



**NORTH OF THE LAW**







*"And you'll play the game alone?" she asked . . . .*  
*"Isn't there any one else you want to share it?"*

# NORTH OF THE LAW

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NORTH OF THE  $\bar{L}$ A $\bar{W}$



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## CHAPTER I

### THE STAKE OF LIFE

**T**HE bell of the river steamer *Dawson* clanged farewell to the Mounted Police post at the Big Salmon. Cast-off lines swished shrilly through the crisp autumn air. Groaning frosty protests, the gangplank came in. As the Upper Yukon boat swung her nose against the current, a resonant shout rose from those on her cluttered decks. Far farers these, bronzed men and huge, and though outward bound, still clad in parkas, furs, and mackinaws. Off every Klondike creek were they foregathered, glutted with gold, kings of Eldorado. Wedged between mountainous dunnage and freight, shoulder to shoulder with mongrel Thron-Diuck savages and leg to leg with savage Malemute mongrels, the horde of homegoers blackened the steamer from stem to stern. Not a foot of space was left above or below. Men must eat where they stood, and sleep beneath the aurora and the Arctic stars.

From the ragged shore, making strange contrast to the joyful clamour of this homefaring crowd, came

a forlorn, answering cry. Grouped in front of the log police post, backed by desolate hills, stood the two mounted men stationed at the Big Salmon, a Russian trader going up to traffic in furs with the Indians at Quiet Lake, four trappers heading for the McConnell River, two old-timers questing for pockets in the Semenof Hills, and a decrepit Eskimo whose goal was nowhere, and whose home was up on Wrangel Island, in the Arctic Ocean. Waving hands and head-gear, these to whom the out trail was as yet but an elusive hope were staring after the last boat of the year and resignedly uttering farewells, when, through the general bustle, intruded a discordant bellow.

"Stop her!" yelled one of the McConnell trappers, jumping back and forth and frantically pointing up the Big Salmon. "Captain Cline, stop her! Passengers. Two more passengers. Savvy?"

Captain Cline caught the trapper's vociferations and thrust his head out of the pilot house. Flying down the Big Salmon, propelled by two wild-eyed, hatless, dishevelled men, he could see a long, slim Peterborough canoe flashing yellow with every lunge as it leaped like a thing alive.

Captain Cline rang the bell for reverse. The wheel back-churned the river surface into whirlpools. Swarming against the rail, the mob of passengers stared curiously at the belated two.

"Who are they?" asked Carman, a slim American who was plainly but a transient in the land.

"The bowman's Félix Bruneau, the voyageur," answered a Circle City man, recognizing the swarthy, clean-shaven face that was uplifted as the canoe rode the steamer's swell. "But who's the steersman? Some size, eh? Who in blazes is he?"

"Dane, Jules Dane," informed Keswick, the Pelly trader.

"Southerner?" asked Carman quickly. "One of the Virginia Danes?"

"No, Northman," Keswick told him. "Born here. St. Michaels. Son of old Dival Dane, him that's dead and drowned with a hundred seal raids to his credit. Jules ain't never been outside far's I know, but it looks like he's hiking there now. Must have cleaned a big stake. I run across him and the French Canadian this summer on the Pelly River above the Glenlyon Mountains. They sure had a good sample. Coarse gold, too. Coarse and flat. They smelled a strike, and they was working twenty-four hours a day. And mind they wasn't advertising it, either. Sour doughs, both of 'em! Look at 'em go round us. Ever see a chechahco do that?"

For Dane and Bruneau were paddling to starboard of the *Dawson* so that the eddies which whirled on the port side might not grind their light gunwale against the steamer's heavy hull. There they drifted a moment with the vessel while their dunnage was raised on a rope let down from the upper deck. Then,

making the rope fast to the canoe thwarts in order that the Peterborough might be hauled after them, they ascended.

Big men and broad were both. Yet though Bruneau stood a full six feet, Dane topped him by three inches. Perhaps it was this height that gave the impression of leanness in Dane's frame. Though neither carried an ounce of fat, Bruneau seemed the bulkier, albeit lacking a score of his companion's two hundred and forty pounds of brawn. They were scantily dressed in open-neck shirts, khaki duck trousers, and moccasins, and dressed alike, except that Félix sported the gay, plaidlike mackinaw shirt of the Ottawa voyageur, while Dane wore khaki duck to match his trousers. These shirts showed the huge swell of muscle and curve of chest when they pulled themselves up hand over hand.

As they came across the rail near the pilot house, Captain Cline, who knew every sour dough on the river, stepped out and regarded them with a grin.

"Running it mighty fine, eh, boys?" he demanded.

"Mighty fine," panted Dane, sitting down heavily on his dunnage. "It's been like that all the way from the Pelly."

"How'd you come out, Dane?" asked the trader, pushing up. "Water all the way?"

"Nearly all, Keswick! Up the Ketz River. Down the McConnell. Portaged to Quiet Lake, and down the Big Salmon."

"Wonder you didn't try to get me at Selkirk," observed Cline.

Dane shook his head. "Too far down. Knew we'd never make it in time. And we wanted to play the Pelly thing to the limit. Understand? It's big, big as we figured, Keswick. We have the cream of it." He kicked a heavy mooseskin poke lying among the dunnage.

"Thunderation!" exclaimed Keswick, staring at the size of the poke. "Say, Dane, mebbe I should have stayed with you this summer. Any skimmed milk left?"

"Some. But the word's gone down. There'll be a stampede from Dawson City in the spring to lap it up. And for my part they're welcome to it. I'm bound out."

Bound out! Some mad magic pervaded the thought. Vivid necromancies of the world beyond the passes set Dane's tired muscles tingling, kindled new fire in his jaded eye.

His friend, Captain Cline, knew that in that far quest of the outside there could be no fitter Argonaut than Dane. He knew that he was a man of strength, virility, optimism, nerve, a man with sea-blue, quiet, unwavering eyes, a man with a frankness of presence which knew no embarrassment, a white man with a white man's code which, in stress or in ease, was an iron and an infallible code.

As for Dane's friend, the captain knew his calibre, though he did not know his desires.

"You, too, Félix?" he asked, genially.

"*Non,*" Bruneau replied, with a toss of his straight black hair. "I'm onlee goin' ovaire de Chilcoot wit' *mon camarade*. I'm not goin' leave Dyea, me. I be wintaire dere an' bank ma monnaie. Den in de spreeng I be roam w'ere I please. You see, de beeg cities an' de noise lak's all ovaire ain't no good for me. I want de forest an' rivaires and mountains. Must hunt de bear, de moose, an' sooch. Dat's w'y I be stay. Guide, mebbe. Trap, mebbe. Go on de far trail, mebbe, w'ere no wan evaire been!"

"Yes, that's his pet ambition," Dane laughed. "Although he has a bigger stake than he'll ever use, about next July he'll be poling up the Tanana or the Porcupine, pretending to hunt placers and slaughtering mosquitoes."

"*Bâ oui,*" sighed the voyageur, rolling his black eyes dreamily as he took his newly lit pipe from teeth which shone ivory-white against his swarthy skin. "Dat's de onlee t'ing wort' while in dis world. I be try all de rest, an' I know. Some taim, w'en I get tired of dis countree, I go back on de Abittibi, de Kenogami, or de Missinaibie an' work for de Hudson's Bay Companee. Den I build me wan leetle cabin on de Ottawa for spend ma old days."

Dane laughed loud, shaking in his merriment the glistening drops of sweat from his dark hair. "By thunder, you're a funny one, Félix!"

"Ver' well," returned his friend, unruffled. "You

go for see de world—w'at you call de world—stacks of houses, jams of men, shut-in cities, stinkin' air, an' people crawlin' lak ants in de ant heap. Go among dem, *camarade*. Everyw'ere you turn, you'll bang oop against new laws, laws dat crowd. I be know, me. I been dere. An' you joost lak me! You'll nevaire fit in. Too beeg a man, Jules! You be born to de outland. She's in your blood. You're de true outlander, *mon vieux*, an' to de outland you'll come back."

"No, I won't," contradicted Dane. "I've had enough of the slavery of Northland life. I'm going back to my first love, the sea. But don't think I'm going it blind, Félix! You know the years I put in in the patrol service in the Bering and in the Arctic? Well, I didn't waste any time then. During those years I went through certain p. o. and w. o. ratings, got my ensign's commission, and passed my examinations for lieutenant. That's not so bad for a starter. Now I'll go the rest of the way. I've stake enough to last a lifetime. I won't have to grub along on the miserable officer's salary. And I'll show these Annapolis fellows what a thoroughbred mustang can do!"

"Dey use horses in de navy, den?" inquired Bru-neau, blandly.

"No," Jules laughed. "A mustang's a man who has never played football at Annapolis, a man without theoretical naval-school training, a man who by stark merit works up from the ranks."

"So? Well, trained or untrained, she's all de same discipline. Dat's de point, Jules. An', ba gosh, I m see somet'ing w'en I see you takin' ordaires from anybodee."

"I'll get a command and give them, you croaker."

"Still you must be take dem some taim first. *Oui, mon vieux*, dere's no mistake about dat. An' I be know dat no man ordaire you ver' mooch. Before long I'm t'ink you be come back."

"The devil I will!" scoffed Dane. "I'm not worrying any about coming back. I'm worrying about getting out before the freeze-up. Yon's frost smoke in the sky." He swept a hand toward the gray-blue vapour hanging on the edge of the horizon. "It's getting mighty cold, too. And the mush ice is running."

"*Oui*, de Beeg Salmon she was throwin' it thick w'en we come down."

"And why'd you think I wanted to squelch through it? Just for sport, I suppose? Pah! To get out. That's all I want."

But Captain Cline, knowing well the eternal lure of the Northland for the Northman, winked slyly at Bruneau as he stepped over to the wheelsman and gave him instructions for steering in the bad water which lay above.

"That's right, captain," Dane commended. "Don't let him strike any snags. It'll be the last ocean-going steamer at Dyea, and if you miss the

other Yukon boat above Miles Cañon, I'll never speak to you again."

"Trust me to make connections," nodded Cline, gravely. "There's a life staked on my hitting Whitehorse on time."

Dane looked up sharply. "A life? How's that?"

"Enid Mavor, Curtis Mavor's daughter, is sick in my stateroom below, and Carman, that slim medical student by the rail yonder, says she has to be at Whitehorse in three days."

"Why? What's wrong?"

"Tumour in the throat. She's certainly sick. Can hardly speak now. Carman allows she'll die unless operated on inside three days."

"Then why in blazes doesn't he take a chance himself? Why doesn't he give the girl a chance? What kind of a mollycoddle is he?"

"Oh, he's done all he can!" the captain hastened to explain. "No instruments or anything. Couldn't operate if he had them. Only in his first year, you know, and prospecting during holidays trying to scrape up enough to put him through the fall term. No, he can't touch her. It's a surgeon's job. There's only one man this side of tide water can do it, and that's Surgeon Wheaton. You know Wheaton, of Whitehorse?"

"Yes. But where's the girl from? Who's her father?"

"From Skagway. That's her home. You've heard of her father—Curtis Mavor?"

"Not Admiral Curtis Mavor?"

"Sure. Commands the cruiser *Shasta*."

"Yes, I know. I've heard a good deal about him. Must be on leave, eh?"

"Sure. And spending it where he always spends it—inland after big game. It's his hobby, and he's as daft on it as the most of them. Bruneau knows that. He's guided him once or twice."

"Twice," corroborated the voyageur. "Two falls I be guide heem. Two falls he eat de same grub wit' me, sleep in de same blanket. Great man for *camarade*! Great man on de navy!"

"Yes, and he has great people visiting him now at Skagway," declared Captain Cline. "People from the Russian embassy at Washington. Count Mas-sinoff and his wife! Came up on the count's steam yacht, the *Carnavia*. That was some months ago. The count, the count got—well, indisposed, so he stayed at Skagway with the countess and Enid while Mavor went in with two other men of the party, Seville and Canard."

"Who?" demanded Dane, with a vehemence that astonished Cline. "Who'd you say?"

"Seville and Canard, I said. Know them?"

Dane's eyes narrowed. "The Seville I know is a naval writer and war correspondent. The Canard I know is captain of a collier fleet. Does that hit them off?"

"Straight to the bull's-eye. Carlos Seville. Cap-

tain Haegar Canard. Friends of the embassy people. How'd you get to know them?"

"In the Bering patrol service. And I can't say it was much of an honour. But that doesn't matter. Go on, captain. What about this party?"

"I took the three men in to the Nordenskold River with a squad of Chilcat guides. They were going to hunt up there, work back again, and catch me at Nordenskold Post. Enid Mavor came in as far as the post on my in trip two weeks ago to meet her father. But when I touched there on this out trip from Dawson City, I found that the hunters hadn't come down as arranged and that Enid was sick at the post. The swelling in her throat's bad—damned bad, Jules. Carman says the only thing that'll save her is cutting it out."

Dane's face was sombre as he pondered a moment with eyes fixed on the grim Semenof Hills astern. "Then her father doesn't know," he figured. "He won't know till he gets out. And to get out he'll now have to wait for snow and dogs."

"Sure," agreed Cline, gloomily. "And the girl's got to go under the knife without him near. It's devilish tough, Dane, isn't it? I'm the only friend she has this side Dyea, but I'm doing my bloody best for her. I've told her over and over I'd get her to Whitehorse in time. And, by God, freeze-up or no freeze-up, I'll do it!"

Had it been merely a question of the freeze-up,

Captain Cline would certainly have made good his boast, for he had a mighty reputation as a darer of frost and a buckler of rim, skim, and floe ice. But in flinging his challenge to the Arctic elements he forgot the damaged condition of the vessel he commanded. His in trip, as usual, had not been accomplished without mishaps. On Tagish Lake he had caught a blow that put him on the rock shoals down by Taku Arm and jarred his engines into scrap iron. It had taken four days to fix them temporarily, and thus four days behind his schedule, Cline had no time to effect permanent repairs at Dawson City. Carruthers, the chief engineer, had simply spent six hours tinkering with the disabled machinery, riveting and bracing where he could, and the captain had sailed again between two days.

"Dinna ye let yer wheelsmon bump her," Carruthers had warned Cline. "She's in no condeetion for jarring, ye ken. Gin ye strike a bag o' feathers ma cylinders wull fly to the deil."

And Carruthers was right. The *Dawson* was in no condition to withstand a shock, yet shock she got from something weightier than a bag of feathers. At the mouth of the Hootalinqua a pine tree, waterlogged and ponderous, floating just below the surface and masked by the porridge-like mush ice, struck her a violent blow. The steamer reared up at the bow, settled back at the stern, and poised there a moment, with her splashing wheel trying crazily to

overturn her completely. Then as the branches which upheld her snapped, the steamer slid sidewise off the obstruction. The engines coughed wheezily once or twice and gave up the ghost. Silence fell in the engine room except for a steady stream of oaths from Carruthers.

Captain Cline disappeared swiftly through the engine-room hatch.

He reappeared slowly.

"It's hell, Dane," he blurted. "It's sure a-popping hell. Four more days, Carruthers says. Four more days, and you know what I told you about Mavor's girl!"

"By thunder, I clean forgot about her!" exclaimed Jules. "Thinking of our own fix! Do you know what a hole you've put us in, Cline? Four days, you say? The freeze-up isn't four days away. You've gone and tied up boat and passengers for all winter."

"I didn't!" snapped the captain, worried to vexation.

"Den de pine tree did," chuckled Bruneau.

"Now you're getting down to bed rock. I don't give a heathen Siwash curse for the boat. Or for the passengers either, at least for the well passengers. The boat isn't going to bluemold and blow away. In another month the passengers can walk to Whitehorse over the ice. But what gets me and gets me hard is Mavor's girl. She has to go in to Whitehorse now, to-day. How's she going? A lifeboat's no

good against this current. Might as well try to tow up a barge. And what in blazes is left?"

Cline stamped savagely back and forth. "What in blazes is left?" he kept reiterating. "What in blazes is left?" He clenched his hands in desperation and glared about with gloomy eyes, when suddenly those eyes fell upon the canoe.

"Shades of old George Holt!" he exclaimed. One forefinger was flung out like a levelled pistol, and the light of hope illumined his face.

Dane's glance followed the captain's pointing finger to the trim eighteen-foot Peterborough which was stowed aft and which till that moment had been forgotten by all of them.

"We've heads like totem poles!" Jules burst out. "But you don't have to ask, Cline. Félix and I'll go. Bring the girl up. We'll 'tend to the canoe. Come on, Felix. Move that hulk of yours."

"*Bien*," smiled Bruneau. "I'm ready, me." He arose deliberately, carefully emptied his pipe before placing it in his trousers pocket, took up the two paddles and the grub sack, and strode aft with his comrade.

They were poising the canoe on the rail when Cline came up the companionway. Leaning on the captain's arm Dane and Bruneau saw a girl of twenty, tall and slender, with hair the colour of autumn birches on the Nisutlin and eyes of the sheen of Lake LaBerge. She was dressed in a hooded parka of

blanket cloth which reached halfway down a skirt of the same material. To the two men her healthy appearance came as a surprise. Her form, though slender, had a certain erectness and hint of supple strength. The contour of her face was full and fine. Only the extreme pallor of her cheeks and the drawn expression of her lips told that there was anything wrong. Jules and Félix did not know that it was her pride which carried her body erect and caused her to lean but lightly on the captain's arm till they saw her sway at the top of the companionway and throw out her right hand to clutch the stair stanchion.

Dane sprang to help support her. Between him and Cline, the girl steadied herself.

"Thanks," she breathed, scarcely above a whisper. "I'm certainly clumsy or—or else a bit dizzy."

"Lean on us, Enid, and don't try to call up false strength," pleaded the captain, as they practically carried her across the deck. "This is Dane, one of your volunteers. I've told him all about you. And he's of the kind that understands."

In spite of her physical stress, Enid Mavor's eyes were steady and unshadowed as they looked into Dane's. "You're of the kind that understands," she observed. "Then I'll not try to trade words of praise for your service. Anyway, Captain Cline absolutely forbids me to talk. Isn't that an awful injunction to serve on a woman?" The drawn expression faded from her lips, and a smile lurked there.

"It's a hard one, under ordinary circumstances," laughed Jules. "But there won't be much chance to talk on the river. We'll have to wrap you in blankets, and your head must be covered for the most part. Félix," he called to the voyageur, "hunt out those Hudson Bays!"

Bruneau extracted the heavy blankets from the dunnage and unrolled them as he came forward.

"This is Bruneau, your other courier," Dane informally introduced. "He is one of the best canoe-men in the North."

The voyageur had no cap to touch, so he reached out a brawny paw to entrap Enid's slim fingers. Yet, while he shook hands, his eyes, instead of being fixed upon the girl's face, were fixed upon her feet.

"Ba gosh!" he exclaimed, in colossal wonder.

"What's the matter?" asked the astonished Enid.

"Dose cruisers!" Félix pointed to the dainty laced boots of cream elkskin which reached to her knees. "I never see dem so small. You got on Cinderella's long boots sure!"

Enid, beguiled into forgetfulness of her pain, gave a little laugh. "Then you two must be my good fairies," she declared. "Aren't they, Captain Cline? Will they vanish if I talk to them?"

"You can't open your lips on the water, young lady," blustered Cline, sternly. "That's an absolute command."

"She don't need to open de lips to talk, 'cause her

eyes do dat," put in Bruneau, gallantly. "An' we have conversation all de way!"

Meanwhile, men aboard the *Dawson* had let the canoe down for them. Dane and Bruneau slid into it. Then Enid Mavor was lowered in a sling. Warmly swathed in the Hudson Bay blankets, she lay amidships. Félix had the bow, Jules the stern. As they pushed off, the captain dived into the pilot house, ran forth again, and dropped two fur caps into the canoe.

"You'll maybe need them," he yelled.

"Thanks!" Dane shouted up. "And just keep an eye on our dust. We'll see you at Whitehorse."

"Over the first ice," Cline assured him. "Good-bye, Enid! Safe water, men!"

Enid waved a blanket end in farewell. Dane and Bruneau shook their paddles aloft as they headed through the night up the swift and tortuous Thirty Mile.

Dawn flared upon them as they won the last stretch of the Thirty Mile while it flowed from Lake LaBerge, and on the shores of the lake they hastily breakfasted by a roaring driftwood fire. It was growing colder as they again embarked. The tops of the flanking Hancock Hills showed snowcoated and austere, while by the lake edge shore ice continually formed and broke off in fragile floes.

All morning they paddled unceasingly, and at

noon reached the mouth of the Fifty Mile River. The Fifty Mile was a wicked stream in its balmiest moments, but with mush ice that ran like stiffening paint, with shore ice that thrust out to clutch the straining Peterborough and snarled as the craft ripped through, with dizzy currents, bad eddies, ugly bends, and hidden snags, it became a veritable demon. The men strove desperately to win through the reeling currents of the narrow gorges. They slanted black eddies, fringed with scum ice, where the river whirled in its gigantic basins. They worked carefully up through the treacherous shallows. For it was not as if Jules and Félix were alone. There could be no capsizing, no taking of long chances, no roughing of white water to save a shore mile.

This was what made the twenty-seven river miles to Whitehorse one never-ending moil. Around impassable channels Félix carried the canoe on his shoulders, while Jules took the girl in his arms.

Through swift water, chill as a glacier stream, they waded, knee-deep, waist-deep, sometimes shoulder-deep, one at the bow with a towline, the other at the stern, and Enid alone occupying the craft.

Some miles below Whitehorse they came to a series of rushing chutes which, on Enid's account, they dared not ascend thus. So the voyageur poled the Peterborough up himself with a long pole cut for the purpose, while Dane, bearing his human burden,

forged along on the bank. A chaotic path for his feet, the bank dipped and plunged and twisted. Now he poised on a precipice edge. Now he crawled in a chasm's bowels. But ever he went forward, stumbling through tangled underbrush and shrubbery, staggering over logs, stumps, and bowlders, tearing his clothes and flesh and bruising his arms and body, till at length clear water opened and the canoe came into commission again.

Spent with their efforts, Jules and Félix paddled lethargically into Whitehorse at sundown.

A man on shore, strolling by himself, stopped and peered at them curiously as they drew in.

"Dat's Lonely Ben Desmond, ain't it?" sighed Félix.

Dane weakly nodded. "And he's alone, all right. We won't waken the girl if we can help it. I'll get Ben to give us a hand with her up to Wheaton's office."

Dane climbed out on his cramped, battered limbs and went up the wharf toward Desmond.

"Lonely, give us a hand, will you?" he greeted. "We've a patient here."

"Patient, eh? Sure I will! It's Dane, ain't it?" Ben scrutinized him in the dusk. "Thought it was your voice. But you look like a lousy tramp. Who's the other hobo?"

"Félix Bruneau. We have a job for Surgeon Wheaton. Come on!"

"Hold on, you mean," amended Lonely Ben, staying him with his hand. "Wheaton ain't here."

"What do you say?" Jules swung about with savage sharpness.

"Wheaton ain't here."

"Where in blazes is he?"

"Livingstone Creek placer camps. Smallpox!"

Dane felt as if Ben had hit him in the face. "Then he won't be back?" he blurted.

"Back? No! It's quarantine. Savvy? And we ain't hankerin' to have him back, either. Not till the bloody thing's stamped out."

"Another doctor?" demanded Jules.

"No. The town's some young yet. Why? What's grippin' you so hard? You've mebbe been man-handled, but you ain't been knifed or shot. And Bruneau seems all in one piece. What you want the dope drummer for?"

Dane pointed to the wrapped form in the canoe. "See that bundle, Ben?"

"Sure."

"That's Admiral Mavor's girl."

"Hell!" exploded Desmond. "That Yankee big gun? I seen him goin' in after big game with some natty tenderfeet. His girl? What in thunder's wrong?"

"Throat trouble. Tumour or something. We brought her in to Wheaton for an operation. She was on the *Dawson*, but the *Dawson* is down with engine trouble at the Hootalinqua."

Lonely Ben's mouth opened wide. He gulped once or twice in dismay. "Holy Hunker!" he breathed. "And Wheaton sixty miles east and holdin' quarantine! That's thunderin' bad, Jules!"

For a minute the two men, gazing stupidly at each other, stood there upon the wharf. But for all his stupid appearance, the mind of Dane was feverishly active.

"She has to go to Dyea," he decided. "That's her only chance. We'll go with her, and we'll go at once. There's no use in the other steamer above the cañon waiting for the *Dawson* now. It can leave right away."

"Leave!" echoed Desmond, blankly. "It has left. Waited three days overtime for the *Dawson*, but dassen't wait any longer, fear of the freeze-up. It sailed at noon."

"Hell!" snarled Dane, swinging toward the canoe. "You hear, Félix? And Dawson City's half a thousand river miles from here! That puts it out of the question. But what about Dyea? We'll find Surgeon Forman there at the hospital, because hospitals don't jump around. Can we make it on time? It's a hundred miles from here to Lake Lindeman and twenty-eight from Lindeman over the Chilcoot. One hundred and twenty-eight altogether! How long will it take?"

"Ba gosh, *mon vieux*, dat's long way, all right!" observed the voyageur, shaking a doubtful head.

"An' she's a slow trail at de best. In good wedder I'm see her done by canoe in feefy hours. But, *mon Dieu*, not wit' de seeck woman!"

"Thunder!" exclaimed Desmond, who had squatted on the landing beside them. "You ain't for facin' the lakes in that cursed canoe this time of year? You'll drown the girl, not to speak of yourselves."

"Three days that Carman fellow allowed before operation," Jules went on, unheeding. "One day gone already. Two left. Of course, there's the chance of striking a doctor at one of the police posts or maybe at Caribou Crossing. But we can't bank on that. So we'd better move mighty sudden. Eh, Félix?"

"Mightee sudden," Félix agreed. "Get in!"

"You're dod-blasted idiots!" protested Lonely Ben Desmond, as Jules once more took his place in the stern. "Crack-brained Willies from Willieville. But you're bulgin' fit to split with pure, unadulterated grit. And if I'd ever put foot on one of them mankillin' canoes, I'd sure sit down and help you."

"You can help us yet and save us time," Dane assured him. "Go uptown. Buy us a rubber-cased sleeping-bag, two drill parkas, and some more grub. Throw in lots of condensed milk and chocolate for Enid. Bring the stuff after us to the head of the cañon. Can you catch us somewhere there?"

"Catch you? Sure! Catch you before you pass the rapids." Desmond disappeared up the wharf on the run.

One mile above the town the good water was disrupted, and the Whitehorse Rapids snarled in the way. The men were forced to portage round the timber-fringed torrent with its narrow, thirty-yard gateway at the foot crowding the crazy river to a sudden drop. The portage was three eighths of a mile. At the end Dane and Bruneau paused to breathe themselves, and there Lonely Ben Desmond overtook them.

"Here's your bag and parkas and grub," he panted.

"Got them at the A. C. C. store. Pay? To hell with pay!" He struck away the pocket poke in Dane's hand. "Put on your parkas. You'll freeze in them dam' shirts. Goin' to take yon half mile of smooth water? No, you say? Well, I guess it ain't hardly worth while. Make better time on the bank. Here, Felix, you're about played. Gimme that canoe. You go over empty and get a rest. You'll sure need it before you're through."

It was a good two-mile carry to the head of Miles Cañon. Ben Desmond strode swiftly in the lead. Bruneau hobbled after him, and Jules, staggering in the rear with his feminine burden, was hard put to keep their pace. True, Enid Mavor did not weigh more than one hundred and twenty pounds, and Dane had, on countless occasion, packed triple her weight as far without worry. But that was on his back, with a stout tumpline across his forehead distributing the strain throughout his body from neck

to toe tips. Enid lay like lead in his arms. She still slept, despite the roughness of the portage, until near the head of the cañon, when the jerk of Dane's clutch, as he felt her slipping, abruptly awakened her.

She pushed aside the blanket from her face.

"Where are we?" she asked, weakly. "Is this Whitehorse?"

"No, we're past Whitehorse," Jules answered, with simulated cheerfulness. "Surgeon Wheaton's away checking a smallpox outbreak on Livingstone Creek. So we're taking you on to a doctor at one of the other camps. I don't think we'll have very far to go."

And Enid, spared the understanding, nodded acquiescence as her head drooped sleepily again upon Dane's shoulder. She was dead to all extraneous things, past recognizing the vague loom of their surroundings. Even the resounding roar of Miles Cañon failed to stir her.

She did not know, was not aware that Jules and Félix had drawn the sleeping-bag over her like an envelope, tightly laced the patent flap, and embarked, with a word of farewell to Lonely Ben.

But once under way she knew. For as they struggled upstream through the frigid night, the adverse fate which had dogged them from the Hootalinqua to Whitehorse asserted itself. Straightway their delays and mishaps began. Three times in the

gloom, relieved only by yellow stars and silver aurora, they struck snags on the Lewes River and capsized, with icy soakings for the men and uncanny frights for the girl. Yet, game to the core, Enid never whimpered when, in her water-tight sleeping-bag, she found herself floating and bobbing on the current. She was lashed to Dane's wrist with eight feet of rope, and each time he swam ashore with her while Bruneau dragged out the canoe and righted it. They had foreseen such accidents and made their preparations accordingly. The waterproof grub sack, containing their food and cooking utensils, was tied to a thwart. Their paddle grips were attached to rings in bow and stern by pieces of cord of sufficient length to allow freedom of stroke, and these cords saved the blades from being swept beyond recovery when the craft overturned. So in the moments of their numerous mischances they lost nothing but strength and body heat. Which loss was in itself a most serious thing.

An endless succession of gigantic endeavours took them up the Lewes. Towline and wading defeated the stubborn ice and current. But Dane and Bruneau paid for their victory with a dire numbness of limb that compelled beating back the blood into circulation. Half their garments were strewn in shredded patches among the underbrush, rocks, and logs, together with portions of their flesh on the more precipitous banks where they had crawled along,

the one with the towline, the other with the heavier load. Their knees and elbows were pulpy with contusions. Their faces and hands were cruelly lacerated. Wet clothes and unceasing motion chafed the bleeding wounds in many parts of their bodies till these raw, gaping places quivered with excruciating agonies. Still, indomitable, unbreakable, they fought forward, always forward, backs bent to the herculean toil, silent as grim Vikings.

On Lake Marsh a heavy night gale roared down from the distant mountains, tossing the canoe this way and that with titanic hands. An icy spray of water smote, soaked, and froze them.

"Bail, Félix!" Dane was continually shouting through the hurtling wind in his teeth. "I'll keep her head on."

And he thanked God that Enid was immune from that freezing bath, although her sleeping-bag sometimes floated in the shipped water.

Thus, one bailing, the other driving the paddle, they won through Lake Marsh. They almost prostrated themselves with the superhuman effort. At the head of the lake they halted and fed themselves to instill new strength. Jules warmed milk and chocolate and made Enid drink plenty in order to keep up her vitality.

"This is terrible on you," she protested over her last cup, as Dane came to lift her into the canoe. "And I'm so dry and warm. I'm ashamed to make

you work and suffer so. Have we much farther to go?"

"Not much," Jules evaded. "We're sure to strike a doctor at the police post on Tagish Lake."

At dawn they made it.

A sleepy private of the Mounted Police crawled out of bed to answer Dane's thunderous knock.

"A doctor here?" Jules asked, incisively.

The private shook his tousled head.

"No chance! This ain't a hospital."

Heregarded Dane with amazement, aroused more by the latter's physical appearance than by the question.

But, wasting no time in futile explanations, Jules turned his back on Tagish Post and shambled to the beach.

Tagish Lake proved kind. The wind had died in favour of snow flurries, which, though discomforting, were not impeding. Temporarily invigorated by the food they had swallowed and by the blessed respite from the check of brawling head winds, they made swift progress. But before they had crossed, this place of uncertain air currents lived up to its blustery reputation. By Windy Arm a gale leaped forth, a tempest that piled the waves mountain high and swamped the canoe in the surf as it fled for land. The Peterborough was beached like a biscuit and the whole bow stove; but, still unbeaten, Jules and Félix bought another canoe from a man at Little Windy and pushed on.

Through necessity, they kept to the shelter of the shore and went out the narrow neck of Nares Lake, known to oldtimers as Caribou Crossing.

"No surgeon; nothing but a quack," they told Dane there, and he groaned in despair and sheer exhaustion.

He staggered as he walked back to the canoe. Yet he had no thought of giving up. Félix, too, showed signs of the severe pressure. His face had an unnatural, pinched appearance, his dark skin a sickly pallor quite foreign to it.

Still, there was no shade of disappointment or discouragement in Dane's features as he brought the news to Enid.

"Have to hit Crater Lake Camp," he announced offhandedly. "We can't risk you with any quack. Crater Lake's not so far on!" He gestured toward the north.

But Jules put too much of a swagger into his gesture, too great a flippancy into his words. In a flash, Enid's womanly intuitiveness pierced the mask of his jaunty demeanour and discerned his physical strait, at which so far she had only vaguely guessed.

"I—I can't let you go on," she gasped, feebly. "You're deceiving me. You know there's no doctor nearer than Dyea, and you both are killing yourselves to get me there. It's pure suicide, and I won't permit it." Her blue eyes showed fire, and a hectic flush of colour momentarily dyed her white cheeks.

"Hush, little girl with Cinderella's long boots on!"

warned Dane. "You mustn't start to talk like that, or the good fairies will vanish sure. You're mistaken when you mention suicide. Félix and I aren't going to die yet. Our part of it is only a picnic. The one it's really hard on is you."

And Jules, scarred, ragged giant that he was, leaned over her and smiled.

"Remember," he added, "that Félix and I have been on trails like this for years."

Dane lied, because he had never in his life followed a trail that demanded one tenth the amount of endurance required in the present essay.

Provisionally Lake Bennett was calm. For once this goddess of storm, this oracle of loud-tongued, glacier-born tempest, deigned to be merciful.

Still it was thirty miles, thirty long, weary, muscle-wrenching miles which they covered by an expense of energy drawn from some secret depths of their Northmen's natures. A corporal of the police post at Bennett's head fed them when they pulled in there, too weak almost to lift a paddle, too utterly fatigued to give sane answers to his questions. Then they started afresh.

Portages had become hideous nightmares to Dane. But between Bennett and Lindeman there was another a mile long, and there were yet others farther on. Over Lindeman; across Long Lake; through Deep Lake; on to Crater Lake! The journey became a sort of hallucination, a pilgrimage of torture

in the underworld where lakes were but succeeding stages of torment and portages improvements on the thumbscrew and the rack.

