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THE INDIAN DRUM

by

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We guarantee that every member of the family will have a good reason for wanting the next instalment of this story---The Editor

NEAR the northern end of Lake Michigan, where the bluff-bowed ore-carriers and the big, low-lying, wheat-laden steel freighters from Lake Superior push out from the Straits of Mackinac and dispute the right of way, in the island divided channel, with the white-and-gold, electric lighted, wireless equipped passenger steamers bound for Detroit and Buffalo, there is a copse of pine and hemlock back from the shingly beach. From this copse—dark, blue, primeval, silent at most times as when the Great Manitou ruled his inland waters—there comes at times of storm a sound like the booming of an old Indian drum. This drum beat, so the tradition says, whenever the lake took a life; and, as a sign perhaps that it is still the Manitou who rules the waters in spite of all the commerce of the cities, the drum still beats its roll for every ship lost on the lake, one beat for every life.

So—men say—they heard and counted the beatings of the drum to thirty-five upon the hour when, as afterward they learned, the great steel steamer Wenota sank with twenty-four of its crew and eleven passengers; so—men say—they heard the requiem of the five who went down with the schooner Grant; and of the seventeen lost with the Susan Hart; and so of a score of ships more. Once only, it is told, has the drum counted wrong.

At the height of the great storm of December, 1895, the drum beat the roll of a sinking ship. One, two, three—the hearers counted the drum beats, time and again, in their intermitted booming, to twenty-four. They waited, therefore, for report of a ship lost with twenty-four lives; no such news came. The new steel freighter Miwaki, on her maiden trip during the storm with twenty-five—not twenty-four—aboard never made her port; no news was ever heard from her; no wreckage ever was found. On this account, throughout the families whose fathers, brothers, and sons were the officers and crew of the Miwaka, there stirred for a time a desperate belief that one of the men on the Miwaka was saved; that somewhere, somehow, he was alive and might return. The day of the destruction of the Miwaka was fixed as December fifth by the time at which she passed the government lookout at the Straits; the hour was fixed as five o'clock in the morning only by the sounding of the drum.

The region, filled with Indian legend and with memories of wrecks, encourages such beliefs as this. To northward and to westward a half dozen warning lights—l'Île-aux-Galets ("Skilligalee" the lake men call it), Waugaushance, Beaver, and Fox Islands—

gleam spectrally where the bone-white shingle outcrops above the water, or blur ghostlike in the haze; on the dark knolls topping the glistening sand bluffs to northward, Chippewas and Ottawas, a century and a half ago, quarreled over the prisoners after the massacre at Fort Mackinac; to southward, where other hills frown down upon Little Traverse Bay, the black-robed priests in their chapel chant the same masses their predecessors chanted to the Indians of that time. So, whatever may be the origin of that drum, its meaning is not questioned by the forlorn descendants of those Indians, who now make bead-work and sweet-grass baskets for their summer trade, or by the more credulous of the white fishermen and farmers; men whose word on any other subject would receive unquestioning credence will tell you they have heard the drum.

But at bottom, of course, this is only the absurdest of superstitions, which can affect in no way men who to-day ship ore in steel bottoms to the mills of Gary and carry gasoline-engine reaped and threshed wheat to the elevators of Chicago. It is recorded, therefore, only as a superstition which for twenty years has been connected with the loss of a great ship.

THE MAN WHOM THE STORM HAUNTED

STORM—the stinging, frozen sleet-slash of the February norther whistling down the floe-jammed length of the lake—was assaulting Chicago. Over the lake it was a white, whirling maelstrom, obscuring at mid-afternoon even the lighthouses at the harbor entrance; beyond that, the winter boats trying for the harbor mouth were bellowing blindly at bay before the jammed ice, and foghorns and sirens echoed loudly in the city in the lulls of the storm.

Battering against the fronts of the row of club buildings, fashionable hotels, and shops which face across the narrow strip of park to the lake front in downtown Chicago, the gale swirled and eddied the sleet till all the wide windows, warm within, were frosted. So heavy was this frost on the panes of the Fort Dearborn Club—one of the staidest of the downtown clubs for men—that the great log fires blazing on the open hearths added appreciable light as well as warmth to the rooms.

The few members present at this hour of the afternoon showed by their lazy attitudes and the desultoriness of their conversation the dulling of vitality which warmth and shelter bring on a day of cold and storm. On one, however, the storm had had a

contrary effect. With swift, uneven steps he paced now one room, now another; from time to time he stopped abruptly by a window, scraped from it with finger nail the frost, stared out for an instant through the little opening he had made, then resumed as abruptly his nervous pacing with a manner so uneasy and distraught that, since his arrival at the club an hour before, none even among those who knew him best had ventured to speak to him.

There are, in every great city, a few individuals who, from their fullness of experience in an epoch of the city's life come to epitomize that epoch in the general mind; when one thinks of a city or of a section of the country in more personal terms than its square miles, its towering buildings, and its censused millions, one must think of those individuals. Almost every great industry owns one and seldom more than one; that often enough is not, in a money sense, the predominant figure of his industry; others of his rivals or even of his partners may be actually more powerful than he; but he is the personality; he represents to the outsiders the romance and mystery of the secrets and early, naked adventures of the great achievement. Thus, to think of the great mercantile establishments of State Street is to think immediately of one man; another very vivid and picturesque personality stands for the stockyards; another rises from the wheat pit; one more from the banks; one from the steel works. The man who was pacing restlessly and alone the rooms of the Fort Dearborn Club on this stormy afternoon was the man who, to most people, bodied forth the life underlying all other commerce thereabouts but the least known, the life of the lakes.

The lakes, which mark unmistakably those who get their living from them, had put their marks on him. Though he was slight in frame with a spare, almost ascetic leanness, he had the wiry strength and endurance of the man whose youth had been passed upon the water. He was very close to sixty now, but his thick, straight hair was still jet black except for a slash of pure white above one temple; his brows were black above his deep blue eyes. Unforgettable eyes, they were; they gazed at one directly with surprising, disconcerting intrusion into one's thoughts; then, before amazement altered to resentment, one realized that, though he was still gazing, his eyes were vacant with speculation—a strange, lonely withdrawal into himself. His acquaintance, in explaining him to strangers, said he had lived too much by himself of late; he and