

KLONDIKE TALES

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Jack London

JACK LONDON

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TALES

Introduction by Gary Kinder

Notes by Christopher Gair



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John Griffith London, the novelist, short story writer, essayist, and journalist whose own life proved as dramatic as his fiction, was born in San Francisco on January 12, 1876. He was the illegitimate son of Flora Wellman, a spiritualist and music teacher, and William Henry Chaney, an astrologer and itinerant lecturer. Renamed for his stepfather, Civil War veteran John London, he endured an impoverished childhood on various California farms and a succession of poorhouses in Oakland, where the family moved in 1886. London left school at the age of fourteen to work in a cannery. After a brief, dangerous stint as an oyster pirate on San Francisco Bay, he became a deputy for the California Fish Patrol, having adventures he later recalled in *The Cruise of the Dazzler* (1902) and *Tales of the Fish Patrol* (1905). In 1893 he boarded a sealing schooner headed for the Bering Sea. The seven-month voyage inspired his “Story of a Typhoon Off the Coast of Japan” (1893), which was awarded first prize in a writing contest sponsored by a San Francisco newspaper, and *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), perhaps his best novel about the struggle of man against nature.

The following year London headed east by rail with other young hobos. He roamed across America as far as Niagara Falls, New York, where he was arrested for vagrancy. “I have often thought that to this training of my tramp days is due much of my success as a story writer,” he reflected. “In order to get the food whereby I lived, I was compelled to tell tales that ran true. At the back door, out of inexorable necessity, is developed the convincingness and sincerity laid down by all authorities on the art of the short story.” *The Road* (1907), a forerunner of the work of Dos Passos and Kerouac, recounts his experiences as a “road kid.” Upon returning to California, London resumed his education by studying the works of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Friedrich Nietzsche. He attended Oakland High School for a year and spent one semester at the University of California at Berkeley. During this time he became interested in Marxism and joined the Socialist Labor Party, gaining notoriety as the “Boy Socialist” of Oakland. The semi-autobiographical novel *Martin Eden* (1909) chronicles his dreams of literary fame that date from this period.

In the summer of 1897, London joined the Klondike gold rush, little realizing the wealth of material it would provide him as a writer. “It was in the Klondike I found myself,” he later attested. “There you get your perspective. I got mine.” He sold his first story, “To the Man on the Trail,” to the *Overland Monthly* in 1899, and the *Atlantic Monthly* published “An Odyssey of the North” in January 1900. London’s first book, *The Son of the Wolf* (1900), was a collection of Klondike tales that proved enormously popular. He quickly capitalized on his success with *The God of His Fathers* (1901) and *Children of the Frost* (1902). His other volumes of Klondike stories include *The Faith of Men* (1904), *Love of Life and Other Stories* (1907), *Lost Face* (1910), and *Smoke Bellew* (1912).

The Call of the Wild brought London international acclaim when it was published in 1903. Viewed by many as his symbolic autobiography, it recounts the story of the dog Buck, who

learns to survive in the brutal Yukon wilderness. “No other popular writer of his time did a better writing than you will find in *The Call of the Wild*,” noted H. L. Mencken. “Here, indeed, are all the elements of sound fiction.” *White Fang*, which was conceived by London as “a complete antithesis and companion piece to *The Call of the Wild*,” appeared in 1906. “The quintessential Jack London is in the on-rushing compulsiveness of his northern stories,” noted James Dickey. “Few men have more convincingly examined the connection between the creative powers of the individual writer and the unconscious drive to breed and to survive found in the natural world.”

London next focused on social and political issues. He journeyed to England in 1902 to research *The People of the Abyss* (1903), a study of the appalling slum conditions in the East End of London. In 1904 he traveled to Korea and Manchuria to report on the Russo-Japanese War for the Hearst newspaper syndicate. The Russian Revolution of 1905 prompted London to give a series of socialist lectures subsequently compiled in *War of the Classes* (1905) and *Revolution and Other Essays* (1910). And in *The Iron Heel* (1908), an astonishing political fantasy judged by Leon Trotsky to be a work of genius, he imagined the rise of fascism in America.

In 1907 London sailed for the South Pacific. *The Cruise of the “Snark”* (1911) recounts the writer’s grueling two-year journey through the islands of Polynesia and Melanesia in search of untouched civilizations. Forced to abandon his travels in Australia owing to illness, he returned to California in shattered health. Yet London soon produced *South Sea Tales* (1911), *The House of Pride and Other Tales of Hawaii* (1912), and *A Son of the Sun* (1912), works that attempt to reconcile his dream of an unfallen world with the harsh reality of twentieth-century materialism.

By 1913 London was the highest-paid writer in the world. In that year alone he published *The Night-Born*, a collection of stories; *The Valley of the Moon*, a novel of California ranch life; *The Abysmal Brute*, a fictional exposé of professional boxing; and *John Barleycorn*, a memoir about his struggles with alcoholism. In 1914 he traveled to Vera Cruz to cover the Mexican Revolution for *Collier’s* magazine. Jack London’s final years were spent at his ranch in the Sonoma Valley, where he died of uremic poisoning on November 22, 1916. His last works of fiction include *The Mutiny of the “Elsinore”* (1914), *The Strength of the Strong* (1914), *The Scarlet Plague* (1915), *The Star Rover* (1915), *The Little Lady of the Big House* (1916), *The Turtles of Tasman* (1916), *The Red One* (1918), and *Island Tales* (1920).

“Jack London was an instinctive artist of a high order,” said H. L. Mencken. “There was in him a vast delicacy of perception, a high feeling, a sensitiveness to beauty. And there was in him, too, under all his blatancies, a poignant sense of the infinite romance and mystery of human life.” James Dickey wrote: “The key to London’s effectiveness is to be found in his complete absorption in the world he evokes. The author is in and committed to his creation to a degree very nearly unparalleled in the composition of fiction.” As E. L. Doctorow remarked on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review*: “To this day Jack London is the most widely read American writer in the world.”

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Gary Kinder

So Weatherbee sinks a hatchet into the base of Cuthfert's spine just as Cuthfert launches a bullet into Weatherbee's face. By now, I'm laughing out loud. London's got me imagining the scene from about 500 feet up to accentuate the insignificance of their existence; I picture their cabin as a speck aglow with the light of a fire.