On the rim of the age-old, water-filled, volcanic pit called Crater Lake they at last abandoned the canoe and crawled out among the huddle of tents which marked the end of incomers' long pack over the mountain. They had barely beaten the frost. All around the lake edge the shore ice was hourly thrusting toward the centre. And it did not break off in floes. It thickened to stay. Morning would mark the close of navigation.

By a cache on the shore where they landed, a tall, powerful Sitka Indian packer was taking the pack straps off the burden he had carried over the pass. As he finished and turned away for the back trip, Dane recognized his face.

"Chasni Jim!" he called.

The Indian stopped and stared curiously.

"What um want?" he demanded.

"Don't you know me? They say a Sitka never forgets."

Chasni Jim strode closer, and his swart features widened in a grin.

"Sure!" he grunted. "You um man on States police boat.\* Storm come wipe out whole Sitka village. We freeze and starve. You come warm and feed us. Three years, mebbeso four years back!

\*Revenue cutter.

You Sitka tribe's friend. You Chasni Jim's friend. What you want um do?"

"Find me a doctor!"

Chasni Jim's grin faded, and his face grew lugubrious. "No can find," he declared. "Skagway man break um leg last night on um hog back." He pointed to the steep ridge of rock above Crater Lake. "No doctor fix um. So um pardners fix um." Chasni Jim drew his hands down either side of his own leg to indicate splints, and wound it figuratively with cord.

Dane cursed futilely.

"What you want um doctor for?" asked Chasni Jim.

"That girl! Savvy? Sick! Got to take her over Chilcoot. You on your back trip now?"

The Sitka nodded.

"Will you help us?"

The Sitka nodded again, and vigorously.

"Sure!" he agreed. "You Sitka tribe's friend. You Chasni Jim's friend. Mebbeso you want um, me help you clean to hell!"

"I believe you," said Jules. "But Dyea's far enough."

Enid Mavor was lost in a sort of coma, induced by exhaustion, not strictly unconscious, but always hovering on the edge of a weird oblivion while her couriers crawled over the crest of the first divide, passed across an old moraine, and forged upward

above timber line amid the chaotic slag vomited forth centuries before by some colossal volcanic upheaval. On abandoning the canoe, the men had retained the sleeping-bag, in spite of its additional weight, as the only means of keeping Enid from freezing and protecting her against the impact of ledge and boulder. The method of the portage was ingeniously arranged by Chasni Jim, who was one of the most experienced and one of the most powerful packers on the Chilcoot. One quarter of a mile was the allotted distance of a single effort, and the Sitka, being fresh and strong, relieved Dane and Bruneau alternately. Thus he worked a double shift and carried Enid one half of every mile, while Jules and Félix carried one quarter and breathed themselves for three quarters of every mile.

This worked like a charm to the snowy summit. But near the icy palisades, groping blindly for the trail in the thick darkness preceding the dawn, when stars and aurora failed and the sun had not yet risen, Chasni Jim stumbled and fell in a rocky crevice. Even as he fell, he swung his burden uppermost with an agile twist of his body and shielded the girl from harm. He himself struck heavily. His right foot turned sidewise under him, and when Jules hastily snatched up Enid, the Sitka lay where he had fallen.

"Guess um sprain sure," he grunted, feeling the ligaments of his ankle.

"*Mon Dieu!*" wailed Bruneau. "W'at next?"

"Can't help um," returned Chasni Jim, coolly. "No can walk!"

"An' you can't be stay here above timber line to freeze! Get on ma back!"

So from the palisades all the way down to Cañon City they each had a burden, and it told on them yard by yard. They plunged and staggered along the rough trail worn among the flinty rocks by thousands of stampedeers' feet. They fell and rose up, blindly forging forward to the next collapse. The effort they put forth was gigantic, the strain superhuman. But even to gigantic effort, to superhuman strain, there are certain limits, mental and physical, beyond which none may trespass without committing suicide. Dane and Bruneau were approaching that stage when they lurched through straggling Sheep Camp, which, half buried by a snowslide, was shovelling itself out. They had fully reached it when they made Cañon City. A tinge of insanity seemed to touch the pair, for, though Félix was willing to deposit Chasni Jim there, neither he nor Jules would surrender Enid to the willing hands that were outstretched when the Sitka passed the news. They would accept no overtures, not even the offer of driving all four to Dyea in a wagon. Tremendous suffering had imbued in them a savage unreasonableness. So vast was the obsession of their one idea that they could countenance nothing but that one idea: bearing the girl to tidewater. Refusing to

listen to any other means of carrying out that idea than the one they had been employing so long, they tore themselves loose from the pressing throng and stumbled on in the phantasmagoric spell of the struggle.

At last the men of Cañon City became insistent and charged Dane and Bruneau in a body. By force of numbers they overpowered the pair and bundled them, together with Enid and Chasni Jim, into a wagon. Even then it required three stout fellows to sit upon Jules and keep him in the wagon box while the caravan rumbled down the glacial cobble of Dyea Valley.

Felix was asleep before they arrived. Stupefied with exhaustion, he lay like a piece of rock. But the short rest had fanned the mad fever in Dane, and by the door of Dyea Hospital he jumped through all restraint and confronted the astonished attendant.

"Where's Surgeon Forman?" he demanded.

The attendant gaped, open-mouthed, at the frayed, tattered giant with the haggard eyes and bloody face. His amazement petrified his tongue, and it was a Yankee tar in naval uniform who stepped from the edge of the curious, gathering crowd and touched Dane's arm.

"Surgeon Forman's just left the *Shasta* wit' Admiral Mavor," he informed. "They're dinin' aboard the *Carnavia*."

Dane whirled. "Dining? Mavor? *Shasta*? What in blazes are you talking about?"

The tar swung his hand beachward. "Yonder she is. I'm off her, Barty Barnham, at your soivce, sir, an' me mate, Nolan McLettan. We come ashore in the launch wit' Coxs'n Brenner."

"But Mavor's inland, hunting!"

"No, he ain't. Come over the White Pass yesterday. There's hell to pay in the Pribilof Islands."

Dane waited for no more; but, seizing the shoulders of Barty Barnham and Nolan McLettan, he thrust them toward the launch on the beach.

"Get in," he ordered, "and take us aboard the *Carnavia*."

McLettan recovered himself from the thrust and rubbed his shoulder. "Fwat d'ye mane?" he scowled. "Ye have wan divil of a grip!"

"An' not offerin' any essence o' contempt, we're taking no orders 'cept from the coxs'n," Barty Barnham informed.

"You'll take them from me!" Dane thundered.

He sprang to the wagon and lifted Enid out of the sleeping-bag which had been her couch in the rough box. The blanket fell away from her face, and she glimpsed the waters of Dyea Inlet. There, anchored between Count Massinoff's yacht and a big ocean-going steamer she could see the grim shape of a gray cruiser. Also, close by on the beach, she saw the launch and the two tars.

"What's the matter here?" she asked, in bewilderment. "Where are you taking me?"

Dane was staggering under her weight. He spoke in jerks. "To the *Carnavia*," he answered. "Your father's there."

He had reached the launch and placed her awkwardly in the bottom. "Quick, blast you, quick!" he commanded. "You fools, it's the admiral's daughter!"

Barnham and McLettan stared at the white face. "Howly flag!" exclaimed McLettan. "It is, Barty. The chief's girl!"

They sprang to their seats, and a streamer of spray curled over the bow as the craft surged through the choppy swell on the inlet.

"What's the trouble in the Pribilofs?" asked Jules, when he got his breath.

"Seal rookeries," answered Barty Barnham. "Raidin'. General complikashuns. Russian cruiser fired on a Yankee cutter. An' the naval department's ordered the *Shasta*, wit Lootenant Commander Lewis as ordnance officer an' the chief in command, to push in and investigate things."

"But how'd they got word to Mavor and his party?"

"Juneau Indians took in the news an' brought them out. Easy, Nolan; easy, now! Here's the *Carnavia's* starbo'rd gangway!"

As they swung alongside, a voice hailed them from above.

"What's wrong with you men?" it demanded.

"Where's the coxswain? And why have you disobeyed orders? You have no business near this vessel!"

The bluejackets looked up and saw Lieutenant Commander Lewis at the top of the *Carnavia's* gangway.

"Gawd, Barty, he's mad!" whispered McLettan.

But, undaunted, Barty pointed significantly, first to Enid and then to Dane. "The chief's girl—sick!" he shouted, in explanation. "He brought her out over the Chilcoot Pass."

Even at that height Dane saw the lieutenant commander's face pale, and he wondered vaguely if Enid Mavor was anything to him. But his dazed mind had neither the energy nor the opportunity to ponder the thing. For Lewis, calling something to a marine at hand, rushed recklessly down the gangway. Between him and the sailors Enid was raised to the deck, and the unsteady Dane followed. The obsession, the tinge of insanity, was still upon the latter. Once on deck, he snatched back the girl from Lewis and staggered with her toward an excited group of people issuing from the companionway.

Among the faces of the group Surgeon Forman's was the only one Jules knew, but dimly he surmised that the smallish Russian with the wine-flushed cheeks was Count Massinoff, that the tall, dark woman beside him was the countess, and that the white-haired, white-moustached man in uniform was

Admiral Mavor. The latter, running swiftly, with arms outstretched, outdistanced the rest of the party, and to those arms Dane mutely surrendered his burden.

"Enid, Enid!" cried Mavor, wildly. "What has happened, sir?"

Composure and discipline fell from the father, shorn by the greater force of his love.

"Enid, can't you tell me?" he implored. "My God, this must be serious. Speak, man, speak!"

What faltering speech Enid was capable of was choked by the strangling sobs that came at the touch of her father's arms. Dane's words were likewise incoherent, for his resurgence of strength was ebbing fast. But he managed to stammer out enough to let them know the girl's need.

Like Lieutenant Commander Lewis, the admiral paled.

"Forman," he called, hoarsely, "come below! Where's the *Carnavia's* doctor? Where's Kensard? Lewis, go and find him. No, no, Forman, let me carry her!"

He clutched Enid tightly, so Surgeon Forman simply steadied him in the descent of the companionway.

"Help the man, count!" Mavor begged. "Take his arm! Countess, his other arm! His clothes may be dirty, but his heart is the heart of a king. He saved my girl while I sat dining. Good heavens—

dining! But I couldn't know you had come in to meet me, Enid. The call from the naval department came before we had started down to Nordenskold Post, and the other way out was quicker," Mavor raved on, and in Dane's ears his ravings rang but faintly, as if spoken from a great distance. Jules was stumbling downward between the diminutive Russian and his regal wife. They supported him by the arms, and adulation poured from the voluble count. Lost in a range of Russian superlatives, Massinoff could find no expression exaggerated enough to describe Dane's conduct. As for the countess, she was silent. Her fires of praise burned only in her eyes, great, haunting, brown eyes which Jules, even in the blindness of exhaustion, knew to be beautiful eyes.

His brain was whirling as they reached the bottom of the companionway.

He could not see where to place his rebellious feet. Helpless as a blind man, he felt about with them, then collapsed in the Massinoffs' arms.

When he opened his eyes again, it seemed to him only a moment since they closed. Now his vision was clear, and he immediately recognized Surgeon Forman and the *Carnavia's* doctor, Kensard, working over him. He sat up suddenly and thrust them away.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "Get out of here! Your place is with Enid Mavor."

"Lie down!" ordered Surgeon Forman. "That's all over——"

Dane leaped up. "What? I was too late?"

Forman pushed him back on the stateroom bed. "No. You misunderstand. You've been unconscious for an hour. Miss Mavor's doing nicely. It was a matter of minutes for us. A slit of the knife, and it was all over. But you were just in time. Another day and we couldn't have done much."

"How long was she on the way from Whitehorse? I don't remember. It might have been a week or a year, for all I could tell."

"When did you leave Whitehorse?"

"Wednesday, at dark. My memory was working that far."

"Then you made Dyea in sixty hours, and I can't help telling you it was a piece of colossal grit. Pure, unalloyed, Alaskan grit, Kensard. We breed an unequalled strain of it up here."

"Against all handicaps," murmured Kensard. "It was superhuman."

"Bah!" returned Dane. "There were two of us for it."

He propped himself up on his elbow.

"You'll have to lie down," Forman commanded. "I gave you a prick with the needle. That's why you're so lively now. But it'll pass, and, when it does pass, you must be asleep. Then the tremendous waste of tissue you've suffered will begin to be re-

placed. You sleep the clock round. I'll give you stuff whenever you happen to wake. Understand? Do as I say, or I won't be responsible for you. I don't think even the admiral should see you yet. He made me promise to tell him the moment you came to, but——”

The surgeon paused, with a gesture of annoyance, for behind him the door of the stateroom opened and Admiral Mavor and Count Massinoff looked in. Forman attempted to dismiss them with a professional scowl, but they looked him boldly in the eye as they quickly crossed the floor.

Jules held up an entreating hand to stay Mavor's impulsive rush. "Not a word," he pleaded. "Not a word. Bruneau and I were coming out, anyway. The rest was nothing, nothing at all. Any man in the North would have done it."

"Any Northman, you mean," amended Mavor, huskily. For he understood the Northman's soul, the soul that, while winning the laurel, scorned the thunder of praise. "But if you won't have me speak my gratitude, let me put it all in a handgrip."

"Sure," accepted Dane, putting forth a huge hand, bruised and swollen. "I like it that way."

"But I can't sail at daybreak and never have another opportunity to show how I feel," protested Mavor. "And Enid, too. We both want to see more of you."

"Your daughter's doing well, the doctors tell me."

"Yes, thank God! That knowledge makes it a lot easier for me to go on this mission to the Pribilofs."

"Will there be fighting there, do you think?"

The admiral shook his head.

"I don't think so."

"Those bluejackets, Barnham and McLettan, hinted as much."

"Maybe. But they're so fond of a fight that they're always conjuring one up. I'm pretty certain that once the *Shasta* appears, Russia will back down. With all due apologies, count!" smiling whimsically at Massinoff.

But the count was too drunk to take offence.

"Each for his own country!" he nodded maudlinly.

"So," continued Mavor, "I don't expect to be away long. My furlough isn't finished yet. I'll finish it afterward, and Enid and I will be glad to see you in Skagway at Mavor House. The house is up on the slopes above the bay. Any sailor will point it out to you. Now promise to come, and I'll let Surgeon Forman have his will."

"Thanks, I'll come," Dane promised, "the first chance." And the admiral made him seal it with another handgrip.

"But I forgot to ask you how you came out from the Nordenskold River," he ventured.

"Oh, over the old Indian trail! We were up on the Middle Fork when the Juneau bucks found our camp."

"Then you crossed to the Mendenhall River?"

"Yes, and kept on to the Watson River. We followed the Watson into Lake Bennett. There were some packers at Bennett, so we bought their horses and rode the White Pass Trail."

"Your friends came?"

"Seville and Canard? Oh, yes! They've both gone to St. Michaels. There's a tramp steamer over at Skagway clearing to-night for the fort. I gave them a boat to catch it, and they left just before you came."

"What was their hurry?"

"Well, although I, personally, don't expect trouble, the naval department is prepared for it. That, of course, is wise. And as our warships when in the Bering get coal from Canard's colliers, he has gone to St. Michaels to look after his fleet. Then Seville had to be near at hand in case of real trouble in the interests of the American War Press Syndicate. Why? Do you know them?"

"Just casually. A tramp steamer clearing at Skagway, you said?"

"Yes."

"What about the Seattle boat? When does she sail?"

"In the morning."

"Then could you see that I'm put aboard to-night? I'm not likely to wake for twenty-four hours, and I want to get away. Could——"

"No, admiral; no, Mr. Dane," a voice cut in, "I will not hear of that."

It was Massinoff's voice.

"I will not hear of that," he repeated, making grave, protesting gestures before Dane and Mavor. "It was an heroic deed. For it, in my country, you would be worshipped as a hero. And, abroad, does a Massinoff forget the ways of his people and the customs of his land? No, my friend, no! Not while my Russian blood runs! I revere you. The countess reveres you. You shall not go from us on another vessel when my yacht is going south. You sail with us to-morrow. But to-night you sleep. I take the admiral with me and leave you to your rest. From this moment you are my guest. No, no, there is no refusal with a Massinoff! It is understood!"

Dane was just on the rim of oblivion that marks the approach of sleep when there came a light step and the faint rustling of a dress at the stateroom door. It was one of these vague noises that make the nerves quiver back to semi-wakefulness and cause the relaxed muscles to contract with a start. His eyelids jarred open a little space, then wearily closed.

As if in the fabric of a dream, Countess Massinoff slipped in. She paused an instant, her brown eyes aglimmer with eagerness, yet obviously full of fear that Dane might be awake. But she noted his mo-

tionless form and the deep rise and fall of his chest. Undoubtedly her fear was foolish! He was asleep! She crossed the room hesitatingly, as one who walks upon forbidden ground, and came to his bedside.

There she stooped and gazed, a wonderful light on her face.

Her proximity stirred Jules again to semi-wakefulness, so that he saw her through the screen of his eyelashes.

Softly and long she looked at him, then bent down and touched her lips to his.

As in the fabric of a dream, Dane thrilled to the caress, and his eyelids closed.

"I never thought there were such men," he heard her murmur.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RETURN

**W**HERE are we?" shouted Count Massinoff in Dane's ear. "I haven't seen a thing since we lost Baranoff Island."

Wrapped in winter oilskins, he and Dane stood, with the officer of the watch, on the slippery bridge of the *Carnavia*, staring into the blinding snow smother ahead. For three days the gale had blown out of the east, now and then shifting a few points south, a terrific, devastating glacial tempest, that had made a shattered plaything of the powerful steam yacht.

"Heaven knows where we are!" Dane shrieked in answer, pitching his voice high to pierce the thrumming, slashing tumult. "You see, this comes of venturing out on the open sea in such weather. I warned you to take the shelter of the islands and keep the Inside Passage."

For Dane thoroughly regretted having been induced to ship with the cognac-drinking Massinoff and with officers who imbibed so freely that in a midnight emergency they were wholly incapable of

combating at one and the same time the whirlwind spinning in their heads and the Alaskan hurricane which had driven them offshore.

Also, Jules regretted the presence of the countess, since he knew the perils of these northern seas.

"Can't you get your bearings?" Massinoff was crying to the officer in charge of the bridge. "Where the devil is your training?"

The officer put a hand to his frozen cap, shouting lengthy explanations through the roaring blast. The substance of his explanations was that for three days the sky had not been seen, much less the sun. Soundings with the lead told nothing about their position except that they were drifting along within ten or fifteen miles of the Alaskan coast. Thus the officer on the bridge was powerless, though now thoroughly sobered.

Not so Massinoff. The cognac still had its grip on the Russian, a grip that he strengthened from time to time by trips below, in consequence of which he was on the verge of nervous collapse. For spirits, instead of bolstering, depressed his system.

"Come to the steersman," he despairingly begged, seizing Dane's arm. "Come and see how we're pointing."

Across the streaming deck they staggered in their hip boots and oilskins. Tons of hammering water had smashed the wheelhouse to splinters. The steersman, a hoar-swathed apparition, was roped to the

wheel, which still remained intact. At intervals he loosed one hand warily from the spokes to wipe the sleet from the binnacle.

Massinoff put his lips to the wheelsman's ear. "Where are we driving?" he yelled.

"West by nor'west," the man answered, straining with all his might to quarter a whalebacked surge that threatened to slue the *Carnavia* broadside on in the reeling troughs.

"Must be off the southwest corner of Prince of Wales," the count hazarded, screwing up his bleared, brine-stung eyes.

"Good Lord, no!" exclaimed Jules. "That's impossible. You don't know these currents or winds. We've been blown away back into the gulf, and you'd better put two men on that wheel."

Massinoff did it, and Dane dragged him back to the upper bridge, which was the next best place to being under cover of the hatches. Truly, the *Carnavia* was in a bad way. She had reached, even passed, the salvage state, and bade fair to become a derelict. Boats were either swept away or battered in. The davits and stanchions had broken clear off, or else wrenched loose to pound destruction within the circle of their length. The deckhouse lay a shattered mass of wood and metal, disappearing, piece by piece, with every wave that sluiced the boards. A floating tongue of glacier ice had demolished her screw, sprung water in the bilge, and flooded the

engine room. Whereupon, bereft of steam power, the crew had rigged the vessel with mainsail, staysail, trysail, and every other kind of sail, set upon the masts and jury masts and funnels. This served to keep her before the wind, the only method of prolonging existence in that inferno of ocean waters.

"What speed?" Dane asked the man on the bridge.

"Eleven knots."

"And your last soundings?"

"Twenty fathoms."

"How would it be to heave again?"

The officer gave the order. The sounder crawled into his unenviable position in the forechains, and plumbed with exceeding difficulty.

"Fifteen fathoms!" he bellowed, his voice almost smothered by the wind.

Again he swung. "Twelve and a half!"

"We're running inshore!" babbled Massinoff.

"Officer, keep her off! Get your helm down!"

"No, no!" Dane warned. "She's not making inshore by the way this swell runs. We must be in a strait."

Massinoff, all belief and trust in his own men gone, turned beseechingly to Jules.

"For God's sake, do something!" he pleaded.

"You're the only man on board who seems to know anything!"

"I can't do more than your officer is doing now," answered Dane. "Someone got the yacht off her

course in the night, and I don't know where she is. I have no means of knowing. All I can do is guess, till we sight a bit of land—if we ever do that. Only one thing I can say for certain: This isn't an in-shore swell. It's a channel swell. So don't put the helm down unless you want to pile her up on the shore."

Presently a rift in the snow screen proved Dane right.

"Land ho!" the lookout cried.

"Where away?"

"Three points on the starboard bow."

Then the loom of land vanished. The squalls closed in. The yacht sped on, in blindness and suspense, till the lookout's cry rang again, thin as a wail in the blast:

"Land ahead! One point to port!"

Dane whirled exultingly upon Massinoff.

"I told you we were in a strait!" he yelled. "Land on both sides! Wonder what channel it is?"

He strained his eyes to pierce the whipping veil of snow which dissolved and thickened with tantalizing persistency.

"Can't make it out," he growled. "Lying low to larboard, anyway."

Whereupon, as if to mock them, the tempest spelled its blustering lungs with a quiet space, a lull which let the snowfall settle in straight lines and allowed a partial vision of the shore. They could see a broad

bay indenting the rocks, wherein the waters, though terribly rough, seemed like a mill pond in comparison with the foam-streaked, mountainous swell of the channel through which they reeled. Buildings of some sort huddled close to the water, and Jules recognized the squat roofs of a fishing village.

"It's Uyak Bay!" he exclaimed. "See the canneries!"

"Uyak Bay!" muttered Massinoff. "Where on earth's that?"

"On the Island of Kodiak. We're past Cook's Inlet, and driving through the strait."

"What strait?"

"Shelikof Strait! Never heard of it? You're lucky—till now!"

"Put in!" ordered Massinoff, frantically. "Put in for shelter!"

Dane smiled grimly as the steersman, obeying, submerged the yacht in a cross sea that hit her like a typhoon, straining her plates and starting her rivets.

For salvation, the wheel was instantly jerked back again. The vessel heeled and rushed on.

"Really, you don't know Shelikof Strait," Jules observed. "Nobody who does would dream of getting into the bay with this sea running."

On past Uyak Bay the yacht tossed, and the gale howled after as they sped from the channel's menace.

"Now port your helm," Dane advised, "and keep off the rocks."

"Take charge," Massinoff begged, excitedly. "You know these waters. Take charge of the bridge."

"No," objected Jules. "I can't supersede your officer. It's not fair to him or to me. But I'll stay with him and help keep watch. My eyes are used to the snow and the blizzard. Perhaps that'll help some."

"Good!" exclaimed Massinoff, with satisfaction. "I know everything will be safe in your hands. I must hurry below and tell Sonia. It will soothe her alarm." He tore off a hatch cover and disappeared, whether to tell the countess, or take another drink, Dane did not know.

On through a maelstrom of storm-lashed waters the *Carnavia* was hurled. Dark fell, with its impenetrable pall. Midnight turned the hour. Dane remained on the bridge. Then, unable to distinguish anything in the intense blackness that followed the midnight, he descended and took up his position by the binnacle, in order to see that the wheelsman maintained an offshore course which agreed with his own peculiar sense of direction. He determined not to leave the post till daylight assured safety from reef and land peril.

Standing there, three hours before the dawn, his nostrils were assailed by a strange, cold dampness. A clammy atmosphere touched his cheek like icy hands, and instantly he sensed the presence of the deadliest sea menace known.

"A berg!" he cried to the startled wheelmen.  
"Don't you smell it?"

He sprang to the wheel, jerked the spokes from the grip of both of them, and jammed the wheel hard astarboard.

A great mountain of ice, gleaming with a weird, ghastly sheen in the contrasting blackness of the night, loomed up suddenly as a spectre over the yacht's bows. The submerged portion of the berg was propelled by a strong undercurrent, so that it moved against the wind and sea. This uncanny motion bore it swiftly down upon the *Carnavia*, which hung motionless for a moment, thrown off her course, and poised on her heel before the wind caught and bellied her sails on the sharp tack shoreward.

Such was the position of the berg that the vessel could turn no other way; and so narrow was her margin, that a projecting ledge of ice shaved her rail as she veered inshore. She was straining thus from danger, when a jangling crash sounded under her fore-foot. Abruptly her bows jumped ten feet in the air. The floor of the wheelhouse heaved up like a trapdoor. Dane, the first officer, and the two wheelmen found themselves in a rush of shipped water, grovelling among the ruins of the bridge.

Jules and the first officer struggled to their feet, their arms bracing each other's body.

"It's a reef!" the former cried. "A barrier reef!

Good God! See the breakers sweep her! Get the crew aloft! The yacht won't last long!"

Half blinded, holding tightly to each other still, they fought their way forward. Pulling the cover off the companionway, Dane splashed down with a half-ton wave flooding after. An oil lamp, still burning below, showed the corridor running water like a river, and, in the middle of the corridor, Massinoff and his wife stemming the waist-high tide.

"Thank God! Here he is!" shouted the Russian. "Catch his hand, Sonia! I told you he wouldn't desert us!"

"What is it?" demanded the countess, the chill water causing her to gasp her words. "Is the yacht sinking?"

"Not yet. But there's no time to gamble with. We'll have to take to the rigging. We missed a berg and hit a reef—a barrier reef, by the way she lies on it—and that means land somewhere near. Wait till I get some food. If we're stranded, we don't want to starve."

He waded away to the galley, snatching up what provisions were in sight. These he crammed into a tarpaulin bag together with a bottle of brandy, a rifle, and some ammunition from the lockers, and hurried back to the Massinoffs.

At the foot of the companionway the three paused while the oversurge of a wave was spent; then, abreast, they dashed on deck. The crew, from first

officer to coal trimmer, were already aloft, and, raising the countess between them, Dane and the count followed. To them, as they climbed, a tremendous tumult was wafted from below. The *Carnavia* had hit the barrier reef with a force that carried her halfway over, and, wedged there, they could feel her teeter sickeningly to every swell; could feel her lifted clear when the mammoth breakers geysered and banged back upon the rocks with appalling destruction to her plates and frame.

Nothing could withstand such ceaseless assaults of the waves. Everything the storm had loosened went spinning away, and everything still immovable was soon rendered movable by the powerful hands of the sea.

Unable to flee from the menace of that grip, able only to shrink a little above the clutching fingers, those in the shrouds and ratlines beheld the monstrous whalebacks begin a process of stripping the doomed vessel, which lasted till daylight.

"An island, count!" called Dane, as the first gray light of morning touched the snow-covered land beyond the barrier reef and revealed for miles around nothing but a wild expanse of sea. "An island, sure enough! And look! What's that heap of logs? A building?"

Massinoff did not answer.

"A good deal like the ruins of a trading post,"

Jules deduced, gazing under his hand. "What island will it be? One of the Aleutians?"

Still Massinoff did not answer.

Jules looked across the snarl of frozen halyards to see him hanging stiff in his lashings.

Beyond were more stiff figures, tied in various positions in the rigging, their hands iced to the ropes, their eyes staring glassily for the dawn they never beheld.

Dane's first emotion was profound surprise. It seemed unbelievable that men should have died thus, almost within reach of him, without uttering a sound. He looked them all over again, from coal trimmer to first officer. Then, with an appalling sense of disaster, he realized that he and the countess alone had survived. Unused to the climate, and weakened by excessive drinking, as Massinoff and his sailors were, the glacial cold had conquered them one by one, while Dane, inured to Arctic hardships, and unshaken by dissipation, had outlasted them.

To his strength Countess Massinoff owed her own survival. She was numb and speechless from exposure, but she could not literally freeze till her protector froze. His arms were around her, his great body shielded her. She drew from him, in a measure, his body heat, and she could not chill beyond recovery till the fires of his frame were dead.

Yet that would have been only a question of a short time had not the dawn wind taken a hand. Roaring

down from the Siberian tundras, it caught the *Carnavia* on the opposite quarter from that which had borne assault on the night before, and, under its terrific onslaught, the yacht, jarred and fractured beyond resisting, disseminated with a monstrous uprush of air from the hold. Like a broken twig, the tip of the mast which supported the two living ones whipped into the bay, beyond the reef, and a huge comber, tearing shoreward with it, tossed it high on the rocks.

Dane lay dazed for a little. Then, as the shock of his beaching passed, he rolled over in his lashings and got to his knees. He drew the clasp knife from his pocket, and, his fingers not being equal to the task, opened it with his teeth. For five minutes he sawed at the ropes which bound him and his companion. The ice baffled the steel, and the frozen strands were as tough as wire, but finally he hacked them loose. Lifting the woman, he stumbled stiffly toward the ruin of logs.

He was letting drops of brandy fall between her lips when her lashes moved for the first time after losing consciousness in the surf. The lashes fluttered spasmodically and opened. Her great brown eyes regarded Jules in a bewildered manner, then shifted to the flames roaring in the big stone fireplace at her side. The sense of relation of things caused her glance to rove farther round the ruinous shelter

wherein she lay, taking note of the uneven, slab-formed floor, the rough log walls, the trough roof half battered in by a succession of storms. As her gaze came back to Dane's face, a smile lighted her features, such a smile as she had worn when she bent over him on the stateroom bed at the end of the out trail.

"You!" she sighed gratefully. "And what has happened?"

"Don't you remember?" he prompted. "The gale? The wreck?"

"The *Carnavia*?" she asked, her mouth quivering. "The crew?"

Dane shook his head, and she sat up with a scream.

"None of them?" she demanded, wildly. "Not a single one?"

Again Jules shook his head. "The set of the current is out over the reef," he explained. "The backwash took everything but our piece of the mast. Good thing it snapped below us. It was the size of the wave that saved us, though. Big enough to throw us clear of the ebb. Everything else struck the shore line and slipped back, sucked down by the eddies."

He did not tell her that it was dead men the tide took out.

Even without that knowledge she had a moment of awful retrospection. About her, without her volition, the wild wreck scene reconstructed itself;

but it faded and a sort of resignation, that was almost calm satisfaction, replaced her fevered mood.

"And my husband with the rest?" she asked, quietly.

Jules nodded.

She gave a sigh, a sigh so filled with relief that Dane's eyes flickered.

"That astonished you?" she burst out. "But suppose I have reason to be thankful? Is that sinful?"

"I don't know," he evaded.

"But I do know," she declared, passionately. "What's the use of keeping on the mask? He was a beast, a drunken beast, and the breaking of my yoke is a godsend. If it isn't, why did God do it? You believe in God?"

"Yes."

"Well, why did He take Massinoff and leave me? Why was it not the other way? This release must be for my benefit, to give me life, and the joy of life that I haven't had. It must be, I tell you, and I thankfully accept it as that."

She gazed at Jules defiantly, as if daring him to dispute her interpretation of the ends of destiny; but instantly, struck by the realization of the instrumentality through which she had been spared, her face softened, and she stretched out her hands impulsively to him.

"But you—you!" she cried. "You saved me from frost and sea! Call me ingrate, for I deserve it!"

"No, you don't deserve it," Jules protested, "and there's little credit in all I did. You know I'm about Arctic-proof against the cold."

"My God!" she murmured. "Why was not Massinoff such a man as you?" The question leaped forth as something impersonal, but the intensity of her voice thrilled Jules. She looked into his eyes and tried to laugh. The effort ended in a sob which brought on a hysterical shuddering of mingled feeling—gratitude, fear, regret, despair.

"You'll snap your nerves," Dane warned. "Four nights without rest—it's too much for a woman. You must sleep. See! I've dried some sails that hung to our ratlines, and put them in the warmest bunk. They'll do for your bedding till I can get sealskins. Seals are on all these islands. Now try to rest, and let your garments dry while I go out. I'll be away for quite a while. I have to hoist a staff to fly a signal if a steamer should come in sight, gather firewood, and see if there's any food left in the cache."

Quietly Jules went out, leaving her to rally her shattered emotions and compose herself.

To his great elation, the stone cache stood intact. When he dug through, he found it, as he had conjectured, full of northern food—flour, bacon, beans, tea, and articles of trade such as are used in dealing with the Aleuts. His supposition was that Alaskan natives had formerly inhabited the place, and that

some hardy Russian trader had been dickering with them.

But the reason for the departure of the Aleuts and the abandoning of the cache by whoever built it, Jules could not surmise. Perhaps the trader had been lost at sea, and the natives had gone away in their oomiaks upon uncertain journeys, as was their custom.

Dane next made a partial survey of the island. He found it about four or five miles in circumference, and totally isolated. From its highest points no other land was visible in any direction. It consisted wholly of rock, with trees growing thickly in the many crevices. The shores were sloping on three sides. The fourth side was very precipitous. All the large tree trunks had been used to build the trading post, but there remained abundance of small stunted timber for firewood.

Searching the sloping shores, Jules found traces of seals, bears, and foxes, the latter having doubtless originally come to the island over the ice packs. The presence of these animals was cheering, for with the stock of food in the cache, and game in sight, Dane felt that he and the countess could exist for a long time, if necessary, to await a passing vessel.

He returned to the log post. Sonia Massinoff, after her three hours' sleep, was awake, and dressed in her dried garments. Her beauty, even after the peril and hardship she had faced, was a vivid lure.

