JACK LONDON.

BURNING DAYLIGHT

By Jack London

[Copyright, 1910, by the New York Herald Company—All Rights Reserved.]

SYNOPSIS.

"BURNING DAYLIGHT"—Elam Harnish—is introduced to the reader as he enters a Circle City dance hall, saloon and gambling house like the whirlwind that he is.

Possessed of a tidy fortune and sure of making a vast one, Burning Daylight proceeds to stir up the life of the gambling house. The men and women all admire him, for he is of the type that dominates.

Essentially a man's man, Burning Daylight resents, or rather fears, the wiles of the women who frequent the dance hall. He is afraid to be even civil to a woman, because he dreads the idea of being mastered by anybody or anything, and to surrender to a woman means, in his mind, that he is conquered.

Then comes a poker game—the greatest ever played in the Klondike. Burning Daylight's luck deserts him at the end, and he rises from the table penniless—worse than broke.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

FRENCH Louis was the last of the five, and he had seen enough to make him cautious. He circled and baffled for a full minute before coming to grips, and for another full minute they strained and reeled without either winning the advantage. And then, just as the contest was becoming interesting, Daylight effected one of his lightning shifts, changing all stresses and leverages and at the same time delivering one of his muscular explosions. French Louis resisted till his huge frame cracked and then slowly was forced over and under and downward.

"The winner pays!" Daylight cried as he sprang to his feet and led the way back into the Tivoli. "Surge along, you-all! This way to the snake room!"

They lined up against the long bar, in places two or three deep, stamping the frost from their moccasined feet, for outside the temperature was sixty below. Bettles, himself one of the gamest of the old timers in deeds of daring, ceased from his drunken lay of the "Sassafras Root" and titubated over to congratulate Daylight. But in the midst of it he felt impelled to make a speech and raised his voice oratorically.

"I tell you, fellers, I'm plum proud to call Daylight my friend. We've hit the trail together afore now, and he's eighteen carat from his moccasins up, damn his mangy old hide, anyway. He was a shaver when he first hit this country. When you fellers was his age you wa'n't dry behind the ears yet. He never was no kid. He was born a full grown man. An' I tell you a man had to be a man in them days. This wa'n't no effete civilization like it's come to be now." Bettles paused long enough to put his arm in a proper bear hug around Daylight's neck. "When you an' me mushed into the Yukon in the good ol' days it didn't rain soup and they wa'n't no free lunch joints. Our campfires was lit where we killed our game and most of the time we lived on salmon tracks and rabbit bellies. Ain't I right?"

But at the roar of laughter that greeted his inversion Bettles released the bear hug and turned fiercely on the crowd.

"Laugh, you mangy shorthorns, laugh! But I tell you plain and simple, the best of you ain't knee high fit to tie Daylight's moccasin strings. Ain't I right, Campbell? Ain't I right, Mac? Daylight's one of the old guard, one of the real sourdoughs. And in them days they wa'n't ary a steamboat or ary a trading post, and we cusses had to live offen salmon bellies and rabbit tracks."

He gazed triumphantly around, and in the applause that followed arose cries for a speech from Daylight. He signified his consent. A chair was brought, and he was helped to stand upon it. He was no more sober than the crowd above which he now towered—a wild crowd, uncouthly garmented, every foot moccasined or mukluked, with mittens dangling from necks and with furry earflaps raised so that they took on the seeming of the winged helmets of the Norsemen. Daylight's black eyes were flashing, and the flush of strong drink flooded darkly under the bronze of his cheeks. He was greeted with round on round of affectionate cheers, which brought a suspicious moisture to his eyes, albeit many of the voices were inarticulate and inebriate. And yet men have so behaved since the world began, feasting, fighting and carousing, whether in the dark cave mouth or by the fire of the squatting place, in the palaces of imperial Rome and the rock strongholds of robber barons or in the sky aspiring hotels of modern times and in the boozing kens of sailortown. Just so were these men, empire builders in the Arctic night, boastful and drunken and clamorous, winning surcease for a few wild moments from the grim reality of their heroic toil. Modern heroes they, and in nowise different from the heroes of old time.

