The Haunters of the Silences

A BOOK OF ANIMAL LIFE BY CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

Author of
"The Kindred of the Wild," "Red Fox," "The Heart of the Ancient Wood," "The Forge in the Forest," "The Heart That Knows," etc.

With many Illustrations and Decorations by *CHARLES LIVINGSTON BULL*

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THE LEADER OF THE CARIBOU HERD ... RETURNED THE STALLION'S INQUIRING STARE WITH A GLANCE OF MILD CURIOSITY.—Page 122.

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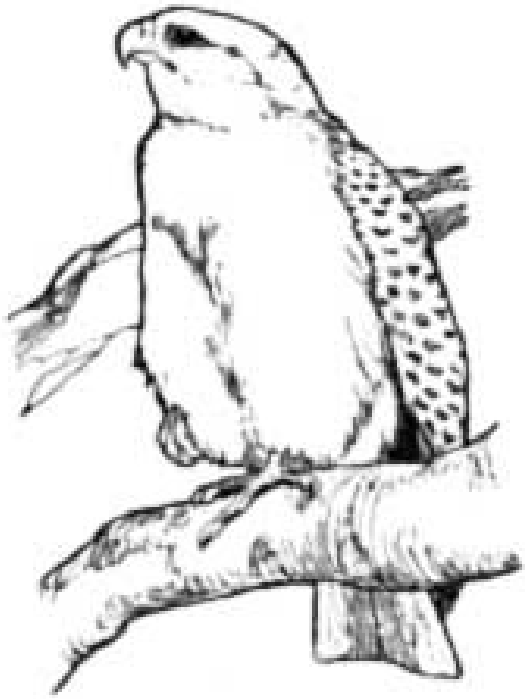
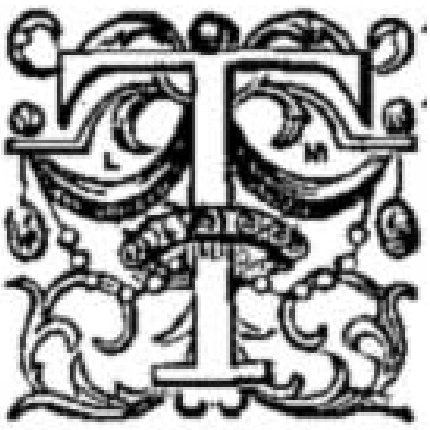


To Charles Livingston Bull

Prefatory Note

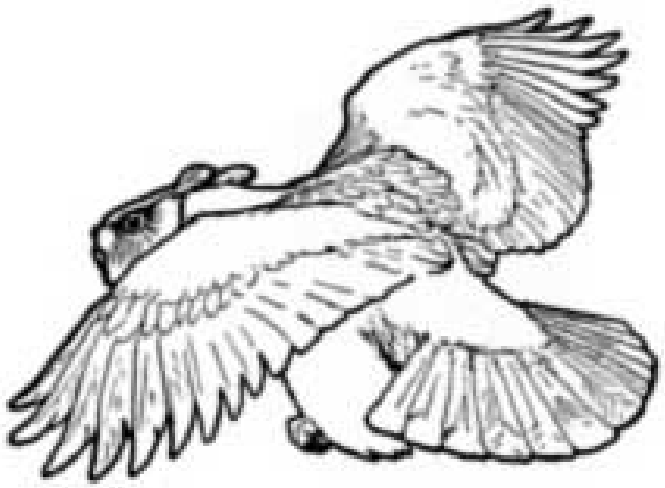


HE present collection of stories dealing with creatures of the wilderness differs from its companion volumes, "The Kindred of the Wild" and "The Watchers of the Trails," in one important particular. It contains certain studies and depictions of a sphere of wild life which presents peculiar difficulties to the observer, viz.: the life of the dwellers in the deep sea. Our investigation of these remote kindreds is at best spasmodic, and conducted always at the extreme of disadvantage; and the knowledge which we may gain from such investigation must always remain in a measure fragmentary. It is not easy for any observer to be intimate with a sawfish; and the most ardent naturalist's acquaintance with an *orca*, or "killer" whale, must be essentially a distant one, if he would hope to put his observations upon record. Needless to say, my own knowledge of the orca, the shark, the narwhal, or the colossal cuttlefish of the ocean depths, is not of the same kind as my knowledge of the bear, the moose, the eagle, and others of the furtive folk of our New Brunswick wilderness. When I write of these latter I build my stories upon a foundation of personal, intimate, sympathetic observation, the result of a boyhood passed in the backwoods, and of almost yearly visits, ever since my boyhood, to the wild forest regions of my native province. But when I write of the kindreds of the deep sea, I am relying upon the collated results of the observations of others. I have spared no pains to make these stories accord, as far as the facts of natural history are concerned, with the latest scientific information. But I have made no vain attempt at interpretation of the lives of creatures so remote from

my personal knowledge; and for such tales as "A Duel in the Deep," "The Terror of the Sea Caves," or "The Prowlers," my utmost hope is that they may prove entertaining, without being open to any charge of misrepresenting facts. On the other hand, in certain of the stories dealing with the results of my own observation and experience, I have dared to hope that I might be contributing something of value to the final disputed question of animal psychology. For such stories, which offer in the form of fiction what my observations have compelled me to regard as fact, I have presented my case already, in the prefaces to "The Watchers of the Trails" and "Red Fox." To those prefaces I would add nothing here; and from the conclusions therein stated I have nothing to retract. I would merely take this occasion to reaffirm with confidence the belief, which I find shared by practically all observers whose lives are passed in the closest relationship with animals,—by such vitally interested observers, for instance, as keepers, trainers, hunters, and trappers,—that the actions of animals are governed not only by instinct, but also, in varying degree, by processes essentially akin to those of human reason.

C. G. D. R.

Contents of the Book



A List of the Full-Page Drawings in the Book

The Haunters of the Silences

The Summons of the North

I

N the mystic gloom and the incalculable cold of the long Arctic night, when Death seemed the only inhabitant of the limitless vasts of ice and snow, the white bear cub was born. Over the desolate expanses swept the awful polar wind, now thick with fine, crystalline snow which volleyed and whirled and bit like points of steel, now glassy clear, so that the great, unwavering Arctic stars could preside unobscured over its destructive fury. When the wind was still, not less awful than the wind had been was the stillness, in which the unspeakable cold wrought secretly its will upon the abandoned world. Sometimes the implacable starlight would pale suddenly, and the lovely, sinister, spectral flames of the aurora, electric blue, and violet, and thin, elusive red, would go dancing in terrible silence across the arch of sky.

But the white cub—contrary to the custom of her kind his mother had borne but the one, instead of two—felt nothing of the cold and the unutterable desolation, saw nothing of the unchanging night, the implacable stars, the heatless and mirthless dancing flames. In a lair between two rocks, under seven or eight feet of snow, he lay snuggled against the warm, furry body of his mother, safe hidden from

the world of night and cold. The mother, whose hot breathing kept open a little arched hollow in the sheltering snow, spent practically all her time in sleep, the ample layers of fat which the previous summer had stored upon her ribs supplying food and fuel to her giant frame. The cub, too, slept away most of the long unvarying hours, waking to nurse from time to time, and growing with marvellous rapidity on the inexhaustible nourishment which his mother's milk supplied.

Month followed month, as the night dragged slowly on toward spring and dawn; and still the mother slept, growing thinner day by day; and still the cub slept, and grew, and slept, day by day waxing fatter, and larger, and stronger for the great and terrible battle of life which awaited him beyond the threshold of the snow.

Except for the vast alternations of storm and calm, of starlight and auroral radiance, there was nothing to happen in that empty and frozen world. Such life as dared the cold and dark in those regions kept along the edges of the sea, where the great waters kept air-holes open through the incumbent ice. Thither frequented the walrus and the seals, and there hunted stealthily the savage old he-bears, who were too restless to yield themselves to the long winter sleep. But the wise mother had wandered far into the inland solitudes before retiring for her winter of sleep and motherhood. Over the place of that safe sleep and secret motherhood no live thing passed, all winter long,—save once or twice a small white fox, who sniffed cautiously at a faint, menacing scent which stole up through the hard snow, and once or twice the wide, soundless wings of a great white Arctic owl, winnowing southward to find the vanished ptarmigan.

Late and lagging came the beginnings of the dawn,—and then, much later, when dawn had grown into the long day, the beginnings of the Arctic spring. Something called to the heart of the old she-bear, and she heard in the deep of her lair. Bursting through the softening and decaying snow, she led her sturdy cub forth into the white outer

solitudes, and turned her steps eastward toward the seashore. She was gaunt, loose-pelted, and unspeakably hungry; but she went slowly, while the cub learned the new and interesting business of using his legs.

Along the shore the massive ice was still unbroken for miles out; but where the currents and tides and storms had begun to vanquish it, and the steel blue waves were eating into it hour by hour beneath the growing sunlight, there the life of the north was gathering. Sea-birds clamoured, and mated, and dived, and flew in circles, or settled in flickering gray and white masses on every jutting promontory of black rock. Along the blue-white ice-edge seals basked and barked, their soft eyes keeping incessant watch against the perils that always lurked about them. Huge bulks of walrus wallowed heavily in the waves, or lifted their tusked heads menacingly to stare over the ice.

"SOME INEXPERIENCED SEAL HAD BEEN FOOLISH ENOUGH TO LIE BASKING CLOSE BESIDE AN ICE-CAKE"

Amid this teeming life, which the returning sun had brought back to the ice-fields, the old she-bear, with her cub close at her heels, moved

craftily. She lurked behind piled-up ice-cakes, crept from shelter to shelter, and moved as noiselessly as a wraith of snow on the hair-tufted pads of her great feet. Sometimes her tireless hunting was promptly rewarded, particularly when some inexperienced seal had been foolish enough to lie basking close beside an ice-cake large enough to give cover to the cunning hunter. Sometimes her sudden rush would take unawares a full-fed gannet half-dozing on a rocky ledge. Sometimes a lightning plunge and sweep of her armed paw would land a gleaming fish upon the ice, a pleasant variation to the diet of red-blooded seal-meat. And presently, as the long sunlight gathered warmth, and the brief, swift heat of the Arctic summer approached, rushing down upon the ice as if it knew how short must be its reign, the melting of the snow on sheltered slopes and southward-facing hollows uncovered a wealth of mosses, and lichens, and sprouting roots, most grateful to the bears' flesh-wearied palates.

But not always was foraging a matter so simple. The mother bear had two great appetites to supply, her own, and that of the vigorous youngster beside her, who kept draining unremittingly at her sources of vitality and strength. Sometimes the seals were unusually alert and shy, the birds vituperative and restless, and the fish obstinate in their preference for the waters far offshore. At such times, if there were no greening hollows near by, where she might make a bloodless banquet, the old bear would call to her aid those great powers of swimming which made her almost as much at home in the water as the seal itself. Marking some seals at rest by the edge of some far-jutting, naked ice-field, where there was no possibility of her creeping upon them unobserved, she would slip into the water in the seclusion of some little cove, and swim straight seaward, swimming so low that only the tip of her muzzle was to be seen. This moving speck upon the waters was not conspicuous even to the keenest and most suspicious eyes. It might pass for a fragment of ice with seaweed frozen into it, or for a bit of floating moss, save for the fact that it moved steadily through the dancing of the waves, paying no heed to tide or wind. As

the seals were not expecting danger from the direction of the sea, they were not inclined to scrutinize a thing so insignificant as that steadily moving speck among the waves. Arriving within well calculated distance of the unsuspecting baskers on the ice-field, the old bear would fill her lungs, sink beneath the surface, and swim forward with all speed. At the very edge of the ice she would rise up, lunge forward, and strike down with her savage paw the nearest seal, before any of them had time to realize the direction from which death had burst upon them.

The old bear's triumph, however, was not always so complete. On one day in particular she was confronted by an experience which almost left her cub without a mother. The cub, watching solicitously from behind a jagged hummock of ice, received a lesson which never faded from his mind. He learned that in the wilds one must never let himself become so absorbed in any occupation as to forget to keep a watchful eye for what may be coming up behind one's back.

It was on one of the lean days, when all game was wide awake and the lichen-beds far away. On the jagged ice off the mouth of an inlet lay two walrus calves sunning their round, glistening sides while their mothers wallowed and snorted in the water beside them. The old bear eyed the calves hungrily for a minute or two. Then, ostentatiously turning her back upon the scene, she slouched off inland among the hummocks and rocks, the cub lurching along contentedly beside her.

Once hidden from the view of the walruses, she quickened her pace till the cub had to struggle to keep with her, swung around the head of the inlet, and crept stealthily down the other side toward the spot where the calves were lying. The wind blew softly from them, her padded feet made no sound, and she kept herself completely out of sight. Peering warily from behind a tilted ice-cake, she saw that one of the cows had crawled out of the water and lain down beside its calf for a noonday doze. Then she drew her head back, and continued her

careful stalking by nose and ear alone.

At last she found herself within rushing distance. Not thirty yards away she could hear the loud breathing of the drowsy cow on the ice, the splashing of the one in the water. Turning upon the cub, she made him understand that he was to stay where he was till she was ready for him. Then gathering all the force of her muscles till she was like a great bow bent, she shot forth from her place of hiding and rushed upon the sleepers.

As the white shape of doom came down upon them without warning, the cow and one calf awoke in intuitive panic and with astonishing and instantaneous agility rolled off into the water. But the other calf was not in time. One sprawling struggle it made toward safety, and gave utterance to one hoarse bleat of despair, as if it knew that fate had overtaken it. Then a heavy stroke broke its neck; and as its clumsy legs spread out limp and unstrung upon the ice the bear clutched it and started to drag it back from the water's edge.

At this moment she was aware of a huge lumbering bulk crawling up upon the ice behind her. She took it for granted it was the dead calf's mother, and paid no heed. Walrus cows she despised as antagonists, though as game she held them in high consideration. She would attend to this one in a moment; and then her larder would be amply stocked for days.

An instant later, however, if she had deigned to look back, she would have seen a gigantic gray and brown, warty-skinned bulk, surmounted by a hideous face and grim, perpendicular tusks, rearing itself on huge flippers just behind her. The cub, peering from his hiding-place, saw the peril but did not comprehend it. The next moment the bulk fell forward, crushing the bear's hind-quarters to the ice, while those long tusks, which, fortunately for her, had failed to strike directly, tore a great red gash across her right shoulder.

With a grunting squeal of rage and pain the bear writhed herself free of the dripping mass of her assailant, and turned upon him madly. Blow after blow she struck with that terrible fore paw of hers, armed with claws like steel chisels. But the hide of the giant walrus was like many thicknesses of seasoned leather for toughness; and though she drew blood in streams at every tearing stroke, she inflicted no disabling wound. His little, deep eyes red with fury, the bull rearing himself on his flippers and lunging forward with awkward but irresistible force, like a toppling mountain, seeking to crush his enemy and at the same time catch her under the terrific downward thrust of his tusks. As he fought he bellowed hoarsely, and panted with great windy, wheezy breaths, while the walrus cows swam slowly up and down by the edge of the ice, watching the struggle with their small, impassive eyes.

"SHE LED HIM FARTHER AND FARTHER ACROSS THE ICE."

The old bear was lame and aching from that first crushing assault, and her hind-quarters felt almost useless. Nevertheless she was much too active for her clumsy adversary to succeed in catching her again

at a disadvantage. As she yielded ground before his blundering charges she led him farther and farther across the ice, farther and farther from the element wherein he was at home and invincible. Had she been herself unhurt she would eventually have vanquished his ill-directed valour, wearing him out and at last reaching his throat. But now she found herself wearing out, with loss of blood and the anguish of her bruised hind-quarters. As soon as she realized that her strength was failing, and that presently she might fail to avoid one of her enemy's great sprawling rushes, she was seized with fear. What would become of the cub if she were killed? She wheeled swiftly, ran to where the cub stood waiting and whimpering, nosed him solicitously, and led him away through the blue and sparkling hummocks.

After this misadventure the mother bear did no more hunting for a week or two, but kept inland among the sunny valleys, and nursed her wounds, and fed on the young roots and tender herbage which sprouted hurriedly wherever the snow left bare a patch of earth. On such clean and blood-cooling diet her hurts speedily healed. Then with renewed vigour and a whetted craving for red flesh-food, she went back to her keen hunting of the seals. But the walruses she haughtily ignored.

"WOULD RUN GLEEFULLY TO SNAP THEM UP AND EAT THEM."

The Arctic summer, meanwhile, with its perpetual sun, poured down upon the world in swift, delicious heat; and the desolate world began

to laugh, with vivid greenery about the bubbling sources of the springs, and sudden fringes of bloom, yellow and pink, along the edges of the perpetual ice, and the painted fluttering of butterflies in every southward-sloping hollow where there was earth enough to hold the roots of flowers. The little winged adventurers would sometimes flit abroad over the snow, questing perilously beyond the narrow confines of their home. These rash wanderers, as a rule, would fall chilled, and die on the snow before they could get back; and the cub, attracted by the flecks of gay colour on the expanse of gray-white barrenness, would run gleefully to snap them up and eat them.

Throughout the summer the cub and his mother kept very much to themselves, seldom consorting with the other bears which roamed the rocks and floes or came to the sunny valleys to feed on the ephemeral herbage. The cub, meanwhile, having all the nourishment and care that was usually divided between two, was growing swiftly in stature and in the lore of the north. With his mother's example before him he learned to hunt seals, to creep up on the dozing sea-birds, to scoop the unwary fish from the sea, to waylay the stupid hare or the wary fox. But he was peculiarly averse to swimming, and never entered the water except under the compulsion of his mother's firm paw. The wise old bear, knowing how much his success in the battle of life must depend on his mastery of the water, would push him in from time to time, and keep him there in spite of every whimpering protest. In this way he learned his needed lessons. But his preference was all for land hunting, and it was obvious that only the extreme of hunger would ever lead him to follow the seals in their own element. As a matter of fact, since that memorable day when his mother had been beaten by the great walrus, the cub had grown to regard the sea as the peculiar domain of the walruses, and he felt a certain diffidence about trespassing.

When the summer was beginning to fade away as hurriedly as it had come, the cub was suddenly left alone in his grim world. It happened

in this way. On a certain hungry day, when his mother's hunting had been unsuccessful, the wind brought over a ridge of rock a pungent and ravishing smell of fresh blood. As cautiously as a cat the old bear crept around the ridge, the cub creeping at her heels. The sight that met them was one they had never seen before. Close at the water's edge three men were busy skinning and cutting up a couple of seals. The cub stopped short. A natural, inborn caution warned him that man was a dangerous animal. But the old bear, to whom man was as unknown as to her cub, had her intuitions obscured at that moment by her too eager appetite. Moreover, she was in a bad temper, and felt that the strangers were intruders upon her own hunting-ground. They were insignificant-looking intruders, too, any one of whom she felt that she could settle at a single stroke of her paw. A green gleam came into her eyes, as with narrow, snaky head thrust forward and jaws half-parted savagely, she stalked down upon the group, expecting to see it scatter at her approach and leave her in undisputed possession of the prey.

As she drew near the men stopped work, stood up, and stared at her. For a moment they did nothing. Then, seeing that she meant business, two of them stepped aside and picked up what looked to her like two long sticks, which glinted in the sun. One man took a stride forward and pointed the stick at her in a way which seemed like a challenge. With a grunt of anger she charged straight at him.

From the point of the stick burst a flash and a roar, with a little puff of blue smoke that drifted off like a ghost over the waves. It might have been the ghost of the old bear herself, fading reluctantly back into the grim and desolate earth from which she had sprung; for at the instant of its appearing she plunged forward upon her nose and lay motionless, with a bullet through her brain.

It was a perfect shot; but the man who had made it took it as a matter of course. In a few moments the limp and warm body was being

treated like that of the seal, for the pelt was a fine one and fresh bear-meat was a delicacy not to be despised by Arctic travellers. But the cub was not a witness of this red work of the shambles. When he saw his mother fall he shrank back in overwhelming terror behind the rocks, then turned and ran with all his might till he could run no longer. Finding himself in a little sheltered valley where he and his mother had often fed together on the sweet herbage, he crouched down under a rock and lay shivering for hours, afraid even to whimper.

At first the white cub suffered torments of loneliness and vague fear; but presently the more insistent torments of hunger gave him forgetfulness of his loss, and in hunting for his meals he gradually got himself adjusted to the new conditions. Naturally keen-witted and adaptable, he prospered, and when the approach of the long Arctic night began to throw its shadows over the ice and rocks his ribs were well covered with fat. When the herbage in the little valleys was all frozen to stone and sealed away under the first hard-driven snow, he yielded to a drowsiness which had been creeping into his nerves. With this drowsiness came a stirring of vague memory, and he turned his steps farther inland, far beyond the roar of waves and grinding floes, till he reached a place of tumbled rock, and cleft ravine, and imperishable ice. This was the place where he had been born; and here, in the very same sheltered crevice, he curled himself up for his winter's sleep. He was no more than fairly asleep, when the snow fell thick with the first of the unbroken night, and covered him away securely.

II

Through the months of dark, and storm, and ghostly, dancing lights, and immeasurable cold, the cub slept unstirring, and grew in his sleep. But when he woke, at the very first hint of awaking spring, he

was wide awake all at once, and fiercely hungry. Fiercely he burst out from the sheltering snow, and shook himself, and hurried through the mystic glimmer of dawn to the seashore, where he hoped to find the seals.

He was trusting partly to memory, partly to instinct; but he did not know that this year he was a little ahead of the season. The ice inshore was still unbroken, and the journey to open water was leagues longer than he had anticipated. His cunning sharpened by his appetite, he stalked and killed an unwary seal beside its blow-hole, and lay there among the tumbled hummocks for some days, alternately eating and sleeping. Then, his strength and craft and self-reliance increasing hourly, he pressed forward league upon league, under the ethereal, bubble-tinted, lonely Arctic morning, seeking the open sea.

When, at last, he heard the waves breaking along the blue ice brink, and the clamour of the sea-fowl, and the barking of the seals, he felt that he had come home again. He forgot the solid land, here upon what seemed as solid as any land. He forgot the little inland valleys, where presently the snow would be melting and the tender grasses beginning to sprout. Here was good hunting, and easy; and here he stayed, making his lair among the up-tilted ice-floes, till the yellow and blue glory of full day was pouring over the waste.

It happened that year that no storms came to shatter and eat away the ice-fields along their outer edges. Only the tides and the slow assault of the sun did their work; and presently a vast area of unbroken ice parted from the land and went drifting southward in the grip of the polar current.

For days the young bear was quite unaware of this accident. The ice-field was too vast and too solid for its motion to convey any warning. The sea-birds, of course, knew all about it; and in a few days they disappeared, requiring solid ground for their nesting business. As for

the seals, if they knew they didn't care, holding the ice safer for their domestic arrangements than the perilous and hostile shore. The young bear found good hunting. No storms came to vex him. And the warmth of summer fairly rushed to meet him. For several weeks he was altogether content.

Meanwhile the sun and the sea were making inroads upon the strength of the ice-field. One day when the bear was prowling along its edges, a mass of perhaps a quarter-acre in area broke off, lurching on the long swell. Astonished and a little alarmed, the bear hurried across, swam the narrow but rapidly widening strait, and clambered out upon the main field. The incident in some way stirred up a latent instinct, and he became uneasy. Setting his pace northward and landward, he stalked straight ahead for hours,—and where he expected a familiar ridge of rocks he came upon open sea. Much disturbed, he kept on his vain search for land, forgetting to eat, and soon had circumnavigated his voyaging domain. There was no land anywhere to swim to. There was nothing to be done but accept the situation with such composure as he could command. The seals were still with him, and he was not compelled to go hungry.

Then came a storm, with blinding flurries of snow out of the north, and huge waves piling upon the weakened ice; and the field began to break up. The seals fled away from the turmoil. Frantic with terror, the bear was again and again overwhelmed among the warring floes, and only by sheer miracle of good luck escaped being crushed. Clever swimmer that he was, again and again he succeeded in crawling out upon a larger floe, ploughing its way more steadily through the tumult. But every such refuge went to pieces after a time, crumbling into chaos under the shocks of pounding wave and battering ice. At last, and not too soon, when his young courage was almost worn out and his young strength all but gone, he was so fortunate as to gain a particularly tough and massive floe which withstood all the storm's assaults. It was almost a young berg in its

dimensions and solidity; and in its centre, crouched in a crevice, the bear felt, for the first time since the uproar began, something like a sense of security.

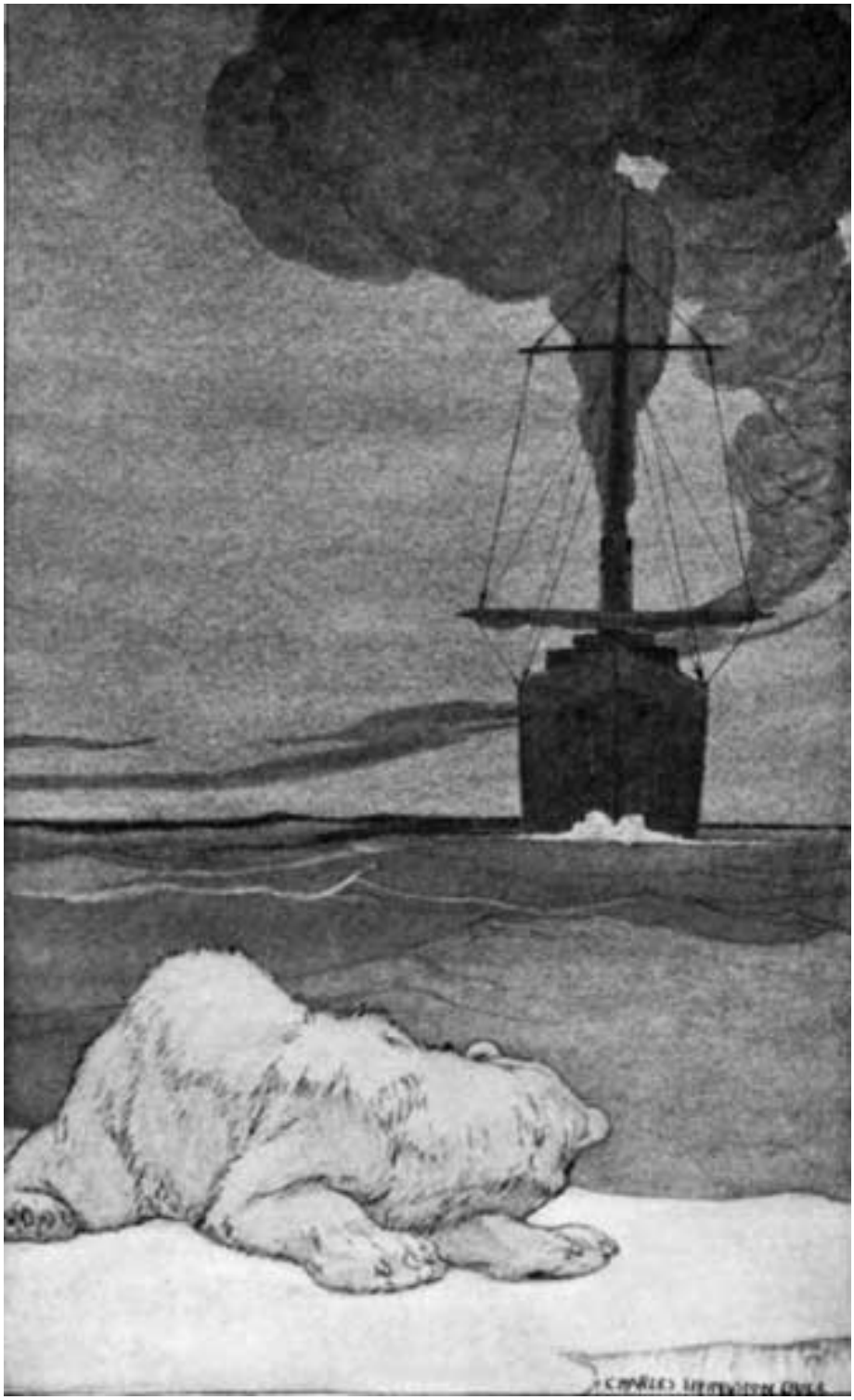
The drift of the current had by this time carried the ice so far south that the unchanging light of the Arctic day was left behind. Each night, for a little while, the sun dipped from sight below the naked horizon. For three days the great floe voyaged on through unrelenting storm, riding down the lesser ice-cakes, and taking the waves with ponderous lurch and slide. Little by little the lesser ice disappeared, till the great floe rode alone. Then the wind died down; and last of all the waves subsided. And the bear found himself sailing a steel-blue, sparkling, empty sea, under a cloudless sky and a sun that burned with a warmth he had never known.

It was now came the terrific trial of hunger to the young bear. For days together he had no taste of food, no comfort to his throat but the licking of the ice and lapping of the fresh water in the pools. Once only did he taste meat,—a blundering gannet which alighted within a foot of his motionless head and never knew the lightning doom that smote it. This made one meal; but no more birds came, and no seals appeared, and no fish came near enough for the bear to have any hope of striking them. Day by day he grew thinner and weaker, till it was an effort to climb the slopes of icy domain; and day by day the floe diminished, till it grew to be a race between the ice and the animal, as to which should first fade back into the elements.

But here fate intervened to stop this unnatural rivalry. By this time the ice had drifted down into the track of occasional ships; and one day, as a tramp steamer was passing near the floe, some one on deck discerned the crouching bear. The sea was calm, and the captain in a mood of leisure; so a boat was lowered and the crew set out for a bear hunt.

Having heard much of the ferocity of the polar bear, the men went well

armed and full of excitement. But the reception which they met disarmed them. Too hopeless for fear, or hate, or wonder, the despairing animal turned upon them a look of faint appeal which they could not misunderstand. With a not unnatural distrust of such amenability they lightly bound and muzzled him, and took him aboard ship. There the cook admitted him to his special favour, gave him a little warm broth, and gradually, by careful dieting, coaxed him back to health.



"SOME ONE ON DECK DISCERNED THE CROUCHING BEAR."

The young bear, as soon as he recovered himself, became the admiration of the whole ship's company. His coat was rich and fine, its whiteness tinged with a faint golden dye. His teeth and claws were perfect, and in the small, inscrutable eyes with which he followed the

business of the ship gleamed an unusual intelligence. Nevertheless, though he showed no ill-temper, no one, not even his kind attendant the cook, could penetrate his impregnable reserve. To each individual who approached him he showed complete indifference, while, on the contrary, his interest in whatever was going on seemed unfailing. Chained to an iron stanchion near the galley, he would stand swaying from side to side and swinging his narrow, snake-like head for hours. But nothing that took place, alow or aloft, escaped his keen observation. His indifference was plainly not stupidity, so every one on the ship, from the captain down, regarded him with vast respect. When at length, after a quiet voyage, the ship reached port, this respect was enhanced by the price which he commanded from the directors of the zoological gardens.

Now began for the young bear a life which, after the first annoying novelty of it had worn off, almost broke his spirit by its cramped monotony. His iron cage was spacious,—for a cage,—and built under the shadow of a leaning rock; and a spring-fed pool at the base of the rock kept the heat of the southern summer from growing utterly intolerable. But the staring, grinning crowds which passed endlessly before the bars of his cage filled him with weary rage; and day by day a fiercer homesickness clutched at his heart. The food which his keeper gave him he ate greedily enough, but through some inexplicable caprice he scorned the peanuts which the crowd kept throwing to him through the bars. He saw the other bears, in neighbouring cages, devour these small, dry things and beg for more; but he would have none of them. He was ceaselessly irritated, too, by the noisy sparrows which would flit impudently within a foot of his nose; and once in a while the stroke of his inescapable paw would descend upon one of them, easing for the moment his sense of injury. Such small trophies he would eat with a relish which the choicest of his jailers' gifts could not excite. The only moments when his homesick heart could even pretend to forget its longing for the desolate spaces, the lifeless rock ridges, the little, snow-rimmed flower valleys, and the call of the eternal ice, were when, in the solitary lilac-gray of dawn, he wallowed unobserved in his sweetly chilly pool, and dreamed that the barking of the seals from their tank across the garden was the authentic voice of his lost home. But the coming of the first drowsy attendants would shatter this illusion, and send him back

under his rock to stand sullenly swaying and swinging his head all day.

In this way the summer dragged along, and then the fine, dry fall; and instead of becoming reconciled the young bear grew more moody. His appetite began to fail and his fine coat lose its live, elastic quality. The keepers were disappointed in him. At first they had expected to win him over easily, because of his apparent amenableness and that look of intelligence in his eyes. But now they gave him up as an irreconcilable, and set themselves to keep him from pining away.

When winter came with raw rains, and sleet, and some sharp frosts, the exile sniffed the air hopefully for a few days, then relapsed into a deeper gloom. Then came a flurry of snow. As the great flakes fell about him he grew wild with excitement, running with uplift head about his cage, plunging in and out of the pool, and rearing himself against the bars in a sort of play. While the flurry lasted he saw no one, and forgot to eat. But in a day this tender snow had vanished, and he found no sufficient consolation in the thin ice which came afterward to encrust the edges of his pool. He seemed to feel himself cheated in his dearest hopes, and grew more obstinately dejected than ever; till finally came days when nothing would persuade him from the deepest corner of his den. Some of the attendants thought this meant no more than the drowsiness which, in his own home, might precede the desire for hibernation. But one, more understanding of the wild kindreds than the rest, declared that it was the very disease of homesickness, and that the exile was eating his own heart out for desire of his frozen north.

The city of the young bear's exile was not so far south but that sometimes, once in a long while, it found itself in the track of a wandering northern blizzard. One day, with terrific suddenness, on the heels of a gusty thaw, such a blizzard came. In half an hour the pool was frozen and a fine snow was drifting in fierce whirls about the cage.

The unhappy bear lifted his head and looked forth from his den. But he was not going to let himself again be cheated. He had no faith in this alien storm; and turning his back upon it, he once more buried his nose between his paws.

Meanwhile the cold deepened swiftly; the wind grew savage and shrieked over the cages and the roofs; and the snow, dry and hard like the driven needles of the Arctic night, thickened so that one could not see ten paces before his nose. Through the throbbing drift the attendants went hurrying about the open cages, fixing shelter for the animals that needed it. The cold, the savage noises of the wind, the sharp buffets of snow that struck into his den, at last brought the bear to his feet. He turned slowly, and came out into the storm.

He found himself, now, actually alone, and in what seemed almost his own world. This storm was convincing. He could not refuse to believe in the icy driven crystals which cut so deliciously upon his tongue and against his open jaws. This was really snow, that whirled and heaped about him. This was really ice, which crashed about him as he plunged in and out of his pool. Around and around his cage he romped, biting the snow in ecstasy, rolling in it, breathing it, whimpering to it. When his keeper came and looked in at him with wonder, and spoke to him with sympathetic comprehension, he neither saw nor heard. To his eyes the storm was volleying over the illimitable fields of the ice. In his ears the raving of the wind held the crash of grinding floes. To his heart it was the summons of the north, —and suddenly his heart answered. He stood still, with a strange bewilderment in his eyes, as if transfixed by some kind of tremendous shock. Then he swayed on his legs; and sank in a lifeless heap by the drifted brink of his pool.

The Last Barrier

I

N a circular hollow in the clean, bright gravel of the river-bar the tiny egg of the great Quahdavic salmon stirred to life. For months it had lain there among its thousands of fellows, with the clear, cold, unsullied current streaming over it ceaselessly. Through the autumn the wilderness sunshine and the bracing wilderness air, playing on the unshaded shallows of the wide stream, had kept the water highly vitalized,—though this was hardly necessary in that pure and spring-fed current. When the savage northern winter closed down upon the high valley of the Quahdavic it found difficulty in freezing the swift current that ran rippling over the bar; and when, at last, the frost conquered, gripping and clutching through the long, windless nights, it was to form only a thin armour of transparent, steel-strong ice, through which, as through the mantle of snow which made haste to cover it, the light still filtered softly but radiantly at noon, with an ethereal cobalt tinge.

The bar on which the parent salmon had hollowed their round gravel nest was far up the Great South Branch of the Quahdavic, not many miles from the little cold spring lake that was its source. The Great South Branch was a stream much loved by the salmon, for its deep pools, its fine gravel spawning-beds, the purity and steady coldness of its current, and the remoteness which protected it from the visits of greedy poachers. In all its course there was but one serious obstruction, namely, the Big Falls, where the stream fell about twelve feet in one pitch, then roared down for half a mile over a succession of low ledges with deep pools between. The Falls were such that vigorous fish had no real trouble in surmounting them. But they

inexorably weeded out the weaklings. No feeble salmon ever got to the top of that straight and thunderous pitch. Therefore, as the spawning-bars were all above the Falls, it was a fine, long-finned, clean swimming breed of salmon that was bred in the Great South Branch.

When the tiny egg in the gravel stirred to life,—as the thousands of other tiny eggs about it were doing at the same time,—there was no ice sheet imprisoning the current, which ran singing pleasantly under a soft spring sun. The deep hollow in the gravel sheltered the moving atoms, so that they were not swept away by the current streaming over them. But minute as they were, they speedily gathered a strength altogether miraculous for their size, as they absorbed the clinging sacs of egg-substance and assumed the forms of fish, almost microscopic, but perfect. This advance achieved, they began to venture from behind and beneath the sheltering pebbles, to dare the urgent stream, and to work their way shoreward toward shallower waters where the perils which beset young salmon would be fewer and less insistent.

The egg from which he came having been one of the first to hatch, the tiny salmon mentioned in the opening paragraph was one of the first of the host to find his strength and to start the migration shoreward from the nest on the noisy bar. Perhaps a score started with him, trying the current, darting back to shelter, then more boldly venturing again. A passing trout, hungry and fierce-eyed, darted above them, heading up against the current; but being so few and scattered, they escaped his fatal attentions. Terrified, however, by the sudden shadow, they hid in the gravel and for some time made no further trial of the dangerous world.

When again the salmon atom adventured forth, he found himself in a greater company. Hundreds more of the tiny creatures had left the nest and were moving shoreward with him. As the defenceless throng advanced, he saw a couple of what seemed to him gigantic creatures dashing hither and thither among them, snapping them up greedily by twos and threes; and he himself barely escaped those greedy jaws by shooting forward in the nick of time. These seeming monsters were but young redfins, a couple of inches in length, whom he would soon

come to despise and chase from his feeding-grounds.

"HE SAW A BIG SUCKER SETTLE LAZILY WHERE THE THRONGING FRY WERE THICKEST."

His superior development and speed having so well served him, he was now a foot or more in advance of the throng, and so escaped another and even more wide-ranging peril. A huge shadow, as vast as that of the trout, swept down upon them, and as he shrank beneath a sharpedged stone he saw a big sucker settle lazily where the thronging fry were thickest. With round, horribly dilating and contracting mouth turned down like an inverted snout, the big fish sucked up the little wrigglers greedily, even drawing them out by his power of suction from their hidings in the gravel. Of the hundreds that had started on the first migration from the nest not more than three score were left to follow their frightened and panting mite of a leader into the shallows where the big sucker could not come.

Among the little stones close to shore, where the water was hardly

more than an inch deep, even the greedy young redfins would not venture. Nevertheless there were plenty of enemies waiting eagerly for the coming of the fry, and the little fellow whose one hour of seniority had made him the pioneer of the shoal found all his ability taxed to guard the speck of life which he had so lately achieved. Keeping far enough from shore to avoid being stranded by some whimsical ripple, he nevertheless avoided the depths that were sufficient for the free hunting of the predatory minnows and redfins. Such of his kinsfolk as stayed farther out soon served, the greater number of them, as food for the larger river dwellers, while those who went too close inshore got cast up on the sand to die, or were pounced upon, as they lay close to the surface, by ravenous and unerring mosquitoes, which managed to pierce them even through a film of water a sixteenth of an inch or more in thickness. So it came about in a very brief time that of the countless throng emerging from the nest on the bar there remained but a hundred or so of the tiny fry to sustain the fortunes of that particular salmon family.

Even at the safest and most cunningly chosen depth, however, the little pioneer had plenty of perils to guard against. Secure from the suckers and redfins on the one hand, and from the mosquitoes on the other, he had yet for enemies certain predatory larvæ and water-beetles, as well as a few inch-long youngsters of the trout family, who were very active and rapacious. There was a water-beetle with hooked, pincer-like jaws and lightning rapidity of movement, which kept him almost ceaselessly on the alert, and filled him with wholesome terror as he saw it capture and devour numbers of his less nimble or less wary kin. And one day, when he had chanced, in the company of his diminished school of fry, to drift into a shallow cove where there was no current at all to disturb the water, he was chased by the terrible larva of a dragon-fly. The strange-looking creature, with what seemed a blank, featureless mask where its face and jaws ought to be, darted at him under the propulsion of jets of water sucked into its middle and spurted out behind. Having taken alarm in time, he made good his escape between the stalks of a fine water-weed where the big larva could not penetrate. From this retreat he saw his pursuer turn and pounce upon a small basking minnow. The mask that covered the larva's face shot out as if on a hinge, developed into two powerful, grappling claws, and clutched the victim

in the belly. After a brief struggle, which terrified all the tiny creatures within a radius of three feet, the minnow was dragged down to a clump of weed and the victor proceeded to make his feast. The little salmon stole in terror from his hiding-place and darted out into the more strenuous but for him far safer waters where a live current stirred among the gravel. To be sure the beetles were there, and the hungry young trout; but he had learned the ways of both these species of foe and knew pretty well how to elude them. Meanwhile, as he was himself continually busy catching and devouring the tiny forms of life which abounded in those fruitful waters,—minute shell-fish, and the spawn of the water-snails that clung under the stones, gnats, and other small insects that fell on the water, and even other fry just from the egg,—he was growing at such a rate that presently the fierce water-beetles and the baby trout ceased to have any terrors for him. And at last, turning savagely as one of his old tormentors passed by, he caught a small beetle between his jaws and proceeded to make a meal of him. A few days later one of the baby trout was too slow in getting out of his way. He made a rush, caught his former tyrant, and, though the latter was more than an inch long, found no difficulty in swallowing him head first.