"You've been lucky!" she exclaimed, reading his features. "I see it in your face!"

"Yes," he smiled. "There's plenty of firewood on the island, and a great deal of food in the cache. I saw traces of seals, too. Their skins will be warmer for you up here than that dress. Just wait till I shoot some and fix the hides."

"You're thinking only of me," she reproved, with gentle tenderness. "You must not neglect your own needs. There, let me arrange supper while you attend to the fire. No, no! You shall not be my servant! The sea has levelled us. I am no longer a countess. I am a mere woman, and I possess hands. Ah, I knew I could have my way! I always do." She smiled, with that flashing radiance of hers, as she pressed both palms upon his shoulders, pushing him away to the piling of the night's firewood while she prepared the meal.

Gayly they sat down to it. Dane, gazing upon her with fascinated eyes, marvelled at her return of spirits. He began to view the rude events which he had just passed through as some hazy dream. It was but a few hours ago, and now it seemed so remote. Had this woman really lost a husband, a crew of forty, and a luxurious floating home? Were those men really cold beneath the Alaskan tides, when they two ate strong food and basked in a fire fiercely warm?

She chattered as they ate. She told him of her-

self, of her childhood, and family, of life in St. Petersburg, of her brother, Count Panella, at the Russian embassy at Washington. In return, she demanded to know of himself, and Dane recalled what he knew of his father. As for his mother, he had never known her.

"Ah, but that is sad!" Sonia observed. "Not to know one's mother! Never to lavish your love on her! It is yet pent up in you. Watch when it flows out. Watch when the one woman comes to you. Your love will be a torrent."

Sonia's cheeks flushed slightly as she looked across to Jules over their finished meal. Embarrassed, Dane felt his own bronzed cheeks respond, but abruptly he rose from the flattened log they had used for a table.

"I must not sit still when I should be at the roof," he observed, brusquely. "Look at the holes!"

He pointed, but Sonia's eyes did not follow; they remained upon him.

"Yes," she sighed, "you had better see to it while I clear away the food. The cold is terrible here."

The cold of the polar ice fields, rushing unchecked upon them across the leagues of sea, was indeed terrible. The island had no shelter from the arctic winds which howled along the shores and puffed through the holes in the roof like icicles thrust in their faces. Jules turned his attention to these holes first, and then to the troughs of the roof. He worked

awkwardly with an old axe that lay in the building, but before the dark fell he managed, by cutting and stuffing, to make the ruin fairly weatherproof.

They now had shelter, warmth, and food. The next requirement was sleep, and fatigue sat so heavily upon them that they lost no time in seeking it. Inside the post a huge fire was making havoc with the frost, and before retiring the fireplace was crammed with logs to last till morning. The building boasted no partition which had not crumbled or collapsed, so Jules contrived one, for the present, out of sailcloth. Bunks ran across both ends of the main room, but the two Dane had chosen were at the northern end. These being on opposite sides of the fireplace, offered promise of greatest warmth. The one on the sheltered side Jules gave the countess. The one on the windward side he took himself. The slabs of which the bunks were formed he found very hard, but he promised himself that they would soon be soft with bearskins.

He rolled up for slumber fully dressed, and with some of the sailcloth he had saved piled on top, when the woman's voice came faintly through the partition:

"We forgot to say good-night, didn't we? Good-night, Jules."

"Good-night, countess."

"Call me Sonia. I told you the waves had levelled us."

“Well, good-night—Sonia.”

Day came.

And six more days.

And twenty-four additional ones, with no apparent change in the situation.

The month roared out, and another roared in, to give place to a violent successor with still no apparent change.

Yet there was a change really occurring, or rather a transition taking place, in the mutual relations of the two castaways. To Dane, their island life naturally divided itself into two stages. In each of these stages, mental, not physical, troubles oppressed him.

Physical needs he found little difficulty in supplying. He used the rifle on the seals upon the shore, and bagged two bears upon the island's peaks. This gave them fresh meat, and skins for warmer clothing and bedding. In all these enterprises Sonia helped, as ready to render aid, at times when four hands were required, as any male comrade could have been. Moved to protest against this, at first, Dane had gradually come to allow it, then to expect it, and finally to welcome it eagerly.

“You are no slave,” she told him one day, taking from him the tanned sealskins, cut to the pattern of garments, and commencing to sew upon them herself. “Nor am I a slave driver. Suppose that we were an-

cient cave people here in a bygone age? Would you act so? No, I know you wouldn't. The cave man serves his wife nowadays, but he is not her slave."

"Wife!" exclaimed Jules, flushing.

"Yes." Her full, flashing glance hung upon his face. "Supposing we were cave man and wife?"

She saw his hands tremble, his chest rise and fall, his cheek dye itself deeper with the swift rush of emotion, but only for an instant. Dane was calm again, a hard, set look replacing the impulsive expression of his virile manhood.

"It is hard," he observed, quietly, "to serve without becoming a slave, but I think I can do it."

And instantly he fell to his cutting again, and she to her sewing, both in silence.

Yet Jules, outwardly composed, was hot and troubled under his mask and silence. The sea had swept away all inequality. Here upon this island, cut off from all the world, they were only man and woman. Herein lay his mental trouble of the first phase—the matter of broken caste—for when the wall of caste had crumbled what might not follow through the breach?

Still, day by day the matter of caste seemed to be solving itself. The equal footing on which they stood was not infringed upon. What the sea had worked out, what nature had compassed, was not presumed upon. Always, Dane kept the pride of his own caste, of his own democracy.

"Three months!" she cried, the night Jules notched off the third-month end on the door jamb. "Suppose a steamer never comes?"

"Never!" Dane started, as if he had not contemplated such a contingency before. "A sealer or a man-of-war *must* pass some time! The world's not so big as it used to be. Besides, men have been here, and they'll come again in our lifetime. Everything on earth runs in circles."

Sonia was gazing at him earnestly, intensely, her brown eyes blazing in the ruddy glow of the fireplace. Week by week, Dane had seen that light in her eyes grow to a brilliant flame, and so had it grown in his own, although he stubbornly refused to acknowledge it.

"But suppose?" Sonia insisted, sweetly.

"No, I won't suppose!" snapped Dane, harshly.

This unaccustomed harshness startled Sonia; but then she saw the compression of his mouth, and the savage manner in which he turned to his own side of the room. She understood for the first time how strongly he was curbing, checking, containing himself, and her lips parted in a smile.

Smiling all that evening, she let her eyes rest upon and dream over the red coals.

So must Eve have looked in an old garden of history.

During the second stage of his companionship, Dane was forced gradually into a period of awkward

restraint. Yet restraint gave way to deference, deference wore to gentleness, and gentleness abdicated when love came to rule. It was in nowise possible that a man even of Dane's strong fibre might hold out against the beauty, the charm, and the feminine magnetism that had conquered the capital of America. His surrender was inevitable. His own life had been cast in the grim ports of the North, along all the coast from Skagway to Herschel Island, and on its grimmer seas, running government patrol down the Alaskan panhandle, taking white whales within the Circle, harrying the seal herds up to Anadir.

Such had been the womanless round of his early life, and in the years during which he followed the Yukon's yellow lure he had encountered no women, for the creatures of the dance halls were not women in his eyes. But now he was burned up with the sheer flame of woman entwining him unawares.

Was it love? Jules did not know. It had sprung as a flash, to envelop, overwhelm, and consume.

Sonia herself would have been blind if she had not seen that in her hands she had the power of uniting their lives. The attraction of this wonderful specimen of masculinity drew her like a magnet. He was such as she had dreamed of in the moments when her marriage yoke galled. He was clean and fine and high.

Still, no regal blood—as her traditions defined regal blood—pulsed in his godlike body. Dane was

not of her class. Unconsciously, she was continually rebuilding her wall of caste and continually tearing it down again. Cut off from the world, it could be. Back in the world, could it be? That was the thought which delayed her in claiming him—the spectre of return!

“Return!” she laughed, one night, in her habitual dreaming by the fire. “As if there will ever be return!”

Her yearning was rising to its climax, and she voiced aloud her feelings before she was aware.

Dane, too, on the other side of the fire, was conjuring visions of impossible things.

“What’s that?” he demanded, stirring from his fire dreams.

“I was thinking of steamers and capitals and worlds,” she answered, strangely restive.

She sprang erect, and paced the uneven floor before him, paced lightly and with grace. Her fine figure tantalized him with the fullness of its curves, shadowed, revealed, and lost again as she crossed and recrossed the belt of flame.

“But there’s no use!” she cried, turning to him with a gesture all impulsiveness. “No such things exist. We’re alone at the pole! Come out and see!”

Jules gazed at her, fascinated, sensing a crisis. Her face was close to his, but he did not move.

“Come out and see!” she pleaded, impetuously.

She pressed her palms against his cheeks and lifted

him from his log seat. It had taken two more months to reach the point where her spell was omnipotent, but it was reached at last. Dane bent to her will.

Sonia caught his arm, and together, under a sky of unfathomable loneliness, they walked the bleak rocks outside. Overhead, dilating and contracting in its mighty palpitations, the weird aurora flamed from sea rim to zenith.

Beyond their two fiery selves remained none of the teeming forms of life that had come down through the glacial ages. They were, as Sonia said, alone at the pole.

"Look!" she urged, pointing to the dim, limitless expanse of icy sea. "We're out of the track. No ship will ever come. The world is blotted out from us forever. Ah, to-night there is no world! All that exists is this tiny point in space with two atoms upon it. Is it not so? Just the gray sea and the crimson sky. We're spirits, if you like voyaging the upper air. Jules, do you like the voyage?"

Her mood was caloric.

It melted Dane.

"Yes, Sonia, yes!" he breathed. "To-night, yes; but to-morrow——"

"There is no to-morrow when there is no world; and we're no more of any world. We're cut off. We're together. Ah, I believe in incarnations now! Here on this island we have arisen as our other selves in our other life. Isn't it incarnation, Jules?"

"I don't know, Sonia. I half believe we——"

"You must fully believe. How else are we placed here? And, why? Here together, for all time! Answer me that!"

His mind in a tumult, Dane could find no answer. Treading the edge of a mirage, thrust by the twining arm that clasped his into a delicious realm of unknown, unfathomed mystery, Jules cared not where they voyaged so long as they voyaged together.

"You can't answer!" Sonia challenged. "You can't answer the truth. At last, through lies and bonds, we have come to the truth."

Their breasts were heaving under their furs.

Gazing into each other's eyes, they saw to the depths of each other's souls.

"Jules! Jules!" whispered Sonia, tremulously, ecstatically.

Her face, with its fringed hood, came close.

"Jules! You surrender?"

"I surrender!"

The fire of her lips was a consuming flame.

But even as his head was lowered in the caress, Dane's eyes encountered, over Sonia's shoulder, a gray blot upon the grayer sea.

"What's wrong, Jules?"

Sonia had felt his involuntary start.

Slowly he pointed.

Past a headland of the island, and hitherto hidden by the ragged spruce, loomed a steel hull.

"A cruiser!" he exclaimed.

Instinctively he turned and ran toward the huge heap of brush piled under his signal staff.

"Jules! Jules!"

Sonia's quick cry halted him. There was yearning, pain, in the cry.

"Why is this? Oh, why is it, when we were here together?"

Dane wheeled. Filled with a fierce exultation he took a step back. Under the aurora his face was illumined with a wonderful light.

"Sonia, say the word—one word—and it will never be lighted!"

The issue was upon her. What life, what the world had denied her was now within reach if she spoke. Yet she could not speak. Her cheeks went white as the frozen snow about her. She clasped her hands upon her breast in a silent agony.

Jules took his answer.

He stooped, and scratched the match.

The fire flamed twenty feet in the air.

Running into the log post, he returned with his rifle, and fired several shots. An answering report sounded aboard the cruiser, and the red and white lights of the Ardois system began to flash from the foretop.

Dane plucked out a torch from the roaring fire, wiggling a reply as best he could with the clumsy light. They caught his appeal, for the Ardois lights began to wink again in answer.

"What do they say?" asked Sonia, drawing near and laying a trembling hand on Dane's arm.

"Standing by! Boat coming!" Jules read in the blaze of coloured lights.

It was a wonderful thing to see men's words flashing out under the polar skies where, but moments before, the two had thought was nothing but infinite space. Awed, they watched the boat nose in. A man stood up in the craft, rocking to the swell.

"Ahoy, the island!" he shouted. "Who are you?"

"Countess Massinoff and Jules Dane!" Jules roared in answer. "Castaways from the *Carnavia!*"

He heard the man in charge of the boat utter a quick exclamation of surprise. The craft leaped forward through the surf.

"Watch the reef!" Dane warned. "There's a barrier reef ahead! Keep to port—to port! That's it! All right, you're clear now!"

The boat sped in across the bay, and it was Dane's turn to exclaim in surprise.

"Why, it's Lewis in charge!" he cried. "Lieutenant Commander Lewis, of the *Shasta!*"

"Of the *Shasta!*" echoed Sonia. "It can't be!"

"It is! I remember him! It's the *Shasta*, sure enough. Are you ready? We must be quick when they swing the boat. They can't land here, you know. Too rocky, and too big a surf. See! They're rounding to! Stand ready, Sonia! Now!"

He caught her in his arms and sprang through the

foaming wash to where the crew held the boat a moment against the ebb of the surf. They tumbled over the gunwale, and the wave's outrun carried the craft clear.

"Good work, Dane!" lauded Lewis. "It's easily seen you've been to sea before. Congratulations to you both. Here, Dane, wrap my coat about the countess, and tell us something of it. We heard from one of the revenue cutters that the *Carnavia* was counted lost. But how on earth did you manage to get ashore out here?"

"Where?"

"Just off the tip of the Peninsula!"

"So I was right! It was one of the Aleutians!"

"Yes, though a mighty desolate one. It's a long time since Ruigisoff, the Russian trader, traded there with the Aleuts."

"Then thank God for Ruigisoff!" breathed Jules.

Lieutenant Commander Lewis laughed.

From his seat between the steersman and the stroke oar, who were in person Barty Barnham and Nolan McLettan, Dane looked forward to where Sonia had been made comfortable, and held her eyes a moment. "We are indebted to Ruigisoff," he said, "but we owe you a good deal, too, Lewis."

"No, there's nothing owing me," replied Lewis. "All you owe is to the old ship. I'm merely an automaton. Somehow the old ship always leaves a lucky wake."

"Was luck with you in the Pribilofs? What was the trouble there?"

"Nunalava Island!"

"Oh! The old bone of contention, eh?"

"Yes. It's grand sealing ground, and Russia seems bound to grab it some time."

"But the trouble's settled for now, I suppose?"

"Not by any means! It's only begun!"

"What! They wouldn't back down for the *Shasta*?"

"The *Shasta* had to back down for them. When we arrived, Nunalava Bay was full of Russian gun-boats. They'd seized the American schooners sealing there, cleared all crews off the island, and thrown up fortifications on the hills about the harbour."

"Thunder! They mean business, then?"

"Yes; and so do we. The department's ordered a squadron north to St. Michaels. The *Shasta's* on her way to join them now. The squadron ships stores and coals at St. Michaels, and then—and then——" Lewis finished his sentence with a sweep of his hand.

"You'll scour Nunalava!" interpreted Jules.

He knew Nunalava Island, and he had a vision of the wicked warships streaking in to the attack on its crescent-shaped harbour. The vision stirred the Viking blood in him, but there in the bow, before his eyes, was Sonia. He wanted her more than he wanted conquest or glory. Was it true that love killed the hardness in men, took away their desire and ambition for conquest, made them things of ease and pleasure? He hoped not!

Idly he watched the white crests of the icy waves riot past. Carlos Seville came into his mind. Haegar Canard came into it, too. They were in St. Michaels, on the rim of the trouble. He puzzled over their sudden departure from Skagway for the Fort, puzzled over the reason Admiral Mavor had given for that departure. For reasons of his own, he mistrusted both men, and he wondered if they had seen the loom of the danger clouds months before the storm developed.

But abruptly scattering his thoughts, the lieutenant commander's voice rang out.

"Steady away, lads!" he ordered. "Hold hard! Who's that at the top of the gangway? Bless me, if it isn't the admiral! Somebody's wakened him! Scaly Neptune! Look at him! Hopping with excitement!"

Mavor grasped Sonia impulsively as she was passed up. His was an odd figure, with his pajamas but half covered by his uniform and his feet in slippers. However, he was but little conscious of his dishabille. He was carried away by the emotions of the moment.

"Ah, countess, permit me!" he cried, receiving her with open arms. "Condolences first, and—might I say it?—congratulations upon your escape! You must be thankful for that. You two alone. It was a miracle, and you must not let your mind dwell too much upon the awfulness of disaster. Try not to. Although I know what a shock it was. You are trembling now, even, at the mention of it! Come,

let me take you below at once. You are wet with the surf, and half frozen, besides. Lewis, take charge of Dane. I guess the countess is now indebted to him as much as I am."

"Heavens, yes!" Sonia exclaimed. "And not a word of thanks have I offered him!"

Letting go the admiral's arm, she took a step toward Jules, and in a flash he saw that she was not the woman who had walked with him in that mad hour on Ruigisoff Island, between the gray sea and the crimson sky. An impassable rampart, the barrier of blood, rose up once more. All her imperiousness of rank, her regality of caste, clothed her again. She was the Countess Massinoff. She extended her hands to Dane with a queenly gesture.

"You may kiss my hands, sir," she invited.

Jules started as if she had struck him across the face. He stared at her, by the sheer strength of his glance managing to hold her eyes. In those eyes he read, as plain as the aurora in the sky, her message of renunciation.

Dane felt the power of the laws that crowd.

With grim, stiffened lips, he bent and kissed Sonia's hands, and turned swiftly away with Lewis.

"What was left now?" he involuntarily asked himself.

And the answer came in the throb and quiver of the steel monster under his feet.

There was the war cloud rolling up by Nunalava!

## CHAPTER III

### THE SOUL OF THE FLAG

CARLOS SEVILLE, the representative of the American War Press Syndicate, joined the squadron at St. Michaels. In that port the warships had taken on their stores and were busy coaling, or hoping to coal. The cruiser *Shasta*, to which Seville had been assigned, was a seething example of the fervency of that hope when he rowed out to her. Across her quarterdeck Seville walked, but he found no officers. Clad in dungarees, they were all up forward, rigging the whips, seeing that winches worked smoothly, watching the quick jounce of full coal bags from the collier's hold, and the soft thud of loads on the cruiser's deck, weighing and tallying, accelerating the hatch-running and the stowing. Their efforts were unflagging, but in spite of that the coaling was going slowly. The officers were furious. They told Seville things about the need for colliers under their own flag, spoke disparagingly of the naval department, and energetically cursed Congress for a dead suburb of Hades. The seamen, whom the sea herself had made, and whose

vision of the heart of things was uncanny, painted conditions for him in picturesque and vivid language. Midshipmen, with the certainty of knowledge drawn from their superiors, enlarged upon that. Gunners' mates and turret captains elucidated further. Coxswain Brenner and Ensign Keele took pains to offer more trenchant criticism, conclusive and invocative. While Lieutenant Commander Lewis crowned the whole with the observation that the Senate was a sanitarium for aged and incapacitated grafters. All this they told Seville because he was a writer and a naval critic of standing, and not because, unknown to them, he was the mouthpiece of a certain official group that made frenzied pleas for reform, and, incidentally, self-advancement.

Seville wrinkled his brown cheeks into a smile at their vehemence. He already possessed the information they imparted and more. The present expedition would test the theories of the clique which supported and cherished him since he might say through the press what the service regulations prevented them from saying.

He knew that the coaling was going slowly, for upon the foggy wharves of St. Michaels he had interviewed for an instant Haegar Canard, captain of the collier fleet.

"Look here!" he observed to Canard. "I see trouble ahead. There's nothing to hinder you doubling the price of your coal."

"No," Canard answered, in his oily Russian voice,

"there isn't." And his head nodded reflectively to the July mist which hid his barges.

"Nor," continued Seville, "has any man a right to cross your gangplank. You can send consignment papers."

"Yes," and Canard nodded again in precisely the same fashion. "I can."

There the interview had ended. Not a word more! But evidently Seville and the Russian captain of what passed for a British collier fleet understood each other, for the ridiculous average of eight and one half tons an hour was pouring down the hatches.

While the loading was in progress, the dark had crept in with a thickening of the fog, and the searchlights of the battleships gleamed like the fiery eyes of giant ogres in the harbour. Water, land, and vessel odours mingled in a strange stew. The wharves were faint, nebulous blurs among which moved magnified, formless shadows. Seaward, endless shipping convulsed the port in a chaos of sound. The state of the atmosphere, moist and muggy, caused noises to beat up with peculiar insistency, to echo and reëcho from the hulls of wooden merchantmen and steel leviathans. Far over the congested harbour streamed the rays from the searchlights, revealing forests of masts and yards, flags of a dozen nations, vessels of a hundred types. Here on the one extreme lay the crazy coast junks. There, on the other extreme, the trim, painted, modern liner.

Downward, too, filtered the glare on the *Shasta's* decks and upon the inky coal barge *Rawdon*, fast to the cruiser's side. To a man the bluejackets were busily employed, trying with an exasperating sense of failure to handle bags more rapidly than they were jounced out from between the collier's decks. Listening to the rumble and roar, Carlos Seville stood and watched the turmoil. He gazed on the laggard loading in idle unconcern, but presently the familiarity of a face and figure, limned by a searchlight ray as the man bent over the whips on a hoist, startled him out of his apathy. He strode forward and stared full in the man's face, and the man, turning, stopped to stare back.

"Good Lord, Dane! So it *is* you!" Seville exclaimed.

Dane's broad shoulders straightened under the smeared dungarees. His big form seemed to bulk larger with an increased rigidity and erectness.

"That you, Seville?" he returned, coldly. "I expected to see you somewhere in this row."

"But I," cried the other, "never thought of striking you."

A sort of braggadocio pervaded his manner, as if he had something unpleasant, of which Jules was aware, to live down or outface.

"No?"

Dane's voice was crisp and noncommittal. He hoisted another load into position for running to the hatch, after which the line hung loose for a wholly

unnecessary length of time. "You see," he added, showing his teeth in a grim laugh, "I can pass a word with you. There's plenty of time. Those lascars, or coolies, or serangs, or whatever they are, must be sleeping between lashings."

Seville screened an unbidden smile as the winches flew round savagely when the ropes did tighten in the pit. "That ought to wake them up," he chuckled. "But tell me, in the name of all the northern gods and demigods, why you are here. The last I saw of you was in the Alaskan patrol service."

"In the Alaskan patrol service, yes." Dane attended to a line which did not need attention. He was quite content to let his one-time companion do the leading and the ingratiating.

"That affair of the imprisoned whaler in the Arctic," Seville continued, rather confusedly, "when we couldn't get help across from the revenue cutter, when—when—oh, you know how it was, Dane! I pinched out—my feet, you know!"

"Yes, I remember. You pinched out."

Quite vividly did Jules remember what time the whaler *Polaris* was caught off Point Barrow in the Arctic floes, how Seville, in charge of a relief expedition drawn from the revenue cutter, had quit; quit shamelessly and selfishly. Also, he recalled how he, a subordinate in the party, had taken Seville's place and accomplished the journey and the succour. Yes, he remembered, all right!

"Why did you leave?" Seville ventured constrainedly. "How did you get here?"

"I struck it rich in the Yukon. That's why I came out. Hello, what's wrong in that manhole now?" He leaned down and shouted vitriolic things at the snail-like lascars in the hold of the coal barge.

"Delib'rut'ly loafin'," commented Seaman Barty Barnham, who was working at that pit. "Did youse ever see the beat? Eight an' one quarter this trip. An' them slant-eyed, idol-kissin' lobsters sleepin' in the hold."

"Ah, me bye, 'tis a scourin' out 'tween decks thot's needed," declared his hatchmate, Nolan McLettan. "An' iv'ry hour wasted countin' agin' us when we make Nunalava Bay. 'Tis a cl'anin' out an' our own min in, thot's fwhat thim divils are after wantin'."

"Maybe they'll get it before long, Nolan," laughed Dane. "Lieutenant Commander Lewis won't stand much more."

Turning to Seville, he resumed his conversation where it had been interrupted by his own impatience.

"The way I got here was rather roundabout. I left Dyea on a vessel bound for San Francisco. It was wrecked on one of the Aleutian Islands, and I was one of two castaways picked up by the *Shasta* when she came over from Nunalava."

"Narrow escape, eh? Where's the other castaway?"

"The other castaway? Pretty near the States by

this time, aboard a Seattle steamer the *Shasta* spoke next day!"

"And you stayed and signed on here? Why'd you do it?"

"Because there was a detail open on the cruiser—the forward turret, and the admiral offered it to me."

"But with a private fortune you don't need to butt into this trouble. You don't need that turret, and some other poor devil of a lieutenant does. Why are you taking it?"

Jules did not answer on the instant, and Seville's lips curled up in a sneer. He had never ceased to resent Dane's Arctic triumph over him, and the severe criticism that ensued. Nor had he ever forgiven the other's unvarying antipathy to him from the moment of their first acquaintance. He felt that there was some hidden thing behind Dane's action, and he purposed finding it out.

"Why?" he asked again, something of indefinite accusation in his tone which stung Jules with its impudence.

"Why?" Dane echoed. "Oh, a whim of mine!"

"The inevitable woman?" leered Seville.

Dane wheeled, and looked hard at the man for whom he had nothing but contempt.

"There's no use quarrelling with you," he replied, shortly. "But if it's any satisfaction to you, I'll tell you that it was more than a woman!"

Dane's brusqueness struck Seville as a warning.

He realized that he had gone far enough with his baiting, and he adroitly changed the subject.

"See here," he burst out, "who feeds your turret in a fight?"

"Barnham and McLettan work at the right hoist. The men at the left I don't know."

"Good! They're the men I need. I want some articles on turret fighting and its perils. You can help me if you'll have them take observations at the bottom of the hoists."

"How?"

Jules was suspicious of the suave tone.

"Well, it's like this. There's a big dispute on among the critics about certain characteristics of our ships. One point is the direct-hoist system; that is, the straight ammunition feed from handling room to turret. Some say that, whenever guns are fired, burning grains of powder from the breechblocks fall straight down. They contend that water is kept in the handling room, and that it is a customary thing for hoist feeders to put out sparks around the magazine. If that's the case, every ship in the fleet is a gigantic bomb, and I want facts. I don't write anything unless I have facts. You understand?"

Dane nodded gravely. "I understand."

"I'll be in the turrets part of the time when we get in on Nunalava, but I won't be allowed in the handling room. So I want you to have these men watch closely to see if anything like what I've stated occurs.

Just forget our old differences and do me this favour! Those differences are of no account now, anyhow. Will you do it?"

"Sure!" agreed Dane. "If you put it that way, I'll do it!"

As Seville went away aft, Jules nodded significantly at Barty Barnham and Nolan McLettan.

"You heard him, men? Now you will watch, eh?"

"Our damnedest!" Barty declared. "Mind you I ain't trustin' Seville too far. It's Russia we're up against. He's half Russian. And a half dago's a lot worse'n a whole one!"

Having delivered this philosophy, Barty bent to his work once more, for Ensign Keele was coming down the line.

"Something funny afoot, boys, isn't there?" he asked, halting beside them.

"Funny it is," grumbled Nolan McLettan. "The devil's afoot, beggin' yer pardon, sor. Eight an' one quarter this last hour. Bad cess to thim black spalpeens as is dozin' on their shovels!"

"Going down? Slower?" The ensign used some acid phrases not to be found in any book of regulations.

"If all the ships coal like the *Shasta's* been coaling," ventured Dane, "Russia'll have time to build an auxiliary fleet and steam it into Nunalava Bay before we get there."

"By Heaven, we won't stand it!" declared Ensign Keele. "It's a throwdown. I'll see Lieutenant Commander Lewis."

"Better see the chief, sor," suggested McLettan.

"The Admiral's ashore, wearing out the cables. Canard, the owner of the collier fleet, is about the fort somewhere, too. We sent a man to find him, but he couldn't be placed. That's hard luck, for a word to him and he'd see that his skippers did their duty. He's a friend of the Admiral's. But I'll see what Lewis can do."

Ensign Keele went back to the quarterdeck, and Dane worked angrily at his hoist.

"Who has Canard as skipper on the *Rawdon*?" he asked Barty Barnham.

"I dunno," Barnham answered. "But I know the crew. Escaped convicks mostly. They're Malays, lascars, coolies. Yes, any blarsted thing. An' 'tween me an' you an' that winch, I ain't trustin' this here Canard man any either. He's a friend o' the chief's but I'm thinkin the chief has took a serpent to his bosom. Canard's a dirty Russian dago. He's a low-down Polish swine."

"Why, what do you know of him?"

"Mebbe more'n the chief knows! On the Atlantic station I'm hearin' o' him often up along this here coast. Been his nobbs or somethin' high at court back in his tobacco-stamp country. He took a header from grace, so's the general report. Though

I don't say as it consoins me! Look sharp, Dane. Mum's the sign. Here's Lootenant Commander Lewis."

Lewis came forward like an eight-inch shell.

"What's this afloat about more slow loads? Hasn't the average gone up yet, Dane?"

"Gone down, sir!"

"Hell! Go aboard the collier and ask for consignment papers. And ask for a decent average. Tell the *Rawdon's* skipper we'll have it or raise the devil. Tell him, if he doesn't give it, we'll put our own men in his hold. These cursed Malay skippers will find out that they can't play crooked with us in their owner's absence. But keep your eyes open, Dane. That crew's a bad bunch."

Dane hurried across the gangway in the thick of the fog. The gangway seemed like the approach to the mouth of a dirty mine shaft, and presently he became aware of two loosely clad figures, like ugly phantoms in the mist, standing at the end of the plank. Two coolies they were, with evil eyes that shone like wolves' eyes in the half gloom.

"No come aboard," they warned, jabbering their pidgin English. "Skipper say so. Not one dam' step!"

Dane's choler rose at the insolent salutation. The way the yellow talons of the coolies slipped suggestively inside their sagging jackets rankled his spirit. He knew that knives hung under the cotton. Also,

he knew that the skipper had undoubtedly picked a pair of the worst rascals in all the rascally crew to enforce the order that none should step upon the *Rawdon's* deck. But Dane was going to step there. It was the inevitableness of the white man stirring in Jules, the thing that has made the white man lord of the meaner races. In the pride of this strength, he paused just the fraction of a minute, feeling with his feet to get a firm hold on the greasy planks, and watching with nice calculation the restless hands of the coolies. Then, before they could draw, he jumped and smashed them right and left with straight-arm punches full in their pockmarked faces.

Like two Chinese images toppled roughly from their pedestals, the yellow men rolled senseless in the scuppers, fingers on knife hafts as they fell, so that the weapons jerked out and steel rang upon wood.

As Dane trod the decks, a sense of familiarity about the vessel impressed itself. It seemed to him that he had been on those decks before. He tried to recall when and where, but the vague impression would not crystallize into facts and details. But still he seemed to know the ship, knowing the shape of the poop, the pitch of the foredeck, the set of the masts, and the slant of the boom. He could visualize with distinctness every vessel he had ever shipped in. He could conjure up the deck scene of each. But in none of the name of *Rawdon* had he sailed.

Yet, try as he would to get rid of the impression, it persisted. He told himself that he had been aboard this vessel somewhere. Was it under another name? He scanned the name *Rawdon*, painted on the boats that were lashed to ringbolts on the deck. They all passed inspection but one, and that one showed an old name almost faded out. Evidently it had been counted impossible of being deciphered and not worth while being painted over. Jules lit a match and held it close. Under the flame, the raised letters showed here and there.

"B—R—L—S," he read.

In a flash, he mentally pieced in the missing letters.

The *Borealis*! Now he remembered. The missing ship. Hurriedly he blew out the match and cautiously descended the ladder.

The cabin door was closed, but Dane swung it open and stepped inside.

There sat, not the *Rawdon's* Malay skipper, but Captain Haegar Canard.

At Dane's intrusion, the Russian owner, who couldn't be found in St. Michaels, jumped from his seat. He was working with an instrument that looked like a battery, and from which strange wire ran in coils. Hastily he dropped the thing into an open drawer of the table in front of him, the table submerged by maps, charts, and nautical paraphernalia. Leaning forward, he glared belligerently at Jules.

"How the devil did you get aboard?" he demanded. His pudgy cheeks swelled with wrath. His cinnamon-coloured pig eyes blazed. The ratty black brush on top of his bullet head stood up stiffly as he unconsciously moved his scalp. "Damn your nerve! How'd you come aboard in the face of the skipper's orders? How'd you sneak in, I say?"

"Across your gangplank."

"What?"

"Yes. You'll find your coolie cutthroats in the scuppers, with kinks in their necks that a month's seafaring won't untwist." Dane took no pains to use words that would smoothe Canard's ruffled feelings, or to hide his own antagonism.

"You'll pay for that!" shouted the captain, clenching one fist and pounding the cabin table. "Piracy, you cursed Yankee! I'll have the British consul onto you. Remember this fleet is a British collier fleet. Now what in the devil have you to say for yourself?"

Jules checked a sudden desire to choke him then and there.

"I've come for consignment papers," he announced, "and I'll trouble you for the same. Lieutenant Commander Lewis wants them at once."

"Oh, he does, does he?" grinned Canard. "Well, he can wait till I send them. See? Only, you might tell him that the price of coal is doubled."

"Doubled? But you can't bleed us like that!"

Canard straightened his stocky form in the low, dingy cabin, and his hands hung at his sides. "Can't, eh? You go and tell your officer that coal's up one hundred per cent. He can take it or leave it, just as he likes."

"He's already leaving a lot of it at the rate it's coming out of your hold, and he's leaving more of it every hour."

"Don't you like our loading?"

"No."

"Then try some other colliers."

"Don't be a fool. You know that's impossible. And we know you're throwing us down. We can't move till we coal, and time's precious to the Russians. You know that."

Canard roared like a Castilian bull in the arena. "You get back to your ship, quick!" he advised. "I'm not afraid of any Yank in the navy, man or officer, and I don't let one talk to me like that. Up that ladder!"

Canard's eyes burned red-hot. In spite of his fat, he appeared big-boned, heavy-muscled, a machine which could inflict much damage in a rough-and-tumble fight.

