructions from Kelly. If you don’t, the papers’ll call it another bum fight and give the game a bigger black eye in Los Angeles.”

All of which was not encouraging. But Rivera took no notice. He despised prize fighting. It was the hated game of the hated Gringo. He had taken up with it, as a chopping block for others in the training quarters, solely because he was starving. The fact that he was marvelously made for it had meant nothing. He hated it. Not until he had come in to the Junta, had he fought for money, and he had found the money easy. Not first among the sons of men had he been to find himself successful at a despised vocation.

He did not analyze. He merely knew that he must win this fight. There could be no other outcome. For behind him, nerving him to this belief, were profounder forces

than any the crowded house dreamed. Danny Ward fought for money, and for the easy ways of life that money would bring. But the things Rivera fought for burned in his brain—blazing and terrible visions, that, with eyes wide open, sitting lonely in the corner of the ring and waiting for his tricky antagonist, he saw as clearly as he had lived them.

He saw the white-walled, water-power factories of Rio Blanco. He saw the six thousand workers, starved and wan, and the little children, seven and eight years of age, who toiled long shifts for ten cents a day. He saw the perambulating corpses, the ghastly death's heads of men who labored in the dye-rooms. He remembered that he had heard his father call the dye-rooms the "suicide-holes," where a year was death. He saw the little patio, and his mother cooking and moiling at crude housekeeping and finding time to caress and love him. And his father he saw, large, big-moustached and deep-chested, kindly above all men, who loved all men and whose heart was so large that there was love to overflowing still left for the mother and the little muchacho playing in the corner of the patio. In those days his name had not been Felipe Rivera. It had been Fernandez, his father's and mother's name. Him had they called Juan. Later, he had changed it himself, for he had found the name of Fernandez hated by prefects of police, jefes politicos, and rurales.

Big, hearty Joaquin Fernandez! A large place he occupied in Rivera's visions. He had not understood at the time, but looking back he could understand. He could see him setting type in the little printery, or scribbling endless hasty, nervous lines on the much-cluttered desk. And he could see the strange evenings, when workmen, coming secretly in the dark like men who did ill deeds, met with his father and talked long hours where he, the muchacho, lay not always asleep in the corner.

As from a remote distance he could hear Spider Hagerty saying to him: "No layin' down at the start. Them's instructions. Take a beatin' and earn your dough."

Ten minutes had passed, and he still sat in his corner. There were no signs of Danny, who was evidently playing the trick to the limit.

But more visions burned before the eye of Rivera's memory. The strike, or, rather, the lockout, because the workers of Rio Blanco had helped their striking brothers of Puebla. The hunger, the expeditions in the hills for berries, the roots and herbs that all ate and that twisted and pained the stomachs of all of them. And then, the nightmare; the waste of ground before the company's store; the thousands of starving workers; General Rosalio Martinez and the soldiers of Porfirio Diaz, and the death-spitting rifles that seemed never to cease spitting, while the workers' wrongs were washed and washed again in their own blood. And that night! He saw the flat cars, piled high with the bodies of the slain, consigned to Vera Cruz, food for the sharks of the bay. Again he crawled over the grisly heaps, seeking and finding, stripped and mangled, his father and his mother. His mother he especially remembered—only her face projecting, her body burdened by the weight of dozens of bodies. Again the rifles of the soldiers of Porfirio Diaz cracked, and again he dropped to the ground and slunk away like some hunted coyote of the hills.

To his ears came a great roar, as of the sea, and he saw Danny Ward, leading his retinue of trainers and seconds, coming down the center aisle. The house was in wild uproar for the popular hero who was bound to win. Everybody proclaimed him. Everybody was for him. Even Rivera's own seconds warmed to something akin to cheerfulness when Danny ducked jauntily through the ropes and entered the ring. His face continually spread to an unending succession of smiles, and when Danny smiled he smiled in every feature, even to the laughter-wrinkles of the corners of the eyes and into the depths of the eyes themselves. Never was there so genial a fighter. His face was a running advertisement of good feeling, of good fellowship. He knew everybody. He joked, and laughed, and greeted his friends through the ropes. Those farther away, unable to suppress their admiration, cried loudly: "Oh, you Danny!" It was a joyous ovation of affection that lasted a full five minutes.

Rivera was disregarded. For all that the audience noticed, he did not exist. Spider Lagerty's bloated face bent down close to his.

"No gettin' scared," the Spider warned.

"An' remember instructions. You gotta last. No layin' down. If you lay down, we got instructions to beat you up in the dressing rooms. Savve? You just gotta fight."

The house began to applaud. Danny was crossing the ring to him. Danny bent over, caught Rivera's right hand in both his own and shook it with impulsive heartiness. Danny's smile-wreathed face was close to his. The audience yelled its appreciation of Danny's display of sporting spirit. He was greeting his opponent with the fondness of a brother. Danny's lips moved, and the audience, interpreting the unheard words to be those of a kindly-natured sport, yelled again. Only Rivera heard the low words.

"You little Mexican rat," hissed from between Danny's gaily smiling lips, "I'll fetch the yellow outa you."

Rivera made no move. He did not rise. He merely hated with his eyes.

"Get up, you dog!" some man yelled through the ropes from behind.

The crowd began to hiss and boo him for his unsportsmanlike conduct, but he sat unmoved. Another great outburst of applause was Danny's as he walked back across the ring.

When Danny stripped, there was ohs! and ahs! of delight. His body was perfect, alive with easy suppleness and health and strength. The skin was white as a woman's, and as smooth. All grace, and resilience, and power resided therein. He had proved it in scores of battles. His photographs were in all the physical culture magazines.

A groan went up as Spider Hagerty peeled Rivera's sweater over his head. His body seemed leaner, because of the swarthy skin. He had muscles, but they made no display like his opponent's. What the audience neglected to see was the deep chest. Nor could it guess the toughness of the fiber of the flesh, the instantaneousness of the cell explosions of the muscles, the fineness of the nerves that wired every part of him into a splendid fighting mechanism. All the audience saw was a brown-skinned boy of eighteen with what seemed the body of a boy. With Danny it was different. Danny was a man of twenty-four, and his body was a man's body. The contrast was still more

striking as they stood together in the center of the ring receiving the referee's last instructions.

Rivera noticed Roberts sitting directly behind the newspaper men. He was drunker than usual, and his speech was correspondingly slower.

"Take it easy, Rivera," Roberts drawled.

"He can't kill you, remember that. He'll rush you at the go-off, but don't get rattled. You just cover up, and stall, and clinch. He can't hurt you much. Just make believe to yourself that he's choppin' out on you at the trainin' quarters."

Rivera made no sign that he had heard.

"Sullen little devil," Roberts muttered to the man next to him. "He always was that way."

But Rivera forgot to look his usual hatred. A vision of countless rifles blinded his eyes. Every face in the audience, far as he could see, to the high dollar-seats, was transformed into a rifle. And he saw the long Mexican border arid and sun-washed and aching, and along it he saw the ragged bands that delayed only for the guns.

Back in his corner he waited, standing up. His seconds had crawled out through the ropes, taking the canvas stool with them. Diagonally across the squared ring, Danny faced him. The gong struck, and the battle was on. The audience howled its delight. Never had it seen a battle open more convincingly. The papers were right. It was a grudge fight. Three-quarters of the distance Danny covered in the rush to get together, his intention to eat up the Mexican lad plainly advertised. He assailed with not one blow, nor two, nor a dozen. He was a gyroscope of blows, a whirlwind of destruction. Rivera was nowhere. He was overwhelmed, buried beneath avalanches of punches delivered from every angle and position by a past master in the art. He was overborne, swept back against the ropes, separated by the referee, and swept back against the ropes again.

It was not a fight. It was a slaughter, a massacre. Any audience, save a prize fighting one, would have exhausted its emotions in that first minute. Danny was certainly showing what he could do—a splendid exhibition. Such was the certainty of the audience, as well as its excitement and favoritism, that it failed to take notice that the Mexican still stayed on his feet. It forgot Rivera. It rarely saw him, so closely was he enveloped in Danny's man-eating attack. A minute of this went by, and two minutes. Then, in a separation, it caught a clear glimpse of the Mexican. His lip was cut, his nose was bleeding. As he turned and staggered into a clinch, the welts of oozing blood, from his contacts with the ropes, showed in red bars across his back. But what the audience did not notice was that his chest was not heaving and that his eyes were coldly burning as ever. Too many aspiring champions, in the cruel welter of the training camps, had practiced this man-eating attack on him. He had learned to live through for a compensation of from half a dollar a go up to fifteen dollars a week—a hard school, and he was schooled hard.

Then happened the amazing thing. The whirling, blurring mix-up ceased suddenly. Rivera stood alone. Danny, the redoubtable Danny, lay on his back. His body quivered

as consciousness strove to return to it. He had not staggered and sunk down, nor had he gone over in a long slumping fall. The right hook of Rivera had dropped him in midair with the abruptness of death. The referee shoved Rivera back with one hand, and stood over the fallen gladiator counting the seconds. It is the custom of prize-fighting audiences to cheer a clean knock-down blow. But this audience did not cheer. The thing had been too unexpected. It watched the toll of the seconds in tense silence, and through this silence the voice of Roberts rose exultantly:

“I told you he was a two-handed fighter!”

By the fifth second, Danny was rolling over on his face, and when seven was counted, he rested on one knee, ready to rise after the count of nine and before the count of ten. If his knee still touched the floor at “ten,” he was considered “down,” and also “out.” The instant his knee left the floor, he was considered “up,” and in that instant it was Rivera’s right to try and put him down again. Rivera took no chances. The moment that knee left the floor he would strike again. He circled around, but the referee circled in between, and Rivera knew that the seconds he counted were very slow. All Gringos were against him, even the referee.

At “nine” the referee gave Rivera a sharp thrust back. It was unfair, but it enabled Danny to rise, the smile back on his lips. Doubled partly over, with arms wrapped about face and abdomen, he cleverly stumbled into a clinch. By all the rules of the game the referee should have broken it, but he did not, and Danny clung on like a surf-battered barnacle and moment by moment recuperated. The last minute of the round was going fast. If he could live to the end, he would have a full minute in his corner to revive. And live to the end he did, smiling through all desperateness and extremity.

“The smile that won’t come off!” somebody yelled, and the audience laughed loudly in its relief.

“The kick that Greaser’s got is something God-awful,” Danny gasped in his corner to his adviser while his handlers worked frantically over him.

The second and third rounds were tame. Danny, a tricky and consummate ring general, stalled and blocked and held on, devoting himself to recovering from that dazing first-round blow. In the fourth round he was himself again. Jarred and shaken, nevertheless his good condition had enabled him to regain his vigor. But he tried no man-eating tactics. The Mexican had proved a tartar. Instead, he brought to bear his best fighting powers. In tricks and skill and experience he was the master, and though he could land nothing vital, he proceeded scientifically to chop and wear down his opponent. He landed three blows to Rivera’s one, but they were punishing blows only, and not deadly. It was the sum of many of them that constituted deadliness. He was respectful of this two-handed dub with the amazing short-arm kicks in both his fists.

