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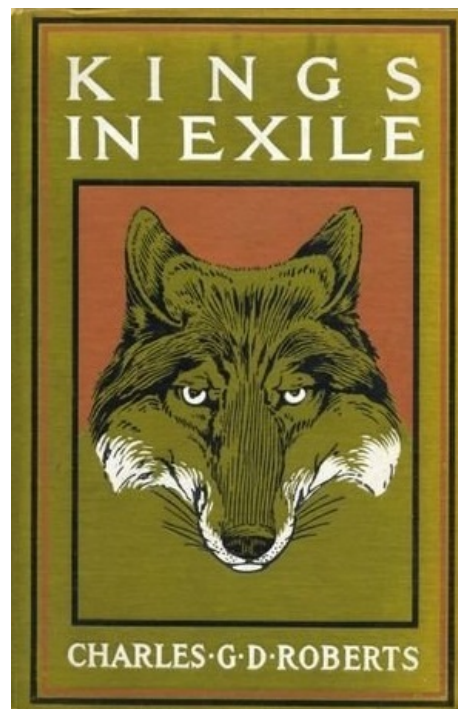
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KINGS IN EXILE



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TORONTO



"The Gray Master."

KINGS IN EXILE

BY

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS
AUTHOR OF "THE BACKWOODSMEN," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

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1912

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LAST BULL

Last Bull

That was what two grim old sachems of the Dacotahs had dubbed him; and though his official title, on the lists of the Zoölogical Park, was "Kaiser," the new and more significant name had promptly supplanted it. The Park authorities—people of imagination and of sentiment, as must all be who would deal successfully with wild animals—had felt at once that the name aptly embodied the tragedies and the romantic memories of his all-but-vanished race. They had felt, too, that the two old braves who had been brought East to adorn a city pageant, and who had stood gazing stoically for hours at the great bull buffalo through the barrier of the steel-wire fence, were fitted, before all others, to give him a name. Between him and them there was surely a tragic bond, as they stood there islanded among the swelling tides of civilization which had already engulfed their kindreds. "Last Bull" they had called him, as he answered their gaze with little, sullen, melancholy eyes from under his ponderous and shaggy front. "Last Bull"—and the passing of his race was in the name.

Here, in his fenced, protected range, with a space of grassy meadow, half a dozen clumps of sheltering trees, two hundred yards of the run of a clear, unfailing brook, and a warm shed for refuge against the winter storms, the giant buffalo ruled his little herd of three tawny cows, two yearlings, and one blundering, butting calf of the season. He was a magnificent specimen of his race—surpassing, it was said, the finest bull in the Yellowstone preserves or in the guarded Canadian herd of the North. Little short of twelve feet in length, a good five foot ten in height at the tip of his humped and huge fore-shoulders, he seemed to justify the most extravagant tales of pioneer and huntsman. His hind-quarters were trim and fine-lined, built apparently for speed, smooth-haired, and of a grayish lion-color. But his fore-shoulders, mounting to an enormous hump, were of an elephantine massiveness, and clothed in a dense, curling, golden-brown growth of matted hair. His mighty head was carried low, almost to the level of his knees, on a neck of colossal strength, which was draped, together with the forelegs down to the knees, in a flowing brown mane tipped with black. His head, too, to the very muzzle, wore the same luxuriant and sombre drapery, out of which curved viciously the keen-tipped crescent of his horns. Dark, huge, and ominous, he looked curiously out of place in the secure and familiar tranquillity of his green pasture.

For a distance of perhaps fifty yards, at the back of the pasture, the range of the buffalo herd adjoined that of the moose, divided from it by that same fence of heavy steel-wire mesh, supported by iron posts, which surrounded the whole range. One sunny and tingling day in late October—such a day as makes the blood race full red through all healthy veins—a magnificent stranger was brought to the Park, and turned into the moose-range.

The newcomer was a New Brunswick bull moose, captured on the Tobique during the previous spring when the snow was deep and soft, and purchased for the Park by one of the big Eastern lumber-merchants. The moose-herd had consisted, hitherto, of four lonely cows, and the splendid bull was a prize which the Park had long been coveting. He took lordly possession, forthwith, of the submissive little herd, and led them off at once from the curious crowds about the gate to explore the wild-looking thickets at the back of the pasture. But no sooner had he fairly entered these thickets than he found his further progress barred by the steel-meshed fence. This was a bitter disappointment, for he had expected to go striding through miles of alder swamp and dark spruce woods, fleeing the hated world of men and bondage, before setting himself to get acquainted with his new followers. His high-strung temper was badly jarred. He drew off, shaking his vast antlers, and went shambling with spacious stride down along the barrier towards the brook. The four cows, in single file, hurried after him anxiously, afraid he might be snatched away from them.

Last Bull, standing solitary and morose on a little knoll in his pasture, caught sight of the strange, dark figure of the running moose. A spark leapt into his heavy eyes. He wheeled, pawed the sod, put his muzzle to the ground, and bellowed a sonorous challenge. The moose stopped short and stared about him, the stiff hair lifting angrily along the ridge of his massive neck. Last Bull lowered his head and tore up the sod with his horns.



"Last Bull, standing solitary and morose on a little knoll in his pasture."

This vehement action caught the eyes of the moose. At first he stared in amazement, for he had never seen any creature that looked like Last Bull. The two were only about fifty or sixty yards apart, across the little valley of the bushy swamp. As he stared, his irritation speedily overcame his amazement. The curious-looking creature over there on the knoll was defying him, was challenging him. At this time of year his blood was hot and quick for any challenge. He gave vent to a short, harsh, explosive cry, more like a grumbling bleat than a bellow, and as unlike the buffalo's challenge as could well be imagined. Then he fell to thrashing the nearest bushes violently with his antlers. This, for some reason unknown to the mere human chronicler, seemed to be taken by Last Bull as a crowning insolence. His long, tasselled tail went stiffly up into the air, and he charged wrathfully down the knoll. The moose, with his heavy-muzzled head stuck straight out scornfully before him, and his antlers laid flat along his back, strode down to the encounter with a certain deadly deliberation. He was going to fight. There was no doubt whatever on that score. But he had not quite made up his wary mind as to how he would deal with this unknown and novel adversary.

They looked not so unequally matched, these two, the monarch of the Western plains, and the monarch of the northeastern forests. Both had something of the monstrous, the uncouth, about them, as if they belonged not to this modern day, but to some prehistoric epoch when Earth moulded her children on more lavish and less graceful lines. The moose was like the buffalo in having his hind-quarters relatively slight and low, and his back sloping upwards to a hump over the immensely developed fore-shoulders. But he had much less length of body, and much less bulk, though perhaps eight or ten inches more of height at the tip of the shoulder. His hair was short, and darker than that of his shaggy rival, being almost black except on legs and belly. Instead of carrying his head low, like the buffalo, for feeding on the level prairies, he bore it high, being in the main a tree-feeder. But the greatest difference between the two champions was in their heads and horns. The antlers of the moose formed a huge, fantastic, flatly palmated or leaflike structure, separating into sharp prongs along the edges, and spreading more than four feet from tip to tip. To compare them with the short, polished crescent of the horns of Last Bull was like comparing a two-handed broadsword to a bowie-knife. And his head, instead of being short, broad, ponderous, and shaggy, like Last Bull's, was long, close-haired, and massively horse-faced, with a projecting upper lip heavy and grim.

Had there been no impregnable steel barrier between them, it is hard to say which would have triumphed in the end, the ponderous weight and fury of Last Bull, or the ripping prongs and swift wrath of the moose. The buffalo charged down the knoll at a thundering gallop; but just before reaching the fence he checked himself violently. More than once or twice before had those elastic but impenetrable meshes given him his lesson, hurling him back with humiliating harshness when he dashed his bulk against them. He had too lively a memory of past discomfitures to risk a fresh one now in the face of this insolent foe. His matted front came against the wire with a force so cunningly moderated that he was not thrown back by the recoil. And the keen points of his horns went through the meshes with a vehemence which might indeed have done its work effectively had they come in contact with the adversary. As it was, however, they but prodded empty air.

The moose, meanwhile, had been in doubt whether to attack with his antlers, as was his manner when encountering foes of his own kind, or with his knife-edged fore-hoofs, which were the weapons he used against bears, wolves, or other alien adversaries. Finally he seemed to make up his mind that Last Bull, having horns and a most redoubtable stature, must be some kind of moose. In that case, of course, it became a question of antlers. Moreover, in his meetings with

rival bulls it had never been his wont to depend upon a blind, irresistible charge,—thereby leaving it open to an alert opponent to slip aside and rip him along the flank,—but rather to fence warily for an advantage in the locking of antlers, and then bear down his foe by the fury and speed of his pushing. It so happened, therefore, that he, too, came not too violently against the barrier. Loudly his vast spread of antlers clashed upon the steel meshes; and one short prong, jutting low over his brow, pierced through and furrowed deeply the matted forehead of the buffalo.

As the blood streamed down over his nostrils, obscuring one eye, Last Bull quite lost his head with rage. Drawing off, he hurled himself blindly upon the barrier—only to be hurled back again with a vigor that brought him to his knees. But at the same time the moose, on the other side of the fence, got a huge surprise. Having his antlers against the barrier when Last Bull charged, he was forced back irresistibly upon his haunches, with a rudeness quite unlike anything that he had ever before experienced. His massive neck felt as if a pine tree had fallen upon it, and he came back to the charge quite beside himself with bewilderment and rage.



"Only to be hurled back again with a vigor that brought him to his knees."

By this time, however, the keepers and Park attendants were arriving on the scene, armed with pitchforks and other unpleasant executors of authority. Snorting, and bellowing, and grunting, the monstrous duellists were forced apart; and Last Bull, who had been taught something of man's dominance, was driven off to his stable and imprisoned. He was not let out again for two whole days. And by that time another fence, parallel with the first and some five or six feet distant from it, had been run up between his range and that of the moose. Over this impassable zone of neutrality, for a few days, the two rivals flung insult and futile defiance, till suddenly, becoming tired of it all, they seemed to agree to ignore each other's existence.

After this, Last Bull's sullenness of temper appeared to grow upon him. He was fond of drawing apart from the little herd, and taking up his solitary post on the knoll, where he would stand for an hour at a time motionless except for the switching of his long tail, and staring steadily westward as if he knew where the great past of his race had lain. In that direction a dense grove of chestnuts, maples, and oaks bounded the range, cutting off the view of the city roofs, the roar of the city traffic. Beyond the city were mountains and wide waters which he could not see; but beyond the waters and the mountains stretched the green, illimitable plains—which perhaps (who knows?) in some faint vision inherited from the ancestors whose myriads had possessed them, his sombre eyes, in some strange way, *could* see. Among the keepers and attendants generally it was said, with anxious regret, that perhaps Last Bull was "going bad." But the head-keeper, Payne, himself a son of the plains, repudiated the idea. *He* declared sympathetically that the great bull was merely homesick, pining for the wind-swept levels of the open country (God's country, Payne called it!) which his imprisoned hoofs had never trodden.

Be this as it may, the fact could not be gainsaid that Last Bull was growing more and more morose. The spectators, strolling along the wide walk which skirted the front of his range, seemed to irritate him, and sometimes, when a group had gathered to admire him, he would turn his low-hung head and answer their staring eyes with a kind of heavy fury, as if he burned to break forth upon them and seek vengeance for incalculable wrongs. This smouldering indignation against humanity extended equally, if not more violently, to all creatures who appeared to him as servants or allies of humanity. The dogs whom he sometimes saw passing, held in leash by their masters or mistresses, made him paw the earth scornfully if he happened to be near the fence. The patient horses who pulled the road-roller or the noisy lawn-mower

made his eyes redden savagely. And he hated with peculiar zest the roguish little trick elephant, Bong, who would sometimes, his inquisitive trunk swinging from side to side, go lurching lazily by with a load of squealing children on his back.

Bong, who was a favored character, amiable and trustworthy, was allowed the freedom of the Park in the early morning, before visitors began to arrive who might be alarmed at seeing an elephant at large. He was addicted to minding his own business, and never paid the slightest attention to any occupants of cage or enclosure. He was quite unaware of the hostility which he had aroused in the perverse and brooding heart of Last Bull.

One crisp morning in late November, when all the grass in the Park had been blackened by frost, and the pools were edged with silver rims of ice, and mists were white and saffron about the scarce-risen sun, and that autumn thrill was in the air which gives one such an appetite, Bong chanced to be strolling past the front of Last Bull's range. He did not see Last Bull, who was nothing to him. But, being just as hungry as he ought to be on so stimulating a morning, he did see, and note with interest, some bundles of fresh hay on the other side of the fence.

Now, Bong was no thief. But hay had always seemed to him a free largess, like grass and water, and this looked like very good hay. So clear a conscience had he on the subject that he never thought of glancing around to see if any of the attendants were looking. Innocently he lurched up to the fence, reached his lithe trunk through, gathered a neat wisp of the hay, and stuffed it happily into his curious, narrow, pointed mouth. Yes, he had not been mistaken. It was good hay. With great satisfaction he reached in for another mouthful.

Last Bull, as it happened, was standing close by, but a little to one side. He had been ignoring, so far, his morning ration. He was not hungry. And, moreover, he rather disapproved of the hay because it had the hostile man-smell strong upon it. Nevertheless, he recognized it very clearly as his property, to be eaten when he should feel inclined to eat it. His wrath, then, was only equalled by his amazement when he saw the little elephant's presumptuous gray trunk reach in and coolly help itself. For a moment he forgot to do anything whatever about it. But when, a few seconds later, that long, curling trunk of Bong's insinuated itself again and appropriated another bundle of the now precious hay, the outraged owner bestirred himself. With a curt roar, that was more of a cough or a grunt than a bellow, he lunged forward and strove to pin the intruding trunk to the ground.

With startled alacrity Bong withdrew his trunk, but just in time to save it from being mangled. For an instant he stood with the member held high in air, bewildered by what seemed to him such a gratuitous attack. Then his twinkling little eyes began to blaze, and he trumpeted shrilly with anger. The next moment, reaching over the fence, he brought down the trunk on Last Bull's hump with such a terrible flail-like blow that the great buffalo stumbled forward upon his knees.

He was up again in an instant and hurling himself madly against the inexorable steel which separated him from his foe. Bong hesitated for a second, then, reaching over the fence once more, clutched Last Bull maliciously around the base of his horns and tried to twist his neck. This enterprise, however, was too much even for the elephant's titanic powers, for Last Bull's greatest strength lay in the muscles of his ponderous and corded neck. Raving and bellowing, he plunged this way and that, striving in vain to wrench himself free from that incomprehensible, snake-like thing which had fastened upon him. Bong, trumpeting savagely, braced himself with widespread pillars of legs, and between them it seemed that the steel fence must go down under such cataclysmic shocks as it was suffering. But the noisy violence of the battle presently brought its own ending. An amused but angry squad of attendants came up and stopped it, and Bong, who seemed plainly the aggressor, was hustled off to his stall in deep disgrace.

Last Bull was humiliated. In this encounter things had happened which he could in no way comprehend; and though, beyond an aching in neck and shoulders, he felt none the worse physically, he had nevertheless a sense of having been worsted, of having been treated with ignominy, in spite of the fact that it was his foe, and not he, who had retired from the field. For several days he wore a subdued air and kept about meekly with his docile cows. Then his old, bitter moodiness reasserted itself, and he resumed his solitary broodings on the crest of the knoll.

When the winter storms came on, it had been Last Bull's custom to let himself be housed luxuriously at nightfall, with the rest of the herd, in the warm and ample buffalo-shed. But this winter he made such difficulty about going in that at last Payne decreed that he should have his own way and stay out. "It will do him no harm, and may cool his peppery blood some!" had been the keeper's decision. So the door was left open, and Last Bull entered or refrained, according to his whim. It was noticed, however,—and this struck a chord of answering sympathy in the plainsman's imaginative temperament,—that, though on ordinary nights he might come in and stay with the herd under shelter, on nights of driving storm, if the tempest blew from the west or northwest, Last Bull was sure to be out on the naked knoll to face it. When the fine sleet or stinging rain drove past him, filling his nostrils with their cold, drenching his matted mane, and lashing his narrowed eyes, what visions swept through his troubled, half-comprehending brain, no one may know. But Payne, with understanding born of sympathy and a common native soil, catching sight of his dark bulk under the dark of the low sky, was wont to declare that *he* knew. He would say that Last Bull's eyes discerned, black under the hurricane, but lit strangely with the flash of keen horns and rolling eyes and frothed nostrils, the endless and innumerable droves of the buffalo, with the plains wolf skulking on their flanks, passing, passing, southward

into the final dark. In the roar of the wind, declared Payne, Last Bull, out there in the night, listened to the trampling of all those vanished droves. And though the other keepers insisted to each other, quite privately, that their chief talked a lot of nonsense about "that there mean-tempered old buffalo," they nevertheless came gradually to look upon Last Bull with a kind of awe, and to regard his surly whims as privileged.

It chanced that winter that men were driving a railway tunnel beneath a corner of the Park. The tunnel ran for a short distance under the front of Last Bull's range, and passed close by the picturesque cottage occupied by Payne and two of his assistants. At this point the level of the Park was low, and the shell of earth was thin above the tunnel roof.

There came a Sunday afternoon, after days of rain and penetrating January thaw, when sun and air combined to cheat the earth with an illusion of spring. The buds and the mould breathed of April, and gay crowds flocked to the Park, to make the most of winter's temporary repulse. Just when things were at their gayest, with children's voices clamoring everywhere like starlings, and Bong, the little elephant, swinging good-naturedly up the broad white track with all the load he had room for on his back, there came an ominous jar and rumble, like the first of an earthquake, which ran along the front of Last Bull's range.

With sure instinct, Bong turned tail and fled with his young charges away across the grassland. The crowds, hardly knowing what they fled from, with screams and cries and blanched faces, followed the elephant's example. A moment later and, with a muffled crash, all along the front of the range, the earth sank into the tunnel, carrying with it half a dozen panels of Last Bull's hated fence.

Almost in a moment the panic of the crowd subsided. Every one realized just what had happened. Moreover, thanks to Bong's timely alarm, every one had got out of the way in good season. All fear of earthquake being removed, the crowd flocked back eagerly to stare down into the wrecked tunnel, which formed now a sort of gaping, chaotic ditch, with sides at some points precipitous and at others brokenly sloping. The throng was noisy with excited interest and with relief at having escaped so cleanly. The break had run just beneath one corner of the keepers' cottage, tearing away a portion of the foundation and wrenching the structure slightly aside without overthrowing it. Payne, who had been in the midst of his Sunday toilet, came out upon his twisted porch, half undressed and with a shaving-brush covered with lather in his hand. He gave one look at the damage which had been wrought, then plunged indoors again to throw his clothes on, at the same time sounding the hurry call for the attendants in other quarters of the Park.

Last Bull, who had been standing on his knoll, with his back to the throngs, had wheeled in astonishment at the heavy sound of the cave-in. For a few minutes he had stared sullenly, not grasping the situation. Then very slowly it dawned on him that his prison walls had fallen. Yes, surely, there at last lay his way to freedom, his path to the great open spaces for which he dumbly and vaguely hungered. With stately deliberation he marched down from his knoll to investigate.

But presently another idea came into his slow mind. He saw the clamorous crowds flocking back and ranging themselves along the edge of the chasm. These were his enemies. They were coming to balk him. A terrible madness surged through all his veins. He bellowed savage warning and came thundering down the field, nose to earth, dark, mountainous, irresistible.

The crowd yelled and shrank back. "He can't get across!" shouted some. But others cried: "He can! He's coming! Save yourselves!" And with shrieks they scattered wildly across the open, making for the kiosks, the pavilions, the trees, anything that seemed to promise hiding or shelter from that onrushing doom.

At the edge of the chasm—at this point forming not an actual drop, but a broken slide—Last Bull hardly paused. He plunged down, rolled over in the débris, struggled to his feet again instantly, and went ploughing and snorting up the opposite steep. As his colossal front, matted with mud, loomed up over the brink, his little eyes rolling and flaming, and the froth flying from his red nostrils, he formed a very nightmare of horror to those fugitives who dared to look behind them.

Surmounting the brink, he paused. There were so many enemies, he knew not which to pursue first. But straight ahead, in the very middle of the open, and far from any shelter, he saw a huddled group of children and nurses fleeing impotently and aimlessly. Shrill cries came from the cluster, which danced with colors, scarlet and yellow and blue and vivid pink. To the mad buffalo, these were the most conspicuous and the loudest of his foes, and therefore the most dangerous. With a bellow he flung his tail straight in the air, and charged after them.

An appalling hush fell, for a few heart-beats, all over the field. Then from different quarters appeared uniformed attendants, racing and shouting frantically to divert the bull's attention. From fleeing groups black-coated men leapt forth, armed only with their walking-sticks, and rushed desperately to defend the flock of children, who now, in the extremity of their terror, were tumbling as they ran. Some of the nurses were fleeing far in front, while others, the faithful ones, with eyes starting from their heads, grabbed up their little charges and struggled on under the burden.

Already Last Bull was halfway across the space which divided him from his foes. The ground shook under his ponderous gallop. At this moment Payne reappeared on the broken porch.

One glance showed him that no one was near enough to intervene. With a face stern and sorrowful he lifted the deadly .405 Winchester which he had brought out with him. The spot he covered was just behind Last Bull's mighty shoulder.

The smokeless powder spoke with a small, venomous report, unlike the black powder's noisy reverberation. Last Bull stumbled. But recovering himself instantly, he rushed on. He was hurt, and he felt it was those fleeing foes who had done it. A shade of perplexity darkened Payne's face. He fired again. This time his aim was true. The heavy expanding bullet tore straight through bone and muscle and heart, and Last Bull lurched forward upon his head, ploughing up the turf for yards. As his mad eyes softened and filmed, he saw once more, perhaps,—or so the heavy-hearted keeper who had slain him would have us believe,—the shadowy plains unrolling under the wild sky, and the hosts of his vanished kindred drifting past into the dark.

THE KING OF THE FLAMING HOOPS

The King of the Flaming Hoops

CHAPTER I

The white, scarred face of the mountain looked straight east, over a vast basin of tumbled, lesser hills, dim black forests, and steel-blue loops of a far-winding water. Here and there long, level strata of pallid mist seemed to support themselves on the tree-tops, their edges fading off into the startling transparency that comes upon the air with the first of dawn. But that was in the lower world. Up on the solitary summit of White Face the daybreak had arrived. The jagged crest of the peak shot sudden radiances of flame-crimson, then bathed itself in a flow of rose-pinks and thin, indescribable reds and pulsating golds. Swiftly, as the far horizon leapt into blaze, the aerial flood spread down the mountain-face, revealing and transforming. It reached the mouth of a cave on a narrow ledge. As the splendor poured into the dark opening, a tawny shape, long and lithe and sinewy, came padding forth, noiseless as itself, as if to meet and challenge it.

Half emerging from the entrance upon the high rock-platform which formed its threshold, the puma halted, head uplifted and forepaws planted squarely to the front. With wide, palely bright eyes she stared out across the tremendous and mysterious landscape. As the colored glory rushed down the mountain, rolling back the blue-gray transparency of shadow, those inscrutable eyes swept every suddenly revealed glade, knoll, and waterside where deer or elk might by chance be pasturing.

She was a magnificent beast, this puma, massive of head and shoulder almost as a lioness, and in her calm scrutiny of the spaces unrolling before her gaze was a certain air of overlordship, as if her supremacy had gone long unquestioned. Suddenly, however, her attitude changed. Her eyes narrowed, her mighty muscles drew themselves together like springs being upcoiled, she half crouched, and her head turned sharply to the left, listening. Far down the narrow ledge which afforded the trail to her den she had caught the sound of something approaching.

As she listened, she crouched lower and lower, and her eyes began to burn with a thin, green flame. Her ears would flatten back savagely, then lift themselves again to interrogate the approaching sounds. Her anger at the intrusion upon her private domain was mixed with some apprehension, for behind her, in a warm corner of the den, curled up in a soft and furry ball like kittens, were her two sleeping cubs.

Her trail being well marked and with her scent strong upon it, she knew it could be no ignorant blunderer that drew near. It was plainly an enemy, and an arrogant enemy, since it made no attempt at stealth. The steps were not those of any hunter, white man or Indian, of that she presently assured herself. With this assurance, her anxiety diminished and her anger increased. Her tail, long and thick, doubled in thickness and began to jerk sharply from side to side. Crouching to the belly, she crept all the way out upon the ledge and peered cautiously around a jutting shoulder of rock.

The intruder was not yet in sight, because the front of White Face, though apparently a sheer and awful precipice when viewed from the valley, was in fact wrinkled with gullies and buttresses and bucklings of the tortured strata. But the sound of his coming was now quite intelligible to her. That softly ponderous tread, that careless displacing of stones, those undisguised sniffings and mumblings could come only from a bear, and a bear frankly looking for trouble. Well, he was going to find what he was looking for. With an antagonism handed down to her by a thousand ancestors, the great puma hated bears.

Many miles north of White Face, on the other side of that ragged mountain-ridge to which he formed an isolated and towering outpost, there was a fertile valley which had just been invaded by settlers. On every hand awoke the sharp barking of the axe. Rifle-shots startled the echoes. Masterful voices and confident human laughter filled all the wild inhabitants with wonder and dismay. The undisputed lord of the range was an old silver-tip grizzly, of great size and evil temper. Furious at the unexpected trespass on his sovereignty, yet well aware of his powerlessness against the human creature that could strike from very far off with lightning and thunder, he had made up his mind at once to withdraw to some remoter range. Nevertheless, he had lingered for some days, sullenly expecting he knew not what. These formless expectations were most unpleasantly fulfilled when he came upon a man in a canoe paddling close in by the steep shore of the lake. He had hurled himself blindly down the bank, raging for vengeance, but when he reached the water's edge, the man was far out of reach. Then, while he stood there wavering, half minded to swim in pursuit, the man had spoken with the lightning and the thunder, after the terrifying fashion of his kind. The bear had felt himself stung near the tip of the shoulder, as if by a million wasps at once, and the fiery anguish had brought him to his senses.

It was no use trying to fight man, so he had dashed away into the thickets, and not halted till he had put miles between himself and the inexplicable enemy.

For two days, with occasional stops to forage or to sleep, the angry grizzly had travelled southward, heading towards the lonely peak of White Face. As the distance from his old haunts increased, his fears diminished; but his anger grew under the ceaseless fretting of that wound on his neck just where he could not reach to lick and soothe it. The flies, however, could reach it very well, and did. As a consequence, by the time he reached the upper slopes of White Face, he was in a mood to fight anything. He would have charged a regiment, had he suddenly found one

in his path.

When he turned up a stone for the grubs, beetles, and scorpions which lurked beneath it, he would send it flying with a savage sweep of his paw. When he caught a rabbit, he smashed it flat in sheer fury, as if he cared more to mangle than to eat.

At last he stumbled upon the trail of a puma. As he sniffed at it, he became, if possible, more angry than ever. Pumas he had always hated. He had never had a chance to satisfy his grudge, for never had one dared to face his charge; but they had often snarled down defiance at him from some limb of oak or pine beyond his reach. He flung himself forward upon the trail with vengeful ardor. When he realized, from the fact that it was a much-used trail and led up among the barren rocks, that it was none other than the trail to the puma's lair, his satisfaction increased. He would be sure to find either the puma at home or the puma's young unguarded.



"When the grizzly saw her, his wicked little dark eyes glowed suddenly red."

When the puma, at last, saw him emerge around a curve of the trail, and noted his enormous stature, she gave one longing, wistful look back over her shoulder to the shadowed nook wherein her cubs lay sleeping. Had there been any chance to get them both safely away, she would have shirked the fight, for their sakes. But she could not carry them both in her mouth at once up the face of the mountain. She would not desert either one. She hesitated a moment, as if doubtful whether or not to await attack in the mouth of the cave. Then she crept farther out, where the ledge was not three feet wide, and crouched flat, silent, watchful, rigid, in the middle of the trail.

When the grizzly saw her, his wicked little dark eyes glowed suddenly red, and he came up with a lumbering rush. With his gigantic, furry bulk, it looked as if he must instantly annihilate the slim, light creature that opposed him. It was a dreadful place to give battle, on that straight shelf of rock overhanging a sheer drop of perhaps a thousand feet. But scorn and rage together blinded the sagacity of the bear. With a grunt he charged.

Not until he was within ten feet of her did the crouching puma stir. Then she shot into the air, as if hurled up by the release of a mighty spring. Quick as a flash the grizzly shrank backward upon his haunches and swept up a huge black paw to parry the assault. But he was not quite quick enough. The puma's spring overreached his guard. She landed fairly upon his back, facing his tail; but in the fraction of a second she had whirled about and was tearing at his throat with teeth and claws, while the terrible talons of her hinder paws ripped at his flanks.

With a roar of pain and amazement the grizzly struggled to shake her off, clutching and striking at her with paws that at one blow could smash in the skull of the most powerful bull. But he could not reach her. Then he reared up, and threw himself backwards against the face of the rock, striving to crush her under his enormous weight. And in this he almost succeeded. Just in time, she writhed around and outward, but not quite far enough, for one paw was caught and ground to a pulp. But at the next instant, thrust back from the rock by his own effort, the bear toppled outward over the brink of the shelf. Grappling madly to save himself, he caught only the bowed loins of the puma, who now sank her teeth once more into his throat, while her rending claws seemed to tear him everywhere at once. He crushed her in his grip; and in a dreadful ball of screeching, roaring, biting, mangling rage the two plunged downward into the dim abyss. Once, still locked in the death-grip, they struck upon a jutting rock, and bounded far out into space. Then, as the ball rolled over in falling, it came apart; and separated now, though still very close together, the two bodies fell sprawlingly, and vanished into the blue-shadowed deeps

which the dawn had not yet reached.

Upon this sudden and terrible ending of the fight appeared a bearded frontiersman who had been trailing the grizzly for half an hour and waiting for light enough to secure a sure shot. With something like awe in his face he came, and knelt down, with hands gripping cautiously, and peered over the dreadful brink. "Gee! But that there cat was game!" he muttered, drawing back and sweeping a comprehensive gaze across the stupendous landscape, as if challenging denial of his statement. Obviously the silences were of the same opinion, for there came no suggestion of dissent. Carefully he rose to his feet and pressed on towards the cave.

Without hesitation he entered, for he knew that the puma's mate some weeks before had been shot, far down in the valley. He found the kittens asleep and began to fondle them. At his touch, and the smell of him, they awoke, spitting and clawing with all their mother's courage. Young as they were, their claws drew blood abundantly. "Gritty little devils!" growled the man good-naturedly, snatching back his hand and wiping the blood on his trouser-leg. Then he took off his coat, threw it over the troublesome youngsters, rolled them in it securely, so that not one protesting claw could get out, and started back to the camp with the grumbling and uneasy bundle in his arms.

Three months later, the two puma cubs, sleek, fat, full of gayety as two kittens of like age, and convinced by this time that man was the source and origin of all good things, were sold to a travelling collector. One, the female, was sent down to a zoölogical garden on the Pacific coast. The other, the male, much the larger and at the same time the more even-tempered and amenable to teaching, found its way to the cages of an animal-trainer in the East.

CHAPTER II

"King's kind of ugly to-night, seems to me; better keep yer eyes peeled!" said Andy Hansen, the assistant trainer, the big, yellow-haired Swede who knew not fear. Neither did he know impatience or irritability; and so all the animals, as a rule, were on their good behavior under his calm, masterful, blue eye. Yet he was tactful with the beasts, and given to humoring their moods as far as convenient without ever letting them guess it.

"Oh, you go chase yourself, Andy!" replied Signor Tomaso, the trainer, with a strong New England accent. "If I got to look out for King, I'd better quit the business. Don't you go trying to make trouble between friends, Andy."

"Of course, Bill, I know he'd never try to maul *you*," explained Hansen seriously, determined that he should not be misunderstood in the smallest particular. "But he's acting curious. Look out he don't get into a scrap with some of the other animals."

"I reckon I kin keep 'em all straight," answered the trainer dryly, as he turned away to get ready for the great performance which the audience, dimly heard beyond the canvas walls, was breathlessly awaiting.

The trainer's name was William Sparks, and his birthplace Big Chebeague, Maine; but his lean, swarthy face and piercing, green-brown eyes, combined with the craving of his audiences for a touch of the romantic, had led him to adopt the more sonorous pseudonym of "Signor Tomaso." He maintained that if he went under his own name, nobody would ever believe that what he did could be anything wonderful. Except for this trifling matter of the name, there was no fake about Signor Tomaso. He was a brilliant animal-trainer, as unacquainted with fear as the Swede, as dominant of eye, and of immeasurably greater experience. But being, at the same time, more emotional, more temperamental than his phlegmatic assistant, his control was sometimes less steady, and now and again he would have to assert his authority with violence. He was keenly alive to the varying personalities of his beasts, naturally, and hence had favorites among them. His especial favorite, who heartily reciprocated the attachment, was the great puma, King, the most intelligent and amiable of all the wild animals that had ever come under his training whip.