By this time the little salmon was between two and three inches long. He was what those learned in matters pertaining to the salmon would have called a "parr". His colouring was very beautiful, in a higher key than the colouring of a trout, and more brilliant, if less showy. There was none of the pink of the trout, but a clear silvery tone on sides and belly, with a shining blue-black along the back. The sides were marked with a row of black dots, set far apart and accentuated by a yellow flush around them, and with another row of spots of most vivid scarlet. Along the sides also ran a series of broad, vertical, bluish gray bars, the badge of the young of all the salmon tribe. He was a slender, strong-finned, finely moulded little fish, built to have his dwelling in swift currents and to conquer turbulent rapids. His jaws were strong and large, and he had no reason to fear anything of his size that swam the river.

There were now not more than two score of his brothers and sisters left alive, and these scattered far and wide over the shoaling stream. It was high summer in the Quahdavic country, and the Great South

Branch was beginning to show its ledges and sandy bars above water. Deep green the full-leaved boughs of elm and ash, poplar and cedar leaned above the current; and along the little wild-meadows which here and there bordered the stream, where the lumbermen had had camps or "landings", the misty pink-purple blossoms of the milkweed poured a wild sweetness upon the air. In a shallow run near the shore, where the sunlight, falling through an overhanging cedar "sweeper", dappled the clear ripples, and the current was about eight inches deep, and there was no pool near to tempt the larger fish, the active and wary little parr took up his home. The same run was chosen by three of his fellows also, and by a couple of small trout of about the same size. But there was room enough, and food enough, in that run for all of them, so the association was harmonious.

Lying with his head up-stream, his long fins and broad tail slowly waving to hold him in his position against the current, the little parr waited and watched while his food was brought down to him by the untiring flow. Sometimes it was a luckless leaf-grub, or a caddis-worm torn from his moorings, that came tumbling and bumping down along the smooth pebbles of the bottom, to be gathered into the young salmon's eager maw. Sometimes it was a fly or moth or bee or beetle that came bobbing with drenched, helpless wings along the tops of the ripples. And once in awhile a pink-shelled baby crawfish in its wanderings would come sidling across the run, and be promptly gobbled up in spite of the futile threatenings of its tiny claws. The river was liberal in its providing for its most favoured children, these aristocratic and beautiful parr, so the youngster grew apace in his bright run.

Happy though his life was now, in every kind of weather, he was still beset with perils. He had, of course, no longer anything to fear from the journeying suckers, with their small, toothless mouths, but now and then a big-mouthed, red-bellied, savage trout would pass up the run, and in passing make a dash at one of the little occupants. In this way two of the parr, and one of the little trout, disappeared,—the trout folk having no prejudice whatever against cannibalism. But our pioneer, ceaselessly on the watch and matchlessly nimble, always succeeded in keeping well out of the way. Once he had a horrible scare, when a seven-pound salmon, astray from the main channel, made his way

cautiously up the middle of the run and scraped over the bar. In this case, however, the alarm was groundless. The stranger was not seeking food, but only a way out of the embarrassing shallows.

Another peril that kept the young parr on the alert—an ever imminent and particularly appalling peril—was the foraging of the kingfishers. A pair of these noisy and diligent birds had their nest of six little ones in a hole in the red bluff just above the run, and they took ceaseless tribute from the finny tribes of the river. Like an azure arrow one of them would dart down into the river with a loud splash, and flap up again, usually, with a gleaming trout or parr held firmly between the edges of his great beak. If he missed his shot and came up with empty beak, he would fly off up the river with a harsh, clattering, startlingly loud cry of indignation and protest. Several times one or other of these troublesome foragers dropped into the run. The dappling of the shadow and sun, however, from the cedar, was a protection to the dwellers in this run; and only twice was the fishing there successful. The second little trout, and one more of the parr, were carried off. Then the birds forsook that particular bit of ripple and hunted easier waters.

In leaping at the flies which came down the surface of the run the little salmon one day got a severe but invaluable lesson. A large and gaudy fly, unlike anything that he had ever encountered before, appeared on the ripples over his head. Still more unlike those which he had encountered before, it did not hurry downward with the water, but maintained its position in a most mysterious fashion. While the parr eyed it curiously, wondering whether to try it or not, it suddenly moved straight up against the current, and was followed at a short distance by another queer-looking big fly, green and brown like a grasshopper. Excited by the strange behaviour of these two strangers, the parr rose sharply and hit the green fly with his tail, intending to drown it and investigate it at his leisure. To his astonishment both flies instantly disappeared. Chagrined and puzzled, he dropped back to the tail of the run, sulking.

"HELD FIRMLY BETWEEN THE EDGES OF HIS GREAT BEAK."

A moment later, however, the two flies reappeared, slipping very slowly down the current, mounting up again directly in the teeth of it, sometimes dancing on the surface, sometimes sinking a little below it, but always remaining the same distance apart, and always behaving in a manner mysteriously independent of the power of the stream. For a few seconds the parr eyed them with distrust. Then growing excited by their strange actions, he dashed forward fiercely and caught the gaudy red fly in his jaws. There was a prick, a twitch, a

frightful jerk,—and he found himself dragged forth into the strangling upper air, where he fell flopping on the dry gravel of the shore.

As he lay gasping and struggling on the hot pebbles, which scorched off the delicate bloom from his tender skin, a tall shape stooped over him, and a great hand, its fingers as long as his whole body, picked him up. He heard a vague reverberation, which was the voice of the tall shape saying, "A poor little beggar of a salmon,—but not badly hooked! He'll be none the worse, and perhaps none the wiser!" Then, with what seemed to him terrible and deadly violence, but what was really the most careful delicacy that the big hand was capable of, the hook was removed from his jaw, and he was tossed back into the water. Dizzy and half-stunned, he turned over on his back, head downward, and for a moment or two was at the mercy of the current. Then, recovering from the shock, he righted himself, and swam frantically to the shelter of an overhanging stone which he knew, where he lay with heaving sides, sore, aching, and trembling, till little by little his self-possession returned to him. But ever afterward, since he was by nature somewhat more wary and alert than his fellows, he viewed floating flies with suspicion and inspected them cautiously before seizing them in his jaws.

All through the summer and autumn the little parr was kept very busy, feeding, and dodging his enemies, and playing in the cheerful, shallow "run" beneath the cedar. When the early autumn rains swelled the volume of the Great South Branch, he first realized how numerous were the big salmon in the stream,—fish which had kept carefully clear of the shallow places wherein he had spent the summer. Though he held himself well aloof from these big fish,—which never paid him any attention,—he noticed them playing tempestuously, leaping high out of the pools, and very busy night and morning on the gravel bars, where they seemed to be digging with their powerful snouts.

"LEAPING HIGH OUT OF THE POOLS."

Still later, when, instead of flies and beetles, there fell upon the darkening surface of the river little pale specks which vanished as he snatched at them, he grew fiercely and inexplicably discontented. What he longed for he did not know; but he knew it was nowhere in the waters about him, neither along the edges of the shore, where now the ice was forming in crisp fringes. All about him he saw the big salmon,—their sides lean and flat, their brilliant colours darkened and faded,—swimming down languidly with the strenuous current. Hitherto

their movements had been all up-stream,—upward, upward incessantly and gladly. Now the old energy and joy of life seemed all gone out of them. Nevertheless, they seemed very anxious to go somewhere, and the way to that somewhere appeared to be down-stream. Hardly knowing what he did, and not at all knowing why he did it, the parr found himself slipping down-stream with them. He had grown vastly in size and strength, while his vivid and varied hues had begun to soften appreciably. In fact, he was now no longer a parr, but a "smelt"; and after the ordained custom of his kind, he was on his way to the sea.

II

Long-finned and full of vigour, the smelt was not dismayed when he came to heavier water, exchanging the region of the gravelly bars for a space of broken ledges, where the great current roared hither and thither and lashed itself into foam. Through these loud chutes and miniature falls he shot safely, though not at first without some trepidation. The lean, slab-sided salmon, or "slinks", who were his travelling companions, served as his involuntary guides. Except to make use of them in this way once or twice, he paid them little attention; though now and again a big lantern-jawed fellow would rush at him with a sort of half-hearted fury, compelling him to make a hurried retreat.

The Great South Branch, soon after the region of the wild ledges was past, fell into quiet ways, and crept for a few miles with deep, untroubled current through a land of alders. Here the winter, which had by this time settled down upon the high Quahdavic country, had its will, and the river was frozen and snow-covered from shore to shore. The smelt, as he journeyed beneath the ice, was puzzled and disturbed by the unusual dimness of the light that filtered down to him.

This was a condition, however, which he soon left behind. Swollen by the influx of several lesser streams, the Great South now burst its fetters and thundered along through a series of tumultuous rapids. Then above the thunder of these rapids came a louder, heavier roar, a trampling whose vibration carried a warning to the traveller. He

paused for a moment; but seeing that the salmon swam on without hesitation or apparent misgiving, he dashed forward-confidently into the tumult. A moment more and he was hurled onward bewilderingly, dashed downward through a smother of broken water which held so much air in it that it almost choked him, and shot into a great, deep, swirling pool where many "slinks" and a few slim smelts like himself were swimming lazily hither and thither. He had successfully made the descent of the South Branch Falls, though, in his ignorance of the best channel, he had missed the solid water, and come down through the smother.

After a very brief rest in the basin below the Falls, to recover his self-possession, the smelt, with many other migrants, resumed his seaward journey. The Great South presently, with a long rush, united its waters with those of the main Quahdavic. Down this full-flowing stream he swam steadily for three uneventful days, to find himself at length in a mighty river whose amber-brown current was a surprise to him after the clear, greenish floods in which he had been born. It took him several days, journeying leisurely, and feeding moderately as he went, to get accustomed to the change in the water. And barely had he become accustomed to it when another and more startling change confronted him. The current, flowing strongly in one direction, would change for a time and flow directly against him. This was confusing. But it was not by any means the worst. A strange, bitter taste was in the water. The great salt tides were rushing up to welcome him. He was nearing the sea.

At first the brackishness in the water repelled him; but almost at once he found himself accepting it with avidity. At the same time he could not but observe a sudden awakening of interest in life among the languid "slinks". They began to show a better appetite, to move about more alertly, to make themselves more dangerous to the smaller fish that crossed their paths. The water grew more and more salt,—with an ever increasing zest to it which made the smelt amazingly keen for his food. Then the shield of ice above him, beneath which he had so long travelled, suddenly vanished, and through long, free shoreless waves he felt the sunlight streaming down to him unimpeded. The water was now no longer tawny brown, but green. He had reached the sea.

For some reason which he could never have explained,—for he certainly felt no affection for them,—the smelt, with others like himself, kept travelling more or less in the company of the reviving "slinks". Like all the rest of the strong-*finned, silver-sided host, he was now feeding with a ravenousness of appetite unknown to him in the old days of rapid and pool. His food was chiefly the very tiny creatures of the sea, shell-fish from the deep-covered rocks and floating masses of weed, young fry swimming in schools, jellyfish of various sorts, and the myriad minute sea things which made certain belts and patches of the sea, at times, almost like a kind of soup ready to his eager palate. Ever north and north swam the silver host, seeking those cold currents from the pole which are as thick with life as the lands they wash are lifeless. Very deep they swam, so deep that, countless as their armies were, they left no trace to betray them to the nets or hooks of the fishing fleets. In those faintly glimmering depths the slow tide stirred softly, unmoved by whatever Arctic storm might rave and shrink over its surface. In the gloom the tiny creatures of the sea shone by their own pale phosphorescence, and in such unimaginable millions did they swarm that the journeying salmon had but to open their mouths to be fed. At this depth, too, they had but little persecution from the more swift and powerful hunters of the sea, the big-mouthed whales, the sharks, and the porpoises. Their most dangerous enemies generally lived and fought and ravaged nearer the surface, leaving to them the lordship of the twilight deeps. Once in awhile, indeed, a sounding whale might drop its mighty bulk among them, and engulf a few scores in his huge maw before the pressure and the need of air forced him again to the surface. And once in awhile a shark or swordfish would rush down, as a hawk swoops from the upper sky, to harry their array. But for the most part now, as at no other period in their career, they went unmolested on their secret and mysterious northern drift.

When the young salmon had been about three months in the sea, growing diligently all the time, a strange but potent influence impelled him, along with most of his companioning hordes, to turn and journey backward toward the coast whence he had come. He was now about five pounds in weight, and if he had fallen into the hands of a fisherman he would have been labelled a "grilse". His companions

were nearly all grilse like himself, varying in weight from two and a half to four or five pounds, with here and there a big, adult salmon journeying majestically among them. The majority of the full-grown salmon had preceded them shoreward by anything from one month to four, under the urge of the homing and parental instinct.

As the big grilse journeyed he went on growing daily, till by the time he found himself back in the waters of the Gulf he was a good six pounds in weight. As he mounted nearer the surface and drew inshore he passed the mouths of various rivers and encountered swirling currents of brackish water. At each of these river-mouths numbers of the host would separate and turn up the freshening tide. But our grilse kept right on, making unerringly for his mighty native stream. And those that continued with him were more in number than those that turned aside.

It was during this journey down offshore that perils once more began to assail the young salmon, perils which it took all his good luck and keen activities to evade. For one thing, there were dogfish. These miniature sharks, with their savage mouths set far under their snouts, were no match for the grilse, or any of his kind, in speed; but the latter, being unsuspicious, came very near being caught unawares. A swift surge of his long fins and powerful tail saved him, just in time. He shot away like a silver streak as the fierce jaws snapped sharply at his flank. After that he kept his eyes alert on the approach of any fish in the least degree larger than himself. And in the course of this watchfulness he saw many of his kinsmen caught and torn to pieces by the ravening dogfish, who are the very wolves of the sea.

Another and equally deadly peril was one that took several forms. Once as he swam swiftly but easily onward, he saw a number of his companions, who chanced to be a little ahead of him, stop abruptly and engage in what seemed to him a meaningless struggle. Ever suspicious, he checked himself and tried to make out what was the matter. The struggle was desperate, but the adversary at first invisible. In a moment, however, he detected a mesh of fine, brown lines, which seemed to surround and grapple with the unfortunate fish. Not waiting to investigate further, he retreated with a nervous flurry of speed. Then, since nothing could divert his homeward impulse, he

dived almost to the bottom and continued his journey, not returning toward the dangerous surface till he was nearly a mile beyond the throttling peril of the drift-net. But there were yet other nets, and as he entered the great outrush of his native river he encountered them on every side, stretched on rows of stakes running far out into the channels. These "set nets", as they were termed, he was fortunate enough, or wary enough, to detect when he first entered the river, and he avoided them by keeping to the deepest parts of the channel; but he saw what cruel toll they took of the eager and heedless schools that swam with him. Net after net they threatened him; but ever upward he urged his way against the tawny current, his long fins and powerful tail never pausing in their graceful, tireless effort. Neither he nor his companions now lost time in foraging, for their appetite had mysteriously vanished since leaving the salt water. They had become engrossed in one idea, the quest of the clean-rushing rapids and the beds of bright gravel where they were born.

Leagues up the great river, after mounting several noisy but not difficult rapids, the grilse came to a halt for the first time in a deep and spacious pool which swarmed with his fellows. Here he rested, and here he made light, casual meals, jumping at the little flies which fell upon the swirling surface of the pool. Once the bright yellow body of a struggling wasp allured him,—but just as he was rising to gulp it in, a memory, vague but terrifying, swung dimly up into his brain from the far-off days when he had been a tiny, gay-coloured parr in the ripples of the Great South Branch. He remembered the sharp point piercing his jaw, his choking and gasping on the hot, dry bank; and refusing the bright titbit, he left it to be gobbled up by one of his less wary companions. After that revival of memory the crafty grilse inspected every fly before he rose to it, to see if any slender, almost invisible line were attached to it. His precautions were unnecessary, in that instance, the pool being a lonely and unnoted one in a broad, shallow reach of the river; but his awakened watchfulness was to stand him in good stead later on.

A day's journey beyond the pool, a great outrush of colder water, green-white against the amber tide of the main river, greeted the returning grilse, and he found himself in the mouth of his native Quahdavic. It was a scanter and shallower stream, however, than

when he left it, for now the long heats of the summer had shrunken all the watercourses. As he mounted the clear current he now encountered fierce rapids, and ledges boiling with foam, which put his swimming prowess to the test. After a day of these rapids and ledges and shallow rips, he felt quite ready to halt once more in a great green pool where two lively brooks, tumbling in from either shore, kept the surface flecked with whirling foam. Here the invigorating coolness of the water speedily refreshed him, and he fell to feeding on the various insects brought down by the meeting currents. The pool was thronged with grilse and full-grown salmon, with here and there a school of graceful whitefish or a group of sluggish suckers, whom he ignored. When the moon rose white over the black, serried masses of the fir woods, silvering the pool, the big grilse, obeying a sudden caprice, shot upwards with a mighty surge of fins and tail, and hurled himself high into the still air. Falling back with a resounding splash, he repeated the feat again and again. He had discovered the fascination of diving upward into the unknown and alien element of the air. Others of his kindred, large and small, had made the same discovery, and the wilderness silence was broken with splash after splash, as the tense, silver shapes shot up, gleamed for an instant, and fell back. As the noise of the mysterious play echoed on the night air, a black bear crept down to the water's edge on one side of the stream, and a lynx stole out to the end of a log on the other side, each hoping that some unwary player might come within reach of his paw. But all the salmon kept out in the safe deeps; and the keen-eyed watchers watched in vain as the round moon climbed the clean heights of sky.

After a few days in this pool, he was surprised one early morning by the sight of a long, dark shape gliding over the surface. From its side, near the hinder end, a strange-looking, narrow fin thrust downward from time to time, and with heavy swirls propelled the dark shape. The strange apparition disturbed him, and he grew restless and watchful. A few minutes after it had passed there came a faint splash on the surface above him, and a big, curious-looking fly appeared. It sank an inch or two, moved against the current, and was then withdrawn. He eyed it with scorn, remembering his former experience with such. But when, a moment later, the strange fly appeared again, he was amazed to see one of the biggest salmon in the pool rise lazily and suck it down. The next instant there was a terrific commotion. He saw

the great fish rush hither and thither up and down and around the pool, now scattering the whitefish on the bottom, now splashing upon the surface and leaping half his length into the air. Very clearly the cunning grilse understood what it all meant. For many long minutes he watched the struggle, which showed no sign of ending. Then disgusted and apprehensive, he forsook the pool, darting beneath the canoe as he did so, and continued his journey up-stream.

Late in the day the returning traveller came to the mouth of the Big South Branch. Without hesitation he turned up that turbulent but shrunken stream, knowing it for his own; and he made no stop till he reached the deep, green, foamy pool at the foot of the Falls. Being still comparatively fresh, and very restless, he swam all round the pool, and took a crafty survey of the terrific obstacle before him. But among the sojourners in the pool were many fish with bleeding sides, who had essayed the leap in vain and were waiting to recuperate their energies for another effort. So he, too, paused a little, gathering his young strength.

The Falls of the Big South were about twelve feet in total height. There were two leaps, the upper one, of about three feet, rolling down into a hollow shelf of sandstone some six or eight feet in width, and the lower, dropping nine feet sheer into the pool. Most of the face of fall, at this stage of the water, was lashed into foam by fissures and projecting angles of rock, but on the right the main volume of the stream fell in a clear, green column. Up the front of this column the grilse presently flung himself, striking the water about a foot from the top. As he struck, the impetus of his leap not yet exhausted, his powerful fins and tail took firm hold of the solid water and urged him upward. Over the lip he shot, into the boiling turmoil of the shelf, then onward over the great surge of the upper dip. He had triumphed easily, and the way was clear before him to the shining gravel bars whereon he had been spawned. There were still some tough rapids—shallow, and tortuous, and grid-ironed with slaty rocks—to be climbed; but there were quiet pools to sojourn in, and no perils that his craft could not evade. One by one his fellow voyagershad dropped away, betrayed by the fisherman's luring fly, clutched by the skilful paw of wildcat or bear, or vanquished in their own element by the mink or the otter. But when he reached the wide spawning-beds he was still

comraded by a fair remnant of the host which had entered the river with him; and the shallow run that swept the bars were noisy with their splashings through the twilight of evening and dawn.

"VANQUISHED IN THEIR OWN ELEMENT BY THE MINK."

Every day there were new arrivals at the spawning-beds, and among them the strong and wary grilse soon found a mate. She was

considerably larger than he, a trim young salmon of the second year and perhaps nine pounds in weight. But his radiant colouring, his strength and his activity, as he swam around her and displayed his charms, appeared to content her. With his bony nose he dug her a circular nest in the gravel, where the current ran clear but not too strong; and in this nest she laid her countless eggs, while he rubbed his side caressingly against her shining flanks. When her eggs were all laid and fertilized he drifted away from her, dropped down to the nearest pool, and lay there sluggish and uninterested for awhile, until, seized once more by the longing for the great salt tide, he joined a returning company of "slinks" and hurried back down-river to the sea.

III

When he reached the deep sea once more, and regained his appetite among the sweeping tides, he once more began to grow. His fins became smaller in proportion to his bulk, and he was no longer a grilse, but a salmon. His life, however, underwent no great change; his adventures, perils, interests, appetites, were all much the same as during his first season in the sea. Only he now swam with a certain majesty, ignoring the grilse and smaller salmon who swam and fed beside him; for he was of splendid, constantly growing stature, of the lords of his kind.

This time he let nearly the whole round of the year go by, feeding at leisure and lazily dodging the seals, among the icy but populous tides that swung beyond the mouth of Hudson Straits. Then, late the following winter, long before the dark earth had any word of spring, spring stirred secretly in his veins, and he remembered the sunny gravel bars of the Great South Branch. The sudden urge of his desire turned him about, and he began to swim tirelessly southward, companioned by an ardent, silvery host into whose veins at the same time the same compelling summons had been flashed.

It was late May when the returning salmon, having successfully eluded the snares of the nets and the assaults of harbour seal and dogfish, came again to the mouth of his native river and fanned his gills once more in its sweet, amber current. He was now a good forty pounds in

weight, and his clean blue-and-silver body was adorned with fine markings of extraordinary brilliancy. His vigorous, wholesome, seasoned muscles propelled him irresistibly against the current of the river, which was now fierce with freshet; and being urged by a stronger and more insistent desire than that which had swayed him on his former visit, as a grilse, he now made more haste in his journeying, with briefer halts in the pools. The pools, at this season, were some of them indistinguishable in the flood, and others turbulent and difficult of access, so the fly-fishermen were not yet out in force. Only once, in the great pool below the Quahdavic mouth, did he see the bright fly whose treacherous lure he knew so well go dancing over his head. He rose lazily and slapped it with his tail in angry contempt, then returned to the bottom of the pool and watched it lazily, while for nearly an hour it went through its futile antics. Then it vanished suddenly.

Perhaps ten minutes after the gaudy fly had disappeared, the big salmon saw a brown furry shape, more like a very young squirrel than anything else, go floating down the current. Other salmon, who, like himself, had ignored the fly, observed this furry shape with interest, and half started to investigate. But when the big salmon rose to it they turned away with resignation. As for him, though he had not been once really hungry since entering the fresh water, he felt that that strange object was the very thing he wanted. Gliding up to the surface on a long slant, very slowly, he opened his great jaws just below the object, sucked it in, and with a heavy splash turned back toward the bottom. The next instant there was a jerk, a prick, a fierce tug at his jaw which swerved him from his course; and he realized that he had been fooled. The furry shape was but the old treason of the fly in another form.

His first impulse was to rush madly across the pool in an effort to escape the small tormentor. But memory and experience, added to that native cunning which had brought him safely through so many perils, now came to his rescue. Instead of rushing to the surface and performing wild feats which would have soon worn him out while delighting the soul of his enemy, he turned resolutely back to his course and bored his way to the bottom against the exasperating pressure of rod and reel. Here he set himself to nosing vigorously

among the stones, in the hope of rubbing off this troublesome thing on his jaw. The thing tugged, and tugged, and pricked, and worried, as the fisherman at the other end of the line strove to rouse him into a lively and spectacular struggle. But for some minutes he refused to be diverted from his nosing among the stones, till the fisherman began to fear that the hook had got fast to a log.

Presently, however, the great salmon decided to change his tactics. Though he did not know it, he had already loosened the hook appreciably, tearing the cartilage of his jaw. Now, having craftily eyed for some seconds the fine, taut, almost invisible line of gut as it slanted off through the water, he made a long, swift rush straight in the direction in which the line was striving to pull him. Instantly the pull ceased, the line fell slack. But he felt the hook, with its furry attachment, still clinging at the side of his mouth. He passed straight under the dark shape of the canoe, and heard a sharp, vibrant sound above him, something like the song of a locust, which was the noise of the big salmon reel as the fisherman made wild haste to take in the slack of the line. As he swam he shook his head savagely; but the hook still held. Then, near the farther edge of the pool, he darted between the limbs of a sunken windfall, and back again on the other side, effectually fouling the line a few feet from his nose. The next moment there was a violent jerk at his jaw. The hook tore out, and he swam free.

In tremendous indignation and trepidation the great salmon now darted from the pool and up against the wild current of the Quahdavic. In the next pool he delayed for but a few minutes, not resting, but swimming about restlessly and stirring up the other salmon with his excitement. Then, accompanied by three or four of those whom his nervous activity had aroused, he pressed onward. Through rapid and chute and pool, and white-churned trough where rocks scored the bed of the river, he darted tirelessly, and up the clear torrent of the Great South Branch; and he never halted till he found himself in the boiling basin of green and foam at the foot of the Falls.

The basin was a very different place now from that which he had visited as a grilse. Into its vexed deeps the flood fell with the heavy trampling of thunder, which was echoed back and forth between the

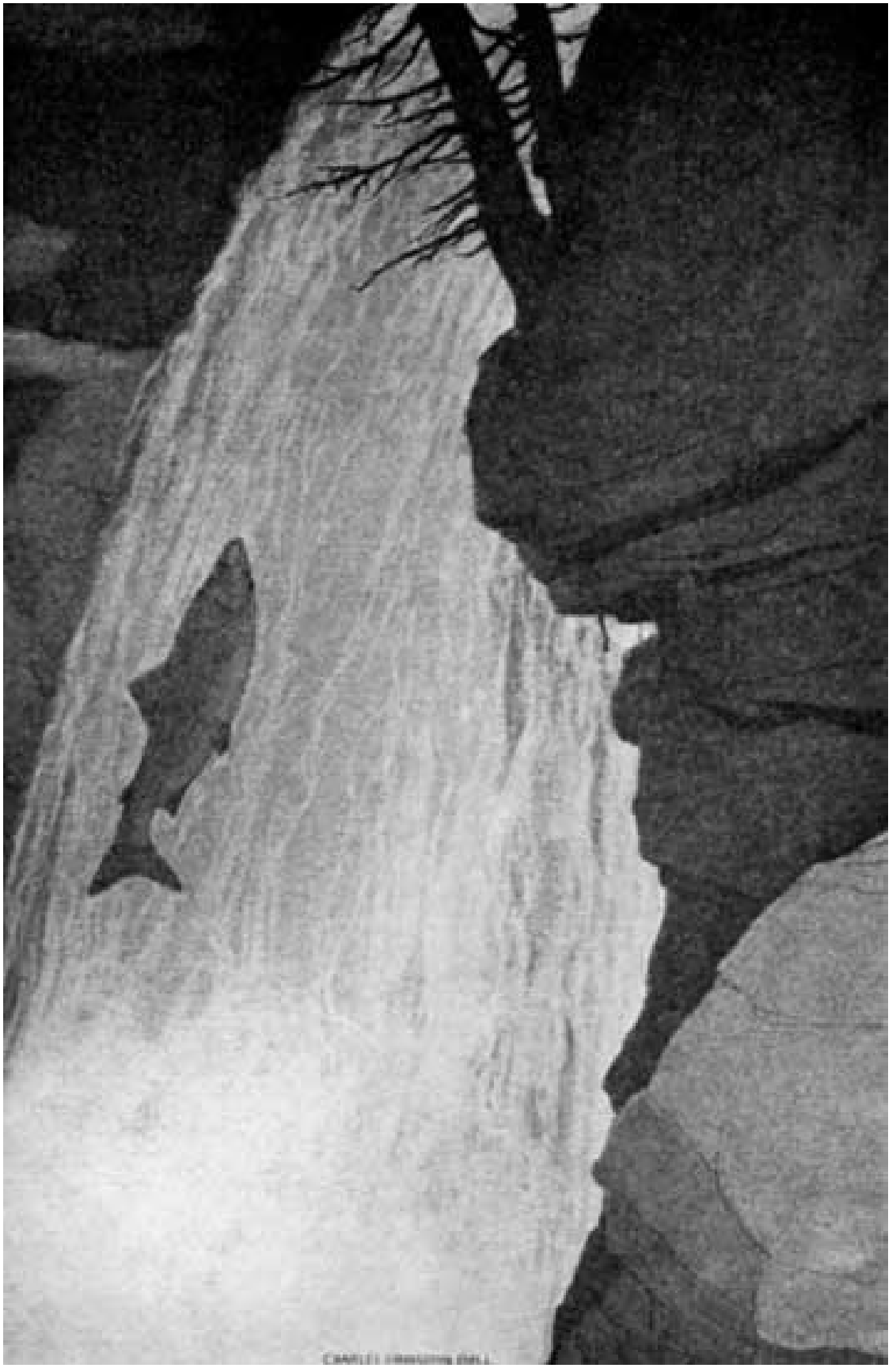
high broken rocks enclosing the basin. But what was of most importance to the great salmon was a fact which, if he realized it at all, he realized but vaguely. The Falls themselves had changed since his last visit.

At the very first of spring there had been a landslide. The great, partly overhanging rock, seamed and split by the wedges of countless frosts, had all at once crumbled down beneath the tireless pressure of the cataract. The lower fall, thus retreating, had become one with the upper. The straight descent was now nearly five feet higher than before,—a barrier which no voyager those waters ever knew could hope to overcome.

The great salmon did not understand what had happened. He knew that he had passed the barrier before, and had come to those bright, gravelled reaches of which he was desirous. He knew that a summons which he could not disobey was urging him on up-stream. He had no thought but to obey. After a short rest in the deepest part of the pool,—he was alone there, being the first of the returning migrants,—he suddenly aroused himself, darted like a flash of silver through the green flood, and shot straight up the face of the fall. Within three feet of the crest he came, hung curved like a bow for a fraction of a second, glittering and splendid, then fell back into the white smother. Again, and yet again, he essayed the leap, gaining perhaps a foot on the second trial, but falling far short on the third. Then, exhausted and beaten by the great impact of the waters as he fell back defenceless, he retired to the quietest depth of the pool to recover his strength. He felt bewildered by his failure, and half stunned by the buffeting of the air-charged flood, which affected him somewhat as a tornado might affect a man who was fighting to make head against it. Moreover, there was a long crimson gash slanting down his flank, where he had been driven against a jagged rock as he fell.

Of all these things, however, he thought little, as he lay there in the green deep which seethed from the turmoil passing above it. Through the turmoil he saw the wide, clean-glittering, shallow-rippled gravel-bars of the upper stream, golden under the sun and blue-white under the moon. These he saw as he remembered them, and he saw the

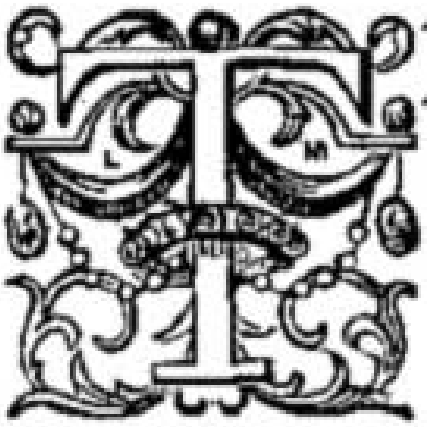
loud barrier to be passed before he could reach them. As he brooded, his courage summoned back his strength. Again he flashed up, with a power and swiftness that seemed irresistible, and again he shot into the spray-thick air on the face of the fall. Again he hung there for a half a heart-beat, spent, to fall back baffled and confused. Again and again, however, he flashed back to the trial, undaunted in spirit though at each effort his strength grew less: again and again the rock teeth hidden in the foam caught and tore him as he fell. At last, all but stunned and altogether bewildered, he swam feebly into an eddy close to shore and half turned upon his side, his gills opening and closing violently.



"AGAIN HE SHOT INTO THE SPRAY-THICK AIR ON THE FACE OF THE FALL."

Just about this time a visitor from the hills had come shambling down to the river-edge,—one of the great black bears of the Quahdavic valley. Sitting contemplatively on her haunches, her little, cunning eyes had watched the vain leaps of the salmon. She knew a good deal about salmon and her watching was not mere curiosity. As the efforts of the brave fish grew feebler and feebler she drew down closer and closer to the edge of the water, till it frothed about her feet. When, at last, the salmon came blindly into the eddy and turned upon his side, the bear was but a few feet distant. She crept forward like a cat, crouched,—and a great black paw shot around with a clutching sweep. Gasping and quivering, the salmon was thrown up upon the rocks. Then white teeth, savage but merciful, bit through the back of his neck; and unstruggling he was carried to a thicket above the Falls.

Answerers to the Call



HE little lake, long and narrow, and set in a cleft of the deep forest, led off like a pathway of light to the full October moon. The surface of the lake was as still as glass, and the woods, rising from each shore in dense waves, billowy where the hardwoods crowded thick, or serrated and pinnacled where the fir and spruce and hemlock drew their ordered ranks, were as motionless as if an enchantment had been laid upon them. The air was magically clear, almost pungent with suggestion of frost, and tonic with autumn scents.

In sharp contrast to the radiance of the open, the deep of the forest was filled with an extraordinarily liquid and transparent darkness, pierced with hard white lines and spots of light where the moon broke through. Down along the shores of the lake, under the ragged fringe of mixed growths where forest and open met, ran a tangle of grotesque, exaggerated shadows, so solid of outline as to seem almost palpable.

All these shadows were as motionless as if frozen—except one, a long, angular shadow, which projected itself spasmodically but noiselessly through the bushes, occasionally darting out upon the naked beach, but withdrawing again instantly, as if in dread of the exposure. The source of this erratic shadow was a lean backwoodsman, who, rifle in hand, was stealing on moccasined feet down the lake shore under cover of the fringing branches.

Suddenly across the water came a sound as if some one were

thrashing the underbrush with a stick. The hunter stopped short, and listened intently from his place of concealment. Very well he knew that sound. It was a bull moose eager for fight, thrashing the bushes with his great antlers as a challenge to any rival who might be within hearing.

The woodsman's grizzled lips parted in a smile of satisfaction, and after a glance at his rifle to see that the cartridge was in place, he crept onward down the lake, well under cover and as soundless as his own shadow. He expected to come upon the challenger somewhere near the foot of the lake. He might, of course, have adopted a surer and lazier method of hunting by staying where he was and imitating the call of the big moose's mate; but this seemed to him gross treachery, and little short of murder. He would almost as willingly have condescended to snare the noble beast whom he gloried in overcoming in fair chase.

The hunter had not gone far, however, when another strange sound disturbed the enchanted silence. It was harsh, wild, yet appealing, and seemed in some way the very voice of the untamed wilderness. It was the call of the shy cow moose.

The woodsman crept down to the shore and peered cautiously through the screening boughs, to see whether the call was an authentic one or the cheat of some other hunter less scrupulous than himself.

About a quarter of a mile down the shore a bare sand spit jutted out into the sheen of the lake; and near its point, an ungainly black silhouette against the bright water, stood the cow, calling, listening, and calling again.

The hunter stood for a few moments, watching her with that deliberation which marks the man of the woods. As he watched, suddenly the cow wheeled half-round, as if startled, then dashed into

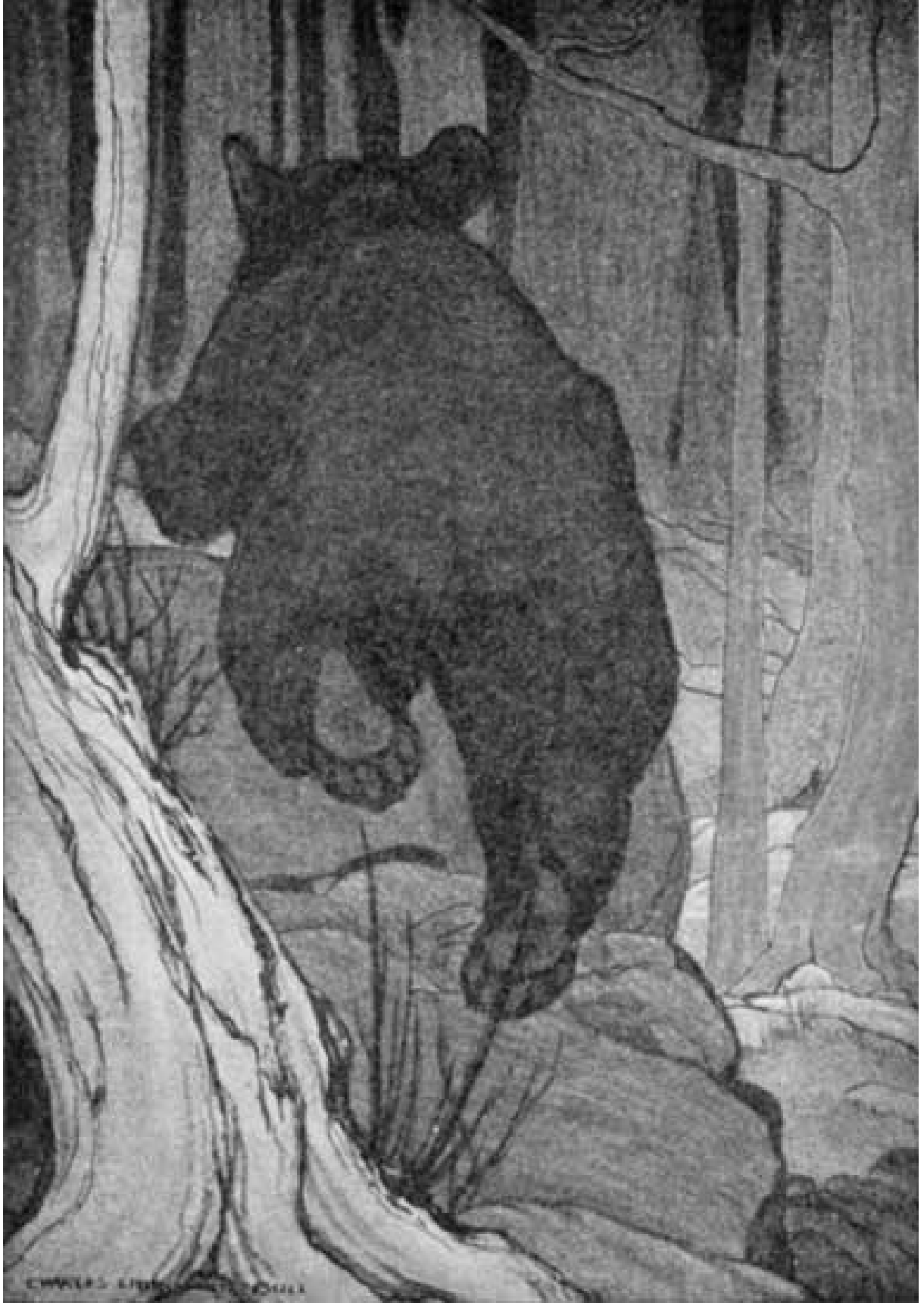
the water, swam in haste to the next point, and vanished among the trees.

The woodsman, much surprised, waited motionless where he was for a couple of minutes, to see if the cause of her alarm would reveal itself. Then, as no sign of life appeared on the brilliantly lighted sand spit, he pressed on stealthily down the shore to investigate for himself.

In a few minutes—forest and lake meanwhile as still as if no living thing breathed within the borders—the hunter found himself at the head of the sand spit. Keeping within the deep shadow, he examined the ground carefully, but could detect no trail, except that of the cow which had been calling. Puzzled, and nettled to find his woodcraft at fault, he continued his furtive progress toward the foot of the lake.

He had gone not more than two or three hundred yards when, just as he was about to step out upon a little lighted glade, that subtle and unnamed sixth sense which the men of the woods sometimes develop warned him that something alive and hostile was hidden in the thicket just ahead. He stiffened in his tracks and waited, eyes and nostrils intently alert.

He was so close to the edge of the thicket that his own concealment was very imperfect. In the thicket, just across the lighted space, nothing stirred; but he was sure that something was there. For fully five minutes he waited. Then, just to see what would happen, he gave, very softly and alluringly, the call of the cow moose.



"SCUTTLED OFF INTO THE WOODS LIKE A FRIGHTENED WOODCHUCK."

What happened was something no previous experience had taught him to expect. No moose responded to the supposed voice of its

mate; but a huge black bear fairly bounced into the open, and came at him in terrific leaps, evidently purposing to catch the cow before she could get started running. Annoyed, because he was not hunting bear and did not want to scare the game he was seeking, the woodsman stepped out into the full light as he raised his rifle.

But he did not have to shoot. If he was not hunting bear, neither was the bear hunting man. At this unlooked-for apparition of a man with a voice like a cow moose, the bear almost stopped in mid-jump, as if struck by an explosive bullet. Fairly falling over in his desperate haste to stop himself, he clawed the turf wildly, wheeled about, and scuttled off into the woods like a frightened woodchuck. The hunter smiled grimly, and went on. He knew now what had startled the cow moose.

For nearly half an hour the great white moon seemed to possess the world alone. At the foot of the lake the hunter had to appear in the shining open for a second or two, while crossing the shallow but wide brook which formed the outlet. But he drifted across from stone to stone like a shadow, marked, as he knew well enough, by vigilant eyes, but not, he trusted, by the moose.

On this point he was presently quite assured, for he had little more than reached cover again when he saw the cow reappear on the open beach a short distance up the lake. She walked out till her fore hoofs were at the very edge of the water, then called again and again. She knew that somewhere in these illimitable shades, bold but crafty, her mate was watching and listening.

In answer to her call he was likely to come rushing up noisily, defying all peril, and flinging his challenge abroad for all whom it might interest. But to-night there was a vague suspicion in the air. It was probable that he would come silently, and give no hint of his coming until he stood beside her on the beach.

The point of beach whereon the cow was standing was carefully

chosen with reference to the scare which she had received a half-hour earlier. It was where a little stream flowed in through a space of wild meadow, so that there was ample open all about her, and no enemy could get nearer than forty or fifty yards without revealing himself.