For months these two have been bickering like the Odd Couple, Felix and Oscar of the Yukon, buried in snow, surrounded by trees, hemmed in by mountains, enshrouded in the darkness of an arctic winter. All around stands an enormous and forbidding landscape that itself would guffaw, except it does n't care. London has orchestrated the scene so skillfully that by the time the two kill each other, I'm really enjoying myself. London seems to be having a good time, too.

People who justify their existence by categorizing the works of others cannot decide whether Jack London is a "romantic realist," an "ethereal idealist," or a "literary naturalist." But none of that matters. Jack London is an extraordinarily gifted writer, a thinker, a seeker of truth and detail, who went off adventuring in exotic lands, and recorded his adventures as graphically and accurately as his immense talent would allow. From there, I just want to step back and enjoy the show.

Besides his gift for words and syntax, his humor, his affection for the true good in people, here's what I love about Jack London: He puts himself in situations to serve as his own crucible for observing human behavior, and then synthesizes those complex observations. I am tempted to quote all of the first two paragraphs from "In a Far Country," which is where we meet Weatherbee and Cuthfert, but I will choose snippets instead. Like the opening sentence: "When a man journeys into a far country, he must be prepared to forget many of the things he has learned." The easy stuff is exchanging "a dainty menu for rough fare, [a] stiff leather shoe for the soft, shapeless moccasin, [a] feather bed for a couch in the snow." And that's where a romantic deludes himself. "His pinch will come in learning properly to shape his mind's attitude toward all things," continues London, "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."

Against these warnings, London juxtaposes Weatherbee and Cuthfert. "The one was a lower-class man who considered himself a gentleman, and the other was a gentleman who knew himself to be such." Then London manipulates events to seal these two together in a tight space. They join a party of argonauts on an arduous journey bound for the Klondike. "Severe toil like this lays a man naked to the very roots of his soul," writes London, and

Weatherbee and Cuthfert do n't look so good naked. they 're the last ones up in the mornin' the first to turn in at night, and in between lift nary a voluntary finger to help. The halfbreed guide calls them the "babies." When the guide calculates they 've got another 40 miles up river and over snow before they reach the Yukon and 500 beyond that to Dawson, eight out of the ten men remaining decide they can still make it as long as they do n't have to carry the "Incapables."

They leave Weatherbee and Cuthfert in an abandoned cabin, well-stocked with provisions and wood, to survive the winter and find their own way out come spring. But the cabin is tiny, and the sub-zero air outside traps them as though the door were bolted. Here is where London starts pumping the bellows to stoke the conflict. "[Weatherbee] 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.... [Weatherbee] was as sensuous as Cuthfert 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.... A great wonder sprang up in the breast of each, as to how God had ever come to create the other."

Eventually, Weatherbee hallucinates with the heebie-jeebies, ghosts from the tombstones outside the cabin crawling into his bed; Cuthfert fixates on the stillness of the weather until the stillness, *nothing* moves, crushes his sanity. They watch their toes freeze and fall off, their gums turn yellow, and the purple rash of scurvy creep across their skin, but they disdain for each other, rising like a crescendo, reaches such heights that each ignores his own condition to delight in the misfortunes of the other. The story rapidly approaches the good climax when one suspects the other has stolen a spoonful of sugar.

When I was 18, taking freshman English at the University of Florida, I had one of the two professors from college I still remember. He had us read Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*, and we talked about "symbolism." Someone in the class said that when Heller wrote about those little white mushrooms lining the path down to the water, he meant for them to symbolize little white crosses and all the men who had needlessly died in war. I thought to myself, "What if Heller meant the little white mushrooms to be ... little white mushrooms? What if he had seen little white mushrooms when he was in Italy and was simply recalling the setting?" Why did an author have to "mean" something other than what he had written? I have often wondered what authors would say about their own work if we dug them up and asked them questions like, "What did you *mean* when you wrote, 'their garments would have disgusted a ragpicker?'" London did n't mean *anything*; he was just taking notes, writing about what he saw, and enjoying himself. I think.

Actually, I would like to exhume the guy for a beer and ask him a few questions. For example, the ordeal of Weatherbee and Cuthfert is not the only time he mixes humor with horror, and I'm curious: I can't tell if he's trying to lighten the horror of what's happening, or if he's using the horror as some kind of counter-something-or-other to make the scenes even funnier.

"Jack," I might say, "what were you thinking when you wrote 'Keesh, the Son of Keesh'? Are you just having a good time, or did you actually see Indians who looked like that?"

In "Keesh" we 're in a circle around the fire when Keesh, the chief of one arctic tribe, asks

for the hand of Su-Su, daughter of the chief of another arctic tribe. A couple of young bucks both brothers of Su-Su, do n't like the idea. London describes the brothers: "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." Next is brother Nossabok. "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." Picture them side by side, like two jack-o'-lanterns.

But London does n't stop with these two protesting. Su-Su also has her doubts. She wants a brave who's big and strong, "a hunter and fighter of beasts and men, well able to win me when I should eat for two." She thinks that Keesh has spent too much time with the white men and has become soft. She tells him that before she can find him worthy, he must first bring her not the scalps but the whole heads of two men. You can probably see where this is going already.

For a while, Keesh tries to live the life of a good Christian, as he has been taught by the local reverend, until he hears that a new suitor has bid for the hand of the fair Su-Su. No longer Keesh disappears. A short while later he shows up at the lodge of Su-Su, sporting a moosehide sack, dripping red. He dumps the sack and out roll not two but four heads, one belonging to Su-Su's father, one to the unfortunate suitor, and here's London's description of the other two: "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."

"Jack," I want to say to him, "I know there's nothing mystical about writing, you just do it and sometimes it works, and sometimes it does n't. Sometimes little thoughts fly in like meteors, and we do n't even know what galaxy they 're from. But still, Makamuk and Nossabok?"

In another story, "The Son of the Wolf," one incensed brave tries to incite the others over his frustration with the white men, the "Wolves," cherry-picking all of their young and delectable maidens. There's not much left for a nice brave to choose from.

"'There is Gugkla!' he cried, brutally pointing out one of the women, who was a cripple. 'Her legs are bent like the ribs of a birch canoe. She cannot gather wood nor carry the meat of the hunters. Did the Wolves choose her?'"

"'There is Moyri, whose eyes are crossed by the Evil Spirit. Even the babes are affrighted when they gaze upon her, and it is said that the bald-face gives her the trail. Was she chosen?'"

Since "bald-face" means grizzly bear, I can't help but think that London was just amusing himself. In a little different setting we could be at a fraternity house complaining about blind dates. What did you *mean* by this, Jack? Are you just tweaking our noses, or have you seen these women?