"Well, fellows, I don't know what to say to you-all," Daylight began lamely, striving still to control his whirling brain that went around and around. "I think I'll tell you-all a story. I had a pardner wunst, down in Juneau. He come from North Carolina, and he used to tell this same story to me. It was down in the mountains in his country and it was a wedding. There they was, the family and all the friends. The parson was just puttin' on the last touches, and he says, They as the Lord have j'ined let no man put asunder.'

"'Parson,' says the bridegroom, 'I rises to question your grammar in that there sentence. I want this weddin' done right.'

"When the smoke clears away the bride she looks around and sees a dead parson, a dead bridegroom, a dead brother, two dead uncles and five dead wedding guests.

"So she heaves a mighty strong sigh an' says:—'Them new fangled, self-cocking revolvers sure has played hell with my prospects.'

"And so I say to you-all," he added, as the roar of laughter died down, "that them four kings of Jack Kearns sure has played hell with my prospects. I'm busted higher'n a kite and I'm hittin' the trail for Dyea"——

"Goin' out?" some one called.

A spasm of anger wrought on his face for a flashing instant, but in the next his good humor was back again.

"I know you-all are only pokin' fun asking such a question," he said, with a smile. "Of course I ain't going out."

"Take the oath again, Daylight," the same voice cried.

"I sure will. I first come over Chilcoot in '83. I went out over the Pass in a fall blizzard with a rag of a shirt and cup of raw flour. I got my grubstake in Juneau that winter and in the spring I went over the Pass once more. And once more the famine druv me out. Next spring I went in again and I swore then that I'd never come out till I made my stake. Well, I ain't made it, and here I am. And I ain't going out now. I get the mail and I come right back. I won't stop the night at Dyea. I'll hit up Chilcoot soon as I change the dogs and get the mail and grub. And so I swear once more, by the mill-tails of hell and the head of John the Baptist, I'll never hit for the Outside till I make my pile. And I tell you-all, here and now, it's got to be an almighty big pile."

"How much might you call a pile?" Bettles demanded from beneath, his arms clutched lovingly around Daylight's legs.

"Yes, how much? What do you call a pile?" others cried.

Daylight steadied himself for a moment and debated.

"Four or five millions," he said slowly, and held up his hand for silence as his statement was received with derisive yells. "I'll be real conservative and put the bottom notch at a million. And not for an ounce less'n that will I go out of the country."

Again his statement was received with an outburst of derision. Not only had the total gold output of the Yukon up to date been below five millions, but no man had ever made a strike of a hundred thousand, much less of a million.

"You-all listen to me. You seen Jack Kearns get a hunch to-night. We had him sure beat before the draw. His ornery three kings was no good. But he just knew there was another king coming. That was his hunch, and he got it. And I tell you-all I got a hunch. There's a big strike coming on the Yukon, and it's just about due. I don't mean no ornery Moosehide, Birch Creek kind of a strike. I mean a real rip-snorting hair-raiser. I tell you-all she's in the air and hellbent for election. Nothing can stop her, and she'll come up river. There's where you-all'll track my moccasins in the future if you-all want to find me—somewhere in the country around Stewart River, Indian River and Klondike River. When I get back with the mail I'll head that way so fast you-all won't see my trail for smoke. She's a-coming, fellows, gold from the grass roots down, a hundred dollars to the pan, and a stampede in from the outside fifty thousand strong. You-all'll think all hell's busted loose when that strike is made."

He raised his glass to his lips.

"Here's kindness and hoping you-all'll be in on it."

He drank and stepped down from the chair, falling into another one of Bettles' bear hugs.

"If I was you, Daylight, I wouldn't mush to-day," Joe Hines counselled, coming in from consulting the spirit thermometer outside the door. "We're in for a good cold snap. It's sixty-two below now and still goin' down. Better wait till she breaks."

Daylight laughed and the old sourdoughs around him laughed.