In defense, Rivera developed a disconcerting straight-left. Again and again, attack after attack he straight-lefted away from him with accumulated damage to Danny’s mouth and nose. But Danny was protean. That was why he was the coming champion. He could change from style to style of fighting at will. He now devoted himself to

infighting. In this he was particularly wicked, and it enabled him to avoid the other's straight-left. Here he set the house wild repeatedly, capping it with a marvelous lock-break and lift of an inside upper-cut that raised the Mexican in the air and dropped him to the mat. Rivera rested on one knee, making the most of the count, and in the soul of him he knew the referee was counting short seconds on him.

Again, in the seventh, Danny achieved the diabolical inside uppercut. He succeeded only in staggering Rivera, but, in the ensuing moment of defenseless helplessness, he smashed him with another blow through the ropes. Rivera's body bounced on the heads of the newspaper men below, and they boosted him back to the edge of the platform outside the ropes. Here he rested on one knee, while the referee raced off the seconds. Inside the ropes, through which he must duck to enter the ring, Danny waited for him. Nor did the referee intervene or thrust Danny back.

The house was beside itself with delight.

"Kill'm, Danny, kill'm!" was the cry.

Scores of voices took it up until it was like a war-chant of wolves.

Danny did his best, but Rivera, at the count of eight, instead of nine, came unexpectedly through the ropes and safely into a clinch. Now the referee worked, tearing him away so that he could be hit, giving Danny every advantage that an unfair referee can give.

But Rivera lived, and the daze cleared from his brain. It was all of a piece. They were the hated Gringos and they were all unfair. And in the worst of it visions continued to flash and sparkle in his brain—long lines of railroad track that simmered across the desert; rurales and American constables, prisons and calabozos; tramps at water tanks—all the squalid and painful panorama of his odyssey after Rio Blanca and the strike. And, resplendent and glorious, he saw the great, red Revolution sweeping across his land. The guns were there before him. Every hated face was a gun. It was for the guns he fought. He was the guns. He was the Revolution. He fought for all Mexico.

The audience began to grow incensed with Rivera. Why didn't he take the licking that was appointed him? Of course he was going to be licked, but why should he be so obstinate about it? Very few were interested in him, and they were the certain, definite percentage of a gambling crowd that plays long shots. Believing Danny to be the winner, nevertheless they had put their money on the Mexican at four to ten and one to three. More than a trifle was up on the point of how many rounds Rivera could last. Wild money had appeared at the ringside proclaiming that he could not last seven rounds, or even six. The winners of this, now that their cash risk was happily settled, had joined in cheering on the favorite.

Rivera refused to be licked. Through the eighth round his opponent strove vainly to repeat the uppercut. In the ninth, Rivera stunned the house again. In the midst of a clinch he broke the lock with a quick, lithe movement, and in the narrow space between their bodies his right lifted from the waist. Danny went to the floor and took the safety of the count. The crowd was appalled. He was being bested at his own game. His famous right-uppercut had been worked back on him. Rivera made no attempt to

catch him as he arose at “nine.” The referee was openly blocking that play, though he stood clear when the situation was reversed and it was Rivera who desired to rise.

Twice in the tenth, Rivera put through the right-uppercut, lifted from waist to opponent’s chin. Danny grew desperate. The smile never left his face, but he went back to his man-eating rushes. Whirlwind as he would, he could not damage Rivera, while Rivera through the blur and whirl, dropped him to the mat three times in succession. Danny did not recuperate so quickly now, and by the eleventh round he was in a serious way. But from then till the fourteenth he put up the gamest exhibition of his career. He stalled and blocked, fought parsimoniously, and strove to gather strength. Also, he fought as foully as a successful fighter knows how. Every trick and device he employed, butting in the clinches with the seeming of accident, pinioning Rivera’s glove between arm and body, heeling his glove on Rivera’s mouth to clog his breathing. Often, in the clinches, through his cut and smiling lips he snarled insults unspeakable and vile in Rivera’s ear. Everybody, from the referee to the house, was with Danny and was helping Danny. And they knew what he had in mind. Bested by this surprise-box of an unknown, he was pinning all on a single punch. He offered himself for punishment, fished, and fainted, and drew, for that one opening that would enable him to whip a blow through with all his strength and turn the tide. As another and greater fighter had done before him, he might do a right and left, to solar plexus and across the jaw. He could do it, for he was noted for the strength of punch that remained in his arms as long as he could keep his feet.

Rivera’s seconds were not half-caring for him in the intervals between rounds. Their towels made a showing, but drove little air into his panting lungs. Spider Hagerty talked advice to him, but Rivera knew it was wrong advice. Everybody was against him. He was surrounded by treachery. In the fourteenth round he put Danny down again, and himself stood resting, hands dropped at side, while the referee counted. In the other corner Rivera had been noting suspicious whisperings. He saw Michael Kelly make his way to Roberts and bend and whisper. Rivera’s ears were a cat’s, desert-trained, and he caught snatches of what was said. He wanted to hear more, and when his opponent arose he maneuvered the fight into a clinch over against the ropes.

“Got to,” he could hear Michael, while Roberts nodded. “Danny’s got to win—I stand to lose a mint—I’ve got a ton of money covered—my own. If he lasts the fifteenth I’m bust—the boy’ll mind you. Put something across.”

And thereafter Rivera saw no more visions. They were trying to job him. Once again he dropped Danny and stood resting, his hands at his side. Roberts stood up.

“That settled him,” he said.

“Go to your corner.”

He spoke with authority, as he had often spoken to Rivera at the training quarters. But Rivera looked hatred at him and waited for Danny to rise. Back in his corner in the minute interval, Kelly, the promoter, came and talked to Rivera.

"Throw it, damn you," he rasped in, a harsh low voice. "You gotta lay down, Rivera. Stick with me and I'll make your future. I'll let you lick Danny next time. But here's where you lay down."

Rivera showed with his eyes that he heard, but he made neither sign of assent nor dissent.

"Why don't you speak?" Kelly demanded angrily.

"You lose, anyway," Spider Hagerty supplemented. "The referee'll take it away from you. Listen to Kelly, and lay down."

"Lay down, kid," Kelly pleaded, "and I'll help you to the championship."

Rivera did not answer.

"I will, so help me, kid."

At the strike of the gong Rivera sensed something impending. The house did not. Whatever it was it was there inside the ring with him and very close. Danny's earlier surety seemed returned to him. The confidence of his advance frightened Rivera. Some trick was about to be worked. Danny rushed, but Rivera refused the encounter. He side-stepped away into safety. What the other wanted was a clinch. It was in some way necessary to the trick. Rivera backed and circled away, yet he knew, sooner or later, the clinch and the trick would come. Desperately he resolved to draw it. He made as if to effect the clinch with Danny's next rush. Instead, at the last instant, just as their bodies should have come together, Rivera darted nimbly back. And in the same instant Danny's corner raised a cry of foul. Rivera had fooled them. The referee paused irresolutely. The decision that trembled on his lips was never uttered, for a shrill, boy's voice from the gallery piped, "Raw work!"

Danny cursed Rivera openly, and forced him, while Rivera danced away. Also, Rivera made up his mind to strike no more blows at the body. In this he threw away half his chance of winning, but he knew if he was to win at all it was with the outfighting that remained to him. Given the least opportunity, they would lie a foul on him. Danny threw all caution to the winds. For two rounds he tore after and into the boy who dared not meet him at close quarters. Rivera was struck again and again; he took blows by the dozens to avoid the perilous clinch. During this supreme final rally of Danny's the audience rose to its feet and went mad. It did not understand. All it could see was that its favorite was winning, after all.

"Why don't you fight?" it demanded wrathfully of Rivera.

"You're yellow! You're yellow!" "Open up, you cur! Open up!" "Kill'm, Danny! Kill 'm!" "You sure got 'm! Kill 'm!"

In all the house, bar none, Rivera was the only cold man. By temperament and blood he was the hottest-passioned there; but he had gone through such vastly greater heats that this collective passion of ten thousand throats, rising surge on surge, was to his brain no more than the velvet cool of a summer twilight.

Into the seventeenth round Danny carried his rally. Rivera, under a heavy blow, drooped and sagged. His hands dropped helplessly as he reeled backward. Danny thought it was his chance. The boy was at, his mercy. Thus Rivera, feigning, caught

him off his guard, lashing out a clean drive to the mouth. Danny went down. When he arose, Rivera felled him with a down-chop of the right on neck and jaw. Three times he repeated this. It was impossible for any referee to call these blows foul.

“Oh, Bill! Bill!” Kelly pleaded to the referee.

“I can’t,” that official lamented back. “He won’t give me a chance.”

Danny, battered and heroic, still kept coming up. Kelly and others near to the ring began to cry out to the police to stop it, though Danny’s corner refused to throw in the towel. Rivera saw the fat police captain starting awkwardly to climb through the ropes, and was not sure what it meant. There were so many ways of cheating in this game of the Gringos. Danny, on his feet, tottered groggily and helplessly before him. The referee and the captain were both reaching for Rivera when he struck the last blow. There was no need to stop the fight, for Danny did not rise.

“Count!” Rivera cried hoarsely to the referee.

And when the count was finished, Danny’s seconds gathered him up and carried him to his corner.

“Who wins?” Rivera demanded.

Reluctantly, the referee caught his gloved hand and held it aloft.

There were no congratulations for Rivera. He walked to his corner unattended, where his seconds had not yet placed his stool. He leaned backward on the ropes and looked his hatred at them, swept it on and about him till the whole ten thousand Gringos were included. His knees trembled under him, and he was sobbing from exhaustion. Before his eyes the hated faces swayed back and forth in the giddiness of nausea. Then he remembered they were the guns. The guns were his. The Revolution could go on.

The Minions of Midas

WADE ATSHELER is dead — dead by his own hand. To say that this was entirely unexpected by the small coterie which knew him, would be to say an untruth; and yet never once had we, his intimates, ever canvassed the idea. Rather had we been prepared for it in some incomprehensible subconscious way. Before the perpetration of the deed, its possibility is remotest from our thoughts; but when we did know that he was dead, it seemed, somehow, that we had understood and looked forward to it all the time. This, by retrospective analysis, we could easily explain by the fact of his great trouble. I use “great trouble” advisedly. Young, handsome, with an assured position as the right-hand man of Eben Hale, the great street-railway magnate, there could be no reason for him to complain of fortune’s favors. Yet we had watched his smooth brow furrow and corrugate as under some carking care or devouring sorrow. We had watched his thick, black hair thin and silver as green grain under brazen skies and parching drought. Who can forget, in the midst of the hilarious scenes he toward the last sought with greater and greater avidity — who can forget, I say, the deep abstractions and black moods into which he fell? At such times, when the fun rippled and soared from height to height, suddenly, without rhyme or reason, his eyes would turn lacklustre, his brows knit, as with clenched hands and face overshot with spasms of mental pain he wrestled on the edge of the abyss with some unknown danger.

