

instant of irresolution and a glance into the empty drawing-room, he turned into the small room at the opposite side of the hall. A handsome, stately, rather large woman, whom he found there, introduced herself to him formally as Mrs. Sherrill.

He knew from Sherrill's mention of the year of their marriage that Mrs. Sherrill's age must be about forty-five, but if he had not known this, he would have thought her ten years younger. In her dark eyes and her carefully dressed, coal-black hair, and in the contour of her youthful looking, handsome face, he could not find any such pronounced resemblance to her daughter as he had seen in Lawrence Sherrill. Her reserved, yet almost too casual acceptance of Alan's presence, told him that she knew all the particulars about himself which Sherrill had been able to give; and as Constance came down the stairs and joined them half a minute later, Alan was certain that she also knew.

YET there was in her manner toward Alan a difference from that of her mother—a difference which seemed almost opposition. Not that Mrs. Sherrill's was unfriendly or critical; rather, it was kind with the sort of reserved kindness which told Alan, almost as plainly as words, that she had not been able to hold so charitable a conviction in regard to Corvet's relationship with Alan as her husband held, but that she would be only the more considerate to Alan for that. It was this kindness which Constance set herself to oppose, and which she opposed as reservedly and as subtly as it was expressed. It gave Alan a strange, exhilarating sensation to realize that, as the three talked together, this girl was defending him.

Not him alone, of course, or him chiefly. It was Benjamin Corvet, her friend, whom she was defending primarily; yet it was Alan, too; and all went on without a word about Benjamin Corvet or his affairs being spoken.

Dinner was announced, and they went into the great dining-room, where the table with its linen, silver, and china gleamed under shaded lights. The oldest and most dignified of the three men servants who waited upon them in the dining-room Alan thought must be a butler—a species of creature of whom Alan had heard but never had seen; the other servants, at least, received and handed things through him, and took their orders from him. As the silent-footed servants moved about, and Alan kept up a somewhat strained conversation with Mrs. Sherrill—a conversation in which no reference to his own affairs was yet made—he wondered whether Constance and her mother always dressed for dinner in full evening dress as now, or whether they were going out. A word from Constance to her mother told him this latter was the case, and while it did not give complete answer to his internal query, it showed him his first glimpse of social engagements as a part of the business of life. In spite of the fact that Benjamin Corvet, Sherrill's close friend, had disappeared—or perhaps because he had disappeared and, as yet, it was not publicly known—their and Sherrill's engagements had to be fulfilled.

WHAT Sherrill had told Alan of his father had been iterating itself again and again in Alan's thoughts; now he recalled that Sherrill had said that his daughter believed that Corvet's disappearance had had something to do with her. Alan had wondered at the moment how that could be; and as he watched her across the table and now and then exchanged a comment with her, it puzzled him still more. He had opportunity to ask her when she waited with him in the library, after dinner was finished and her mother had gone up-stairs; but he did not see then how to go about it.

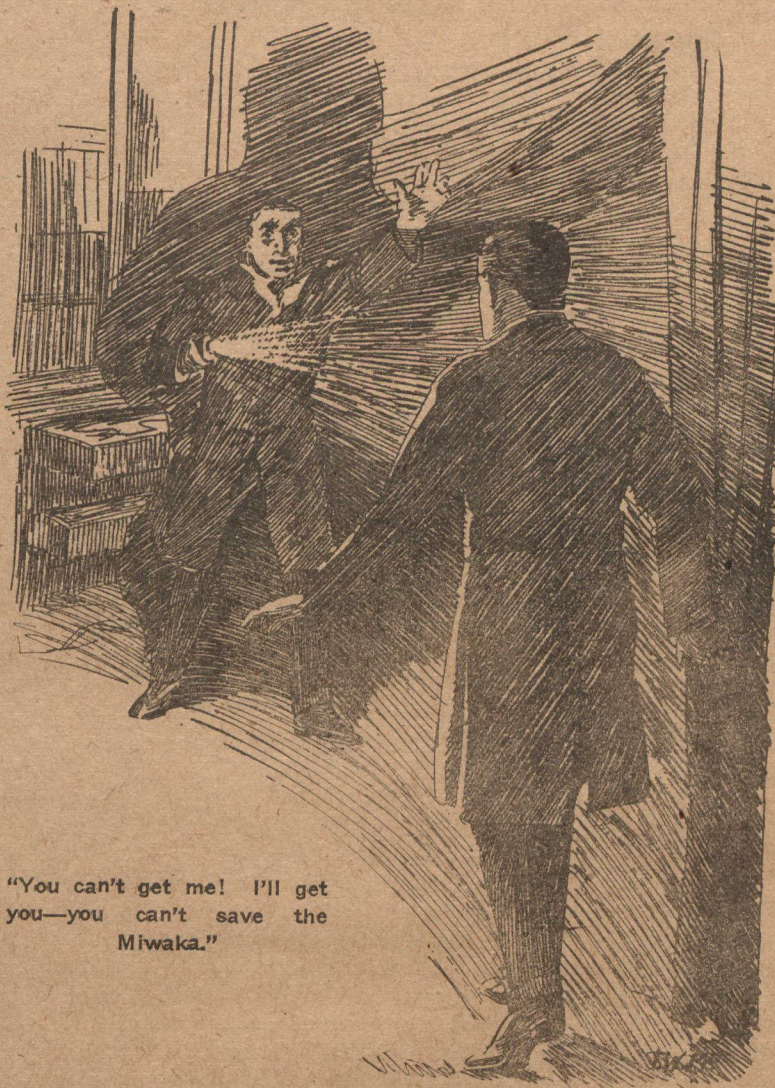
"I'm sorry," she said to him, "that we can't be home to-night; but perhaps you would rather be alone?"