"Just like you shorthorns," Bettles cried, "afraid of a little frost. And blamed little you know Daylight if you think frost kin stop 'm."

"Freeze his lungs if he travels in it," was the reply.

"Freeze pap and lollypop! Look here, Hines, you only be'n in this here country three years. You ain't seasoned yet. I've seen Daylight do fifty miles up on the Koyokuk on a day when the thermometer busted at seventy-two below."

Hines shook his head dolefully.

"Them's the kind that does freeze their lungs," he lamented. "If Daylight pulls out before this snap breaks he'll never get through—an' him travellin' without tent or fly."

"It's a thousand miles to Dyea," Bettles announced, climbing on the chair and supporting his swaying body by an arm passed around Daylight's neck. "It's a thousand miles, I'm sayin', an' most of the trail unbroke, but I bet any chechaquo anything he wants that Daylight makes Dyea in thirty days."

"That's an average of over thirty-three miles a day," Doc Watson warned, "and I've travelled some myself. A blizzard on Chilcoot would tie him up for a week."

"Yep," Bettles retorted, "an' Daylight'll do the second thousand back again on end in thirty days more, and I got $500 that says so, and damn the blizzards."

To emphasize his remarks he pulled out a gold sack the size of a bologna sausage and thumped it down on the bar. Doc Watson thumped his own sack alongside.

"Hold on!" Daylight cried. "Bettles' right and I want in on this. I bet five hundred that sixty days from now I pull up at the Tivoli door with the Dyea mail."

A sceptical roar went up and a dozen men pulled out their sacks. Jack Kearns crowded in close and caught Daylight's attention.

"I take you, Daylight," he cried. "Two to one you don't—not in seventy-five days."

"No charity, Jack," was the reply. "The bettin's even and the time is sixty days."

"Seventy-five days and two to one you don't," Kearns insisted. "Fifty Mile'll be wide open and the rim-ice rotten."

"What you win from me is yours," Daylight went on. "And, by thunder, Jack, you can't give it back that way. I won't bet with you. You're trying to give me money. But I tell you-all one thing, Jack. I got another hunch. I'm goin' to win it back some one of these days. You-all just wait till the big strike up-river. Then you and me'll take the roof off and sit in in a game that'll be full man's size. Is it a go?"

They shook hands.

"Of course he'll make it," Kearns whispered in Bettles' ear. "And there's five hundred Daylight's back in sixty days," he added aloud.

Billy Rawlins closed with the wager and Bettles hugged Kearns ecstatically.

"By Yupiter, I ban take that bet," Olaf Henderson said, dragging Daylight away from Bettles and Kearns.

"Winner pays!" Daylight shouted, closing the wager. "And I'm sure going to win, and sixty days is a long time between drinks, so I pay now. Name your brand, you hoochinoos! Name your brand!"

Bettles, a glass of whiskey in hand, climbed back on his chair, and swaying back and forth sang the one song he knew:—

"O, it's Henry Ward Beecher
And Sunday school teachers
All sing of the sassafras root:
But you bet all the same,
If it had its right name,
It's juice of the forbidden fruit."

The crowd roared out the chorus:—

"But you bet all the same,
If it had its right name,
It's juice of the forbidden fruit!"

Somebody opened the outer door. A vague gray light filtered in.

"Burning Daylight, Burning Daylight," some one called warningly.

