

IN THE FORESTS OF THE NORTH.

By Jack London, in Pearson's Magazine.



A weary journey beyond the last scrub timber and straggling copses, into the heart of the Barrens, where the niggard north is supposed to deny the earth, are to be found great sweeps of forest and stretches of smiling land. But this the world's explorers have known it, from time to time, but hitherto they have never returned to tell the world.

The Barrens—well, they are the Barrens, the bad lands of the Arctic, the deserts of the Circle, the bleak and bitter home of the musk-ox and the lean plains-wolf. So Avery Van Brunt found them, treeless and cheerless, sparsely clothed with moss and lichens and altogether uninviting. At least so he found them till he penetrated to the white blank spaces on the map, and came upon undreamed-of rich spruce forests and unrecorded Eskimo tribes. It had been his intention (and his bid for fame) to break up these white blank spaces, and diversify them with the black markings of mountain chains, sinks and basins, and sinuous river-courses, and it was with added delight that he came to speculate upon the possibilities of timber-belts and native villages.

Avery Van Brunt, or, in full distinction, Professor A. Van Brunt of the Geological Survey, was second in command of the expedition, and first in command of the sub-expedition which he had led on a side tour of some half a thousand miles up one of the branches of the Thelon, and which he was now leading into one of its unrecorded villages. At his back plodded eight men, two of them French-Canadian voyageurs, and the remainder strapping Crees from Manitoba. He, alone, was full-blooded Saxon, and his blood was pounding fiercely through his veins to the traditions of his race.

The village emptied itself, and a motley crowd trooped out to meet him, men in the forefront, with bows and spears clutched menacingly, and women and children faltering timidly in the rear. Van Brunt lifted his right arm and made the universal peace sign, a sign which all peoples know, and the villagers answered in peace. But to his chagrin, a skin-clad man ran forward and thrust out his hand with a familiar "Hello." He was a bearded man, with cheeks and brow bronzed to copper brown, and in him Van Brunt knew his kind.

"Who are you?" he asked, gripping the extended hand. "Andree?"

"Who's Andree?" the man asked back.

Van Brunt looked at his more sharply. "By George, you've been here some time."

"Five years," the man answered, a dim flicker of pride in his eyes. "But come on, let's talk."

"Let them camp alongside of me," he answered Van Brunt's glance at his party. "Old Tantlatch will take care of them. Come on."

He swung off in a long stride, Van Brunt following at his heels through the village. In irregular fashion, wherever the ground favored, the lodges of moosehide were pitched. Van Brunt ran his practised eye over them and calculated.

"Two hundred, not counting the young ones," he summed up.

The man nodded. "Pretty close to it. But here's where I live, out of the thick of it, you know, more privacy and all that. Sit down. I'll eat with you when your men get something cooked up. I've forgotten what tea tastes like. . . . Five years and never a taste or smell. . . . Any tobacco? . . . Ah, thanks, and a pipe? Good. Now for a fire-stick, and we'll see if the weed has lost its cunning."

He drew in the first mouthful of smoke and blew it out through his pursed lips slowly and caressingly. He sighed happily, with immeasurable content.

Van Brunt nodded sympathetically. "Five years, you say?"

"Five years." The man sighed

again. "And you, I presume, wish to know about it, being naturally curious, and this is a sufficiently strange situation, and all that. But it's not much. I came in from Edmonton after musk-ox, and like Pike and the rest of them, had my mischances, only I lost my party and outfit. Starvation, hardship, the regular tale, you know, sole survivor, and a—that, till I crawled into Tantlatch's here on hand and knee. Five years on February last. I crossed the Great Slave early in May."

"And you are . . . Fairfax?" Van Brunt interjected.

The man nodded. "Let me see. . . . John, I think it is, John Fairfax."

"How did you know?" Fairfax queried lazily, half-absorbed in curling smoke-spirals upward in the quiet air.

"The papers were full of it at the time. Prevanche."

"Prevanche!" Fairfax sat up, suddenly alert. "He was lost in the Smoke Mountains."

"Yes, but he pulled through and came out."

Fairfax settled back again and resumed his smoke-spirals. "I am glad to hear it. Prevanche was a bully fellow—if he did have ideas about head-straps, the beggar. And he pulled through? Well, I'm glad."