"Not yet!" defied Jules, his voice metallic. "I don't leave this cabin till you enter your cargo on those papers at the usual price. More than that, I don't leave it till a decent average of eleven tons and more is going out of this so-called *Rawdon's* hold."

Jules stepped into the centre of the cabin floor, beneath the ceiling lamp.

For an angry instant the eyes of the two men battled silently.

"Do you by any chance happen to know who I am?" Dane asked, finally.

"Not by the remotest chance in the world," answered Canard, with a sneer.

"Well, I'll tell you. My name is Dane—Jules Dane."

"You haven't told me yet. Your name means nothing to me."

"At one time I was in the revenue cutter service in the Bering."

"You were!" Canard's exclamation sounded like a growl.

"Our cutter took off the sailors from a stranded schooner, the *Borealis*, away south of St Michaels. They had lost half their men in the storm that put them on the beach, and I was one of the gang that helped patch the *Borealis* and step her masts again. We went back to the fort for a tug to pull her off the beach, and what do you think we found when we returned? Nothing! Some other crew had already floated the schooner and made off with her. The *Borealis* was never traced. But afterward I found out from Aleuts that a certain ship had been hanging round. Do you get my meaning?"

Canard gazed at Dane sullenly. Over his swarthy

face an ashen shade, as of fear, slowly spread and deepened. He did not make any attempt to speak.

"Your ship, the *Yezo Queen*, was hanging round," Jules continued. "You talked a minute ago about piracy. I guess you know all about piracy. That stolen schooner has been refitted, repainted, rechristened, and introduced into another trade. Captain Canard, we stand in her!"

The captain started.

Dane caught an oath in his staccato native tongue.

"A fine lie," he blustered, "and a lot to go on! Word of Aleuts! To the devil with your balderdash!"

"It's the truth, I have the proof. And I have you where I want you."

"What can you do?"

"Haul you before the consuls. They'll soon reopen the *Borealis* affair. You'll be up to your neck in the dirt, and you know it. You've been crooked and insulting. Now you'll have to take your medicine."

Canard stumbled with a swift movement, and apparently to save himself, his right hand plunged into an open drawer of the table among a litter of papers. But Dane understood the significance of his action and jumped forward at the glitter of steel. He launched a rapid kick as the captain raised his arm. The pistol spun into a corner, while the captain clapped his palm to the arm with a shriek of pain.

In the rough clinch that followed, Jules got home a short-arm jolt which tumbled his antagonist insensible across the ship's transom. As he bent over the unconscious captain, his eye caught sight of some wires on the floor. With a cry of amazement and alarm he seized them and dashed on deck, wig-wagging a signal to Lieutenant Commander Lewis with a lantern he had snatched.

Instantly the *Shasta's* men charged across the gangplank with a rush and a cheer, and the roar of bitter, brutal fighting arose from the coal ship's bowels. The tars worried the *Rawdon's* crew as dogs worry a horde of rats, and the squealing of the beaten coolies and lascars resounded through the night.

But Dane took no part in the fight. The wicked-looking wires still in his hands, he raced round with Lieutenant Commander Lewis, searching the vessel between decks.

"Someone fixed the loading," he panted, breathlessly. "But this looks like a plot."

"A devilish plot!" agreed Lewis.

Working with frantic haste, the two men tore away a false bulkhead, cunningly devised.

Underneath shone the dull glint of a concealed case of steel.

"My God, Dane; a mine!" Lewis cried. "And ready loaded! Look at the connecting wires!"

With a vicious swipe the lieutenant commander ripped them off, as if fearful that current might even

then be insidiously creeping through to start its deadly work.

"'Twas set for explosion!" declared Dane. "Set with clockwork!"

"Eh? How do you know that?"

"Canard dropped the thing into the table drawer. I remember now. Something like a little dynamo, all wheels and coils!"

"Then we'd better get our hands on it mighty quick!" Lewis exclaimed, wheeling about.

They rushed back to Canard's cabin, to find the captain pulling himself erect with the aid of the table.

Lewis thrust the wires under his nose.

"You damned Russian, or Pole—it's all the same! I don't care if you are a friend of the admiral's. I don't care if you are the czar himself. You're a dirty dago dog!"

Canard raised a hand with dignity.

"Softly, sir, softly! You will, perhaps, explain your vituperative words. Are you drunk? You send a ruffian to assault me, and a crew to beat up one of my crews, and arrive yourself to throw insults in my face. Better slip back to your ship before you go any farther, my dear sir. I'll come aboard when Admiral Mavor returns, and straighten out this fracas."

Lewis's wrath exploded in a string of oaths. "Oh, don't play the smug hypocrite!" he shouted. "We found it."

"You found what?"

"The mine, you cursed plotter!"

Canard smiled his derision.

"You deny it?" thundered Lewis. "You deny its existence? Between decks! Aft! Behind a false bulkhead!"

"You fool," countered Canard, with, in his turn, a show of anger, "that's a magazine!"

"A magazine on a collier, eh?"

"Remember that the *Rawdon* hasn't always been a collier. She's been a blockade runner during the Chinese uprising. Running the river carrying ammunition to the foreigners in Canton."

Lewis sprang to the table.

"That won't go down," he scoffed. Dropping the wires he held, he pulled open the drawer. "We'll have a look here. Maybe you can explain away the exploding mechanism, too."

"By all means look," grinned Canard.

Lewis looked. There was no mechanism whatever in the drawer. He stared at Dane. And Jules pointed to the open port behind his head.

"I guess it's at the bottom of the harbour," he observed.

While Lewis gazed stupidly from the open port to Canard and back again, the latter lifted the ends of the wires from the table and tossed them out.

"These things are only bits of rubbish and better out of the way," he chuckled. "Aren't you gentlemen wasting a lot of time here?"

Dane, watching Lewis, saw the veins of his neck grow purple with repressed rage. With a growl in his throat, the lieutenant commander whirled on Canard, but the captain, his eyes sparkling wickedly, shook a warning finger in his face.

"Stop right there," he snarled. "Stop right now, before you go too far. You've used words to me that no man ever used, and I've been calm and patient with you. But don't add another syllable. As you Yankees say, you've gone the limit."

He turned his back on the two men and sat down again at the table with his litter of papers.

Lewis motioned Jules through the doorway before him, and they climbed the ladder. "Keep it dark," he told Jules. "Not a word of it to any one!"

"Why, damn it, man," protested Dane, for the moment forgetting discipline, "you aren't going to let him get away with that! We caught him red-handed!"

"We can prove nothing, absolutely nothing. It's your word against his, and your word against his in the courts of inquiry isn't worth a Malay curse. He's a big figure in naval circles, and shrewd as the devil himself. He'll prove to the satisfaction of Admiral Mavor and of everyone else that the mine we found was only a magazine. I might have known that he wouldn't go into such an enterprise without leaving the back door open for escape. I was a fool to bait him. Perhaps I went too far as it was."

“How?”

“Maybe I said enough to make him smash me. Oh, he can do it! You don’t know that man, Dane. He’s hand in glove with Seville. If he wants to raise or smash any one, all he has to do is speak to Seville. Seville’s a power in the land or rather on the sea. He’s more mighty than the heads of the naval department. With his pen, he can make or break any reputation in the navy.”

“But he stole this ship,” blurted Jules. “She’s the old *Borealis*. I can prove it before the consuls.”

“The bloody pirate! But that’s no surprise to me, after all. I wouldn’t be surprised if he stole his whole fleet. Don’t say you can prove it, though. You can’t. And don’t try. You couldn’t prove the first proposition of Euclid where he comes in. Keep a shut mouth. I wasted a good many years before I learned that necessary thing. I tell it to you before you start.”

And Dane, at work at his hoist again, with the *Shasta*’s men in the *Rawdon*’s hold, and coal pouring down the cruiser’s hatches at an average of eleven and a half tons, pondered over these things.

It was as his old comrade, Félix Bruneau, had said it would be. Everywhere he turned, he brushed up against the laws that crowd. Here in this outside world he had clothed in glamour a man could not speak the truth. He had to keep a shut mouth, and powerless to prevent, see rottenness fester and

spread. Plotters sat in the high places. One had to intrigue with them in order to survive. The struggle for existence raged Outside as it raged Inside, a blaze of battle, only here men battled with lies and intrigues. Such, Dane saw, was the modern law. It gilded the seats of the modern mighty while lying like a stone upon the necks of the modern meek.

Had he had the leisure, Dane would no doubt have pursued his analysis still further, arriving at new conclusions and generalizations. But there was no leisure. The completion of the coaling, the departure from St. Michaels, the rush across the Bering, and the attack on Nunalava Island came in quick succession.

Upon the eve of that attack, not Dane alone, but every man aboard the American squadron, thrilled at the morrow's prospect. The huge leviathans themselves seemed to thrill in their steel nerves and fibres. Through the twilight Arctic night they moved in grim, parallel, turreted lines, rising and falling on the heave of the Bering waves, their masts leaning up against the stars, the Ardois lights winking keen, varicoloured eyes through the half gloom. In all quarters was that indefinable atmosphere of impending battle. Air, sky, and sea held hints of it. Like a shroud, a filmy, gossamer mist came down to hover over the phosphorescent wakes of the tossing vessels. Many a bluejacket could not sleep below, and, breaking regulations, sneaked out to haunt the

forecastle deck, hiding among the anchor chains to gaze in awe upon the phenomenon of the radiant northern night.

Toward morning this radiance increased, till the sky became blood red in the haze, blazing as a dire omen, a true presage. Then, while the men cleared the ships for action, the thrill of the prospective fight became an obsession with them. Hate and the lust of strife awoke. In their hearts burned the pride of race and the patriot fire. But, subconsciously, every heart beneath the blue hummed the battle hymn of the republic. With vision strange, prophetic, men saw the ports of home, roadsteads like steel ribbons on the Atlantic, green quays of the South, the sunset grandeur of the Golden Gate. Then, dispelling dreams, hurling the climax of realism, burst the incarnate shriek of shells from the Russian batteries two miles away on the hills around Nunalava Bay.

Instantly the flagship of the American squadron displayed her signal, and the battleships replied. Earth, ocean, air, and sky seemed rent with a colossal thunderbolt.

"All hell's loose now," gasped Dane, amid the acrid reek of powder in the *Shasta's* forward turret.

Steaming down the firing line at a twelve-knot speed flew the smoking cruiser. As she flew, she belched destruction. Port guns boomed. Broad-sides reverberated. The long-range, deadly turret

engines spat yellow flame across the blood-red sky. Stripped to their waists, every sinew taut, every muscle showing, the turret crew worked. Forward they sprang when the cylinders raised the guns from recoil, flashed in the projectile from the car of the hoist, and followed it with the two bags of powder. The men on the hydraulic rammer quickly pounded the explosive home. The breech-block clanged and was twirled tight. The veteran gunners sighted cunningly, and one by one the silenced guns toppled from the earthworks above Nunalava harbour. To Dane, staring ferociously through his glasses, the accuracy of the gunner seemed uncanny. Nunalava Island was the flat top of a sunken volcanic mountain. On all sides, except in front, where the harbour lay, its shores rose perpendicularly for a thousand feet. In front was the crumbled slope of the mountain's ancient crater, with one half broken away. This crescent-shaped hollow made the harbour and the sealing beach, while above sheered the hills. These hills formed the target for the *Shasta's* guns, and the shots went home, two miles distant, as if thrown by hand. With every report Dane saw the shells plowing up the earthworks under the gun carriages or striking the carriages themselves. Close in under their shore batteries the Russian gunboats returned the fire. But because of their cramped position and because of the swift maneuvering of the attacking squadron, their shots fell wide. There in

the din of the firing a wave of fierce exultation swept over Jules, and he impulsively clapped the sweating gunners upon their bare backs.

"Good shot, Buckley! Good shot, Henline!" he exclaimed. "If you can keep that up for half an hour, there won't be a shore gun left mounted!"

Carlos Seville, too, was with Dane in his turret, viewing the conflict through glasses. He half crouched, half stood by the entering hatch, using his glasses through the turret openings whenever the opportunity was presented. He marked the progress of the bombardment quite impassively. For the moment, he was a human machine to note and absorb detail and afterward reproduce it for the benefit of an insatiable public.

Little gods of battle, on the other hand, were the men. Their faces smiled through smudge and grime. Their eyes gleamed, dulled, and quickened again with each vital emotion of those pregnant minutes of the fray. The ribs sprang in their heaving chests, and the muscles played like snakes under their skins. "To win! To win!" was the cry in their pounding hearts. The battle hymn, timed by the staccato rattle of quick-firers, roared in their ears, not prophetic now or fateful, but in blazing glory!

Yet for those who fed the turrets there was no such verve or inspiration. Within the handling room, down below the protective deck, Barnham and McLettan toiled like demons in concert with the

other men to keep supplied the two twelve-inch guns in the turret above. Inside the shell chamber, on the one hand, and the powder chamber on the other, compatriots worked as madly to pass ammunition out to the handlers to be placed upon the trays of the cages, or cars, which ran up and down the right and left hoists. The shells were whipped from racks into a chain carrier and run out along an overhead track, to be lowered in place. The powder, sewn in silk bags and inclosed in copper cans, was picked from similar racks and passed by hand through the flap of the magazine door, two bags for every shell.

Barnham and McLettan found the heat below oppressive because the water-tight steel doors were closed. No communication between the series of rooms, except by way of the flaps, was allowed while the guns were in action. Nolan and Barty worked at the right elevator. The din of battle echoed down the barbette when the shutter opened for the ascent and descent of the ammunition car, which spun up and down with wonderful rapidity, yet the men could not know how the fight was going. But above, in the turret, they knew, for the glasses revealed the whole face of the hills around Nunalava harbour ripped open and scoured, the last shore battery dismantled, and the Russian gunboats in full flight out of the bay.

Dane and his turret crew, wreathed in the clinging smoke, cheered while they fought, and, even as they

cheered, a sheet of fire, born of inflammable gas, filled the turret. Gasping for breath against the poisonous stuff, the turret crew staggered aside, with hair and faces singed.

"A flareback!" cried Seville. "Look out, the stuff's dangerous!"

"Down, men, down!" ordered Dane. He caught necks in either hand and pushed dazed fellows toward the right elevator.

Half suffocated by the fumes, they came down and tottered across the handling room. Barty Barnham, Nolan McLettan, and the others threw water in their blackened faces. Dane and Seville descended the four decks in frenzied haste.

"What's this smoke?" yelled Lieutenant Commander Lewis, rushing in.

"Fire!" Seville told him. "A flareback in the turret. Seems to have got something below. There must have been powder accumulating here. I don't see what else could have done it. The men know the regulations against allowing powder to accumulate, but the careless devils will do it."

"Is the shutter closed?" Lewis demanded.

The ship being on the firing line, he hesitated to have his chief take her out of action unless it was absolutely necessary.

"It's closed!" a gunner cried, swinging off the ammunition car. "But the left hoist's all afire. My God, watch the magazine!"

Everything was a dark, reeking whirl, with fiery, sizzling sparks falling in showers. Striving like maniacs, Lewis, the turret crew, and the handlers dashed water wherever they saw red.

"Fasten those magazine flaps!" commanded Lewis. "Tight! Put your backs to them."

McLettan sprang to one side, Buckley to the other. With their bodies, they protected the openings against the passage of flames, and made the flaps secure. In the smoke-saturated pit Lewis and the other men fought on, slowly losing ground before the tentacles of fire. Buckley, with his back pressed against the magazine door, felt it grow warm. Warily he lifted the flap again and stuck his head within, backing away with a curse.

"The magazine's on fire!" he yelled. "Burnin' at the top and eatin' down to the powder. Mates, the old ship's done!"

A swift glance told Lewis that his gunner was right.

"Water!" he ordered, snatching at a bucket. "Throw it through the flap."

"Unlock the door," suggested Buckley, shouting to make himself heard in the increasing turmoil of the furnace-like shaft. "Get the door open."

"No!" thundered Lewis. "That'll make a draft. Leave the door shut. Work through the flap."

For tense minutes full of dread they battled thus, trying to quench the flames in the magazine with

bucketfuls tossed upward from the circular opening in the steel door, and gradually recognizing that the essay was vain.

"She's goin' up anyway, boys!" Buckley asserted despairingly, his breath coming in great convulsions. "The old ship's done!"

"You're right, Buckley!" panted Lewis. "Come out, men! We'll have to beach her, after all."

Out they stumbled, burned, blackened apparitions. The door of the shaft opening for their exit augmented the draft tremendously, and the fiendish crackle behind them swelled to a full-throated bellow. Lewis ran aft, his uniform cindered to rags, his white face smudged to the colour of a lascar.

Immediately a clarion note resounded through the cruiser.

"Fire and collision quarters!" exclaimed Dane to his turret crew. "Get to your places!"

Rubbing their blistered eyes, they ran to position.

Under the desultory fire of the fleeing Russian gunboats, the *Shasta* wheeled from the line and dashed at full speed for the Nunalava sealing beach.

As the ship swung into the bay, her flood cocks opened, and water began to rise to the magazines. Yet there was little doubt in the minds of men and officers, from stoker to chief, but that the cruiser would be blown to fragments before she could reach the shore. The water flow into the blazing maga-

zine could raise its own level only a few inches a minute, while the fire was eating down from the top with far greater speed.

"The old ship's done!" declared Buckley for the third time.

Some baleful fascination drew men to the place of greatest danger. Lieutenant Commander Lewis had hurried below to have a gang bring up a hose to play water through the flap of the magazine door, but the time it took to make the connections offset any chance of saving the *Shasta*. The crowd around had now lost all semblance of discipline, and through its ranks a man suddenly broke at a run.

"Where are you going, Dane?" cried Lewis.

"Inside!" shouted Jules.

"You damned fool!"

Lewis jumped for him. His fingers closed on Dane's shoulder, but all he got was a handful of jersey. The next instant, Jules dived through the round, fire-rimmed aperture.

The men about fell back, mouths agape, eyes bulging.

"By God, he's gone!" Lewis breathed, as if in prayer.

Walled in the fiery furnace, Dane had no emotions he could analyze. The smoke stung his eyes. The fire knifed his lungs. He threw himself face downward on the magazine floor, feeling for water.

None met his parched lips. The flood cocks had just been opened. The fluid had not risen.

Some dim realization, not of his own danger, but of the vessel's emergency and of the peril of his ship-mates, filtered like cool drops into his scorched brain. He stumbled erect again. The fire flamed on a level with his head, swiftly eating down, and, enduring agonizing physical torture, Dane resisted it, beating the red, licking tongues with his palms till, pained beyond all enduring, he had to desist. Then, ripping the jersey from his body, he redoubled his efforts, flailing the fire with the garment and trying to smother it. He crouched low from the heat, but still it overcame him. A torpor like the approach of death oppressed him. His knees gave way, and he fell backward—to splash in the rising water!

Gurgling, gasping, he rolled there, submerging his face in the invigorating fluid, drawing refreshment, summoning new strength for a final endeavour. Then he sprang upright in a self-inflicted frenzy, scooping big handfuls and throwing them on the flames.

"A bucket!" he screamed to a colourless face that dared to peer beneath the flap. "For God's sake a bucket!"

Someone tossed it in.

Those outside heard violent splashing and dashing of water, heard the fire's angry hiss and feeble sputter as it stubbornly succumbed.

Then there came a dull pounding on the steel door.

When they unlocked it, Dane staggered blindly out, with the skin stripping from his body, and the first arms round him to carry him to the ship's surgeon were Admiral Mavor's.

"The soul of the flag is in you, sir," the old chief breathed, tears standing in his eyes. "And the whole nation shall know it. You've saved a thousand lives, not to speak of a five-million-dollar ship!"

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FLIGHT OF THE ROCKET

**S**KYROCKET promotion! That's the only name for it!" exclaimed Carlos Seville.

"Oh, I don't know!" Lieutenant Commander Lewis differed. "You forget the years of the patrol service in the Arctic and in the Bering that he has behind him. During those years he went through the usual p.-o. and w.-o. ratings, got an ensign's commission, and passed his examinations for lieutenant. His promotion to captain is sudden, I'll admit——"

"And crooked!" Seville cut in. "Influence! A pull with the admiral! You know the promotion game's all crooked, anyway."

"Sudden, but sound," Lewis went on, ignoring Seville's comment. "Good, hard, practical work behind you! That's what counts. That's what got me my own position."

"By Jove, so it was! I was forgetting you are a mustang."

"And you adore only Annapolis men," countered Lewis, sharply.

From the grounds of Mavor House, where they stood, Seville looked down the steep of the headland at the *Shasta*, lying in Skagway Bay.

For an instant the lieutenant commander's pointed truth kept him silent. Then he laughed shortly.

"Well," he defended, "you fellows never see things through the Annapolis eye. It's all in the point of view. For my own part, I hold strongly to training, discipline, and the unchanging traditions of the navy. But, leaving this aside, and granting that ambition, practical ability, and loyal service should be rewarded, Dane has done a foolish thing in jumping so quickly from lieutenant to captain. So quickly has he leaped and clung that if ever a hand slips, he plunges to the bottom. See? There's nothing stable to rest upon. And just remember this, Grant, if anything happens in the future: You never saw a rocket go up which didn't come down."

"Don't croak so much," chaffed Lewis. "I'm beginning to think you're jealous of him, Seville."

"No, not at all. I simply speak from experience. You'll admit I've seen much of the sea."

"So has Dane. And, for that matter, myself."

"Yes, yes, and again yes, in a hard-working, practical way. With maybe a touch of theory, too. I'd say you were equals in that respect. Evidently the naval department thinks likewise. They've offered each of you a command. How do you like the *Lincoln*?"

"She's a good ship. The only thing I have against her is that she's in dock for repairs. I like to be on active service."

"Well, why don't you take the *Shasta*, then, and Dane the *Lincoln*? Didn't the department leave the choice between you two?"

"Well, they rather left the choice to Dane. If he feels well enough, he commands the *Shasta*. If he doesn't, he hands the command over to me for the time being."

"How does he feel?" asked Seville, again gazing down speculatively at the anchored cruiser.

"I don't know," Lewis answered.

"But you'll soon have to know, won't you?"

"Before midnight. She weighs anchor then. The launch comes off to the beach below for one of us."

"And how long before the ship comes off patrol?"

"Six months, I expect. That's why I like it. Somehow, the Bering always suits me. I would rather Dane didn't go just yet. Six months up there," gesturing vaguely over Dyea Inlet, "would just be to my taste. Anyway, I hardly think Dane's feeling well enough for the voyage."

While he spoke, the vibrant sputter of a motor boat beat insistently over the inlet, and both men turned to look.

"Do you believe his state of health is the only thing that will influence his decision?" Seville asked, as he watched the approaching craft.

"Why?"

"Because there's another thing, and it's coming in this boat."

With a rush the speedy craft passed them, spinning along the shore at the foot of the slope upon which they stood.

Dane was at the wheel. Amidships sat Enid Mavor, smiling and waving her hands to the two on the hill as the low, gray, torpedo-bodied boat shot on to the admiral's private landing. Seville, as he gazed after them, lit a cigar and handed its mate to Lewis.

"See the other thing?" he leered. "That'll hold him for a while. Bet you one hundred to one he doesn't go to-night."

"I never play long shots," observed Lewis, coldly.

"He doesn't go to-night," repeated Seville. "You say he hasn't decided, but it's plain that the admiral's daughter has decided for him. Since the day he woke up and found himself in Mavor House with Enid nursing him, affection, as well as ambition, has gone up like a rocket. And, mark me, Grant, like a rocket it'll come down."

"Croaking some more, eh?"

"Not at all, Grant. I'm only stating the law of gravitation. And the day his rocket of affection comes down, the better for you."

"For me? How?" Lewis feigned surprise.

"Don't fence with me," replied Seville, bluntly. "I happen to know she was engaged to you before

Dane butted in with that life-saving trip out over the Chilcoot."

"Oh, you do, do you?" demanded Lewis, turning swiftly from the railing which ran along the cliff and staring the other man full in the face. "You seem damned well informed, Seville."

Seville flicked the ash from his cigar.

"No better informed than other people," he observed. "It's public property. I read the announcement of that engagement to-day."

"What!" thundered Lewis.

"Yes, just what I said." Seville's cynical eyes scanned the lieutenant commander's features. "The *Lorgnette* has it pat. But maybe you're not educated in the line of printed frippery. I'll explain. The *Lorgnette* is the paragon sheet of society here, the food and drink of the families of the Eldorado and Bonanza kings. Strange, isn't it, that these man-size men and woman-size women haven't outgrown the spell of childish picture books? I have a copy in my pocket, but I'll not bother. I can quote the substance to you: 'Union of old families. Announced engagement of a prominent naval officer to an admiral's beautiful daughter!' You know the rotten, stereotyped form, Lewis. And with photographs! Where the deuce did the *Lorgnette* get the information?"

The blond face of Lewis had darkened with anger. He raised a fist and brought it violently down upon the railing.

"Curse these gossip-weaving minions of society journals!" he cried, fiercely, hitting the railing a second time. "Curse them!" He struck a third blow, and the railing broke.

Annoyed still further at so obvious a show of wrath, he pulled away his hands and locked them behind his back. Under his fair hair, his features were hard and stern as he confronted Seville.

"If you ever hear any one speak of that, say it's a lie!" he ordered, curtly. "A damned lie! And don't open the subject to me again."

Seville gave him one quick look and turned from the slope. "Very well," he agreed, "if you feel that way about it." Apparently in a huff, he walked off through the sloping, well-trimmed grounds toward the Mavor mansion, but in reality he was chuckling quietly.

Under bond of secrecy as to its origin, he himself had caused the article, with photographs, to be inserted in the *Lorgnette*. He had done it to accomplish ends of his own.

Frowning darkly, Grant Lewis continued to lean against the railing at the edge of the sea slope and to stare moodily below.

Carlos Seville's words had more than ruffled him. They had forced action upon him, action that could be nothing else than sacrifice. And the conception of the immensity of that sacrifice oppressed Lewis with a dull hopelessness that was akin to sickness.

He wondered how he would get through the dinner Admiral Mavor was giving to celebrate Dane's commission and return to health. Also he wondered how he could speak with Enid. He must find means; for he, and not Dane, should sail at midnight on the *Shasta*. The thing was decided now. The *Lorgnette's* article had decided it.

Lewis knew that Enid Mavor did not love him. But she had liked him; liked him so much that she had been moved to yield to his wooing. He did not ask much, and she had given her word on the understanding that he must wait till she was surer of herself. So Lewis waited hungrily, waited for the spark of love which he claimed to burst into flame. Now it had at last burst into flame, but it was another hand that fanned the fire.

A mustang Seville had called him, and hinted at a lack of training, discipline, and tradition. But Lewis possessed these attributes in a degree that Seville never dreamed of. Lewis had trained the hardest of all things to train—the emotions. He had disciplined the most insurgent of all rebels—the heart. He had sworn by the proud traditions of the Lewis line to do the thing the Lewis men had always done—the honourable thing.

At all costs, the honourable thing was the decision he came to, brooding thus, his strong figure and determined face kin to the heights behind him.

As he went back through the grounds to Mavor

House to dress for dinner, a trim, white yacht pointed up the inlet and anchored off the admiral's private landing. *Volga*, Lewis read upon her side, and he knew it for Count Panella's yacht, just arriving after a cruise through the Inside Passage.

Panella had aboard guests of the admiral's inviting, and Lewis paused to watch them descend the gangway to the launch. He saw step into the craft Panella himself, Panella's sister, the Countess Massinoff, Captain Haegar Canard, and some ladies he did not know.

Hastily Lewis entered the house, and, while going upstairs, he pondered on the secret machinations in which Canard had been engaged during the Nunavala trouble, machinations which but for a fortunate chance would have destroyed the squadron at St. Michaels. He had a vision of that night, the cluttered harbour, the glaring searchlights, the coaling cruiser, the bluejackets' rush aboard the collier, Dane's and his frantic search for the hidden mine, the discovery, and their defeat through the cool cunning of Canard. A vision, too, of the thunderous firing line and of the *Shasta's* peril. But a voice on the stairs above him dispelled all visioning and recalled him to the present:

"Dreaming, Grant?"

It was Enid Mavor's voice, and it vibrated like a silver bell. Bright as the spirit of sunlight, she smiled on him from the superior height her position

on the stairs gave. Her cheeks were warm glows of colour. Her blue eyes shone sapphire in the shade of the stair landing. Seeming to float, rather than to trip, down the thickly carpeted steps, Enid moved in haste to greet the newly arrived embassy guests.

"Wait!" Lewis entreated. "I want to speak to you."

Enid, in her swift descent, was beside him even while he uttered his entreaty. "I can't wait, Grant," she told him, tapping him upon the shoulder with her finger tips in sisterly fashion and tripping on down with a rustle, a fragrance, a subtle essence of personality that but enhanced her charm. "Speak to me later. The guests off the *Volga* are arriving. Didn't you notice? The yacht's in the bay."

"Yes, yes, I saw." Lewis took a step after her. "I wanted only a word. But of course you can't wait. I'm a fool to suggest it. But later, then, Enid. After dinner. In the grounds, in the summerhouse—anywhere! Will you come?"

Now it was Enid who was looking up. Her smile was for an instant usurped by a seriousness unusual and uneasy.

"If—if you insist," she assented.

"If I beg!"

The girl at the bottom of the staircase looked furtively through the long hall, where the ponderous salutations of the admiral, as he welcomed the newcomers, could be heard. Then she turned again with one yellow silk slipper on the step.

"Is it about—about Jules?" she asked, in a whisper.

"About Jules, yes."

The admiral was convoying his guests through the hall, and Enid had to hurry forward.

"In the summerhouse," she nodded over her shoulder.

A moment Lewis looked over the balustrade to watch her greet the guests with the sunny smile that had returned. He noted that she was wearing a clinging evening dress of golden net over filmy silk; and the whole effect, from the golden waves of her hair to the golden beads on her shoes, was one of radiant light.

Dane, the cause of Lewis's misery, dressed in the next room to him.

Jules came down first and strolled into the library, which boasted a stupendous collection of books from Goethe down to the season's best seller. In the interval of awaiting the descent of the others, he took down a volume of Kipling, wheeled a great leather chair round so that it backed to the light, and gave himself up to a quarter of an hour's reading.

So deep was his absorption, and so softly the woman moved down the stairs, that the almost inaudible rustle of her garments failed to reach him. He did not hear till the silken train swished on the carpet behind him. Then he arose out of the dark, as it were, and the two faced each other in the glow of the rose lights.

"Jules!"

It was the same voice that had spoken on Ruigisoff Island beneath the aurora and the arctic stars; the same moving, compelling, caloric voice.

"Sonia!"

Dane's greeting was no cry of fervour, no resurgence of exaltation. It was a ringing challenge. With a savage thrill, he met the test of her wonderful presence, the test he had wondered so much about, and even feared, when he knew that that night their paths would cross again. But the thrill in his blood was not the former madness of desire. It was the fighting tremor of his strength, the impulse of his confidence in that strength.

Like a Rubens picture in the shaded brilliancy of the electrics she stood, lithe, dark, haunting. Her beauty was a more subtle thing than of old, more impressive, more powerful. The vision of her stirred Dane deeply, but his feeling was admiration for a remarkable creation. He was quite sure of himself.

As for Sonia, the old light blazed in her brown eyes, the old impetuosity fired her features. In that moment she bitterly reproached herself for yielding to the childish fear of facing return with him. Why could she not have divined this under those arctic stars? She chided herself with whiplike lashings of regret. She told herself over and over that she might have known that such a man would rise.

But of this inner conflict of emotion nothing showed. Her face was a sweet, strong lure.

"Jules, Jules! Isn't it strange to meet like this? Don't you know what night it is?"

"What night?" Dane's surprise was genuine.

"Don't you know? The anniversary of that—that other night."

He started.

"So," Sonia pouted, "you forgot? It was nothing to remember?"

"It was only a dream," Jules answered, "and dreams are soon forgotten."

"How cruel!" She drew back, hurt, rebuffed, waiting for the quick impulse of sympathy that would rush him into her snares.

But Dane had a curb on his impulses. He knew she was acting. Now he saw Sonia Massinoff clearly. The spell she had exercised was gone. For Jules had gazed on the panorama of the outside world and grown worldly-wise; had walked down the darker lanes of life and seen the essences of being.

Coming out of the Northland's fastness from toil, privation, and solitude, he had been thrown into enforced contact with the first really beautiful woman he had ever seen. Could those exotic hours of infatuation, he asked himself, be called love? No. For then he had no standard of judgment, no perspective. Now his perspective was true.

"How cruel!" he exclaimed, echoing her words. "Not I, but the thing we call destiny is cruel."

"And what but destiny," Sonia demanded, "made to-night the anniversary of that other night?"

"Mightn't there have been human agency?" Jules asked.

The accusation of design in her visit stung her. A vengeful gleam leaped to her eyes, a torrent of speech to her lips, but the chatter of people on the threshold checked her retort.

"Hush!" Dane warned in a whisper. "The rest are coming."

He covered the moment of awkward constraint by putting his volume of Kipling in place.

Chattering, laughing, joying in swift repartee, in swept the other guests, Enid and the admiral in their midst. Dane found himself greeting Mrs. Cowan-Wyndham, whose husband was a rear admiral stationed in the East; her daughter Mildred; Miss Garfield, a brunette débutante; and Miss Nettem, who was something of a lion hunter. For the latter lady, sport promised well. The social jungle of Mavor House seemed full of lions. Not least of them was the old fire-eating chief himself. Then there were Dane, Lewis, Seville, Canard, and Count Panella. Panella had the bearing of the well-bred Russian diplomat. He was tall, spare, dark, aristocratic, and he spoke English perfectly. Canard appeared to be the former Polish pirate with his evil nature better concealed under a finer polish. About him, like a web, clung the atmosphere of dangerous

mystery. Watching the captain under cover of the rapid-fire small talk of the animated group, Jules noted that his cinnamon-coloured eyes hardly ever left Sonia's face. So he had ambitions! How many men, Dane wondered, were fired with that same longing? And what about the woman invested her with such power? It might have been her unfathomability. Men love the mysterious, that which they cannot probe, which ever eludes and beckons from beyond. Sonia had this attribute. Enid Mavor had it not. No part of the latter's exuberant nature could be concealed. It was the spirit of sunlight in her, springing to release. Her being rushed forth. Sonia's drew back behind a wall of regal reserve. Standing side by side in the middle of the group of guests, the personalities of the two women presented salient contrast. A full-blown, sun-kissed, yellow rose, glowing with health, dewy with youth, and open to the day, Enid seemed. A dark saffron flower in the shade, symbol of subtlety and tragedy, and scornful in royal purple, was Sonia.