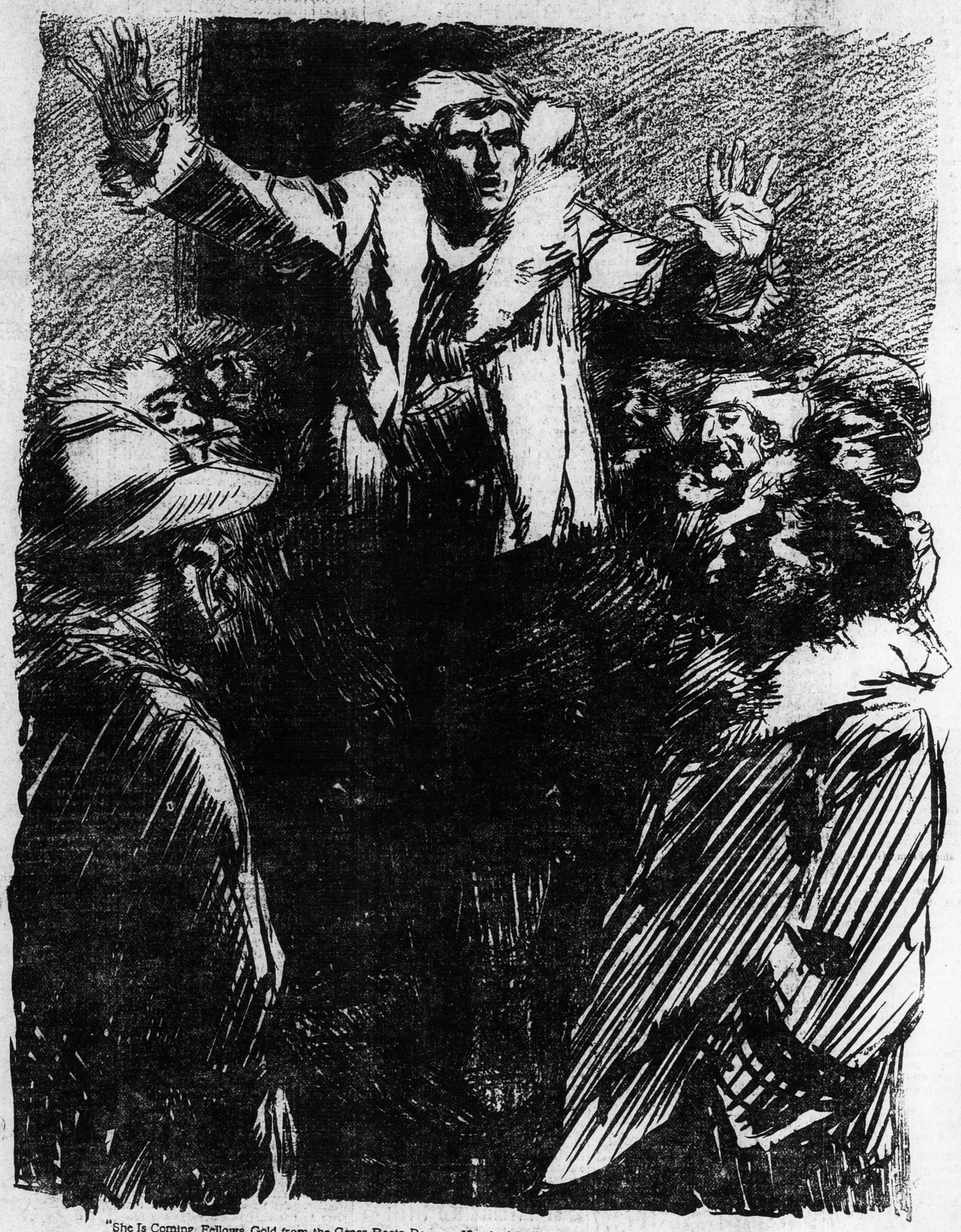
Daylight paused for nothing, heading for the door and pulling down his earflaps. Kama stood outside by the sled, a long, narrow affair sixteen inches wide and seven and a half feet in length, its slatted bottom raised six inches above the steel shod runners. On it, lashed with throngs of moosehide, were the light canvas bags that contained the mail and the food and gear for the dogs and men. In front of it, in a single line, lay curled five frost rimed dogs. They were huskies, matched in size and color, all unusually large and all gray. From their cruel jaws to their bushy tails they were as like as peas to timber wolves. Wolves they were, domesticated, it was true, but wolves in appearance and in all their characteristics. On top the sled load, thrust under the lashings and ready for immediate use, were two pairs of snowshoes.

Bettles pointed to a robe of Arctic hareskins, the end of which showed in the mouth of a bag.