But I would be remiss if I led you to believe that all of London's stories feature cross-eyed Indians and incapable adventurers.

One of my favorite stories is "The League of the Old Men," where London makes much emphathize with an old chief, Imber, who is on trial for countless, cold-blooded murders, yet London paints a sympathetic portrait, because the old man's killing is really a confused

lashing out at the loss of his world; the young braves of his culture have been compromised, the young women lured. One particularly poignant moment comes when the reader realizes that Imber not only does not understand the language of English, he cannot even comprehend the concept of the written word, that words can be transferred not only to the ear, but also to the eye.

The final paragraph I especially admire for its grace, its tone, and its twist. “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 sulleseas; 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.”

I have many favorites. At one point, I remember thinking, Each story just gets better than the one before. One technique that particularly intrigues me is London’s setting a scene where someone is about to tell a story, and the story becomes the focus, a story within a story, and the story within a story leaps from a masterful imagination, as though London himself sits in the outer circle, listening along with us. He is so good, I find myself thinking that the interior story came to life by itself, that it surprises London as much as it does me.

Mostly, I find pleasure in reading him just for the richness of his observations, for sentences like, “Frost after frost had bitten deeply, each depositing its stratum of scab upon the half-healed scar that went before.” Or, “The man was chewing tobacco, and the muzzle of ice held his lips so rigidly that he was unable to clear his chin when he expelled the juice. The result was that a crystal beard of the color and solidity of amber was increasing its length on his chin. If he fell down it would shatter itself, like glass into brittle fragments.” Only someone who’s been there could write those words.

They’re from “To Build a Fire,” which has to rank with the best short stories ever written. Here, London blends simplicity, authenticity, philosophy, and suspense with perfection. He sets his scene of severe and subtle cold so convincingly, that by the time the fire crackles, you can almost feel its warmth. But what elevates this story above those by other writers is London’s observations of the fire builder. “The trouble with him,” writes London, “was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty-odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man’s frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold; and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man’s place in the universe.”

I like that London even thinks to mention this. I like it even more that the man’s inability to contemplate other than the physical and the immediate leads to his fatal mistake. He knows the importance of fire, the warning signs of frostbite, the seriousness of wet feet at seventy-five below. At several points his preparedness allows him to outwit the hidden dangers of the landscape, but ultimately he outwits only himself. His biggest mistake is being

there, outside and alone.

I have two friends, Warren and Pete, who both possess an enviable knack for creating texture in their lives. Both practice law in big cities, but they make time to fish in Alaska, run white water in Idaho, ski from helicopters in Canada. Warren was a river guide out west for seven summers in college and law school. Pete was a guide in the Boundary Waters in Minnesota. Pete would rather take his kids to be with the simple folk at a fiddle contest than play golf at a country club. Until the summer of 2000, Warren did n't have cable TV.

Not long ago, the three of us ended up at a redneck karaoke bar in rural Alabama and decided that we would never forgive ourselves if we left the place without singing. I remember some existential reasoning about the universe and 20 years from now. We took the floor one at a time, none of us able to carry a tune as well as a stone mason in the rear pew, but we did try. The point was that anyone willing to stand up and sing loud at the risk of making an ass out of himself was family. So we connected with some fine people we had never met, and there was texture in all of that. That was one of the best nights of my life, and the reason I'm telling you this is because Pete and Warren would love this book. I'm going to make sure they each get a copy.

FROM

THE SON OF
THE WOLF

“Carmen won’t last more than a couple of days.” Mason spat out a chunk of ice and surveyed the poor animal ruefully, then put her foot in his mouth and proceeded to bite out the pieces which clustered cruelly between the toes.

“I never saw a dog with a highfalutin’ name that ever was worth a rap,” he said, as he concluded his task and shoved her aside. “They just fade away and die under the responsibility. Did ye ever see one go wrong with a sensible name like Cassiar, Siwash, or Husky? No, sir! Take a look at Shookum here, he’s”—

Snap! The lean brute flashed up, the white teeth just missing Mason’s throat.

“Ye will, will ye?” A shrewd clout behind the ear with the butt of the dog-whip stretched the animal in the snow, quivering softly, a yellow slaver dripping from its fangs.

“As I was saying, just look at Shookum, here—he’s got the spirit. Bet ye he eats Carmen before the week’s out.”

“I’ll bank another proposition against that,” replied Malemute Kid, reversing the frozen bread placed before the fire to thaw. “We’ll eat Shookum before the trip is over. What d’ ye say, Ruth?”

The Indian woman settled the coffee with a piece of ice, glanced from Malemute Kid to her husband, then at the dogs, but vouchsafed no reply. It was such a palpable truism that no reply was necessary. Two hundred miles of unbroken trail in prospect, with a scant six days’ grub for themselves and none for the dogs, could admit no other alternative. The two men and the woman grouped about the fire and began their meagre meal. The dogs lay in their harnesses for it was a midday halt, and watched each mouthful enviously.

“No more lunches after to-day,” said Malemute Kid. “And we ’ve got to keep a close eye on the dogs,—they ’re getting vicious. They’d just as soon pull a fellow down as not, if they get the chance.”

“And I was president of an Epworth¹ once, and taught in the Sunday school.” Having irrelevantly delivered himself of this, Mason fell into a dreamy contemplation of his steaming moccasins, but was aroused by Ruth filling his cup. “Thank God, we ’ve got slathers of tea! I ’ve seen it growing, down in Tennessee. What would n’t I give for a hot corn pone just now! Never mind, Ruth; you won’t starve much longer, nor wear moccasins either.”

The woman threw off her gloom at this, and in her eyes welled up a great love for her white lord,—the first white man she had ever seen,—the first man whom she had known to treat a woman as something better than a mere animal or beast of burden.

“Yes, Ruth,” continued her husband, having recourse to the macaronic jargon in which it was alone possible for them to understand each other; “wait till we clean up and pull for the Outside. We’ll take the White Man’s canoe and go to the Salt Water. Yes, bad water, rough water,—great mountains dance up and down all the time. And so big, so far, so far away,—

you travel ten sleep, twenty sleep, forty sleep” (he graphically enumerated the days on his fingers), “all the time water, bad water. Then you come to great village, plenty people, just the same mosquitoes next summer. Wigwams oh, so high,—ten, twenty pines. Hi-yu shookum!”