Yellow rose and saffron flower, the two stood revealed as perfect specimens of two distinct types of womanhood. And, philosophized Jules: to every man his type!

But he smiled to himself as he thought of the time when he was so greatly mistaken in his type, the time before he had reached the full conception of his true ideal. Sonia caught him in the smile, and she looked up calculatingly through narrowed eyelids.

"Well, what pleasant thought was that?" she asked.

"One of you," Jules answered. "There is something upon which I wish to congratulate you."

The sardonic timbre of his tone did not escape her. She gazed at him sharply, her eyelids now wide open.

"Upon what?"

"Upon your return to the world. It seems to have been such a success." He took her finger tips, and his lips brushed them in mock congratulation.

Amusement was in his glance as he did so. His cool, well-contained touch gave further proof that he was master of himself. It seemed to be that very evidence that angered Sonia more than his words, for the tiger within her leaped up and glared through her eyes.

"Would you have it otherwise?" she challenged.

"No. Don't think for a moment that I would wish to deprive you of the smallest bit of that success. It should stand as it stands, complete!"

Sonia's eyes blazed brighter, and her cheeks flushed.

"Take care," she warned, "or you may spoil your own return."

Dane gazed at her in silence, his arms folded, the smile still playing about his features in a manner that exasperated her. He made no retort, but simply smiled and held her eyes, only raising his glance when

Ressling, the admiral's butler, pushed back the portières.

"Dinner is served," that august personage announced.

A stir ensued, the movement of partners being arranged, and Jules turned away.

"I said 'take care'," Sonia repeated in the shift of people.

"Of Enid? Thanks!" He laughed, and seized the opportunity to turn her weapons on herself. "The countess commands," he explained, gayly, offering his arm to Enid. "Isn't she kind to lift the responsibility from you?"

When all were seated, Count Panella leaned smilingly across the table to Seville.

"Your famous Captain Dane seems dangerously absorbed in our hostess," he commented, speaking low amid the general murmur of conversation.

The seating arrangement allowed him to make the remark unheard by Enid and Jules. For the guests were seated in two lines at a long table, flowers being, by a unique arrangement, banked up at the head and foot of the glittering board. On the right-hand side, and in order, sat Enid and Jules, Sonia and Canard, Miss Garfield and Seville; on the left-hand side, and in the same order, were Lewis and Mildred Cowan-Wyndham, the admiral and Mildred's mother, and Panella and Miss Nettem.

Before replying, Seville took a look up the array of

silver and linen and lights and flowers. Other faces were animated, but his remained masklike.

"That's natural," he observed at last to Panella. "He's a sort of social lion to-night. The rest of us bask in the reflection of his glory and give thanks for the good dinner he was the cause of. Of course you heard how he saved the ship he is now to command?"

"Yes, yes! Plucky thing!"

"Plucky? Mad! But it was sufficient to make him a hero. The women worship him for it, count. All women are hero worshippers, anyhow. Are they not?"

"In some measure," agreed Panella, reservedly.

In the count, Seville recognized the thing that makes the diplomat; namely reticence, and he smiled over it.

"When Dane was invalided off the *Shasta*," he continued, "there was fever on top of that magazine experience. But he awoke one day to find himself a national idol and to hear the naval officers and naval critics arguing about the dangers of inclosed turrets and direct hoists. They're arguing still, count."

"So I have observed," laughed the count, who had been where the verbal afterbattle raged.

"And they'll go on arguing," Seville declared. "Let them—till they make up their minds to do something in the way of reform. What is probably

of more importance to Dane is that the day he woke he found himself in Mavor House, with our hostess nursing him."

"So?" Panella's knowing smile deepened. "Then one may perhaps make predictions for the future."

"But predictions are such abominably uncertain quantities."

"That depends upon the subject," contended Panella. "Doesn't it, Miss Nettem?"

"If the subject is human nature, I should say that predictions are decidedly uncertain."

"But wasn't there something terribly romantic about their first meeting?" asked Miss Garfield. "I think I heard a rumour."

"That was on the Dawson Trail," Seville explained. "She was sick and Dane made a big dash out with her and saved her life."

"And they do say her nursing saved his," murmured Miss Garfield. "How adorably romantic!"

Thus, with a medley of talk and laugh and banter above the different cross-sections into which the resplendent table naturally divided itself, the dinner went on. Course after course was served by that august and sombre personage, the admiral's butler, known to clubmen on the coast from St. Michaels to San Francisco, and purchased by Mavor at a price. Where Ressler served, nothing could be at fault.

Conscious that with Ressler everything was correct, rigidly and scrupulously correct, the trim, white-

moustached admiral beamed to right and left and across the table on his guests. His talk was of the service. And when it came to the toasts, and they had toasted the ladies, the flag, and the fleet, the admiral sprang triumphantly erect.

"A toast to the guest of honour!" he cried. "A toast to his commission and his vessel in commission. A toast to the man who saved the *Shasta*. A standing toast, my friends!"

They rose, a distinguished, smiling company. Dane saw the ruby glasses tip, and heard the applause of women's hands go round the board. He bowed.

"I thank you for that toast, and for the sentiment behind it," he replied, simply. "But I would rather have you toast not that lucky impulse of mine, but the thing that gave the impulse. That is outside any man, and none may take credit for it. It is the spirit the sea puts in the men she makes, and I would rather have you honour that, honour what is in the heart of everyone who follows the flag upon the waves. Ladies and gentlemen, a toast to the sea-bred!"

In silence they drank the toast, a new and greater admiration in their eyes for the man who proposed it.

"That was fine of you," whispered Enid, as Jules resumed his seat.

Her eyes were alight, and in them Dane thought he read many things.

"Do you want me to go to the Bering to-night?" he asked.

The crimson crept into her cheeks.

"How—how can I decide? Whatever is best for you!"

"It would be like cutting a hand off to go," he murmured, audaciously, and his very audacity seemed to relieve her, for she flashed him a grateful smile.

Before he could press his advantage, Dane became aware that Sonia, on his left, was speaking softly to him.

"I'm guilty of eavesdropping," she confessed. "Why aren't you going to the Bering to-night?"

"Oh," Jules replied, carelessly, "my health isn't too sound yet."

Quick as a flash, Sonia addressed Lewis across the table: "Then you're taking command of the *Shasta* at present?"

Dane censured himself for a thoughtless fool, but to his delight Lewis was not off his guard. He was having a miserable time keeping up enough spirit to entertain Mildred Cowan-Wyndham, but he looked up sharp and cool at Sonia's question.

"Yes," he answered, to her discomfiture, "I really don't think Dane ought to go."

"Is the matter of your health your only reason?" inquired Sonia, sweetly, turning again to Jules.

"Of course. But what earthly difference does that make?"

"It might make you heed the warning I gave you in the library."

"What was it? I have the worst memory in this whole city."

"It was: 'Take care!'"

"Yes, I remember the warning now."

"Then remember it is now accentuated."

Jules smiled. "You have the dramatic instinct," he lauded, mockingly.

"No, I believe it's the poetic. You read Kipling? I think I saw you with one of his books."

"Yes, I read him. Especially his prose, which is perhaps his truest poetry."

"Then in prose you know his 'Without Benefit of Clergy'?"

The words were ominous. Dane's shoulders set rigidly.

"Yes, I know that powerful short story," he responded. "But why do you ask?"

"Because I happen to know that Enid Mavor is an earnest believer in the benefit of clergy."

The words were soft and spoken for him alone. He sat back, very still.

"What?" he demanded, in an amazed whisper. "You would—to her you would——"

"Lie?" laughed Sonia.

"You would—well, misrepresent that Ruigisoff Island sojourn?"

"I am of the diplomatic circle," Sonia replied. "We would not call it misrepresentation. We would call it diplomacy. And please remember that I am

accustomed to use every sort of diplomacy which will bring me triumph in the end."

As the dinner finished, the men went off to the smoking room for cigars and coffee, and in the doorway Dane brushed shoulders with Captain Haegar Canard.

"Your pardon," bowed Canard, with a smile that was three parts sneer. "It is some time since we were in such close contact."

Dane returned the bow and the smile.

"The last time it was somewhat closer, wasn't it?" he asked.

"I disremember," avowed the captain, shortly.

"I don't," laughed Jules. "Although we both have risen considerably in the world since then."

"Time changes. Circumstances alter." Canard shrugged his shoulders coldly.

"Yes, but it's odd, isn't it, the things that make men rise?"

Without replying, the captain walked abruptly away to the other end of the smoking room, and proceeded to finish the conversation he had carried on across the table with Admiral Mavor. It was not in Canard's nature to forget, and Jules knew that the affair in St. Michaels harbour was not forgotten. The captain only bided his time.

Lewis had left the room, so Dane wandered round and dropped into a seat between Panella and Seville. Through the blue haze of cigar smoke, their lazy talk

was of the embassies, foreign relations, and the pending reforms in the navy. Then Dane began to question Panella about conditions in Russia, and the conversation touched on his home land here and there till it involved the estates of the Panellas, which were famous not only in Europe, but abroad. Panella described these great holdings and told them that the estates had been augmented by the thousands of acres that had come with Massinoff Castle.

"That fell to your line after the death of your sister's husband, didn't it?" inquired Jules.

"Yes, and a palace it is."

"I've heard tourists talk about it. Does your sister use it?"

"No, not at all. She has been residing with me in Washington. It is pleasant for her there."

"How long has she been with you?"

"Since the death of her husband."

"It is strange that she prefers this democratic country to Russia. She has her lands, her palaces, and all that her rank brings her there. Why does she give it all up?"

Panella knocked the ash from his cigar in his coffee cup, and gazed at the glowing weed in a perplexed fashion.

"That's something I have never been able to determine," he observed. "Perhaps love of travel is largely responsible for her attitude. We travel a good deal. Indeed, just at present we are making

an extended cruise about Alaska. We intend seeing all the coast with the admiral and his daughter."

"And yours truly," supplemented Seville. "I'm in on that little jaunt. Naval observation purposes, you know."

"So? That is good." Panella nodded genially. "Travel, even for its own sake, is a tremendous benefit to any one. And especially to my sister. It permits her to forget. For her marriage was rather a *mésalliance*."

The men were silent for an instant, then Seville raised himself from his sprawling position against the end of the settee.

"Speaking of marriages," he broke out, "we've forgotten to congratulate our friend Lewis."

"How?" the others chorused.

"Didn't you know? Good Lord, it's in all the papers! Read it!"

He drew a crumpled page of the *Lorgnette* from the breast of his evening coat and tossed it to them. With a vicious, covert delight he watched Dane's face as he read, seeing an odd pallor fade the tan.

Panella, reading over Dane's shoulder, did not mark the effect, but gave expression to his own polite surprise. "A lucky fellow!" he exclaimed. "A lucky, lucky fellow! A more charming lady than our hostess I have never met. I should say it is an admirable match. Where is Lieutenant Commander Lewis? Gone out, has he? Well, I shall tender my

congratulations later. The admiral must be proud. And just by the way, Seville, we evidently did some misinterpreting at dinner, didn't we?"

"Or someone else did," answered Seville.

"So?" Panella raised his eyes and looked at Dane with polite sympathy.

But Dane still held the paper in hands that shook, and he was staring at the printed article and the smiling photographs as a man stares at precious argosies wrecked within sight of harbour.

"They've been engaged for some time," Seville idly informed. "Even before she fell sick that time at Nordenskold Post."

He puffed his cigar and waited for the climax of his triumph, some outbreak from Dane. Yet Dane made none. He seemed dazed. The smoky air of the room stifled his lungs. A sensation of oppression was upon him, a suffocation, an utter helplessness of despair.

"This place is hot as hell!" he exclaimed at last, sponging his forehead with his palm. "I'll have to take a turn in the grounds."

"I'm with you." Seville stood up. "Are you coming, count?"

"No, not now," declined Panella, who fancied that Dane wished the company of no one. "Another time. I have some questions to ask the admiral."

He went down the long room to Mavor and Canard at the other end.

Seville followed Dane out into the twilight northern night.

Neither Dane nor Panella had attached any significance to the absence of Lewis from the smoking room, but Seville was wiser. To him, Lewis's absence from the smoking room meant his presence somewhere else. And where could the somewhere else be but about the grounds? And, again, what was the most attractive spot in the grounds for meeting someone else? Why, the answer was as easy as a newspaper riddle: The summerhouse was that spot!

To Lewis, the summerhouse seemed a fit trysting spot for trysts that were true; a spot to make, and not to break, ties that bind. As he set foot in the green-girdled bower, his heart beat faster. He could see Enid sitting in the moonlight by a cluster of roses, yellow roses that harmonized wonderfully with her dress and hair. At the sound of his step, she started up, and mistook the grave mask he had assumed for severity.

"You have come to storm and to plead," she faltered.

"No such nonsense." Lewis laughed boldly; so boldly that the girl could not know what effort it cost him. "I've simply come to straighten out a tangle that should never have been tangled. Our lives, I mean."

He sat down, seemingly out of breath, upon the bench beneath the yellow roses, and began to roll a cigarette with nervous fingers.

Enid stood silently before him, her hands at her throat, clasping the covering she had thrown over her shoulders against the cool night air. The moonlight, striking through the vines, turned her hair to a golden halo round her head.

Lewis lit his cigarette and looked up through the smoke with friendly enthusiasm.

"See, Enid," he broke out, "I've been doing some steep thinking lately, and I've come to a conclusion. Here it is: I showed colossal ignorance in thinking once that we could ever be affinities. I was wrong to bind you to an engagement into which you entered without love. I was more than wrong; I was defying the code of morality and committing a crime against nature. No, none of your half-hearted protests, Enid, if you please. You think the very same, don't you? Own up, now. There, that's better. Follow the heart, you say? You've hit it, Enid. I want you to follow your heart. Think of that old agreement of ours as non-existent and follow your heart to—to happiness."

Lewis's voice was a little unsteady. He made two or three ineffectual passes with his little finger before he succeeded in flicking the ash from his cigarette. Then he puffed with bravado.

"Any one who has the least wisdom," he continued, "knows that it's utter folly to tie two hearts together at random, launch them on the ocean of love as the poets call it, and expect them to make the

harbour of heavenly bliss without the lashings breaking. It's not logic, and it spells misery."

"Not always," murmured Enid, confusedly, as if she felt guilty of being glad for some ungrateful thing. "There have been happy cases where——"

"One in a million," Lewis interrupted. It was not good for him to argue, and he had to get the thing over quickly. If ever he loosed the curb on himself, anything might happen. "One in a million," he repeated, harshly. "And our case is not the one. Of course it seemed all right, and it might have been all right, too, if—if neither of us had met the real affinity. But I am not blind, Enid. I can see things."

Enid blushed. In her eyes shone a joyful light. She had not thought the perplexity of her position could have been so easily cleared. Moreover, she did not know that this was sacrifice. For Lewis wore his mask well.

"Then, if you really feel that way," she ventured, tremulously, "if it makes no difference at heart!"

"No, no difference at heart." Lewis leaped up from his seat. "You see, I knew this explanation had to come some time, Enid. I was sure of that. But a report that's out forced it on me to-night. . . . The report? Oh, you needn't trouble about that now. You'll see it soon enough. And, anyway, it doesn't matter. It's only the heart that matters, and I'm doing this thing for your sake. For you, remember! Not on account of you. There's a difference. Don't

mistake my motive. Heaven knows any man would be proud of you. Any man!"

The thought that she might have mistaken his motive and viewed his action as a selfish one made Lewis start forward, made him seize her hands and read her face. That instant was a treacherous one for him. All the yearning he had held back surged over him in a flood. The touch of her hands set his blood pulsing riotously. His arms ached for her. His heart hungered. For a second he wavered, shaken by impulse, and regained control of himself by an effort that left him pale and trembling.

Happily, under the deceptive play of the silver aurora, Enid did not notice.

"But you don't think that," Lewis sighed, in a sort of relief. "I see by your face that you don't think that."

"No, Grant, no! How could I be so ungrateful as to think that?"

"You couldn't," Lewis breathed.

His hands quivered on hers as he held them for a minute.

And while he held them, outside in the lawn shrubbery two slow-moving figures blackened the starlit aisles. Two bright cigar ends proclaimed them human figures, but neither Enid nor Lewis saw them appear at the open side of the summerhouse.

"By Jove!" whispered Seville. "I believe we intrude here. Just look at that tableau!"

There was little need of urging. Dane could not tear his eyes away from the girl standing under the yellow roses, with the moonlight bathing her hair and her dress of golden net and her fingers entwined in those of Lewis. Jules looked for what seemed an age. Then he suddenly became aware that this was not a scene for the profaning eyes of outsiders, and he swung swiftly on past the summerhouse.

"Pretty tableau, eh?" laughed Seville, softly.

"Yes."

With the word, his teeth bit through his cigar. It fell on the grass. Seville marked the evidence of volcanic feeling and smiled that sneering smile which made his handsome face so cynical; but he offered no further remark, and they went along the terrace in silence.

Though outwardly so cold, so calm, so bitter, Dane's mind was a seething chaos. Two things only flashed plain—the knowledge that within minutes he would be upon the *Shasta's* deck, and the remembrance of what he had lost. That remembrance, recollection of the past months spent with her, was indelible. How they had roamed and played gypsy together, exploring the indented shores from Skagway to Pyramid Harbour, hunting glaciers from the Ferebee to the Garrison, seeking out Indian villages from Katzechin to Klukwan. Enid had been his inspiration in it all, and without her now the Northland lured not. The grimmest, grandest coun-

try God ever created had lost its spell for him. For a disillusioned man, the Bering patrol and the stark sealing beaches seemed better.

On the terrace, Dane turned to glimpse the silver sweep of Skagway Bay, with the riding lights of the vessels set like jewels thereon. As he looked, he was conscious of a stir aboard the cruiser. Electric lights flashed, and the sound of heavy chains gaining through the hawse pipes came distinctly through the night.

Dane and Seville listened, shoulders thrust forward, eyes fixed, as men bred to the sea will listen to that familiar sound.

"She's weighing anchor!"

The voice was behind, and they wheeled quickly. There on the porch, his shoulders thrust forward, his eyes fixed, was the admiral. The sound had reached him through the open windows, and he had hearkened to it as an old charger harkens to the clank of sabres.

"Whoever is going, you or Lewis, had better hurry!" he exclaimed.

"I'm going," declared Dane.

Their eyes followed a rocket streaking upward from the bridge, one red rib in the silver fan of the aurora.

"There's your signal," spoke Seville. "And yonder's the launch, putting off."

"Well, I'm ready for it," announced Jules. "Just a minute to say good-bye inside."

He strode within, and shortly appeared again, an

officer's cloak across his arm, which he drew on over his evening clothes. "All shipshape!" he cried, briskly. "My uniforms are aboard. Good-bye, Seville!"

"I'll go down with the admiral," proffered Seville.

"All right," assented Mavor. "But where is Enid? Isn't she coming? You didn't bid her good-bye?"

"Yes, I bade her good-bye," asserted Dane, solemnly, as the three descended the slope.

And he had. Though not in the sense the admiral accepted.

Mavor shook Dane's hand warmly before allowing him to step into the launch.

"Remember, sir," was his final salute, "that I walked that bridge myself."

Jules looked him in the eye.

"To walk that bridge as you walked it is my highest ambition. Grant Lewis says the old ship always leaves a lucky wake. I live in that hope, sir."

He gave the order to cast off, and waved his hand from the waters of the bay.

A few minutes later he stood upon the *Shasta's* bridge as the cruiser headed down Dyea Inlet for Chilcoot Inlet and the Lynn Canal. And there once more Félix Bruneau's words recurred to him. Once more the voyageur was right. Everywhere he turned, he brushed up against the laws that crowd. Only north of those laws lay anything but disillusion. Even gall had its gall.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TRAIL TO FORGETFULNESS

**S**OUTHBOUND, after her six months' Bering patrol, the cruiser *Shasta* touched at Juneau for supplies, and that night a short liberty was proclaimed. The bluejackets, among them Barty Barnham and Nolan McLettan, were wild for freedom.

As in liberty blue and round, gilt-banded sailor caps they stepped out of the first running launch that left the *Shasta's* gangway, their sole ambition was the most hilarious excitement that might be crammed into their period of shore leave. Juneau was a good place in which to find excitement, and Coxswain Brenner, knowing this, gave them warning,

"Remember, there'll be a strict mast to-morrow, boys," he growled, "so keep straight, and behave yourselves."

"Fwaht's to ut, Barty, me dear?" asked Nolan when, with admirable acumen and dispatch, they had lost the others among the horde in the narrow streets.

Barty reflected, his cap tilted over one ear, and his

fat, moonlike face uplifted to the shutters of the water-front shops.

"A calf-hay, as the Frinchmin call ut, a *mozo* to sarve, an' vino enough to make us see pink mice?" his companion suggested.

"No," answered Barnham, piously. "Vino don't flourish here. This ain't the Philippines, I would remoind you. Nolan, you're deterioratin'!"

"But there's vino in other phases," protested McLettan. "Tall drinks, Barty, wid red-bellied cherries to suck when ye're done, an' icebergs piled all round. Cowl'd, Barty, ar-r-ctic cowl'd!"

"Don't, for Gawd's sake!" Barty waved his hands in gestures of renunciation. "Don't tempt me to retoin to me ol' paths! I thought you was an angel in disgrace, Nolan, but now I know you for a son o' Satan!"

"An' yersilf fer a bluddy hypocrite, d'ye moind!" McLettan sent back. "Fwaht the divil's in ye, ye're actin' so to-night?"

"To-night," Barty solemnly declared, albeit there was a smirk on his full-moon countenance, "to-night, Nolan, I'm a nonimbiber."

"Howly Nephthune!" snorted McLettan. "A fwhat?"

"A nonimbiber. Likewise, McLettan!"

Nolan stared under Barty's hat ribbons for an instant as they turned away from Main Street.

"Faith," he shrugged, "'tis hard on ye, Barty, to

have a rivet loose thot way; but 'tis a foine thing ye have a fri'nd to take care av ye an' guide yer seneel dimintia."

"Stow it!" commanded his companion. "To-night, as I says, we're bot' nonpercolators. We're out to see things not magn'fied or mult'plied, but in their natchooral state. We'll find something woithy o' us, me dear. Do you understand?"

"Fwaht?" McLettan demanded, doubtfully. "Theayters, is ut?"

"Theayters, if you will," his companion assented. "That'll do as a starter; an' then we'll go on a tour o' mask balls an' Siwash dinners an' suchlike little things."

Accordingly, they navigated many streets, and approached the playhouse district. But before coming to the haunts they knew of old, huge, vivid posters, pasted on the windows of a shop, flagged them.

"Luk here!" Nolan exclaimed, excitedly. "Grand op'ra, me bye! Fwhat's thot?"

The poster bore the operatic title, "Lucia," explaining it as a musical treatment of the sorrows of the Bride of Lammermoor.

"I've never given me own sorrows musical treatment," Barty observed, "but the idea's a piercin' one."

"Rale original."

"An' I'm yearnin' to behold the sound application."

"Same here," confessed McLettan. "Oi'm dyin' to hear ut wurrk. Luk at thim faces an' costumes!"

The San Bendos galaxy of first-magnitude stars shone out of their blue-paper heaven with a glory that amazed and fascinated the two bluejackets.

"Spaniar-r-ds!" Nolan hazarded. "They luk ut!"

"Mebbe they'll have a bullfight an' the band playin', same as we saw at Callao," Barty prophesied. "Tambourine girls an' all? Yow, Molan, leg it—rate o' knots?"

The impetus of the idea was such as to carry them onward under full steam, and those they met suffered in consequence.

Like two torpedoes boring through protective netting, they bored through the crowds that blocked Theatre Street.

"Be after havin' a care, Barty," McLettan warned his pilot. "Ye'll hit some wan too hard yet, an' he'll hit back; an' divil a bluejacket is behind us if we start a row."

"Nolan," declared Barty, exultingly, "I'm a bit of a Christian Scientist to-night. I feel that you an' me could clean up the blessed earth, an' they say it's all a matter o' faith."

At length they penetrated the temple of the footlights.

"The crosstrees, is ut?" asked Nolan.

"Misdoubtedly," Barty confirmed.

With the true sailor instinct, they climbed as high

as possible, and reached the gods. The first act had begun, and this was enough to show them that Donizetti's opera was unsuited to their mental capacities. To their disgust, it did not even remotely resemble a Spanish holiday. Barty harshly criticized the music. Nolan discovered flaws in Edgardo's impersonation, while the rôle of Ashton pleased neither.

Still, they had some solace, for between acts they descended dry and returned refreshed, in spite of Barty's pose as a nonimbiber. On one of these excursions, when the preceding part of the opera had been painfully trying to their unreceptive mood, Barty brought back a blouse full of oranges.

"Have ye turned vegetarian?" demanded Nolan, regarding the spheroids with suspicious eyes.

"Anarkist," his companion announced.

When the sextet began its thrilling rendition, it seemed to Barty like a lascars' chorus. He felt for his oranges, but Nolan jerked away his hands.

"'Tisn't amatoor night in voodiville, d'ye moind!" warned McLettan.

"They creak like frozen weather cloths," Barty indignantly declared. "Leggo, you porpoise! They deserve a bomb!"

"Sit ye still!" his friend impioered. "Beard av Nephthune, they don't be after throwin' bombs in grand op'ra. Ye must learn to accommodate yer-self, me bye."

Yet Barty refused to accommodate his being to the

demands of the occasion. He plugged both ears with brine-seared fingers, and sought diversion in scanning the boxes. Quite suddenly he emitted a surprised grunt.

"'Thot's right, Barty," approved McLettan. "Applaud now an' thin. We're sure to strike ut some time."

"Applaud, you fish! I wouldn't clap if I had a thousand hands! But look at that box, would you! The one wit' the starry spangles on. Know 'em?"

Nolan leaned forward and looked down from the heights upon a box gayly decorated with American ensigns and filled with American people.

"Howly flag!" he cried. "Sure, 'tis Admiral Mavor hisself an' the darlin' daughter! Fresh as a Tipperary rose, she is!"

Barty Barnham was staring as if through a stadiometer.

"Gawd forgive me for the sin o' covetousness, Nolan," he breathed, "but I envy Lootenant Commander Lewis sittin' beside her, an' that dam' lobster Seville!"

"Who's the rale swell parties wid thim?"

"Embassy lot. Ain't you seen 'em on the old ship before now? That's yon Russian count an' his sister, an' Canard, the cussed Pole!"

"Luk at the admiral's girl, though! Wouldn't the sight av her cure all grand-op'ra ills? An' d'ye remimber the pink-an'-white bit av a babe she was

fwat toime we sarved under the admiral—captain he was then—in the ould *Rangoon*?”

“Do I? What wouldn’t I give for them ol’ days! Nolan, it’s not us, but the world as is deterioratin’!”

Barty and Nolan relapsed into fond retrospection, and retrospection brought reverie, from which they were rudely awakened by the artificial music of the “mad scene” of “*Lucia*.”

Now, insanity set to music struck Barty Barnham as something altogether beyond countenancing. Forgetting it was not amateur night in vaudeville, he sprang up in the gods with a yell, and, as fast as shots from a turret gun, hurled his oranges through the scenery.

There arose cries of dismay from the performers and roars of mirth from unsympathetic ones of the audience. But hardly had the last of Barty’s ammunition left his hand before a mob of agile attendants fell upon him and Nolan, threw them downstairs, bounced them over the entrance steps, and hoisted them outside.

Propelled clear across the street, Barty and Nolan demolished a Japanese toy shop in their catapult-like flight, thereby incurring the curses of its Oriental owner. He heaped unintelligible anathemas upon their paper-crowned heads as they rose unsteadily from the débris. Also, in what English he possessed, he demanded immediate payment for the damage.

“Damage, is ut?” bellowed McLettan, whose

anger had risen under the rough handling he had received. "Bedad, ye were obstructin' the right av way, ye ould withered joss! Yer loss be on yer own skinny scalp!"

The shopkeeper opened his mouth in a tremendous shriek, and a squad of his brethren, appearing like magic out of the many alleys, charged Barty and Nolan. Up and down the street the scene of conflict shifted, the two lone bluejackets battling valorously with a horde of Orientals, whose numbers were being augmented every second. Barnham raised his American war cries high above the squealing of the Japanese, in case any of his shipmates should be within hearing, and presently from an upper-room masked ball on the next street the wished-for reinforcements came pouring.

"Hey!" shouted Barty, exultingly. "Here comes the bunch! Down wit' the risin' sun an' its disfigurements! Who cares for a lot o' yellow insecks?"

The noise was terrific. In three minutes, the area of congestion had spread till a swaying crowd blockaded the whole highway. The rush of Barty's shipmates had sufficed to carry them far enough up the street to receive him and Nolan in their ranks. Then they strove to hammer a way out, surging and pushing, crashing from wall to wall. Here and there weak shutters and screens fell down. Booths toppled over and were trampled upon. Litter of coloured paper, wooden toys, baskets, lanterns, and

every variety of Oriental merchandise filled the street knee deep. Shopkeepers, making an attempt at shielding their wares, were swept down and lost in the tangle of legs. Police batons and wooden shoes cracked on bare heads.

"Faith," gasped Nolan McLettan, "the ould joss has raised the divil at last! Where are ye at, Barty, me bye?"

"Poundin' rice in that guy's stomach," panted Barty, emerging from a dismantled candy booth whereon he had pinned an overly aggressive Oriental. "Is this Main Street?"

"Not yit. We ain't out yit. Shades av the *Maine*, fwhat a thunderashin'!"

"You're right, Nolan. It'll reach the water front. Our chief's ashore, an' he'll be skippin' along this here way. Good Gawd, it's just as bad! Look there!"

"Fwhat? Our chief?"

"No; the admiral an' the rest. Theayters is out. Gawd, what a mess!"

Caught in the blockade, the carriage which carried Admiral Mavor's party was milled up in the rabble, the frightened horses rearing and plunging. They could see the white-moustached admiral standing up to command a passage, and they also marked the startled face of Enid where she sat with Seville.

"'Tis splendiferous trouble thot ould joss has launched!" spluttered Nolan. "They'll all be

shpilled in the strate, an' there'll be the divil's own toime wid the magistrates!"

To Barty Barnham it indeed seemed that way; but while he fought and strove to come to their aid, a rushing phalanx of marines split the crowd like a flying wedge. In it Barty saw Dane and Coxswain Brenner.

"The chief, Nolan!" he whispered. "The chief and the coxs'n! Gawd! He'll make fireworks!"

Dane sprang upon the window ledge of a shop and shouted a command that rang as far as the harbour. The conflict dragged at his stentorian cry, and he hurled another order to his men. Swiftly the marines from the *Shasta* formed two solid lines, which gradually widened, and forced the Japs back, leaving an open lane in the centre of the street.

Through this lane the admiral's party at once advanced. They could see Dane plainly above the heads of the horde, and all, with the exception of Enid, waved to him. Enid herself sat very straight, staring directly ahead, giving no acknowledgment, no word, no look, while the carriage passed.

Dane saw, and his face grew bitter. In the ranks of the bluejackets, Barty Barnham and Nolan McLettan were also quick to see.

"Cut dead!" exclaimed Nolan. "Now fwat does the young hussy mane? An' fwat the divil has the chief done to her?"

"Search me!" Barty replied. "But it's nobody's fault but our own. Whatever has been done,

we was the ones as went an' give her the chance to cut him. Complicashuns an' more complicashuns! An' all o' us goin' on our liberty! Nolan, why the 'ell didn't we stay aboard?"

They were not long in beholding the far-reaching results of the fracas of their starting, for while the rest of the bluejackets were sent aboard, they in company with the boatswain's mate were deputed to stay by the launch at the Juneau wharf and wait for the chief and the coxswain. They waited late. Then Brenner came, but not Dane; and Brenner was in need of their aid. The two faithfuls, albeit with many a wink and chuckle, lifted him into the launch and ran him across the harbour to where the *Shasta* lay at anchor.

There it became necessary to give him strong support in the ascent to the deck.

"Steady, sor!" admonished Nolan.

At which admonishment Coxswain Brenner slipped up a second time, and slid down four more steps of the gangway upon his wavering shins.

In extenuation of his helplessness, the coxswain's voice rose querulously:

"Damn these slovenly floor swabbers!" he grumbled. "Why mush they alwaysh spill their water buckets on the stairsh?"

Barty Barnham snorted, and coughed to cover the snort, and was, with laugh and cough, in a fair way to strangle himself.

"Yessir," he jerked out between spasms. "Very careless, sir; an' very slipp'ry, sir."

On either side of the coxswain, arms locked in his, Barty and Nolan piloted him across the deck, which, to Brenner, seemed heaving on the open sea, but which was, in reality, as stable as the wharf he had left.

And later, while glorying in the very proper fulfillment of this peculiar duty, Barty stared cock-eyed at his friend.

"Heaven's sake!" he blurted. "Where *has* he been?"

"Attemptin' a job he couldn't complete," deduced Nolan. "Followin' av the chief!"

"An' where is the chief?"

"Goin' yit!"

Which surmise of Nolan McLettan's was entirely correct, for Dane had that night hurled himself into the first lapse of a well-ordered existence. He was seeking the unknown quantity called oblivion, and, although he failed to find it, all Juneau knew of his search.

Carlos Seville brought the information to the main section of the Mavor party at their hotel, Countess Massinoff and Captain Haegar Canard being out for an airing, and he took pains to twist the circumstances a little for his own ends.

"Dane's evidently been on privation up in the Arctic," he announced, maliciously, "for he's hitting

the trail to forgetfulness mighty hard. Cleaning up all the concoctions in sight, and drinking them against time. Not drinking at anchorage, you understand, but navigating all over the city, with faro, stud, and draw poker, fan-tan, roulette, *rouge et noir*, and nearly everything else thrown in; and the funny part is that nothing fizzes on him, neither liquids nor losses, while his coxswain succumbed long ago."

But Seville was disappointed in the effect of his announcement.

For Enid instantly understood Dane's mood, comprehended the reckless impulse so petty and so unworthy of his sane self. She knew she was the cause of it, and she resolved that she must check him, even at the sacrifice of her own pride.