As Hansen's success with the animals, during the few months of his experience as assistant, had been altogether phenomenal, his chief felt a qualm of pique upon being warned against the big puma. He had too just an appreciation of Hansen's judgment, however, to quite disregard the warning, and he turned it over curiously in his mind as he went to his dressing-room. Emerging a few minutes later in the black-and-white of faultless evening dress, without a speck on his varnished shoes, he moved down along the front of the cages, addressing to the occupant of each, as he passed, a sharp, authoritative word which brought it to attention.

With the strange, savage smell of the cages in his nostrils, that bitter, acrid pungency to which his senses never grew blunted, a new spirit of understanding was wont to enter Tomaso's brain. He would feel a sudden kinship with the wild creatures, such a direct and instant comprehension as almost justified his fancy that in some previous existence he had himself been a wild man of the jungle and spoken in their tongue. As he looked keenly into each cage, he knew that the animal whose eyes for that moment met his was in untroubled mood. This, till he came to the cage containing the latest addition to his troupe, a large cinnamon bear, which was rocking restlessly to and fro and grumbling to itself. The bear was one which had been long in captivity and well trained. Tomaso had found him docile, and clever enough to be admitted at once to the performing troupe. But to-night the beast's eyes were red with some ill-humor. Twice the trainer spoke to him before he heeded; but then he assumed instantly an air of mildest subservience. The expression of a new-weaned puppy is not more innocently mild than the look which a bear can assume when it so desires.

"Ah, ha! old sport! So it's you that's got a grouch on to-night; I'll keep an eye on you!" he muttered to himself. He snapped his heavy whip once, and the bear obediently sat up on its haunches, its great paws hanging meekly. Tomaso looked it sharply in the eye. "Don't forget, now, and get funny!" he admonished. Then he returned to the first cage, which contained the puma, and went up close to the bars. The great cat came and rubbed against him, purring harshly.

"There ain't nothing the matter with *you*, boy, I reckon," said Tomaso, scratching him affectionately behind the ears. "Andy must have wheels in his head if he thinks I've got to keep my eyes peeled on *your* account."

Out beyond the iron-grilled passage, beyond the lighted canvas walls, the sharp, metallic noises of the workmen setting up the great performing-cage came to a stop. There was a burst of music from the orchestra. That, too, ceased. The restless hum of the unseen masses around the arena died away into an expectant hush. It was time to go on. At the farther end of the passage, by the closed door leading to the performing cage, Hansen appeared. Tomaso opened the puma's cage. King dropped out with a soft thud of his great paws, and padded swiftly down the passage, his master following. Hansen slid wide the door, admitting a glare of light, a vast, intense rustle of excitement; and King marched majestically out into it, eying calmly the tier on climbing tier of eager faces. It was his customary privilege, this, to make the entrance alone, a good half minute ahead of the rest of the troupe; and he seemed to value it. Halfway around the big cage he walked, then mounted his pedestal, sat up very straight, and stared blandly at the audience. A salvo of clapping ran smartly round the tiers—King's usual tribute, which he had so learned to expect that any failure of it would have dispirited him for the whole performance.

Signor Tomaso had taken his stand, whip in hand, just inside the cage, with Hansen opposite him, to see that the animals, on entry, went each straight to his own bench or pedestal. Any mistake in this connection was sure to lead to trouble, each beast being almost childishly jealous of its rights. Inside the long passage an attendant was opening one cage after another; and in a second more the animals began to appear in procession, filing out between the immaculate Signor and the roughly clad Swede. First came a majestic white Angora goat, carrying high his horned and bearded head, and stepping most daintily upon slim, black hoofs. Close behind, and looking just ready to pounce upon him but for dread of the Signor's eye, came slinking stealthily a spotted black-and-yellow leopard, ears back and tail twitching. He seemed ripe for mischief, as he climbed reluctantly on to his pedestal beside the goat; but he knew better than to even bare a claw. And as for the white goat, with his big golden eyes superciliously half closed, he ignored his dangerous neighbor completely, while his jaws chewed nonchalantly on a bit of brown shoe-lace which he had picked up in the passage.

Close behind the leopard came a bored-looking lion, who marched with listless dignity straight to his place. Then another lion, who paused in the doorway and looked out doubtfully, blinking with distaste at the strong light. Tomaso spoke sharply, like the snap of his whip, whereupon the lion ran forward in haste. But he seemed to have forgotten which was his proper pedestal, for he hopped upon the three nearest in turn, only to hop down again with apologetic alacrity at the order of the cracking whip. At last, obviously flustered, he reached a pedestal on which he was allowed to remain. Here he sat, blinking from side to side and apparently much mortified.

The lion was followed by a running wolf, who had shown his teeth savagely when the lion, for a moment, trespassed upon his pedestal. This beast was intensely interested in the audience, and, as soon as he was in his place, turned his head and glared with green, narrowed eyes at the nearest spectators, as if trying to stare them out of countenance. After the wolf came a beautiful Bengal tiger, its black-and-golden stripes shining as if they had been oiled. He glided straight to his stand, sniffed at it superciliously, and then lay down before it. The whip snapped sharply three times, but the tiger only shut his eyes tight. The audience grew hushed. Tomaso ran forward, seized the beast by the back of the neck, and shook him roughly. Whereupon the tiger half rose, opened his great red mouth like a cavern, and roared in his master's face. The audience thrilled from corner to corner, and a few cries came from frightened women.

The trainer paused for an instant, to give full effect to the situation. Then, stooping suddenly, he lifted the tiger's hind-quarters and deposited them firmly on the pedestal, and left him in that awkward position.

"There," he said in a loud voice, "that's all the help you'll get from me!"

The audience roared with instant and delighted appreciation. The tiger gathered up the rest of himself upon his pedestal, wiped his face with his paw, like a cat, and settled down complacently with a pleased assurance that he had done the trick well.

At this moment the attention of the audience was drawn to the entrance, where there seemed to be some hitch. Tomaso snapped his whip sharply, and shouted savage orders, but nothing came forth. Then the big Swede, with an agitated air, snatched up the trainer's pitchfork, which stood close at hand in case of emergency, made swift passes at the empty doorway, and jumped back. The audience was lifted fairly to its feet with excitement. What monster could it be that was giving so much trouble? The next moment, while Tomaso's whip hissed in vicious circles over his head, a plump little drab-colored pug-dog marched slowly out upon the stage, its head held arrogantly aloft. Volleys of laughter crackled around the arena, and the delighted spectators settled, tittering, back into their seats.

The pug glanced searchingly around the cage, then selecting the biggest of the lions as a worthy antagonist, flew at his pedestal, barking furious challenge. The lion glanced down at him, looked

bored at the noise, and yawned. Apparently disappointed, the pug turned away and sought another adversary. He saw King's big tail hanging down beside his pedestal. Flinging himself upon it, he began to worry it as if it were a rat. The next moment the tail threshed vigorously, and the pug went rolling end over end across the stage.

Picking himself up and shaking the sawdust from his coat, the pug growled savagely and curled his little tail into a tighter screw. Bristling with wrath, he tiptoed menacingly back toward the puma's pedestal, determined to wipe out the indignity. This time his challenge was accepted. Tomaso's whip snapped, but the audience was too intent to hear it. The great puma slipped down from his pedestal, ran forward a few steps, and crouched.

With a shrill snarl the pug rushed in. At the same instant the puma sprang, making a splendid tawny curve through the air, and alighted ten feet behind his antagonist's tail. There he wheeled like lightning and crouched. But the pug, enraged at being balked of his vengeance, had also wheeled, and charged again in the same half second. In the next, he had the puma by the throat. With a dreadful screech the great beast rolled over on his side and stiffened out his legs. The pug drew off, eyed him critically to make sure that he was quite dead, then ran, barking shrill triumph, to take possession of the victim's place. Then the whip cracked once more. Whereupon the puma got up, trotted back to his pedestal, mounted it, and tucked the pug protectingly away between his great forepaws.

The applause had not quite died away when a towering, sandy-brown bulk appeared in the entrance to the cage. Erect upon its hind legs, and with a musket on its shoulder, it marched ponderously and slowly around the circle, eyeing each of the sitting beasts—except the wolf—suspiciously as it passed. The watchful eyes of both Signor Tomaso and Hansen noted that it gave wider berth to the puma than to any of the others, and also that the puma's ears, at the moment, were ominously flattened. Instantly the long whip snapped its terse admonition to good manners. Nothing happened, except that the pug, from between the puma's legs, barked insolently. The sandy-brown bulk reached its allotted pedestal,—which was quite absurdly too small for it to mount,—dropped the musket with a clatter, fell upon all fours with a loud *whoof* of relief, and relapsed into a bear.

The stage now set to his satisfaction, Signor Tomaso advanced to the centre of it. He snapped his whip, and uttered a sharp cry which the audience doubtless took for purest Italian. Immediately the animals all descended from their pedestals, and circled solemnly around him in a series of more or less intricate evolutions, all except the bear, who, not having yet been initiated into this beast quadrille, kept his place and looked scornful. At another signal the evolutions ceased, and all the beasts, except one of the lions, hurried back to their places. The lion, with the bashful air of a boy who gets up to "speak his piece" at a school examination, lingered in the middle of the stage. A rope was brought. The Swede took one end of it, the attendant who had brought it took the other, and between them they began to swing it, very slowly, as a great skipping-rope. At an energetic command from Signor Tomaso the lion slipped into the swinging circle, and began to skip in a ponderous and shamefaced fashion. The house thundered applause. For perhaps half a minute the strange performance continued, the whip snapping rhythmically with every descent of the rope. Then all at once, as if he simply could not endure it for another second, the lion bolted, head down, clambered upon his pedestal, and shut his eyes hard as if expecting a whipping. But as nothing happened except a roar of laughter from the seats, he opened them again and glanced from side to side complacently, as if to say, "Didn't I get out of that neatly?"

The next act was a feat of teetering. A broad and massive teeter-board was brought in, and balanced across a support about two feet high. The sulky leopard, at a sign from Tomaso, slouched up to it, pulled one end to the ground, and mounted. At the centre he balanced cautiously for a moment till it tipped, then crept on to the other end, and crouched there, holding it down as if his very life depended on it. Immediately the white goat dropped from his pedestal, minced daintily over, skipped up upon the centre of the board, and mounted to the elevated end. His weight was not sufficient to lift, or even to disturb, the leopard, who kept the other end anchored securely. But the goat seemed to like his high and conspicuous position, for he maintained it with composure and stared around with great condescension upon the other beasts.

The goat having been given time to demonstrate his unfitness for the task he had undertaken, Tomaso's whip cracked again. Instantly King descended from his pedestal, ran over to the teeter-board, and mounted it at the centre. The goat, unwilling to be dispossessed of his high place, stamped and butted at him indignantly, but with one scornful sweep of his great paw the puma brushed him off to the sawdust, and took his place at the end of the board. Snarling and clutching at the cleats, the leopard was hoisted into the air, heavily outweighed. The crowd applauded; but the performance, obviously, was not yet perfect. Now came the white goat's opportunity. He hesitated a moment, till he heard a word from Tomaso. Then he sprang once more upon the centre of the board, faced King, and backed up inch by inch towards the leopard till the latter began to descend. At this point of balance the white goat had one forefoot just on the pivot of the board. With a dainty, dancing motion, and a proud tossing of his head, he now threw his weight slowly backward and forward. The great teeter worked to perfection. Signor Tomaso was kept bowing to round after round of applause while the leopard, the goat, and King returned proudly to their places.

After this, four of the red-and-yellow uniformed attendants ran in, each carrying a large hoop. They stationed themselves at equal distances around the circumference of the cage, holding the hoops out before them at a height of about four feet from the ground. At the command of

Tomaso, the animals all formed in procession—though not without much cracking of the whip and vehement command—and went leaping one after the other through the hoops—all except the pug, who tried in vain to jump so high, and the bear, who, not knowing how to jump at all, simply marched around and pretended not to see that the hoops were there. Then four other hoops, covered with white paper, were brought in, and head first through them the puma led the way. When it came to the bear's turn, the whip cracked a special signal. Whereupon, instead of ignoring the hoop as he had done before, he stuck his head through it and marched off with it hanging on his neck. All four hoops he gathered up in this way, and, retiring with them to his place, stood shuffling restlessly and grunting with impatience until he was relieved of the awkward burden.

A moment later four more hoops were handed to the attendants. They looked like the first lot; but the attendants took them with hooked handles of iron and held them out at arm's length. Touched with a match, they burst instantly into leaping yellow flames; whereupon all the beasts, except King, stirred uneasily on their pedestals. The whip snapped with emphasis; and all the beasts—except King, who sat eying the flames tranquilly, and the bear, who whined his disapproval, but knew that he was not expected to take part in this act—formed again in procession, and ran at the flaming hoops as if to jump through them as before. But each, on arriving at a hoop, crouched flat and scurried under it like a frightened cat—except the white goat, which pranced aside and capered past derisively. Pretending to be much disappointed in them, Signor Tomaso ordered them all back to their places, and, folding his arms, stood with his head lowered as if wondering what to do about it. Upon this, King descended proudly from his pedestal and approached the blazing terrors. With easiest grace and nonchalance he lifted his lithe body, and went bounding lightly through the hoops, one after the other. The audience stormed its applause. Twice around this terrifying circuit he went, as indifferent to the writhing flames as if they had been so much grass waving in the wind. Then he stopped abruptly, turned his head, and looked at Tomaso in expectation. The latter came up, fondled his ears, and assured him that he had done wonders. Then King returned to his place, elation bristling in his whiskers.

While the flaming hoops were being rushed from the ring and the audience was settling down again to the quiet of unlimited expectation, a particularly elaborate act was being prepared. A massive wooden stand, with shelves and seats at various heights, was brought in. Signor Tomaso, coiling the lash of his whip and holding the heavy handle, with its loaded butt, as a sceptre, took his place on a somewhat raised seat at the centre of the frame. Hansen, with his pitchfork in one hand and a whip like Tomaso's in the other, drew nearer; and the audience, with a thrill, realized that something more than ordinarily dangerous was on the cards. The tiger came and stretched itself at full length before Tomaso, who at once appropriated him as a footstool. The bear and the biggest of the lions posted themselves on either side of their master, rearing up like the armorial supporters of some illustrious escutcheon, and resting their mighty forepaws apparently on their master's shoulders, though in reality on two narrow little shelves placed there for the purpose. Another lion came and laid his huge head on Tomaso's knees, as if doing obeisance. By this time all the other animals were prowling about the stand, peering this way and that, as if trying to remember their places; and the big Swede was cracking his whip briskly, with curt, deep-toned commands, to sharpen up their memories. Only King seemed quite clear as to what he had to do—which was to lay his tawny body along the shelf immediately over the heads of the lion and the bear; but as he mounted the stand from the rear, his ears went back and he showed a curious reluctance to fulfil his part. Hansen's keen eyes noted this at once, and his whip snapped emphatically in the air just above the great puma's nose. Still King hesitated. The lion paid no attention whatever, but the bear glanced up with reddening eyes and a surly wagging of his head. It was all a slight matter, too slight to catch the eye or the uncomprehending thoughts of the audience. But a grave, well-dressed man, with copper-colored face, high cheek-bones and straight, coal-black hair, who sat close to the front, turned to a companion and said:—

“Those men are good trainers, but they don't know everything about pumas. *We* know that there is a hereditary feud between the pumas and the bears, and that when they come together there's apt to be trouble.”

The speaker was a full-blooded Sioux, and a graduate of one of the big Eastern universities. He leaned forward with a curious fire in his deep-set, piercing eyes, as King, unwillingly obeying the mandates of the whip, dropped down and stretched out upon his shelf, his nervous forepaws not more than a foot above the bear's head. His nostrils were twitching as if they smelled something unutterably distasteful, and his thick tail looked twice its usual size. The Sioux, who, alone of all present, understood these signs, laid an involuntary hand of warning upon his companion's knee.

Just what positions the other animals were about to take will never be known. King's sinews tightened. “Ha-ow!” grunted the Sioux, reverting in his excitement to his ancient utterance. There was a lightning sweep of King's paw, a shout from Hansen, a *wah* of surprise and pain from the bear. King leaped back to the top of the stand to avoid the expected counter-stroke. But not against him did the bear's rage turn. The maddened beast seemed to conclude that his master had betrayed him. With a roar he struck at Tomaso with the full force of his terrible forearm. Tomaso was in the very act of leaping forward from his seat, when the blow caught him full on the shoulder, shattering the bones, ripping the whole side out of his coat, and hurling him senseless to the floor.

The change in the scene was instantaneous and appalling. Most of the animals, startled, and

dreading immediate punishment, darted for their pedestals,—*any* pedestals that they found within reach,—and fought savagely for the possession of the first they came to. The bear fell furiously upon the body of Tomaso. Cries and shrieks arose from the spectators. Hansen rushed to the rescue, his fork clutched in both hands. Attendants, armed with forks or iron bars, seemed to spring up from nowhere. But before any one could reach the spot, an appalling screech tore across the uproar, and King's yellow body, launched from the top of the stand, fell like a thunderbolt upon the bear's back.

The shock rolled the bear clean over. While he was clawing about wildly, in the effort to grapple with his assailant, Hansen dragged aside the still unconscious Tomaso, and two attendants carried him hurriedly from the stage.

Audience and stage alike were now in a sort of frenzy. Animals were fighting here and there in tangled groups; but for the moment all eyes were riveted on the deadly struggle which occupied the centre of the stage.

For all that he had less than a quarter the weight and nothing like a quarter the bulk of his gigantic adversary, the puma, through the advantage of his attack, was having much the best of the fight. Hansen had no time for sentiment, no time to concern himself as to whether his chief was dead or alive. His business was to save valuable property by preventing the beasts from destroying each other. It mattered not to him, now, that King had come so effectively to Tomaso's rescue. Prodding him mercilessly with his fork, and raining savage blows upon his head, he strove, in a cold rage, to drive him off; but in vain. But other keepers, meanwhile, had run in with ropes and iron bars. A few moments more and both combatants were securely lassoed. Then they were torn apart by main force, streaming with blood. Blinded by blankets thrown over their heads, and hammered into something like subjection, they were dragged off at a rush and slammed unceremoniously into their dens. With them out of the way, it was a quick matter to dispose of the other fights, though not till after the white goat had been killed to satisfy that ancient grudge of the leopard's, and the wolf had been cruelly mauled for having refused to give up his pedestal to one of the excited lions. Only the pug had come off unscathed, having had the presence of mind to dart under the foundations of the frame at the first sign of trouble, and stay there. When all the other animals had been brought to their senses and driven off, one by one, to their cages, he came forth from his hiding and followed dejectedly, the curl quite taken out of his confident tail. Then word went round among the spectators that Tomaso was not dead—that, though badly injured, he would recover; and straightway they calmed down, with a complacent sense of having got the value of their money. The great cage was taken apart and carried off. The stage was speedily transformed. And two trick comedians, with slippers that flapped a foot beyond their toes, undertook to wipe out the memory of what had happened.

CHAPTER III

The show was touring the larger towns of the Northwest. On the following day it started, leaving Tomaso behind in hospital, with a shattered shoulder and bitter wrath in his heart. At the next town, Hansen took Tomaso's place, but, for two reasons, with a sadly maimed performance. He had not yet acquired sufficient control of the animals to dare all Tomaso's acts; and the troupe was lacking some of its most important performers. The proud white goat was dead. The bear, the wolf, and one of the lions were laid up with their wounds. And as for the great puma, though *he* had come off with comparatively little hurt, his temper had apparently been quite transformed. Hansen could do nothing with him. Whether it was that he was sick for Tomaso, whom he adored, or that he stewed in a black rage over the blows and pitchforkings, hitherto unknown to him, no one could surely say. He would do nothing but crouch, brooding, sullen and dangerous, at the back of his cage. Hansen noted the green light flickering fitfully across his pale, wide eyes, and prudently refrained from pressing matters.

He was right. For, as a matter of fact, it was against the big Swede exclusively, and not against man in general, that King was nursing his grudge. In a dim way it had got into his brain that Hansen had taken sides with the bear against him and Tomaso, and he thirsted for vengeance. At the same time, he felt that Tomaso had deserted him. Day by day, as he brooded, the desire for escape—a desire which he had never known before—grew in his heart. Vaguely, perhaps, he dreamed that he would go and find Tomaso. At any rate, he would go—somewhere, anywhere, away from this world which had turned unfriendly to him. When this feeling grew dominant, he would rise suddenly and go prowling swiftly up and down behind the bars of his cage like a wild creature just caught.

Curiously enough—for it is seldom indeed that Fate responds to the longing of such exiles from the wild—his opportunity came. Late at night the show reached a little town among the foothills. The train had been delayed for hours. The night was dark. Everything was in confusion, and all nerves on edge. The short road from the station to the field where the tents were to be set up was in bad repair, or had never been really a road. It ran along the edge of a steep gully. In the darkness one wheel of the van containing King's cage dropped to the hub into a yawning rut. Under the violence of the jolt a section of the edge of the bank gave way and crashed down to the bottom of the gully, dragging with it the struggling and screaming horses. The cage roof was completely smashed in.

To King's eyes the darkness was but a twilight, pleasant and convenient. He saw an opening big enough to squeeze through; and beyond it, beyond the wild shouting and the flares of swung lanterns, a thick wood dark beneath the paler sky. Before any one could get down to the wreck, he was out and free and away. Crouching with belly to the earth, he ran noiselessly, and gained

the woods before any one knew he had escaped. Straight on he ran, watchful but swift, heading for the places where the silence lay heaviest. Within five minutes Hansen had half the men of the show, with ropes, forks, and lanterns, hot on the trail. Within fifteen minutes, half the male population of the town was engaged in an enthusiastic puma hunt. But King was already far away, and making progress that would have been impossible to an ordinary wild puma. His life among men had taught him nothing about trees, so he had no unfortunate instinct to climb one and hide among the branches to see what his pursuers would be up to. His idea of getting away—and, perhaps, of finding his vanished master—was to keep right on. And this he did, though of course not at top speed, the pumas not being a race of long-winded runners like the wolves. In an hour or two he reached a rocky and precipitous ridge, quite impassable to men except by day. This he scaled with ease, and at the top, in the high solitude, felt safe enough to rest a little while. Then he made his way down the long, ragged western slopes, and at daybreak came into a wild valley of woods and brooks.

By this time King was hungry. But game was plentiful. After two or three humiliating failures with rabbits—owing to his inexperience in stalking anything more elusive than a joint of dead mutton, he caught a fat wood-chuck, and felt his self-respect return. Here he might have been tempted to halt, although, to be sure, he saw no sign of Tomaso, but beyond the valley, still westward, he saw mountains, which drew him strangely. In particular, one uplifted peak, silver and sapphire as the clear day, and soaring supreme over the jumble of lesser summits, attracted him. He knew now that that was where he was going, and thither he pressed on with singleness of purpose, delaying only when absolutely necessary, to hunt or to sleep. The cage, the stage, the whip, Hansen, the bear, even the proud excitement of the flaming hoops, were swiftly fading to dimness in his mind, overwhelmed by the inrush of new, wonderful impressions. At last, reaching the lower, granite-ribbed flanks of old White Face itself, he began to feel curiously content, and no longer under the imperative need of haste.

Here it was good hunting. Yet, though well satisfied, he made no effort to find himself a lair to serve as headquarters, but kept gradually working his way onward up the mountain. The higher he went, the more content he grew, till even his craving for his master was forgotten. Latent instincts began to spring into life, and he lapsed into the movements and customs of the wild puma. Only when he came upon a long, massive footprint in the damp earth by a spring, or a wisp of pungent-smelling fur on the rubbed and clawed bark of a tree, memory would rush back upon him fiercely. His ears would flatten down, his eyes would gleam green, his tail would twitch, and crouching to earth he would glare into every near-by thicket for a sight of his mortal foe. He had not yet learned to discriminate perfectly between an old scent and a new.

About this time a hunter from the East, who had his camp a little farther down the valley, was climbing White Face on the trail of a large grizzly. He was lithe of frame, with a lean, dark, eager face, and he followed the perilous trail with a lack of prudence which showed a very inadequate appreciation of grizzlies. The trail ran along a narrow ledge cresting an abrupt but bushy steep. At the foot of the steep, crouched along a massive branch and watching for game of some sort to pass by, lay the big puma. Attracted by a noise above his head he glanced up, and saw the hunter. It was certainly not Tomaso, but it looked like him; and the puma's piercing eyes grew almost benevolent. He had no ill-feeling to any man but the Swede.

Other ears than those of the puma had heard the unwary hunter's footsteps. The grizzly had caught them and stopped to listen. Yes, he was being followed. In a rage he wheeled about and ran back noiselessly to see who it was that could dare such presumption. Turning a shoulder of rock, he came face to face with the hunter, and at once, with a deep, throaty grunt, he charged.

The hunter had not even time to get his heavy rifle to his shoulder. He fired once, point blank, from the hip. The shot took effect somewhere, but in no vital spot evidently, for it failed to check, even for one second, that terrific charge. To meet the charge was to be blasted out of being instantly. There was but one way open. The hunter sprang straight out from the ledge with a lightning vision of thick, soft-looking bushes far below him. The slope was steep, but by no means perpendicular, and he struck in a thicket which broke the full shock of the fall. His rifle flew far out of his hands. He rebounded, clutching at the bushes; but he could not check himself. Rolling over and over, his eyes and mouth choked with dust and leaves, he bumped on down the slope, and brought up at last, dazed but conscious, in a swampy hole under the roots of a huge over-leaning tree.



"Almost over his head, on a limb not six feet distant, crouched, ready to spring, the biggest puma he had ever seen."

Striving to clear his eyes and mouth, his first realization was that he could not lift his left arm. The next, that he seemed to have jumped from the frying-pan into the fire. His jaws set themselves desperately, as he drew the long hunting-knife from his belt and struggled up to one knee, resolved to at least make his last fight a good one. Almost over his head, on a limb not six feet distant, crouched, ready to spring, the biggest puma he had ever seen. At this new confronting of doom his brain cleared, and his sinews seemed to stretch with fresh courage. It was hopeless, of course, as he knew, but his heart refused to recognize the fact. Then he noted with wonder that not at him at all was the puma looking, but far over his head. He followed that look, and again his heart sank, this time quite beyond the reach of hope. There was the grizzly coming headlong down the slope, foam slavering from his red jaws.

Bewildered, and feeling like a rat in a hole, the hunter tried to slip around the base of the tree, desperately hoping to gain some post of vantage whence to get home at least two or three good blows before the end. But the moment he moved, the grizzly fairly hurled himself downwards. The hunter jumped aside and wheeled, with his knife lifted, his disabled left arm against the tree trunk. But in that same instant, a miracle! Noiselessly the puma's tawny length shot out overhead and fell upon the bear in the very mid-rush of the charge.

At once it seemed as if some cataclysmic upheaval were in progress. The air, as it were, went mad with screeches, yells, snarls, and enormous thick gruntings. The bushes went down on every side. Now the bear was on top, now the puma. They writhed over and over, and for some seconds the hunter stared with stupefaction. Then he recovered his wits. He saw that the puma, for some inexplicable reason, had come to his help. But he saw, also, that the gigantic grizzly must win. Instead of slipping off and leaving his ally to destruction, he ran up, waited a moment for the perfect opportunity, and drove his knife to the hilt into the very centre of the back of the bear's neck, just where it joined the skull. Then he sprang aside.

Strangely the noise died away. The huge bulk of the grizzly sank slowly into a heap, the puma still raking it with the eviscerating weapons of his hinder claws. A moment more and he seemed to realize that he had achieved a sudden triumph. Bleeding, hideously mangled, but still, apparently, full of fighting vigor, he disengaged himself from the unresisting mass and looked around him proudly. His wild eyes met those of the hunter, and the hunter had an anxious moment. But the great beast looked away again at once, and seemed, in fact, to forget all about the man's existence. He lay down and commenced licking assiduously at his wounds. Filled with astonishment, and just now beginning to realize the anguish in his broken arm, the hunter stole discreetly away.

After an hour or two the puma arose, rather feebly, passed the body of his slain foe without a glance, and clambered up the slope to the ledge. He wanted a place of refuge now, a retreat that would be safe and cool and dark. Up and up he followed the winding of that narrow trail, and came out at last upon a rocky platform before a black-mouthed cave. He knew well enough that he had killed the owner of the cave, so he entered without hesitation.

Here, for two days, he lay in concealment, licking his wounds. He had no desire to eat; but two or three times, because the wounds fevered him, he came forth and descended the trail a little way to where he had seen a cold spring bubbling from the rocks. His clean blood, in that high, clean air, quickly set itself to the healing of the hurts, and strength flowed back swiftly into his torn sinews. At dawn of the third day he felt himself suddenly hungry, and realizing that he must seek some small game, even though not yet ready for any difficult hunting, he crept forth, just

as the first thin glory of rose light came washing into the cave. But before he started down the trail he paused, and stood staring, with some dim half memory, out across the transparent, hollow spaces, the jumbled hilltops, misty, gray-green forests, and steel-bright loops of water to which he had at last come home.

THE MONARCH OF PARK BARREN

The Monarch of Park Barren

CHAPTER I

From the cold spring lakes and sombre deeps of spruce forest, over which the bald granite peak of Old Saugamauk kept endless guard, came reports of a moose of more than royal stature, whose antlers beggared all records for symmetry and spread. From a home-coming lumber cruiser here, a wandering Indian there, the word came straggling in, till the settlements about the lower reaches of the river began to believe there might be some truth behind the wild tales. Then—for it was autumn, the season of gold and crimson falling leaves, and battles on the lake-shores under the white full moon—there followed stories of other moose seen fleeing in terror, with torn flanks and bleeding shoulders; and it was realized that the prowess of the great moose bull was worthy of his stature and his adornment. Apparently he was driving all the other bulls off the Saugamauk ranges.

By this time the matter became of interest to the guides. The stories gathered in from different quarters, so it was hard to guess just where the gigantic stranger was most likely to be found. To north and northeast of the mountain went the two Armstrongs, seeking the stranger's trail; while to south and southeastward explored the Crimmins boys. If real, the giant bull had to be located; if a myth, he had to be exploded before raising impossible hopes in the hearts of visiting sportsmen.

Then suddenly arrived corroboration of all the stories. It came from Charley Crimmins. He was able to testify with conviction that the giant bull was no figment of Indian's imagination or lumberman's inventive humor. For it was he whose search had been successful.

In fact, he might have been content to have it just a shade less overwhelmingly successful. That there is such a thing as an embarrassment of success was borne in upon him when he found himself jumping madly for the nearest tree, with a moose that seemed to have the stature of an elephant crashing through the thickets close behind him. He reached the tree just in time to swing well up among its branches. Then the tree quivered as the furious animal flung his bulk against it. Crimmins had lost his rifle in the flight. He could do nothing but sit shivering on his branch, making remarks so uncomplimentary that the great bull, if he could have appreciated them, would probably have established himself under that tree till vengeance was accomplished. But not knowing that he had been insulted, he presently grew tired of snorting at his captive, and wandered off through the woods in search of more exciting occupation. Then, indignant beyond words, Charley descended from his retreat, and took his authoritative report in to the Settlements.



"He reached the tree just in time to swing well up among the branches."

At first it was thought that there would be great hunting around Old Saugamauk, till those tremendous antlers should fall a prize to some huntsman not only lucky but rich. For no one who could not pay right handsomely for the chance might hope to be guided to the range where such an unequalled trophy was to be won. But when the matter, in all its authenticated details, came to the ears of Uncle Adam, dean of the guides of that region, he said "No" with an emphasis that left no room for argument. There should be no hunting around the slopes of Saugamauk for

several seasons. If the great bull was the terror they made him out to be, then he had driven all the other bulls from his range, and there was nothing to be hunted but his royal self. "Well," decreed the far-seeing old guide, "we'll let him be for a bit, till his youngsters begin to grow up like him. Then there'll be no heads in all the rest of New Brunswick like them that comes from Old Saugamauk." This decree was accepted, the New Brunswick guides being among those who are wise enough to cherish the golden-egged goose.

In the course of that season the giant moose was seen several times by guides and woodsmen—but usually from a distance, as the inconsiderate impetuosity of his temper was not favorable to close or calm observation. The only people who really knew him were those who, like Charley Crimmins, had looked down upon his grunting wrath from the branches of a substantial tree.