From the foot of the lake the woodsman approached with a stealth that none of the wild kindred themselves could surpass. Skirting the back of the meadow, he drew near from the upper side, expecting that any response the call might bring would come from that direction. Then he hid himself in a dense thicket of willows near the water.

Meanwhile there were others besides the woodsman for whom the calling of the lonely cow had interest. The great black bear, having recovered from his panic and put what he thought a safe distance between himself and the dangerous stranger, had slipped his huge bulk through the underbrush without a sound, and glared out savagely over the meadow to the solitary figure on the beach.

He knew that he was no match in speed for a frightened cow moose, and he saw that the distance across the open was too great for him to carry the matter by a rush. That cow was not for him, apparently. His mouth watered, but he held himself firmly under cover, waiting in the hope that some whimsical fortune of the woods might throw opportunity in his way.

Suddenly his ears caught a tiny but suggestive sound. Somewhere far up the course of the little brook a twig snapped sharply. He turned his attention away from the cow, and listened. That chance sound, so conspicuous on the expectant silence, might signify the coming of the antlered bull.

The bear would much rather have spared himself exertion by hunting the cow; but a bull, although apt to prove a dangerous adversary to an inexperienced bear, was well enough for one who knew how to manage such matters. He slipped over to the edge of the brook, and

crouched behind a huge stump which was veiled by a growth of vines.

Immediately before him was the narrow, grassy clearway occupied by the brook at high water, and now threaded by a winding, loitering rivulet. So narrow was the space that in one lunge of his long body and mighty forearm he could reach almost all the way across it. This white-lit path was fretted with black traceries of branch and leaf, but the shadow behind the rock was so thick that even the furry bulk of the bear was completely engulfed in it.

The lonely figure out by the lake-side kept repeating its harsh calls from time to time, but neither the bear behind his brook-side rock nor the woodsman in his willow thicket up the shore any longer heeded her. Both were waiting for a third to answer her summons.

The third, indeed, was coming to answer; but with unwonted circumspection. He was a small but sturdy young bull, his antlers not yet perfect. It was he whom the hunter had heard thrashing the bushes in challenge; and when his mate first sent her call across the lake, he had stood silent behind the sheltering trees and watched her. But just as he was about to start on the long détour round the foot of the lake to join her, he had seen her sudden alarm and been puzzled by it.

Like the woodsman, he had rested for some time, motionless and watchful, looking for what else might happen. The absence of happening had left him vaguely apprehensive. When, therefore, he saw her reappear long afterward on his own side of the lake and begin her calls again, he was cautious about replying. Instead of hurrying straight down the shore to meet her, he sank softly back, deeper and deeper, into the woods, till her voice could scarcely reach his ears.

"THE MOOSE CAME IN SIGHT UP THE BROOK CHANNEL."

Then he made a wide swing round, and came stealthily down the channel of the little brook. In spite of his bulk, his spread of antlers, his

broad and loose-hung hoofs, no mink or weasel could have come more silently than he.

As the moose came in sight up the brook channel, a moving shadow, the muscles of the watching bear behind the rock grew tense, and a luminous green film seemed to come over his small eyes. One powerful hind leg lifted itself till its claws took firm grip on a projection near the top of the rock. He was like a catapult, bent and ready.

When the moose came just opposite, the giant spring was loosed. The ponderous shape of the bear launched out over the top of the rock and seemed to shoot through the air.

Magnificent as the leap was, however, it just fell short of its mark; for the moose, taking instinctive alarm before any cause was actually perceptible, had swerved a yard aside from the place of ambush. Instead of falling directly upon him, therefore, and bearing him to the ground with a broken back, the bear landed at his side, just close enough to strike him a savage blow on the neck.

Powerful as the neck of a bull moose is, had that blow struck true it would have ended the fight. But it fell rakingly, rending hide and muscle but breaking no bones. Brave as he was cautious, the moose wheeled to strike back.

Jumping aside with the agility of a red buck, he gained room to lower his antlers, and lunged forward upon the foe with all the force of his seven hundred pounds behind these formidable weapons. The bear, skilful as a boxer at parrying, with his big fore paw turned aside the direct thrust; but owing to the spread of the antlers, one long, keen spike caught him right under the shoulder and drove home.

Then began a terrific uproar of crashing and growling and coughing and grunting, while the underbrush was beaten flat beneath the ponderous combatants. The bear clung to the antlers, wrenching and

twisting, now trying to pull his antagonist to the ground, now striving to reach past his pronged defences and rend his throat.

For a time the moose succeeded in keeping his feet, struggling to force his assailant backward and pierce his flank. Then he was lucky enough to tear himself free. Instantly he reared like a mad horse, and brought down his sharp hoofs on the enemy's shoulder.

It was a terrific blow, battering like a sledge-hammer and cutting like an axe, and the bear roared under it. But it was not a finishing blow, and it let the foe reach close quarters. The bear got the bull's neck into the grip of his mighty forearms, and pulled him down. The moose struggled valiantly, thrashing backward with jagged antlers, and tearing up the ground in desperate efforts to regain his feet. But victory was now, beyond peradventure, within the clutch of the bear.

At the first sound of the battle the cow had come trotting inland to see what was going on, under the impression that her mate had fallen foul of a rival. At the inner extremity of the meadow, however, she caught sight of the woodsman running in the same direction, whereupon her discretion overcame all other emotions, and she made haste to escape from a neighbourhood so full of the unexpected.

The woodsman never gave her a glance, but ran on at a swift lope, a spark of excitement in his quiet gray eyes. When he reached the scene of combat the bear had just got his brave antagonist down.

The hunter paused for a few seconds, to take in the situation thoroughly. Then he raised his rifle. His sympathies were altogether with the moose. He waited till he got the chance he wanted, then he sent a heavy 45-70 expanding bullet through the bear's heart.

The great black form collapsed in a limp heap upon his adversary; and the latter, struggling to his feet, threw the burden disdainfully aside. At first he paid no attention to the woodsman, who, taking it for

granted that his injuries were hopeless, stood waiting compassionately to end his sufferings. But this young bull was made of astonishingly tough stuff. In his rage he had apparently not heard the sound of the rifle. As soon as he had fairly regained his feet, he reared to his full height, came down upon the bear's unresisting form, and trampled madly for several seconds.

The woodsman stood watching with a grin of sympathetic approval, and muttered, "Chuck full of ginger yet!"

At last the panting beast turned his head, and saw the man. The sight sobered him. For a moment he stood staring and shaking his head, drunk with his imagined triumph. Then discretion whispered in his ear. He turned away sullenly, with one last, regretful look at his foe's battered body, and trotted off into the mystic confusion of shine and shadow.

The Prisoners of the Pitcher-plant

T the edge of a rough piece of open, where the scrubby bushes which clothed the plain gave space a little to the weeds and harsh grasses, stood the clustering pitchers of a fine young sarracenia. These pitchers, which were its leaves, were of a light, cool green, vividly veined with crimson and shading into a bronzy red about the lip and throat. They were of all sizes, being at all stages of growth; and the largest, which had now, on the edge of summer, but barely attained maturity, were about six inches in length and an inch and a quarter in extreme diameter. Down in the very heart of the cluster, hardly to be discerned, was a tiny red-tipped bud, destined to shoot up, later in the season, into a sturdy flower-stalk.

Against the fresh, warm green of the sunlit world surrounding it, the sarracenia's peculiar colouring stood out conspicuously, its streaks and splashes of red having the effect of blossoms. This effect, at a season when bright-hued blooms were scarce, made the plant very attractive to any insects that chanced within view of it. There was nearly always some flutterer or hummer poising above it, or touching it eagerly to dart away again in disappointment. But every once in awhile some little wasp, or fly, or shining-winged beetle, or gauzy ichneumon, would alight on the alluring lip, pause, and peer down into the pitcher. As a rule the small investigator would venture farther and farther, till it disappeared. Then it never came out again.

"AT THIS MOMENT A PASSING SHRIKE SWOOPED DOWN."

On a leaf of a huckleberry bush, overhanging the pitcher-plant, a little black ant was running about with the nimble curiosity of her kind. An orange and black butterfly, fluttering lazily in the sun, came close beside the leaf. At this moment a passing shrike swooped down and caught the butterfly in his beak. One of his long wings, chancing to strike the leaf, sent it whirling from its stem; and the ant fell directly upon one of the pitchers below.

It was far down upon the red, shining lip of the pitcher that she fell; and there she clung resolutely, her feet sinking into a sort of fur of smooth, whitish hairs. When she had quite recovered her equanimity she started to explore her new surroundings; and, because that was the easiest way to go, she went in the direction toward which the hairs all pointed. In a moment, therefore, she found herself just on the edge of the precipitous slope from the lip to the throat of the pitcher. Here, finding the slope strangely slippery, she thought it best to stop and retrace her steps. But when she attempted this she found it impossible. The little, innocent-looking hairs all pressed against her, thrusting her downward. The more she struggled, the more energetically and elastically they pushed back at her; till all at once she was forced over the round, smooth edge, and fell.

To her terrified amazement, it was water she fell into. The pitcher was about half full of the chilly fluid. In her kickings and twistings she brought herself to the walls of her green prison, and tried to clamber out,—but here, again, were those cruel hairs on guard to foil her. She tried to evade them, to break them down, to bite them off with her strong, sharp mandibles. At last, by a supreme effort, she managed to drag herself almost clear,—but only to be at once hurled back, and far out into the water, by the sharp recoil of her tormentors.

Though pretty well exhausted by now, she would not give up the struggle; and presently her convulsive efforts brought her alongside of a refuge. It was only the floating body of a dead moth, but to the ant it

was a safe and ample raft. Eagerly she crept out upon it, and lay very still for awhile, recovering her strength. More fortunate than most shipwrecked voyagers, she had an edible raft and was therefore in no imminent peril of starvation.

The light that came through the veined, translucent walls of this watery prison was of an exquisite cool beryl, very different from the warm daylight overhead. The ant had never been in any such surroundings before, and was bewildered by the strangeness of them. After a brief rest she investigated minutely every corner of her queer retreat, and then, finding that there was nothing she could do to better the situation, she resumed her attitude of repose, with only the slight waving of her antennæ to show that she was awake.

For a long time nothing happened. No winds were astir that day, and no sounds came down into the pitcher save the shrill, happy chirping of birds in the surrounding bushes. But suddenly the pitcher began to tip and rock slightly, and the water to wash within its coloured walls. Something had alighted on the pitcher's lip.

It was something comparatively heavy, that was evident. A moment or two later it came sliding down those treacherous hairs, and fell into the water with a great splash which nearly swept the ant from her refuge.

The new arrival was a bee. And now began a tremendous turmoil within the narrow prison. The bee struggled, whirled around on the surface with thrashing wings, and sent the water swashing in every direction, till the ant was nearly drowned. She hung to her raft, however, and waited philosophically for the hubbub to subside. At length the bee too, after half a dozen vain and exhausting struggles to climb out against the opposing array of hairs, encountered the body of the dead moth. Instantly she tried to raise herself upon it, so as to escape the chill of the water and dry her wings for flight. But she was too heavy. The moth sank, and rolled over, at the same time being

thrust against the wall of the pitcher. The ant, in high indignation clutched a bundle of the hostile hairs in her mandibles, and held herself at anchor against the wall.

Thoroughly used up, and stupid with panic and chill, the bee kept on futilely grappling with the moth's body, which, in its turn, kept on sinking and rolling beneath her. A very few minutes of such disastrous folly sufficed to end the struggle, and soon the bee was floating, drowned and motionless, beside the moth. Then the ant, with satisfaction, returned to her refuge.

When things get started happening, they are quite apt to keep it up for awhile, as if events invited events. A large hunting spider, creeping among the grass and weeds, discovered the handsome cluster of the sarracenia. She was one of the few creatures who had learned the secret of the pitcher-plant and knew how to turn it to account. More than once had she found easy prey in some trapped insect struggling near the top of a well-filled pitcher.

Selecting the largest pitcher as the one most likely to yield results, the spider climbed its stem. Then she mounted the bright swell of the pitcher itself, whose smooth outer surface offered no obstacle to such visitors. The pitcher swayed and bowed. The water within washed heavily. And the ant, with new alarm, marked the big, black shadow of the spider creeping up the outside of her prison.

Having reached the lip of the leaf and cautiously crawled over upon it, the spider took no risks with those traitor hairs. She threw two or three stout cables of web across the lip; and then, with this secure anchorage by which to pull herself back, she ventured fearlessly down the steep of that perilous throat. One hooked claw, outstretched behind her, held aloft the cable which exuded from her spinnerets as she moved.

On the extreme of the slope she stopped, and her red, jewelled

cluster of eyes glared fiercely down upon the little black ant. The latter shrank and crouched, and tried to hide herself under the side of the dead moth to escape the light of those baleful eyes. This new peril was one which appalled her far more than all the others she had encountered.

At this most critical of all crises in the destiny of the little black ant, the fickle Fortune of the Wild was seized with another whim. An overwhelming cataclysm descended suddenly upon the tiny world of the pitcher-plant. The soft, furry feet of some bounding monster—rabbit, fox, or wildcat—came down amongst the clustered pitchers, crushing several to bits and scattering wide the contents of all the rest. Among these latter was that which contained the little black ant. Drenched, astonished, but unhurt, she found herself lying in a tuft of splashed grass, once more free. Above her, on a grass-top, clung the bewildered spider. As it hung there, conspicuous to all the foraging world, a great black-and-yellow wasp pounced upon it, stung it into helplessness, and carried it off on heavily humming wing.

The Prowlers

EELING under a stiff breeze, the sloop rose joyously to the long Caribbean rollers. Soon after midnight Mahoney awoke. He went to the tiller at once, and let the stalwart Jamaican nigger, who constituted his crew, take a turn of sleep. The wind was steady, the sea was clear, there was no island, reef, or shoal between himself and Cuba, and Mahoney had little to do but hold the tiller and dream. Presently clouds gathered, obscuring the moon, and thickened till the light which filtered through them was rather a deceit than an illumination. Far-off waves seemed close at hand, and waves so near they were about to break over the bow appeared remote. Strange shapes made and unmade themselves among the shifting surfaces, dark, solid forms which melted into flowing, hissing water. Mahoney's eyes amused themselves with these fantastic wave-shadows and phantoms of the fluent deep. Then, suddenly, one of the dark, submerged shapes broke the rules of the game. It refused to melt and flow. With a gasp Mahoney jammed his helm hard round, and let go his sheet on the run. There was a shuddering shock. The boat reared, like a frightened horse struggling to climb a bank. Then, with a kind of sickening deliberation, she turned clean over. There was a choking yell from the rudely awakened darky; and Mahoney found himself plunged into the smother of the broken waves.

When he came to the surface and shook the water out of his eyes, Mahoney clutched the stern and pulled himself up to see what had happened. He had run upon a huge fragment of a broken-up wreck. From the heavy, steady motion, he concluded that the boat was

caught on a sunken portion of the wreck. Some fifteen feet away a space of deck, with a few feet of bulwarks, rose just clear of the waves. This seemed to offer a less precarious refuge than the keel to which he was clinging. He slipped back into the waves, struck out hurriedly, and dragged himself up to the highest point of the wet deck. Here, holding to the broken bulwarks, he peered about for his assistant. Taking for granted that the negro, whom he knew to be a magnificent swimmer, was clinging to the other side of the boat, he shouted to him, with angry solicitude, but got no answer. It was incomprehensible. Starting to his feet he was about to plunge again into the smother and swim around the boat. Then he checked himself. Such a step was obviously futile. If the negro had been there, he would have lost no time in clambering out upon the bottom of the boat. There was a mystery in that sudden and complete disappearance. With a shiver Mahoney crouched down again and clutched the lurching bulwarks.

He had plenty of time now to think. He cursed himself bitterly for the rash impatience which had driven him to attempt the journey from Kingston to Santiago in a little sloop, instead of waiting for the regular steamer, just because he feared the rebellion might fizzle out before he could get there to make a story of it. His folly had cost the nigger's life, at least; and the account was not yet closed! Well, the nigger was gone, poor beggar. His black hide had enclosed a man, all right; but there was no use worrying over him. The question was, how soon would a ship come along? This was a frequented sea, more or less. But the wreck was almost level with the water, and lamentably inconspicuous. Mahoney knew that unless he were picked up right soon the tropic sun would drive him mad with thirst. He knew, too, that if any sort of a wind should blow up, he would promptly have forced upon him that knowledge of the other world which he was not yet ready to acquire. It was clear that he must find some means of flying a signal. He decided that when daylight came he would dive under the

upturned boat, cut away either the gaff or the boom, lash it to the bulwarks, and hoist his shirt upon it as a flag of distress.

Just before dawn the breeze died away. By the time the east had begun to flame, and thin washes of red-orange to mottle the sky fantastically, the long swells were as smooth as glass. Mahoney was impatient to get up his flagstaff, but he wanted plenty of light. He waited until the sky was blue, the sun clear of the horizon. Then he stood up, set the hilt of his knife between his teeth, and prepared to plunge in. Before doing so, however, he instinctively scanned the water all about him. Then he removed the knife from his mouth and stared.

"That accounts for it!" he muttered, his teeth baring themselves with a snarl of loathing as he thrust the knife back into his belt and sat down again. Just behind him, and not a dozen feet away, a gigantic, triangular black fin was slowly cleaving the swells.

There being nothing else to do, Mahoney occupied himself in watching that great dorsal, as it prowled slowly this way and that. Such a fin, he calculated, must mean a bigger shark than any that had hitherto come within his range of observation. He had a righteous hatred of all sharks, but this one in particular sickened him with vindictive loathing. He knew how lately, and how horridly, it had fed; yet here it was as ravenous as ever. Presently it sank out of sight, and was gone for perhaps ten or fifteen minutes. Then, on a sudden, there was the devilish black fin again, vigilant and deliberate.

As the sun rose, and the light fell more steeply, the dazzling reflections disappeared and Mahoney could look down into the transparent blue-green depths. He saw that the wreck on which he had taken refuge was an old one, long adrift in the teeming tropic seas. Its under edges carried a dense, waving fringe of barnacles and coloured weed, swarming with sea-creatures. In its shadow life crowded riotously, and death held easy revel. Among the looser fringes of the barnacle

growth swam fish of the smaller species, many of them flashing with the radiance of sapphire and topaz, or shooting like pink flames. Hither and thither darted a small school of blue and gold bonito, insatiable and swift, snatching down their prey from among the tips of the barnacles. About six feet below the barnacles a cavernous-jawed barracouta, perhaps five feet long, lay motionless but for the easy waving of its fins. It must have been gorged, for Mahoney, in all his seafaring, had never before seen one of these ravenous and ferocious fish thus at rest. It must even have, for once, lapsed into something like sleep,—a perilous lapse in the strenuous life of the sea, for anything less formidable than a sperm whale or an orca, and not without its dangers even for them. Its wide-set, staring eyes seemed to command a view in every direction. Yet they did not see a huge, spectral form rise smoothly from below, turning belly upward with a sudden green-white gleam. Then, the barracouta's powerful tail twisted with a violence that sent the water swirling as from a screw. But it was too late. The shark's triangular jaws snapped upon their prey, biting the big fish in halves. The two pieces were bolted instantly, as a hungry man bolts a "bluepoint." And the shark—the biggest "man-eater" that Mahoney had ever seen—sank slowly out of sight, to reappear at the surface again in five minutes as ravenous as ever.

"LAY MOTIONLESS BUT FOR THE EASY WAVING OF ITS FINS."

By this time it was beginning to get hot, there on the shelterless wreck. A small steamer passed in the distance. Mahoney tore off his

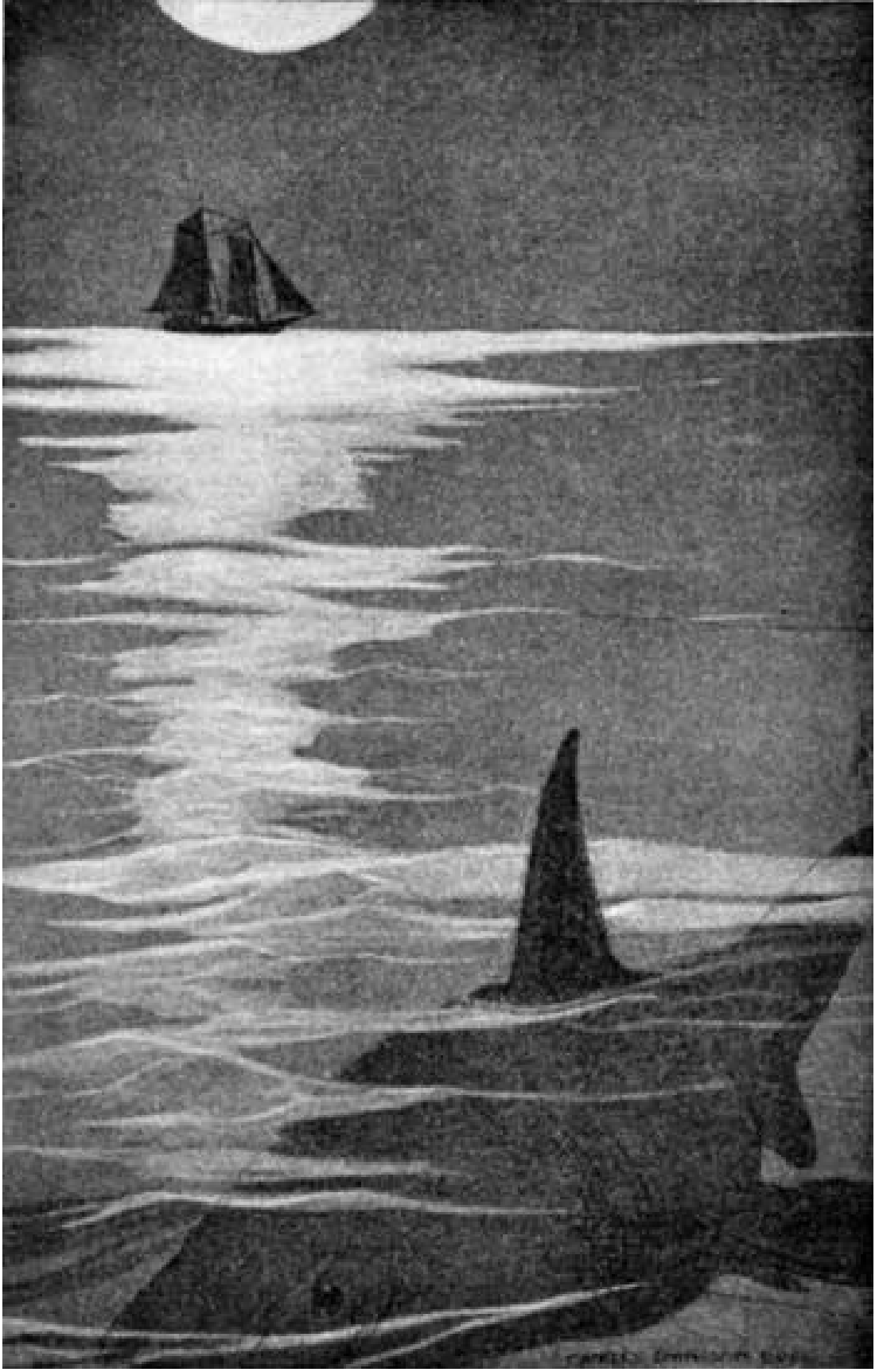
shirt and waved it wildly, on the chance that some one on the steamer might at that moment have a telescope pointed in his direction. The steamer went its way. Mahoney put on his shirt again, and wished he had not lost his hat. He had a handkerchief, however, and this he wound upon the top of his head like a turban. By wetting it frequently he kept his head and neck cool. As the morning wore on, no fewer than five sails appeared on the horizon, but none came near enough even to excite a thrill of hope. Since there was nothing better to do, Mahoney was wise enough to keep as still as possible, watching the strange life that went on beneath his refuge, and splashing water over himself from time to time that his skin might absorb some of the liquid, and so the dreaded torment of thirst be a little postponed.

The blazing sun dragged slowly past the zenith, indifferent to Mahoney's maledictions. Along in the afternoon a three-masted schooner hove in sight. There was not enough wind, now, to ruffle the tops of the swells; but there was some breeze up aloft, apparently, and the schooner, with all her canvas spread, was catching it, for she moved along at a brisk pace. Her course brought her so near that Mahoney tore off his shirt in trembling anxiety and waved it at arm's length, jumping as high as he could in the struggle to make himself conspicuous. Finding this fruitless, he then tied the shirt to the sleeves of his white duck coat, making a long streamer, which he thought the lookout could not fail to see. Notwithstanding all this frantic effort the schooner sailed on unheeding. From its decks the waving white streamer, if seen at all, would have looked like nothing more than an agitated streak of foam. But to Mahoney it seemed that he was being wantonly and brutally ignored. With a pang he realized that his excitement and his effort had accomplished but one thing. They had brought on the thirst! His throat was parching. He had an impulse to break out into a volley of hysterical curses against the retreating ship. But his self-respect withheld him. Leaning over the bulwarks, he murmured to the great green prowling shape of his submarine jailer:

"You're no worse than lots of men, you ain't, damn you!"

As if in answer to this equivocal compliment the shark sailed in to within a little more than arm's length of the bulwark, and looked up at Mahoney with cold, malignant eyes. Mahoney kicked at him hysterically, then turned away and drenched himself where the little waves ran up shallow over the slope of the deck. The cool of the water on his skin, particularly on his throat and wrists, did actually, though slightly, ease his thirst.

The night fell windless and clear; and for a time, so black were the shifting reflections on the swells, so confusing the phosphorescent gleams that shot up through the waters, that Mahoney could no longer see the stealthy prowling of the great black fin. Lashing himself to the bulwark by the sleeves of his shirt, he snatched an hour or two of troubled sleep. Once he woke with a shock of disappointment from a dream that the bottom had fallen out of a jug of water which he was just raising to his lips. Again he started up shouting, and struggling fiercely with the bonds that held him safely to the bulwark. He had dreamed that a glittering white steam-yacht was speeding close past his refuge,—so close that he had to look up at her rail,—yet the people on her deck most unaccountably failing to see him. From this waking he fell back weak and hopeless, and it was some minutes before he could get his nerves under their wonted cool control. He had no longer any desire for sleep, so he devoted himself again to soaking his wrists in the water and letting the lambent phosphorescence stream through his fingers.



"ONLY THAT SHARP BLACK FIN, THAT PROWLED AND PROWLED, KEPT ALWAYS IN SIGHT"

At last the moon rose over the waste of sea. Across the shimmering silver pathway of its light sailed a far-off ship, small and black.

Mahoney gazed at it with longing. An hour or two later another ship crossed the radiant pathway. But none came near the wreck. Only that sharp black fin, that prowled and prowled, kept always in sight, always near, till Mahoney began to wonder if it were really possible that the tireless monster would get him in the end. He registered a vow that if he should find himself growing delirious with thirst he would lash himself so securely to the bulwark that, come what might, the shark should never get his body. Comforted by this resolve, and the torment of his thirst mitigated a trifle by a drenching in the brine, Mahoney fell asleep again, and did not wake till the sun was streaming savagely on his face.

Untying himself from the bulwark, Mahoney stared about him wildly. A tall-masted brig, with royal and topgallant sails drawing full, was retreating in the distance. Apparently, it had passed not far from the wreck. Mahoney cursed himself wildly for having allowed himself to fall asleep. This had been perhaps, his one chance. No other sail was in sight. There was nothing but a wisp of smoke on the horizon, betraying the passage of an unseen steamer. Mahoney found that he was babbling to himself about it, and the realization shocked him. He shook himself, pulled his courage and his nerve together sharply, then took off his clothes and splashed himself with water from head to foot. It was certain that his thirsty skin must absorb a good share of the liquid so generously applied to it; and thus assuring himself, his thirst became, or seemed to become less intolerable. When he had dressed again,—leaving off his shirt, which he kept tied to the bulwark ready for instant use,—he leaned over and peered down into the smooth water to look for the shark.

Grim and spectral, the great shape was just in sight, rising with strange indolence toward the surface. Evidently, some good-sized victim had just been devoured. The shark came to rest within a few inches of the surface, where the sun could warm its rough back through the thin barrier of the water. There it lay, apparently basking,

with the content of one that has well dined. The complacent malignity of its eyes, which seemed to meet the man's eyes with a peculiarly confident menace, filled Mahoney with rage. He tore savagely at the bulwarks, in a foolish attempt to provide himself with a missile.

In the midst of this futile effort, Mahoney chanced to drop his glance into the depths. There he caught sight of something that arrested him, making him forget for the moment even the tortures of his thirst. In the deepest green, at the very confines of his vision, a gigantic shape came faintly into view. It stirred, and grew more distinct. Motionless he peered down upon it, striving to make out what it was. His sea lore, more abundant than exact, did not inform him as to whether or not the shark had any enemies to fear; but his imagination, always finding free play in the mysteries of the deep sea, was hospitably ready for any marvel. With fantastic expectancy he watched the sinister form of the strange creature, as it slowly, and stealthily floated upward.

Presently he recognized it, having caught glimpse of its like once before in a deep lagoon of the Ladrones. It was not altogether dissimilar to the great shark basking above it, but slenderer in build, and with a pair of curious lateral fins outspread like broad, blunt wings. The most conspicuous difference was in its head, which was broad and blunt like the fins, and armed with a kind of two-edged saw, perhaps eight inches in width, projecting from its snout to a length of about four feet. The tip of the saw looked as if it had been chopped off square. Down both edges ran a series of keen, raking teeth. It was the mysterious and dreadful sawfish, perpetrator of fabulous horrors.

Mahoney was afraid to move a muscle, lest he should arouse the shark and put it on its guard. The eyes of the stranger stared up with a dead coldness at the bulk of the sleeping monster on the surface. More rapidly now, but still almost without movement of fin or tail, the ominous form rose through the transparent flood, till Mahoney could

fairly count the teeth on its awkward-looking but hideous weapon. Directly beneath the shark the stranger came, till at last there was no more than the space of a few feet between the two giant shapes. And still the shark slumbered. Mahoney held his breath. Then the sawfish rolled over on its side, turning one edge of the saw toward the surface. For an instant it hung so, poised and still. Then the fins and flukes heaved together, the long bulk shot forward and upward, and the living saw cut straight across the belly of the shark, deeply and cleanly, under the urge of that tremendous thrust.

"DIRECTLY BENEATH THE SHARK THE STRANGER CAME."

Mahoney cried out, shuddering at the horrible and unexpected sight. The shark was completely disembowelled. With a gigantic convulsion it sprang almost clear of the water, which was instantly dyed with

blood. Mahoney now looked for a battle of Titans to follow. But in truth the battle was already over. The victim made no attempt at retaliation. It did not even seem to see its foe, or to know what had stricken it. For a few seconds it lashed the surface convulsively. Then it dived, plunging straight downward to die unseen in some rayless cavern of the deeps.

With a leisurely zest which turned Mahoney sick, the monster guzzled its meal, then swam up and nosed inquiringly along the fringe of barnacles. Nothing there seeming to interest him, he turned with a disdainful sweep of his huge flukes and bored his way slowly downwards toward the unknown deep whence he had so mysteriously come. Unstirring, held fast as if in a hideous dream, Mahoney watched the dull gray-black form grow green, and spectral, and faint till at last it vanished. For a brief space he continued to stare after it, picturing it in his fevered imagination when it had sunk far beyond any reach of sight. At last, as if tearing himself free from a horrid spell, he drew a long breath and lifted his eyes to the horizon.

There, in full view, but too far away to notice such a speck among the waves as Mahoney on his bit of wreck, was a small freight-boat, steaming past at a leisurely pace. Mahoney was himself in an instant. He realized that the sawfish had freed him from his dreadful jailer. With his knife between his teeth he dived beneath the upturned sloop and fell to cutting ropes and lashings with a cool but savage haste. In half a minute he reappeared, gasping, but not discouraged. After two or three deep breaths he dived again, and this time when he came up, he brought the long slender pole of the gaff with him. With frantic eagerness he hoisted the white pennon of his shirt and coat, thanking Heaven that the gaff was so long. He was about to lash the pole to the bulwarks with his belt, when he remembered that there was not wind enough to run out the signal. Lifting it in both hands as high as he could, he waved the flag wildly over his head in great arcs and sudden violent dips. Would the lookout on the steamer see? Or seeing, would

he understand? Mahoney felt his strength suddenly failing, as a wave of despair sucked up at his heart. It was all he could do to keep the signal moving. Then, at last, he saw that the long line of the steamer's broadside was shortening. Yes,—she was coming, she was coming. Tremblingly, with fingers that fumbled, he lashed the staff to the bulwark, and sank panting upon the deck.

A Stranger to the Wild

S the vessel, a big three-masted schooner, struck again and lurched forward, grinding heavily, she cleared the reef by somewhat more than half her length. Then her back broke. The massive swells, pounding upon her from the rear, overwhelmed her stern and crushed it down inescapably upon the rock; and her forward half, hanging in ten fathoms, began to settle sickeningly into the loud hiss and chaos. Around the reef, around the doomed schooner, the lead-coloured fog hung thick, impenetrable at half a ship's length. Her crew, cool, swift, ready,—they were Gaspé and New Brunswick fishermen, for the most part,—kept grim silence, and took the sharp orders that came to them like gunshots through the din. The boats were cleared away forward, where the settling of the bow gave some poor shelter.

At this moment the fog lifted, vanishing swiftly like a breath from the face of a mirror. Straight ahead, not two miles away, loomed a high, black, menacing shore—black, scarred rock, with black woods along its crest and a sharp, white line of surf shuddering along its base. Between that shore and the shattered schooner lay many other reefs, whereon the swells boiled white and broke in dull thunder; but off to the southward was clear water, and safety for the boats. At a glance the captain recognized the land as a cape on the south coast of the Gaspé peninsula, so far from her course had the doomed schooner been driven. Five minutes more, and the loaded boats, hurled up from the seething caldron behind the reef, swung out triumphantly on a long, oil-dark swell, and gained the comparative safety of the open. Hardly had they done so when the broken bow of the schooner, with a final rending of timbers, settled in what seemed like a sudden hurry, pitched nose downward into the smother, and sank with a huge, startling sigh. The rear half of the hull was left lodged upon the reef, a kind of gaping cavern, with the surf plunging over it in cataracts, and a mad mob of boxes, bales, and wine-casks tumbling out from its black depths.

Presently the torrent ceased. Then, in the yawning gloom, appeared the head and fore-quarters of a white horse, mane streaming, eyes

starting with frantic terror at the terrific scene that met them. The vision sank back instantly into the darkness. A moment later a vast surge, mightier than any which had gone before, engulfed the reef. Its gigantic front lifted the remnant of the wreck half-way across the barrier, tipping it forward, and letting it down with a final shattering crash; and the white horse, hurled violently forth, sank deep into the tumult behind the reef.

The schooner which had fallen on such sudden doom among the St. Lawrence reefs had sailed from Oporto with a cargo, chiefly wine, for Quebec. Driven far south of her course by a terrific northeaster roaring down from Labrador, she had run into a fog as the wind fell, and been swept to her fate in the grip of an unknown tide-drift. On board, as it chanced, travelling as an honoured passenger, was a finely bred, white Spanish stallion of Barb descent, who had been shipped to Canada by one of the heads of the great house of Robin, those fishing-princes of Gaspé. When the vessel struck, and it was seen that her fate was imminent and inevitable, the captain had loosed the beautiful stallion from his stall, that at the last he might at least have a chance to fight his own fight for life. And so it came about that, partly through his own agile alertness, partly by the singular favour of fortune, he had avoided getting his slim legs broken in the hideous upheaval and confusion of the wreck.

"HE STRUCK OUT DESPERATELY, AND SOON CLEARED THE TURMOIL OF THE BREAKERS."

When the white stallion came to the surface, snorting with terror and blowing the salt from his wide nostrils, he struck out desperately, and soon cleared the turmoil of the breakers. Over the vast, smooth swells he swam easily, his graceful, high head out of water. But at first, in his bewilderment and panic, he swam straight seaward. In a few moments, however, as he saw that he seemed to be overcoming disaster very well, his wits returned, and the nerve of his breeding came to his aid. Keeping on the crest of a roller, he surveyed the situation keenly, observed the land, and noted the maze of reefs that tore the leaden surges into tumult. Instead of heading directly shoreward, therefore,—for every boiling whiteness smote him with horror,—he shaped his course in on a long slant, where the way seemed clear.

Once well south of the loud herd of reefs, he swam straight inshore, until the raving and white convulsion of the surf along the base of the cliff again struck terror into his heart; and again he bore away

southward, at a distance of about three hundred yards outside the breakers. Strong, tough-sinewed, and endowed with the unfailing wind of his far-off desert ancestors, he was not aware of any fatigue from his long swim. Presently, rounding a point of rock which thrust a low spur out into the surges, he came into a sheltered cove where there was no surf. The long waves rolled on past the point, while in the cove there was only a measured, moderate rise and fall of the gray water, like a quiet breathing, and only a gentle back-wash fringed the black-stoned, weedy beach with foam. At the head of the cove a shallow stream, running down through a narrow valley, emptied itself between two little red sand-spits.

Close beside the stream the white stallion came ashore. As soon as his feet were quite clear of the uppermost fringe of foam, as soon as he stood on ground that was not only firm, but dry, he shook himself violently, tossed his fine head with a whinny of exultation, and turned a long look of hate and defiance upon the element from which he had just made his escape. Then at a determined trot he set off up the valley, eager to leave all sight and sound of the sea as far as possible behind him.

Reared as he had been on the windy and arid plateau of Northern Spain, the wanderer was filled with great loneliness in these dark woods of fir and spruce. An occasional maple in its blaze of autumn scarlet, or a clump of white birch in shimmering, aërial gold, seen unexpectedly upon the heavy-shadowed green, startled him like a sudden noise. Nevertheless, strange though they were, they were trees, and so not altogether alien to his memory. And the brook, with its eddying pools and brawling, shallow cascades, that seemed to him a familiar, kindly thing. It was only the sea that he really feared and hated. So long as he was sure he was putting the huge surges and loud reefs farther and farther behind him, he felt a certain measure of content as he pushed onward deeper and deeper into the serried gloom and silence of the spruce woods. At last, coming to a little patch of brook-side meadow where the grass kept short and sweet and green even at this late season, he stopped his flight, and fell to pasturing.

Late in the afternoon, the even gray mass of cloud which for days had

veiled the sky thinned away and scattered, showing the clear blue of the north. The sun, near setting, sent long rays of cheerful light down the narrow valley, bringing out warm, golden bronzes in the massive, dull green of the fir and spruce and hemlock, and striking sharp flame on the surfaces of the smooth pools. Elated by the sudden brightness, the white stallion resumed his journey at a gallop, straight toward the sunset, his long mane and tail, now dry, streaming out on the light afternoon breeze that drew down between the hills. He kept on up the valley till the sun went down, and then, in the swiftly deepening twilight, came to a little grassy point backed by a steep rock. Here where the rippling of the water enclosed him on three sides, and the rock, with a thick mass of hemlocks, surmounting it, shut him in on the fourth, he felt more secure, less desolate, than when surrounded by the endless corridors of the forest; and close to the foot of the rock he lay down, facing the mysterious gloom of the trees across the stream.

Just as he was settling himself, a strange voice, hollow yet muffled, cried across the open space "*Hoo-hoo, hoo-hoo, woo-hoo-hoo!*" and he bounded to his feet, every nerve on the alert. He had never in his life before heard the voice of the great horned owl, and his apprehensive wonder was excusable. Again and yet again came the hollow call out of the deep dark of the banked woods opposite. As he stood listening tensely, eyes and nostrils wide, a bat flitted past his ears, and he jumped half around, with a startled snort. The ominous sound, however, was not repeated, and in a couple of minutes he lay down again, still keeping watchful eyes upon the dark mass across the stream. Then, at last, a broad-winged bird, taking shape softly above the open, as noiseless as a gigantic moth, floated over him, and looked down upon him under his rock with round, palely luminous eyes. By some quick intuition he knew that this visitor was the source of the mysterious call. It was only a bird, after all, and no great thing in comparison with the eagles of his own Pyrenean heights. His apprehensions vanished, and he settled himself to sleep.

Worn out with days and nights of strain and terror, the exile slept soundly. Soon, under the crisp autumn starlight, a red fox crept down circumspectly to hunt mice in the tangled dry grasses of the point. At sight of the strange white form sleeping carelessly at the foot of the rock he bounded back into cover, startled quite out of his philosophic

composure. He had never before seen any such being as that; and the smell, too, was mysterious and hostile to his wrinkling fastidious nostrils. Having eyed the newcomer for some time from his hiding-place under the branches, he crept around the rock and surveyed him stealthily from the other side. Finding no enlightenment, or immediate prospect of it, he again drew back, and made a careful investigation of the stranger's tracks, which were quite unlike the tracks of any creature he knew. Finally he made up his mind that he must confine his hunting to the immediate neighbourhood, keeping the stranger under surveillance till he could find out more about him.

Soon after the fox's going a tuft-eared lynx came out on the top of the rock, and with round, bright, cruel eyes glared down upon the grassy point, half-hoping to see some rabbits playing there. Instead, she saw the dim white bulk of the sleeping stallion. In her astonishment at this unheard-of apparition, her eyes grew wider and whiter than before, her hair stood up along her back, her absurd little stub of a tail fluffed out to a fussy pompon, and she uttered a hasty, spitting growl as she drew back into the shelter of the hemlocks. In the dreaming ears of the sleeper this angry sound was only a growl of the seas which had for days been clamouring about the gloom of his stall on the ship. It disturbed him not at all.

At about two o'clock in the morning, at that mystic hour when Nature seems to send a message to all her animate children, preparing them for the advent of dawn, the white stallion got up, shook himself, stepped softly down to the brook's edge for a drink, and then fell to cropping the grass wherever it remained green. The forest, though to a careless ear it might have seemed as silent as before, had in reality stirred to a sudden, ephemeral life. Far off, from some high rock, a she-fox barked sharply. Faint, muffled chirps from the thick bushes told of junkos and chickadees waking up to see if all was well with the world. The mice set up a scurrying in the grass. And presently a high-antlered buck stepped out of the shadows and started across the open toward the brook.