"That's his bed," he said. "Six pounds of rabbit-skins. Warmest thing he ever slept under, but I'm damned if it could keep me warm, and I can go some myself. Daylight's a hellfire furnace, that's what he is."

"I'd hate to be that Indian," Doc Watson remarked.

"He'll kill 'm; he'll kill 'm sure," Bettles chanted, exultantly. "I know. I've be'n with Daylight on trail. That man ain't never be'n tired in his life. Don't know what it means. I seen him travel all day with wet socks at forty-five below. There ain't another man living can do that."



"She Is Coming, Fellows, Gold from the Grass Roots Down, a Hundred Dollars to the Pan, and a Stampede In from the Outside Fifty Thousand Strong. You All'll Think All Hell's Busted Loose When That Strike Is Made"

While this talk went on Daylight was saying good-by to those that clustered around him. The Virgin wanted to kiss him, and, fuddled slightly though he was with the whiskey, he saw his way out without compromising with the apron string. He kissed the Virgin, but he kissed the other three women with equal partiality. He pulled on his long mittens, roused the dogs to their feet and took his place at the gee-pole."

"Mush, you beauties!" he cried.

The animals threw their weights against their breast bands on the instant, crouching low to the snow and digging in their claws. They whined eagerly, and before the sled had gone half a dozen lengths both Daylight and Kama (in the rear) were running to keep up. And so, running, men and dogs dipped over the bank and down to the frozen bed of the Yukon, and in the gray light were gone.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the river, where was a packed trail and where snowshoes were unnecessary, the dogs averaged six miles an hour. To keep up with them the two men were compelled to run. Daylight and Kama relieved each other regularly at the gee-pole, for here was the hard work of steering the flying sled and keeping in advance of it. The man relieved dropped behind the sled, occasionally leaping upon it and resting.

It was severe work, but of the sort that was exhilarating. They were flying, getting over the ground, making the most of the packed trail. Later on they would come to the unbroken trail, where three miles an hour would constitute good going. Then there were be no riding and resting and no running. Then the gee-pole would be the easier task and a man would come back to it to rest after having completed his spell to the fore, breaking trail with the snowshoes for the dogs. Such work was far from exhilarating. Also, they must expect places where for miles at a time they must toil over chaotic ice jams, where they would be fortunate if they made two miles an hour. And there would be the inevitable bad jams, short ones, it was true, but so bad that a mile an hour would require terrific effort.

Kama and Daylight did not talk. In the nature of the work they could not, nor in their own natures were they given to talking while they worked. At rare intervals, when necessary, they addressed each other in monosyllables, Kama for the most part contenting himself with grunts. Occasionally a dog whined or snarled, but in the main they too kept silent. Only could be heard the sharp, jarring grate of the steel runners over the hard surface and the creak of the straining sled.

As if through a wall, Daylight had passed from the hum and roar of the Tivoli into another world—a world of silence and immobility. Nothing stirred. The Yukon slept under a coat of ice three feet thick. No breath of wind blew. Nor did the sap move in the hearts of the spruce trees that forested the river banks on either hand. The trees, burdened with the last infinitesimal pennyweight of snow their branches could hold, stood in absolute petrifaction. The slightest tremor would have dislodged the snow, and no snow was dislodged. The sled was the one point of life and motion in the midst of the solemn quietude, and the harsh churn of its runners but emphasized the silence through which it moved.

It was a dead world and, furthermore, a gray world. The weather was sharp and clear; there was no moisture in the atmosphere, no fog nor haze; yet the sky was a gray pall. The reason for this was that though there was no cloud in the sky to dim the brightness of day there was no sun to give brightness. Far to the south the sun climbed steadily to meridian, but between it and the frozen Yukon intervened the bulge of the earth. The Yukon lay in a mighty shadow, and the day itself was in reality a long twilight. At a quarter before twelve, where a wide bend of the river gave a long vista south, the sun shoved its upper rim above the sky line. But it did not rise perpendicularly. Instead it rose on a slant, so that by high noon it had barely lifted its lower rim clear of the horizon. It was a dim, wan sun. There was no heat to its rays, and a man could gaze squarely into the full orb of it without hurt to his eyes. No sooner had it reached meridian than it began its slant back beneath the horizon, and at a quarter past twelve the earth threw its shadow again over the land.

