

the pursuing gad-flies with a leafy switch, and watch the dragon-flies darting after mosquitoes, or the kingfisher diving after trout.

It was a happy life: and, though I did not go to school, I did not grow up in ignorance. My father taught me to read and one of our choicest possessions was a shelf of good books. Sometimes I would take a volume with me when I went for a ride on Merwa. While he browsed on the tender twigs of birch, aspen and mountain-ash, I sought a shady bank where I read and dreamed.

Once a year my father made a long trip to Lillooet, where he disposed of his furs and purchased such supplies as we needed to put us through the winter. It was during one of these trips, when Merwa was five years old and I was fifteen, that I had my great adventure.



It had been a very dry summer and fall. October came with no sign of rain. Even the swamp-grass was burnt and brittle. The air was hazy and hot; the hills, invisible. Merwa seemed uneasy. Gazing to the south, he sniffed and snorted and stamped in a most unusual manner. It filled me with a sense of alarm, and I found myself searching the south and watching for something to come out of the purple mists.

And come it did. There was no mistaking it—a forest fire. First came white ashes, borne by some higher current of air; then smoke, that made the eyes smart and the throat dry; and finally, we saw the flames. A wall of fire, miles in length, seemed sweeping upon us. A terrible fear seized me. I felt powerless to act: but not so Merwa. He came to me, where I stood trembling, and nipped me by the sleeve. It was a signal I knew well: he wanted me to mount and ride. Good old Merwa! He had greater presence of mind than I had. But I was not slow in responding to his invitation. Pausing only long enough to obtain my rifle and ammunition, I mounted and we were off.

Never before had I realized what speed lay in those clicking hoofs. His gait was like that of a trotting horse, but his speed was that of a racer. Due north we flew: through forests of pine and cottonwood; along stretches of beaver-meadow; and over sun-scorched barren hills.