So she went to Lewis.

"You promised once to be my friend," she reminded him. "I need you now. I want you to find Jules and come back here."

Lewis went, as if it were not a hard thing to do. After some searching, he located Dane four blocks away, in a fashionable gambling club called the Marunang. At once he hurried back to report to Enid.

"Get me a carriage!" she ordered.

"But you mustn't go there!" objected Lewis.

"It's night, and it's not necessary for me to be seen. I'll wait outside. You can do the talking, and let him know my carriage is waiting."

Lewis reluctantly consented to this proposition, but he asked Seville to come with them.

"You can stay by the carriage with her," Lewis told him. "It's not good for a woman to be alone in that street."

Even while Enid made preparations to bring him to his senses, Dane lost steadily at the Marunang. All the gods of play seemed to have conspired against him to strip him of the fortune he had wrested from the Pelly gravels.

Yet Dane received no lesson from the succession of heavy losses. The gambling mechanism was a human thing, laughing at, deriding him. Its apparent ridicule and contempt angered him. He was obsessed by the unalterable idea that he should and must win, provided he persevered long enough. Added to this dogged resolution was a tremendous disregard of consequences, caused by the incident in Theatre Street.

Even while Lewis entered the Marunang, and stood by, he saw Dane stake a thousand dollars and lose; also, he saw him sign a check for his night's total losses with an air of abandon.

"You've played about enough, haven't you, Jules?" he ventured, tapping Dane on the shoulder.

Dane looked up, and laughed, recklessly.

"I guess so, Grant. I'm at my limit."

"Eh? You haven't been fool enough to lose everything?"

"Everything. I didn't save even a get-away stake. Parental training wasted on me. The get-away stake was a thing Dival Dane never forgot. He could take a long chance, Lewis, and be game as the next man, but he never failed to save his get-away stake. Except, perhaps, the last time, when he played with the typhoon."

While he talked on idly, reminiscently, Jules had arisen from the tables and stepped out into the flower-decked hall that led off from the men's gambling salon to that of the women. Lewis was walking with him, his hand on his shoulder, and he stopped him there.

"Where to?" he asked.

"To the ladies' salon. I can't play any more myself, but I can watch them."

Lewis frowned.

"More foolery?" he demanded.

"No. Only I happen to have a friend playing there. I have a fancy to see how she's doing."

"Who is it?"

"Sonia Massinoff."

"She came with you here?"

"No; she came with Canard. Canard's somewhere about. Lavillane, the owner of the Marunang, is a friend of his."

"Then leave them to their friendship. Leave Sonia to her play, and come with me. I'm asking you for your own welfare, Dane."

"When did you make my welfare your chief aim, Lewis?"

"Don't be sarcastic!"

"Then don't be sympathetic. Sympathy's entirely lost on me."

"Damn it," flared Lewis, "you won't listen to me! Will you listen to Enid?"

"No. You wouldn't expect me to, now, would you?"

"Look here!" Lewis roughly shook Dane's arm. "You have to come with me this minute. Enid sent me in. She's waiting in a carriage at the door."

Jules whirled on him. "Enid! Good heavens! You brought *her* here?"

"She would come," Lewis defended. "I told her what this place is, but she insisted. It's for your sake. Why do you want to be such a cursed fool? If you knew how I smoothed things——"

"Keep your criticism to yourself, Grant," interrupted Jules. He was furious with an unreasonable fury against himself, against Lewis, against Enid. "Keep your advice to yourself, and don't try to interfere with me. I can attend to my own affairs." He shoved Lewis toward the street door.

"Yes, and a damned nice mess you've made of them!" retorted Lewis, thrusting him back.

Instantly Dane leaped at him. "You bloody cynic!" he snarled. "Will you go, or do I have to throw you out?"

They swayed a moment in the hallway, arms locked about each other. Then, his grip broken by Dane's great strength, Lewis was hurled backward through the doorway into the street.

Without so much as looking where he landed, Jules turned, and made his way to the women's salon.

Gathering much dust and many bruises, Lewis travelled swiftly in the opposite direction, rolling down the steps and striking the carriage wheel against which he brought up abruptly.

Enid Mavor screamed as the vehicle tilted sharply. Seville emitted a surprised whistle. The driver commenced to swear under his breath.

"What do you think of my powers of persuasion?" groaned Lewis, rising in his dust and bruises.

"They seem parabolic," laughed Seville.

Lewis surveyed himself a moment, then chuckled at his plight, and they all eased their feelings in an instant's mirth.

"I guess I'm evidence enough that Dane won't listen to any one," Lewis observed. "I'll straighten myself up, and we'll go back."

"It won't take me two minutes to wash and brush and get straightened up," he called as he ran into the club rotunda.

Alone with Carlos Seville, in the ebb and flow of the curious waves of humanity that filled the street, Enid was thinking rapidly.

A sense of defeat oppressed her, only increasing her desire to conquer.

"I wonder?" she began aloud, and stopped, because the thought was wholly personal.

"You wonder what?" Seville prompted, his dark eyes bent upon her with a worship which, in her preoccupation, she entirely failed to note.

Enid shook her head.

"If Dane knew you were here?" he supplemented.

Another impatient toss of her head for assent. She had reached a decision as to what she had been contemplating. A glance toward the club assured her that Lewis had not yet arranged his dishevelled person. It would be some minutes before he could appear. She turned to Seville quite abruptly.

"I want to go in."

Triumph lighted Seville's eyes, but he acted warily.

"You heard what Lewis said about ladies going there?" he deprecated.

With an outward wave of her hand, Enid expressed fine disregard of convention. "I want to go in," she repeated.

"Very well," acquiesced Seville.

He gave her his arm to alight, and guided her up the steps. The carriage was opposite the side entrance, and, when they had passed through the doorway, they were in the flower-decked hall. They went down between rows of palms and entered the brilliant

quarters set apart for the female patrons of the Marunang.

The room was a blaze of light and colour, a paradise of subtle perfume and feminine presence. Soft and sensuous the lights swung. The atmosphere swam with an enervating essence. A hectic wave seemed to pulse from the animated senses of the already initiated to the minds of the newcomers. Enid experienced the sensation. Seville also felt it. But something more salient than impressionistic influences sprang a surprise on them. They had entered without a sound upon the heavily carpeted floor of the salon, and they found themselves directly behind a richly upholstered settee upon which sat Dane and Sonia Massinoff.

Not as a lover had Dane come to her; but in pique he had turned to this fascinating plaything.

Sonia's attitude was different, and in this painfully transient moment of companionship Sonia tried to snatch what advantage she could, and win back some of the ground she had lost.

The abandon in her attitude, the spirit of surrender, was as plain as her beauty to Enid and Seville, and this added to the shock Enid experienced at sight of her in the Marunang. A little murmur of incredulity escaped her, and a hardening of the eyes bespoke condemnation of Dane's devotion. Neither of these signs was wasted on Seville. He was prepared for the celerity with which she turned about.

"I can't do anything now," she hurriedly whispered, "and she must not see me. Take me out quickly!" She glanced apprehensively over her shoulder at the two on the settee; but, absorbed in each other's conversation, they had not noticed any one behind.

"Quick!" Enid entreated. "Take me out!"

"Where?" asked Seville. "Lewis won't be ready to go in the carriage yet, and you'd better not attract attention by sitting in the street so long."

"Oh, anywhere," Enid murmured, a strange pallor deadening the lustre of her skin, "anywhere out of this room!"

A little faint from the nervous reaction of her emotions and from the closeness of the exotic atmosphere, somewhat blinded by anger and jealousy, she did not see that Seville was leading her down a side hall into a walled alcove.

And, unconscious of their coming and going, Dane talked on with Sonia Massinoff till, suddenly punctuating the spirited chatter of the Marunang with silence, a sharp report echoed through the place.

In the ladies' salon it sounded loud and close at hand. Dane leaped up. "A pistol shot!" he exclaimed.

Hard on his words came a feminine cry: "Jules!"

He knew the voice, faint as it was, as Enid's, and the thought of harm coming to her sent him running out of the salon and along the hallway. He did not know the plan of the building well enough to under-

stand where he was going; but, with animal instinct, dashed in the direction from which the sound had come. A short passage crossed the end of the hall, and, rushing into it, he brought up against an alcove, walled off, and fitted with folding doors.

He listened. There was scuffling, and another shot. Its sound was like that of the big-bored naval-service arm. Who was using it? Lewis or Seville? And had Enid called from inside?

His brain in a tumult, his heart pounding in suspense, Jules sprang swiftly against the gilded doors, but at the same instant the doors swung inward. The automatic still in his talon-like hand, Carlos Seville, hollow-eyed and nerve-shaken, was backing out. The screening palms that had stood upon the huge bronze pedestals within the threshold were broken and trampled, and the room lay open to view. All white and bloody, tumbled in a heap on the floor, was Lewis. Shot through the body he was still dragging himself after Seville. His fingers clutched spasmodically, yearning for the latter's throat, and a vivid flash struck the set, dogged stare from his tortured eyes when they lighted on Dane.

Seville interpreted the look even before he heard Dane's step behind. Swiftly he wheeled, swinging his weapon, his dark countenance falling again into its sneer of hatefulness, but his movement was not quick enough. One of Dane's hands had pinioned the dangerous wrist and deflected the pistol. The

other was squeezing Seville's neck till it cracked. Their passions flung forth and raged free of restraint—unconcealed, savage, primitive.

Jules threw all his strength into the grip on the wrist which Seville was trying to loosen. The wrenched bones ground and snapped. The automatic fell, and spun across the floor toward the creeping Lewis.

The struggling pair clenched roughly, and, while they stumbled and strove, Dane became aware that Sonia had followed him, was hovering near like a butterfly on the threshold where they fought.

"Keep away! You'll get hurt!" he warned, as by superior power he bore Seville backward into the alcove.

But still Sonia flitted round and round them, her cheeks blanched with fear, her hands clasped in doubt and foreboding. Not a word was uttered by any one. Only the trampling and laboured breathing of the combatants broke the uncanny silence of the place, till the legs of the men struck the swinging doors and slammed them violently shut, the click of the spring lock proclaiming them all prisoners. Then, while they tore at each other with clenched arms, over Seville's shoulder Jules saw Enid half lying upon a padded velvet couch in one corner of the alcove, her fingers pressed tightly against her eyes, as if shutting out some horrible scene, and her face pale in a death-like faint.

"You fiend, Seville!" Dane cried.

In a rush of madness he whirled Seville in the air and dashed him to the floor, where he rolled over and over to Lewis. Lewis, grimly watching his chance during the swift seconds of the struggle, the fallen automatic he had grasped ready in his hand, reached out and bored Seville through the lungs with his own murderous weapon.

Dane wheeled about at the report, hesitated uncomprehendingly an instant, then went on to Enid. He lifted her in his arms, a heavier weight now, with the fullness of her womanhood, than on the Yukon journey, and spoke to her softly.

She stirred, and opened her eyes. A little sigh, that was half a gasp, fraught with relief, heaved her breast. She clasped her arms trustingly on his shoulders, and Dane read in her glance that he should never have gone from her.

"Carry me away, Jules!" she implored. "Away from this awful nightmare!"

But already the management and habitués of the Marunang seemed to have located the place of the sudden disturbance.

Loud talking and the patter, patter of running footsteps sounded in the corridor.

Lewis groaned out a feeble imprecation.

"Get Enid outside!" he whispered, his voice trembling with the agony he was enduring. "They'll be here in a minute, and she needs a doctor."

"A doctor for yourself, you mean!" Dane amended.

"For me? Oh, no!" Lewis smiled, with the ash of death on his lips. "I'm past doctors now. He got me clean through and through. But Enid can't be very bad. It was a glancing shot—the first shot!"

"The first shot? Who—what are you talking about? Enid? Oh, my God!" For at last he saw the red staining her shoulder.

"Didn't you know?" she faltered, meeting his horrified glance.

"No, I didn't know. The beast! The devil!"

"We were both blind, Dane," Lewis groaned. "He always had it in his heart. You see, the street was mighty dirty where I landed, and I had to go off and get cleaned. They were gone when I got back. I didn't like the look of that, so I rushed in. Struck this place first thing, and here he was making love to her. Enid was angry and frightened, and I started to square everything with Seville right then, but he was too quick and too well armed. That's all there is to it—except to get her out."

Lewis broke off his words sharply, with spasms of pain convulsing his throat.

"Yes," Dane agreed, "I must get her out, and no one must know she was here."

"No, no one. Hurry!"

But as Jules carried Enid gently to the door, somebody knocked on it.

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"Let us in!" commanded a voice, which they knew belonged to Lavillane, the owner of the Marunang.

Dane tiptoed back and appealed to Sonia, who, dazed by the shock of the whole occurrence, was standing in bewilderment.

"Is there another way out?" he demanded.

Sonia wavered a moment, then crossed the floor noiselessly and indicated the centre of the opposite wall, which was inlaid with the richest of polished woods.

"That panel slides," she whispered. "It opens into the back hall."

"Then step through," urged Lewis, hoarsely. "The carriage is where I left it, at the side entrance. The hospital's just up on the hill. Take her there, Dane, and hurry back. I want you here when they question me. Our statements must agree." He coughed, sickeningly, and shivered.

"Of course they'll agree," declared Jules. "There were only three of us here."

"Only three," Lewis nodded. "You, Seville, and myself." He smiled a pained smile. "They won't shake me on that. I'll lie like a gentleman while my breath lasts."

Sonia slid back the panel for Dane to pass through with Enid. She followed, and closed the exit. A crash in the front corridor told that the other doors had been broken in.

"Be quick, Sonia!" Jules exhorted. "Lead the way out!"

Because of the commotion in the women's salon and in the front hall, the rear passage was deserted.

Enid had slipped back into a fainting spell as Dane reached the carriage at the side entrance, and placed her in the seat. He and Sonia had to support her there while the amazed driver whipped his horses up to the hospital on the hill.

"Struck by a stray bullet in the street," Dane told the house surgeon. "Shooting fracas in the Marunang, and I want you to talk straight, and tell me, as man to man, how bad it is."

"Not hopeless," announced the house surgeon, making a superficial examination with professional coolness. "Too high up on the shoulder to be that. But it's serious enough. We'll have to find that ball right away."

"Sonia, you telephone the admiral," Dane requested, "and stay beside her till he comes; but don't let him know the real facts. I've got to get back to Lewis."

In the walled alcove of the Marunang, when Jules reentered, were Lavillane, Haegar Canard, and a squad of Juneau police.

"Just waiting for you," greeted Canard, grimly.

"Why?" Dane's glance ran round the empty room. "Where's Lewis?"

"Dead! And you're under arrest for shooting Seville!"

The captain waved his hand as he spoke, and before Jules could move the Juneau police had him in an unbreakable grip.

"You fools!" he stormed, struggling. "It's a trap! You set it, Canard! You know Lewis made a statement before he died!"

"Yes; and, of course, he tried to assume your guilt, but it didn't go down. We have the right man."

"You hell-bred liar! But your proof—where's a shred of proof?"

Canard stepped quietly over and worked the sliding panel Sonia had revealed.

"I stood here," he declared. "I saw everything."

Instantly Jules realized the strength of the lie and the lust for revenge that actuated Canard. Like a baited beast he sprang at the captain in a frenzy, but the police grip held.

He was flung back, shaking with passion. "You devil-spawned plotter!" he thundered. "But you forget there's a person who can clear me!"

Canard leaned forward and spoke low in Dane's ear.

"Can!" he sneered. "But you know, as well as I do, that she won't!"

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PAY STREAK

**A**LONG the Yukon trail that ran from McQuesten River to Mayo Landing, in the Upper Stewart country, slouched Félix Bruneau. He drove his lazy pack horse before him, and the valleys rang with the musical bars of his lusty song. Clear, strong, throaty, it rose, the old, familiar chant of habitants and white-water men:

*Ah fils du roi, tu es mechant,  
En roulant ma boule,  
Toutes les plumes s'en vont au vent,  
Rouli roulant, ma boule roulant.*

Slowly he passed along the track that snaked across the wash gravel, winding through small valleys, rolling over sloping bench lands, twisting between bare bluffs. Up the steep of the bench lands he saved his breath, but on the crests his notes broke out in rollicking measures.

From the crests he could see the Stewart River in the distance, and he paused as if debating whether to strike it or take water at the little feeder a half mile

ahead. For a minute he stared into the valley ahead, where ran the Stewart's nameless tributary, humming carelessly:

*Toutes les plumes s'en vont au vent,  
En roulant ma boule,  
Trois dames s'en vont les ramassant,  
Rouli roulant, ma boule roulant.*

While he sang, he decided on the tiny creek as his camping place. Turning his pack horse downward, he swung his chorus into a swifter, snappier time:

*En roulant ma boule roulant,  
En roulant ma boule,  
Derrière' chez-nous y-a-t'-un' étang,  
En roulant, ma boule.*

But as he reached the base of the bench lands and came out on the creek limits, the voyageur checked himself and his horse abruptly. For from the valley of the little creek, from someone invisible, there sounded like an echo another verse of his quaint ballad:

*Le fils du roi s'en va chassant,  
En roulant ma boule,  
Avec son grand fusil d'argent,  
Rouli roulant, ma boule roulant.*

The voice of the unknown who had taken up his song seemed to Bruneau as if husky from disuse.

Moreover, the singer sang the lines somewhat uncertainly, like the footlight artist who comes back to a former half-forgotten part. Yet the tone was vaguely familiar. Félix felt the chords of old association vibrate within him. Standing there, marshalling his dim recollections into a definite remembrance, grasping blindly at the tantalizing, exasperating shadow of familiarity that hovered in the voice of the unknown, he put the thing to test by softly continuing:

*Avec son grand fusil d'argent,  
En roulant ma boule,  
Visant le noir, tuant le blanc,  
Rouli roulant, ma boule roulant.*

And louder, clearer, more certain now, as if memory had returned in full flood at the voyageur's prompting, virile notes, which Félix knew as well as he knew his own, replied:

*Visant le noir, tuant le blanc,  
En roulant ma boule,  
O fils du roi, tu es mechant!  
Rouli roulant, ma boule roulant.*

Too many times had that tune accompanied the plunge of their paddles upon the Yukon's foaming waterways for Bruneau to mistake the baritone that used to swell so richly from the stern of the canoe or

poling boat. He hit his surprised pack horse with an end of the lashing and dashed round the shoulder of the next bluff.

In his haste, he almost overran the man who had answered his song and who jumped up, grinning, from his own campfire. The hands of the two gripped above the crackling spruce, and they stood thus, laughing foolishly and calling each other's names:

"Jules!"

"Félix!"

"You *diable* man!"

"You old Siwash!"

"W'at I be tell you goin' out on de steamer dat day? De day we leave de Beeg Salmon. Eh? I guess you be come back?"

"I certainly have come back."

"An' mebbe you be brushed oop against dose laws dat crowd?"

"I sure did, Félix. And I hit them mighty hard!"

Because they were both true Northmen, their meal must come before their talk. Making no further remark, Bruneau slipped the pack lashings from his horse and hobbled it to feed with Dane's.

Jules, with the same temporary reticence, spread out what bacon and bannocks he had already cooked and put another helping on the fire.

"Grub!" was his brief but eloquent intimation that supper was laid upon the canvas pack coverings.

Félix rubbed his hands eagerly as he came forward.

"Ba gar, I'm ready, me!" he declared. "I'm hongree lak wan Tanana wolf."

They ate, according to the Northland custom, in silence; and the voyageur found opportunity to stare wonderingly at his comrade, marvelling over the change in him. Dane's face was creased with heavy lines. His jaw had a dogged set, his lips a grimness of compression. And the furtive, shifting look of the hunted thing gleamed at times in his eyes. Félix understood that some bitter experience had left its mark upon him. For Jules was older by more than the months which had passed since sailing from Dyea for the outside.

Not yet, however, did the shrewd voyageur make any comment on the change.

"How you know I be comin' an' answaire me wit' dat song?" he asked, when they had finished eating and settled back for their after-supper smoke.

"I saw you on top of the bench land. Knew you in a minute—even without the song. Where are you from?"

"From de McQuesten." Félix nodded toward his pack horse. "Been outfittin' some placer men dere."

"And where are you bound?"

"Mayo Landin', 'cause I have de dam' bad luck. Read dat."

He plucked from his Mackinaw shirt a letter and tossed it to his companion.

"Dat come down to McQuesten from de Landin' on de steamer."

Jules opened it. He saw it was from Taylor, the trader at Mayo Landing. It was cryptic, and it read:

Come up. Guide party four big game hunters on the Kusawaks. Start at once.

"Bear an' moose an' bighorn, I guess," grunted Félix. "An' all four be dam' soft chechahcos, I bet. Dey no good 'cept for mak' trouble. Dey got no business here. I soonaire guide four old women. Ba gosh, dat's right! Dis t'ing is de fine picnic for me. Eh, *mon vieux*?"

"But you don't need to go."

"I be undaire contract wit' Taylor."

"The devil you are! What crazy trick is that? You don't have to work for anybody."

"Dat's w'ere you be wrong," declared Bruneau, shaking his head, solemnly. "I have to work now. I got no monnaie."

"What?" Dane jumped up in his excitement astride the fire. "You've gone and lost your clean-up, too?"

"Too?" shrieked Félix, with intuition. "An' you also, *mon camarade*? *Saprie!* Dis is de beeg joke!"

He keeled over on his back, his legs in the air, and rocked from side to side, roaring with laughter.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he panted between bursts of merriment. "De bot' of us! Don't dat beat *le diable?*"

Dane's face wore a grim smile.

"What happened to *you?*" he demanded.

Félix had recovered his control. He sat upright again, hands clasped upon his knees, and stared away over the low ridges in a silence that was broken by no sound except the slow movements of the pack horses as they searched for sustenance.

"Go ahead, Félix," prompted Jules, stuffing his pipe afresh. "What happened?"

"Ba gosh, I don't lak to say, me. She's not ver' long to tell, but mebbe you'll t'ink me wan dam' beeg fool."

"No bigger than myself. Go on."

"Well, it's lak dis," blurted Félix. "Dey tell me she's old treeck back on de States, but she's new wan on me. You be hear 'bout de beeg fire on de Ottawa last fall w'at wipe out great lumbaire limit an' destroy de towns, eh?"

"Yes, I read of it."

"Ver' well. Course all de voyageurs oop here feel for dose lumbairejacks and rivaire men, an' for dose women an' children w'at have no home. *Saprie*, in Dawson City along comes wan milk-faced fellow wit' de green eyes! He's collectin' wan beeg relief fund for dose people, an' he want me to act de bankaire 'cause all de voyageurs trust me. He give me de pile of monnaie an' ask me to sign wan receipt

w'ile I keep her. Course dat's all right, an' de milk-faced fellow wit' de green eyes is goin' round all de odder camps for collect. But, ba gosh, he don't come back! An' w'en I be smelli somet'ing, w'at I be find out? He work de papaire game wit' de slip beneath. I sign not wan receipt but wan check for ma bank roll."

Dane gave an almost inaudible growl.

"De monnaie he geeve me is bogus, an' I'm too late at de bank. He's gone wit' ma own."

The voyageur's voice vibrated harshly, full of vindictive wrath. His eyes blazed like the coals of the campfire.

"I don't mind the monnaie so mooch," continued Félix, stormily. "It's de dam' low treeck! All last wintaire I be follow dat man an' get track of heem here and there, but I lose heem ovaire de American boundary in de Forty Mile. But if evaire I see hees milk face an' green eyes again, I'll sign hees last check wit' dat!"

The movement of Bruneau's hand to his trousers pocket was scarcely perceptible, but the blue steel of a Colt revolver blinked where it snuggled in his palm.

"Wit' dat—hees last check!"

"What was the dirty skunk's name?" demanded his comrade.

"I don't know. He had too many. But dey call heem mostly Yukon Pete."

Jules was staring into the fire and indulging in bitter ruminations.

"Yet that was better," he mused, "than losing it the way I did."

"T'ink so?" returned Félix, regarding him vaguely. "What's your story?"

"It's told in one word: jailbird."

Bruneau stared sharply across the flaming camp-fire.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed. "Dat's pretty hard word, *camarade!* Dat's wan dam' hard word—if you not be makin' de beeg joke."

"Do I look it?" Dane's voice was strident. "Do I look anything like a joker?"

He thrust his head forward where the gleam from the coals would limn it, and Félix gazed upon the changed countenance, hard-set, furrowed, Ishmael-stamped.

"Dose lines, dose eyes," spoke the voyageur, slowly. "*Vraiment*, dey ain't de fenny fellow's."

"If it's a joke, it's the grimmest one that's been cracked since the glacier tongues first licked through these valleys. And the Lord knows who the mirth master is!"

"De man w'at pays."

"Then I'm the man. I'm paying."

Impelled by the demon of unrest within him, Dane jumped up and paced the half circle of their camp which faced the dribbling creek. His hands were

clenched behind his back. A blacker gloom was on his face than upon the face of the Yukon night.

"I'm paying," he repeated, fiercely. "A jailbird! An escaped felon! Great God, how I'm paying! Not in the fear of the hunted, Félix. Not in disgrace. Not in regret. Though all that is a big bill for even a strong man to foot. Not in any of these, but in other things, things I've had to leave behind, great things, things that assay higher than the gold of Eldorado."

Breaking off abruptly, Dane strode back and forth in silence, sunk in a bitter mood of introspection, then he whirled all at once upon his comrade with increased intensity of manner. "How do you know if I deserve to sit by your fire?" he cried. "You don't know why I was convicted. The man who's talking to you, who ate with you, who will sleep beside you, may be as low down as Yukon Pete—and lower."

Viciously Jules kicked the fire into a smouldering heap and stood over it, looking squarely at Bruneau. The blaze that began to curl up anew gave his eyes only surface lights which seemed to bore through the voyageur like slender, piercing flame points.

Félix rose quickly at the challenge. He stepped without hesitation to the other's side and locked an arm within Dane's stiffened one, leading him back and seating him on the packs.

"*Mon vieux*, you always been ma friend, an' wan

honest man. I believe you all dat yet no mattaire how hard dey knock you away down in de south. Dey t'ink dey make fine laws dere, but we know dey all artificial laws. Dey shrink a man. Dey crowd heem. Dey crush hees best nature. Dat's why I lak hear dem go smash. So w'atevaire you be done, *camarade*, I be sure you still square enough for shake de brown hand of Félix Bruneau!"

He gripped Dane's palm with his right hand and laid the left on his shoulder. For of such are the bonds of friendship that the North forges.

Jules felt the choking spasm which the fingers of gratitude lay on the throats of rough fellows. He closed his own fist upon that bronzed hand of trust and pressed in the fulness of his feeling until the bones cracked.

In silence the message passed from man to man. "*Continuez, mon vieux, continuez!*" urged Félix, gently.

And Dale continued, unfolding the story that the voyageur had known was behind the look of misery and renunciation in his friend's eyes. He told Félix of the main incidents in those intervening months as he had lived them since the day they had crawled together over Chilcoot with their human freight. He recounted the affair of the *Carnavia's* wreck, his naval experiences in the Bering Sea, coming at last to the events of the wild night in Juneau harbour.

As Jules neared the climax of his tale, his earnestness changed to vehemence, his vehemence to frenzy.

"Good God, what a diabolical plotter!" he burst out, in telling of Canard's trap. "What a devil for revenge! He stood there in the witness box and swore he saw me shoot Seville. He perjured himself to hell in order to fasten the killing on me. And he did it. Even the admiral believed him and turned against me."

"But dat girl, Enid!" exclaimed the voyageur, impetuously. "W'y ain't she clear you? She be dere all de taim."

"Enid didn't know who fired the shot that killed Seville. She had fainted from her own wound. She saw nothing till I picked her up."

Félix leaned out of the half dusk on the rim of the firelight and let his hand fall on Dane's arm in an uncertain movement.

"But w'at she t'ink?"

"How do I know? I never saw her since."

"Ha! Ba gar, *camarade*, I'm sorry, me!"

"It makes it easier that she didn't see Lewis shoot," Dane went on. "Because, in that case, she would have gone into court in spite of anything and cleared me."

"Dis Canard man! Is dere any chance of heem seein' an' gettin' t'ings somew'at all mixed oop?"

"No chance in the world."

"You be sure?"

“Positive. The fact that he didn’t know Enid was in the room proves that he saw nothing, stamps his evidence as lies. Like Admiral Mavor, he believes Enid was hit in the street by a stray ball. It was easily believed, because the bullets did go through the wall and across the street. I had Sonia Massinoff make sure of that belief and cause Enid to keep the truth from her father.”

“Den, ba gosh, you had heem!” declared the quick-witted voyageur. “If he not know de girl dere, you had heem. An’ you could smash hees whole dam’ story.”

“Yes, at her expense!”

Félix realized all at once the magnitude of Dane’s sacrifice. He leaped up and grasped his hand again.

“*Saprie!*” he breathed. “It ain’t every man w’at shields de woman’s name at de risk of hees life. An’ you be say mebbe you ain’t good enough for camp wit’ me, eh? Ba gar, ma friend, you de whitest man in de North!”

Dane sat with bowed head, his mind speeding back over the trails of recollection.

The voyageur’s question roused him:

“You nevaire see dat girl, Enid? How’s dat?”

“She wasn’t able to leave the hospital till the trial was finished. Manslaughter, they made it. Ten years the judge said. After that, they sent me away.”

“An’ dis odder Sonia woman! You be say she come to you alone before de trial an’ offer for swear

against Canard an' clear you if you go off wit' her an' be married?"

"Yes."

"An' she keep back w'en you refuse, an' let you take your medicine?"

"Yes."

"Den she's bad as Canard. Dis woman wan *diable*, too!"

"Hardly that," remonstrated Jules. "Sonia didn't intend it to turn out as it did. She was fighting in her own way for—for something that she had once kicked aside——"

"Yourself!" Félix interpreted, bluntly.

Dane hesitated, then nodded slowly.

"You see, she thought I would give in. She figured I would weaken and never take the risk. She ran things finer and finer, hoping to win all the time, till it was too late."

"She be let you go down. Ba gar, I'm t'ink dere's no woman in de world hard enough for do dat."

"You don't understand the heart of a woman, Félix. At the end, when she found she had lost, Sonia was wild to save me, but she couldn't. And I got the ten years. Ten years' confinement in State's prison. Think of it! Good God, think of it!"

Jules stretched his body all rigid at the remembrance, as if the time he had spent there had been so many days, so many weeks, so many months upon the rack.

"Ten years!" he repeated. "Forty seasons! My God, Bruneau, I didn't dare count it in the periods smaller than that for fear I should go mad. Ten years in which I could never see the tides come in or hear the rivers run. Ten years, and never see the flowers bloom or the leaves fall. Ten eternal years to eat and sleep with beastly companions. Oh, I made strong vows, all right. I vowed the stone walls and bars would never hold me. I swore to burn, to fight, to kill, as long as I got out."

"Ha, *mon vieux*," breathed Félix. "I'm t'ink I see you in dat *diable* place."

"For pretty nearly a year I stood it. Every minute I watched for my chance. At last it came in a quieter way than burning and killing. I slipped on a wagon truck through the gates and hid beneath the load till I was out of the city. After that, the freight trains and the lone trails, Félix, always bearing north! I worked by the way, and saved, pushing on and on till I hit the Yukon. It's big enough to hide me for a little, and I've built a cabin on the Kusawak Mountains over there." He pointed south into the dark.

"De Kusawaks!" echoed Bruneau. "Dat's un-lucky!"

"How?"

"Dat's w'ere I be have take dose four dam'-fool chechahcos. Dat's w'ar Taylor's letter says."

"Oh, sure, I was forgetting! Still, it doesn't matter. No game stays there after the snow. And I

won't be back till I can go in on the snow with dogs. So there's no danger of us striking each other. I'm working lonely creeks for enough to carry me through the winter. But don't breathe it. The Mounted Police will have word of me, and they'll figure it even money that I've come North. Be a shut-mouthed man, Félix. You've never seen me since I sailed from Dyea. Call it a trapper's cabin on the Kusawaks."

"Sure t'ing!" nodded the voyageur. "But listen!" He raised his head quickly. "W'at's dat click-clack?"

Over the trail, from the direction of Mayo Landing, came the sound of horses' hoofs striking the wash gravel.

"Ba gosh, some strangaire travellin'! An' so late! Dat's funny!"

"Stranger?" growled Dane, suspiciously. "The devil! I don't like strangers—now!"

"Hello, the camp!"

The voice from the outer darkness was more gently modulated than that of Yukon itinerants in general. Withal, there was in the salutation a note of fatigue, a hint of exhaustion, a tinge of distress.

"*Hola, pilgrim!*" called Bruneau, staring sidewise as he leaned on his elbow. "Ba gar, but you be hittin' de trail late!"

"That's the fault of my mare," explained the stranger. "Gone lame. And I thought I'd have to rout you out, till I saw you sitting up."

He was advancing while he spoke, and the men could distinguish the halting break in the animal's footsteps. Then they discerned the vague outlines of both man and horse, and saw that the man was leading it.

"But you stay awake late," the traveller ventured, his tone betraying something like uncertainty.

"*Oui*," grunted Félix, unconcernedly, "we be not tired—mooch."

The stranger dropped his reins to the ground and stretched his trail-stiffened joints. "But I am," he yawned. "I certainly am. Still I can't rest. Wife's sick at Mayo Bridge, and I'm bound to McQuesten Post for a doctor. There's none at the Landing. Making good time, too, till Starface stumbled and spoiled a leg."

He stooped for examination, holding the animal's foot in the yellow pool of light that the fire spilled upon the ground. Starface nuzzled the back which was toward the fire and whinnied gratefully when her rider stood erect again and patted her.

"Dead lame," he observed to the other two. "Get me another, gents. I'll pay two hundred dollars for it."

He unloosed the cinch, unbuckled the cheek strap, and pulled off saddle and bridle.

"I'll take these. I can bank on them."

In his manner was assurance, as if the bargain were already closed, and he turned impatiently when

neither Dane nor Bruneau leaped up to get him another horse.

"Well, what in blazes are you?" he demanded. "Chechahcos who don't know the rules of the game up here? Greenhorns who don't savvy that strangers eat each other's grub and sleep in each other's beds and smoke each other's tobacco in the outland? Why, damn it, down in Nevada camps, where I came from, I'd have had a hundred horses led up to me on the run if I shouted. Or maybe you think I want to steal a mount, eh?"