He never spoke of his trouble, nor were we indiscreet enough to ask. But it was just as well; for had we, and had he spoken, our help and strength could have availed nothing. When Eben Hale died, whose confidential secretary he was — nay, well-nigh adopted son and full business partner — he no longer came among us. Not, as I now know, that our company was distasteful to him, but because his trouble had so grown that he could not respond to our happiness nor find surcease with us. Why this should be so we could not at the time understand, for when Eben Hale’s will was probated, the world learned that he was sole heir to his employer’s many millions, and it was expressly stipulated that this great inheritance was given to him without qualification, hitch, or hindrance in the exercise thereof. Not a share of stock, not a penny of cash, was bequeathed to the dead man’s relatives. As for his direct family, one astounding clause expressly stated that Wade Atsheler was to dispense to Eben Hale’s wife and sons and daughters whatever moneys his judgement dictated, at whatever times he deemed advisable. Had there been any scandal in the dead man’s family, or had his sons been wild or undutiful, then there might have been a glimmering of reason in this most unusual action; but Eben Hale’s domestic happiness had been proverbial in the community, and one would have to travel far and wide to discover a cleaner,

saner, wholesomer progeny of sons and daughters. While his wife — well, by those who knew her best she was endearingly termed “The Mother of the Gracchi.” Needless to state, this inexplicable will was a nine day’s wonder; but the expectant public was disappointed in that no contest was made.

It was only the other day that Eben Hale was laid away in his stately marble mausoleum. And now Wade Atsheler is dead. The news was printed in this morning’s paper. I have just received through the mail a letter from him, posted, evidently, but a short hour before he hurled himself into eternity. This letter, which lies before me, is a narrative in his own handwriting, linking together numerous newspaper clippings and facsimiles of letters. The original correspondence, he has told me, is in the hands of the police. He has begged me, also, as a warning to society against a most frightful and diabolical danger which threatens its very existence, to make public the terrible series of tragedies in which he has been innocently concerned. I herewith append the text in full:

It was in August, 1899, just after my return from my summer vacation, that the blow fell. We did not know it at the time; we had not yet learned to school our minds to such awful possibilities. Mr. Hale opened the letter, read it, and tossed it upon my desk with a laugh. When I had looked it over, I also laughed, saying, “Some ghastly joke, Mr. Hale, and one in very poor taste.” Find here, my dear John, an exact duplicate of the letter in question.

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M. August 17, 1899.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — We desire you to realize upon whatever portion of your vast holdings is necessary to obtain, IN CASH, twenty millions of dollars. This sum we require you to pay over to us, or to our agents. You will note we do not specify any given time, for it is not our wish to hurry you in this matter. You may even, if it be easier for you, pay us in ten, fifteen, or twenty instalments; but we will accept no single instalment of less than a million.

Believe us, dear Mr. Hale, when we say that we embark upon this course of action utterly devoid of animus. We are members of that intellectual proletariat, the increasing numbers of which mark in red lettering the last days of the nineteenth century. We have, from a thorough study of economics, decided to enter upon this business. It has many merits, chief among which may be noted that we can indulge in large and lucrative operations without capital. So far, we have been fairly successful, and we hope our dealings with you may be pleasant and satisfactory.

Pray attend while we explain our views more fully. At the base of the present system of society is to be found the property right. And this right of the individual to hold property is demonstrated, in the last analysis, to rest solely and wholly upon MIGHT. The mailed gentlemen of William the Conqueror divided and apportioned England amongst themselves with the naked sword. This, we are sure you will grant, is true of all feudal possessions. With the invention of steam and the Industrial Revolution there came into existence the Capitalist Class, in the modern sense of the word. These

capitalists quickly towered above the ancient nobility. The captains of industry have virtually dispossessed the descendants of the captains of war. Mind, and not muscle, wins in to-day's struggle for existence. But this state of affairs is none the less based upon might. The change has been qualitative. The old-time Feudal Baronage ravaged the world with fire and sword; the modern Money Baronage exploits the world by mastering and applying the world's economic forces. Brain, and not brawn, endures; and those best fitted to survive are the intellectually and commercially powerful.

We, the M. of M., are not content to become wage slaves. The great trusts and business combinations (with which you have your rating) prevent us from rising to the place among you which our intellects qualify us to occupy. Why? Because we are without capital. We are of the unwashed, but with this difference: our brains are of the best, and we have no foolish ethical nor social scruples. As wage slaves, toiling early and late, and living abstemiously, we could not save in threescore years — nor in twenty times threescore years — a sum of money sufficient successfully to cope with the great aggregations of massed capital which now exist. Nevertheless, we have entered the arena. We now throw down the gage to the capital of the world. Whether it wishes to fight or not, it shall have to fight.

Mr. Hale, our interests dictate us to demand of you twenty millions of dollars. While we are considerate enough to give you reasonable time in which to carry out your share of the transaction, please do not delay too long. When you have agreed to our terms, insert a suitable notice in the agony column of the "Morning Blazer." We shall then acquaint you with our plan for transferring the sum mentioned. You had better do this some time prior to October 1st. If you do not, in order to show that we are in earnest we shall on that date kill a man on East Thirty-ninth Street. He will be a workingman. This man you do not know; nor do we. You represent a force in modern society; we also represent a force — a new force. Without anger or malice, we have closed in battle. As you will readily discern, we are simply a business proposition. You are the upper, and we the nether, millstone; this man's life shall be ground out between. You may save him if you agree to our conditions and act in time.

There was once a king cursed with a golden touch. His name we have taken to do duty as our official seal. Some day, to protect ourselves against competitors, we shall copyright it.

We beg to remain,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

I leave it to you, dear John, why should we not have laughed over such a preposterous communication? The idea, we could not but grant, was well conceived, but it was too grotesque to be taken seriously. Mr. Hale said he would preserve it as a literary curiosity, and shoved it away in a pigeonhole. Then we promptly forgot its existence. And as promptly, on the 1st of October, going over the morning mail, we read the following:

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M., October 1, 1899.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — Your victim has met his fate. An hour ago, on East Thirty-ninth Street, a workingman was thrust through the heart with a knife. Ere you read this his body will be lying at the Morgue. Go and look upon your handiwork.

On October 14th, in token of our earnestness in this matter, and in case you do not relent, we shall kill a policeman on or near the corner of Polk Street and Clermont Avenue.

Very cordially,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

Again Mr. Hale laughed. His mind was full of a prospective deal with a Chicago syndicate for the sale of all his street railways in that city, and so he went on dictating to the stenographer, never giving it a second thought. But somehow, I know not why, a heavy depression fell upon me. What if it were not a joke, I asked myself, and turned involuntarily to the morning paper. There it was, as befitted an obscure person of the lower classes, a paltry half-dozen lines tucked away in a corner, next a patent medicine advertisement:

Shortly after five o'clock this morning, on East Thirty-ninth Street, a laborer named Pete Lascalle, while on his way to work, was stabbed to the heart by an unknown assailant, who escaped by running. The police have been unable to discover any motive for the murder.

"Impossible!" was Mr. Hale's rejoinder, when I had read the item aloud; but the incident evidently weighed upon his mind, for late in the afternoon, with many epithets denunciatory of his foolishness, he asked me to acquaint the police with the affair. I had the pleasure of being laughed at in the Inspector's private office, although I went away with the assurance that they would look into it and that the vicinity of Polk and Clermont would be doubly patrolled on the night mentioned. There it dropped, till the two weeks had sped by, when the following note came to us through the mail:

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M. October 15, 1899.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — Your second victim has fallen on schedule time. We are in no hurry; but to increase the pressure we shall henceforth kill weekly. To protect ourselves against police interference we shall hereafter inform you of the event but a little prior to or simultaneously with the deed. Trusting this finds you in good health,

We are,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

This time Mr. Hale took up the paper, and after a brief search, read to me this account:

A DASTARDLY CRIME

Joseph Donahue, assigned only last night to special patrol duty in the Eleventh Ward, at midnight was shot through the brain and instantly killed. The tragedy was enacted in the full glare of the street lights on the corner of Polk Street and Clermont Avenue. Our society is indeed unstable when the custodians of its peace are thus openly

and wantonly shot down. The police have so far been unable to obtain the slightest clue.

Barely had he finished this when the police arrived — the Inspector himself and two of his keenest sleuths. Alarm sat upon their faces, and it was plain that they were seriously perturbed. Though the facts were so few and simple, we talked long, going over the affair again and again. When the Inspector went away, he confidently assured us that everything would soon be straightened out and the assassins run to earth. In the meantime he thought it well to detail guards for the protection of Mr. Hale and myself, and several more to be constantly on the vigil about the house and grounds. After the lapse of a week, at one o'clock in the afternoon, this telegram was received:

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M. October 21, 1899.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — We are sorry to note how completely you have misunderstood us. You have seen fit to surround yourself and household with armed guards, as though, forsooth, we were common criminals, apt to break in upon you and wrest away by force your twenty millions. Believe us, this is farthest from our intention.

You will readily comprehend, after a little sober thought, that your life is dear to us. Do not be afraid. We would not hurt you for the world. It is our policy to cherish you tenderly and protect you from all harm. Your death means nothing to us. If it did, rest assured that we would not hesitate a moment in destroying you. Think this over, Mr. Hale. When you have paid us our price, there will be need of retrenchment. Dismiss your guards now, and cut down your expenses.

Within minutes of the time you receive this a nurse-girl will have been choked to death in Brentwood Park. The body may be found in the shrubbery lining the path which leads off to the left from the band-stand.

Cordially yours,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

The next instant Mr. Hale was at the telephone, warning the Inspector of the impending murder. The Inspector excused himself in order to call up Police Sub-station F and despatch men to the scene. Fifteen minutes later he rang us up and informed us that the body had been discovered, yet warm, in the place indicated. That evening the papers teemed with glaring Jack-the-Strangler headlines, denouncing the brutality of the deed and complaining about the laxity of the police. We were also closeted with the Inspector, who begged us by all means to keep the affair secret. Success, he said, depended upon silence.

As you know, John, Mr. Hale was a man of iron. He refused to surrender. But, oh, John, it was terrible, nay, horrible — this awful something, this blind force in the dark. We could not fight, could not plan, could do nothing save hold our hands and wait. And week by week, as certain as the rising of the sun, came the notification and death of some person, man or woman, innocent of evil, but just as much killed by us as though we had done it with our own hands. A word from Mr. Hale and the slaughter would have ceased. But he hardened his heart and waited, the lines deepening, the

mouth and eyes growing sterner and firmer, and the face aging with the hours. It is needless for me to speak of my own suffering during that frightful period. Find here the letters and telegrams of the M. of M., and the newspaper accounts, etc., of the various murders.