Upon certain important details, however, all observers agreed. The stranger (for it was held that, driven by some southward wandering instinct, he had come down from the wild solitudes of the Gaspé Peninsula) was reckoned to be a good eight inches taller at the shoulders than any other moose of New Brunswick record, and several hundredweight heavier. His antlers, whose symmetry and palmation seemed perfect, were estimated to have a spread of sixty inches at least. That was the conservative estimate of Uncle Adam, who had made his observations with remarkable composure from a tree somewhat less lofty and sturdy than he would have chosen had he had the time for choice.

In color the giant was so dark that his back and flanks looked black except in the strongest sunlight. His mighty head, with long, deeply overhanging muzzle, was of a rich brown; while the under parts of his body, and the inner surfaces of his long, straight legs, were of a rusty fawn color. His "bell"—as the shaggy appendix that hangs from the neck of a bull moose, a little below the throat, is called—was of unusual development, and the coarse hair adorning it peculiarly glossy. To bring down such a magnificent prize, and to carry off such a trophy as that unmatched head and antlers, the greatest sportsmen of America would have begrudged no effort or expense. But though the fame of the wonderful animal was cunningly allowed to spread to the ears of all sportsmen, its habitat seemed miraculously elusive. It was heard of on the Upsalquitch, the Nipisiguit, the Dungarvan, the Little Sou'west, but never, by some strange chance, in the country around Old Saugamauk. Visiting sportsmen hunted, spent money, dreamed dreams, followed great trails and brought down splendid heads, all over the Province; but no stranger with a rifle was allowed to see the proud antlers of the monarch of Saugamauk.

The right of the splendid moose to be called the Monarch of Saugamauk was settled beyond all question one moonlight night when the surly old bear who lived in a crevasse far up under the stony crest of the mountain came down and attempted to dispute it. The wild kindreds, as a rule, are most averse to unnecessary quarrels. Unless their food or their mates are at stake, they will fight only under extreme provocation, or when driven to bay. They are not ashamed to run away, rather than press matters too far and towards a doubtful issue. A bull moose and a bear are apt to give each other a wide berth, respecting each other's prowess. But there are exceptions to all rules, especially where bears, the most individual of our wild cousins, are concerned. And this bear was in a particularly savage mood. Just in the mating season he had lost his mate, who had been shot by an Indian. The old bear did not know what had happened to her, but he was ready to avenge her upon any one who might cross his path.

Unluckily for him, it was the great moose who crossed his path; and the luck was all Charley Crimmins's, who chanced to be the spectator of what happened there beside the moonlit lake.

Charley was on his way over to the head of the Nipisiguit, when it occurred to him that he would like to get another glimpse of the great beast who had so ignominiously discomfited him. Peeling a sheet of bark from the nearest white birch, he twisted himself a "moose-call," then climbed into the branches of a willow which spread out over the edge of the shining lake. From this concealment he began to utter persuasively the long, uncouth, melancholy call by which the moose cow summons her mate.

Sometimes these vast northern solitudes seem, for hours together, as if they were empty of all life. It is as if a wave of distrust had passed simultaneously over all the creatures of the wild. At other times the lightest occasion suffices to call life out of the stillness. Crimmins had not sounded more than twice his deceptive call, when the bushes behind the strip of beech crackled sharply. But it was not the great bull that stepped forth into the moonlight. It was a cow moose. She came out with no effort at concealment, and walked up and down the beach, angrily looking for her imagined rival.

When the uneasy animal's back was towards him, Crimmins called again, a short, soft call. The cow jumped around as if she had been struck, and the stiff hair along her neck stood up with jealous rage. But there was no rival anywhere in sight, and she stood completely mystified, shaking her ungainly head, peering into the dark undergrowth, and snorting tempestuously as if challenging the invisible rival to appear. Then suddenly her angry ridge of hair sank down, she seemed to shrink together upon herself, and with a convulsive bound she sprang away from the dark undergrowth, landing with a splash in the shallow water along shore. At the same instant the black branches were burst apart, and a huge bear, forepaws upraised and jaws wide open, launched himself forth into the open.

Disappointed at missing his first spring, the bear rushed furiously upon his intended victim, but the cow, for all her apparent awkwardness, was as agile as a deer. Barely eluding his rush, she went shambling up the shore at a terrific pace, plunged into the woods, and vanished. The bear checked himself at the water's edge, and turned, holding his nose high in the air, as if disdaining to acknowledge that he had been foiled.

Crimmins hesitatingly raised his rifle. Should he bag this bear, or should he wait and sound his call again a little later, in the hope of yet summoning the great bull? As he hesitated, and the burly black shape in the moonlight also stood hesitating, the thickets rustled and parted almost beneath him, and the mysterious bull strode forth with his head held high.

He had come in answer to what he thought was the summons of his mate; but when he saw the bear, his rage broke all bounds. He doubtless concluded that the bear had driven his mate away. With a bawling roar he thundered down upon the intruder.

The bear, as we have seen, was in no mood to give way. His small eyes glowed suddenly red with vengeful fury, as he wheeled and gathered himself, half crouching upon his haunches, to meet the tremendous attack. In this attitude all his vast strength was perfectly poised, ready for use in any direction. The moose, had he been attacking a rival of his own kind, would have charged with antlers down, but against all other enemies the weapons he relied upon were his gigantic hoofs, edged like chisels. As he reached his sullenly waiting antagonist he reared on his hind-legs, towering like a black rock about to fall and crush whatever was in its path. Like pile-drivers his fore-hoofs struck downwards, one closely following the other.

The bear swung aside as lightly as a weasel, and eluded, but only by a hair's breadth, that destructive stroke. As he wheeled he delivered a terrific, swinging blow, with his armed forepaw, upon his assailant's shoulder.

The blow was a fair one. Any ordinary moose bull would have gone down beneath it, with his shoulder-joint shattered to splinters. But this great bull merely staggered, and stood for a second in amazement. Then he whipped about and darted upon the bear with a sort of hoarse scream, his eyes flashing with a veritable madness. He neither reared to strike, nor lowered his antlers to gore, but seemed intent upon tearing the foe with his teeth, as a mad horse might. At the sight of such resistless fury Crimmins involuntarily tightened his grip on his branch and muttered: "That ain't no *moose!* It's a—" But before he could finish his comparison, astonishment stopped him. The bear, unable with all his strength and weight to withstand the shock of that straight and incredibly swift charge, had been rolled over and over down the gentle slope of the beach. At the same moment the moose, blinded by his rage and unable to check himself, had tripped over a log that lay hidden in the bushes, and fallen headlong on his nose.

Utterly cowed by the overwhelming completeness of this overthrow, the bear was on his feet again before his conqueror, and scurrying to refuge like a frightened rat. He made for the nearest tree, and that nearest tree, to Crimmins's dismay, was Crimmins's. The startled guide swung himself hastily to a higher branch which stretched well out over the water.

Before the great bull could recover his footing, the fugitive had gained a good start. But desperately swift though he was, the doom that thundered behind him was swifter, and caught him just as he was scrambling into the tree. Those implacable antlers ploughed his hind-quarters remorselessly, till he squealed with pain and terror. His convulsive scrambling raised him, the next instant, beyond reach of that punishment; but immediately the great bull reared, and struck him again and again with his terrible hoofs, almost crushing the victim's maimed haunches. The bear bawled again, but maintained his clutch of desperation, and finally drew himself up to a safe height, where he crouched on a branch, whimpering pitifully, while the victor raged below.

At this moment the bear caught sight of Crimmins eyeing him steadily. To the cowed beast this was a new peril menacing him. With a frightened glance he crawled out on another branch, as far as it could be trusted to support his weight. And there he clung, huddled and shivering like a beaten puppy, looking from the man to the moose, from the moose to the man, as if he feared they might both jump at him together.

But the sympathies of Crimmins were now entirely with the unfortunate bear, his fellow-prisoner, and he looked down at the arrogant tyrant below with a sincere desire to humble his pride with a rifle-bullet. But he was too far-seeing a guide for that. He contented himself with climbing a little lower till he attracted the giant's attention to himself, and then dropping half a handful of tobacco, dry and powdery, into those snorting red nostrils.

It was done with nice precision, just as the giant drew in his breath. He got the fullest benefit of the pungent dose; and such trivial matters as bears and men were instantly forgotten in the paroxysms which seized him. His roaring sneezes seemed as if they would rend his mighty bulk asunder. He fairly stood upon his head, burrowing his muzzle into the moist leafage, as he strove to purge the exasperating torment from his nostrils. Crimmins laughed till he nearly fell out of the tree, while the bear forgot to whimper as he stared in terrified bewilderment. At last the moose stuck his muzzle up in the air and began backing blindly over stones and bushes, as if trying to get away from his own nose. Plump into four or five feet of icy water he backed. The shock seemed to give him an idea. He plunged his head under, and fell to wallowing and snorting and raising such a prodigious disturbance that all the lake shores rang with it. Then he bounced out upon the beach again, and dashed off through the woods as if a million hornets were at his ears.

Weak with laughter, Crimmins climbed down out of his refuge, waved an amiable farewell to the stupefied bear, and resumed the trail for the Nipisiguit.

CHAPTER II

For the next two years the fame of the great moose kept growing, adding to itself various wonders and extravagances till it assumed almost the dimensions of a myth. Sportsmen came from all over the world in the hope of bagging those unparalleled antlers. They shot moose, caribou, deer, and bear, and went away disappointed only in one regard. But at last they began to swear that the giant was a mere fiction of the New Brunswick guides, designed to lure the hunters. The guides, therefore, began to think it was time to make good and show their proofs. Even Uncle Adam was coming around to this view, when suddenly word came from the Crown Land Department at Fredericton that the renowned moose must not be allowed to fall to any rifle. A special permit had been issued for his capture and shipment out of the country, that he might be the ornament of a famous Zoölogical Park and a lively proclamation of what the New Brunswick forests could produce.

The idea of taking the King of Saugamauk alive seemed amusing to the guides, and to Crimmins particularly. But Uncle Adam, whose colossal frame and giant strength seemed to put him peculiarly in sympathy with the great moose bull, declared that it could and should be done, for he would do it. Upon this, scepticism vanished, even from the smile of Charley Crimmins, who voiced the general sentiment when he said,—

“Uncle Adam ain’t the man to bite off any more than he can chew!”

But Uncle Adam was in no hurry. He had such a respect for his adversary that he would not risk losing a single point in the approaching contest. He waited till the mating season and the hunting season were long past, and the great bull’s pride and temper somewhat cooled. He waited, moreover, for the day to come—along towards midwinter—when those titanic antlers should loosen at their roots, and fall off at the touch of the first light branch that might brush against them. This, the wise old woodsman knew, would be the hour of the King’s least arrogance. Then, too, the northern snows would be lying deep and soft and encumbering, over all the upland slopes whereon the moose loved to browse.

Along toward mid-February word came to Uncle Adam that the Monarch had “yarded up,” as the phrase goes, on the southerly slope of Old Saugamauk, with three cows and their calves of the previous spring under his protection. This meant that, when the snow had grown too deep to permit the little herd to roam at will, he had chosen a sheltered area where the birch, poplar, and cherry, his favorite forage, were abundant, and there had trodden out a maze of deep paths which led to all the choicest browsing, and centred about a cluster of ancient firs so thick as to afford covert from the fiercest storms. The news was what the wise old woodsman had been waiting for. With three of his men, a pair of horses, a logging-sled, axes, and an unlimited supply of rope, he went to capture the King.

It was a clear, still morning, so cold that the great trees snapped sharply under the grip of the bitter frost. The men went on snowshoes, leaving the teams hitched in a thicket on the edge of a logging road some three or four hundred yards from the “moose-yard.” The sun glittered keenly on the long white alleys which led this way and that at random through the forest. The snow, undisturbed and accumulating for months, was heaped in strange shapes over hidden bushes, stumps, and rocks. The tread of the snowshoes made a furtive crunching sound as it rhythmically broke the crisp surface.

Far off through the stillness the great moose, lying with the rest of the herd in their shadowy covert, caught the ominous sound. He lurched to his feet and stood listening, while the herd watched him anxiously, awaiting his verdict as to whether that strange sound meant peril or no.

For reasons which we have seen, the giant bull knew little of man, and that little not of a nature to command any great respect. Nevertheless, at this season of the year, his blood cool, his august front shorn of its ornament and defence, he was seized with an incomprehensible apprehension. After all, as he felt vaguely, there was an unknown menace about man; and his ear told him that there were several approaching. A few months earlier he would have stamped his huge hoofs, thrashed the bushes with his colossal antlers, and stormed forth to chastise the intruders. But now, he sniffed the sharp air, snorted uneasily, drooped his big ears, and led a rapid but dignified retreat down one of the deep alleys of his maze.

This was exactly what Uncle Adam had looked for. His object was to force the herd out of the maze of alleys, wherein they could move swiftly, and drive them floundering through the deep, soft snow, which would wear them out before they could go half a mile. Spreading his men so widely that they commanded all trails by which the fugitives might return, he followed up the flight at a run. And he accompanied the pursuit with a riot of shouts and yells and laughter, designed to shake his quarry’s heart with the fear of the unusual. Wise in all woodcraft, Uncle Adam knew that one of the most daunting of all sounds, to the creatures of the wild, was that of human laughter, so inexplicable and seemingly so idle.

At other times the great bull would merely have been enraged at this blatant clamor and taken it as a challenge. But now he retreated to the farthest corner of his maze. From this point there were but two paths of return, and along both the uproar was closing in upon him. Over the edge of the snow—which was almost breast-high to him, and deep enough to bury the calves, hopelessly deep, indeed, for any of the herd but himself to venture through—he gave a wistful look towards the depths of the cedar swamps in the valley, where he believed he could baffle all pursuers. Then his courage—but without his autumnal fighting rage—came back to him. His herd was his care. He crowded the cows and calves between himself and the snow, and turned to face his pursuers as they came running and shouting through the trees.

When Uncle Adam saw that the King was going to live up to his kingly reputation and fight

rather than be driven off into the deep snow, he led the advance more cautiously till his forces were within twenty-five or thirty paces of the huddling herd. Here he paused, for the guardian of the herd was beginning to stamp ominously with his great, clacking hoofs, and the reddening light in his eyes showed that he might charge at any instant.

He did not charge, however, because his attention was diverted by the strange action of the men, who had stopped their shouting and begun to chop trees. It amazed him to see the flashing axes bite savagely into the great trunks and send the white chips flying. The whole herd watched with wide eyes, curious and apprehensive; till suddenly a tree toppled, swept the hard blue sky, and came down with a crashing roar across one of the runways. The cows and calves bounded wildly, clear out into the snow. But the King, though his eyes dilated with amazement, stood his ground and grunted angrily.

A moment more and another tree, huge-limbed and dense, came down across the other runway. Two more followed, and the herd was cut off from its retreat. The giant bull, of course, with his vast stride and colossal strength, could have smashed his way through and over the barrier; but the others, to regain the safe mazes of the "yard," would have had to make a detour through the engulfing snow.

Though the King was now fairly cornered, Uncle Adam was puzzled to know what to do next. In his hesitation, he felled some more trees, dropping the last one so close that the herd was obliged to crowd back to avoid being struck by the falling top. This, at last, was too much for the King, who had never before known what it was to be crowded. While his followers plunged away in terror, burying themselves helplessly before they had gone a dozen yards, he bawled with fury and charged upon his tormentors.



"For perhaps thirty or forty yards the bull was able to keep up this almost incredible pace."

Though the snow, as we have seen, came up to his chest, the giant's strength and swiftness were such that the woodsmen were taken by surprise, and Uncle Adam, who was in front, was almost caught. In spite of his bulk, he turned and sprang away with the agility of a wildcat; but if his snowshoes had turned and hindered him for one half second, he would have been struck down and trodden to a jelly in the smother of snow. Seeing the imminence of his peril, the other woodsmen threw up their rifles; but Uncle Adam, though extremely busy for the moment, saw them out of the corner of his eye as he ran, and angrily ordered them not to shoot. He knew what he was about, and felt quite sure of himself, though the enemy was snorting at his very heels.

For perhaps thirty or forty yards the bull was able to keep up this almost incredible pace. Then the inexorable pull of the snow began to tell, even upon such thews as his, and his pace slackened. But his rage showed no sign of cooling. So, being very accommodating, Uncle Adam slackened his own pace correspondingly, that his pursuer might not be discouraged. And the chase went on. But it went slower, and slower, and slower, till at last it stopped with Uncle Adam still just about six feet in the lead, and the great moose still blind-mad, but too exhausted to go one foot farther. Then Uncle Adam chuckled softly and called for the ropes. There was kicking, of course, and furious lunging and wild snorting, but the woodsmen were skilful and patient, and the King of Old Saugamauk was conquered. In a little while he lay upon his side, trussed up as securely and helplessly as a papoose in its birch-bark carrying-cradle. There was nothing left of his kingship but to snort regal defiance, to which his captors offered not the slightest retort. In his bonds he was carried off to the settlements, on the big logging-sled, drawn by the patient horses whom he scorned.

After this ignominy, for days the King was submissive, with the sullen numbness of despair. Life for him became a succession of stunning shocks and roaring change. He would be put into strange box-prisons, which would straightway begin to rush terribly through the world with a voice of thunder. Through the cracks in the box he would watch trees and fields and hills race by in madness of flight. He would be taken out of the box, and murmuring crowds would gape at him till the black mane along his neck would begin to rise in something of his old anger. Then some one would drive the crowd away, and he would slip back into his stupor. He did not know which he hated most,—the roaring boxes, the fleeing landscapes, or the staring crowds. At last he came to a loud region where there were no trees, but only what seemed to him vast, towering, naked rocks, red, gray, yellow, brown, full of holes from which issued men in swarms. These terrible rocks ran in endless rows, and through them he came at last to a wide field, thinly scattered with trees. There was no seclusion in it, no deep, dark, shadowy hemlock covert to lie down in; but it was green, and it was spacious, and it was more or less quiet. So when he was turned loose in it, he was almost glad. He lifted his head, with a spark of the old arrogance returning to his eyes. And through dilating nostrils he drank the free air till his vast lungs thrilled with almost forgotten life.

The men who had brought him to the park—this bleak barren he would have called it, had he had the faculty of thinking in terms of human speech, this range more fitted for the frugal caribou than for a ranger of the deep forests like himself—these men stood watching him curiously after they had loosed him from his bonds. For a few minutes he forgot all about them. Then his eyes fell on them, and a heat crept slowly into his veins as he looked. Slowly he began to resume his kingship. His eyes changed curiously, and a light, fiery and fearless, flamed in their depths. His mane began to bristle.

“It’s time for us to get out of this. That fellow’s beginning to remember he has some old scores to settle up!” remarked the Director coolly to the head-keeper and his assistants; and they all stepped backwards, with a casual air, towards the big gate, which stood ajar to receive them. Just as they reached it, the old fire and fury surged back into the exile’s veins, but heated seven fold by the ignominies which he had undergone. With a hoarse and bawling roar, such as had never before been heard in those guarded precincts, he launched himself upon his gaolers. But they nimbly slipped through the gate and dropped the massive bars into their sockets.

They were just in time. The next instant the King had hurled himself with all his weight upon the barrier. The sturdy ironwork and the panels on either side of the posts clanged, groaned, and even yielded a fraction of an inch beneath the shock. But in the rebound they thrust their assailant backward with startling violence. Bewildered, he glared at the obstacle, which looked so slender, yet was so strong to balk him of his vengeance. Then, jarred and aching, he withdrew haughtily to explore his new domain. The Director, gazing after him, nodded with supreme satisfaction.

“Those fellows up in New Brunswick told no lies!” said he.

“He certainly is a peach!” assented the head-keeper heartily. “When he grows his new antlers, I reckon we will have to enlarge the park.”

The great exile found his new range interesting to explore, and began to forget his indignation. Privacy it had not, for the trees at this season were all leafless, and there were no dense fir or spruce thickets into which he could withdraw, to look forth unseen upon this alien landscape. But there were certain rough boulders behind which he could lurk. And there were films of ice, and wraiths of thin snow in the hollows, the chill touch of which helped him to feel more or less at home. In the distance he caught sight of a range of those high, square rocks wherein the men dwelt; and hating them deeply, he turned and pressed on in the opposite direction over a gentle rise and across a little valley; till suddenly, among the trees, he came upon a curious barrier of meshed stuff, something like a gigantic cobweb. Through the meshes he could distinctly see the country beyond, and it seemed to be just the country he desired, more wooded and inviting than what he had traversed. Confidently he pushed upon the woven obstacle; but to his amazement it did not give way before him. He eyed it resentfully. How absurd that so frail a thing should venture to forbid him passage! He thrust upon it again, more brusquely, to be just as brusquely denied. The hot blood blazed to his head, and he dashed himself upon it with all his strength. The impenetrable but elastic netting yielded for a space, then sprang back with an impetuosity that flung him clear off his feet. He fell with a loud grunt, lay for a moment dismayed, then got up and eyed his incomprehensible adversary with a blank stare. He was learning so many strange lessons that it was difficult to assimilate them all at once.

The following morning, when he was feasting on a pile of the willow and poplar forage which he loved, and which had appeared as if by magic close beside the mysterious barrier, he saw some men, perhaps a hundred yards away, throw open a section of the barrier. Forgetting to be angry at their intrusion on his range, he watched them curiously. A moment more, and a little herd of his own kind, apparently quite indifferent to the men, followed them into the range. He was not surprised at their appearance, for his nose had already told him there were moose about. But he was surprised to see them on friendly terms with man.

There were several cows in the herd, with a couple of awkward yearlings; and the King, much gratified, ambled forward with huge strides to meet them and take them under his gracious protection. But a moment later two fine young bulls came into his view, following the rest of the herd at a more dignified pace. The King stopped, lowered his mighty front, laid back his ears like an angry stallion, and grunted a hoarse warning. The stiff black hair along his neck slowly arose and stood straight up.

The two young bulls stared in stupid astonishment at this tremendous apparition. It was not the fighting season, so they had no jealousy, and felt nothing but a cold indifference toward the stranger. But as he came striding down the field his attitude was so menacing, his stature so formidable, that they could not but realize there was trouble brewing. It was contrary to all traditions that they should take the trouble to fight in midwinter, when they had no antlers and their blood was sluggish. Nevertheless, they could not brook to be so affronted, as it were, in their own citadel.

Their eyes began to gleam angrily, and they advanced, shaking their heads, to meet the insolent stranger. The keepers, surprised, drew together close by the gate; while one of them left hurriedly and ran towards a building which stood a little way off among the trees.

As the King swept down upon the herd, bigger and blacker than any bull they had ever seen before, the cows shrank away and stood staring placidly. They were well fed, and for the time indifferent to all else in their sheltered world. Still, a fight is a fight, and if there was going to be one, they were ready enough to look on.

Alas for the right of possession when it runs counter to the right of might! The two young bulls were at home and in the right, and their courage was sound. But when that black whirlwind from the fastnesses of Old Saugamauk fell upon them, it seemed that they had no more rights at all.

Side by side they confronted the onrushing doom. At the moment of impact, they reared and struck savagely with their sharp hoofs. But the gigantic stranger troubled himself with no such details. He merely fell upon them, like a blind but raging force, irresistible as a falling hillside and almost as disastrous. They both went down before him like calves, and rolled over and over, stunned and sprawling.

The completeness of this victory, establishing his supremacy beyond cavil, should have satisfied the King, especially as this was not the mating season and there could be no question of rivalry. But his heart was bursting with injury, and his thirst for vengeance was raging to be glutted. As the vanquished bulls struggled to recover their feet, he bounded upon the nearest and trod him down again mercilessly. The other, meanwhile, fled for his life, stricken with shameless terror; and the exile, leaving his victim, went thundering in pursuit, determined that both should be annihilated. It was a terrifying sight, the black giant, mane erect, neck out-thrust, mouth open, eyes glaring with implacable fury, sweeping down upon the fugitive with his terrific strides.

But just then, when another stride would have sufficed, a strange thing happened! A flying noose settled over the pursuer's head, tightened, jerked his neck aside, and threw him with a violence that knocked the wind clean out of his raging body. While his vast lungs sobbed and gasped to recover the vital air, other nooses whipped about his legs; and before he could recover himself even enough to struggle, he was once more trussed up as he had been by Uncle Adam amid the snows of Saugamauk.

In this ignominious position, his heart bursting with shame and impotence, he was left lying while his two battered victims were lassoed and led away. Since it was plain that the King would not suffer them to live in his kingdom, even as humble subjects, they were to be removed to some more modest domain; for the King, whether he deserved it or not, was to have the best reserved for him.

It was little kingly he felt, the fettered giant, as he lay there panting on his side. The cows came up and gazed at him with a kind of placid scorn, till his furious snortings and the undaunted rage that flamed in his eyes made them draw back apprehensively. Then, the men who had overthrown him returned. They dragged him unceremoniously up to the gate, slipped his bonds, and discreetly put themselves on the other side of the barrier before he could get to his feet. With a grunt he wheeled and faced them with such hate in his eyes that they thought he would once more hurl himself upon the bars. But he had learned his lesson. For a few moments he stood quivering. Then, as if recognizing at last a mastery too absolute even for him to challenge, he shook himself violently, turned away, and stalked off to join the herd.

That evening, about sundown, it turned colder. Clouds gathered heavily, and there was the sense of coming snow in the air. A great wind, rising fitfully, drew down out of the north. Seeing no covert to his liking, the King led his little herd to the top of a naked knoll, where he could look about and choose a shelter. But that great wind out of the north, thrilling in his nostrils, got into his heart and made him forget what he had come for. Out across the alien gloom he stared, across the huddled, unknown masses of the dark, till he thought he saw the bald summit of Old Saugamauk rising out of its forests, till he thought he heard the wind roar in the spruce tops, the dead branches clash and crack. The cows, for a time, huddled close to his massive flanks, expecting some new thing from his vast strength. Then, as the storm gathered, they remembered the shelter which man had provided for them, and the abundant forage it contained. One after the other they turned and filed away slowly down the slopes, through the dim trees, towards the corner where they knew a gate would stand open for them, and then a door into a warm-smelling shed. The King, lost in his dream, did not notice their going. But suddenly, feeling himself alone, he started and looked about. The last of the yearlings, at its mother's heels, was just vanishing through the windy gloom. He hesitated, started to follow, then stopped abruptly. Let them go! They would return to him probably. Turning back to his station on the knoll, he stood with his head held high, his nostrils drinking the cold, while the winter night closed in upon him, and the wind out of his own north rushed and roared solemnly in his face.

THE GRAY MASTER

The Gray Master

CHAPTER I

Why he was so much bigger, more powerful, and more implacably savage than the other members of the gray, spectral pack, which had appeared suddenly from the north to terrorize their lone and scattered clearings, the settlers of the lower Quah-Davic Valley could not guess. Those who were of French descent among them, and full of the old Acadian superstitions, explained it simply enough by saying he was a *loup-garou*, or "wer-wolf," and resigned themselves to the impossibility of contending against a creature of such supernatural malignity and power. But their fellows of English speech, having no such tradition to fall back upon, were mystified and indignant. The ordinary gray, or "cloudy," wolf of the East they knew, though he was so rare south of Labrador that few of them had ever seen one. They dismissed them all, indifferently, as "varmin." But this unaccountable gray ravager was bigger than any two such wolves, fiercer and more dauntless than any ten. Though the pack he led numbered no more than half a dozen, he made it respected and dreaded through all the wild leagues of the Quah-Davic. To make things worse, this long-flanked, long-jawed marauder was no less cunning than fierce. When the settlers, seeking vengeance for sheep, pigs, and cattle slaughtered by his pack, went forth to hunt him with dogs and guns, it seemed that there was never a wolf in the country. Nevertheless, either that same night or the next, it was long odds that one or more of those same dogs who had been officious in the hunt would disappear. As for traps and poisoned meat, they proved equally futile. They were always visited, to be sure, by the pack, at some unexpected and indeterminable moment, but treated always with a contumelious scorn which was doubtless all that such clumsy tactics merited. Meanwhile the ravages went on, and the children were kept close housed at night, and cool-eyed old woodsmen went armed and vigilant along the lonely roads. The French *habitant* crossed himself, and the Saxon cursed his luck; and no one solved the mystery.

Yet, after all, as Arthur Kane, the young schoolmaster at Burnt Brook Cross-Roads, began dimly to surmise, the solution was quite simple. A lucky gold-miner, returning from the Klondike, had brought with him not only gold and an appetite, but also a lank, implacable, tameless whelp from the packs that haunt the sweeps of northern timber. The whelp had gnawed his way to freedom. He had found, fought, thrashed, and finally adopted, a little pack of his small, Eastern kin. He had thriven, and grown to the strength and stature that were his rightful heritage. And "the Gray Master of the Quah-Davic," as Kane had dubbed him, was no *loup-garou*, no outcast human soul incarcerated in wolf form, but simply a great Alaskan timber-wolf.

But this, when all is said, is quite enough. A wolf that can break the back of a full-grown collie at one snap of his jaws, and gallop off with the carcass as if it were a chipmunk, is about as undesirable a neighbor, in the night woods, as any *loup-garou* ever devised by the *habitant's* excitable imagination.

All up and down the Quah-Davic Valley the dark spruce woods were full of game,—moose, deer, hares, and wild birds innumerable,—with roving caribou herds on the wide barren beyond the hill-ridge. Nevertheless, the great gray wolf would not spare the possessions of the settlers. His pack haunted the fringes of the settlements with a needless tenacity which seemed to hold a challenge in it, a direct and insolent defiance. And the feeling of resentment throughout the Valley was on the point of crystallizing into a concerted campaign of vengeance which would have left even so cunning a strategist as the Gray Master no choice but to flee or fall, when something took place which quite changed the course of public sentiment. Folk so disagreed about it that all concerted action became impossible, and each one was left to deal with the elusive adversary in his own way.

This was what happened.

In a cabin about three miles from the nearest neighbor lived the Widow Baisley, alone with her son Paddy, a lad under ten years old, and little for his age. One midwinter night she was taken desperately ill, and Paddy, reckless of the terrors of the midnight solitudes, ran wildly to get help. The moon was high and full, and the lifeless backwoods road was a narrow, bright, white thread between the silent black masses of the spruce forest. Now and then, as he remembered afterwards, his ear caught a sound of light feet following him in the dark beyond the roadside. But his plucky little heart was too full of panic grief about his mother to have any room for fear as to himself. Only the excited amazement of his neighbors, over the fact that he had made the journey in safety, opened his eyes to the hideous peril he had come through. Willing helpers hurried back with him to his mother's bedside. And on the way one of them, a keen huntsman who had more than once pitted his woodcraft in vain against that of the Gray Master, had the curiosity to step off the road and examine the snow under the thick spruces. Perhaps imagination misled him, when he thought he caught a glimpse of savage eyes, points of green flame, fading off into the black depths. But there could be no doubt as to the fresh tracks he found in the snow. There they were,—the footprints of the pack, like those of so many big dogs,—and among them the huge trail of the great, far-striding leader. All the way, almost from his threshold, these sinister steps had paralleled those of the hurrying child. Close to the edge of the darkness they ran,—close, within the distance of one swift leap,—yet never any closer!

Why had the great gray wolf, who faced and pulled down the bull moose, and from whose voice the biggest dogs in the settlements ran like whipped curs—why had he and his stealthy pack

spared this easy prey? It was inexplicable, though many had theories good enough to be laughed to scorn by those who had none. The *habitants*, of course, had all their superstitions confirmed, and with a certain respect and refinement of horror added: Here was a *loup-garou* so crafty as to spare, on occasion! He must be conciliated, at all costs. They would hunt him no more, his motives being so inexplicable. Let him take a few sheep, or a steer, now and then, and remember that *they*, at least, were not troubling him. As for the English-speaking settlers, their enmity cooled down to the point where they could no longer get together any concentrated bitterness. It was only a big rascal of a wolf, anyway, scared to touch a white man's child, and certainly nothing for a lot of grown men to organize about. Some of the women jumped to the conclusion that a certain delicacy of sentiment had governed the wolves in their strange forbearance, while others honestly believed that the pack had been specially sent by Providence to guard the child through the forest on his sacred errand. But all, whatever their views, agreed in flouting the young schoolteacher's uninteresting suggestion that perhaps the wolves had not happened, at the moment, to be hungry.

As it chanced, however, even this very rational explanation of Kane's was far from the truth. The truth was that the great wolf had profited by his period of captivity in the hands of a masterful man. Into his fine sagacity had penetrated the conception—hazy, perhaps, but none the less effective—that man's vengeance would be irresistible and inescapable if once fairly aroused. This conception he had enforced upon the pack. It was enough. For, of course, even to the most elementary intelligence among the hunting, fighting kindreds of the wild, it was patent that the surest way to arouse man's vengeance would be to attack man's young. The intelligence lying behind the wide-arched skull of the Gray Master was equal to more intricate and less obvious conclusions than that.