The dark buck, himself a moving shadow, saw the stallion first, and stopped with a loud snort of astonishment and defiance. The stallion wheeled about, eyed the intruder for a moment doubtfully, then trotted

up with a whinny of pleased interrogation. He had no dread of the antlered visitor, but rather a hope of companionship in the vast and overpowering loneliness of the alien night.

The buck, however, was in anything but a friendly mood. His veins aflame with the arrogant pugnacity of the rutting season, he saw in the white stranger only a possible rival, and grew hot with rage at his approach. With an impatient stamping of his slim fore hoofs, he gave challenge. But to the stallion this was an unknown language. Innocently he came up, his nose stretched out in question, till he was within a few feet of the motionless buck. Then, to his astonishment, the latter bounced suddenly aside like a ball, stood straight up on his hind legs, and struck at him like lightning with those keen-edged, slim fore hoofs. It was a savage assault, and two long, red furrows—one longer and deeper than the other—appeared on the stallion's silky, white flank.

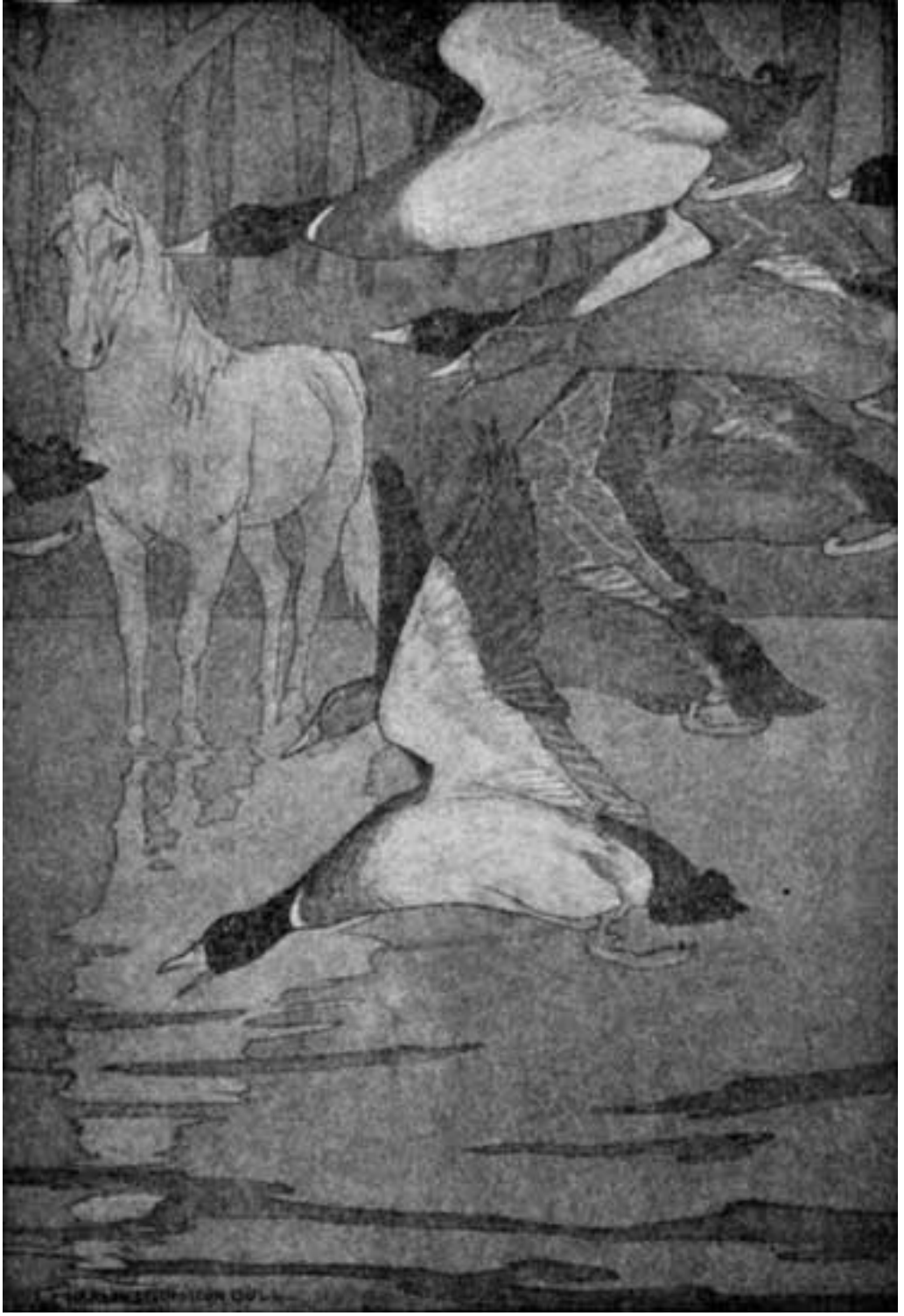
In that instant the wanderer's friendliness vanished, and an avenging fury took its place. His confidence had been cruelly betrayed. With a harsh squeal, his mouth wide open and lips drawn back from his formidable teeth, he sprang at his assailant. But the buck had no vain idea of standing up against this whirlwind of wrath which he had evoked. He bounded aside, lightly but hurriedly, and watched for an opportunity to repeat his attack.

The stallion, however, was not to be caught again; and the dashing ferocity of his rushes kept his adversary ceaselessly on the move, bounding into the air and leaping aside to avoid those disastrous teeth. The buck was awaiting what he felt sure would come, the chance to strike again; and his confidence in his own supreme agility kept him from any apprehension as to the outcome of the fight.

But the buck's great weakness lay in his ignorance, his insufficient knowledge of the game he was playing. He had no idea that his rushing white antagonist had any other tactics at command. When he gave way, therefore, he went just far enough to escape the stallion's teeth and battering fore feet. The stallion, on the other hand, soon realized the futility of his present method of attack against so nimble an adversary. On his next rush, therefore, just as the buck bounced aside, he wheeled in a short half-circle, and lashed out high and far

with his steel-shod heels. The buck was just within the most deadly range of the blow. He caught the terrific impact on the base of the neck and the forward point of the shoulder, and went down as if an explosive bullet had struck him. Before he could even stir to rise, the stallion was upon him, trampling, battering, squealing, biting madly; and the fight was done. When the wanderer had spent his vengeance, and paused, snorting and wild-eyed, to take breath, he looked down upon a mangled shape that no longer struggled or stirred or even breathed. Then the last of his righteous fury faded out. The sight and smell of the blood sickened him, and in a kind of terror he turned away. For a few hesitating moments he stared about his little retreat and then, finding it had grown hateful to him, he forsook it, and pushed onward up the edge of the stream, between the black, impending walls of the forest.

About daybreak he came out on the flat, marshy shores of a shrunken lake, the unstirred waters of which gleamed violet and pale-gold beneath the twisting coils and drifting plumes of white vapour. All around the lake stood the grim, serried lines of the firs, under a sky of palpitating opal. The marshes, in their autumn colouring of burnt gold and pinky olive, with here and there a little patch of enduring emerald, caught the wanderer's fancy with a faint reminder of home. Here was pasture, here was sweet water, here was room to get away from the oppressive mystery of the woods. He halted to rest and recover himself; and in the clear, tonic air, so cold that every morning the edges of the lake were crisped with ice, the aching red gashes on his flank speedily healed.



"THE SOUTHWARD JOURNEYING DUCKS, WHICH WOULD DROP WITH LOUD QUACKING AND SPLASHING INTO THE SHALLOWS"

He had been at the lake about ten days, and was beginning to grow restlessly impatient of the unchanging solitude, before anything new took place. A vividly conspicuous object in his gleaming whiteness as he roamed the marshes, pasturing or galloping up and down the shore with streaming mane and tail, he had been seen and watched and wondered at by all the wild kindreds who had their habitations in

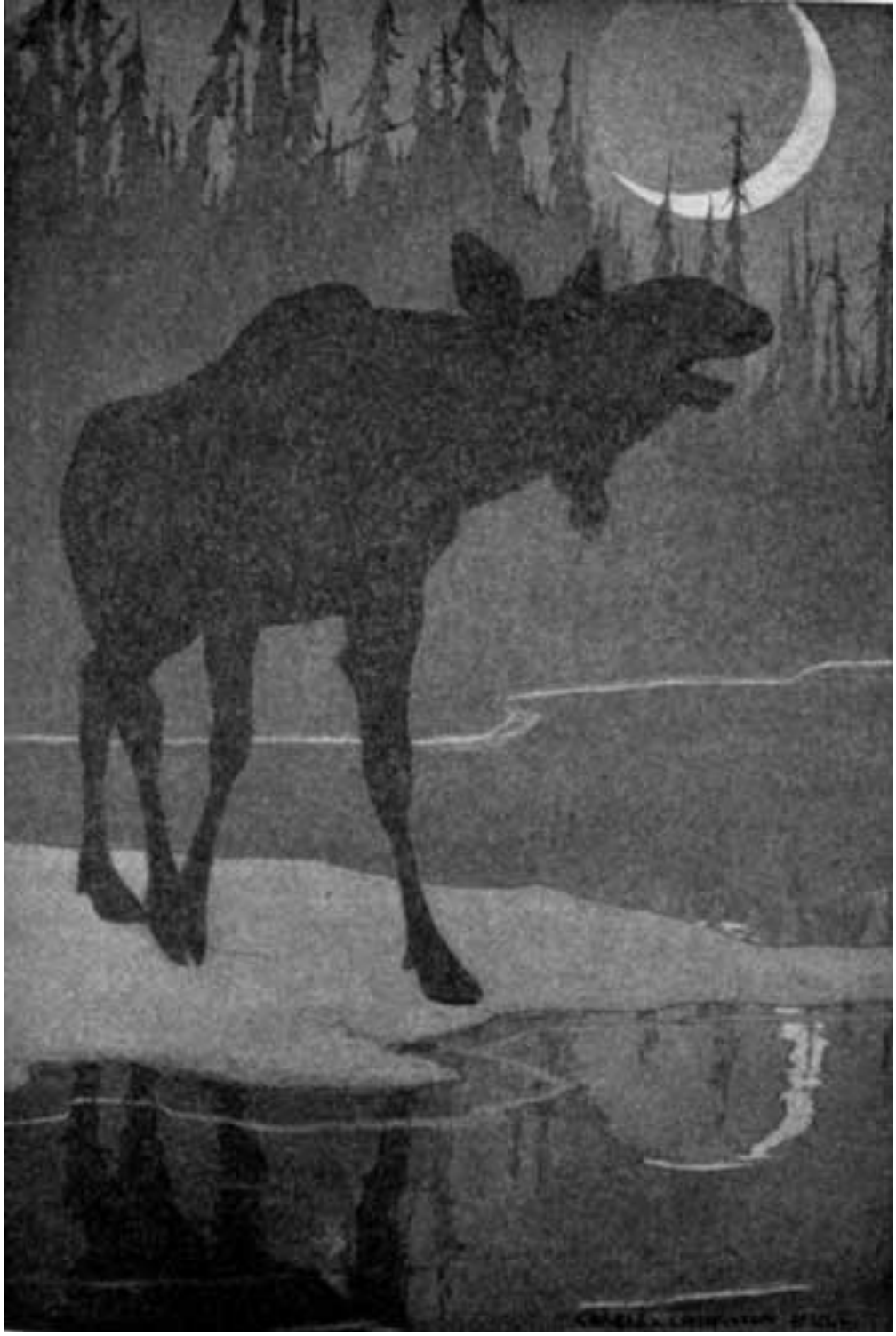
the woods about the lake. But they had all kept carefully out of his sight, regarding him with no less terror than wonder; and he imagined himself utterly alone, except for the fish-hawks, and the southward journeying ducks, which would drop with loud quacking and splashing into the shallows after sunset, and the owls, the sombre hooting of which disturbed him every night. Several times, too, from the extreme head of the lake he heard a discordant call, a great braying bellow, which puzzled him, and brought him instantly to his feet by a note of challenge in it; but the issuer of this hoarse defiance never revealed himself. Sometimes he heard a similar call, with a difference—a longer, less harshly blatant cry, the under note of which was one of appeal rather than of challenge. Over both he puzzled in vain; for the moose, bulls and cows alike, had no wish to try the qualities of the great white stranger who seemed to have usurped the lordship of the lake.

At last, one violet evening in the close of the sunset, as he stood fetlock-deep in the chill water, drinking, a light sound of many feet caught his alert ear. Lifting his head quickly, he saw a herd of strange-looking, heavy-antlered, whitish-brown deer emerging in long line from the woods and crossing the open toward the foot of the lake. The leader of the caribou herd, a massive bull, nearly white, with antlers almost equal to those of a moose, returned the stallion's inquiring stare with a glance of mild curiosity, but did not halt an instant. It was plain that he considered his business urgent; for the caribou, as a rule, are nothing if not curious when confronted by any strange sight. But at present the whole herd, which journeyed, in the main, in single file, seemed to be in a kind of orderly haste. They turned questioning eyes upon the white stallion as they passed, then looked away indifferently, intent only upon following their leader on his quest. The stallion stood watching, his head high and his nostrils wide, till the very last of the herd had disappeared into the woods across the lake. Then the loneliness of his spacious pasture all at once quite overwhelmed him. He did not want the company of the caribou, by any means, or he might have followed them as they turned their backs toward the sunset; but it was the dwellings of men he wanted, the human hand on his mane, the provendered stall, the voice of kindly command, and the fellowship of his kindred of the uncleft hoof. In some way he had got it into his head that men might be found most

readily by travelling toward the southwest. Toward the head of the lake, therefore, and just a little south of the sunset's deepest glow, he now took his way. He was done with the lake and the empty marshes.

From the head of the lake he followed up a narrow still-water for perhaps half a mile, crashing his way through a difficult tangle of fallen, rotting trunks and dense underbrush, till he came out upon another and much smaller lake, very different from the one he had just left. Here were no meadowy margins; but the shores were steep and thick-wooded to the water's edge. Diagonally thrust out across the outlet, and about a hundred yards above it, ran a low, bare spit of white sand, evidently covered at high water. Over the black line of the woods hung a yellow crescent moon, only a few nights old and near setting.

Coming suddenly from the difficult gloom of the woods, where the noise of his own movements kept his senses occupied to the exclusion of all else, the wanderer stopped and stood quite still for a long time under the shadow of a thick hemlock, investigating this new world with ear and eye and nostril. Presently, a few hundred yards around the lake shore, to his left, almost opposite the jutting sand-spit, arose a noisy crashing and thrashing of the bushes. As he listened in wonder, his ears erect and eagerly interrogative, the noise stopped, and again the intense silence settled down upon the forest. A minute or two later a big, high-shouldered, shambling, hornless creature came out upon the sand-spit, stood blackly silhouetted against the moonlight, stretched its ungainly neck, and sent across the water that harsh, bleating cry of appeal which he had been hearing night after night. It was the cow moose calling for her mate. And in almost instant answer arose again that great crashing among the underbrush on the opposite shore.



"IT WAS THE COW MOOSE CALLING FOR HER MATE."

With a certain nervousness added to his curiosity, the white stallion listened as the crashing noise drew near. At the same time something in his blood began to tingle with the lust of combat. There was menace in the approaching sounds, and his courage arose to meet it. All at once, within about fifty yards of him, and just across the outlet, the noise ceased absolutely. For perhaps ten minutes there was not a sound,—not the snap of a twig or the splash of a ripple,—except that twice again came the call of the solitary cow standing out

against the moon. Then, so suddenly that he gave an involuntary snort of amazement at the apparition, the wanderer grew aware of a tall, black bulk with enormous antlers which took shape among the undergrowth not ten paces distant.

The wanderer's mane rose along his arched neck, his lips drew back savagely over his great white teeth, fire flamed into his eyes, and for a score of seconds he stared into the wicked, little, gleaming eyes of the bull moose. He was eager for the fight, but waiting for the enemy to begin. Then, as noiselessly and miraculously as he had come, the great moose disappeared, simply fading into the darkness, and leaving the stallion all a-tremble with apprehension. For some minutes he peered anxiously into every black thicket within reach of his eyes, expecting a rushing assault from some unexpected quarter. Then, glancing out again across the lake, he saw that the cow had vanished from the moonlit point. Bewildered, and in the grasp of an inexplicable trepidation, he waded out into the lake belly-deep, skirted around the south shore, climbed the steep slope, and plunged straight into the dark of the woods. His impulse was to get away at once from the mysteries of that little, lonely lake.

The deep woods, of course, for him were just as lonely as the lake, for his heedless trampling and conspicuous colouring made a solitude all about him as he went. At last, however, he stumbled upon a trail. This he adopted gladly as his path, for it led away from the lake and in a direction which his whim had elected to follow.

Moving now on the deep turf, with little sound save the occasional swish of branches that brushed his flanks, he began to realize that the woods were not as empty as he had thought. On each side, in the soft dark, he heard little squeaks and rustlings and scurryings. Rabbits went bounding across the trail, just under his nose. Once a fox trotted ahead of him, looking back coolly at the great, white stranger. Once a small, stripe-backed animal passed leisurely before him, and a whiff of pungent smell annoyed his sensitive nose. Wide wings winnowed over him now and then, making him jump nervously; and once a pouncing sound, followed by a snarl, a squeal, and a scuffle, moved him to so keen an excitement that he swerved a few steps from the trail in his anxiety to see what it was all about. He failed to see

anything, however, and after much stumbling was relieved to get back to the easy trail again. With all these unusual interests the miles and the hours seemed short to him; and when the gray of dawn came filtering down among the trees, he saw before him a clearing with two low-roofed cabins in the middle of it. Wild with delight at this evidence of man's presence, he neighed shrilly, and tore, up to the door of the nearest cabin at full gallop, his hoofs clattering on the old chips which strewed the open.

To his bitter disappointment, he found the cabin, which was simply an old lumber-camp, deserted. The door being ajar, he nosed it open and entered. The damp, cheerless interior, with no furnishing but a rusty stove, a long bench hewn from a log, and a tier of bunks along one side, disheartened him. The smell of human occupation still lingered about the bunks, but all else savoured of desertion and decay. With drooping head he emerged, and crossed over to the log stable. That horses had occupied it once, though not recently, was plain to him through various unmistakable signs; but it was more in the hope of sniffing the scent of his own kind than from any expectation of finding the stable occupied that he poked his nose in through the open doorway.

It was no scent of horses, however, which now greeted his startled nostrils. It was a scent quite unfamiliar to him, but one which, nevertheless, filled him with instinctive apprehension. At the first whiff of it he started back. Then, impelled by his curiosity, he again looked in, peering into the gloom. The next instant he was aware of a huge black shape leaping straight at him. Springing back with a loud snort, he wheeled like lightning, and lashed out madly with his heels.

The bear caught the blow full in the ribs, and staggered against the door-post with a loud, grunting cough, while the stallion trotted off some twenty yards across the chips and paused, wondering. The blow, in all probability, had broken several of the bear's ribs, but without greatly impairing his capacity for a fight; and now, in a blind rage, he rushed again upon the intruder who had dealt him so rude a buffet. The stallion, however, was in no fighting mood. Depressed as he was by the desolation of the cabin, and daunted by the mysterious character of this attack from the dark of the stable, he was now like a

child frightened of ghosts. Not the bear alone, but the whole place, terrified him. Away he went at full gallop across the clearing, by good fortune struck the continuation of the loggers' road, and plunged onward into the shadowy forest.

For a couple of miles he ran, then he slowed down to a trot, and at last dropped into a leisurely walk. This trail was much broader and clearer than the one which had led him to the camp, and a short, sweet grass grew along it, so that he pastured comfortably without much loss of time. The spirit of his quest, however, was now so strong upon him that he would not rest after feeding. Mile after mile he pressed on, till the sun was high in the clear, blue heavens, and the shadows of the ancient firs were short and luminous. Then suddenly the woods broke away before him.

Far below he saw the blue sea sparkling. But it was not the beauty of the sea that held his eyes. From his very feet the road dropped down through open, half-cleared burnt lands, a stretch of rough pasture-fields, and a belt of sloping meadow, to a little white village clustering about an inlet. The clutter of roofs was homelike to his eyes, hungry with long loneliness; the little white church, with shining spire and cross, was very homelike. But nearer, in the very first pasture-field, just across the burnt land, was a sight that came yet nearer to his heart. There, in a corner of the crooked snake-fence, stood two bay mares and a foal, their heads over the fence as they gazed up the hill in his direction. Up went mane and tail, and loud and long he neighed to them his greeting. Their answer was a whinny of welcome, and down across the fields he dashed at a wild gallop that took no heed of fences. When, a little later in the day, a swarthy French-Canadian farmer came up from the village to lead his mares down to water, he was bewildered with delight to find himself the apparent master of a splendid white stallion, which insisted on claiming him, nosing him joyously, and following at his heels like a dog.

When the Logs Come Down

T was April, and the time of freshet, when

"Again the last thin ice had gone
To join the swinging sea."

After the ice was all away the river had risen rapidly, flooding the intervale meadows, till in some places the banks, deep under water, were marked only by the tops of the alder and willow bushes, and by a line of elms growing, apparently, in the middle of a lake. Behind these elms the water was as still as a lake; but in front of them it rushed in heavy swirls, swaying the alders and willows, and boiling with swish and gurgle around the resolutely opposing trunks.

Above the swollen flood of water,—the hurried retreat of the last snow from a thousand forest valleys converging around the river's far-off source,—washed softly the benign and illimitable flood of the April air. This air seemed to carry with reluctance a certain fluctuating chill, caught from the icy water. But in the main its burden was the breath of willows catkin and sprouting grass and the first shy bloom on the open edges of the uplands. It was the characteristic smell of the northern spring, tender and elusive, yet keenly penetrating. If gems had perfumes, just so might the opal smell.

Besides the fragrance and the faint chill, the air carried an April music, a confusion of delicate sounds that seemed striving to weave a tissue of light melody over the steady, muffled murmur of the freshet. In this melody the ear could differentiate certain notes,—the hum of bees and flies in the willow bloom, the staccato *chirr*, *chirr* of the blackbirds in the elm-tops, the vibrant yet liquid *kong-kla-lee* of the redwings in the alders, the intermittent ecstasy of a stray song-sparrow, the occasional long flute-call of a yellowhammer across the flood, and, once in awhile, a sudden clamour of crows, a jangle of irrelevant, broken chords. From time to time, as if at points in a great

rhythm too wide for the ear to grasp, all these sounds would cease for a second or two, leaving the murmur of the flood strangely conspicuous.

The colours of the world of freshet were as delicately thrilling as its scents and sounds. The veiled blue pallor of the sky and the milky, blue-gray pallor of the water served as neutral background to innumerable thin washes and stains of tint. Over the alders a bloom of lavender and faint russet, over the willows a lacing of pale yellow, over the maples a veiling of rose-pink, over the open patches on the uplands a mist that hinted of green, and over the further hills of the forest, broad, smoky smudges of indigo. Here and there, just above the reach of the freshet, a pine or spruce interrupted the picture emphatically with an intrusion of firm green-black.

Into this opalescent scene, some days before the freshet reached its height, the logs began to come down. In the upper country every tributary stream was pouring them out in shoals,—heavy, blind, butting, and blundering shoals,—to be carried by the great river down to the booms and saws above its mouth. Some, caught in eddies, were thrust aside up the bank to lie and slowly rot among the living trees. But most, darting and wallowing through mad rapids, or shooting falls, or whirling and circling dully down the more tranquil reaches of the tide, made shift to accomplish their voyage. They would blacken the broad river for acres at a time; and then again straggle along singly, or by twos and threes. It was a good run of logs and the scattered dwellers along the river forgave the unusual excesses of the freshet, because to them it was chiefly important that all the logs of the winter's chopping should be got out.

On a single log, at a most daunting distance from either shore, came voyaging a lonely and bedraggled little traveller. This particular red squirrel had been chattering gaily in the top of an old tree on the river-bank, when misfortune took him unawares. The tree was on a bluff just where a small but very turbulent and overswollen stream flowed in. The flood had stealthily undermined the bluff. Suddenly the squirrel had felt the tree sway ominously beneath him. He had leaped for safety, but too late! The whole bank had melted into the current. By great luck, the squirrel had managed to swim to a passing log.

Breathless and all but drowned, he had clambered upon it. Before he could recover his wits enough to make a venture for shore, the vehement lesser stream had swept his log clean out into mid-channel. Though a bold enough swimmer, he had seen that he could not face that boiling tide with any hope of success; so he had clung to his unstable refuge and waited upon fate.

"THE PLUCKY LITTLE ANIMAL JUMPED AS FAR AS HE

COULD."

For perhaps an hour the squirrel journeyed thus without incident or further adventure. Then, in a wide, comparatively sluggish reach of the river, some whimsical cross-current had borne his log over to the neighbourhood of a whole, voyaging fleet of brown timbers. Unable to see how far this group extended, the squirrel inferred that it might possibly afford him passage to the shore. With a tremendous leap he gained the nearest of the timber. Thence he went skipping joyously, now up river and now down, skirting wide spaces of clear water, and twice swimming open lanes too broad to jump, till he was not more than a hundred yards from the line of trees that marked the flooded bank. Some thirty feet beyond, and that much nearer safety, one more log floated alone. The plucky little animal jumped as far as he could, landed with a splash, and swam vigorously for this last log. He gained it, and was just dragging himself out upon it, when there was a rush and heavy break in the water, and a pair of big jaws snapped close behind him. An agonized spring saved him, and he clung flat, quivering, on the top of the log. But the hungry pickerel had captured nearly half his tail.

A minute or two later he had recovered from this shock; and thereupon he sat up and chattered shrill indignation, twitching defiantly the sore and bleeding stump. This outburst perhaps relieved his feelings a little; for apparently the red squirrel needs to give his emotions vent more than any other member of the wild kindreds. But he had learned a lesson. He would not again try swimming in a water which pickerel inhabited. Then, a little later, he learned another. A fish-hawk passed overhead. The fish-hawk would not have harmed him under any circumstances. But the squirrel thought of other hawks, less gentle-mannered; and he realized that the loud volubility which in the security of his native trees he might indulge would never do out here on his shelterless log. He stopped his complaints, crouched flat, and scanned the sky anxiously for sign of other hawks. He had suddenly realized that he was now naked to the eyes of all his enemies.

Presently a new terror came to sap his courage. A little way ahead the banks were high and the channel narrow; and the river, no longer

able to relieve the freshet strain by spreading itself over wide meadows, became a roaring rapid. The squirrel heard that terrifying roar. He noted how swiftly it was approaching. In a half-panic he stared about, almost ready to dare the pickerel and make a try for shore, rather than be carried through those rapids.

In this extremity of terror he saw what, at other times, would have frightened him almost as much as hawk or pickerel. A rowboat slowly drew near, picking its way through the logs. The one rower, a grizzled old river-man, was surging vigorously, to avoid being swept down into the thunderous narrows. But as he approached, he noticed the trembling squirrel on the log. In a flash he took in the situation. With a sheepish grin, as if ashamed of himself for troubling about a "blame squirrel," he thrust out the tip of an oar toward the log, with a sort of shy invitation.

The squirrel, fortunately for himself, was one of those animals which are sometimes open to a new idea. He did not trust the man, to be sure. But he trusted him more than he did the rapids ahead, and feared him less than he feared the pickerel. Promptly he skipped aboard the boat, and perched himself on the bow, as far away as possible from his rescuer. The man wasted no time on sentimentalizing, but pulled as hard as he could for shore. When near the bank, however, and out of the stress of the current, he permitted himself what he considered a piece of foolishness. He turned the boat about, and backed in till the stern touched land. He wanted to see what the squirrel, up there in the bow, was going to do about it.

The little animal made up his mind quickly. Scared but resolute, he darted along the gunwale. The rower, with both arms outspread, was directly in his way. He hesitated, gave a nervous chirrup, then launched himself high into the air. His little feet struck smartly on the top of the man's head. Then he was off up the bank as if hawk and pickerel and rapids were all after him together. A moment later from the thick top of a fir-tree came his shrill chatter of triumph and defiance.

"Sassy little varmint!" muttered the old river-man, looking up at him with indulgent eyes.

A Duel in the Deep

OUGH there was no wind, the wide surface of the estuary was curiously disturbed. In from the open sea came swiftly as it were a wedge of roughness, its edges lightly dancing, sparkling with blue-and-silver flashes. The strange disturbance kept on straight up the channel, leaving the placid shoals alongshore to shine unruffled in the low, level-glancing Arctic sun.

Down along the flat, interminable shore, picking his way watchfully among the ragged ice-cakes of the tempestuous spring, came a huge white bear. His small, snaky, cruel head was bent downwards, while his fierce little eyes peered among the tumbled ice blocks for possible dead fish. His long, loose-jointed body twisted sinuously as he moved—the only living creature to be seen up and down the level desolation of those bleak shores.

The white bear was an old male, restless, and of savage temper. Like many of his fellows among the older males, he had not been so fortunate as to slumber away the long, terrific, Arctic winter in the shelter of a snow-buried rock. All through the months of dark and tempest, of ghostly auroras and cold unspeakable, he had roamed the dead world and fought his fight with hunger. His craft, his strength, his fierce desperation in attack, had pulled him through. Lean and savage, he sniffed the oncoming of spring, and watched the ice go grinding out.

Presently his keen ears noted a faint sound, which seemed to blow in from the sea. As there was no wind, this was worthy of note. Lifting his black nose high above the ice-cakes, he sniffed and peered intently at the inrushing wedge of tumbled water. His uncertainty was not for long. The salmon were returning. This was the vanguard of the spring run.

For a few seconds the great white shape stood as if turned to stone, watching the radiant confusion. Here and there he saw a slender body flash forth for an instant, half its length above the sparkling water, as if striving to escape some unseen enemy. The school was making for the main channel, which ran between two low, naked islets of rock, perhaps half a mile apart. The nearest of these was about three hundred yards from the shore. As soon as the bear made sure that the salmon were taking this course, he galloped at top speed—a long, loose, shambling, but rapid pace—down along the shore till just abreast of the islet. Then he plunged in and swam for it, his sharp black muzzle and narrow white head cleaving the smooth flood with almost incredible swiftness, and throwing off an oily, trailing ripple on either side. When he reached the islet the front of the salmon school was still some forty or fifty paces distant. He crossed the rocks, slipped smoothly down into the water again, and waited for the shining turmoil to break upon him.

For some reason known only to the hosts of the salmon themselves, however, the shining turmoil swerved as it approached the islet, crowding over toward the other side of the channel. The bear's hungry little eyes blazed savagely at this. He imagined the hordes had taken alarm at his dread presence,—a natural imagining on his part, since he knew of nothing but the old bull walrus that dared ever await his approach. But as a matter of fact the eager myriads of the salmon, thrilling with life and vigour and the mating fire of spring, were no more conscious of the savage animal than if he had been a rock or an ice-floe. The joy of the incoming rush was in their splendid sinews, and the lure of the shallow, singing rapids in their veins. To that exultant host an enemy, however formidable, was but an incident. The exhaustless fertility of their race derided fate.

With a grunt the bear launched himself through the whitish flood. On the flanks of the flashing host he dived, swimming sinuously and with extraordinary swiftness like a seal. Rising gradually toward the surface, he struck this way and that, with wide jaws and armed fore paws, among the crowded ranks of the salmon. His object was to kill, kill, kill, before the opportunity passed by, in order that there should be many dead fish to drift ashore and be picked up at his leisure.

After a minute or two of this savage work, which turned the thronged tide crimson all about him, he came to the surface for breath. The upper ranks of the salmon were still flashing on every side, and half-leaping out of water within the very sweep of his deadly paw, heedless of his presence. His hunger being fierce upon him, he now seized a good-sized fish, bit its backbone through to put an end to its troublesome struggling, and devoured it as he swam along slowly with the host.

Suddenly, not a dozen feet ahead of his nose, a huge salmon seemed to be lifted horizontally almost clear of the water. It writhed and thrashed for a second in a sort of convulsion, then sank with a heavy swirl. The bear stared curiously. He had never seen anything like that before. The salmon had not jumped of its own accord, that was evident. It had apparently been held up from below, firmly and steadily sustained as it struggled, for that brief space of moments. To the wild creatures anything new, anything unknown, is always either interesting or terrifying. The white bear was unacquainted with terror, but he was interested instantly. He swam toward the spot where the salmon had sunk.

The next moment something still more strange arrested him. A little to one side of the spot where the salmon had behaved so curiously, a great sharp-pointed spike of yellow horn, massive and twisted, was thrust up about three feet above the water and instantly withdrawn. Blood clung thinly in the convolutions of the horn. It was a mysterious and menacing weapon. Filled with a curiosity that was now warming into wrath, the bear made for the spot. There was something like defiance in that sudden upthrust. Moreover, it seemed that some stranger was poaching on his fishing-grounds. The bear's wrath flamed into fury in a few seconds. Unable to see down into the disturbed and discoloured tide, he dived deep, to get below the salmon and the blood, and see what manner of rival it was with which he had to deal. Whatever it was, he was going to drive it off or kill it. He would share his salmon with no one.

Meanwhile, just beneath the lowermost ranks of the horde, a big, pallid-skinned, fish-like creature was swimming slowly this way and that. Shaped something like a porpoise, with a big bluff head and

tremendously powerful flukes, it belonged evidently to the great kinship of the whales. Its massive body was about fourteen feet in length. But the strange thing about it, setting it wide apart from all its cetacean kin, was a long, heavy, twisted horn or tusk, of yellow ivory, jutting straight out from its upper jaw to a length of about four feet. It was that most peculiar of all the whales, a narwhal.

From time to time this ominous shape would launch itself upward among the salmon, transfixing some of the largest fish with lightning thrusts of its tusk, and killing others by terrible, thrashing side-blows of the weapon. Sometimes it would open its great mouth and engulf the most convenient victim; but it did not seem ravenous. Its hunger was already all but glutted, and its purpose seemed to be, mainly, to kill, in order that food might still be abundant after the salmon had passed on up the river beyond his reach.

When the white bear, swimming under water outstretched like an otter, saw this threatening form, his veins ran fire. Darting downward, easily as a mink might have done, he struck the unsuspecting narwhal in the middle of the back just between the flippers. His mighty fore paws, armed with claws like knife-blades, tore two gaping wounds in the narwhal's hide, and the dark blood jetted forth. But the wounds went little below the blanket of blubber which enclosed the narwhal underneath his hide. Beyond the pain of those two tearing buffets, the great sea-beast was little the worse of them. With a surge of his tail he lunged forward, and turned furiously upon his assailant.

The bear, though rash in his arrogance and rage, was no mere headlong blunderer. Though he mistook the narwhal for some kind of gigantic seal, and therefore scorned him, he had not missed the possibilities of that long, menacing horn. He was upon his foe again in an instant, not giving him time to charge, and successfully planted another rending stroke which disabled the narwhal's right flipper. Then, however, finding that he could hold his breath no longer after such terrific exertion, he darted to the surface, and hurriedly refilled his lungs.

To regain his breath took him but a moment, and instantly aware of his peril while at the surface, he dived again to renew his attack. As he dived, either his own craft or some subtle forewarning led him to

twist sharply to one side. But for this, his fighting would have ended then and there, his heart split by the thrust of that giant tusk. As it was, the mad upward rush of the narwhal missed its aim. The bear felt a couple of salmon hurled in his face. Then the horn shot past his neck; and a black mass smote him full in the chest, with a force that knocked the wind out of him, and bore him, clawing and biting passionately, back to the surface. His blows, of course, were delivered blindly, but one struck home just above the narwhal's sinister little eye, wiping it out of existence.

As the bear got his head above water, he choked and gasped, swimming high for a few seconds in the struggle to recover his breath. Realizing now to the full how dangerous an adversary he had challenged, he knew that every second he remained at the surface was a deadly peril. But, at first, the breath would not return to his buffeted lungs. With his nose high in air he gave a longing look away across the tumult of the journeying host, across the tranquil white water beyond, to the low, desolate shore with its dirty ice-cakes. For the moment, he wished himself back there. Then, as he regained his breath, and his great, bellows-like lungs resumed their function, his courage and his fighting fury also returned. The red light of battle blazed up again in his eyes, and wheeling half-about with a violence that sent the water swirling and foaming from his mighty shoulders and hurled a score of salmon upon each other's backs, he dropped his head to dive once more into the fight.

The narwhal, for his part, had fared badly in that last encounter. With one eye blinded, his head badly clawed, and the tough cartilage about his blow-holes torn deeply by his adversary's teeth, he was bewildered for the moment. But he was not daunted. His sluggish blood only boiled to a blacker fury. Never before had he met anything like serious opposition. The colossal sperm-whale, undisputed lord of the ocean, never came into these cold northern waters; and the huge, blundering whalebone whales he despised. He had transfixed and slaughtered the helpless calves of this species under the very fins of their gigantic but timorous mothers. He had pierced seals, and even, once, a walrus. Terribly armed as he was, and swift, and powerful, he had never yielded way to any other inhabitant of his cold and glimmering world.

For a few moments of agitated confusion, flurried by the pain of his wounds, he swam straight ahead, just below the salmon. Then, recovering his wits, he turned in a rage and looked about, with his one remaining eye, for the bear. At first, unable immediately to readjust his vision, he could not locate him; but presently, staring up vindictively through the straight-swimming, blue and silver ranks of the journeying fish, he saw the big white form swimming at the surface some little distance away. Up through the thronged and swirling tide he darted on a long slant, straight and swift as a hungry trout rising to a May-fly.

As the bear, with lowered head and great haunches uplifted began his dive, he felt a terrible, grinding thrust in his left flank, and it seemed as if a rock from the floor of the channel rose up and smote him, half-lifting him from the water. The narwhal, his aim confused by the blinding of one eye, had again failed to strike true. The point of his tusk had caught the bear's flank on such a slant that it did not penetrate to any vital organ, but ran up, perhaps an inch below the hide, between the outermost curve of two of the upper ribs, and reappeared a little behind the shoulder. The tremendous force of that upward rush carried the great twisted horn right through to its very base.

Having delivered what he felt must be a fatal and final blow, the narwhal at once backed downward with powerful surges of his tail, trying to withdraw his horn. But now he found himself in a deadly trap. The bear, mad with pain, and held firmly, proceeded to enwrap his adversary's whole head in a frightful embrace. Slashing, tearing, ripping, with all four desperate paws at once, he was speedily shredding the narwhal's head to fragments. With mad thrashings the narwhal struggled to break loose, but in vain. Down he sank, till he lay upon the bottom, that destroying bulk still fixed upon his head. When he felt the solid ground beneath him he bent his mighty body like a bow, and sprung it, with a force that nothing could resist. His horn tore itself free, the bear was flung loose, and he lurched to one side with a violence that threw the swimming salmon overhead into confusion and sent great surges boiling to the surface. Then, blind, shattered, and jetting blood in torrents from his gaping throat, he settled upon the bottom, writhed feebly for a few minutes, and lay still.

"THEN, WITH THE LARGEST PRIZE IN HIS JAWS, HE SWAM SLOWLY TO THE ROCK."

The bear, plunging upward through the close ranks of the salmon, began to cough hoarsely as soon as he got his head above water. It was some moments before he could do more than keep himself afloat while he regained his breath. Then he began slowly swimming

round and round in a circle, still full of battle rage, but not yet able to control his lungs. At last, he felt equal to seeking a renewal of the fight. Once more he dived, expecting at any instant to feel again that grinding thrust, that resistless upward blow. Below the salmon throng he peered about through the glimmer. Far down, he made out the shape of his opponent, lying motionless on the bottom. Obviously, there was nothing more to be feared from that still bulk, which seemed to sway gently in the current. The victor returned to the surface.

"LAY DOWN IN SULLEN TRIUMPH TO LICK HIS WOUNDS."

Lifting his head high above the water, he scanned the whole empty, pallid world. No enemy, no possible rival, was to be seen. Weak as he was and weary, he killed two or three more of the ceaselessly passing salmon just to reassure himself. Then, with the largest prize in his jaws, he swam slowly to the rock, crawled ashore, and lay down in sullen triumph to lick his wounds.

The Little Tyrant of the Burrows

LONG the edge of the woodland he found the young, green turf of the pasture close and soft. As he paused for a moment with his long, trunk-like nose thrust into it, his fine sense could detect nothing but the cool tang of the grass-stems, the light pungency and sweetness of the damp earth below. With a savage impatience of movement he jerked himself a foot or more to one side, and again thrust his nose into the turf. Here he evidently detected something more to his taste than the sweetness of grass and earth, for he began to dig fiercely, biting the matted roots apart, and tearing up the soil with his powerful little fore paws. In a few seconds he dragged forth a fat, cream-coloured grub about an inch and a half in length, with a copper-coloured head. The grub twisted and lashed about, but was torn apart and eaten on the spot. The victor ate furiously, wrinkling his flexible snout away from his prey in a manner that gave him a peculiarly ferocious, snarling expression.

Nearly six inches in length, with a round, sturdy body, short tail, very short, sturdy legs, and fine fur of a clouded leaden gray, this fierce and implacable little forager might have been mistaken by the careless observer for an ordinary mole. But such a mistake on the part of any creature not larger than a ground-sparrow or wood-mouse or lizard would have resulted in instant doom; for this tiny beast, indomitable as a terrier and greedy for meat as a mink, was the mole-shrew.

Having devoured the fat grub, and finding his appetite still unappeased, the shrew at once resumed his vehement digging. His marvellously developed nostrils had assured him that a little farther on beneath the turf were more grubs, or well-conditioned earthworms, or

the stupid, big red-brown beetles called "May-bugs." In a few seconds only his hind quarters were visible among the grass-roots. Then, only a twitch of his short tail, or a kick of his hind claws. At this moment a broad, swift shadow appeared overhead; and a hungry marsh-hawk, dropping like a shot, clutched with eager claws at the mouth of the burrow. That deadly clutch tore up some grass-roots and some fresh earth, but just failed to reach the diligent burrower. Tail and hind legs had been nimbly drawn in just in time, as if forewarned of the swooping peril; and the hawk flew off heavily, to resume his quartering of the pasture.

Unruffled by his narrow escape, the shrew went on with his burrowing. He ran his gallery very near the surface,—in fact, close under the roots of the turf, where the grubs and beetles were most numerous. Sometimes he would dip an inch or more, to avoid a bit of difficult excavation; but more often he would press so closely to the surface that the thin layer of sod above him would heave with every surging motion. The loose earth, for the most part, was not thrust behind him, but jammed to either side or overhead, and so vigorously packed in the process as to make strong walls to the galleries, which zigzagged hither and thither as the moment's whim or the scent of some quarry might dictate.

