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POMIUK'S RING.

By Ralph Graham Taber.

It is only a slight gold band with a tiny opal setting, a child's ring; for you or I could not push it below the joint of the little finger. For the matter of that, neither can its small owner, Pomuk; it is the dearest thing on earth to him.

Some of you who visited the world's fair at Chicago and strayed into the Eskimo village, at the northwest corner of Jackson Park, may recollect a little fellow who always wore a smiling face, and whose small, turned-up nose was sometimes in need of a handkerchief. You must remember his comical dances, that brought him in showers of nickels from the spectators; though he did not dance for very long, for he had a fall in the grounds one day that made of him a cripple. But this was not Pomuk's only means of conjuring the small change out of the visitors' pockets. None there could better crack one of the long whips, and he was quite an expert at throwing a harpoon; but his greatest source of income was not through skill or chance at all. It was the irresistible way he had of winning all hearts about him, and by this he held the combinations to a good many well-filled purses.

Do not, however, let Pomuk's love for nickels, dimes and quarters lower him in your estimation. He knew very little about their real value; in fact, he knew very little about that until long after the world's fair opened; but they were bright and pretty things, and Pomuk loved to play with them and to hear their merry jingle; for Pomuk, spite of his gentle ways and ever smiling countenance, was a veritable savage, and a close study of him might easily have led one to entertain a lesser regard for the enlightenment of civilization.

But I started to tell you about his ring, and I must not wander from the subject.

His first day upon a civilized shore was marked by an event for Pomuk that made it ever memorable. It was the 13th day of October, the year before the big show was held, that Pomuk landed at Boston with 56 other Eskimos; and it happened that among those who came down to the wharf to see the curious cargo brought by the schooner Evalina there was a theatrical manager. Whether it was out of the kindness of his heart or to advertise his performance, he was not sure; but, no matter what his motive, the fact remains that he gave these simple visitors to America the freedom of his play-house; and that evening nearly a score of them, under a proper escort, attended in body and occupied the boxes.

The play was merely a big burlesque, and they could not understand a word of it. They were dazzled by the lights and the crowded house and the orchestra and the ballet. The stage, with its hidden workings, was a marvel past understanding; but the songs were pretty, the costumes bright, and the dancing—ah, the dancing!

Pomuk had thought that he could dance; but never in all his most fanciful dreams had he pictured such wonderful dancing. From the first to the last his gaze fastened upon the dainty leader of the ballet. She was a mere child, but, nevertheless, the most skillful dancer that ever graced an American theatre, and all Boston was talking of her and loudly voicing her praises. When her dancing was ended and she left the stage, Pomuk's smile faded, and he sank back again into the seat from which her fascinations had drawn him.

The interpreter asked him if he liked it, and Pomuk's little black eyes lighted up and his little tongue rolled off long Eskimo words at the rate of 20 a minute. The manager was standing by his chair, and he noted the child's animation.

"What does he say?" he asked.
"He says," replied the interpreter, "that since he has come aboard the ship, people have been telling him about God and Heaven and, angels, and that if he were good he would go there when he died; but he says they must have made a mistake for he doesn't believe that he is dead, yet he certainly is in Heaven."

"There are very few angels here, I fear," remarked the manager, sadly. Not that the manager needed an "angel," for he was playing to crowded houses.

Pomuk now wanted to know what the manager had been saying, and when he heard the manager's remark, he replied, with prompt decision: "There is surely one angel—that little one. Oh, how I would like to speak to her."

No sooner was Pomuk's wish made known than the manager called an usher, and in a very few minutes the little girl and her mother entered the box. The little girl had, of course, changed her attire, and Pomuk hardly recognized her at first, but when he did so his joy knew no bounds. He promptly threw his arms around her neck, and not only rubbed noses, Eskimo fashion, but gave her cheek a resounding smack, which might have been heard all over the house had not the orchestra been playing.