Among all the scattered inhabitants of the Quah-Davic Valley there was no one who devoted quite so much attention to the wonderful gray wolf as did the young school-teacher. His life at the Burnt Brook Cross-Roads, his labors at the little Burnt Brook School, were neither so exacting nor so exciting but that he had time on his hands. His preferred expedients for spending that time were hunting, and studying the life of the wild kindreds. He was a good shot with both rifle and camera, and would serve himself with one weapon or the other as the mood seized him. When life, or his dinner, went ill with him, or he found himself fretting hopelessly for the metropolitan excitement of the little college city where he had been educated, he would choose his rifle. And so wide-reaching, so mysterious, are the ties which enmesh all created beings, that it would seem to even matters up and relieve his feelings wonderfully just to kill something, if only a rabbit or a weasel.

But at other times he preferred the camera.

Naturally Kane was interested in the mysterious gray wolf more than in all the other prowlers of the Quah-Davic put together. He was quite unreasonably glad when the plans for a concerted campaign against the marauder so suddenly fell through. That so individual a beast should have its career cut short by an angry settler's bullet, to avenge a few ordinary pigs or sheep, was a thing he could hardly contemplate with patience. To scatter the pack would be to rob the Quah-Davic solitudes of half their romance. He determined to devote himself to a study of the great wolf's personality and characteristics, and to foil, as far as this could be done without making himself unpopular, such plots as might be laid for the beast's undoing.

Recognizing, however, that this friendly interest might not be reciprocated, Kane chose his rifle rather than his camera as a weapon, on those stinging, blue-white nights when he went forth to seek knowledge of the gray wolf's ways. His rifle was a well-trying repeating Winchester, and he carried a light, short-handled axe in his belt besides the regulation knife; so he had no serious misgivings as he trod the crackling, moonlit snow beneath the moose-hide webbing of his snowshoes. But not being utterly foolhardy, he kept to the open stretches of meadow, or river-bed, or snow-buried lake, rather than in the close shadows of the forest.

But now, when he was so expectant, the wolf-pack seemed to find business elsewhere. For nights not a howl had been heard, not a fresh track found, within miles of Burnt Brook Cross-Roads. Then, remembering that a watched pot takes long to boil, Kane took fishing-lines and bait, and went up the wide, white brook-bed to the deep lake in the hills, whence it launches its shallow flood towards the Quah-Davic. He took with him also for companionship, since this time he was not wolf-hunting, a neighbor's dog that was forever after him—a useless, yellow lump of mongrel dog-flesh, but friendly and silent. After building a hasty shelter of spruce boughs some distance out from shore in the flooding light, he chopped holes through the ice and fell to fishing for the big lake trout that inhabited those deep waters. He had luck. And soon, absorbed in the new excitement, he had forgotten all about the great gray wolf.

It was late, for Kane had slept the early part of the night, waiting for moonrise before starting on his expedition. The air was tingling with windless cold, and ghostly white with the light of a crooked, waning moon. Suddenly, without a sound, the dog crept close against Kane's legs. Kane felt him tremble. Looking up sharply, his eyes fell on a tall, gray form, sitting erect on the tip of a naked point, not a hundred yards away, and staring, not at him, but at the moon.

In spite of himself, Kane felt a pricking in his cheeks, a creeping of the skin under his hair. The apparition was so sudden, and, above all, the cool ignoring of his presence was so disconcerting. Moreover, through that half-sinister light, his long muzzle upstretched towards the moon, and raised as he was a little above the level on which Kane was standing, the wolf looked unnaturally and impossibly tall. Kane had never heard of a wolf acting in this cool, self-possessed, arrogantly confident fashion, and his mind reverted obstinately to the outworn

superstitions of his *habitants* friends. But, after all, it was this wolf, not an ordinary brush-fence wolf, that he was so anxious to study; and the unexpected was just what he had most reason to expect! He was getting what he came for.

Kane knew that the way to study the wild creatures was to keep still and make no noise. So he stiffened into instant immobility, and regretted that he had brought the dog with him. But he need not have worried about the dog, for that intelligent animal showed no desire to attract the Gray Master's notice. He was crouched behind Kane's legs, and motionless except for his shuddering.

For several minutes no one stirred—nothing stirred in all that frozen world. Then, feeling the cold begin to creep in upon him in the stillness, Kane had to lift his thick-gloved hands to chafe his ears. He did it cautiously, but the caution was superfluous. The great wolf apparently had no objection to his moving as much as he liked. Once, indeed, those green, lambent eyes flamed over him, but casually, in making a swift circuit of the shores of the lake and the black fringe of the firs; but for all the interest which their owner vouchsafed him, Kane might as well have been a juniper bush.

Knowing very well, however, that this elaborate indifference could not be other than feigned, Kane was patient, determined to find out what the game was. At the same time, he could not help the strain beginning to tell on him. Where was the rest of the pack? From time to time he glanced searchingly over his shoulder towards the all-concealing fir woods.

At last, as if considering himself utterly alone, the great wolf opened his jaws, stretched back his neck, and began howling his shrill, terrible serenade to the moon. As soon as he paused, came far-off nervous barkings and yelpings from dogs who hated and trembled in the scattered clearings. But no wolf-howl made reply. The pack, for all the sign they gave, might have vanished off the earth. And Kane wondered what strong command from their leader could have kept them silent when all their ancient instincts bade them answer.

As if well satisfied with his music, the great wolf continued to beseech the moon so persistently that at last Kane lost patience. He wanted more variety in the programme. Muttering, "I'll see if I can't rattle your fine composure a bit, my friend!" he raised his rifle and sent a bullet whining over the wolf's head. The wolf cocked his ears slightly and looked about carelessly, as if to say, "What's that?" then coolly resumed his serenade.

Nettled by such ostentatious nonchalance, Kane drove another bullet into the snow within a few inches of the wolf's forefeet. This proved more effective. The great beast looked down at the place where the ball had struck, sniffed at it curiously, got up on all fours, and turned and stared steadily at Kane for perhaps half a minute. Kane braced himself for a possible onslaught. But it never came. Whirling lightly, the Gray Master turned his back on the disturber of his song, and trotted away slowly, without once looking back. He did not make directly for the cover, but kept in full view and easy gunshot for several hundred yards. Then he disappeared into the blackness of the spruce woods. Thereupon the yellow mongrel, emerging from his shelter behind Kane's legs, pranced about on the snow before him with every sign of admiration and relief.

But Kane was too puzzled to be altogether relieved. It was not according to the books for any wolf, great or small, to conduct himself in this supercilious fashion. Looking back along the white bed of the brook, the path by which he must return, he saw that the sinking of the moon would very soon involve it in thick shadow. This was not as he wished it. He had had enough of fishing. Gathering up his now frozen prizes, and strapping the bag that contained them over his shoulder, so as to leave both hands free, he set out for home at the long, deliberate, yet rapid lope of the experienced snowshoer; and the yellow dog, confidence in his companion's prowess now thoroughly established, trotted on heedlessly three or four paces ahead.

Already the shadow of the woods lay halfway across the bed of the brook, but down the middle of the strip of brightness, still some five or six paces in breadth, Kane swung steadily. As he went, he kept a sharp eye on the shadowed edge of his path. He had gone perhaps a mile, when all at once he felt a tingling at the roots of his hair, which seemed to tell him he was being watched from the darkness. Peer as he would, however, he could catch no hint of moving forms; strain his ears as he might, he could hear no whisper of following feet. Moreover, he trusted to the keener senses, keener instincts, of the dog, to give him warning of any furtive approach; and the dog was obviously at ease.

He was just beginning to execrate himself for letting his nerves get too much on edge, when suddenly out from the black branches just ahead shot a long, spectral shape and fell upon the dog. There was one choked yelp—and the dog and the terrible shape vanished together, back into the blackness.

It was all so instantaneous that before Kane could get his rifle up they were gone. Startled and furious, he fired at random, three times, into cover. Then he steadied himself, remembering that the number of cartridges in his chamber was not unlimited. Seeing to it that his axe and knife were both loose for instant action, he stopped and replenished his Winchester. Then he hurried on as fast as he could without betraying haste.

As he went, he was soon vividly conscious that the wolves—not the Gray Master alone, but the whole pack also—were keeping pace with him through the soundless dark beyond the rim of the spruces. But not a hint of their grim companionship could he see or hear. He felt it merely in the creeping of his skin, the elemental stirring of the hair at the back of his neck. From moment to moment he expected the swift attack, the battle for his life. But he was keyed up to it. It was not

fear that made his nerves tingle, but the tense, trembling excitement of the situation. Even against these strange, hidden forces of the forest, his spirit felt sure of victory. He felt as if his rifle would go up and speak, almost of itself, unerringly at the first instant of attack, even before the adversary broke into view. But through all the drawn-out length of those last three miles his hidden adversaries gave no sign, save that once a dead branch, concealed under the snow, snapped sharply. His rifle was at his shoulder, it seemed to him, almost before the sound reached his ear. But nothing came of it. Then a panic-mad rabbit, stretched straight out in flight, darted across the fast narrowing brightness of his path. But nothing followed. And at last, after what seemed to him hours, he came out upon the open pastures overlooking Burnt Brook Settlement. Here he ran on a little way; and then, because the strain had been great, he sat down suddenly upon a convenient stump and burst into a peal of laughter which must have puzzled the wolves beyond measure.

After this, though well aware that the Gray Master's inexplicable forbearance had saved him a battle which, for all his confidence, might quite conceivably have gone against him, Kane's interest in the mysterious beast was uncompromisingly hostile. He was bitter on account of the dog. He felt that the great wolf had put a dishonor upon him; and for a few days he was no longer the impartial student of natural history, but the keen, primitive hunter with the blood-lust hot in his veins. Then this mood passed, or, rather, underwent a change. He decided that the Gray Master was, indeed, too individual a beast to be just snuffed out, but, at the same time, far too dangerous to be left at liberty.

And now all the thought and effort that could be spared from his daily duties at the Cross-Roads were bent to the problem of capturing the great wolf alive. He would be doing a service to the whole Quah-Davic Valley. And he would have the pleasure of presenting the splendid captive to his college town, at that time greatly interested in the modest beginnings of a zoölogical garden which its citizens were striving to inaugurate. It thrilled his fancy to imagine a tin placard on the front of a cage in the little park, bearing the inscription—

CANIS OCCIDENTALIS.
EASTERN NORTH AMERICA.
PRESENTED BY ARTHUR KANE, ESQ.

After a few weeks of assiduous trapping, however, Kane felt bound to acknowledge that this modest ambition of his seemed remote from fulfilment. Every kind of trap he could think of, that would take a beast alive, he tried in every kind of way. And having run the whole insidious gamut, he would turn patiently to run it all over again. Of course, the result was inevitable, for no beast, not even such a one as the Gray Master, is a match, in the long run, for a man who is in earnest. Yet Kane's triumph, when it blazed upon his startled eyes at last, was indirect. In avoiding, and at the same time uncovering and making mock of, Kane's traps, the great wolf put his foot into another, a powerful bear-trap, which a cunning old trapper had hidden near by, without bait. The trap was secured to a tree by a stout chain—and rage, strain, tear as he might, the Gray Master found himself snared. In his silent fury he would probably have gnawed off the captive foot, for the sake of freedom. But before he came to that, Kane arrived and occupied his attention fully.

Kane's disappointment, at finding the splendid prize in another trap than his own, was but momentary. He knew his successful rival would readily part with his claims, for due consideration. But he was puzzled as to what should be done in the immediate emergency. He wanted to go back home for help, for ropes, straps, and a muzzle with which he had provided himself; but he was afraid lest, in his absence, the trapper might arrive and shoot the captive, for the sake of the pelt and the bounty. In his uncertainty he waited, hoping that the trapper might come soon; and by way of practice for the serious enterprise that would come later, as well as to direct the prisoner's mind a little from his painful predicament, Kane began trying to lasso him with a coil of heavy cord which he carried.

His efforts in this direction were not altogether successful, but the still fury which they aroused in the great wolf's breast doubtless obscured the mordant anguish in his foot. One terrific leap at his enemy, resulting in an ignominious overthrow as the chain stopped him in mid-air, had convinced the subtle beast of the vanity of such tactics. Crouching back, he eyed his adversary in silence, with eyes whose hatred seemed to excoriate. But whenever the running noose at the end of the cord came coiling swiftly at his head, with one lightning snap of his long teeth he would sever it as with a knife. By the time Kane had grown tired of this diversion the cord was so full of knots that no noose would any longer run.

But at this point the old trapper came slouching up on his snowshoes, a twinkle of elation in his shrewd, frosty, blue eyes.

"I reckon we'll show the varmint now as how he ain't no *loup-garou!*" he remarked, lightly swinging his axe.

But Kane hastily intervened.

"Please don't kill him, Dave!" he begged. "I want him, bad! What'll you take for him?"

"Just as he stands?" demanded the old trapper, with a chuckle. "I ain't a-goin' to deliver the goods to yer door, ye know!"

"No," laughed Kane, "just as he stands, right here!"

"Well, seein' as it's you, I don't want no more'n what his pelt'ld fetch, an' the bounty on his nose," answered the trapper.

"All right," said Kane. "You wait here a bit, will you, an' keep him amused so's he won't gnaw his paw off; an' I'll run back to the Cross-Roads and get some rope and things I guess I'll be needing."

When he got back with rope, straps, a big mastiff-muzzle, and a toboggan, he found Dave in a very bad humor, and calling the watchful, silent, crouching beast hard names. In his efforts to amuse himself by stirring that imperturbable and sinister quiet into action, he had come just within the range of the Gray Master's spring. Swift as that spring was, that of the alert backwoodsman was just swift enough to elude it—in part. Dave's own hide had escaped, but his heavy jacket of homespun had had the back ripped clean out of it.

But now, for all his matchless strength, courage, and craft, the Gray Master's game was played out. The fickle Fates of the wild had pronounced against him. He could not parry two flying nooses at once. And presently, having been choked for a few moments into unconsciousness, he awoke to find himself bound so that he could not move a leg, and his mighty jaws imprisoned in a strange cage of straps and steel. He was tied upon the toboggan, and being dragged swiftly through the forest—that free forest of which he had so long felt himself master—at the heels of his two conquerors. His only poor consolation was that the hideous, crunching thing had been removed from his bleeding paw, which, however, anguished cruelly for the soothing of his tongue.

CHAPTER II

During the strenuous and dangerous weeks while Kane was gaoler to his dreaded captive, his respect for the grim beast's tameless spirit by no means diminished; but he had no shadow of misgiving as to the future to which he destined his victim. He felt that in sending the incomparable wolf to the gardens, where he would be well cared for, and at the same time an educative influence, he was being both just and kind. And it was with feelings of unmixed delight that he received a formal resolution of gratitude from the zoological society for his valued and in some respects unique donation.

It was about a year and a half later that Kane had occasion to revisit the city of his Alma Mater. As soon as possible he hurried to inspect the little gardens, which had already marched so far towards success as to be familiarly styled "The Zoo." There were two or three paddocks of deer, of different North American species—for the society was inclined to specialize on the wild kindreds of native origin. There were moose, caribou, a couple of bears, raccoons, foxes, porcupines, two splendid pumas, a rather flea-bitten and toothless tiger, and the Gray Master, solitary in his cage!

A sure instinct led Kane straight to that cage, which immediately adjoined the big double cage of the pumas. As he approached, he caught sight of a tall, gray shape pacing, pacing, pacing, pacing to and fro behind the bars with a sort of measured restlessness that spoke an immeasurable monotony. When he reached the front of the cage, Kane saw that the great wolf's eyes were noting nothing of what was about him, but dim with some far-off vision. As he marked the look in them, and thought of what they must be remembering and aching for, his heart began to smite him. He felt his first pang of self-reproach, for having doomed to ignominious exile and imprisonment this splendid creature who had deserved, at least, to die free. As he mused over this point, half angrily, the Gray Master suddenly paused, and his thin nostrils wrinkled. Perhaps there still clung about Kane's clothes some scent of the spruce woods, some pungent breath of the cedar swamps. He turned and looked Kane straight in the eyes.

There was unmistakable recognition in that deep stare. There was also, to Kane's sensitive imagination, a tameless hate and an unspeakable but dauntless despair. Convicted in his own mind of a gross and merciless misunderstanding of his wild kindreds, whom he professed to know so well, he glanced up and saw the painted placard staring down at him, exactly as he had anticipated--

CANIS OCCIDENTALIS.
EASTERN NORTH AMERICA.
PRESENTED BY ARTHUR KANE, ESQ.

The sight sickened him. He had a foolish impulse to tear it down and to abase himself with a plea for pardon before the silent beast behind the bars. But when he looked again, the Gray Master had turned away, and was once more, with indrawn, far-off vision in his eyes, pacing, pacing, pacing to and fro. Kane felt overwhelmed with the intolerable weariness of it, as if it had been going on, just like that, ever since he had pronounced this doom upon his vanquished adversary, and as if it would go on like that forever. In vain by coaxing word, by sharp, sudden whistle, by imitations of owl, loon, and deer calls, which brought all the boys in the place admiringly about him, did he strive to catch again the attention of the captive. But not once more, even for the fleeting fraction of a second, would the Gray Master turn his eyes. And presently, angry and self-reproachful, Kane turned on his heel and went home, pursued by the enthusiasm of the small boys.

After this, Kane went nearly every day to the little "Zoo"; but never again did he win the smallest hint of notice from the Gray Master. And ever that tireless pacing smote him with bitterest self-reproach. Half unconsciously he made it a sort of penance to go and watch his victim, till at last he found himself indulging in sentimental, idiotic notions of trying to ransom the prisoner. Realizing that any such attempt would make him supremely ridiculous, and that such a dangerous and powerful creature could not be set free anywhere, he consoled himself

with a resolve that never again would he take captive any of the freedom-loving, tameless kindreds of the wilderness. He would kill them and have cleanly done with it, or leave them alone.

One morning, thinking to break the spell of that eternal, hopeless pacing by catching the Gray Master at his meals, Kane went up to the gardens very early, before any of the usual visitors had arrived. He found that the animals had already been fed. The cages were being cleaned. He congratulated himself on his opportune arrival, for this would give him a new insight into the ways of the beasts with their keepers.

The head-keeper, as it chanced, was a man of long experience with wild animals, in one of the chief zoölogical parks of the country. Long familiarity, however, had given him that most dangerous gift, contempt. And he had lost his position through that fault most unforgivable in an animal keeper, drunkenness. Owing to this fact, the inexperienced authorities of this little "Zoo" had been able to obtain his services at a comparatively moderate wage—and were congratulating themselves on the possession of a treasure.

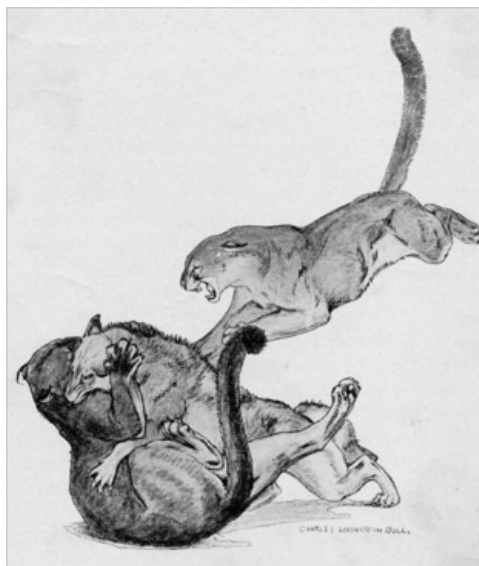
On this particular morning, Biddell was not by any means himself. He was cleaning the cage of the two pumas, and making at the same time desperate efforts to keep his faculties clear and avoid betraying his condition. The two big cats seemed to observe nothing peculiar in his manner, and obeyed him, sulkily, as usual; but Kane noticed that the great wolf, though pacing up and down according to his custom, had his eyes on the man in the next cage, instead of upon his own secret visions. Biddell had driven the two pumas back through the door which led from the open cage to the room which served them for a den, and closed the door on them. Then, having finished his duties there, he unfastened the strong door between this cage and that of the Gray Master, and stepped through, leaving the door slightly ajar.

Biddell was armed, of course, with a heavy-pronged fork, but he carried it carelessly as he went about his work, as if he had long since taught the sombre wolf to keep at a distance. But to-day the wolf acted curiously. He backed away in silence, as usual, but eyed the man fixedly with a look which, as it seemed to Kane, showed anything rather than fear. The stiff hair rose slightly along his neck and massive shoulders. Kane could not help congratulating himself that he was not in the keeper's place. But he felt sure everything was all right, as Biddell was supposed to know his business.

When Biddell came to the place where the wolf was standing, the latter made way reluctantly, still backing, and staring with that sinister fixity which Kane found so impressive. He wondered if Biddell noticed. He was just on the point of speaking to him about it, through the bars, when he chanced to glance aside to the cage of the pumas. Biddell, in his foggy state of mind, had forgotten to close an inner door connecting the two rooms in the rear. The pumas had quietly passed through, and emerged again into their cage by the farther entrance. Catching sight of the door into the wolf's cage standing ajar, they had crept up to it; and now, with one great noiseless paw, the leader of the two was softly pushing it open.

Kane gave an inarticulate yell of warning. No words were needed to translate that warning to the keeper, who was sobered completely as he flashed round and saw what was happening. With a sharp command he rushed to drive the pumas back and close the gate. But one was already through, and the other blocked the way.

At this tense instant, while Kane glanced swiftly aside to see if any help were in sight, the Gray Master launched himself across the cage. Kane could not see distinctly, so swiftly did it happen, whether the man or the intruding puma was the object of that mad rush. But in the next second the man was down, on his face, with the silent wolf and the screeching puma locked in a death grapple on top of him.



"Then the second puma pounced."

Horried, and yelling for help, Kane tore at the bars, but there was no way of getting in, the

door being locked. He saw that the wolf had secured a hold upon the puma's throat, but that the great cat's claws were doing deadly work. Then the second puma pounced, with a screech, upon the Gray Master's back, bearing him down.

At this moment Biddell rolled out from under the raving, writhing heap, and staggered to his feet, bleeding, but apparently uninjured. With his fork and his booted foot he threw himself upon the combatants furiously, striving to separate them. After what seemed to Kane an age he succeeded in forcing off the second puma and driving it through the gate, which he shut. Then he returned to the fight.

But he had little more to do now, for the fight was over. Though no wolf is supposed to be a fair match for a puma, the Gray Master, with his enormous strength and subtle craft, might perhaps have held his own against his first antagonist alone. But against the two he was powerless. The puma, badly torn, now crouched snarling upon his unresisting body. Biddell forced the victor off and drove him into a corner, where he lay lashing his sides with heavy, twitching tail.

The keeper was sober enough now. One long look at the great wolf's body satisfied him it was all over. He turned and saw Kane's white face pressed against the bars. With a short laugh he shook himself, to make sure he was all sound, then pushed the body of the Gray Master gently with his foot. Yet there was respect, not disrespect, in the gesture.

"I wouldn't have had that happen for a thousand dollars, Mr. Kane!" said he in a voice of keen regret. "That was a great beast, an' we'll never get another wolf to match him."

Kane was on the point of saying that it would *not* have happened but for certain circumstances which it was unnecessary for him to specify. He realized, however, that he was glad it had happened, glad the long pacing, pacing, pacing was at an end, glad the load of his self-reproach was lifted off. So he said something quite different.

"Well, Biddell, he's *free*! And maybe, when all's said, that was just what he was after!"

Then he turned and strode hurriedly away, more content in his heart than he had felt for days.

THE SUN-GAZER

The Sun-Gazer

CHAPTER I

To Jim Horner it seemed as if the great, white-headed eagle was in some way the uttered word of the mountain and the lake—of the lofty, solitary, granite-crested peak, and of the deep, solitary water at its base. As his canoe raced down the last mad rapid, and seemed to snatch breath again as it floated out upon the still water of the lake, Jim would rest his paddle across the gunwales and look upward expectantly. First his keen, far-sighted, gray eyes would sweep the blue arc of sky, in search of the slow circling of wide, motionless wings. Then, if the blue was empty of this far shape, his glance would range at once to a dead pine standing sole on a naked and splintered shoulder of the mountain which he knew as "Old Baldy." There he was almost sure to see the great bird sitting, motionless and majestic, staring at the sun. Floating idly and smoking, resting after his long battle with the rapids, he would watch, till the immensity and the solitude would creep in upon his spirit and oppress him. Then, at last, a shrill yelp, far off and faint, but sinister, would come from the pine-top; and the eagle, launching himself on open wings from his perch, would either wheel upward into the blue, or flap away over the serried fir-tops to some ravine in the cliffs that hid his nest.

One day, when Jim came down the river and stopped, as usual, to look for the great bird, he scanned in vain both sky and cliff-side. At last he gave up the search and paddled on down the lake with a sense of loss. Something had vanished from the splendor of the solitude. But presently he heard, close overhead, the beat and whistle of vast wings, and looking up, he saw the eagle passing above him, flying so low that he could catch the hard, unwinking, tameless stare of its black and golden eyes as they looked down upon him with a sort of inscrutable challenge. He noted also a peculiarity which he had never seen in any other eagle. This one had a streak of almost black feathers immediately over its left eye, giving it a heavy and sinister eyebrow. The bird carried in the clutch of its talons a big, glistening lake trout, probably snatched from the fish-hawk; and Jim was able to take note of the very set of its pinion-feathers as the wind hummed in their tense webs. Flying with a massive power quite unlike the ease of his soaring, the eagle mounted gradually up the steep, passed the rocky shoulder with its watch-tower pine, and disappeared over the edge of a ledge which looked to Horner like a mere scratch across the face of the mountain.

"There's where his nest is, sure!" muttered Horner to himself. And remembering that cold challenge in the bird's yellow stare, he suddenly decided that he wanted to see an eagle's nest. He had plenty of time. He was in no particular hurry to get back to the settlement and the gossip of the cross-roads store. He turned his canoe to land, lifted her out and hid her in the bushes, and struck back straight for the face of "Old Baldy."

The lower slope was difficult to climb, a tangle of tumbled boulders and fallen trunks, mantled in the soundless gloom of the fir-forest. Skilled woodsman though he was, Horner's progress was so slow, and the windless heat became so oppressive to his impatience, that he was beginning to think of giving up the idle venture, when suddenly he came face to face with a perpendicular and impassable wall of cliff. This curt arrest to his progress was just what was needed to stiffen his wavering resolution. He understood the defiance which his ready fancy had found in the stare of the eagle. Well, he had accepted the challenge. He would not be baffled by a rock. If he could not climb over it, he would go round it; but he would find the nest.

With an obstinate look in his eyes, Horner began to work his way along the foot of the cliff towards the right. Taking advantage of every inch of ascent that he could gain, he at last found, to his satisfaction, that he had made sufficient height to clear the gloom of the woods. As he looked out over their tops, a light breeze cooled his wet forehead, and he pressed on with fresh vigor. Presently the slope grew a trifle easier, the foothold surer, and he mounted more rapidly. The steely lake, and the rough-ridged, black-green sea of the fir-tops began to unroll below him. At last he rounded an elbow of the steep, and there before him, upthrust perhaps a hundred feet above his head, stood the outlying shoulder of rock, crowned with its dead pine, on which he was accustomed to see the eagle sitting. Even as he looked, motionless, there came a rushing of great wings; and suddenly there was the eagle himself, erect on his high perch, and staring, as it seemed to Horner, straight into the sun.

When Horner resumed his climbing, the great bird turned his head and gazed down upon him with an ironic fixity which betrayed neither dread nor wonder. Concluding that the nest would be lying somewhere within view of its owner's watch-tower, Horner now turned his efforts towards reaching the dead pine. With infinite difficulty, and with a few bruises to arm and leg, he managed to cross the jagged crevice which partly separated the jutting rock-pier from the main face of the cliff. Then, laboriously and doggedly, he dragged himself up the splintered slope, still being forced around to the right, till there fell away below him a gulf into which it was not good for the nervous to look. Feeling that a fate very different from that of Lot's wife might be his if he should let himself look back too indiscreetly, he kept his eyes upon the lofty goal and pressed on upwards with a haste that now grew a trifle feverish. It began to seem to him that the irony of the eagle's changeless stare might perhaps not be unjustified.

Not till Horner had conquered the steep and, panting but elated, gained the very foot of the pine, did the eagle stir. Then, spreading his wings with a slow disdain, as if not dread but aversion to this unbidden visitor bade him go, he launched himself on a long, splendid sweep

over the gulf, and then mounted on a spacious spiral to his inaccessible outlook in the blue. Leaning against the bleached and scarred trunk of the pine, Horner watched this majestic departure for some minutes, recovering his breath and drinking deep the cool and vibrant air. Then he turned and scanned the face of the mountain.



"He launched himself on a long, splendid sweep over the gulf."

There it lay, in full view—the nest which he had climbed so far to find. It was not more than a hundred yards away. Yet, at first sight, it seemed hopelessly out of reach. The chasm separating the ledge on which it clung from the outlying rock of the pine was not more than twenty feet across; but its bottom was apparently somewhere in the roots of the mountain. There was no way of passing it at this point. But Horner had a faith that there was a way to be found over or around every obstacle in the world, if only one kept on looking for it resolutely enough. To keep on looking for a path to the eagle's nest, he struggled forward, around the outer slope of the buttress, down a ragged incline, and across a narrow and dizzy "saddle-back," which brought him presently upon another angle of the steep, facing southeast. Clinging with his toes and one hand, while he wiped his dripping forehead with his sleeve, he looked up—and saw the whole height of the mountain, unbroken and daunting, stretched skyward above him.

But to Horner the solemn sight was not daunting in the least.

"Gee!" he exclaimed, grinning with satisfaction. "I hev circumvented that there cervice, sure's death!"

Of the world below he had now a view that was almost overpoweringly unrestricted; but of the mountain, and his scene of operations, he could see only the stretch directly above him. A little calculation convinced him, however, that all he had to do was to keep straight on up for perhaps a hundred and fifty feet, then, as soon as the slope would permit, work around to his left, and descend upon the nest from above. Incidentally, he made up his mind that his return journey should be made by another face of the mountain—any other, rather than that by which he had rashly elected to come.

It seemed to Horner like a mile, that last hundred and fifty feet; but at last he calculated that he had gained enough in height. At the same time he felt the slope grow easier. Making his way towards the left, he came upon a narrow ledge, along which he could move easily side-wise, by clinging to the rock. Presently it widened to a path by which he could walk almost at ease, with the wide, wild solitude, dark green laced with silver watercourses, spread like a stupendous amphitheatre far below him. It was the wilderness which he knew so well in detail, yet had never before seen as a whole; and the sight, for a few moments, held him in a kind of awed surprise. When, at last, he tore his gaze free from the majestic spectacle, there, some ten or twelve yards below his feet, he saw the object of his quest.

It was nothing much to boast of in the way of architecture, this nest of the Kings of the Air—a mere cart-load of sticks and bark and coarse grass, apparently tumbled at haphazard upon the narrow ledge. But in fact its foundations were so skilfully wedged into the crevices of the rock, its structure was so cunningly interwoven, that the fiercest winds which scourged that lofty seat were powerless against it. It was a secure throne, no matter what tempests might rage around it.

Sitting half erect on the nest were two eaglets, almost full grown, and so nearly full feathered that Horner wondered why they did not take wing at his approach. He did not know that the period of helplessness with these younglings of royal birth lasted even after they looked as big

and well able to take care of themselves as their parents. It was a surprise to him, also, to see that they were quite unlike their parents in color, being black all over from head to tail, instead of a rich brown with snow-white head, neck, and tail. As he stared, he slowly realized that the mystery of the rare "black eagle" was explained. He had seen one once, flying heavily just above the tree-tops, and imagined it a discovery of his own. But now he reached the just conclusion that it had been merely a youngster in its first plumage.

As he stared, the two young birds returned his gaze with interest, watching him with steady, yellow, undaunted eyes from under their flat, fierce brows; with high-shouldered wings half raised, they appeared quite ready to resent any familiarity which the strange intruder might be contemplating.

Horner lay face downward on his ledge, and studied the perpendicular rock below him for a way to reach the next. He had no very definite idea what he wanted to do when he got there; possibly, if the undertaking seemed feasible, he might carry off one of the royal brood and amuse himself with trying to domesticate it. But, at any rate, he hoped to add something, by a closer inspection, to his rather inadequate knowledge of eagles.

And this hope, indeed, as he learned the next moment, was not unjustified. Cautiously he was lowering himself over the edge, feeling for the scanty and elusive foothold, when all at once the air was filled with a rush of mighty wings, which seemed about to overwhelm him. A rigid wing-tip buffeted him so sharply that he lost his hold on the ledge. With a yell of consternation, which caused his assailant to veer off, startled, he fell backwards, and plunged down straight upon the nest.