In the absolute darkness of his straitened underworld the shrew felt no consciousness of restriction. His eyes tight closed, the thick earth pressing upon him at every point, he felt nevertheless as free as if all the range of upper air were his. The earthy dark was nothing to him, for the nerves of his marvellous nose served all the purposes of sight and hearing. It was, indeed, as if he heard, felt, smelled, and saw, all with his nose. If the walls of the narrow tunnel pressed him too straitly, he could expand them by a few seconds of digging. In fact, his underground world, limited as it was, for the moment contented him utterly. From time to time he would scent, through perhaps a quarter-inch of earth, a worm or a grub ahead of him. Then he would drive forward almost with a pounce, clutch the prey, and devour it delightedly there in the dark.

Suddenly the earth broke away before him, and his investigating nose poked itself through into another gallery, a shade larger than his own.

The fact that the gallery was larger than his own might well have made him draw back, but his was not the drawing-back disposition. His nose told him that the rival digger was a mole, and had but recently gone by. Without a second's hesitation he clawed through, and darted down the new tunnel, seeking either a fight or a feast, as fate might please to award.

In his savage haste, however, the shrew was not discriminating; and all at once he realized that he had lost the fresh scent. This was still the mole's gallery, but there was no longer any sign that its owner had very lately traversed it. As a matter of fact, several yards back the shrew had blundered past the mouth of a branching tunnel, up which the mole, ignorant that he was being pursued, had taken leisurely way. The pursuer stopped, hesitating for a moment, then decided to push ahead and see what might turn up. In half a minute a breath of the upper air met him,—then a star of light glimmered before him,—and he came out at one of the exits which the mole had used for dumping earth.

At this point the shrew seemed to decide that he had had enough of underground foraging. He stuck his head up through the opening, and looked over the green turf. The opening was close to a pile of stones in the fence corner, which promised both shelter and good hunting. Having hastily dusted the loose earth from his face and whiskers, he emerged, ran to the stone heap, and whisked into the nearest crevice.

On a warm gray stone near the top of the pile, gently waving its wings in the sunshine, glowed a gorgeous red-and-black butterfly. The intensity of its colouring seemed to vibrate in the unclouded radiance. Suddenly, from just beneath the stone on which it rested, slipped forth the shrew, and darted at it with a swift, scrambling leap. The beautiful insect, however, was wide awake, and saw the danger in good time. One beat of its wide, gorgeous wings uplifted its light body as a breath softly uplifts a tuft of thistledown. The baffled shrew jumped straight into the air, but in vain; and the great butterfly went flickering off aimlessly and idly over the pasture to find some less perilous basking-place.

"THE BAFFLED SHREW JUMPED STRAIGHT INTO THE AIR."

Angered by this failure, the shrew descended the stone heap and scurried over to the fence, poking his nose under every tussock of weeds in search of the nest of some ground-bird. Along parallel with the fence he hunted, keeping out about a foot from the lowest rail. He found no nest; but suddenly the owners of a nest that was hidden somewhere in the neighbourhood found him. He felt himself buffeted

by swift, elusive wings. Sharp little beaks jabbed him again and again, and the air seemed full of angry twittering. For a few moments he stood his ground obstinately, wrinkling back his long snout and jumping at his bewildering assailants. Then, realizing that he could do nothing against such nimble foes, he drew back and ran under the fence. He was not really hurt, and he was not at all terrified; but he was distinctly beaten, and therefore in a very bad temper.

Since his return to the green upper world ill luck had persistently followed his ventures, and now his thoughts turned back to the burrows under the grass-roots. He remembered, also, that mole which had so inexplicably evaded him. Keeping close to the fence, he hurried back to the stone heap, on the other side of which lay the entrance to the burrows. He was just about to make a hurried and final investigation of the pile, on the chance that it might conceal something to his taste, when his nose caught a strong scent which made him stop short and seem to shrink into his skin. At the same instant a slim, long, yellow-brown animal emerged from the stones, cast a quick, shifting glance this way and that, then darted at him as smoothly as a snake. With a frantic leap he shot through the air, alighting just beside the mouth of the burrow. The next instant he had vanished; and the weasel, arriving just a second too late, thrust his fierce, triangular face into the hole, but made no attempt to squeeze himself down a passage so restricted.

"WITH A FRANTIC LEAP HE SHOT THROUGH THE AIR."

The shrew had been terrified, indeed; but his dogged spirit was by no means cowed or given over to panic. He felt fairly confident that the weasel was too big to pursue him down the burrow, but presently he stopped, scraped away the earth on one side, and turned around to face the menace. Small though he was, the weasel would have found him a troublesome and daring antagonist in such narrow quarters. When he saw a glimmer of light reappear at the entrance of the burrow, he understood that his big enemy was not going to attempt

the impossible. Reassured, but still hot with wrath, he turned again, and went racing through the black tunnel in search of something whereon to wreak his emotions.

Now as the fates of the underworld would have it, at this moment the lazy old mole who owned these burrows was returning from his tour of investigation. He came to the fork where the shrew had gone by an hour before. The strong, disagreeable, musky smell of the intruder arrested him. His keen nose sniffed at it with resentment and alarm, and told him the whole story, there in the dark, more plainly than if it had passed in daylight before his purblind eyes. It told him that some time had gone by since the intruder's passing. But what it could not tell him was that the intruder was just now on his way back. After some moments of hesitation the long, cylindrical, limp body of the mole scuffled out into the main tunnel, and turned toward the exit. Its movement was rather slow and awkward, owing to the fact that the fore legs were set on each side of the body, like flippers, which was an excellent arrangement for digging, but a very bad one for plain walking.

The mole had not advanced more than a yard or so along the main tunnel when again that strong, musky smell smote his nostrils. This time it was fresh and warm. Indeed, it was startlingly imminent. Elongating his soft body till it was not more than half its usual thickness, the mole doubled in his tracks, intent upon the speediest possible retreat. In that very instant, while he was in the midst of this awkward effort to turn, the shrew fell upon him, gripping and tearing his soft, unprotected flank.

The mole was not altogether deficient in character; and he was larger and heavier than his assailant. Seeing that escape was impossible, and stung by the pain of his wounds, he flung himself with energy into the struggle, biting desperately and striving to bear down his lighter opponent. It was a blind smother of a fight, there in that pitch-black narrow tunnel whose walls pressed ceaselessly upon it and hemmed it in. From the smother came no sound but an occasional squeak of rage or pain, barely audible to the lurking spiders among the grass-stems just overhead. The thin turf heaved vaguely, and the grass-blades vibrated to the unseen struggle; but not even the low-flying

marsh-hawk could guess the cause of these mysterious disturbances.

For several minutes the mole made a good fight. Then the indomitable savagery of his enemy's attack suddenly cowed him. He shrank and tried to draw away; and in that moment the enemy had him by the throat. In that moment the fight was ended; and in the next the invader was satisfying his ravenous appetite on the warm flesh which he craved.

When this redoubtable little warrior had eaten his fill, he felt a pleasant sense of drowsiness. First he moved a few feet farther along the tunnel, till he reached the point where it was joined by the smaller gallery of his own digging. At this point of vantage, with exits open both ways, he hastily dug himself a little pocket or side chamber where he could curl himself up in comfort. Here he licked his wounds for a minute or two, and carefully washed his face with his clever, hand-like fore paws. Then with a sense of perfect security he went to sleep, his watchful nose, most trusty of sentinels, on guard at the threshold of his bedchamber.

While he slept in this unseen retreat, among the short grasses just above his sleep went on the busy mingling of comedy and tragedy, of mirth and birth and death, which makes the sum of life on a summer day in the pastures. Everywhere the grass, and the air above the grass, were thronged with insects. Through the grass came gliding soundlessly a long, smooth, sinuous brown shape with a quick-darting head and a forked, amber-coloured, flickering tongue. The snake's body was about the thickness of a man's thumb, and his back was unobtrusively but exquisitely marked with a reticulation of fine lines. He seemed to be travelling rather aimlessly, doubtless on the watch for any small quarry he might catch sight of; but when he chanced upon the fresh-dug hole where the shrew had begun his burrowing, he stopped abruptly. His fixed, opaque-looking eyes grew strangely intent. With his head poised immediately over the hole he remained perfectly rigid for some seconds. Then he glided slowly into the burrow.

The black snake—for such he was called, in spite of his colour being brown—had an undiscriminating appetite for moles and shrews alike. It was of no concern to him that the flesh of the shrew was rank and

tough; for his sense of taste was, to say the least of it, rudimentary, and to digestion so invincible as his, tough and tender were all one. He had learned, of course, that shrews were averse to being swallowed, and that they both could and would put up a stiff fight against such consummation. But he had never yet captured one in such a position that he could not get his coils around and crush it. What he expected to find in the burrow which he entered so confidently was a satisfying meal, followed by a long, safe sleep to companion digestion.

As he trailed along the winding of the tunnel, his motion made a faint, dry, whispering sound. This delicate sound, together with his peculiar, sickly, elusive scent, travelled just before him, and reached the doorway of the little chamber where the shrew was sleeping. The sleeper awoke,—wide awake all at once, as it behoves the wild kindreds to be. Instantly, too, he understood the whole peril, and that it was even now upon him. There was no time for flight. To do him justice, it was not flight he thought of, but fight. His little heart swelled with rage at this invasion of his rest. Experienced fighter that he was, he fully understood the advantages of his situation. As the head of the invader stole past his doorway, he sprang, and sank his long, punishing teeth deep into the back of the snake's neck.

With this hold the advantage was all his, so long as he could maintain it; and he hung to the grip like a bulldog, biting deeper and deeper every minute. Fettered completely by the narrowness of the tunnel, unable to lash or coil or strike, the snake could only writhe impotently and struggle to drag his adversary farther down the burrow toward some roomier spot where his own tactics would have a chance. But the shrew was not to be dislodged from his point of vantage. He clung to his doorway no less doggedly than he clung to his hold; and all the while his deadly teeth were biting deeper in. At last, they found the backbone,—and bit it through. With a quiver the writhing of the big snake stopped.

Victor though he was, the shrew was slow to accept conviction of his victory over so mighty an antagonist. Though all resistance had ceased, he kept on gnawing and worrying, till he had succeeded in completely severing the head from the trunk. Then, feeling that his

triumph was secured, he turned back into his chamber and curled up again to resume his rudely interrupted siesta.

Having thus effectually established his lordship of the burrows, this small champion might have reasonably expected to enjoy an undisturbed and unanxious slumber. But Fate is pitilessly whimsical in its dealings with the wild kindreds. It chanced at this time that a red fox came trotting down along the pasture fence. He seemed to have a very vague idea of where he was going or what he wanted to do. Presently he took it into his head that he wanted to cross the pasture, so he forsook the fence and started off over the grass; and as luck would have it, his keen, investigating nose sniffed the sod just at the point whereunder the sleeping shrew lay hidden. The turf that formed the little fighter's ceiling was not more than half an inch in thickness.

The smell that came up through the grass-roots was strong, and not particularly savoury. But the red fox was not overparticular just then. He would have chosen rabbit or partridge had Mother Nature consulted his wishes more minutely. But as it was he saw no reason to turn up his sharp nose at shrew. After a few hasty but discreet sniffings, which enabled him to locate the careless slumberer, he pounced upon the exact spot and fell to clawing the sod ferociously. His long nails and powerful fore paws tore off the thin covering of turf in less time than it takes to tell of it, and the next instant the shrew was hurled out into the sunlight, dazzled and half stunned. Almost before he touched the grass a pair of narrow jaws snapped him up. Without a moment's delay the fox turned and trotted off up the pasture with his prey, toward his den on the other side of the hill; and as the discriminating sunlight peered down into the uncovered tunnel, in a few minutes flies came to investigate, and many industrious beetles. The body of the dead snake was soon a centre of teeming, hungry, busy life, toiling to remove all traces of what had happened. For Nature, though she works out almost all her ends by tragedy, is ceaselessly attentive to conceal the red marks of her violence.

The Ringwaak Buck

OWN through the leafy tangle the sunlight fell in little irregular splotches, flecking the ruddy-brown floor of a thicket on the southward slope of Ringwaak. In the very heart of the thicket, curled close and with its soft, fine muzzle resting flat on its upgathered hind legs, lay a young fawn.

The ground, covered with a deep, elastic carpet of dead spruce and hemlock needles, was much the same colour as the little animal's coat. The latter, however, was diversified with spots of a lighter hue, which matched marvellously with the scattered splotches of sunlight—so marvellously, indeed, that only an eye that was initiated, as well as discriminating, could tell the patches of shine from the patches of colour or distinguish the outlines of the fawn's figure against the blending background. There was neither sound nor movement in the thicket. A tiny greenish-yellow worm, which had let itself down from a branch on a yard or more of delicate filament, hung motionless and crinkled, seeming to have forgotten the purpose of its descent. Not a breath of wind disturbed the clear, balsamy fragrance of the shadowed air, and the fawn appeared to sleep, though its great liquid eyes were wide open.

During the brief absence of its mild-eyed mother the little animal was accustomed to maintaining this voiceless and unwavering stillness, which, combined with its colouring, made its most effective concealment. Enemies, hungry and savage, were all about it, searching coverts and pursuing trails. But the eyes of the hunting beasts seem to be less keen than we are wont to imagine them—certainly less keen than the eyes of skilled woodsmen—and an unwinking stillness may deceive the craftiest of them. Whether because its mother had taught it to be thus motionless, or because it was coerced by instincts inherited from ten thousand cautious ancestors, the fawn obeyed so absolutely that even its long, sensitive

ears were not permitted to twitch. Its great eyes kept staring out in vague apprehension at the wide, shadowy, unknown world.

Suddenly into the limpid deeps of the little watcher's eyes came a flash of fear, like a sharp contraction in the back of the pupils. A stealthy-footed, moon-faced, fierce-eyed beast came soundlessly to the edge of the thicket and glared in searchingly. The fawn knew in some dim way that this was a deadly danger that confronted him. But he never winked or moved an anxious ear. He hardly dared to breathe. It was almost as if a hand of ice had clutched him and held him still beyond even the possibility of a tremor. For perhaps a full minute the huge lynx stood there half crouching, with one big, padded fore paw upheld, piercing the gloom with his implacable stare. He could discern nothing, however, except spaces of reddish-brown shadow, scored with the slim, perpendicular trunks of saplings, and spattered thicket with spots of infiltering sunlight. But the fawn, though in full view, was perfectly concealed—for he had that gift of fern-seed which, as the old romancers feign, makes its possessor invisible. No wandering puff of wind came by to tell the lynx's nose that his eyes were playing him false. At last the uplifted fore paw came softly to the ground and he crept off like a terrible gray shadow. For two or three seconds the fawn's sides moved violently. Then he was once more as still as a stone.

It chanced that on this particular occasion the mother doe was long away. The fawn got very hungry, as well as lonely, which strained his patience to the utmost. Nevertheless, he remained obedient to the law which shielded him, while the forest, which seems so empty, but is in reality so populous, sent its furtive kindreds past his hiding-place. From time to time a dainty, bead-eyed wood-mouse scurried by; or a brooding partridge, unwilling to be long absent from her eggs, ran hither and thither to peck her hasty meal; or a red squirrel, with fluffy tail afloat, would dart swiftly and silently over the ground, dash up a tree, and from the top chatter shrill defiance to the perils which had lain wait for him below. All these things the fawn's wide eyes observed, unconsciously laying the foundations for that wisdom of the woods upon which his success in the merciless game of life would depend. Once a large red fox, wary, but self-confident, trotted quietly across one end of the thicket, within ten feet of the fawn's nose; and

once more that inward spasm which meant fear contracted the depths of the little watcher's eyes. But the fox was sniffing with his narrow, inquisitive snout at the places where the partridge hen had scratched, and he never saw the fawn.

With all its advantages, however, this invisibility had certain defects of its own. About five minutes after the fox had gone there came a swishing of branches, a pounding of soft feet, a mysterious sound of haste and terror, at the back of the thicket where the fawn could not see. He did not dare to lift his head and look, but waited, quivering with apprehension. The next moment a furry bulk landed plump upon his flank, to bounce off again with a squeal of terror. In an uncontrollable panic the fawn bounded to his feet, and stood trembling, while a large hare, elongated to a straight line in the desperation of his flight, shot crashing through the screen of branches and disappeared. As the fawn shrank away from this incomprehensible apparition—which, as far as he knew, might return at any instant and thump him again—a thin, snarling, peculiarly malignant cry made him turn his head, and as he did so a small, dark-furred beast, the hare's pursuer, sprang upon him furiously and bore him down. For the first time he experienced the pang of physical anguish, as fierce teeth, small, but sharp, tore at the tender hide of his neck, feeling the way to his throat. He lay helplessly kicking under this onslaught, and bleated piteously for his mother.

"TURN HIS NARROW, SNARLING FACE TO SEE WHAT THREATENED."

At that same moment, and just in time, the mother arrived. Her eyes, usually so gentle, were aflame with rage. Before the fisher—for such the daring little assailant was—could do more than turn his narrow, snarling face to see what threatened, and while yet the first sweet trickle of blood was in his throat, a knife-edged hoof came down upon his back, smashing the spine. He squirmed aside and made one futile effort to drag himself away. A second later he was pounded and trampled into a shapeless mass.

The fisher being small and his fangs not very long, the fawn's wounds were not serious. He picked himself up and crowded close against his mother's flank. Tenderly the doe licked him over as he nursed, and then, when his slim legs had stopped trembling she led him away to another hiding-place.

This experience so jarred the little animal's nerves that for a week or more his mother could not leave him alone, but had to snatch such pasturage as she could get near his hiding-place. His confidence in the tactics of invisibility had been so shaken that whenever his mother

tried to leave him he would jump up and run after her. The patient old doe got thin under these conditions; but by the time her little one had recovered his nerves he was strong enough to follow her to her favoured feeding-grounds, and thereafter her problems grew daily less difficult. The summer passed with comparatively little event, and by autumn, when his mother began to develop other instincts, and occasionally, in the companionship of a tall, wide-antlered buck, seemed to forget him altogether, he was a very sturdy, self-reliant youngster, in many ways equipped to take care of himself. Ignored by the tall buck, whom he eyed with vague disfavour, he still hung about his mother, pasturing with her usually, and always sleeping near her in the thickets. But his first summer had supplied him with the most important elements of that knowledge which a red deer's life in the wilderness of the north demands.

The courses of the varied knowledge which the wild creatures must carry in their brains in order to survive in the struggle would seem to be threefold. The first, and most important, source is doubtless inherited instinct, which supplies the constant quantity, so to speak, or the knowledge common to all the individuals of a species. The second appears to be experience, which teaches varying lore, according to variation in circumstance and surrounding. In the amount of such knowledge which they possess the individuals of a species will be found to differ widely. But, after instinct and experience have accounted for everything that can reasonably be credited to them, there remains a considerable and well authenticated residuum of instances where wild creatures have displayed a knowledge which neither instinct nor experience could well furnish them with. In such cases observation and inference seem to agree in ascribing the knowledge to parental teaching.

Among the lessons learned that summer by the little red buck one of the most vital was how to keep out of the way of the bears. All the forests about Ringwaak Hill abounded in bears; for the slopes of Ringwaak were rich in blueberries, and bears and blueberries go together when the wishes of the bears are at all considered. But the season of blueberries is short, and before the blueberries are ready there are few things more delicious to a bear's taste than a fawn or a moose calf. The bear, however, is not a very pertinacious trailer, nor

does he excel in running long distances at top speed. When it is young moose or deer he is wanting, his way is to lie hidden behind some brush-screened stump or boulder till the victim comes by, then dart out a huge paw and settle the matter at one stroke. Such might well have been the fate of the little red buck that summer but that he learned to look with wary eye on every ambush that might hide a bear. To all these perilous places he gave wide berth, sometimes avoiding them altogether and sometimes circling about at safe distances till he could get the wind of them and find out whether they held a menace or not.

Another important truth borne in upon him that first summer was that man, the most to be dreaded of all creatures, was, notwithstanding, capable of being most useful to the deer people. To the west of Ringwaak lay a line of scattered settlements and lonely upland farms. Along the edge of the forest were open fields, where the men had roots and grains which the deer found very good to eat. Often the little red buck and his mother would break into one of these fields and feast riotously on the succulent crops. But at the first glimpse, smell, or sound of man, or of the noisy dogs who served man and dwelt with him, they would be off like swift shadows to their remotest retreats. The wise old doe knew a lot about man; and so, however it came about, the little red buck had a lot of useful information upon the same subject. At the same time, through some inexplicable caprice of his mother's, he acquired a dangerous habit that was in no way consistent with his prudent attitude toward man. The old doe had a whimsical liking for cows, and would sometimes lead her fawn into one of the remoter back-lot cow-pastures to feed among the cattle. She neither permitted nor offered any familiarities whatever to these heavy, alien beasts, but for some reason she liked to be among them. The little red buck, therefore, although he knew the cattle were associated with man and cared for by him, got into the way of visiting the cow-pastures occasionally and feeding on the sweet, close-cropped grasses. Fortunately, he learned from the first that milking-time was a time when the pastures were to be avoided.

Yet another lesson the little buck learned that fall one day when he and his mother were crossing the road near the settlement. Two of the village dogs—mongrels neither very keen of nose nor very resolute of

temper—caught sight of them, and gave chase with noisy cry. Away through the woods went doe and fawn together, bounding lightly, at a pace that soon left their pursuers far behind. For these pursuers the old doe had no very great respect—at a pinch, indeed, she would have faced them and fought them with her nimble fore hoofs, and she did not want to tire the fawn unnecessarily. When the yelping of the dogs grew faint in the distance she wheeled around a half-circle of perhaps fifty feet in diameter, ran back a little way, and lay down with the fawn beside her to watch the trail. By the time they were both thoroughly rested the dogs came panting by, noses to the ground. As soon as they were well past the two fugitives jumped up and made off again at full speed in another direction. After one repetition of this familiar manoeuvre the dogs gave up the game in disgust. The little red buck had learned a handy trick, but he had learned, at the same time, to take dogs too lightly.

That winter the doe and fawn, with another doe, were in a manner taken in charge by the tall, wide-antlered buck, who, when the snow began to get deep, selected a sunny slope where groves of thick spruce were interspersed with clumps of young poplar and birch. Hither he led his little herd, and here he established his winter quarters, treading out paths from grove to grove and from thicket to thicket, so that even when the snow lay from four to five feet deep the herd could move about freely from one feeding-place to another. The memory of all this fixed itself securely in the recesses of the little buck's brain, to serve him in good stead in later winters.

When at last the snow vanished and the hillside brooks ran full and loud, and spring, with her cool colours and fresh scents, was in full possession of Ringwaak, the little herd scattered. The old doe stole off by herself one day when he was not noticing, and the yearling found himself left solitary. For a few days he was lonely and spent much of his time looking for his mother. Then, being of self-reliant disposition and very large and vigorous for his age, and well endowed with the joy of life, he forgot his loss and became pleasantly absorbed in the wilderness world of Ringwaak, with its elations, and satisfactions, and breathless adventures, and thrilling escapes. That autumn he grew pugnacious, and get more than one thrashing from full-grown bucks whom he was so foolhardy as to offend. But his

defeats were the best kind of instruction, and he was growing both in strength and stature beyond the ordinary custom of his kind. By the time another winter and another summer had gone over him he was ready to wipe out all past humiliations. When he stopped to drink at the glassy pool which lies in a granite pocket half-way up the western slope of Ringwaak he saw a reflection of the most redoubtable buck on all that range, and when the other bucks responded to his challenge they one after another met defeat. That winter, when he established his yard and trod out his range of paths among the birch and poplar thickets, he had three does and two fawns under his leadership.

"WHEN HE STOPPED TO DRINK AT THE GLASSY POOL."

During the next two years he became famous throughout the settlements. Every one had heard of the big buck who was so bold about showing himself when no one was ready for him, but so crafty in eluding the hunters. He was seen from time to time in the pastures with the cattle, but never when there was a gun within reach. On many a field of earing grain he stamped the broad defiance of his ravages, till for miles about every backwoods sportsman began to dream of winning those noble antlers.

The last farm of the settlement toward the northwest, where the road leads off over wooded dips and rises to the valley of the turbulent Ottanoonsis, belonged to an old bachelor farmer named Ramsay. This farm the red buck seemed to have selected for his special and distinguished attention. He loved Ramsay's bean-fields and his corn-patch. He loved his long, sea-green turnip rows. He loved even the little garden before the kitchen window, where he easily learned to like cabbages and cucumbers and tried vainly to acquire a taste for onions and peppergrass. The visits to the garden were invariably paid when Ramsay was away at the crossroads store or during the dark hours of those particular nights when Ramsay slept soundest. The gaunt old farmer vowed vengeance, and kept his long-barrelled duck gun loaded with buckshot, and wasted many days lying in wait for the marauder or following his trail through the tumbled, sweet-smelling autumn woods of Ringwaak. At last, however, though his desire for vengeance had by no means slackened, the grim old farmer woodsman began to take a certain pride in his adversary's prowess, along with a certain jealous apprehension lest those daring antlers should fall a trophy to some other gun than his. When the buck would perpetrate some particularly audacious depredation on the corn or cabbages, Ramsay's first burst of wrath would be succeeded by something akin to respectful appreciation. He would pull his scraggy and grizzled chin with his gnarled fingers contemplatively, and a twinkle of understanding humour would supplant the anger in his shrewd, blue, woods-wise eyes as he stood surveying the damage. Such an antagonist was worth while, and Ramsay registered a vow that that fine hide should keep him warm in winter, those illustrious antlers adorn no other walls but his.

But there were many others who had similar views as to the destiny of the great Ringwaak buck, whose fame by the opening of his fourth season had spread far beyond the limits of the Ringwaak settlements. Late in the fourth autumn a couple of new settlers on the lower river decided to make a trip up to Ringwaak and try their luck. They had heard of the big buck's craft in foiling the trailers, of his almost inspired sagacity in avoiding ambuscade. But they were prepared to play an entirely new card against him. They brought with them two splendid dogs of mixed Scotch deerhound and collie blood who were

not only fierce but intelligent, not only tireless but swift.

When these two long-legged, long-jawed, iron gray dogs were loosed upon his trail the big buck chanced to be watching them from the heart of a thicket on a knoll less than one hundred yards away. At least, as the crow flies, it was about that distance, but by the windings of the trail it was fully a mile. It was with equanimity, therefore, that the buck gazed down upon these two strange arrivals, till he perceived by their actions that it was his own trail they were following. Then a spark of anger came into his great liquid eyes, and he stamped his sharp hoofs, as if he would like to wait and give battle. But these were antagonists too formidable for even so hardy a fighter as he; so he decided to get away in good time. He was only half in earnest about it, however, for after all, big as they were, these were only dogs, and dogs were easy to elude. He amused himself with three or four mighty leaps, first in one direction, then in another, to give his pursuers something to puzzle over. Then he went bounding lightly away along the skirts of the mountains, northwestward, toward the more familiar and favoured section of his range. When he came to a brook he would run a little way up or down the channel before resuming his flight. And at last, when his velvet sides were beginning to heave from so much exercise, he made his accustomed loop in the trail and lay down, well satisfied to wait for the pursuers to go by.

There was only one thing that made him a little nervous as he waited in the covert overlooking his back tracks. These dogs were so silent, compared with the curs he was used to. An occasional sharp yelp, just enough to let their masters know where they were, was all the noise they made. They attended strictly to business. The buck did not expect to hear anything of them for some time, but he had hardly been lying in his covert more than five minutes when those staccato yelps came faintly to his ears. He was startled. How had the creatures so quickly solved the complexities of his trail? He had no apprehension of the sure cunning with which those dogs could cut across curves and pick up the trail anew. Still less did he realize their appalling speed. When next their voices struck upon his ear they were so close that for an instant his heart stood still. But his craft did not fail him. Without waiting to see the lean, long shapes flash by, he arose and noiselessly faded back through the covert, moving as softly as a

shadow till he felt himself out of ear-shot. Then he dashed away at top speed, determined to put a safe distance between himself and these disconcerting adversaries.

"NOISELESSLY FADED BACK THROUGH THE COVERT."

He kept on now till his heart was near bursting, and when at last he made his strategic loop and lay down to rest and watch he felt that he

must have secured ample time to recover. But not so. Before he had half got his wind, and while his flanks were yet heaving painfully, those meagre but terrible cries again drew near. This time, perforce, he let the pursuers run by, and saw that they seemed as fresh as ever. Then he sprang up and resumed the flight, shaken by the first chill of real terror that he had known since that forgotten day in the thicket when the hare and the fisher jumped upon him.

His flight now led him past the back lots of Ramsay's farm, where the cattle were pasturing. Either because his sudden fear made him seek companionship or with an idea of confusing his scent with that of the cattle, he leaped into the pasture and ran here and there among the mildly wondering cows. Then he leaped the fence again at the farthest corner, plumped into the thick underbrush, and headed toward the fields with which he had been wont to make so free. He had just vanished in the leafage when his pursuers appeared at the other side of the pasture. They ran in at once among the cows, paying no heed whatever to angry snorts and levelled horns, unravelled the trail with perfect ease, dashed over the fence again, and darted into the underbrush with a new note of triumph in their yelpings.

"THEN HE LEAPED THE FENCE AGAIN."

When the buck heard their voices so close behind him his knees almost gave way. He knew he could not run much farther, and he knew his shifts were all vain against such implacable foes as these. He half-paused, with a brave impulse to stand at bay. But some other impulse, undefined, but potent, urged him on toward Ramsay's farm. It was familiar ground, and he had never suffered any hurt there. He knew that the old farmer was most dangerous, but he was not an instant, horrible, inevitable menace like this which was close upon his

heels. Moreover, he had seen the cattle go up to the barn-yard and take refuge there, and come away in safety.

With the last of his ebbing strength he burst forth into the open, ran across the corn-field, passed the corner of the garden, brushed against the end of the well-sweep, and paused before the open door of the stable. The heavy door was carelessly propped open with a stick. In contrast with the glare of the sunshine outside, the interior looked black and safe. But all about, though mixed with the smell of the cattle, was the dreaded smell of man. He wheeled aside, dimly intending to go around the stable and resume his hopeless flight, but as he did so the yelp of his pursuers broke louder upon his ears. He saw them break from the woods and dart into the corn-field. This decided him. He wheeled again, half-staggering, struck blunderingly against the stick which propped the door open, stumbled across the threshold, ran to the innermost depths of the stable, and fell gasping into a box stall which Ramsay had once built for a colt. At the same moment the heavy door, no longer propped back, swung to with a slam, the big wooden latch rising smoothly and dropping securely into place.

When the dogs arrived and found the door shut against them they broke into angry clamour. Once around the building they ran to see if there was any other entrance. Then they clawed savagely at the door, barking and growling in their balked fury. Their noise brought Ramsay on the run from the potato-field, over the rise, where he was working. He was surprised to see two strange dogs making such a fuss at his stable door. Being a canny backwoodsman, however, instead of going straight to the door, he went around behind the stable and looked in the window.

When Ramsay saw the shivering, tawny form and great antlers on the floor of the stall his heart swelled with exultation. The coveted trophies were his. He ran into the kitchen for his gun. Then he changed his mind and picked up, instead, his long hunting-knife. When he approached the stable door the dogs turned upon him threateningly. But the crisp voice of authority with which he ordered them aside was something they were quite too clever to defy. Sullenly, with red eyes of wrath, they obeyed, waiting for their masters to arrive and support

them.

Ramsay closed the door carefully behind him and strode to the box stall, knife in hand. On its threshold he paused and scrutinized the captive with triumphant admiration. Sure, besides the trophies of hide and horns, there was meat enough there to do him all winter—tough, perhaps, but sweet, seeing that it had been fatted on his choicest crops. He looked at the animal's heaving sides and realized what a magnificent run he must have made. Then as he stepped forward with his knife he wondered what could have induced the beast to flee to such a refuge. The buck was gazing up at him with wide eyes, reassured by the man's quiet. There was no terror in that gaze, but only a sort of anxious question; and he never flinched, though the laboured breath came quicker through his nostrils as the man approached his head.

As Ramsay met that anxious, questioning look, the eager triumph in his own eyes died away, and his grim mouth softened to a half-abashed, half-quizzical smile. The bright blade in his hand slipped furtively into his belt, as if he didn't want the buck to notice it. Then, muttering approvingly, "Ye've fooled 'em, ain't ye!" he picked up a little shallow tub that stood in a corner of the stall and started out to the well to get the beast a drink.

As he closed the stable door behind him two perspiring men with guns entered the yard from the corn-field, and were eagerly greeted by the dogs. "Good day," said one, politely. "We're after a big buck which our dogs here have run down for us. He must have hidden in your barn."

Ramsay eyed the visitors with ill disguised antagonism and fingered his scraggy chin before he answered.

"Ya-as," he drawled. "I've got a mighty fine buck in there—the old Ringwaak buck himself, as everybody's heard tell of. But, beggin' your pardon, friends, I reckon he's goin' to stay in there for the present."

The strangers studied the old man's strong face for a moment or two in silence, noted the latent fire in the depths of his eyes, and realized that there was nothing to be done. Whistling the dogs to heel, they

strode off, angry and disgusted. But before they had gone far the one who had spoken turned around.

"I'll give you fifty dollars for those horns," he said abruptly.

"Ef they're wuth fifty dollars they're good enough for me to keep," drawled Ramsay, never moving from where he stood. And with resentful eyes he watched them out of sight before he went to the well.

During the next four days half the men and boys in the settlement, with not a few of the women, visited Ramsay's barn to view the famous captive. The buck, well fed and watered, had recovered himself in a few hours, and seemed none the worse for his adventure. All his former arrogance, too, had returned, and visitors were careful to keep at a safe distance. But Ramsay he recognized, apparently, as either protector or master, and Ramsay could enter the stall at any time. The buck would sidle off and eye him anxiously, but show no sign of the furious anger which the visitors excited.

To all inquiries as to what he would do with his captive Ramsay would answer, "Sell him to circus, maybe." But it was not till several weeks had passed and the settlement had got over its interest in the matter that he was able to quite make up his mind. Then, one crisp autumn morning, when the woods were all yellow and red, he went over to the next farm and asked his neighbour, a handy young farmer, to come and help him get the captive aboard a hay-wagon.

"Got a chance to sell him up to the Falls," he vouchsafed in brief explanation, and the explanation was one to content the whole settlement.

There was a strenuous hour or two before the indignant animal was roped and trussed into helplessness. Then the bruised and panting men hoisted the prisoner into the hay-wagon and tied him so he could not be bounced off; and Ramsay started on the rough twenty-five mile drive to the Falls.

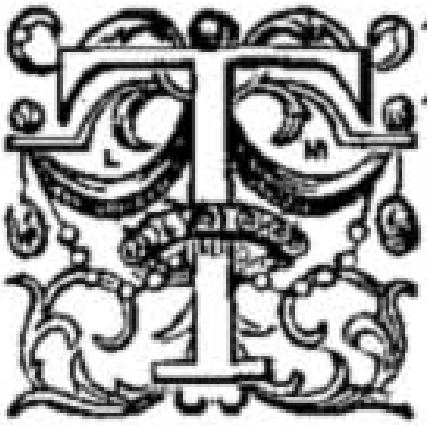
About seventeen miles from Ringwaak the road crossed the Ottanoonsis, whose wild current filled the valley with noise and formed an impassable northern frontier to the Ringwaak region. It was generally believed that the wild creatures of the Ringwaak region held

little intercourse with those north of the Ottanoonsis, by reason of that stream's turbulence. As soon as Ramsay found himself across the bridge he stopped and once more drew his hunting-knife. At the flash of the blade the captive looked up wonderingly from his bonds. Leaning over him, the old man's face broke into a sheepish grin. But he did not hesitate. Three or four properly distributed strokes of the knife, and the ropes fell apart. The captive lifted his splendid head, kicked, and struggled to his feet, bewildered.

"Now," said Ramsay, "Git!"

As he spoke he snapped his long whip sharply. With a magnificent leap the buck went out and over the wheels and vanished with great sailing bounds into the wild Ottanoonsis forest. Then Ramsay turned slowly back toward home, thinking a thrilling story for the settlement about the cunning escape of the Ringwaak buck.

The Heron in the Reeds



OUGH haying was almost done on the uplands, over the wide, level, treeless meadow-island the heavy grass stood still uncut, its rank growth taking long to ripen. The warm wind that drew across it from time to time in a vague, elusive rhythm was burdened with rich summer scents, the mid-noon distillations from the vetch and clover and lily and yellow-daisy blooms which thronged among the grass-heads, and from the flaunting umbels of the wild parsnip which towered above them. Over this radiant and pregnant luxuriance the air quivered softly, and hummed with the murmur of foraging bees and flies, glad in the heat.

The island lay on the tranquil river like a splendid green enamel on blue porcelain. Its level, at this season, lay several feet above that of the water, and its shores, fantastically looped with little, sweeping coves and jutting points, were fringed with deep rushes of intense, glaucous green. Whenever the wind puffed lightly over them, the tops of the rushes bowed gravely together in long ranks, and turned silvery gray. Here and there above them fluttered a snipe, signalling its hidden young, then winging off across the water to the next point, with a clear, two-noted whistle.

On one of the little jutting points, where a log lay half-submerged in trailing water-weeds, stood a tall blue heron balanced motionless on one long, stilt-like leg. Its head, drawn flat back between the high shoulders, came about ten inches above the tops of the sedge. Its long, keen, javelin-like beak lay along its protruding breast, in readiness to dart in any direction. Its round, gem-like eyes, hard as glass in their glitter, took in not only the wide, blue-and-green empty landscape, but equally every movement of the sedge-fringe and the weedy shallows along-shore.

For some minutes the great bird was as still as a carven figure. Then, for no apparent reason, the long neck uncoiled violently like a loosed crossbow, and the javelin beak shot downward with a movement almost too swift for the eye to follow. Deep into the weeds and water it darted,—to return with a small, silvery chub securely transfixed. One smart, sidelong blow of the wriggling fish upon the log ended its struggles. Then the skilful fisher threw his prize up in the air, caught it as it fell, swallowed it head foremost, and relapsed into his watchful immobility.

This time he had not quite so long to wait. Again the coiled spring of his neck was loosed, again that lightning lance darted downward into the water, and returned with a kicking trophy. Now it was a large brown-and-green frog, which the victor had more difficulty in killing. For half a minute he whacked it savagely against the side of the log, before he could satisfy himself that the limp, bedragged form was past all effort to escape. Then, picking it up between the tips of his beak, he stepped from his log, strode with awkward dignity some paces up the shore, and hid the prize safely in the heart of a tussock of sedge-grass. Not only for himself was the big blue heron fishing, but also, and first of all, for certain extraordinarily hungry nestlings in a cedar swamp behind the neighbouring hills.

Having hidden the frog, the heron raised his head and steadily surveyed the shores. Then he spread his long wings and flapped up to a height of seven or eight feet, where he commanded a comprehensive view of the meadows. Assured that no peril was lurking near, he winnowed slowly along the shore, his legs trailing ludicrously, and dropped again to earth at the next point. The moment he touched ground and steadied himself he became once more the moveless image of a bird, as if just projected into solidity from the face of a Japanese screen.

At this point, however, fortune failed to smile upon his fishing. For full

five minutes he waited, and neither fish nor frog came within reach. Suddenly he unlimbered, and went stalking gravely up along the sloppy mud between the reeds and the shrunken water. As he went, his long neck craned alternately to one side and the other, and his eyes pierced every retreat among the rushes or the water-weeds. Sometimes he snapped up a tiny shiner, or a big black water-beetle, which he promptly swallowed; but he got no more prizes worth carrying back to the nest behind the hills. He went forward somewhat briskly, therefore, being in haste to reach a bit of good frogging-ground a little farther on. At length, coming to the mouth of a sluggish rivulet, he started to wade across it, not carefully observing how he set down his feet in the tangle of weeds and eel-grass. From under the tangle came a muffled "click." With a startled squawk he lifted his wings, as something grabbed him by the toes, and held him fast. He was in the iron clutch of a muskrat trap.

"HE WAS IN THE IRON CLUTCH OF A MUSKRAT TRAP."

That one squawk was the only sound he uttered; but his powerful wings threshed the air desperately as he strained to wrench himself free. There was no such thing, of course, as relaxing the strong jaws

of the trap, or wrenching his foot free; but he did succeed in pulling the trap up from its bed under the water-grass and dragging it out upon the shore to the full limit of the light chain which held it. Having accomplished this much, he was quiet for some minutes, while his fierce eyes scrutinized with fear and wonder the incomprehensible creature which had fastened upon him. After three or four frantic efforts to stab it with his redoubtable beak, he was quick to realize that this was an invulnerable foe. He seemed to realize, also, that it was an inanimate foe; for after due consideration he set himself to pulling it and feeling it with the tip of his beak, seeking some way of getting rid of it. At last, finding all this temperate effort useless, he blazed out into a frantic rage. He would jump, and tug, and flop, and spring into the air, and almost wrench the captive toes from their sockets. But all he accomplished was to make his leg ache intolerably, clear up to the thigh. At length he desisted and stood trembling, so exhausted that he could hardly keep his feet.

Meanwhile, it chanced that two boys in a birch-bark canoe were paddling up the river. The extraordinary antics of the blue heron caught their eyes. They had never heard that this most stately of birds was subject to fits; and they were filled with wonder. Paddling ashore with all speed, they momently expected the great bird to recover himself at their approach and flop heavily away, as herons are wont to do when one seeks to observe them too closely. When near enough, however, to see what the trouble was, they were much elated, as they had long wanted to capture a blue heron and observe his habits in captivity.

As the boys ran their canoe ashore the bird was just yielding to exhaustion. His dauntless spirit, however, was by no means broken by his misfortune. At sight of the intruders his fierce eyes hardened, and his head drew back warily between his shoulders. "Look out! Don't go near that beak!" shouted the elder boy, as the younger sprang forward to secure the coveted prize.

The warning came barely in time. That long neck had flashed forward to its full length,—and just fallen short of the enemy's stockinged leg.

"Gee whizz!" exclaimed the lad, with a nervous laugh. "If that had struck, I guess it would have gone clean through! How are we going to disarm him?"