He paused impotently, cast an appealing glance at Malemute Kid, then laboriously placed the twenty pines, end on end, by sign language. Malemute Kid smiled with cheery cynicism, but Ruth’s eyes were wide with wonder, and with pleasure; for she half believed he was joking, and such condescension pleased her poor woman’s heart.

“And then you step into a—a box, and pouf! up you go.” He tossed his empty cup in the air by way of illustration, and as he deftly caught it, cried: “And biff! down you come. Oh, great medicine-men! You go Fort Yukon, I go Arctic City,²—twenty-five sleep,—big string, all the time,—I catch him string,—I say, ‘Hello, Ruth! How are ye?’—and you say, ‘Is that my good husband?’—and I say, ‘Yes,’—and you say, ‘No can bake good bread, no more soda,’—then I say, ‘Look in cache, under flour; good-by.’ You look and catch plenty soda. All the time you go Fort Yukon, me Arctic City. Hi-yu medicine-man!”

Ruth smiled so ingenuously at the fairy story, that both men burst into laughter. A roar among the dogs cut short the wonders of the Outside, and by the time the snarling combatants were separated, she had lashed the sleds and all was ready for the trail.

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“Mush! Baldy! Hi! Mush on!” Mason worked his whip smartly, and as the dogs whined low the traces, broke out the sled with the gee-pole. Ruth followed with the second team, leaving Malemute Kid, who had helped her start, to bring up the rear. Strong man, brute that he was, capable of felling an ox at a blow, he could not bear to beat the poor animals, but humored them as a dog-driver rarely does,—nay, almost wept with them in their misery.

“Come, mush on there, you poor sorefooted brutes!” he murmured, after several ineffectual attempts to start the load. But his patience was at last rewarded, and though whimpering with pain, they hastened to join their fellows.

No more conversation; the toil of the trail will not permit such extravagance. And of all deadening labors, that of the Northland trail is the worst. Happy is the man who can weather a day’s travel at the price of silence, and that on a beaten track.

And of all heart-breaking labors, that of breaking trail is the worst. At every step the greasy webbed shoe sinks till the snow is level with the knee. Then up, straight up, the deviation of a fraction of an inch being a certain precursor of disaster, the snowshoe must be lifted till the surface is cleared; then forward, down, and the other foot is raised perpendicularly for the matter of half a yard. He who tries this for the first time, if haply he avoids bringing his shoes in dangerous propinquity and measures not his length on the treacherous footing, will give up exhausted at the end of a hundred yards; he who can keep out of the way of the dogs for a whole day may well crawl into his sleeping-bag with a clear conscience and a pride which passeth all understanding; and he who travels twenty sleeps on the Long Trail is a man whom the gods may envy.

The afternoon wore on, and with the awe, born of the White Silence, the voiceless travelers bent to their work. Nature has many tricks wherewith she convinces man of her

finitude,—the ceaseless flow of the tides, the fury of the storm, the shock of the earthquake, the long roll of heaven's artillery,—but the most tremendous, the most stupefying of all, is the passive phase of the White Silence. All movement ceases, the sky clears, the heavens are brass; the slightest whisper seems sacrilege, and man becomes timid, affrighted at the sound of his own voice. Sole speck of life journeying across the ghostly wastes of a dead world, he trembles at his audacity, realizes that his is a maggot's life, nothing more. Strange thoughts arise unsummoned, and the mystery of all things strives for utterance. And the fear of death of God, of the universe, comes over him,—the hope of the Resurrection and the Life, the yearning for immortality, the vain striving of the imprisoned essence,—it is then, if ever, that man walks alone with God.

So wore the day away. The river took a great bend, and Mason headed his team for the cut-off across the narrow neck of land. But the dogs balked at the high bank. Again and again, though Ruth and Malemute Kid were shoving on the sled, they slipped back. Then came the concerted effort. The miserable creatures, weak from hunger, exerted their last strength. Up—the sled poised on the top of the bank; but the leader swung the string of dogs behind him to the right, fouling Mason's snowshoes. The result was grievous. Mason was whipped on his feet; one of the dogs fell in the traces; and the sled toppled back, dragging everything to the bottom again.

Slash! the whip fell among the dogs savagely, especially upon the one which had fallen.

"Do n't, Mason," entreated Malemute Kid; "the poor devil's on its last legs. Wait and we'll put my team on."

Mason deliberately withheld the whip till the last word had fallen, then out flashed the long lash, completely curling about the offending creature's body. Carmen—for it was Carmen—cowered in the snow, cried piteously, then rolled over on her side.

It was a tragic moment, a pitiful incident of the trail,—a dying dog, two comrades in anger. Ruth glanced solicitously from man to man. But Malemute Kid restrained himself, though there was a world of reproach in his eyes, and bending over the dog, cut the traces. No word was spoken. The teams were double-spanned and the difficulty overcome; the sleds were under way again, the dying dog dragging herself along in the rear. As long as an animal can travel, it is not shot, and this last chance is accorded it,—the crawling into camp, if it can, and the hope of a moose being killed.

Already penitent for his angry action, but too stubborn to make amends, Mason toiled on at the head of the cavalcade, little dreaming that danger hovered in the air. The timber clustered thick in the sheltered bottom, and through this they threaded their way. Fifty feet or more from the trail towered a lofty pine. For generations it had stood there, and for generations destiny had had this one end in view,—perhaps the same had been decreed for Mason.

He stooped to fasten the loosened thong of his moccasin. The sleds came to a halt and the dogs lay down in the snow without a whimper. The stillness was weird; not a breath rustled the frost-encrusted forest; the cold and silence of outer space had chilled the heart and smoothed the trembling lips of nature. A sigh pulsed through the air,—they did not seem to actually hear it, but rather felt it, like the premonition of movement in a motionless void. Then the great tree, burdened with its weight of years and snow, played its last part in the tragedy of

life. He heard the warning crash and attempted to spring up, but almost erect, caught the blow squarely on the shoulder.

The sudden danger, the quick death,—how often had Malemute Kid faced it! The pin needles were still quivering as he gave his commands and sprang into action. Nor did the Indian girl faint or raise her voice in idle wailing, as might many of her white sisters. At his order, she threw her weight on the end of a quickly extemporized handspike, easing the pressure and listening to her husband's groans, while Malemute Kid attacked the tree with his axe. The steel rang merrily as it bit into the frozen trunk, each stroke being accompanied by a forced, audible respiration, the "Huh!" "Huh!" of the woodsman.