You will notice also the letters warning Mr. Hale of certain machinations of commercial enemies and secret manipulations of stock. The M. of M. seemed to have its hand on the inner pulse of the business and financial world. They possessed themselves of and forwarded to us information which our agents could not obtain. One timely note from them, at a critical moment in a certain deal, saved all of five millions to Mr. Hale. At another time they sent us a telegram which probably was the means of preventing an anarchist crank from taking my employer's life. We captured the man on his arrival and turned him over to the police, who found upon him enough of a new and powerful explosive to sink a battleship.

We persisted. Mr. Hale was grit clear through. He disbursed at the rate of one hundred thousand per week for secret service. The aid of the Pinkertons and of countless private detective agencies was called in, and in addition to this thousands were upon our payroll. Our agents swarmed everywhere, in all guises, penetrating all classes of society. They grasped at a myriad clues; hundreds of suspects were jailed, and at various times thousands of suspicious persons were under surveillance, but nothing tangible came to light. With its communications the M. of M. continually changed its method of delivery. And every messenger they sent us was arrested forthwith. But these inevitably proved to be innocent individuals, while their descriptions of the persons who had employed them for the errand never tallied. On the last day of December we received this notification:

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M., December 31, 1899.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — Pursuant of our policy, with which we flatter ourselves you are already well versed, we beg to state that we shall give a passport from this Vale of Tears to Inspector Bying, with whom, because of our attentions, you have become so well acquainted. It is his custom to be in his private office at this hour. Even as you read this he breathes his last.

Cordially yours,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

I dropped the letter and sprang to the telephone. Great was my relief when I heard the Inspector's hearty voice. But, even as he spoke, his voice died away in the receiver to a gurgling sob, and I heard faintly the crash of a falling body. Then a strange voice hello'd me, sent me the regards of the M. of M., and broke the switch. Like a flash I called up the public office of the Central Police, telling them to go at once to the Inspector's aid in his private office. I then held the line, and a few minutes later received the intelligence that he had been found bathed in his own blood and breathing his last. There were no eyewitnesses, and no trace was discoverable of the murderer.

Whereupon Mr. Hale immediately increased his secret service till a quarter of a million flowed weekly from his coffers. He was determined to win out. His graduated rewards aggregated over ten millions. You have a fair idea of his resources and you can see in what manner he drew upon them. It was the principle, he affirmed, that he was fighting for, not the gold. And it must be admitted that his course proved the nobility of his motive. The police departments of all the great cities cooperated, and even the United States Government stepped in, and the affair became one of the highest questions of state. Certain contingent funds of the nation were devoted to the unearthing of the M. of M., and every government agent was on the alert. But all in vain. The Minions of Midas carried on their damnable work unhampered. They had their way and struck unerringly.

But while he fought to the last, Mr. Hale could not wash his hands of the blood with which they were dyed. Though not technically a murderer, though no jury of his peers would ever have convicted him, none the less the death of every individual was due to him. As I said before, a word from him and the slaughter would have ceased. But he refused to give that word. He insisted that the integrity of society was assailed; that he was not sufficiently a coward to desert his post; and that it was manifestly just that a few should be martyred for the ultimate welfare of the many. Nevertheless this blood was upon his head, and he sank into deeper and deeper gloom. I was likewisewhelmed with the guilt of an accomplice. Babies were ruthlessly killed, children, aged men; and not only were these murders local, but they were distributed over the country. In the middle of February, one evening, as we sat in the library, there came a sharp knock at the door. On responding to it I found, Lying on the carpet of the corridor, the following missive:

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M., February 15, 1900.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — Does not your soul cry out upon the red harvest it is reaping? Perhaps we have been too abstract in conducting our business. Let us now be concrete. Miss Adelaide Laidlaw is a talented young woman, as good, we understand, as she is beautiful. She is the daughter of your old friend, Judge Laidlaw, and we happen to know that you carried her in your arms when she was an infant. She is your daughter's closest friend, and at present is visiting her. When your eyes have read thus far her visit will have terminated.

Very cordially,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

My God! did we not instantly realize the terrible import! We rushed through the dayrooms — she was not there — and on to her own apartments. The door was locked, but we crashed it down by hurling ourselves against it. There she lay, just as she had finished dressing for the opera, smothered with pillows torn from the couch, the flush of life yet on her flesh, the body still flexible and warm. Let me pass over the rest of this horror. You will surely remember, John, the newspaper accounts.

Late that night Mr. Hale summoned me to him, and before God did pledge me most solemnly to stand by him and not to compromise, even if all kith and kin were destroyed.

The next day I was surprised at his cheerfulness. I had thought he would be deeply shocked by this last tragedy — how deep I was soon to learn. All day he was light-hearted and high-spirited, as though at last he had found a way out of the frightful difficulty. The next morning we found him dead in his bed, a peaceful smile upon his careworn face — asphyxiation. Through the connivance of the police and the authorities, it was given out to the world as heart disease. We deemed it wise to withhold the truth; but little good has it done us, little good has anything done us.

Barely had I left that chamber of death, when — but too late — the following extraordinary letter was received:

OFFICE OF THE M. of M., February 17, 1900.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — You will pardon our intrusion, we hope, so closely upon the sad event of day before yesterday; but what we wish to say may be of the utmost importance to you. It is in our mind that you may attempt to escape us. There is but one way, apparently, as you have ere this doubtless discovered. But we wish to inform you that even this one way is barred. You may die, but you die failing and acknowledging your failure. Note this: **WE ARE PART AND PARCEL OF YOUR POSSESSIONS. WITH YOUR MILLIONS WE PASS DOWN TO YOUR HEIRS AND ASSIGNS FOREVER.**

We are the inevitable. We are the culmination of industrial and social wrong;. We turn upon the society that has created us. We are the successful failures of the age, the scourges of a degraded civilization.

We are the creatures of a perverse social selection. We meet force with force. Only the strong shall endure. We believe in the survival of the fittest. You have crushed your wage slaves into the dirt and you have survived. The captains of war, at your command, have shot down like dogs your employees in a score of bloody strikes. By such means you have endured. We do not grumble at the result, for we acknowledge and have our being in the same natural law. And now the question has arisen: **UNDER THE PRESENT SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, WHICH OF US SHALL SURVIVE?** We believe we are the fittest. You believe you are the fittest. We leave the eventuality to time and law.

Cordially yours,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

John, do you wonder now that I shunned pleasure and avoided friends? But why explain? Surely this narrative will make everything clear. Three weeks ago Adelaide Laidlaw died. Since then I have waited in hope and fear. Yesterday the will was probated and made public. Today I was notified that a woman of the middle class would be killed in Golden Gate Park, in faraway San Francisco. The despatches in to-night's papers give the details of the brutal happening — details which correspond with those furnished me in advance.

It is useless. I cannot struggle against the inevitable. I have been faithful to Mr. Hale and have worked hard. Why my faithfulness should have been thus rewarded I cannot understand. Yet I cannot be false to my trust, nor break my word by compromising. Still, I have resolved that no more deaths shall be upon my head. I have willed the many millions I lately received to their rightful owners. Let the stalwart sons of Eben Hale work out their own salvation. Ere you read this I shall have passed on. The Minions of Midas are all-powerful. The police are impotent. I have learned from them that other millionnaires have been likewise mulcted or persecuted — how many is not known, for when one yields to the M. of M., his mouth is thenceforth sealed. Those who have not yielded are even now reaping their scarlet harvest. The grim game is being played out. The Federal Government can do nothing. I also understand that similar branch organizations have made their appearance in Europe. Society is shaken to its foundations. Principalities and powers are as brands ripe for the burning. Instead of the masses against the classes, it is a class against the classes. We, the guardians of human progress, are being singled out and struck down. Law and order have failed.

The officials have begged me to keep this secret. I have done so, but can do so no longer. It has become a question of public import, fraught with the direst consequences, and I shall do my duty before I leave this world by informing it of its peril. Do you, John, as my last request, make this public. Do not be frightened. The fate of humanity rests in your hand. Let the press strike off millions of copies; let the electric currents sweep it round the world; wherever men meet and speak, let them speak of it in fear and trembling. And then, when thoroughly aroused, let society arise in its might and cast out this abomination.

Yours, in long farewell,
WADE ATSHELER.

The Mistake of Creation

“Whoa!” Smoke yelled at the dogs, throwing his weight back on the gee-pole to bring the sled to a halt.

“What’s eatin’ you now?” Shorty complained. “They ain’t no water under that footing.”

“No; but look at that trail cutting out to the right,” Smoke answered. “I thought nobody was wintering in this section.”

The dogs, on the moment they stopped, dropped in the snow and began biting out the particles of ice from between their toes. This ice had been water five minutes before. The animals had broken through a skein of ice, snow-powdered, which had hidden the spring water that oozed out of the bank and pooled on top of the three-foot winter crust of Nordbeska River.

“First I heard of anybody up the Nordbeska,” Shorty said, staring at the all but obliterated track covered by two feet of snow, that left the bed of the river at right angles and entered the mouth of a small stream flowing from the left. “Mebbe they’re hunters and pulled their freight long ago.”

Smoke, scooping the light snow away with mittened hands, paused to consider, scooped again, and again paused. “No,” he decided. “There’s been travel both ways, but the last travel was up that creek. Whoever they are, they’re there now—certain. There’s been no travel for weeks. Now what’s been keeping them there all the time? That’s what I want to know.”

“And what I want to know is where we’re going to camp to-night,” Shorty said, staring disconsolately at the sky-line in the southwest, where the mid-afternoon twilight was darkening into night.

“Let’s follow the track up the creek,” was Smoke’s suggestion. “There’s plenty of dead timber. We can camp any time.”

“Sure we can camp any time, but we got to travel most of the time if we ain’t goin’ to starve, an’ we got to travel in the right direction.”

“We’re going to find something up that creek,” Smoke went on.

“But look at the grub! Look at them dogs!” Shorty cried. “Look at—oh, hell, all right. You will have your will.”

“It won’t make the trip a day longer,” Smoke urged. “Possibly no more than a mile longer.”

“Men has died for as little as a mile,” Shorty retorted, shaking his head with lugubrious resignation. “Come on for trouble. Get up, you poor sore-foots, you—get up! Haw! You Bright! Haw!”

The lead-dog obeyed, and the whole team strained weakly into the soft snow.

“Whoa!” Shorty yelled. “It’s pack trail.”

Smoke pulled his snow-shoes from under the sled-lashings, bound them to his moccasined feet, and went to the fore to press and pack the light surface for the dogs.

It was heavy work. Dogs and men had been for days on short rations, and few and limited were the reserves of energy they could call upon. Though they followed the creek bed, so pronounced was its fall that they toiled on a stiff and unrelenting upgrade. The high rocky walls quickly drew near together, so that their way led up the bottom of a narrow gorge. The long lingering twilight, blocked by the high mountains, was no more than semi-darkness.

