

growled passionately, as might a dog over a bone, planting his huge, hairy hand in the centre of the paper.

At a peremptory movement from him I went over and studied the little map. At first sight it meant nothing more to me than the frivolling of a sadly unsettled mind. Yet something about the tangle of lines looked oddly and indeterminately familiar. Even the rough turtle's head, which two of his rivers outlined, seemed strangely suggestive. And it was just above the nose of the turtle, where contributory streams ran into the darker line of the big river, that his great hand was planted authoritatively, as a sign that it "was all his." I studied the map once again, this time more seriously. Then suddenly, as I pondered over it, a flash-light of intelligence illuminated the whole mystery.

"My God, man—that's the Klondike!" I gasped.

He looked at me with careless and uncomprehending eyes.

"This is the Yukon here," I explained, "this darker line; the upper line of the turtle's head is Stewart River, the lower is Macmillan River; this eye is one of the Reid Lakes. And here, see, here where the Klondike empties into the Yukon, is Dawson City!"

"It's all mine!" he repeated in his majestic and solemn guttural. "I found it, year and years ago. I saw the gold there, and paid for it all, in good blankets and tea. That was to the Hoochi tribe, and to a few of the Stick Indians. I should have gone back sooner—but there were reasons, there were reasons!"

He turned to me fiercely.

"Now you shall do this for me! There is gold there, in plenty—gold enough for twenty kings. But men will be finding out. It's getting late, getting late! And there are reasons!"

The flame in his smoky little lamp, for want of oil, paled and sank lower on the wick, leaving the room in twilight.

"My God, man, you'll be paid for it," he cried confidently, as he looked in my startled and hesitating face, "paid like a prince!"

He rummaged through the odds and ends on his dirty sleeves for a bit of tallow candle. When the unwilling wick had caught up the flame it shed a thin and wavering half-light through the room.

I humoured him, in my weakness, and as he planned and explained and dictated his mind seemed to grow more lucid. He sat back in the dusk, with the dignity of a king who had come into his own.

"But one thing I must know first," I insisted, hoping to overtake him while sanity still clung to him. "Why are you yourself afraid to go back? And what makes you such a fool about open water?"

He repeated his old vague cry: "There are reasons!" And his majesty ebbed mysteriously from him, leaving him there, a limp and bent and withered old man. I turned on him sharply.

"And those reasons have to do with how you got off the island—in Hunger River!"

"They were only two Kawkuits," he whimpered piteously, "and I had to get home with my secret! I had to get home!"

"Then how did you kill them?"

He laughed softly down in his throat. "It wasn't the killing; it was what came after!" He drew his hand slowly across his wet brow.

"Go on!" I insisted.

He shook his head slowly from side to side.

"It's too long ago—and you wouldn't understand. You would listen, and walk out, and leave me, like the other men have done."

"Go on!" I still insisted, wiping the sweat from my own face.

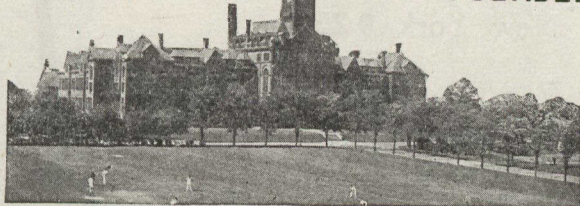
"It has turned them and sickened them, all of them, from the first," he wheezed huskily, folding his hairy hands across his upthrust knees. "And it was two to save one!"

"Everything—tell me everything!"

He paddled with one hand, crazily, like a trained mastiff reaching out with a forepaw. Then he clinched

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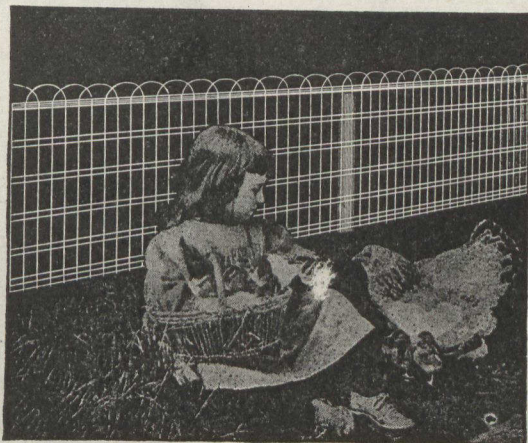
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