At last the Kid laid the pitiable thing that was once a man in the snow. But worse than his comrade's pain was the dumb anguish in the woman's face, the blended look of hopefulness and hopeless query. Little was said; those of the Northland are early taught the futility of words and the inestimable value of deeds. With the temperature at sixty-five below zero, a man cannot lie many minutes in the snow and live. So the sled-lashings were cut, and the sufferer rolled in furs, laid on a couch of boughs. Before him roared a fire, built of the very wood which wrought the mishap. Behind and partially over him was stretched the primitive fly,—a piece of canvas, which caught the radiating heat and threw it back and down upon him,—a trick which men may know who study physics at the fount.

And men who have shared their bed with death know when the call is sounded. Mason was terribly crushed. The most cursory examination revealed it. His right arm, leg, and back were broken; his limbs were paralyzed from the hips; and the likelihood of internal injury was large. An occasional moan was his only sign of life.

No hope; nothing to be done. The pitiless night crept slowly by,—Ruth's portion, the despairing stoicism of her race, and Malemute Kid adding new lines to his face of bronze. In fact, Mason suffered least of all, for he spent his time in Eastern Tennessee, in the Great Smoky Mountains, living over the scenes of his childhood. And most pathetic was the melody of his long-forgotten Southern vernacular, as he raved of swimming-holes and coon-hunts and watermelon raids. It was as Greek to Ruth, but the Kid understood and felt,—felt as only one can feel who has been shut out for years from all that civilization means.

Morning brought consciousness to the stricken man, and Malemute Kid bent closer to catch his whispers.

"You remember when we foregathered on the Tanana, four years come next ice-run? I didn't care so much for her then. It was more like she was pretty, and there was a smack of excitement about it, I think. But d' ye know, I 've come to think a heap of her. She's been a good wife to me, always at my shoulder in the pinch. And when it comes to trading, you know there is n't her equal. D' ye recollect the time she shot the Moosehorn Rapids to put you and me off that rock, the bullets whipping the water like hailstones?—and the time of the famine at Nuklukyeto?³—or when she raced the ice-run to bring the news? Yes, she's been a good wife to me, better'n that other one. Did n't know I'd been there? Never told you eh? Well, I tried it once, down in the States. That's why I'm here. Been raised together, too. She came away to give her a chance for divorce. She got it.

"But that's got nothing to do with Ruth. I had thought of cleaning up and pulling for the Outside next year,—her and I,—but it's too late. Do n't send her back to her people, Kid. It

bestly hard for a woman to go back. Think of it!—nearly four years on our bacon and bear and flour and dried fruit, and then to go back to her fish and cariboo. It's not good for her to have tried our ways, to come to know they 're better 'n her people's, and then return to them. Take care of her, Kid,—why do n't you,—but no, you always fought shy of them,—and you never told me why you came to this country. Be kind to her, and send her back to the States as soon as you can. But fix it so as she can come back,—liable to get homesick, you know.

“And the youngster—it's drawn us closer, Kid. I only hope it is a boy. Think of it!—flesh of my flesh, Kid. He must n't stop in this country. And if it's a girl, why she can 't. Sell my furs, they'll fetch at least five thousand, and I 've got as much more with the company. And hand over my interests with yours. I think that bench claim will show up. See that he gets a good schooling; and Kid, above all, do n't let him come back. This country was not made for white men.

“I'm a gone man, Kid. Three or four sleeps at the best. You 've got to go on. You must go on! Remember, it's my wife, it's my boy,—O God! I hope it's a boy! You can't stay by me,—and I charge you, a dying man, to pull on.”

“Give me three days,” pleaded Malemute Kid. “You may change for the better; something may turn up.”

“No.”

“Just three days.”

“You must pull on.”

“Two days.”

“It's my wife and my boy, Kid. You would not ask it.”

“One day.”

“No, no! I charge”—

“Only one day. We can shave it through on the grub, and I might knock over a moose.”

“No,—all right; one day, but not a minute more. And Kid, do n't—do n't leave me to face alone. Just a shot, one pull on the trigger. You understand. Think of it! Think of it! Flesh of my flesh, and I'll never live to see him!

“Send Ruth here. I want to say good-by and tell her that she must think of the boy and not wait till I'm dead. She might refuse to go with you if I did n't. Good-by, old man; good-by.

“Kid! I say—a—sink a hole above the pup, next to the slide. I panned out forty cents on my shovel there.

“And Kid!” he stooped lower to catch the last faint words, the dying man's surrender of his pride. “I'm sorry—for—you know—Carmen.”

Leaving the girl crying softly over her man, Malemute Kid slipped into his *parka* and snowshoes, tucked his rifle under his arm, and crept away into the forest. He was no tyro to the stern sorrows of the Northland, but never had he faced so stiff a problem as this. In the abstract, it was a plain, mathematical proposition,—three possible lives as against one doomed one. But now he hesitated. For five years, shoulder to shoulder, on the rivers and

trails, in the camps and mines, facing death by field and flood and famine, had they knitted the bonds of their comradeship. So close was the tie, that he had often been conscious of a vague jealousy of Ruth, from the first time she had come between. And now it must be severed by his own hand.

Though he prayed for a moose, just one moose, all game seemed to have deserted the land, and nightfall found the exhausted man crawling into camp, light-handed, heavy-hearted. A uproar from the dogs and shrill cries from Ruth hastened him.

Bursting into the camp, he saw the girl in the midst of the snarling pack, laying about her with an axe. The dogs had broken the iron rule of their masters and were rushing the ground. He joined the issue with his rifle reversed, and the hoary game of natural selection was played out with all the ruthlessness of its primeval environment. Rifle and axe went up and down, hit or missed with monotonous regularity; lithe bodies flashed, with wild eyes and dripping fangs; and man and beast fought for supremacy to the bitterest conclusion. Then the beaten brutes crept to the edge of the firelight, licking their wounds, voicing their misery to the stars.

The whole stock of dried salmon had been devoured, and perhaps five pounds of flour remained to tide them over two hundred miles of wilderness. Ruth returned to her husband while Malemute Kid cut up the warm body of one of the dogs, the skull of which had been crushed by the axe. Every portion was carefully put away, save the hide and offal, which were cast to his fellows of the moment before.

Morning brought fresh trouble. The animals were turning on each other. Carmen, who still clung to her slender thread of life, was downed by the pack. The lash fell among the unheeded. They cringed and cried under the blows, but refused to scatter till the last wretched bit had disappeared,—bones, hide, hair, everything.

