

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is a protest and a deliverance. For seven years I had written continuously of Canada, though some short stories of South Sea life, and the novel *Mrs. Falchion*, had, during that time, issued from my pen. It looked as though I should be writing of the Far North all my life. Editors had begun to take that view; but from the start it had never been my view. Even when writing *Pierre and His People* I was determined that I should not be cabined, cribbed, and confined in one field; that I should not, as some other men have done, wind in upon myself, until at last each succeeding book would be but a variation of some previous book, and I should end by imitating myself, become the sacrifice to the god of the pin-hole.

I was warned not to break away from Canada; but all my life I had been warned, and all my life I had followed my own convictions. I would rather not have written another word than be corralled, bitted, saddled, and ridden by that heartless broncho-buster, the public, which wants a man who has once pleased it, to do the same thing under the fret of whip and spur for ever. When I went to the Island of Jersey, in 1897, it was to shake myself free of what might become a mere obsession. I determined that, as wide as my experiences had been in life, so would my writing be, whether it pleased the public or not. I was determined to fulfil myself; and in doing so to take no instructions except those of my own conscience, impulse, and conviction. Even then I saw fields of work which would occupy my mind, and such skill as I had, for many a year to come. I saw the Channel Islands, Egypt, South Africa, and India. In all these fields save India, I have given my Pegasus its bridle-rein, and, so far, I have no reason to feel that my convictions were