Five years. The phrase drifted recurrently through Van Brunt's thought, and somehow the face of Emily Southwaite seemed to rise up and take form before him. Five years. Van Brunt pulled out his watch. It was an hour past midnight. The northward clouds flushed bloodily, and rays of sombre red shot southward, firing the gloomy woods with a lurid radiance. The air was in breathless calm, not a needle quivered. Far off somewhere a child was crying, and from the depths of the forest, like a silver thread, rose a woman's voice in mournful chant: "O-o-o-a-haa-ha-a, O-o-o-a-haa-ha."

Van Brunt shivered and rubbed the backs of his hands briskly.

"And they gave me up for dead?" his companion asked slowly.

"Well you never came back, so your friends—"

"Promptly forgot," Fairfax laughed harshly, defiantly.

"Why didn't you come out?"

"Partly disinclination, I suppose, and partly because of circumstances over which I had no control. You see Tantlatch here was down with a broken leg when I made his acquaintance, a nasty fracture, and I set it for him and got him into shape. I stayed some time, getting my strength back. I was the first white man he had seen, and of course I seemed very wise and showed his people no end of things. Coached them up in military tactics, among other things, so that they conquered the four other tribal villages, which you have not yet seen, and came to rule the land. And they naturally grew to think a good deal of me, so much so that when I was ready to go they wouldn't hear of it. Were most hospitable, in fact. Put a couple of guards over me, and watched me day and night. And then Tantlatch offered me inducements, so to say, and as it didn't matter much one way or the other, I reconciled myself to remaining."

"I knew your brother at Freiburg. I am Van Brunt."

Fairfax reached forward impulsively and shook his hand. "You are Billy's friend, eh? Poor Billy! He spoke of you often."

"Rum meeting place, though," he added, casting a glance over the landscape, and listening for a moment to the woman's mournful notes.

"Her man was clawed by a bear, and she's taking it hard."

"Beastly life!" Van Brunt grimaced his disgust. "I suppose, after five years of it civilization will be sweet?"

Fairfax's face took on a stolid expression. "Oh, I don't know. At least they're honest folk, and live accord-

ing to their lights. And then they are amazingly simple. No complexity about them, no thousand and one subtle ramifications to every single emotion they experience. They love, fear, hate, are angered or made happy in common, ordinary, and unmistakable terms. It may be a beastly life, but at least it is easy to live. No mistakes, no misunderstandings. It has its charm, after civilization's fitful fever. Comprehend? No, it's a pretty good life," he said, after a pause, "good enough for me, and I intend to stay with it."

Van Brunt lowered his head in a musing manner, and an imperceptible smile played on his mouth. Fairfax also was taking it hard, he thought, just because Emily Southwaite had been mistakenly clawed by a bear. And not a bad sort of a bear, either, was Carlton Southwaite.

"But you are coming along with me," Van Brunt said deliberately.

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are."

"Life's too easy here, I tell you," Fairfax spoke with decision. "I understand everything, and I am understood. Summer and winter alternate like the sun flashing through the palings of a fence, the seasons are a blur of light and shade, and time slips by, and life slips by, and then a waiting in the forest, and the dark. Listen!"

He held up his hand, and the silver thread of the woman's sorrow rose through the silence. Fairfax joined in softly.

"O-o-o-a-haa-ha-a, O-o-o-a-haa-ha," he sang. "Can't you hear it? Can't you see it? The women mourning—the funeral chant—my hair white-locked—my skins wrapped in rude splendor about me—my hunting spear by my side? And who shall say it is not well?"

Van Brunt looked at him coolly.

"Fairfax, you are a damned fool. Five years of this is enough to knock any man, and you are in an unhealthy, morbid condition. Further Carlton Southwaite is dead."

Van Brunt filled his pipe and lighted it, the while watching slyly and with almost professional interest. Fairfax's eyes flashed on the instant, his fists clenched, he half rose up, then his muscles relaxed, and he seemed to brood. Michael, the cook, signalled that the meal was ready, but Van Brunt motioned back to delay. The silence hung heavy and he fell to analyzing the forest scents, the odors of mould and rotting vegetation, the resinous smells of pine cones and needles, the aromatic savors of many camp-smokes. Twice Fairfax looked up, but said nothing, and then:

"And . . . Emily?"

"Three years a widow; still a widow."

Another long silence broken by Fairfax finally. "I guess you're right, Van Brunt. I'll go along."

"I knew you would," Van Brunt laid his hand on Fairfax's shoulder.

"Of course, one cannot know, but I imagine, for one in her position, she has had offers."

"When do you start?" Fairfax interrupted.

"After the men have had some sleep. Which reminds me, Michael is getting angry, so come and eat."