“It’s a trap,” Shorty said. “The whole look of it is rotten. It’s a hole in the ground. It’s the stampin’-ground of trouble.”

Smoke made no reply, and for half an hour they toiled on in silence—a silence that was again broken by Shorty.

“She’s a-workin’,” he grumbled. “She’s sure a-workin’, an’ I’ll tell you if you’re minded to hear an’ listen.”

“Go on,” Smoke answered.

“Well, she tells me, plain an’ simple, that we ain’t never goin’ to get out of this hole in the ground in days an’ days. We’re goin’ to find trouble an’ be stuck in here a long time an’ then some.”

“Does she say anything about grub?” Smoke queried unsympathetically. “For we haven’t grub for days and days and days and then some.”

“Nope. Nary whisper about grub. I guess we’ll manage to make out. But I tell you one thing, Smoke, straight an’ flat. I’ll eat any dog in the team exceptin’ Bright. I got to draw the line on Bright. I just couldn’t scoff him.”

“Cheer up,” Smoke girded. “My hunch is working overtime. She tells me there’ll be no dogs eaten, and, whether it’s moose or caribou or quail on toast, we’ll all fatten up.”

Shorty snorted his unutterable disgust, and silence obtained for another quarter of an hour.

“There’s the beginning of your trouble,” Smoke said, halting on his snow-shoes and staring at an object that lay on one side of the old trail.

Shorty left the gee-pole and joined him, and together they gazed down on the body of a man beside the trail.

“Well fed,” said Smoke.

“Look at them lips,” said Shorty.

“Stiff as a poker,” said Smoke, lifting an arm, that, without moving, moved the whole body.

“Pick ‘m up an’ drop ‘m and he’d break to pieces,” was Shorty’s comment.

The man lay on his side, solidly frozen. From the fact that no snow powdered him, it was patent that he had lain there but a short time.

“There was a general fall of snow three days back,” said Shorty.

Smoke nodded, bending over the corpse, twisting it half up to face them, and pointing to a bullet wound in the temple. He glanced to the side and tilted his head at a revolver that lay on top of the snow.

A hundred yards farther on they came upon a second body that lay face downward in the trail. "Two things are pretty clear," Smoke said. "They're fat. That means no famine. They've not struck it rich, else they wouldn't have committed suicide."

"If they did," Shorty objected.

"They certainly did. There are no tracks besides their own, and each is powder-burned." Smoke dragged the corpse to one side and with the toe of his moccasin nosed a revolver out of the snow into which it had been pressed by the body. "That's what did the work. I told you we'd find something."

"From the looks of it we ain't started yet. Now what'd two fat geezers want to kill themselves for?"

"When we find that out we'll have found the rest of your trouble," Smoke answered. "Come on. It's blowing dark."

Quite dark it was when Smoke's snow-shoe tripped him over a body. He fell across a sled, on which lay another body. And when he had dug the snow out of his neck and struck a match, he and Shorty glimpsed a third body, wrapped in blankets, lying beside a partially dug grave. Also, ere the match flickered out, they caught sight of half a dozen additional graves.

"B-r-r-r," Shorty shivered. "Suicide Camp. All fed up. I reckon they're all dead."

"No-peep at that." Smoke was looking farther along at a dim glimmer of light. "And there's another light—and a third one there. Come on. Let's hike."

No more corpses delayed them, and in several minutes, over a hard-packed trail, they were in the camp.

"It's a city," Shorty whispered. "There must be twenty cabins. An' not a dog. Ain't that funny!"

"And that explains it," Smoke whispered back excitedly. "It's the Laura Sibley outfit. Don't you remember? Came up the Yukon last fall on the Port Townsend Number Six. Went right by Dawson without stopping. The steamer must have landed them at the mouth of the creek."

"Sure. I remember. They was Mormons."

"No-vegetarians." Smoke grinned in the darkness. "They won't eat meat and they won't work dogs."

"It's all the same. I knowed they was something funny about 'em. Had the allwise steer to the yellow. That Laura Sibley was goin' to take 'em right to the spot where they'd all be millionaires."

"Yes; she was their seeress—had visions and that sort of stuff. I thought they went up the Nordensjold."

"Huh! Listen to that!"

Shorty's hand in the darkness went out warningly to Smoke's chest, and together they listened to a groan, deep and long drawn, that came from one of the cabins. Ere

it could die away it was taken up by another cabin, and another—a vast suspiration of human misery. The effect was monstrous and nightmarish.

“B-r-r-r,” Shorty shivered. “It’s gettin’ me goin’. Let’s break in an’ find what’s eatin’ ‘em.”

Smoke knocked at a lighted cabin, and was followed in by Shorty in answer to the “Come in” of the voice they heard groaning. It was a simple log cabin, the walls moss-chinked, the earth floor covered with sawdust and shavings. The light was a kerosene-lamp, and they could make out four bunks, three of which were occupied by men who ceased from groaning in order to stare.

“What’s the matter?” Smoke demanded of one whose blankets could not hide his broad shoulders and massively muscled body, whose eyes were pain-racked and whose cheeks were hollow. “Smallpox? What is it?”

In reply, the man pointed at his mouth, spreading black and swollen lips in the effort; and Smoke recoiled at the sight.

“Scurvy,” he muttered to Shorty; and the man confirmed the diagnosis with a nod of the head.

“Plenty of grub?” Shorty asked.

“Yep,” was the answer from a man in another bunk. “Help yourself. There’s slathers of it. The cabin next on the other side is empty. Cache is right alongside. Wade into it.”

In every cabin they visited that night they found a similar situation. Scurvy had smitten the whole camp. A dozen women were in the party, though the two men did not see all of them. Originally there had been ninety-three men and women. But ten had died, and two had recently disappeared. Smoke told of finding the two, and expressed surprise that none had gone that short distance down the trail to find out for themselves. What particularly struck him and Shorty was the helplessness of these people. Their cabins were littered and dirty. The dishes stood unwashed on the rough plank tables. There was no mutual aid. A cabin’s troubles were its own troubles, and already they had ceased from the exertion of burying their dead.

“It’s almost weird,” Smoke confided to Shorty. “I’ve met shirkers and loafers, but I never met so many all at one time. You heard what they said. They’ve never done a tap. I’ll bet they haven’t washed their own faces. No wonder they got scurvy.”

“But vegetarians hadn’t ought to get scurvy,” Shorty contended. “It’s the salt-meat-eaters that’s supposed to fall for it. And they don’t eat meat, salt or fresh, raw or cooked, or any other way.”

Smoke shook his head. “I know. And it’s vegetable diet that cures scurvy. No drugs will do it. Vegetables, especially potatoes, are the only dope. But don’t forget one thing, Shorty: we are not up against a theory but a condition. The fact is these grass-eaters have all got scurvy.”

“Must be contagious.”

“No; that the doctors do know. Scurvy is not a germ disease. It can’t be caught. It’s generated. As near as I can get it, it’s due to an impoverished condition of the blood.

Its cause is not something they've got, but something they haven't got. A man gets scurvy for lack of certain chemicals in his blood, and those chemicals don't come out of powders and bottles, but do come out of vegetables."

"An' these people eats nothin' but grass," Shorty groaned. "And they've got it up to their ears. That proves you're all wrong, Smoke. You're spielin' a theory, but this condition sure knocks the spots outa your theory. Scurvy's catchin', an' that's why they've all got it, an' rotten bad at that. You an' me'll get it too, if we hang around this diggin'. B-r-r-r!—I can feel the bugs crawlin' into my system right now."

Smoke laughed skeptically, and knocked on a cabin door. "I suppose we'll find the same old thing," he said. "Come on. We've got to get a line on the situation."

"What do you want?" came a woman's sharp voice.

"We want to see you," Smoke answered.

"Who are you?"

"Two doctors from Dawson," Shorty blurted in, with a levity that brought a punch in the short ribs from Smoke's elbow.

"Don't want to see any doctors," the woman said, in tones crisp and staccato with pain and irritation. "Go away. Good night. We don't believe in doctors."

Smoke pulled the latch, shoved the door open, and entered, turning up the low-flamed kerosene-lamp so that he could see. In four bunks four women ceased from groaning and sighing to stare at the intruders. Two were young, thin-faced creatures, the third was an elderly and very stout woman, and the fourth, the one whom Smoke identified by her voice, was the thinnest, frailest specimen of the human race he had ever seen. As he quickly learned, she was Laura Sibley, the seeress and professional clairvoyant who had organized the expedition in Los Angeles and led it to this death-camp on the Nordbeska. The conversation that ensued was acrimonious. Laura Sibley did not believe in doctors. Also, to add to her purgatory, she had wellnigh ceased to believe in herself.

"Why didn't you send out for help?" Smoke asked, when she paused, breathless and exhausted, from her initial tirade. "There's a camp at Stewart River, and eighteen days' travel would fetch Dawson from here."

"Why didn't Amos Wentworth go?" she demanded, with a wrath that bordered on hysteria.

"Don't know the gentleman," Smoke countered. "What's he been doing?"

"Nothing. Except that he's the only one that hasn't caught the scurvy. And why hasn't he caught the scurvy? I'll tell you. No, I won't." The thin lips compressed so tightly that through the emaciated transparency of them Smoke was almost convinced he could see the teeth and the roots of the teeth. "And what would have been the use? Don't I know? I'm not a fool. Our caches are filled with every kind of fruit juice and preserved vegetables. We are better situated than any other camp in Alaska to fight scurvy. There is no prepared vegetable, fruit, and nut food we haven't, and in plenty."

"She's got you there, Smoke," Shorty exulted. "And it's a condition, not a theory. You say vegetables cures. Here's the vegetables, and where's the cure?"

"There's no explanation I can see," Smoke acknowledged. "Yet there is no camp in Alaska like this. I've seen scurvy—a sprinkling of cases here and there; but I never saw a whole camp with it, nor did I ever see such terrible cases. Which is neither here nor there, Shorty. We've got to do what we can for these people, but first we've got to make camp and take care of the dogs. We'll see you in the morning, er—Mrs. Sibley."

"MISS Sibley," she bridled. "And now, young man, if you come fooling around this cabin with any doctor stuff I'll fill you full of birdshot."

"This divine seeress is a sweet one," Smoke chuckled, as he and Shorty felt their way back through the darkness to the empty cabin next to the one they had first entered.

It was evident that two men had lived until recently in the cabin, and the partners wondered if they weren't the two suicides down the trail. Together they overhauled the cache and found it filled with an undreamed-of variety of canned, powdered, dried, evaporated, condensed, and desiccated foods.

"What in the name of reason do they want to go and get scurvy for?" Shorty demanded, brandishing to the light packages of egg-powder and Italian mushrooms. "And look at that! And that!" He tossed out cans of tomatoes and corn and bottles of stuffed olives. "And the divine steeress got the scurvy, too. What d'ye make of it?"