"Watch me!" said the elder, as he snatched up his coat from the canoe. This effective weapon he threw over the bird's head; and in a few moments the captive was so securely trussed up that he could do nothing but eye his captors with implacable and indomitable hate. The cruel trap was removed from his toes, and their bruises carefully washed. Then very respectfully he was deposited in the bottom of the canoe, and in high elation the boys paddled off.

They had not gone far, however, when a thought struck them both at the same time, and both stopped paddling. They looked at each other with misgivings.

"Well, what is it?" asked the younger, reluctantly.

"I'm afraid," answered the elder, "it's a blame mean trick we're playing on the old bird, at this season! Eh? What do you think?"

"Perhaps so!" assented the other with a sigh, looking wistfully down at their prize. "I never thought about the young ones."

Without a word more they proceeded to loose the bonds of their prisoner. The moment he was free he struck at them savagely; but they had been on guard against such ingratitude, and got out of the way in time. Then he sprang into the air and flapped away indignantly; while the boys stared after him wistfully, half-repenting of their gentleness.

In the Deep of the Silences

I

N the ancient wild there were three great silences that held their habitations unassailed. They were the silence of the deep of the lake, the silence of the dark heart of the cedar swamp, and the silence of the upper air, high above the splintered peak of the mountain.

To this immeasurable quiet of upper air but one of all the earth sounds could come. That one sound was of such quality that it seemed rather to intensify the silence than disturb it. It was so absolutely alone, so naked of all that murmurous background which sustains yet obscures the individual sounds of earth's surface, that it served merely as an accent to the silence. It was the fine, vibrant hiss of the smitten air against the tense feathers of the soaring eagle.

Through the immense, unclouded solitude the eagle swung majestically in a great circle. At one point in the vast, deliberate swing he was directly above the bald, deep-riven peak of granite upthrust from its mantling forest of firs,—directly above it, at a height of not more than a few hundred feet. The rest of his course took him far out over the soundless spaces of the landscape, which formed an enormous bowl rimmed by the turquoise horizon. The bowl was all a many-shaded green, stains of the light green of birch and poplar blending with the austere green-black of fir, cedar, and hemlock. Here

and there through the dense colour gleamed sharply the loops and coils of three watercourses and at the centre of the bowl, glowing in the transparent brilliancy of the northern day, shone the clear mirror of the lake. At that point of his aërial path when the eagle swung farthest from the peak, he hung straight over the middle of the lake and looked down into its depths.

"HIS COURSE TOOK HIM FAR OUT OVER THE SOUNDLESS SPACES."

Though no lightest breath was astir far down on the lake surface and not a tree-top swayed in the forest, up here where the eagle was

soaring streamed a viewless and soundless wind. So it came about that at some portions of his swing the eagle's wide, apparently moveless wings would tilt a little, careening ever so slightly, and their tense-webbed feathers would set themselves at a delicately different angle to the air-current. When this took place, there would be a different note in that strange whisper. The vibrant hiss would change to a faint, ghostly humming, which again would fade away as the rigid feathers readjusted themselves to another point of the gigantic curve.

Over the soaring black wings the intense sapphire of the zenith thrilled and melted; but the eyes of the eagle were not directed upward, since there was nothing above him but sky, and air, and the infinitude of silence. As he swung, his gleaming, snow-white head and neck were stretched downward toward the earth. His fierce yellow eyes, unwavering, brilliant, and clear like crystal, deep set beneath straight, overhanging brows, searched the far panorama with an incredibly piercing gaze. At such a distance that the most penetrating human eye—the eye of a sailor, a plains' ranger, a backwoods' huntsman, or an enumerator of the stars—could not discern him in his soundless altitude, he could mark the fall of a leaf or the scurry of a mouse in the sedge-grass.

Though the range of his marvellous vision was so vast, the eagle could not see beneath the surfaces of the lake except when he soared straight over it. At one point in his course the baffling reflections of the surface vanished, and his gaze pierced to the bottom. But from all other points the lake presented to him either a mirror of stainless blue, or a dazzling shield of bright steel.

For an hour or more, on wide, untiring wings, the great bird sailed and watched. The furtive life of the wilderness, all unaware of that high impending doom, revealed itself to him, yet he saw nothing to draw him down out of his realm of silence.

Except for that mysterious whisper of the smitten air in his own wings,

it was to the eagle as if all the action and movement of earth had been struck dumb. Once he saw a black cow moose, tormented with flies, lurch out madly from the thickets and plunge wallowing into the lake. High splashed and flashed the water about her floundering bulk; but not a whisper of it came up to him. Once he saw a pair of swimming loons stretching their necks alternately as high as they could above the water, and opening wide their straight, sharp beaks. He well knew the strident, wild cries with which they were answering each other, setting loose a rout of crazy echoes all up and down the shores. But not a ghost of an echo reached him. It was all dumb show. And once, on the lower slope of the mountain, an ancient fir-tree, its foothold on the rocks worn away by frost and flood of countless seasons, fell into the ravine. He saw the mighty downward sweep and plunge, the convulsion of branches below; but of the sullen roar that startled the mountainside no faintest sound arose to him.

At last, as he was wheeling over the centre of the lake, his inescapable eye saw something which interested him. His great wings flapped heavily, checking his course. He tipped suddenly, half-shut his wings, and shot straight downward perhaps a thousand feet. Here he stopped his descent with a sharp upward turn which made the wind whistle harshly in his wings. And here he hung, hovering, watching, waiting for the opportunity that now seemed close at hand.

II

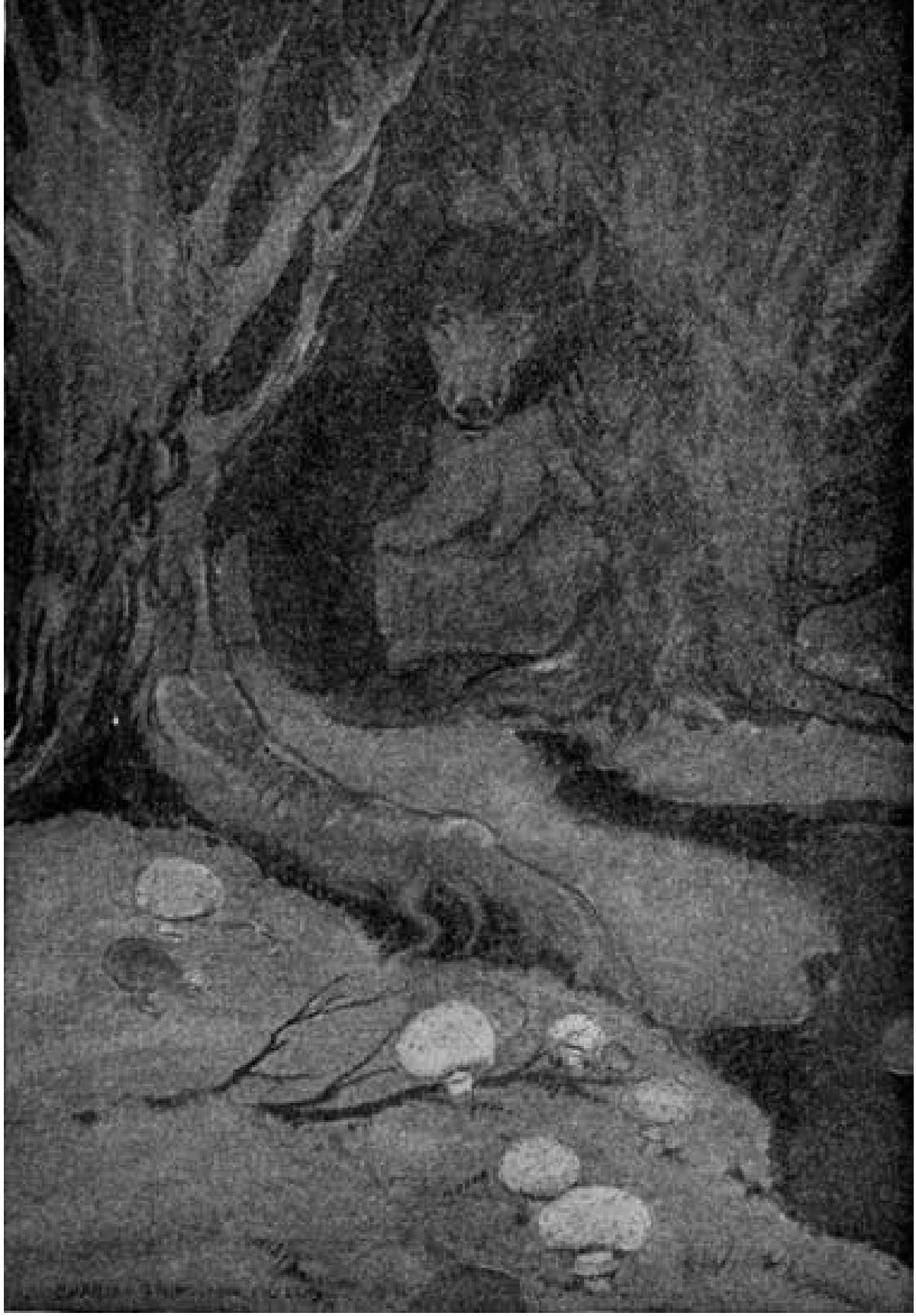
In the heart of the cedar swamp the silence was thick, brooding, and imperishable. One felt that if ever any wandering sound, any lost bird-cry or call of wayfaring beast, should drop into it, the intruding voice would be straightway engulfed, smothered, and forgotten.

The ground beneath the stiff branches and between the gray, ragged, twisted trunks was grotesquely humped with moss-grown roots and

pitted with pools of black water. Here and there amid the heavy moss fat fungoid growths thrust up their heads, dead white, or cold red, or pink, or spotted orange. The few scattered herbs that flourished among the humped and dangerous pools were solitary in habit, broad of leaf, tall and succulent of stalk. Not one of them bore any gay or perfumed blossom, to lure into the swamp the brightness of a butterfly or the homely humming of wild bees.

The only bird that habitually endured the stillness and the gloom of the cedar swamp was a shadowy, silent, elusive little nuthatch, which spent its time slipping up and down the ragged trunks, uttering at wide intervals its faint, brief note. So furtive a being, and so shy and rare a voice, only made the silence more impressive, the solitude more profound.

A great black bulk, moving noiselessly as a shadow hither and thither among the shadows, seemed the spirit of the swamp made palpable. The old bear, having learned that certain of the big toadstools growing in the swamp were very good to eat, had taken to haunting the silence of the glooms in the season when the fungoids flourished. The solitude and the stillness suited his morose temper; and for all his seeming awkwardness he moved as delicately as a cat. His great sharp-clawed feet seemed shod with velvet, and never a twig snapped under his stealthy tread. It was not through fear that he went thus softly, for he feared no creature of the wilderness. But the heavy silence was attuned to his mood; and besides, he never knew when he might surprise some mouse, water-rat, or mink that would furnish variety to his toadstool diet.



"FOR ALL HIS SEEMING AWKWARDNESS HE MOVED AS DELICATELY AS A CAT."

Such a fortunate surprise, however, could befall him but seldom in the empty solitude of the swamp. So it happened that, one day when he

tired of the fat, insipid fungoids, his thought turned to the lake, on whose shores he had sometimes found dead fish. He remembered, with watering chops, that he had even once or twice been able to catch live fish, close in shore, by lying in wait for them with exhaustless patience and scooping them up at last with a lightning sweep of the paw.

Ignoring the toadstools, he turned straight south, and made his way toward the lake. He travelled swiftly, winding this way and that between the green, humped roots, the gray trunks, and the black water-pits. But swiftly as he went, his movement left no trail of sound behind it. A shadow could not have moved more noiselessly. It was as if the age-old silence simply seized and folded away for ever the impact of his great footfalls on the moss. When at length he caught the flash of the bright water ahead of him through the trees, he moved even more cautiously, so extreme was his circumspection. Reaching the edge of the cedar growth, he slipped unseen into a thicket of red willows which afforded a convenient ambush, and peered out warily to assure himself as to what might be going on around the shores. For a long while he crouched there as moveless as a stone, that if by mischance his coming had given alarm to any of the wilderness folk, suspicion might have time to die away.

III

In the mid-deep of the lake the silence was absolute. There was no hiss of tense feathers to accentuate it, as in the upper vast of air. There was no fading and elusive bird-note to measure it by, as in the gloom of the cedar swamp. Down in the gold-brown glimmer the fine silt lay unstirred on the stones. There was no movement, except the delicate, almost imperceptible waving of the great trout's coloured fins.

In the shallower water along the edges of the lake there was always a faint confusion of small sounds. The slow breathing of the lake, as it were, kept up a rhythmic, almost invisible motion among the smaller pebbles, making a crisp whisper which the water carried far beneath the surface while it could not be heard at all in the air above. But none of this stir reached the silent deeps where the big trout, morose and enamoured of his solitude, lay lazily opening and shutting his crimson gills.

Because the water of the lake was dark,—amber-tinted from the swamps about its shores,—the colours of the trout were dark, strong, and vivid. His strangely patterned back was almost black, yet brilliant, like some kinds of damascened steel. His belly was bright pink. His sides had a purplish hue, on which the rows of intense vermilion spots stood out almost incongruously. His fins were as gaudy as the petals of some red-and-white flower.

The trout was staring upward with his blank, lidless eyes. He was hungry, and he felt that it was from that direction that food was like to come to him most easily. Smaller fish had learned, from the fate of so many of their fellows, to shun the haunted stillness of this mid-lake depth; and the big trout was growing tired of caddis bait and such small game.

The surface of the lake, as he looked up at it, presented to him a sort of semitransparent mirror, thronged with reflections, yet allowing the sky overhead, and the shadows of many dreaming insects, to show through. If a swallow, for instance, or a low-winged snipe, flew over, the trout could see not only the bird itself, and the shadow of the bird on the bottom, but also a dim, swift-moving reflection of the shadow, on the silvery mirror above. If a swallow's wing-tip flicked the surface, sending down a bright little jet of bubbles, these bubbles also would double themselves in reflections as they darted up again and vanished in the mirroring ripples.

All this, however, was of little interest to the hungry trout, till he caught sight of a large butterfly zigzagging languidly close above the water. Its flight was so feeble that the big fish's expectations were aroused. Slowly he started upwards, to be on hand for whatever favour fortune might have in store for him.

As he swam up out of the gloom, the butterfly flickered above him, and its big shadow danced along the bottom beside his own. A small beetle, its wings all outspread, struck the surface violently close by, shattering the mirror for a second, then starting a series of tiny ripples. The big trout paid no heed to the convulsive gyrations of the beetle. He was wholly intent upon the butterfly, whose faltering flight drooped ever nearer and nearer to the shining flood. At last, the splendid painted wings failed to flutter; and lightly, softly, like a leaf, the gorgeous insect sank upon the water, hardly marring the surface. Without a struggle, without even a quiver. They rested,—for perhaps a second. Then, there was a heavy boil in the water immediately beneath. A pair of black jaws opened. The dead butterfly was sucked down. With a wanton flick of his broad, powerful tail, just above the surface, the big trout turned to sink back into the watery silence with his spoils.

"THE WATER SPLASHED HIGH AND WHITE ABOUT HIM."

IV

There was a harsh, strong hissing in the air, and a dark body fell out of the sky. Fell? Rather it seemed to have been shot downward from a catapult. No mere falling could be so swift as that sheer yet governed descent. Just at the surface of the water the wedge of the eagle's body turned, his snow-white head and neck bent upwards, his broad wings spread, and beat heavily. In spite of the terrific force of his descent, his body did not go wholly under water, but the water splashed high and white about him. The next instant he rose clear, flapping ponderously. In the iron clutch of his talons writhed the great trout, gripped behind the head and by the middle of the back, its tail thrashing spasmodically.

Never before had this fierce and majestic visitant from the upper silence fallen upon so difficult a prey. Its weight, alone, was all that his mighty wings could lift; and its vehement writhings were so full of energy that it was all he could do to hold it. With his most strenuous flapping, he could hardly lift the victim clear of the water. To bear it off to his lonely rock-ledge on the peak was manifestly impossible. After a few moments of laborious indecision he beat his way heavily toward shore. Nowhere, up and down the beach, in the thickets, or in the dark corridors of the forest, could his piercing eyes detect any foe.

The nearest point of land was an arrow ribbon of clean white rock with a screen of Indian willow close behind it. This point he made for. A few feet above the water's edge he alighted. For a moment he stood haughtily, his hard, implacable yellow eyes challenging the wilderness. Then, his snake-like white head stooped quickly forward, and his powerful beak bit clear through to the victim's backbone, a little behind the spot where it joined the neck. The trout's body stiffened straight out, with a strong shudder, then lay limp and still. Very deliberately, as if scorning to display his hunger, the royal bird began to make his meal.

But one palpitating morsel had gone down his outstretched, snowy

throat, when it seemed to him that a leaf whispered in the willow thicket behind him. There was no air stirring, so why should a leaf whisper? His claws relaxed their grip upon the prey; his wings shot out and gave one powerful flap; he bounced lightly upward and aside. At the same moment a black bulk burst out from the willow thicket, and a great black paw smote at him savagely.

The eagle had sprung aside just in time. Had that terrific buffet fairly reached him, never again would he have mounted to his aërial haunts of silence. But as it was, the sweep of the black paw just touched the bird's tail. Two or three dark, regal feathers fluttered to the ground. His spacious pinions caught the air and winnowed out a few feet over the water. The bear, content at having captured the prize, paid no more attention to him, but greedily fell upon the prey.

Ordinarily, an eagle would no more think of interfering with a bear than of assailing a granite boulder. But in this case the aggravation was unprecedented. Never before had the "King of the Air" known what it was to have his lawful prey and hard-won spoils snatched from him. With a sudden sharp yelp of rage he whirled, shot upward, and swooped, with a twang of stiff-set feathers, straight at his adversary's head. Totally unprepared for such a daring assault, the bear could not ward it off. Several sudden red gashes on his head showed where those knife-like talons had struck. "*Wah!*" he bawled, half-rising on his haunches and throwing up a great forearm in defence. The eagle, swooping upward out of reach, swung round and hovered as if about to repeat the attack.

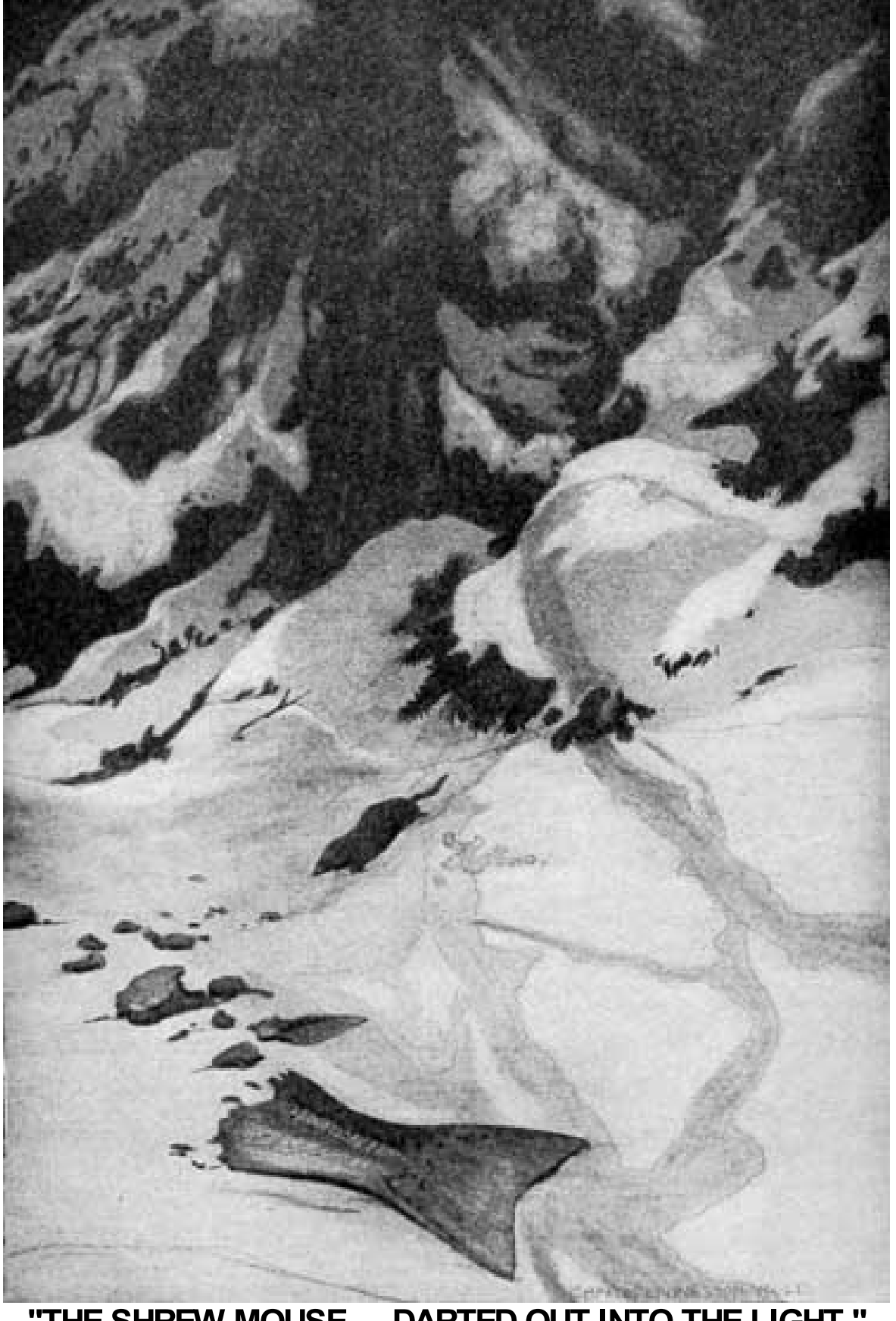
As the bear crouched, half-sitting, one paw on the mangled prey, the other uplifted in readiness for stroke or parry, the furious bird hesitated. He knew the full menace of that massive upraised paw, which, clumsy though it looked, could strike as swiftly as the darting head of a snake. For all his rage, he had no mind to risk a maimed wing. In a second or two he swooped again, this time as if to catch

the foe in the back; but he took care not to come too close. The bear whirled on his haunches, and struck viciously; but his claws met nothing but empty air, while a stiff wing-tip brushed smartingly across his eyes.

Again, and yet again, the eagle swooped, never coming quite within reach. Again and yet again the bear, boiling with embarrassed fury, whirled and struck, but in vain. He struck nothing more tangible than air. The sharp indignant yelps of the great bird flapping close above him were a defiance which he could not answer. He had the prize, but he could not enjoy it. For a few moments he hesitated. Then doggedly he crouched down, with his head partly shielded between his fore paws, and fell to eating hurriedly. Before he could fairly swallow one mouthful, the air again hissed ominously in his ears, and those clutching talons tore at his neck. With a roar of pain, and wrath, and discomfiture, he snatched the prey up in his jaws, and plunged into the thicket with his head well down between his legs. As he vanished the implacable talons struck once more, ripping red furrows in the black fur of his rump.

Smarting, and grumbling heavily, the bear lay down in the heart of the willow thicket, and finished devouring the great trout. Still yelping, the eagle circled above the thicket. Through the leafy branches he could see the black form of his adversary; but into the thicket he dared not swoop lest he should be caught at a disadvantage there. For a long time he circled, hoping that his enemy would come out and give him another opportunity of vengeance. Then, seeing that the bear lay motionless, apparently asleep, his rage wore itself out. Higher he whirled, and yet higher, while the wary beast in the thicket watched patiently for his going. Then suddenly he changed his course. With long, splendid sweep of wing he made off in direct flight, slanting swiftly upward toward the blue silence above the peak.

On the Night Trail



"THE SHREW-MOUSE ... DARTED OUT INTO THE LIGHT."

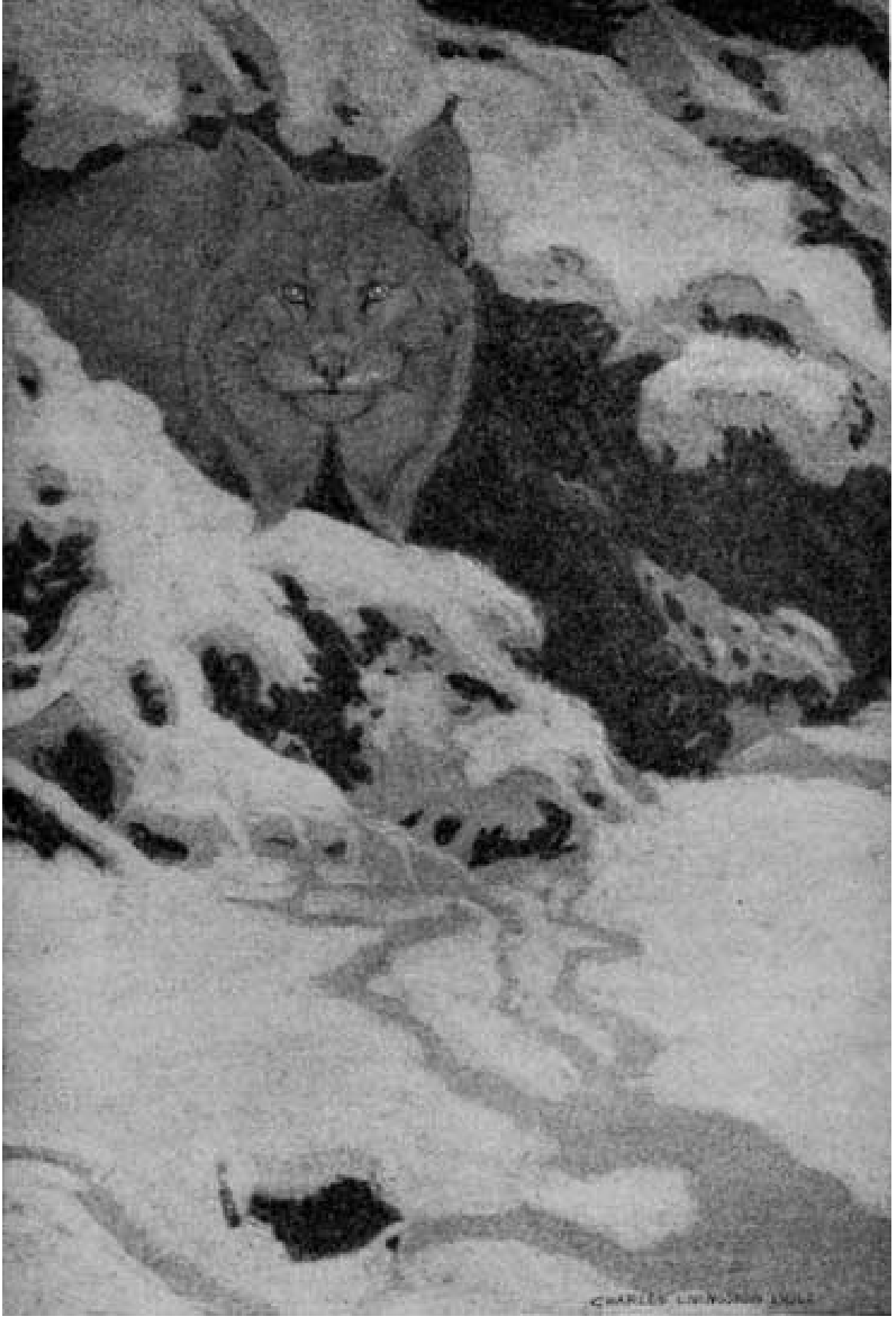
THE radiant, blue-white, midwinter moonlight, flooding the little open space of white in the blackness of the spruce forest, revealed the

frozen fragments of a big lake trout scattered over the snow. They stood out sharply, so that no midnight forager of the wilds, prowling in the fringes of the shadow and peering forth in the watch for prey or foe, could by any possibility fail to sight them.

The stillness of the solitude was intense, breathless, as if sealed to perpetual silence by the bitter cold. At last, at one corner of the open, a spruce branch that leaned upon the snow stirred ever so slightly; and from its shelter a little gray-brown nose, surmounted by a pair of tiny eyes like black beads, anxiously surveyed the perilous space of illumination. For perhaps half a minute there was not another movement. Then the shrew-mouse, well aware that death might be watching him from under every tree, plucked up a desperate valour and darted out into the light. The goad of his winter hunger driving him, he seized the nearest bit of fish that was small enough for him to handle, and scurried back with it to his safe hole under a fir-root. It was brave adventure, and deserved its success.

For ten minutes more nothing happened to break the stillness. Then again the little shrew-mouse peered from the covert of his hanging branch. This time, however, he drew back instantly. He had caught sight of a pointed black head and snake-like neck stealthily reconnoitring from the opposite side of the open. A hungry mink was making ready to appropriate some of the fish; but since he knew that a forest glade, far from the water, was not a customary resort of fish, alive or frozen, he was inclined to be suspicious of some kind of trap or ambuscade. Instead of looking at the delicious morsels, there in plain, alluring view, he scanned piercingly the shadows and drooping branches which encircled the glade. Suddenly he seemed to detect something to his distaste. A red gleam of anger and ferocity flared into his eyes, and he sank back noiselessly into covert.

A moment later came a huge lynx, padding softly but fearlessly straight out into the revealing light, as if he knew that at this season, when the bears were asleep and the bull moose, bereft of their antlers, had lost their interest in combat, there was none of all the forest kindreds to challenge his supremacy. He was stealthy, of course, in every movement, and his round, sinister eyes glared palely into every covert, but that was merely because he dreaded to frighten off a possible quarry, not because he feared a lurking foe. The frozen fish, however, showed no signs of flight at his approach; so he fell upon the nearest fragment and bolted it ravenously.



"HIS ROUND, SINISTER EYES GLARED PALELY INTO EVERY COVERT."

Having thus eagerly disposed of several substantial lumps, the great lynx became more critical, and went sniffing fastidiously from morsel

to morsel as if he revelled in such unexpected abundance. Suddenly there was a vicious *click*; and with a spit and a yowl the lynx started as if to jump into the air. Instead of rising, however, some six or seven feet, under the propulsion of his mighty, spring-like muscles, he merely bowed his back and strained tremendously. In response, a small thing of dark steel emerged from the snow, followed closely by a log of heavy wood. The lynx was caught in a trap by his right fore foot.

For a minute or two the panic-stricken beast went through a number of more or less aimless contortions, spitting and screeching, biting at the trap, and clawing frantically at the log. Presently, however, finding that his contortions only made the thing that had him grip the harder and hurt him the more savagely, he halted to consider his predicament. Consideration not appearing to ease that urgent anguish in his paw, he began to strain steadily backward, hoping, if he could not free himself, at least to drag his captor into the woods and perhaps lose it among the trees. The log, however, was very heavy, and his best efforts could move it but a few inches at a time. When, at the end of an hour of fierce struggle, he lay down utterly exhausted, he was still in the full glare of the moon, still several feet from the shelter of the branches. But no sooner had he lain down, than the crunching of a footstep on the crisp snow brought him to his feet again; and with every hair on end along his back, his eyes ablaze with rage and fear, he turned to face the tall figure of a backwoodsman, who stood gazing at him with a smile of satisfaction from the other side of the glade.

Just about three hours earlier, on his way into the Cross Roads Settlement, Pete Logan had set that trap with particular care, and with the definite purpose of capturing that particular lynx. With all his cunning, little did the great tuft-eared cat suspect that for weeks the backwoodsman had been watching him, noting his haunts and trails, observing his peculiarities, and laying plans for his capture. That very evening, at the Cross Roads, Logan had boasted that single-handed

he would bring the big lynx into the Settlement, alive and undamaged. He wanted the splendid animal to sell to an American who was collecting wild beasts for menageries; and to avoid injuring the captive's fine gray fur he had partly muffled the cruel teeth of the trap, that they might take hold without tearing.

Having no dread of anything that inhabited the wilds, Logan had left his rifle at home, and carried no weapon but the knife in his belt and his light, straight-hafted axe. In the pack on his back, however, he brought what he intended should serve him better than any weapon,—a thick blanket, and a heavy canvas sack. Now, as he stood eying the frightened and furious captive, he undid the pack and shook the big blanket loose. The lynx glared with new terror at the ample folds. He had seen men before, but he had never seen one shaking out a blanket, which looked to him like a kind of gigantic and awful wings.

Logan had made his plans with careful foresight; and now it was with the deliberation of absolute confidence that he went about the execution of them. His axe gripped in readiness for any unforeseen piece of strategy on the part of the foe, he advanced with the blanket outspread before him like a shield. Back and back, to the limit of his bonds, cowered the lynx, glaring defiance and inextinguishable hate. Slowly the man drew near, till, just barely within reach of the beast's spring, he stopped. For perhaps half a minute more neither man nor beast stirred a muscle,—till the tension of the captive's nerves must have neared the breaking-point. Then, as if his own nerves knew by sympathy the exactly proper moment for the next move in the game, Logan made a swooping forward plunge with the blanket. With a screech of fury the lynx sprang to the grapple,—to find himself, in half a second, rolled over and tangled up and swathed helpless in the smothering woollen folds. In vain he bit, and spat, and yowled, and tore. His keen white fangs caught nothing but choking wool; his rending claws had no chance to do their work; and the crushing weight of the woodsman's sturdy body was bearing him down into the

snow. In a few moments, daunted by the thick darkness over his eyes and exhausted by the impotence of his efforts, he lay still, quivering with rage. Then, with the most delicate caution, working through a couple of folds of the blanket, Logan released the jaws of the trap and slipped it warily from the imprisoned paw. To remove it from within the perilous paral was, of course, not to be thought of; but he feared to damage the joint by leaving it in that inexorable clutch a moment longer than was necessary. This done, he deftly whipped a lashing of cod-line about the bundle, binding the legs securely, but leaving a measure of freedom about the head and neck. Then he thrust the bundle into the canvas bag, slung it over his back, and started on the five-mile tramp back to his camp.

Logan travelled without snow-shoes, because there was just now little snow on the trails, or even in the deep woods. What snow there was, moreover, was frozen almost as hard as rock, except for an inch or two of fluffy stuff which had fallen leisurely within a couple of days. An extraordinarily heavy and prolonged January thaw, followed by fierce and sudden frost, had brought about this unusual condition, making something like a famine among the hunting kindreds of the forest, whose light-footed quarry, the eaters of bark and twig and bud, now found flight easy over the frozen surfaces.

The complacent trapper, ruminating pleasantly over his triumph and the handsome price his captive was to bring him, had covered perhaps a mile of his homeward journey when from far behind him came to his ears a novel sound, faintly pulsing down the still night air. Without seeming to pay it any attention whatever, he nevertheless was instantly and keenly concerned; and he perceived that the uneasy bundle on his back was interested too, for it stopped its indignant wrigglings to listen. Up to this moment Logan had believed that there was no voice in all the wilderness unfamiliar to his ears, no speech of all the wild kindreds which he could not in rough fashion interpret. But this cry he did not understand. Presently it was repeated, a little

nearer, and a little more convincingly strange to him. He knotted his rugged brows. A few moments more and again it floated down the moonlight, high, quavering, musical, yet carrying in its mysterious cadences an unmistakable menace. Logan knew now to a certainty that it was a sound he had never heard before; and he knew what it was, though he refused to acknowledge it to himself, because it was a refutation of many of his most dogmatic pronouncements.

"It *ain't* wolves!" He muttered to himself obstinately. "Ther' ain't never been a wolf in New Brunswick!"

But even as he spoke, the sinister cry arose again, nearer and yet nearer; and he was obliged to confess to himself that, whatever it was, it was on his trail, and he was likely to know more about it within a few minutes. He was not alarmed, but he was annoyed, both at the upsetting of his theories and at the absence of his gun. Undoubtedly, these Charlotte County romancers had been right. There *were* wolves in New Brunswick. He was ready to apologize for having so sarcastically questioned it.

In spite of the fact that his dignity as a woodsman would not permit him to be alarmed, he could not but recognize that the cry upon his trail was made up of a number of voices, and that a number of wolves might be capable of making things very unpleasant for him. He remembered, uncomfortably, that in this weather, with the snow so hard that the deer could run their fastest upon it, the wolves must be extremely hungry. The more he thought of this fact the more clearly he realized that the wolves must be very hungry indeed, to dare to trail a man. He had been walking as fast as he could; but now he broke into a long, swinging lope, his moccasined feet padding with a soft whisper upon the snow. For a moment he thought of ridding himself of the burden upon his back; but this idea he rejected resentfully and with scorn. He was not going to be robbed of his triumph by a bunch of rascally, interloping vermin like wolves.

Meanwhile, the quavering high-pitched chorus was sweeping swiftly nearer through the moonlight, and Logan put on a burst of speed in order to get to a stretch of open burnt lands before his pursuers should come up with him. If he was to have a fight forced upon him, he wanted plenty of room and the chance to keep all his adversaries in plain view. He gained the open, with its scattered black stumps and gaunt, ghostly "rampikes" dotting the radiant silver of the snow, and was some eighty or a hundred paces beyond the edge of the woods before the wolves appeared. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw the gray forms of the pack halt, come close together, then separate again, hesitating at the venture of the open. The hesitation was only for a moment, however. Then, in formation so close that one might have covered the whole pack with a bedquilt, they came on again. His trained eye had counted six wolves in the pack; and he was relieved to find that there were not more. From their cries he had imagined there must have been thirty or forty.

"HE SAW THE GRAY FORMS OF THE PACK."

Logan was too wise to run, now that he was in view of his foes. He stalked on with haughty indifference, till the pack was within twenty-five or thirty yards of his heels. Then he turned, and spoke, with an air

of sharp, confident authority. Even through their hunger and their savage madness of pursuit the beasts felt the mastery of his voice. They paused, irresolutely, then opened out and sat down on their haunches to see what he would do.

After surveying them superciliously for a few seconds, the woodsman turned again and stalked on, keeping, however, a keen watch over his shoulder and his axe poised ready for instant use. As soon as he moved on, the wolves followed, but no longer in their pack formation. Not yet audacious enough to come within ten or twelve feet of this arrogantly confident being, whose voice had power to daunt them in the very heat of their onslaught, they spread out on either side of the trail, half-surrounding him, and keeping pace with him at a skulking trot. Their jaws were half-open, their long white fangs were bared in a snarling grin, and their eyes, all fixed upon him unwinkingly, glinted a green light of ferocity and hunger.

Little by little they drew closer in, while Logan pretended to ignore them contemptuously. All at once he felt, almost more than saw, one of the largest of the pack dart in to spring upon his back. Out went the bright axe-blade like a flash of blue flame, as he whirled on his heel; and the wolf dropped with a choked-off yelp, shorn through the neck. Thrice around him he wheeled the circle of the deadly blade; and the wolves deferentially slunk beyond reach of it, not yet ready to tempt the fate of their comrade.

Five minutes more, however, and the wary beasts again drew closer and Logan found that the strain of guarding himself on all sides at once was overwhelming. At any moment, as he knew, those hungry eyes might all close in on him together. A few hundred yards ahead, as he bethought himself, the trail led under the foot of a high, almost perpendicular rock; and he made up his mind that he must reach that rock as speedily as possible. With his back against the steep face of it he could face the charge of the pack to better advantage. Breaking

into a long, unhurried trot, he pressed on, swinging the axe from side to side in swift, menacing sweeps, and uttering angry expletives which the wolves seemed to respect as much as they did the gleaming weapon. Before he gained the foot of the rock, however, the beasts had grown more confident and more impatient, making little sudden leaps at him, from one side or the other, so incessantly that his arm had not a moment's rest; and he realized that the crisis of the adventure could not be much longer delayed.

When he reached the foot of the rock and turned at bay, the wolves drew back once more and formed a half-circle before him, a moving, interweaving half-circle that drew closer and grew smaller stealthily. Suddenly the wolf which seemed the leader sprang straight in. But the woodsman seemed to divine the move even before it began, so sharply did he meet it with a step forward and a savage axe-stroke; and the wolf sprang back just in time to save its skull.

And now, in the clutch of the final trial, Logan had an inspiration. With all the doggedness of the backwoods will he had vowed that he would not give up the rich booty on his back. But the question had at last, as he saw, become one of giving up his own life. In this crisis, his backwoods understanding and sympathy suddenly went out toward the plucky but helpless captive in the sack on his back. It would be quite too bad that the splendid lynx, with all his fighting equipment of fangs and claws, should be torn to pieces in his bonds without a chance to make a fight for life. Moreover, as he realized with the next thought, here was perhaps a chance to create an effective diversion in his own favour.

With a shout and a mad whirling of the axe, he once more drew back the narrowing crescent of the wolves. The next instant he swung the bag from his back, ripped open the mouth of it, and emptied out the writhing roll of blanket upon the snow at his feet,—while the wolves, eyeing this new procedure with suspicion, held back a few moments

before again closing in. As the bundle fell, Logan seized one corner of the blanket, and with a dexterous twist and throw unrolled it, landing the prisoner almost under the noses of the wolves.

Bewildered for an instant, the lynx had no time to bound back and scurry up the steep face of the rock to safety. He had no sooner gained his feet than the whole pack was upon him. With a screech of fury he proclaimed his understanding of the crisis, and turned every tooth and claw into the fray. His fangs, of course, were no match for those of any one of his assailants; but his claws were weapons of such quality that no single wolf could have withstood him. As it was, the wolves in their eagerness got in one another's way; and as the mass of them smothered the lynx down, more than one got eviscerating slashes that sent them yelping out of battle.

For a few breathless seconds Logan watched the fight, glowing with excited approval over his late captive's prowess. Then he realized the time had come when he must take a hand, or find himself again at a disadvantage. Silently he darted upon the screeching, growling heap with his light axe. So skilled was he in all the woodsman's sleights, that even in so brief time as takes to tell it, three more of the pack were down, kicking and dying silently on the snow. The leader of the pack, the side of his neck redly furrowed and the lust of battle hot in his veins, wheeled, and jumped madly at Logan's throat. But the woodsman met him with a terrific short-handled upward stroke, which fairly split his ribs and hurled him over backwards. On the instant the remaining wolves, who had each suffered something in the mêlée, concluded that the game was up. Leaping away from the reach of those deadly-ripping claws, they turned and ran off like whipped dogs.