It was the nest only that saved him from instant death. Tough and elastic, it broke his fall; but at the same time its elasticity threw him off, and on the rebound he went rolling and bumping on down the steep slopes below the ledge, with the screaming of the eagles in his ears, and a sickening sense in his heart that the sunlit world tumbling and turning somersaults before his blurred sight was his last view of life. Then, to his dim surprise, he was brought up with a thump; and clutching desperately at a bush which scraped his face, he lay still. At the same moment a flapping mass of feathers and fierce claws landed on top of him, but only to scramble off again as swiftly as possible with a hoarse squawk. He had struck one of the young eagles in his fall, hurled it from the nest, and brought it down with him to this lower ledge which had given him so timely a refuge.

For several minutes, perhaps, he lay clutching the bush desperately and staring straight upwards. There he saw both parent eagles whirling excitedly, screaming, and staring down at him; and then the edge of the nest, somewhat dilapidated by his strange assault, overhanging the ledge about thirty feet above. At length his wits came back to him, and he cautiously turned his head to see if he was in danger of falling if he should relax his hold on the bush. He was in bewildering pain, which seemed distributed all over him; but in spite of it he laughed aloud, to find that the bush, to which he hung so desperately, was in a little hollow on a spacious platform, from which he could not have fallen by any chance. At that strange, uncomprehended sound of human laughter the eagles ceased their screaming for a few moments and wheeled farther aloof.

With great difficulty and anguish Horner raised himself to a sitting position and tried to find out how seriously he was hurt. One leg was quite helpless. He felt it all over, and came to the conclusion that it was not actually broken; but for all the uses of a leg, for the present at least, it might as well have been putty, except for the fact that it pained him abominably. His left arm and shoulder, too, seemed to be little more than useless encumbrances, and he wondered how so many bruises and sprains could find place on one human body of no more than average size. However, having assured himself, with infinite relief, that there were no bones broken, he set his teeth grimly and looked about to take account of the situation.

CHAPTER II

The ledge on which he had found refuge was apparently an isolated one, about fifty or sixty feet in length, and vanishing into the face of the sheer cliff at either end. It had a width of perhaps twenty-five feet; and its surface, fairly level, held some soil in its rocky hollows. Two or three dark-green seedling firs, a slim young silver birch, a patch or two of wind-beaten grass, and some clumps of harebells, azure as the clear sky overhead, softened the bareness of this tiny, high-flung terrace. In one spot, at the back, a spread of intense green and a handbreadth of moisture on the rock showed where a tiny spring oozed from a crevice to keep this lonely oasis in the granite alive and fresh.

At the farthest edge of the shelf, and eying him with savage dread, sat the young eagle which had fallen with him. Horner noticed, with a kind of sympathy, that even the bird, for all his wings, had not come out of the affair without some damage; for one of its black wings was not held up so snugly as the other. He hoped it was not broken. As he mused vaguely upon this unimportant question, his pain so exhausted him that he sank back and lay once more staring up at the eagles, who were still wheeling excitedly over the nest. In an exhaustion that was partly sleep and partly coma, his eyes closed. When he opened them again, the sun was hours lower and far advanced towards the west, so that the ledge was in shadow. His head was now perfectly clear; and his first thought was of getting himself back to the canoe. With excruciating effort he dragged himself to the edge of the terrace and looked down. The descent, at this point, was all but perpendicular for perhaps a hundred feet. In full possession of his powers, he would

find it difficult enough. In his present state he saw clearly that he might just as well throw himself over as attempt it.

Not yet disheartened, however, he dragged himself slowly towards the other end of the terrace, where the young eagle sat watching him. As he approached, the bird lifted his wings, as if about to launch himself over and dare the element which he had not yet learned to master. But one wing drooped as if injured, and he knew the attempt would be fatal. Opening his beak angrily, he hopped away to the other end of the terrace. But Horner was paying no heed to birds at that moment. He was staring down the steep, and realizing that this ledge which had proved his refuge was now his prison, and not unlikely to become also his tomb.

Sinking back against a rock, and grinding his teeth with pain, he strove to concentrate his attention upon the problem that confronted him. Was he to die of thirst and hunger on this high solitude before he could recover sufficiently to climb down? The thought stirred all his dogged determination. He *would* keep alive, and that was all there was about it. He *would* get well, and then the climbing down would be no great matter. This point settled, he dismissed it from his consideration and turned his thoughts to ways and means. After all, there was that little thread of a spring trickling from the rock! He would have enough to drink. And as for food—how much worse it would have been had the ledge been a bare piece of rock! Here he had some grass, and the roots of the herbs and bushes. A man could keep himself alive on such things if he had will enough. And, as a last resource, there was the young eagle! This idea, however, was anything but attractive to him; and it was with eyes of good-will rather than of appetite that he glanced at his fellow-prisoner sitting motionless at the other extremity of the ledge.

"It'd be hard lines, pardner, ef I should hev to eat you, after all!" he muttered, with a twisted kind of grin. "We're both of us in a hole, sure enough, an' I'll play fair as long as I kin!"

As he mused, a great shadow passed over his head, and looking up, he saw one of the eagles hovering low above the ledge. It was the male, his old acquaintance, staring down at him from under that strange, black brow. He carried a large fish in his talons, and was plainly anxious to feed his captive young, but not quite ready to approach this mysterious man-creature who had been able to invade his eyrie as if with wings. Horner lay as still as a stone, watching through half-closed lids. The young eagle, seeing food so near, opened its beak wide and croaked eagerly; while the mother bird, larger but wilder and less resolute than her mate, circled aloof with sharp cries of warning. At last, unable any longer to resist the appeals of his hungry youngster, the great bird swooped down over him, dropped the fish fairly into his clutches, and slanted away with a hurried flapping which betrayed his nervousness.

As the youngster fell ravenously upon his meal, tearing it and gulping the fragments, Horner drew a deep breath.

"There's where I come in, pardner," he explained. "When I kin git up an appetite for that sort of vittles, I'll go shares with you, ef y'ain't got no objection!"

Having conceived this idea, Horner was seized with a fear that the captive might presently gain the power of flight and get away. This was a thought under which he could not lie still. In his pocket he always carried a bunch of stout salmon-twine and a bit of copper rabbit-wire, apt to be needed in a hundred forest emergencies. He resolved to catch the young eagle and tether it securely to a bush.

His first impulse was to set about this enterprise at once. With excruciating effort he managed to pull off his heavy woollen hunting-shirt, intending to use it as the toreador uses his mantle, to entangle the dangerous weapons of his adversary. Then he dragged himself across to the other end of the ledge and attempted to corner the captive. For this he was not quite quick enough, however. With a flop and a squawk the bird eluded him, and he realized that he had better postpone the undertaking till the morrow. Crawling back to his hollow by the bush, he sank down, utterly exhausted. Not till the sharp chill which comes with sunset warned him of its necessity, was he able to grapple with the long, painful problem of getting his shirt on again.

Through the night he got some broken sleep, though the hardness of his bed aggravated every hurt he had suffered. On the edge of dawn he saw the male eagle come again—this time more confidently and deliberately—to feed the captive. After he was gone, Horner tried to move, but found himself now, from the night's chill and the austerity of his bed, altogether helpless. Not till the sun was high enough to warm him through and through, and not till he had manipulated his legs and arms assiduously for more than an hour, did his body feel as if it could ever again be of any service to him. Then he once more got off his shirt and addressed himself to the catching of the indignant bird whom he had elected to be his preserver.

Though the anguish caused by every movement was no less intense than it had been the afternoon before, he was stronger now and more in possession of his faculties. Before starting the chase, he cut a strip from his shirt to wind around the leg of the young eagle, in order that he might be able to tether it tightly without cutting the flesh. The bird had suddenly become most precious to him!

Very warily he made his approaches, sidling down the ledge so as to give his quarry the least possible room for escape. As he drew near, the bird turned and faced him, with its one uninjured wing lifted menacingly and its formidable beak wide open. Holding the heavy shirt ready to throw, Horner crept up cautiously, so intent now upon the game that the anguish in the leg which he dragged stiffly behind him was almost forgotten. The young bird, meanwhile, waited, motionless and vigilant, its savage eyes hard as glass.

At last a faint quiver and shrinking in the bird's form, an involuntary contracting of the feathers,

gave warning to Horner's experienced eye that it was about to spring aside. On the instant he flung the shirt, keeping hold of it by the sleeve. By a singular piece of luck, upon which he had not counted at all, it opened as he threw it, and settled right over the bird's neck and disabled wing, blinding and baffling it completely. With a muffled squawk it bounced into the air, both talons outspread and clawing madly; but in a second Horner had it by the other wing, pulling it down, and rolling himself over upon it so as to smother those dangerous claws. He felt them sink once into his injured leg, but that was already anguishing so vehemently that a little more or less did not matter. In a few moments he had his captive bundled up with helplessness, and was dragging it to a sturdy bush near the middle of the terrace. Here, without much further trouble, he wrapped one of its legs with the strip of flannel from his shirt, twisted on a hand-length of wire, and then tethered it safely with a couple of yards of his doubled and twisted cord.

Just as he had accomplished this to his satisfaction, and was about to undo the imprisoning shirt, it flashed across his mind that it was lucky the old eagles had not been on hand to interfere. He glanced upward—and saw the dark form dropping like a thunderbolt out of the blue. He had just time to fling himself over on his back, lifting his arm to shield his face, and his foot to receive the attack, when the hiss of that lightning descent filled his ears. Involuntarily he half closed his eyes. But no shock came, except a great buffet of air on his face. Not quite daring to grapple with that ready defence, the eagle had opened its wings when within a few feet of the ledge, and swerved upward again, where it hung hovering and screaming. Horner saw that it was the female, and shook his fist at her in defiance. Had it been his old acquaintance and challenger, the male, he felt sure that he would not have got off so easily.

Puzzled and alarmed, the mother now perched herself beside the other eaglet, on the edge of the nest. Then, keeping a careful eye upon her, lest she should return to the attack, Horner dexterously unrolled the shirt, and drew back just in time to avoid a vicious slash from the talons of his indignant prisoner. The latter, after some violent tugging and flopping at his tether and fierce biting at the wire, suddenly seemed to conclude that such futile efforts were undignified. He settled himself like a rock and stared unwinkingly at his captor.

It was perhaps an hour after this, when the sun had grown hot, and Horner, having slaked his thirst at the spring in the rock, had tried rather ineffectually to satisfy his hunger on grass roots, that the male eagle reappeared, winging heavily from the farthest end of the lake. From his talons dangled a limp form, which Horner presently made out to be a duck.

"Good!" he muttered to himself. "I always did like fowl better'n fish."

When the eagle arrived, he seemed to notice something different in the situation, for he wheeled slowly overhead for some minutes, uttering sharp yelps of interrogation. But the appeals of the youngster at last brought him down, and he delivered up the prize. The moment he was gone, Horner crept up to where the youngster was already tearing the warm body to pieces. Angry and hungry, the bird made a show of fighting for his rights; but his late experience with his invincible conqueror had daunted him. Suddenly he hopped away, the full length of his tether; and Horner picked up the mangled victim. But his appetite was gone by this time; he was not yet equal to a diet of raw flesh. Tossing the prize back to its rightful owner, he withdrew painfully to grub for some more grass roots.



"After this the eagle came regularly every three or four hours with food for the prisoner."

After this the eagle came regularly every three or four hours with food for the prisoner. Sometimes it was a fish—trout, or brown sucker, or silvery chub—sometimes a duck or a grouse, sometimes a rabbit or a muskrat. Always it was the male, with that grim black streak across the side of his white face, who came. Always Horner made a point of taking the prize at once from the angry youngster, and then throwing it back to him, unable to stomach the idea of the raw flesh. At last, on the afternoon of the third day of his imprisonment, he suddenly found that it was not the raw flesh, but the grass roots, which he loathed. While examining a fine lake-trout, he remembered that he had read of raw fish being excellent food under the right conditions. This was surely one of those right conditions. Picking somewhat fastidiously, he nevertheless managed to make so good a meal off that big trout that there was little but head and tail to toss back to his captor.

"Never mind, pardner!" he said seriously. "I'll divide fair nex' time. But you know you've been havin' more'n your share lately."

But the bird was so outraged that for a long time he would not look at these remnants, and only consented to devour them, at last, when Horner was not looking.

After this Horner found it easy enough to partake of his prisoner's meals, whether they were of fish, flesh, or fowl; and with the ice-cold water from the little spring, and an occasional mouthful of leaves and roots, he fared well enough to make progress towards recovery. The male eagle grew so accustomed to his presence that he would alight beside the prisoner, and threatened Horner with that old, cold stare of challenge, and frequently Horner had to drive him off in order to save his share of the feast from the rapacity of the eaglet. But as for the female, she remained incurably suspicious and protesting. From the upper ledge, where she devoted her care to the other nestling, she would yelp down her threats and execrations, but she never ventured any nearer approach.

For a whole week the naked hours of day and dark had rolled over the peak before Horner began to think himself well enough to try the descent. His arm and shoulder were almost well, but his leg, in spite of ceaseless rubbing and applications of moist earth, remained practically helpless. He could not bear his weight on it for a second. His first attempt at lowering himself showed him that he must not be in too great haste. It was nearly a week more before he could feel assured, after experiments at scaling the steep above him, that he was fit to face the terrible steep below. Then he thought of the eaglet, his unwilling and outraged preserver! After a sharp struggle, of which both his arms and legs bore the marks for months, he caught the bird once more and examined the injured wing. It was not broken; and he saw that its owner would be able to fly all right in time, perhaps as soon as his more fortunate brother in the nest above. Satisfied on this point, he loosed all the bonds and jumped back to avoid the indomitable youngster's retort of beak and claws. Unamazed by his sudden freedom, the young eagle flopped angrily away to the farther end of the ledge; and Horner, having resumed his useful shirt, started to climb down the mountain, whose ascent he had so heedlessly adventured nearly two weeks before. As he lowered himself over the dizzy brink, he glanced up, to see the male eagle circling slowly above him, gazing down at him with the old challenge in his unwinking, golden eyes.

"I reckon you win!" said Horner, waving the imperturbable bird a grave salutation. "But you're a gentleman, an' I thank you fer your kind hospitality."

It was still early morning when Horner started to descend the mountain. It was dusk when he reached the lake and flung himself down, prostrated with fatigue and pain and strain of nerve, beside his canoe. From moment to moment, through spells of reeling faintness and spasmodic exhaustion, the silent gulfs of space had clutched at him, as if the powers of the solitude and the peak had but spared him so long to crush him inexorably in the end. At last, more through the sheer indomitableness of the human spirit than anything else, he had won. But never afterwards could he think of that awful descent without a sinking of the heart. For three days more he made his camp by the lake, recovering strength and nerve before resuming his journey down the wild river to the settlements. And many times a day his salutations would be waved upward to that great, snowy-headed, indifferent bird, wheeling in the far blue, or gazing at the sun from his high-set watch-tower of the pine.

CHAPTER III

Two or three years later, it fell in Horner's way to visit a great city, many hundreds of miles from the gray peak of "Old Baldy." He was in charge of an exhibit of canoes, snowshoes, and other typical products of his forest-loving countrymen. In his first morning of leisure, his feet turned almost instinctively to the wooded gardens wherein the city kept strange captives, untamed exiles of the wilderness, irreconcilable aliens of fur and hide and feather, for the crowds to gape at through their iron bars.

He wandered aimlessly past some grotesque, goatish-looking deer which did not interest him, and came suddenly upon a paddock containing a bull moose, two cows, and a yearling calf. The calf looked ungainly and quite content with his surroundings. The cows were faded and moth-eaten, but well fed. He had no concern for them at all. But the bull, a splendid, black-shouldered, heavy-muffled fellow, with the new antlers just beginning to knob out from his massive forehead, appealed to him strongly. The splendid, sullen-looking beast stood among his family, but towered over and seemed unconscious of them. His long, sensitive muzzle was held high to catch a breeze which drew coolly down from the north, and his half-shut eyes, in

Horner's fancy, saw not the wires of his fence, but the cool, black-green fir thickets of the north, the gray rampikes of the windy barrens, the broad lily leaves afloat in the sheltered cove, the wide, low-shored lake water gleaming rose-red in the sunset.

"It's a shame," growled Horner, "to keep a critter like that shut up in a seven-by-nine chicken-pen!" And he moved on, feeling as if he were himself a prisoner, and suddenly homesick for a smell of the spruce woods.

It was in this mood that he came upon the great dome-roofed cage containing the hawks and eagles. It was a dishevelled, dirty place, with a few uncanny-looking dead trees stuck up in it to persuade the prisoners that they were free. Horner gave a hasty glance and then hurried past, enraged at the sight of these strong-winged adventurers of the sky doomed to so tame a monotony of days. But just as he got abreast of the farther extremity of the cage, he stopped, with a queer little tug at his heart-strings. He had caught sight of a great, white-headed eagle, sitting erect and still on a dead limb close to the bars, and gazing through them steadily, not at him, but straight into the eye of the sun.

"Shucks! It ain't possible! There's millions o' bald eagles in the world!" muttered Horner discontentedly.

It was the right side of the bird's head that was turned towards him, and that, of course, was snowy white. Equally, of course, it was as, Horner told himself, the height of absurdity to think that this grave, immobile prisoner gazing out through the bars at the sun could be his old friend of the naked peak. Nevertheless, something within his heart insisted it was so. If only the bird would turn his head! At last Horner put two fingers between his mouth, and blew a whistle so piercing that every one stared rebukingly, and a policeman came strolling along casually to see if any one had signalled for help. But Horner was all unconscious of the interest which he had excited. In response to his shrill summons the eagle had slowly, very deliberately, turned his head, and looked him steadily in the eyes. Yes, there was the strange black bar above the left eye, and there, unbroken by defeat and captivity, was the old look of imperturbable challenge!

Horner could almost have cried, from pity and homesick sympathy. Those long days on the peak, fierce with pain, blinding bright with sun, wind-swept and solitary, through which this great, still bird had kept him alive, seemed to rush over his spirit all together.

"Gee, old pardner!" he murmured, leaning as far over the railing as he could. "But ain't you got the grit! I'd like to know who it was served this trick on you. But don't you fret. I'll get you out o' this, ef it takes a year's arnings to do it! You wait an' see!" And with his jaws set resolutely he turned and strode from the gardens. That bird should not stay in there another night if he could help it.

Horner's will was set, but he did not understand the difficulties he had to face. At first he was confronted, as by a stone wall, by the simple and unanswerable fact that the bird was not for sale at any price. And he went to bed that night raging with disappointment and baffled purpose. But in the course of his efforts and angry protestations he had let out a portion of his story—and this, as a matter of interest, was carried to the president of the society which controlled the gardens. To this man, who was a true naturalist and not a mere dry-as-dust cataloguer of bones and teeth, the story made a strong appeal, and before Horner had quite made up his mind whether to get out a writ of *habeas corpus* for his imprisoned friend, or commit a burglary on the cage, there came a note inviting him to an interview at the president's office. The result of this interview was that Horner came away radiant, convinced at last that there was heart and understanding in the city as well as in the country. He had agreed to pay the society simply what it might cost to replace the captive by another specimen of his kind; and he carried in his pocket an order for the immediate delivery of the eagle into his hands.

To the practical backwoodsman there was no fuss or ceremony now to be gone through. He admired the expeditious fashion in which the keeper of the bird-house handled his dangerous charge, coming out of the brief tussle without a scratch. Trussed up as ignominiously as a turkey—proud head hooded, savage talons muffled, and skyey wings bound fast, the splendid bird was given up to his rescuer, who rolled him in a blanket without regard to his dignity, and carried him off under his arm like a bundle of old clothes.

Beyond the outskirts of the city Horner had observed a high, rocky, desolate hill which seemed suited to his purpose. He took a street car and travelled for an hour with the bundle on his knees. Little his fellow-passengers guessed of the wealth of romance, loyalty, freedom, and spacious memory hidden in that common-looking bundle on the knees of the gaunt-faced, gray-eyed man. At the foot of the hill, at a space of bare and ragged common, Horner got off. By rough paths, frequented by goats, he made his way up the rocky slope, through bare ravines and over broken ridges, and came at last to a steep rock in a solitude, whence only far-off roofs could be seen, and masts, and bridges, and the sharp gleam of the sea in the distance.

This place satisfied him. On the highest point of the rock he carefully unfastened the bonds of his prisoner, loosed him, and jumped back with respect and discretion. The great bird sat up very straight, half raised and lowered his wings as if to regain his poise, looked Horner dauntlessly in the eye, then stared slowly about him and above, as if to make sure that there were really no bars for him to beat his wings against. For perhaps a full minute he sat there. Then, having betrayed no unkingly haste, he spread his wings to their full splendid width and launched himself from the brink. For a few seconds he flapped heavily, as if his wings had grown unused to their function. Then he got his rhythm, and swung into a wide, mounting spiral, which Horner watched with sympathetic joy. At last, when he was but a wheeling speck

in the pale blue dome, he suddenly turned and sailed off straight towards the northeast, with a speed which carried him out of sight in a moment.

Horner drew a long breath, half wistful, half glad.

“Them golden eyes of yourn kin see a thunderin’ long ways off, pardner,” he muttered, “but I reckon even you can’t make out the top of ‘Old Baldy’ at this distance. It’s the eyes o’ your heart ye must have seen it with, to make for it so straight!”

THE LORD OF THE GLASS HOUSE

The Lord of the Glass House

CHAPTER I

In the sheltered Caribbean cove the water was warm as milk, green and clear as liquid beryl, and shot through with shimmering sun. Under that stimulating yet mitigated radiance the bottom of the cove was astir with strange life, grotesque in form, but brilliant as jewels or flowers. Long, shining weeds, red, yellow, amber, purple, and olive, waved sinuously among the weed-like sea-anemones which outshone them in colored sheen. Fantastic pink-and-orange crabs sidled awkwardly but nimbly this way and that. Tiny sea-horses, yet more fantastic, slipped shyly from one weed-covert to another, aware of a possible peril in every gay but menacing bloom. And just above this eccentric life of the shoal sea-floor small fishes of curious form shot hither and thither, live, darting gleams of gold and azure and amethyst. Now and again a long, black shadow would sail slowly over the scene of freakish life—the shadow of a passing albacore or barracouta. Instantly the shining fish would hide themselves among the shining shells, and every movement, save that of the unconsciously waving weeds, would be stilled. But the sinister shadow would go by, and straightway the sea-floor would be alive again, busy with its affairs of pursuit and flight.

The floor of the cove was uneven, by reason of small, shell-covered rocks and stones being strewn over it at haphazard. From under the slightly overhanging base of one of these stones sprouted what seemed a cluster of yellowish gray, pink-mottled weed-stems, which sprawled out inertly upon the mottled bottom. Over the edge of the stone came swimming slowly one of the gold-and-azure fish, its jewelled, impassive eyes on the watch for some small prey. Up from the bottom, swift as a whip-lash, darted one of those inert-looking weed-stems, and fastened about the bright fish just behind the gills.

Fiercely the shining one struggled, lashing with tail and fins till the water swirled to a boil over the shell-covered rock, and the sea-anemones all about shut their gorgeous, greedy flower-cups in a panic. But the struggle was a vain one. Slowly, inexorably, that mottled tentacle curled downward with its prey, and a portion of the under side of the rock became alive! Two ink-black eyes appeared, bulging, oval, implacable; and between them opened a great, hooked beak, like a giant parrot's. There was no separate head behind this gaping beak, but eyes and beak merely marked the blunt end of a mottled, oblong, sac-like body.



“And the writhing tentacles composed themselves once more to stillness upon the bottom, awaiting the next careless passer-by.”

As the victim was drawn down to the waiting beak, among the bases of the tentacles, all the tentacles awoke to dreadful life, writhing in aimless excitement, although there was no work for them to do. In a few seconds the fish was torn asunder and engulfed—those inky eyes the while unwinking and unmoved. A darker, livid hue passed fleetingly over the pallid body of the octopus. Then it slipped back under the shelter of the rock; and the writhing tentacles composed themselves once more to stillness upon the bottom, awaiting the next careless passer-by. Once more they seemed mere inert trailers of weed, not worth the notice of fish or crab. And soon the anemones near by reopened their treacherous blooms of yellow and crimson.

Whether because there was something in the gold-and-azure fish that disturbed his inward

content, or because his place of ambush had somehow grown distasteful to his soft, unarmored body, the octopus presently bestirred himself and crawled forth into the open, walking awkwardly on the incurled tips of his tentacles. It looked about as comfortable a method of progression as for a baby to creep on the back of its hands. The traveller himself did not seem to find it altogether satisfactory, for all at once he sprang upward nimbly, clear of the bottom, and gathered his eight tentacles into a compact parallel bunch extending straight out past his eyes. In this attitude he was no longer clumsy, but trim and swift-looking. Beneath the bases of the tentacles, on the under side of the body, a sort of valve opened spasmodically and took in a huge gulp of water, which was at once ejected with great force through a tube among the tentacles. Driven by the strange propulsion of this pulsating stream, the elongated shape shot swiftly on its way, but travelling backward instead of forward. The traveller had apparently taken his direction with care before he started, however, for he made his way straight to another rock, weedier and more overhanging than the first. Here he stopped, settled downward, and let his tentacles once more sprawl wide, preparatory to backing his spotted body-sac into its new quarters.

This was the moment when he was least ready for attack or defence; and just at this moment a foraging dolphin, big-jawed and hungry, shot down upon him through the lucent green, mistaking him, perhaps, for an overgrown but unretaliating squid. The assailant aimed at the big, succulent-looking body, but missed his aim, and caught instead one of the tentacles which had reared themselves instantly to ward off the attack. Before he realized what was happening, another tentacle had curled about his head, clamping his jaws firmly together so that he could not open them to release his hold; while yet others had wrapped themselves securely about his body.

The dolphin was a small one; and such a situation as this had never come within range of his experience. In utter panic he lashed out with his powerful tail and darted forward, carrying the octopus with him. But the weight upon his head, the crushing encumbrance about his body, were too much for him, and bore him slowly downward. Suddenly two tentacles, which had been trailing for an anchorage, got grip upon the bottom—and the dolphin's frantic flight came to a stop abruptly. He lashed, plunged, whirled in a circle, but all to no purpose. His struggles grew weaker. He was drawn down, inexorably, till he lay quivering on the sand. Then the great beak of the octopus made an end of the matter, and the prey was dragged back to the lair beneath the weed-covered rock.

A long time after this, a shadow bigger and blacker than that of any albacore—bigger than that of any shark or saw-fish—drifted over the cove. There was a splash, and a heavy object came down upon the bottom, spreading the swift stillness of terror for yards about. The shadow ceased drifting, for the boat had come to anchor. Then in a very few minutes, because the creatures of the sea seem unable to fear what does not move, the life of the sea-floor again bestirred itself, and small, misshapen forms that did not love the sunlight began to convene in the shadow of the boat.

Presently, from over the side of the boat descended a dark tube, with a bright tip that seemed like a kind of eye. The tube moved very slowly this way and that, as if to let the eye scan every hiding-place on the many-colored bottom. As it swept over the rock that sheltered the octopus, it came to a stop. Those inert, sprawling things that looked like weeds appeared to interest it. Then it was softly withdrawn.

A few moments later, a large and tempting fish appeared at the surface of the water, and began slowly sinking straight downward in a most curious fashion. The still eyes of the octopus took note at once. They had never seen a fish behave that way before; but it plainly was a fish. A quiver of eagerness passed through the sprawling tentacles, for their owner was already hungry again. But the prize was still too far away, and the tentacles did not move. The curious fish, however, seemed determined to come no nearer, and at last the waiting tentacles came stealthily to life. Almost imperceptibly they drew themselves forward, writhing over the bottom as casually as weeds adrift in a light current. And behind them those two great, inky, impassive eyes, and then the fat, mottled, sac-like body, emerged furtively from under the rock.

The bottom, just at this point, was covered with a close brown weed, and almost at once the body of the octopus and his tentacles began to change to the same hue. When the change was complete, the gliding monster was almost invisible. He was now directly beneath that incomprehensible fish; but the fish had gently risen, so that it was still out of reach.

For a few seconds the octopus crouched, staring upward with motionless orbs, and gathering himself together. Then he sprang straight up, like a leaping spider. He fixed two tentacles upon the tantalizing prey; then the other tentacles straightened out, and with a sharp jet of water from his propulsion tube he essayed to dart back to his lair.

To his amazement, the prey refused to come. In some mysterious way it managed to hold itself—or was held—just where it was. Amazement gave way to rage. The monster wrapped his prize in three more tentacles, and then plunged his beak into it savagely. The next instant he was jerked to the surface of the water. A blaze of fierce sun blinded him, and strong meshes enclosed him, binding and entangling his tentacles.

In such an appalling crisis most creatures of sea or land would have been utterly demoralized by terror. Not so the octopus. Maintaining undaunted the clutch of one tentacle upon his prize, he turned the others, along with the effectual menace of his great beak, to the business of battle. The meshes fettered him in a way that drove him frantic with rage, but two of his tentacles managed to find their way through, and writhed madly this way and that in search of some

tangible antagonist on which to fasten themselves. While they were yet groping vainly for a grip, he felt himself lifted bodily forth into the strangling air, and crowded—net, prey, and all—into a dark and narrow receptacle full of water.

This fate, of course, was not to be tamely endured. Though he was suffocating in the unnatural medium, and though his great, unwinking eyes could see but vaguely outside their native element, he was all fight. One tentacle clutched the rim of the metal vessel; and one fixed its deadly suckers upon the bare black arm of a half-seen adversary who was trying to crowd him down into the dark prison. There was a strident yell. A sharp, authoritative voice exclaimed: "Look out! Don't hurt him! I'll make him let go!" But the next instant the frightened darky had whipped out a knife and sliced off a good foot of the clutching tentacle. As the injured stump shrank back upon its fellows like a spade-cut worm, the other tentacle was deftly twisted loose from its hold on the rim, and the captive felt himself forced down into the narrow prison. A cover was clapped on, and he found himself in darkness, with his prey still gripped securely. Upset and raging though he was, there was nothing to be done about it, so he fell to feasting indignantly upon the prize for which he had paid so dear.

CHAPTER II

Left to himself, the furious prisoner by and by disentangled himself from the meshes of the net, and composed himself as well as he could in his straitened quarters. Then for days and days thereafter there was nothing but tossing and tumbling, blind feeding, and uncomprehended distress; till at last his prison was turned upside down and he was dropped unceremoniously into a great tank of glass and enamel that glowed with soft light. Bewildered though he was, he took in his surroundings in an instant, straightened his tentacles out before him, and darted backwards to the shelter of an overhanging rock which he had marked on the floor of the tank. Having backed his defenceless body under that shield, he flattened his tentacles anxiously among the stones and weeds that covered the tank-bottom, and impassively stared about.

It was certainly an improvement on the black hole from which he had just escaped. Light came down through the clear water, but a cold, white light, little like the green and gold glimmer that illumined the slow tide in his Caribbean home. The floor about him was not wholly unfamiliar. The stones, the sand, the colored weeds, the shells,—they were like, yet unlike, those from which he had been snatched away. But on three sides there were white, opaque walls, so near that he could have touched them by stretching out a tentacle. Only on the fourth side was there space—but a space of gloom and inexplicable moving confusion from which he shrank. In this direction the floor of sand and stones and weeds ended with a mysterious abruptness; and the vague openness beyond filled him with uneasiness. Pale-colored shapes, with eyes, would drift up, sometimes in crowds, and stare in at him fixedly. It daunted him as nothing else had ever done, this drift of peering faces. It was long before he could teach himself to ignore them. When food came to him,—small fish and crabs, descending suddenly from the top of the water,—at such times the faces would throng tumultuously in that open space, and for a long time the many peering eyes would so disconcert him as almost to spoil his appetite. But at last he grew accustomed even to the faces and the eyes, and disregarded them as if they were so much passing seaweed, borne by the tide. His investigating tentacles had shown him that between him and the space of confusion there was an incomprehensible barrier fixed, which he could see through but not pass; and that if he could not get out, neither could the faces get in to trouble him.

Thus, well fed and undisturbed, the octopus grew fairly content in his glass house, and never guessed the stormy life of the great city beyond his walls. For all he knew, his comfortable prison might have been on the shore of one of his own Bahaman Keys. He was undisputed lord of his domain, narrow though it was; and the homage he received from the visitors who came to pay him court was untiring.

His lordship had been long unthreatened, when one day, had he not been too indifferent to notice them, he might have seen that the faces in the outer gloom were unusually numerous, the eyes unusually intent. Suddenly there was the accustomed splash in the water above him. That splash had come to him to mean just food, unresisting victims, and his tentacles were instantly alert to seize whatever should come within reach.