The little girl took it good-naturedly, and then began for both of them a half hour or so of such novel pleasure and amusement as neither had ever enjoyed before. In a very few minutes they managed to dispense with the services of an interpreter; and presently they retired to the back of the box, where the little girl danced a few measures for him, and then prevailed upon him to dance for her. It took her but a moment to master his odd steps; and when she joined in them she won the last fraction of Pomuk's heart, if she hadn't all before that.

At last the mother said they must go, as it was long past the little girl's bedtime; and their parting brings me to my story.

The little girl took a ring from her finger and fitted it on one of Pomuk's. "Keep that," she said, "so I will know you when I see you again; perhaps it will be in heaven."

Pomuk looked at the little token, and his eyes suddenly filled with tears.

Alas! he had nothing to give in return.

"Never mind," said the little girl, putting her arm around him; "I shall never forget you. I shall not need a reminder."

All through the hot, weary months at Chicago, Pomuk treasured the little keepsake and thought about the donor, and wondered when he would meet her again, and longed for her with such longing as only the heart of a child can hold.

When the great fair was over, and Pomuk with his people—Kangasutuk, his uncle, and Tuklavina, the latter's wife, and Kavaluit and Sikepa, his cousins—returned to their home in the frozen north, which, from the needs of their nomadic life, is from Nachvok to Ungava, Pomuk gave his uncle his board of quarters, nickels and dimes. These, with his uncle's savings, were promptly converted into fishing nets, guns, ammunition, clothing, a cook stove and cooking utensils, tobacco, flour and molasses, and last, but not least in their estimation, the clock and a maltese kitten. But with one thing Pomuk would not part for aught; this side of heaven—the little gold band that he had already outgrown, with its tiny opal setting.

Kangasutuk fell among thieves by the way, and when, after many vicissitudes, they managed to reach their northern home, there were but a few of their purchases left, save the stove, the clock and the kitten.

Nor had things gone well in Labrador during their 30 months of absence. The fishing had been a failure, the seals had been scarce, and had it not been for the deer, that principal source of supply in winter, probably none of Kangasutuk's band would have been left to welcome them.

It was a sad home coming. Two of the 12 who had gone to the fair had been buried by the way. Kangasutuk's father was dead, and his aged mother also died a few days after their return. Then, ere the snow was solid enough to build their winter igloos, a sickness swept among them. Kangasutuk's father had been the medicine man; there was no other to take his place, and nearly half the tribe succumbed to this dread visitation. Those whose lives were spared were of little use that winter, and with but two or three well souls to hunt and trap and fish and serve the needs of a score of ill ones, it proved a terrible season.

Toward the latter end of February, when the cold was at its greatest, the powder and meat gave out at once. It was not a great way to the company's post, but they had no fur to trade there. Far to trade must be properly dressed. What little the half-dressed traps had caught had been hurriedly skinned and frozen up. There had been no well hands to dress it.

"But you still have your ring," said Kangasutuk. "Take that, it has much value, and bring us powder and meat from the post. Do hang your head. I would take it from you and go myself were I able. I—"

"But wait!" interrupted Pomuk. "Why should they not give us powder and meat? They do so to others far the south, and even to those at the seaward. We can pay them in furs in the spring. They have often offered to trust us."

"And be like the mission Eskimos—like the poor slaves we know and have seen to the south? Not I!" said Kangasutuk. "Never yet have I been in debt. It is the first rule of our tribe. Would you have me, the chief, the first to break it? No. Do as I did you, and go at once. I speak as your chief, not your uncle."

Refusal was out of the question. Pomuk bit his lip till it bled; but he limped out of the igloo, called the team of dogs together, and painfully harnessed them to the sled.

It was a long journey, but it did not matter. The sky was ablaze with northern lights that flamed like candles of gigantic power; for they clothed all the snow-clad mountains with a weird, ghastly light that was not like the light of the moon, nor the stars, but a light that one could see by as well as if the sun had risen.