"Seeress," Smoke corrected.

"Steeress," Shorty reiterated. "Didn't she steer 'em here to this hole in the ground?"

Next morning, after daylight, Smoke encountered a man carrying a heavy sled-load of firewood. He was a little man, clean-looking and spry, who walked briskly despite the load. Smoke experienced an immediate dislike.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

"Nothing," the little man answered.

"I know that," Smoke said. "That's why I asked you. You're Amos Wentworth. Now why under the sun haven't you the scurvy like all the rest?"

"Because I've exercised," came the quick reply. "There wasn't any need for any of them to get it if they'd only got out and done something. What did they do? Growled and kicked and grouched at the cold, the long nights, the hardships, the aches and pains and everything else. They loafed in their beds until they swelled up and couldn't leave them, that's all. Look at me. I've worked. Come into my cabin."

Smoke followed him in.

"Squint around. Clean as a whistle, eh? You bet. Everything shipshape. I wouldn't keep those chips and shavings on the floor except for the warmth, but they're clean chips and shavings. You ought to see the floor in some of the shacks. Pig-pens. As for me, I haven't eaten a meal off an unwashed dish. No, sir. It meant work, and I've worked, and I haven't the scurvy. You can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"You've hit the nail on the head," Smoke admitted. "But I see you've only one bunk. Why so unsociable?"

"Because I like to be. It's easier to clean up for one than two, that's why. The lazy blanket-loafers! Do you think that I could have stood one around? No wonder they got scurvy."

It was very convincing, but Smoke could not rid himself of his dislike of the man.

“What’s Laura Sibley got it in for you for?” he asked abruptly.

Amos Wentworth shot a quick look at him. “She’s a crank,” was the reply. “So are we all cranks, for that matter. But Heaven save me from the crank that won’t wash the dishes that he eats off of, and that’s what this crowd of cranks are like.”

A few minutes later, Smoke was talking with Laura Sibley. Supported by a stick in either hand, she had paused in hobbling by his cabin.

“What have you got it in for Wentworth for?” he asked, apropos of nothing in the conversation and with a suddenness that caught her off her guard.

Her green eyes flashed bitterly, her emaciated face for the second was convulsed with rage, and her sore lips writhed on the verge of unconsidered speech. But only a splutter of gasping, unintelligible sounds issued forth, and then, by a terrible effort, she controlled herself.

“Because he’s healthy,” she panted. “Because he hasn’t the scurvy. Because he is supremely selfish. Because he won’t lift a hand to help anybody else. Because he’d let us rot and die, as he is letting us rot and die, without lifting a finger to fetch us a pail of water or a load of firewood. That’s the kind of a brute he is. But let him beware! That’s all. Let him beware!”

Still panting and gasping, she hobbled on her way, and five minutes afterward, coming out of the cabin to feed the dogs, Smoke saw her entering Amos Wentworth’s cabin.

“Something rotten here, Shorty, something rotten,” he said, shaking his head ominously, as his partner came to the door to empty a pan of dish-water.

“Sure,” was the cheerful rejoinder. “An’ you an’ me’ll be catchin’ it yet. You’ll see.”

“I don’t mean the scurvy.”

“Oh, sure, if you mean the divine steeress. She’d rob a corpse. She’s the hungriest-lookin’ female I ever seen.”

“Exercise has kept you and me in condition, Shorty. It’s kept Wentworth in condition. You see what lack of exercise has done for the rest. Now it’s up to us to prescribe exercise for these hospital wrecks. It will be your job to see that they get it. I appoint you chief nurse.”

“What? Me?” Shorty shouted. “I resign.”

“No, you don’t. I’ll be able assistant, because it isn’t going to be any soft snap. We’ve got to make them hustle. First thing, they’ll have to bury their dead. The strongest for the burial squad; then the next strongest on the firewood squad (they’ve been lying in their blankets to save wood); and so on down the line. And spruce-tea. Mustn’t forget that. All the sour-doughs swear by it. These people have never even heard of it.”

“We sure got ourn cut out for us,” Shorty grinned. “First thing we know we’ll be full of lead.”

“And that’s our first job,” Smoke said. “Come on.”

In the next hour, each of the twenty-odd cabins was raided. All ammunition and every rifle, shotgun, and revolver was confiscated.

"Come on, you invalids," was Shorty's method. "Shootin'-irons-fork 'em over. We need 'em."

"Who says so?" was the query at the first cabin.

"Two doctors from Dawson," was Shorty's answer. "An' what they say goes. Come on. Shell out the ammunition, too."

"What do you want them for?"

"To stand off a war-party of canned beef comin' down the canyon. And I'm givin' you fair warnin' of a spruce-tea invasion. Come across."

And this was only the beginning of the day. Men were persuaded, coaxed, bullied or dragged by main strength from their bunks and forced to dress. Smoke selected the mildest cases for the burial squad. Another squad was told off to supply the wood by which the graves were burned down into the frozen muck and gravel. Still another squad had to chop firewood and impartially supply every cabin. Those who were too weak for outdoor work were put to cleaning and scrubbing the cabins and washing clothes. One squad brought in many loads of spruce-boughs, and every stove was used for the brewing of spruce-tea.

But no matter what face Smoke and Shorty put on it, the situation was grim and serious. At least thirty fearful and impossible cases could not be taken from the beds, as the two men, with nausea and horror, learned; while one, a woman, died in Laura Sibley's cabin. Yet strong measures were necessary.

"I don't like to wallop a sick man," Shorty explained, his fist doubled menacingly. "But I'd wallop his block off if it'd make him well. And what all you lazy bums needs is a wallopin'. Come on! Out of that an' into them duds of yourn, double quick, or I'll sure muss up the front of your face."

All the gangs groaned, and sighed, and wept, the tears streaming and freezing down their cheeks as they toiled; and it was patent that their agony was real. The situation was desperate, and Smoke's prescription was heroic.

When the work-gangs came in at noon, they found decently cooked dinners awaiting them, prepared by the weaker members of their cabins under the tutelage and drive of Smoke and Shorty.

"That'll do," Smoke said at three in the afternoon. "Knock off. Go to your bunks. You may be feeling rotten now, but you'll be the better for it to-morrow. Of course it hurts to get well, but I'm going to get you well."

"Too late," Amos Wentworth sneered pallidly at Smoke's efforts. "They ought to have started in that way last fall."

"Come along with me," Smoke answered. "Pick up those two pails. You're not ailing."

From cabin to cabin the three men went, dosing every man and woman with a full pint of spruce-tea. Nor was it easy.

"You might as well learn at the start that we mean business," Smoke stated to the first obdurate, who lay on his back, groaning through set teeth. "Stand by, Shorty." Smoke caught the patient by the nose and tapped the solar-plexus section so as to make the mouth gasp open. "Now, Shorty! Down she goes!"

And down it went, accompanied with unavoidable splutterings and stranglings.

“Next time you’ll take it easier,” Smoke assured the victim, reaching for the nose of the man in the adjoining bunk.

“I’d sooner take castor oil,” was Shorty’s private confidence, ere he downed his own portion. “Great jumpin’ Methuselem!” was his entirely public proclamation the moment after he had swallowed the bitter dose. “It’s a pint long, but hogshead strong.”

“We’re covering this spruce-tea route four times a day, and there are eighty of you to be dosed each time,” Smoke informed Laura Sibley. “So we’ve no time to fool. Will you take it or must I hold your nose?” His thumb and forefinger hovered eloquently above her. “It’s vegetable, so you needn’t have any qualms.”

“Qualms!” Shorty snorted. “No, sure, certainly not. It’s the deliciousest dope!”

Laura Sibley hesitated. She gulped her apprehension.

“Well?” Smoke demanded peremptorily.

“I’ll—I’ll take it,” she quavered. “Hurry up!”

That night, exhausted as by no hard day of trail, Smoke and Shorty crawled into their blankets.

“I’m fairly sick with it,” Smoke confessed. “The way they suffer is awful. But exercise is the only remedy I can think of, and it must be given a thorough trial. I wish we had a sack of raw potatoes.”

“Sparkins he can’t wash no more dishes,” Shorty said. “It hurts him so he sweats his pain. I seen him sweat it. I had to put him back in the bunk, he was that helpless.”

“If only we had raw potatoes,” Smoke went on. “The vital, essential something is missing from that prepared stuff. The life has been evaporated out of it.”

“An’ if that young fellow Jones in the Brownlow cabin don’t croak before morning I miss my guess.”

“For Heaven’s sake be cheerful,” Smoke chided.

“We got to bury him, ain’t we?” came the indignant snort. “I tell you that boy’s something awful—“

“Shut up,” Smoke said.

And after several more indignant snorts, the heavy breathing of sleep arose from Shorty’s bunk.

In the morning, not only was Jones dead, but one of the stronger men who had worked on the firewood squad was found to have hanged himself. A nightmare procession of days set in. For a week, steeling himself to the task, Smoke enforced the exercise and the spruce-tea. And one by one, and in twos and threes, he was compelled to knock off the workers. As he was learning, exercise was the last thing in the world for scurvy patients. The diminishing burial squad was kept steadily at work, and a surplus half-dozen graves were always burned down and waiting.

“You couldn’t have selected a worse place for a camp,” Smoke told Laura Sibley. “Look at it—at the bottom of a narrow gorge, running east and west. The noon sun doesn’t rise above the top of the wall. You can’t have had sunlight for several months.”

“But how was I to know?”

He shrugged his shoulders. "I don't see why not, if you could lead a hundred fools to a gold-mine."

She glared malevolently at him and hobbled on. Several minutes afterward, coming back from a trip to where a squad of groaning patients was gathering spruce-boughs, Smoke saw the seeress entering Amos Wentworth's cabin and followed after her. At the door he could hear her voice, whimpering and pleading.

"Just for me," she was begging, as Smoke entered. "I won't tell a soul."

Both glanced guiltily at the intruder, and Smoke was certain that he was on the edge of something, he knew not what, and he cursed himself for not having eavesdropped.

"Out with it," he commanded harshly. "What is it?"

"What is what?" Amos Wentworth asked sullenly. And Smoke could not name what was what.

Grimmer and grimmer grew the situation. In that dark hole of a canyon, where sunlight never penetrated, the horrible death list mounted up. Each day, in apprehension, Smoke and Shorty examined each other's mouths for the whitening of the gums and mucous membranes—the invariable first symptom of the disease.

"I've quit," Shorty announced one evening. "I've been thinkin' it over, an' I quit. I can make a go at slave-drivin', but cripple-drivin's too much for my stomach. They go from bad to worse. They ain't twenty men I can drive to work. I told Jackson this afternoon he could take to his bunk. He was gettin' ready to suicide. I could see it stickin' out all over him. Exercise ain't no good."