This time the splash was unusually heavy, and he was surprised to see a massive, roundish creature, with a little, pointed tail sticking out behind, a small, snake-like head stretched out in front, and two little flippers outspread on each side. With these four flippers the stranger came swimming down calmly towards him. He had never seen anything at all like this daring stranger; but without the slightest hesitation he whipped up two writhing tentacles and seized him. The faces beyond the glass surged with excitement.

When that abrupt and uncompromising clutch laid hold upon the turtle, his tail, head, and flippers vanished as if they had never been, and his upper and lower shells closed tight together till he seemed nothing more than a lifeless box of horn. Absolutely unresisting, he was drawn down to the impassive eyes and gaping beak of his captor. The tentacles writhed all over him, stealthily but eagerly investigating. Then the great parrot-beak laid hold on the shell, expecting to crush it. Making no impression, however, it slid tentatively all over the exasperating prize, seeking, but in vain, for a weak point.



“Without the slightest hesitation he whipped up two writhing tentacles and seized him.”

This went on for several minutes, while the watching faces outside the glass gazed in tense expectancy. Then at last the patience of the octopus gave way. In a sudden fury he threw himself upon the exasperating shell, tumbling it over and over, biting at it madly, wrenching it insanely with all his tentacles. And the faces beyond the glass surged thrillingly, wondering how long the turtle would stand such treatment.

Shut up within his safe armor, the turtle all at once grew tired of being tumbled about, and his wise discretion forsook him. He did not mind being shut up, but he objected to being knocked about. Some prudence he had, to be sure, but not enough to control his short temper. Out shot his narrow, vicious-looking head, with its dull eyes and punishing jaws, and fastened with the grip of a bulldog upon the nearest of the tentacles, close to its base. A murmur arose outside the glass.

The rage of the octopus swelled to a frenzy, and in his contortions the locked fighters bumped heavily against the glass, making the faces shrink back. The small stones on the bottom were scattered this way and that, and the fine silt rose in a cloud that presently obscured the battle.

Had the turtle had cunning to match his courage, the lordship of the glass house might have changed holders in that fight. Had he fixed his unbreakable grip in the head of his foe, just above the beak, he would have conquered in the end. But as it was, he had now a vulnerable point, and at last the octopus found it. His beak closed upon the exposed half of the turtle's head, and slowly, inexorably, sheared it clean off just behind the eyes. The stump shrank instantly back into the shell; and the shell became again the unresisting plaything of the tentacles, which presently, as if realizing that it had no more power to retaliate, flung it aside. In a few minutes the silt settled. Then the eager faces beyond the glass saw the lord of the tank crouching motionless before his lair, his ink-like eyes as impassive and implacable as ever, while the turtle lay bottom side up against the glass, no more to be taken account of than a stone.

BACK TO THE WATER WORLD

Back to the Water World

CHAPTER I

An iron coast, bleak, black, and desolate, without harborage for so much as a catboat for leagues to north or south. A coast so pitiless, so lashed forever by the long, sullen rollers of the North Atlantic, so tormented by the shifting and treacherous currents of the tide between its chains of outlying rocky islets, that no ship ever ventured willingly within miles of its uncompromising menace. A coast so little favored by summer that even in glowing August the sun could reach it seldom through its cold and drenching fogs.

Perhaps half a mile off shore lay the islands—some of them, indeed, mere ledges, deathtraps for ships, invisible except at low tide, but others naked hills of upthrust rock, which the highest tides and wildest hurricanes could not overwhelm. Even on the loftiest of them there was neither grass, bush, nor tree to break the jagged outlines, but day and night, summer and winter long, the sea-birds clamored over them, and brooded by the myriad on their upper ledges.

These islands were fretted, on both their landward and their seaward sides, by innumerable caves. In one of these caves, above the reach of the highest tide, and facing landward, so that even in the wildest storms no waves could invade it, the pup of the seal first opened his mild eyes upon the misty northern daylight.

Of all the younglings of the wild, he was perhaps the most winsome, with his soft, whitish, shadowy-toned, close, woolly coat, his round, babyish head, his dark, gentle eyes wide with wonder at everything to be seen from the cave mouth. He lay usually very near the entrance, but partly hidden from view by a ragged horn of rock. While alone—which was a good part of the time, indeed, like most fishermen's children—he would lie so still that his woolly little form was hardly to be distinguished from the rock that formed his couch. He had no desire to attract public attention—for the only public that might have been attracted to attend consisted of the pair of great sea eagles whose shadows sometimes swooped across the ledge, or of an occasional southward-wandering white bear. As for the innumerable gulls, and gannets, and terns, and lesser auks, which made the air forever loud about these lonely islets, nothing could have induced them to pay him any attention whatever. They knew him, and his people, to be harmless; and that was all their winged and garrulous companies were concerned to know.

But to the little seal, on the other hand, the noisy birds were incessantly interesting. Filled with insatiable curiosity, his mild eyes gazed out upon the world. The sea just below the cave was, of course, below his line of vision; but at a distance of some hundred yards or so—a distance which varied hugely with the rising and falling of the tide—he caught sight of the waves, and felt himself strangely drawn to them. Whether leaden and menacing under the drift of rain and the brooding of gray clouds, or green-glinting under the sheen of too rare sunshine, he loved them and found them always absorbing. The sky, too, was worth watching, especially when white fleeces chased each other across a patch of blue, or wonderful colors, pallid yet intense, shot up into it at dawn from behind a far-off line of saw-toothed rocks.

The absences of the mother seal were sometimes long, for it required many fish to satisfy her appetite and keep warm her red blood in those ice-cold arctic currents. Fish were abundant, to be sure, along that coast, where the invisible fruitfulness of the sea made compensation for the blank barrenness of the land; but they were swift and wary, and had to be caught, one at a time, outwitted and outsped in their own element. The woolly cub, therefore, was often hungry before his mother returned. But when, at last, she came, flopping awkwardly up the rocky slope, and pausing for an instant to reconnoitre, as her round, glistening head appeared over the brink of the ledge, the youngster's delight was not all in the satisfying of his hunger and in the mothering of his loneliness. As he snuggled under her caress, the salty drip from her wet, sleek sides thrilled him with a dim sense of anticipation. He connected it vaguely with that endless, alluring dance of the waves beyond his threshold.

When he had grown a few days older, the little seal began to turn his attention from the brighter world outside to the shadows that surrounded him in his cave. His interest was caught at once by a woolly gray creature like himself, only somewhat smaller, which lay perhaps seven or eight feet away, at the other side of the cave, and farther back. He had not realized before that his narrow retreat was the home of two families. Being of a companionable disposition, he eyed his newly discovered neighbor with immense good-will. Finding no discouragement in the mild gaze that answered his, he presently raised himself on his flippers, and with laborious, ungainly effort flopped himself over to make acquaintance. Both youngsters were too unsophisticated for ceremony, too trusting for shyness, so in a very few minutes they were sprawling over each other in great content.

In this baby comradeship the stranger's mother, returning to her household duties, found them. She was smaller and younger than our Pup's dam, but with the same kindly eyes and the same salty-dripping coat. So, when her own baby fell to nursing, the Pup insisted confidently on sharing the entertainment. The young mother protested, and drew herself away uneasily, with little threatening grunts; but the Pup, refusing to believe she was in earnest, pressed his point so pertinaciously that at length he got his way. When, half an hour later, the other mother returned to her charge, well filled with fish and well disposed toward all the world, she showed no discontent at the situation. She belonged to the tribe of the "Harbor Seals," and, unlike her

pugnacious cousins, the big "Hoods," she was always inclined towards peace and a good understanding. There was probably nothing that could have brought the flame of wrath into her confiding eyes, except an attack upon her young, on whose behalf she would have faced the sea-serpent himself. Without a moment's question, she joined the group; and henceforth the cave was the seat of a convenient partnership in mothers.

It was perhaps a week or two later, when the islands were visited by a wonderful spell of sun and calm. It was what would have been called, farther south, Indian summer. All along the ledges, just above the mark of the diminished surf, the seals lay basking in the glow. The gulls and mews clamored rapturously, and squabbled with gay zest over the choicer prizes of their fishing. It appeared to be generally known that the bears, displeased at the warmth, had withdrawn farther north. The sea took on strange hues of opal and lilac and thrice-diluted sapphire. Even the high black cliffs across the charmed water veiled their harshness in a skyey haze. It was a time for delicious indolence, for the slackening of vigilance, for the forgetfulness of peril. And it was just at this very time that it came the young seal's way to get his first lesson in fear.

He was lying beside his mother, about a dozen feet out from the mouth of the cave. A few steps away basked his little cave-mate—alone for the moment, because its mother had flung herself vehemently down the slope to capture a wounded fish which had just been washed ashore. As she reached the water's edge, a wide shadow floated across the rocks. She wheeled like a flash and scrambled frantically up the steep. But she was too late. She saw the other mothers near by throw their bodies over those of their young, and lift their faces skyward with bared, defiant fangs. She saw her own little one, alone in the bright open, gaze around in helpless bewilderment and alarm. He saw her coming, and lifting himself on his weak flippers, started towards her with a little cry. Then came a terrible hissing of wings in the air above, and he cowered, trembling. The next instant, with a huge buffet of wind in all the upturned faces, a pair of vast, dark pinions were outspread above the trembler; great clutching talons reached down and seized him by neck and back; and his tiny life went out in a throttled whimper. The nearest seal, the mother of the Pup, reared on her flippers and lunged savagely at the marauder. But all she got was a blinding slash of rigid wing-tips across her face. Then, launching himself from the brink of the slope, the eagle flapped scornfully away across the water toward the black cliffs, his victim hanging limply from his claws. And all along the ledges the seals barked furiously after him.

The Pup, whom death had brushed so closely, could not be persuaded for hours to leave the shelter of his mother's side, even after she had led him back to the cave. But now he found himself the exclusive proprietor of two mothers; for the bereaved dam, thenceforth, was no less assiduously devoted to him than his own parent. With such care, and with so abundant nourishment, he thrived amazingly, outstripping in growth all the other youngsters of his age along the ledges. His terror quickly passed away from him; but the results of the lesson long remained, in the vigilance with which his glance would sweep the sky, and question every approach of wings more wide than those of gull or gannet.

It was not long after this grim chance that the Pup's woolly coat began to change. A straight, close-lying under-fur pushed swiftly into view, and the wool dropped out—a process which a certain sense of irritation in his skin led him to hasten by rubbing his back and sides against the rock. In an astonishingly short time his coat grew like his mother's—a yellowish gray, dotted irregularly with blackish spots, and running to a creamy tone under the belly. As soon as this change was completed to his mother's satisfaction, he was led down close to the water's edge, where he had never been allowed before.

Eagerly as he loved the sight of the waves, and the salty savor of them, when the first thin crest splashed up and soused him he shrank back daunted. It was colder, too, that first slap in his face, than he had expected. He turned, intending to retreat a little way up the rocks and consider the question, in spite of the fact that there was his little mother in the water, swimming gayly a few feet out from shore and coaxing him with soft cries. He was anxious to join her—but not just yet. Then, all at once the question was decided for him. His real mother, who was just behind him, suddenly thrust her muzzle under his flank, and sent him rolling into deep water.

He came up at once, much startled. Straightway he found that he could move in the water much more easily and naturally than on shore—and he applied the discovery to getting ashore again with all possible haste. But his mother, awaiting him at the edge, shoved him off relentlessly.

Feeling much injured, he turned and swam out to his other mother. Here the first one joined him; and in a few minutes amazement and resentment alike were lost in delight, as he began to realize that this, at last, was life. Here, and not sprawling half helplessly on the rocks, was where he belonged. He swam, and dived, and darted like a fish, and went wild with childish ecstasy. He had come to his own element. After this, he hardly ever returned to the cave, but slept close at the side of one or the other of his mothers, on the open rocks just a few feet above the edge of tide.

A little later came a period of mad weather, ushering in the autumn storms. Snow and sleet drove down out of the north, and lay in great patches over the more level portions of the islets above tide. The wind seemed as if it would lift the islets bodily and sweep them away. The vast seas, green and black and lead-color, thundered down upon the rocks as if they would batter them to fragments. The ledges shuddered under the incessant crashing. When the snow stopped, on its heels came the vanguard of the arctic cold. The ice formed instantly in all the

pools left by the tide. Along the edges of the tide it was ground to a bitter slush by the perpetual churning of the waves.

After a week or two of this violence, the seals—who, unlike their polar cousins, the “Harps” and the “Hoods,” were no great lovers of storm and the fiercer cold—began to feel discontented. Presently a little party of them, not more than a score in all, with a few of the stronger youngsters of that season, on a sudden impulse left their stormy ledges and started southward. The Pup, who, thanks to his double mothering, was far bigger and more capable than any of his mates, went with his partner-mothers in the very forefront of the migration.

Straight down along the roaring coast they kept, usually at a distance of not more than half a mile from shore. They had, of course, no objection to going farther out, but neither had they any object in doing so, since the fish-life on which they fed as they journeyed was the more abundant where the sea began to shoal. With their slim, sleek, rounded bodies, thickest at the fore flippers and tapering finely to tail and muzzle, each a lithe and close-knit structure of muscle and nerve-energy, they could swim with astounding speed; and therefore, although there was no hurry whatever, they went along at the pace of a motor-boat.

All this time the gale was lashing the coast, but it gave them little concern. Down in the black troughs of the gigantic rollers there was always peace from the yelling of the wind—a tranquillity wherein the gulls and mews would snatch their rest after being buffeted too long about the sky. Near the tops of the waves, of course, it was not good to be, for the gale would rip the crests off bodily and tear them into shreds of whipping spray. But the seals could always dive and slip smoothly under these tormented regions. Moreover, if weary of the tossing surfaces and the tumult of the gale, they had only to sink themselves down, down, into the untroubled gloom beneath the wave-bases, where greenish lights gleamed or faded with the passing of the rollers overhead, and where strange, phosphorescent shapes of life crawled or clung among the silent rocks. Longer than any other red-blooded animal, except the whale, could their lungs go without fresh oxygen; so, though they knew nothing of those great depths where the whales sometimes frequent, it was easy for them to go deep enough to get below the storm.

Sometimes a break in the coast-line, revealing the mouth of an inlet, would tempt the little band of migrants. Hastening shoreward, they would push their way inland between the narrowing banks, often as far as the head of tide, gambolling in the quiet water, and chasing the salmon fairly out upon the shoals. Like most discriminating creatures, they were very fond of salmon, but it was rarely, except on such occasions as this, that they had a chance to gratify their taste.

After perhaps a week of this southward journeying, the travellers found themselves one night at the head of a little creek where the tide lapped pleasantly on a smooth, sandy beach. They were already getting into milder weather, and here, a half mile inland, there was no wind. The sky was overcast, and the seals lay in contented security along the edge of the water. The blacker darkness of a fir forest came down to within perhaps fifty paces of their resting-place. But they had no anxieties. The only creatures that they had learned to fear on shore besides man were the polar bears; and they knew they were now well south of that deadly hunter’s range. As for eagles, they did not hunt at night; and, moreover, they were a terror only in the woolly-coated, baby stage of a seal’s existence.

But it often enough happens that wild animals, no less than human beings, may be ignorant of something which their health requires them to know. There was another bear in Labrador—a smallish, rusty-coated, broad-headed, crafty cousin of the ordinary American black bear. And one of these, who had acquired a taste for seal, along with some cleverness in gratifying that taste, had his headquarters, as it chanced, in that near-neighboring fir wood.

The Pup lay crowded in snugly between his two mothers. He liked the warmth of being crowded; for the light breeze, drawing up from the water, was sharp with frost. There is such a thing, however, as being just a little too crowded, and presently, waking up with a protest, he pushed and wriggled to get more space. As he did so, he raised his head. His keen young eyes fell upon a black something a little blacker than the surrounding gloom.

The black something was up the slope halfway between the water and the wood. It looked like a mass of rock. But the Pup had a vague feeling that there had been no rock thereabouts when he went to sleep. A thrill of apprehension went up and down his spine, raising the stiffish hairs along his neck. Staring with all his eyes through the dimness, he presently saw the black shape move. Yes, it was drawing nearer. With a shrill little bark of terror he gave the alarm, at the same time struggling free and hurling himself toward the water.

In that same instant the bear rushed, coming down the slope as it were in one plunging jump. The seals, light sleepers all, were already awake and floundering madly back to the water. But for one of them, and that one the Pup’s assistant mother, the alarm came too late. Just as she was turning, bewildered with terror of she knew not what, the dark bulk of the bear landed upon her, crushing her down. A terrific blow on the muzzle broke her skull, and she collapsed into a quivering mass. The rest of the band, after a moment of loud splashing, swam off noiselessly for the safe retreat of the outer ledges. And the bear, after shaking the body of his victim to make sure it was quite dead, dragged it away with a grunt of satisfaction into the fir wood.

After this tragedy, though the travellers continued to ascend the creeks and inlets when the whim so moved them, they took care to choose for sleep the ruder security of outlying rocks and islands, and cherished, by night and by day, a wholesome distrust of dark fir woods. But for all

their watchfulness their journeying was care-free and joyous, and from time to time, as they went, their light-heartedness would break out into aimless gambols, or something very like a children's game of tag. Nothing, however, checked their progress southward, and presently, turning into the Belle Isle Straits, they came to summer skies and softer weather. At this point, under the guidance of an old male who had followed the southward track before, they forsook the Labrador shore-line and headed fearlessly out across the strait till they reached the coast of Newfoundland. This coast they followed westward till they gained the Gulf of St. Lawrence, then, turning south, worked their way down the southwest coast of the great Island Province, past shores still basking in the amethystine light of Indian summer, through seas so teeming with fish that they began to grow lazy with fatness. Here the Pup and other younger members of the company felt inclined to stay. But their elders knew that winter, with the long cold, and the scanty sun, and the perilous grinding of tortured ice-floes around the shore-rocks, would soon be upon them; so the journey was continued. On they pressed, across the wide gateway of the Gulf, from Cape Ray to North Cape, the eastern point of Nova Scotia. Good weather still waited upon their wayfaring, and they loitered onward gayly, till, arriving at the myriad-island bay of the Tuskets, near the westernmost tip of the peninsula, they could not, for sheer satisfaction, go farther. Here was safe seclusion, with countless inaccessible retreats. Here was food in exhaustless plenty; and here was weather benignant enough for any reasonable needs.

It was just here, off the Tuskets, that the Pup got another lesson. Hitherto his ideas of danger had been altogether associated with the land where eagles swooped out of a clear sky and bears skulked in the darkness, and where, moreover, he himself was incapable of swift escape. But now he found that the sea, too, held its menace for the gentle kindred of the seals. It was a still, autumnal morning, blue and clear, with a sunny sparkle on sea and air. The seals were most of them basking luxuriously on the seaward ledges of one of the outermost islands, while half a dozen of the more energetic were amusing themselves with their game of tag in the deep water. Pausing for a moment to take breath, after a sharp wrestling-match far down among the seaweeds, the Pup's observant eyes caught sight of a small, black triangular object cutting swiftly the smooth surface of the swells. He stared at it curiously. It was coming towards him, but it did not, to his uninitiated eyes, look dangerous. Then he became conscious of a scurrying of alarm all about him; and cries of sharp warning reached him from the sentinels on the ledge. Like a flash he dived, at an acute angle to the line of approach of the mysterious black object. Even in the instant, it was close upon him, and he caught sight of a long, terrible, gray shape, thrice as long as a seal, which turned on one side in its rush, showing a whitish belly, and a gaping, saw-toothed mouth big enough to take him in at one gulp. Only by a hair's-breadth did he avoid that awful rush, carrying with him as he passed the sound of the snapping jaws and the cold gleam of the shark's small, malignant eye.

Hideously frightened, he doubled this way and that, with a nimbleness that his huge pursuer could not hope to match. It took the shark but a few seconds to realize that this was a vain chase. An easier quarry caught his eye. He darted straight shoreward, where the deep water ran in abruptly to the very lip of the ledge. The Pup came to the surface to watch. One of the younger seals, losing its wits utterly with fright, and forgetting that its safety lay in the deep water where it could twist and dodge, was struggling frantically to clamber out upon the rocks. It had almost succeeded, indeed. It was just drawing up its narrow, tail-like hind flippers, when the great, rounded snout of the shark shot into the air above it. The monstrous shape descended upon it, and fell back with it into the water, leaving only a splash and trickle of blood upon the lip of the ledge. The other seals tossed their heads wildly, jumped about on their fore-flippers, and barked in lively dismay; and in a few moments, as if the matter had been put to vote and carried unanimously, they betook themselves in haste to one of the inner islands, where they knew that the shark, who hates shoal water, would not venture to follow them.

In this sheltered archipelago the little herd might well have passed the winter. But after a few weeks of content the southing spirit again seized upon the old male who had hitherto been the unquestioned leader. At this point, however, his authority went to pieces. When he resumed the southward wandering, less than half the herd accompanied him. But among those faithful were the Pup and his mild-eyed mother.

Rounding the extremity of Nova Scotia, the travellers crossed the wide mouth of the Bay of Fundy, and lingered a few days about the lofty headlands of Grand Manan. By this time they had grown so accustomed to ships of all kinds, from the white-sailed fishing-smack to the long, black, churning bulk of the ocean liner, that they no longer heeded them any more than enough to give them a wide berth. One and all, these strange apparitions appeared quite indifferent to seals, so very soon the seals became almost indifferent to them. Off the island of Campobello, however, something mysterious occurred which put an end to this indifference, although none of the band could comprehend it.

A beautiful, swift, white craft, with yellow gleams flashing here and there from her deck as the sun caught her polished brasswork, was cleaving the light waves northward. The seals, their round, dark heads bobbing above the water at a distance of perhaps three hundred yards from her port-quarter, gazed at the spectacle with childlike interest. They saw a group of men eying them from the deck of the swift monster. All at once from this group spurted two thin jets of flame. The Pup heard some tiny vicious thing go close over his head with a cruel whine, and *zip* sharply through a wave-crest just beyond. On the instant, even before the sharp clatter of the two reports came to their ears, all the seals dived, and swam desperately to get as far away as possible from the terrifying bright monster. When they came to the surface again, they were far out of range. But the restless old male, their leader, was not among them. The white yacht was

steaming away into the distance, with its so-called sportsmen congratulating themselves that they had almost certainly killed something. The little band of seals waited about the spot for an hour or two, expecting the return of their chief; and then, puzzled and apprehensive, swam away toward the green-crested shore-line of Maine.

Here, lacking a leader, their migration came to an end. There seemed no reason to go farther, since here was everything they wanted. The Pup, by this time an expert pursuer of all but the swiftest fish, was less careful now to keep always within his mother's reach, though the affection between the two was still ardent. One day, while he was swimming some little distance apart from the herd, he noticed a black-hulled boat rocking idly on the swells near by. It was too near for his comfort, so he dived at once, intending to seek a safer neighborhood. But as luck would have it, he had hardly plunged below the surface when he encountered an enormous school of young herring. What throngs of them there were! And how crowded together! Never had he seen anything like it. They were darting this way and that in terrific excitement. He himself went wild at once, dashing hither and thither among them with snapping jaws, destroying many more than he could eat. And still they seemed to throng about him ever the more closely. At last he got tired of it, and dashed straight ahead to clear the shoal. The next moment, to his immeasurable astonishment, he was checked and flung back by a fine, invisible barrier. No, it was not quite invisible. He could see a network of meshes before him. Puzzled and alarmed, he shot up to the surface to reconnoitre.

As his head rose above the water, his heart fairly stopped for a second with dismay. The black side of the fishing boat was just above him, and the terrifying eyes of men looked straight down into his. Instantly he dived again, through the ever thickening masses of the herring. But straightway again he met the fine, invincible barrier of the net. Frantically he struggled to break through it, but only succeeded in coiling it about him till he could not move a flipper. And while he wriggled there impotently, under the squirming myriads of the fish, he was lifted out into the air and dragged into the boat.

Seeing the damage he had wrought in their catch, the fishermen were for knocking their captive straightway on the nose. But as he lay there, looking up with innocent eyes of wonder and appeal through the meshes, something in his baby helplessness softened the captain's heart.

"Hold hard, Jim," he ordered, staying a big sailor's hand. "Blamed if the little varmint ain't got eyes most as soft as my Libby's. I reckon he'll make a right purty pet fer the kid, an' kind of keep her from frettin' after her canary what died last Sunday."

"He don't much resemble a canary, Ephraim," laughed Jim, dropping the belaying-pin.

"I reckon he'll fill the bill fine, all the same," said the captain.

So the Pup was carried prisoner to Eastport.

CHAPTER II

As it happened, Miss Libby was a child of decided views. One of the most decided of her views proved to be that a seal pup, with very little voice and that little by no means melodious, was no substitute for a canary. She refused to look at the Pup at all, until her father, much disappointed, assured her that she should have a canary also without further delay. And even then, though she could not remain quite indifferent to the Pup's soft eyes and confiding friendliness, she never developed any real enthusiasm for him. She would minister amiably to his wants, and laugh at his antics, and praise his good temper, and stroke his sleek, round head, but she stuck resolutely to her first notion, that he was quite too "queer" for her to really love. She could never approve of his having flippers instead of fore paws, and of his lying down all the time even when he walked. As for his hind feet, which stuck out always straight behind him and close together, like a sort of double-barrelled tail, she was quite sure they had been fixed that way by mistake, and she could not, in spite of all her father's explanations as to the advantages, for a seal, of that arrangement, ever bring herself to accept them as normal.

Miss Libby's mother proved even less cordial. Her notions of natural history being of the most primitive, at first view she had jumped to the conclusion that the Pup was a species of fish; and in this opinion nothing could ever shake her.

"Well, I never!" she had exclaimed. "If that ain't just like you, Eph Barnes. As if it wa'n't enough to have to eat fish, an' talk fish, an' smell fish, year in an' year out, but you must go an' bring a live fish home to flop aroun' the house an' keep gittin' under a body's feet every way they turn! An' what's he goin' to eat, anyways, I'd like to know?"

"He eats *fish*, but he ain't no manner of fish himself, mother, no more than you nor I be!" explained Captain Ephraim, with a grin. "An' he won't be in your way a mite, for he'll live out in the yard, an' I'll sink the half of a molasses hogshead out there an' fill it with salt water for him to play in. He's an amusin' little beggar, an' gentle as a kitten."

"Well, I'd have you know that *I* wash my hands of him, Ephraim!" declared Mrs. Barnes, with emphasis. And so it came about that the Pup presently found himself, not Libby's special pet, but Captain Ephraim's.

Two important members of the Barnes family were a large yellow cat and a small, tangle-haired, blue-gray mop of a Skye terrier. At the first glimpse of the Pup, the yellow cat had fled, with tail as big as a bottle-brush, to the top of the kitchen dresser, where she crouched growling, with eyes like green full moons. The terrier, on the other hand, whose name was Toby, had shown

himself rather hospitable to the mild-eyed stranger. Unacquainted with fear, and always inclined to be scornful of whatever conduct the yellow cat might indulge in, he had approached the newcomer with a friendly wagging of his long-haired stump of a tail, and sniffed at him with pleased curiosity. The Pup, his lonely heart hungering for comradeship, had met this civil advance with effusion; and thenceforward the two were fast friends.

By the time the yellow cat and Mrs. Barnes had both got over regarding the Pup as a stranger, he had become an object of rather distant interest to them. When he played at wrestling matches with Toby in the yard,—which always ended by the Pup rolling indulgently on his back, while Toby, with yelps of excitement, mounted triumphantly between his fanning flippers,—the yellow cat would crouch upon the woodpile close by and regard the proceedings with intent but non-committal eye. Mrs. Barnes, for her part, would open the kitchen door and surreptitiously coax the Pup in, with the lure of a dish of warm milk, which he loved extravagantly. Then—this being while Libby was at school and Captain Ephraim away on the water—she would seat herself in the rocking-chair by the window with her knitting and watch the Pup and Toby at their play. The young seal was an endless source of speculation to her.

"To think, now," she would mutter to herself, "that I'd be a-settin' here day after day a-studyin' out a critter like that, what's no more'n jest plain *fish* says I, if he *do* flop roun' the house an' drink milk like a cat. He's right uncanny; but there ain't no denyin' but what he's as good as a circus when he gits to playin' with Toby."

As Mrs. Barnes had a very good opinion of Toby's intelligence, declaring him to be the smartest dog in Maine, she gradually imbibed a certain degree of respect for Toby's friend. And so it came about that the Pup acquired a taste which no seal was ever intended to acquire—a taste for the luxurious glow of the kitchen fire.

When at last the real Atlantic winter had settled down upon the coast, binding it with bitter frost and scourging it with storm, then Captain Ephraim spent most of his time at home in his snug cottage. He had once, on a flying visit to New York, seen a troupe of performing seals, which had opened his eyes to the marvellous intelligence of these amphibians. It now became his chief occupation, in the long winter evenings, to teach tricks to the Pup. And stimulated by abundant prizes in the shape of fresh herrings and warm milk, right generously did the Pup respond. He learned so fast that before spring the accomplished Toby was outstripped; and as for the canary,—an aristocratic golden fellow who had come all the way from Boston,—Miss Libby was constrained to admit that, except when it came to a question of singing, her pet was "not in it" with her father's. Mrs. Barnes' verdict was that "canaries seemed more natural-like, but couldn't rightly be called so interestin'."

Between Libby and her father there was always a lot of gay banter going on, and now Captain Ephraim declared that he would teach the Pup to sing as well as the canary. The obliging animal had already acquired a repertoire of tricks that would have made him something of a star in any troupe. The new demand upon his wits did not disturb him, so long as it meant more fish, more milk, and more petting. Captain Ephraim took a large tin bucket, turned it upside down on the floor, and made the Pup rest his chest upon the bottom. Then, tying a tin plate to each flipper, he taught the animal to pound the plates vigorously against the sides of the bucket, with a noise that put the shrill canary to shamefaced silence and drove the yellow cat in frantic amazement from the kitchen. This lesson it took weeks to perfect, because the Pup himself always seemed mortified at the blatant discords which he made. When it was all achieved, however, it was not singing, but mere instrumental music, as Libby triumphantly proclaimed. Her father straightway swore that he was not to be downed by any canary. A few weeks more, and he had taught the Pup to point his muzzle skyward and emit long, agonizing groans, the while he kept flapping the two tin plates against the bucket. It was a wonderful achievement, which made Toby retreat behind the kitchen stove and gaze forth upon his friend with grieved surprise. But it obliged Libby, who was a fair-minded child, to confess to her father that she and her pet were vanquished.

All this while the Pup was growing, as perhaps no harbor seal of his months had grown before. When spring came, he saw less of Captain Ephraim, but he had compensation, for the good captain now diverted into his modest grounds a no-account little brook which was going begging, and dug a snug little basin at the foot of the garden for the Pup to disport himself therein. All through the summer he continued to grow and was happy, playing with Toby, offending the yellow cat, amusing Miss Libby, and affording food for speculation to Mrs. Barnes over her knitting. In the winter Captain Ephraim polished him up in his old tricks, and taught him some new ones. But by this time he had grown so big that Mrs. Barnes began to grumble at him for taking up too much room. He was, as ever, a model of confiding amiability, in spite of his ample jaws and formidable teeth. But one day toward spring he showed that this good nature of his would not stand the test of seeing a friend ill-used.

It happened in this way. Toby, who was an impudent little dog, had managed to incur the enmity of a vicious half-breed mastiff, which lived on a farm some distance out of Eastport. The brute was known to have killed several smaller dogs; so whenever he passed the Barnes' gate, and snarled his threats at Toby, Toby would content himself with a scornful growl from the doorstep.

But one morning, as the big mongrel went by at the tail of his master's sled, Toby chanced to be very busy in the snow near the gate digging up a precious buried bone. The big dog crept up on tiptoe, and went over the gate with a scrambling bound. Toby had just time to lift his shaggy little head out of the snow and turn to face the assault. His heart was great, and there was no terror in the growl with which he darted under the foe's huge body and sank his teeth

strategically into the nearest hind paw. But the life would have been crushed out of him in half a minute, had not the Pup, at this critical juncture, come flopping up awkwardly to see how his little friend was faring.

Now the Pup, as we have seen, was simply overflowing with good-will towards dogs, and cats, and every one. But that was because he thought they were all friendly. He was amazed to find here a dog that seemed unfriendly. Then all at once he realized that something very serious was happening to his playmate. His eyes reddened and blazed; and with one mighty lunge he flung himself forward upon the enemy. With that terrific speed of action which could snap up a darting mackerel, he caught the mastiff in the neck, close behind the jaw. His teeth were built to hold the writhings of the biggest salmon, and his grip was that of a bulldog—except that it cut far deeper.