It was cold, too. Our common thermometer would have failed to show how cold it was; but that did not matter, either. The Eskimo are used to the cold. There is a silly notion that they like to be half frozen, that they enjoy numb hands and feet and frost-bitten noses. The truth is, they suffer from cold quite much as we do, but they are more able to bear it. That is to say, others would perish, perhaps, where they are able to sustain life. The same may be said of hunger. They are used to that, too; and as for cold and hunger when they are starving. They will find food, of course, if they can. If they cannot, why then, what matter? All must go some time, some way. One way may be as good as another. I wish the world held more such simple, good-natured philosophers.

Pomuk took with him his uncle's harpoon, his knife, which was long and keen, and a carpenter's axe that they had brought and had managed to retain among them. In addition to these he took an old boot. It was made of seal-skin and had been oiled often. It was good to chew on when hungry. Then he squatted down on the seat of the sled, and wrapped a bearskin round him, and shouted "Whit! whit!" to the leader.

For a mile he headed toward the company's post; then he called out sharply, "Rara! rara!" and the team obediently turned to the left and started out toward the ocean.

At last they had travelled 30 miles, and the edge of the ice was before them. Here Pomuk stopped, built a snow house, and taking his dogs in as bed-fellows, that they might warm both themselves and him, he chewed a bit of the seal-skin boot and went sound asleep. Just one hour he slept and woke refreshed, gave each dog a piece of the boot as bed-fellows, and reassured them to the komatik and started again on his journey. It would have puzzled you, however, to tell where the sled was going. A league to the southwest, then "Rara! rara!" and a league to the southeast followed. "Auk! auk!" and a league to the southwest again, tacking back and forth like a sailboat beating to windward; and that was just what he was doing, for the breeze was blowing in his face and he needed himself to his bedding. If his young body was stunted and crippled, Pomuk's

heart was big and strong; but it nearly gave up hoping when midday came without a sign and the afternoon began to go and nothing had come of his hunting. Again they stopped to warm themselves and to chew a bit of the seal-skin, and still nothing. The boot must last them another day. What was left was carefully portioned, the dogs were unharnessed for the night and the snow house was building. Pomuk paid no more attention to the dogs, till there came a low growl from the leader. Then he looked round quickly. Far off in the dusk he could not say how far, something white was moving, and the dogs were bounding toward it. Grasping his harpoon and handaxe, he joyfully hobbled after them. The half-famished dogs would not let it escape. There was no need to hurry. But though they attacked it valiantly, they could not succeed without him; and it was well that he made strength. When he reached them, one of his very best dogs, the fiercest one, the bully of the team, fell back with his head crushed from a blow that Namuk, the bear, had given him.

Urging the dogs to do their best, he approached the huge creature as near as he dared, and sought to reach its throat with the harpoon; but when the right moment came he thrust too low: the weapon struck under the collar-bone, and though he had given it all his strength and its head was completely buried, the bear brushed the handle aside as if it had been a wisp of straw, and, with a roar, made toward him.

Pomuk might have fared illly then, had it not been for his faithful dogs. They attacked the monster from all sides at once. The smell of its blood made them frantic, and seemed to double and treble their strength. It was well; for their crippled master, in trying to elude the enraged bear, had slipped on a small broken hummock of ice, and the creature was nearly on him.

It was not a time to think, but to act. Pomuk's instinct guided him. Instinct is strong in the savage, and in spite of his taste of civilized life he was yet a child of nature. He lay quite still where he had fallen, his stillness as death till the fighting bear stood over his prostrate body. Then he drew over his knife and struck quickly, once, twice; and the second time, leaving his knife in the wound, sprang nimbly to one side, handaxe in hand; but the latter was not needed. Lashed down by the wrathful dogs, the great bear tottered and fell on the ice, and the bloody battle was over.

Pomuk's first care was to beat off the dogs and feed them with his uncle's entrails. Next he set about skinning the carcass. It was heavy work for a mere lad, in the dark and cold of an Arctic night, but last it was accomplished; the meat was hacked into sections that he could lift, the komatik was brought, and all was stowed as it should be; then the snow house was completed, and, with full stomachs, they all turned in and slept soundly until the morning.