The men and the dogs raced on. Daylight and Kama were both savages so far as their stomachs were concerned. They could eat irregularly in time and quantity, gorging hugely on occasion and on occasion going long stretches without eating at all. As for the dogs, they ate but once a day, and then rarely did they receive more than a pound each of dried fish. They were always ravenously hungry and at the same time splendidly in condition. Like the wolves, their forebears, their nutritive processes were rigidly economical and perfect. There was no waste. The last least particle of what they consumed was transformed into energy. And Kama and Daylight were like them. Descended themselves from the generations that had endured, they, too, endured. Theirs was the simple, elemental economy. A little food equipped them with prodigious energy. Nothing was lost. A man of soft civilization, sitting at a desk, would have grown lean and woebegone on the fare that kept Kama and Daylight at the top notch of physical efficiency. They knew, as the man at the desk never knows, what it is to be normally hungry all the time so that they could eat any time. Their appetites were always with them and on edge, so that they bit voraciously into whatever offered and with an entire innocence of indigestion.

By three in the afternoon the long twilight faded into night. The stars came out, very near and sharp and bright, and by their light dogs and men still kept the trail. They were indefatigable. And this was no record run of a single day, but the first day of sixty such days. Though Daylight had passed a night without sleep, a night of dancing and carouse, it seemed to have left no effect. For this there were two explanations. First, his remarkable vitality, and next, the fact that such nights were rare in his experience. Again enters the man at the desk, whose physical efficiency would be more hurt by a cup of coffee at bedtime than could Daylight's by a whole night long of strong drink and excitement.

Daylight travelled without a watch, feeling the passage of time and largely estimating it by subconscious processes. By what he considered must be six o'clock he began looking for a camping place. The trail, at a bend, plunged out across the river. Not having found a likely spot, they held on for the opposite bank a mile away. But midway they encountered an ice jam, which took an hour of heavy work to cross. At last Daylight glimpsed what he was looking for, a dead tree close by the bank. The sled was run in and up. Kama grunted with satisfaction, and the work of making camp was begun.

The division of labor was excellent. Each knew what he must do. With one axe Daylight chopped down the dead pine. Kama, with a snowshoe and the other axe, cleared away the two feet of snow above the Yukon ice and chopped a supply of ice for cooking purposes. A piece of dry birch bark started the fire, and Daylight went ahead with the cooking while the Indian unloaded the sled and fed the dogs their ration of dried fish. The food sacks he slung high in the trees beyond leaping reach of the huskies. Next he chopped down a young spruce tree and trimmed off the boughs. Close to the fire he trampled down the soft snow and covered the packed space with the boughs. On this flooring he tossed his own and Daylight's gear bags, containing dry socks and underwear and their sleeping robes. Kama, however, had two robes of rabbit skin to Daylight's one.

To be continued.

THE SHOPPING BAG.

Purses and bags of all kinds are at the moment an engrossing subject of thought. The shopping bag has assumed such proportions and contains so many accessories is a boon to womankind, for it holds letthat it is much more on the order of a ters and even small parcels, and when travelling bag and is fast losing by this fitted with small purse and powder puff is very exaggeration much of its practical all sufficient for a day's shopping. The value. The moderate size shopping bag motor bags are larger and are fitted as thoroughly as any dressing case, and can also be used for a shopping bag, but are much heavier in weight.

The gold and silver mesh bags are still fashionable, and the flat silver case that closely resembles a cigarette case is also fashionable. The larger mesh bag must have a smaller purse inside to make it practical when there is not a separate pocket for small change, and if there is not one just made to fit it is not difficult to find one that will fit into the larger one.

A leather wallet is a most useful combination of pocketbook and card case as well as wallet, and is quite like the wallet carried by men, only not so wide. It should never be too wide to be carried easily in the hand.