The mastiff yelped, snapped wildly at his strange antagonist, and then, finding himself held so that he could not by any possibility get a grip, strove to leap into the air and shake his assailant off. But the Pup held him down inexorably, his long teeth cutting deeper and deeper with every struggle. For perhaps half a minute the fight continued, the mad contortions of the entangled three (for Toby still clung to his grip on the foe's hind paw) tearing up the snow for a dozen feet in every direction. The snow was flecked with crimson,—but suddenly, with a throbbing gush, it was flooded scarlet. The Pup's teeth had torn through the great artery of his opponent's neck. With a cough the brute fell over, limp and unresisting as a half-filled bran sack.

At this moment the mastiff's owner, belatedly aware that the tables were being turned on his vicious favorite, came yelling and cursing over the gate, brandishing a sled stake in his hands. But at the same time arrived Captain Ephraim, rushing bareheaded from the kitchen, and stepped in front of the new arrival. One glance had shown him that the fight was over.

"Hold hard there, Baiseley!" he ordered in curt tones. Then he continued more slowly—"It ain't no use makin' a fuss. That murderin' brute of yourn begun it, an' come into my yard to kill my own little tike here. He's got just what he deserved. An' if the Pup here hadn't 'a' done it, I'd 'a' done it myself. See?"

Baiseley, like his mongrel follower, was a bully. But he had discretion. He calmed down.

"That there dog o' mine, Captain Ephraim, was a good dog, an' worth money. I reckon ye'll hev to pay me ten dollars for that dog, an' we'll call it square."

"Reckon I'll have to owe it to ye, Hank! Mebbe I'll pay it some day when you git han'somer 'n you are now!" laughed Captain Ephraim dryly. He gave a piercing whistle through his teeth. Straightway Toby, sadly bedraggled, came limping up to him. The Pup let go of his dead enemy, and lifted his head to eye his master inquiringly. His whole front was streaming with blood.

"Go wash yerself!" ordered the captain picking up a chip and hurling it into the pond, which was now half empty of ice.

The Pup floundered off obediently to get the chip, and Baiseley, muttering inarticulate abuse, slouched away to his sled.

CHAPTER III

Toward the end of April there came a great change in the Pup's affairs. Primarily, the change was in Captain Ephraim's. Promoted to the command of a smart schooner engaged in cod-fishing on the Grand Banks, he sold his cottage at Eastport and removed his family to Gloucester, Massachusetts. At the same time, recognizing with many a pang that a city like Gloucester was no place for him to keep a seal in, he sold the Pup, at a most consoling price indeed, to the agent of an English animal trainer. With the prospect of shortly becoming the cynosure of all eyes at Shepherd's Bush or Earl's Court, the Pup was shipped on a freighter for Liverpool.

With his pervasive friendliness, and seeking solace for the absence of Toby and Captain Ephraim, the Pup proved a most privileged and popular passenger. All went well till the ship came off Cape Race, Newfoundland. Then that treacherous and implacable promontory made haste to justify its reputation; and in a blind sou'wester the ship was driven on the ledges. While she was pounding to pieces, the crew got away in their boats, and presently the Pup found himself reviving half-forgotten memories amid the buffeting of the huge Atlantic rollers.

He felt amazingly at home, but very lonely. Bobbing his head as high as he could above the water, he stared about him in every direction, dimly hoping to catch sight of Captain Ephraim or Toby—or even of the unsociable yellow cat. They were nowhere to be seen. Well, company he must have. After fish, of which there was no lack in those teeming waters, company was his urgent demand. He headed impatiently for the coast, which he could not see indeed, but which he felt clearly in the distance.

The first land he encountered was a high hogback of rock which proved to be an island. Swimming around under its lea, he ran into a little herd of seals of his own kind, and hastened confidently to fraternize with them.

The strangers, mostly females and young males, met his advances with a good-natured indifference. One of the herd, however, a big dog-seal who seemed to consider himself the chief, would have none of him, but grumbled and showed his teeth in a most unpleasant manner. The Pup avoided him politely, and crawled out upon the rocks, about twenty feet away, beside two friendly females. He wanted to get acquainted, that was all. But the old male, after grumbling

for several minutes, got himself worked up into a rage, and came floundering over the rocks to do up the visitor. Roughly he pushed the two complaisant females off into the water, and then, with a savage lunge, he fell upon the Pup.

But in this last step the old male was ill-advised. Hitherto the Pup had felt diffident in the face of such a reception, but now a sudden red rage flared into his eyes. Young as he was, he was as big as his antagonist, and, here on land, a dozen times more nimble. Here came in the advantage of Captain Ephraim's training. When the old male lunged upon him, he simply wasn't there. He had shot aside, and wheeled like a flash, and secured a hold at the root of his assailant's flipper. Of course in this position he too received some sharp punishment. But he held on like a bulldog, worrying, worrying mercilessly, till all at once the other squealed, and threw up his muzzle, and struggled to get away. The Pup, satisfied with this sign of submission, let him go at once, and he flounced off furiously into the water.

As a prompt result of this victory, the Pup found himself undisputed leader of the little herd, his late antagonist, after a vain effort to effect a division, having slipped indolently into a subordinate place. This suited the Pup exactly, who was happy himself, and wanted everybody else to be so likewise.

As spring advanced, the herd worked their way northward along the Newfoundland coast, sometimes journeying hurriedly, sometimes lingering for days in the uninhabited inlets and creek mouths. The Pup was in a kind of ecstasy over his return to the water world, and indulged in antics that seemed perhaps frivolous in the head of so important a family. But once in a while a qualm of homesickness would come over him, for Toby, and the Captain, and a big tin basin of warm milk. And in one of these moods he was suddenly confronted by men.

The herd was loitering off a point which marked the entrance to a shallow cove, when round the jutting rocks slid a row-boat, with two fishermen coming out to set lines. They had no guns with them, fortunately. They saw the seals dive and vanish at the first glimpse of them, as was natural. But to their amazement, one seal—the biggest, to their astonished eyes, in the whole North Atlantic—did not vanish with the rest. Instead of that, after eying them fearlessly at a distance of some fifty feet, he swam deliberately straight toward them.

Now there is nothing very terrifying, except to a fish, in the aspect of even the biggest harbor seal; but to these fishermen, who knew the shyness of the seals, it was terrifying to the last degree that one should conduct himself in this unheard-of way. They stopped rowing, and stared with superstitious eyes.

"Howly Mother!" gasped one, "that b'ain't no seal, Mike!"

"What d'ye s'pose he wants wid us, Barney, annyhow?" demanded Mike, in an awed voice.

"Sure, an' it's a *sign* for the one or t'other of us. It's gittin' back to shore we'd better be," suggested Barney, pulling round hard on the bow oar.

As the mysterious visitor was still advancing, this counsel highly commended itself to Mike, who would have faced a polar bear with no weapon but his oar, but had no stomach for a parley with the supernatural. In another moment the boat was rushing back up the cove with all the speed their practised muscles could impart. But still, swimming leisurely in their wake, with what seemed to them a dreadful deliberation, the Pup came after them.

"Don't ye be comin' nigh *me!*" cried Mike, somewhat hysterically, "or I'll bash yer face wid the oar, mind!"

"Whisht!" said Barney, "don't ye be after talkin' that way to a sperrit, or maybe he'll blast ye!"

"I'm thinkin', now," said Mike, presently, in a hushed voice, "as maybe it be Dan Sheedy's sperrit, comin' back to ha'nt me coz I didn't give up them boots o' his to his b'y, accordin' to me promise."

"Shure an' why not that?" agreed Barney, cheered by the hope that the visitation was not meant for him.

A moment more and the boat reached the beach with an abruptness that hurled both rowers from their seats. Scrambling out upon the shingle, they tugged wildly at the boat to draw her up. But the Pup, his eyes beaming affection, was almost on their heels. With a yell of dismay Mike dashed up the shore toward their shack; but Barney, having less on his conscience, delayed to snatch out of the bow the precious tin pail in which they carried their bait. Then he followed Mike. But looking back over his shoulder, he saw his mysterious pursuer ascend from the water and come flopping up the shore at a pace which assuredly no *mortal* seal could ever accomplish on dry land. At that he fell over a boulder, dropped the pail of bait, picked himself up with a startled yell, and made a dash for the shack as if all the fiends were chasing him.

Slamming the door behind them, the two stared fearfully out of the window. Their guns, loaded with slugs, leaned against the wall, but they would never be guilty of such perilous impiety as to use them.

When he came to the tin pail and the spilled bait the Pup was pleased. He knew very well what the pail was for, and what the men expected of him. He had no objection to being paid in advance, so he gobbled the bait at once. It was not much, but he had great hopes that, if he acquitted himself well, he might get a pan of warm milk. Cheerfully he hoisted his massive chest upon the pail, and then, pounding jerkily with his flippers as hard as he could, he lifted his muzzle heavenward and delivered himself of a series of prolonged and anguished groans.

This was too much for his audience.

"Howly Mother, save us!" sobbed Barney, dropping upon his knees, and scrabbling desperately in his untidy memory for some fragments of his childhood's prayers.

"Don't, Dan, don't!" pleaded Mike, gazing out with wild eyes at the Pup's mystical performance. "I'll give back them boots to the b'y. I'll give 'em back, Dan! Let me be now, won't 'ee, old mate?"

Thus adjured, the Pup presently stopped, and stared expectantly at the shack, awaiting the pan of warm milk. When it did not come, he was disgusted. He had never been kept waiting this way before. These men were not like Captain Ephraim. In a minute or two he rolled off the pail, flopped heavily down the beach, and plunged back indignantly into the sea. As his dark head grew smaller and smaller in the distance, the men in the shack threw open the door, and came out as if they needed fresh air.

"I always *said* as how Dan had a good heart," muttered Mike, in a shaken voice. "An' shure, now, ye see, Barney, he ain't after bearin' no grudge."

"But ye'll be takin' back them boots to young Dan, this very day of our lives," urged Barney. "An' ye'll be after makin' it all right wid the Widdy Sheedy, afore ye're a day older, now."

"Shure, an' to wanst ain't none too quick for me, an' me receavin' a hint loike that!" agreed Mike.

As for the Pup, after this shock to his faith in man, he began to forget the days of his comfortable captivity. His own kind proved vastly interesting to him, and in a few weeks his reversion was complete. By that time his journeyings had led him, with his little herd, far up the coast of Labrador. At last he came to a chain of rocky islands, lying off a black and desolate coast. The islands were full of caves, and clamorous with sea-birds, and trodden forever by a white and shuddering surf. Here old memories stirred dimly but sweetly within him—and here he brought his wanderers to rest.

LONE WOLF

Lone Wolf

CHAPTER I

Not, like his grim ancestors for a thousand generations, in some dark cave of the hills was he whelped, but in a narrow iron cage littered with straw. Two brothers and a sister made at the same time a like inauspicious entrance upon an alien and fettered existence. And because their silent, untamable mother loved too savagely the hereditary freedom of her race to endure the thought of bearing her young into a life of bondage, she would have killed them mercifully, even while their blind baby mouths were groping for her breasts. But the watchful keeper forestalled her. Whelps of the great gray timber wolf, born in captivity, and therefore likely to be docile, were rare and precious. The four little sprawlers, helpless and hungrily whimpering, were given into the care of a foster-mother, a sorrowing brown spaniel bitch who had just been robbed of her own puppies.

When old enough to be weaned, the two brothers and the sister, sturdy and sleek as any wolf cubs of the hills, were sold to a dealer in wild animals, who carried them off to Hamburg. But "Lone Wolf," as Toomey, the trainer, had already named him, stayed with the circus. He was the biggest, the most intelligent, and the most teachable cub of the whole litter, and Toomey, who had an unerring eye for quality in a beast, expected to make of him a star performer among wolves.

Job Toomey had been a hunter and a trapper in the backwoods of New Brunswick, where his instinctive knowledge of the wild kindreds had won him a success which presently sickened him. His heart revolted against the slaughter of the creatures which he found so interesting, and for a time, his occupation gone, he had drifted aimlessly about the settlements. Then, at the performance of a travelling circus, which boasted two trained bears and a little trick elephant, he had got his cue. It was borne in upon him that he was meant to be an animal trainer. Then and there he joined the circus at a nominal wage, and within six months found himself an acknowledged indispensable. In less than a year he had become a well-known trainer, employed in one of the biggest menageries of America. Not only for his wonderful comprehension and command of animals was he noted, but also for his pose, to which he clung obstinately, of giving his performances always in the homespun garb of a backwoodsman, instead of in the conventional evening dress.

"Lone Wolf!" It seemed a somewhat imaginative name for the prison-born whelp, but as he grew out of cub-hood his character and his stature alike seemed to justify it. Influenced by the example of his gentle foster-mother, he was docility itself toward his tamer, whom he came to love well after the reticent fashion of his race. But toward all others, man and beast alike, his reserve was cold and dangerous. Toomey, apparently, absorbed all the affection which his lonely nature had to spare. In return for this singleness of regard, Toomey trained him with a firm patience which never forgot to be kind, and made him, by the time he was three years old, quite the cleverest and most distinguished performing wolf who had ever adorned a show.

He was now as tall as the very tallest Great Dane, but with a depth of shoulder and chest, a punishing length and strength of jaw, that no dog ever could boast. When he looked at Toomey, his eyes wore the expression of a faithful and understanding follower; but when he answered the stares of the crowd through the bars of his cage, the greenish fire that flamed in their inscrutable depths was ominous and untamed. In all save his willing subjection to Toomey's mastery, he was a true wolf, of the savage and gigantic breed of the Northwestern timber. To the spectators this was aggressively obvious; and therefore the marvel of seeing this sinister gray beast, with the murderous fangs, so submissive to Toomey's gentlest bidding, never grew stale. In every audience there were always some spectators hopefully pessimistic, who vowed that the great wolf would some day turn upon his master and tear his throat. To be sure, Lone Wolf was not by any means the only beast whom the backwoodsman had performing for the delectation of his audiences. But all the others—the lions, the leopards, the tiger, the elephant, the two zebras, and the white bear—seemed really subdued, as it were hypnotized into harmlessness. It was Lone Wolf only who kept the air of having never yielded up his spirit, of being always, in some way, not the slave but the free collaborator.

Ordinarily, in spite of the wild fire smouldering in his veins, Lone Wolf was well enough content. The show was so big and so important that it was accustomed to visit only the great centres, and to make long stops at each place. At such times his life contained some measure of freedom. He would be given a frequent chance of exercise, in some secure enclosure where he could run, and jump, and stretch his mighty muscles, and breathe deep. And not infrequently—after dark as a rule—his master would snap a massive chain upon his collar, and lead him out, on leash like a dog, into the verdurous freshness of park or country lane. But when the show was on tour, then it was very different. Lone Wolf hated fiercely the narrow cage in which he had to travel. He hated the harsh, incessant noise of the grinding rails, the swaying and lurching of the trucks, the dizzying procession of the landscape past the barred slits which served as windows to his car. Moreover, sometimes the unwieldy length of the circus train would be halted for an hour or two on some forest siding, to let the regular traffic of the line go by. Then, as his wondering eyes caught glimpses of shadowed glades, and mysterious wooded aisles, and far-off hills and horizons, or wild, pungent smells of fir thicket and cedar swamp drew in upon the wind to his uplifted nostrils, his veins would run hot with an uncomprehended but savage longing for delights which he had never known, for a freedom of which he had never learned or guessed. At

such times his muscles would ache and quiver, till he felt like dashing himself blindly against his bars. And if the halt happened to take place at night, with perhaps a white moon staring in upon him from over a naked hill-top, he would lift his lean muzzle straight up toward the roof of his cage and give utterance to a terrible sound of which he knew not the meaning, the long, shrill gathering cry of the pack. This would rouse all the other beasts to a frenzy of wails and screeches and growls and roars; till Toomey would have to come and stop his performance by darkening the cage with a tarpaulin. At the sound of Toomey's voice, soothing yet overmastering, the great wolf would lie down quietly, and the ghostly summons of his far-ravaging fathers would haunt his spirit no more.

After one of these long journeys, the show was halted at an inland city for a stop of many weeks; and to house the show a cluster of wooden shanties was run up on the outskirts of the city, forming a sort of mushroom village flanked by the great white exhibition tents. In one of these shanties, near the centre of the cluster, Lone Wolf's cage was sheltered, along with the cages of the puma, the leopard, and the little black Himalayan bear. Immediately adjoining this shanty was the spacious open shed where the elephants were tethered.

That same night, a little before dawn, when the wearied attendants were sleeping heavily, Lone Wolf's nostrils caught a strange smell which made him spring to his feet and sniff anxiously at the suddenly acrid air. A strange reddish glow was dispersing the dark outside his window. From the other cages came uneasy mutterings and movements, and the little black bear, who was very wise, began to whine. The dull glow leaped into a glare and then the elephants trumpeted the alarm. Instantly the night was loud with shoutings, and trappings, and howlings, and rushings to and fro. A cloud of choking smoke blew into Lone Wolf's cage, making him cough and wonder anxiously why Toomey didn't come. The next moment Toomey came, with one of the keepers, and an elephant. Frantically they began pushing and dragging out the cages. But there was a wind; and before the first cage, that of the puma, was more than clear of the door, the flames were on top of them like a leaping tiger. Panic-stricken, the elephant screamed and bolted. The keeper, shouting, "We can't save any more in this house. Let's git the lions out!" made off with one arm over his eyes, doggedly dragging the heavy cage of the puma. The keeper was right. He had his work cut out for him, as it was, to save the screeching puma. As for Toomey, his escape was already almost cut off. But he could not endure to save himself without giving the imprisoned beasts a chance for their lives. Dashing at the three remaining cages, he tore them open; and then, with a summons to Lone Wolf to follow him, he threw his arms over his face and dashed through the flames.

The three animals sprang out at once into the middle of the floor, but their position seemed already hopeless. The leopard, thoroughly cowed, leaped back into his cage and curled up in the farthest corner, spitting insanely. Lone Wolf dashed at the door by which Toomey had fled, but a whirl of flame in his face drove him back to the middle of the floor, where the little bear stood whimpering. Just at this moment a massive torrent of water from a fire engine crashed through the window, drenching Lone Wolf, and knocking the bear clean over. The beneficent stream was whisked away again in an instant, having work to do elsewhere than on this already doomed and hopeless shed. But to the wise little bear it had shown a way of escape. Out through the window he scurried, and Lone Wolf went after him in one tremendous leap just as the flames swooped in and licked the floor clean, and slew the huddled leopard in its cage.

Outside, in the awful heat, the alternations of dazzling glare and blinding smoke, the tumult of the shouting and the engines, the roar of the flames, the ripping crash of the streams, and the cries of the beasts, Lone Wolf found himself utterly confused. But he trusted, for some reason, to the sagacity of the bear, and followed his shaggy form, bearing diagonally up and across the wind. Presently a cyclone of suffocating smoke enveloped him, and he lost his guide. But straight ahead he darted, stretched out at top speed, belly to the ground, and in another moment he emerged into the clear air. His eyes smarting savagely, his nose and lips scorched, his wet fur singed, he hardly realized at first his escape, but raced straight on across the fields for several hundred yards. Then, at the edge of a wood, he stopped and looked back. The little bear was nowhere to be seen. The night wind here blew deliciously cool upon his face. But there was the mad red monster, roaring and raging still as if it would eat up the world. The terror of it was in his veins. He sprang into the covert of the wood, and ran wildly, with the one impulse to get as far away as possible.

Before he had gone two miles, he came out upon an open country of fields, and pastures, and farmyards, and little thickets. Straight on he galloped, through the gardens and the farmyards as well as the open fields. In the pastures the cattle, roused by the glare in the sky, stamped and snorted at him as he passed, and now and then a man's voice yelled at him angrily as his long form tore through flowerbeds or trellised vines. He had no idea of avoiding the farmhouses, for he had at first no fear of men; but at length an alert farmer got a long shot at him with a fowling-piece, and two or three small leaden pellets caught him in the hind quarters. They did not go deep enough to do him serious harm, but they hurt enough to teach him that men were dangerous. Thereupon he swerved from the uncompromising straight line of his flight, and made for the waste places. When the light of the fire had quite died out behind him, the first of the dawn was creeping up the sky; and by this time he had come to a barren region of low thickets, ragged woods, and rocks thrusting up through a meagre, whitish soil.

Till the sun was some hours high Lone Wolf pressed on, his terror of the fire now lost in a sense of delighted freedom. By this time he was growing hungry, and for an instant the impulse seized him to turn back and seek his master. But no, that way lay the scorching of the flames. Instead of turning, he ran on all the faster. Suddenly a rabbit bounded up, almost beneath his nose.

Hitherto he had never tasted living prey, but with a sure instinct he sprang after the rabbit. To his fierce disappointment, however, the nimble little beast was so inconsiderate as to take refuge in a dense bramble thicket which he could not penetrate. His muzzle, smarting and tender from the fire, could not endure the harsh prickles, so after prowling about the thicket for a half-hour in the wistful hope that the rabbit might come out, he resumed his journey. He had no idea, of course, where he wanted to go, but he felt that there must be a place somewhere where there were plenty of rabbits and no bramble thickets.

Late in the afternoon he came upon the fringes of a settlement, which he skirted with caution. In a remote pasture field, among rough hillocks and gnarled, fire-scarred stumps, he ran suddenly into a flock of sheep. For a moment he was puzzled at the sight, but the prompt flight of the startled animals suggested pursuit. In a moment he had borne down the hindermost. To reach for its throat was a sure instinct, and he feasted, with a growing zest of savagery, upon the hot flesh. Before he realized it, he was dragging the substantial remnant of his meal to a place of hiding under an overhanging rock. Then, well content with himself, he crept into a dark thicket and slept for several hours.

When he awoke, a new-risen moon was shining, with something in her light which half bewildered him, half stung him to uncomprehended desires. Skulking to the crest of a naked knoll, he saw the landscape spread out all around him, with the few twinkling lights of the straggling village below the slopes of the pasture. But not for lights, or for villages, or for men was his concern. Sitting up very straight on his gaunt haunches, he stretched his muzzle toward the taunting moon, and began to sound that long, dreadful gathering cry of his race.

It was an unknown or a long-forgotten voice in those neighborhoods, but none who heard it needed to have it explained. In half a minute every dog in the settlement was howling, barking, or yelping, in rage or fear. To Lone Wolf all this clamor was as nothing. He paid no more attention to it than as if it had been the twittering of sparrows. Then doors opened, and lights flashed as men came out to see what was the matter. Clearly visible, silhouetted against the low moon, Lone Wolf kept up his sinister chant to the unseen. But presently, out of the corner of his eye, he noted half a dozen men approaching up the pasture, with the noisy dogs at their heels. Men! That was different! Could it be that they wanted him? All at once he experienced a qualm of conscience, so to speak, about the sheep he had killed. It occurred to him that if sheep belonged to men, there might be trouble ahead. Abruptly he stopped his serenading of the moon, slipped over the crest of the knoll, and made off at a long, tireless gallop which before morning had put leagues between himself and the angry villagers.

After this he gave a wide berth to settlements; and having made his first kill, he suddenly found himself an accomplished hunter. It was as if long-buried memories had sprung all at once to life, —memories, indeed, not of his own but of his ancestors',—and he knew, all at once, how to stalk the shy wild rabbits, to run down and kill the red deer. The country through which he journeyed was well stocked with game, and he fed abundantly as he went, with no more effort than just enough to give zest to his freedom. In this fashion he kept on for many days, working ever northward just because the wild lands stretched in that direction; and at last he came upon the skirts of a cone-shaped mountain, ragged with ancient forest, rising solitary and supreme out of a measureless expanse of wooded plain. From a jutting shoulder of rock his keen eyes noted but one straggling settlement, groups of scattered clearings, wide apart on the skirts of the great hill. They were too far off to mar the vast seclusion of the height; and Lone Wolf, finding a cave in the rocks that seemed exactly designed for his retreat, went no farther. He felt that he had come into his own domain.

CHAPTER II

The settlers around the skirts of Lost Mountain were puzzled and indignant. For six weeks their indignation had been growing, and the mystery seemed no nearer a solution. Something was slaughtering their sheep—something that knew its business and slaughtered with dreadful efficiency. Several honest dogs fell under suspicion, not because there was anything whatever against their reputations, but simply because they had the misfortune to be big enough and strong enough to kill a sheep if they wanted to, and the brooding backwoods mind, when troubled, will go far on the flimsiest evidence.

Of all the wrathful settlers the most furious was Brace Timmins. Not only had he lost in those six weeks six sheep, but now his dog, a splendid animal, half deerhound and half collie, had been shot on suspicion by a neighbor, on no better grounds, apparently, than his long legs and long killing jaws. Still the slaughtering of the flocks went on with undiminished vigor. And a few days later Brace Timmins avenged his favorite by publicly thrashing his too hasty neighbor in front of the cross-roads store. The neighbor, pounded into exemplary penitence, apologized, and as far as the murdered dog was concerned, the score was wiped clean. But the problem of the sheep killing was no nearer solution. If not Brace Timmins' dog, as every one made prudent haste to acknowledge, then whose dog was it? The life of every dog in the settlement, if bigger than a wood-chuck, hung by a thread, which might, it seemed, at any moment turn into a halter. Brace Timmins loved dogs; and not wishing that others should suffer the unjust fate which had overtaken his own, he set his whole woodcraft to the discovery of the true culprit.

Before he had made any great progress, however, on this trail, a new thing happened, and suspicion was lifted from the heads of all the dogs. Joe Anderson's dog, a powerful beast, part sheep-dog and part Newfoundland, with a far-off streak of bull, and the champion fighter of the settlements, was found dead in the middle of Anderson's sheep pasture, his whole throat fairly

ripped out. He had died in defence of his charges, and it was plainly no dog's jaws that had done such mangling. What dog indeed could have mastered Anderson's "Dan"?

"It's a bear, gone mad on mutton," pronounced certain of the wise ones, idling at the cross-roads store. "Ye see as how he hain't *et* the dawg, nowadays, but jest bit him to teach him not to go interferin' as regards sheep."

"Ye're all off," contradicted Timmins, with authority. "A bear'd hev' tore him an' batted him an' mauled him more'n he'd hev' bit him. A bear thinks more o' usin' his fore paws than what he does his jaws, if he gits into any kind of an onpleasantness. No, boys, our unknown friend up yonder's a *wolf*, take my word for it."

Joe Anderson snorted, and spat accurately out through the door.

"A *wolf*!" he sneered. "Go chase yerself, Brace Timmins. I'd like to see any wolf as could 'a' done up my Dan that way!"

"Well, keep yer hair on, Joe," retorted Timmins, easily. "I'm a-goin' after him, an' I'll show him to you in a day or two, as like as not!"

"I reckon, Joe," interposed the storekeeper, leaning forward across the counter, "as how there be other breeds of wolf besides the sneakin' little gray varmint of the East here, what's been cleaned out of these parts fifty year ago. If Brace is right,—an' I reckon he be,—then it must sure be one of them big timber wolves we read about, what the Lord's took it into His head to plank down here in our safe old woods to make us set up an' take notice. You better watch out, Brace. If ye don't git the brute first lick, he'll git you!"

"I'll watch out!" drawled Timmins, confidently; and selecting a strong, steel trap-chain from a box beside the counter, he sauntered off to put his plans in execution.

These plans were simple enough. He knew that he had a wide-ranging adversary to deal with. But he himself was a wide ranger, and acquainted with every cleft and crevice of Lost Mountain. He would find the great wolf's lair, and set his traps accordingly, one in the runway, to be avoided if the wolf was as clever as he ought to be, and a couple of others a little aside to really do the work. Of course, he would carry his rifle, in case of need, but he wanted to take his enemy alive.

For several arduous but exciting days Timmins searched in vain alike the dark cedar swamps and the high, broken spurs of the mountain. Then, one windless afternoon, when the forest scents came rising to him on the clear air, far up the steep he found a climbing trail between gray, shelving ledges. Stealthy as a lynx he followed, expecting at the next turn to come upon the lair of the enemy. It was a just expectation, but as luck would have it, that next turn, which would have led him straight to his goal, lay around a shoulder of rock whose foundations had been loosened by the rains. With a kind of long growl, rending and sickening, the rock gave way, and sank beneath Timmins' feet.

Moved by the alert and unerring instinct of the woodsman, Timmins leaped into the air. Both high and wide he sprang, and so escaped being engulfed in the mass which he had dislodged. On the top of the ruin he fell, but he fell far and hard; and for some fifteen or twenty minutes after that fall he lay very still, while the dust and débris settled into silence under the quiet flooding of the sun.

At last he opened his eyes. For a moment he made no effort to move, but lay wondering where he was. A weight was on his legs, and glancing downward, he saw that he was half covered with earth and rubbish. Then he remembered. Was he badly hurt? He was half afraid, now, to make the effort to move, lest he should find himself incapable of it. Still, he felt no serious pain. His head ached, to be sure; and he saw that his left hand was bleeding from a gash at the base of the thumb. That hand still clutched one of the heavy traps which he had been carrying, and it was plainly the trap that had cut him, as if in a frantic effort to escape. But where was his rifle? Cautiously turning his head, he peered around for it, but in vain, for during the fall it had flown far aside into the thickets. As he stared solicitously, all at once his dazed and sluggish senses sprang to life again with a scorching throb, which left a chill behind it. There, not ten paces away, sitting up on its haunches and eying him contemptively, was a gigantic wolf, much bigger, it seemed to him, than any wolf had any right to be.

Timmins' first instinct was to spring to his feet, with a yell that would give the dreadful stranger to understand that he was a fellow it would not be well to tamper with. But his woodcraft stayed him. He was not by any means sure that he *could* spring to his feet. Still less was he sure that such an action would properly impress the great wolf, who, for the moment at least, seemed not actively hostile. Stillness, absolute immobility, was the trump-card to be always played in the wilderness when in doubt. So Timmins kept quite still, looking inquiringly at Lone Wolf. And Lone Wolf looked inquiringly at him.

For several minutes this waiting game went on. Then, with easy nonchalance, Lone Wolf lifted one huge hind paw and vigorously scratched his ear. This very simple action was a profound relief to Timmins.

"Sartain," he thought, "the crittur must be in an easy mood, or he'd never think to scratch his ear like that. Or mebbe he thinks I'm so well buried I kin wait, like an old bone!"

Just then Lone Wolf got up, stretched himself, yawned prodigiously, came a couple of steps nearer, and sat down again, with his head cocked to one side, and a polite air of asking, "Do I intrude?"

"Sartain sure, I'll never ketch him in a better humor!" thought Timmins. "I'll try the human voice on him."

"Git to H-- out of that!" he commanded in a sharp voice.

Lone Wolf cocked his head to the other side interrogatively. He had been spoken to by Toomey in that voice of authority, but the words were new to him. He felt that he was expected to do something, but he knew not what. He liked the voice—it was something like Toomey's. He liked the smell of Timmins' homespun shirt—it, too, was something like Toomey's. He became suddenly anxious to please this stranger. But what was wanted of him? He half arose to his feet, and glanced around to see if, perchance, the inexplicable order had been addressed to some one else. As he turned, Timmins saw, half hidden in the heavy fur of the neck, a stout leather collar.

"I swear!" he muttered, "if tain't a *tame* wolf what's got away!" With that he sat up; and pulling his legs, without any very serious hurt, from their covering of earth and sticks he got stiffly to his feet. For a moment the bright landscape reeled and swam before him, and he had a vague sense of having been hammered all over his body. Then he steadied himself. He saw that the wolf was watching him with the expression of a diffident but friendly dog who would like to make acquaintance. As he stood puzzling his wits, he remembered having read about the great fire which had recently done such damage to Sillaby and Hopkins' Circus, and he concluded that the stranger was one of the fugitives from that disaster.

"Come here, sir! Come here, big wolf!" said he, holding out a confident hand.

"Wolf"—that was a familiar sound to Lone Wolf's ears! it was at least a part of his name! And the command was one he well understood. Wagging his tail gravely, he came at once, and thrust his great head under Timmins' hand for a caress. He had enjoyed his liberty, to be sure, but he was beginning to find it lonely.

Timmins understood animals. His voice, as he talked to the redoubtable brute beside him, was full of kindness, but at the same time vibrant with authority. His touch was gentle, but very firm and unhesitating. Both touch and voice conveyed very clearly to Lone Wolf's disciplined instinct the impression that this man, like Toomey, was a being who had to be obeyed, whose mastery was inevitable and beyond the reach of question. When Timmins told him to lie down, he did so at once, and stayed there obediently while Timmins gathered himself together, shook the dirt out of his hair and boots, recovered his cap, wiped his bleeding hand with leaves, and hunted up his scattered traps and rifle. At last Timmins took two bedraggled but massive pork sandwiches, wrapped in newspaper, from his pocket, and offered one to his strange associate. Lone Wolf was not hungry, being full of perfectly good mutton, but being too polite to refuse, he gulped down the sandwich. Timmins took out the steel chain, snapped it on to Lone Wolf's collar, said, "Come on!" and started homeward. And Lone Wolf, trained to a short leash, followed close at his heels.