Bleeding from a dozen gashes, bedraggled and battered, but still full of fight to every outspread claw, the lynx crouched and glared at the man, with ears flattened back and eyes shooting pallid flame. For some seconds the two faced each other, the man grinning with

approval. Then it occurred to him that the maddened beast, in despair of escape, might spring at him and compel him to strike, which, in his present sympathetic and grateful mood, he was most unwilling to do. Cautiously, keeping his eyes on the sinister flaring orbs that faced him, he took a step backwards. Still the lynx crouched, ready to spring. Then Logan spoke, in quiet expostulation.

"Don't ye go for to fight *me*, now! I never done ye no hurt!" he argued mendaciously. "It's them durn wolves, that was after the both of us; an' it was me got ye out of that scrape. Don't ye come lookin' fer trouble, for I don't want to hurt ye!"

At the sound of the quiet voice, soothing yet commanding, the tension of the beast's madness seemed to relax. The fixity of his glare wavered. Then his eyes shifted; and the next moment, turning with a movement so quick that the woodsman's eyes could hardly follow it, he was away like a gray shadow among the stumps and trunks, not leaping, but running belly to ground like a cat. Logan watched him out of sight, then nonchalantly put two wounded wolves out of their misery, whetted his knife on his larrigans, and settled down to the task of stripping the pelts.

When the Tide Came Over the Marshes

PERFECT dome of palest blue, vapourous but luminous. To northward and southeastward a horizon line of low uplands, misty purple. Along the farthest west a glimmer and sparkle of the sea. Everywhere else, wide, wind-washed levels of marsh, pallid green or ochre yellow, cut here and there with winding tide-channels and mud-flats of glistening copper red. Twisting this way and that in erratic curves, the unbroken, sodded lines of the dyke, fencing off the red flats and tide-channels, and dividing the green expanses of protected dyke-marsh from the ochre yellow stretches of the salt marsh, as yet but half-reclaimed from the sea.

At this autumn season the hay had all been cut and cured and most of it hauled away to safe storage in far-off, upland barns. But on the remoter and wetter marshes some of it had been piled in huge yellow-gray, cone-peaked stacks, to await the easier hauling of winter. The solitary, snug-built stacks, towering above the dyke-tops and whistled over ceaselessly by the long marsh winds, were a favoured resort of the meadow-mice. These adaptable little animals were able to endure with equanimity the inevitable annual destruction of their homes in the deep grass, seeing that the haymakers were so thoughtful as to afford them much dryer and more secure abodes in the heart of the stacks, where neither the keen-nosed fox nor the keen-eyed marsh-owl could get at them.

Past the foot of a certain lonely stack by the outer dyke, within sound of the rushing tide, ran an old drainage ditch, at this time of year almost dry. Its bottom, where tiny puddles were threaded on a trickle of running water, was now a thronged resort of water-loving insects, and small frogs, and imprisoned shiners. To a wandering mink, driven down by drought from the uplands, it was a wonderful and delightful place, which he adopted at once as his own particular range. The main ditch, with its system of lateral feeders, furnished several miles of runway, and the whole of this rich domain the newcomer preempted, patrolling it methodically, devoting his whole attention to it, and ready to defend it against any rival claimant who might appear.

The mink was a male, about twenty inches long, with his rich dark coat in perfect condition. His pointed, sinister, quietly savage face and head were set on a long but heavy-muscled neck, almost as thick as the thickest part of his body. The body itself was altogether snake-like in its lithe sinuousness, and supported on legs so ridiculously short that when he was not leaping he seemed to writhe and dart along on his belly after the fashion of a snake. In spite of this shortness of the legs, however, his movements, when he had any reason for haste, were of an almost miraculous swiftness, his whole form seeming to be made up of subtle and tireless steel springs. When he did not care to writhe and dart along like a snake, he would arch his long back like a measuring-worm and go leaping over the ground in jumps of sometimes four or five feet in length. This method of progression he probably adopted for the fun of it, in the main; for his hunting tactics were usually those of stealthy advance and lightning-like attack. Once in a long while, indeed, by lucky chance he would succeed in catching in one of these wild leaps, a snipe which flew too low over the ditch or paused on hovering wing before alighting to forage on the populous ooze. Such an achievement would afford a pleasant variation to his customary diet of fish, frogs, beetles, and occasional muskrat.

"A SNIPE WHICH FLEW TOO LOW OVER THE DITCH."

The mink had been nearly three weeks on his new range, and enjoying himself hugely in his devastating way, before he observed the big yellow stack beside the ditch. It was on a day of driving rain-squalls and premature cold that he first took note of its possibilities. Gliding furtively around its base, his bright, fierce eyes detected a tiny hole, the imperfectly hidden entrance to a mouse-tunnel. He thrust in his head at once to investigate. It was a close squeeze; but where his head and neck could go his slender body could follow, and he dearly

loved the exploring of just such narrow passages.

A little way in, the tunnel branched; but the mink made no mistake. The gallery which he selected to follow ended in a mouse-nest, with the mice at home. There in the dry, warm, sweet-scented dark there was a brief tragedy, with shrill squeaks and a rustling struggle. Two mice escaped the slaughter, but the other three were caught. The invader sucked the blood of all three while they were warm, ate one, and then curled himself up for sleep in his new and delightful quarters. This stack was all that the new range needed to make it the very choicest that a mink could possess.

After this the mink occupied the stack in bad weather, but ranged the ditches, as usual, when it was pleasant. The stack was full of mouse-galleries, and when he wanted a change he hunted mice. But it was the outdoor, wide-ranging life that best contented him, so the mice were by no means all driven out. Being a happy-go-lucky tribe, the survivors continued to occupy their nests in spite of their terrible new neighbour, trusting that doom would overlook them.

But neither men nor mice nor minks can be prepared against all the caprices of Nature. That fall, Nature suddenly took it into her head to try the dykes, of which the men had for a generation or more been so boastful. She rolled in from the sea a succession of tremendous tides, backing them up with a mighty and unrelenting wind out of the southwest, and piled the tide-channels to the brim with buffeting floods. For a time the dykes withstood the assault valiantly. But again and again, ever fiercer and fiercer, came the besieging tides; and finally they made a breach. In rushed a red and foaming torrent, devouring the clay walls on either side with a roar, and drowning the long-protected dyke-marsh under a seething chaos of muddy waves and débris.

The first breach occurred at daybreak; and the stack stood right in the way. The huge flood poured in in angry glory, almost blood-red in the first gush of a blazing crimson sunrise. In that unnatural and terrifying light, which swiftly softened to a mocking delicacy of pink and lilac, the stack was torn from its foundations and borne revolving up the tide.

The nest of the mink, being low in the stack, was promptly flooded,

driving the angry tenant out. He ran up to the dry top of the stack, and surveyed the wild scene with surprise. Water, of course, had no terrors for him; but this tumultuous flood seemed a good thing to keep out of. He would stay by his refuge for the present, at least. Meanwhile, there were mice!

The mice, indeed, panic-stricken and forced from their lower nests, were fairly swarming in the top of the stack. The mink first satiated his thirst with blood. Next he glutted his hunger with the brains of his victims. Then, seeing their numbers apparently undiminished, he got wild with excitement and blood-lust. Darting hither and thither, madly joyous, he killed, and killed, and killed, for the joy of killing; while the stack, with its freight of terror and death, went whirling majestically along the now broader and quieter flood.

"MADLY JOYOUS, HE KILLED, AND KILLED, AND KILLED, FOR THE JOY OF KILLING."

How long the slaughter of the helpless mice would have continued, before the slaughterer tired of the game and crept into a nest to sleep, cannot be known. By another of Nature's whims, concerned equally with great matters and with little, it was not left to the joyous

mink to decide. His conspicuous dark body, darting over the light surface of the stack, caught the eye of a great hawk soaring high above the marshes. Lower and lower sank the bird, considering,—for the mink was larger game than he usually chose to hunt. Then, while still too high in the blue to attract attention from the busy slayer, he narrowed his wings, hardened his plumage, and shot downward. At a strange sound in the air the mink looked up,—but not in time to meet that appalling attack. One great set of talons, steel-strong and edged like knives, clutched him about the throat, strangling him to helplessness, while another set crushed his ribs and cut into his vitals. The wise hawk had struck with a thorough comprehension of the enemy's fighting powers; and had taken care that there should be no fight. Flying heavily, he carried the long, limp body off to his high nest in the hills; and the stack drifted on with the tiny terrified remnant of the mouse-people, till the ebbing tide left it stranded on a meadow near the foot of the uplands.

Under the Ice-roof

I

ILTERING thinly down through the roof of snow and clean blue ice, the sharp winter sunshine made almost a summer's glow upon the brown bottom of the pond. Beneath the ice the water was almost as warm now as in summer, the pond being fed by springs from so deep a source that their temperature hardly varied with the seasons. Here and there a bit of water-weed stood up from the bottom, green as in June. But in the upper world, meanwhile, the wind that drove over the ice and snow was so intensely cold that the hardy northern trees snapped under it, and few of the hardy northern creatures of the wilderness, though fierce with hunger, had the fortitude to face it. They crouched shivering in their lairs, under fallen trunks or in the heart of dense fir thickets, and waited anxiously for the rigour of cold and the savagery of wind to abate. Only down in the pond, in the generous spaces of amber water beneath the ice-roof, life went on busily and securely. The wind might rage unbridled, the cold might lay its hand of death heavily on forest and hill; but the beavers in their unseen retreat knew nothing of it. All it could do was to add an inch or two of thickness to the icy shelter above them, making their peaceful security more secure.

The pond was a large one, several acres in extent, with a depth of fully five feet in the deeper central portions, which were spacious enough to give the beavers room for play and exercise. Around the shallow edges the ice, which was fully fifteen inches thick beneath its blanket of snow, lay solid on the bottom.

The beavers of this pond occupied a lodge on the edge of the deep water, not far above the dam. This lodge was a broad-based, low-

domed house of mud, turf, and sticks cunningly interwoven, and rising about four feet above the surface of the ice-roof. The dome, though covered deep with snow, was conspicuous to every prowler of the woods, who would come at times to sniff greedily at the warm smell of beaver steaming up from the minute air-vents in the apex. But however greedy, however ravenous, the prowling vagrants might be, the little dome-builders and dam-builders within neither knew nor cared about their greed. The dome was fully two feet thick, built solidly, and frozen almost to the hardness of granite. There were no claws among all the ravening forest kindred strong enough to tear their way through such defences. In the heart of the lodge, in a dry grass-lined chamber just above high-water level, the beavers dwelt warm and safe.

But it was not from the scourge of the northern cold alone, and the ferocity of their enemies, that the beavers were protected by their ice-roof and their frozen dome. The winter's famine, too, they had well guarded themselves against. Before the coming of the frost, they had gnawed down great quantities of birch, poplar, and willow, cut them into convenient, manageable lengths, and dragged them to a spot a little above the centre of the dam, where the water was deepest. Here the store of logs, poles, and brush made a tangled mass from the bottom up to the ice. When it was feeding-time in the hidden chamber of the lodge, a beaver would swim to the brush pile, pull out a suitable stick, and drag it into the chamber. Here the family would feast at their ease, in the dry, pungent gloom, eating the bark and the delicate outer layer of young wood. When the stick was stripped clean, another beaver would drag it out and tow it down to the dam, there to await its final use as material for repairs. Every member of the colony was blest with a good appetite, and there was nearly always at least one beaver to be seen swimming through the amber gloom, either with a green stick from the brush pile, or a white stripped one to deposit on the base of the dam.

For these most diligent of all the four-foot kindreds this was holiday time. Under the ice-roof they had no dam-building, no tree-cutting, no house-repairing. There was nothing to do but eat, sleep, and play. There was not much variety to their play, to be sure; but the monotony of it did not trouble them. Sometimes two would indulge in a sort of

mad game of tag, swimming at marvellous speed close beneath the ice, their powerful hind legs propelling them, their tiny little fore paws held up demurely under their chins, and their broad, flat, hairless tails stretched straight out behind to act as rudders. As they swam this way and that, they loosed a trail of silvery bubbles behind them, from the air carried under their close fur. At last one of the players, unable to hold his breath any longer, would whisk sharply into the mouth of the black tunnel leading into the lodge, scurry up into the chamber, and lie there panting, to be joined a moment later by his equally breathless pursuer. One by one the other members of the colony would dip in, till the low chamber was full of furry, snuggling warmth and well-fed content. Little cared the beavers whether it was night or day in the wide, frozen, perilous world above the ice-roof, whether the sun shone from the bitter blue, or the wolf-haunted moonlight lay upon the snow, or the madness of the blizzard made the woods cower before its fury.

"WOULD WHISK SHARPLY INTO THE MOUTH OF THE BLACK TUNNEL."

As long as the cold endured and the snow lay deep upon the wilderness, the beavers lived their happy, uneventful life beneath the ice-roof. But in this particular winter the untempered cold of December and January, which slew many of the wood folk and drove the others wild with hunger, broke suddenly in an unprecedented thaw. Not the oldest bear of the Bald Mountain caves could remember any such thaw. First there were days on days, and nights on nights, of

bland, melting rain, softer than April's. The snow vanished swiftly from the laden branches of fir and spruce and hemlock, and the silent woods stood up black and terrible against the weeping sky. On the ground and on the ice of pond and stream the snow shrank, settled, and assumed a grayish complexion. Water, presently, gathered in great spreading, leaden-coloured pools on the ice; and on the naked knolls the bare moss and petty shrubs began to emerge. Every narrow watercourse soon carried two streams,—the temperate, fettered, summer-mindful stream below the ice, and the swollen, turbulent flood above. Then the rain stopped. The sun came out warm and urgent as in latter May. And snow and ice together dwindled under the unnatural caress.

The beavers, in their safe seclusion, had knowledge in two ways of this strange visitation upon the world. Not all the soft flood of the melting snow ran over the surface of their ice, but a portion got beneath it, by way of the upper brooks. This extra flow disturbed both the colour and the temperature of the clear amber water of the pond. It lifted heavily against the ice, pressed up the tunnels to the very edge of the dry chamber of the lodge, and thrust ponderously at the outlets of the dam. Understanding the peril, the wise little dam-builders sallied forth in a flurry, and with skilful tooth and claw lost no time in enlarging the outlets. They were much too intelligent to let the flood escape by a single outlet, lest the concentrated flow should become too heavy for them to control it. They knew the spirit of that ancient maxim of tyrants, "*divide et impera*." By dividing the overflow into many feeble streams they knew how to rule it. This done, they rested in no great anxiety, expecting the thaw to end with a stringent frost.

Then, however, came the second, and more significant, manifestation of peril. The snow on the ice-roof had vanished; and looking up through the ice they saw the flood eddying riotously over the naked expanse. It was a portent which the wiser elders understood. The whole colony fell to work strengthening the dam where the weight of the current bore down upon it, and increasing the outlet along the farther edges.

A thaw so persistent, however, and at the same time so violent, overpassed their cunning calculations. One night, when all had done

their best and, weary, but reassured, had withdrawn into the warm chamber of the lodge, something happened that they had never looked for. In their snug retreat they were falling to sleep, the rush of the overflow and the high clamour of the side vents coming dimly to their ears, when suddenly they were startled by the water being forced up over the dry floor of the chamber. The pressure of water beneath the ice had suddenly increased. They were more than startled. They were badly frightened. If the water should rise much higher they would be drowned helplessly, for the ice lay close all over the pond. The younger ones scurried this way and that with plaintive squeaks, and several dashed forth into the pond in a panic, forgetting that there was no escape in that direction. A moment later a low crashing penetrated to the dark chamber; and the invading water retreated down the tunnel. The ice-roof, worn thin, honey-combed, and upheaved by the pressure from below, had gone to pieces.

It was the older and wiser beavers who had remained in the chamber, terrified, but not panic-stricken. When the water retreated to its normal level,—about two inches below the chamber floor,—they were satisfied. Then, however, a louder and heavier note in the rush of the overflow came to their ears, and their anxiety returned with fresh force. Thrusting their whiskered noses inquiringly down the tunnel, they observed that the water was sinking far below its proper level. Well they knew what that meant. The dam was broken. The water, which was their one protection from the terrors of the forest, was escaping.

This was the kind of an emergency which a beaver will always rise to. Shy as they are, under ordinary circumstances, when the dam is attacked their courage is unfailing. In a moment every beaver in the colony was out among the swirling ice, under the broad, white moonlight which they had not seen for so long.

It was at its very centre, where the channel was deepest and the thrust of the water most violent, that the dam had given way. The break was about ten feet wide, and not, as yet, of any great depth. It was the comparatively narrow and unsubstantial crust of the embankment which had yielded, disintegrated by the thaw and ripped by the broken edges of the ice.

The vehemence of the torrent was rapidly cutting down into the firmer body of the dam, when the beavers flung themselves valiantly into the breach. In the face of the common danger they forgot all caution, and gave no heed to any hungry eyes that might be glaring at them from the woods on either shore. Without any apparent leadership in the work, they all seemed to help each other in whatever way would be most effective. Some dragged up the longest and heaviest poles from the pile of stripped stuff, floated them carefully into the break, butt end up-stream and parallel with the flow, and held them there doggedly with their teeth and fore paws till others could come with more timbers to hold the first lot down. Meanwhile, from the soft bottom along the base of the dam, big lumps of mingled clay and grass-roots, together with small stones to add weight, were grabbed up and heaped solidly upon the layers of sticks for anchorage. This loose stuff, though deposited along the upper ends of the sticks where the flow was least violent, and swiftly packed down into the interstices, was mostly washed away in the process. It was seemingly an even struggle, for a time, and the beavers could do no more than hold the breach from deepening and widening. But they were quite undaunted; and they seemed to know no such thing as fatigue. Little by little they gained upon the torrent, making good the hold of a mass of turf here, a few stones there, and everywhere the long straight sticks upon which the water could get but slight grip. The flood grew shallower and less destructive. More sticks were brought, more stones, and clay, and grass-roots; and then a layer of heavy, clean poles, over which the water slid thinly and smoothly without danger to the structure beneath.

The dam was now strongest at this point, its crest being broader and formed of heavier timbers than elsewhere. But no sooner had the hard-won victory been secured, and the plucky little architects paused for breath, than there came an ominous crackling from far over to the extreme left of the dam, where a subsidiary channel had offered a new vantage to the baffled torrent. The crackling was mingled with a loud rushing noise. Another section of the crest of the dam had been swept away. A white curtain of foam sprang into the moonlight, against the darkness of the trees.

II

While the brave little dam-builders had been battling with the flood, out there in the wide-washing moonlight, hungry eyes had been watching them from the heart of a dense spruce thicket, a little below the left end of the dam. The watching had been hopeless enough, as the owner of those fierce, narrow eyes knew it was no use trying to surprise a beaver in the open, when the whole pond was right there for him to dive into. But now when the new break brought the whole colony swimming madly to the left-hand shore, and close to the darkness of the woods, those watching eyes glowed with a savage expectancy, and began slowly, noiselessly, steadily, floating nearer through the undisturbed underbrush.

The tremendous thaw, loosing the springs and streams on the high flanks of Bald Mountain, had washed out the snow from the mouth of a shallow cave and rudely aroused a young bear from his winter sleep. As soon as he had shaken off his heaviness the bear found himself hungry. But his hunting thus far had not been successful. His training had not been in the winter woods. He hardly knew what to look for, and the soft slumping snow hampered him. One panic-stricken white rabbit, and a few ants from a rotten stump, were all that he had found to eat in three days. His white fangs in his red jaws had slavered with craving as he watched the plump beavers at their work, far out on the brightly moonlit dam. When, at last, they came hurrying toward him, and fell to work on the new break within thirty or forty yards of his hiding-place, he could hardly contain himself. He did contain himself, however; for he had hunted beaver before, and not with a success to make him overconfident. Right by the termination of the dam, where the beavers were working, the woods came down thick and dark to within eight or ten feet of the water. Toward this point he made his way patiently, and with such control of every muscle that, for all his apparent clumsiness, not a twig snapped, not a branch rustled, any more than if a shadow were gliding through them. He saw one old beaver sitting stiffly erect on the crest of the dam, a wary sentinel, sniffing the still air and scanning the perilous woods; but he planned to make his final rush so swift that the sentinel would have no time to give warning.

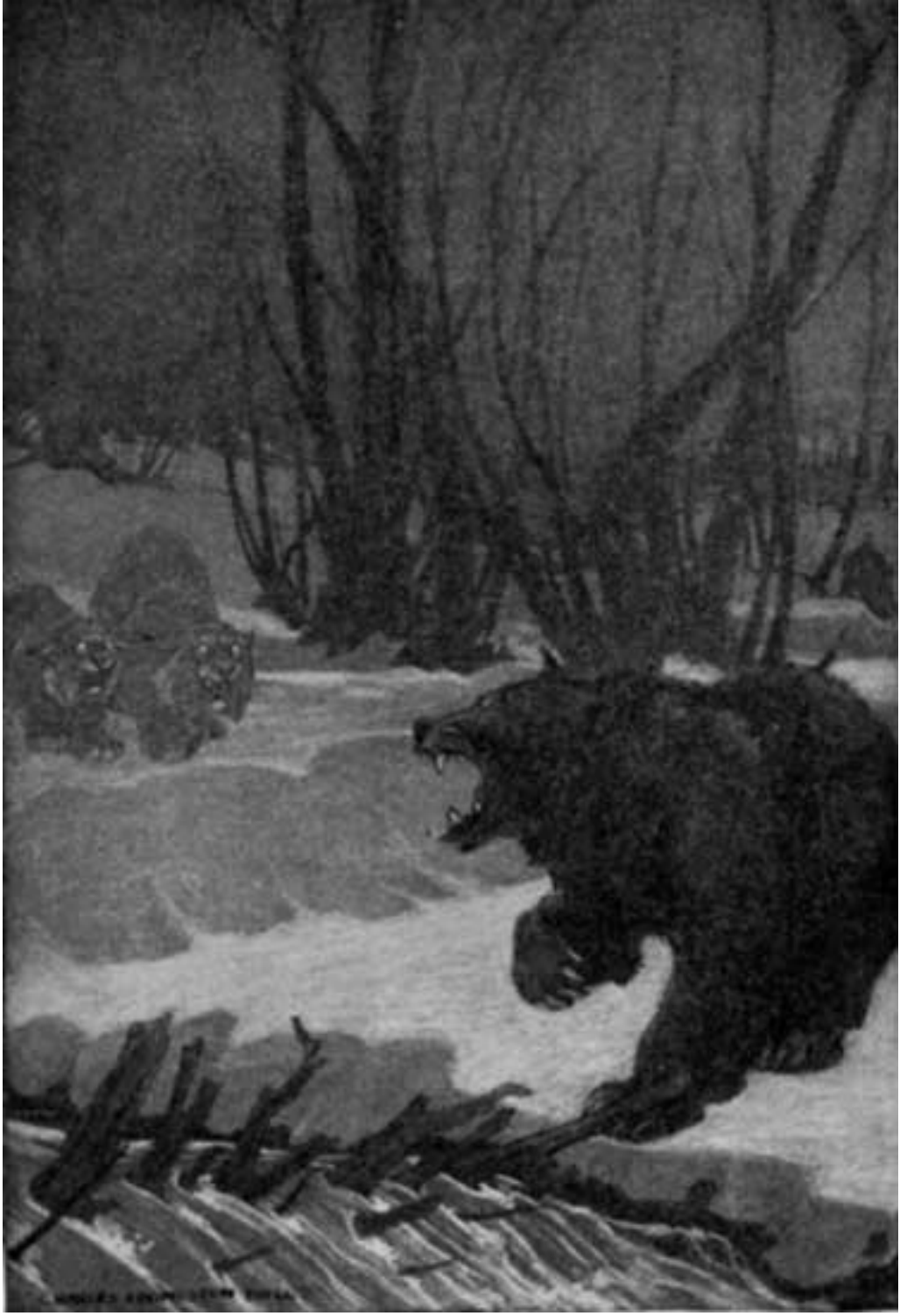
But the fierce little eyes of the bear, dark and glinting red, were not the only ones that watched the beavers at their valorous toil. In the juniper scrub, a short distance up the bank of the pond, crouched two big gray lynxes, glaring down upon the scene with wide, round, pale greenish eyes, unspeakably sinister. The lynxes were gaunt with famine. Fired with the savage hope that some chance might bring a beaver within reach of their mighty spring, they had crept down, on their great, furred, stealthy pads, to the patch of juniper scrub. Here they had halted, biding their time with that long, painful patience which is the price of feeding—the price of life—among the winter-scourged kindreds. Now, when the beavers had so considerately come over to the edge of the woods, and appeared to be engrossed in some incomprehensible pulling and splashing and mud-piling, the two lynxes felt that their opportunity had arrived. Their bellies close to the snow, their broad, soft-padded feet stepping lightly as the fall of feathers, their light gray fur all but invisible among the confused moon-shadows, their round, bright eyes unwinking, they seemed almost to drift down through the thickets toward their expected prey.

Neither the bear creeping up from below the dam, nor the two lynxes stealing down from above it, had eyes or thought for anything in the world but the desperately toiling beavers. Their hunger was gnawing at their lean stomachs, the fever of the hunt was in their veins, and the kill was all but within reach. A few moments more, and the rush would come, up from the fir thickets—the long, terrible spring and pounce, down from the juniper scrub.

The work of repairing the breach was making good progress. Already the roaring overflow was coming into subjection, its loud voice dwindling to a shallow clamour. Then, something happened. Perhaps the wary sentinel on the crest of the dam detected a darker shade stirring among the firs, or a lighter grayness moving inexplicably between the bushes up the bank. Perhaps his quick nostrils caught a scent that meant danger. Perhaps the warning came to him mysteriously, flashed upon that inner sense, sometimes alert and sometimes densely slumbering, which the forest furtiveness seems to develop in its creatures. However, it came, it came. Dropping forward as if shot, the sentinel beaver brought his flat tail down upon the surface of the water with a smack that rang all up and around the

borders of the pond, startling the quiet of the night. In a fraction of a second every beaver had vanished beneath the shining surface.

At the same moment, or an eye-wink later, a strange thing happened —one of those violent surprises with which the vast repression of the forest sometimes betrays itself. Maddened to see his prey escaping, the bear made his rush, launching himself, a black and uncouth mass, right down to the water's edge. Simultaneously the two lynxes shot into the air from higher up the bank, frantic with disappointed hunger. With a screech of fury, and a harsh spitting and snarling, they landed a few feet distant from the bear, and crouched flat, their stub tails twitching, their eyes staring, their tufted ears laid back upon their skulls.



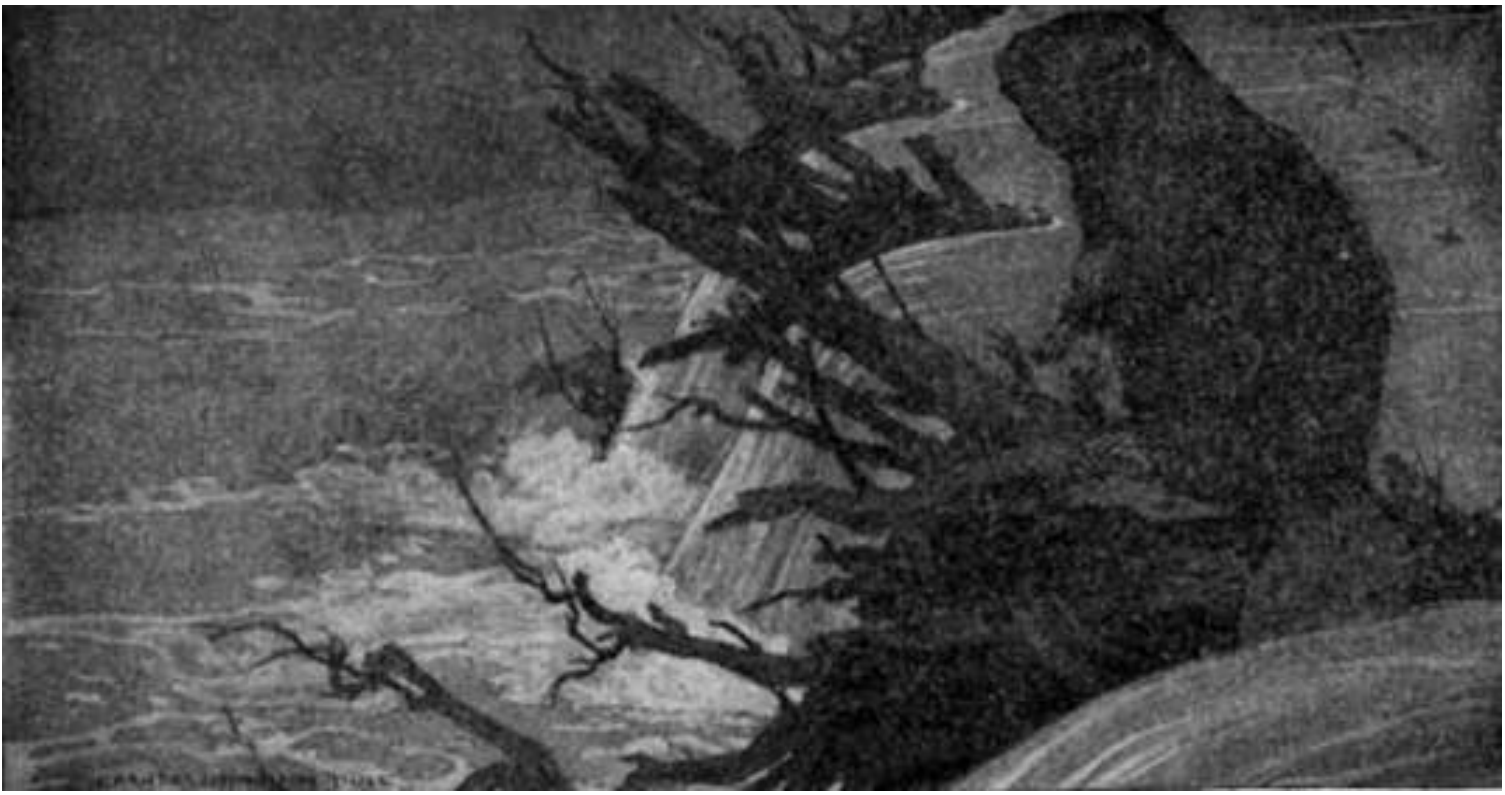
"CONFRONTING THE TWO GREAT CATS WITH UPLIFTED PAW AND MOUTH WIDE OPEN."

Like a flash the bear wheeled, confronting the two great cats with uplifted paw and mouth wide open. Half-sitting back upon his haunches, he was ready for attack or defence. His little eyes glowed red with rage. To him it was clearly the lynxes who had frightened off the beavers and spoiled his hunting; and interference of this kind is what the wild kindreds will not tolerate. To the lynxes, on the other hand, it was obvious that the bear had caused the whole trouble. He

was the clumsy interloper who had come between them and their quarry. They were on the verge of that blindness of fury which might hurl them, at any instant, tooth and claw, upon their formidable foe. For the moment, however, they had not quite lost sight of prudence. The bear was master of the forest, and they knew that even together they two were hardly a match for him.

The bear, on the other hand, was not quite sure that he was willing to pay the price of vengeance. His blood surging in the swollen veins, he growled with heavy menace, and rocking forward upon his haunches he seemed on the point of rushing in. But he knew how those powerful knife-edged claws of the lynxes could rend. He knew that their light bodies were strong and swift and elusive, their teeth almost as punishing as his own. He felt himself the master; nevertheless he realized that it would cost dear to enforce that mastery. He hesitated. Had he made the slightest forward move, the lynxes would have thrown caution to the winds, and sprung upon him. On the other hand, had the lynxes even tightened up their sinews to spring, he would have hurled himself with a roar into the battle. But as it was, both sides held themselves in leash, tense, ready, terrible in restraint. And as the moments dragged by, out on the bright surface of the pond small heads appeared, with little bright eyes watching curiously.

For perhaps three or four long, intense minutes there was not a move made. Then the round eyes of the lynxes shifted ever so little, while the bear's eyes never faltered. The bear's was the steadier purpose, the more tenacious and resolute temper. Almost imperceptibly the lynxes shrank backward, gliding inch by inch. A swift side-glance showed them that the way of retreat was open. Then, as if both were propelled by the one vehement impulse, they bounded into the air, one whirling aside and the other almost doubling back upon his own trail. Quicker than it takes to tell it, they were fleeing like gray shadows, one over the bank and through the juniper bushes, the other up along the snowy shore of the pond, their discomfiture apparently driving them to part company. The bear, as if surprised, sat up on his haunches to stare after them. Then, with a hungry look at the beavers, now swimming openly far out in the moonlight, he turned and shambled off to find some more profitable hunting.



"ONCE MORE THE WATCHFUL SENTINEL APPEARED."

For a few minutes all was stillness, save for the rushing of the water over the dam. The solitude of the night had resumed its white and tranquil dominion as if nothing had ever occurred to jar its peace. Then once more the watchful sentinel appeared, sitting erect on the dam, and the diligent builders busied themselves to complete the mending of the breach.

The Terror of the Air

ROM all the lonely salt-flats and tide-washed, reedy shores of the wide estuary, the flocks of the sea-ducks had flown south. After feeding for days together amicably, golden-eyed and red-head, broad-bill and dipper, all hobnobbing and bobbing and guttering in company, without regard to difference of kin, they had at last assorted themselves into flocks of the like species and wing power, and gone off in strong-flying wedges to seek milder tides and softer skies.

Nevertheless, though the marshy levels were now stiffened with frost, and ice fringes lingered thin and brittle behind each retreating tide, and white flurries of snow went drifting over the vast, windy spaces of wave and plain, some bold, persistent waifs of life clung to these bleak solitudes. Here and there a straggler from the flocks, or a belated arrival from farther north, fed solitary and seemed sufficient to himself; while here and there a few hardy coots, revelling in the loneliness and in the forbidding harshness of the season, swam and dived among the low, leaden-coloured waves.

Across ten level miles of naked marsh-land another estuary made in from the sea. On the shore of this estuary, so shallow that for leagues along its edge it was impossible to distinguish, at high tide, just where the water ended and the solid land began, a solitary surf-duck dabbled among the gray, half-frozen grasses. Of a dull black all over, save for a patch of clear white on his head and another on the back of his neck, he made a sharp, conspicuous spot against the pallid colouring of the marshes. For all his loneliness, he seemed to be enjoying himself very well, active and engrossed, and to all appearances forgetful of the departed flocks.

Suddenly, however, he stopped feeding, and sat with head erect and watchful eyes, rising and falling gently with the pulse of the sedge-

choked flood. Either some unusual sight or sound had disturbed him, or some drift of memory had stirred his restlessness. For several minutes he floated, forgetful of the savoury shelled and squirming creatures which his discriminating bill had been gathering from among the oozy sedge-roots. Then with an abrupt squawk, he flapped noisily along the surface of the water, rose into the air, and flew straight inland, mounting as he went to a height far above gunshot.

The flight of the lonely drake was toward the shores of the other estuary, ten miles southward, where in all likelihood he had some hope of finding the companionship of his kin, if not a better feeding-ground. Though his body was very heavy and massive and his wings ridiculously short for the bulk they had to sustain, he flew with tremendous speed and as straight as a bullet from a rifle. His wings, however small, were mightily muscled and as tough as steel springs, and they beat the air with such lightning strokes that the sturdy body, head and neck and legs and feet outstretched in a rigid line, was hurled through the air at a speed of something like a hundred miles an hour. As he flew, the flurries of snow gathered into a squall of whirling flakes, almost obscuring the waste of marsh-land that rushed past beneath his flight, and shutting him off alone in the upper heights of sky.

Alone indeed he imagined himself, while the cold air and the streaming snowflakes whistled past his flight. But keen as were his eyes, other eyes keener than his had marked him from a loftier height, where the air was clear above the storm strata. A great Arctic goshawk, driven by some unknown whim to follow the edge of winter southward, was sailing on wide wings through the high, familiar cold. When he saw the black drake far below him, shooting through the snowflakes like a missile, his fierce eyes flamed and narrowed, his wings gave one mighty beat and then half-closed, and he dropped into the cloudy murk of the storm belt.

The drake was now about a hundred yards ahead of the great hawk, and flying at perhaps ninety miles an hour under the mere impulse of his desire to reach the other estuary. When he caught sight of the white terror pursuing him, his sturdy little wings doubled the rapidity of their stroke, till he shot forward at a rate of, perhaps, two miles a

minute, his wedge-shaped body and hard, oiled plumage offering small resistance to the air even at that enormous speed. His only chance of escape, as he well knew, was to reach the water and plunge beneath it. But he could not turn back, for the terror was behind him. Straight ahead lay his only hope. There, not more than two or three minutes distant, lay his secure refuge. He could see the leaden gray expanse, touched by a gleam of cold and lonely sunlight which had pierced the obscurity of the squall. Could he reach it? If he could, he would drop into the slow wave, dive to the bottom, and hold to the roots of the swaying weeds till the terror had gone by.

A hundred yards behind came the hawk, moving like a dreadful ghost through the swirl and glimmer of the snow. His plumage was white, but pencilled with shadowy markings of pale brown. His narrowed eyes, fixed upon the fugitive, were fiercely bright and hard like glass. His hooked beak, his flat head, his strong, thick, smoothly modelled neck, were outstretched in a rigid line like those of the drake.

The long, spectral wings of the great hawk beat the air, but not with haste and violence like those of the fleeing quarry. Swift as his wingbeats were, there was a surging movement about them, an irresistible thrust, which made them seem slow and gave their working an air of absolute ease. For all this ease, however, he was flying faster than the fugitive. Slowly, yard by yard, he crept up, the distance from his victim grew narrower. The drake's wings whistled upon the wind, a strange shrill note, as of terror and despair. But the wings of the pursuing destroyer were as noiseless as sleep. He seemed less a bird than a spirit of doom, the embodiment of the implacable Arctic cold.

"THE NOISELESS WINGS WERE NOW JUST BEHIND HIM"

The astounding speed at which the two were rushing through the sky on this race of life and death brought the gleam of the estuary water hurrying up from the horizon to meet them. The terrible seconds passed. The water was not half a mile ahead. The line of the drake's flight began to slope toward earth. A few moments more, and a sudden splash in the tide would proclaim that the fugitive was safe in a refuge where the destroyer could not follow. But the noiseless wings were now just behind him, just behind and above.

At this moment the fugitive opened his beak for one despairing squawk, his acknowledgment that the game of life was lost. The next instant the hawk's white body seemed to leap forward even out of the marvellous velocity with which it was already travelling. It leaped forward, and changed shape, spreading, and hanging imminent for the least fraction of a second. The head, with slightly open beak, reached down. A pair of great black talons, edged like knives, open and clutching, reached down and forward.

The movement did not seem swift, yet it easily caught the drake in the midst of his flight. For an instant there was a slight confusion of winnowing and flapping wings, a dizzy dropping through the sky. Then the great hawk recovered his balance, steadied himself, turned, and went winging steadily inland toward a crag which he had noted, where he might devour his prey at ease. In his claws was gripped the body of the black drake, its throat torn across, its long neck and webbed feet trailing limply in the air.

In the Unknown Dark

IS long, awkward legs trembling with excitement, his long ears pointing stiffly forward, his distended nostrils sniffing and snorting, he stared anxiously this way and that from the swirling, treacherous current to the silent man poling the scow. The river, at this point nearly half a mile wide, daunted him now that he saw it at such close quarters, though all summer he had been viewing it with equanimity from the shore. A few hundred yards above the comparatively quiet course of the ferry he saw a long line of white leaping waves, stretching from bank to bank with menacing roar, and seeming as it were about to rush down upon the slow ferry and overwhelm it. When he looked toward the other side of the scow the prospect was equally threatening. The roar from below was worse than the roar from above, and the whole river, just here so radiant with the sunset glow, grew black with gloom and white with fury as it plunged through a rocky chasm strewn with ledges. The only thing that comforted him at all and kept his fears within bounds was the patient, sturdy figure of the man, poling the scow steadily toward shore.

This nervous passenger on the primitive backwoods ferry was a colt about eight months old, whose mother had died the previous day. His owner, a busy lumberman, was now sending him across the river to a neighbour's farm to be cared for, because he was of good "Morgan" strain. The ferryman had taken the precaution to hitch the end of his halter-rope to a thwart amidships, lest he should get wild and jump overboard; but the colt, though his dark brown coat was still woolly with the roughness of babyhood, had too much breadth between the eyes to be guilty of any such foolishness. He felt frightened, and strange, and very lonely; but he knew it was his business just to trust the man and keep still.

When the animal trusts the man he generally comes out all right; but

once in a long while Fate interferes capriciously, and the utterly unexpected happens. Hundreds of times, and with never a mishap, the ferryman had poled his clumsy scow across the dangerous passage between the rapids—the only possible crossing-place for miles in either direction. But this evening, when the scow was just about mid-channel, for some inexplicable reason the tough and well-tried pole of white spruce snapped. It broke short off in the middle of a mighty thrust. And overboard, head first, went the ferryman.

As the man fell his foot caught in the hook of a heavy chain used for securing hay-carts and such vehicles on the scow; and as the clumsy craft swung free in the current the man was dragged beneath it. He would have been drowned in a few seconds, in such water; but at last, in the twisting, the captive foot fell clear. The man came to the surface on the upper side of the scow, made one despairing but successful clutch, got hold of the edge, and with his last strength drew himself aboard, all but suffocated, and with a broken ankle. Tricked by years of security, he had left his spare pole on the shore. There was absolutely nothing to do but let the scow drift, and pray that by some succession of miracles she might survive nine miles of rapids and gain the placid reaches below.

As the man, white and sullen, crouched on the bottom of the scow and held his ankle, the colt eyed him wonderingly. Then he eyed the river, very anxiously, and presently braced his legs wide apart as the scow gave a strange, disconcerting lurch. The roar was growing swiftly louder, and those fierce white waves appeared to be rushing right up the middle of the river to meet the scow. Daunted at the sight, he crowded as close as he could to the ferryman, and nosed him as if to call his attention to the peril.