With the swift hand-to-hip movement of one who in his time had been a gunman, he whipped a heavy sack of gold dust from his pocket and bounced it up and down upon his palm.

"Don't be afraid," he sneered. "I sure can pay. Two hundred dollars for a mount! Are you on?"

Dane had not spoken. He half reclined upon the packs in the shadow. Likewise in the shadow, the stranger stood at the farther side of the fire, his features but dimly discernible, the dying flame playing redly upon his riding boots. Félix, too, was beyond the circle of dim light. It was he who answered:

"Dis monnaie ain't de t'ing," he pointed out. "We ain't got no mounts."

"The devil. I never thought of that! You're walking? But your packs? Pack horses, I suppose?"

"*Oui*. I'm sorry for you, *strangaire*. An' I lak

help you get to McQuesten queeck. But I not tak' de monnaie. Don't want her for help de friend in need. You can have ma pack horse for go as fast as he'll go, an' dat ain't ver' rapid. He's nevaire been ridden, but mebbe he won't buck. No, ba gar, put de poke in your pocket! I'm lend you dat pack horse. I'm near de Landin,' an' ma packs can stay here for a w'ile. You'll be bring me de old fellow bymeby."

"By thunder, old-timer, you're sure no chechahco, after all!" exclaimed the other. "Shake!"

He stepped forward, with one hand thrust out, where the firelight fell fairly upon him, and Dane saw that he was dressed in a gray suit with a brown Stetson hat. Beneath the straight brim Jules caught the glint of piercing eyes gleaming above a bushy, black beard.

Félix had risen and grasped the stranger's hand, but instantly a change came over him. His shoulder set in a sort of crouch. He leaned closer and raked the traveller with a look of terrific intensity.

"*Pardieu!*" he muttered, his voice quivering. "I mak' de wrong mebbe; but, strangaire, I'm goin' shave you!"

With a lightning movement, Bruneau's left hand darted out and back. The stranger's black beard came away in his fingers. The exposed face shone chalky white.

"Yukon Pete!" roared the voyageur.

Dane, too astounded at the moment to make a move, lay in the shadow and watched them.

Their legs straddled the campfire. Their bodies leaned, tense, above. Their faces glared in the ochre light. Their right hands were still locked, and this attitude held for a second.

Then Yukon Pete's left hand grabbed for his Colt.

With the instinctive swiftness of the wilderness-trained, the voyageur seized the wrist that drew the weapon. At the same time, he hurled his whole weight upon his enemy, bearing back to bend, to break, to crush him before a slip of the foot or fingers could give the swindler a chance to twist the Colt and shoot.

Treading the dead ashes on the outside of the fire, stirring them up into an enveloping, smoky cloud, the high, laced cruisers crooked about the tan riding boots. There was the ripping sound of hobnails on leather, and the combatants fell together on top of the fire just as Jules leaped forward. There arose the odour of burned garments and singed hair while the two rolled over and over upon the coals, scorching their very faces in the struggle. The revolver flickered and swerved, pointing at one and then at the other for brief instants, but in those instants neither could press the trigger.

"Look out, Félix!" shouted Dane, as the Colt was swinging in circles from head to head and back again. "You'll shoot yourself!"

He dropped upon his knees, making a frantic clutch at the weapon, but all he got was a double handful of ashes.

Then came the stifled report, muffled by the men's bodies as they struggled so close together as to conceal the Colt.

Dane saw Yukon Pete wilt like a pack sack suddenly emptied. The weapon slid from his fingers, and he sank down in the ashes.

Bruneau disengaged his legs and arose, breathing heavily. The blazing hate had gone out of his eyes. He was quite calm.

"Ba gar, he mebbe can hide hees milk face wit' de black beard, but I know hees green eyes anyw'ere."

"Who pulled the trigger?"

"Heesself. Dat's w'at you be call judgment. Eh, *mon vieux*? But if he hadn't, I be do it maself."

The fire was nearly smothered. Jules raked it together and put on more fuel. By the upspringing flame he turned to look at the body. Quite unemotionally he gazed upon Yukon Pete, who had lived by robbery and evil, but who was now mere kin to the wash gravel upon which he lay. Dane had no regret, no censure, no pang, as he gazed.

"This is about the fix I was in," he observed. "How are you going to prove he shot himself?"

"I don't know," returned the voyageur, uncertainly. "But dey know hees bad name oop here. Dat's so mooch for me."

"Yes, but is it enough? Maybe we better bury him and keep our mouths shut."

"Dat's no good. Dem Mounted fellows trace it down. Ba gosh, dey lak wan bonch of hounds. I see dem do it hondreds of taims. No, I got tak' heem on an' face it through."

"Smooth liar, wasn't he?"

"*Mon Dieu*, yes! Heem an' hees seeck wife! I wondaire w'ere he be goin' so hard an' so late. Runnin' from some wan, dat's sure! I wondaire w'at he be done."

Dane stooped and straightened the crooked legs. Underneath lay a few papers and envelopes that had fallen from Yukon Pete's pocket during the struggle. Idly he picked them up.

"Yes, I wonder what he's done," he echoed.

Into the night abstractedly he voiced the question. Out of the night concretely the answer came. The bench ground above their camp thundered with galloping horses, and, the flames flashing on bright uniforms, a trooper squad tore along the creekside.

"*Bon Dieu*, de Mounted Police!" whispered Félix.

Jules stepped a couple of paces into the shadow, unconsciously thrusting the papers he held in his hand into his pocket.

A horseman with sergeant's bars on his arm pulled up on the edge of the firelight.

"Roused you up, eh?" he greeted. "I'm Sabliere, of B Division on the Stewart. Seen a man in a gray

suit, tan riding boots, and brown Stetson on the trail? Riding a bay mare with a star on the forehead."

Bruneau pointed.

"Dere he is."

"By thunder, you got him? Yukon Pete? Got him alone?"

Sergeant Sabliere leaped from his horse and tipped the straight-brimmed Stetson that hid the dead man's face.

"It's Yukon Pete, all right," he nodded. "I guess the two thousand head money's yours, partner. Dead or alive, we made it, because we wanted him bad. And dead he is, and I'm glad of it, for Desmond's tuckered out."

"Ben Desmond?" cried the voyageur. "Lonelee Ben Desmond?"

Sabliere nodded. "Sure. Lonely Ben. Yukon Pete plugged him in the recording office at Mayo Bridge. Claim dispute. Pete made his get-away quick, but the word came down to the Stewart, and we headed him off. Trailed him up the McQuesten River all along the South Fork and back to the Mayo. He knew we were close, for he was hitting only the high spots. I guess we ran him like a rabbit straight into your camp. Good job you spotted him, though. How'd you know him? Seen our placards, eh? Did he put up much of a scrap?"

Bruneau's jaw dropped—it might have been with relief.

"Wan dam' beeg scrap!" he declared.

The light of the near dawn was in the east as Dane and Bruneau stood staring after the low-coiled, slow-moving spiral of dust cast up by the Mounted men of B Division as they vanished over the bench lands toward the McQuesten River. . . .

When they were gone, the two turned and looked at each other.

"Well, what do you know about that?" Jules demanded.

"Dat's wan judgment," declared Félix.

"It sure is," agreed his comrade.

"An' also—w'at you call dat odder t'ing?"

"Providence?"

"For sure, Providence! I'm t'ink dat de hand of Providence strike ver' hard in dis outland. Ba gar, yes, she's mebbe some slow to land wan blow, but w'en she does land—*Saprie*, it's de knockout!"

Dane laughed grimly.

"Does Providence ever pat a man instead of handing him a knock-out?" he asked, cynically.

"Yes, *mon vieux*, at de proper taim."

"Then it's proper time it laid a light glove on me."

"Fonny how it strikes men, eh? Look at Ben Desmond. Gone in de gun fight. Remembraire how he be help us at White Horse dat night an' carry for me round de cañon? Ba gosh, but he's wan old caractaire on de Yukon! An' now he's called ovaire de last trail to de camp of de last stampede."

"And Yukon Pete, too! Wonder what they'll say when they meet."

"Dey won't meet. Lonelee Ben, he'll be staked on de pay streak, all right, 'cause he be wan square man. But Yukon Pete'll be on red-hot bed rock and done to a turn!"

"Thunder, his papers!" exclaimed Jules, remembering. "I forgot all about them. They should have gone with Sergeant Sabliere."

"*Oui*," admitted Bruneau, "but mebbe dey're of no account."

Dane fingered them.

"Letters, postcards, bills, receipts, records of some mining transactions," he enumerated, passing them over for his companion's inspection. "Hello, here's a map. Looks like a survey! Was he anything of an engineer?"

"Wan financial engineer," observed Félix, gravely.

Jules caught himself short in his chuckle. "It's a scale drawing of a creek!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "Haggert Creek, or I'm a Siwash! Here's Dublin Gulch marked at the top. Familiar ground, eh, Félix? Remember how we tried it away back in '97?"

"Ba gar, yes, I remembaire! Bad luck. Ver' bad luck. An' she's old creek, too. T'ink Yukon Pete been prospectin' her?"

"I don't know. It's poor drawing, and it's all smeared with red paint. But up on the left limit he has it marked with a circle and an arrow."

"W'at's dat?" Bruneau snatched the sheet. "Circle an' arrow? Dat's Ben Desmond's mark. I'm see her often. Dis is hees map. An' you be t'ink dat's red paint? No, *camarade*, look at it close! It's blood!"

"Fresh?" asked Jules, startled.

"Old an' dry. Lonelee Ben Desmond's blood. Ba gosh, we be find somet'ing now. She's beeg t'ing, dis map, or dey don't fight ovaire it. You got to follow her oop."

"Who? Me? Not by a damned sight! Whatever's in it belongs to you. He skinned you out of a big stake. Take this map and get it back if you can."

"No, I say you got to," persisted Félix. "Follow her oop. Stake me in if dere's anyt'ing goin'. I got to finish ma contrack wit' Taylor. She runs out dis fall."

"The devil take your contract and your stubborn head!"

Bruneau grinned.

"Some men be just as stubborn odder ways."

"Break your contract with Taylor and let your pay go to blazes!"

"Nevaire broke ma word to any man, an' I ain't goin' to start now."

"But I don't like the idea of going in where there are other men, men who may have seen me in other diggings," Jules grumbled. "You and I have tried

a good many camps in our time, and we're pretty well known."

"Dose men on Haggert won't know you," Félix assured him. "Anyway, dere's only de few men on ahead. Tak' anodder name, an' *camarade*, nevaire let any man shave you!"

They parted as they had met, on the trail.

Bruneau went on to Mayo Landing, at the junction of the Mayo and Stewart rivers.

Dane headed for Haggert Creek. He covered his ground slowly, and at evening of the next day he came in on the lower creek; that is, that part below Dublin Gulch which, known to be rich in gold and a producer for many years, was held by a hydraulic syndicate. Above him, a half dozen white tents betrayed the presence of a few prospectors, but their number could not be large, and he flattered himself that he need not be troubled about any one discovering his identity.

His belief held good for the night, but not for the morning. As he broke camp at dawn and moved upstream, he met an Indian buck coming down, driving an ugly broncho upon whose crooked back his worldly goods were diamond-hitched. The buck had the strong limbs and huge shoulders of the professional packer, and Dane, with the wilderness instinct that never errs, sensed something vaguely familiar in his carriage. Still, he did not scrutinize the fellow as they drew near each other. For he who inspects

invites inspection. He slouched along the creekside with head bent.

But abruptly the grinning mouth of the buck spoke across the broncho's back:

"Huh! 'Member me?"

And Jules looked up into the good-natured face of Chasni Jim.

"'Member me?"

"I guess so, Chasni Jim. And you seem to be tolerably sure of me."

"Sure? Me know um in um million. You Sitka tribe's friend. You Chasni Jim's friend. Me never forget."

"But I want you to forget."

"Eh?" Chasni Jim looked bewildered. "How um mean? Me not savvy."

Dane tapped the Sitka's outfit.

"Where are you heading?" he asked.

"Here. Stay on Haggert. Prospec' some and some more."

"Then come with me. I've a good thing in hand for myself and Bruneau. You remember Félix?"

"Sure. Where um now?"

"Gone to Mayo Landing. Going to guide. But he'll be back by winter. This is how it stands: If I strike what I'm after, I stake him in. You stake next. Suit you?"

Chasni Jim's eyes gleamed.

"Suit sure!" he grunted. "Me savvy you one dam' good friend."

"But I'm not staking you in for nothing. There's a condition."

"Eh? How um mean?"

"No one but you and Bruneau knows I'm back in the Yukon. No one else must know. This bargain closes your mouth. Call me anything you like. Maybe 'partner' is as good a name as any. Savvy?"

"Me savvy," nodded the Sitka, grinning knowingly.

"Is it a bargain, then?"

"Bargain sure—partner."

Dane flashed a look of gratitude into the wise, dark eyes as together they turned upstream.

For he knew that Chasni Jim had in him the heart of the unspoiled savage, the heart that never lies.

Busy on their own quests, those already on Haggert Creek paid but little attention to the newcomers.

Therefore, with ambition undisturbed, with intent undivided, the two launched all energy into their search, the search that would test Ben Desmond's map.

Quietly but methodically, unostentatiously but none the less surely, they worked, pursuing the elusive pay streak. The Duncan district had long been one for miners to conjure with, and Haggert was known before Bonanza was discovered. In fact, here on the creek rumours of the find in the Klondike

Valley had reached Dane and Bruneau in '97, and stampeded them down the Stewart and the Yukon.

So to Jules it proved familiar ground.

Of old, the bars had yielded gold. But they offered little present profit, and the pay gravel seemed limited to certain patches. Thus there had been nothing substantial upon which to base operations, and small inducement was afforded for the maintaining of claims in good standing.

Now, however, Dane had something substantial to go on. Ben Desmond had not drawn Haggert Creek to scale and figured on the pay streak for fun. He had even set his mark on the ground which he decided it must cross. It was up on the left rim, and all the autumn weeks Jules and Chasni Jim grubbed holes in it. Buckets and hoist was the primitive method they used, and the windlass was shifted and continually shifted, always moving upstream.

Disappointment comes in spells to the most hardened prospector, but it cannot long remain in the face of his colossal faith. Jules and Chasni Jim lived in fervent hope as week by week they received encouraging signs. Evidences of the pay streak grew plainer; and one night when Chasni Jim returned from Mayo Landing, where he had gone for fresh supplies, he beheld stakes on the left rim which had not been there when he departed.

He deserted in the middle of the creek trail the

pack horse he had laden with provisions, and bolted into Dane's tent.

"You got um?" he demanded.

Jules, his face streaked with sweat and clay, was sitting on a box in the act of pouring water into a goldpan full of dirt. He stopped, with hand in air.

"Maybe you better pick them out first," he suggested. "She runs big. That's why I staked before I panned. I could see them."

"See um?"

Chasni Jim plunged his hands into the pan and felt around. The dirt held little muck. It was nearly all the powder of granite bowlders and angular fragments of schist. Chasni Jim's task was easy, and his lithe fingers picked them out, a shining palmful of coarse, dull gold.

"Oh, God, um big and some more!" he yelled.

He was half crazed. The stoicism of the savage fell before the yellow lure. Before nothing else had Dane ever seen it fall.

Dane himself was strangely calm. He washed out the rest of the pan with a skilful, swirling motion, and sifted the wet, sparkling specks through his fingers.

"Oh, God, um big and some more!" Chasni Jim repeated. His eyes were shining like the gold, and his breath came hard.

"A five-dollar pan!" Jules calculated.

And with the certainty of that knowledge he felt the sense of proportion in things readjusted. In a

night, in Juneau, he had been stripped of one stake. It seemed fitting that in a night, on Haggert, he should receive the gift of another.

By morning the news went forth on Haggert Creek, and those working there left the barren upper reaches to stake while they might. Dane watched their stakes spring up on the left rim and also on the right. Hard on the heels of these stakes came men from Dublin Gulch, and not twenty-four hours had passed before miners on the tributaries got the news in some uncanny way.

There are those who swear that facts of certain stampedes must have been wirelessly in some telepathic manner to far-faring prospectors, or else they could never have gotten in on them. Also, certain old-timers are reputed to be able to smell a stampede in the air. Jules, of course, did not believe this. He knew that signs such as a fast-made or much-travelled trail in new country, excess of smoke in a distant valley, the evidence of half a dozen poling boats having passed upstream, were as good as a wireless call to the seasoned sour dough. Yet he marvelled at the celerity with which they came in off the Haggert branches from such creeks as Abbott, Iron Rust, Lynx, Swede, Chasni, Snowshoe, and Fell.

Among the incomers he saw many prototypes of himself, men who had footed it through the dark ways, men who, like himself, had squandered one,

and more than one, fortune and to whom final reward was coming late. With them, he had known it must arrive. For long ago, amid terrific trial and vicissitude, had he come to understand the unchangeable dictum of the outland, had he learned to recognize the unalterable, inelastic, infallible law of the North: that she deals men deserts according to their merits. And what were merits but the outgrowths of over-strong desires?

Every man according to his merits! The inexorable law of the North echoed in the ears of everyone on the creek. Blindly they had come, each believing in his own unexplicit way in that universal law which had been so often applied for them. Rewards dealt according to merits! These rough men had seen and believed. To the murderer, a handy tree of size! To the drunkard, the river plunge or the cañon fall! To the weak, the grave in the frozen gravel! To the strong, the shining miracle of gold!

The entire creek was staked to the mouth, and many, it being already late autumn, made preparations to put down winter holes. Numbers were even now hard at work. Some had found bed rock at from twelve to twenty feet. Others had not struck it at fifty feet, the depth being accounted for by the width of the valley and the gradual slope to the hills. From a gold seeker's point of view the creek valley was of splendid proportions, and its contour showed concentration.

Here on Haggert were no surface evidences of glacier deposit such as could be readily seen on Duncan Creek. The ground had been worn down by the eternal rush of water, and this was what gladdened the hearts of men who knew. This was why they were so jubilant, so confident, so full of voluble optimism. They saw that, more than any other creek of the Duncan district, Haggert resembled the Klondike's famous streams. It had the same sheer, precipitous sides, the same evidence of concentration.

Excitement ran high. Cabins sprang up. Boilers were carried in to the creeksides. Ditches were constructed to work the bench lands. Taylor sent over his underlings from Mayo Landing to traffic in supplies, and Dawson City capitalists came up the Stewart and McQuesten rivers to grab enticing ground.

To one of these capitalists, a heavy Klondike operator, Dane and Chasni Jim sold out at a stiff figure. This was the time of the first snow. Bruneau had not arrived. So they waited, with two dog teams bought from Taylor, while the mushing became good. Still Félix did not come.

"It's no use," declared Dane at last. "He always keeps his word. Something's holding him, and I have to go. There are too many men coming in here to suit me. We'd better divide the stake and send his dust over to Taylor. Taylor'll bank it for him."

It was a big stake, even when split in three.

Chasni Jim was appalled by his wealth.

"Oh, God, um too much!" he complained. "Me not savvy how much. Somebody steal um. What you do with um yours?"

"Cache it! I don't use banks any now."

"Me cache um, too, then."

"Where?"

"With um yours."

"But you're not going with me."

"Sure!" cried the Sitka, determinedly. "Me not um Siwash dog. Siwash dog forget. Chasni Jim um Sitka. Sitka not forget. Me see you all alone, go all alone, live all alone. Me see you need some dam' good friend. Chasni Jim that dam' good friend. Savvy?"

Dane savvied.

Not only on the banks of the Haggert, but in the unspoiled savage's heart, had he struck pay gravel, and the Sitka asked nothing better than to share his exile.

And Jules himself in his secret soul was gladdened. Foreknowing the utter loneliness, the awful rigour of the winter on the Kusawaks, he was aware that Chasni Jim's companionship was a thing to be treasured through the eternal night.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE OUTLANDERS

**D**ISGRUNTLED, travel-soiled, in the illest of ill humours, Bruneau butted into the trading house at Mayo Landing on the evening of the day he parted with Dane.

"Where's Taylor?" he asked of the young fellow in charge of the packed trading room.

"Gone down the river. Who in blazes are you?"

"Tak' wan look at me!" commanded the voyageur, glowing.

"That's Bruneau—Félix Bruneau," an old-timer warned the flippant clerk. "Don't get gay with him."

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed the clerk, sheepishly. "So you're the guide he's been swearing about!"

Félix grinned.

"Mebbe I'm swearin', too. W'ere's dis chechahco party?"

"Taylor's meeting them at the McQuesten. He'll come back with them on the steamer. She's due in the morning?"

"Ba gosh, dat's somet'ing lak wan new trek for Taylor, ain't it? Who are dese chechahcos?"

"I don't know, but they must have the coin, or the old man wouldn't spread himself that way. 'Tisn't every day in the year he puts himself out to meet people."

"Dose chechahco bonches always got more money dan sense," growled Félix, and he shuffled away for a much-needed sleep.

Morning had not improved his temper. Hesat upon the wharf in the warm sun, puffing at a pipe which failed to draw. When the shallow draft steamer swung up, with her siren announcing her arrival to those within miles, Bruneau stared at her moodily, hating her because she was bringing his troubles to him.

But a voice from the rail, as the steamer swung in to the wharf, scattered his morose reflections.

"Hello, Félix!" it called. "Hello, you sun dog. By George, but you're tanned like an Indian!"

"*Bon Dieu!*" gasped the voyageur.

He jumped for the gangplank and gripped the hand of Admiral Mavor whose clean-shaven, white-moustached face grinned into his own brown one.

"Took you unawares, eh? Jove, then it's the first time I ever did! We've been touring the Yukon all summer for Enid's health. She's been poorly—result of a bad accident. The summer here's done her a world of good, but I couldn't go home without a crack at the bighorn."

"Ba gar, an' I ain't got anyt'ing ready, me!" confessed Félix.

"Don't worry about that. I sent Taylor word from Dawson City that I was going on the Kusawaks, and I told him to have everything fixed. He says he's done it. Your name was on his list of guides, so I took a first mortgage on you. I wanted a safe guide on account of the women." He looked back up the gangway. "Well?" he asked. "Can't Taylor get the rest of you through this rabble? Hurry, Enid! Here's Félix."

In Taylor's wake Enid came pushing breathlessly to the wharf.

"You remember him?" prompted her father.

"Remember him? As if I could ever forget!"

She seized both Bruneau's hands impetuously, pouring into his veins the wine of gratitude which the years had but enriched. Her fervency made the voyageur flush furiously under his tan. The touch of a woman's fingers was something new and incomparably sweet to him. He decided instantly that this chechahco would be no burden.

But of the other chechahcos who had followed Enid across the gangway Bruneau was not so sure. He gazed at them dubiously—the tall, dark, graceful woman and the stocky man with the cinnamon-coloured pig eyes.

"Countess Massinoff," the admiral murmured to Félix, by way of introduction. "She's been Enid's companion, and practically her nurse, all summer."

"I t'ink I be hear of her."

Félix gave Sonia a swift, searching glance which, for some reason unknown to her, threw her into confusion and caused her in that moment and in subsequent days to fear him.

"And my friend is Captain Haegar Canard," Mavor further explained. "He's had one season at big game, and he's wild for more. You'll be honoured, Félix, with such figures in your party. Still, they're enjoyably democratic, and you mustn't feel too greatly impressed—or afraid."

But Bruneau doubted the honour.

He glowered at Canard as if he wanted to stick a knife in him.

"I'm not be impressed—or afraid," he asserted.

At which Sonia and Canard laughed.

The rest of that day Mavor's party had the hospitality of Mayo Landing, which in its unpolished way was genuinely good. At night Taylor gave them a rude banquet at the trading house. Men were there from Mayo Bridge, and from the Jam, and from Minto Bridge, to wonder at the chechahcos. There was music and dancing after the frontier fashion, novelties which afforded Enid and Sonia much eager delight.

But at morning they were off, in charge of Bruneau. He had packed the outfit during the night. At dawn he had diamond-hitched it upon three pack horses. These beasts, with five saddle animals, Mavor had bought, instead of hired, from Taylor

because it was not his intention to come back to Mayo Landing. This would involve covering ground twice, which was bad generalship. The Kusawak Mountains lay south of Ethel Lake, between the Stewart and Macmillan rivers, and the party would go out on the southern slope to the Macmillan, down the Macmillan to its junction with the Pelly, and on down the Pelly to catch a late Yukon boat at Selkirk.

A week after leaving Mayo Landing Bruneau was fervently glad to pitch their permanent camp upon the shoulders of Mount Kusawak, the highest peak in the range. For he had had his woes en route. From the first, Canard and Sonia began to prove themselves cumbersome annoyances. It was not exactly Sonia's fault. Without being aware of the fact, she was far out of her proper element and environment. So much the voyageur could forgive, although she failed to adapt and acclimatize herself as did Enid Mavor. But Canard's pompous spirit gave Bruneau the galling experience of interference. He interfered with the method of pitching tents, striking tents, packing dunnage, hitching packs, making beds, cooking meals, and with the method of daily travel and the very route itself. When they came to No-Gold Creek, he contended it was the bend of the Stewart up by Fraser's Falls and swore they were off their course. And on Mount Kusawak he took command of the permanent camp. He overlorded Félix and criticized him. He overturned

his plans and upset his calculations. He made himself so obtrusive, so overbearing, so exasperatingly superior in his ignorance that the voyageur had to go out alone on the slope and swear holes in the cañon walls to relieve the pressure.

Enid was not slow to see how things stood.

"You mustn't mind the captain," she sympathized. "Just do things in your own fashion, Félix, and don't bother your head about what he orders. He doesn't know the ways of the outland."

"Ba gar, dat's easy t'ing for see," replied Bruneau, smiling with relief at someone's confidence. "He doesn't know as mooch as wan leetle bear cub."

"You'll find it easier on your nerves if you know I share your opinion. Only I can't say those awful words with which I've heard you bombarding the rocks."

And Félix blushed in discovery and shouldered his cares again with a light heart.

Not at once did luck come to the men of the party, but the women enjoyed the life as they had enjoyed no other thing since riding over the White Pass Railway in a Pullman down to Lake Bennett. They entered upon the wild freedom of the mountains with a zest peculiarly feminine. They hunted ptarmigan about the camp, indulged in target practice, took daily tramps to other peaks, and breathed the essence of the primal wilderness into their very souls.

Upon one of these daily excursions Enid discovered

a nailed-up log cabin built on a ridge on the higher of the two peaks of Mount Kusawak, the rocky slope where it stood being visible from their camp on the lower peak in a line across the gap.

"Who would be living there?" she asked Félix.

"Some Indian or trappaire, mebbe," he answered.

"In summer?"

"No, in de wintaire."

"But such a terribly lonely spot, and nobody within a week's travel of it."

"Dere's some men don't mind dat," observed Bruneau.

Yet on Mount Kusawak at present was no hint of loneliness. It was draped with its autumn lure instead of being cloaked in haunting terror. Sparsely timbered, it was not hidden in colour as heavily forested reaches are. Thus it did not sacrifice its giant strength to the riot of emblazonment. Its mammoth grandeur was graced with trceries of tinted leaves, with a thousand blended hues, with a miracle of rainbow lights when the ice-cold frost fogs wreathed the eternal snows of the upper peaks.

The stupendous bigness of their surroundings gripped the women like a spell, but a different spell, the spell of the chase, bound their male companions.

True, Canard had not as yet realized his ambitions, but the admiral's luck had come. In the second week he bagged a moose and a grizzly. In the third week, on the sheep meadows on the northern slope

of Mount Kusawak, he bagged two bighorn in one day. And in the fourth week, along the low spurs of the western curve of the range, he added another moose.

Besides the heads, only the delicacies were cut from the carcasses, because camp would shortly be broken in order to get out to the Macmillan and down the Pelly before the freeze-up, and there was no necessity for saving much meat. The heads themselves, both moose and sheep, were splendid ones, and the admiral gloated over them.

"About a record for me!" he exulted. "My limit inside a month, and a grizzly thrown in! But it's too bad about Canard. You'll have to get him something, Félix."

"*Mon Dieu*, ain't I tryin' all de taim?" demanded the voyageur. "Twice I put heem on beeg ram. An' twice he lose dem 'cause he can't stalk. Three times I get heem near moose, an' he rattle hees dam' artillery an' scare dem forty miles. It's no good. He mak' so mooch noise as wan brass band. He'll nevaire get in range of anyt'ing onless it's wan swarm of bees. Dey come to de noise!"

"Well," laughed Mavor, "stay with it a little longer."

"Taim we be goin' out now. She looks lak de early freeze-up. We don't want to get caught."

"No, we can't gamble much with the frost, but we'll give the captain two or three days more. Do your darndest, Félix!"

So Bruneau persisted in his thankless task, wishing every hour, when he thought of Dane, that the captain might make a misstep and slip over a handy precipice.

Truly the latter was a commotion when he went abroad. He was a walking arsenal with his high-powered rifle, two revolvers, three knives, and an axe. He wore a tailored hunting suit with a Thermos bottle in each side pocket and field glasses slung to his shoulder. Each accoutrement jangled a different tune, and Félix swore over and over again that Canard would never get close to anything if he tried till the crack of doom.

But Félix was wrong.

The miracle happened.

On his last day of grace Canard got close to something.

At the mouth of a little draw, three hundred feet above the camp, as he and the voyageur ventured forth in a final attempt, a nine-foot grizzly lumbered across the rocks ahead of them. Bruneau, packing only his Colts, was in front. He crouched down to let Canard fire over him.

"Shoot!" he urged. "*Mon Dieu*, shoot queeck!"

The nearness of the huge beast shook Canard's nerve. Fumbling nervously with his rifle, he lost precious seconds, and the grizzly lurched into the scrub.

The voyageur sprang up.

"Stand ver' still," he ordered. "Don't move for your life. I'll circle an' head heem back. Wait till you can see hees hair before you shoot."

Buck fever was a reposeful dream compared to the bear fever to which the captain succumbed as he waited at the mouth of the draw while Félix beat up the cover. His heart was jumping and his knees shaking. His wavering rifle muzzle circled the points of the compass. All the time the crashing in the draw continued. The draw was just about the timber line, and the scrub grew low and stunted. Canard could see nothing at all in the tangled growth; and this fact, together with the approaching noise, keyed him up notch by notch. The sound got closer and closer, to cease abruptly. Canard wondered if the brute had smelled him. Then the bushes in front of him swayed, and blindly, with the insane action of those deer hunters who shoot at a moving thing before defining that thing, Canard fired. There was a heavy thud upon the slide rock, a gurgle, and silence.

Quaking, the captain stepped through.

At his feet lay Bruneau with a thirty-thirty bullet through his hip.

Raving in delirium, brain fever on top of the bullet hole, Bruneau lay upon his back in the Mount Kusawak camp for five weeks. Through those weeks Enid and Sonia battled for the voyageur's life with

what simple medicines were at hand in the kit bags. The feminine skill in nursing of which they were naturally possessed stood them in good stead, but the great incentive was the knowledge that Bruneau's salvation meant their own salvation.

For from the instant that Félix was wounded, the situation of the party became grave. If Félix died, they all died. Even if he recovered, they might all die in the end. They had already stayed long enough on the mountains. It was now a question if the last boat on the Yukon could be caught at Selkirk, and the chances were that there would be scarcely time to reach the Macmillan River before the deep snows, peculiar to this section, fell to prohibit travel with horses.

To move the voyageur in his wounded condition was to commit murder. Nor could they depart without him, even if they wished. Félix alone could guide them out of the wilderness as he had guided them in. From their high altitude they could see the country well enough to imagine that they could trace the route without a guide, but Mavor knew from experience that down in the valleys it would be an astonishingly different matter. The attempt at breaking through to the north to Fraser's Falls or Mayo Landing, or to the south to some of the lone cabins on the Macmillan would end in frantic wandering amid the unknown maze of valleys, streams, and divides.

With winter uncertain days away, and the wild creatures migrating far off for their own sustenance, the prospect was suicide.

Equally as bad was the prospect of wintering in the mountains without provisions. The admiral knew that at this season nearly all game went west of the Yukon. So there was only one mind in the camp to decide for them, to suggest, to plan, to prosecute, and that mind was in the nightmare of delirium. Accordingly they struggled unceasingly for its recovery. The women and the men engaged in the struggle. With the clear understanding of their danger, as it came to them upon the day of the accident, Mavor and Canard hurried out to try to bring down something in the shape of meat. But the hard frosts of the last week seemed to have been sent to baffle them. In those frosts the wild things had sensed the white scourge they feared. Already their feet were moving to the district of lesser snows.

The ptarmigan themselves were scarce. Mavor could shoot but two, and with his apprehensions materialized into convictions he came again into camp. He looked at the heads he had gathered and thought of the meat thrown away. Then Canard came in, empty-handed as usual. For had the Kusawaks been swarming with game, and had the party been dependent on the captain's rifle for food, they would have starved at the start.

Yet, in spite of the skill of Mavor, chances seemed

no better. There was no use in his being able to put a ball in the right spot behind a moose's shoulder when not a moose was to be seen. Again and again he trailed out, searching, tramping, praying for game. Again and again he returned, unrewarded, spent, and desperate. Always Haegar Canard, in his tailored hunting suit and portable arsenal, indulged in a pretense of trailing and stalking. Although his methods were different, his success was the same as the admiral's. His incompetency brought in as much as the admiral's skill.

The supplies that had been calculated to a nicety, with a view to avoiding undue weight while trailing in to the Kusawaks, dwindled to a dangerously narrow margin before Bruneau's condition improved. Then Mavor had the luck to bag a small sheep that had remained after the others had passed on to the more sheltered sheep meadows on the ranges away to the west. A pittance it was against the strength of hunger's grip, but it gave hope and was welcomed as a miracle.

Never at any time did the admiral speak his doubts to Enid and Sonia. Persistently he attempted to deceive them as to future prospects, saying that game could be shot when snow fell to permit tracking. But, though the women hoped with him, some subtle, intuitive process revealed the truth to them. While they watched by Bruneau's bed, their eyes spoke it to each other. They recognized the magni-

tude of the shadow which loomed over the Mount Kusawak camp. They knew that even Félix upon his feet could not cope with the wintry hosts that would be marshalled in enmity against them.