Malemute Kid went about his work, listening to Mason, who was back in Tennessee delivering tangled discourses and wild exhortations to his brethren of other days.

Taking advantage of neighboring pines, he worked rapidly, and Ruth watched him make a cache similar to those sometimes used by hunters to preserve their meat from the wolverine and dogs. One after the other, he bent the tops of two small pines toward each other and nearly to the ground, making them fast with thongs of moosehide. Then he beat the dogs into submission and harnessed them to two of the sleds, loading the same with everything but the furs which enveloped Mason. These he wrapped and lashed tightly about him, fastening either end of the robes to the bent pines. A single stroke of his hunting-knife would release them and send the body high in the air.

Ruth had received her husband's last wishes and made no struggle. Poor girl, she had learned the lesson of obedience well. From a child, she had bowed, and seen all women bow to the lords of creation, and it did not seem in the nature of things for woman to resist. The Kid permitted her one outburst of grief, as she kissed her husband,—her own people had no such custom,—then led her to the foremost sled and helped her into her snowshoes. Blindly and instinctively, she took the gee-pole and whip, and "mushed" the dogs out on the trail. Then he returned to Mason, who had fallen into a coma; and long after she was out of sight she crouched by the fire, waiting, hoping, praying for his comrade to die.

It is not pleasant to be alone with painful thoughts in the White Silence. The silence of gloom is merciful, shrouding one as with protection and breathing a thousand intangible sympathies; but the bright White Silence, clear and cold, under steely skies, is pitiless.

An hour passed,—two hours,—but the man would not die. At high noon, the sun, without raising its rim above the southern horizon, threw a suggestion of fire athwart the heavens, then quickly drew it back. Malemute Kid roused and dragged himself to his comrade's side. He cast one glance about him. The White Silence seemed to sneer, and a great fear came upon him. There was a sharp report; Mason swung into his aerial sepulchre; and Malemute Kid dashed the dogs into a wild gallop as he fled across the snow.

Man rarely places a proper valuation upon his womankind, at least not until deprived of them. He has no conception of the subtle atmosphere exhaled by the sex feminine so long as he bathes in it; but let it be withdrawn, and an ever-growing void begins to manifest itself in his existence, and he becomes hungry, in a vague sort of way, for a something so indefinite that he cannot characterize it. If his comrades have no more experience than himself, they will shake their heads dubiously and dose him with strong physic. But the hunger will continue and become stronger; he will lose interest in the things of his every-day life and will become morbid; and one day, when the emptiness has become unbearable, a revelation will dawn upon him.

In the Yukon country, when this comes to pass, the man usually provisions a poling-boat, if it be summer, and if winter harnesses his dogs, and heads for the Southland. A few months later, supposing him to be possessed of a faith in the country, he returns with a wife to share with him in that faith, and incidentally in his hardships. This but serves to show the innate selfishness of man. It also brings us to the trouble of "Scruff" Mackenzie, which occurred in the old days, before the country was stamped and staked by a tidal-wave of *che-cha-quas* and when the Klondike's only claim to notice was its salmon fisheries.

Scruff Mackenzie bore the ear-marks of a frontier birth and a frontier life. His face was stamped with twenty-five years of incessant struggle with nature in her wildest moods,—the last two, the wildest and hardest of all, having been spent in groping for the gold which lies in the shadow of the Arctic Circle. When the yearning sickness came upon him he was not surprised, for he was a practical man and had seen other men thus stricken. But he showed no sign of his malady, save that he worked harder. All summer he fought mosquitoes and washed the sure-thing bars of the Stuart River for a double grub-stake. Then he floated a raft of house-logs down the Yukon to Forty Mile,² and put together as comfortable a cabin as any the camp could boast of. In fact, it showed such cosy promise that many men elected to be his partner and to come and live with him. But he crushed their aspirations with rough speech, peculiar for its strength and brevity, and bought a double supply of grub from the trading-post.

As has been noted, Scruff Mackenzie was a practical man. If he wanted a thing he usually got it, but in doing so, went no farther out of his way than was necessary. Though a son of toil and hardship, he was averse to a journey of six hundred miles on the ice, a second of two thousand miles on the ocean, and still a third thousand miles or so to his last stamping grounds,—all in the mere quest of a wife. Life was too short. So he rounded up his dogs, lashed a curious freight to his sled, and faced across the divide whose westward slopes were drained by the head-reaches of the Tanana.

He was a sturdy traveler, and his wolf-dogs could work harder and travel farther on less grub than any other team in the Yukon. Three weeks later he strode into a hunting-camp

the Upper Tanana Sticks. They marveled at his temerity; for they had a bad name and had been known to kill white men for as trifling a thing as a sharp axe or a broken rifle. But he went among them single-handed, his bearing being a delicious composite of humility, familiarity, *sang-froid*, and insolence. It required a deft hand and deep knowledge of the barbaric mind effectually to handle such diverse weapons; but he was a past master in the art, knowing when to conciliate and when to threaten with Jove-like wrath.

He first made obeisance to the Chief Thling-Tinneh, presenting him with a couple of pounds of black tea and tobacco, and thereby winning his most cordial regard. Then he mingled with the men and maidens, and that night gave a *potlach*.³ The snow was beaten down in the form of an oblong, perhaps a hundred feet in length and quarter as many across. Down the centre a long fire was built, while either side was carpeted with spruce boughs. The lodges were forsaken, and the fivescore or so members of the tribe gave tongue to their folk-chants in honor of their guest.

Scruff Mackenzie's two years had taught him the not many hundred words of their vocabulary, and he had likewise conquered their deep gutturals, their Japanese idiomatic constructions, and honorific and agglutinative particles. So he made oration after the same manner, satisfying their instinctive poetry-love with crude flights of eloquence and metaphorical contortions. After Thling-Tinneh and the Shaman had responded in kind, he made trifling presents to the menfolk, joined in their singing, and proved an expert in the fifty-two-stick gambling game.

And they smoked his tobacco and were pleased. But among the younger men there was a defiant attitude, a spirit of braggadocio, easily understood by the raw insinuations of the toothless squaws and the giggling of the maidens. They had known few white men, "Sons of the Wolf," but from those few they had learned strange lessons.