He did not answer that.

"Have you a picture here, Miss Sherrill, of—my father?" he asked

"Uncle Benny had had very few pictures taken; but there is one here."

She went into the study, and came back with a book open at a half-tone picture of Benjamin Corvet. Alan took it from her and carried it quickly closer to the light. The face that looked up to him from the heavily glazed page was regular of feature, handsome in a way, and forceful. There were imagination and vigor of thought in the broad, smooth forehead; the eyes were strangely moody and brooding; the mouth was gentle, rather kindly; it was a queerly impelling, haunting face. This was his father! But, as Alan held the picture, gazing down upon it, the only emotion which came to him was realization that he felt none. He had not expected to know his father from strangers on the street; but he had expected, when told that his father was before him, to feel through and through him the call of a com-



"You can't get me! I'll get you—you can't save the Miwaka."

mon blood. Now, except for consternation at his own lack of feeling, he had no emotion of any sort; he could not attach to this man, because he bore the name which some one had told him was his father's, the passions which, when dreaming of his father, he had felt.

As he looked up from the picture to the girl who had given it to him, startled at himself and believing she must think his lack of feeling strange and unnatural, he surprised her gazing at him with wetness in her eyes. He fancied at first it must be for his father, and that the picture had brought back poignantly her fears. But she was not looking at the picture, but at him; and when his eyes met hers, she quickly turned away.

His own eyes filled, and he choked. He wanted to thank her for her manner to him in the afternoon, for defending his father and him, as she had at the dinner table, and now for this unplanned, impulsive sympathy when she saw how he had not been able to feel for this man who was his father and how he was dismayed by it. But he could not put his gratitude in words.

A servant's voice came from the door, startling him.

"Mrs. Sherrill wishes you told she is waiting, Miss Sherrill."

"I'll be there at once." Constance, also, seemed startled and confused; but she delayed and looked back to Alan.

"If—if we fail to find your father," she said, "I

want to tell you what a man he was."

"Will you?" Alan asked. "Will you?"

She left him swiftly, and he heard her mother's voice in the hall. A motor door closed sharply, after a minute or so; then the house door closed. Alan stood still a moment longer, then, remembering the book which he held, he drew a chair up to the light, and read the short, dry biography of his father printed on the page opposite the portrait. It summarized in a few hundred words his father's life. He turned to the cover of the book and read its title, "Year Book of the Great Lakes," and a date of five years before; then he looked through it. It consisted in large part, he saw, merely of lists of ships, their kind, their size, the date when they were built, and their owners. Under this last head he saw some score of times the name, "Corvet, Sherrill and Spearman." There was a separate list of engines and boilers, and when they had been built and by whom. There was a chronological table of events during the year upon the lakes. Then he came to a part headed "Disasters of the Year," and he read some of them; they were short accounts, drily and unfeelingly put, but his blood thrilled to these stories of drowning, freezing, blinded men struggling against storm and ice and water, and conquering or being conquered by them. Then he came to his father's picture and biography once more and, with it, to pictures of other lakemen and their biographies. He turned to the index and looked for Sherrill's name, and then Spearman's; finding they were not in the book, he read some of the other ones.

THERE was a strange similarity, he found, in these biographies, among themselves as well as to that of his father. These men had had, the most of them, no tradition of seamanship, such as Sherrill had told him he himself had had. They had been sons of lumbermen, of farmers, of mill hands, miners, or fishermen. They had been very young for the most part, when they had heard and answered the call of the lakes—the ever-swelling, fierce demand of lumber, grain, and ore for outlet; and they had lived hard; life had been violent, and raw, and brutal to them. They had sailed ships, and built ships, and owned and lost them; they had fought against nature and against man to keep their ships, and to make them profitable, and to get more of them. In the end a few, a very few comparatively, had survived; by daring, by enterprise, by taking great chances, they had thrust their heads above those of their fellows; they had come

to own a half dozen, a dozen, perhaps a score of bottoms, and to have incomes of fifty, of a hundred, of two hundred thousand dollars a year.

Alan shut the book and sat thoughtful. He felt strongly the immensity, the power, the grandeur of all this; but he felt also its violence and its fierceness. What might there not have been in the life of his father who had fought up and made a way for himself through such things?

The tall clock in the hall struck nine. He got up and went out into the hall and asked for his hat and coat. When they had been brought him, he put them on and went out.

The snow had stopped some time before; a strong and increasing wind had sprung up, which Alan, with knowledge of the wind across his prairies, recognized as an aftermath of the greater storm that had produced it; for now the wind was from the opposite direction—from the west. He could see from the Sherrill's door-step, when he looked toward the lighthouse at the harbor mouth winking red, white, red, white, at him, that this offshore wind was causing some new commotion and upheaval among the ice-floes; they groaned and labored and fought against the opposing pressure of the waves, under its urging.

He went down the steps and to the corner and turned west to Astor Street. When he reached the house of his father, he stopped under a street-lamp, looking up at the big, stern old mansion questioningly. It had taken on a different look for him since he had heard Sherrill's account of his father;