With such refreshment it did not take long next day to reach the company's post. There the skin was traded for powder, and bullets, and tobacco, and flour, and molasses, and tea, which summary comprises all of the Eskimo's desires.

With his komatik loaded with such good things he returned to the igloo by nightfall, where the people greeted him joyously, and could scarcely believe their good fortune.

"And the ring?" said Kangasutuk.

Pomuk showed it proudly. "It was the ring brought by Namuk," he said. "She will know me by that when we meet again—there was a choking in Pomuk's voice and his lips quivered—'when I meet her again in her heaven.'"

—N. Y. Independent.

To Tell the Speed of a Wheel.

Here is a new way to determine how fast you are going on your bicycle, suggested a writer in The Scientific American: Multiply the gear by 10 and divide by 56. Call the result seconds. The number of complete revolutions made by either pedal in that number of seconds shows the rate of miles per hour. Example: If your gear is 84, then 84 multiplied by 10 divided by 56, equals 15; if either pedal makes 20 revolutions in 15 seconds you are riding at the rate of 20 miles to the hour. If the gear is 67.2, then 67.2 multiplied by 10, divided by 56, equals 12, and 20 revolutions made in 12 seconds equals 20 miles to the hour.

Factories Without Chimneys.

To horseless carriages and smokeless powder add chimneysless factories as the newest in nonpollution. Heretofore it has been necessary in order to secure plenty of draft for a furnace to build an immensely tall chimney. Now it is found that instead of pulling the draft by a chimney you can push it from below with a fan. A plant running three boilers of 200 horse power tried this experiment with a fan whose wheel had a diameter of 54 inches. The draft was so much bettered that the firm saved nearly \$1,000 a year by using a cheaper grade of coal.

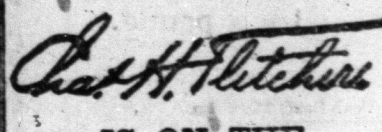
The Red and Yellow Sea.

The ocean is not always "true blue" in color. The red tints, which are probably caused by animals related to the "Chlorella" and "Limnospira arctica" (the food of the whales), are found in the southern Atlantic, where the influence is said of cold currents from Cape Horn. It is remarkable that no reference is made in any log to the appearance of red tints in the neighborhood of Cape Horn. The yellow tints are generally ascribed by captains to pollen or flowering water plants.

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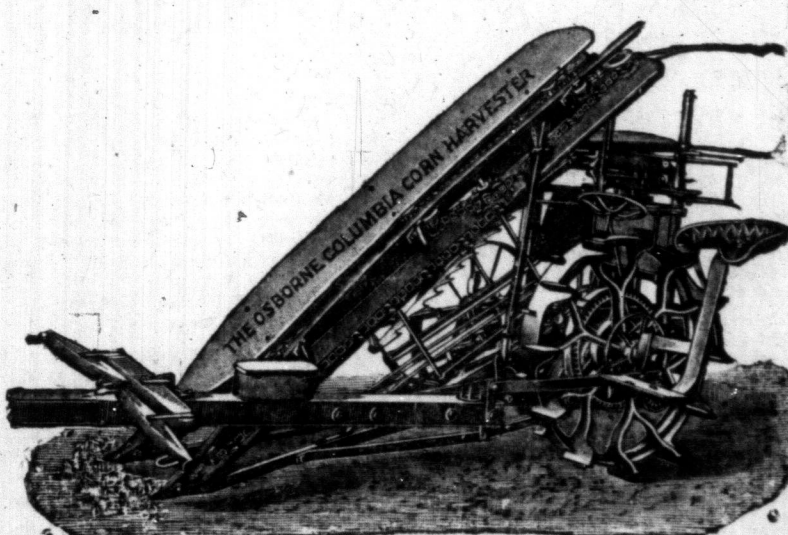
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