And of a truth the winter was preparing the battle ground for its forces. The gorgeous leafage of autumn went scurrying into the chasms like streams of brown rags. The frost struck everything with a lash which left black marks behind. Cavernous now the twin-peaked mountain bulked up, and clammy, silvery mists lay all day upon its ancient snows. Not with an unexpected, breathless, rushing charge that was apt to break and falter and later give a breathing spell came the ruthless winter. Steadily it advanced, without rash haste, but always with concentrated purpose. It drew near, accompanied by almost imperceptible change in material things about. It approached through an infinitesimal substitution of atoms from one day to another. Some giant wizard was turning by marvellous alchemy the golden Yukon autumn to the frosted-iron winter.

Daily those of the Mount Kusawak camp watched the subtle process. Struck small in their confined human sphere by the advent of menaces gigantic, they stood aloof in awe, possessed of a fear incapable of being analyzed. Helpless against the mighty power that moved to crush them, they could only stand and wait. For, like a judgment, the formidableness of the unseen overcame them.

When the frosts had stripped the trees and split the dripping rocks, great winds began to roar through the cañons, setting up a noise like the pounding of a thousand enormous drums. Many days the sound harassed their untrained ears. Many nights the clamour persisted, fraying the nerves of the sleepless ones till they gave utterances to frenzied wishes that the snow would come and still the tumult. But it was coming swiftly. Already on the higher peak of Mount Kusawak new snow had been added to the old snow and the line of demarcation was creeping down. Shortly ranges and valleys would be smothered.

The day Bruneau staggered out of his delirium the wind fell. The abrupt silence, coming on the heels of the demoniacal drumming, was horribly oppressive, heavy with portent, disproportionate. Then the cloud wracks disseminated, enveloping everything in spinning flakes, large, soft, and spotless as ptarmigan feathers.

For four days the fall continued.

Even if Félix could have sat in the saddle, travel with horses was now impossible. When the snow had ceased, the voyageur saw that known peaks in the distance were now unknown, that landmarks were gone, and rudimentary formations of the country totally changed.

Snow, and more snow, and snow without end was the outlook! Yet this snow which the others gazed

upon with despair was hope to the voyageur. He knew that, strike or no strike, Dane would not remain on Haggert Creek if he, Félix, did not come. So many men from summer diggings, moving there according to their custom to put down winter holes, would drive Jules away. He would come in to his cabin with dogs. Therefore rescue hinged upon his coming. The dog team that would bring him in over the snows would take them out. Also, he would have ample supplies, for he was not fool enough to go short on provisions when no game was to be had.

Still Bruneau could give no hint to the others of what was passing in his mind. Even in extremity he remained faithful to the condition of secrecy. Should Jules come, Félix would have to speak with him unknown to the rest, get his team, and warn him to keep off out of sight. To his companions the man he got the dog team from would be a fictitious trapper who had come back to his cabin on the Kusawks for fur. It would be as easy for him to return to Dane after guiding Mavor and his friends to civilization, always providing that his wound healed satisfactorily. Against that time he fashioned snowshoes for each member of the camp, using for frames wood that the admiral brought off the slopes under his direction, and for the webbing strips of twisted moose hide.

While Bruneau made his preparations, the last shred of the sheep meat disappeared.

Then the trophy heads went into the soup pot.

And finally it came to a question of horseflesh.

"Can we live on it alone?" Mavor asked Félix.

"Can or not, we got to! De taste ain't so bad. I'm eat her wan taim w'en I got snowed oop on de Valdez Trail."

The Mavor camp was only about a hundred yards below timber line on the lesser peak of Mount Kusawak, and the horses were corralled in a valley lower down. The corral was built of small timber, and a stack of dried hay stood in the middle. This hay the men had cut from the rank valley growth before the snow. The stack served a double purpose, that of affording the animals protection from the cold, and providing them with food which they could pick off without need of more attention than one visit a day.

As the three men went down to the valley to choose their meat, they passed the pile of logs that Mavor and Canard had cut during the voyageur's sickness to throw up a cabin in order to mitigate the awful cold that they suffered in the tents, the ten-foot square, one-man cabin on the higher peak being entirely too small for the party. Skirting the pile of logs was a dog-like track, the first snow track they had seen.

"Ba gar," Félix cried, "dat's de wolf pad. Here's more of dem. Come on, queeck! Dose horses——"

He broke into a shuffling run, lurching heavily

from side to side, limping painfully in his snowshoe stride.

Mavor and Canard ran at his heels as they dropped down the drifted slope into the valley below. In the centre of the valley the wolf tracks had closed in on the corral. It lay a tangle of tossed hay and broken poles, evidence of the white-fanged assault from without and of the red-jawed death struggle within. A shambles it had been in the night. Now it was but a bloody, frozen crust studded with bones.

In a dazed way the voyageur walked round and round the great crimson blot.

"*Mon Dieu*," he muttered, "dat's de end if he don't come soon!"

The wolf pack had swung eastward across the mountains, and all day Mavor and Canard ranged after it. At night they staggered in with never a sight of the shaggy bellies—staggered home through a screeching blizzard which nearly obliterated the back trail and overwhelmed them.

Henceforth no snow track marred the brittle crust. Like shadowy demons the pack had drifted from the mountains, removing the last sign of animal life, taking the last vestige of food. The summit of isolation, the acme of destitution, the pinnacle of despair, towered ice-armoured Mount Kusawak.

The plight of Mavor's party could be traced in stages by their bill of fare:

Soup of horse bones!

Paste of powdered skulls and cleaning oil:

Leather gun cases boiled, moccasins stewed, hides and pack straps fried!

Such was their need.

They attacked, too, the bark and roots of trees and certain unknown berries found in meagre quantities. But these sickened instead of sustaining. The roots and bark brought on violent cramps; the frozen mountain berries laid them out with a poisonous vertigo.

Always Bruneau watched the cabin on the other peak. Every day for three weeks he had climbed painfully across to it. Every day, like a symbol of barred hope, he had found it nailed tight. On the twenty-second day after the loss of the horses, Félix could hardly stagger up to it. Coming back, he stumbled and fell a dozen times. He lurched weakly into the log cabin they had built for themselves, and at his entrance Mavor and Canard looked up eagerly to read his face. Its message was despair, and their gloom enveloped them again.

"She's no use," groaned Félix. "I guess we got to throw!"

"Eh?"

The eyes of the other men regarded him fixedly. They seemed to understand his words.

"We got to throw!" he repeated.

He put his hand in his pocket and tossed upon the slab floor three heavy dice carved out of wood. The

dice fell between the two men lying beside the stove. The rattling sound was as of clods upon a coffin.

"Good God! Is there no other way?" demanded Canard.

"Keep quiet!" the admiral warned, glancing apprehensively toward the farther wall, where Enid and Sonia, wrapped in blankets, were attempting to forget their suffering in sleep.

"Dere's no odder way! I'm be tell you of dis trappaire, how he mebbe come back to de odder cabin. But he ain't come yet. An' we can't wait wan hour longaire. If dey don't eat to-night, dose women goin' die queeck!"

He kicked the dice to the pair by the stove.

"Throw!" he ordered.

Mechanically Mavor took the dice in his thin palm. His full face had grown gaunt, and the skin was leaden gray. He betrayed no emotion, but twirled the dice as if there were no stake.

"Fourteen!" quavered Canard. "You were always lucky."

Sonia heard the rattle. The noise irritated her. She stirred fretfully in her blankets and moved closer to Enid.

"What a horrible diversion!" she moaned. "And at such a time."

The voyageur grouped the dice with the toe of his shoepack.

"Throw!" he directed again.

Canard threw with a hand that had wasted from a pudgy ball to a gnarled talon. He trembled. The cinnamon-coloured eyes blazed.

"Twelve!" Mavor counted, in a dull monotone.

The captain leaned forward in suspense, watching Félix.

A third time the dice thumped hollowly upon the slabs. Bruneau stood looking at them stoically. Eleven blinked up at him.

"You lose," gasped Canard. He searched the voyageur's face for the agony, the cowardice that he thought must follow hard upon the throw.

Yet neither agony nor cowardice was revealed in Bruneau's countenance. It was like a mask, emaciated, hard, cold, emotionless.

"I'm be lose," he admitted. "Den you, Canard. An' at last de admiral. W'en we be gone, he must tak' de women oop to dat odder cabin. Dere'll be room dere den, wit' only de two. An' dey can kip alive for some taim. De trappaire be back before dey give out, sure. If he don't, we all be done de best we could."

Félix stepped to the door of the cabin and pressed his head close to the six-inch window slide that was let into it. So had he leaned against the open square through every famished day, varying the monotony of his watch by ascents to the cabin above. When he stared thus, the rest knew he watched for signs of the trapper's return. His eyes were glued upon the

log hut, stuck like a gray lichen against the snow-plastered granite, where smoke would rise on the instant of Dane's return. His jaws had become rigid, his eyes glazed with the eternal vigil. He had strained sunken cheeks against the slide till they were scored with purple lines, livid and weird against the starvation pallor of his skin.

This time, as usual, the tiny roof showed sharp and snow-covered. Nothing curled from the rusted chimney pipe. Bruneau strode back to Mavor and Canard.

"*Que Dieu vous bénisse!*" he murmured, gripping their hands in turn. "I'm t'ink you be saved yet, *camarades.*"

"My God!" cried Mavor. "I can't let you go! I can't let you go!"

For now that the hour of the compact had arrived the admiral was incoherently unmindful of the agreement the three had made.

But Bruneau silenced him by putting a glove over his mouth and pointing to the blanketed figures by the farther wall.

"Dose women! Remembraire!"

He drew up his parka hood and took his rifle.

Enid and Sonia heard him slip through the doorway and move off, his snowshoes crunching on the heavy crust.

They thought it was but another of his vagaries, another of his unceasing pilgrimages to the cabin higher up.

While the voyageur limped across the slopes of their own peak, he revolved in his harried brain the circle of things that had persistently obsessed him during the famine period.

He thought of the women, of fire, of food, and lastly of Dane.

The whole cosmos of existence had come to be embraced in those four ideas.

The snow, the cold, the glaciers, the winter aurora had no part in it. All other attributes and complexities of nature and the universe were extraneous considerations that never troubled him.

Several times, he remembered, Mavor had proposed making a dash on snowshoes across the Pelly basin. As well die in the attempt, he had argued, because death had marked them where they were. But Félix would never hear of it. Such a course would be only throwing themselves to destruction. While here they might crouch from destruction. Here they could make some pretence of eating. Here, at least, they were warm. And always in such counselings the pin point to which Bruneau's hopes drew was the cabin upon the other peak.

He wondered if ever before human stomachs had been so abused. Yet now for him this thing was past. Though racked with pain, he experienced a strange thrill of content. Had he been certain that Dane would arrive in time to save the others, or even in time to save the women, he could have rejoiced.

He crossed the breast of the slope out of sight of the Mavor cabin. Above him sheered the stark twin peaks of Mount Kusawak, their glacier breath intensifying the sixty-odd degrees of frost that held all things with a gauntlet of steel. Overhead, a sea of flame, pulsed the weird aurora; but nothing on earth stirred.

Deliberately he cocked his rifle, set the butt on the crust, and fumbled with the toe of his shoepack against the trigger guard. In a last look his gaze swept the gigantic Northland. He saw once more the stupendous stretch of wilderness stained red as blood by the blazing borealis, the sombre green of the silhouetted spruce, the barrenness and the eeriness of the ruthless wastes. Then, while his glance came wearily back across the Kusawak slopes in line with Dane's cabin on the farther peak, his toe pressed the trigger.

And as he pressed, he saw that smoke streaked blackly from the cabin roof across the carmine sky.

The sight gave him a mental jerk that instantaneously communicated itself to his muscles. His arms shot out in a lightning-like effort to throw the rifle muzzle wide of his body. So near was he to failure that at the snappy report the ball drilled his parka hood.

He staggered back. "*Mon Dieu !*" he gasped, and collapsed in the drifts.

Yet he instantly rose again, swaying upon his feet.

The wind was blowing off the ice fields of the higher peak, blowing from Dane's cabin, and Félix knew that Jules inside would never hear the rifle's crack. Also he knew that in the cabin across the slope, carried by the wind, it would be heard. It was the signal for Mavor and Canard to come and find him. Therefore he must be quick!

What shreds of physical strength were left Bruneau the nervous reaction of the moment, when he had toyed with death, had dissipated. Having no muscular power to work his will, he drew upon the vital fire of his inner self. In a sort of monomania, he lurched in a zigzag course across the mountain gap and up the higher peak, sliding about, falling down, rising up—to fall again. The immensity of effort strained his heart. The pressure burst open his half-healed wound, and the loss of blood laid him faint upon the crust.

He pulled himself erect and went on, buoyed by an incandescent vigour that was burning up his spirit. When he struck the trail where dogs and sled had passed by to the cabin, he was crawling along on hands and knees. The trail was like a path of encouragement to the sombre hand of the smoke that beckoned. It proved that the curling vapour on the ruddy sky was not an illusion of his overtaxed brain, a consequence of malnutrition, a forerunner of madness. His sight was not steady. Yet he did not pause to steady it. The trail was under his groping

hands, and he crawled on it unseeingly. His snowshoes were an impediment to his crawling. He twisted his heels from their loops and let them go clattering behind. At the noise a husky snarled, and it sounded to the voyageur like a human voice. He lifted benumbed fingers and rubbed his eyes through which piercing, hot pains continually shot. Outside the cabin two dog teams of five dogs each were halted, anchored there by the turning of the sledges on one side. Again Félix passed his fingers across his eyes. He was afraid that he was seeing double. But the two teams remained. With febrile energy he dragged himself between the sledges to the log step of the cabin, felt for the latch string, and pulled. The door gave suddenly. Bruneau fell face downward on the slab floor.

"Starving!" whispered Chasni Jim, as the two men laid him on the bunk by the fire.

For once the Sitka had seen the spectre of want stalking among the people of his own island, and henceforth he knew its emaciated face.

"Starving!" agreed Dane, grimly. "Only the shade of the old Félix! He's been caught out somewhere while making for the Kusawaks. Hurt, too! He's bleeding!"

Together they worked over the wraith of the voyageur. Chasni Jim poured a little whisky down his throat. Jules rubbed him all over and stanchd and bandaged the wound in the hip. Their own

meal being ready, they then plied him with hot coffee till his senses began to stir. This they knew to be a grand medicine for exposure, and Bruneau's hungering system absorbed it as fast as it was swallowed.

"Strong when um well," Chasni Jim commented, touching the muscles that now hung loosely, like plaited vines, on the voyageur's frame.

"Yes, and he'll be strong again after I've fed him up. He has the grit of a grizzly. Look at that! He wants to get out already!"

Dane promptly shoved him back on the bunk. The effort it required surprised him.

"*Mon Dieu, camarade,*" moaned Félix, "give me two bags of meat an' flour an' loan me wan dog team!"

Jules wrestled with him, scrutinizing his face for signs of delirium. In the blazing eyes he thought he read it.

"Yes, yes, that's all right," he soothed. "But you're not on the trail now, Félix. You're at the end of it, and everything you need is here. Lie quiet. Don't you know me?"

"Yes, but you ain't be understand. I'm not crazy. De food's for dat chechaheo bonch, four of dem. I'm get shot by accident an' have de brain fever. De wintaire's come before I get ma senses. Can't move den wit'out dogs. Wolves eat de horses. No game. Not'ing! Dey're four people starvin' in de cabin on de odder peak."

"Good God, starving! Four! Look after him for a little, Chasni Jim. I'll go across."

Jules jumped to the supplies they had unlashd from the sledges and piled in the corner of the cabin, grubbed up some bags, and made for the door. But Bruneau rolled from the bunk.

"Stop! You can't be go down. Dose chechahcos know you. Dey're Americans. You must kip out of sight."

He seized Dane's arm as the latter kicked up the latch, but the door swung open under a pull from without, and Jules stared into the thin faces of Enid Mavor, Sonia Massinoff, and Haegar Canard.

The bags crashed from his arms to the floor. Inimical furies leaped up in him. For the moment they ruled him, driving out all other emotions of astonishment, fear, cunning, pity. He was oblivious to any fact, circumstance, or consideration except that his enemy was within reach. His leap at Canard was involuntary, mechanical, as if long pent-up desires and broodings had reacted viciously upon his physical organism. His face was savage, his intent murderous. It seemed to the cowed women that in one second the captain would be snatched up, broken to pieces, and flung like refuse to the slaving dogs. Yet Bruneau, weak as he was, threw himself between. His feeble fingers locked round Dane's neck, causing him to lose his balance, and together they rolled in the snow.

Jules jerked roughly loose. Félix clung to his legs. "Don't give blows to wan starvin' man!" he cried.

"You be mad. A child could kill heem now. Ain't you be understand? He's lak de rest—starvin'."

The word cleared Dane's heated soul. A cool wave of sanity smothered his furious design.

"Good heavens, I'm a savage!" he exclaimed, with a rush of pity. "But talking's no use. Come and eat. For God's sake, come and eat!"

He put an arm round each of the women and half carried them to the rude table that had been spread by Chasni Jim. Enid flushed crimson through her pallor at Dane's touch, but Sonia's cheeks turned whiter than the drifts as she clung an instant to his shoulder, hiding her face and uttering a choking cry.

Bruneau piloted Canard inside.

"W'ere's de admiral?" he asked.

"He was out gathering wood when I heard the shot. The shot made me look, and I saw the smoke. We hurried, if you can call crawling up the slope hurrying, to get food for ourselves. When I've eaten I'll take some down to him."

"I'm guess I can tend to dat," grunted Félix. "You go for stuff yourself."

Chasni Jim was feeding the starving. Jules, in order that he might not witness their famished devouring, carried the provisions out for Félix and lashed them on the sled. Then he sat on top, the whining, empty-bellied huskies crowding about. He started off across the multicoloured peaks, which seemed to quiver and shift as the fantastic aurora

leaped and palpitated above them. Upon the sled was supposed to be grub enough to take Mavor's party to the Stewart, and Félix was calculating on the weight of the load to make sure.

"Plenty?" Dane asked.

"I'm t'ink so."

"Leave a margin. Never take a risk again."

"No. I'm wan beeg fool to come in wit' dat chechahco Canard alone. I should be have anodder guide. Dat was de mistake. All de taim I'm afraid he swing hees thirty-thirty round and get me. No more chechahcos for me!"

"Good thing he didn't know you for a friend of mine. The hole might have been in your heart instead of in your hip."

"Dat *diable*. If he ain't be starvin', I let you kill heem a leetle w'ile back."

"I'm not done with him yet."

"Eh? W'at you mean? Remembraire de Mounted Police always find de missin' man oop here."

"I'm not likely to forget that. But all the same his medicine's coming when you people are gone. Chasni Jim'll go with you and help you get the party to the Stewart if I ask him. Here he is now."

The Sitka stalked from the cabin with a wide grin on his face.

"Eat um all supper up," he announced.

"Better not give them any more now, then," warned Jules. "Be careful on the start. Don't feed

too heavy, but feed often. If you're through, you can take this team across to the other peak. There's another man there to feed. Savvy?"

"Savvy sure."

"And you'll help Félix get them out to the Stewart?"

"Help sure. But we come back bymeby. One month. Mebbe so six weeks."

"Not here! This place is known now. Once you are out of the way, I'm going to strike straight for the Pelly River and go up it into the Pelly Mountains."

"Dis Haggert Creek, she's no good, den?" asked the voyageur.

"Haggert? By thunder, I forgot! We struck it, Chasni Jim and I. Found him on the creek before me. We staked you in and sold out to a Klondiker. We cached our stuff. Taylor has yours."

"So?" Bruneau stared his comical surprise. "Lonelee Ben's map be all right, eh? Ba gosh, dat's de great luck! An' Yukon Pete turn round an' give me back w'at he stole. Jules, I guess dat Providence we talk of is certainly on de job!"

"Maybe on your job. I don't see any one working overtime on mine."

"You don't know, *camarade*. You always walk wit' your head in de bag. W'ere you goin' w'en you hit de Pelly?"

"Up it! Into the Pelly Mountains! You know Hoole River?"

"*Oui.*"

"And Campbell Creek, above?"

"Sure t'ing."

"Well, I know a deserted cabin in between. I've a job to finish here first, but after that you and Chasni Jim can find me if you want to."

"Ba gar, we want to! Eh, Chasni?"

The Sitka's eyes lightened.

"Dam' bad we want to!" he vowed.

"And I want you both damned bad," confessed Jules. "Savvy? Damned bad! Now get over to the other peak with the food. I think that's all."

"No, not all!" interrupted someone behind.

Dane turned.

Enid Mavor had slipped, unnoticed, out of the cabin.

Food and drink had driven much of the starved look from her face. There was a faint glow stealing through her wan cheeks.

"No, Jules, not all," she repeated, "I heard you. You've thought about everyone but yourself. What about yourself?"

"Myself? You know!" he cried, fiercely. "The word'll go down to the Mounted Police. It'll be a rabbit hunt from now on. They'll chase me all over the Yukon from the Liard to the Porcupine. There'll be a price on my head, and I'll live the life of the hounded."

Enid drew closer. Her eyes, that had seen some-

thing of the ruthlessness of the North to those in its power, looked sagely into his.

"And you'll play the game out with them alone?" she asked.

He nodded. "Alone! Unless it's what little time the Mounted let Félix and Chasni Jim share with me."

"Isn't there any one else you want to share it?"

Her challenge took Dane's breath away, sent the blood racing to his face. So close she stood that he might have reached out his arms in that moment and stayed the heart hunger of the years. An instant he hesitated, wrenched by a great temptation. But the dynamic force of the realization of what the fugitive life would mean for Enid blasted the selfish desire out of him. He shook his head and turned back to the cabin.

Enid took a step after him, touching his shoulder with a movement irresistibly feminine.

"Isn't there any one else you want to share it?" she repeated, in a whisper.

"There's no one else I can ask to share it," he answered, and walked on.

Sonia and Canard were coming out of the cabin doorway as he reached it. He let the woman pass, but he barred Canard in with his hands against the jambs.

"You stay here!" he glowered.

Famine had broken the spirit of the captain. He cringed.

"W'at you mean, *camarade*?" interposed Brun-eau, alarmed.

"I mean what I say. He stays here. Tell Mavor any tale you like. Tell him Canard slipped over a precipice."

Again Dane faced the captain. "I could kill you now like a beetle, but I won't. I'll feed you. Meal by meal I'll build you up. Bit by bit I'll give you back every cursed ounce of your old strength. Then you'll pay for your deviltries here in this cabin. One of us will go out alone from the Kusawaks!"

The vision of Dane's face as he ground out the edict was one that the others took down the slope with them and into their dreams that night. Especially did it haunt the voyageur's dreams, and when someone pulled his blankets off him at morning he accepted it as part of his dream.

"*Camarade*," he murmured, reproachfully, "it's only de middle of de night."

He clutched sleepily at the warm coverings, instinctively resenting interruption of the sleep that hunger had so long forbidden. Then he awakened enough to remember that it was Chasni Jim who was his bunk mate, and it seemed to him to be the Sitka who was routing him out at the hour that passed for dawn in the eternal night of the Northland.

"*Mon Dieu*, Chasni!" he growled, "can't you be quiet?"

But an agitated voice clamaoured in his ear, forcing awakening and understanding upon him. He realized that Chasni Jim, too, was being mauled like himself, and he woke with a start.

Mavor was jerking at them, his frightened face limned by the glare of a tallow candle.

"Enid!" he yelled. "I can't find her! Good heavens, get up! Enid's gone!"

Bruneau stood upright, ready dressed because he had slept in his clothes.

"W'en? W'ere?" he demanded.

"How can I tell? She wasn't here when I woke. She's not outside the cabin. There's no track, either. It's snowed a good deal. Great God, Félix, get the Indian out and see what you can do. Think of something to do. I can't think; I'm three parts crazy!"

The voyageur strode swiftly across the floor to where a canvas pack covering screened the bunk of Enid and Sonia. It was turned partly back. Sonia was sitting on the side of the bunk lacing her moose-skin shoepacks. She noted Bruneau's suspicious glance as it travelled over the disarranged blankets and rested on her.

"I know nothing," she told him. "Enid went to bed with me. I woke alone. Beyond that I know nothing."

"You know not'ing, but you guess, mebbe," he observed, in a low voice.

"Maybe. Can't I guess if I like?"

"Are you goin' speak, den?"

"Not yet!" Sonia temporized.

Chasni Jim and the admiral were already outside. The Sitka was testing the depth of the snowfall with his shoepacked leg as Félix joined them.

"No good," he decided. "Deep and some more. No can trail um."

"Dat's w'at I say maself," agreed the voyageur.

He knew that if Enid had really lost herself there was now no chance of finding her before the frost and fatigue should have done their work. But he doubted the assumption that she was lost. It was not customary for people to get up in the middle of the Yukon night and wander off across mountain slopes with the mercury forty below. Yet there was no telling this to Mavor. Instead, immediate pretence of ranging the peaks must be made.

"You tak' de lower peak," Félix directed the admiral. "Dere's not so mooch ground to cover. Chasni Jim and me'll tak' de odder."

Sticking his head in the doorway, Bruneau spoke to Sonia again. "Kip de fire goin'," he ordered. "Mebbe we need hot t'ings. Dese Kusawaks be some cold."

"Cold!" echoed Mavor. "It's a devilish spot, a hellish spot!"

"No, only strong!"

"It's hellish, I say," contradicted the admiral,

in a blaze of ferocity. "Yesterday we lost Canard. And to-day it's Enid. But I won't give her up. I won't! You hear?"

He dashed away in a passion, hurling defiance at the North, registering loud vows of vengeance.

Félix shook his head sagely as with Chasni Jim he pushed across the mountain gap.

So had he heard sterner men than Mavor swear vengeance against the mighty North, and always their grim oaths had availed not.

Truly, the voyageur's was a wonderful stamina.

Plenty of food and one night's rest had in a great measure restored his tremendous vigour and endurance. Sustenance and sleep, too, had exerted a healing influence upon the tissues of his wound so that it threatened no reopening, although it pained considerably. Still, granting this improvement in his condition, he knew he could not tramp the many miles that would be necessary if they really had to start and trail Enid across the ranges. He hoped the search would end at the cabin on the higher peak.

They had left the dog team behind, and, their snowshoes making no sound in the fluffy, new snow, they worked quietly up the slope. When a hundred yards from the cabin Bruneau saw that the other team of huskies was missing.

"Dat's w'at I t'ink all along!" he exclaimed. "De dog train's gone."

"Sure," admitted Chasni Jim, "but who got um?"

Eager to look inside, yet fearful of what he might find there, Félix shoved back the door. Canard lay by the Klondike stove. His legs were bound to a heavy log. His arms were strapped together at elbows and wrists, allowing him only the freedom of swinging them, like a crane, in a semicircle from the woodpile to the stove and back again in order to keep the cold at bay. For the rest, the cabin was deserted and bare. Sleeping blankets, supplies, cooking utensils, and dunnage were all gone.

From his position Canard could not see them, but he heard the hinges creak and he squirmed into a sitting posture.

"Thank God!" he screamed, staring at the two. "Cut these straps!"

The voyageur saw that his nerve was shattered. He understood how the solitary hours of waiting, uncertain as to rescue, fearful lest the fire die, had shaken the captain to pieces.

During a period obviously short by the natural measurements of time, but eternal in its length of menace and intimidation, the hitherto unseen spirit of the Northland had attained visibility. It had drawn near, a concrete image, powerful, circumspect, and glowered into the prisoner's face. It was no wonder he was incoherent, babbling many strange things of fear and detention, new phases of them which had not been known to him before.

"Untie me! Untie me!" he kept continually exclaiming, and writhed in his bonds.

Bruneau shuffled out of his snowshoes and limped across to him.

"Hold on dere!" he advised. "No use makin' so mooch noise. You be in wan dam' beeg blue funk. Were's Jules?"

"Gone! Enid, too! And thank God for that! Now untie me."

"Bymeby. Tell us about it."

"There's nothing to tell. She came in the night. She pleaded with him. They went."

"So?"

Without his volition the scene of the midnight meeting flashed before the voyageur's eyes. He had a vision of the immensity of Enid Mavor's sacrifice, of Dane's struggle against acceptance, of mutual explanation, forgiveness, surrender.

"Nothing to tell," Canard repeated. "But the fires of hell to experience! To have your life hanging on a woman's words! I knew if she didn't take him away he'd kill me in the end. I guess she knew it, too. That's what inspired her. And I prayed she'd melt him. The only time I ever prayed! For God's sake, untie me!"

"Not before you swear nevaire to spik wan word of dis!" decreed Bruneau. "Nevaire to put de police on Dane's track!"

"A thousand oaths on it! Anything to get out of this!"

"Wan is plaintee. Don't break it w'en you be off dis countree. If dey come huntin' Jules, I'll be know who gave de sign. Den I'll mak' de journey, an' you'll die queeck."

As he bent to cut the straps, the shadow of a movement in the doorway flickered darkly on the bright steel. He turned quickly. Sonia stood there. She had stolen up without Chasni Jim's notice in spite of his Indian ears.

"W'at you be find?" demanded Félix.

"Nothing. But I've heard."

"Den you remembaire, too. I'm not wan coward for threaten de woman, but you must not spik, either. I mak' Canard answer for you. You spik, an' he'll die just the same."

He freed the captain.

"Yesterday," he told him, "you be slip down precipice. You fell in de snow pocket an', burrowed in de drifts, managed to kip alive. We be find you dis mornin' an' rescue you. Is dat all plain?"

"Yes."

"Wait here, den, till we come back. We're goin' on de tip of de peak."

A thousand feet the greater peak rose above the lesser. Its tip was the highest point in hundreds of miles of country. From the summit they could see whether Canard lied.

The laborious climb along the grim-mouthed precipices, over the talus slopes, and across the

glacier moraines took Bruneau and Chasni Jim an hour. Intense cold of upper space smote them to the marrow. Despite the fur fringes of the close-drawn parka hoods, the glacier breath seared their faces, but finally the two men stood, seven thousand feet in air, upon the pinnacle of the Pelly country. There the ordinarily restricted human vision was given unlimited range. The tremendous expanse of wilderness which stretched southward was as an open book.

"Look!" panted Félix.

He extended an arm, like a compass needle, southwest by west.

Many miles away a string of black specks broke the dazzling white reach of snow. Eight of those minute dots Bruneau counted—the man, the woman, five dogs, and the sled.

"Dere goes Jules on de outland forevaire," he breathed, with a choke in his throat. "We won't see heem any more, Chasni. He's got hees comrade for life."

"Sure," nodded Chasni Jim, and gazed mournfully.

Crawling as insects crawl upon a microscopic plate, the specks topped a low divide, and, paralleling it on the other side, disappeared. Again the limitless levels stretched away, unmarred.

"Dat course will land dem on de Kalzas Range," figured the voyageur. "Dey'll go down de Kalzas Rivaire into de Macmillian Rivaire, cross to de Pelly,

and go oop de Pelly to de mountains. You remembaire dat cabin he spik of between Hoole Rivaire an' Campbell Creek? Well, dere's missionary minister among dose Pelly Indians, and he's goin' to get de job to do at dat cabin. But mind we know not'ing. We see not'ing."

"No, me no see um," the Sitka corroborated. "But um girl. Look what um give up." He waved a hand southward to indicate the sunland's luxury.

"Yes, for de greater t'ing," returned Bruneau. "Dey bot' give it oop for de greater t'ing."

For the voyageur understood that henceforth Dane would abide by the laws that broaden and not the laws that crowd. Through those northern gates of glamour, the White and Chilcoot passes, Jules had passed and shrivelled under the artificiality of the decrees that governed life in the world beyond. Back through those glamorous portals had he retreated to feel his blood leap and his soul thrive under primæval sway. Upon this azoic land lay the laws of the universe in its uncontaminated state, before the hand of civilization had spread its warping veneer or written its crooked code. True, a few of the gold-born towns had felt the leprous touch, but the stupendous outland which held clean men like Dane in thrall knew it not. In the strong, pure, free life no want of woman, no curse of caste, no rust of rivalry, no gall of glory, no edict of earth prevailed. There man, and woman, too, was ruled according to stark merit.

He had gone north of the law, where for woman there was no want or weakness. The hazard of the wild gave her the same vitality as man. And in accepting that hazard, Félix knew that Enid Mavor had wisely come into her own.

Deep in reflection, the voyageur shuffled mechanically down the slope. Not long was it allowed for any mortal to remain on the tip of Mount Kusawak. The snow was heaped in gigantic cornices, and the frost lay thick as the polar ice pack. A few seconds of inactivity was enough to produce a warning numbness of body. To remain still for five minutes was to be changed to a pillar of ice.

When they were half way down the pack, a peculiar tremor, vibrating suddenly in the air, halted them.

Bruneau saw fear leap into his companion's eyes.

"Snowslide!" the Sitka blurted.

"No," doubted the voyageur. "It's de blizzard wind, mebbe." He pawed at the upspringing gust to get its direction.

"Look at um!" cried Chasni Jim.

Below, a smoking streamer on the mountainside gave Félix the lie. Only a curling wisp at first, a detached boss of snow shot downward, gathering volume as it slid, gaining momentum with every yard till the roar of the increasing torrent reverberated like booming cannon. The sound reached Admiral Mavor across the gap on the lower peak,

for they saw him run to the cabin, thinking, no doubt, that the slide was on his own slope.

Still he was safe enough, and Bruneau and Chasni Jim were likewise safe. The high altitude to which they had climbed proved their salvation, for the slide had started beneath them.

"T'ank Heaven," breathed Félix, "dat de admiral an' de cabin an' de dogs ain't on dis peak!"

"But um others!" yelled Chasni Jim.

He pointed through the rolling smother of snow.

Félix started. He had forgotten the two in Dane's cabin below; but now he saw them, warned by the thunderous booming, dashing wildly across the charging front of the slide, two puny human figures with hands flung wildly upward to ward off the universe's might. But, resistless as the universe's decrees, the titanic snow cloud shot downward. The wind that went before it scattered the cabin logs like straw. Trees, rocks, and ice buttresses flattened under the abysmal onrush; and, as if they had never move flying human feet were overtaken.

Just as the two were lost in the heart of the havoc, Sonia gave a scream and crouched in Canard's arms. The inexorable law of the Northland was again applied.

Canard, too, had his desire in the inexorable law that lies north of the law!

THE END

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