In a very few minutes the scow was in the rapids. But the current had carried her well inshore, where there chanced to be, for several miles, a comparatively free channel, few rocks, and no disastrous ledges. She swung and wallowed sickeningly, bumping so violently that once the colt's knees gave way beneath him and twice he was all but hurled overboard. And she took in great, sloshing crests of waves till she was half-full of water. But she was not built to sink, and her ribs were sound. For miles she pounded her terrible way in safety through the

bewildering tumult. At last a long jutting promontory of rock started the current on a new slant, and she was swept staggering across to the other shore. Here, for nearly two miles, she slipped with astonishing good luck down a narrow, sluice-like lane of almost smooth water. As if to compensate for this fortune, however, she was suddenly caught by a violent cross-current, snatched out of the clearway, and swept heavily over a ledge. At the foot of this ledge she was fairly smothered for some seconds. The man clung obstinately to the gunwales; and the colt, by sheer good luck, fell in the scow instead of over the side. By the time he had struggled to his feet again the scow had righted herself, and darted into a wild chaos of rocks and sluices close by the shore. Here she caught on a boulder, tipped up till she was nearly on her gunwale, and pitched the little animal clear overboard.

As the clumsy craft swung loose the very next instant, the colt was dragged along in her wake, and would have ended his adventures then and there but for the readiness of the man. Forgetting for an instant his own terrible plight, he drew his knife and slashed the rope. Thus released, the colt got his head above water and made a valiant struggle toward the shore, which was now not five yards away.

All that he could do in the grip of that mad flood was, needless to say, very little, but it chanced to be enough, for it brought him within the grasp of a strong eddy. A moment later he was dashed violently into shoal water. As he fought to a footing he saw the scow wallowing away down the torrent. Then he found himself, he knew not how, on dry land. The falls roared behind him. They might, it seemed, rush up at any instant and clutch him again. Blind and sick with panic, he dashed into the woods, and went galloping and stumbling straight inland. At last he sank trembling in the deep grass of a little brookside meadow.

Being of sturdy stock, the brown colt soon recovered his wind. Then, feeling nervous in the loneliness of the woods and the deepening shadows, he snatched a few mouthfuls of grass and started to try and find his way home. Obeying some deep-seated instinct, he set his face aright, and pushed forward through the thick growths.

His progress, however, was slow. Among the trees the twilight was now gathering, and the dark places filled his young heart with vague

but dreadful apprehensions, so that at every few steps he would stop and stare backward over his shoulder. Presently he came out upon another open glade, and cheered by the light, he followed this glade as long as it seemed to lead in the right direction. Once a wide-winged, noiseless shadow sailed over his head, and he shied with a loud snort of terror. He had never before seen an owl. And once he jumped back wildly, as a foraging mink rustled through the herbage just before him. But for all the alarms that kept his baby heart quivering, he pressed resolutely forward, longing for the comfort of his mother's flank, and the familiar stall in the barn above the ferry.

"HIS APPREHENSIVE EARS CAUGHT A CURIOUS SOUND."

As he reached the end of the glade his apprehensive ears caught a curious sound, a sort of dry rustling, which came from the fringe of the undergrowth. He halted, staring anxiously at the place the strange sound came from. Immediately before him was the prostrate and

rotting trunk of an elm-tree, its roots hidden in the brushwood, its upper end projecting into the grass and weeds of the glade. As the colt stood wondering, a thickset, short-legged, grayish coloured animal, covered with long, bristling quills, emerged from the leafage and came crawling down the trunk toward him. It looked no larger than the black-and-white dog which the colt was accustomed to seeing about the farmyard, but its fierce little eyes and its formidable quills made him extremely nervous.

The porcupine came directly at him, with an ill-natured squeaking grunt. The colt backed away a foot or two, snorting, then held his ground. He had never yielded ground to the black-and-white dog. Why should he be afraid of this clumsy little creature? But when, at last, the porcupine drew so near that he could have touched it with his outstretched nose, instead of making any such great mistake as that he flung his head high in air, wheeled about, and lashed out furiously with his hinder hoofs. One hoof caught the porcupine fairly on the snout and sent it whirling end over end into the thicket, where it lay stretched out lifeless, as a feast for the first hungry prowler that might chance by. Not greatly elated by his victory, the magnitude of which he in no way realized, the colt plunged again into the woods and continued his journey.

By this time the sun had dropped completely behind the wooded hills, and here in the deep forest the dark seemed to come on all at once. The colt's fears now crowded upon him so thickly that he could hardly make any progress at all. He was kept busy staring this way and that, and particularly over his shoulders. A mass of shadow, denser than the rest,—a stump, a moss-grown boulder,—would seem to his frightened eyes a moving shape, just about to spring upon him. He would jump to one side, his baby heart pounding between his ribs, only to see another and huger shadow on the other side, and jump back again. The sudden scurrying of a wood-mouse over the dry spruce-needles made his knees tremble beneath him. At last, coming to two tall, straight-trunked saplings growing close together just before the perpendicular face of a great rock, he was vaguely reminded of the cow-stanchions near his mother's stall in the barn. To his quivering heart this was in some way a refuge, as compared with the terrible spaciousness of the forest. He could not make himself go any farther,

but crowded up as close as possible against the friendly trees and waited.

He had no idea, of course, what he was waiting for, unless he had some dim expectation that his dead mother, or his owner, or the man on the ferryboat would come and lead him home. His instinct taught him that the dark of the wilderness held unknown perils for him, though his guarded babyhood had afforded him no chance to learn by experience. Young as he was, he took up the position which gave his peculiar weapons opportunity for exercise. Instead of backing up against the trees and the rock, and facing such foes as the dread dark might send upon him, he stood with his back toward the danger and his formidable heels in readiness, while over first one shoulder, then the other, his eyes and ears kept guard. The situation was one that might well have cowed him completely; but the blood in his baby veins was that of mettled ancestors, and terrified though he was, and trembling, his fear did not conquer his spirit.

"THE BIG OWL HAD BEEN DISTURBED AT ITS BANQUET."

Soon after he had taken his stand in this strange and desolate stabling, from a little way back in the underbrush there came a pounce, a scuffle, and a squeal, more scuffle, and then silence. He could not even guess what was happening, but whatever it was, it was terrible to him. For some moments there came, from the same spot, little, soft, ugly, thickish sounds. These stopped abruptly. Immediately afterwards there was a hurried beating of wings, and something floated over him. The big owl had been disturbed at its banquet. A

few seconds more and the watcher's ears caught a patter of light footsteps approaching. Next he saw a faint gleam of eyes, which seemed to scrutinize him steadily, fearlessly, indifferently, for perhaps the greater part of a minute. Then they vanished, with more patter of light footsteps; and as they disappeared a wandering puff of night air brought to the colt's nostrils a musky scent which he knew. It was the smell of a red fox, such as he had seen once prowling around his owner's barn-yard. This smell, from its associations, was comforting rather than otherwise, and he would have been glad if the fox had stayed near.

"WHICH SEEMED TO SCRUTINIZE HIM STEADILY."

For some time now there was stillness all about the big rock, the owl's kill and the passing of the fox having put all the small wild creatures on their guard. Little by little the colt was beginning to get used to the situation. He was even beginning to relax the tense vigilance of his watching, when suddenly his heart gave a leap and seemed to stand still. Just about ten paces behind him he saw a pair of pale, green-

gleaming eyes, round, and set wider apart than those of the fox, slowly floating toward him. At the same time his nostrils caught a scent which was absolutely unknown to him, and peculiarly terrifying.

As these two dreadful eyes drew near, the colt's muscles grew tense. Then he distinguished a shadowy, crouching form behind the eyes; and he gathered his haunches under him for a desperate defense. But the big lynx was wary. This long-legged creature who stood thus with his back to him and eyed him with watchful, sidelong glances was something he did not understand. Before he came within range of the colt's heels he swerved to one side and stole around at a safe distance, investigating. He was astonished, and at first discomfited, to find that, whichever way he circled, the unknown animal under the rock persisted in keeping his back to him. For perhaps half an hour, with occasional intervals of motionless crouching, he kept up this slow circling, unable to allay his suspicions. Then, apparently making up his mind that the unknown was not a dangerous adversary, or perhaps in some subtle way detecting his youth, he crept closer. He crept so close, indeed, that he felt emboldened to spring; and he was just about to do so.

Just at this moment, luckily just the right moment, the colt let loose the catapult of his strong haunches. His hoofs struck the lynx fairly in the face, and hurled him backwards against a neighbouring tree.

Half-stunned, and his wind knocked out, the big cat picked himself up with a sharp spitting and snarling, and slunk behind the tree. Then he turned tail and ran away, thoroughly beaten. The strange animal had a fashion in fighting which he did not know how to cope with; and he had no spirit left for further lessons.

After this the night wore on without great event, though with frequent alarms which kept the colt's nerves ceaselessly on the rack. Now it was the faint, almost imperceptible sound of a hunting weasel; now it was the erratic scurrying of the wood-mice; now it was the loud but muffled thumping of a hare, astonished at this long-limbed intruder upon the wilderness domains. The colt was accustomed to sleeping well through the night, and this protracted vigil upon his feet (for he was afraid to lie down) exhausted him. When the first spectral gray of dawn began to work its magic through the forest, his legs were

trembling so that he could hardly stand. When the first pink rays crept in beneath the rock, he sank down and lay for half an hour, not sleeping, but resting. Then he got up and resumed his homeward journey, very hungry, but too desperate with chill and homesickness to stop and eat.

He had travelled perhaps a mile, when he caught the sound of heavy, careless footsteps, and stopped. Staring anxiously through the trees, he saw a woodsman striding along the trail, with an axe over his shoulder. At sight of one of those beings that stood to him for protection, and kindly guidance, and shelter, his terror and loneliness all slipped away. He gave a shrill, loud whinny of delight, galloped forward with much crashing of underbrush, and snuggled a coaxing muzzle under the arm of the astonished woodsman.

The Terror of the Sea Caves

I

T was in Singapore that big Jan Laurvik, the diver, heard about the lost pearls.

He was passing the head of a mean-looking alley near the waterside, late one sweltering afternoon, he was halted by a sudden uproar of cries and curses. The noise came from a courtyard about twenty paces up the alley. It was a fight, evidently, and Jan's blood responded with a sympathetic thrill. But the curses which he caught were all in Malay or Chinese, and he curbed his natural desire to rush in and help somebody. Though he knew both languages very well, he knew that he did not know, and never could know, the people who spoke those languages. Interference on the part of a stranger might be resented by both parties to the quarrel. He shrugged his great shoulders, and walked on reluctantly.

Hardly three steps had he taken, however, when above the shrill cries a great voice shouted.

"Take that, you damned—" it began, in English. And at that it ended, with a kind of choking.

Jan Laurvik wheeled round in a flash and ran furiously for the door of the courtyard, which stood half-open. He was a Norwegian, but English was as a native tongue to him; and amid the jumble of races in the East he counted all of European speech his brothers. An Englishman was being killed in there. The quarrel was clearly his.

Six feet two in height, swift, and of huge strength, with yellow hair, so light as to be almost white, waving thickly over a face that was sunburnt to a high red, his blue eyes flaming with the delight of battle,

Jan burst in upon the mob of fighters. Several bodies lay on the floor. One dark-faced, low-browed fellow, a Lascar apparently, with his back to the wall and a bloody kreese in his hand, was putting up a savage fight against five or six assailants, who seemed to be Chinamen and Malays. The body of the Englishman whose voice Jan had heard lay in an ugly heap against the wall, its head far back and almost severed.

Jan's practised eye took in everything at a glance. The heavy stick he carried was, for a mêlée like this, a better weapon than knife or gun. With a great bellowing roar he sprang upon the knot of fighters.

The result was almost instantaneous. The two nearest rascals went down at his first two strokes. At the sound of that huge roar of his all had turned their eyes; and the man at bay, seizing his opportunity, had cut down two more of his foes with lightning slashes of his blade. The remaining two, scattering and ducking, had leaped for the door like rabbits. Jan wheeled, and sprang after them. But they were too quick for him. As he reached the head of the alley they darted into a narrow doorway across the street which led into a regular warren of low structures. Knowing it would be madness to follow, Jan turned back to the courtyard, curious to find out what it had all been about.

The silence was now startling. As he entered, there was no sound but the painful breathing of the Lascar, whom he found sitting with his back against the wall, close beside the body of the Englishman. He was desperately slashed. His eyes were half-closed; and Jan saw that there was little chance of his recovery. Besides that of the Englishman, there were six bodies lying on the floor, all apparently quite lifeless. Jan saw that the place was a kind of drinking den. The proprietor, a brutal-looking Chinaman, lay dead beside his jugs and bottles. Jan reached for a jug of familiar appearance, poured out a cup of arrack, and held it to the lips of the dying Lascar. At the first gulp of the potent spirit his eyes opened again. He swallowed it all, eagerly, then straightened himself up, held out his hand in European fashion to Jan, and thanked him in Malayan.

"Who's that?" inquired Jan in the same tongue, pointing to the dead white man.

Grief and rage convulsed the fierce face of the wounded Lascar.

"He was my friend," he answered. "The sons of filthy mothers, they killed him!"

"Too bad!" said Jan sympathetically. "But you gave a pretty good account of yourselves, you two. I like a man that can fight like you were fighting when I came in. What can I do for you?"

"I'm dead, pretty soon now!" said the fellow indifferently. And from the blood that was soaking down his shirt and spreading on the floor about him, Jan saw that the words were true. Anxious, however, to do something to show his good will, he pulled out his big red handkerchief, and knelt to bandage a gaping slash straight across the man's left forearm, from which the bright arterial blood was jumping hotly. As he bent, the fellow's eyes lifted and looked over his shoulder.

"Look out!" he screamed. Before the words were fairly out of his mouth Jan had thrown himself violently to one side and sprung to his feet. He was just in time. The knife of one of the Chinamen whom he had supposed to be dead was sticking in the wall beside the Lascar's arm.

Jan stared at the bodies—all, apparently, lifeless.

"That's the one did it," cried the Lascar excitedly, pointing to the one whom Jan had struck on the head with his stick. "Put your knife into the son of a dog!"

But that was not the big Norseman's way. He wanted to assure himself. He went and bent over the limp-looking, sprawling shape, to examine it. As he did so the slant eyes opened upon his with a flash of such maniacal hate that he started back. He was just in time to save his eyes, for the Chinaman had clutched at them like lightning with his long nails.

Startled and furious at this novel attack, Jan reached for his knife. But before he could get his hand on it the Chinaman had leaped into the air like a wildcat, wound arms and legs about his body, and was struggling like a mad beast to set teeth into his throat. The attack was so miraculously swift, so disconcerting in its beast-like ferocity, that

Jan felt a strange qualm that was almost akin to panic. Then a black rage swelled his muscles; and tearing the creature from him he dashed him down upon the floor, on the back of his neck, with a violence which left no need of pursuing the question further. Not till he had examined each of the bodies carefully, and tried them with his knife, did he turn again to the wounded Lascar leaning against the wall.

"Thank you, my friend!" he said simply.

"You're a good fighting man. You're—like him," answered the Lascar feebly, nodding toward the dead Englishman. "Give me more arrack. I will tell you something. Hurry, for I go soon."

Jan brought him the liquor, and he gulped it. Then from a pouch within his knotted silk waistband he hurriedly produced a bit of paper which he unfolded with trembling fingers, Jan saw that it was a rough map sketched with India ink and marked with Malayan characters. The Lascar peered about him with fierce eyes already growing dim.

"Are you sure they are all gone?" he demanded.

"Certain!" answered Jan, highly interested.

"They'll try their best to kill you," went on the dying man. "Don't let them. If you let them get the pearls, I'll come back and haunt you."

"I won't let them kill me, and I won't let them get the pearls, if that's what it is that's made all the trouble. Don't worry about that," responded Jan confidently, reaching out his great hand for the paper, which was evidently so precious that men were giving up their lives for it.

The man handed it over with a groping gesture, though his savage black eyes were wide open.

"That'll show you where the wreck of the junk lies, in seven or eight fathom of water, close inshore. The pearls are in the deck-house. *He* kept them. The steamer was on a reef, going to pieces, and we came up just as the boats were putting off. We sunk them all, and got the pearls. And next night, in a storm, the junk was carried on to the rocks by a current we didn't know about. Only five of us got ashore—for the

sharks were around, and the 'killers,' that night. *Him* and me, we were the only ones knew enough to make that map."

Here the dying pirate—for such he had declared himself—sank forward with his face upon his knees. But with a mighty effort he sat up again and fixed Jan Laurvik with terrible eyes.

"Don't let the sons of a dog get them, or I will come back and choke you in your sleep," he gasped, suddenly pointing a lean finger straight at the Norseman's face. Then his black eyes opened wide, a strange red light blazed up in them for an instant and faded. With a sigh he toppled over, dead, his head resting on the dead Englishman's feet.

II

Jan Laurvik looked down upon the slack form with a sort of grim indulgence. "He was game, and he loved his comrade, though he *was* but a bloody-hearted pirate!" he muttered to himself.

With the paper folded small and hidden in his great palm, he glanced again from the door to see if any of the routed scoundrels were coming back. Satisfied on this point, he once more investigated the dead bodies on the floor, to assure himself that all were as dead as they appeared. Then he set himself to examine the precious paper, which held out to his imagination all sorts of fascinating possibilities. He knew that the swift boats carrying the proceeds of the pearl-fisheries were always eagerly watched by the piratical junks infesting those waters, but carried an armament which secured them from all interference. In case of wreck, however, the pirates' opportunity would come. Jan knew that the story he had just heard was no improbable one.

The map proved to be rough, but very intelligible. It indicated a stretch of the eastern coast of Java, which Jan recognized; but the spot where the junk had gone down was one to which passing ships always gave a wide berth. It was a place of treacherous anchorage, of abrupt, forbidding, uninhabited shore, and of violent currents that shifted erratically. So much the better, thought Jan, for his

investigations, if only the pirate junk should prove to have been considerate enough to sink in water not too deep for a diver to work in. There would be so much the less danger of interruption.

Jan was on the point of hurrying away from the gruesome scene, which might at any moment become a scene of excitement and annoying investigation, when a new idea flashed into his mind. It was over this precious paper that all the trouble had been. The scoundrels who had fled would undoubtedly return as soon as they dared, and would search for it. Finding it gone they would conclude that he had it; and they would be hot on his trail. He had no fancy for the sleepless vigilance that this would entail upon him. He had no fancy for the heavy armed expedition which it would force him to organize for the pearl hunt. He saw his airy palaces toppling ignominiously to earth. He saw that all he was likely to get was a slit throat.

As he glanced about him for a way out of his dilemma his eyes fell on a bottle of India ink containing the fine-tipped brush with which these Orientals did their writing. His resourcefulness awoke to this chance. The moments were becoming very pearls themselves for preciousness, but seizing the brush, he made a workable copy of the map on the back of a letter which he had in his pocket. Then he made a minute and very careful correction in the original, in such a manner as to indicate that the position of the wreck was in a deep fiord some fifty miles east of where it actually was. This done to his critical satisfaction, he returned the map to its hiding-place in the dead pirate's belt, and made all haste away. Not till he was back in the European quarter did he feel himself secure. Once among his fellow whites, where he was a man of known standing and reputed to be the best diver in the Archipelago, he knew that he would run no risk of being connected with a drinking brawl of Lascars and pirates. As for the dead Englishman, he knew the odds were that the Singapore police would know all about him.

Jan Laurvik had a little capital. But he needed a trusty partner with more. To his experienced wits his other needs were clear. There would have to be a very seaworthy little steamer, powerfully engined for service on that stormy coast, and armed to defend herself against prowling pirate junks. This small and fit craft would have to be manned

by a crew equally fit, and at the same time as small as possible, for the reason that in a venture of this sort every one concerned would of necessity come in for a share of the winnings. Moreover, the fewer there were to know, the fewer the chances of the secret leaking out; and Jan was even more in dread of the Dutch Government getting wind of it than he was of the pirates picking up his trail.

Up to a certain point, he had no difficulty in verifying the dead pirate's story. He had heard of the wreck of the Dutch steamer *Viecht* on a reef off the Celebes, and of the massacre of all the crew and passengers, except one small boat-load, by pirates. This had happened about eight months ago. Discreet inquiry developed the fact that the *Viecht* had carried about $300,000 worth of pearls. The evidence was sufficiently convincing and the prize was sufficiently alluring to make it worth his while to risk the adventure.

It was with a certain amount of Northern deliberation that Jan Laurvik thought these points all out, and made up his mind what to do. Then he acted promptly. First he cabled to Calcutta, to one Captain Jerry Parsons, to join him in Singapore without fail by the very next steamer. Then he set himself unobtrusively to the task of finding the craft he wanted and looking up the equipment for her.

Captain Jerry Parsons was a New Englander, from Portland, Me. He had been whaler, gold-hunter, filibuster, copra-trader, general-in-chief to a small Central American republic, and sheepfarmer in the Australian bush. At present he was conducting a more or less regular trade in precious stones among the lesser Indian potentates. He loved gain much, but he loved adventure more.

When he received the cable from his good friend Jan Laurvik, he knew that both were beckoning to him. With light-hearted zest he betook himself to the steamship offices, found a P. & O. boat sailing on the morrow, and booked his passage. Throughout the journey he amused himself with trying to guess what Jan Laurvik was after; and, as it happened, almost the only thing he failed to think of was pearls.

When Captain Jerry reached Singapore Jan Laurvik told him the story of the dead pirate's map.

"Let's see the map!" said he, chewing hard on the butt of his unlighted Manila.

Jan passed his copy over. The New Englander inspected it carefully, in silence, for several minutes.

"'Tain't much of a map!" said he at length disparagingly. "You think the varmint was straight?"

"In his way, yes," answered Jan with conviction. "He had it in him to be straight in his way to a friend, which wouldn't hinder him cuttin' the throats of a thousand chaps he didn't take an interest in."

"When shall we start?" asked Captain Jerry. Now that his mind was quite made up he took out his match-box and carefully lighted his cheroot.

The big Norseman's face lighted up with pleasure, and he reached out his hand. The grip was all, in the way of a bargain, that was needed between them.

"Why, to-morrow night!" he answered.

"Well," said the New Englander, "I'll draw some cash in the morning."

The boat which Jan had hired was a fast and sturdy seagoing tug, serviceable, but not designed for comfort. Jan had retained her engineer, a shrewd and close-mouthed Scotchman. Her sailing-master would be Captain Jerry. For crew he had chosen a wiry little Welshman and two lank leather-skinned Yankees. To these four, for whose honesty and loyalty he trusted to his own insight as a reader of men, he explained, partially, the nature of the undertaking, and agreed to give them, over and above their wages, a substantial percentage of whatever treasure he might succeed in recovering. He had made his selection wisely, and every man of the four laid hold of the opportunity with ardour.

"THOSE SWIFT AND IMPLACABLE LITTLE WHALES WHO FEAR NO LIVING THING."

The tug was swift enough to elude any of the junks infesting those waters, but the danger was that she might be taken by surprise at her anchorage while Laurvik was under water. He fitted her, therefore, with a Maxim gun on the roof of the deck-house, and armed the crew with repeating Winchesters.

Thus equipped, he felt ready for any perils that might confront him above the surface of the water. As to what might lurk below he felt somewhat less confident, as these he should have to face alone, and he remembered the ominous warning of his pirate friend, about the sharks and the "killers." For sharks Jan Laurvik had comparatively small concern; but for the "killers," those swift and implacable little whales who fear no living thing, he entertained the highest respect.

On the evening of the day after Captain Jerry's arrival, the tug *Sarawak* steamed quietly out of the harbour. As this was a customary thing for her to do, it excited no particular comment among the frequenters of the waterside. By the pirates' spies, who abounded in the city, it was not considered an event worth making note of.

The journey, across the Straits, and down the treacherous Javan Sea, was so prosperous that Jan Laurvik, his blood steeped in Norse superstition, began to feel uneasy. The sea was like a millpond all the

way, and they were sighted by no one likely to interfere or ask questions. Jan distrusted Fortune when she seemed to smile too blandly. But Captain Jerry comforted him with the assurance that there'd be trouble enough ahead; and strangely enough this singular variety of comfort quite relieved Jan's depression.

The unusual calm made it easy to hold close inshore, when they reached that portion of the coast where they must keep watch for the landmarks indicated on the pirate's map. Every reef and surface-ledge boiled ceaselessly in the smooth swell, and by that clear green sea they were saved the trouble of tedious soundings. When they came exactly abreast of a low headland which they had been watching for some time, it suddenly opened out into the semblance of a two-humped camel crouching sidewise to the sea, exactly as it was represented in Jan's map. Just beyond was a narrow bay, and across the middle of its mouth, with a dangerous passage on either side, stretched the reef on which the pirate junk had gone down. At this hour of low water the reef was showing its teeth and snarling with surf. At high tide it would be hidden, and a perfect snare of ships. According to the map, the wreck lay in some eight fathoms of water, midway of the outer crescent of the reef. Behind the reef, where the latter might serve them as a partial shelter from the sweep of the seas if a northeaster should blow up, they found tolerable anchorage for the tug. For the preliminary soundings, and for the diving operations, of course, Jan planned to use the launch. And, in order to take utmost advantage of the phenomenal calm, which seemed determined to smooth away every obstacle for the adventurers, Jan got instantly to work. Within a half-hour of the *Sarawak's* anchoring he had the launch outside the reef with all his diving apparatus aboard, with Captain Jerry to manage the air-pump, and the Scotch engineer to run the motor.

III

Along the outer face of the reef, at a depth varying from eight to twelve fathoms, ran an irregular rocky shelf which dipped gradually seaward for several hundred yards, then dropped sheer to the ocean depths. In

the warm water along this shelf swarmed a teeming life, of gay-coloured gigantic weeds, and of strange fish that outdid the brightest weeds in brilliancy and unexpectedness of hue. Where the tropic sunlight filtered dimly down through the beryl tide it sank into a marvellous garden whose flowers, for the most part, were living and moving forms, some monstrous, many terrifying, and almost all as grotesque in shape as they were radiant in colour. But in that insufficient, glimmering light, which was rather, to a human eye, a vaguely translucent, greenish darkness, these colours were almost blotted out. It took eyes adapted to the depth and gloom to differentiate them clearly.

In the great deeps, also, beyond the edge of the shelf, thronged life in swimming, crawling, or moveless forms, of every imagined and many unimagined shapes, from creatures so tiny that a whole colony could dwell at ease in the eye of a cambric needle, to the Titanic squid, or cuttlefish, with oval bodies fifty feet in length and arms like writhing constrictors reaching twenty or thirty feet farther. It was a life of noiseless but terrific activity, of unrelenting and incessant death, in a darkness streaked fitfully with phosphorescent gleams from the bodies of the darting, writhing, or pouncing creatures that slew and were slain in the stupendous silence.

"FAR OFFSHORE, ONE OF THESE MONSTERS CAME UP AND SPRAWLED UPON THE SURFACE."

Down to these dwellers in the profound had come some mysterious message or exciting influence, no man knows what, from the prolonged calm on the surface. It affected individuals among various species, in such a way that they moved upward, into a twilight where they were aliens and intruders. Among those so stung with unrest were several of the gigantic, pallid cuttles. Far offshore, one of these monsters came up and sprawled upon the surface in the unfriendly sun, his dreadful arms curling and uncurling like snakes, till a great sperm-whale, of scarcely more than his own size, came by and fell upon him ravenously, and devoured him.

Another of the restless monsters, however, kept his restlessness within the bounds of discretion. Slowly rising, a vast and spectral horror as he came up into the green light, he reached the rim of the ledge. The growing light had already made him uneasy, and he wanted no more of it. Here on the ledge, where food, though novel in character, was unlimited in supply, was variety enough to content him. Gorging himself as he went with everything that swam within reach of his darting tentacles, he moved over the rocky floor till he came to the

wreck of the junk.

To his huge unwinking eyes of crystal black, which caught every tiniest ray of light in their smooth, appalling deeps, the wreck looked strange enough to attract his attention at once. It was quite unlike any rock-form which he had ever seen. Rather cautiously he advanced a giant tentacle to investigate it. But at the touch of the unfamiliar and alien substance the tentacle recoiled in aversion. The pale monster backed away. But the wreck made no attempt to pounce upon him. It seemed to have no fight in it. Possibly, on closer investigation, it might prove to be good to eat; and he was hungry. In fact, he was always hungry, for the irresistible corrosives in his great stomach—and he was nearly all stomach—were so swift in their action that whatever he swallowed was digested almost in the swallowing. Since coming upon the ledge he had clutched and devoured two small basking sharks, from six to eight feet long, and a sawfish fully ten feet long, who had not been on their guard against the approach of such a peril. Besides these substantial victims, countless small fry, of every kind, had been drawn deftly to the insatiable vortex of his maw. Nevertheless, his appetite was again crying out. He tried the wreck again, first carefully, then boldly, till the writhing tentacles, with their sensitive tips and suckers, had enveloped it from stem to stern and searched it inside and out. A few lurking fish and mollusks were snatched from the dark interior by those insinuating and inexorable feelers; and a toothsome harvest of anchored crustaceans was gathered from the hidden surfaces along beside the keel. But of the bodies of the pirates that had gone down in the sudden foundering there was nothing left but bones, which the myriad scavengers of the sea had polished to the barren smoothness of ivory.

"UP DARTED A LIVID TENTACLE, AND FIXED UPON IT."

While the pallid monster was occupied in the investigation of the wreck those two great bulging black mirrors of his eyes were sleeplessly alert to everything that passed above or about them. Once a swordfish, about seven feet long, sailed carelessly though swiftly some ten feet overhead. Up darted a livid tentacle, and fixed upon it with the deadly sucking disks. In vain the splendid and ferocious fish lashed out in the effort to wrench itself free. In vain it strove to plunge downward and pierce the puffy monster with its sword. In a second

two more tentacles were wrapped about it. Then, all force crushed out of it, it was dragged down and crammed into the conqueror's horrible mouth.

While its mouth was yet working with the satisfaction of this meal, the monster saw a graceful but massive black shape, nearly half as long as himself, swimming slowly between his eyes and the shining surface. At the sight a shudder of fear passed over him. Every waving tentacle shrank back and lay moveless, as if suddenly paralyzed, and he flattened himself down as best he could beside the dark hulk of the wreck. Well he knew that dark shape was a whale—and a whale was the one being he knew of which he had cause to fear. Against those rending jaws his cable-like tentacles and tearing beak were of no avail, his unarmoured body utterly defenceless.

The whale, however,—not a sperm, but one of a much smaller, though more savage, species—the "killer,"—did not catch sight of the giant cuttlefish cringing below him. Intent on other game, he passed swiftly on. His presence, however, had for the moment destroyed the monster's appetite. Instead of continuing his search for food, he wanted a hiding-place. He could no longer be at ease for a moment there in the open.

"A SINGULAR FIGURE, DESCENDING SLOWLY THROUGH THE GLIMMERING GREEN."

Just behind the wreck the rock wall rose abruptly to the surface of the reef. Its base was hollowed into a series of low caves, where masses of softer rock had been eaten out from beneath a slanting stratum of more enduring material. The most spacious of these caves was immediately behind the wreck. It was exactly what the monster craved. He backed into it with alacrity, completely filling it with his spectral and swollen body. In the doorway the convex inky lenses of

his eyes kept watch, moveless and all-seeing. And his ten pale-spotted tentacles, each thicker at the base than a man's thigh, lay outspread and hidden among the seaweeds, waiting for such victims as might come within reach of their lightning snap and coil.

The monster had no more than got himself fairly installed in his new quarters, when into the range of his awful eyes came a singular figure, descending slowly through the glimmering green directly over the wreck. It was not so long as the swordfish he had lately swallowed, but it was thick and massive-looking; and it was blunt at the ends, unlike any fish he had ever seen. Its eyes were enormous, round and bulging. From its head and from one of its curious round, thick fins, extended two slender antennæ straight up toward the surface, and so long that their extremities were beyond the monster's vision. It was indeed a strange-looking creature, but he felt sure that it would be very good to eat. In their concealment among the many-coloured seaweeds his tentacles thrilled with expectancy, and he waited, like some stupendous nightmare of a spider, to spring the moment the prey came within reach.

It chanced, however, that just as the strange creature, descending without any movement of its fins, did come within reach, there also appeared again, in the distance, the black form of the "killer" whale, swimming far overhead. The monster changed his plans instantly. His interest in the newcomer died out. He became intent on nothing but keeping himself inconspicuous. The newcomer, unconscious of the terror lying in wait so near him and of the dark form patrolling the upper green, alighted upon the wreck and groped his way lumberingly into the cabin, dragging those two slim antennæ behind him.

IV

When Jan Laurvik, in his up-to-date and well-tested diving-suit, went down through the green twilight of the sea, he was doing what it was his profession to do, and he had few misgivings. He had confidence in his equipment, in his skill, and in his mate at the rope and the air-pump, Captain Jerry. For defence against any obtrusive shark or sawfish he carried a heavy, long-bladed, two-edged knife, by far the

most effective weapon in deep water. This knife he wore in a sheath at his waist, with a cord attached to the handle so that it could not get away from him. He carried also a tiny electric battery supplying a strong lamp on the front of his head-piece just above his eyes.

From his long experience in sounding and in locating wrecks, Jan Laurvik had acquired an accuracy that seemed almost like divination. His soundings, in this instance, had been particularly thorough, because he did not wish to waste any more time than necessary at the depth in which he would have to work. He was not surprised, therefore, when he found himself descending upon the wreck of a junk. Moreover, as it was not an old wreck, he concluded that it was the junk which he was looking for. The wreck had settled almost on an even keel; and as he was familiar with craft of her type, he had no difficulty in finding his way about.

It was in the narrow, closet-like structure which served as the junk's cabin that the pirate had said the pearls would be found. The door was open. Turning on his light, which struggled with the water and diffused a ghostly glow, he found himself confronted by a hideous little joss of red-and-gilt lacquer. He knew it was lacquer, and of the best, for nothing else, except gold itself, would have withstood the months of soaking in sea-water. Jan grinned to himself, there within his rubber and copper shell, at this evidence of pirate piety. Then it occurred to him that a man like the pirate captain would probably have turned his piety to practical use. What better guardian of the treasure than a god? Dragging the gaudy deity from his altar, he found the altar hollow. In that secure receptacle lay a series of packages done up with careful precision in wrappings of oiled silk. He knew the style of wrapping very well. For all his coolness, his heart fell to thumping painfully at the sight of this vast wealth beneath his hand. Then he realized that the pressure of the water, and of the compressed air in his helmet, was beginning to tell upon him. In fierce but orderly haste he corded the packages about his middle and turned to leave the cabin. He would make another trip for the lacquer god, and for such other articles of value or *vertu* which the junk might contain.

Jan turned to leave the cabin. But in the doorway he started back with

a shudder of dread and loathing. A slender, twisting thing, whitish in colour and minutely speckled with livid spots, reached in, and fastened upon his arm with soft-looking suckers which held like death.

Jan knew instantly what the pale, writhing thing was. Out flashed his knife. With a swift stroke he slashed off the detaining tip, where it had a thickness of perhaps two inches. The raw stump shrank back, like a severed worm, and Jan, leaping clear of the doorway, signalled furiously to be hauled up. But at the same instant two more of the curling white things came reaching over the bulwarks and fastened upon him—one upon his right arm, hampering him so that he was almost helpless, and the other upon his left leg just above the knee. He felt his signal promptly answered by a powerful tug on the rope. But he was anchored to the wreck as if he had grown to it.

Never before had Jan Laurvik felt the clutch of fear at his heart as he did at this moment. But not for an instant, in the horror, did he lose his presence of mind. He knew that in a pulling match with the giant devil-fish of the deeps his comrades in the boat far overhead would be nowhere. He had made a mistake in leaving the cabin. Frantically he signalled with his left hand, to "slack away" on the rope; and at the same time, though hampered by the grip on his right arm, he managed to slash off the end of the feeler that had fixed upon his leg. On the instant, whipping the knife over to his left, he cut his right arm clear, and sprang back into the doorway.

Jan's idea was that by keeping just inside the cabin door he could defend himself from being surrounded by the assault of the writhing things. He knew that in the open he would speedily be enfolded and crushed, and engulfed between the jaws of the monstrous squid. But in the narrow doorway the swift play of his blade would have some chance. He gained the doorway. He got fairly inside it, indeed. But as he entered he was horrified to see the thick stump, whose tip he had shorn off, dart in with him and fix itself, by its bigger and more irresistible suckers, upon the middle of his breast. With a shiver he sliced off the fatal disks, in one long sweep of his blade; then turned like a flash to sever a pallid tip which had fastened upon his helmet.

Jan was now thankful enough that he had got himself into the narrow doorway. Seemingly undisturbed by the slashings and slicings which

some of them had received, the whole ten squirming horrors now darted at the doorway. Jan's knife swooped this way and that; but as fast as he severed one clutch two more would make good. The cut tentacles grew to be the more terrifying, because their suckers were so big; and they themselves were so thick and hard to cut. Presently no fewer than three of the diabolical things laid their loathsome hold upon his right leg, below the knee, and began to haul it out through the door. Jan slashed at them madly, but not altogether effectually; for at this moment another tentacle had laid grip upon his arm below the elbow. He had just time to shift the knife again to his left and catch the jamb of the door, when he felt his helmet almost jerked from his head. This grip he dared not interfere with, lest he should cut, at the same time, the air-tube that fed his lungs, and drown like a rat in a hole. All he could do was hold on to the door-jamb, and carve away savagely at the tentacles which were within reach. If he could get free of those, he calculated that he could then reach the one which had fastened to his head-piece by throwing himself over on his back and so bringing it within range of his vision and his knife. At this moment, however, just as the pressure upon his neck was becoming intolerable, he felt his head suddenly released. One of the great sucking disks had crushed in the glass of the electric lamp and fastened upon the live wire. The sensation it experienced was evidently not pleasant, for it let go promptly, and secured a new hold upon Jan's left arm.

This hold left him almost helpless, because he could no longer wield the knife freely with either hand. He felt himself slowly being pulled out of the doorway by his right leg. Throwing himself partly backward, and partly behind the door, he gained a firmer brace and at the same time brought his knife again into better play. He would fight to the very last gasp, but he felt that the odds had now gone overwhelmingly against him. The fear of death itself was not heavy upon him. He had faced it too often, and too coolly, for that. But at the manner of this death that confronted him his very soul sickened with loathing. As he thought of it, his horror was not lessened by the sight which now greeted his view. A colossal, swollen, leprous-looking bulk, pallid and spotted, was mounting over the bulwark. Two great oval lenses of clear blackness, set close together, were in the front of the bulk, just over the spot where the tentacles started. These gigantic, appalling, expressionless eyes were fixed upon him. The monster was coming

aboard to see what kind of creature it was that was giving him so much trouble.

Jan saw that the end of the fight was very near. The thought, however, did not unnerve him. Rather, it put new fire into his nerves and muscles. By a tremendous wrench he succeeded in reaching with the knife the tentacle that bound his right arm. This freedom was like a new lease of life to him. He made swift play with his blade, so savagely that he was able to drag himself back almost completely into the cabin before the writhing horrors again closed upon him. But meanwhile, the monster's gigantic body had gained the deck. Those two awful eyes were slowly drawing nearer; and below them he saw the viscid mouth opening and shutting in anticipation.

At this a kind of madness began to surge up in Jan Laurvik's overtaxed brain. His veins seemed to surge with fresh power, as if there were nothing too tremendous for him to accomplish. He was on the very point of stopping his resistance, plunging straight in among the arms, and burying his big blade in those unspeakable eyes. It would be a satisfaction, at least, to force them to change their expression. And then, well, something might happen!

Before he could put this desperate scheme into execution, however, something did happen. Jan was aware of a sudden darkness overhead. The monster was evidently aware of it, too, for every one of the twisting horrors suddenly shrank away, leaving Jan to lean up against the doorway, free. The next moment a huge black shape descended perpendicularly upon the fleshy mountain of the monster's back, and a rush of water drove Jan backward into the cabin.

As the electric lamp had gone out when the glass was broken, Jan could see but dimly the awful battle of giants now going on before him. So excited was he that he forgot his own new peril. The danger was now that in the struggle one or other of the battling bulks might well crush the cabin flat, or entangle the air-tube and life-line In either case Jan's finish would be swift; but in comparison with the loathsome death from which he had just been so miraculously saved, such an end seemed no very dreadful thing. He was altogether absorbed in watching the prowess of his avenging rescuer.

Skilled in deep-sea lore as he was, he knew the dark fury which had swooped down upon the devilfish. It was a "killer" whale, or grampus, the most redoubtable and implacable fighter of all the kindreds of the sea. Jan saw its wide jaws shear off three mighty tentacles at once, close at the base. The others writhed up hideously and fastened upon him, but under the surging of his resistless muscles their tissues tore apart like snapped cables. Huge masses of the monster's ghastly flesh were bitten off, and thrown aside. Then, gaining a grip that took in the monster's head and the roots of the tentacles, the killer shook his prey as a bulldog might shake a fat sheep. The tentacles straightened out slackly. Jan saw that the fight was over; and that it was high time for him to remove from that too strenuous neighbourhood. He gave the signal vehemently, and was drawn up, without attracting his dangerous rescuer's notice. When Captain Jerry hauled him in over the boatside, he fell in an unconscious heap.

When Jan came to himself he was in his bunk on the *Sarawak*. It was an utter physical and nervous exhaustion that had overcome him. His swoon had passed into a heavy sleep, and when he awoke he sat up with a start. Captain Jerry was at his side, bursting with suppressed curiosity; and the Scotch engineer was standing by the bunk.

"Waal, partner, you've delivered the goods all right!" drawled Captain Jerry. "They're the stuff, not a doubt of it. But kind o' seemed to us up here you were having high jinks of one kind or another down there. What was it?"

"It was hell!" responded Jan with a shudder. Then he took hold of Captain Jerry's hand, and felt it, as if to make sure it was real, or as if he needed the feel of honest human flesh again to bring him to his senses.

"Ugh!" he went on, swinging out of the bunk. "Let me get out into the sunlight again! Let me see the sky again! I'll tell you all about it by an' by, Jerry. But wait. Were all the packages on me, all right?"

"I reckon!" responded Captain Jerry. "There was six of 'em tied on to you. I reckon they're worth the three hundred an' fifty thousand all right!"

"Well, let's get away from this place quick as we can get steam up again!" said Jan. "There's more swag down there, I guess—lots of it. But I wouldn't go down again, nor send another man down, for all the millions we've all of us ever heard tell of. Mr. McWha, how soon can we be moving?"

"Ten meenutes, more or less!" replied the Scotchman.

"All right! When we're outside of this accursed bay, an' round the 'Camel' yonder, I'll tell you what it's like down there under that shiny green."

THE END.

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