"I've made up my mind to the same thing," Smoke answered. "We'll knock off all but about a dozen. They'll have to lend a hand. We can relay them. And we'll keep up the spruce-tea."

"It ain't no good."

"I'm about ready to agree with that, too, but at any rate it doesn't hurt them."

"Another suicide," was Shorty's news the following morning. "That Phillips is the one. I seen it comin' for days."

"We're up against the real thing," Smoke groaned. "What would you suggest, Shorty?"

"Who? Me? I ain't got no suggestions. The thing's got to run its course."

"But that means they'll all die," Smoke protested.

"Except Wentworth," Shorty snarled; for he had quickly come to share his partner's dislike for that individual.

The everlasting miracle of Wentworth's immunity perplexed Smoke. Why should he alone not have developed scurvy? Why did Laura Sibley hate him, and at the same time whine and snivel and beg from him? What was it she begged from him and that he would not give?

On several occasions Smoke made it a point to drop into Wentworth's cabin at meal-time. But one thing did he note that was suspicious, and that was Wentworth's suspicion of him. Next he tried sounding out Laura Sibley.

“Raw potatoes would cure everybody here,” he remarked to the seeress. “I know it. I’ve seen it work before.”

The flare of conviction in her eyes, followed by bitterness and hatred, told him the scent was warm.

“Why didn’t you bring in a supply of fresh potatoes on the steamer?” he asked.

“We did. But coming up the river we sold them all out at a bargain at Fort Yukon. We had plenty of the evaporated kinds, and we knew they’d keep better. They wouldn’t even freeze.”

Smoke groaned. “And you sold them all?” he asked.

“Yes. How were we to know?”

“Now mightn’t there have been a couple of odd sacks left?—accidentally, you know, mislaid on the steamer?”

She shook her head, as he thought, a trifle belatedly, then added, “We never found any.”

“But mightn’t there?” he persisted.

“How do I know?” she rasped angrily. “I didn’t have charge of the commissary.”

“And Amos Wentworth did,” he jumped to the conclusion. “Very good. Now what is your private opinion—just between us two. Do you think Wentworth has any raw potatoes stored away somewhere?”

“No; certainly not. Why should he?”

“Why shouldn’t he?”

She shrugged her shoulders.

Struggle as he would with her, Smoke could not bring her to admit the possibility.

“Wentworth’s a swine,” was Shorty’s verdict, when Smoke told his suspicions.

“And so is Laura Sibley,” Smoke added. “She believes he has the potatoes, and is keeping it quiet, and trying to get him to share with her.”

“An’ he won’t come across, eh?” Shorty cursed frail human nature with one of his best flights, and caught his breath. “They both got their feet in the trough. May God rot them dead with scurvy for their reward, that’s all I got to say, except I’m goin’ right up now an’ knock Wentworth’s block off.”

But Smoke stood out for diplomacy. That night, when the camp groaned and slept, or groaned and did not sleep, he went to Wentworth’s unlighted cabin.

“Listen to me, Wentworth,” he said. “I’ve got a thousand dollars in dust right here in this sack. I’m a rich man in this country, and I can afford it. I think I’m getting touched. Put a raw potato in my hand and the dust is yours. Here, heft it.”

And Smoke thrilled when Amos Wentworth put out his hand in the darkness and hefted the gold. Smoke heard him fumble in the blankets, and then felt pressed into his hand, not the heavy gold-sack, but the unmistakable potato, the size of a hen’s egg, warm from contact with the other’s body.

Smoke did not wait till morning. He and Shorty were expecting at any time the deaths of their worst two cases, and to this cabin the partners went. Grated and

mashed up in a cup, skin, and clinging specks of the earth, and all, was the thousand-dollar potato—a thick fluid, that they fed, several drops at a time, into the frightful orifices that had once been mouths. Shift by shift, through the long night, Smoke and Shorty relieved each other at administering the potato juice, rubbing it into the poor swollen gums where loose teeth rattled together and compelling the swallowing of every drop of the precious elixir.

By evening of the next day the change for the better in the two patients was miraculous and almost unbelievable. They were no longer the worst cases. In forty-eight hours, with the exhaustion of the potato, they were temporarily out of danger, though far from being cured.

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” Smoke said to Wentworth. “I’ve got holdings in this country, and my paper is good anywhere. I’ll give you five hundred dollars a potato up to fifty thousand dollars’ worth. That’s one hundred potatoes.”

“Was that all the dust you had?” Wentworth queried.

“Shorty and I scraped up all we had. But, straight, he and I are worth several millions between us.”

“I haven’t any potatoes,” Wentworth said finally. “Wish I had. That potato I gave you was the only one. I’d been saving it all the winter for fear I’d get the scurvy. I only sold it so as to be able to buy a passage out of the country when the river opens.”

Despite the cessation of potato-juice, the two treated cases continued to improve through the third day. The untreated cases went from bad to worse. On the fourth morning, three horrible corpses were buried. Shorty went through the ordeal, then turned to Smoke.

“You’ve tried your way. Now it’s me for mine.”

He headed straight for Wentworth’s cabin. What occurred there, Shorty never told. He emerged with knuckles skinned and bruised, and not only did Wentworth’s face bear all the marks of a bad beating, but for a long time he carried his head, twisted and sidling, on a stiff neck. This phenomenon was accounted for by a row of four finger-marks, black and blue, on one side of the windpipe and by a single black-and-blue mark on the other side.

Next, Smoke and Shorty together invaded Wentworth’s cabin, throwing him out in the snow while they turned the interior upside down. Laura Sibley hobbled in and frantically joined them in the search.

“You don’t get none, old girl, not if we find a ton,” Shorty assured her.

But she was no more disappointed than they. Though the very floor was dug up, they discovered nothing.

“I’m for roastin’ him over a slow fire an’ make ‘m cough up,” Shorty proposed earnestly.

Smoke shook his head reluctantly.

“It’s murder,” Shorty held on. “He’s murderin’ all them poor geezers just as much as if he knocked their brains out with an ax, only worse.”

Another day passed, during which they kept a steady watch on Wentworth's movements. Several times, when he started out, water-bucket in hand, for the creek, they casually approached the cabin, and each time he hurried back without the water.

"They're cached right there in his cabin," Shorty said. "As sure as God made little apples, they are. But where? We sure overhauled it plenty." He stood up and pulled on his mittens. "I'm goin' to find 'em, if I have to pull the blame shack down a log at a time."

He glanced at Smoke, who, with an intent, absent face, had not heard him.

"What's eatin' you?" Shorty demanded wrathfully. "Don't tell me you've gone an' got the scurvy!"

"Just trying to remember something, Shorty."

"What?"

"I don't know. That's the trouble. But it has a bearing, if only I could remember it."

"Now you look here, Smoke; don't you go an' get bug-house," Shorty pleaded. "Think of me! Let your think-slats rip. Come on an' help me pull that shack down. I'd set her afire, if it wa'n't for roastin' them spuds."

"That's it!" Smoke exploded, as he sprang to his feet. "Just what I was trying to remember. Where's that kerosene-can? I'm with you, Shorty. The potatoes are ours."

"What's the game?"

"Watch me, that's all," Smoke baffled. "I always told you, Shorty, that a deficient acquaintance with literature was a handicap, even in the Klondike. Now what we're going to do came out of a book. I read it when I was a kid, and it will work. Come on."

Several minutes later, under a pale-gleaming, greenish aurora borealis, the two men crept up to Amos Wentworth's cabin. Carefully and noiselessly they poured kerosene over the logs, extra-drenching the door-frame and window-sash. Then the match was applied, and they watched the flaming oil gather headway. They drew back beyond the growing light and waited.

They saw Wentworth rush out, stare wildly at the conflagration, and plunge back into the cabin. Scarcely a minute elapsed when he emerged, this time slowly, half doubled over, his shoulders burdened by a sack heavy and unmistakable. Smoke and Shorty sprang at him like a pair of famished wolves. They hit him right and left, at the same instant. He crumpled down under the weight of the sack, which Smoke pressed over with his hands to make sure. Then he felt his knees clasped by Wentworth's arms as the man turned a ghastly face upward.

"Give me a dozen, only a dozen—half a dozen—and you can have the rest," he squalled. He bared his teeth and, with mad rage, half inclined his head to bite Smoke's leg, then he changed his mind and fell to pleading. "Just half a dozen," he wailed. "Just half a dozen. I was going to turn them over to you—to-morrow. Yes, to-morrow. That was my idea. They're life! They're life! Just half a dozen!"

"Where's the other sack?" Smoke bluffed.

"I ate it up," was the reply, unimpeachably honest. "That sack's all that's left. Give me a few. You can have the rest."

"Ate 'em up!" Shorty screamed. "A whole sack! An' them geezers dyin' for want of 'em! This for you! An' this! An' this! An' this! You swine! You hog!"

The first kick tore Wentworth away from his embrace of Smoke's knees. The second kick turned him over in the snow. But Shorty went on kicking.

"Watch out for your toes," was Smoke's only interference.

"Sure; I'm usin' the heel," Shorty answered. "Watch me. I'll cave his ribs in. I'll kick his jaw off. Take that! An' that! Wisht I could give you the boot instead of the moccasin. You swine!"

There was no sleep in camp that night. Hour after hour Smoke and Shorty went the rounds, doling the life-renewing potato-juice, a quarter of a spoonful at a dose, into the poor ruined mouths of the population. And through the following day, while one slept the other kept up the work.

There were no more deaths. The most awful cases began to mend with an immediacy that was startling. By the third day, men who had not been off their backs for weeks crawled out of their bunks and tottered around on crutches. And on that day, the sun, two months then on its journey into northern declination, peeped cheerfully over the crest of the canyon for the first time.

"Nary a potato," Shorty told the whining, begging Wentworth. "You ain't even touched with scurvy. You got outside a whole sack, an' you're loaded against scurvy for twenty years. Knowin' you, I've come to understand God. I always wondered why he let Satan live. Now I know. He let him live just as I let you live. But it's a cryin' shame, just the same."

"A word of advice," Smoke told Wentworth. "These men are getting well fast; Shorty and I are leaving in a week, and there will be nobody to protect you when these men go after you. There's the trail. Dawson's eighteen days' travel."

"Pull your freight, Amos," Shorty supplemented, "or what I done to you won't be a circumstance to what them convalescents'll do to you."

"Gentlemen, I beg of you, listen to me," Wentworth whined. "I'm a stranger in this country. I don't know its ways. I don't know the trail. Let me travel with you. I'll give you a thousand dollars if you'll let me travel with you."

"Sure," Smoke grinned maliciously. "If Shorty agrees."

"WHO? ME?" Shorty stiffened for a supreme effort. "I ain't nobody. Woodticks ain't got nothin' on me when it comes to humility. I'm a worm, a maggot, brother to the pollywog an' child of the blow-fly. I ain't afraid or ashamed of nothin' that creeps or crawls or stinks. But travel with that mistake of creation! Go 'way, man. I ain't proud, but you turn my stomach."