After supper, when the Crees and voyageurs had rolled into their blankets, snoring, the two men lingered by the dying fire. There was much to talk about, wars and politics and explorations, the doings of men and the happening of things, mutual friends, marriages, deaths—five years of history for which Fairfax clamored.

"So the Spanish fleet was bottled up in Santiago," Van Brunt was saying, when a young woman stepped lightly before him and stood by Fairfax's side. She looked swiftly into his face, then turned a troubled gaze upon Van Brunt.

"Chief Tantlatch's daughter, sort of princess," Fairfax explained with an honest flush. "One of the inducements, in short, to make me stay. Thom, this is Van Brunt, friend of mine."

Van Brunt held out his hand, but the woman maintained a rigid repose, quite in keeping with her general appearance. Not a line of her face softened. She looked him straight in the eyes, her own piercing, questioning, searching.

"Precious lot she understands," Fairfax laughed. "Her first introduction, you know. But as you were saying, with the Spanish fleet bottled up in Santiago—"

Thom crouched down by her husband's side, motionless as a bronze statue, only her eyes flashing from face to face in ceaseless search. And Avery Van Brunt, as he talked on and on, felt a nervousness under the dumb gaze. In the midst of his most graphic battle-descriptions he would become suddenly conscious of the

black eyes burning into him, and would stumble and flounder till he could catch a gait and go again. Fairfax, hands clasped round knees, pipe out, absorbed, spurred him on, and repictured the world he thought he had forgotten.

One hour passed, and two, and Fairfax rose reluctantly to his feet. "And Cronje was cornered, eh? Well, just wait a moment till I run over to Tantlatch. He'll be expecting you and I'll arrange for you to see him after breakfast. That will be all right, won't it?"

He went off between the pines, and Van Brunt found himself staring into Thom's warm eyes.

He laughed and stood up. Her insistent stare disconcerted him. A dog was prowling among the grub-sacks. He would drive it away and place them in safety against Fairfax's return. But Thom stretched out a detaining hand and stood up facing him.

"You?" she said in the arctic tongue which differs little from Greenland to Point Barrow. "You?"

And the swift expression of her face demanded all for which "you" stood, his reason for existence, his presence there, his relation to her husband—everything.

"Brother," he answered in the same tongue, with a sweeping gesture to the south. "Brothers we be, your man and I."

She shook her head. "It is not good that you be here."

"After one sleep I go."

"And my man?" she demanded with tremulous eagerness.

Van Brunt shrugged his shoulders. He was aware of a certain secret shame, of an impersonal sort of shame, and an anger against Fairfax. And he felt the warm blood in his face as he regarded the young savage. She was just a woman. That was all, a woman. The whole sordid story over again, over and over again, as old as Eve and young as the last new love-light.

"My man! My man! My man!" she was reiterating vehemently, her face passionately dark, and the ruthless tenderness of the Eternal Woman, the Mate-Woman, looking out at him from her eyes.

"Thom," he said gravely, in English, "you were born in the Northland forest, and you have eaten fish and meat, and fought with frost and famine, and lived simply all the days of your life. And there are many things, indeed, not simple, which you do not know and cannot come to understand. You do not know what it is to long for the flesh-pots afar, you cannot understand what it is to yearn for a fair woman's face. And the woman is fair, Thom, the woman is nobly fair. You have been woman to this man, and you have been your all, but your all is very little, very simple. Too little and too simple, and he is an alien man. Fairfax you have never known, you can never know. It is so ordained."

Though she did not understand, she had listened with intense attention, as though life hung on his speech. But she caught at her husband's name, and cried out in Eskimo:

"Yes! Yes! Fairfax! My man!"

"Poor little fool, how could he be your man?"

But she could not understand his English tongue, and deemed that she was being trifled with. The dumb, insensate anger of the Mate-Woman flamed in her face, and it almost seemed to the man as though she crouched panther-like for the spring.

He cursed softly to himself, and watched the fire fade from her face and the soft luminous glow of the appealing woman who foregoes strength and panoplies herself wisely in her weakness.

"He is my man," she said gently. "Never have I known other. It cannot be that I should ever know other. Nor can it be that he should go from me."

"Who has said he shall go from thee?" he demanded sharply, half in exasperation, half in impotence.

"It is for thee to say he shall not go from me," she answered softly, a half-sob in her throat.

Van Brunt kicked the embers of the fire savagely and sat down.

"It is for thee to say he is my man. Before all women he is my man. Thou art big, thou art strong, and behold, I am very weak. See, I am at thy feet. It is for thee to deal with me. It is for thee."

"Get up!" He jerked her roughly erect and stood up himself. "Thou art a woman. Wherefore the dirt is no place for thee, nor the feet of any man."