Nor had Scruff Mackenzie, for all his seeming carelessness, failed to note these phenomena. In truth, rolled in his sleeping-furs, he thought it all over, thought seriously, and emptied many pipes in mapping out a campaign. One maiden only had caught his fancy,—none other than Zarinska, daughter to the chief. In features, form, and poise, answering more nearly to the white man's type of beauty, she was almost an anomaly among her tribal sisters. He would possess her, make her his wife, and name her—ah, he would name her Gertrude. Having thus decided, he rolled over on his side and dropped off to sleep, a true son of his conquering race.

It was slow work and a stiff game; but Scruff Mackenzie manoeuvred cunningly, with an unconcern which served to puzzle the Sticks. He took great care to impress the men that he was a sure shot and a mighty hunter, and the camp rang with his plaudits when he brought down a moose at six hundred yards. Of a night he visited in Chief Thling-Tinneh's lodge with moose and cariboo skins, talking big and dispensing tobacco with a lavish hand. Nor did he fail to likewise honor the Shaman; for he realized the medicine-man's influence with his people, and was anxious to make of him an ally. But that worthy was high and mighty, refused to be propitiated, and was unerringly marked down as a prospective enemy.

Though no opening presented for an interview with Zarinska, Mackenzie stole many a glance to her, giving fair warning of his intent. And well she knew, yet coquettishly surrounded herself with a ring of women whenever the men were away and he had a chance

But he was in no hurry; besides, he knew she could not help but think of him, and a few days of such thought would only better his suit.

At last, one night, when he deemed the time to be ripe, he abruptly left the chief's smoking dwelling and hastened to a neighboring lodge. As usual, she sat with squaws and maids about her, all engaged in sewing moccasins and beadwork. They laughed at his entrance, and his bandinage, which linked Zarinska to him, ran high. But one after the other they were unceremoniously bundled into the outer snow, whence they hurried to spread the tale through all the camp.

His cause was well pleaded, in her tongue, for she did not know his, and at the end of two hours he rose to go.

“So Zarinska will come to the White Man's lodge? Good! I go now to have talk with thy father, for he may not be so minded. And I will give him many tokens; but he must not ask too much. If he say no? Good! Zarinska shall yet come to the White Man's lodge.”

He had already lifted the skin flap to depart, when a low exclamation brought him back to the girl's side. She brought herself to her knees on the bearskin mat, her face aglow with true Eve-light, and shyly unbuckled his heavy belt. He looked down, perplexed, suspicious, his ears alert for the slightest sound without. But her next move disarmed his doubt, and he smiled with pleasure. She took from her sewing-bag a moosehide sheath, brave with bright beadwork, fantastically designed. She drew his great hunting-knife, gazed reverently along the keen edge, half tempted to try it with her thumb, and shot it into place in its new home. Then she slipped the sheath along the belt to its customary resting-place, just above the hip.

For all the world, it was like a scene of olden time,—a lady and her knight. Mackenzie drew her up full height and swept her red lips with his mustache,—the, to her, foreign care of the Wolf. It was a meeting of the stone age and the steel.

There was a thrill of excitement in the air as Scruff Mackenzie, a bulky bundle under his arm, threw open the flap of Thling-Tinneh's tent. Children were running about in the open, dragging dry wood to the scene of the *potlach*, a babble of women's voices was growing in intensity, the young men were consulting in sullen groups, while from the Shaman's lodge rose the eerie sounds of an incantation.

The chief was alone with his blear-eyed wife, but a glance sufficed to tell Mackenzie that the news was already old. So he plunged at once into the business, shifting the beaded sheath prominently to the fore as advertisement of the betrothal.

“O Thling-Tinneh, mighty chief of the Sticks and the land of the Tanana, ruler of the salmon and the bear, the moose and the cariboo! The White Man is before thee with a great purpose. Many moons has his lodge been empty, and he is lonely. And his heart has eaten itself in silence, and grown hungry for a woman to sit beside him in his lodge, to meet him from the hunt with warm fire and good food. He has heard strange things, the patter of beaded moccasins and the sound of children's voices. And one night a vision came upon him, and he beheld the Raven, who is thy father, the great Raven, who is the father of all the Sticks. And the Raven spake to the lonely White Man, saying: ‘Bind thou thy moccasins upon thee, and gird thy snowshoes on, and lash thy sled with food for many sleeps and fine tokens for thyself, O Chief Thling-Tinneh. For thou shalt turn thy face to where the mid-spring sun is wont to shine.’”

below the land, and journey to this great chief's hunting-grounds. There thou shalt make presents, and Thling-Tinneh, who is my son, shall become to thee as a father. In his lodge there is a maiden into whom I breathed the breath of life for thee. This maiden shalt thou take to wife.'

"O Chief, thus spake the great Raven; thus do I lay many presents at thy feet; thus am I come to take thy daughter!"

The old man drew his furs about him with crude consciousness of royalty, but delayed no reply while a youngster crept in, delivered a quick message to appear before the council, and was gone.

"O White Man, whom we have named Moose-Killer, also known as the Wolf, and the Son of the Wolf! We know thou comest of a mighty race; we are proud to have thee our *potlach* guest; but the king-salmon does not mate with the dog-salmon, nor the Raven with the Wolf.

"Not so!" cried Mackenzie. "The daughters of the Raven have I met in the camps of the Wolf,—the squaw of Mortimer, the squaw of Tregidgo, the squaw of Barnaby, who came twice-ice-runs back, and I have heard of other squaws, though my eyes beheld them not."

"Son, your words are true; but it were evil mating, like the water with the sand, like the snowflake with the sun. But met you one Mason and his squaw? No? He came ten ice-runs ago,—the first of all the Wolves. And with him there was a mighty man, straight as a willow shoot, and tall; strong as the bald-faced grizzly, with a heart like the full summer moon in his"—

"Oh!" interrupted Mackenzie, recognizing the well-known Northland figure,—"*Malemu* Kid!"

"The same,—a mighty man. But saw you aught of the squaw? She was full sister of Zarinska."

"Nay, Chief; but I have heard. Mason—far, far to the north, a spruce-tree, heavy with years, crushed out his life beneath. But his love was great, and he had much gold. With this and her boy, she journeyed countless sleeps toward the winter's noonday sun, and there she yet lives,—no biting frost, no snow, no summer's midnight sun, no winter's noonday night."

A second messenger interrupted with imperative summons from the council. As Mackenzie threw him into the snow, he caught a glimpse of the swaying forms before the council-fire, heard the deep basses of the men in rhythmic chant, and knew the Shaman was fanning the anger of his people. Time pressed. He turned upon the chief.