Timmins' breast swelled with exultation. What was the loss of one dog and half a dozen no-account sheep to the possession of this magnificent captive and the prestige of such a naked-handed capture? He easily inferred, of course, that his triumph must be due, in part at least, to some resemblance to the wolf's former master, whose dominance had plainly been supreme. His only anxiety was as to how the great wolf might conduct himself toward Settlement Society in general. Assuredly nothing could be more lamb-like than the animal's present demeanor, but Timmins remembered the fate of Joe Anderson's powerful dog, and had his doubts. He examined Lone Wolf's collar, and congratulated himself that both collar and chain were strong.

It was getting well along in the afternoon when Timmins and Lone Wolf emerged from the thick woods into the stumpy pastures and rough burnt lands that spread back irregularly from the outlying farms. And here, while crossing a wide pasture known as Smith's Lots, an amazing thing befell. Of course Timmins was not particularly surprised, because his backwoods philosophizing had long ago led him to the conclusion that when things get started happening, they have a way of keeping it up. Days, weeks, months, glide by without event enough to ripple the most sensitive memory. Then the whimsical Fates do something different, find it interesting, and proceed to do something else. So, though Timmins had been accustomed all his life to managing bulls, good-tempered and bad-tempered alike, and had never had the ugliest of them presume to turn upon him, he was not astonished now by the apparition of Smith's bull, a wide-horned, carrot-red, white-faced Hereford, charging down upon him in thunderous fury from behind a poplar thicket. In a flash he remembered that the bull, which was notoriously murderous in temper, had been turned out into that pasture to act as guardian to Smith's flocks. There was not a tree near big enough for refuge. There was not a stick big enough for a weapon. And he could not bring himself to shoot so valuable a beast as this fine thoroughbred. "Shucks!" he muttered in deep disgust. "I might 'a' knowed it!" Dropping Lone Wolf's chain, he ran forward, waving his arms and shouting angrily. But that red onrushing bulk was quite too dull-witted to understand that it ought to obey. It was in the mood to charge an avalanche. Deeply humiliated, Timmins hopped aside, and reluctantly ran for the woods, trusting to elude his pursuer by timely dodging.

Hitherto Lone Wolf had left all cattle severely alone, having got it somehow into his head that they were more peculiarly under man's protection than the sheep. Now, however, he saw his duty, and duty is often a very well-developed concept in the brain of dog and wolf. His ears flattened, his eyes narrowed to flaming green slits, his lips wrinkled back till his long white fangs were clean bared, and without a sound he hurled himself upon the red bull's flank. Looking back over his shoulder, Timmins saw it all. It was as if all his life Lone Wolf had been killing bulls, so unerring was that terrible chopping snap at the great beast's throat. Far forward, just behind the bull's jaws, the slashing fangs caught. And Timmins was astounded to

see the bull, checked in mid-rush, plunge staggering forward upon his knees. From this position he abruptly rolled over upon his side, thrown by his own impetus combined with a dexterous twist of his opponent's body. Then Lone Wolf bounded backward, and stood expectant, ready to repeat the attack if necessary. But it was not necessary. Slowly the great red bull arose to his feet, and stared about him stupidly, the blood gushing from his throat. Then he swayed and collapsed. And Lone Wolf, wagging his tail like a dog, went back to Timmins' side for congratulations.

The woodsman gazed ruefully at his slain foe. Then he patted his defender's head, recovered the chain with a secure grip, and said slowly:—

"I reckon, partner, ye did yer dooty as ye seen it, an' mebbe I'm beholden to ye fer a hul' skin, fer that there crittur was sartinly amazin' ugly an' spry on his pins. But ye're goin' to be a responsibility some. Ye ain't no suckin' lamb to hev aroun' the house, I'm thinkin'."

To these remarks, which he judged from their tone to be approving, Lone Wolf wagged assent, and the homeward journey was continued. Timmins went with his head down, buried in thought. All at once, coming to a convenient log, he seated himself, and made Lone Wolf lie down at his feet. Then he took out the remaining sandwich,—which he himself, still shaken from his fall, had no desire to eat,—and contemplatively, in small fragments, he fed it to the wolf's great blood-stained jaws. At last he spoke, with the finality of one whose mind is quite made up.

"Partner," said he, "there ain't no help for it. Bill Smith's a-goin' to hold *me* responsible for the killin' o' that there crittur o' his'n, an' that means a pretty penny, it bein' a thoroughbred, an' imported at that. He ain't never a-goin' to believe but what I let you loose on to him a purpose, jest to save *my* hide! Shucks! Moreover, ye may's well realize y'ain't *popular* 'round these parts; an' first thing, when I wasn't lookin', somebody'd be a-puttin' somethin' onhealthy into yer vittles, partner! We've kind o' took to each other, you an' me; an' I reckon *we'd* git on together *fine*, me always havin' me own way, of course. But there ain't no help fer it. Ye're too hefty a proposition, by long odds, fer a community like Lost Mountain Settlement. I'm a-goin' to write right off to Sillaby an' Hopkins, an' let them have ye back, partner. An' I reckon the price they'll pay'll be enough to let me square myself with Bill Smith."

And thus it came about that, within a couple of weeks, Lone Wolf and Toomey were once more entertaining delighted audiences, while the settlement of Lost Mountain, with Timmins' prestige established beyond assault, relapsed into its uneventful quiet.

THE BEAR'S FACE

The Bear's Face

CHAPTER I

"There ain't no denying but what you give us a great show, Job," said the barkeeper, with that air of patronage which befits the man who presides over and autocratically controls the varied activities of a saloon in a Canadian lumber town.

"It *is* a good show!" assented Job Toomey, modestly. He leaned up against the bar in orthodox fashion, just as if his order had been "whiskey fer mine!" but being a really great animal trainer, whose eye must be always clear and his nerve always steady as a rock, his glass contained nothing stronger than milk and Vichy.

Fifteen years before, Job Toomey had gone away with a little travelling menagerie because he loved wild animals. He had come back famous, and the town of Grantham Mills, metropolis of his native county, was proud of him. He was head of the menagerie of the Sillaby and Hopkins' Circus, and trainer of one of the finest troupes of performing beasts in all America. It was a great thing for Grantham Mills to have had a visit from the Sillaby and Hopkins' Circus on its way from one important centre to another. There had been two great performances, afternoon and evening. And now, after the last performance, some of Toomey's old-time acquaintances were making things pleasant for him in the bar of the Continental.

"I don't see how ye do it, Job!" said Sanderson, an old river-man who had formerly trapped and hunted with Toomey. "I mind ye was always kind o' slick an' understandin' with the wild critters; but the way them lions an' painters an' bears an' wolves jest folly yer eye an' yer nod, willin' as so many poodle dogs, beats me. They seem to like it, too."

"They *do*," said Toomey. "Secret of it is, I like *them*; so by an' by they learn to like me well enough, an' try to please me. I make it worth their while, too. Also, they know I'll stand no fooling. Fear an' love, rightly mixed, boys—plenty of love, an' jest enough fear to keep it from spilin'—that's a mixture'll carry a man far—leastways with animals!"

The barkeeper smiled, and was about to say the obvious thing, but he was interrupted by a long, lean-jawed, leather-faced man, captain of one of the river tugs, whose eyes had grown sharp as gimlets with looking out for snags and sandbanks.

"The finest beast in the whole menagerie, that big grizzly," said he, spitting accurately into a spacious box of sawdust, "I noticed as how ye didn't have *him* in your performance, Mr. Toomey. Now, I kind o' thought as how I'd like to see you put *him* through his stunts."

Toomey was silent for a moment. Then, with a certain reserve in his voice, he answered—

"Oh, he ain't exactly strong on stunts."

The leather-faced captain grinned quizzically.

"Which does he go shy on, Mr. Toomey, the love or the fear?" he asked.

"Both," said Toomey, shortly. Then his stern face relaxed, and he laughed good-humoredly. "Fact is, I think we'll have to be sellin' that there grizzly to some zoölogical park. He's kind of bad fer my prestige."

"How's that, Job?" asked Sanderson, expectant of a story.

"Well," replied Toomey, "to tell you the truth, boys,—an' I only say it because I'm here at home, among friends,—it's *me* that's afraid of *him*! An' he knows it. He's the only beast that's ever been able to make me feel fear—the real, deep-down fear. An' I've never been able to git quit of that ugly notion. I go an' stand in front o' his cage; an' he jest puts that great face of his up agin the bars an' stares at me. An' I look straight into his eyes, an' remember what has passed between us, an' I feel afraid still. Yes, it wouldn't be much use me tryin' to train *that* bear, boys, an' I'm free to acknowledge it to you all."

"Tell us about it, Job!" suggested the barkeeper, settling his large frame precariously on the top of a small, high stool.

An urgent chorus of approval came from all about the bar. Toomey took out his watch and considered.

"We start away at 5.40 A.M.," said he. "An' I must make out to get a wink o' sleep. But I reckon I've got time enough. As you'll see, however, before I git through, the drinks are on me, so name yer pison, boys. Meanwhile, you'll excuse me if I don't join you this time. A man kin hold jest about so much Vichy an' milk, an' I've got my load aboard.

"It was kind of this way," he continued, when the barkeeper had performed his functions. "You see, for nigh ten years after I left Grantham Mills, I'd stuck closer'n a burr to my business, till I began to feel I knew 'most all there was to know about trainin' animals. Men do git that kind of a fool feelin' sometimes about lots of things harder than animal-trainin'. Well, nothin' would do me but I should go back to my old business of *trappin'* the beasts, only with one big difference. I wanted to go in fer takin' them alive, so as to sell them to menageries an' all that sort of thing. An' it was no pipe dream, fer I done well at it from the first. But that's not here nor there. I was gittin' tired of it, after a lot o' travellin' an' some lively kind of scrapes; so I made up my mind to finish up with a grizzly, an' then git back to trainin', which was what I was cut out fer, after all.

"Well, I wanted a grizzly; an' it wasn't long before I found one. We were campin' among the foothills of the upper end of the Sierra Nevada range, in northern California. It was a good prospectin' ground fer grizzly, an' we found lots o' signs. I wanted one not too big fer convenience, an' not so old as to be too set in his ways an' too proud to larn. I had three good men with me, an' we scattered ourselves over a big bit o' ground, lookin' fer a likely trail. When I stumbled on to that chap in the cage yonder, what Captain Bird admires so, I knew right off *he* wasn't what I was after. But the queer thing was that *he* didn't seem to feel that way about *me*. He was after me before I had time to think of anything jest suitable to the occasion."

"Where in thunder was yer gun?" demanded the river-man.

"That was jest the trouble!" answered Toomey. "Ye see, I'd stood the gun agin a tree, in a dry place, while I stepped over a bit o' boggy ground, intendin' to lay down an' drink out of a leetle spring. Well, the bear was handier to that gun than I was. When he come fer me, I tell ye I didn't go back fer the gun. I ran straight up the hill, an' him too close at my heels fer convenience. Then I remembered that a grizzly don't run his best when he goes up hill on a slant, so on the slant I went. It worked, I reckon, fer though I couldn't say I gained on him much, it was soothin' to observe that he didn't seem to gain on me.

"Fer maybe well on to three hundred yards it was a fine race, and I was beginnin' to wonder if the bear was gittin' as near winded as I was, when slap, I come right out on the crest of the ridge, which jest ahead o' me jutted out in a sort of elbow. What there was on the other side I couldn't see, and couldn't take time to inquire. I jest had to chance it, hopin' it might be somethin' less than a thousand foot drop. I ran straight to the edge, and jest managed to throw myself flat on my face an' clutch at the grasses like mad to keep from pitchin' clean out into space. It *was* a drop, all right,—two hundred foot or more o' sheer cliff.

"An' the bear was not thirty yards behind me.

"I looked at the bear, as I laid there clutchin' the grass-roots. Then I looked down over the edge. I didn't feel frightened exactly, so fur; didn't *know* enough, maybe, to be *frightened* of *any* animal. But jest at this point I was mighty anxious. You'll believe, then, it was kind o' good to me to see, right below, maybe twenty foot down, a little pocket of a ledge full o' grass an' blossomin' weeds. There was no time to calculate. I could let myself drop, an' maybe, if I had luck, I could stop where I fell, in the pocket, instead of bouncin' out an' down, to be smashed into flinders. Or, on the other hand, I could stay where I was, an' be ripped into leetle frayed ravellin's by the bear; an' that would be in about three seconds, at the rate he was comin'. Well, I let myself over the edge till I jest hung by the fingers, an' then dropped, smooth as I could, down the rock face, kind of clutchin' at every leetle knob as I went to check the fall. I lit true in the pocket, an' I lit pretty hard, as ye might know, but not hard enough to knock the wits out o' me, the grass an' weeds bein' fairly soft. An' clawin' out desperate with both hands, I caught, an' stayed put. Some dirt an' stones come down, kind o' smart, on my head, an' when they'd stopped I looked up. There was the bear, his big head stuck down, with one ugly paw hangin' over beside it, starin' at me. I was so tickled at havin' fooled him, I didn't think o' the hole I was in, but sez to him, saucy as you please, 'Thou art so near, an' yet so far.' At this he give a grunt, which might have meant anything, an' disappeared.

"'Ye know enough to know when you're euchred,' says I. An' then I turned to considerin' the place I was in, an' how I was to git out of it.

"To git out of it, indeed! The more I considered, the more I wondered how I'd ever managed to stay in it. It wasn't bigger than three foot by two, or two an' a half, maybe, in width, out from the cliff-face. On my left, as I sat with my back agin the cliff, a wall o' rock ran out straight, closin' off the pocket to that side clean an' sharp, though with a leetle kind of a roughness, so to speak—nothin' more than a roughness—which I calculated *might* do, on a pinch, fer me to hang on to if I wanted to try to climb round to the other side. I *didn't* want to jest yet, bein' still shaky from the drop, which, as things turned out, was just as well for me.

"To my right a bit of a ledge, maybe six or eight inches wide, ran off along the cliff-face for a matter of ten or a dozen feet, then slanted up, an' widened out agin to another little pocket, or shelf like, of bare rock, about level with the top o' my head. From this shelf a narrow crack, not more than two or three inches wide, kind o' zigzagged away till it reached the top o' the cliff, perhaps forty foot off. It wasn't much, but it looked like somethin' I could git a good finger-hold into, if only I could work my way along to that leetle shelf. I was figurin' hard on this, an' had about made up my mind to try it, an' was reachin' out, in fact, to start, when I stopped sudden.

"A good, healthy-lookin' rattler, his diamond-pattern back bright in the sun, come out of the crevice an' stopped on the shelf to take a look at the weather.

"It struck me right off that he was on his way down to this pocket o' mine, which was maybe his favorite country residence. I didn't like one bit the idee o' his comin' an' findin' me there, when I'd never been invited. I felt right bad about it, you bet; and I'd have got away if I could. But not bein' able to, there was nothin' fer me to do but try an' make myself onpleasant. I grabbed up a handful o' dirt an' threw it at the rattler. It scattered all 'round him, of course, an' some of it hit him. Whereupon he coiled himself like a flash, with head an' tail both lifted, an' rattled indignantly. There was nothin' big enough to do him any damage with, an' I was mighty oneasy lest he might insist on comin' home to see who his impident caller was. But I kept on flingin' dirt as long as there was any handy, while he kept on rattlin', madder an' madder. Then I stopped, to think what I'd better do next. I was jest startin' to take off my boot, to hit him with as he come along the narrow ledge, when suddenly he uncoiled an' slipped back into the crevice.

"Either it was very hot, or I'd been a bit more anxious than I'd realized, for I felt my forehead wet with sweat; I drew my sleeve across it, all the time keeping my eyes glued on the spot where the rattler'd disappeared. Jest then, seemed to me, I felt a breath on the back o' my neck. A kind o' cold chill crinkled down my backbone, an' I turned my face 'round sharp.

"Will you believe it, boys? I was nigh jumpin' straight off that there ledge, right into the landscape an' eternity! There, starin' 'round the wall o' rock, not one inch more than a foot away from mine, was the face o' the bear.

"Well, I was scared. There's no gittin' round that fact. There was something so onnatural about that big, wicked face hangin' there over that awful height, an' starin' so close into mine. I jest naturally scrooged away as fur as I could git, an' hung on tight to the rock so's not to go over. An' *then* my face wasn't more'n two feet away, do the best I could; an' that was the time I found what it felt like to be right down scared. I believe if that face had come much closer, I'd have *bit* at it, that minute, like a rat in a hole.

"For maybe thirty seconds we jest stared. Then, I kind o' got a holt of myself, an' cursed myself good fer bein' such a fool; an' my blood got to runnin' agin. I fell to studyin' how the bear could have got there; an' pretty soon I reckoned it out as how there must be a big ledge runnin' down the cliff face, jest the other side o' the wall o' the pocket. An' I hugged myself to think I hadn't managed to climb 'round on to that ledge jest before the bear arrived. I got this all figgered out, an' it took some time. But still that face, hangin' out there over the height, kept starin' at me; an' I never saw a wickeder look than it had on to it, steady an' unwinkin' as a nightmare. It is curious how long a beast *kin* look at one without winkin'. At last, it got on to my nerves so I jest couldn't stand it; an' snatching a bunch of weeds (I'd already flung away all the loose dirt, flingin' it at the rattler), I whipped 'em across them devilish leetle eyes as hard as I could. It was a kind of a child's trick, or a woman's, but it worked all right, fer it made the eyes blink. That proved they were real eyes, an' I felt easier. After all, it *was* only a bear; an' he couldn't git any closer than he was. But that was a mite too close, an' I wished he'd move. An' jest then, not to be gittin' *too* easy in my mind, I remembered the rattler.

"Another cold chill down my backbone! I looked 'round right smart. But the rattler wasn't anywhere in sight. That, however, put me in mind of what I'd been goin' to do to *him*. A boot wasn't much of a weapon agin a bear, but it was the only thing handy, so I reckoned I'd have to make it do. I yanked it off, took it by the toe, an' let that wicked face have the heel of it as hard as I could. I hadn't any room to swing, so I couldn't hit very hard. But a bear's nose is tender, on the tip; an' it was jest there, of course, I took care to land. There was a big snort, kind o' surprised like, an' the face disappeared.

"I felt a sight better.

"Fer maybe five minutes nothin' else happened. I sat there figgerin' how I was goin' to git out o' that hole; an' my figgerin' wasn't anyways satisfactory. I knew the bear was a stayer, all right. There'd be no such a thing as tryin' to crawl 'round that shoulder o' rock till I was blame sure *he* wasn't on t'other side; an' how I was goin' to find *that* out was more than I could git at. There was no such a thing as climbin' *up*. There was no such a thing as climbin' *down*. An' as fer that leetle ledge an' crevice leadin' off to the right,—well, boys, when there's a rattler layin' low fer ye in a crevice, ye're goin' to keep clear o' that crevice. It wanted a good three hours of sundown, an' I knew my chaps wouldn't be missin' me before night. When I didn't turn up for dinner, of course they'd begin to suspicion somethin', because they knew I was takin' things rather easy an' not followin' up any long trails. It looked like I was there fer the night; an' I didn't like it, I tell you. There wasn't room to lay down, and if I fell asleep settin' up, like as not I'd roll off the ledge. There was nothing fer it but to set up a whoop an' a yell every once in a while, in hopes that one or other of the boys *might* be cruisin' 'round near enough to hear me. So I yelled some half a dozen times, stoppin' between each yell to listen. Gittin' no answer, at last I decided to save my throat a bit an' try agin after a spell o' restin' an' worryin'. Jest then I turned my head; an' I forgot, right off, to worry about fallin' off the ledge. There, pokin' his ugly head out o' the crevice, was the rattler. I chucked a bunch o' weeds at him, an' he drew back in agin. But the thing that jarred me now was, how would I keep him off when it got too dark fer me to see him. He'd be slippin' home quiet like, thinkin' maybe I was gone, an' mad when he found I wasn't, fer, ye see, *he* hadn't no means of knowin' that I couldn't go *up* the rock jest as easy as I come down. I feared there was goin' to be trouble after dark. An' while I was figgerin' on that till the sweat come out on my forehead, I turned agin, an' there agin was the bear's face starin' round the rock not more'n a foot away.

"You'll understand how my nerves was on the jumps, when I tell you, boys, that I was scared an' startled all over again, like the first time I'd seen it. With a yell, I fetched a swipe at it with my boot; but it was gone, like a shadow, before I hit it; an' the boot flew out o' my hand an' went over the cliff, an' me pretty nigh after it. I jest caught myself, an' hung on, kind o' shaky, fer a minute. Next thing, I heard a great scratchin' at the other side o' the rock, as if the brute was tryin' to git a better toehold an' work some new dodge on me. Then the face appeared agin, an' maybe, though perhaps that was jest my excited imagination, it was some two or three inches closer this time.

"I lit out at it with my fist, not havin' my other boot handy. But Lord, a bear kin dodge the sharpest boxer. That face jest wasn't there, before I could hit it. Then, five seconds more, an' it was back agin starin' at me. I wouldn't give it the satisfaction o' tryin' to swipe it agin, so I jest kept still, pretendin' to ignore it; an' in a minute or two it disappeared. But then, a minute or two more an' it was back agin. An' so it went on, disappearin', comin' back, goin' away, comin'

back, an' always jest when I *wasn't* expectin' it, an' always sudden an' quick as a shadow, till *that* kind o' got on to my nerves too, an' I wished he'd stay one way or t'other, so as I could know what I was up against. At last, settlin' down as small as I could, I made up my mind I jest wouldn't look that way at all, face or no face, but give all my attention to watchin' for the rattler, an' yellin' fer the boys. Judgin' by the sun,—which went mighty slow that day,—I kept that game up for an hour or more; an' then, as the rattler didn't come any more than the boys, I got tired of it, an' looked 'round for the bear's face. Well, that time it wasn't there. But in place of it was a big brown paw, reachin' round the edge of the rock all by itself, an' clawin' quietly within about a foot o' my ear. That was all the farthest it would reach, however, so I tried jest to keep my mind off it. In a minute or two it disappeared; an' then back come the face.

"I didn't like it. I preferred the paw. But then, it kept the situation from gittin' monotonous.

"I suppose it was about this time the bear remembered somethin' that wanted seein' to down the valley. The face disappeared once more, and this time it didn't come back. After I hadn't seen it fer a half-hour, I began to think maybe it had *really* gone away; but I knew how foxy a bear could be, an' thought jest as like as not he was waitin', patient as a cat, on the other side o' the rock fer me to look round so's he could git a swipe at me that would jest wipe my face clean off. I didn't try to look round. But I kept yellin' every little while; an' all at once a voice answered right over my head. I tell you it sounded good, if *'twasn't* much of a voice. It was Steevens, my packer, lookin' down at me.

"'Hello, what in h-- are ye doin' down there, Job?' he demanded.

"'Waiting fer you to git a rope an' hoist me up!' says I. 'But look out fer the bear!'

"'Bear nothin'!' says he.

"'Chuck an eye down the other side,' says I.

"He disappeared, but came right back. 'Bear nothin',' says he agin, havin' no originality.

"'Well, he *was* there, 'an' he stayed all the afternoon,' says I.

"'Reckon he must 'a' heard ye was an animal trainer, an' got skeered!' says Steevens. But I wasn't jokin' jest then.

"'You cut fer camp, an' bring a rope, an' git me out o' this, *quick*, d'ye hear?' says I. 'There's a rattler lives here, an' he's comin' back presently, an' I don't want to meet him. Slide!'

"Well, boys, that's all. That bear *wasn't* jest what I'd wanted; but feelin' ugly about him, I decided to take him an' break him in. We trailed him, an' after a lot o' trouble we trapped him. He was a sight more trouble after we'd got him, I tell you. But afterwards, when I set myself to tryin' to train him, why, I might jest as well have tried to train an earthquake. Do you suppose that grizzly was goin' to be afraid o' *me*? He'd seen me afraid o' *him*, all right. He'd seen it in my eyes! An' what's more, *I* couldn't forgit it; but when I'd look at him I'd *feel*, every time, the nightmare o' that great wicked face hangin' there over the cliff, close to mine. So, he don't perform. What'll ye take, boys? It's hot milk, this time, fer mine."

THE DUEL ON THE TRAIL

The Duel on the Trail

White and soft over the wide, sloping upland lay the snow, marked across with the zigzag gray lines of the fences, and spotted here and there with little clumps of woods or patches of bushy pasture. The sky above was white as the earth below, being mantled with snow-laden cloud not yet ready to spill its feathery burden on the world. One little farm-house, far down the valley, served but to emphasize the spacious emptiness of the silent winter landscape.

Out from one of the snow-streaked thickets jumped a white rabbit, its long ears waving nervously, and paused for a second to look back with a frightened air. It had realized that some enemy was on its trail, but what that enemy was, it did not know. After this moment of perilous hesitation, it went leaping forward across the open, leaving a vivid track in the soft surface snow. The little animal's discreet alarm, however, was dangerously corrupted by its curiosity; and at the lower edge of the field, before going through a snake fence and entering another thicket, it stopped, stood up as erect as possible on its strong hind quarters, and again looked back. As it did so, the unknown enemy again revealed himself, just emerging, a slender and sinister black shape, from the upper thicket. A quiver of fear passed over the rabbit's nerves. Its curiosity all effaced, it went through the fence with an elongated leap and plunged into the bushes in a panic. Here it doubled upon itself twice in a short circle, trusting by this well-worn device to confuse the unswerving pursuer. Then, breaking out upon the lower side of the thicket, it resumed its headlong flight across the fields.

Meanwhile the enemy, a large mink, was following on the trail with the dogged persistence of a sleuth-hound. Sure of his methods, he did not pause to see what the quarry was doing, but kept his eyes and nose occupied with the fresh tracks. His speed was not less than that of the rabbit, and his endurance was vastly greater. Being very long in the body, and extremely short in the legs, he ran in a most peculiar fashion, arching his lithe back almost like a measuring-worm and straightening out like a steel spring suddenly released. These sinuous bounds were grotesque enough in appearance, but singularly effective. The trail they made, overlapping that of the rabbit, but quite distinct from it, varied according to the depth of the surface snow. Where the snow lay thin, just deep enough to receive an imprint, the mink's small feet left a series of delicate, innocent-looking marks, much less formidable in appearance than those of the pad-footed fugitive. But where the loose snow had gathered deeper the mink's long body and sinewy tail from time to time stamped themselves unmistakably.

When the mink reached the second thicket, his keen and experienced craft penetrated at once the poor ruses of the fugitive. Cutting across the circlings of the trail, he picked it up again with implacable precision, making almost a straight line through the underbrush. When he emerged again into the open, the rabbit was in full view ahead.

The next strip of woodland in the fugitive's path was narrow and dense. Below it, in a patch of hilly pasture ground, sloping to a pond of steel-bright ice, a red fox was diligently hunting. He ran hither and thither, furtive, but seemingly erratic, poking his nose into half-covered moss-tufts and under the roots of dead stumps, looking for mice or shrews. He found a couple of the latter, but these were small satisfaction to his vigorous winter appetite. Presently he paused, lifted his narrow, cunning nose toward the woods, and appeared to ponder the advisability of going on a rabbit hunt. His fine, tawny, ample brush of a tail gently swept the light snow behind him as he stood undecided.

All at once he crouched flat upon the snow, quivering with excitement, like a puppy about to jump at a wind-blown leaf. He had seen the rabbit emerging from the woods. Absolutely motionless he lay, so still that, in spite of his warm coloring, he might have been taken for a fragment of dead wood. And as he watched, tense with anticipation, he saw the rabbit run into a long, hollow log, which lay half-veiled in a cluster of dead weeds. Instantly he darted forward, ran at top speed, and crouched before the lower end of the log, where he knew the rabbit must come out.

Within a dozen seconds the mink arrived, and followed the fugitive straight into his ineffectual retreat. Such narrow quarters were just what the mink loved. The next instant the rabbit shot forth—to be caught in mid-air by the waiting fox, and die before it had time to realize in what shape doom had come upon it.

All unconscious that he was trespassing upon another's hunt, the fox, with a skilful jerk of his head, flung the limp and sprawling victim across his shoulder, holding it by one leg, and started away down the slope toward his lair on the other side of the pond.

As the mink's long body darted out from the hollow log he stopped short, crouched flat upon the snow with twitching tail, and stared at the triumphant intruder with eyes that suddenly blazed red. The trespass was no less an insult than an injury; and many of the wild kindreds show themselves possessed of a nice sensitiveness on the point of their personal dignity. For an animal of the mink's size the fox was an overwhelmingly powerful antagonist, to be avoided with care under all ordinary circumstances. But to the disappointed hunter, his blood hot from the long, exciting chase, this present circumstance seemed by no means ordinary. Noiseless as a shadow, and swift and stealthy as a snake, he sped after the leisurely fox, and with one snap bit through the great tendon of his right hind leg, permanently laming him.

As the pang went through him, and the maimed leg gave way beneath his weight, the fox dropped his burden and turned savagely upon his unexpected assailant. The mink, however, had

sprung away, and lay crouched in readiness on the snow, eying his enemy malignantly. With a fierce snap of his long, punishing jaws the fox rushed upon him. But—the mink was not there. With a movement so quick as fairly to elude the sight, he was now crouching several yards away, watchful, vindictive, menacing. The fox made two more short rushes, in vain; then he, too, crouched, considering the situation, and glaring at his slender black antagonist. The mink's small eyes were lit with a smouldering, ruddy glow, sinister and implacable; while rage and pain had cast over the eyes of the fox a peculiar green opalescence.

For perhaps half a minute the two lay motionless, though quivering with the intensity of restraint and expectation. Then, with lightning suddenness, the fox repeated his dangerous rush. But again the mink was not there. As composed as if he had never moved a hair, he was lying about three yards to one side, glaring with that same immutable hate.

At this the fox seemed to realize that it was no use trying to catch so elusive a foe. The realization came to him slowly—and slowly, sullenly, he arose and turned away, ignoring the prize which he could not carry off. With an awkward limp, he started across the ice, seeming to scorn his small but troublesome antagonist.

Having thus recovered the spoils, and succeeded in scoring his point over so mighty an adversary, the mink might have been expected to let the matter rest and quietly reap the profit of his triumph. But all the vindictiveness of his ferocious and implacable tribe was now aroused. Vengeance, not victory, was his craving. When the fox had gone about a dozen feet, all at once the place where the mink had been crouching was empty. Almost in the same instant, as it seemed, the fox was again, and mercilessly, bitten through the leg.

This time, although the fox had seemed to be ignoring the foe, he turned like a flash to meet the assault. Again, however, he was just too late. His mad rush, the snapping of his long jaws, availed him nothing. The mink crouched, eying him, ever just beyond his reach. A gleam of something very close to fear came into his furious eyes as he turned again to continue his reluctant retreat.

Again, and again, and yet again, the mink repeated his elusive attack, each time inflicting a deep and disastrous wound, and each time successfully escaping the counter-assault. The trail of the fox was now streaked and flecked with scarlet, and both his hind legs dragged heavily. He reached the edge of the smooth ice and turned at bay. The mink drew back, cautious for all his hate. Then the fox started across the steel-gray glair, picking his steps that he might have a firm foothold.

A few seconds later the mink once more delivered his thrust. Feinting towards the enemy's right, he swerved with that snake-like celerity of his, and bit deep into the tender upper edge of the fox's thigh, where it plays over the groin.

It was a cunning and deadly stroke. But in recovering from it, to dart away again to safe distance, his feet slipped, ever so little, on the shining surface of the ice. The delay was only for the minutest fraction of a second. But in that minutest fraction lay the fox's opportunity. His wheel and spring were this time not too late. His jaws closed about the mink's slim backbone and crunched it to fragments. The lean, black shape straightened out with a sharp convulsion and lay still on the ice.

Though fully aware of the efficacy and finality of that bite, the fox set his teeth, again and again, with curious deliberation of movement, into the limp and unresisting form. Then, with his tongue hanging a little from his bloody jaws, he lifted his head and stared, with a curious, wavering, anxiously doubtful look, over the white familiar fields. The world, somehow, looked strange and blurry to him. He turned, leaving the dead mink on the ice, and painfully retraced his deeply crimsoned trail. Just ahead was the opening in the log, the way to that privacy which he desperately craved. The code of all the aristocrats of the wild kindred, subtly binding even in that supreme hour, forbade that he should consent to yield himself to death in the garish publicity of the open. With the last of his strength he crawled into the log, till just the bushy tip of his tail protruded to betray him. There he lay down with one paw over his nose, and sank into the long sleep. For an hour the frost bit hard upon the fields, stiffening to stone the bodies but now so hot with eager life. Then the snow came thick and silent, filling the emptiness with a moving blur, and buried away all witness of the fight.

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