"He is my man!"

"Then Jesus forgive all men!" Van Brunt cried out passionately.

"He is my man," she repeated monotonously, beseechingly.

"He is my brother," he answered.

"My father is Chief Tantlatch. He is a power over five villages. I will

see that the five villages be searched for thy choice of all maidens; that thou mayest stay here by thy brother, and dwell in comfort."

"After one sleep I go."

"And my man?"

"Thy man comes now. Behold!"

From among the gloomy spruces came the light carolling of Fairfax's voice.

As the day is quenched by a sea of fog, so his song smote the light out of her face. "It is the tongue of his own people," she said; "the tongue of his own people."

She turned, with the free movement of a lithe young animal, and made off into the forest.

"It's all fixed," Fairfax called as he came up. "His regal highness will receive you after breakfast."

"Have you told him?" Van Brunt asked.

"No. Nor shall I tell him till we're ready to pull out."

Van Brunt looked with moody affection over the sleeping forms of his men.

"I shall be glad when we are a hundred leagues upon our way," he said.

(To be concluded tomorrow.)

Gen. Randall in Seattle

Seattle, Aug. 25.—Gen. George M. Randall, commanding the department of the Columbian and Alaska, reached Seattle on the City of Seattle yesterday morning from the north. The boat reached the dock just in time for the general to catch the early morning Portland train and he left for that city at once. Numbers of dispatches from the war department which have awaited his arrival here were forwarded by telegraph to him at Vancouver barracks, where he will be for nearly a week.

Capt. W. P. Richardson, aide to Gen. Randall, came down on the same boat, but remained in this city for a few hours, leaving to rejoin his chief on the night train. He declared that business of a personal nature caused his stop-over and that all army matters would be attended to at the barracks. He stated that the dispatches for the general were on matters of detail and were not of any local importance.

Gen. Randall, accompanied by Captain Richardson, sailed for the north July 8, and during the past month and a half has made a personal inspection of nearly all the army posts in Alaska and has investigated the needs of the military forces in that

section. The trip included an inspection of the new telegraph lines which will connect Valdes, Nome and other northern points with the United States. This work, which is of such vital interest to Pacific coast interests, is being pushed toward completion and a large portion will be completed this year. In speaking of the trip Capt. Richardson said:

"The general made a tour of inspection to the posts in Alaska and found them in very good shape. Some more improvements are needed at several of the barracks and he will probably make recommendations along these lines to the department. The telegraph lines are being built as fast as possible and it will not be many months before communication in the frozen north will be as simple a matter as in this state."

"There are but few matters connected with the trip on which it would be proper for me to speak. As to what recommendations Gen. Randall will make regarding changes in the Alaskan district I have nothing to say. The dispatches which were awaiting him here were on matters of detail only."

Forest Reserve

Seattle, Aug. 25.—The newly created Alexander archipelago forest reserve in the extreme southeastern part of Alaska is one of the first important steps taken by the national government to prevent depredation on valuable timber lands in Alaska. The reserve comprises hundreds of acres of the best timber of the section. Just how much is not known as no survey of the islands has yet been made by the government. The reservation embraces Prince of Wales island and all adjacent to the ward, Chicago, Kupreahoff, Kala and Zarembo islands, with many of the smaller islands farther out to sea.

Lieut. Emmons, who is now in Alaska investigating the international boundary question, is directly responsible for the setting aside of the lands for a timber reserve. Some time ago he made an extensive examination of the islands and became familiar with their rich timber value. He made a report on the matter President Roosevelt, who is showing the keenest interest in Alaska affairs, gave the matter attention, resulting in the order establishing the reserve.

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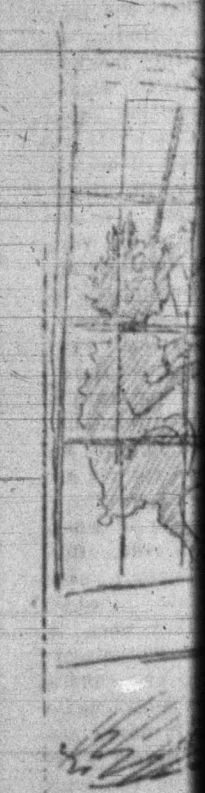
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The dog in question night stands, one might for at least gagement and was miss an appointment always went up with an overture. Bittner's "German" every old kind of lude followed in of the scene of ac beneath the wind mentioned reside. Finally, when pat be a virtue, and all the stray pots wood in the house, the serpnader w



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