"Come! I wish thy child. And now. See! here are tobacco, tea, many cups of sugar, warm blankets, handkerchiefs, both good and large; and here, a true rifle, with many bullets and much powder."

"Nay," replied the old man, struggling against the great wealth spread before him. "Even now are my people come together. They will not have this marriage."

"But thou art chief."

"Yet do my young men rage because the Wolves have taken their maidens so that they may not marry."

"Listen, O Thling-Tinneh! Ere the night has passed into the day, the Wolf shall face his dog,

to the Mountains of the East and fare forth to the Country of the Yukon. And Zarinska shall break trail for his dogs.”

“And ere the night has gained its middle, my young men may fling to the dogs the flesh of the Wolf, and his bones be scattered in the snow till the springtime lay them bare.”

It was threat and counter-threat. Mackenzie’s bronzed face flushed darkly. He raised his voice. The old squaw, who till now had sat an impassive spectator, made to creep by him for the door. The song of the men broke suddenly, and there was a hubbub of many voices as he whirled the old woman roughly to her couch of skins.

“Again I cry—listen, O Thling-Tinneh! The Wolf dies with teeth fast-locked, and with his eyes there shall sleep ten of thy strongest men,—men who are needed, for the hunting is begun, and the fishing is not many moons away. And again, of what profit should I die? I know the custom of thy people; thy share of my wealth shall be very small. Grant me thy child, and it shall all be thine. And yet again, my brothers will come, and they are many, and their maws are never filled; and the daughters of the Raven shall bear children in the lodge of the Wolf. My people are greater than thy people. It is destiny. Grant, and all this wealth shall be thine.”

Moccasins were crunching the snow without. Mackenzie threw his rifle to cock, and loosened the twin Colts in his belt.

“Grant, O Chief!”

“And yet will my people say no.”

“Grant, and the wealth is thine. Then shall I deal with thy people after.”

“The Wolf will have it so. I will take his tokens,—but I would warn him.”

Mackenzie passed over the goods, taking care to clog the rifle’s ejector, and capping the bargain with a kaleidoscopic silk kerchief. The Shaman and half a dozen young braves entered, but he shouldered boldly among them and passed out.

“Pack!” was his laconic greeting to Zarinska as he passed her lodge and hurried to harness his dogs. A few minutes later he swept into the council at the head of the team, the woman by his side. He took his place at the upper end of the oblong, by the side of the chief. To his left, a step to the rear, he stationed Zarinska,—her proper place. Besides, the time was ripe for mischief, and there was need to guard his back.

On either side, the men crouched to the fire, their voices lifted in a folk-chant out of the forgotten past. Full of strange, halting cadences and haunting recurrences, it was none the less beautiful. “Fearful” may inadequately express it. At the lower end, under the eye of the Shaman, danced half a score of women. Stern were his reproofs to those who did not wholly abandon themselves to the ecstasy of the rite. Half hidden in their heavy masses of raven hair, all disheveled and falling to their waists, they slowly swayed to and fro, their forms rippling to an ever-changing rhythm.

It was a weird scene; an anachronism. To the south, the nineteenth century was reeling on the few years of its last decade; here flourished man primeval, a shade removed from the prehistoric cave-dweller, a forgotten fragment of the Elder World. The tawny wolf-dogs snarled between their skin-clad masters or fought for room, the firelight cast backward from their red

eyes and slavered fangs. The woods, in ghostly shroud, slept on unheeding. The White Silence, for the moment driven to the rimming forest, seemed ever crushing inward; the stars danced with great leaps, as is their wont in the time of the Great Cold; while the Spirits of the Pole trailed their robes of glory athwart the heavens.

Scruff Mackenzie dimly realized the wild grandeur of the setting as his eyes ranged down the fur-fringed sides in quest of missing faces. They rested for a moment on a newborn baby suckling at its mother's naked breast. It was forty below,—seventy and odd degrees of frost. He thought of the tender women of his own race, and smiled grimly. Yet from the loins of some such tender woman had he sprung with a kingly inheritance,—an inheritance which gave to him and his dominance over the land and sea, over the animals and the peoples of all the zones. Single-handed against fivescore, girt by the Arctic winter, far from his own, he felt the prompting of his heritage, the desire to possess, the wild danger-love, the thrill of battle, the power to conquer or to die.

The singing and the dancing ceased, and the Shaman flared up in rude eloquence. Through the sinuosities of their vast mythology, he worked cunningly upon the credulity of his people. The case was strong. Opposing the creative principles as embodied in the Crow and the Raven, he stigmatized Mackenzie as the Wolf, the fighting and the destructive principle. Not only was the combat of these forces spiritual, but men fought, each to his totem. They were the children of Jelchs, the Raven, the Promethean fire-bringer; Mackenzie was the child of the Wolf, or, in other words, the Devil. For them to bring a truce to this perpetual warfare, to marry their daughters to the archenemy, were treason and blasphemy of the highest order. No phrase was harsh, nor figure vile, enough in branding Mackenzie as a sneaking interloper and emissary of Satan. There was a subdued, savage roar in the deep chests of his listeners as he took the swing of his peroration.

“Ay, my brothers, Jelchs is all-powerful! Did he not bring heaven-born fire that we might be warm? Did he not draw the sun, moon, and stars from their holes that we might see? Did he not teach us that we might fight the Spirits of Famine and of Frost? But now Jelchs is angry with his children, and they are grown to a handful, and he will not help. For they have forgotten him, and done evil things, and trod bad trails, and taken his enemies into the lodges to sit by their fires. And the Raven is sorrowful at the wickedness of his children; but when they shall rise up and show they have come back, he will come out of the darkness to aid them. O brothers! the Fire-Bringer has whispered messages to thy Shaman; the same shall ye hear. Let the young men take the young women to their lodges; let them fly at the throat of the Wolf; let them be undying in their enmity! Then shall their women become fruitful and they shall multiply into a mighty people! And the Raven shall lead great tribes of the fathers and their fathers' fathers from out of the North; and they shall beat back the Wolves till they are as last year's camp-fires; and they shall again come to rule over all the land! 'Tis the message of Jelchs, the Raven.”

This foreshadowing of the Messiah's coming brought a hoarse howl from the Sticks as they leaped to their feet. Mackenzie slipped the thumbs of his mittens, and waited. There was a clamor for the Fox, not to be stilled till one of the young men stepped forward to speak.

“Brothers! The Shaman has spoken wisely. The Wolves have taken our women, and our men are childless. We are grown to a handful. The Wolves have taken our warm furs, and

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