And Amos Wentworth went away, alone, dragging a sled loaded with provisions sufficient to last him to Dawson. A mile down the trail Shorty overhauled him.

"Come here to me," was Shorty's greeting. "Come across. Fork over. Cough up."

“I don’t understand,” Wentworth quavered, shivering from recollection of the two beatings, hand and foot, he had already received from Shorty.

“That thousand dollars, d’ ye understand that? That thousand dollars gold Smoke bought that measly potato with. Come through.”

And Amos Wentworth passed the gold-sack over.

“Hope a skunk bites you an’ you get howlin’ hydrophoby,” were the terms of Shorty’s farewell.

Moon-Face

A Story of Mortal Antipathy

John Claverhouse was a moon-faced man. You know the kind, cheek-bones wide apart, chin and forehead melting into the cheeks to complete the perfect round, and the nose, broad and pudgy, equidistant from the circumference, flattened against the very centre of the face like a dough-ball upon the ceiling. Perhaps that is why I hated him, for truly he had become an offense to my eyes, and I believed the earth to be cumbered with his presence. Perhaps my mother may have been superstitious of the moon and looked upon it over the wrong shoulder at the wrong time.

Be that as it may, I hated John Claverhouse. Not that he had done me what society would consider a wrong or an ill turn. Far from it. The evil was of a deeper, subtler sort; so elusive, so intangible, as to defy clear, definite analysis in words. We all experience such things at some period in our lives. For the first time we see a certain individual, one who the very instant before we did not dream existed; and yet, at the first moment of meeting, we say: "I do not like that man." Why do we not like him? Ah, we do not know why; we know only that we do not. We have taken a dislike, that is all. And so I with John Claverhouse.

What right had such a man to be happy? Yet he was an optimist. He was always gleeful and laughing. All things were always all right, curse him! Ah how it grated on my soul that he should be so happy! Other men could laugh, and it did not bother me. I even used to laugh myself — before I met John Claverhouse.

But his laugh! It irritated me, maddened me, as nothing else under the sun could irritate or madden me. It haunted me, gripped hold of me, and would not let me go. It was a huge, Gargantuan laugh. Waking or sleeping it was always with me, whirring and jarring across my heart-strings like an enormous rasp. At break of day it came whooping across the fields to spoil my pleasant morning revery. Under the aching noonday glare, when the green things drooped and the birds withdrew to the depths of the forest, and all nature drowsed, his great "Ha! ha!" and "Ho! ho!" rose up to the sky and challenged the sun. And at black midnight, from the lonely cross-roads where he turned from town into his own place, came his plaguey cachinnations to rouse me from my sleep and make me writhe and clench my nails into my palms.

I went forth privily in the night-time, and turned his cattle into his fields, and in the morning heard his whooping laugh as he drove them out again. "It is nothing," he said; "the poor, dumb beasties are not to be blamed for straying into fatter pastures."

He had a dog he called "Mars," a big, splendid brute, part deer-hound and part blood-hound, and resembling both. Mars was a great delight to him, and they were

always together. But I bided my time, and one day, when opportunity was ripe, lured the animal away and settled for him with strychnine and beefsteak. It made positively no impression on John Claverhouse. His laugh was as hearty and frequent as ever, and his face as much like the full moon as it always had been.

Then I set fire to his haystacks and his barn. But the next morning, being Sunday, he went forth blithe and cheerful.

“Where are you going?” I asked him, as he went by the cross-roads.

“Trout,” he said, and his face beamed like a full moon. “I just dote on trout.”

Was there ever such an impossible man! His whole harvest had gone up in his haystacks and barn. It was uninsured, I knew. And yet, in the face of famine and the rigorous winter, he went out gayly in quest of a mess of trout, forsooth, because he “doted” on them! Had gloom but rested, no matter how lightly, on his brow, or had his bovine countenance grown long and serious and less like the moon, or had he removed that smile but once from off his face, I am sure I could have forgiven him for existing. But no. he grew only more cheerful under misfortune.

I insulted him. He looked at me in slow and smiling surprise.

“I fight you? Why?” he asked slowly. And then he laughed. “You are so funny! Ho! ho! You’ll be the death of me! He! he! he! Oh! Ho! ho! ho!

What would you? It was past endurance. By the blood of Judas, how I hated him! Then there was that name — Claverhouse! What a name! Wasn’t it absurd? Claverhouse! Merciful heaven, WHY Claverhouse? Again and again I asked myself that question. I should not have minded Smith, or Brown, or Jones — but CLAVERTHOUSE! I leave it to you. Repeat it to yourself — Claverhouse. Just listen to the ridiculous sound of it — Claverhouse! Should a man live with such a name? I ask of you. “No,” you say. And “No” said I.

But I bethought me of his mortgage. What of his crops and barn destroyed, I knew he would be unable to meet it. So I got a shrewd, close-mouthed, tight-fisted money-lender to get the mortgage transferred to him. I did not appear but through this agent I forced the foreclosure, and but few days (no more, believe me, than the law allowed) were given John Claverhouse to remove his goods and chattels from the premises. Then I strolled down to see how he took it, for he had lived there upward of twenty years. But he met me with his saucer-eyes twinkling, and the light glowing and spreading in his face till it was as a full-risen moon.

“Ha! ha! ha!” he laughed. “The funniest tike, that youngster of mine! Did you ever hear the like? Let me tell you. He was down playing by the edge of the river when a piece of the bank caved in and splashed him. ‘O papa!’ he cried; ‘a great big puddle flew up and hit me.’”

He stopped and waited for me to join him in his infernal glee.

“I don’t see any laugh in it,” I said shortly, and I know my face went sour.

He regarded me with wonderment, and then came the damnable light, glowing and spreading, as I have described it, till his face shone soft and warm, like the summer

moon, and then the laugh — "Ha! ha! That's funny! You don't see it, eh? He! he! Ho! ho! ho! He doesn't see it! Why, look here. You know a puddle — "

But I turned on my heel and left him. That was the last. I could stand it no longer. The thing must end right there, I thought, curse him! The earth should be quit of him. And as I went over the hill, I could hear his monstrous laugh reverberating against the sky.

Now, I pride myself on doing things neatly, and when I resolved to kill John Claverhouse I had it in mind to do so in such fashion that I should not look back upon it and feel ashamed. I hate bungling, and I hate brutality. To me there is something repugnant in merely striking a man with one's naked fist — faugh! it is sickening! So, to shoot, or stab, or club John Claverhouse (oh, that name!) did not appeal to me. And not only was I impelled to do it neatly and artistically, but also in such manner that not the slightest possible suspicion could be directed against me.

To this end I bent my intellect, and, after a week of profound incubation, I hatched the scheme. Then I set to work. I bought a water spaniel bitch, five months old, and devoted my whole attention to her training. Had any one spied upon me, they would have remarked that this training consisted entirely of one thing — RETRIEVING. I taught the dog, which I called "Bellona," to fetch sticks I threw into the water, and not only to fetch, but to fetch at once, without mouthing or playing with them. The point was that she was to stop for nothing, but to deliver the stick in all haste. I made a practice of running away and leaving her to chase me, with the stick in her mouth, till she caught me. She was a bright animal, and took to the game with such eagerness that I was soon content.

After that, at the first casual opportunity, I presented Bellona to John Claverhouse. I knew what I was about, for I was aware of a little weakness of his, and of a little private sinning of which he was regularly and inveterately guilty.

"No," he said, when I placed the end of the rope in his hand. "No, you don't mean it." And his mouth opened wide and he grinned all over his damnable moon-face.

"I — I kind of thought, somehow, you didn't like me," he explained. "Wasn't it funny for me to make such a mistake?" And at the thought he held his sides with laughter.

"What is her name?" he managed to ask between paroxysms.

"Bellona," I said.

"He! he!" he tittered. "What a funny name."

I gritted my teeth, for his mirth put them on edge, and snapped out between them, "She was the wife of Mars, you know."

Then the light of the full moon began to suffuse his face, until he exploded with: "That was my other dog. Well, I guess she's a widow now. Oh! Ho! ho! E! he! he! Ho!" he whooped after me, and I turned and fled swiftly over the hill.

The week passed by, and on Saturday evening I said to him, "You go away Monday, don't you?"

He nodded his head and grinned.

“Then you won’t have another chance to get a mess of those trout you just ‘dote’ on.”

But he did not notice the sneer. “Oh, I don’t know,” he chuckled. “I’m going up to-morrow to try pretty hard.”

Thus was assurance made doubly sure, and I went back to my house hugging myself with rapture.

Early next morning I saw him go by with a dip-net and gunnysack, and Bellona trotting at his heels. I knew where he was bound, and cut out by the back pasture and climbed through the underbrush to the top of the mountain. Keeping carefully out of sight, I followed the crest along for a couple of miles to a natural amphitheatre in the hills, where the little river raced down out of a gorge and stopped for breath in a large and placid rock-bound pool. That was the spot! I sat down on the croup of the mountain, where I could see all that occurred, and lighted my pipe.

Ere many minutes had passed, John Claverhouse came plodding up the bed of the stream. Bellona was ambling about him, and they were in high feather, her short, snappy barks mingling with his deeper chest-notes. Arrived at the pool, he threw down the dip-net and sack, and drew from his hip-pocket what looked like a large, fat candle. But I knew it to be a stick of “giant”; for such was his method of catching trout. He dynamited them. He attached the fuse by wrapping the “giant” tightly in a piece of cotton. Then he ignited the fuse and tossed the explosive into the pool.

Like a flash, Bellona was into the pool after it. I could have shrieked aloud for joy. Claverhouse yelled at her, but without avail. He pelted her with clods and rocks, but she swam steadily on till she got the stick of “giant” in her mouth, when she whirled about and headed for shore. Then, for the first time, he realized his danger, and started to run. As foreseen and planned by me, she made the bank and took out after him. Oh, I tell you, it was great! As I have said, the pool lay in a sort of amphitheatre. Above and below, the stream could be crossed on stepping-stones. And around and around, up and down and across the stones, raced Claverhouse and Bellona. I could never have believed that such an ungainly man could run so fast. But run he did, Bellona hot-footed after him, and gaining. And then, just as she caught up, he in full stride, and she leaping with nose at his knee, there was a sudden flash, a burst of smoke, a terrific detonation, and where man and dog had been the instant before there was naught to be seen but a big hole in the ground.

“Death from accident while engaged in illegal fishing.” That was the verdict of the coroner’s jury; and that is why I pride myself on the neat and artistic way in which I finished off John Claverhouse. There was no bungling, no brutality; nothing of which to be ashamed in the whole transaction, as I am sure you will agree. No more does his infernal laugh go echoing among the hills, and no more does his fat moon-face rise up to vex me. My days are peaceful now, and my night’s sleep deep.

The Ted K Archive

A critique of his ideas & actions



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